











# **Our Bauhaus**

# **Memories of Bauhaus People**

Edited by Magdalena Droste and Boris Friedewald

**PRESTEL**

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In August 1976, Eckhard Neuman interviewed Nina Kandinsky in her apartment in Paris, where this photograph was taken, for his book *Bauhaus und Bauhäusler*.  
(Photo: unknown)

# Preface

This book compiles a unique treasury of memories at whose center stands the Bauhaus. They are retrospectives by friends, directors, masters, and students, who not only experienced the Bauhaus but above all helped shaped it.

These texts are of exceptional importance. They depict everyday life; tell of experiments and utopias, both their successes and their failures, of difficult political and social circumstances; they speak of heated discussions, ideas, desires, and struggles. They offer insight into the particular teaching methods and into the highways and byways of design. They report on the first days of the founding of the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1919, of its time in Dessau, and extend to its closing in Berlin in 1933. They also tell of the subsequent founding of new institutions that saw themselves in the tradition of the Bauhaus, such as the New Bauhaus in Chicago or the failed attempt to revive the Bauhaus in Dessau after 1945.

They are personal memories of eyewitnesses who report things that no object, no building, no photograph, and no manifesto or statutes could tell us. Reading these texts, moments of the history of the Bauhaus come alive again; indeed, one even gets a feeling of living them oneself. And yet the book also shows that “each *Bauhäusler* had his own Bauhaus,” as Lou Scheper said. These memoirs were written long after the events took place—most of these essays were written from the early 1960s to the early 1980s. They are not responses to standardized questionnaires, like those sent to former Bauhaus people all over the world by the Bauhaus-Archiv in Darmstadt and Berlin or by Reginald. R. Isaacs in the United States, but rather their themes and length were chosen freely by their authors. Precisely their diversity, their thematic range, and their lively, “unscholarly” approach and language account for the peculiar charm and uniqueness of these retrospective views, which are of irreplaceable value. For all that, however, one can also see that those looking back from a distance are often inconsistent, not without substantive errors, and that sometimes facts and myths are interwoven.

The majority of the texts collected in this volume were written at the initiative of Eckhard Neumann (born April 15, 1933, in Königsberg, Germany [now Kaliningrad in Poland], died March 24, 2006, in Frankfurt am Main). After the Second World War, Neumann studied to become a poster designer in Dessau, where he first became

interested in the history of the Bauhaus—an interest which took hold of him for the rest of his life. From 1953, he attended the technical school for advertising in Berlin and decided to then study at the Ulm School of Design (*Hochschule für Gestaltung*), where his studies took a special turn. When he had just arrived, he made his way by foot from the Ulm train station to the school, soon a Bentley pulled up next to him; it quickly became clear they were headed to the same destination and so Neumann got in the car. The driver was the former *Bauhäusler* Max Bill, the co-founder, architect, and director of the Ulm School of Design. Over the years, it grew into a fine friendship. In the end, Neumann attended only the basic course at the school as he took an opportunity in 1957 to become the advertising director in Germany for the airline Swissair. At the same time, he began to visit and meet avant-garde artists on his trips throughout the world, including many Bauhaus people, with whom he often initiated lively exchanges. The design historian Jörg Stürzebecher once wrote: “His address book reads like the index of an encyclopedia of the avant-garde.”

Neumann’s particular interest was in the typography of the 1920s, a subject to which he devoted an exhibition, organized with a friend, in the legendary Göppinger Galerie in Frankfurt am Main in 1963—probably the first on the subject in Germany after 1933. He also had a profound interest in visual communication. In 1964, he founded the annual publication *Werbung in Deutschland* (Advertising in Germany), which he edited for a decade, and in 1967, his book *Functional Graphic Design in the 20’s* was published in the United States. He also taught the history of communication at the Ulm School of Design from 1965 to 1967. From 1973 to 1975, he worked in the advertising department of Braun AG in Kronberg, and from 1975 to 1985 was director of design promotion at the Design Council in Darmstadt, where he also compiled the press publication *Design Report*. From 1985 to 1988, Neumann taught at the Mannheim University of Applied Sciences (*Städtische Fachhochschule Mannheim*) and then again from 1988 as professor of communications design.

The true love of this graphic designer, lecturer, archivist, curator, collector, author, and connoisseur of the art of living, however, was always the Bauhaus. In 1964, he was co-organizer of one of the first comprehensive exhibitions on the Bauhaus, which was shown at the Göppinger Galerie. The accompanying exhibition catalog, *Idee - Form - Zweck - Zeit* (Idea—Form—Purpose—Time), for which Neumann was responsible, was the first compilation of a number of reports by former Bauhaus people on their time at the Bauhaus. Walter

Gropius wrote the foreword, in which he redefined the goal of the Bauhaus in a surprising way: “The Bauhaus was and is a movement with dynamic momentum. Its goal: unity in diversity and overcoming the ego cult.” The contributions to the catalog—several of which were taken from other publications, but the majority of which had been written for the catalog at Neumann’s suggestion—formed the core of the book Neumann published in the United States in 1970: *bauhaus and bauhaus people: personal opinions and recollections of former bauhaus members and their contemporaries*. In addition to numerous new texts, Neumann himself had written a brief biography of each author. This book appeared on the German-speaking market in 1971 under the title *Bauhaus und Bauhäusler: Erinnerungen und Bekenntnisse* and in an expanded paperback edition in 1985.

That the nearly all the texts from Neumann’s *Bauhaus und Bauhäusler* are included here is thanks not only to the copyright holders but also to the collector Bernd Freese, who owns the extensive correspondence between Neumann and the former Bauhaus people. For this book, therefore, the texts could be checked again, modestly edited, missing first names added, and spelling errors corrected. In addition, we have included texts by Hin Bredendieck, Lotte Gerson-Collein, Lydia Driesch-Foucar, and Hannes Meyer, most of which appeared in publications that have long been out of print. Another text by Hubert Hoffmann, originally presented as a lecture, is now being published here for the first time. Finally, all of the short biographies have been rewritten by the editors and a selection of photographs made especially for this book.

During one of the many meetings, Eckhard Neumann gave Bernd Freese a copy of *Bauhaus und Bauhäusler*. On the first page, Neumann had written a dedication to Freese that reasons: “should keep going.” In the present book, Neumann’s challenge has now become reality.

Magdalena Droste      Boris Friedewald



View into the metal workshop of the Bauhaus in Weimar, ca. 1924–25.  
(Photo: unknown)

# Bruno Adler

## Weimar in Those Days

The Bauhaus—so one reads in books and magazines today—was an idea, a school of thought, a living organism. A description of the beginnings of these notions may not be out of place.

How can one get at the facts, looking at it from a chronological and geographical distance? Even those who were members of the Bauhaus are subject to illusions. In the first place the Weimar Bauhaus phase is characterized by a mixture of trends, which appear alien in contrast to literature, particularly foreign literature. This often leads historians and critics to risky judgments and interpretations.

The confusion is understandable: the Bauhaus began in a drastic period. Only one who was an observer, not a member, can recognize a historically determined and logical progress in the apparently contradictory development of the “crystalline symbol of a new creed” into a “machine for living,” and of emotional expressionism into the integration of art and technology.

The movement, which did not erupt after the First World War, but rather had its roots in it, and which one designates by the general

term “Expressionism,” developed in two opposing directions. Janus-like it faced both forward and backward, dreaming of a romantic past and a utopian future. The young avant-garde German leaned toward mythologizing bygone eras, loved the medieval mystics and Far-Eastern religions, and his artistic endeavors were influenced by the innocence of the primitives and the newly discovered world of the exotics. Thus there was a denial of everything merely rational, a distrust of industrialization and the masses. In other words, the movement was a flight from the brutal reality of a present that threatened to lead in a terrifying direction. But this visionary attitude was also connected with an optimistic belief in the renewal of mankind, in which mankind remained a pure abstraction. Individualists glowed with universal brotherhood, pacifists dramatized class hatred and parricide. Soul, regarded by others as the adversary of intellect, was done to death in manifestos and proclamations; and the kernel of truth hidden in all these postulations was stifled in a boundless enthusiasm.

No wonder the winged language of Gropius’s first Bauhaus proclamation spoke directly to the hopes and quests of the young. Here they saw purpose, a new way of artistic thought, and more: a new way of life, founded on a real community of creators; new teaching methods in place of the old, worn-out conventions; a return to handicrafts; and above all the vision of a future creative unity.

Those who came to Weimar in 1919 to attend the laying of the cornerstone for this church of the future did not, however, have the impression that the young people were actively concerned with the theme of the new community that the unified work of art would build. They were concerned with matters of practice and method. More topical than theories concerning life was the actual establishment of the most basic conditions for a school and the clarification of questions of artistic education. Everything was lacking. There was not much more than Van de Velde’s beautiful building, with its sorry neighbors; the old art academy was still organizationally connected with the new foundation, and at first Gropius had brought with him only Lyonel Feininger and Gerhard Marcks as new teachers. For the time being there could be no question of regular, systematic instruction.

Things changed only when Johannes Itten joined them. The strongest and most influential personality of the group, a teacher in the truest sense of the word, he laid the educational foundations for the first Bauhaus years in his *Vorkurs*, which—although much altered in form—was adopted by numerous art schools all over the world. Itten made unusual demands on the student. His theoretical and practical

ideas were to include more than the basic teachings about figure and form; to comprehend all sensual, spiritual, and intellectual faculties—in short, the whole man, his very breathing, diet, and clothing. Itten's more immediate circle was for the most part composed of students who had come with him from Vienna, and actually constituted the only coherent group at the Bauhaus. Georg Muche, appointed to the faculty shortly after Itten (Oskar Schlemmer and Paul Klee were next, and after them, Kandinsky), called this group “the yeast which initiated the process of organic development in the Bauhaus. They replaced the initially somewhat crude spirit with relaxed composure and the grace of the free imagination. They were not what one generally calls *Bauhäusler*, for they would not lend themselves to simplification. They were and remain art enthusiasts.”

There is an intimation here of the conflict that was coming to a head. There were frictions among the students and tensions among the faculty, not to mention endless attacks from outside. Oskar Schlemmer's diaries and letters movingly reflect the situation again and again. Basically it was the ideological and structural changes in society that led the participants to disagree despite themselves. Reorientation proved just as inopportune as an escape into an unreal image of the future. Gropius was the first to recognize the signs of the times and thought he must decide between the reforms offered: he chose the exoteric over the esoteric. Modern technology replaced handicrafts; contact with industry became more important than contact with an Oriental philosophy of life. Foreign influences fostered the change, especially the functionalist manifesto of the Dutchman, Theo van Doesburg, the advocate of the *De Stijl* group. Itten withdrew and soon left. He was replaced by László Moholy-Nagy, who, more than the other masters, had real connections with technology and science. His teaching talent and his temperament soon assured him a leading place.

The fact that the pendulum did not swing to the other extreme was due to circumstances and the prudence of the director. Gropius imposed neither a style nor *De Stijl* principles upon his institute. But as little as he bowed to a new dogma, so little did he remain attached to an old one. He was sufficiently unprejudiced to allow himself to be advised by his colleagues and to let the opposition respect what was worthy of respect. After all, the Bauhaus had been founded on the concept of cooperation with technology, and it needed only the ideological change to affirm its contact with industrial means of production. And had he not in his early structures anticipated much of

what this new salvationism preached so vehemently? Functionalism was in the air, and sooner or later the Bauhaus had to follow the trend of the time.

“Art and Technology—a New Unity”—that was the watchword. Thus the difficulties of yesterday were replaced by a new one.

From the beginning the Bauhaus was not intended to be an art school. It was not to have been a sanctuary of nonfunctional art. For years, however, architecture was not taught. Paradoxically, while the construction of dwellings, the creation of functional objects, and technological processes occupied the foreground, in those years above all it was the important painters who lent luster to the Bauhaus. True, they did operate as artistic directors of the workshops, but what Feininger, Klee, Kandinsky, and the others created in their studios at the Bauhaus would probably have been no different in any other setting. Their works had hardly anything in common with the rational principles of the organization. Feininger would not hear of the unity of art and technology; Schlemmer, that man of utter integrity, faced the problem honestly and would have liked best to find some synthesis of the two opposing principles, had that been possible; Klee, of course, could not acknowledge anything less than free artistic creativity; and Muche explained lucidly the essential difference between art and technology. On the other side of the fence were the practitioners, with their engineers’ aesthetics. The conflict was insoluble: only the director’s intelligence could hold the opposing parts together. He could reconcile internal differences, but even he could not cope with external crises. Reactionary Weimar agitated and fought against the institute with the most incredible measures. Day-in, day-out Gropius had to fight lies and slander. And when a nationalist government took the reins of Thuringia, the Bauhaus’s final hour had been tolled. The Weimar adventure foundered heroically on the political blindness and baseness that from the beginning had been, and would remain, their undoing.

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Born: October 14, 1889, Karlsbad, Austria-Hungary

(now Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic)

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Died: December 27, 1968, London, UK

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Bruno Adler’s important role in the Expressionist Bauhaus has yet to be assessed.

Adler was born in Karlsbad to Jewish parents. After completing secondary school in Prague, he studied philosophy, art history, and literature in Vienna, Erlangen, and Munich. In 1916, he completed his doctorate in

Munich. As a pacifist, he refused to serve in the war and was imprisoned. After his release, he worked as a journalist in Vienna and there met Johannes Itten—whom he followed to Weimar in 1919—along with his first wife, Margit Téry. There Adler gave lectures on art history at the Bauhaus and taught at the adult education center in neighboring Jena. In 1920, he founded the Utopia publishing house and in 1921 published the important almanac *Utopia: Dokumente der Wirklichkeit* (Utopia: Documents of Reality). In 1922, he began publishing an edition of the major works of the Austrian writer, Adalbert Stifter, and later published a multivolume edition of the works of the poet Matthias Claudius. When his friend Itten left the Bauhaus in 1923, Adler and his family returned to Karlsbad. In 1924, with the writers Ernst Sommer and Ernst Bergauer, Adler published the journal of cultural politics *Die Provinz*, for which he sometimes wrote under the pseudonym Urban Roedel. He went to Berlin and was active for the Ullstein publishing house until 1933. After the Nazis seized power, he was briefly arrested in 1933 and then fled with his second wife, Ilse, to Prague, where he continued to publish under a pseudonym. In 1936, he emigrated to England and taught for a time at a school in Kent for the children of Jewish émigrés. From 1940, Adler worked as an editor for satirical broadcasts on the German Service of the BBC. After the war, from 1946 to 1950, he was editor in chief of the monthly journal *Neue Auslese aus dem Schrifttum der Gegenwart* (New Selection of Contemporary Writing) of the Allied Information Service and then returned to the BBC, where he wrote weekly satirical broadcasts until 1964. MD

# Josef Albers

## Thirteen Years at the Bauhaus

I spent three years as student and ten years as teacher at the Bauhaus (this means longer than anyone else). In 1919, when the Bauhaus was founded, I was in Munich, and at the beginning of 1920 I studied with Franz von Stuck at the Munich Academy, as did Kandinsky and Klee before me. Although I grew particularly fond of Munich, I was soon very strongly drawn to Weimar because of the tempting possibilities of studying under an unusual name: the name was Bauhaus. Obviously this name meant something else than “academy.” Also the names “institute” or even “*Hochschule*” were not alarming. And instead of workshop, which it actually was, it was most modestly called “house,” and significantly not “house for art and industry,” nor some other combination of both, but “Bauhaus,” therefore a house for building, and again modestly and discreetly, for building and design. Even today I am convinced that the invention of this name, the invention of the word “Bauhaus,” was a particularly happy and important action of Gropius. This happened at a time when art was written with a capital “A” after a much-too-retrospective nineteenth century, when

one talked too frequently of the golden age of the Renaissance, so that there was hardly any time left for one's own work. In spite of the independent, unconventional name of Bauhaus we did not, even in Weimar, remain without some indications and warnings of the past. But the more we studied the old memories, the more certain we became that analyzing and dissecting was no goal. It was even more significant that the so-called masters there did not look back toward even older masters, but intentionally opposed what had already been done and said, in order to dedicate themselves more intensively to their own development. We therefore preferred to watch new and living masters who were determined not to follow others, and Gropius was the man who bravely introduced us to such masters.

The greatest success of the Bauhaus was to win over and interest industry. We realized this aim only to a small degree. Time was too short and possibly not yet ready for it. Instead, we gained something else, something much more effective: a new visual education. We had a disorganized but very far-reaching influence on general education. This was an unexpected success. I do not believe that during the ten years of my life at the Bauhaus I heard the word "education" mentioned. We talked a lot about design, production, and industry, but hardly about education. We simply tried to teach anew. In America today the mistake is made of talking of a Bauhaus method. We have heard that it is of no use to talk about the Bauhaus style because no style was sought. A Bauhaus teaching method was never intended, because each master developed his own method of teaching, independent of the others and especially independent of any agreed principles and aims of teaching.

And this also explains the pedagogic success of the Bauhaus. As every success in learning and teaching depends on the personality of the teacher, so it was in teaching of design, i.e., of "Shaping and Construction" at the Bauhaus.

At first the Bauhaus meant opposition for me. Naturally, the strongest opposition came from young people, and this was supported by the work and attitude of the masters, who also did not follow others nor repeat others. The result was that the students influenced the development of the Bauhaus. It is typical that the very first course at the Bauhaus, the preliminary course, had to succumb to the opposition of the students. Subsequent courses could not and would not act as a continuation of the preliminary course, if only because later lecturers could not and would not be heirs to a way of teaching that had been rejected.

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Born: March 19, 1888, Bottrop, Germany

Died: March 25, 1976, New Haven, CT, USA

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An artist and educator, Albers developed Itten's preliminary course at the Bauhaus, whose principles and techniques he later also imparted to many young artists both in the United States and at the Ulm School of Design (*Hochschule für Gestaltung*).

The son of a master housepainter, Albers trained from 1905 to 1908 as an elementary school teacher, and worked as such until 1913. In that year he began studying at the Royal Art School in Berlin where he qualified as an arts educator. From 1916 to 1919, Albers studied at the School of Applied Arts in Essen with the stained-glass artist, Jan Thorn Prikker, while simultaneously working as a teacher in Bottrop. As a student of Franz von Stuck and Max Doerner, he studied from 1919 to 1920 at the Royal Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. In 1920, aged thirty-two, he began studying at the Bauhaus. After completing the preliminary course, he worked on glass assemblages and reestablished the glass workshop. From 1923, Albers co-taught the preliminary course and, until 1925, was director of the glass workshop. In 1925, he married Anneliese (Anni) Fleischmann, a student at the Bauhaus. That same year, he was appointed junior master. From 1926, Albers designed tea glasses, furniture, and lamps, and began taking photographs. From 1928, Albers taught the full preliminary course and became the director of the carpentry workshop. In 1932, he took over the teaching of draftsmanship and typography. From November 1933 to 1949, Albers taught as a professor at Black Mountain College in Ashville, North Carolina. His students included Robert Rauschenberg and Kenneth Noland, among others. From 1936 to 1940, he taught a class similar to the Bauhaus's preliminary course at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. From 1936, he also held a number of visiting professorships in the United States and Europe, including at the Ulm School of Design from 1953 to 1955, where he directed the basic course. In 1950, Albers began his famous series *Homage to the Square*, which he continued until his death. BF



Young master Josef Albers and his wife, the weaver Anni, on the balcony of their room in the Prellerhaus, probably in the spring of 1928. Only after László Moholy-Nagy left the Bauhaus a short time later did the two of them move into one of the masters' houses. (Photo: *Marianne Brandt*)





In early 1930, Alfred Arndt, the head of the building department, moved in the master's house that had formerly been Schlemmer's, where this photograph was taken on the roof terrace. On the left, Lis Beyer is looking at us; next to her is Alfred Arndt and on the right Hans Volger, who pressed the auto-timer. (Photo: Hans Volger)

# Alfred Arndt

## how i got to the bauhaus in weimar

it was 1921, just before noon, a warm may day in weimar. my back was in a sweat from my heavy rucksack, and besides i was weighed down by a heavy, home-made portfolio that hung about me. thank god both arms and legs were quite bare: that was cooling. i'd tramped from hamburg across the moors, through the thuringian forest, through the beautiful park around goethe's garden house, past the liszt monument with a few marble figures stuck on it, and landed on the belvedere alley, right in front of a house that looked completely different from any other weimar house. i turned to see if there was anyone around i could ask about it. there was someone! he had a strange rig on: a brown jacket with a low collar, belted with the same material; the trousers were very wide above and very narrow below. "funnel trousers," i thought to myself. i asked him politely what sort of building that was, and he answered: "man, man you're from elbing!" of course i hadn't expected to be recognized as being from elbing by my dialect, which i thought i'd overcome. the man was kube. he told me this was the art school built by the famous architect van de velde. now it was the bauhaus, directed by the architect walter gropius. i couldn't make much of that. who was van de velde? who was gropius? what did he

mean—bauhaus? kube invited me to dinner with him at the bauhaus canteen, which made me very happy.

as i entered the canteen with kube there was a hullabaloo about tramping and long hair. suddenly i was bear hugged from behind: “man, emir,” (my tramping name) “how did you get here?” it was kurt schwerdtfeger, the pomeranian i had met during the war as a soldier at a youth movement meeting. schwerdtfeger said: “man you’re going to stay right here. this is where we belong. this is the place—you’ll see.”

that afternoon i was received at the main office of the bauhaus by a tall secretary—sister von hirschfeld—who asked me what i wanted. “i’d like to speak to the director.” i must have sounded a bit shy, for miss hirschfeld said that the director was a friendly, approachable man. i was announced and immediately admitted. with a bow i gave my name and explained that i had eaten in the canteen and that an acquaintance of mine had invited me to stay. “well, now,” he mused, pressing me into a fantastically overstuffed chair—square and yellow. “you can’t stay here just like that. you’ll have to show what you’ve learned up to this point; in other words, send in some drawings or photos with a curriculum vitae. the masters’ committee will judge and then decide whether you have enough talent.” “what is the masters’ committee?” i wondered silently, and then told him that i was tramping and had no work with me outside of the sketches i had made on the road. but i would write my mother and ask her to send a portfolio with sketches, life drawings, linocuts, and my records and so on to the bauhaus. i myself was thinking of wandering down into the bavarian, or rather bohemian, forest (my interest had been fired by adalbert stifter) and in about two months, poste restante passau, would expect the decision of the masters’ committee as to whether or not i could come. gropius agreed, shook my hand, and wished me a good trip.

quite excited by the bauhaus experience i went off to the youth hostel, lay down on the straw ticking, and let all that i had seen and heard pass through my mind again. next day i went to jena and then via kahla to the leuchtenberg to visit muck-lamberty, who was trying to improve the world through handicrafts. then on through the fichtel mountains into the bavarian forest to find a letter from the bauhaus in passau two months later. it said that i had been accepted into the *vorkurs*, or orientation, semester. so, on to weimar!

i finally arrived after many detours, on september 30, 1921, by slow train. i’d slept on a hard bench in the waiting room—and that’s how my studies began. on the first of october i begged and begged to

be allowed to sleep at the youth hostel for a couple of days because i was going to study at the bauhaus. they weren't very friendly, but in my need i explained that i'd be happy to help clean. so the first few days of my bauhaus adventure were assured. after a week i had hunted down a room, without bed, without furniture. the door had no handle, but there was a sword—i'm not kidding, a real sword—which i could use to open the door. during the day it had to stay open, of course, or i wouldn't have been able to get in myself. i borrowed a bed with a straw mattress and so on from the youth hostel, and it was more comfortable. things were looking up. so much for my accommodations, and now for the courses at the bauhaus.

the *vorkurs* was conducted by a certain master itten, who was dressed in the same gear as the good master kube, the first bauhaus man i had met. i still remember exactly what happened that first day, and because i once told the story about master itten at a festival in the new ulm institute, it has remained relatively fresh in my memory.

there were about twenty of us, predominantly men, with very few women. the door opened. itten came in and said, "good morning." we stood and in chorus said, "good morning." thereupon itten said, "that isn't a good morning!" went out again, came back in, and said, "good morning!" the same from us, only louder this time. but itten wasn't satisfied. he felt we hadn't woken up yet; we were still cramped. "please stand up. you have to be loose, completely loose, or you won't be able to work. turn your heads. That's it! more! You've still got sleep in your necks!"

i was more than curious to see what the work would be like after all this head turning. an old man we were to draw was asked in. itten left, returned after two hours, and just said, "continue." and so the life drawing continued for a while—the old man, an old woman, then something quite different. itten had ordered everyone to get a large pad of newsprint, charcoal, chalk, and soft pencil. one day he said, "today we're going to draw the war." everyone was to make a drawing of his experiences in the war or his impressions of the war. we drew. dieckmann, who had been through the war and had a shot-up hand, sat next to me. he leaned on his shattered arm and sketched, with great concentration i must say, trenches with barbed wire, guns, and soldiers. behind me was menzel, the youngest member of the *vorkurs*, who had not been in the war. he was in a turmoil of work; his chalk broke constantly. after less than five minutes he said, "i'm through," and left. when itten returned after several hours we had

to put all the sheets on the floor and pick the one that best carried out the assignment. the choice fell on menzel, who had rushed the chalk back and forth with his fist, breaking it several times, making sharp points and zigzags, hammering it down upon the paper. itten said, “here you see very clearly this was done by a man who really experienced the war in all its relentlessness and harsh reality. It’s all sharp points and harsh resistance; in contrast look at this sheet,” (the one by dieckmann). “this artist did not experience the war; this is a romantic picture in which even the landscape and all the details, so to speak, play soldier.”

i thought to myself, “so menzel, who was too young to be drafted, experienced the war, and dieckmann, who was in the war and was wounded, didn’t experience it?” I was nonplussed. itten had brought along some reproductions of old masters whose pictures had to do with war, and the best of these showed predominantly harsh, pointed forms. suddenly it hit me that our common choice—menzel’s sheet with only pointed forms and traces of broken chalk—was the right one.

we also had to copy reproductions of old masters for itten—that is, copy accurately in black and white, exactly reproducing the model. itten brought in a bunch of photos and said, “today we’re going to emphasize.” each of us was to copy accurately a section of the plate he was given. he would first look at the student, leaf through the pile of illustrations, and then hand out a sheet. i got “john on patmos,” which i liked very much; my friend gebhart, an illustration he liked too. that’s what i call “recognition of individual tendencies.” each student copied with love and reverence because he got a work he could relate to. that was itten’s strength.

around the middle of the semester we were concerned with studies of texture: rough-smooth, pointed-blunt, soft-hard, and so on. the last stage was more or less the high point. itten urged us to be on the look out on our walks for materials in refuse dumps, junk piles, garbage cans, and scrap heaps. with these materials we were to create something that would clearly represent the essential nature of and contrast between the individual materials.

“you have a week to practice in peace; then you are to bring in the study you think best in terms of the assignment.”

on the appointed day everyone brought in his construction. the works were quite characteristic. the girls brought little, dainty works, about as big as a hand. several fellows had constructions a foot high. often they were real scraps, rusted and corroded. several dragged

in individual pieces, like sticks of wood, stovepipes, wire, glass, and so on, and knocked them together in class. as always, itten allowed the students themselves to decide which were the best works. unanimously we decided that mirkin, a pole, was the winner. i can still see that “horse” today. it was a wooden plank, partly smooth and partly knotted, with an old kerosene lamp cylinder anchored down with a rusty saw through it, ending in a spiral. the sculptured texture studies were then sketched, and intensified contrasts of material and movement emphasized. everyone was free to create such sculptural forms graphically.

i shall not speak of life drawing with schlemmer and analytical drawing with kandinsky—it would lead me too far afield. but even here everything was quite different from the academies. my impression of the overall course of study i went through was, “they’re knocking everything we know and consider right and good out of our heads, with the idea that a full pot can hold no more.”

the first semester was over. each student had to prepare an exhibit of his works. it is a pity that a collected exhibit like that (it contained over twenty booths) could not have been immortalized in a single picture. what a fabulous portrayal of multiplicity and of curiosities.

one day while waiting for the judgment of the masters’ committee i went down to ettersberg with my friend pascha. weimar lay before us all lit up. we spoke of our future, reviewed the previous exciting, stimulating half a year, and concluded that everyone spins at the bauhaus. we had joined in with dedication and industry—but we were not quite sure whether this was right for us. we went on, and suddenly i stopped, tapped my friend on the shoulder, and said, “man, pascha, just imagine if that town down there were rome!” “let’s go to rome,” he said.

the masters’ committee found us both worthy—we could stay; but we didn’t. we took a semester’s vacation and went down to italy. it was 1922 and spring.

and now i come to the end. in rome, lying on a bench, hour after hour, in the sistine chapel (that sort of undisturbed artistic life was still possible then), i made my decision. pointing to the last judgment of michelangelo i asked my friend, “do you think anyone today could manage to produce a thing like that? and is it really today’s task to create things like that? isn’t the expression of our times completely different?” the answer came, “let us affirm today!” back to weimar! back to the bauhaus!

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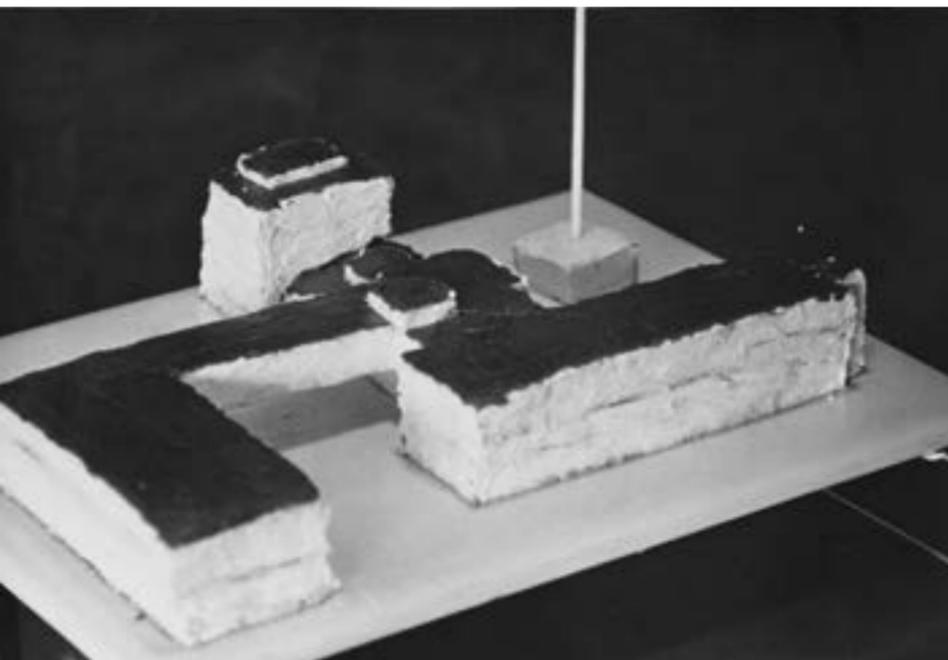
Born: November 26, 1898, Elbing, near Danzig (now Gdansk, Poland)  
Died: October 7, 1976, Darmstadt, Germany

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*“Alfred Arndt is a Bauhaus person through and through, who has remained loyally faithful, with a propensity to, and profound understanding of the Bauhaus and its ideas,” wrote Walter Gropius of his former student.*

As a trained draftsman, Arndt was conscripted in the First World War, serving in Danzig from 1916 to 1919 as a construction foreman. In 1919–20, he attended the vocational school in his native city, Elbing, and in 1920–21 began studying at Academy of Art in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia). He was a member of the *Wandervogel* youth movement and learned of the Weimar Bauhaus by chance in 1921. Arndt transferred there in the winter semester of 1921, and after completing the preliminary course under Johannes Itten, he began training in the mural workshop. Arndt’s colorful mural and interior designs are among his best work.

He financed his studies by working as a commercial graphic artist, and on April 15, 1924, he passed his journeyman’s exam at the Chamber of Trades and Crafts (*Handwerkskammer*) in Weimar. He then took charge of the modern addition to and furnishing of the *Haus des Volkes* (House of the People) in Probstzella, Thuringia. In 1927, he married the Bauhaus student Gertrud Hantschk. In 1929, Hannes Meyer hired him as director of the so-called “completion” department at the Dessau Bauhaus, where he was responsible for organizing the workshops and managing commissioned works. In 1931–32, Arndt also taught construction, draftsmanship, and perspective. When the Bauhaus moved to Berlin in late 1932, Arndt returned to Probstzella. There he supervised the CIAM (*Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne*) working group of Bauhaus students as they prepared their analyses of Dessau and Stockholm for the fourth congress of CIAM—*The Functional City*—in Athens in July 1933. In 1935, he was freelancing for AEG; from 1936 to 1945, he worked for industrial companies in Thuringia and did advertising work. After the war ended, he worked with other *Bauhäuslers* to reestablish the Bauhaus. From 1945, he was director of the Building and Planning Office in Jena until moving (by way of Coburg) to Darmstadt in 1948. There he worked as an artist and painter and contributed to the founding of the Bauhaus Archive. MD



The Bauhaus as cake: on the occasion of a party at Harvard for his eightieth birthday in July 1963, Walter Gropius was presented with this cake in the form of the Bauhaus building in Dessau. (*Photo: unknown*)

Herbert Bayer, in Weimar in 1922. In March of that year, Bayer, who was born in 1900, began studying in the mural painting workshop of the Bauhaus. Only a short time later, he took a long study journey to Italy. *(Photo: unknown)*



# Herbert Bayer

## Homage to Gropius

he was in his office/ at the van de velde bauhaus building in weimar/  
when i first met him,/ presenting my work/ to become a student at  
the bauhaus./ above his desk in the spacious, high-ceilinged room/  
hung a cubist léger./ there was also a medieval architectural drawing./  
gropius wore black trousers, white shirt, slim black bow tie,/ and  
a short natural-colored leather jacket/ which squeaked with each  
movement./ his short mustache, trim figure, and swift movements  
gave him the air of a soldier/ (which in fact he had been until recently)./  
gropius's manner of dress was in contrast/ to the generally fantastic  
individualistic appearances around the bauhaus./ it was a statement  
of his opinion/ that the new artist need not oppose his society/ by  
wearing dress that, to begin with,/ would set him apart from the  
world he lives in,/ that the first step toward common understanding/  
would be acceptance of such standards/ as would not infringe on  
a free spirit.

when i recall those years/ i first think of a community of highly  
eccentric individuals,/ some of them strange or just funny, with  
vague notions/ about their purpose for being there,/ attracted mainly  
by the promise of the unknown,/ bohemian, poor, defying weimar's  
bourgeoisie./ i also think of the scent of roses and lilac,/ and of  
nightingales in goethe's moon-flooded park./ my background lay in the  
viennese design tradition/ of art nouveau and secession./ dissatisfied  
with the role of the designer/ as a mere beautifier,/ i was drawn to  
the bauhaus by its first proclamation/ with feiningger's symbolic,

romantic woodcut—a revelation./ at the time i was deeply impressed by kandinsky's book/ *about the spiritual in art*, which i read by chance./ if even in retrospect i cannot express exactly/ what brought us all together./ in gropius's mind it must have been clear./ as preceding the bauhaus he had already opened the doors/ to new perspectives with his crystal-clear buildings./ and he steadfastly guided us/ through yet undefined concepts/ to a distinct consummation./ outside currents and inside trends contributed/ to an atmosphere of explosive evolution./ most of us were stricken with romantic expressionism,/ dadaism paralleled our rejection of any sanctioned order/ the work of the *de stijl* group, attractive by its purity,/ had a short-lived, formalistic influence./ constructivism added its share to the artistic turmoil,/ but the world of machine production,/ with its innate facts and functions,/ was already coloring the future./ more evident still becomes the greatness of his vision/ if we understand the utter confusion of those times./ as a student of the bauhaus i honor Gropius/ for he was always drawn to youth—/and youth was always attracted to him./ a prerequisite for the great educator he was,/ dedication to the younger generation,/ gave him strength in the face of hostility,/ to deal with unending personal, artistic, internal, financial issues./ his interest in man was at the core/ of his belief in the working team./ and it is here that i had the privilege/ to be associated with him in later years/ in collaboration on design projects./ this i learned from him:/ to give and take, to live and let live./ by exchange of thought to contribute parts to the whole,/ making teamwork a great and successful experience./ whether the aims were vague or clear at the bauhaus/ there was a unifying air—the spirit of a group,/ making each member/ an active part in the explorations of the new./ friction of thought against thought/ or harmony of ideas/ inspired the individual./ group spirit carried feeling and thinking, living and working./ for the future/ the bauhaus gave us assurance/ in facing the perplexities of work;/ it gave us the know-how to work,/ a foundation in the crafts,/ an invaluable heritage of timeless principles/ as applied to the creative process./ it expressed again that we are not to impose aesthetics/ on the things we use, to the structures we live in,/ but that purpose and form must be seen as one—/that they seldom can stand alone,/ that direction emerges when one begins to consider/ concrete demands, special conditions, inherent character,/ but never losing perspective/ that one is after all an artist./ whereas the painter can only be guided from within./ the bauhaus existed for a short span of time,/ but the potentials,/ intrinsic in its principles/