

Bauhaus and its Sites in Weimar

The school was founded by Walter Gropius at the conservative city of Weimar in 1919 as a merger of the Weimar School of Arts and Crafts and the Weimar Academy of Fine Arts. His opening manifesto proclaimed "to create a new guild of craftsmen, without the class distinctions which raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist".

Most of the contents of the pre-war Weimar workshops had been sold during World War I. The early intention was for the Bauhaus to be a combined architecture school, crafts school, and academy of the arts. Much internal and external conflict followed.

Gropius argued that a new period of history had begun with the end of the war. He wanted to create a new architectural style to reflect this new era. His style in architecture and consumer goods was to be functional, cheap and consistent with mass production. To these ends, Gropius wanted to reunite art and craft to arrive at high-end functional products with artistic pretensions. The Bauhaus issued a magazine called "Bauhaus" and a series of books called "Bauhausbücher". Since the country lacked the quantity of raw materials that the United States and Great Britain had, they had to rely on the proficiency of its skilled labor force and ability to export innovative and high quality goods. Therefore designers were needed and so was a new type of art education. The school's philosophy basically stated that the artist should be trained to work with the industry.

Thuringian Parliamentary support for the school came from the Social Democratic party. In February 1924, the Social Democrats lost control of the state parliament to the nationalists. the Ministry of Education placed the staff on six-month contracts and cut the school's funding in half. they had already been looking for alternative sources of funding. Together with the Council of Masters he announced the closure of the Bauhaus from the end of March 1925.

The appearance of Theo van Doesburg and his criticism affected the director, Walter Gropius. He now realised that what was being taught by Johannes Itten, Expressionism, was not what he intended. The latter eventually left the school and Moholy Nagy took over as the Vorkurs. After the Bauhaus moved to Dessau, a school of industrial design with teachers and staff less antagonistic to the conservative political regime remained in Weimar. This school was eventually known as the Technical University of Architecture and Civil Engineering, and in 1996 changed its name to Bauhaus University Weimar.

Bauhaus and its Sites in Dessau

The Dessau years saw a remarkable change in direction for the school. According to Elaine Hoffman, Gropius had approached the Dutch architect Mart Stam to run the newly-founded architecture program, and when Stam declined the position, Gropius turned to Stam's friend and colleague in the ABC group, Hannes Meyer. Gropius would come to regret this decision.

The charismatic Meyer rose to director when Gropius resigned in February 1928, and Meyer brought the Bauhaus its two most significant building commissions, both of which still exist: five apartment buildings in the city of Dessau, and the headquarters of the Federal School of the German Trade Unions (ADGB) in Bernau. Meyer favored measurements and calculations in his presentations to clients, along with the use of off-the-shelf architectural components to reduce costs, and this approach proved attractive to potential clients. The school turned its first profit under his leadership in 1929.

But Meyer also generated a great deal of conflict. As a radical functionalist, he had no patience with the aesthetic program, and forced the resignations of Herbert Bayer, Marcel Breuer, and other longtime instructors. As a vocal Communist, he encouraged the formation of a Communist student organization. In the increasingly dangerous political atmosphere, this became a threat to the existence of the Dessau school, and to the personal safety of anyone involved. Meyer was also compromised by a sexual scandal involving one of his students, and Gropius fired him in 1930.

Source: -- Wikipedia [<http://www.wikipedia.org>]