

form & function

das bauhaus

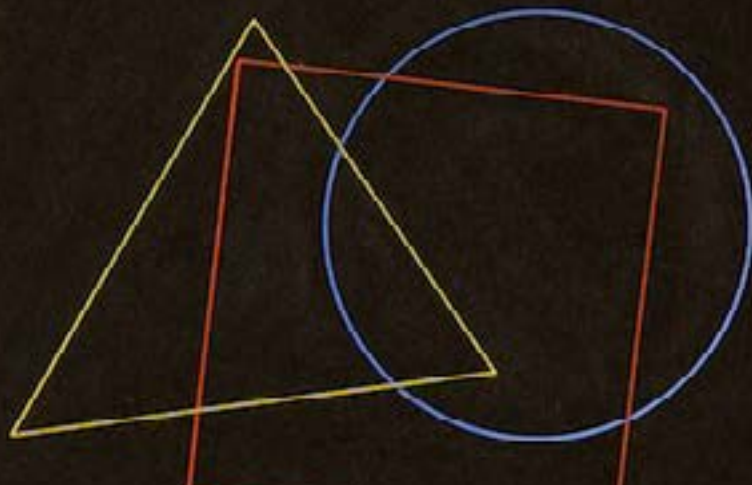
# *contents*

history	4
interior design	8
architecture	12
typography	16
artwork	18
noted artists from the era	20
impact on the world	22
references	23



The year was 1919, and Germany had just set foot into an era of bankruptcy following the giant financial losses of World War I. Creative, young artists were inspired to bring unification to their craft — by doing so, they would bring positive change to their disheveled German state, and the world. Enter Walter Gropius. Gropius had a vision that would unify and extend beauty to not only individual homes but the mindset of Germany as well.

“Let us therefore create a new guild of craftsmen without the class distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsmen and artists. Let us desire, conceive, and create the new building of the future together. It will combine architecture, sculpture, and painting in a



## chapter one

single form, and will one day rise toward the heavens from the hands of a coming faith.”

The idea was to accomplish this through well-designed modernist, industrial objects that stressed the relationship between form and function. Their relationship goes hand in hand. The shape of a building or

object should be directly related to its function. Gropius wanted to bridge the gap between creativity and manufacturing, believing that manufacturing didn't have to be so ordinary and traditional. The school would be founded in Weimar, and would be called Bauhaus: which in German translates to “building house,” but according to the

Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, it stands for an “eagerness to experiment, openness, creativity, a close link to industrial practice and internationality.” The Bauhaus strived to rejuvenate the natural beauty of design in everyday life. Though the Bauhaus school did attempt to rid themselves of traditional fine art education

“*LET US DESIRE, CONCEIVE, AND  
CREATE THE NEW BUILDING OF THE  
FUTURE TOGETHER.*” -Walter Gropius

and move toward modernism, their core ideas and motivations were based on intellectual and theoretical pursuits. These were inherently linked to practical skills, bringing fine art and craft together to solve issues in what was becoming an increasingly industrial Germany. Having said this, Gropius envisioned Bauhaus teaching all the important aspects of modern artistic media: fine art, typography and graphic design, interior design, and architecture.

In 1923, four years after the school's founding, political

tensions began to rise in the German state of Thuringia, where Weimar was located. 1924 saw the Social Democrats lose control to the Nationalists (prior to the rise of the Nazi party). This loss of power caused the Ministry of Education to give all professors at Weimar just 6 month contracts. Gropius then announced that the school would move to Dessau in 1925.

The Bauhaus's move to Dessau, a more industrial area of Germany, would prove to be its most successful period. The new building for the school was

designed by Gropius himself, which still is seen today as a landmark of the modernist and functionalist architecture movements. Bauhaus's stay in Dessau also saw the founding of the department of architecture. Yet by 1928, Walter Gropius was finding himself increasingly worn down by the work of his position, and soon grew tired of the constant fighting with the school's critics. Increased political tension throughout his tenure didn't help, either.

Swiss architect Hannes Meyer took over for Gropius. Given his

## history





meticulous and calculating style of leadership, he helped turn the school's first profit in 1929. Yet Meyer also ensued more conflict than Gropius during his tenure. As head of the architecture department, Meyer incorporated his Marxist teachings into his curriculum and student organizations. Although the school continued to grow in student size and number of programs offered, opposition to Meyer's communist teachings grew as well. He was dismissed as director in 1930, after just two years at the helm. After the Nazi regime came to power in 1932, the school in Dessau closed.

The same year saw the Bauhaus move to Berlin to gain some sort

of safety from the increasingly powerful Nazi party. Historically, the Nazis greatly opposed creative growth within the arts, and would do everything in their power to exterminate creativity throughout Europe. Hitler believed it to be "degenerate art," and not worthy of finding its way to the German people. Ironically, though Hitler stifled the creativity of countless artists across Europe in his time as Chancellor, he had been an artist himself prior to his career as a politician.

Once the Bauhaus had moved to Berlin, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe took over as director. A strong advocate for functionalism, Van der Rohe entered an era in which the school had

much less resources and had lost many of its most talented master teachers due to the move from Dessau to Berlin and the constant threat of Nazi invasion. Though he tried to remove politics from the school's atmosphere, it worked to no avail as the school closed indefinitely in 1933 — amidst yet another Nazi occupation of the area.



The interior design movement within the Bauhaus was perhaps its most influential contribution to society. Driven by the philosophy of minimalism and form following function, Bauhaus designers tried to adhere strictly to the idea that the shape of an object should be primarily based on its function. No frills necessary. This was a dramatic change from historical furniture design in the past — the minimalist, functionalist, contemporary Bauhaus designers found beauty and purity in basic design. Nearly every aspect of the interior designers' work was radically different from what the European world had seen previously. Colors could be either bright and vibrant — often reflecting the Bauhaus's primary color scheme (blue, yellow, red) or tended to stay within the Bauhaus's traditional, bold black and white style. There wasn't much in between.

Interior designers strived to make the most commonly used objects in one's life even simpler; more intuitive than before. Desk lamps and chairs became more minimalist and much more geometric. Even items like teapots lost any sort of frill that prior teapots seemed to have, yet stressed absolute functionality with features like a heat-resistant handle and a no-drip spout. Bauhaus designers found beauty in absolute simplicity and functionality. Nothing else was necessary. Artists also felt the need to reflect the movement towards industry and machinery, making their work feel characterized by economic sensibility and efficiency. Products were designed for mass production.



# “BAUHAUS DESIGNERS *found beauty and purity* IN BASIC DESIGN.”



Bauhaus interior designers' style can perhaps most easily be seen in the production of modern furniture. The movement taught that products and materials should be created and displayed within their natural,

most simplistic form. The steel should be displayed, not hidden. Rather, it should be embraced. The use of machine-made steel and tubing created a simple form that didn't need much attention in regard to upholstery

or handcrafting. It creating a defined, unique look that not only represented the outlook during the era, but lasted for decades to come.





The Bauhaus architectural style was very similar to that of interior design, emphasizing cubic and geometric shapes to convey rationality, given that many students and faculty lived on its campus. Architects strove to reflect classical architecture in its absolute purist form: without any decoration or adornment whatsoever. As a general rule, Bauhaus buildings have flat roofs and smooth facades. Unlike some aspects of Bau-

haus interior design that have vibrant color, Bauhaus architecture almost exclusively stuck to black, white, beige, and dark grey as the color scheme. Designers would seek inspiration from the world around them. The steel tubing in the chairs was inspired by local bicycles. Given that the movement was





in the midst of an industrial revolution, steel was used quite frequently. Large glass windows were used as well, a popular method in the modernist era. Jagged, sharp lines and edges were a largely recognizable aspect of the style. Another, rather unique feature of the Bauhaus architecture was narrow, spiraling staircases — usually constructed of steel or metal. This only added to the slender, functional, and minimalist feel of the buildings. One of the most popular architecture programs in the school was cabinetmaking. Professors challenged even the essence of conventional forms like chairs, speculating that they would even become obsolete because of their sheer weight. The goal was to make everything as lightweight as possible, with maximum efficiency and spatial logic in mind.

“DESIGNERS SOUGHT  
**INSPIRATION**  
FROM THE WORLD  
AROUND THEM.”





**T**ypographic design in the Bauhaus, although initially not a priority when established by founder Walter Gropius, eventually became one of the most recognizable facets of the school that still remains an influence in the typographic world today. To the instructors at Bauhaus, typography was not only a means of communication, but it was also a form of artistic expression. Complete and absolute visual clarity was stressed over anything else, and functional requirements had a large role in shaping the work. Communication must appear in the shortest, simplest way possible. The Bauhaus typographic movement also stressed the use of sans-serif typefaces — a break from the status quo of the time. Designers' use of clarity in text and image led to a modernist movement in advertising that would last for decades. This included the use of geometric shapes, vibrant colors, and strong bars that were used quite frequently in posters. The style was also characterized by the placing of text on an angle and wrapping text around objects.

Herbert Bayer (1900-1985) was a noted typographer of the era and the only “master” typographer in Bauhaus’s history. He proposed the elimination of serifs and capital letters in general, saying that they weren’t completely necessary to achieve successful visual efficiency and communication. He also wanted to simplify the typewriter keyboard layout. In 1925, Gropius commissioned Bayer to create a typeface that would be used in all official Bauhaus communications. Bayer created the “universal” font — a simple geometric-influenced font that is still used today. Over the years, the style has proven to be timeless and has influenced countless typographic designs including album covers, movie posters, and more recently, Barack Obama’s 2008 Presidential Campaign rally in Berlin — a poster that showed respect and appreciation for the movement and the country itself.





Similar to the typographic, interior design, and architectural movements of the Bauhaus, painting was also largely based off of geometric shapes and cubism. Artists like Wassily Kandinsky explored the possibilities of color theory and its translation into shapes like the circle and triangle. It was extremely common for artists to explore the usage of bold lines: both straight

and curved. Many of the artists experimented with the representation of primary colors and how they could be expressed in watercolor — giving the paintings a softer, more faded feel as opposed to harsher, bolder, acrylic paints. It is also important to note that all Bauhaus paintings were indeed abstract. None of the works included any shift toward realism. In this sense, the painted works of the Bauhaus had

some similarities to the architecture, interior design, and typographic works: though the paintings were relatively simplistic and used similar styles and shapes, they still left a lot up to the imagination. The meanings of the works weren't always recognizable instantaneously. Furthermore, the abstract combination of swirls and shapes gave interesting context to the interim period between World War I and World

War II. In many ways the abstraction signifies an inspiration to bring positive change and recognition back to Germany after the huge losses of the first world war, while striving to remain independent as the communist movement and the Nazi regime spread throughout Europe.





Given that Bauhaus was founded on the belief that it would encompass a “total” work of art including architecture, interior design, painting, and typography, it is safe to say that the faculty and respective students were quite diverse in their fields of expertise.

Joseph Albers was one of the more famed artists of his era that was a product of the Bauhaus, and was probably the most well-known in America. Originally a painter, Albers joined the Bauhaus faculty as a handicrafts professor, teaching stained glass and furniture design. Following the school’s closure in 1933, Albers began to teach at Black Mountain College, a liberal arts school in North Carolina where he focused primarily on fine art and craft, a nod to his European artistic roots. While he was teaching at Black Mountain, Albers continued to grow his own portfolio, showcasing his glass paintings from the Bauhaus along with his new graphic drawings and oil compositions. In 1949, he joined the faculty at Yale University, where he was chair of the Design Department for another nine years. He was later commissioned by his colleague from the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, to create a mural for the Graduate Center at Harvard. Albers also created a mural at the PanAm building in New York City. Perhaps his most commonly known publication was *Interaction of Color*, a book in which he examines the idea that colors are created by an internal and misleading logic.

Johannes Itten was a Swiss expressionist painter that redefined color theory by establishing strategies for color combinations: saturation, hue, warm and cool, and compliments. In his own work, he combined simplistic color theory with intriguing modernism and expressionism that led to previously unseen compositions.

Otto Lindig was a master potter at Bauhaus and greatly simplified the functionality of common, every day societal objects — including coffee jugs and teapots. Lindig created a cast mold that could be used for mass production of his ceramic containers.

Laszlo Moholy-Nagy strove to combine the growth of technology into design and had an interest in a variety of mediums. He reinvented the Bauhaus’s introductory preliminary course and molded it from expressionism to practical, industrial design. His work included photography, theater set design, and film. After his exit from the Bauhaus in 1933, he moved to America in 1937 and created the New Bauhaus in Chicago — an institution with a very similar philosophy to the original in Germany. However, the school lost its financial backing after only a year. His biggest accomplishment, however, would be his founding of the Institute of Design in Chicago, which later became a part of the Illinois Institute of Technology, the first university in the U.S. to offer a PhD in Design.



Joseph Albers



Johannes Itten



Otto Lindig



Laszlo Moholy-Nagy



The Bauhaus movement is one that will be remembered for decades to come. It bridged the gap between art and industry. Its theories of modernism and functionalism were no longer simply art forms; they were routes in which people lived their lives. Modern advertising and typography were products of the era. Geometric tea pots and steel plated furniture

are still in our homes today. Master professors at Bauhaus believed that great design led to a more virtuous life. They were able to intertwine technology, architecture, interior design, painting, and typography into one style. One movement. A movement that will undoubtedly continue to influence the world in which we see it forever.

## COLOPHON

### Works Cited

- "The Art Story.org - Your Guide to Modern Art." Bauhaus Movement, Artists and Major Works. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2014.
- "Bauhaus and Its Sites in Weimar and Dessau." United States Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, n.d. Web. 6 Nov. 2014.
- "The Bauhaus Movement." Bauhaus Interiors. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2014.
- "Bauhaus: Ninety Years of Inspiration - Smashing Magazine." Smashing Magazine. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2014.
- "Bauhaus Typography." Bauhaus Typography. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2014.
- "Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History." The Bauhaus, 1919–1933. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2014.
- "Josef Albers Biography, Art, and Analysis of Paintings by TheArtStory." TheArtStory. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Nov. 2014.
- "Laszlo Moholy-Nagi Biography." The Art Story, n.d. Web. 6 Nov. 2014.
- "Picture Dictionary of Modern Architecture." About. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2014.

## PHOTOCREDITS

1. itten - <http://imgarcade.com/>
2. lindig - <http://www.christiane-bernstiel.com/CVOL.html>
3. <http://bauhaus-online.de/en/atlas/personen/laszlo-moholy-nagy>



