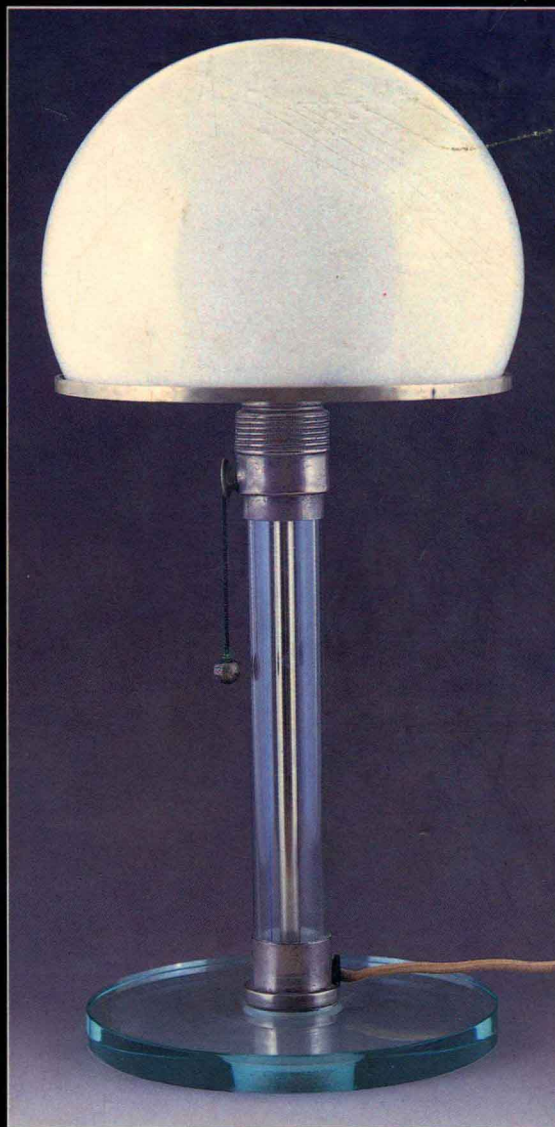


BAUHAUS

SOURCE - BOOK



BAUHAUS STYLE AND ITS WORLDWIDE INFLUENCE

ANNA ROWLAND

BAUHAUS SOURCE BOOK

ANNA ROWLAND

PHAIDON · OXFORD

A QUARTO BOOK

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Tea service by Marianne Brandt, c. 1924.

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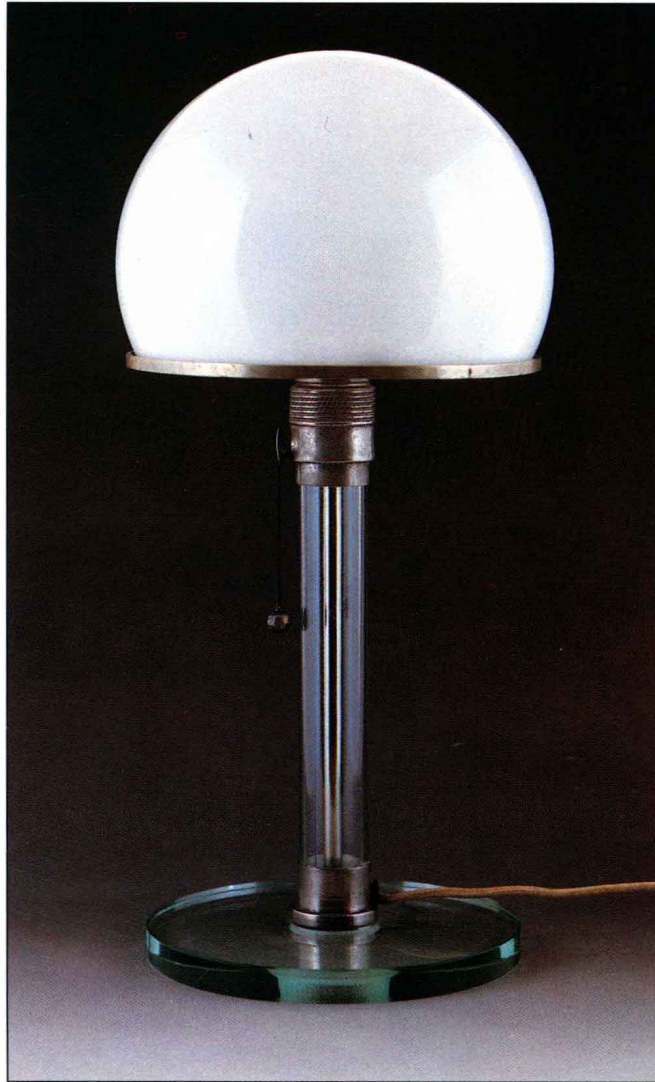
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Wagenfeld/Jucker lamp, 1924.

CONTENTS

8

FOREWORD

10

INTRODUCTION

18

CHAPTER · ONE
METALWORK



58

CHAPTER · THREE
FURNITURE



40

CHAPTER · TWO
CERAMICS



80

CHAPTER · FOUR
TEXTILES



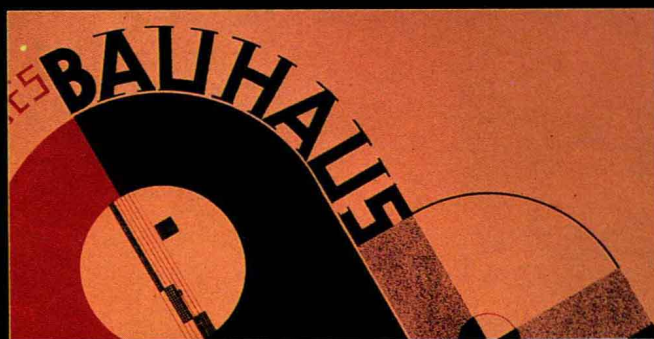
96

CHAPTER · FIVE
ARCHITECTURE



122

CHAPTER · SIX
GRAPHICS



146

CHAPTER · SEVEN
PAINTING AND
SCULPTURE



172

BIBLIOGRAPHY

173

I N D E X

179

C R E D I T S

FOREWORD



In 1919 when the Bauhaus was founded, I was nine years old. I enrolled as a student at the Dessau Bauhaus in 1930 when Hannes Meyer was Director. Although many of the great names of the earlier Bauhaus – Gropius, Breuer, Bayer and Moholy-Nagy – had left by this time, I was privileged to have been able to study under some of the most important painters and teachers of the period, such as Kandinsky, Klee, Feininger, Albers and Schmidt, and the teachings of the

Bauhaus entered my bloodstream.

The vast scope of Bauhaus activities makes it impossible to deal individually with all aspects of its work. Only my subjective recollections remain and even these have undergone selective filtration over a period of time.

As students we researched the principles that underlie the interrelationship of form and function. Every week we attended classes by Kandinsky and Klee. I have vivid recollections of the two masters and recall being overwhelmed by the wealth of stimulating readings and debates. In just a few months of my first term, Josef Albers was able to open my eyes and develop my tactile senses sufficiently to allow me to experience subject, material and even the work process as part of nature. The problem of form automatically arose during the work process since the aim was to adapt form to material. We also learned to use materials economically; I can still hear today Albers shouting, “You must find the right balance between cost and results!” Alongside countless experiments, we developed our own critical methods using entirely new values. The slogan “The Unity of Art and Craft” evolved into “The Unity of Art and Industry” and later into “The Unity of Art and Life”.

In retrospect, the contribution of the Bauhaus to all areas of design is apparent. Advertising and graphics were given a new impetus. Walk-through room sets with type and graphics, pioneered by Joost Schmidt, became a part of the new display architecture. The use of photographs, simplified typography and photograms of which Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer were great exponents, are commonplace today. Architecture moved from the craft-based concepts of the early Bauhaus, towards the mass-produced

functional housing that was characteristic during Hannes Meyer's Directorship at Dessau. Looking back on the stage work of the Bauhaus, with such productions as Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet*, Hirschfeld-Mack's *Reflective Illuminations*, and the *Mechanical Ballet* of Kurt Schmidt, I realize how close we came not only to total performance (theatre in the round), but also to total art.

At Dessau the preoccupation with the mythical, which had characterized much of the work at Weimar, gave way to a greater emphasis on objectivity, with its clear, organic structures and emphatic rejection of the superfluous. Although the ethos of the school pervaded every aspect of our lives (the students wore specially designed collarless jackets and women students wore trousers and all had the same "functional" hairstyle), purism did not prevent us from enjoying parties where we would wear metallic or geometric masks and dance to the syncopated rhythms of the Bauhaus band.

My time at the Bauhaus (1930-3) coincided with a period of great pressure caused by the tensions between Utopian and real Socialism versus esoteric abstraction. These rival movements threatened to divide the students between Formalists and Functionalists. There was also intense pressure from outside the school, with the opposition to the school from the petit bourgeoisie and the growing threat of the Nazis. I now realize that it was only in the closed society of the Bauhaus that the full potential of the ideas of both students and masters could come to fruition.

In the vast context of the development of art and design during this century, it is in some ways extraordinary that there is such a continuing interest in the work of the Bauhaus, which after all existed for only 14 years. Perhaps Mies van der Rohe had the right answer when he said, "The Bauhaus was an idea. Only ideas last this long."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kurt Kranz', with a stylized, flowing script.

Kurt Kranz

INTRODUCTION

The Bauhaus is not a style; it is a collection of attitudes. This book intends not so much to demonstrate the elements of a Bauhaus style but to indicate the multiplicity and ambiguity of design at the Bauhaus. As a school, it was a shifting, contradictory melting pot, living a hand-to-mouth existence during a time of tremendous social, political and economic upheaval. Most of the objects and documents produced there have since been destroyed, and its ideas and ideals have been widely caricatured. It is now admired and disliked in equal measure.

The mere word "Bauhaus" conjures up the cold gleam of nickled tubular steel on cantilevered dining chairs; cuboid white buildings with flat roofs and metal window frames; table lamps conceived as formal compositions according to the elements of geometry; graphic layouts with heavy black rules, red points and sections of text set at 90 degrees; the puritanical austerity of the anonymous standard product. Above all, the Bauhaus is identified with functionalism, which is now seen as the eradication of ornament in favour of the austere beauty of the industrial aesthetic.

Its founder, the architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969), was a brilliant coordinator, encourager, catalyst and publicist. Although there were a number of other schools in Europe and the Soviet Union with radical programmes, and although several enterprising manufacturers were reassessing the design of their products in the light of the post-war mood and the new materials that had become available, it is the Bauhaus that is remembered. It has had an enormous influence, transmitted through its publications, through its students' work in industry and, most importantly, through its work in education. It may sound cynical, but the very fact that the Bauhaus was finally closed down by the National Socialists in 1933 has ensured it a position of importance, particularly in the United States, where a great number of Bauhaus students and teachers settled following their enforced dispersal.

But the real reason the Bauhaus continues to invite debate, admiration and, on occasion, loathing is that it represents a celebrated, intensely idealistic attempt to come to terms with the problems of industrialization. Its goal was the education of a new generation of designers who could heal the divisions in a society that was based on mass-production and mass-consumption and create in its place a cohesive, democratic culture. This unity would be achieved through the research and development of a coherent and universally applicable language of design. In turn, this language would be used to create definitive, standard forms for the objects of everyday life, which, being mass-produced, would be universally available and affordable. The guiding ideas of the Bauhaus were continually under revision and were the subject of considerable debate and uncertainty. The history of the

school's development is complex. Its lifespan – 1919–33 – coincides exactly with that of the Weimar Republic. Both were born in the revolutionary upheavals that followed Germany's defeat in World War I and died at the outset of the Third Reich. The Bauhaus had three directors (Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe) and three resting bases (Weimar, Dessau and Berlin).

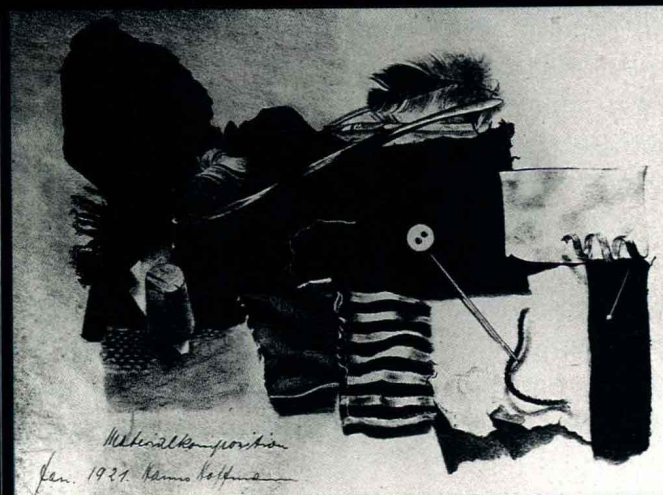
THE MANIFESTO

The Bauhaus was founded in Weimar (now in East Germany) by the amalgamation of the Academy of Fine Art and Henry van de Velde's School of Applied Art. Its intention, as stated in April 1919 in the ecstatically worded Manifesto with which Gropius attracted staff and students, was to unite the teaching of fine art, applied art and architecture in order to educate creative people capable of large-scale collaborative projects or "total works of art" (Gesamtkunstwerke). The name he chose for the school derived from "Hausbau" meaning construction. Bauhaus implies not only building and construction but also reconstruction.

The Manifesto can be read as a plea for unity, collaboration, wholeness and reintegration. It implies a "fall from grace", the loss of an earlier state of innocent harmony, latterly disturbed by the division of labour

Lyonel Feininger's profoundly Expressionistic woodcut (2), called "Cathedral", appeared as the frontispiece of the Bauhaus Manifesto in April 1919. The cathedral represents the Total Work of Art, the glorious product of communal effort. As Gropius puts it in the Manifesto: "Together let us desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith."

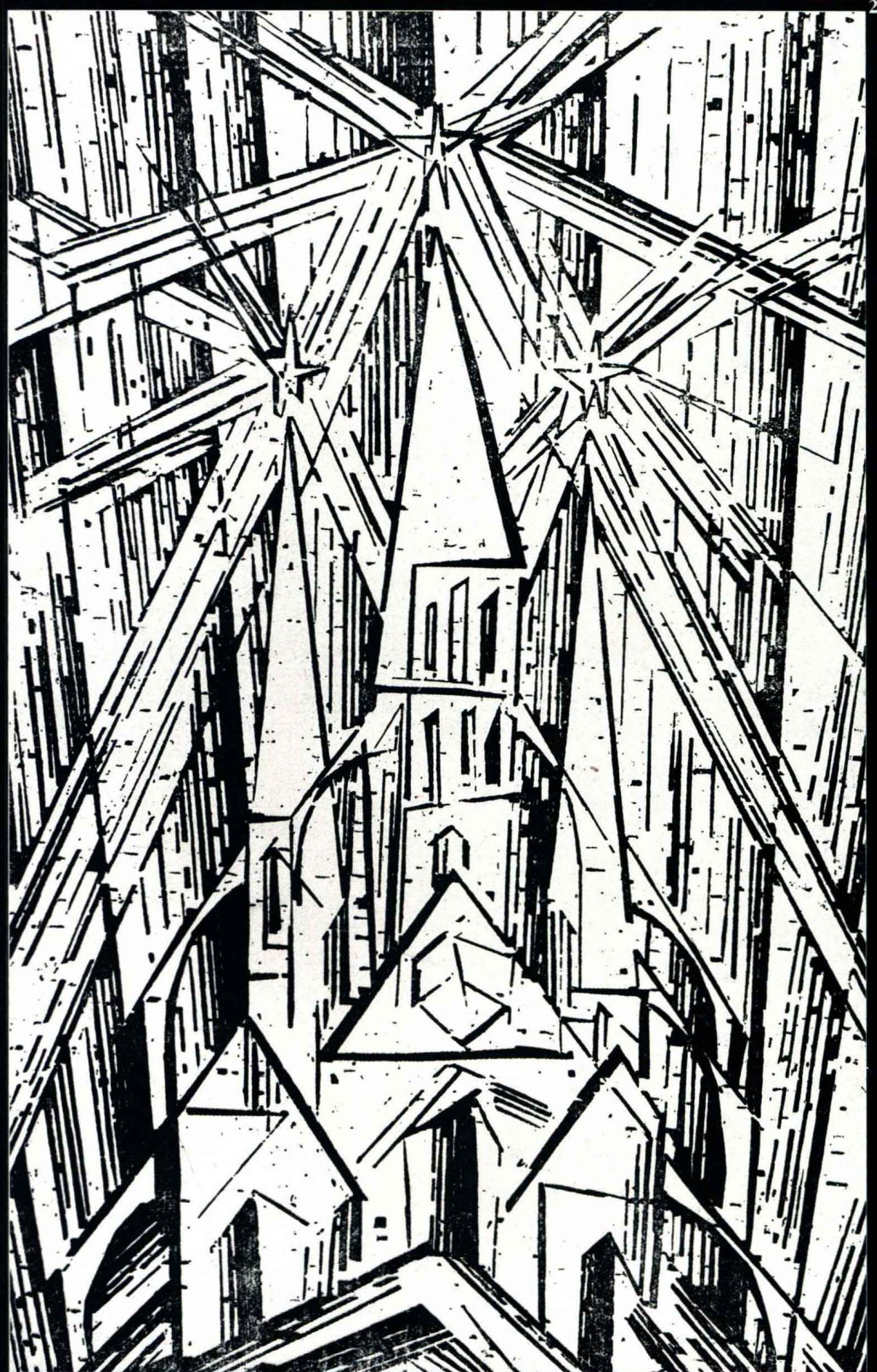
Hans Hoffman's materials study (1) (1921) comes from Johannes Itten's preliminary course. Such naturalistic studies were intended to develop sensitivity to the unique qualities of different materials, and to bring out the contrasts between them. Note the contrast of the lower end of the needle, shown dark against light, and the upper end, shown light against dark. Like nearly all preliminary course work, this study uses scrap materials.



1

BAUHAUS DIRECTORS

	1919	1925	1928	1930	1932 1933
WEIMAR	GROPIUS				
DESSAU		GROPIUS	MEYER	MIES	
BERLIN					MIES



inherent in mass-production and by a catastrophic world war, which Gropius seems at this time to have connected with mechanization. In particular, he lays the blame at the feet of the false and snobbish barriers erected between fine art, applied art and architecture. The Manifesto traces all three back to a common root – craft – and the common task – the creation of a total work of art. The emblem chosen to represent this is the great Gothic cathedral which is depicted in Lyonel Feininger's Expressionistic woodcut. The school which was to become synonymous with sobriety, restraint and a puritanical approach to design had its roots in profoundly romantic ideas, such as the concept of the total work of art, and wishful imaginings of medieval masons chiselling away in harmony.

Gropius's programme for the Bauhaus was an inspired fusion of existing ideas, catalyzed by the recent trauma of war and revolution. In calling for a return to craft as the basis for all creative work, he was drawing on a long tradition of design reform. The deep anxieties aroused by industrialization were first felt in Britain at the height of its manufacturing power. From the mid-19th century onwards, questions of design reform became a matter of urgent concern in Britain and were expressed by what came to be known as the Arts and Crafts Movement, which drew on the work of thinkers such as John Ruskin (1819–1900) and William Morris (1834–96), who were also extremely influential in Europe. Rejecting the machine, they turned to craft, which brought not only personal satisfaction but also represented dignity in labour, humanity, healing and wholeness.

The Arts and Crafts Movement contained a strong element of nostalgia for a pre-industrial "Merry England" that never was, and, unlike the Bauhaus, it looked to craft as an alternative to the machine, not as a means of humanizing its products. Craft was invoked as a response to fear of the machine and the depersonalization and fragmentation which seemed inherent in the division of labour demanded by industrial manufacture. Influential ideals such as truth to materials arose in reaction to the confusing, distasteful spectacle of machine-made ornament aping handmade ornament.

At the turn of the century, the torch of reform was taken up in Germany. The anglophile architect Hermann Muthesius (1861–1927) founded the Deutsche Werkbund in 1907 in the hopes of uniting art, craft and industry to improve the standards of German manufactured products. Its members included Henry van de Velde (1863–1957), Walter Gropius and Peter Behrens (1868–1938), who as chief designer for the AEG (General Electric Company), was responsible for the first corporate identity programme. In Germany the emphasis of the reform movement fell on education. Pioneers such as Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852) (the inventor of the kindergarten) had already introduced the concepts of creative play and

WALTER GROPIUS

Walter Gropius (1883–1969), founder and director of the Bauhaus, was born in Berlin. He trained as an architect and in 1907 joined the office of Peter Behrens, the pioneering head of design of the A.E.G.

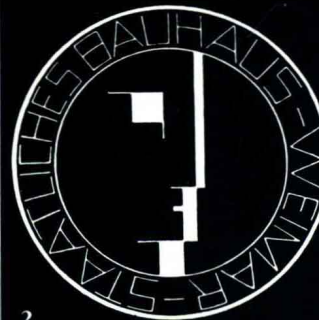
In 1910 Gropius established his own practice and turned his attention to problems of mass-produced housing and equipment. In 1911, with his gifted partner Adolf Meyer (1881–1929), he designed the Fagus factory at Alfeld, which is often seen as the first building to introduce the vocabulary of what was to be known as the International Style.

Gropius became an active member of the Deutsche Werkbund, and he and Meyer made another radical statement in building a model factory and office building for the Werkbund exhibition in 1914. The experience of war brought a new politicization, together with a new expressionism, to Gropius's theoretical

work, and he became a member of a number of left-wing artists' organizations.

In 1919 he founded and was appointed director of the Bauhaus, a position he held until 1928. From 1928 to 1934 Gropius had a private practice in Berlin, but the rise to power of the Nazi party in Germany caused him to move to London, where he worked in partnership with E. Maxwell Fry. Together they designed the influential Impington Village College, near Cambridge (1936).

In 1937 he left Britain for the more congenial climes of Harvard, where he formed The Architect's Collaborative (T.A.C.). He died a greatly respected architectural figure.



In 1922 the earlier, expressionistic Bauhaus seal (1) was replaced by Oskar Schlemmer's design: a generalized, geometricized image of Man (2)

BAUHAUS STUDENTS

The Bauhaus had approximately 100 students at a time, and it was never easy to get a place. As the school's fame spread, students would, if necessary, walk across Europe to show their work. During the early years, a high proportion (roughly a quarter) were female (see Textiles). Some students were as young as 17; others had survived active service in World War I (a few died of their wounds while at the Bauhaus). Most were disoriented by the war and its aftermath; many had already trained elsewhere and were eager for something new.

The Bauhaus was an intense, stimulating working community, and its atmosphere did not suit everybody. A considerable number were rejected after six

months on the basis of their performance in the preliminary course (see page 16), and a few left of their own accord. Some students objected to learning a craft skill, while others found the emphasis on collaboration difficult, along with the fact that the traditional hierarchies of the academy had largely been abolished.

Gropius introduced a system of student payment for workshop activity. This not only encouraged a mature attitude to work, but it also relieved the students' poverty. In the early years, they were frequently paid in kind, in clothes and food, the Bauhaus canteen being a vital source of food. The canteen was also the centre of the community and the

scene of heated debates about life and art, and art and industry.

At Weimar many students wore a Bauhaus costume made from brightly dyed cast-off military uniforms. Those under the influence of Itten and Mazdaznan shaved their heads and wore an approximation of saffron robes. At Dessau the student profile became even more international, and Mazdaznan was replaced by increased political activity.

It can be disconcerting to discover that Bauhäusler remember not so much the stimulating lecture courses and so on but the major setpiece parties, with the whole school gyrating to the sound of the Bauhaus jazz band in full swing.

learning through doing, which were to be influential in art education reform. In the 1880s a network of Kunstgewerbeschulen (schools of applied art) had been established to revive craftsmanship and reform design. There was a widespread conviction among the reformers that craft should be the foundation of all art education and that a student's education should begin with a general course that would offer the opportunity to explore innate talents freely and experiment in a number of different media.

Gropius drew on the ideas of the design reform movement but, believing that the Kunstgewerbeschulen had largely failed in their task, gave some aspects a more radical profile. The difference between craft and art, according to the Bauhaus Manifesto, was not one of method but of inspiration, which came by the Grace of Heaven rather than through a school curriculum. Art itself could not be taught, whereas craft could; a thorough craft training would therefore be the basis of the Bauhaus. Craft terminology was adopted – apprentice, journeyman, master – and full apprenticeships were given, under the guidance of two masters, a Form Master and a Craft Master. To ensure a workmanlike attitude and avoid dilettantism (which Gropius greatly feared), apprentices were paid for their work and penalized for spoiling materials. Before students were allowed to enrol in a workshop, they were obliged to take the preliminary course. This was not an entirely new idea, but at the Bauhaus it was developed by teachers such as Johannes Itten (1888–1967) and Josef Albers (1888–1976) to such a pitch of refinement that its ideas now form the basis of every art school's foundation course. Its purpose was to enable the new student to shed preoccupations and conventional attitudes, and begin work afresh.

Gropius attracted to the school artists of international repute, such as Paul Klee (1879–1940) and Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944). They were not only asked to act as Form Masters in the workshops but also to devise theoretical courses on the elements of form and the origins of creativity. Gropius appears to have believed it possible to transmit the insights and advances made in the realm of art to the realm of architecture and design, which he felt was lagging behind, trapped in 19th-century attitudes like a fly in amber. He was not alone among his contemporaries in believing it possible to discover the formal laws underlying creation and that, once discovered, these laws would be as universally applicable as the laws of science. The laws of form could be used to develop a design language appropriate for the 20th century that would be capable of creating products and environments of universal validity and appeal. As Gropius put it in *The Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus*: "We must know both vocabulary and grammar in order to speak a language; only then can we communicate our

thoughts. Man, who creates and constructs, must learn the specific language of construction in order to make others understand his ideas. Its vocabulary consists of the elements of form and colour and their structural laws."

STANDARDIZATION OF FORM

Having been trained in the language of form, Bauhaus designers set about developing prototypes for the mass-production of definitive, standard forms for the objects of everyday life, basing their approach on the premise that people's practical needs are largely identical. Determined to reject all forms of applied ornament and pretentiousness, they would allow only one determining factor in their search: function. With the reformer's tendency to shrill overstatement, the Bauhaus has suffered from being closely identified with functionalism, which is the belief that form follows function, and that beauty or "good form" can be achieved by rejecting all imposed styles and concentrating solely on the purpose and use of the object in question.

In the recent backlash against Modernism in design, the functionalist approach has been seen as precisely what it strove to avoid being: just another imposed style, this time based on the geometric forms associated with the machine. However, the functionalist philosophy that developed in the Bauhaus workshops was never quite rigid enough to suit either its critics or its defenders. As we shall see, the Bauhaus practised a curious kind of functionalism, far less rigid in practice than in theory and more subtle than is often suggested.

The Bauhaus passion for geometric form and primary colours was, on occasion, certainly capable of luring it onto the rocks of formalism. The purity of its ideals was also compromised by the simple desire to shock the bourgeoisie: to obliterate all that they held dear, threatening to oust their cosy, heavy, elaborate furniture and replace it with lightweight, multi-purpose, adaptable tools for modern life constructed in new hygienic materials. The characteristically moral tone of the war on ornament was, however, by no means confined to the Bauhaus. In 1908, for instance, the Viennese architect Adolf Loos, in an essay entitled *Ornament and Crime*, explicitly equated love of ornament with degeneracy.

THE WORKSHOPS

In terms of workshop production, the Weimar Bauhaus is conventionally portrayed as an ivory tower of theoretical debate and formal experimentation, with very little real achievement. However, despite the difficulties caused by the lack of materials and spiralling inflation of the period along with internal confusions and external antagonism, the Weimar workshops were considerably more active and productive than has been supposed. Although contact with industrial manufacturers was confined to the pottery workshop, every workshop was busy working to commission from the earliest days. It is a considerable blow to the conventional view of the Weimar Bauhaus to realize that it attended trade fairs and acquired a network of trade representatives. It also elaborated a pay and pricing system and struggled to establish a proper business

When the Bauhaus opened its new buildings in Dessau in December 1926, it was given wide press coverage both in Germany and abroad, much of it positive, some of it profoundly hostile. Das Illustrierte Blatt (3) was positive, referring to the school as "an academy for the alive person of today and tomorrow". Gropius's buildings were extremely photogenic and he was well aware of their propaganda value.

"Kubus" (4), a modular system of glass containers, was designed in 1938 for the Vereinigte Lausitzer Glaswerke by Wilhelm Wagenfeld, who was one of the best-known members of the Bauhaus metal workshop. "Kubus" expresses very well the Bauhaus goal of creating thoughtful standard forms for industrial production.

3

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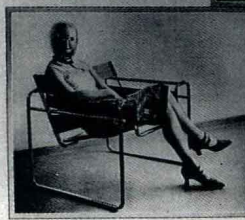
Das Illustrierte Blatt



DAS
NEUE
BAUHAUS
IN
DESSAU



Neue Bauhaus in Dessau. Die Fassade ist aus Glas und Stahl. Die Fassade ist aus Glas und Stahl.



Ein der Bauhaus: Bauhaus ein moderner
Stuhl aus Stahl und Glas. Die Fassade ist aus Glas und Stahl.

Das Illustrierte Blatt

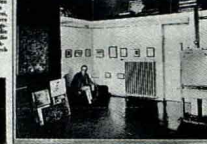
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Die Bauhaus in Dessau. Die Fassade ist aus Glas und Stahl. Die Fassade ist aus Glas und Stahl.

4



One of the best-known new typefaces which Herbert Bayer designed in 1925–7 was called the "Universal" (1). It represents an attempt to construct a sans serif typeface on consistent principles. It was in fact rarely used, except in exhibition displays.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

1

structure for its productive activity. The limited company (Bauhaus GmbH) that resulted formed the basis of the Bauhaus's commercial success at Dessau.

During the Weimar period (1919–1924) Gropius's ideas changed more than he later cared to admit; while he had initially believed in the intrinsic value of craft, he now began to maintain that craft at the Bauhaus had never been more than a means to an end: preparing the student for collaboration with industry. A new slogan, "Art and Technology: a New Unity", was adopted, which caused considerable anxiety among the artists at the school, many of whom were not sure they wished to be united with technology.

From the time of the 1923 Bauhaus Exhibition onwards, the workshops were under considerable pressure from the directors to produce and earn money. The lack of industrial manufacturers during the period of post-war reconstruction meant that the workshops themselves were forced to produce their models serially, becoming, in effect, cottage industries. Workshop teaching arrangements were extremely fluid throughout the Weimar period, and the workshops' function as production lines was not always easily reconciled with their educational role. This conflict was mirrored in the difficulties which arose between the Form and Craft Masters, the latter feeling that theirs was a less than equal partnership. Although the dual teaching system purported to break down the snobbish barriers between fine and applied art, the Form Masters were treated more favourably in terms of pay and conditions.

As a progressive school dependent on state funding, the Bauhaus was extremely vulnerable to shifts in the political situation. Its initiatives were widely experienced as provocative assaults on conservative, nationalist values. In 1924, the political composition of the Weimar parliament changed and the Bauhaus's contract was terminated.

THE MOVE TO DESSAU

In 1925 the Bauhaus found asylum in Dessau, which was a more industrial city, with a sympathetic mayor, Fritz Hesse. Hesse not only welcomed the Bauhaus but secured

funds for a new school building, with extensive workshop facilities. A new generation of Masters came to the fore and all the Bauhaus plans and ideals seemed, finally, to be coming to fruition. However, the move to Dessau was not in itself decisive in the school's development; it did not, as has sometimes been suggested, signal its immediate maturity and fruitful collaboration with industry. The first two years' work in Dessau were absorbed by the construction and equipping of the new school building and the associated public relations activity. In terms of workshop production, the school continued to live off its achievements in Weimar.

Gropius maintained that it was a measure of the success of the dual teaching system that at Dessau Craft Masters were no longer necessary, as the workshop leaders, who had themselves received the Bauhaus's dual training, could competently teach both the artistic and the technical aspects of their subject. However, in a number of cases the technical support of a traditional Craft Master was still needed; the difference was that at Dessau the Craft Master's contribution was not publicly acknowledged.

The Bauhaus's first large-scale successes in providing prototypes for industrial production occurred from 1928 onwards, largely as a result of the concentrated efforts of certain workshop leaders such as László Moholy-Nagy (lighting design) and Hinnerk Scheper (wallpaper design). The change in the fortunes of the Bauhaus was also linked to the altered economic context. The desperate shortage of materials and the inflation that had made a mockery of attempts at serious business dealings with clients at Weimar had given way to a period of relative stability. The school's architectural projects also benefited from state backing for initiatives in mass housing.

The problems of running the school continued, however, and in 1928 Gropius, suddenly weary of the struggle, resigned in favour of Hannes Meyer (1889–1954), a Swiss architect who had recently been appointed to head the new architecture department. Meyer was a committed collectivist of resolute materialist outlook, and he took on the directorship in a spirit of reform. He was worried, indeed scathing, about the formalism and elitism he perceived in the work of the Bauhaus to date. All he claimed he could see at the inauguration ceremony of the Dessau Bauhaus was a hideous constructivist mannerism, enlivened only by dashes of female neurosis in the textile department. As he saw it, art was strangling life.

His brand of functionalism was extreme: he reduced not only design but everything on earth to the formula "function times economy". Building, he maintained, was not an aesthetic process but a question of technical organization. His role at the Bauhaus is still controversial, particularly its political content or connotations. He reorganized the workshops into departments and tightened up the design methodology, asking the students