



National College Of Art And Design.

Fine Art Painting.

Reshaping Reality: The Bauhaus.

By,

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## Contents.

List Of Illustrations. Pg. 2.

Absract Of Thesis. Pg. 3.

Introduction. Pg. 4.

Chapter 1. "A New Art, A new Order" Pg. 7.

Chapter 2. The Form Classes And The Preliminary Course In Relation To  
Design In The Workshops. Pg. 12.

Chapter 3. Hannes Meyer And His Promotion Of A Pragmatism Within The  
Bauhaus. Pg. 20.

Conclusion. Pg. 27.

Biliography. Pg. 29.



## List Of Illustrations.

1. Paul Klee. "Plummets to the wave" 1928. (Geelhaar, 1973, pg.115.)  
Pg. 16.
2. Wassily Kandinsky "On the Points" 1928. (Roethel, 1979, pg.137.)  
Pg. 16.
3. Oskar Schlemmer (middle) and students from the stage workshop.  
Dessau. 1927. (Westphal, 1991, pg.116.)  
Pg. 22.
4. Marcel Breuer's "Lattenstuhl (Slat Chair)" 1922. (Rowland, 1990, pg.67)  
Pg. 24.
5. Marcel Breuer's "B33 Sidechair". 1927-28. (Rowland, 1990, pg.73)  
Pg. 24.

### **Abstract Of Thesis.**

In this thesis I shall be proposing that through representation we can create and recreate our reality. I will be using the Bauhaus as my main example, around which I shall base my discussion of this proposition.

I shall firstly define what I mean by 'representation'. This will include discussion on perception and sense making. The main body of the thesis will consider how the Bauhaus was set up to address the problems of the Modern era that was emerging, and created and organised new forms and concepts that shaped a reality which accomadated for this era.

## Introduction.

There are many forms of representation. There are the major disciplines, science, philosophy, art, politics, technology, language which can all be considered as forms or areas of representation. In fact it can be argued that all ideas and notions and every symbol that we have created for ourselves under the sun are representations. They are representations created by us in order to gain some sort of grasp or angle on the raw external buzz of the real world that we cannot take it in, in its entirety. Any production of meaning is a form of representation. It could also be argued that the external world is unfathomable as basically the more we know about it or come to terms with it the more we can see in it. It appears that both microscopic viewing and macroscopic become infinite. We have used our perceptual tools throughout evolution to construct an experience of the environment; The world that we can understand. This is where representation plays a very important role.

Creating forms of representation enabled us to concentrate on certain aspects of perception and to organise, in a very useful way, the reaction of our senses to stimuli so as to make some sense of it. This makes it seem as if we are detached from the environment, which ofcourse is not true, but it emphasizes that there is actually so much there that we do not take in and cannot take in as we do not yet have the perceptual tools with which to do so. For example, before we enhanced our own visual perception with microscopes and telescopes we could not see cell structures or other galaxies, but as we now know they are actually there. Also what we experience through the organisation of our modes of perception - our consciousness - is to a very large extent created for us and by us through culture. And so each culture and each era with their own different interests, emphasis and knowledge have all consructed different 'realities' for themselves to operate in. They have all their own particular outlook. This is evident throughout the great variety of styles that have been employed by different peoples and different eras to represent (through drawing, painting and sculpture in their widest sense) the visual world. This





shows that there is a cultural dimension to perception and experience as well as a singular individual one. Precise details of individuals perceptions may differ but there is an identity and universal understanding held among people to the sensuous worlds that we share, otherwise we could not communicate. This universal aspect is a learnt behaviour. Perceptual sensitivity is learnt. We learn what to be more sensitive to, what details to concentrate on, what is most important in what we have just perceived, how to organise it all, etc.

The area of representation is vast and representation can mean many different things. But what I shall be concentrating most on will be representation through art. This is still a wide notion to take in but Gombrich gives a very good definition of what I mean when he wrote "man's capacity to conjure up forms, lines, shades or colours, those mysterious phantoms of visual reality..." (Gombrich. 1962. Chap. 1) I do not mean to go into the psychology of how certain shapes, lines or colours when placed together in a certain way come to represent or be recognised as some object in the world. What I mean to discuss is the power of this representation and how we use it.

I have already briefly pointed out how the human race has used representation as a way of not only dealing with the world but giving meaning to it. This creation of meaning has been of the utmost importance since the awakening of man's intellect. Giving meaning to the world created an environment, an experience in which mans intellect with all its desires to map, measure, comprehend and apprehend could operate and grow. Mankind created a reality that suited them and accomadated for all their wants. Perhaps most importantly and of great interest to this essay by organising everything in this way they were in control and so could change their reality accordingly. This gave mankind a great power and we can clearly see how we have used it throughout the ages to change our environment- our reality. This essay is concerned with the role that the form of representation that I singled out earlier ("mans capacity to conjure up forms, lines, shades or colours those mysterious phantoms of visual reality..." Gombrich. 1962. Chap. 1.)played in this at a certain point in time. It is vague to talk of these things in the context of the dawn

of mankind and the awakening of the intellect and it can also give the false impression that visual representation played its magical role all those thousands of years ago but doesn't have any real relevance or effect in our highly complex and technological world today. So for these reasons I have chose to present these claims in a more recent context. The ideas, attitudes and work of the Bauhaus are what I propose to base this study on, as this is a classic example of how visual representation played a major role in a significant change in history.

## Chapter 1.

### "A New Art, A New Order."

The Bauhaus was set up at a time when the arts and crafts found themselves in a crisis. The once gradual development of technology exploded and the arts and crafts as they stood at the time were threatened and had to be reassessed and repositioned. New forms had to be found or invented. A new situation had to be created for the arts and crafts to operate under. A situation that accommodated for the rapid technological developments that were taking place and the new world that was developing. In Germany, even since before the first World War there was a growing feeling of a closing era. The Industrial revolution brought forward machines and materials that the traditional forms of building and crafts did not apply to and so new forms, designs and craftsmanship had to be invented to use and exploit these materials and tools. Invention was to be of the utmost importance in the renovation of culture.

Machinery posed a big problem. Would the machine swamp individual input and creativity and in turn force the people into becoming little more than machines performing one function day in day out with no artistic sensitivity? Would the creative individual artist putting his 'soul' into each work (this was a prominent idea at the time) be replaced by the growing mass proletariat who are slaves to the machine? With the machine came mass production. John Ruskin and William Morris were two main figures within the arts and crafts that were strongly against industrialisation. Both were from England where industrialisation first took place and so consequently where the whole confrontation between art and craft and the new age of machinery and mass production first came to prominence. Ruskin and Morris took a very traditional stance. They both strongly opposed mechanical production of objects and industrialisation as a whole. Their plan was to turn back the tide of industrialisation through an enhanced and staunch resuscitation of traditional craftsmanship. With hindsight it is easy to see how unrealistic an approach this was but in their position at the time it was an understandable attitude and

through their work, writings and lectures they exerted a great influence in England and further afield.

Britain was a leading Empire at this time. It was the first nation to Industrialize, had many colonies and so a wealth of materials and labour. Architects, designers, engineers and industrialists throughout Europe were observing England and many were sent by their governments and companies to study and gain experience of how England was dealing with industrialisation and all the problems it entailed. The German architect Gottfried Semper was such a figure and he became involved in the struggle that the arts faced within an industrialised culture. He however developed a more realistic solution. He realized that technological progress was irreversible, and so rather than making attempts to keep traditional craftsmanship as the outlet for artistic activity he turned to education. He proposed that a new kind of training and education in the arts which did not ignore technology, machinery and mass production, but rather helped to bring about some understanding of them and their potential and capabilities would help bring about a solution to the crisis that the arts found themselves in.

Semper realised that if the peoples thinking was enhanced on these subjects then the new required forms and systems could be produced. Henry Cole sympathized with Semper. He was the director of the South Kensington Museum and of the school of design attached to it (now the Royal College of Art). And so he could put his and Semper's ideas to work and exert an influence throughout Britain, which then affected Europe, especially Germany.

It became a major concern of the arts in Germany to explore form and representation in the light of the new technological society. This was very much in tune with the avant-garde that was sweeping throughout art in Europe. The whole of Europe was making a break from the old traditions and systems of the past, but in Germany after their defeat in the First World War it took on a particular relevance, even an urgency. It was out of this atmosphere that the Bauhaus was formed.

In its beginnings the dramatic and romantically stated proposals of the Bauhaus for merging the arts and crafts, working



with technology and building the future were nothing new. These ideas were very much the thinking of the times in Germany. Practical attempts to fuse the arts and industry had begun in 1907 with the establishment of the Werkbund. The Werkbund clearly stated their objective as being "The refinement of production work in a united effort of art, industry and the crafts through education, publicity, and concerted action in regard to all pertinent questions." (Wingler, 1969, Pg.19.) Even though bloody and violent revolution swept throughout Germany after the war in 1918, a euphoric atmosphere of creating a brave new world took hold of the artists and intellectuals. They were not being ignorant to the times or the situation around them, quite the opposite they, were having a peaceful though intense revolution of ideas. The purpose of art changed. Aims and goals now demanded the merging of disciplines so that art could be put to practical use for building the future. This new approach was to be started in the colleges. In 1917 the Weimar Academy of art submitted a petition to the state ministry requesting for an architecture and applied arts department to be established at the Academy.

An extract from the Academies petition:

The Academies should no longer serve merely the so-called fine arts but should also offer the applied arts a basis for existence which the schools of arts and crafts cannot provide satisfactorily, since they look at art from much too low a level, namely that of generalization. (Forgacs, 1995, pg.24.)

It was this request that lead to the appointment of Walter Gropius as the Director of the Academy and ultimately the transformation of the Academy into the Bauhaus.

Gropius speaking at his first meeting with intellectuals and artists of Weimar:

I come to Weimar full of excitement and with the firm intention of creating one great whole, or else failing that to disappear quickly. This day and age, so extraordinarily exciting and pregnant with ideas, is at last ripe to bear something new and positive; this throbs in the air everywhere. For us kindered spirits

remains the task of truly desiring to bring about something grand, . . . . I have decided that at my art institute together with our faculty and students, we shall draw grand designs and propogate them. ( Forgacs, 1995, Pg.25.)

This dramatic statement by Gropius clarifies where the Bauhaus urge was really coming from. It was a desire, an instinctive feeling of unrest with the present and an awareness of unfulfilled potential that demanded a change. After years in the frontlines of the war Gropius wrote that he was ready to "Start building life anew". (Whitford, 1984, Chap. 2.) Through his experience he knew as well as anyone the chaos of the era and the need for a new realm of order and sense. "In the chaos that was the German world there was hope that a new art, a new order could be created". (Lupton, Ellen, Miller, 1993, Pg.37.)

The Bauhaus started in April of 1919 amidst political chaos. Germany lost the war in 1918 and after the november revolution that took place the Kaiser and the old imperial system and structure were gone. A number of major revolutions occurred throughout the country over the next six months. There was chaos that had to be ordered and potential that had to be channeled and this was the cause that the arts took on.

It was a politically sensitive time and whether artists were politically active or not (many were such as the dadaist's who were making proposals for a communist state in 1918 and 1919) artistic styles and ideas had political content imposed on them. Gropius was careful that the Bauhaus would not directly or actively align with any political ideology or party as this would only be a hinderence to the school. On the number of occassions that Gropius was called upon to state the political position of the school he clarified that the school was not in any way 'politically' concerned. However with political issues being of such sensitivity, the slightest hint of political content aroused controversy and aggression. The Bauhaus school was never generally accepted in Weimar as the ideas, work and the foreign masters employed (Kandinsky, Klee, Itten, Maholy-Nagy ) attached to the school the stigma of being anti-nationalist and too concerned with communal and universal ideas. It was this that made the survival of the Bauhaus so difficult in the Weimar republic.



Through their similar experience of the time and situation in Europe but particularly in Germany artists became aware of the fragility of the reality they occupied and operated in. This was a disjointed era, due to the transition that was taking place. The crumbling of the old empire and structure of life due to its irrelevance in the light of new knowledge, attitudes and possibility, enabled artists to see how their reality was changing. This insight gave artists such as Gropius, Kandinsky, Malevich, Lisitsky, Mondrian, etc. an exhilarating and overwhelming feeling of the potential that was present in the situation in Europe ( in particular Germany and Russia.) In 1919 at the beginning of the Bauhaus there were euphoric ideas and claims about building the future but even though between the wars Germany was never really settled, within the Bauhaus a more level headed approach developed. In spite of the unsettled nature of the running of the Bauhaus due to constant political and financial demands and enquiries the workshops succeeded in producing work of quality that convinced through their simplicity of the possible new world of order and comfort that could exist. Unfortunately the needs the German people also had a dangerous and destructive potential which manifested itself in the form of the NAZIs who proclaimed themselves as the new realm of order 'The Third Reich'.

## Chapter 2.

### The Form Classes And The Preliminary Course In Relation To Design In The Workshops.

The Bauhaus brought their students into a new world of shape, where shape is a language as important, and as agile as speech. The major problem with shape is that there is nothing to oppose it, everything everywhere is of some shape. Therefore it is not generally looked upon as a language that can carry a wealth of information. Whereas writing can simply not be there, shape is always there, in some form. To look upon the Bauhaus we must be fully aware of the language of shape as through the Bauhaus work it took on great importance. It became the main vehicle of communication and expression of ideas. At the Bauhaus the students were taught to use shape as clearly and practically as possible so as to make sense, but also open up to potential and possibility of building new forms that could be exercised and used in design. Design was very important in the Bauhaus as it was the ultimate goal to produce work that could be put to use in society. This was how they proposed to recreate reality, through the production of objects. In the Bauhaus designs the same references were used that had been used throughout the history of design - chair, tables, lamps, houses - but represented in new forms that expressed a particular thought about the world and the way things should be. To change reality they simply attempted to redesign the things in it.

Gropius talking in 1964 about the success of the Bauhaus manifesto.

Young people flocked to us from home and abroad, not to design 'correct' table lamps, but to participate in a community that wanted to create a new man in a new environment. (Forgacs, 1995, Pg.26.)

The Bauhaus institution now represents a lot of things but it was an Art and Design school in which the masters and students dealt above all with form.

Painting itself was not part of the curriculum until the last few years but from the start painters held important teaching positions within the school. The painters who taught at the Bauhaus were of the utmost importance to both the ideology and the institution. The painters selected by Gropius were artists who were investigating the possibilities of form. Klee was a master of invention and creator of endless varieties of worlds, Kandinsky, the first painter to make that huge step into pure abstraction where form was freed from the restricting role of imitation. Both these artists saw Modernism as a restoration of art to its purpose of construction after Impressionism's complete disregard for it. Impressionism was art of the moment. It was subjective response to the environment, a capturing of the play of light on objects in the world. There was no attempt at 'objective' decision making or control over the picture. For Klee and Kandinsky art was structure. Through it they constructed the world, their ideas, their experience and situation. Kandinsky and Klee were brought by Gropius to teach the elements of form. A design school set up planning to actually work within industry and business of the country employed initially mostly painters as it was the painters knowledge and grasp of form and appearance that was of such importance.

The most significant difference between Kandinsky and Klee was Kandinsky's belief that art was distinct from nature. Klee believed that art, like everything else, including himself, was incorporated in nature and he used art to examine his own experience within nature and his relationship to other things in it. Therefore in his teaching he put great emphasis on inter-relationships and synthesis. The relationships between things was of the greater importance to him, whereas Kandinsky in teaching the elements of form placed most weight on the elements themselves. Kandinsky exercised an objective, overview, whereas Klee promoted a much more physically involved and related approach to form. This reflects their differing theories on art. These two figures were of immense influence in the Bauhaus. They were not in personal contact with the students as much as the workshop masters but they were greatly respected. Their the

ories on art and their practice was of great influence to the students who participated in intense debates with them.

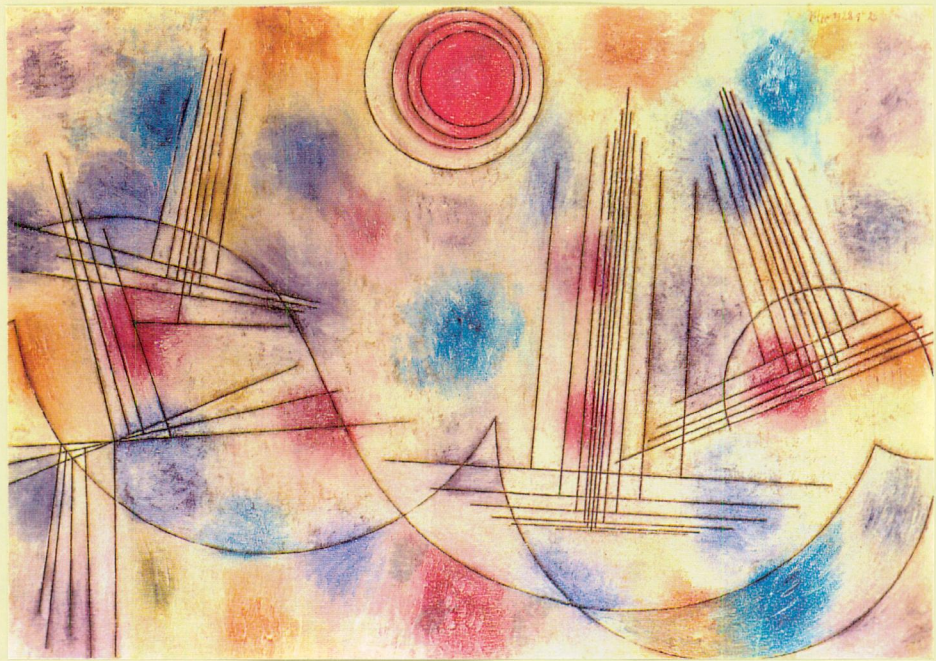
The teaching of art theory and form by Kandinsky and Klee applied directly to the students' practice in the workshops. What was most important for the Bauhaus, was that both artists believed art could be used for the construction of experience. Klee believed that the power lay in the relationship between elements, Kandinsky sought to seek absolutes. He attempted to gain control of experience through systems such as his colour-form equation;- blue applies to the circle, red to the square and yellow to the triangle. Kandinsky believed that a universal formula could be established based on visual elements that could be applied to everything. This proved to be of great importance to design within the Bauhaus. Kandinsky believed that with our capacity to observe measure and draw conclusions we can learn and establish universal laws. Having discovered certain laws or structures that govern the world we have the power to re-organise and build things for our own purposes. With Kandinsky's establishment of strict visual systems he was not proposing to narrow the potential of work but rather establish a valid code in which the students could have control over possibility. A system in which potential could be channeled so as the students could produce and create with it rather than be subject to it. When Kandinsky and Klee taught their students to represent the still life in front of them in simple, essential forms what they were teaching them to do was to look and learn about the essentials of what is there, in order to expose the basic structures and so open up potential for re-organisation. "What we need to acknowledge is that perceptual and pictorial shapes are not only translations of thought processes but the very flesh and blood of thinking itself." (Arnheim, 1969, pg. 134.) The students at the Bauhaus were taught to redesign their thinking on the physical world through form. This led them to an abstract language in which form could be reshaped and reorganised to realise new concepts on the world. New concepts of space, matter and shape were explored and this was of the great importance to the students in their workshop practice. Through exploring new forms in drawing the stu

dents could apply them in design.

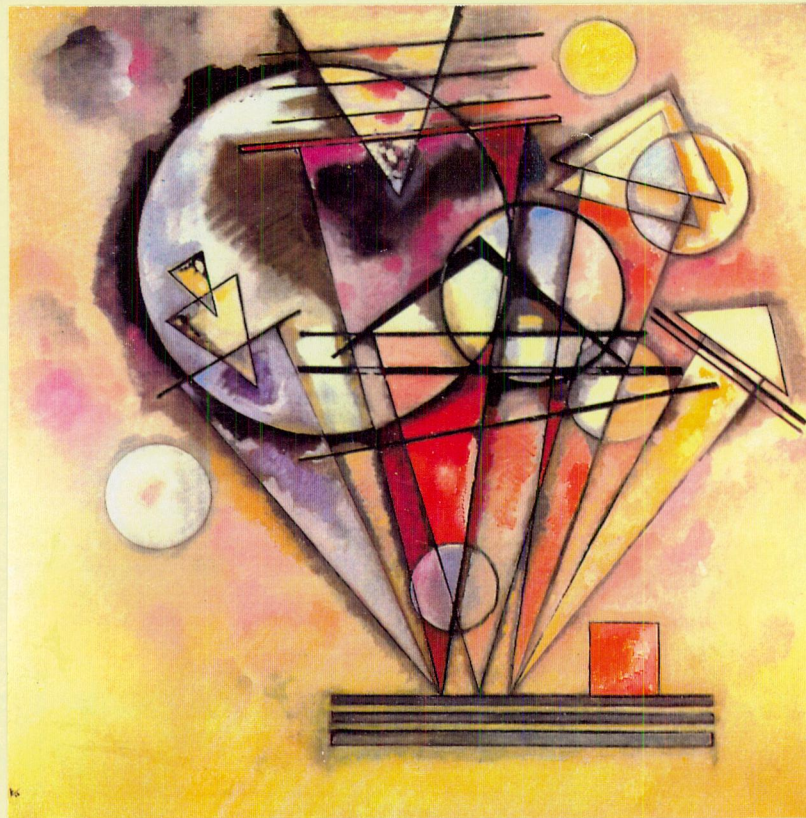
Both Klee and Kandinsky looked upon visual elements as seeds from which things could grow. And by breaking down visual elements to their simplest they could have control over that growth. In their own practice and teaching they both followed a concept of point growing to line and line growing to form. This concept was brought into the workshops by the students and became the basis of design at the Bauhaus. With this approach to design the students could start from one point and create the most basic form that would accommodate the function of the piece they were producing. So at the Bauhaus they were not referring to other designs and cutting back to the essentials by way of removal. Rather they were starting again from scratch and rebuilding completely.

During their years together at the Bauhaus Kandinsky and Klee's theory and practice came very close together even to the point where in the late 1920's Oscar Schlemmer, who was a friend of both, could not distinguish who had produced a particular piece. Their attempts to break visual elements down to their essentials had led them both to the language of geometric forms. And both in their own independent search for structure developed a similar sense of space and composition in their own work. Although both employed this basic language Klee's work avoided the anonymity of Kandinsky's more calculated compositions. Klee's ideas on art allowed him to practice the technique of letting his mind flow into form and composition on his picture surface. This was one of Klee's techniques for tapping into and displaying the structural laws governing the make up of the world. Klee still gave titles to his work that suggested not only pictorial representation but narrative. "Plummet To The Wave" (1928) for instance is as much a geometric composition employing a constructivist type language as "On Points"(1928) by Kandinsky. But Klee's title clearly leads the viewer into a different approach to his work than to Kandinsky's. Kandinsky obviously had no problems with the complete dissolution of matter. Klee however could never really leave 'things' behind him, he was too interested in nature.

The visual languages developed by both artists



1. Paul Klee. "Plumets to the wave" 1928.



2. Wassily Kandinsky "On the Points" 1928.



and propagated among the students by them during their time at the Bauhaus shows their awareness of Constructivist ideas and the similarities of these ideas to their teaching. Neither ever became a fully-fledged or self-declared Constructivist, although Kandinsky was certainly the closest both in theory and practice. However Kandinsky's work, as calculated as it was in relation to Klee's was still exploiting the expressiveness of the shapes and colours used. As Kandinsky arrived at the geometric abstract language that was so close to Constructivism his work instinctively became more painterly, enhancing the expressiveness of texture and the medium itself. However, most importantly the main similarity was that both The Constructivists and the Bauhaus exercised a conscious attempt to change reality by building it anew through the examination of form and structure.

Our greatness? it does not consist in gesticulating at the stars or in being close to the gods. It lies in the simple desire to have clear knowledge, in the ability to make exact measurements of things, to compare them methodically and to draw from them general conclusions. That the mind has the faculty of retaining in the form of abstractions so that it may reproduce them at will and make good use of them in every circumstance. (Osborne, 1979, Pg.129.)

This statement by Michel Seuphor, a constructivist theorist, is equally as applicable to Kandinsky's and Klee's teaching on form as it is to the constructivists.

The students at the Bauhaus were made aware of the Constructivists and De Stijl by their masters and by publications of their work and theories within the school. They were also encouraged to engage with these visual languages in the form classes. "That the mind has the faculty of retaining (the general conclusions) in the form of abstractions so that it may reproduce them at will and make good use of them in every circumstance." (Osborne, 1979, Pg 129) is exactly how Klee and Kandinsky's teaching on form related to the design at the Bauhaus. The students were equipped with the knowledge on form that they could draw upon and apply to the design of every kind of object. The major difference between the International Constructivists and the



Bauhaus was, the International Constructivists concentration on the fine arts in comparison to the Bauhaus technological and design orientated approach. The Russian Constructivists, however, like the Bauhaus school, held the main aim of art as contributing to collaborative projects that should be socially significant. They, like the Bauhaus, singled out Architecture, design, theatre and graphic art as purposeful production. They also considered cinema, photography and propaganda literature and posters as appropriate society based work. The Russian Constructivists repudiated any form of art that did not contribute to the communist arrangement of society. Fine art was viewed as selfish, worthless and even dangerous. The Bauhaus school did not hold such contempt for the fine arts, but the ever decreasing role for them within the Bauhaus lead over time to a sense of alienation for both Kandinsky and Klee.

The preliminary course was in the same way as the form classes connected to design in the workshops. It was considered of such importance that no one, whatever their experience or education, could enter the Bauhaus without first attending this course. It was at first taught by Johannes Itten until his resignation in 1923, and then by Josef Albers. The content of the course was basically education in materials and form. The students were not so much taught as encouraged to discover or awaken their creative abilities. They had to handle, feel and experience all manner of materials, and when they had become familiar with them produce work which expressed their texture and physicality. They were being shown how to rediscover the world, and later to transform it. These exercises were attempting to enhance or stimulate a new perceptual sensitivity in the students. The work itself produced in the course did not take traditional forms (apart from analytical drawing). Collages, montages and compositions of found objects and materials made up the majority of the work. This not only encouraged the exploration of production and representation but instilled in the student a sense of adventure and an awareness of the possibility and potential that lay in the arrangement of things. The nature of the work in this course was expressive rather than practical but it gave the stu

dents experience with all kinds of materials and textures and their different qualities. This coupled with their knowledge of form was what Gropius had hoped would produce a new type of artist/craftsman who would spearhead the merging of the artistic disciplines.

### Chapter 3.

## Hannes Meyer And His Promotion Of A Pragmatism Within The Bauhaus.

Due to the insecure financial situation at the Bauhaus throughout its existence there was much that the Bauhaus proposed that could not be carried through. From the beginning 'the building' was announced by Gropius as the ultimate artistic expression and that every other form of art only existed to support this. However an architecture department did not exist until 1927. Despite this a few successful architectural projects were completed, such as the fully furnished house that was built for the 1923 Bauhaus exhibition. The theatre on the other hand was the place where many ideas and proposals could be exercised and put into practice without the financial and practical demands and limitations that were present in society.

Oskar Schlemmer:

I noticed one thing which became especially clear from the perspective of the Bauhaus. Much of modern art nowadays tends towards practical application, towards architecture. The economic crisis may make building impossible for years to come. There are no noble tasks to which the utopian fantasies of the moderns might be applied. The illusory world of the theatre offers an outlet for these fantasies. We must be content with surrogates, create out of wood and cardboard what we cannot build in stone and steel. (Forgacs, 1995, Pg.118.)

Inevitably the theatre workshops took on great importance within the Bauhaus and it was one of the most consistently successful departments within the school. Through performances issues which were of concern to the Bauhaus could be studied under themes such as "Mechanical Ballet". The theatre took on the role that the building according to Gropius's plans, was supposed to - The integral work of art achieved through the all important merging of disciplines. Sound, light, colour and movement were all parts of the performances that constructed illusory theatrical worlds. "There was theatre at the Bauhaus from

the first day of its existence because the impulse to play was present from the first day." Oskar Schlemmer. (Dearstyne, 1986, Pg.174.) An immense urge to create coupled with the fantasies of a new future burst out in the early Weimar days in the form of fantastic parties, making of masks and costumes, gatherings and intense discussions. This exuberance with time and work developed into the more serious and practical attitude that came to characterize the Bauhaus.

Whereas other workshops such as furniture, metal, pottery, print and typography, and weave had to suppress and abandon the utopian visions and excitement for a more sober mood, the theatre did not. The design workshops, to be productive had to become practical and involved with industry. They had to consider economics, production systems, competition and demand. The theatre however could carry on making leaps into a proposed future. Mankind in the environment of technology and modern abstract shape became a theme that ran through all of the Bauhaus productions under Schlemmer. This influence undoubtedly came from him as the same theme is evident in his paintings. Schlemmer never became completely abstract in his painting or theatre production but rather was concerned with the line where mankind meets the logical and universal. The theatre explored how the fleshy human could exist in the increasingly objective, abstract, mechanized world while still retaining his human characteristics of emotional and spiritual concerns. The students experimented with clothing the actors and dancers in geometric forms of cones, cylinders, and spheres similar to the figures in Schlemmer's paintings. For "Figural cabinet" they used more abstract and manouverable cardboard cut out figures and the possibility of staging a production in which figures where controled by machine was discussed many times but never realised. These developments eventually lead to the "Reflected Light Plays" in which there are no figures at all but just coloured projections of light, and the human presence is only there through the manouevering of the shapes and lighting.

The other workshops had to conform to a more pragmatic approach. A rationalism gradually overtook the initial



3. Oskar Schlemmer (middle) and students from the stage workshop.  
Dessau. 1927.



idealism of the school at Weimar. The change in attitude took place between 1926 - 28. This period began just after the move of the school to Dessau, and included the resignation of Gropius, and the appointment of Hannes Meyer as the new director. Meyer was at first not appreciatively accepted by many as the new director but this was mainly only due to their regret at Gropius's resignation. Meyer, although only director for two years exerted a significant influence within the college. He championed the more social aspects of the original Bauhaus idea in comparison to Gropius's aesthetic concerns. However the work produced after Meyer's appointment did not lose its aesthetic appeal but rather the cooler more versatile and less burdened designs that had begun to emerge around 1924 continued to develop. (See next page.) Meyer introduced physical exercise to the school, lectures on city planning, a course on Gestalt psychology and had planned to start courses in sociology and social economics. These subjects were introduced to promote a social and economic awareness throughout the workshops. There were definite steps made by Meyer to realise the school's initial intention of operating as a commercially viable producer. He brought the Bauhaus into a closer relationship with the outside world. In the year's experience of working as the master of the first Bauhaus architecture department (before his appointment as director) Meyer thought that the workshops and students had become distant from outside industry, and that if this situation was not rectified the Bauhaus was in danger of becoming an island of little more than intellectual proposals.

Meyer had a strong personality and this brought him into conflict with a number of the masters, particularly Maholy-Nagy. Meyer reorientated the overall emphasis within the school onto the design and production of objects. This further alienated the non-utilitarian arts from the Bauhaus, but most importantly was seen as a straying from the whole point of the Bauhaus school, "to create a new man in a new environment."

- Gropius. (Forgacs, 1995, pg.26.) Meyer's promotion of a rigid functionalism and a more practical approach to design was considered by other masters as being too concerned with the







4. Marcel Breuer's "Lattenstuhl (Slat Chair)" 1922.



5. Marcel Breuer's "B33 Sidechair". 1927-28.

demands of industry rather than creating and developing new possibilities. His uncompromising personality was the complete opposite of Gropius's accommodating attitude, which had enabled the survival of the school for so long under the trying conditions of hostility from the locals in Weimar and the enemies of the Bauhaus throughout the country. While Meyer was director the school came into conflict with the Dessau city council due to open expression and promotion of leftwing political interests by some students. Whereas this would not have happened under Gropius, Meyer showed no objection to such activity within the school. Meyer openly expressed his own leftwing views and it was this that eventually led to his dismissal by the chief mayor Fritz Hesse. However his short time as director was a good thing overall for the Bauhaus. During his time he swept away idealist notions within the school and paved the way for the ideas and design at the Bauhaus to be promoted within society.

The school had quite a degree of success in establishing links with outside industry under his direction. Certainly in Germany industry had been aware of and interested in what was happening in the Bauhaus. Many companies were happy to establish links with the school and the design workshops received a number of commissions for designs and also for organising displays of products. This did not establish the school as a 'commercially viable producer', but what it did do was begin the mass production of certain Bauhaus designs within industry (steel furniture and machine embroidered textiles.) This was the beginning of the eventual worldwide influence of Bauhaus design. The school had shifted from being an intellectual builder of a utopian future to an actual leading producer of quality design suited for industry. However, The Bauhaus remained a school, and experimentation and learning continued to be its main function.

The original idea of a "socialist cathedral" had now given way to the chair, the kettle, the room and all manner of objects that make up the places we occupy. In the production of these objects the collective production of work which was always a concern within the Bauhaus was beginning to find ground. More importantly though was that the production of these

objects heralded the arrival of the new artist/craftsman that the whole education system at the Bauhaus was designed to produce. Marcel Breuer's tubular steel chairs can be considered equally as works of art and as functional items of excellent design. Their aesthetic appeal is obvious and we cannot help but admire their simplicity in face of their complete functionality. The whole 'problem' of the 'chair' is solved in the correct shaping of one length of tubular metal. The problem-solving of design in the Bauhaus was an artistic quest for form.

By this stage painting and sculpture had lost their place in the overall idea and aims of the Bauhaus. Kandinsky held a 'Free Painting' class and many of the students and masters continued rigorous examinations in painting in their spare time, but in the overall Bauhaus 'Project' it had no place. Non-utilitarian forms of art did not produce what the Bauhaus 'idea' required. These forms of art were not immediate enough in their effect on society. With painting or sculpture the truth was that they would be placed in a gallery or museum with an air of unapproachability around them for a very small number of people to look at for a few minutes. Functional objects, however, would be placed in homes alongside people and they would be handled, used and seen all day and everyday. The reality of peoples lives would be changed by the objects that surrounded them. And in this industrial era these objects were everything from a page of text to the room they were in.

## Conclusion.

The Bauhaus has in many accounts been considered as a materialistic and commercial institution. Functionalism, simplicity and economy were always major concerns throughout the existence of the Bauhaus but it was a learning institution where creativity and imagination were exercised and applied to materials and design problems. The Bauhaus ultimately wanted to bring about a more relevant relationship between the new man and the new environment. The masters and students began this by examining and exploring representation, creating forms, shapes and lines that manifested their ideas and attitudes. But they did not stop at exploring form, they wanted to put their work to practical use. The effort made at the Bauhaus to integrate art and industry and to elevate the standing of the applied arts were based in a desire for their work to operate and survive in society. Through their design and production of furniture, pots, lamps and buildings they changed the world we live in. They built the objects to make up a new reality and redesigned through representation our outlook on the world. Their influence on design and architecture is everywhere. The Bauhaus shrugged of the clutter and irrelevancies (old building materials, techniques and decor) of a European tradition that had run its course. By doing so they freed themselves from an immense weight and perceptive veil. This enabled them to address the new concerns of the Modern world - Man and the machine and production in modern industry. It can be argued that Bauhaus design and architecture came to be rejected quite quickly. Two generations later younger architects, some of who were former followers of Gropius such as Philip Johnson, were arguing against the exclusionary nature of 'The Bauhaus Style'. However the Bauhaus influence does not lie in a style, but in the fact that the Bauhaus was one of the first institutions to realise concrete answers to the design and architectural problems of the Modernist world. The position and systems of design and architecture in the Modern world were clarified at the Bauhaus. In this way the Bauhaus exercises an influence up to today.

The Bauhaus also had a significant influence on

the fine arts. At the Bauhaus a new aesthetic of the simple and undecorated was developed as well as the activation of negative space both around and within form. This was an important innovation and had an immense effect on the arts, influencing the emergence of a number of art movements the most prominent being Minimalism and Concrete art. These movements were concerned with a new perceptual sensitivity to the value of form itself without it having to be given value by decoration or marks. The form classes of Klee and Kandinsky and the teaching of their theories at the Bauhaus made a major contribution to this new tradition in Western art. The art object became a new 'thing' for many artists. Form had become dominant, it was not to follow the rules of imitation anymore. The quality of a work of art was to be judged by its own inherent laws rather than how it compared to nature. This work rejected expressiveness, rather, its intent was to enhance perception and encourage a more informed and penetrating view of the world. "The better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewers field of vision." - Robert Morris. (Osborne, 1979, pg. 162. ) The development of this kind of work reflects a significant shift in the artist's outlook on the world. Artists changed from being respondents and recorders to being conscious builders of reality. A new experience of the world had been built through art and design, and the Bauhaus was one of the major stepping stones that lead to this.

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