

FARNSWORTH HOUSE

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Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House.

Plano, IL

Photo: Jon Miller, Hedrich Blessing

site spurred the preservation consortium to find donors willing to underwrite their vision of maintaining the home in situ and opening it to the public for visitation. To demonstrate their own commitment, the National Trust and LPCI each committed \$1 million to initiate the purchase fund.

With support from the Friends of the Farnsworth, the fund grew in several small spurts to a total of \$3.5 million as the day of the auction at Sotheby's approached. Publicity generated by the preservation community brought forward donations from a number of parties in the final hours to fuel the bidding. At auction, preservation bidders faced competition from one other anonymous party, driving the cost to the very limits of the fund. The gavel came down on the winning bid of \$7.5 million from the preservation community.

The house is now owned by the National Trust, and is operated by LPCI as a visitation site under a co-stewardship arrangement. The Midwest Office, along with the Historic Sites Department of the Trust, is working with LPCI to develop a long range master plan to assure appropriate preservation, operation and interpretation of the Farnsworth House.



Farnsworth House interior.

Plano, IL.

Photo: Jon Miller, Hedrich Blessing

- In early 2003, it became clear that the State of Illinois would not be able to buy Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House near Plano, Illinois because of the State's financial crisis. Consequently, the National Trust, along with the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois (LPCI), sprung into action to buy the house.

Lord Peter Palumbo, Farnsworth House's conscientious owner, was resolved to sell the property at auction, so little could be done but to begin the process of raising sufficient funding in order to be competitive in the bidding. The challenge was immense, as the property was valued at \$10 million based on its unique role as an art object of the modern movement in architecture.

Concerns that an unfriendly bidder would purchase the home and relocate it to another