



# 100 YEARS OF Bauhaus



WALTER GROPIUS, IRVING PENN, NEW YORK 1948

## BACKGROUND

Recently I went on a pilgrimage to Dessau to look at the restored Bauhaus buildings and the new Museum that has been built there. This provided an opportunity for me to reflect on the movement and its main spokesperson Walter Gropius. When I was an architecture student at Sydney University in the 1960's, we had to select one of the apostles of the modern architectural movement as the subject of an essay. I picked Walter Gropius, to me the best educated and most intellectual, but with the unfortune of being unable to draw. I was interested in his need to collaborate with others to be able to work and informed all he did and in 1945 to the establishment of **The Architects Collaborative (TAC)**. I was working in the Rome office of TAC in 1969 when Gropius died in Boston.

While in Dessau, seeing the permanent exhibition of the new museum, I wondered why the Bauhaus, which existed in reality for such a short time became such an influential movement in architecture. *What was it about its history, the people and their personalities, the movement and the events that occurred that left such an impression?* The ideas that the Bauhaus represented had a long history, before its naming and manifesto were released in Weimar on 1 April 1919, by **Gropius**. It seemed to me though, that it was Gropius himself, his status and skills and his collaborative approach that was the defining factor in the outcomes of the manifesto.



## WALTER GROPIUS

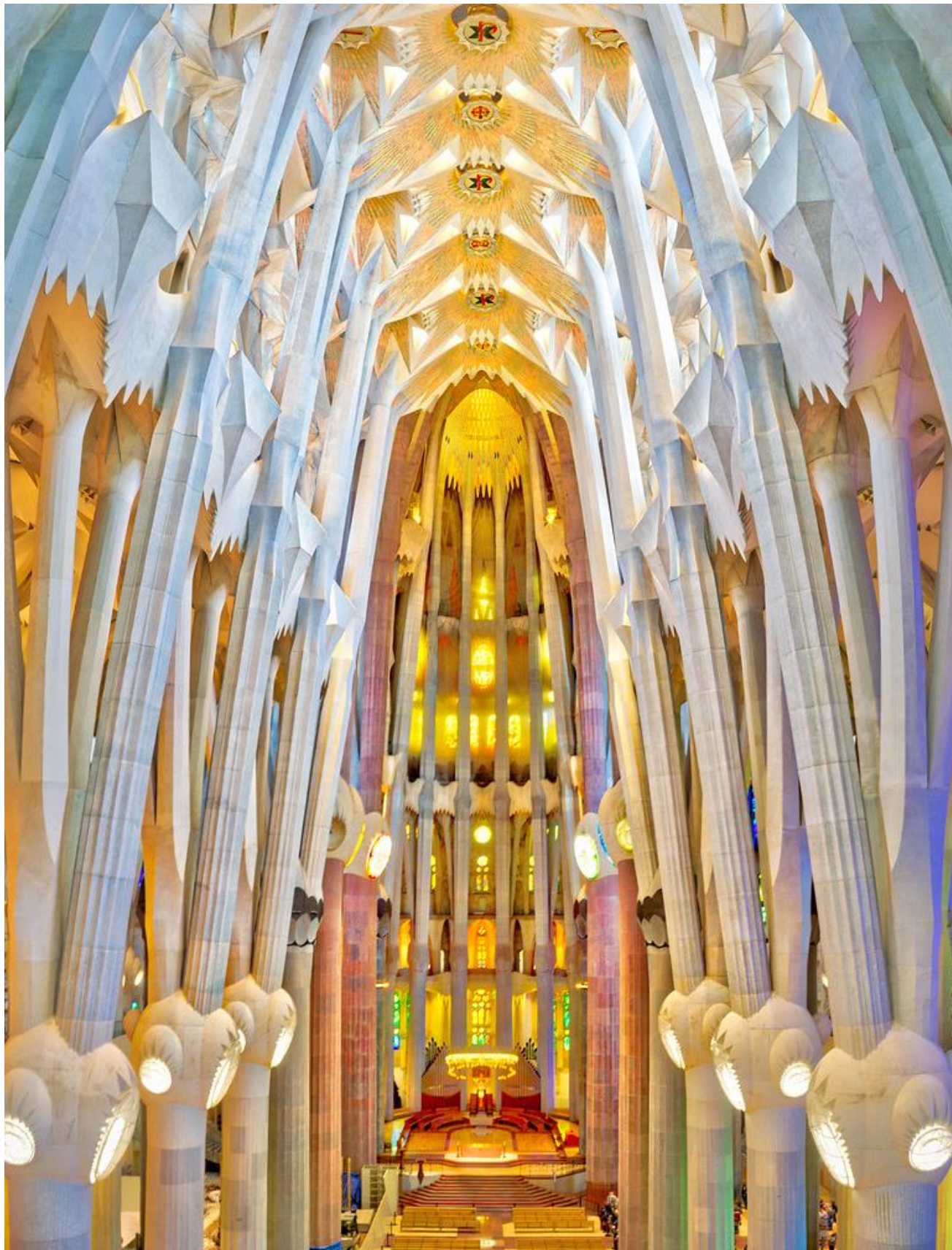
### A BRIEF HISTORY OF HIS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Gropius was born into an upper middle-class Prussian family in Berlin in 1883. His father studied architecture and worked in the Municipal Council and his uncle was an established architect. His family was involved in theatrical presentations in the late 1800's and employed Schinkel, the famous architect, city planner and artist, to design A stage set. He actually lived with the Gropius family at the start of his career. They were a typical cultured family where life centered around music, art and education. In 1904 Gropius started his compulsory military training in a famous Hussar regiment. This was an aristocratic regiment where he learned to ride and made important connections with people who were later to become influential in German society. After military training he returned to the family estate in Pomerania and began to study architecture. He helped to construct model farm buildings, some in a romantic style, but resisted the architecture of the time, which he saw as "clothing new buildings in an old style".



WALTER GROPIUS AS A CADET IN THE FIFTEENTH HUSSARS REGIMENT, WANDABECK 1904





LA SAGRADA FAMILIA, ANTONI GAUDI, BARCELONA, SPAIN 1882

In 1907 with a friend he travelled widely in Spain, he absorbed the lessons of the glorious buildings he saw there. He met Gaudi and was influenced by his use of craftsmen in quasi mediaeval workshop environment, to organically develop building forms.

Gropius returned to Berlin in 1908. At this time Berlin was growing rapidly, housing was scarce and workers' living conditions were poor. He started work in Peter Behrens office alongside Mies Van de Rohe and Le Corbusier. In 1908 Gropius accompanied Behrens on a trip to England. The arts and crafts movement was flourishing there and the idea of a design as a total work of art was influencing thinking. The architect publisher, Muthesius was a great proponent of the arts and crafts movement in Berlin and was the first to bring Frank Lloyd Wright's work to Europe. At the same time the industrial buildings designed in the USA continued to be a major influence. Both the Deutscher Werkbund 1907, and the Wiener Werkstatt, 1903 were funded by industrialists who tried to improve product design to help German products compete with overseas manufactured goods.





AEG TURBINE FACTORY, BY PETER BEHRENS (ARCHITECT), BUILT CIRCA 1909, BERLIN, GERMANY. Behrens was in charge of all the aesthetic aspects of AEG.



WIENER WERKSTÄTTE POSTER (VIENNA WORKSHOP), VIENNA, AUSTRIA 1903-1932

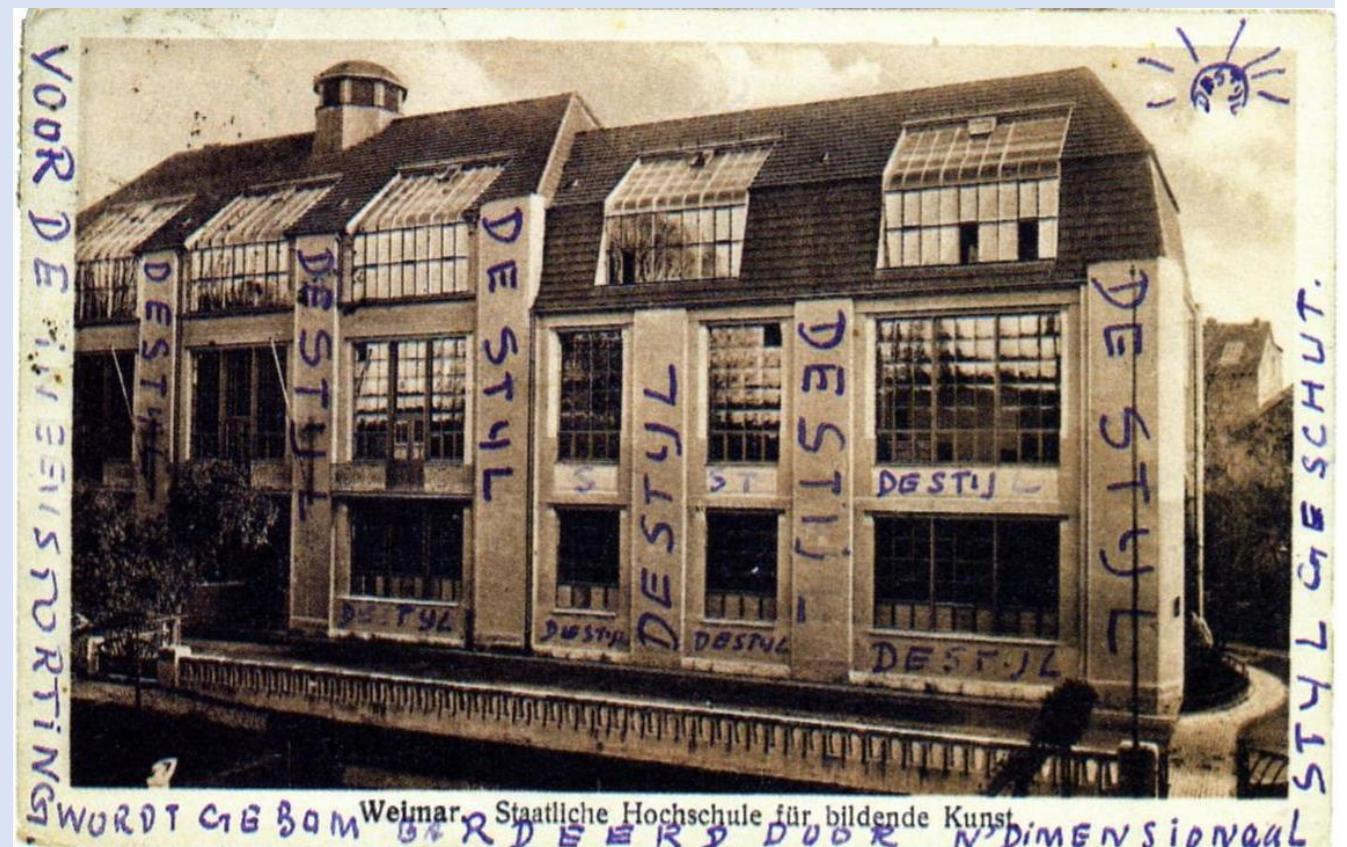


## WEIMAR

The Weimar Republic was led by the Grand Duke of Saxony-Anhalt, son of Queen Victoria's favorite daughter. He was an anglophile and believed in "Art that is life ". In 1902 he established an artistic consultancy for industry with Henry van de Velde, a Belgian artist architect as director. He built the buildings to house the school.

Contemporaneously Die Brücke, and similar artistic movements started to challenge the Beaux Arts dogma. The great Turbine Hall, designed by Behrens, was completed and in 1910 an exhibition of German design was successfully held. The Deutscher Werkbund was the organiser. Gropius joined Deutscher Werkbund and received his first major architectural commission, the Fagus Werk, a shoe lace factory, which he designed in collaboration with Hannes Meyer. The building was a great success and led to him being asked to design the Werkbund Pavilion in Cologne. As both buildings were very photogenic, they were much published. Gropius' connection with the Vienna artistic movement was enhanced by his affair with Alma Mahler, in whose living room the Vienna Secessionist movement started.

His flourishing career was interrupted by the war and he rejoined the Hussars and saw active service until the end of the war. He was decorated for valor, but like others, he was disillusioned by the regimes that caused this huge waste of life and opportunity. As a result, he saw that there was a need to reform society.



POSTCARD FROM THEO VAN DOESBURG TO ANTONY KOK, "BEFORE THE COLLAPSE" 1921, BERLIN, GERMANY



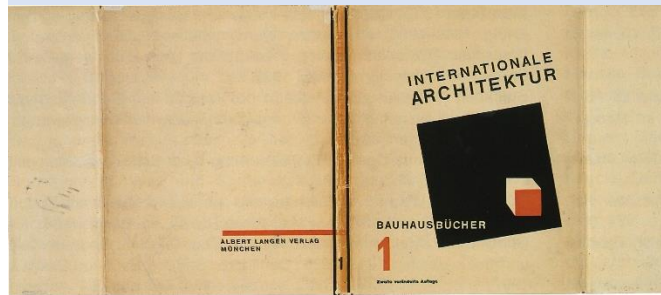


FAGUS FACTORY, BY WALTER GROPIUS (ARCHITECT), ALFELD-AN-DER-LEINE, 1913-25

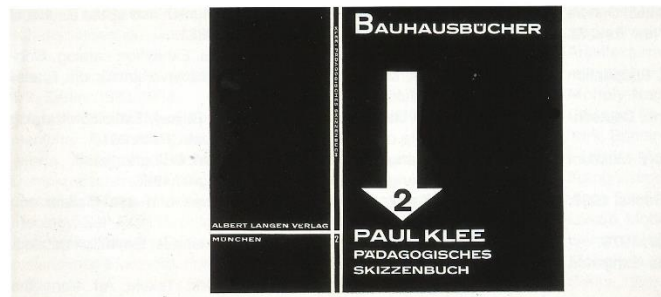


ALMA MAHLER, MARRIED TO WALTER GROPIUS, 1915-1920

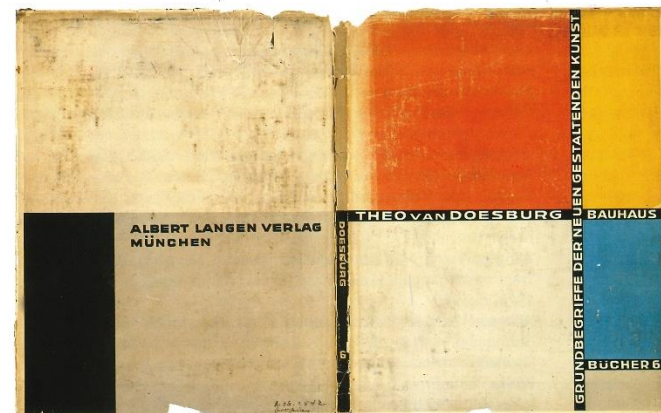




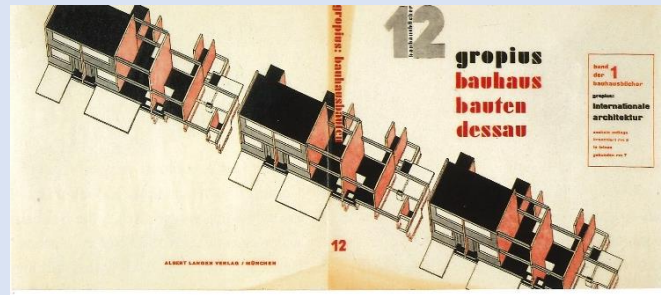
Farkas Molnár, Cover design Bauhaus Book 1. 1925, letterpress, 23.5 x 53.9 cm, BHA.



László Moholy-Nagy, Cover design Bauhaus Book 2. 1925, letterpress, 23.0 x 53.9 cm, BHA.



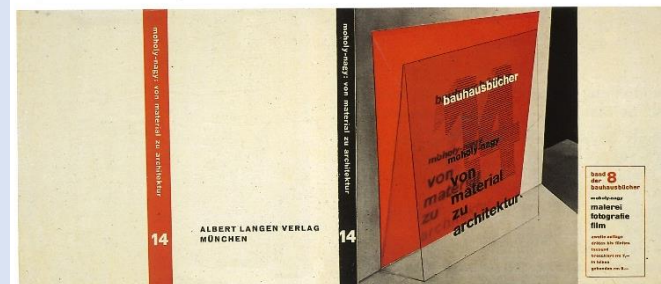
Theo van Doesburg, Cover design Bauhaus Book 6. 1924, litho printing, varnished, 23.0 x 52.0 cm, BHA.



László Moholy-Nagy, Cover design Bauhaus Book 12. 1930, letterpress, 23.7 x 54.5 cm, BHA.



László Moholy-Nagy, Cover design, Bauhaus Book 13. 1928, letterpress, 23.6 x 52.0 cm, BHA.



László Moholy-Nagy, Cover design Bauhaus Book 14. 1929, letterpress, varnished, gloss finish, 23.6 x 56.1 cm, BHA.

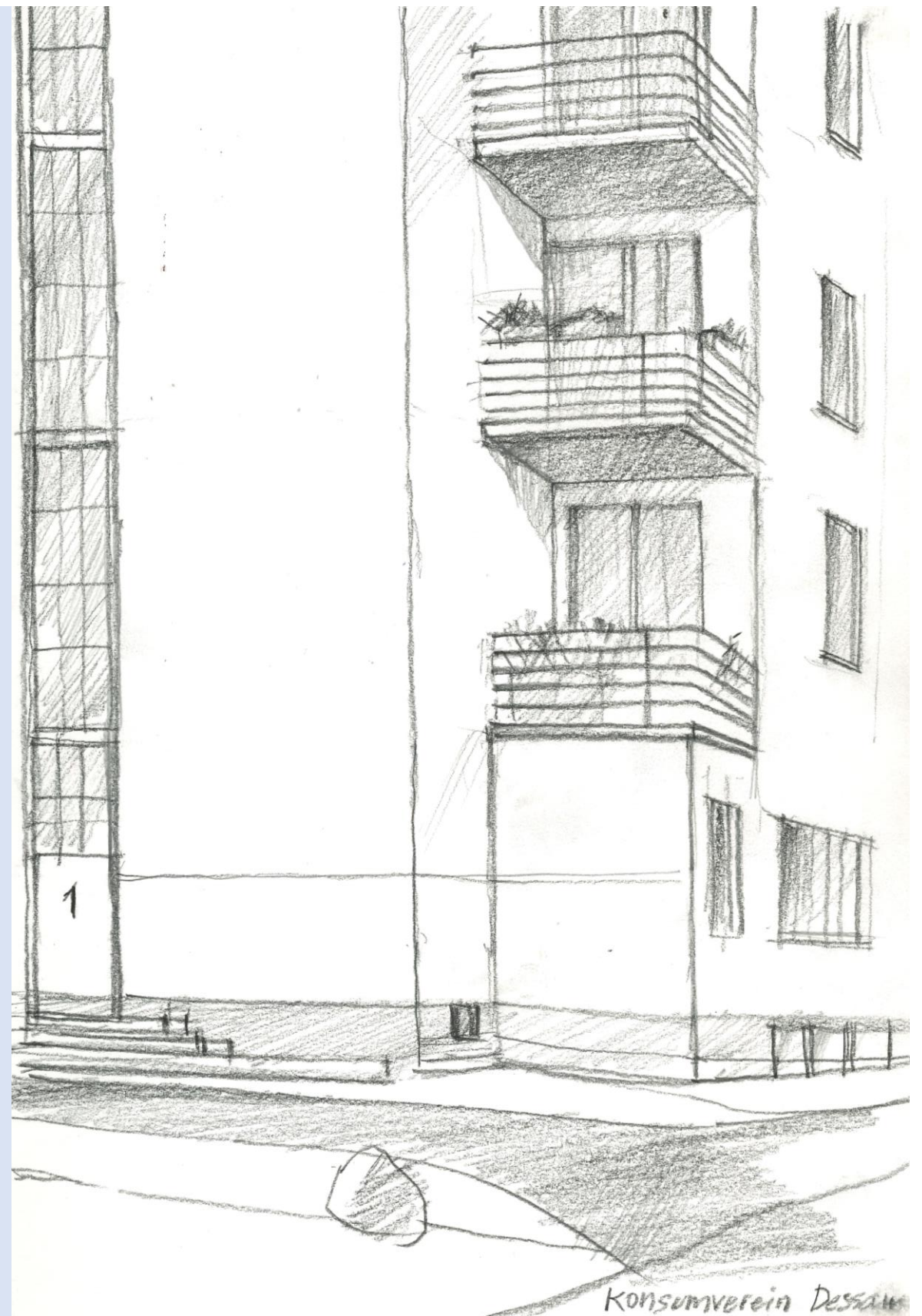
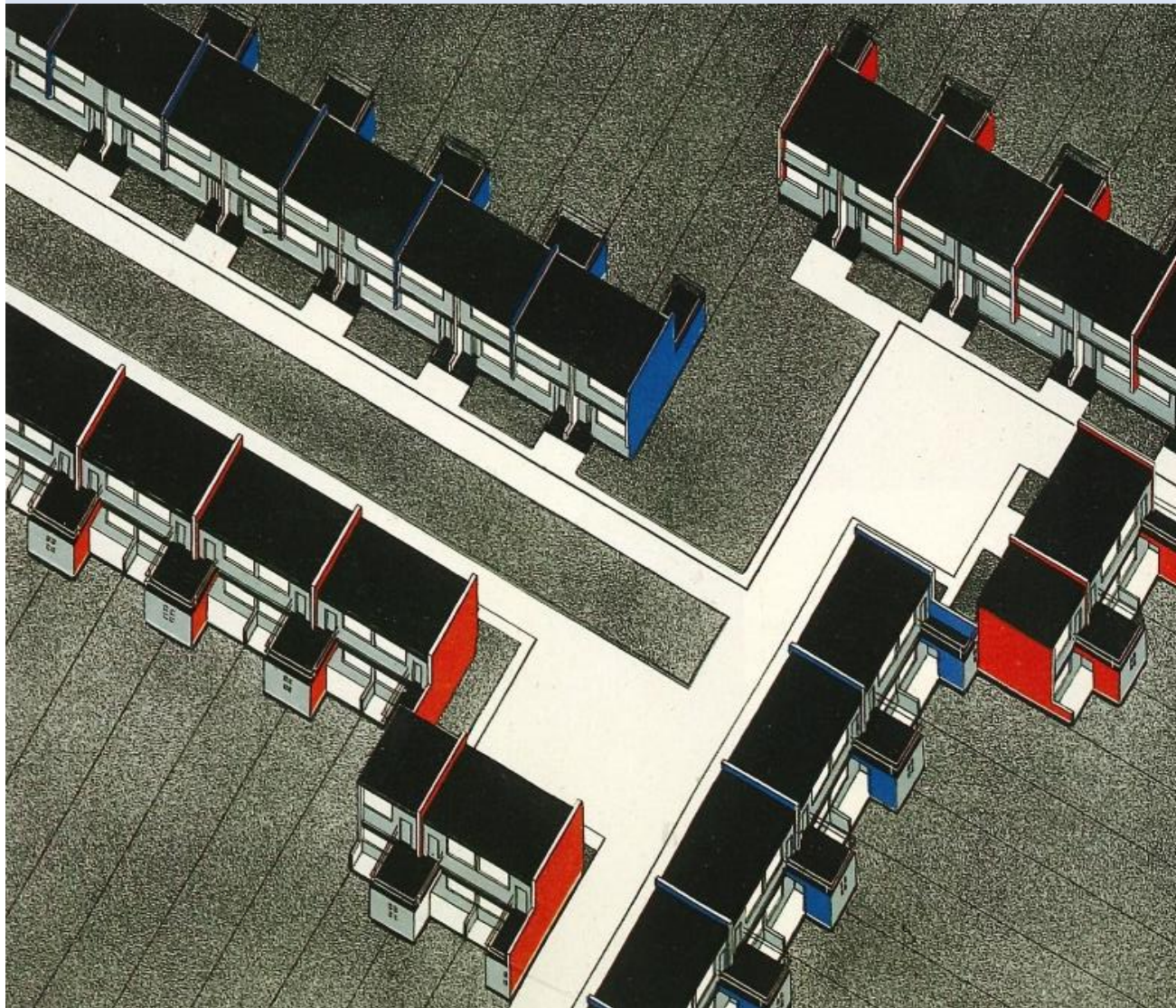
## DESSAU AND THE BAUHAUS

In 1915 the Weimar School closed, and Van de Velde returned to Belgium. He recommended 3 candidates to the Grand Duke to take over and Gropius was successful. He was no doubt impressed when he turned up in uniform indicating his aristocratic connections to the Hussars. On 1 April 1919 he took over the buildings and the school established by Van de Velde and declared “the ultimate role of all artistic activity is architecture “. It became The Grand Ducal School of Fine Arts and Applied Arts and combined the 2 previous schools of fine art and crafts. The school did not yet teach architecture. There was hostility towards it from conservative circles, and the international political climate, the Russian Revolution and various left-wing uprisings in Europe, did not help branding the school as having journalist ideals. Funding was precarious and the 1919 Versailles treaty and the resulting reparations and inflation made life difficult to keep the school going.

As a result, the school needed to receive income from industrial production design. Initially a craft-based design approach was encouraged, and this differed from what happened in the school under Van de Velde. Publications and exhibitions started to attract international attention and Gropius was able, through his interest in collaborative enterprise, to attract avant-guard designers and artists of the highest caliber to the school. Students respected his war service and his personal integrity.

SOME OF THE BAUHAUS GRAPHIC DESIGNS.





SKETCH OF THE CONSUME BUILDING A HIGHER DENSITY FOCUS FOR THE LOWER DENSITY HOUSING..





THE MAIN TEACHING BUILDING IN 2019. AUTHENTIC RESTORATION.



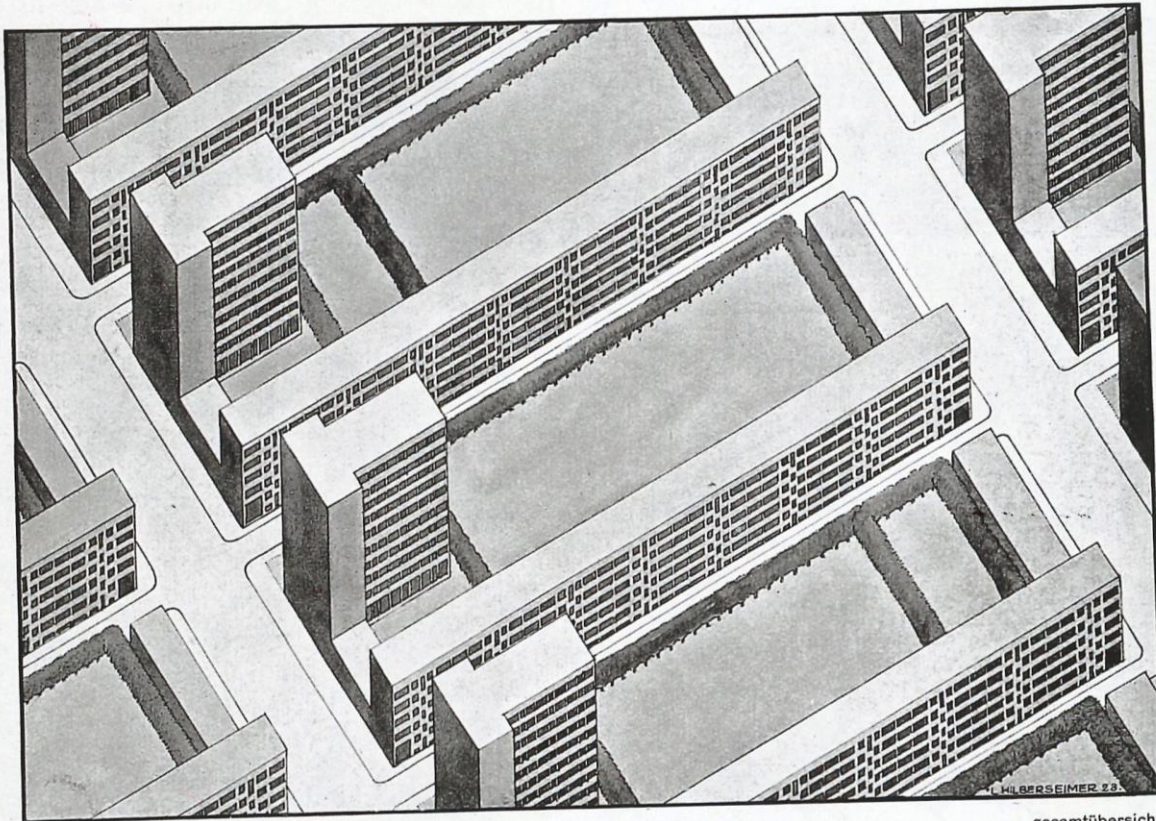


THE FAMOUS STAIRCASE



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gesamtübersicht

## I. hilberseimer kleinstwohnungen größe, grundriß und städtebauliche anordnung.

über nichts herrscht größere unklarheit als über die gröÙe einer wohnung. man ist traditionell gewohnt, durch die übliche zimmerteilung die gröÙe einer wohnung nach der anzahl der zimmer zu bestimmen. so gibt es ein, eineinhalb, zwei, zweieinhalb, drei, dreieinhalb usw. -zimmer-wohnungen. nichts ist falscher als mit solchen dehnbaren begriffen wie zimmer und ihre anzahl die gröÙe und art einer wohnung festzulegen.

heute bestimmt man die wohnungsgröÙe nach der gröÙe der wohnfläche. so sollen nach den neuesten bestimmungen der berliner wohnungsfürsorgegesellschaft kleinstwohnungen eine fläche von 48, 54, 62 qm haben, wobei 48 qm einer eineinhalb-zimmer-wohnung, 54 qm einer zwei-zimmer-wohnung, 62 qm einer zweieinhalb-zimmer-wohnung, entspricht. aber auch diese flächenbemessung ist genau

wie die bemessung nach zimmern von traditionellen gewohnheiten abhängig und für eine freiere grundriß-gestaltung, die auf das wirkliche bedürfnis der bewohner eingeht, ist damit noch keine basis geschaffen.

die an sich richtige methode, die gröÙe nach der fläche zu bemessen, scheitert an der willkürlichen annahme dieser fläche, die von der alten zimmerteilung abhängig ist.

bei festlegung der flächengröÙe für eine wohnung muÙ die erste überlegung die sein, wieviel personen darin unterzubringen und wie die räume auf der fläche zu verteilen sind. es ist zu ermitteln: die wohnungsgröÙe für 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 usw. personen, wobei zu berücksichtigen ist, daÙ jede wohnung, gleichgültig für wieviel personen sie gedacht ist, den nötigen wohn- und schlafraum, bad und küche haben muÙ.

In 1924 the friends of the Bauhaus were established to support the school. Because of political tensions and a lack of available funding in Weimar 3 other municipalities were considered for the enterprise, including Frankfurt and Dessau. The school was welcomed to Dessau, a growing industrial town. Support for its establishment there came from the city mayor, Fritz Hesse and the aviation pioneer Hugo Junkers. It was to become a municipality funded school of design and the municipality looked to it for solutions to the shortage of affordable housing in the area. Dessau was selected and Gropius' architectural office was commissioned, and it designed the main buildings, student accommodation and the masters' houses.

The new slogan was "Industry and Science for Design ". The school was to cover all aspects of design including the buildings, the interiors, furniture, fabrics and even the typeface used in publications. Housing was to be suitable for the age, tubular furniture was designed, and modern lighting would be used in buildings. The Bauhaus published a series of publications with distinctive lower-case typeface, showcasing the school, and the Bauhaus visual style was established. In 1923 a model house exhibition showcased domestic functional design, its aims were to show progress and to "breathe life into the dead products of the machine". There was also a photography department as part of the advertising studio which contributed significantly to establishment of the Bauhaus Style.

LUDWIG KARL HILBERSEIMER, MINI-APARTMENTS, TITLE PAGE FROM BAUHAUS 2, 1929.



In 1927 the department of architecture under Hannes Meyer opened, with 166 students.

Gropius resigned in 1928, to concentrate on his practice, and suggested Hannes Meyer take over. Meyer a Swiss architect eschewed aesthetics in favour of functionality, and his left-wing views and interest in providing economical housing for workers, eventually resulted in his dismissal. He moved to the USSR where he continued his work

The Bauhaus opened in Hungary, where Farkas Molnar carried on the tradition, building a number of influential buildings in Budapest for enlightened patrons, mostly Jewish. Similarly, Mies Van De Rohe built the Tugendhat House in Brno, and was selected to take over the Bauhaus. He was forced to move it to Berlin as the National Socialists are elected in the Dessau Municipality.



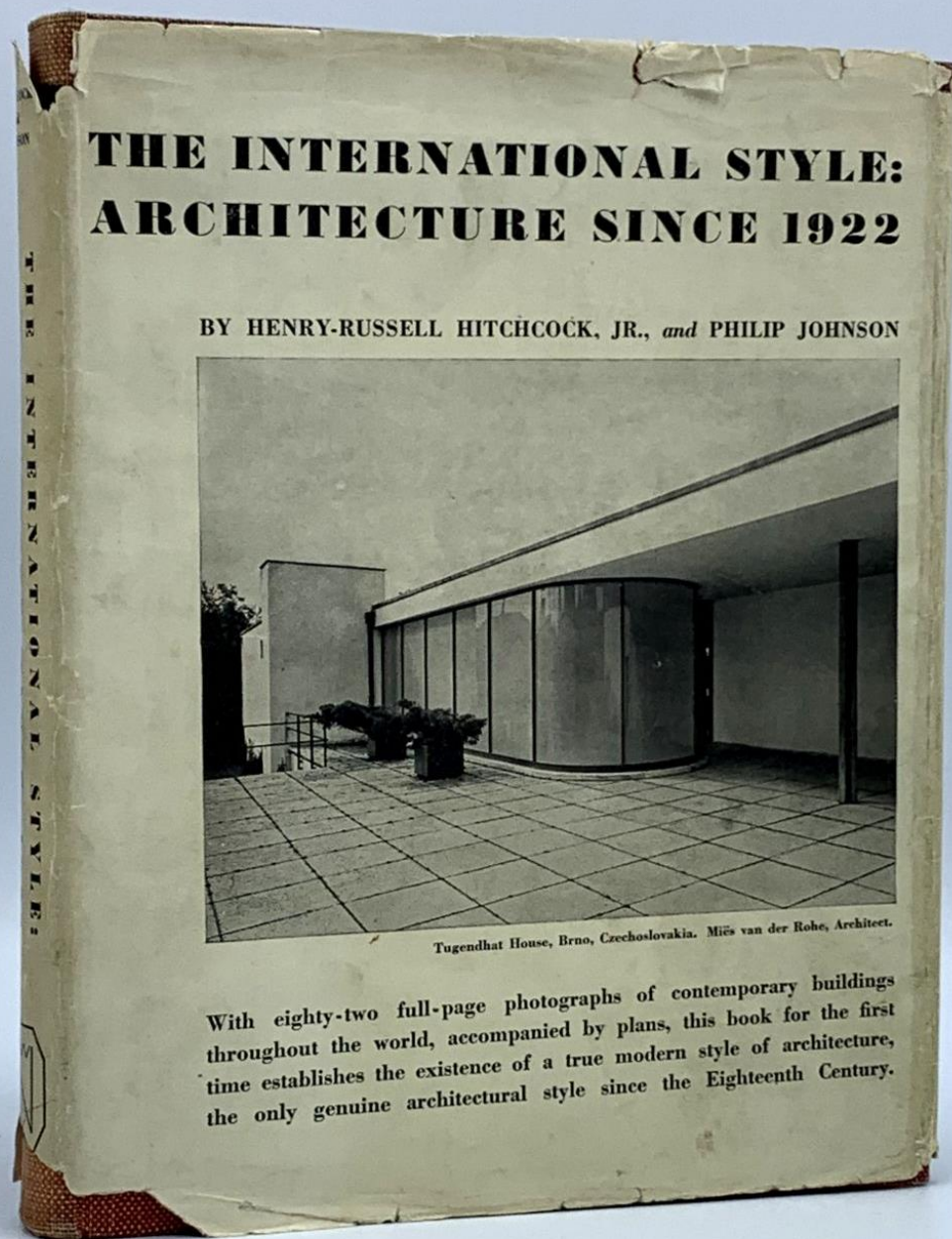
VILLA TUGENDHAT, MIES VAN DER ROHE, BRNO 1927





FARKAS MOLNAR (HUNGARIAN ARCHITECT), TRIED TO OPEN THE BAUHAUS IN BUDAPEST. IMAGE SHOWS VILLA DESIGNED BY MOLNAR IN THE 11 DISTRICT OF BUDAPEST ADJOINING THE AUTHORS RESIDENCE.





'INTERNATIONAL STYLE', HENRY-RUSSELL HITCHCOCK & PHILIP JOHNSON, 1932



'TUGENDHAT HOUSE', BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC, 1930. IMAGE BY JULIUS BOKOR.

## THE BAUHAUS IN BERLIN

The Bauhaus became the subject of a number of international exhibitions, in Stuttgart, and at the CIAM conference. The wallpaper designs were a great success and other products were in limited production numbers. Through photography, graphic and product design the Bauhaus had established a very clear visual identity. Under the leadership of Mies Van De Rohe, 6 departments were active, architecture and planning, advertising, weaving, photography, and visual arts. In 1932 in the USA Johnson and Hitchcock publish the book, "International Style" featuring the Bauhaus.

In 1933 the school is closed by the Gestapo.



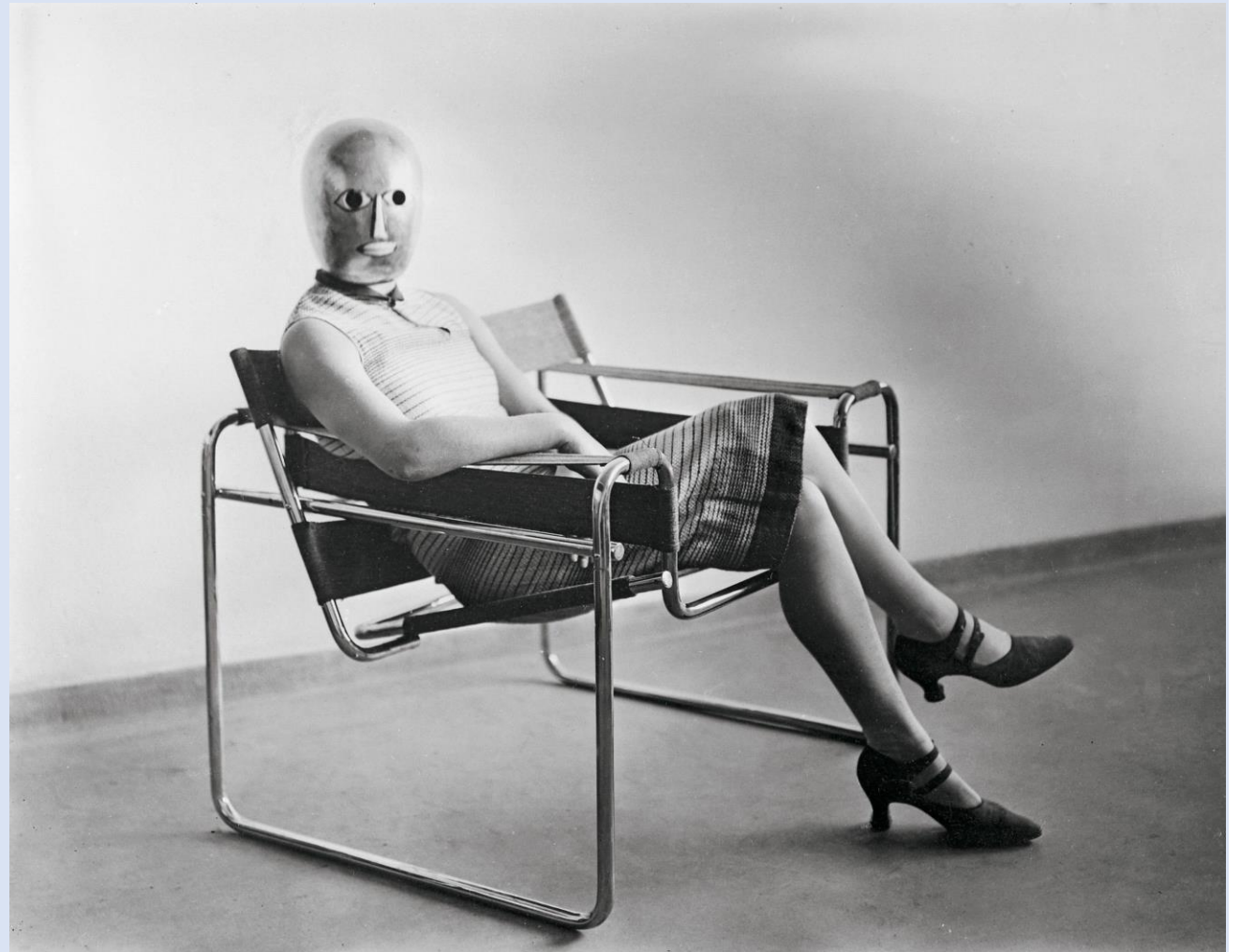
## BAUHAUS INFLUENCE - DIASPORA

The masters chose to immigrate, Gropius initially to England then to the Harvard Graduate Design School in the USA. He established a practice in Cambridge Massachusetts and eventually TAC in 1945.

It's difficult to comprehend the large impact and worldwide influence of the Bauhaus from its brief existence. The concept of a group of creative people working in a sympathetic workshop environment is rooted in history. Each of the studios was led by a master and assistants. They used a craft-based approach, understood the means of production and were able to work with industry so that they understood the advances in technology and the use of new materials.

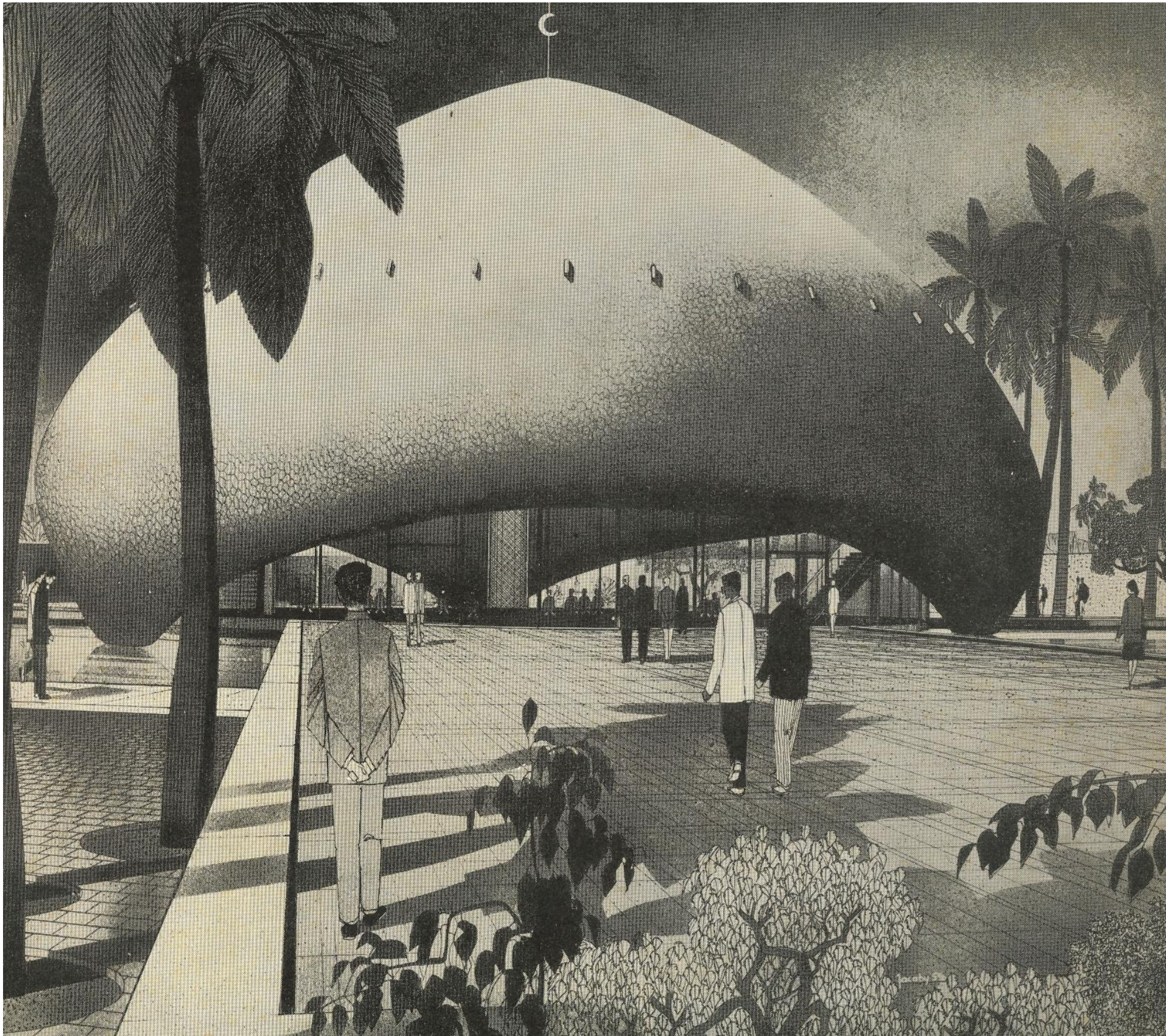


*Marianne Brandt, tea infuser MT49, showing the design principles of the Bauhaus workshop at their purest, 1924*



*ISE GROPIUS OR LIS BAYER IN AN OSKAR SCHLEMMER MASK, SITTING ON MARCEL BREUER'S WASSILY LOUNGE CHAIR, 1926*





'PERSPECTIVE OF MOSQUE AT PROPOSED BAGHDAD UNIVERSITY'; TAC, BY HELMUT JACOBY.





VIEW OF THE WEKBUND'S AM WEISSENHOF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN STUTTGART, MIES VAN DER ROHE 1927

The basis of the design philosophy was good affordable design for everyone. In 1929 a photo exhibition opened in Stuttgart, after the Weissenhof Housing estate was completed, organized by Deutscher Werkbund (DW). The exhibition featured the Bauhaus and the Estate. It was visited by a great number of people and got a lot of publicity at the time. The estate was promoted by DW to demonstrate the possibilities for affordable housing design. It consisted of 21 buildings designed by 17 leading European architects including Le Corbusier, Mies, Gropius and Taut. The common style was modernist, predominantly white buildings, employing prefabrication where possible. Again, the wallpaper was a great success at the exhibition, as were a number of consumer products and lights.

The exhibition was reported worldwide, to acclaim, and was provoked by CIAM.



The desire to design a new world, well-designed objects and affordable healthy housing was based on using industrial production techniques, which was a key aim of the Bauhaus. An important element of this was a desire to replace the symbols and motifs associated with the failed empires; the Reich, the Habsburgs, the Romanoff and Ottoman Empires. Using industrial production to achieve this was supported by industry groups, who needed direction and new uses to breathe life into industrial objects. However, the most disappointing result of the idea of using industrial production was in housing. There was limited understanding with the wider social aspects of housing. What makes a community and gives a sense of place and belonging were not considered fully in the industrial production of the built form. The results were often soulless barracks which destroyed the accepted idea of a city, and its differentiation from the country. See page 20.

The success of the Dessau housing estate by Gropius is a notable exception (see page 21). He recognised the need for designing a community, and houses that interacted with nature. Central focal buildings and individual gardens capable of housing auxiliary structures and even growing food were important elements in the design. To this day the houses are cherished and kept in good repair by the community.



THE MASTERS' HOUSES, WALTER GROPIUS, 1925. TOTAL SUCCESS IN INTEGRATING FUNCTION, NATURE AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY.





WHAT WENT WRONG WHEN THE PRINCIPLES WERE UNIMAGGINATIVELY USED, ESPECIALLY IN SOCIALIST SOCIETIES.





DESSAU HOUSING ESTATE, WALTER GROPIUS 1926. ONE OF THE FIRST COMMISSIONS THE DESSAU HOUSING ESTATE, CARED FOR AND THRIVING TODAY.





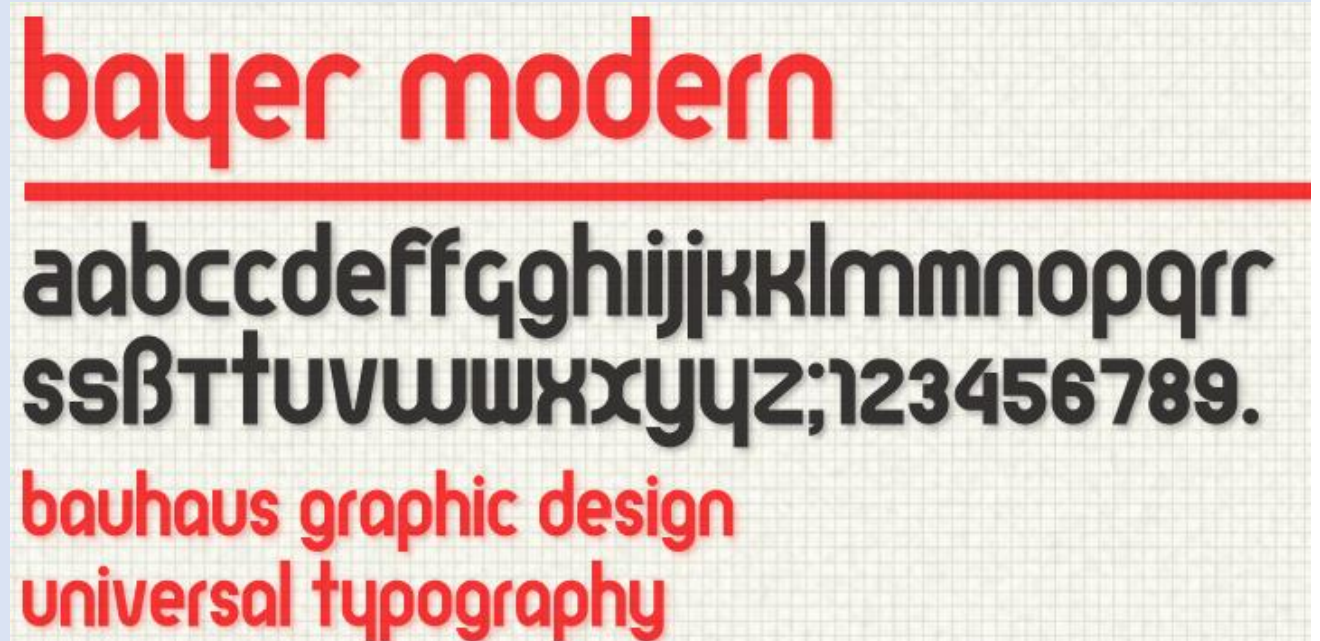
THE MASTERS' HOUSES, WALTER GROPIUS, 1925

The main teaching buildings and student accommodation were a development of the language first used at Fagus Factory and the Werkbund Pavilion. They showed admiration for industrial architecture, in the USA as well as the Turbine Hall of Behrens for AEG. The master's houses were truly successful in combining living areas, studios, and had a strong relationship to the landscape. They were varied, interesting, and spatially complex.



The worldwide influence of the Bauhaus is disproportionate to its short lifespan and limited output, however, the diaspora of the Masters and students around the world contributed greatly to this influence.

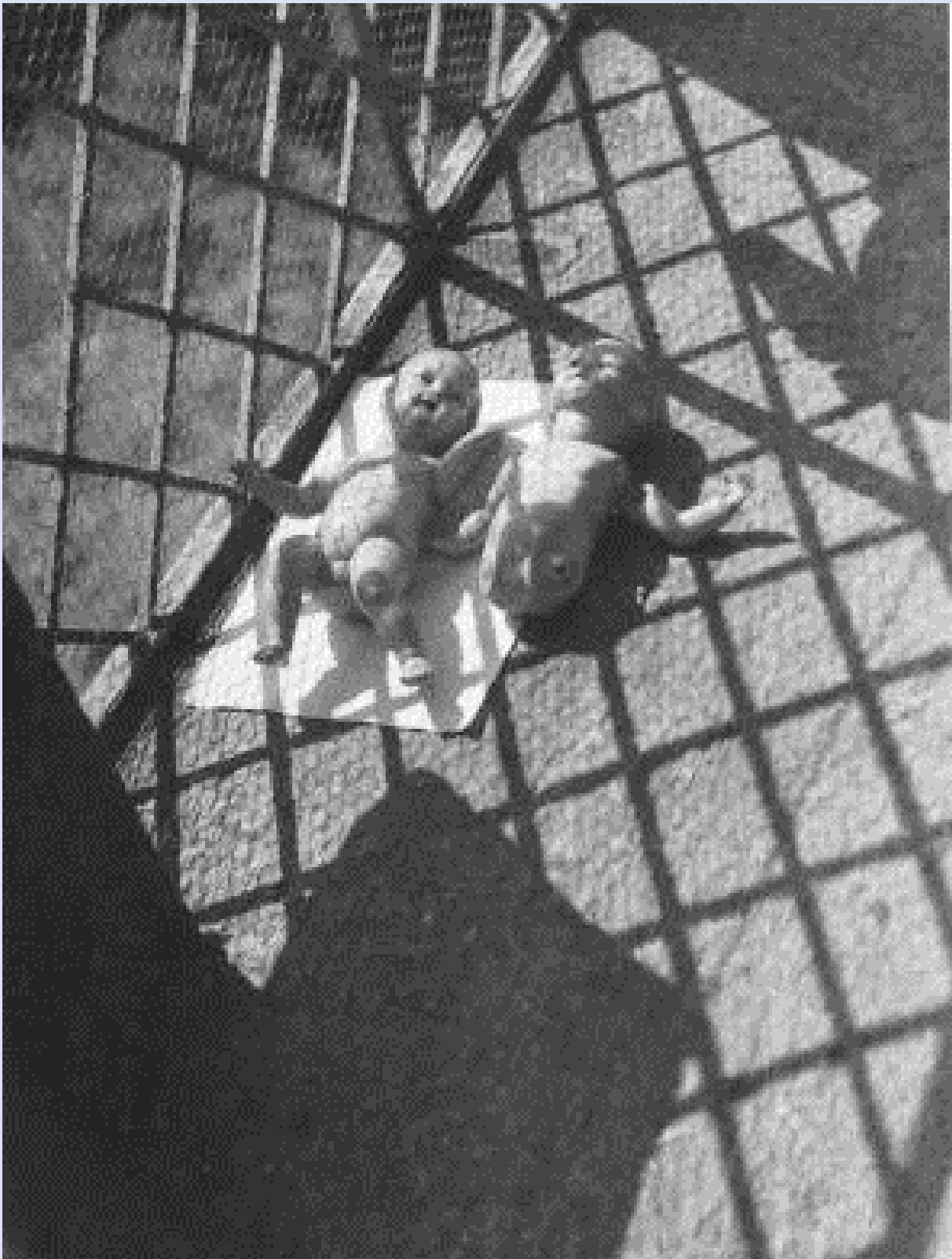
I believe the importance of the Bauhaus visual style, through typeface, the use of photography and film, enabled publication quickly and established an easily recognisable identity. At the same time advances in printing made publishing photo reproduction cheap and easy. Exhibitions were organized and publicized, in a world that was ready to move on from WW 1. The emphasis the Bauhaus placed on image making through the photography and advertising were a major part of this. The buildings were photogenic and served to inspire a generation. The danger was, of course, that without direct experience, the style rather than the method was copied, and buildings were often drab and out of scale. The direct personal study and experience of buildings was replaced by shopping for ideas in practice and schools of architecture. Style over suitability, climate etc.







PHOTOGRAPHS BY LUCIA MOHOLY, 1923-1924



SOME OF THE ICONIC PHOTOS USED TO ESTABLISH THE BAUHAUS.





THE WOMEN OF BAUHAUS, BERLIN, 1925

## WOMEN AT THE BAUHAUS

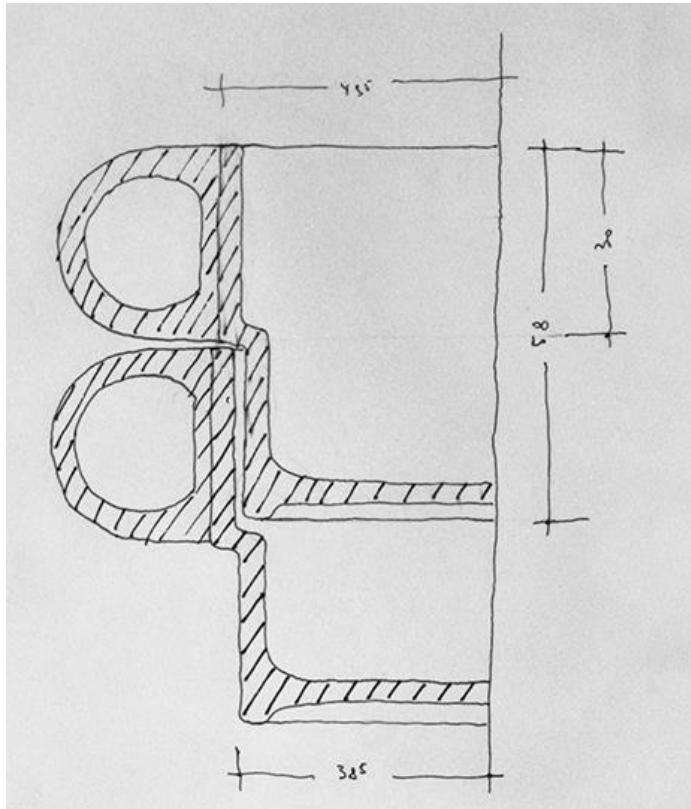
Interestingly the role of women in the Bauhaus story has been used as an example of progressive treatment of women. It was seen as a progressive academic institution, as it accepted both male and female students into its programs. During a time when women were denied admittance to formal art academies, the Bauhaus provided them with opportunity for both education and artistic development, though generally in weaving and other fields considered at the time to be appropriate for women. At the Bauhaus's inception, the school was located in Weimar. In its inaugural year, before the study of architecture was included, more female students applied than male students. The accepted students came from varied socio-economic and educational backgrounds and the curriculum introduced arts through study of materials and colour theory. Most female students specialized in the disciplines of weaving or ceramics. As the Bauhaus progressed, female students were encouraged to specialize in other programs as well. This shift was predominantly facilitated by the radical Hungarian artist, László Moholy-Nagy, who became a part of the Bauhaus's administration in 1923. However, they were steered towards weaving, pottery and wall painting and not admitted to the architecture courses.



## CONCLUSIONS

I have come to some conclusions about the impressive worldwide influence of Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus in design:

- Gropius was the founding influence in the Bauhaus, and his ideas dominated the curriculum.
- His inability to present his ideas by graphics and drawing meant he promoted the use of photography and graphics to establish the Bauhaus style and this enabled the propagation of the Bauhaus style around the world through exhibitions and the production of publications, and encouraged collaboration.
- He was an intellectual with progressive ideas and was connected to the Wiener Werkstaff through his wife Alma Mahler, but respected by a wide group for his war service.
- Bauhaus taught advertising and photography from 1923 and used these skills to mount exhibitions to chart its progress and reassure its financial backers.
- Typeface and photos defined the face of the Bauhaus and printing methods allowed widespread dissemination and international exposure
- The diaspora of the founders and members of the Bauhaus around the world before and after World War 2 meant that the ideas were taught and discussed in many countries and universities.
- The idea of design working hand in hand with industry was revisited by Max Bill at ULM, a new school of design, that managed to give a new identity to BRAUN products and many other firms such as Apple have subsequently adopted this process to add value to products.



BRAUN RADIO/RECORD PLAYER, 1959



