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Medieval Bauhaus

On Walter Gropius and his ideals for the Bauhaus

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INTRODUCTION

Just after World War I, when architect Walter Gropius (18 May 1883 – 5 July 1969) came back home from the battlefield, he had made plans to establish a new school for design, which he called the Bauhaus. In 1919 he wrote a manifesto proclaiming his ideals for this new school. In the manifesto, Gropius mentioned how he considered architecture to be the highest form of art, but that he felt that art schools had missed the mark on how to educate architecture (and art) properly, and that art had become something for the elite only to enjoy. In the manifesto, Gropius stated that he would implement a new way of teaching, taking example from the craft guilds as they were during the Middle Ages. When reading the manifesto however, it is important that the text is put into the cultural context of the time it was written in, and the time its author lived. Being born in 1883, Gropius might have been influenced by late Romanticist ideas. August Wiedmann wrote in 1986 that it was difficult to exactly pin down the term Romantic, however, there were some general features that could describe the Romantic's vision, one of which was a desire for unity and wholeness. This desire emerges from the text of the manifesto as well. To understand where German Romanticism and specifically this longing for unity and wholeness came from, one has to look at the political situation in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century for background. Wiedmann states that in Germany this longing for a feeling of unity was stronger than anywhere else, because the country as such never really existed.[1] Germany as we now know it consisted of smaller nations, amongst which the kingdom of Prussia, the kingdom of Westphalia and the kingdom of Bavaria, all gathered under the Holy Roman Empire. In 1806 Napoleon dissolved the Holy Roman Empire, which elicited a German national movement that wanted to get rid of Napoleon and to found a unified German state.[2] According to Schlüter this new German state was to be founded upon the old 'monarchic principle' of the Middle Ages. In 1965 scholar Isaiah Berlin invented the concept of 'political Romanticism', because politicians held official debates about how to return to the old way of life, specifically the time between the Ottonian (919 – 1024) and Staufen (1138 – 1254) eras.[3] Politicians held the image of Frederick I "Barbarossa"[4] (1122 – 10 June 1190) from the Hohenstaufen dynasty and from 1155 emperor of the Holy Roman Empire high. The myth of Barbarossa that 'the emperor was not dead, but merely sleeping' and would thus once come back and rule again,

[1] Wiedmann, *Romantic Art Theories*, 1-2.
[2] Schlüter, "Barbarossa's Heirs", 89.
[3] Schlüter, "Barbarossa's Heirs", 90.
[4] Meaning 'Redbeard'.

would be preserved in Germany until well into the 20th century.[5] The above serves as a concise visualisation as to how in Germany the continuity of medieval images existed in the 19th and early 20th centuries. With that, it also sheds a light on where Gropius' ideals might have come from. This feeling of unity that the whole country, including politicians, was looking for, resonates in the document. At the same time the preoccupation with unity did, according to Wiedmann, help to shape the general view of the medieval society and history.[6] To further elaborate on this: in the case of Romanticism, the concept of returning to the past did not necessarily mean looking back at it and step-by-step retrieving it. Because when doing so, one could discover things about the past one would rather not return to. As Norman and Welchman state: "One cannot simply return to primitive harmony".[7] What they mean by this is that one cannot desire to reinstate the past by only focusing on its seemingly 'blissful' parts, and ignoring things like war or famine. Within Romanticism this tended to happen, however, and the Romantic image of the Middle Ages has not much in common with the true medieval history.[8] For example, the way John Ruskin (8 February 1819 – 20 January 1900) , founder of the Arts & Crafts Movement (late 19th century – 1920s), which will be further explained in chapter one, described Gothic architecture in his *The Stones of Venice* (1851) can tell us a lot about his Romantic thinking: he wrote that the characteristic morals of Gothic architecture were wildness; of a grotesque nature; rigidity; and redundancy. According to Ruskin the stones of the Gothic building reflected the human spirit of the late-medieval person, which was coarse, loving change and nature, having a disturbed imagination, persisting and generous.[9] This whole description of the general character of the medieval person, based on the architecture of the Middle Ages, implies that Ruskin thought that the Gothic architecture could tell us all there is to know about the Middle Ages and, in other words, glorified it. It is then easy to see why Ruskin's texts formed the basis for the Arts & Crafts Movement, a movement that was about going back to the Middle Ages and retrieving apparent medieval standards in architecture.

According to Perpinyà, one of the medieval phenomena highly regarded by the romantics, was the craft guild.[10] The whole principle of the craft guild, working together and creating a unity, appealed as there was a high need for such unity in post-WWI Germany. Another motivation was to go against consumerism and the upcoming American technological

[5] Schlüter, "Barbarossa's Heirs", 90.
[6] Wiedmann, *Romantic Art Theories*, 3.
[7] Norman and Welchman, "The Question of Romanticism", 53.
[8] Perpinyà, "European Romantic Perception", 25.
[9] Perpinyà, "European Romantic Perception", 26.
[10] Perpinyà, "European Romantic Perception", 30.

inventions. The image of the Middle Ages offered a sense of security, like going back to an idyllic, simpler life. This desire of going back to the simple life is quite understandable after the experience of war. The notion that, in the medieval guilds, working together to create that sought after sense of unity, was also very appealing, which leads to the term *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which will consequently be a central concept in this thesis. During the 19th century there was a fascination for this concept, or the work of art that visibly united all of the individual arts.[11] When reading the foundation manifesto of the Bauhaus (1919-1933) one can assume that its founder, Walter Gropius, must have been captivated by the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* as well, when he began thinking about establishing a new school for design and architecture.

The concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was a typically Romantic product, because the Romantic ideal was to work together on an art piece, similar to the artistic habits in the Middle Ages. The term *Gesamtkunstwerk* originated from 18th-century poetry by philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854).[12] He argued that art was so important because it added up all forms of knowledge and that art, and only art, had the capability to be genius. Schelling's idea of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* was not necessarily that it should be a monumental piece. Most important was that the piece showed that the genius mind had been put at work. According to Schelling, one had to be able to work their conscious and unconscious mind at the same time, in order to reach the level of genius. Doing so, all forms of artistic knowledge would come together to create a total artwork.[13] Another theory is that *Gesamtkunstwerk* came from composer Richard Wagner (22 May 1813 – 13 February 1883), who implemented the concept into his operas. Wagner himself seemed to have struggled with the concept, however. In his essay *Art and Revolution*[14] he discusses the restrictions he is bound to as a composer: "[…], the play and the opera; whereby the play is being deprived of the idealizing influence of music, and the opera is precluded from the heart and highest purpose of actual drama."[15] What he means is that it is very hard to reach a true *Gesamtkunstwerk* in either a play or an opera, because a play does not allow for music and an opera does not allow for easy dialogue between actors. If he could process both these aspects in both plays and operas,

[11] Blanc, "The Bauhaus and the Cathedral Builders", 37.
[12] Sampson, *Lyric Cousins*, 168.
[13] Sampson, *Lyric Cousins*, 169.
[14] In German: *Die Kunst und die Revolution*.
[15] Original German citation: "[…] des Schauspiels und der Oper, wodurch dem Schauspiel der idealisierende Ausdruck der Musik entzogen, der Oper aber von vornherein der Kern und die höchste Absicht des wirklichen Dramas abgesprochen ist." (Wagner, *Die Kunst und die Revolution*, 44)

then he would be able to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Both the play and the opera need each other's aspects to reach the level of genius the total work of art possesses.

Another explanation of the concept came from Ottokar Hostinský (2 January 1847 – 19 January 1910), a Czech historian and musicologist. He compares the roll of a printer to that of a musician: "And the same roll, […], is in music played by the delicate rhythmic, dynamic, chromatic gradations, that the composer cannot possibly write down, and that he must leave to the performing artist. The latter has the written […] music as guidance and his task is to finish the piece […]."[16] To put more clearly: the performance of a musical piece is the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and is the combination of how the composer meant the piece to be played on the one hand, and the interpretation of the musician performing it on the other.

The notion how we should understand the initial ideals Gropius described in his manifesto, forms the basis for this thesis. I will explore the extent to which Gropius would realise the ideals as described in his manifesto for the *Staatlichen Bauhaus in Weimar*. It is relevant to know and differentiate whether the ideals Gropius had while writing his manifesto were meant as a metaphor and if so, what he meant by that metaphor. To research this, it is important to consider the background of his time and see what influence this background had on his ideas. This leads to the main research question for this thesis:

How should we interpret Gropius' ideals about designing and teaching, inspired by the guild system and described in the foundation manifesto of the Bauhaus, considering the seemingly inconsistent development of the Bauhaus?

To come to the answer to this research question, I will discuss what Gropius' ideal about the medieval guild system actually encompassed. Considering Gropius' Romantic background, it is important to know whether the ideal he had in mind and described in his manifesto, are consistent to what the actual medieval guild system was like and how it was set up. Furthermore, an interesting question to be answered in this thesis is whether Gropius was able to fully commit to implementing a 'medieval system' in the early 20th century, a completely different time from when the guild system was in full force. I will begin the thesis with the theoretical background of Walter Gropius' career, and a historical and developmental description of the Bauhaus. Chapter two is dedicated to an analysis of Gropius' manifesto, explaining the differences between his ideal view and the reality of the medieval guild system.

[16] Original German citation: "Und dieselbe Rolle, […], spielen in der Musik die zarten rhythmischen, dynamischen, chromatischen Abstufungen, die der Componist unmöglich niederschreiben kann, die er dem ausübenden Künstler überlassen muss. Dieser letztere hat in en geschriebenen […] Noten jedenfalls ein in der eben besprochenen Richtung noch unfertiges Werk zu erblicken und seine Aufgabe ist es eben, die letzte Hand an das Tonstück zu legen […]. (Hostinský, *Das Musikalisch-Schöne*, 65)

In chapter three I will introduce three case studies: the Sommerfeld house from 1921, the Törten neighbourhood in Dessau from 1928, and the so-called Meisterhausen[17] that belonged to the Bauhaus complex in Dessau. In chapter four I will discuss, by means of the Bauhaus manifesto and primary sources, how these three case studies illustrate Gropius' choices regarding architectural style throughout the years, and how these choices affected the development of the Bauhaus.

The scope of the period discussed will be the years between 1919, when the Bauhaus was founded, and 1932, when the Bauhaus moved to Berlin. The Bauhaus started in 1919 with Gropius writing his manifesto, in which he stated that he wanted to model his teaching system after the medieval guild system. The Romanticist view behind this plan tells us a lot about how Gropius came up with the idea. In this thesis I will discuss how Gropius implemented his original ideas and whether he was able to fully carry through with them, especially after the move from Weimar to Dessau in 1925. The last years (1932-1933) in Berlin will not be taken into account, as the Bauhaus then became under scrutiny of the National Socialist Party and was forced to move further from the original ideas by a force from the outside, rather than from within.

[17] In English: master's houses

CHAPTER 1

GROPIUS' BACKGROUND AND A HISTORY OF THE BAUHAUS

This chapter will be on the background of Gropius' career, and the history of the Bauhaus. To be able to explain how Gropius' later ideals were formed, we need to zoom in on the person that had, career wise, the most direct influence on him, which was his first employer Peter Behrens. From there Gropius' own career lifted off, but when he was called to fight during WWI, his mind-set changed, which resulted in him starting a new school after the war: the Bauhaus.

The Arts & Crafts Movement

The earliest movement that took an interest to the Middle Ages was the Arts & Crafts Movement. This movement preceded the Bauhaus by about half a century. It officially started in 1860, which is when one of the movement's founders William Morris (24 March 1834 – 3 October 1896) built his Red House (fig. 2). The ideas that lay behind the movement existed much earlier already. In 1836 architect Augustus Pugin (1 March 1812 – 14 September 1852) published *Contrasts: Or, a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day* and *Shewing the Present Decay of Taste*, followed by *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* in 1841. In these books, Pugin compared the "barren and heartless" classicistic early 19th-century architecture to the "embellished and kind" architecture of the Middle Ages.[18] One of his main ideas was that beauty in architecture depended on whether the design fitted its purpose. According to Pugin, Gothic architecture could be considered beautiful simply because it met its standard.[19] With these ideas, Pugin laid the foundation for the Arts & Crafts movement. In 1843 art critic and co-founder of the Arts & Crafts Movement John Ruskin wrote:

> "Art is no recreation, it cannot be learned at spare moments, nor pursued when we have nothing better to do. […] it must be understood and undertaken seriously or not at all. To advance it men's lives must be given, and to receive it, their hearts."

The main idea behind the Arts & Crafts movement was to create a connection between art and labour.[20] To Ruskin, the main reason behind this movement was to go against the prevailing

[18] Meister, *Arts & Crafts Architecture*, 38.
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] Triggs, *Arts & Crafts Movement*, 7.

notion that art was meant for the elite. He saw Renaissance art, for example, as nothing more than the display of the pride of life, moreover the pride of the 'superior classes'.[21] In 1882 the Century Guild was founded and in 1884 the Art Workers' Guild. These guilds stood for the unity of arts, and members were craftsmen who produced, for example, wallpaper, textiles, stained glass and books.[22]

William Morris saw in Gothic architecture a unity of art and life. He saw and admired the medieval building as a place where builders and craftsmen would work cooperatively.[23]

The four main values of the Arts & Crafts Movement were first and foremost the appreciation of handicraft; the unity of expression[24]; respect for regional traditions; and simplicity[25].[26]

Peter Behrens' influence on Gropius as an architect

Just like Morris, Pugin and Ruskin, architect and painter Peter Behrens' (14 April 1868 – 27 February 1940) took inspiration from the Middle Ages for his designs. Behrens was Gropius' employer from 1907 to 1910 after Gropius had finished studying architecture at the Universities of Berlin and Munich (1903-1907).[27] Behrens had a significant influence on Gropius. One important aspect here, was Behrens' growing fascination with the German phenomenon of the *Bauhütte*[28]. In his *Apollo in der Demokratie* (1967) Gropius mentioned how Behrens provided him with the foundation on which he established his own development as an architect: "[Behrens] introduced me to the systematic teachings of the medieval *Bauhütten*"[29].[30] These *Bauhütten* to which Gropius was referring, had been around in German architecture for centuries. They originated in the Middle Ages as the mason's lodge. Later in Behrens' career as an architect, these mason's lodges with their medieval origins proved to be a great source of inspiration for him.

Behrens' early works do not appear to have any specific medieval inspiration. In 1910, Behrens and Gropius published a book together, called *Memorandum on the Industrial Prefabrication of Houses on a Unified Artistic Basis*. The book described modern industrial building techniques, which imply that both Behrens and Gropius, around 1910, were not yet

[21] Triggs, *Arts & Crafts Movement*, 18.
[22] Meister, *Arts & Crafts Architecture,* 42-43.
[23] *Ibid*.
[24] The collaboration between craftsmen to produce a harmonious whole: the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.
[25] As a pendant of consumerism.
[26] *Ibid*.
[27] Gropius and Fitch, *Buildings, Plans, Projects*, 6.
[28] In English: construction shed
[29] Original German citation: "[Behrens] führte mich in die Systemlehre der mittelalterlichen Bauhütten […] und in die geometrischen Regeln der griechischen Architektur ein." (Gropius, *Apollo in der Demokratie*, 125)
[30] Gropius, *Apollo in der Demokratie*, 125.

actively trying to implement medieval aspects in their designs. Although one could interpret for example the AEG turbine factory (1909, Berlin) as such. In the tall walls with equally tall windows, constructed from steel and glass, one could see a comparison with Gothic cathedrals, reaching as highly into the sky as possible. To reach such a height, the cathedrals needed buttresses for support. The walls from the AEG turbine factory did not, as the steel-and-glass construction could reach much higher more easily.[31] As architectural problems such as these existed already during the building of the Gothic cathedrals, it makes sense for architects to be interested in the Middle Ages and to want to solve these problems. Even though the turbine factory was designed according to AEG's modern industrial aesthetics, over time Behrens became actively interested in incorporating medieval aspects into his designs, eventually coming up with the *Dombauhütte*, which was built in May 1922 and existed until October that same year (fig. 1). To him, medieval architecture became the most important motivation and inspiration for his own designs. He had a desire to resuscitate cultural continuity and saw the cultural and architectural legacy of the Middle Ages as his goal in this quest.[32] The reason for this, was in fact WWI. Before the Great War, people wanted to keep moving forward and keep modernising. The destruction of the war made an abrupt end to this need for modernisation. People started to fall back on tradition again, architects included. This could be explained by looking at the economic state Germany was in after WWI. As a punishment for starting the war, Germany was imposed new rules and fines. One of the consequences of these rules was that Germany had no access to the international market,[33] which led to shortages in, among others, building materials.[34] This is why architects needed to fall back on traditional building materials such as wood, which was easier accessible. Behrens stated in a letter he wrote in 1929 to German art historian August Hoff (16 September 1892 – 16 February 1971) that with his *Dombauhütte* he wanted to create a counterweight against the materialism and the *neue Sachlichkeit*, which he found too pervasive.[35] The *Neue Sachlichkeit* was an art movement from between the mid-1920s and the early 1930s. The art it produced could be recognised by themes that had much to do with modern technology and busy city life, characterised by hard lines and smooth finishes.[36] With Behrens' need to rebel against the prevailing modernity from before the war, came the need to go back to using old craftsmanship for his designs, such as wood cutting or glass painting. In

[31] James-Chakraborty, *Architecture since 1400*, 261.
[32] Anderson, "Medieval Masons", 441-442.
[33] Cukierman, "Money growth and inflation", 112.
[34] Simpson, *Cheap, Quick and Easy*, 91.
[35] Anderson, "Medieval Masons", 442.
[36] Plumb, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, 11.

his book *Die Dombauhütte* (1923) he wrote that the work of the architect should make them proud to take part in an activity previously considered as honourable for the. According to him, during the Middle Ages, at the time of the *Bauhütten*, the passion for architecture was strongest. Behrens saw the working communities of the builders and stonemasons as likeminded unities.[37]

The *Dombauhütte* gave Behrens the perfect opportunity to realise his ideal of becoming a true craftsman himself, which he saw as the ultimate form of art. The design of the *Dombauhütte* takes mostly after a Gothic chapel, which is very interesting, taking into account that the original medieval *Bauhütten* were only simple huts to provide a place for the mason working, as mentioned earlier. In the case of the *Dombauhütte*, Behrens merged the mason's lodge and the cathedral together. The contrast between the simple lodge and the cathedral emphasises the grandeur of the ecclesiastical aspect of the building, which is exactly what Behrens wanted to achieve. He wanted to show how his church was the product of craftsmen working together, just as he envisioned it would have happened in the Middle Ages, and made clear that only those who had a sense of the significance of 'the whole' could participate".[38] In saying this, Behrens insinuates that creating a *Gesamtkunstwerk* was, for him, the highest achievement anyone could reach within art, and that only likeminded people who really understood the concept, could live up to it. He eventually found such likeminded people: the exhibition catalogue enlisted thirty-three artists that contributed to the *Dombauhütte*.[39] Behrens wanting to resort to craftsmanship came from the idea that craft represented a different world, one under threat of industrialisation. By going back to that world, Behrens believed he could bridge the gap between art and technology that was caused by modernism and industrialisation.[40]

The ideas his former employer had, but also the philosophy of the earlier Arts & Crafts Movement resonates in Walter Gropius' manifesto for the Bauhaus of 1919. Gropius too believed that going back to craftsmanship was the only way to become a true artist. Knowing Walter Gropius had worked for Peter Behrens, it makes sense why he stated the ideas the way he had in his manifesto. Gropius wanted to bring together creative strengths in different disciplines and wanted to "educate architects, painters and sculptors of all levels depending on their abilities, as skilled craftsmen or self-employed artists and establish a community of leading and future artists" (see appendix). Just as Peter Behrens had done, Gropius wanted to

[37] Anderson, "Medieval Masons", 441.
[38] Anderson, "Medieval Masons", 444.
[39] Anderson, "Medieval Masons", 460.
[40] Anderson, "Medieval Masons", 458.

fall back on the principles he believed formed the basis for the medieval guild system. This system he wanted to use to give shape to his new school.

The beginning of Gropius' career

After his time in Behrens' atelier, Gropius' first big project, together with architect Adolf Meyer (17 June 1881 – 14 July 1929) was the Fagus factory: a new shoe last factory in Alfeld an der Leine (1911), owned by entrepreneur Carl Benscheidt. Gropius had just opened his own office when he received the offer to build the factory. The floorplans and construction proposal were already done by Eduard Werner (17 September 1847 – 29 June 1923), but Benscheidt wanted Gropius to design the façade. (fig. 3). After this project was finished, Gropius worked on three more projects before the First World War broke out: a forerunner of the diesel-driven car (1913), car compartments for the German Railway (1914) and an exhibition model factory for the Deutsche Werkbund (1914). [41]

After coming back from the First World War in 1918, Gropius wanted to rekindle his professional contacts in Berlin. In 1919 he joined the Arbeitsrat Für Kunst, initiated in 1918 by architect Bruno Taut (4 May 1880 – 24 December 1938), painter César Klein (14 September 1876 – 13 March 1954) and art historian Adolf Behne (13 July 1885 – 22 August 1948). According to Gropius, the Arbeitsrat was supposed to eventually be able to replace the Deutsche Werkbund[42]. The group wrote publications on art and architecture such as pamphlets or their yearbook, gave lectures and organised the Exhibition for Unknown Architects in 1919.[43] In this Arbeitsrat, Gropius already had some ideas about architecture that he later elaborated on when writing the Bauhaus Manifesto. Together with Adolf Behne (13 July 1885 – 22 August 1948) and Bruno Taut (4 May 1880 – 24 December 1938) he wrote the text for the leaflet of the Exhibition for Unknown Architects:[44]

"Socialism – brotherhood – develops itself through work done in common, and the more this common work is separated from all practical, petty, and restricted goals, the sooner will socialistic feeling, i.e. a true feeling of human brotherhood, develop. […]". "[…] in raising a single work of beauty worthy of the

[41] Gropius and Fitch, *Buildings, Plans, Projects*, 9.
[42] The Deutsche Werkbund was founded on October 5th in 1907 by architect Hermann Muthesius (20 April 1861 – 29 October 1927), politician and pastor Friedrich Naumann (25 March 1860 – 24 August 1919) and painter Henry van de Velde (3 April 1863 – 15 October 1957). The Werkbund was supposed to reform the German arts and crafts by seeking a connection between artists and producers. Their goal was to improve the design and quality of everyday products and to restore the lost moral and aesthetic unity of the German culture. (Campbell, *The German Werkbund*, 9-11)
[43] Pehnt, "Gropius the Romantic", 379.
[44] Original German title: *Ausstellung des A.f.K. für unbekannte Architekten*

> Gothic, we will certainly have done no less for the victory of socialism than the politicians and theoreticians who fight with us on the same line but with different weapons."[45]

This text shows how highly Gropius thought of the Gothic. It also shows how he echoes the ideas Peter Behrens had about the grandeur of the Gothic style and with that, the Middle Ages.

When Gropius was offered the position of director at the Grossherzoglich-Sachsen-Weimarische Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst in 1919, he took the job and moved to Weimar.[46] This move gave him the opportunity to found the Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar.

In his *Recommendations for the Founding of an Educational Institution* of 1916, which can be seen as the predecessor of the manifesto he would write in 1919 for the new Bauhaus school in Weimar, he wrote that among the Bauhaus participants a joyful partnership might re-emerge as was practiced in the medieval 'lodges', where craftsmen came together and contributed their independent work to the collective piece of art.[47] Gropius made clear that he thought of these medieval guilds as exemplary for his new school. He also wanted to go against the prevailing idea that there should be a distinction between artists and artisans. In 1919 Gropius wrote the manifesto in which he described the plan he had for the new school, called *Programm des Staatlichen Bauhaus in Weimar*. This manifesto would become the starting point of the Bauhaus.

Bauhaus in its infancy

After Weimar's School of Arts and Crafts' principal and Belgian architect Henry van der Velde (3 April 1863 – 15 October 1957) had to resign when WWI broke out, Walter Gropius was made candidate as his potential successor in April 1915. As the school closed in July 1915, it would never be realised, but Gropius' high position nevertheless made it possible for him to write the Bauhaus manifesto and to be able to actually realise it.[48]

After Gropius published the manifesto for the Staatlichen Bauhaus in Weimar, the official foundation date for the new school became April 1st 1919.[49] Already in the autumn of 1919, the Bauhaus received political backlash which was the first incident that later led to the school moving to Dessau. Opponents of the Bauhaus had founded the Free Association for City

[45] *Ibid.*
[46] Gropius and Fitch, *Buildings, Plans, Projects*, 6.
[47] Blanc, "The Bauhaus and the Cathedral Builders", 38.
[48] Schuldenfrei, *Luxury and Modernism*, 119.
[49] Siebenbrodt and Schöbe, *Bauhaus 1919-1933*, 10.

Interests, which was a conservative right-wing group. The group accused the Bauhaus of being influenced too much by 'Spartacist and Bolshevist tendencies'.[50] Bauhaus Student Hans Groß had attended the Association's meetings and complained there about the Bauhaus having not enough of a nationalist (or German-minded) leadership. The Groß Case as it was called, led to a number of students leaving the Bauhaus and an official complaint against the Bauhaus by a group of right-wing Weimar citizens and artists.[51]

From 15 August to 30 September 1923, the Bauhaus held its great exhibition with an accompanying publication (*Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar 1919-1933*), and an organised Bauhaus Week filled with lectures, concerts, and stage performances.[52] During this week the German National Theatre in Weimar performed the *Triadisches Ballett*[53] (fig. 14), the avant-garde ballet piece by Oskar Schlemmer (4 September 1888 – 13 April 1943).[54]

Earlier in 1923, during the summer, the German currency, the *Reichsmark*, had crashed and from October that year Gropius tried to found Bauhaus Ltd. This way the Bauhaus had its own company and was free from public funds. He wanted the students to receive the money their products yielded to be able to finance their studies. This strategy proved to be a fruitful one, as it led to high-quality products, such as numerous tea- and coffee sets by for example Marianne Brandt (1 October 1893 – 18 June 1983) (fig. 15) and a chess set (1924) by Josef Hartwig (19 March 1880 – 1956) (fig. 16).[55]

The curriculum

For the curriculum of his new school, Gropius wanted an extensive theoretic basis (fig. 17). He wanted to create a design programme that would go against the student's probable preoccupations about and dependence upon past and existing styles. From this notion, the *Vorkurs*, which means 'basic course') was created by pedagogue and painter Johannes Itten (11 November 1888 – 27 Mei 1967).[56] All students at the Bauhaus had to start with this six months course, in which they would explore the basics of art: colour, shape, space and materials. During the course they learned to let go of previous (traditional) notions they might have about art.[57] According to Gropius, this way the students would be able to better understand the essence of architecture. As he wrote in 1957: "I have found that the very

[50] Siebenbrodt and Schöbe, *Bauhaus 1919-1933*, 13.
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] Siebenbrodt and Schöbe, *Bauhaus 1919-1933*, 17.
[53] Schlemmer's ballet pieces, including the *Triadisches Ballett*, were meant to display the connection between the human consciousness and spatial awareness. (Kant, "Triadic Ballet", 16).
[54] Siebenbrodt and Schöbe, *Bauhaus 1919-1933*, 18.
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] Franciscono, "Founding of the Bauhaus", 238.
[57] Koehler, "Great utopias", 126.

young student, who hasn't found his own ground to stand on, is sometimes rather discouraged when he faces the old masters. […] In order to understand the method of approach taken by the masters beyond all technicalities, the student must have recognized something of the spiritual goals of his profession."[58]

Itten would start with breathing exercises and would let students loosely but quickly draw shapes, like lines, circles and spirals. Other exercises would consist of making detailed drawing of the human figure and of materials and textures. This way, Itten wanted the students to gain precision and become more perceptive of their surroundings, while also start understanding the properties of the materials better.[59] Further elements of the *Vorkurs* consisted of analysing the old masters, doing colour analyses and drawing basic forms while exploring the different connections these forms could have, for example contrasts like big against small or light against dark.[60] The purpose of the *Vorkurs*, and in particular the notion that students had to let go of traditional views on art, was first and foremost to draw the connection between artistic activity and the exploration of the unconscious mind. Only then the student could let go of what they knew and start looking at the different aspects an art piece contained, and work from there, rather than look at the art piece as a whole and the style that it fitted into.[61]

After completing the *Vorkurs*, which lasted six months, students were encouraged to compile their own curriculum, consisting of the more advanced courses at the workshops the Bauhaus offered. Additionally, to the practical courses offered by the workshops, a theoretical course was given by Joost Schmidt on the study of shape and volume and three-dimensional design. Painters Paul Klee (18 December 1879 – 29 June 1940) and Wassily Kandinsky (16 December 1866 – 13 December 1944) had compulsory courses on respectively design and drawing.[62] Neither of these courses had textbooks yet, so Klee and Kandinsky had to write all of their lecture notes down, which would later be published: *Point and Line to Plane* by Kandinsky and *Pedagogical Sketchbook* by Klee, both in 1925.[63]

During the Vorkurs the students were prepared to start working in the workshops. Every workshop at the Bauhaus had two teachers, the *formmeister* would teach observation and composition, while the second, the *lehrmeister* would teach about methods and the use of

[58] Gropius, "History and the Student", 8.
[59] Franciscono, "Founding of the Bauhaus", 251.
[60] Fransiscono, "Founding of the Bauhaus", 252.
[61] Reizman, *History of Modern Design*, 182.
[62] Howell, "Changing Bauhaus ideal", 89.
[63] Howell, "Changing Bauhaus ideal", 91.

materials. By having an arts professor and a crafts professor teach the course together, Gropius wanted to connect the arts and crafts.[64]

The first workshops at the Bauhaus in Weimar were weaving, pottery, printing, woodworking, metalwork, glasswork and mural painting. Even though there was no architectural course until 1927 (Gropius considered this too expensive), architecture was from the beginning the main subject at the Bauhaus.[65] This is already evident in the way Gropius started his manifesto in 1919: "The ultimate goal of all art is building!" (see appendix).

A new beginning: moving to Dessau and making changes

By 1923, the Bauhaus in Weimar was critically acclaimed and recognised throughout Europe, the United States and Canada. However, after around 15.000 people visited the big Bauhaus exhibition from 1923 (fig. 18), the school experienced a setback. On 20 March 1924 the Thuringian state parliament[66] brought Gropius the news that the contracts at the Bauhaus would not be extended, and on 9 April 1924 the Thuringian minister of Finance declared the Bauhaus unprofitable and terminated the contracts with immediate effect. Besides that, the Bauhaus budget would was lowered from 100,000 to 50,000 Reichsmark. In December 1924, the Weimar government stated that new contracts would be allowed only if the government had a say in which masters would be dismissed. At the Bauhaus, both masters and students refused and they had no other choice than to shut down the school in Weimar.[67] On 26 December 1924 The *Staatlichen Bauhaus in Weimar* was officially declared dissolved by the Master's Council with effect from 1 April 1925.

The news of the Bauhaus closing its doors spread fast and many German cities offered a new home for the school. Eventually, it was Dessau's mayor Dr. Fritz Hesse who would convince Gropius that his city was the right place to start up again.[68] Hesse had been elected in 1918 as mayor and was responsible for Dessau's economic and cultural development. He had managed to get the Junkers-Werke airplane manufacturing company to settle in Dessau and had made sure that the (former) Dessau-Alten airport, which was still under construction, got finished. As soon as Hesse learned of Bauhaus' search for a new home, he saw the opportunity to resurge Dessau's artistic field.

[64] Howell, "Changing Bauhaus ideal", 66.
[65] Howel, "Changing Bauhaus ideal", 69.
[66] Which was right-wing, as the German National People's Party (*Deutschnationale Volkspartei*, DNVP), the German People's Party (*Deutsche Volkspartei*, DVP) and the German Democratic Party (*Deutsche Demokratische Partei*, DDP) had been elected only a month before, on 10 February 1924.
[67] Howell, "Changing Bauhaus ideal", 81.
[68] Howell, "Changing Bauhaus ideal", 82.

Culturally, Dessau had a well-developed theatre and opera scene, but was not as strong in other areas. Later, in his memoirs, Hesse wrote that to him, this was the chance of a lifetime to bring Dessau back to what it once had been.[69] On March 28 1925 Dessau's town council voted and decided to invite the Bauhaus to make their city their new home. On April 1st that year the Bauhäusler arrived in Dessau. While the construction on the new Bauhaus building began (which was finished at the end of 1926), other buildings were quickly made ready for the teachers and students. Workshops were installed in a factory building and the local museum made room available for lectures.[70]

In Dessau, after Itten had left in 1923, Gropius appointed Josef Albers and László Moholy-Nagy for the *Vorkurs*. Both men continued the original method Itten had started in 1920, but in their own ways. Albers relied on the study of paper. He let his students cut and fold paper repeatedly, which had three educational purposes, namely: firstly, to show how the same material reacts differently under different methods of alteration; secondly, even though materials appear similar, they can have various textures or structures; and lastly that construction techniques and different uses of materials is essential to understanding any material.[71] These exercises fitted in the reformulated objectives mentioned above. They helped the teachers learn their students about spatial awareness and how materials could complement each other, and prepare them for designing real constructions. For example: different types of metal (nickel and iron are both silver coloured) that appear similar but have a different consistency. Nickel is a very strong metal, while iron, as long as it is not strengthened with other metals, is naturally weak. He considered it important for his students to learn what they could do with different materials. As Albers said in an interview from 1970: "[…] I did not teach art as such, but philosophy and psychology of art".[72]

Moholy-Nagy worked for his *Vorkurs* class with materials such as metal, wood and synthetics. He wanted the students to focus on three-dimensional works, and visual balance. He wanted them to get familiar with the materials they worked with, and was not so much interested in their end products, as he was in the process that preceded it and the use of materials. As his wife, architecture and art historian Sibyl Moholy-Nagy (29 October 1903 – 8 January 1971), wrote in one of her publications that the experiment and free play of intuition

[69] Howell, "Changing Bauhaus ideal", 84.
[70] *Ibid.*
[71] Howell, "Changing Bauhaus ideal", 87.
[72] Holloway, Weil and Albers, "Conversation with Josef Albers", 459.

and material knowledge was of higher value than the end result. 'Education by process' became the motto.[73]

In Dessau the workshops were to be transformed into so-called "laboratory workshops", in contrast to the experimental first phase in Weimar. It was the Bauhaus attempt to attain serial production suitable for industrial manufacture. The goal here was being able to offer high-quality mass products that were affordable for a wide range of people.[74] During the mid-1920s, 'the factory' had a certain high status: it had become symbolic for the new age.[75] Already during the 1910s, when Gropius still worked under Peter Behrens, he was working on and designing industrial buildings, such as the Fagus factory from 1911. In 1910 Gropius had submitted a proposal called *Programm zur Gründung einer allgemeine Hausbaugesellschaft aus künsterlisch einheitlicher Grundlage* to Walter Rathenau of AEG. In it, he describes how the architect and the entrepreneur should work together and combine their forces, establishing a happy union, as he called it, between art and technics.[76] After this proposal, the industrialisation process of architecture disappeared into the background of Gropius' mind until the 1920s. A possible explanation for this could be WWI. Both during and shortly after the Great War Germany was in political chaos[77] and economic decline[78]. Also, materials were scarce. Architecture and art were not high priority, whereas rebuilding society economically was. In 1926 Gropius stated that "The Bauhaus wants to serve in the development of present-day housing […]. The machine can provide the individual with mass-produced products that are cheaper and better than those manufactured by hand" and that "the creation of standard types for all practical commodities of everyday use is a social necessity".[79] This change in viewpoint from the earliest Bauhaus-ideas is notable. Gropius grew more concerned with developing new, practical ways for providing houses, instead of focusing on aesthetically pleasing architecture. Gropius became fascinated by the idea of having a standardised construction kit, which consisted of a precise description of what the end product should look like. The main characteristic of such a construction kit, according to Gropius, should be that it is able to have all the individual elements form a larger unity, which in the area of history of

[73] Moholy-Nagy, *Experiment in Totality*, 39.
[74] Siebenbrodt and Schöbe, *Bauhaus 1919-1933*, 25.
[75] Herbert, *Factory-Made House*, 9.
[76] Herbert, *Factory-Made House*, 33-35.
[77] Due to the war itself, but also the German Revolution of 1918, a lack of leadership because the emperor had fled to The Netherlands, and the Versailles Treaty of 1919 which was supposed to restore peace and at the same time impose punishment to Germany for starting the war.
[78] Due to hyperinflation in the early 1920s.
[79] Herbert, *Factory-Made House*, 41.

technology is called 'totipotency'.[80] In this new, more practical way of building houses, the question remains whether Gropius still fell back on the ideals he had from the beginning: the idea that, in this case, multiple elements are "working together" to form a whole. In 1923 Gropius had started experimenting with the concept of industrialised building, which resulted in the so-called *Wabenbau* ("Honeycomb System") in 1925 and the *Baukasten im Großen* ("Big Construction Kit") in1926.[81] The name of the Honeycomb System is quite self-explanatory: it consists of adding and attaching linked space cells together according to the number of residents and their needs (fig. 19). The Big Construction Kit consists of six standard modules of different sizes and shapes (all tetrominoes[82]) which can be put together as well, again according to the residents and their needs. Gropius presented his ideas in two articles: *Wohnhaus-Industrie* ("Residence Industry") and *Der große Baukasten* (The Big Construction Kit). In these articles, he argued that a "fundamental transformation of the entire construction industry towards an industrial direction" was needed. According to Gropius, the end goal was to transform the house into an industrially manufactured product, assembled from flexible construction kit elements. Gropius wanted ready-made components, built in specialised factories, that were brought to the construction site to be put together there and then. His aim was to eliminate the disadvantages, such as a commissioner changing the components throughout the building process or the amount of time that was lost, of conventional building, which could be, according to Gropius, annoying component changes and loss of time.[83] It needs to be noted, that Gropius did not want entire industrially built houses that all looked the same, but specifically wanted those tetromino modules to create houses of all shapes and sizes. He found a system that allowed for constructing standardised shapes together to form a building, which was different from the next, but the same in building process and technique. This way, he could keep the prices low and the building time short. In his articles on the Honeycomb System and the Big Construction Kit, Gropius also proposed a skeleton construction as the basis of the house onto which the separate components would be added. Iron or reinforced concrete beams and columns would be joined together to create a frame, which would be filled up with machine produced building panels to make the walls. His requirements for the material of these panels were for them to be weather-

[80] Seelow, "Construction Kit", 8.
[81] *Ibid.*
[82] A tetromino is a geometric shape that is made of four squares. Because the squares are linked together differently in each tetromino, five different shapes can be made: a line, an L-shape, an S-shape, a T-shape and a bigger square. The term is where the game "Tetris" gets its name from.
[83] Seelow, "Construction Kit", 9.

resistant, structurally solid yet porous, insulating, tough and lightweight.[84] For the other parts of his new houses, Gropius also wanted to transfer to building materials other than the old ones, as he called them, such as wood. He wanted to start using mechanically instead of naturally processed materials (or mechanically improved natural materials), such as wrought iron, cement alloys or artificial wood. This noticeable change back to non-traditional building materials will be discussed further in chapter four.

In his articles on the Honeycomb System and the Big Construction Kit, Gropius concluded that fundamental changes needed to be brought to the field of architecture and the essence of the profession of the architect. He argued that the modern architect was now a step ahead of his or her ancestors, and needed to look at vehicle engineers who designed cars and ships for inspiration. These engineers already worked with mechanically produced and standardised building materials and mechanical manufacturing methods, and were therefore, according to Gropius, a greater example to the modern architect.[85]

The Bauhaus influence

Gropius did not strive for having a certain amount of influence, for example in the political field, even though the Bauhaus received a lot of political attention in its early years, it was not Gropius' goal to have a say in the local governance. He was focused on communicating his ideal to his students. In doing so, the Bauhaus did gain influence in other areas, namely on art itself and art education. Already during the Dessau-era, several Bauhaus and non-Bauhaus artists worked on a book series, consisting of eight *Bauhaus Bücher* or "Bauhaus Books", which were on the theoretical aspects of art and architecture.[86] Creating this book series was another move towards the ideological approach Gropius wanted for his school: by bringing art to the people by means of a book series, the Bauhaus removed itself further away from the prevalent notion in general society that art was only meant for an elite group of people. Siebenbrodt and Schöbe state that the main principles for the new Bauhaus were "to shape the intellectual, crafts and technical abilities of creatively talented human beings to equip them for design work, particularly construction" and "to perform practical experiments, notably in housing construction and interiors, as well as to develop model types for industry and manual trades".[87]

[84] Seelow, "Construction Kit", 10.
[85] *Ibid.*
[86] Koehler, "Great utopias", 280.
[87] Siebenbrodt and Schöbe, *Bauhaus 1919-1933*, 25.

At one point, the Bauhaus name was so widely known, that discussions within the artistic field, raised by any of the Bauhäusler, were not only debated within the Bauhaus, but also among the larger public. Former Bauhäusler could very easily get a job and some, like Johannes Itten, were able to found their own successful art schools. he Bauhaus ideas reached America as well, and Bauhaus painters had gained such prestige, that they could participate in exhibitions in America.[88]

Even after the Bauhaus, which by then was situated in Berlin, was forced to shut down 1933, the Bauhäusler kept spreading the Bauhaus philosophy. Josef Albers, for example, went to the U.S.A. From 1933 to 1940 he taught at Black Mountain College in North Carolina.[89] Albers continued to educate his artistic views to art students there. He wanted to involve both the intellectual and the intuitive side of his students while teaching them the fundamentals of shape. He taught his students to trust their ability to relate to the qualities of materials and colours and to then use that to make art. He called this the senses of the soul. Teaching this way, Albers saw that every student had potential, even though all students had different backgrounds and personalities.[90] Albers' view on art became widespread in the States, through his publications, but also through his lectures and courses he gave at Harvard and Yale.[91]

Another Bauhäusler coming to the States and spreading Bauhaus views, was László Moholy-Nagy (20 July 1895 – 24 November 1946). To Molohy-Nagy, art had both personal and social significance. He saw art as the embodiment of a person's being. All that a person was, would come out in the form of art: experiences, intellect and emotions. This resulted in him believing that everybody could be an artist, much like Albers' beliefs.[92] Moholy-Nagy wanted his students to recognise their own artistic abilities before starting to make art.[93] In 1937 he opened his own school in Chicago: the *New Bauhaus*, which closed again in 1938. The following year, Moholy-Nagy opened the *School of Design* in Chicago, which in 1944 changed to the *Institute of Design*.[94] When writing the programme for his *New Bauhaus*, Moholy-Nagy wanted to combine Bauhaus ideas with his own view and teaching experiences, all while meeting the needs of students in the United States.[95]

[88] Bayer, *Bauhaus, 1919-1928*, 107.
[89] Moynihan, "The Influence of the Bauhaus", 207.
[90] *Ibid.*
[91] Moynihan, "The Influence of the Bauhaus", 208.
[92] Moynihan, "The Influence of the Bauhaus", 253.
[93] Moynihan, "The Influence of the Bauhaus", 254.
[94] Moynihan, "The Influence of the Bauhaus", 252.
[95] Moynihan, "The Influence of the Bauhaus", 266.

CHAPTER 2

AN ANALYSIS OF GROPIUS' MANIFESTO

This chapter will give an analysis of Gropius' manifesto, followed by a comparison of the ideal regarding the Middle Ages and the medieval guild system which Gropius had in mind for his new school, and the actual way the medieval guilds operated.

An analysis of Gropius' manifesto

The manifesto Gropius wrote to establish the Bauhaus in 1919 has a cover sheet of a woodcut made by Lyonel Feininger (17 July 1871 – 13 January 1965) (fig. 4). The woodcut depicts a cathedral in full glory, with three stars in the sky above it and shooting light beams around the building. This woodcut is not merely an illustration to brighten up the text on the next pages: considering the content of the manifesto, this cathedral can be regarded as a symbol of the Bauhaus. To Gropius the medieval cathedral was the ultimate example of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. It was the 'magnificent outcome' of craftsmen working together, the "crystal symbol of a new order".[96] For the Bauhaus, this was exactly what Gropius wanted to achieve as well: to have men and women specialised in different crafts working together to create a unified work of art. At the same time, the symbol of the cathedral in 1919 had a double meaning. Just after the Great War, because of the many sanctions Germany had received, the economy was in shambles because of a starting recession. For his symbolic cathedral, Feininger chose to build it from crystals. Koehler (2009) even states that Feininger made it from part crystal and part rubble and that it was meant to be an inspiration to young artists to build Germany back up after the war and to start building for the future.[97] To Gropius, the Bauhaus was the start of a new beginning after the war, as he emphasises in his own bundle of Bauhaus buildings during the Dessau period (*Bauhausbauten Dessau*, 1930):

> "After the brutal interruption of work, that was forced by the war, everyone had to change their way of thinking. Everyone longed to bridge the division between reality and spirit. The Bauhaus became the centre of this desire."[98]

[96] Koehler, "Postwar to Postwar", 17.
[97] *Ibid*.
[98] Original German citation: "Nach der brutalen Unterbrechung der Arbeit, die der krieg erzwang, ergab sich für jeden denkenden die Notwendigkeit der Umstellung. Jeder sehnte sich von seinem Gebiet aus, den unheilvollen Zwiespalt zwischen Wirklichkeit und Geist zu überbrücken. Sammelpunkt dieses willens wurde das Bauhaus." (Gropius, *Bauhausbauten*, 7)

Gropius started the text of the manifesto (see appendix) with the statement that “the ultimate goal of all arts is the building!”. The exclamation point at the end of the sentence makes it extra clear to the reader that this is a statement Gropius found of utter importance. He explains how the decoration of a building and the architecture itself have grown apart, and that artists and artisans should do everything to get them aligned again. He accuses old art schools for not understanding this problem he just highlighted and therefore to never have been able to recreate the unity between decoration and architecture. Gropius goes on to explain how he believes that when young people feel the love for art and creativity and start learning a craft rather than following the traditional artistic education, they will create excellent work. Gropius emphasises that there is no difference between the artist and the craftsman, he even states that the artist is merely a glorified version of a craftsman. What he means by this is that the artist was perceived to be of higher status than the craftsman, because art was supposed to be exclusively for the elite. In the last paragraphs Gropius remarks how he wants to create a new guild of craftsmen. With the mention of “creating a new guild” he hints at the ideas about using the medieval guild system as a teaching method, which he learned while under employment of Peter Behrens, as mentioned in chapter 1. He indicates that he wants to take the medieval guilds as an example for the education at the Bauhaus. According to Gropius, within those guilds there was no sign of a class-separating pretention, as he called it.

The next pages of the manifesto are dedicated to the explanation of the curriculum. Again, Gropius mentions how all artistic disciplines should reunite into a new architecture and that the main goal of the Bauhaus will be the unified work of art. In discussing the principles of the Bauhaus, Gropius states that art cannot be taught, but crafts can. Just as on the first page, he implies here that artists should feel the artistic creativity from within, and gain practical knowledge by learning a craft.

Next, he again refers to the medieval guilds, by saying that at the Bauhaus there will not be teachers and students, but masters, journeymen and apprentices. What follows is a list of all the fundamentals Gropius had drawn up, amongst which the principle of “constant contact with leaders in crafts and industries in the country”. This principle can be linked to the medieval guilds as well. As will become clear later on in this chapter when the medieval guild system will be discussed, medieval guilds had built up a network in which apprentices could travel under protection to another guild to trade or gain more practical

skills. A network like this is what Gropius wanted to build up as well, in which cooperation between teachers and students (or masters and apprentices) was encouraged as to reach the goal of making unified works of art.
The next section of the manifesto enlists all the courses that will be given at the Bauhaus, the main ones being architecture, painting and sculpture. Gropius ends with the distribution of courses within the programme and the admission terms.

Gropius' ideal

Gropius had a certain ideal upon which he had based the teaching at his new school. In the last paragraph of his manifesto he wrote: "So let us therefore create a new guild of craftsmen, free of the divisive class pretensions that endeavoured to raise a prideful barrier between craftsmen and artists! Wanting, thinking, creating the building of the future together, that will unite all disciplines: architecture and sculpture and painting, which will rise from millions of hands of craftsmen will be a crystal symbol of a new order." (see appendix). At his school and in his teaching, he wanted to achieve an ideal on how artists and craftsmen of all disciplines would work together and how their disciplines would unite in a total work of art, the *Gesamtkunstwerk,* although he does not yet use this specific term in the manifesto. In this last paragraph, Gropius explicitly mentions the word 'guild'[99], as a reference to the medieval guild system where every craft had their own guild. Simply put, these guilds would work together to create the metaphoric cathedral, which could be perceived as a central work of art which comprises all the other disciplines. Carpenters, stonemasons, glass workers, every discipline had their own part in the process. He described how teachers and students would have special titles, like *Meister* (master) and *Geselle* (journeyman). The difference between Gropius' idea of applying a medieval guild system to create his designs and the actual medieval guilds was that he focused on the teamwork itself, not on medieval techniques or on actually copying the medieval system in its full extend to his methods. The question is whether he literally wanted to apply the guild system to his new school, or whether he was inspired by the guild system. As he mentioned in his manifesto, he wanted to create a new guild of craftsmen. Whether he meant this as a new guild, along the exact guidelines of the medieval guilds, or a new guild along the lines of what he wanted to take from it, and fit this into the standards of his own time, is not made explicitly clear from the manifesto. What he does say is that he wants a guild without the "class-separating pretention" (see appendix), so he does link the guild to a

[99] In German: *Zunft*.

place where everyone can be equal as artists. Eventually he wanted to see architecture, sculpture and painting united together into a new order. The idea of the guild was the basis on which he wanted to achieve this.

The Medieval guild system

To see whether Gropius meant to exactly copy the medieval guild system or that it was his metaphor for a, in his eyes, better world, we need to look at what the medieval guild system actually was comprised of. Nowadays, when someone wants to learn a trade, they attend classes at universities or graduate schools. These institutions of education are mostly located in (bigger) cities. 'The city' can thus be viewed as a place where innovation and development thrive. People come together in cities to gain inspiration, knowledge, but also to pass this on again by sharing their knowledge. Already in the Middle Ages people were attracted to the city, as it was seen as a place of prosperity, progress and civilisation.[100] Key to this feeling of progression, that has always been attached to the city, was the formation of different guilds. Guilds could be based on crafts, such as steel-workers, or trades, like barbers and musicians. By far the most common guild was that of the merchants, the people who traded goods they had not made themselves, for a better profit.[101] Craft and merchant guilds date back as far as the ancient Roman empire. Although most of the documentation is lost, inscriptions and mosaics tell us that the ancient Greeks had merchant guilds.[102] From papyrus rolls we know the rules that Roman Egypt instated upon merchant guilds (*collegia*) about whether or not outsiders could be included in a trade and fixed minimum prices for a merchant's ware.[103] Due to poor conservation of documentation it is hard to tell whether medieval towns continued on this exact Roman guild system, but we do know that towns that had their roots in ancient Roman times, had guilds that had Latin names, such as *collegia*, *schola* or *ministeria*. These guilds did have rules similar to those known from the Roman guild system.[104]

Behind this system lay a much more complex network that the guilds had built up together. This network only applied to guilds from a certain region, and each region had its own set of rules for their guilds to follow. In Flanders for example, there were well-developed guild systems. Around 1300, guilds had evolved into institutions that helped governments to

[100] Davids and De Munck, "Innovation and Creativity", 19.
[101] *Ibid.*
[102] Davids and De Munck, "Innovation and Creativity", 21.
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] *Ibid.*

preserve peace and political unity in the cities.[105] Guildsmen were allowed to elect their officials themselves, without interference of urban governments.[106] They could also hire subcontractors to sell their finished products.[107] In time, the guilds became more and more autonomous from city governments, as they were able to control most of the organisation of their industry themselves. High-ranking guild members had a place in the political matters of their city.[108] As people from the same guild often lived in the same neighbourhoods, the sense of unity was strong among members of craft guilds and they would develop their own political organisations.[109] In Florence, guild members could gain positions in local politics as well, but they would use their power mostly to outmanoeuvre smaller guilds by making sure new rules and regulations would be installed to make trading a lot harder for them.[110] Economically speaking, the medieval guilds functioned as a networking system as well, providing commercial security. By building trading centres overseas, the guilds made sure that there was always the possibility for a merchant to travel and sell their goods. Even more so, guilds would make sure that any foreign (travelling) merchant that joined the guild of their trade, would receive protection of any sort of attack, whether it be by a government or an outsider, and to stand against a government if needed.[111] This also meant that any craftsman or trader outside of the guilds, would be kept at a distance so the guilds could rule as monopolies, within their own economic system.[112]

Besides the political and economic power that the medieval guilds tried to implement, they had some influence on aesthetical progress as well, although to a certain extent. On the one hand, travelling craftsmen would lead to technological diffusion, as they could teach each other. At the same time masters would try to keep their specialties to themselves and were not willing to disclose any technologies or methods.[113] When guild masters were recruiting craft labourers however, they would release their secrets. [114] In other words: aesthetic progress did happen, but sometimes only sparsely, i.e. only when local (city) authorities would allow it to happen. [115]

[105] Dumolyn, "Guild Politics", 15.
[106] Van Steensel, "Guilds and Politics", 52.
[107] Soly, "Political Economy", 47.
[108] Dumolyn, "Guild Politics", 19.
[109] Dumolyn, "Guild Politics", 21.
[110] Soly, "Political Economy", 50.
[111] Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade*, 194.
[112] Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade*, 202.
[113] Reith, "Circulation of Skilled Labour", 131.
[114] Reith, "Circulation of Skilled Labour", 133.
[115] *Ibid*.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDIES

In this chapter, three case studies will be presented: the Sommerfeld house from 1921, the Bauhaus Meisterhausen in Dessau from 1926, and the Törten neighbourhood in Dessau from 1928. These three case studies showcase the changes Gropius went through regarding his views on architecture from when he first wrote the manifesto for the Bauhaus and started off in Weimar, to moving to Dessau. We can see how the style of these buildings, produced by the Bauhaus, changed immensely throughout time. Evidently, these changes were not only visible in the architecture the Bauhaus made, but also in the style of teaching at the Bauhaus itself.

The Sommerfeld House (1920-1921)

This house is the earliest example of a typical Bauhaus *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and was commissioned by Adolf Sommerfeld, a Jewish building industrialist and timber merchant. The house was built in Dahlem, a suburb in the southwestern part of Berlin.[116] Work on the house lasted from 1920 to 1921 and was destroyed during the Second World War. The gateway to the garden and the house that was built for the chauffeur are the only parts that still remain today (fig. 5).

The Sommerfeld House is the first example of Gropius' ideal regarding the cathedral as described in his manifesto. The building practice of this house is the embodiment of his ideal that every workshop should work together to come to an ultimate end piece, which in this case was a domestic building rather than a cathedral. As was Gropius' plan, the Sommerfeld House was designed and built by many Bauhäusler[117] working together. By entrusting this commission to Gropius and Adolf Meyer, Adolf Sommerfeld indirectly provided the different Bauhaus shops with a lot of work already in their early years.

The basis of the house was a block construction created by Sommerfeld himself. The interior wood was taken from a wrecked ship, provided by Sommerfeld.[118] He wanted Walter Gropius to design a house with this wood as a starting point. Important to note here, is that there seems to already have been a real cooperation between the Bauhaus and its commissioner. To work together with and for the industry would become of great value within the Bauhaus. Gropius, together with Adolf Meyer, worked on designing the house itself.

[116] Schuldenfrei, *Luxury and Modernism*, 121.
[117] *Bauhäusler* is the name given to anyone affiliated with the Bauhaus.
[118] Krohn, "Sommerfeld House", 46.

For the stained-glass windows in the staircase above the main entrance, painter Josef Albers (19 March 1888 – 25 March 1976) chose a design of small squared and rectangular pieces of glass, together with longer and more unevenly shaped pieces of glass (fig. 6). In the right-bottom corner of the second-to-last panel on the right, the Bauhaus logo is visible: It is the light-coloured rectangle with the contours of a face consisting of a small black square for an eye and three vertical lines that form the nose and mouth (fig. 6, bottom right). There is no clear explanation for any special reason or logic behind the square and rectangular design of the window, but in an interview from 1970 by professor in Chemistry John Holloway and Associate Scientist John Weil, they asked Albers why he worked with squares so much (referring to Albers' 'Homage to the Square', a series of more than 1,000 paintings created between 1950 to 1976), and the answer was simple: "I just like them [squares] […]. I found out that squares do not normally appear in nature."[119]

Architect Marcel Breuer (21 May 1902 – 1 July 1981) designed and made the furniture for the Sommerfeld House, which was rectangular, much like the house itself (see fig. 7 and 8).

Painter and graphic designer Joost Schmidt (5 January 1893 – 2 December 1948) made the engravings on the timberwork, of which the one on the first floor, directly above the main door, underneath Albers' stained-glass windows, in particular stands out (see fig. 9 and 10). It is a combination of intertwined rectangles, circles and squares, but also some simplified human figures and hidden references to Sommerfeld himself (for example the Star of David which refers to his Jewish roots). [120]

The colour scheme of the interior was provided by colour designer and painter Hinnerk Scheper (6 September 1897 – 5 February 1957).[121]

The design of the Sommerfeld house bears an interesting resemblance to typical German architecture (the traditional *bauhütte*, mentioned in chapter 1 as well), with its traditional timber construction and the tall, pointed roof.[122] It reminded art critic and Weimar Building Trades School[123] director Paul Klopfer (1876 – 1967)[124] of the "ancient prototypes in old Saxony".[125] Another notable resemblance is with Frank Lloyd Wright's work. Wright's houses can be classified under the Prairie Style or Prairie School and the Sommerfeld House, with its geometric shapes, the low, overhanging roof and the natural materials bears

[119] Holloway, Weil and Albers, "Conversation with Josef Albers", 462.
[120] Pehnt, "Gropius the Romantic", 384.
[121] Krohn, "Sommerfeld House", 46.
[122] Schuldenfrei, *Luxury and Modernism*, 121.
[123] In German: *Staatliche Bauschule Weimar* (1829 – 1929).
[124] Siebenbrodt and Schöbe, *Bauhaus 1919-1933*, 189.
[125] Pehnt, "Gropius the Romantic", 383.

resemblances to his work (see fig. 11).[126] The Prairie Style got a lot of inspiration from the Arts & Crafts Movement and gained popularity under the American upper middle class. As Wright stated himself in 1901: "Our art is intended for the city man going to the country".[127] A brief description of the Prairie style would be a building that was, to the eye, placed as a single mass, with a low gable roof. Along the outside walls horizontally oriented windows, and a so-called belt or shelf roof in between the first and second storey (see fig. 12 and 13). This belt roof often extended into a porch or veranda. Important to the Prairie style designs was the continuity of horizontal lines, so that the whole building would become a unity.[128]

The front of the Sommerfeld house is comparable to for example the William M. Adams House from 1900 (fig. 12) or the J. Kibben Ingalls House from 1909 (fig. 13). The way the roof of the Sommerfeld House slopes down from a sharp point in the middle of the building and ends in a flat ridge (gabled roof) that overhangs from the walls is comparable to the Adams House and the Ingalls House. All three houses have a structure on the roof itself as well: the Sommerfeld and Adams House both have a dormer window in the front centre of the roof, and the Ingalls House has a decorative ridge on top. Underneath those roofs a storey with carefully placed windows: on the Sommerfeld and Ingalls House the windows are in the middle, and on the Adams House they are on the sides. Above the Sommerfeld House entrance and the short set of stairs leading up to it there is another piece of roof. The Ingalls House has a bay window on the front side, covered with a belt roof, while the Adams has a veranda, covered by a belt roof as well. Even though this roof covers a different element in each of the houses, on all three houses this roof has the same style as the main roof: the slope coming from a centre point and ending in a flat, overhanging ridge. Except for the addition of a balcony coming off each side of the Ingalls house, all three buildings have the same cubic architecture. The Sommerfeld House has some decoratively placed woodwork on the outside, resembling columns, which both the Ingalls House and the Adams House have as well.

As mentioned before, the Sommerfeld House was one of the earliest examples of a Bauhaus *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The building process was therefore the realisation of Gropius' ideals described in his manifesto. The house had become the modern version of the medieval cathedral, which, to Gropius, was the ultimate form of a unified piece of art. The Bauhaus guilds came together in this house. As Matthew Smith says: "the Bauhaus would be a place where the organic and the mechanical could be re-joined, or, more precisely, where mechanic

[126] Schuldenfrei, *Luxury and Modernism*, 121.
[127] Twombly, "New Forms, Old Functions", 86.
[128] Brooks, *Prairie School*, 5.

could be made organic and rendered a crystalline *Gesamtkunstwerk*."[129] The design, the building process but also the interior and decorations became as important as the end piece itself. Everything in the Sommerfeld House was thought out: from the carpets to the furniture to the tableware, it all belonged to the coherent vision of Gropius and Meyer.[130] Even though the house fits within a contemporary frame of reference, the building process was inspired by the medieval guilds. The stained glass windows might be the most direct example of the combination of the medieval and the contemporary. The technique with which the windows were manufactured, is a reference to the Middle Ages. At the same time it fits within the contemporary tradition of the 1910s and 1920s.

Meisterhausen, Dessau (1925-1926)

During the summer of 1925, when the Bauhaus had moved from Weimar to Dessau, the building of four masters' houses[131] started, designed by Walter Gropius (see fig. 22). These masters' houses were meant for the Bauhaus masters to live in. There were three semi-detached houses, which were for the masters, and one detached house, which was for the director. They were built in a small piece of land, covered with pine trees. The houses were built from so-called 'Jurko-stones'. The inventors of these stones were Johannes and Rudolf Koppe, hence the name.[132] These were big cinder blocks of concrete, which made up the exterior walls. Important to Gropius was, as he emphasises this in *Bauhausbauten*, that the blocks could be lifted by one man at a time. The windows of each house had mirrored crystal glass. Each of the houses had central heating. The flat roofs, made from gravel, were generally not passable, except for some areas where concrete slabs were laid down, as a roof terrace. [133]

The basement of the detached house had a three-room apartment, meant for the caretaker of the property, which stored the boiler room and storage cellar as well. The first floor of the house contained a combined living and dining room, two bedrooms, the kitchen and the bathroom. The second floor contained a guest room, the maid's room, the room for doing the laundry and ironing, and a storeroom. All rooms had cabinets and shelve units that were fixed

[129] Smith, *Total Work of Art*, 50.
[130] Johnson, "Architectural Space", 207.
[131] In German: Meisterhausen
[132] Scheffler, "Restaurierte Zeichnungen", 8.
[133] Gropius, *BauhausBauten*, 85.

unto or into the wall, either as build-in components or built against the wall. The house was built so that, as Gropius said, "it is possible to do housework, avoiding idling and unrest."[134] The floorplans of the semi-detached houses were mirrored. On the first floor are the living room, dining room and kitchen, on the second floor were the bedrooms, children's bedrooms and an atelier.

Törten neighbourhood, Dessau (1926-1928)

The first experiment on industrialised building was the Törten neighbourhood in Dessau which was built from 1926 to 1928 (see fig. 22). The plan consisted of three phases: building 60 houses in 1926, another 100 in 1927, and another 156 houses in 1928. The two-story houses were of a standardised design, however every year some modifications were made. In *Bauhausbauten* from 1930, Gropius describes the plan he had for the houses. Each house would have four or five rooms and was meant to house one family. The main goal was to make the rent of the houses as low as possible, by designing and constructing them as economically favourable as possible.[135] The houses were made of two load-bearing, concrete firewalls on each side, with a beamed ceiling connecting them. The façade of the houses was a non-load bearing wall, also made of concrete blocks. The façade walls were connected to the load-bearing walls by reinforced, concrete beams, transferring the weight to the firewalls.[136]

The houses had central heating, which was installed in three phases: first through a hot air system, then a warm water system was installed. Each house had a bathroom with a bath, which was heated through gas heating, and later with a boiler system.[137] Gropius does not specify why the heating system was installed in phases, and why so many different systems were used.

The bedrooms each had space for two 'normal beds'.[138] All doors were made of smooth plywood with drawn iron frames. The windows were set in an iron frame as well, and had built-in ventilation flaps in the kitchens and bedrooms.

The houses were flat-roofed, so heat loss had to be prevented by a layer of cork or concrete slabs.[139]

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[134] Original German citation: "Festlegung klarer hauswirtschaftlicher arbeitsvorgänge, vermeidung von leerlauf und unruhe." (Gropius, *Bauhausbauten*, 85)
[135] Gropius, *Bauhausbauten*, 153.
[136] Gropius, *Bauhausbauten*, 154.
[137] Gropius, *Bauhausbauten*, 155.
[138] Original German citation: "Die maße der schlafräume sind so, daß durchweg 2 normale betten darin platz finden." (Gropius, *Bauhausbauten*, 155)

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

In both the cases of the *Meisterhausen* and that of the Törten neighbourhood in Dessau, we can see how Gropius was starting to think of ways to make the building process easier and more efficient. As mentioned in chapter 1, before Bauhaus and before WWI, Gropius had already been working on more modern and industrial designs, like the Fagus factory. These designs, together with the *Meisterhausen* and Törten, are a sharp contrast to that of the Sommerfeld house. For this house, Gropius wanted to go 'back to basics', by using materials that had been used throughout building history. In an article from architectural magazine *Der Holzbau* from 1920, Gropius clearly stated that "wood was the original building material of men, sufficient for all the structural parts of building; walls, floor, ceiling, roof, columns and beam".[140] He even said that stone and iron were "old-fashioned building materials"[141] and that wood was the "building material of the present"[142]. In this article, Gropius mentions how the medieval half-timbered buildings of Germany and France, the wooden buildings in Tirol, Lithuania and others are eloquent examples that wood had unlimited possibilities for use in architecture and was therefore, in his eyes, the most valued building material.[143] Together with the Bauhaus manifest itself, *Neues Bauen* is very enlightening regarding Gropius' point of view on architecture around the time of Bauhaus' early years. He seems to have made a rather radical change from creating very progressive designs, using newer materials, to, one could say, more conservative designs. However, as Gropius mentioned in *Neues Bauten*, he actually considered wood to be more progressive than stone and iron, because it was so versatile. The switch from 'new' to 'old' materials can probably be linked to the economic recession Germany was in after WWI and the shortages of building materials as mentioned in chapter one. During those years after the war, materials such as wood were easier to come by

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[139] *Ibid*.
[140] Original German citation: "Holz ist der Urbaustoff der Menschen, der allen tektonischen Gliedern der Baues genügt: Wand, Boden, Decke, Dach, Säule und Balken, der sich sägen, schnitzen, bohren, nageln, hobeln, fräsen, polieren, Beizen, einlegen, lackieren und bemalen läßt." (Gropius, "Neues Bauen", 5)
[141] Original German citation: "Sie können sich noch nicht wieder losmachen von den alten Baugewohnheiten in Stein du Eisen […]." (Gropius, "Neues Bauen", 5)
[142] Original German citation: "Holz ist der Baustoff der Gegenwart." (Gropius, "Neues Bauen", 5)
[143] Gropius, "Neues Bauen", 5.

than stone or iron. The latter two materials were also more expensive than wood, as wood was, in Gropius' words, "widely available and not dependent on coal and industry"[144].

This last quote is a very interesting one, as it implies that Gropius wanted to explicitly distance himself and his buildings from the industrial world, whereas earlier he was in fact working for industry itself (when designing the Fagus factory). This means that Gropius was seemingly not trying to look for cheaper materials solely to replace stone and iron, and to keep building the same type of buildings as before the war, but that with the change to wood, his entire frame of mind regarding his own architectural style seemed to have changed as well. This new view regarding architecture served as the onset for writing the Bauhaus manifesto and starting his new school. As we have seen, in his manifesto Gropius kept reminding the reader that the craftsman and the artist should become one, and that only by experience one could learn how to make art. He stated that by following the example of the medieval guilds and how their members worked together to create the end piece, which was the cathedral. In his manifesto Gropius never literally said that he regarded the house as the contemporary version of the medieval cathedral, but we can see that the Sommerfeld house was built in the same way, with craftsmen from all disciplines working together to create the end piece which, in this case, was the house rather than the cathedral. In the last paragraph of his manifesto, where Gropius called for a new guild of craftsmen to be created, he mentions how the building of the future would have all disciplines (architecture, sculpture and painting) united together and would be the crystal symbol of a new order (see appendix).

Putting the Meisterhausen, the Törten neighbourhood, and the Sommerfeld house side by side, one can see how the Bauhaus style developed throughout the years. Both the Meisterhausen and Törten project portray how Gropius began using to iron and stone again, the building materials which he had once called old-fashioned. The main building material for the Meisterhausen and the houses in the Törten neighbourhood was concrete. As concrete is a mixture of stones, water and cement (as a binder), this material would not have fitted into the Bauhaus' earlier ideal buildings, such as the Sommerfeld house. During the Dessau-era, Gropius seemed to have changed again, this time back to more industrial type buildings, which he also made before the war. Gropius started experimenting with ways to make building more efficient. In *Bauhausbauten*, where Gropius wrote about the Meisterhausen, he emphasised the need for building components that were light and compact enough for one man to handle. He also describes how eight 'stone machines' were placed on the building site,

[144] Original German citation: "Holz ist in ausreichender Menge vorhanden, und ist unabhängig von Kohle du Industrie." (Gropius, "Neues Bauen", 5)

which would cut stones into smaller pieces. He mentions how these machines increased the productivity of each worker by 250 pieces per day, in comparison to the amount that would be produced if every piece was to be cut by hand (which Gropius does not mention).[145]

The walls, beams, the blocks of concrete, floors and roofs were all made on site. When a part was ready to be installed, it was hoisted up by mechanical equipment and set into place. Gropius wanted to have a member of his working crew on every part of the building process, so that every man did the same thing all the time, which should increase the output, which, eventually, should increase the output of the working crew as a whole, he theorised.[146] This idea is more in line with Fordism, which is a manufacturing model based on standardisation and mass production, making use of an assembly line, than it is with Gropius' original ideal of the guild system. It shows again that Gropius was moving further from his original ideal, or that he was fitting his original ideal to new methods that he wanted to implement. Namely, he used this new technique (the assembly line) to let the craftsmen be able to work together more effectively. The original ideal of having everyone work together towards the end piece remained. There were step-by-step plans for every phase of building (fig. 20), and a time chart was drawn up to ensure everything went according to plan. Even though the Törten project was not yet as much an example of prefabrication, as everything was made on site (in contrast to all the parts actually being made in a factory and then brought onto the construction site), the method of building in itself already could be considered as a form of industrialisation. The more efficient way of working, in which every man continuously had the same task, can be considered true to the Bauhaus principle of every workshop doing their part during the building process, however this did not necessarily mean that one man could only do one thing within the working activities of his workshop. What should not go unnoticed however, is that in the building process of the Sommerfeld house, there was great attention to detail, which can be expected, as everything was made by hand, while in both the Meisterhausen and the Törten project, the focus was more on efficiency and time-management.

The contrast between the Sommerfeld house and the Meisterhausen and Törten houses can be translated to the Bauhaus curriculum as well. When comparing both the Weimar and the Dessau curriculum, we can see some notable changes. Three of the main workshops during the Weimar-era are the stained glass workshop, carpentry workshop, and the pottery workshop. All three of these workshops were dropped from the Dessau curriculum. Instead, a plastic workshop, typography workshop, a sculpture workshop, and a photography course

[145] Gropius, *Bauhausbauten*, 154.
[146] Herbert, *Factory-Made House*, 43-44.

were added. [147] The metal workshop, which already existed in Weimar, was sharpened to mainly lighting fixtures, whereas in Weimar the metal workshop's focus was on tableware. The three workshops that were dropped after the move to Dessau corresponded to Gropius' early ideal of going back to more traditional crafts and techniques. Two of these workshops, stained glass and carpentry, were of high importance to the realisation of the Sommerfeld house, as it was adorned with stained-glass windows and carved wooden panels, all made by hand, which would not fit anymore in the more industrialised way of building Gropius wanted later on. Dropping those workshops implies that Gropius started to move further away from the original ideals of going back to traditional materials and techniques. On the other hand, one could state that Gropius wanted to focus more on architecture, as this had been the main focus of the Bauhaus from the beginning. Also, one could state that Gropius merely wanted to move with the time and develop his school, while still staying true to the foundation on which the Bauhaus was built: the manifesto. He still wanted to create a total work of art, with every craftsman working together towards the end piece, but he now wanted to do this in a more modern way. By improving the building process into a much quicker and efficient process, he could make up for lost time and create many more buildings within the same time span, while still adhering to his own principle of building together. Whether Gropius strayed from his original manifesto by building modern houses again, after the iconic Sommerfeld house, was explained by Gropius himself. In 1963, Gropius stated in an article called *The Bauhaus: Crafts or Industry?* that everyone who took an interest in his productions would be able to see that his thinking "had always been aimed at industry, and not at craft work as an end in itself".[148] In the same article he stated that he believed that a student had to learn how to use tools of a certain craft before they could understand modern machines. Gropius states that this line of thinking was the very reason he came up with the idea of having a crafts-focused training as the basis for the Bauhaus. A bit further in the article he states that in a more progressive stage, the students would be able to form their own curriculum after the courses that had their interest most.[149] He then states that even from the beginning of the Bauhaus in 1919, it had been Gropius' intention to move towards modern, industrial buildings again. He states that he had always been very cautious with imposing his own opinions and conclusions on his students, because he wanted them to find their own answers for the problems they would encounter during their studies. Gropius had always seen crafts as a

[147] *Ibid*.
[148] Gropius, "The Bauhaus: Crafts or Industry?", 31-32.
[149] *Ibid*.

means to an end and not as the end itself, because that role was reserved for industry, which he saw as the future basis of production.[150] From this notion, it becomes even more clear that the Sommerfeld house had definitely not merely been a deviation from the modern designs in Gropius' repertoire, to which he went back to after moving to Dessau. Saying that with the Sommerfeld house Gropius set his own standards, from which he deviated in later years by building the Meisterhausen and Törten, would also not be correct, as he himself implied to have had a sophisticated plan from the beginning, even though he had not made that clear in the manifesto. By saying that he goal all along was to teach his students about modern architecture, Gropius implied that he did not want to distract them from the essential basics when learning about architecture, which were in craftsmanship. Putting the three case studies side by side with this knowledge in mind, Sommerfeld house cannot and should not be seen merely as an anomaly in Gropius' typical designs, only because before and after the Sommerfeld house, his design were predominantly of a more modern and industrial nature. One could argue that, because it was built very much according to Gropius' early ideals, his interest around 1920 might have solely focused on the aspect of working with traditional materials. Knowing how he wanted his students to use craftsmanship as a way to develop into modern architects and designers, we can say that the Sommerfeld house was a very important part of the students' educational journey to become a true Bauhaus artist. Adding to this, the other aspect that Gropius found of paramount importance, was the creation of a total work of art within his designs. That too is where the Sommerfeld house fits perfectly into the line of continuity in Gropius career. Even though the focus regarding building materials shifted completely, the main goal of creating a unified art piece was always present when creating his designs. In 1965, Gropius wrote in his book *Die neue Architektur und das Bauhaus* that "A modern building should derive from the vigour and consequence of its own organic proportions. It must be true to itself, logically transparent and virginal of lies or trivialities, as befits a direct affirmation of our contemporary world of mechanisation and rapid transit"[151] Only by going back to basics, which is what the Bauhaus stood for, the modern building could flourish, according to Gropius. This perfectly combines the original ideal with the contemporary aesthetic.

[150] *Ibid*.
[151] Gropius, *The New Architecture*, 36.

CONCLUSION

When Walter Gropius wrote the manifesto for a new school, the Bauhaus, he had set himself to found a school where harmony and unity would prevail. Ideally, he wanted to go back to the Middle Ages and implement the guild system from that time. Or so the text of his manifesto implies. When reading the Bauhaus manifesto Gropius wrote, we have to be careful not to immediately assume Gropius meant to literally implement a medieval guild system into the new school, even though the text suggests it. Namely, he did state that he wanted to create a guild of craftsmen without the class-separating pretention. What Gropius meant, was that art had become something only for the rich elite top layer of society to enjoy. This drove a wedge between the artist and the craftsman, as the artist thought more highly of himself than the craftsman, because they made art for the upper class. Gropius found that these two had to be one and the same, which strongly came forward in his manifesto. He had gained inspiration for this view from his former employer Peter Behrens, who had started to experiment with traditional building techniques as well. He worked on his *Dombauhütte*, which was based on the traditional 10th-century German *Bauhütten*. This contrasted his earlier, more modernist, works, such as the AEG factory. Gropius came from a modernist building tradition as well, he had previously worked on the Fagus factory, for example. The notion of going to the Middle Ages for inspiration was not a new concept. Gropius and Behrens were preceded by the Arts and Crafts movement, which was founded in the 19th century by Morris, Pugin and Ruskin, which already considered Gothic architecture to be more pure than the 19th-century architecture. They strove for a unity of art and life, and saw the Gothic building as the ultimate result of builders and craftsmen working together. This was the same idea Gropius wrote down in his manifesto of April 1919. He called upon the people to realise that art should once again be a harmonious cooperation between artists and artisans. The woodcut on the first page of the manifesto, made by Lyonel Feininger, strongly enhanced the message.

Gropius seemed to imply that he wanted to create a new medieval guild for his new school. What is important to consider, however, is whether he meant to literally copy and paste this medieval system to the Bauhaus, or that he used the medieval guild system as a metaphor. Namely, when studying some of the works that the Bauhaus made, we can see how, at first glance, there seemed to be a big inconsistency there. Before Gropius founded the Bauhaus, his architectural style was of a modern and industrial nature. The Bauhaus manifesto he wrote after WWI and the Sommerfeld house, built during the first years the Bauhaus existed, both

seemed to be directly at odds with Gropius' pre-war designs. The Sommerfeld house was entirely consistent to what Gropius proclaimed in the manifesto, namely a building made of wood, which Gropius considered to be the building material of the future. The project completely came from the different Bauhaus workshops, all working together, just as the medieval guilds would have done when building a cathedral. With this, even though Gropius did not explicitly mention this in his manifesto, the house had become the 20th-century version of the medieval cathedral: a total work of art, in which all disciplines came together to a harmonious whole. It seemed to be the new direction Gropius had taken when he wrote the manifesto and then build the embodiment of his ideals. However, after the Bauhaus had to move to Dessau, the new Meisterhausen which were going to be part of the Bauhaus complex, and a few years later the new Törten neighbourhood in Dessau, the architectural style of the Bauhaus seemed to have made the switch back again, towards modern and industrial buildings. It was then that Gropius started thinking of new building methods as well, to make the building process as efficient and time saving as possible. Even though for the Meisterhausen and the Törten houses, all different elements were still made on site and not in a factory, Gropius had thought of ways to make the process more efficient. For example, the houses were made of concrete blocks that were light and compact enough for one man to lift and build with. This way, each worker could consistently do the same thing throughout the building process, which meant that, eventually, they would become quicker, speeding up the building process as a whole. Tools like stone cutting machines or cranes would have been unthinkable during the building process of the Sommerfeld house, where everything was done by hand, as the medieval worker would have done as well. When looking at these different houses and realising the sharp contrast between the earlier Weimar stage and the later Dessau stage of the Bauhaus, it is then easy to conclude that with the manifesto, Gropius had had a wild but successful idea, but now wanted to go back to his old style. However, this would be too short-sighted of a conclusion. Despite the switches back and forth between modern and traditional building materials and styles, there is one continuity to be noted in all three of the case studies, and that is that the aspect of all Bauhaus workshop working together remained. The house as the ultimate total work of art was still of paramount importance to the Bauhaus. This unity of arts was what Gropius emphasised most in his manifesto, which is why it is important to note that he stayed true to this throughout his time at the Bauhaus.

The main conclusion, however, is based on something Gropius himself mentioned in 1963. He wanted to make clear that his main priority had always been industry. Even when writing the manifesto, in which he did not mentioned industry or anything that could be interpreted as

such. It had however always been his intention to eventually go back to modern design. He had already made the first move towards industrial building when he worked with Peter Behrens and wrote *Memorandum on the Industrial Prefabrication of Houses on a Unified Artistic Basis*, which was about how prefabrication of houses could help make the building process of houses more efficient. This industrially built, modern house was ultimately still what he wanted his students to learn when he started the Bauhaus, but he believed that this could only be achieved by having them first learn a craft and to get to know the essences of building. Only then could the students later on develop their work into more contemporary pieces. In that line of thinking, the Sommerfeld house had been the perfect assignment for the Bauhaus students to work on their own expertise while being part of a bigger project. In chapter one the *Vorkurs* were explained as a very basic but mandatory course the students had to complete before actually starting their studies at the Bauhaus. In essence, the whole Bauhaus education was a basic foundation training, which made the students completely familiar with the crafts of their interest, only to then be able to implement that knowledge and expertise to modern buildings, using industrial building techniques.

Realising that Gropius had always wanted to eventually go back to modern design industrial building, the Bauhaus manifesto and the meaning behind Gropius' are automatically placed in a different context. He did mention how guilds should be formed again, and he did set up different craft workshops, as the medieval guilds had, so in that sense one could say that he did implement the guild system quite literally. However, the overall notion of going back to the Middle Ages and taking on a medieval guild system should be interpreted as metaphorically, as a means to an end. The end being a modern, industrially build house. This is also why Gropius kept working on and developing new techniques to increase efficiency at the building site, while he also kept the workshops on at the Bauhaus, educating his student in craftsmanship. The metaphor also meant that the artist and the craftsman would become one in order to be able to create a masterpiece, because this is what Gropius made clear from the outset and throughout the manifesto: artists and artisans should work together and only then, greatness could be achieved.

Ultimately, Gropius wanted to create and environment for his students in which they could explore their conscious mind and begin appreciating the materials they worked with. This was necessary in order to reach that goal of finding the 'true artist' within themselves, through craftsmanship, to eventually become their own greatest version of an architect or artist.

APPENDIX

Translated text of Walter Gropius' manifesto for the Staatlichen Bauhaus in Weimar*, 1919.*

The ultimate goal of all art is the building! The decoration of the building was once the key purpose of the fine arts, and they were thought of as indispensable components of great architecture. Today they stand in complacent peculiarity, from which they can only be released through the conscious cooperation and interaction of all artisans. Architects, painters and sculptors have to get to know and understand the complex structure of the building in its entirety and in its separate components, only then their works will fill with the architectural spirit that gets lost in salon art.

The old art schools were unable to create this attitude, how should they, since art cannot be taught. They have to return to the workshop. This world of painting and drawing of painters and draftsmen must finally become a world of building. When young people sense a love for creativity within themselves, and begin their career, as in the past, by acquiring craftsmanship, the unproductive 'artist' will no longer be doomed to create imperfect art, because their art is now preserved in craftsmanship where they can do excellent work.

Architects, sculptors, painters, we should all return to craftsmanship! Because there is no "art by profession". There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted artisan. Mercy from heaven, in rare moments of illumination, beyond a man his will, might allow to let art blossom from the work of his hand, but the foundations of proficiency is essential for every artist. That is the key source of creative design.

So let us create a new guild of craftsmen without the class-separating pretention, that tried to erect an imaginary wall between craftsmen and artists! Wanting, thinking, creating the building of the future together, that will unite all disciplines: architecture and sculpture and painting, which will rise from millions of hands of craftsmen will be a crystal symbol of a new order.

WALTER GROPIUS.

PROGRAMME

OF THE

STAATLICHEN BAUHAUSES

IN WEIMAR

The *Staatliche Bauhaus* in Weimar developed from association of the former *Großherzoglich Sächsischen Hochschule für Bildende Kunst* with the former *Großherzoglich Sächsischen Kunstgewerbeschule* with new affiliation of a department for architecture.

Goals of the Bauhaus.

The Bauhaus strives for the unity of all artistic work, the reunion of all artistic disciplines – sculpture, painting, arts and crafts – into a new architecture in all their indispensable components. The last, albeit distant, goal of the Bauhaus is the unified work of art – the grand building – in which there are no boundaries between monumental and decorative art.

The Bauhaus wants to educate architects, painters and sculptors of all levels according to their abilities, as skilled craftsmen or self-employed artists and establish a community of leading and future artists, to create buildings in their intirety – shell construction, detailing, decoration and furnishings – in a unified spirit.

Principles of the Bauhaus.

Art rises above all methods, in itself it cannot be taught, however the craftsmanship can. Architects, painters, sculptors are craftsmen in the original meaning of the word, that is why, as an essential basis for all artistic work, thorough manual practice in the workshops is required for all students. Our own workshops are to be gradually expanded, teaching contracts can be agreed with other workshops.

The school is the servant of the workshop, one day they will merge. Therefore there are no teachers and students at the Bauhaus, but masters, journeymen and apprentices.

The method of teaching arises from the very nature of the workshop:

Organic forms developed from craftsmanship,

Avoid rigidity; stimulate creativity; freedom of individuality, but assure study discipline.

Appropriate master- and journeymen examinations before the Bauhaus master council or external masters.

Participation by the students in the work of the master's.

Securing of commissions, also for students.

Mutual planning of extensive utopian architectural designs – public and cultural buildings – with a long-term goal. Cooperation of all masters and students – architects, painters, sculptors – in these designs with the aim of gradually harmonising all the elements and elements belonging to the building.

Constant contact with leaders in crafts and industries in the country.

Contact with public life, with the people through exhibitions and other events.

New attempts in exhibition to resolve the issue of showing the creation of images and sculptures in an architectural context.

Cultivating friendships between masters and students outside of work; which includes theatre, lectures, poetry, music, costumed parties. Create a cheerful atmosphere at these gatherings.

Scope of the teaching.

Teaching at the Bauhaus encompasses all practical and scientific areas of artistic work.

A. Architecture,
B. Painting,
C. Sculpture

including all crafts.

The students are educated in craftsmanship (1) drawing and painting (2) and theoretically-scientifically (3).

1. The craftsmanship education – be it in our own workshops that are gradually to be expanded, or in external workshops that are subject to a teaching contract – encompasses:

a) sculptors, stonemasons, stucco artists, wood sculptors, ceramists, plasterers,
b) blacksmiths, locksmiths, metal founders, lathe operators,
c) carpenters,

d) decorative painters, glass painters, mosaic artists, enamel artists,
e) etchers, wood cutters, lithographers, art printers, chisel workers,
f) weavers.

The craftsmanship education forms the basis of teaching at the Bauhaus. Every student will learn a craft.

2. The drawing and painting education encompasses:
   a) free sketching from memory and imagination,
   b) drawing and painting heads, live models and animals,
   c) drawing and painting landscapes, figures, plants and still lives,
   d) composing,
   e) murals, panel paintings and religious shrines,
   f) designing ornaments,
   g) font drawing,
   h) construction and project drawing,
   i) designing exteriors, gardens, and interiors,
   j) designing furniture and utensils.
3. The scientific-theoretical education encompasses:
   a) art history – not in the sense of history of style, but the knowledge of historical working methods and techniques,
   b) knowledge of materials,
   c) anatomy – from live models,
   d) physical and chemical colour theory,
   e) rational painting process,
   f) basics of book binding, contract negotiations, personnel,
   g) generally interesting lectures on all areas of art and science.

Classification of teaching.

The education is divided into three courses:

I. course for apprentices,
II. “ ” journeymen,
III. “ ” young masters.

The individual training is left to the discretion of the individual masters within the

framework of the general programme, and to a new curriculum which is to be drawn up every semester.

In order to provide the students with the most diverse, comprehensive technical and artistic training possible, the curriculum is structured so that every architect, painter or sculptor can also take part in other courses.

Admission.

Every uncontested person is accepted regardless of age and gender, whose previous education is considered adequate by the Bauhaus master council, and as long as there is capacity. The tuition fee is 180 marks per year (this is expected to diminish with increasing merits for the Bauhaus). Furthermore, a one-off admission fee of 20 marks is to be paid. Foreigners pay double the amount. Inquiries should be directed to the secretariat of the *Staatlichen Bauhaus in Weimar*.

APRIL 1919.

The leader of the
Staatlichen Bauhaus in Weimar:
Walter Gropius

IMAGES

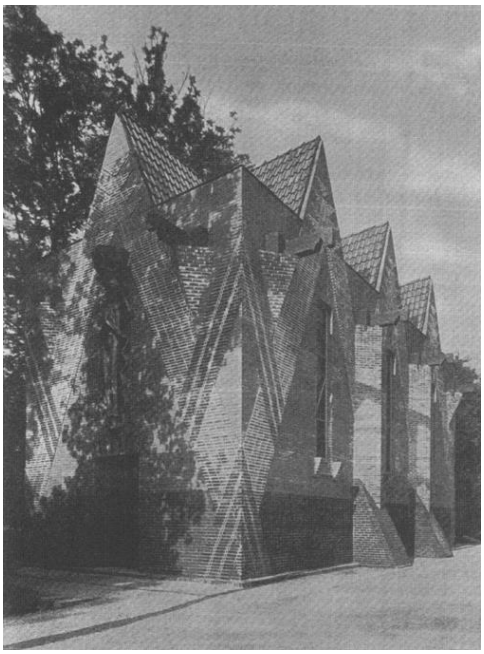

Fig. 1: Peter Behrens, *Die Dombauhütte*, 1922.

Fig. 2: William Morris, *Red House*, 1860.

Fig. 3: Walter Gropius, *Fagus Factory*, 1911.

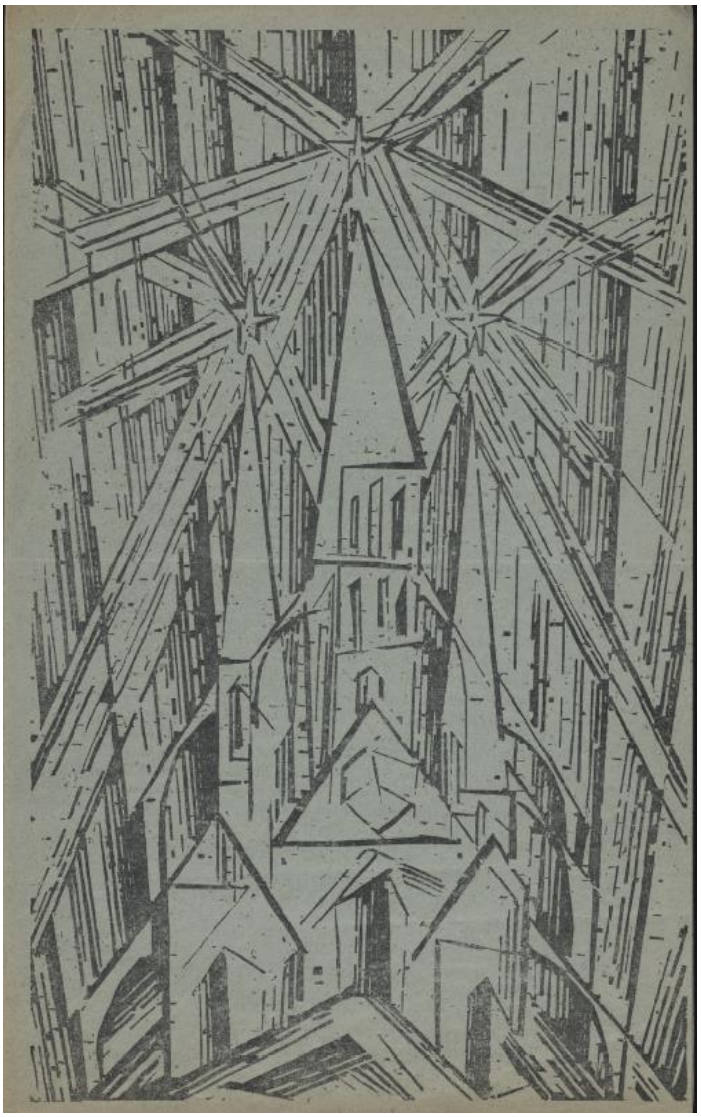

Fig. 4: Lyonel Feininger, *Cathedral on Bauhaus manifesto*, 1919, woodcut.

Fig. 5: Unknown, *Gateway to the garden*, 1920-1921, wood.

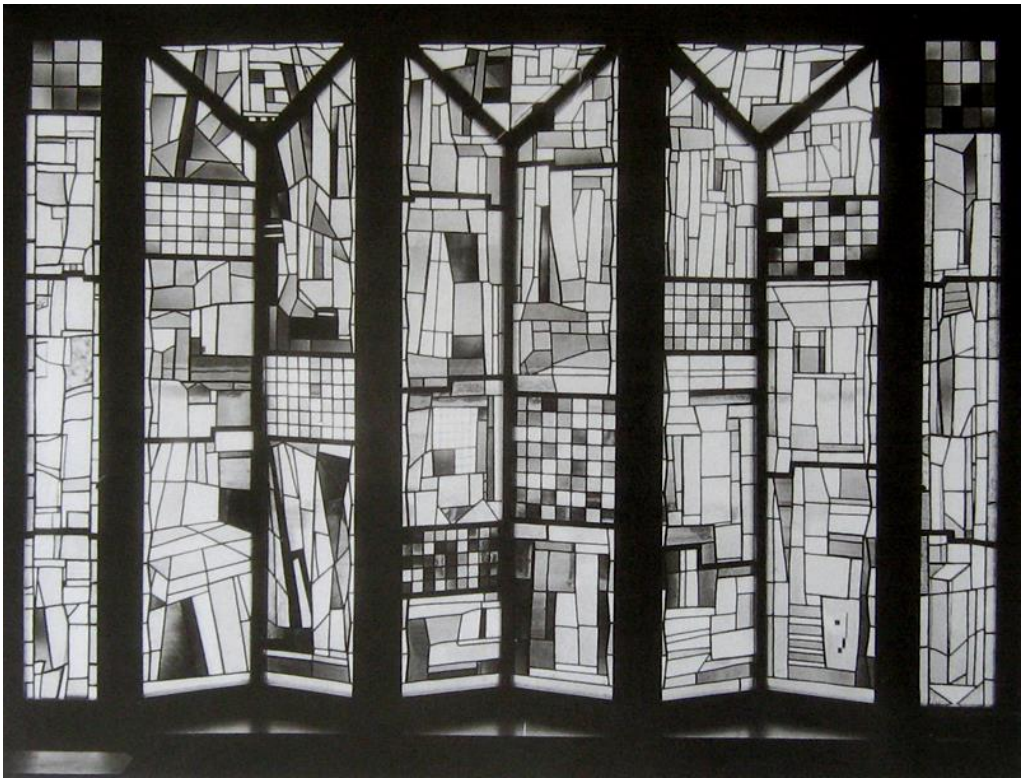

Fig. 6: Josef Albers, *Sommerfeld house panel* window, 1920-1921, stained-glass.

Fig. 7: Marcel Breuer, *interior of the Sommerfeld House with two armchairs*, 1920-1921.

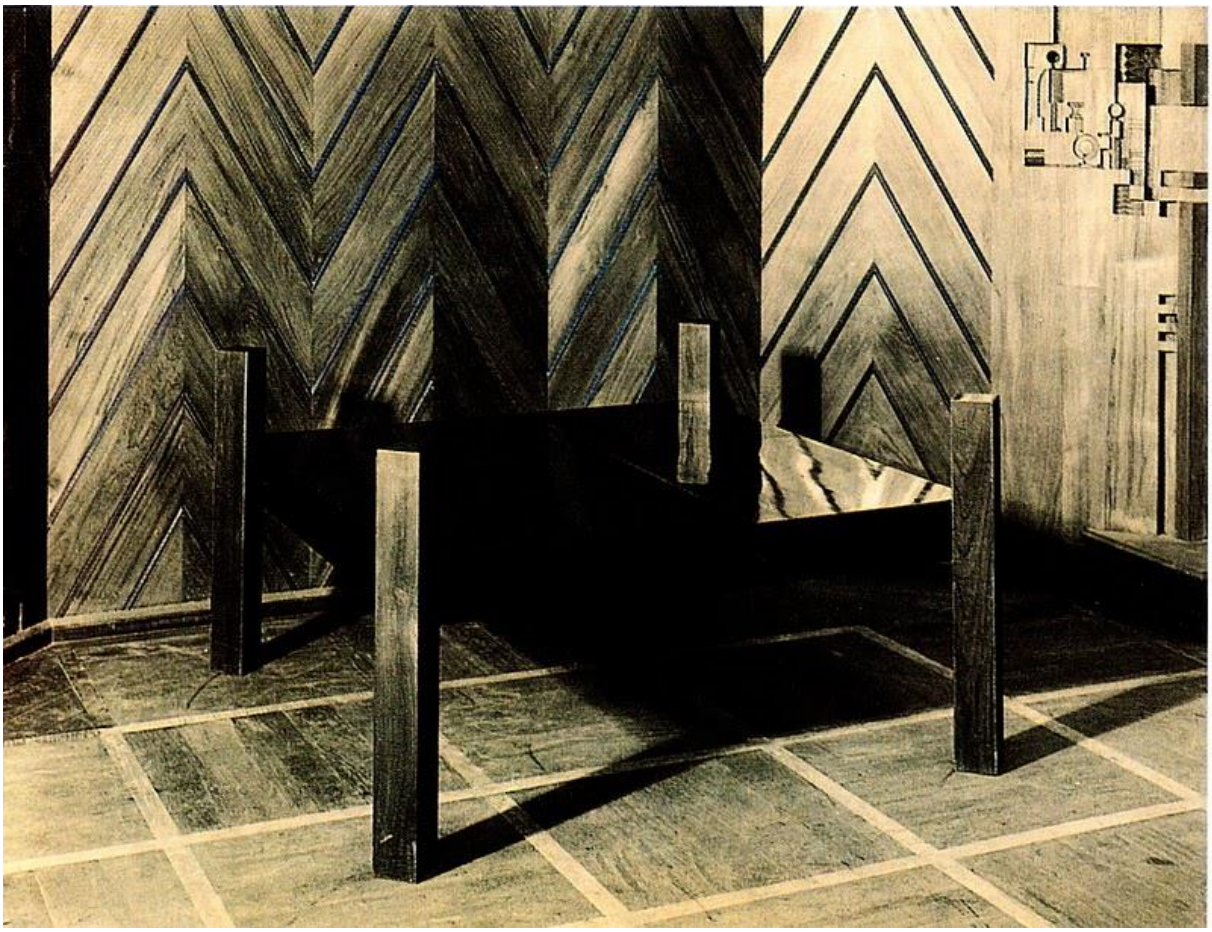

Fig. 8: Marcel Breuer, *Coffee table*, 1920-1921.

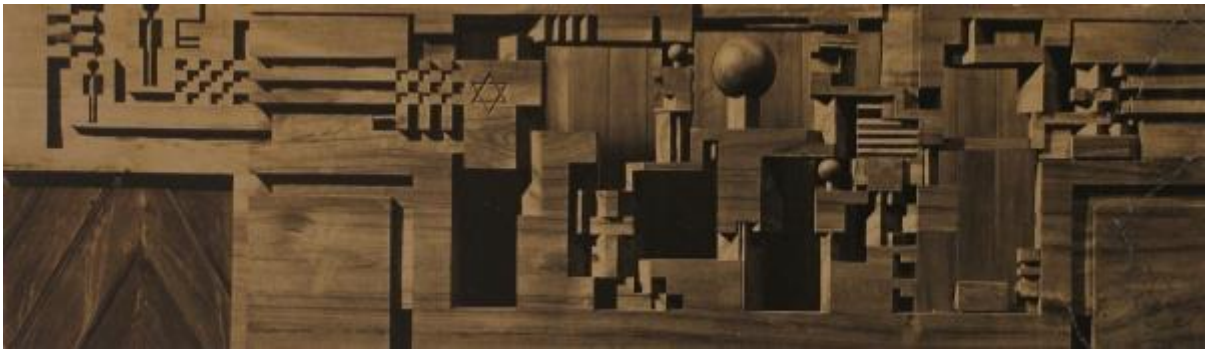

Fig. 9: Joost Schmidt, *relief*, 1920-1921.

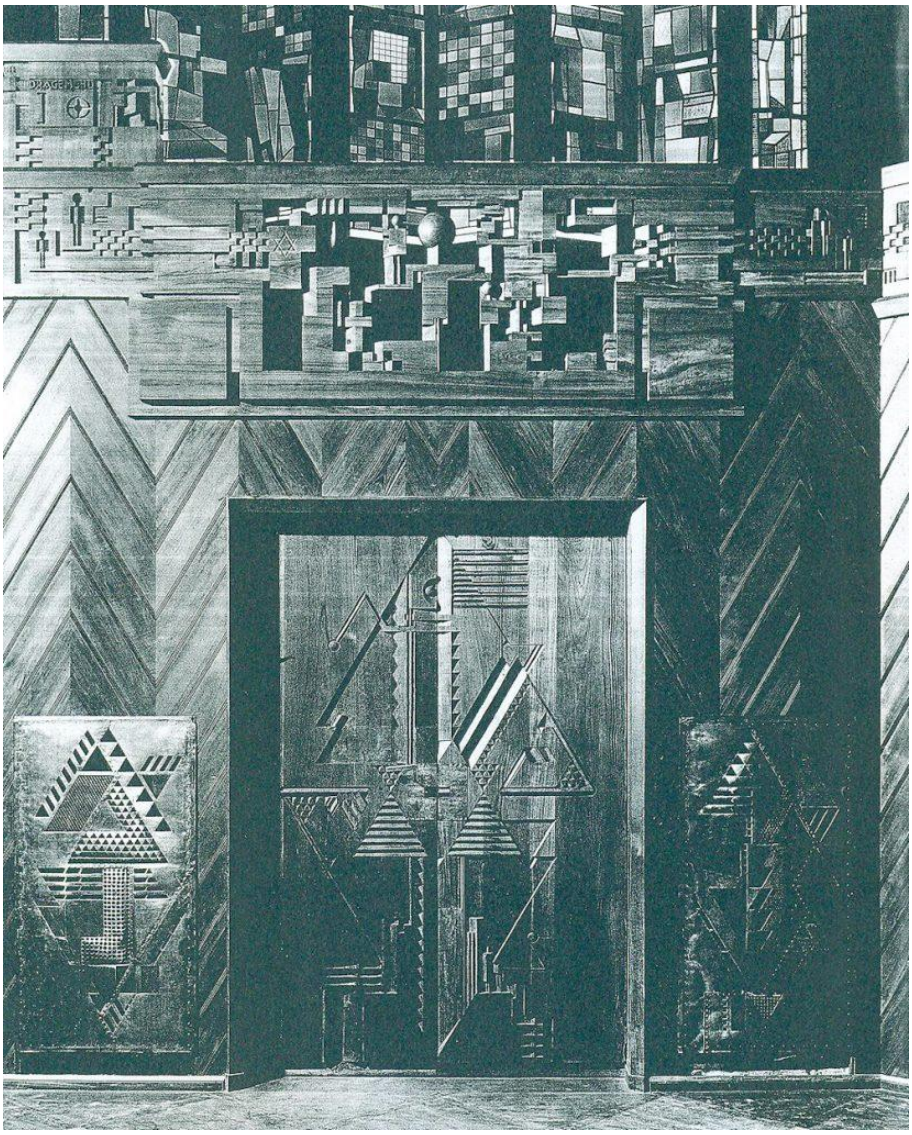

Fig. 10: Various artists, *interior of the Sommerfeld House*, 1920-1921.

Fig. 11: Adolf Sommerfeld, Walter Gropius, *Façade of the Sommerfeld House*, 1920-1921.

Fig. 12: Frank Lloyd Wright, *William M Adams House*, 1900.

Fig. 13: Frank Lloyd Wright, *J Kibben Ingalls House*, 1909.

Fig. 14: Oskar Schlemmer, *Costumes for the Triadisches Ballett*, 1923.

Fig. 15: Marianne Brandt, *Teapot*, 1924, nickel silver, ebony, a: 17.8 x 22.8 cm, b: 8.3 cm, c: 5.4 x 8 cm (MoMa, 186.1958.1a-c).

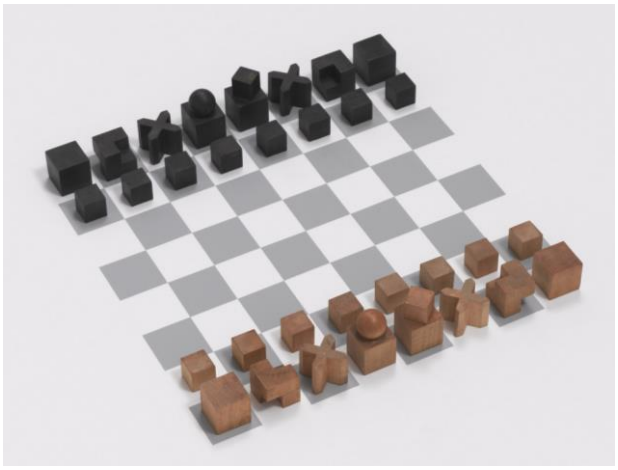

Fig. 16: Josef Hartwig, *Chess Set*, 1924, pear wood, natural and stained black, box: 5.4 x 12.4 x 12.4 cm, smallest part: 2.2 x 2.2 x 2.2 cm, largest part: 4.8 x 2.9 x 2.9 cm (MoMa, 497.1953.1-33).

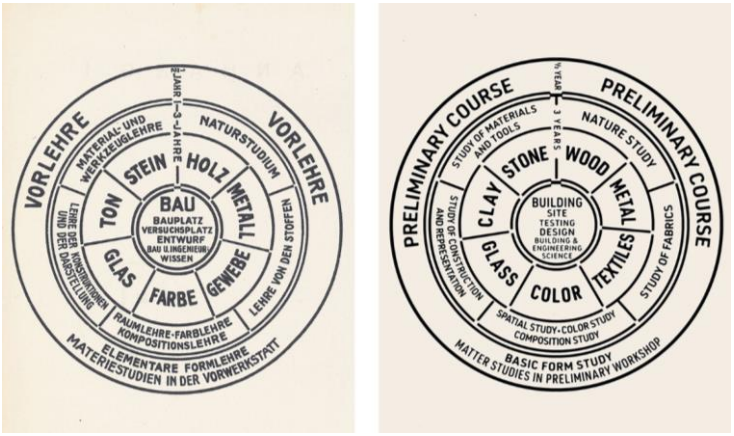

Fig. 17: Walter Gropius, *Bauhaus Scheme*, 1922, lithograph, 20,2 x 29,3 cm.

Fig, 18: Joost Schmidt, *Poster fort he 1923 Bauhaus Exhibition*, 1923, lithograph.

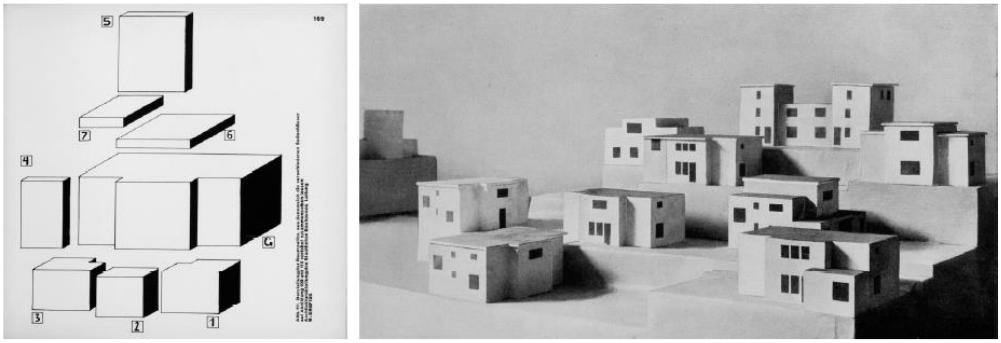

Fig. 19: Walter Gropius, *Wabenbau (Honeycomb System)*, 1922.

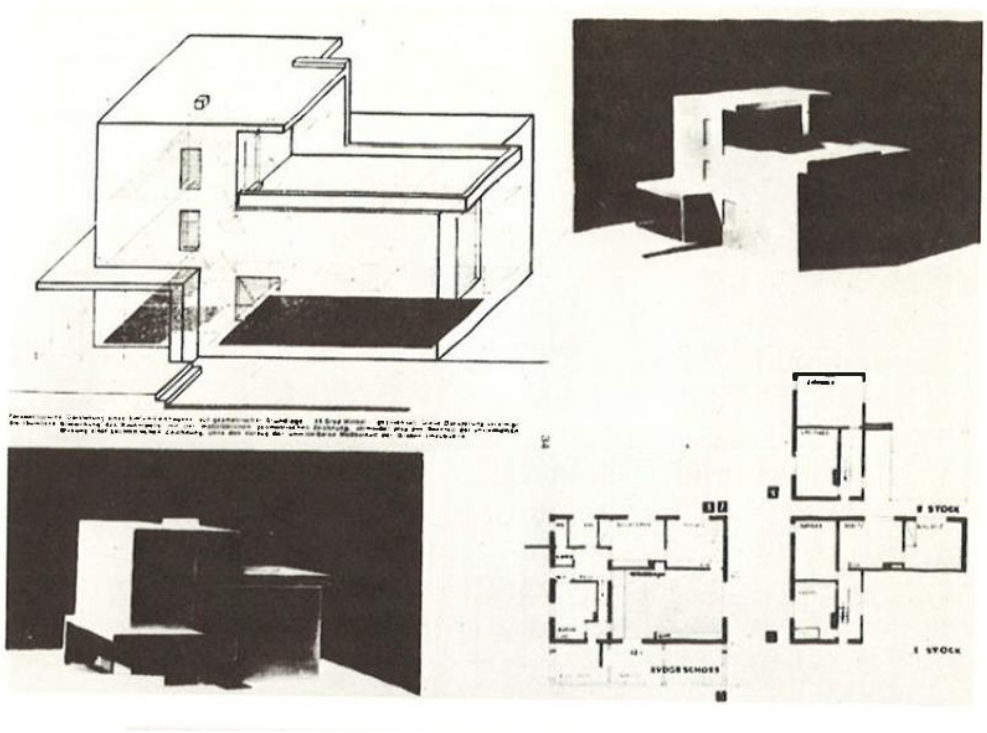

Fig. 20: Walter Gropius, *Big Construction Kit*, 1923.

Fig. 21: Walter Gropius, *One of the semi-detached Meisterhausen at the Bauhaus complex in Dessau*, 1926-1926.

Fig. 22: Walter Gropius, *Törten neighbourhood in Dessau*, 1926-1928.

IMAGE CREDITS

Fig. 1. Anderson, “Medieval Masons”, fig. 1.

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Fig. 3. Downloaded 3 July, 2020.
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Fig. 4. Gropius, *Manifesto,* front page.

Fig. 5. Krohn, “Sommerfeld House”, p. 46.

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Fig. 8. Downloaded 3 July 2020.
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Fig. 13. Downloaded 3 July 2020.
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Fig. 14. Downloaded 3 July 2020.
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Fig. 19. Seelow, “Construction Kit”, fig. 6-7.
Fig. 20. Herbert, *Factory-Made House*, fig. 2.1
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