



# 100 Years of Bauhaus

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## Prologue

Along with the celebration of the 88th anniversary of National Cheng Kung University, the College of Planning and Design Library teams up with College X – which is established by NCKU, aimed to educate the next generation in solving future problems, for the 'x.future.talk parallels 100 years Bauhaus' activity that was held on the 11th of November 2019.

'x.future.talk parallels 100 years Bauhaus' starts with students' project exhibitions early in the morning and continues with the “100 years Bauhaus” in the afternoon.

Through 'The Association of DAAD' located in Taiwan, the organizers managed to invite Professor Doctor Siegfried Gronert and Professor Doctor Karl Schawelka that are both current professors from the Bauhaus, Weimar, all the way from Germany to give a talk on the 'History and Theory of Designing'.

"Professor Gronert is an expert in the Design Philosophy and the History of Design...Professor Schawelka excels in Chromtology, Graphic Design, and Art History...It has been 100 years since Bauhaus has been established, both the professors will be giving their perspective views on the effect of Bauhaus..." The opening speech was given by one of the professors from the College of Planning and Design Library.

The chairman of the Association of DAAD then issued a Certificate of Appreciation for both of the professors before inviting Professor Gronert to start his talk.

### Professor Gronert's Opening Speech

"你好..." Professor Gronert greeted the audience warmly and continued to express his thanks to NCKU and the Association of DAAD.

Professor Gronert talks about the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Bauhaus back in Germany, as this day is considered a grand celebration for the Germans. Organizations all across Germany hosted events and exhibitions to celebrate this joyful day. The Bauhaus Museum in Weimar will also be reopening and the new Bauhaus Museum located in Dessau will open its door for the first time."Over the year 2019, I counted altogether about 80 exhibitions in Germany... talks, symposia, and discussions.



Exhibitions in Europe and symposia all over the world celebrated the historical Bauhaus."

### The Beginning of the Bauhaus

"Let's start in Weimar..." Professor Gronert talks about the origin of the Bauhaus which first started in Weimar, a small village in Thuringia. In 1919, Weimar was the capital of the newly founded federal state of Thuringia. The Bauhaus was founded by an architect named Walter Gropius as a dedication to unite all branches of arts under one roof. The Bauhaus School of Art existed in three German cities - Weimar, from 1919 to 1925; Dessau, from 1925 to 1932; Berlin, from 1932 to 1933. For the three



periods of the Bauhaus School of Art was led by different architect director, namely Walter Gropius - the founder of Bauhaus, Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

### The Founding Manifesto

The Founding Manifesto of the Staatliches Bauhaus by Walter Gropius, April 1919: 「The ultimate goal of all art is the building! The ornamentation of the building was once the main purpose of the visual arts, and they were considered as indispensable parts of the great building. Today, they exist in complacent isolation, from which they can only be salvaged by

the purposeful and cooperative endeavors of all artisans. Architects, painters, and sculptors must learn a new way of seeing and understanding the composite character of the building, both as a totality and in terms of its parts. Their work will then re-imbue itself with the spirit of architecture, which it lost in salon art.

The art schools of old were incapable of producing this unity—and how could they, for art may not be taught. They must return to the workshop. This world of mere drawing and painting of draughtsmen and applied artists must at long last become a world that builds.

When a young person who senses within himself a love for creative endeavor begins his career, as in the past, by learning a trade, the unproductive “artist” will no longer be condemned to the imperfect practice of art because his skill is now preserved in craftsmanship, where he may achieve excellence.

Architects, sculptors, painters—we all must return to craftsmanship! For there is no such thing as “art by profession”. There is no essential difference between the artist and the artisan. The artist is an exalted artisan. Merciful heaven, in rare moments of illumination beyond man's will, may allow

art to blossom from the work of his hand, but the foundations of proficiency are indispensable to every artist. This is the original source of creative design.

So let us, therefore, create a new guild for craftsmen, free of the divisive class pretensions that endeavored to raise a prideful barrier between craftsmen and artists! Let us strive for, conceive and create the new building of the future that will unite every discipline, architecture and sculpture and painting, and which will one day rise heavenwards from the million hands of craftsmen as a clear symbol of a new belief to come. 」

## The Bauhaus Idea

The word 'Bauhaus' literally means 'building house'. "One of the main statements of the Bauhaus in 1919 was we all have to go back to handicraft," says Professor Gronert.

Bauhaus students learned to transform 'Art into Industry' across mediums, from weaving to carpentry, ceramics to bookbinding. In 1925, Gropius moved the school from Weimar to Dessau, where he designed a new building in his Modernist vision. His architectural plan maximized spatial efficiency to include studio, classroom, and administrative space. Here, students applied key Bauhaus

principles to their crafts.

Marcel Breuer's disciples learned to deconstruct the very nature of furniture, reducing designs and replacing materials to produce lighter, mass-producible inventions. In the metalworking studio, designers such as Marianne Brandt forged light fixtures and dishware with both craftsmanship and increased utilitarian ease in mind under the leadership of Hungarian painter, photographer, and professor, László Moholy-Nagy. Graphic designer Herbert Bayer formulated a Bauhaus-specific typography that served a promotional purpose for the school.

In 1928, Gropius resigned as the school's Director, suggesting fellow architect Hannes Meyer as his successor. Meyer upheld the majority of Gropius' principles, placing particular emphasis on functionality and design for the masses. Meyer served as Director for only two years before he was dismissed by the city of Dessau for his Communist leanings, succeeded by architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. In 1932, the Nazi Party motioned to discontinue the school in Dessau as students became increasingly politicized and subsequently threatening to their cause. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe briefly continued the school as a private

institution in Berlin, but steadily decreasing political stability tore through Germany as World War II loomed. In 1933, the school's doors closed for good.

Several former Bauhaus practitioners, including Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, László Moholy-Nagy, and Josef Albers, brought the movement to the United States when they fled Europe during the war. Chicago became one of the most prominent cities for experimental architecture and design in the 1930s and served as the site of Maholy-Nagy's New Bauhaus (now the Illinois Institute of Technology). Today, remnants of the Bauhaus school are preserved in Europe and throughout the United States, from Chicago to New York City and Massachusetts.

## Arguments regarding Gender Equality

"We have the textile workshop with only women, except one man, and that was the leader of the textile workshop; the metal workshop only man except one woman." says professor Gronert as the topic of gender inequality was brought up. Although the Bauhaus was praised for its more progressive approach to gender equality - they will allow women to choose various workshop according to their own will ( as long as they can pass the





preliminary test for the workshop), the school still received some criticism as the people claim that many of the school's female members went unnoticed both during and after the school's short existence. There are some other claims as well, stating although the school fronted progressive ideas of gender equality, its administration has yet to change. One example of this case was Gertrud Arndt - a photographer associated with the Bauhaus movement, as she was redirected into the more domestic or 'feminine' subject - weaving when she aspired to be an architect, the reason given was they were no available architecture classes left. Other than that, some also criticize Gropius's proclamation of gender equality only remains theoretical in the

teaching field. Criticism like this refers to the gender ratio in the faculty. The ratio of female to male did not improve over the years and the decreasing number of female faculty members paralleled the decrease in female enrolment, this indicates Gropius's alterations to the acceptance policy for women.

### The Basic of Designing

"A leader of a school in Australia once said, a student who has mastered the basic principles of design can design anything from a dress to a kitchen stove" Preliminary courses are also set up for students who want to join the Bauhaus, Professor Gronert stressed on the importance of studying basic design before taking classes in the Bauhaus. "The main aim of the courses is to unfold creative power and artistic ability." The preliminary courses at the Bauhaus include the basics in structures, color studies etcetera.

### The Closing of the Bauhaus in 1933 and after the closing

"The Bauhaus was claimed to be a communist school," says Professor Gronert as the National Socialist German Worker's Party (Nazi Party) was becoming more influential in German politics. In late 1932, with the Nazi Party gaining more and more power, to stop the harassment to the school, Mies van der Rohe's moved the school to an empty telephone factory in Berlin and designate it a private institution. Despite all the effort made by Mies van der Rohe, the harassment continued as they demand the faculty members to be replaced by the Nazi sympathizers. The school was then forced to close as the faculty refused to work with the Nazis rather than cooperating with them.

The school was forced to close down due to pressure from the Nazis in 1933. Following the shutting down of the school, the Bauhaus members emigrated to the USA, Switzerland, Russia, Israel and many other countries, they continue to spread the Bauhaus ideas all over the world. Some elements of the Bauhaus teaching method – particularly the preliminary course – are still being used at the college level. The Bauhaus's influence continues to be seen above all in its fundamental ideas and methods, even more than in specific forms and products.

### Professor Schawelka's Talk on Creativity

Bauhaus was one of the single most influential cultural movements of the 20th century, and at its heart was an obsession with the "total" work of art. The impact of Bauhaus is strong enough to affect all pillars of design including graphics, typography, product and furniture and so on.

From the beginning, it was clear that Bauhaus stood for creating beauty through purposeful utilitarian design, uncompromised by mass production. It saw mass production as something that could still incorporate craft. It was about simplicity and usefulness. It avoided the trappings of decoration and it felt that any media could be an interface for the Bauhaus way of thinking.

These core values remain as relevant today as ever for anyone working in graphics and branding, product design, and even those working in digital fields designing an app or a service.

Professor Schawelka also talks about despite the creativity, the function of that particular design should also be taken into consideration. Designing without thinking about the usefulness of the product would give the product no function.