

bauhaus

The name comes from the German Bauen, (build) and Haus (house)



Crucially, Germany capitulated in World War I, and a new, democratically elected government was established in Weimar, east central Germany, to avoid the ongoing turmoil as well as the history of Berlin. Weimar was a bohemian centre and had quite a reputation as a 'party town'. Think about the reputation that Las Vegas has today!

Look at the timings: 1919-1925. Germany was one of only a few Western European countries to resist the march of the Art Deco style, (another was The Netherlands with its early De Stijl.



Walter Gropius

In this environment, the visionary Walter Gropius set up his Bauhaus school in 1919. He intended to combine the study of all the visual arts, design and crafts and use their creative power to rebuild the shattered Germany in a positive, people centred way.

The teaching methods were new, not least for giving design an equal importance to fine art. This revolutionary approach has since been adopted by high schools around the world as what we now call, "art & design".

Walter Gropius was an enigmatic figure and he was able to gather around him some of the day's artists and designers who went on to become the most important of their generation. The creative environment he provided was dedicated to producing thoughtful, practical design solutions that would provide Germany with a bright, clean, efficient future for all. (See also the previous notes on the emergence of art deco and remember that Germany did not win the war).

Some of these teachers and pupils were: Wassily Kandinsky (painting and murals); Paul Klee (landscapes); Johannes Itten (colour); Marcel Breuer (former student, then woodwork and metalwork teacher); Mies van der Rohe (president from 1930 onwards); Maholy Nagy (sculpture); Hanes Meyer (architecture). Try looking any of them up- they are all important in their own right now.



Witness also the women of the Bauhaus: Gunta Stölzl (a weaver), Benita Otte (another weaver), Marguerite Friedlaender-Wildenhain (ceramicist), Ilse Fehling (sculptor and set designer) or Alma Siedhoff-Buscher (toy maker) and famously Margaret Schutte-Lihotzky, designer of the first fitted kitchen (often called the Frankfurt Kitchen). While the men stormed the post-war world, the women of the Bauhaus were really only allowed to flourish under Walter Gropius in Weimar. Later versions of Gropius's ideal, under van der Rohe and others, consigned the women to 'craft' pursuits. But let's not forget the magnitude of what Gropius did- he invited women in in the first place! In the UK women were only just winning the vote through Emily Pankhurst and the Suffragette movement throwing themselves under