The Attack on the Bauhaus Collage by Iwao Yamawaki, 1932

the populist bauhaus

In April 1933, the Nazis shut down the Bauhaus for good, closing its Berlin campus and thereby ending the era of one of the most important design schools in modern history. Because of its progressive past, even the appointment as Director of the more politically-acceptable Mies van der Rohe in 1930 had been unable to shield the school from the Nazi's growing political power (Droste 229–30). Yet, the Bauhaus' opponents won well before they shut down the school entirely, as Mies had already undone many of the school's most innovative changes.

Progressive education at the Bauhaus effectively ended when Mies' predecessor, Hannes Meyer, was ousted in August 1930 because of his Communist beliefs.[1] From its founding in 1919 until that point, the Bauhaus was increasingly an institution that pioneered well-designed products by and for the masses. And that, I believe, is the most interesting way to see the school: not as an institution that established a specific formal style—in fact, the Bauhaus' style changed radically over the years from expressive and individualistic to rational and unified—but as a school that advanced various populist and (utopian) universalist ideals, on which, pre Mies, it was largely able to deliver.

---

[1] It could be argued that Meyer wasn't very savvy about how to keep his job. He doesn't seem to have done much to hide his Communist sympathies, though they were obviously a political liability both from outside and inside the Bauhaus (Droste 200). Nor did he try to discourage the students from making explicitly-political work, as had Walter Gropius, the school's founder and his predecessor as Director (Droste 49). He also doesn't seem to have been great at managing people. He repeatedly and publicly criticized how the Bauhaus had been run under Gropius, turning him into a powerful enemy (Droste 200). And, Meyer presented his radical reforms in such a way that Paul Klee and Josef Albers, long-time professors at the school, felt their positions were threatened (Droste 200). Klee, Albers, and Gropius would all unite with the local mayor to fire Meyer.

part I: anyone can be a craftsman…sorta

In his founding Bauhaus manifesto, Walter Gropius asserted that the art schools of his day were wrong to imply that an artist can be made when, in fact, art "in itself can not be taught" (1; sec. Principles of the Bauhaus). Rather, he said, a person whom we think of as an artist is actually an "exalted craftsman" for whom, in "rare moments of inspiration, transcending the consciousness of his will, the grace of heaven [has caused] his work to blossom into art" (1; sec. Introduction). Accordingly, Gropius argued that, almost always, people who consciously attempt to make fine art will be "unproductive" and "condemned to deficient artistry" (1; sec. Introduction).

So Gropius championed a different aim of creative production, one that schools could teach to and that everyone could participate in. That aim was to create a "complete building" (1; sec. Introduction) in which artistic principles would be imbued harmoniously throughout (in the "structure, finishing, ornamentation, and furnishing"[2]), rather than only in isolated works of painting or sculpture that are tacked on incongruously. He stated it thusly: "The ultimate, if distant, aim of the Bauhaus is the unified work of art—the great structure—in which there is no distinction between monumental and decorative art." (1; sec. Aims of the Bauhaus).[3]

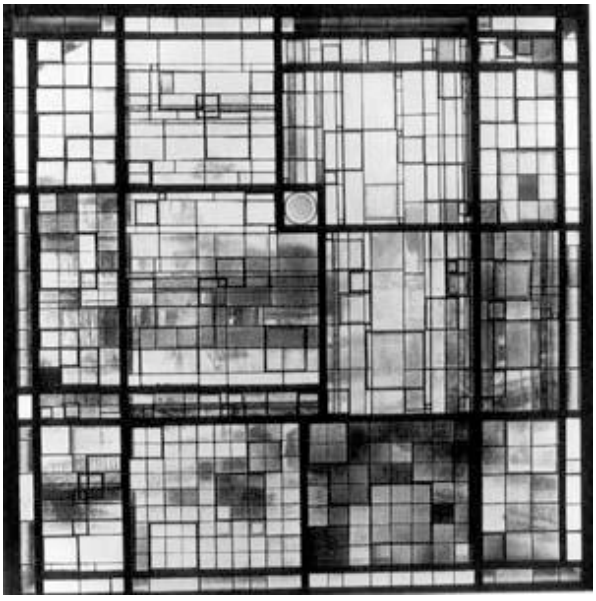
In this model, craft skills become "the indispensable basis for all artistic production" (2; sec. Principles of the Bauhaus); once the need to make every piece from an inspired concept is

---

[2] 1; sec. Aims of the Bauhaus

[3] He gives as an example the cathedrals created by medieval guilds, and, in the model of those guilds, teachers at the Bauhaus are called masters, while students are apprentices or journeymen. William Morris, the father of the Arts & Crafts movement from which Gropius' ideas were loosely descended, also drew on the medieval guild (Droste 9) and the cathedral image was also used by a number of other like-minded reformists surrounding Gropius' (Droste 19).

discarded, it is these skills that are required to create high-quality work. And unlike art, Gropius argued, which excludes many people because making it can't be learned and doesn't provide much income, craft skills are available to anyone (at least in theory) because they can be taught and do make for a viable profession. So Gropius' central placement of craft blasted the idea of the artist as a separate, exclusive class ("There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman.") and instead invited everyone to participate in creative production as an artistically-minded craftsman. Anyone can make a valuable contribution to the built environment, he said, even without divine gifts or inspiration, by creating exquisitely-made and aesthetically-pleasing objects.[4] Conversely, those who consider themselves fine artists but who are having trouble finding work can apply their skills to the socially beneficial and economically sustaining project of building (Droste 17, 19). And so it was the Bauhaus' goal to educate all these "architects, painters, and sculptors of all levels, according to their capabilities, to become competent craftsmen or independent creative artists" (1; sec. Aims of the Bauhaus).



A work of art/craft integrated into the building.

Stained-glass window (destroyed) designed for Dr. Otte's House, 1921/1922
By Josef Albers

[4] That's not to say that Gropius hoped to produce students who would be uncreative or do work simply by rote. His students would have everyday creativity—which he didn't see as the same thing as the divine inspiration required to make truly great art. They would design their own pieces and study with artists as well as craftsmen (Droste 37). Further, Gropius claimed, learning craft would, in itself, develop creativity—he calls craft the "prime source of creative imagination" (1; sec. Introduction). (He doesn't explicitly say how craft develops

> "Let us then create a new guild of craftsmen without the class distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist! 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."
>
> —*Walter Gropius, Bauhaus Manifesto, 1919*

To this end, students at the Bauhaus received training in workshops that were led by two Masters. One was a Master of Form, whose job was to teach the fundamental visual principles, which Gropius believed underpinned and united all the arts and which, once learned, would allow anyone to make beautiful objects. The other was Master of Craft, whose job it was to teach the skill of the given workshop (e.g. woodworking, stonecutting, metalworking, etc).

The Bauhaus also argued that a creative potential exists in all students. As Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, one of the school's later leaders, put it: "Everyone is talented. Every healthy man has a deep capacity for bringing to development the creative energies found in his nature." (qtd. in Borchardt-Hume "*Two Bauhaus Histories*" 70). In its early years, the school tried to cultivate

---

creativity, but the reasoning may be that the intimate familiarity with materials it promotes and the intense practice it demands allow the artist–craftsman to see possibilities that those less attuned to the task at hand would miss.) Finally, a number of students and masters at the Bauhaus continued to make fine art, including Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, who were both teaching free painting classes at the school in 1927 (Droste 188).

this potential by putting students more in touch with their subjective feelings, which were considered, by influential master Johannes Itten (Droste 31) as well as by Gropius and others (Droste 33), to be the source of creative production.[7] But even when, in later years, the school made a major shift away from individual expression, its next group of leaders continued this notion of universal creative potential. (For them, however, the individual's creativity was to be spurred by making him aware of external factors—such as pressing social problems—rather than internal ones, which was consistent with the school's increasing focus on mass production and making things for others rather than for oneself.)

But despite the recognition of universal creativity and the central placement of teachable craft skills and visual principles, the Bauhaus was not as populist as it could have been.

Usually, this was due to financial constraints. For example, in October 1920, the Bauhaus made passing its foundations course a prerequisite for workshop work (Droste 34), even though this meant that, as Bauhaus master Oskar Schlemmer put it, "The Bauhaus automatically spat out the untalented; they could stay no longer than half a year [the foundations course's length]" (qtd. in Droste 34). This unfortunate decision was financially necessary because, when the cash-strapped school let its generally-inexperienced students into the workshops immediately, it found that they used a huge amount of materials without producing work good

[7] In order to put students in touch with their emotions, Itten started classes with gymnastics and meditation exercises (Droste 25). He also tried to get students to "unlearn" ideas they'd received from their culture in order to revert to a more child-like state that would supposedly free their internal creativity. This based on a notion known as "child-as-artist", which had recently become established among the educational reform crowd of which Itten was a part (Miller 19) and which postulated that all children (and people from other "primitive" cultures) had access to a more true and undiluted form of expression because their intuitions and emotional reactions hadn't yet been trapped or distorted by the intellectualizations of Western industrial culture.

enough to justify the costs. Later, Hannes Meyer tried to rectify the situation, saying: "The Bauhaus...does not want to specialize in the talented...but simply wants to attract as many people as possible, to then correctly integrate them into society" (qtd. in Droste 171). He briefly expanded the school to less-talented students but quickly realized that the school didn't have the resources to support them, and he was forced to cap attendance at its prior level of 150 (Droste 171). Additionally, the Bauhaus' stated aim of eventually having free tuition was also sacrificed due to financial constraints.

Further, there was a non-financial respect in which the Bauhaus failed its populist promise to its students: its sexism. Women at the Bauhaus did not have a fair opportunity, despite the legal requirement that the school be co-ed; while the school initially attracted a roughly equal number of women and men, Gropius and the other masters generally restricted women from entering workshops other than weaving, bookbinding, and pottery (Droste 39–40). Although the exact restrictions changed over the years, they survived in one form or another, and architecture, which became an increasingly important part of the school, was never open to women.

Nevertheless, the Bauhaus held a more-inclusive view of who was allowed to participate in creative production than did most other schools of its day.

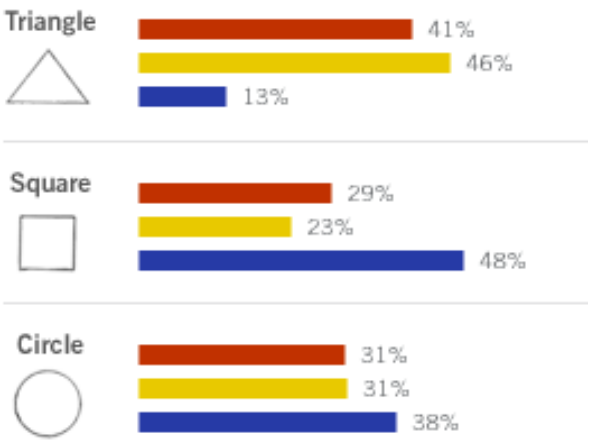
part 2: anyone can "read" visual language...sorta

Consistent with Gropius' ideas, a number of Bauhaus masters tried to find fundamental laws of visual language. These masters claimed that each color, form, and compositional pattern had a specific meaning that was universal and ahistorical, and this became one of the school's key universalist ideas.

The man most responsible for bringing this idea to the Bauhaus was Wassily Kandinsky, whose 1912 book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* ascribed a different character to each color and described how colors behaved in different forms (Droste 66). Once at the Bauhaus, Kandinsky continued such work. He argued that the feelings produced by each visual are universal across cultures and times because the visual world is *felt* instantly according to stable, biological, universal laws of perception—as opposed to verbal language, which necessarily depends on culturally-specific agreement for the meaning of its words and ideas (Lupton 27). He tried to "prove" this concept in 1923 by asking Bauhaus masters and students to take the elementary shapes of circle, triangle, and square and assign each one a primary color (red, blue, yellow); a large majority of chose the same associations—▲ ■ ●—though it must be noted that many of them were already familiar with Kandinsky's work (Droste 88).

Kandinsky's ideas were also supported and expanded on at the Bauhaus by Johannes Itten and Paul Klee (Miller 21; Droste 28). For example, Itten obsessed, much more than did Kandinsky, over the effects of rhythms and contrasts (e.g. between colors, brightnesses, materials, and line shapes) on a work's emotional impact (Droste 19, 66; Bergdoll & Dickerman 17); and he tried to determine these systematically by analyzing many classical works of art in order extract ahistorical principles (Bergdoll & Dickerman 16).

But despite its support at the school, the Bauhaus' "universal" visual language was only a partial success. The premise behind such a language—that visuals create universal, immediate sensations in the viewer that are too automatic for culture or environment to influence—is not entirely correct. For example, many color 'meanings' seem to be created by culture through repeated association, like that between money and the color green. And while a Bauhaus defender might argue that these meanings are superficial, less intense than 'true meaning', and quick to fade when the cultural association is discontinued,[8] a designer nevertheless needs to account for them to communicate successfully to his audience. Further, scientific studies have shown that environment can, in rare instances, affect vision at a much deeper level, down to the very biological sensors present in an animal's eye (Wurtz n. pag.). Yet there is something to the Bauhaus' theory: when MoMA reran Kandinsky's questionnaire more than 80 years later, the majority (albeit of visitors to MoMA's site) still chose the Bauhaus'/Kandinsky's preferred pairings for two of the three shapes.



The results from MoMA's posting of Kandinsky's questionnaire for its 2009 Bauhaus exhibit. Results from 2009 until May 6, 2012

[8] Much like a Pavlovian-conditioned response compared to a natural response.

part 3: anyone can buy and enjoy this product...sorta

For Itten, the point of art was to express its creator's feelings. Period. And though he taught about supposedly-objective visual laws, these were only seen as tools that might support the artist in his subjective aims. As he put it (13): "As the tortoise draws its limbs into its shell at need, so the artist reserves his scientific principles when working intuitively. But would it be better for the tortoise to have no legs?" And so, although any given form had a universal meaning, Itten's students produced works that looked very different from one another, because of the students' differences in emotions and taste (Droste 27, 54). This was consistent with the "[a]voidance of all rigidity; priority of creativity; freedom of individuality" (2; sec. Principles of the Bauhaus) that Gropius had called for in his manifesto.

Variability of work produced in Itten's Vorkurs (i.e. preliminary course), 1920–21

Far Left: Reconstruction of 1920 study of materials, contrasts, and rhythm by M. Mirkin. An abstract/expressionist "horse". Made of glass, wood, and iron.

Immediate Left, Top: Materials study by Oskar Schepp, 1921. Made of cardboard, cloth, felt, wire and drawing pins.

Immediate Left, Bottom: Thistle Drawing by Gunta Stozl,1920.

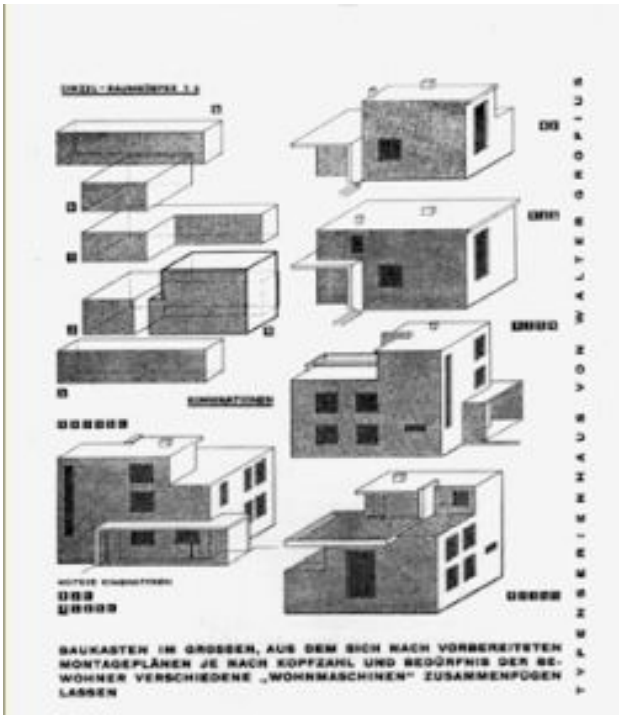
But the Bauhaus started to change in 1922. Itten resigned because Gropius insisted on taking commercial commissions, which Itten saw as compromising individual expression (Droste 46). And the school began to embrace mass production, while assimilating ideas from other avant-garde art movements like De Stijl and Constructivism.

The Bauhaus was drawn to mass production because it saw it as an equalizer that could make good design (more) universally affordable through economies of scale; no longer would high-quality products be reserved for the well-to-do.[9] Walter Gropius, writing in 1923 to the master of the newly-established production section of the pottery workshop, said: "Yesterday I had a look at your many pots. Almost all them are unique, unrepeatable; it would be positively wrong not to look for ways of making the hard work that has gone into them accessible to large numbers of people...We must find ways of duplicating some of the articles with machines." (qtd. in Droste 70). This focus on making things for a broader public was another, new kind of populism at the Bauhaus, and the school changed its products accordingly.

---

[9] There were also a number of practical drivers. First, there were financial reasons to do it: the school, as always, needed more more money and it wanted to break free of state subsidies; Gropius hoped that setting up a company to sell mass-/serially-produced Bauhaus products, which he first investigated in 1922, would be more profitable than taking one-off commissions, which simply weren't coming in large numbers (Droste 58). Second, the Bauhaus was hampered by its liberal image—despite Gropius' continued insistence that the school was apolitical (Droste 49)—in the increasingly-conservative political climate around it, and a shift away from Expressionism, which was often associated with Communism (Miller 19) might have helped the school's public relations. Lyonel Feininger, put it like this: "One thing is sure — unless we can produce 'results' to show the outside world and win over the 'industrialists', the future of the Bauhaus looks very bleak indeed. We now have to aim at earnings – at sales and mass production!" (qtd. in Droste 60). In addition, Gropius still hoped his students would make a valuable contribution to the built environment, but they simply didn't have that opportunity through the old-style craft work because such commissions were rare (Droste 58, 91).

It's also worth noting that these more machine-oriented ideals weren't totally new to Gropius; the building that had first established him as a notable architect, after all, was the radically modernist Fagus Factory of 1911–1913 (Droste 14). Rather, he'd temporarily left some of these ideas behind in the economic depression that followed right after WWI and was now coming back to them.



Gropius' earliest experimentations with prefabrication started in 1922, when he and Adolf Meyer began work on a system of standard building pieces that could be produced on mass and then combined, in an almost-infinite set of ways, to make a house (Miller pp. 6). Gropius described it as "an oversized set of toy building blocks out of which, depending on the number of inhabitants and their needs, different types of machines for living can be assembled." (qtd. in Bergdoll and Christensen 56). Fred Forbát developed a prototype of the system for the Bauhaus' pivotal 1923 exhibit, but government opposition ensured it was never implemented.

Honey-Comb Bauhaus Housing Development
By Walter Gropius and Fred Forbát, 1922

In trying to make products that appealed to all, it adopted a new focus on functionalism. Although Gropius had always wanted to make functional craft objects as part of his goal of contributing to the built environment, the school's approach now was more systematic. Its new functionalism arose as it began to focus on 'rational laws', which it saw transcending cultural boundaries and yielding the single, most-effective solution to a given problem. Accordingly, this functionalism meant analyzing the nature of a problem to determine its functional requirements, and then designing accordingly; art was completely denied as an explanation for an object's form (Droste 82–4). For the chair, for instance, Marcel Breuer arrived at requirements that included: "angling of the seat so that the full length of the upper leg is supported without the pressure arising from a horizontal seat" and "no heavy, expensive or dust-collecting cushioning" (qtd. in Droste 82). With this

"The engineer, inspired by the law of economy and governed by mathematical calculation, puts us in accord with universal law."

Le Corbusier, qtd. in Mills 41

shift in focus to the object's function and away from the creator's desires, the Bauhaus shifted from making art to practicing design.

"Every object displays its construction, no screw is concealed, no decorative chasing hides the raw material being worked. It is very tempting to see this architectural honesty as moral, too."

Rudolf Arnheim on the Bauhaus' visual language in 1927, qtd. in Droste 122

The school also strove to find the most economical way to address these functional requirements. Economy was a concern because wasting resources was seen as irrational, and it would make the design more costly and therefore less widely available. Moreover, the most economical solution was also that which didn't add any forms —such as decoration—beyond what was necessary. Any nonessentials were irrational and therefore seen as arbitrary, culturally-defined forms that could further be dishonest and oppressive. Reacting against the cheaply constructed but ornately decorated furniture that mass production first made available to the poor, which imitated the furniture of the rich but wasn't actually as good, Bauhaus spokeswoman Sibyl Moholy-Nagy called for "a new code of visual values [that will] spit in the face of the harmonious image which had hidden decay, deceit, and exploitation." (qtd. in Mills 38).

So when the Bauhaus shifted its visual language to fit its new products,[10] it focused on the essentials, rationality, and collectivism rather than pluralistic individual expression.

The human character in some of the early works was replaced with precise geometric forms, which were seen as more rational (in greater alignment with mathematical laws), more in

[10] This shift wasn't in conflict with the universal language the school had outlined previously. Rather, it began to use the rational, essential, collectivist subset of that language.

Expressive, imprecise forms under Itten

Top: By Rudolf Lutz, from Itten's 1921 life drawing class

Bottom: By Max Pfieffer-Watenpfuhl from Itten's Vorkurs

keeping with the character of the machine (and it was assumed that such geometric forms would be easier to mass produce),[11] and more essential in that they got at the nature of the form most directly, without particularities that might prevent transfer across cultures, media, etc.

In addition, the focus on the primary colors and 'primary' forms (triangle, circle, square) increased (Droste 58). These had always been viewed as especially important because "without [them] a work... cannot even come into existence" (Kandinsky qtd. in Miller 4), but now it was also assumed that their use across Bauhaus products would subordinate the artist's individual tastes in order to make works that were universally acceptable (Droste 78). This change was driven greatly by the influence of De Stijl and its founder Theo Van Doesburg,[12] who proposed a visual language of primary colors (along with black, white, and grey) and straight lines with the explicit aim of making art that would overcome subjectivity and the 'the tyranny of the individual' (Intl. Faction of Constructivists qtd. in Lodder n. pag.) to generate 'collectivist solutions' (Van Doesburg qtd. in Droste 54).

---

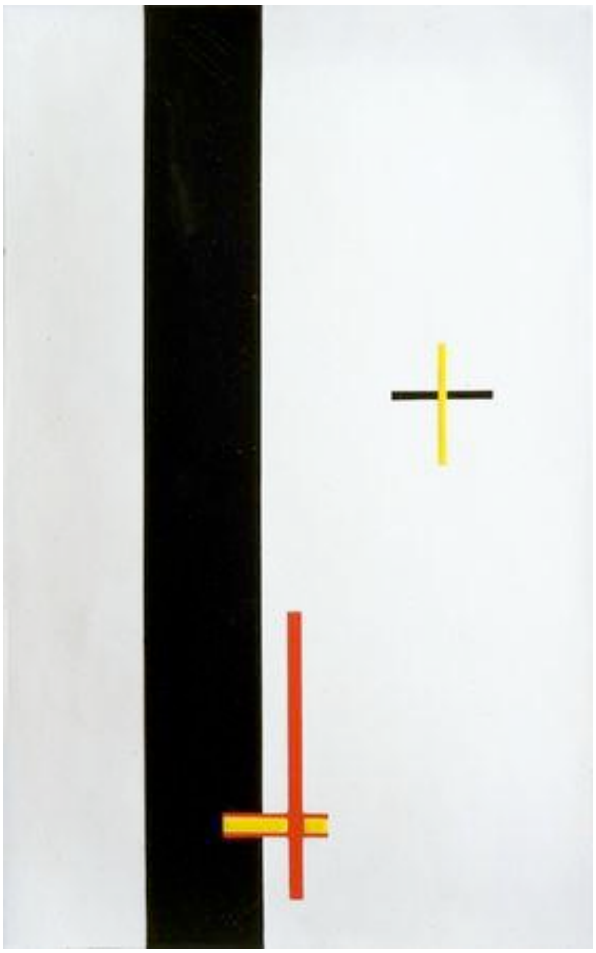
[11] Droste 78–9

[12] His contact with the school included visiting it in 1920, living near it in 1921–22, teaching a local class in 1922 that 20 Bauhaus students attended, developing a personal relationship with Gropius, and more. (Droste 110; Borchardt-Hume 24).

By 1923, when Gropius formalized the shift by changing the Bauhaus's slogan from "Art and Craft: A new unity" to "Art and Technology: A new unity" (Droste 58), the change was already clear. Commenting on the 1923 exhibit of the same title—whose main attraction was a perfectly square house with many functional innovations—student Andor Weininger said: "As well as the 'old' works with their emotional emphasis, there were also new developments to be seen: horizontal, vertical, two-dimensionality, squares and a red cube (as a private residence); in short 'Stijl' influence." (qtd. in Droste 106). After the exhibit, change only accelerated. In October of that year, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy took over as Itten's successor and he vigorously advocated for everything avant-garde (Borchardt-Hume *"Two Bauhaus Histories"* 69; Droste 60). He took over the metal workshop and made it the first to offer mass-produced, economically-viable Bauhaus design to the public (Borchardt-Hume *"Two Bauhaus Histories"* 69).

This building block game by Alma Buscher in 1924 and this set of stacking tables by Josef Albers in 1927 exemplify the changes that were taking place in the school's visual language.

It must be noted though that Stijl wasn't the only avant-garde influence at the Bauhaus. In particular, Russian Constructivist's red, black, and white palette came through (109). Moholy Nagy (Itten's replacement) was friends with prominent Constructivist El Lissitzky and many other prominent avant-garde artists, and he was familiar which much of their work (Borchardt-Hume *"Two Bauhaus Histories"* 68–70).



Moholy was on board with machine culture even before he joined the school. Above is one of his 1922 *Telephone Paintings*, so called because he claimed to have 'painted' them over the telephone, using graph paper and an industrial color chart to direct an unseen sign painter, thereby removing the need for personal contact (Borchardt-Hume, *"Two Bauhaus Histories"* 69).

Telephone Picture EM1, 1922
Porcelain enamel on steel
By Lazlo Moholy-Nagy

He and Josef Albers reorganized Itten's *Vorkurs* (foundations course), dropping its focus on individual personality development, de-emphasizing hand-drawing, and systematizing materials study lessons and integrating them more with industry (Droste 60, 140). And when the Bauhaus moved to Dessau in 1925, the final changes were made. The Masters of Craft were eliminated (Cramer 173) and artisanal titles were removed—'masters' became 'professors' and 'apprentices' and 'journeymen' became 'students' (Droste 134). Meanwhile, workshops whose output wasn't needed in commercial production were closed and the remaining ones became experiment grounds. As Gropius said: "The Bauhaus does not pretend to be a crafts school; contact with industry is consciously sought...the old craft workshops will develop into industrial laboratories: from their experimentation will evolve standards for industrial production…" (Naylor 93) And, with that, the shift from individual craft to collectivist, mass-produced design was truly complete, and the school would continue on this path until Gropius resigned as director in 1928.

But what are we to make of the Bauhaus at that juncture? On one hand, it had begun to fulfill its new—and almost entirely unprecedented (Droste 134)—populist aim of delivering good, functionally-oriented design to a broad public using mass production. (Granted, the designs were only finding moderate success and the school wasn't yet profitable—but it was a big start.) But, on the other hand, the Bauhaus' design had a major flaw in those years: it fell prey to its own ideology and thereby failed to reach some of its stated goals.

For example, its insistence on the 'rational' forms of the pure circle, triangle, and square actually prevented it from making fully functional objects. Take the pot at right, for example—surely it would be more functional with a handle that's ergonomically-shaped rather than its flat half-circle.

The lamp that was the first big commercial success at Moholy's metal workshop.

By Karl Jucker and William Wagenfeld, 1923/4

Tea-essence pot

By Marianne Brandt, 1924
Brass (silver-plated interior) and ebony

And the school's attempts at creating universal typefaces (shown below with Helvetica and attempts by various Bauhaus contemporaries) also suffered this fate; the only thing universal that came from them was universal agreement among modern typographers that the school's letterform modifications for the sake of geometry actually hurt their readability.

Stencil
Joseph Albers
1925 (1925)

universal
jan tschichold
1926–1929

Futura
Paul Renner
1927

universal
herbert bayer
1927

Helvetica
Max Miedinger
1957

Renner's more-radically geometric alternate Futura letterforms:

With color too, the Bauhaus' limited red–blue–yellow–black–white–gray palette, which was meant to symbolize essentialism and collectivism, came to obstruct pure functionality, as a broader and/or more-neutral palette would have allowed the works to integrate in more contexts.

So, because it produced works that couldn't, in the end, truly appeal to functionality as a justification for their form, the school created the last thing it wanted: a 'Bauhaus style' that, while relatively enduring, included arbitrary or culturally-produced formal qualities that were not timeless and universal. As critic Wolfgang Pfleiderer remarked correctly on a Breuer chair: "The Bauhaus chair is also an artistic creation, and the point is absolutely not because it can't look any different for technical reasons but because that's how the artist wants it to look." (qtd. in Droste 84).

Finally, the Bauhaus's focus on rational and universal laws even led it to determine its objects' functional requirements in a sub-optimal way. It approached this as a teleological challenge (asking, for example, "What is the nature of sitting?"), which ignored practical requirements of everyday life (e.g. is the chair light enough to move easily?).

But in 1928, when Meyer became director, he solved most of these lingering problems. When he came to the Bauhaus, he would later write: "Incestuous theories blocked all access to healthy, life-oriented design: the cube was trumps and its sides were yellow, red, blue, white, grey, black" but "As head of the Bauhaus, I fought the Bauhaus style" (qtd. in Droste 199). And he did. He introduced a more scientific approach to design grounded in sociology, economics, and psychology (Droste 166, 170–72, 175). The De Stijl–influenced forms were out and truly functional designs—designs that were actually 'necessary, correct, and thus as neutral...as can possibly be conceived' (Meyer qtd. in Droste 196)—were created based on empirical research into the users' needs. It was under Meyer that, for example, Bauhaus chairs and tables were designed that were light and that could be folded up or disassembled for easy storage. And Meyer's most successful product, a line of single-colored, slightly textured wallpapers, had not a Constructivist color in it (Droste 178).

Foldable table and chair designed under Meyer.

Table by Gustav Hassenpflug, 1928
Chair by Anonymous, 1929.

It was also Meyer who pursued "design for all" most aggressively. His catchphrase was "Popular necessities before elitist

luxuries" (Droste 174) and, largely because of his Communist leanings, he set the school very aggressively on the goal of meeting the "needs of the people" (Droste 171–72). He also cut costs both to the Bauhaus and the public by using cheaper materials and more efficient techniques, and by shrinking the school's product line to further leverage economies of scale. It was under Meyer that the Bauhaus sold its greatest quantity of products and became profitable for the first time. And for a brief while, Meyer realized a successful, populist Bauhaus!

epiloque

And then things fell apart. Meyer was ousted for his political beliefs and Mies, his successor, undid much of the school's liberal work. He expelled the entire student body and refused to readmit those sympathetic to Meyer. He banned all political activity by the students. He took away their voice in the school's government (Droste 204). He instituted a focus on costly materials and expensive furnishings. He cut off all sales of Bauhaus goods to the public (Droste 204). He raised tuition fees. And the Nazis, still perceiving the school to be a liberal hotbed, shut it down anyway—first in Dessau in 1932 and then a year later in Berlin, where Mies had moved the school. But maybe it was "good riddance" at that point, given how much damage Mies had done to the school's populist vision...

But as the Bauhaus died a painful death in Germany, its populist ideas continued to live on. The school's founders and representatives came to America and relentlessly promoted these ideas (though as they were under Gropius, not Meyer) with huge success. And ten years after the Bauhaus closed, a 17-year-old of German descent founded a company called IKEA.

works cited

Bergdoll, Barry, and Leah Dickerman. *Bauhaus 1919-1933: Workshops for Modernity*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2009. Print.

Bergdoll, Barry, Peter Christensen, and Ron Broadhurst. *Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008. Print.

Borchardt-Hume, Achim. *Albers and Moholy-Nagy: From the Bauhaus to the New World*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2006. Print.

Borchardt-Hume, Achim. "Two Bauhaus Histories." *Albers and Moholy-Nagy: From the Bauhaus to the New World*. Ed. Achim Borchardt-Hume. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2006. 66-78. Print.

Cramer, Ned. "The Bauhaus Effect: If the Great Modernists Hadn't Fled to the U.S. in the 1930's, You'd Be Reading a Very Different Magazine Right Now." *Interior Design* 1 Mar. 2004: 169-78. *ProQuest General*. Web. 23 Apr. 2012.

Droste, Magdalena. *Bauhaus, 1919-1933*. Köln: B. Taschen, 1998. Print.

Gropius, Walter. "Bauhaus Manifesto." The Learning Lab. Web. 8 May 2012. <http://www.thelearninglab.nl/resources/Bauhaus-manifesto.pdf>.

Itten, Johannes. "Introduction." Introduction. *The Art of Color: The Subjective Experience and Objective Rationale of Color*. New York: Wiley, 1973. 11-17. Print.

"Kandinsky Questionnaire." *MoMA – Explore Bauhaus*. MoMA, 2009. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2009/bauhaus/Main.html>.

Lodder, Christina. "Constructivism Internationally." *MoMA*. Oxford University Press, 2009. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.moma.org/collection/details.php?theme_id=10955>.

Lupton, Ellen. "Visual Dictionary." *The ABCs of [triangle Square Circle]: The Bauhaus and Design Theory*. Ed. Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott. Miller. New York: Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, 1993. 22-33. Print.

Miller, J. Abbott. "Elementary School." *The ABCs of [triangle Square Circle]: The Bauhaus and Design Theory*. Ed. Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller. New York: Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, 1993. 4-21. Print.

Mills, Mike. "Herbert Bayer's Universal Type in Its Historical Contexts." *The ABCs of [triangle, Square, Circle]: The Bauhaus and Design Theory*. Ed. Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott. Miller. London: Thames and Hudson, 1993. 38-45. Print.

Naylor, Gillian. *The Bauhaus*. London: Studio Vista, 1968. Print.

West, Shearer. *The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890-1937: Utopia and Despair*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2001. Print.

Wurtz, Robert H. "Recounting the Impact of Hubel and Wiesel." *The Journal of Physiology*. The Journal of Physiology, 15 June 2009. Web. 08 May 2012. <http://jp.physoc.org/content/587/12/2817.full>.