Bauhaus architecture

Some facts:

Date: interbellum: 1919 to 1933
Country of origin: Germany
Region: Europe and North America
Modernism
Since 1996 on the UNESCO World Heritage list

The Bauhaus Dessau

1921/2, Walter Gropius’s Expressionist Monument to the March Dead

Typography by Herbert Bayer above the entrance to the workshop block of the Bauhaus, Dessau, 2005

Staatliches Bauhaus, commonly known simply as Bauhaus, was a school in Germany that combined crafts and the fine arts, and was famous for the approach to design that it publicized and taught. It operated from 1919 to 1933. At that time the German term Bauhaus, literally “house of construction” stood for “School of Building”.

The Bauhaus school was founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar. In spite of its name, and the fact that its founder was an architect, the Bauhaus did not have an architecture department during the first years of its existence. Nonetheless it was founded with the idea of creating a ‘total work of art in which all arts, including architecture would eventually be brought together. The Bauhaus style became one of the most influential currents in Modernist architecture and modern design. The Bauhaus had a profound influence upon subsequent developments in art, architecture, graphic design, interior design, industrial design, and typography.

The school existed in three German cities (Weimar from 1919 to 1925, Dessau from 1925 to 1932 and Berlin from 1932 to 1933), under three different architect-directors: Walter Gropius from 1919
to 1928, **Hannes Meyer** from 1928 to 1930 and **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe** from 1930 until 1933, when the school was closed by its own leadership under pressure from the Nazi regime. The changes of venue and leadership resulted in a constant shifting of focus, technique, instructors, and politics. For instance: the pottery shop was discontinued when the school moved from Weimar to Dessau, even though it had been an important revenue source; when Mies van der Rohe took over the school in 1930, he transformed it into a private school, and would not allow any supporters of Hannes Meyer to attend it.

**Bauhaus and German modernism**

Germany's defeat in World War I, the fall of the German monarchy and the abolition of censorship under the new, **liberal Weimar Republic** allowed an upsurge of radical experimentation in all the arts, previously suppressed by the old regime. Many Germans of left-wing views were influenced by the cultural experimentation that followed the Russian Revolution, such as constructivism. Such influences can be overstated: Gropius himself did not share these radical views, and said that Bauhaus was entirely apolitical.[2] Just as important was the influence of the 19th century English designer William Morris, who had argued that art should meet the needs of society and that there should be no distinction between form and function. **Thus the Bauhaus style, also known as the International Style, was marked by the absence of ornamentation and by harmony between the function of an object or a building and its design.** However, the most important influence on Bauhaus was **modernism**, a cultural movement whose origins lay as far back as the 1880s, and which had already made its presence felt in Germany before the World War, despite the prevailing conservatism. The Bauhaus was founded at a time when the German zeitgeist (“spirit of the times”) had turned from emotional Expressionism to the matter-of-fact New Objectivity.

**Architectural output**

![Bauhaus building in Dessau](image1)

![Foyer of the Bauhaus University in Weimar](image2)
The Bauhaus Dessau

Bauhaus building in Chemnitz

The Engel House in the White City of Tel Aviv: architect: Ze'ev Rechter, 1933; a residential building that has become one of the symbols of Modernist architecture and the first building in Tel Aviv to be built on pilotis.

A stage in the Festsaal

Ceiling with light fixtures for stage in the Festsaal

Dormitory balconies in the residence

Mechanically opened windows
Impact

The Bauhaus had a major impact on art and architecture trends in Western Europe, the United States, Canada and Israel (particularly in the White City of Tel Aviv) in the decades following its demise, as many of the artists involved fled, or were exiled, by the Nazi regime. Tel Aviv, in fact, in 2004 was named to the list of world heritage sites by the UN due to its abundance of Bauhaus architecture, it had some 4,000 Bauhaus buildings erected from 1933 on.

Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and László Moholy-Nagy re-assembled in Britain during the mid 1930’s to live and work in the Isokon project before the war caught up with them. Both Gropius and Breuer went to teach at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and worked together before their professional split. Their collaboration produced The Aluminum City Terrace in New Kensington, Pennsylvania and the Alan I W Frank House in Pittsburgh, among other projects. The Harvard School was enormously influential in America in the late 1920s and early 1930s, producing such students as Philip Johnson, I.M. Pei, Lawrence Halprin and Paul Rudolph, among many others.

In the late 1930s, Mies van der Rohe re-settled in Chicago, enjoyed the sponsorship of the influential Philip Johnson, and became one of the pre-eminent architects in the world. Moholy-Nagy also went to Chicago and founded the New Bauhaus school under the sponsorship of industrialist and philanthropist Walter Paepcke. This school became the Institute of Design, part of the Illinois Institute of Technology. Printmaker and painter Werner Drewes was also largely responsible for bringing the Bauhaus aesthetic to America and taught at both Columbia University and Washington
University in St. Louis. Herbert Bayer, sponsored by Paepcke, moved to Aspen, Colorado in support of Paepcke's Aspen projects at the Aspen Institute. In 1953, Max Bill, together with IngeAicher-Scholl and OtlAicher, founded the Ulm School of Design (German: HochschulefürGestaltung – HfG Ulm) in Ulm, Germany, a design school in the tradition of the Bauhaus. The school is notable for its inclusion of semiotics as a field of study. The school closed in 1968, but the 'Ulm Model' concept continues to influence international design education.

**One of the main objectives of the Bauhaus was to unify art, craft, and technology.** The machine was considered a positive element, and therefore industrial and product design were important components. *Vorkurs* ("initial" or "preliminary course") was taught; this is the modern day "Basic Design" course that has become one of the key foundational courses offered in architectural and design schools across the globe. There was no teaching of history in the school because everything was supposed to be designed and created according to first principles rather than by following precedent.

One of the most important contributions of the Bauhaus is in the field of modern furniture design. The ubiquitous Cantilever chair and the Wassily Chair designed by Marcel Breuer are two examples. (Breuer eventually lost a legal battle in Germany with Dutch architect/designer Mart Stam over the rights to the cantilever chair patent. Although Stam had worked on the design of the Bauhaus's 1923 exhibit in Weimar, and guest-lectured at the Bauhaus later in the 1920s, he was not formally associated with the school, and he and Breuer had worked independently on the cantilever concept, thus leading to the patent dispute.) The single most profitable tangible product of the Bauhaus was its wallpaper.

The physical plant at Dessau survived World War II and was operated as a design school with some architectural facilities by the German Democratic Republic. This included live stage productions in the Bauhaus theater under the name of *Bauhausbühne* ("Bauhaus Stage"). After German reunification, a reorganized school continued in the same building, with no essential continuity with the Bauhaus under Gropius in the early 1920s.[22] In 1979 Bauhaus-Dessau College started to organize postgraduate programs with participants from all over the world. This effort has been supported by the Bauhaus-Dessau Foundation which was founded in 1974 as a public institution.

**Bauhaus artists**

Bauhaus was not a formal group, but rather a school. Its three architect-directors (Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe) are most closely associated with Bauhaus. Furthermore a large number of outstanding artists of their time were lecturers at Bauhaus:

- Anni Albers
- Josef Albers
- Herbert Bayer
- Max Bill
- Marianne Brandt
- Marcel Breuer
- AvgustČernigoj
- Christian Dell
- Werner Drewes
- Lyonel Feininger
- Naum Gabo
- Ludwig Hilberseimer
- Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack
- Johannes Itten
- Wassily Kandinsky
- Paul Klee
- Otto Lindig
- Gerhard Marcks
- László Moholy-Nagy
- Piet Mondrian
- Oskar Schlemmer
- Lothar Schreyer
- Joost Schmidt
- Naum Slutzky
- Gunta Stölzl
Bauhaus Chronology

http://german.about.com/library/gallery/blberlin01_01chr1.htm (27/10/’11)

1919: Walter Gropius founds the Bauhaus in Weimar.
1925: For political reasons the Bauhaus moves to Dessau. In June the first in a series of “Bauhaus books” is published. Authors: Gropius, Moholy-Nagy, Klee, Kandinsky und Mondrian.
1926: The Bauhaus in Dessau bears the new name “College for Construction and Design.” On December 4, the new Bauhaus building, designed by Gropius, is dedicated.
1927: In April a Department of Architecture opens; the architect Hannes Meyer is named department chair.
1928: Walter Gropius steps down as director in April in order to work as an architect in Berlin. At his suggestion, Hannes Meyer becomes the new director. The Bauhaus has 166 students in this year.
1929: Under the photographer Walter Peterhans a Department of Photography is set up.
1930: Accused of communist leanings, the director Hannes Meyer is fired by the city of Dessau. With the help of Gropius, the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe becomes the new director in April.
1932: Again for political reasons the Bauhaus has to move to Berlin.
1933: The Bauhaus is shut down by the Nazis on April 11. 32 students are arrested and later released.
1937: Following the immigration of many Bauhaus artists, the “New Bauhaus” (today’s Institute of Design) is founded in Chicago.
1960: The Bauhaus-Archiv e.V. (association) is established in Darmstadt.
1964: Walter Gropius designs a museum building for the Bauhaus Archive in Darmstadt, but the project is never completed there.
1971: The Bauhaus Archive moves to West Berlin.
1976: Under the East German government the Scientific-Cultural Center Bauhaus Dessau is set up and begins to assemble a collection on the history of the Bauhaus.
1979: After three years of construction, the new museum building for the Bauhaus Archive opens in West Berlin.
1986: In Dessau the Bauhaus Dessau Center for Design opens in the former Bauhaus building.
1995: In Weimar a Bauhaus Museum opens on the Theaterplatz (Theater Square).
1997: The museum building in Berlin is placed under landmark protection.

http://architecture.about.com/od/20thcenturytrends/ig/Modern-Architecture/Bauhaus.htm (27/10/’11)

Bauhaus is a German expression meaning house for building. In 1919, the economy in Germany was collapsing after a crushing war. Architect Walter Gropius was appointed to head a new institution that would help rebuild the country and form a new social order. Called the Bauhaus, the Institution called for a new "rational" social housing for the workers. Bauhaus architects rejected "bourgeois" details such as cornices, eaves, and decorative details. They wanted to use principles of Classical architecture in their most pure form: without ornamentation of any kind.

Bauhaus buildings have flat roofs, smooth facades, and cubic shapes. Colors are white, gray, beige, or black. Floor plans are open and furniture is functional.

The Bauhaus school disbanded when the Nazis rose to power. Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and other Bauhaus leaders migrated to the United States. The term International Style was applied to the American form of Bauhaus architecture.
Bauhaus in Stellenbosch – Pius Pahl

Born: 1909
Died: 2003

Since 1952 the excellent work of Pius Pahl, the Bauhaus trained architect, has continued to delight many families and has inspired his colleagues.

Pahl was part of the Bauhaus, the cradle of the International style, and his work embodies its credo. Pahl is a skilled carpenter, builder, glassier, designer, artist and architect. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was his teacher and friend and his associates included Le Corbusier.

Pahl lectured in architecture at the University of Cape Town from 1952 to 1954. He is well known internationally and has received several awards, including a gold Medal from the South African Institute of Architects. Some of his work is included in the permanent Bauhaus exhibition in Berlin, Germany.

GOLD MEDAL

http://www.saia.org.za/_ati_gold_pepahl.php (27/10/’11)
PIUS EDMUND PAHL - STELLENBOSCH, 17 FEBRUARY 2001

Pius Edmund Pahl has always lived and breathed architecture as important social discourse, as professional practice in the service of clients and society at large, and as an essential cultural pursuit and component of vigorous education. His passion about the art of architecture and the science of building, carpentry, joinery and cabinet-making has had a formative influence on many South Africans; be they lay people who admire his dexterity and professionalism in providing them and their friends with fine and affordable contemporary architecture which responded to their needs; or professional colleagues who were often amazed by his tenacity in the context of often tight budgets and his ingenuity in envisioning and detailing airy and imminently liveable fine spaces; or young architectural students who found in Pius and his work a profound humanity and ethical integrity, as well as an infectious resolve to search for sane and appropriate architectural solutions in a disciplined and reasoned way.
The legacy of projects and built works provides a dense testament that Pius has produced a large and notable body of architectural work of very fine quality indeed. Leaving aside his work in Germany, in South Africa he has authored well **over 90 architectural works, all worthy of publication**, ranging from large community buildings and the like to very many extremely fine domestic complexes, for which he is justly renowned.

Pius has national and international standing as an architect of very considerable accomplishment. He received numerous Institute Merit Awards; his buildings have been published both nationally and internationally; exhibitions of his work have been held both here and in Germany; and some of his work is included in the permanent Bauhaus exhibition in Berlin.

Pius has always been modest professionally, and never really pushed himself to the forefront amongst his peers. **For over 30 years he was based in Stellenbosch**, away from Cape Town, where larger practices, often led by younger professionals than himself, tended to have greater profile.

Besides being an **outstanding architect**, Pius has been a **fine teacher of architecture** in both Germany and South Africa. This has been attested to by many individuals fortunate enough to have studied under him during the period 1952-54 at the school of Architecture at UCT. Over the years, and particularly from 1953 to the mid 1960’s he gave talks and participated in public architectural criticism that is still considered memorable by those who were fortunate enough to be present.

Beyond design, over the years Pius has been instrumental in developing the capacity of builders and tradesmen in Stellenbosch and wherever he worked, both in urban and rural contexts. An excellent craftsman himself, his educative thrust towards those who manufacture and assemble components of buildings has always come naturally to him.

Never faddish, Pius’s work has always managed to convey **spatial and functional mastery**, together with **concerns for good light** and other issues of **human comfort**. **His designs and working details were always resolved so as to integrate ecological and economic concerns.**

Pius was awarded life membership of the SA Institute of Architects some years ago. Half a century ago, when he was in his early forties, Pius was nominated and received membership of the German Academy of Arts.

Pius has dedicated his life to architecture and fine design. Though humble, he and his work remain an **exemplary and wise model for architecture in South Africa** and it is for this reason that the SAIA Gold Medal is awarded to him.
Pictures of Bauhaus

Bauhaus School
Pictures of International Style

Mies van der Rohe

Le Corbusier