

Fig. 1: Image of the Physical Education teacher of the Bauhaus, Karla Grosch, with the text: Mädchen wollen etwas lernen («Girls want to learn»)

Fig. 2: Building plan jointly signed by Friedl Dicker and Franz Singer, around 1922

Preface

*Unity in diversity*¹, the motto used by the Bauhaus founder. It is not just a title; it is a sequence of time. As the Bauhaus' final goal was architecture: the complete artwork, where all disciplines are involved; the School without female presence would have been born castrated, it would not have been Bauhaus. In an interview, a student was asked why he had applied for the School, to which he answered: »the community life of the people in Bauhaus«. ²

The different origins and ideas, together with the friendship and fervour showed by both men and women led to a special creative atmosphere, an idea, as Mies van der Rohe described it. For this reason, its expansion and propagation throughout the time keep coming with the same force. On its most intimate of this idea, and indissoluble to it, are the women that participated in the School. Never can Bauhaus be dissociated from the female participation. The warp formed by the mixed youth that worked in the materialization of a better world was and will always be a call to future generations. A youth with different political ideas, religions and origins, and where women, firstly in a timid way and eventually in a more active way, managed to position themselves, and even to become, as in the case of the architects Friedl Dicker, Wera Meyer-Waldeck and Annemarie Wilke.

In this turbulent period – in which diversity represents an antidote against religious and ethnic fanaticisms and misogyny; where feminism claims a rereading of the official history, written by a minority – let us find, in the brave female Bauhaus students, a path that can guide us to achieve a real equality in the distribution of responsibilities, and also benefits. (Fig. 1)

We should not look for the Bauhaus women only in the textile (*weberei*) workshop or in the mural painting (*wandmalerei*) one; they also participated in the carpentry (*ausbau*) and construction (*bau*) sections. The leap from the two-dimensional to the total space was already overcome by these women, and they can help present and future students and professionals reflect on the need to work with their female colleagues. It is women's time. The female Bauhaus architects and engineers remind us of it every day.

We are! We want! And we create!

In 1950, the composer and music critic Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt recalled the beginnings of the school in Weimar, describing it as a curious mixture of ultramodernism and investigative zeal, also remembering its financial vulnerability. »Almost all, teachers and pupils alike, were very poor. [...] Either expressionists fought

1 Since 2000, the slogan of the European Union has been *United in diversity*, similar to the motto of Walter Gropius.

2 Interview with Lothar Lang, in the school magazine *bauhaus* n° 4, 1928, 18.

constructivists [...] or the constructivists themselves were in discord [...].«³ While they debated whether the circle should be red and the square blue, a pair of students formed by Friedl Dicker and Franz Singer drew the house of their dreams, practically symmetrical. On each side of the axis, two identical bedrooms; a large shared work room and a kitchen rounded off each end of the floor; the central space of the dwelling comprised the living room, with a resting place in front of the fireplace and a grand piano with two benches. In order to leave no doubt about the authorship and their future commitment, both authors signed the plan. (Fig. 2)

Such was the school in its beginnings, a deluge of ideas yet without channelling, coming from a group of new students, mixed with the students of the old art schools that merged with the arrival of Walter Gropius. Entering the Bauhaus was not an easy task. Feininger sent a letter to his wife Julia in the summer of 1919 in which he explained to her the distressing assembly they had gone through because of the resentment of the rejected. The latter blamed the director for always standing up »for the ›most extreme art‹.⁴ Their indignation led to a legal complaint to the Ministry accusing the director of introducing foreign students in the Bauhaus in order to rule it by their ideas and, of the former, representing a clique of the selected.

On May 1, 1920, the public administration of the Ministry of Education issued an opinion after months of investigation, concluding:

As for the students who were promoted to the foreground, the same names are always repeated. The survey revealed that the students in question are particularly gifted persons, possessing great intellectual vivacity and interest in art, science, literature and particularly in philosophy. A girl⁵ within this group of students, whose name appears repeatedly among the before mentioned, owns a singularly mature and serious-minded personality, whose generous and altruistic character everyone recognizes wholeheartedly [...]. It cannot be denied that many students of both sexes leave much to be desired regarding their attitude and way of dressing. The main reason for this situation must be seen in the prevailing misery. It is precisely the best and most gifted who are often also the poorest [...]. The morale of the young people, as confirmed by the various reports, is excellent. They maintain mutual good relations, they behave in a communitarian sense and they help each other without selfishness. No abuses have been discovered, especially with regard to gender relations. The directorate would tolerate no such thing if it became aware of it [...].⁶

Despite the wide range of resistance, there were also friends in Weimar who supported and admired the development of the Bauhaus. Those friends included Countess Dürkheim who held celebrations, debates and dances at her home and where hot meals were always available, something much needed by the hungry students. The Bauhaus canteen provided the students with a cheap and nutritious meal in times

3 Stuckenschmidt, Hans Heinz: »Red circle or blue square?«, in: *Die Neue Zeitung*, 12, Berlin 1950, in *50 years bauhaus* (German exhibition). Chicago: Illinois Institute of Technology 1969, 317–318.

4 Wingler, Hans M.: *The Bauhaus, Weimar Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press 1976, 35.

5 It can be assumed that this student was Friedl Dicker, who was granted a scholarship from the Council of Teachers, due to her academic achievements.

6 Some survey results concerning the Bauhaus in Weimar, in Wingler: *The Bauhaus*, 42.

of severe shortages. It was the social nucleus of the school and created a solidarity network where a community was organized in search of self-sufficiency. The site located am Horn, piece of land ceded by the government (where the experimental house Haus am Horn was built in 1923 and a Bauhaus colony was planned to be built), became a large orchard where fruits and vegetables were grown. The students helped the fruit and vegetable growers and in return received vouchers exchangeable for food in the canteen. Both Gunta Stölzl and Benita Otte, students and friends from the beginning, helped in the canteen to manage these tasks.

The Thuringian State Treasury checked the institution's accounts, upon request from the groups opposed to the Bauhaus ordering an inspection because they blamed Walter Gropius for misuse of funds. In September 1924, the main activities of the Bauhaus and its bookkeeping audit were presented. The civil servants thus described the point concerning the kitchen:

14. The Bauhaus kitchen: The Bauhaus kitchen is managed by a commission of five students of the Bauhaus. The chairman of this commission is the student Hoffmann. The kitchen offers the Bauhaus pupils a simple dinner for 0.30 gold marks and a supper for 0.20 gold marks. Since meals were generously served, the prices paid for them is [sic] totally inadequate. Due particularly to the efforts of the women students at the Bauhaus⁷, larger amounts of money have been donated by parents or friends, and food has also been contributed. Moreover, the Bauhaus kitchen received 60 gold marks from the federal subsidy for students, and 400 gold marks plus £ 30 from the European Aid for Students. The latter have been distributed in the form of tickets for free meals for 1120 dinners and 1120 suppers to needy Bauhaus students [...].⁸

The report does not speak of the female students as cooks, it describes them as efficient managers. No one can deny that some of them were voluntarily in charge of the canteen's administration and kitchen, but it was not something generalized. In any case, it only shows the commendable work they all did. The use of land for horticultural labour can only be understood as an imperative need to relieve hunger in extremely difficult times. It is interesting to point out the existence of European funds to help students. At this time Germany was one of the most needy countries.

Art and Technique, a New Unit

In the summer of 1923, the large exhibition, where the Bauhaus was to show its achievements to the outer world, was held: exhibitions, conferences, meetings, theatre performances, celebrations... All of this was aimed at the large attending audience, encouraged to not only imagine a new way of life with the experimental house Haus am Horn, but also to adopt a new way of understanding architecture, under the roof of the Bauhaus pavilion. External assistance was needed and Gropius was perfectly willing to call Le Corbusier, J. J. P. Oud, G. T. Rietveld, Frank Lloyd Wright and several Russian and Czech architects as well as his fellow countrymen Erich Men-

⁷ Emphasis added.

⁸ Thuringian State Treasury. Extract from the report related to the verification of the accounting records of the Bauhaus in Weimar, September 1924, in Wingler: *The Bauhaus*, 89.

delsohn, Mies van der Rohe, Hans Poelzig, Bruno and Max Taut, in order to show the local authorities and general public that the Bauhaus championed, as if it were their own, the language of the new architecture that was being created, not only in Germany.

Officially the women in Weimar were not allowed to meddle in the world of architecture, but who can prevent someone from making a plan? Who can deny the spatial evidence that an axonometric section provides? No one, not even Walter Gropius; in fact, when he publishes a compendium book »Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar 1919–1923« on Weimar, an isometric structure by Benita Otte⁹ appears on page 165. Otte draws the interior and exterior of the Haus am Horn with transparent layers of colour. (Fig. 3) This house was created in collaboration with all the workshops, following the motto of its director:

[...] the manner of working together shall not be conceived as it was by the previous generation (van de Velde, Peter Behrens, Bruno Paul). [Rather, it is important] to clear the way for the creative energies of the individual and to establish an objective foundation upon which individuals will be able to collaborate [...] this unit cannot be represented by one person but only by the concerted efforts of a number of people in harmony with each other.¹⁰

Alma Buscher's plans of the children's room and Benita Otte's kitchen design, together with their colleague E. Gebhardt, for the Haus am Horn, represent just one example of the great female willingness to work and cooperate on the occasion of the exhibition during the summer of 1923 and demonstrates how they felt involved in the body that shaped the Bauhaus in Weimar. The distribution of the kitchen deserves special mention: the upper furniture is narrower and the lower has increased storage capacity – and the L-shaped worktop to be used as a working area or a dining table with its stool next to the window. (Fig. 4) It is not the Frankfurt kitchen, outlined and regulated as a perfect machine, created five years later by the architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, but there is no doubt that this premature Weimar kitchen has maintained its relevance until today.

These women and men, of innovative conscience in their experiences with fabrics, metals, ceramics, mural painting, but also through literature, painting, theatre and music, without leaving out mathematics, technical drawing and physics, managed to offer a new integrative approach in which modernity was experienced in all its aspects, including a way of associative and mixed coexistence that led to a new architectural result. It should not be forgotten that they were aware of being the main characters of an experiment. For this reason in particular, a common characteristic was their extraordinary versatility. They knew how to paint, sculpture, design, photograph and, besides, most of the female students, also how to weave. The fact that architecture was being delayed and thus trying to train students in other fields before venturing towards construction, in retrospect this can be interpreted as the right

9 Otte was technically trained before entering the Bauhaus. From 1911 until 1914 she had received drawing classes and, later, until her entry in the Bauhaus, she had taught them.

10 Notes for the discussion at the Council of Teachers, December 9, 1921, in Wingler: *The Bauhaus*, 51.

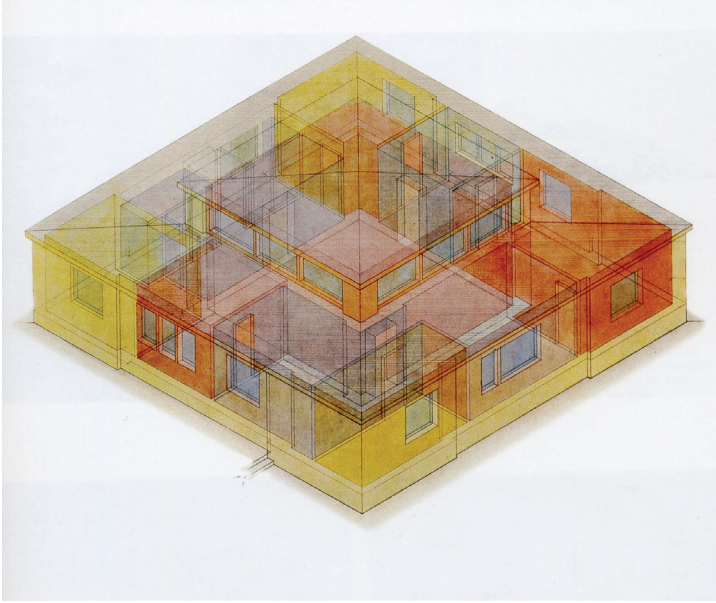


Fig. 3: Benita Otte's plan, from the book *Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar 1919–1923*, p. 165

Fig. 4: Haus am Horn's kitchen, designed by Benita Otte, together with his colleague E. Gebhardt

choice rather than a limitation. As a result, many students were total artists. Some of the male students were in a great hurry to get to the desired architectural workshop, while the female students initially did not even see it as an option (their teachers never encouraged them), but in the end, choosing the less straight path was more intense and rewarding for some, such as Wera Meyer-Waldeck, who obtained her diploma from the Carpentry Guild at first and later her Bauhaus diploma accredited her as an architect. Meyer-Waldeck was able to enjoy that versatility in her professional life. Today we understand the tremendous contradiction that Oskar Schlemmer found in 1921:

In the Bauhaus architecture is not taught, no student wants to be an architect; in other words, that is why they are not able to. But at the same time, the Bauhaus defends the idea of the hegemony of architecture.¹¹

The result of the years lived in Weimar must be interpreted as a laboratory of ideas that crystallized in the new headquarters for the school in Dessau:

[...] from the ideas that the Bauhaus has collected and generated, a vital movement is emerging that is well known beyond the borders of our country, a movement that carries the structure of our modern life within itself. These results cannot be the work of an individual, but are due to the purity of an idea and the intensity of the joint work of our teachers and students, to whom I would like to thank here with all my heart. [...] This building has been created above all for the youth, for the young people who possess figurative skills, and who will have to shape our new world...¹²

The building, despite multiple criticisms, also had many admirers:

It no longer finds itself in the position of a student who lives in a rented room. the architectural school has at long last got the right to build a house for itself. [...] when I finally saw the Bauhaus, which seems to be cast of one piece like a persistent thought. [...] Kandinsky was telling me that many of the pupils occupied themselves secretly, in their leisure time, with painting. after working on designs for slaughterhouses or garages, after manufacturing chairs of metal, or glass lamps, they devoted themselves to a senseless occupation [...]. they do not complain about the trash of the past. heroically, they manufacture everything, down to the bucket.¹³

This team of women and men, hard-working, dedicated and enthusiastic, not only managed to open new headquarters but also turned out to be the generational change of the teaching staff. Five former students were selected, among them a woman: Gunta Stölzl. Years before, she herself would write in her diary:

I have been very busy in myself [...] now I have the feeling that I cannot separate my life and my destiny from the Bauhaus and this will be a great source of energy.¹⁴

11 Letter sent to his friend Otto Meyer-Amden, June 23, 1921, In Schlemmer, C. Raman: »Biografía de Oskar Schlemmer«, in: *Oskar Schlemmer*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and Fundación la Caixa 1996, 159.

12 »Speech for the opening of the Bauhaus building«, in: *Volksblatt für Anhalt*, 285, December 6, 1926, in in Winger: *The Bauhaus*, 125.

13 Ehrenburg, Ilya: »About the Dessau Bauhaus«, in: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, May 28, 1927, in *50 years bauhaus*, 318–320.

14 Müller, Ulrike: *Bauhaus-Frauen. Meisterinnen in Kunst, Handwerk und Design*. Munich: Elisabeth Sandmann Verlag, 2009, 46.

Unity in Diversity

The religious mentality inherited from the Middle Ages combined the improvement of living conditions in cities with the previous moral improvement of people. Therefore, natural disasters and epidemics could well be a consequence of the immorality of humans who inhabited these spaces. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century already, most reformers believed that the previous improvement of the place in which we live was essential for human beings to progress physically and spiritually. In the first half of the 20th century some architects believed that the world could become a better place by using architecture as a tool. They were convinced that through functional dwellings, practical furniture and the healthiest possible way of life, they would be capable of transforming the bourgeois parameters, until then set in stone. The belief in the redemption of the world through art and, in this case, by means of architecture, was an ideal shared by Hesse and Gropius. For this reason, Hesse, the mayor of Dessau, found his best allies in the Bauhaus and in the architect Walter Gropius. The students also joined this project wholeheartedly:

The very next day [of the opening of the new headquarters in Dessau] the Vorkurs¹⁵ began. We were altogether twenty-five boys and girls from different towns and countries (not a single one from Dessau), with varied backgrounds and concepts about our future. Some intended to continue in the fine arts ateliers of the masters, Klee, Kandinsky and Feininger, or in the theatre workshop of Schlemmer; others were attracted by interior and industrial design in the workshops; only a few wanted to be architects. These different backgrounds, ideas and attitudes, together with the comradeship, the intimacy, the spirit and fervour (from the very first, we used the personal »Du« [informal you] instead of the usual »Sie« [formal you]) resulted in there being a creative atmosphere on the course from its very start. Gropius used to call it »unity in diversity«.¹⁶

Unity in diversity was a fact and Gropius left the leadership of the Bauhaus because his discourse had reached its zenith. The »technical« way to achieve a better world for the youth had already been exhausted. Once the architecture department had been set up, another step forward had to be taken, other commitments had to be made, and those commitments he did not want to make himself. He knew Hannes Meyer's approach to rational and functional architecture and his involvement in social issues: »Meyer's fame as an architect of strong social interests attracted me«¹⁷, he acknowledged to Tomás Maldonado in 1963. He handed over fully aware of the work to be carried out by his successor, although he would later regret it: »He led the school to a committed position and, in the end, he drove himself to downfall«.¹⁸ But Gropius had left the school convinced of the direction it would take: finally a construction

15 Introductory course.

16 Sharon, Arieh: *Kibbutz+Bauhaus, an architect's way in a new land*, Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag. 1976, 28.

17 Letter from Walter Gropius to Tomás Maldonado, November 24, 1963, in Maldonado, Tomás: »Otra vez la Bauhaus, textos, cartas, respuestas, comentarios« [»The Bauhaus again, texts, letters, answers, comments«], in: *Comunicación12-Bauhaus*: Editorial Alberto Corazón 1971, 189.

18 Ibid.

department existed and it was taught by a teacher who stood up for a »New World«.¹⁹ In order to demonstrate their good initial relationship, inside the first book edited by Bauhaus, a double page was dedicated to the Geneva building designed by Hannes Meyer and Hans together with Gropius' school in Dessau.

Gropius had already begun to implement the rationalist principles of industrialisation in construction and the commitment to technology with the construction of the Dessau Törten colony and the metal housing prototype in collaboration with the company Junkers. The next step was to link the architectural avant-garde with the political and social forefront and he preferred not facing up to it. The construction in Dessau continued to be carried out by his architectural studio, the reason why he chose to opt out of teaching, although he never completely separated himself from the Bauhaus. The very same Gropius who had decided the course of the centre before his departure, when he saw that his interests no longer coincided with those of the new director, replaced Hannes Meyer with Mies van der Rohe, to counteract the effect. As Gropius himself clarified:

I think it is a mistake to argue that Meyer brought »social content« to the Bauhaus, from the moment he compromised his own social thinking, allowing party politics to dismember the school. Under my direction, the Bauhaus was looking for a »new way of life«. That was its social content.²⁰

Years later, Mies recognized that Hannes Meyer was not the main culprit of the situation: »The Bauhaus became a political instrument, not so much because Hannes Meyer used it as such, but because the young people did«.²¹ Since its beginnings education had much changed, there was no longer an educational foundation based on craftsmanship. Walter Gropius left a functioning college, a »Hochschule für Gestaltung«, and his students were preparing themselves to find work as collaborators in the industry or construction, they would be the engineers and architects of a new age.

With Meyer the study of architecture in the school took a new direction and some women became interested in it. Bau, this concise but powerful word, vigorously indicated »construction«; some of them dared.²² Meyer never looked for a selection of isolated talents, but instead helped to achieve this unity in diversity with work teams comprising students of different ages and levels of education.

In issue number 2/3 of the 1928 *bauhaus* magazine, an advertisement in seven langu-

19 Meyer, Hannes: »Die Neue Welt« [»The New World«], in: *Das Werk* 7, Zürich, July, 1926. In a playful and optimistic tone, he tries to find a new way with modern means in the new world.

20 Letter from Walter Gropius to Tomás Maldonado, October 22, 1963, in Maldonado: »Otra vez la Bauhaus«, 183–184.

21 »Conversations with Mies«, in: John Peter, *The Oral History of Modern Architecture: Interviews with the Greatest Architects of the Twentieth Century*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994, in »Conversaciones con Mies van der Rohe«, 62. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili (ed.). Translation: Moisés Puente.

22 The course listings from 1928–29 show Lotte Beese and Lotte Gerson. In 1930, Hilde Reiss, Gerda Marx, Annemarie Wilke, Wera Meyer-Waldeck and María Muller are included.

imdu babauhaus!
venez étudier à bauhaus!
studiato nel bauhaus!
come and study at the bauhaus!
tanuljatok a bauhausnál!
studjnjcie w bauhausie!
studujete v bauhausu!
studiert am bauhaus!



Fig. 5: Advertisement in seven different languages encouraging readers to study at the Bauhaus

Fig. 6: Paul Klee:
Ein Blatt aus dem Städtebuch, 1928

ages invited to study at the Bauhaus. (Fig. 5) Furthermore, in his school advertising brochures Meyer emphasized his interest in women enrolling. In 1929, the brochure »Komm ans bauhaus« literally said: Are you looking for true equality as a female student?²³ In it, he also highlighted the different nationalities of the students, their different ages and economic capabilities and, in addition, stressed that out of 170 students 119 were men and 51 were women. Once again, when director Meyer outlined the structure of the Bauhaus in 1930, he began by stating that out of 190 students 46 were foreign and 54 were women. It was his way of clarifying the diversity the school was looking for.

Although many theoreticians have insisted on separating the different phases of the Bauhaus, depending on its directors, in a categorical and emphatic way, there has always been a certain continuity in the essential ideas. In this sense, just as Gropius led Meyer to create an architecture department, Mies, albeit minimally, did not forget the social aspect that Meyer had imbued the school with, and in his 1930 programme he made explicit reference to conferences on psychology, economic doctrine and sociology.²⁴ Standardized furniture, an idea initiated in the times of Gropius, developed and promoted with new energies by Meyer, was not abolished under Mies. Alfred Arndt, in charge of the Ausbau seminar, prepared his students for the competition of the Deutscher Werkbund where several designs of standardized furniture for dwellings were awarded prizes. Although bearing no resemblance to Meyer's inexpensive, multipurpose furniture, it neither looked like the director's luxurious Barcelona chair. There has been much speculation about Meyer's and Mies' lack of tolerance for the bohemian and expressionist sentiment that the freestyle painting classes could stand for within the program, but neither of the two directors removed that section. Both Klee and Kandinsky not only participated in the preliminary course but ended up creating their own section in the Bauhaus, attended by students who chose this option as a specialty.

We should also not forget that Mies van der Rohe was the only director of the school who signed the diplomas in order to enable some female students to pursue their professional careers as architects. To the names of the architects Wera Meyer-Waldeck, María Müller, Hilde Reiss and Annemarie Wilke, together with Annemarie Wimmer in interior design, five students should be added who, for different reasons, did not graduate but contributed in the field of architecture as much or more to the school than the school offered them: Friedl Dicker, Benita Otte, Alma Buscher, Lotte Beese and Lotte Gerson. The latter two students entered Bau, but Beese left the school

23 Author unknown, under Hannes Meyer's direction. Page from the brochure *bauhaus*, 1929: »suchst du als studierende wahre gleichberechtigung?«, in Oswald, Philipp: »The Bauhaus at home in Dessau«, in: *Bauhaus art as Life*, London: Barbican Art Centre 2012, 144–145.

24 Bax, Marty: *Bauhaus Lecture Notes 1930–1933*, Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Press 1991, 63. The lecture notes of the student Jan van der Linden reflect some conferences on psychology held by Count Karlfried von Dürckheim, a lecturer who had been invited by Hannes Meyer some years before, as the latter recalled in an article published in the Mexican magazine *Edificación* in 1940.

prematurely and to Gerson, having completed her studies, the diploma was denied, alleging that »despite her acknowledged diligent and neat work, we do not see in her a sufficiently creative capacity«.²⁵

Intersections

The Bauhaus, throughout its entire development, sought to go beyond immediate needs, while no one should feel neglected; this search had nothing in common with the concept of luxury. Through its teachers and directors, it was able to create the conditions for the students to feel involved in the construction of a future, to endow them with the possibility of imagining a fairer world.

From its beginning the Bauhaus school was multidisciplinary. Only in the light of this complexity sociology can be related to aesthetics and statics. It always sensed the collective aspirations of its time. Thanks to the manifold points of view and the different perspectives in the different workshops offered by the students themselves, it was possible to achieve an infinite map of intersections that led to unimaginable relations.

That is why we should not be surprised to find paintings by Paul Klee, as if they were embroidered cloths and, at the same time, to find Klee's chromatic configuration in the textile designs of Gertrud Arndt. (Fig. 6) In spite of the separation between science and art that Hannes Meyer stated in his writings, where he assigned art characteristics of heart and intuition, and science characteristics of brain and intellect, students always found a mechanism of decompression in the power of art. Their emotional intelligence that linked both areas – art and science – granted them transversality to operate in several specialties.

For this reason, a painting by Max Beckmann and an article entitled »die malerei ist tot« (painting is dead)²⁶ simultaneously appeared in issue number 4 of the bauhaus magazine, analysing with surprise that after the Russian revolution no change had taken place and people continued to queue up in front of the paintings of the Moscow museums. The text ended by saying that in order to see images, nothing better than the cinema or magazines. Max Beckmann was the painter chosen by Mies van der Rohe's close friends to commemorate his fiftieth anniversary with his painting »Alfi mit Maske« as a gift. They never suspected that a year later, in 1937, Beckmann would join the illustrious list of painters that made up the exhibition of »Entartete Kunst« (degenerate art); among Beckmann, some 600 works by colleagues such as Klee and Kandinsky. As in the case of the Russian museums, the visitors were countless, triplicating the flow of people of the official exhibition of painters promoted by the Nazi regime, which had been programmed simultaneously. Beckmann was never able to see this exhibition, as that very summer he left his native country to

25 Bauer, Corinna Isabel: *Architekturstudentinnen in der Weimarer Republik. Bauhaus- und Tessenow-Schülerinnen*. Dissertation presented at the University of Kassel in July, 2003, 351.

26 School magazine *bauhaus* n° 4, 1928, 23.

take refuge in Amsterdam and Paris, ending his days in the USA, where a welcoming committee came to the harbour to receive him, among them Mies van der Rohe who in 1939 had already found him a teaching position in Chicago which he could not take up as he did not obtain the corresponding visa.

During the same summer of 1937, another painter, the Spaniard Picasso, depicted the bombings of Guernica, carried out by the German Condor legion (with Junkers aircrafts from Dessau) and the Italian aviation. The Spanish government commissioned the painting for the Pavilion of the Republic at the Paris International Exhibition where architect Luis Lacasa's²⁷ building provided the whole of modernity (fig. 7), completely lacking in the German pavilion of Speer.²⁸ Not only was there a transfer of modern spirit, but also a transfusion of young German blood in the form of International Brigades, among them some components of the Bauhaus. From this international aid, Friedl Dicker herself has bequeathed a painting to us: »Fuchs learns Spanish«. When »Guernica« arrived in Chicago in 1939, Mies van der Rohe must have been so impressed by its vision that he used its image as a wall, a single wall side, serving as background as well as figure, preceded only by a crouching woman covering her face (the sculpture »La Nuit de Maillol«) and, as a final touch to perspective, the blurred marble wall so typical for Mies, with another sculpture in the background. This is how he imagined his Museum for a Small City project. (Fig. 8) Another wall also represented the key element that linked Mies' building to that of Lilly Reich in the exhibition Berliner Bauausstellung of 1931; the wall as metaphor and authentic intersection. Each of them had their own studio, their own house; they were two independent people, but that wall, common to both, supporting his house and hers, was a great sign of their commitment to share the space, both interior and exterior.

Space and time shared until entire dispersion was arranged by the last students of the Bauhaus in Berlin after the school was sealed. Architect Annemarie Wilke, whose relationship with Mies, Reich and Hilberseimer was magnificent, remembered it in 1967 accordingly:

I belonged to the Bauhaus from autumn 1929 until May 1933, thus until the end. The circle of those of us who were still free stayed together for a few weeks. [...] For example, we could be seen sitting there on the already sprawling grass of a part of the Berlin-Lankwitz site, location of the building hosting the headquarters of the Dessau school. Its doors had been sealed. If our meetings were being watched, I never knew. In any case, to us it was unapparent. We were still unsuspecting of the approaching system practices. While we still had a glimmer of hope that the school would reopen, our teachers had none at all. However, we could not imagine any new common ground to share. We found ourselves in a state of perplexity and daze. Professor Mies van der Rohe, Professor Ludwig Hilberseimer and Mrs Lilly Reich were on our side. At that time their personal contact towards us was greatly strengthened. From June and July 1933 onwards we students began to disperse. Some students tried to restore their situation, as soon

27 The architect José Luis Sert was also involved in this project.

28 In the German pavilion, Lilly Reich provided the few touches of modernity in the fabric section. Architect Annemarie Wilke participated with some showcases, whose final versions had apparently been modified.

there would be enough work. We slowly lost track of one another. I myself worked for two more years in Professor Hilberseimer's studio. Later on with Lilly Reich, with whom I had a friendly relationship. She died in Berlin in 1947.²⁹

Her collaboration in the studies of Professor Hilberseimer and teacher Reich proves Wilke's worth and places her in the category of the few students chosen by their teachers to collaborate in their private offices.

But undoubtedly, the teaching intersection of the three principals of the school joined in a single figure can be found exemplarily in the architect Wera Meyer-Waldeck. She participated in the interior design of the Employment Office (*Arbeitsamt*) designed by Gropius in Dessau. (Fig. 9)

Hannes Meyer employed her in his Berlin studio as a draftswoman for the execution of project plans for the furniture of the Trade Union School in Bernau (she also designed the desks for the bedrooms) and finally, Mies van der Rohe was in charge of signing her accreditation as an architect.

When Wera finished her studies in architecture, unemployment in Germany had reached alarming rates, so she tried her luck in Switzerland. Due to bureaucratic problems, she had to return in 1933 when her country was undergoing a difficult situation. Her professional career rises gradually, from being unemployed to occupying increasingly responsible positions, first at Junkers as a draughtswoman³⁰ for the Reich Highways and Railways, until finally, once the war started, holding the position of architect in the construction and planning management of the Karwin mining facilities in Upper Silesia. Her trip to the United States in 1953 became conclusive, as she met her former directors Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe again.

In America she also discovered colleagues with new ideas in the construction of sustainable housing with renewable energies: the American house, built by architect Eleanor Raymond in collaboration with solar energy scientific expert Maria Telkes, inspired her future house for Dr Bockemühl, designed in 1954/55.³¹ (Fig. 10) No less important was her contact with Berkeley through William Wurster, Catherine Bauer and Vernon de Mars, with whom she shared a joint students' class.³² In Meyer-Waldeck's opinion, the University of California at Berkeley had surprised Europe, not only because the architects there had found their own style, but also because it had become the meeting point between European and Asian culture.³³

29 Letter sent to the editor Bruno Adler (first husband of the student Margit Tery) in 1967. He turned to people related to Annemarie because he needed to gather data for the publication of a book on the Bauhaus. Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, n° 1997/26.187–188.

30 Information on Wera Meyer-Waldeck is taken from Hervás y Heras, Josenia: *El camino hacia la arquitectura: las mujeres de la Bauhaus*. Ph.D thesis, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2014.

31 Meyer Waldeck, Wera: »Das Solarhaus braucht keine Öfen«, in: *Die vier Wände* 238, October 11, 1953, 17.

32 Hervás y Heras, Josenia: »Eine Bauhaus-Architektin in der BRD: Wera Meyer-Waldeck«, in: Mary Pepchinsky et al. (eds.), *Frau Architekt – Seit mehr als 100 Jahren: Frauen im Architekturbetrieb*, Frankfurt am Main/Tübingen: Deutsches Architekturmuseum/Ernst Wasmuth Verlag 2018, 167–171.

33 Hervás y Heras, Josenia: »Wera Meyer-Waldeck«, in: Elizabeth Otto/Patrick Rössler, *Bauhaus women. A global perspective*, London: Palazzo 2019, p.115.

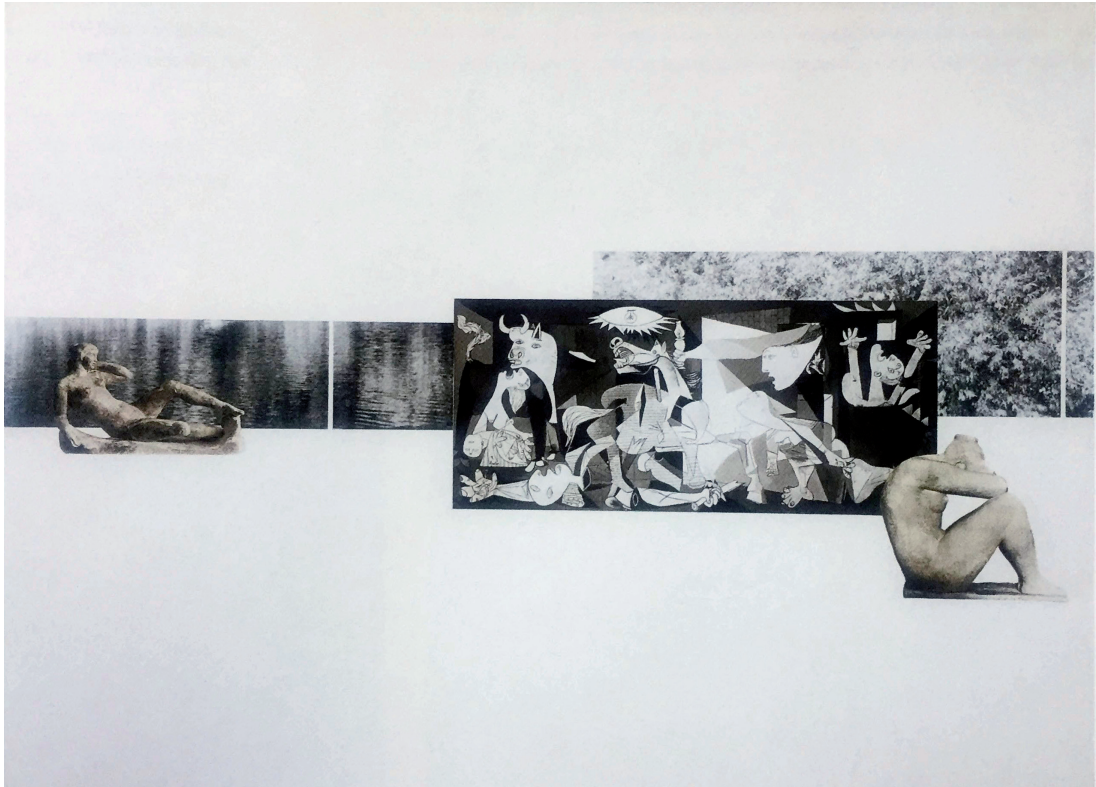


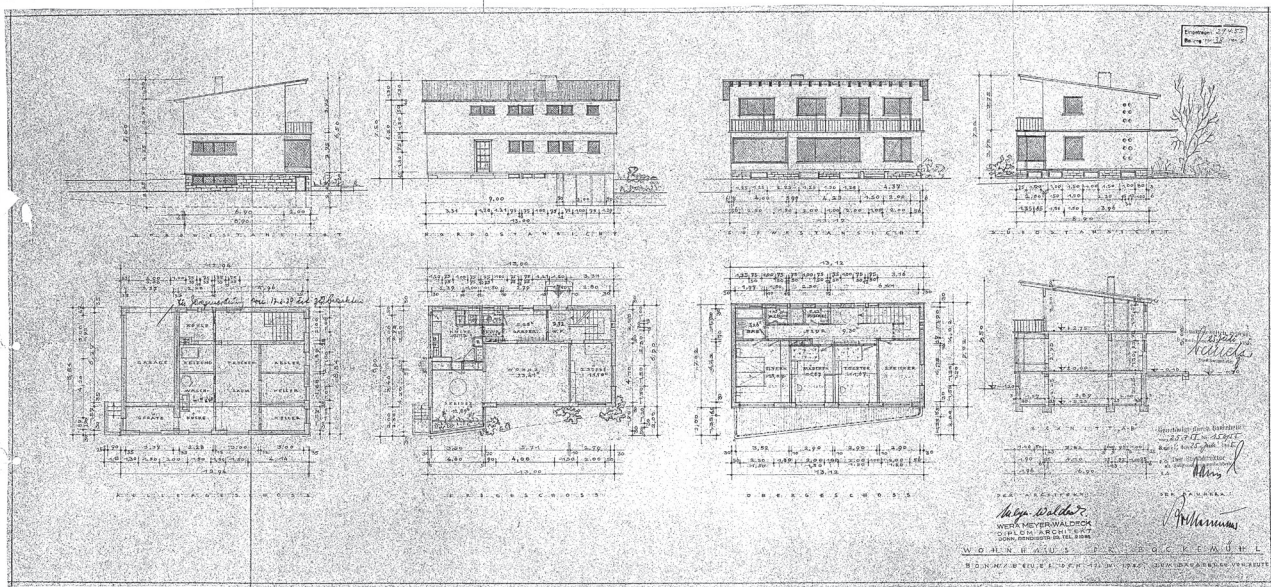
Fig. 7: Views of Picasso's Guernica and Calder's fountain inside the Spanish Pavilion in the Paris International Exhibition of 1937

Fig. 8: Museum: Mies van der Rohe, Architect, Chicago, Ill.



Fig. 9: Employment office in Dessau, by Walter Gropius, collaborating with Wera Meyer-Waldeck in the interiors

Fig. 10: Wera Meyer-Waldeck, Haus Dr. Bockemühl, Beuel-Limperich, 1955



Meyer-Waldeck saw the birth of a new generation of artists in all of the American universities she visited, though she admitted that the European teaching was particularly relevant in Harvard and Chicago, through Gropius and Mies. According to her, it was Berkeley, with a large number of Chinese, Philippine and Malayan students, the one that made the difference. For her, the faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning had become a world class leader, not only for the quality of the students and professors, but also for the works made. Meyer-Waldeck used as an example the new construction methods, prefabricated, used by architect Michael Goodman in his sanitary buildings.³⁴

Catherine Bauer and Wera Meyer-Waldeck who were about the same age and shared the same passion for their profession, were true modern architects by their own decision. It is therefore not surprising that Wera reflected their encounter in a press article.³⁵ On it, she explained the lively talk they had about the social effects of living in isolated houses, in high buildings or rows of houses. Bauer, who introduced the United States to the mentality of solidarity of European architects between the wars, had actively fought for a vigorous policy in the construction of social housing on behalf of the American government in the 1930s. She also encouraged residential promotion by trade unions to compensate the private sector's lack of interest in implementing low-income housing.³⁶

Bauer assured that architecture is a social art, as it is the expression of those forces that keep people together. Her efforts were recognized, and consequently, she helped formulate the legislation that led to the revolutionary *U.S. Housing Act* of 1937.

Following her study tour in 1930, Bauer would later confess: »What I saw in Europe was so exciting it transformed me from an aesthete to a housing reformer«.³⁷ She visited the Siedlung Siemensstadt in Berlin, among many other colonies, and claimed that the Bauhaus was a »primary source of ›modernism««.³⁸ It is not unreasonable to think that a young Meyer-Waldeck, a 24-year-old Bauhaus student, restless, single and childless like Bauer, who by then was 25, could have coincided with the American architect, without knowing each other, on one of their architectural visits. They would never have suspected that after a war confronting their two countries they would meet again in America, thanks to a common passion: architecture.

In April 1945, when Soviet and American troops met for the first time at the River Elbe to continue fighting Hitler, when the last great battle, the battle of Berlin, was being fought, urban planner Catherine Bauer gave a lecture called »Housing« at the

34 Meyer Waldeck, Wera: »Kleine Visite in Harvard und Berkley [sic]«, in: *Werk und Zeit*, 6, vol. 3 (1954), 6.

35 Ibid.

36 Stephens, Suzanne: »Voices of Consequence: four Architectural Critics«, in: Susana Torre (ed.), *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective*, New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1977, 136.

37 Ibid., 137.

38 Bauer, Catherine: *Modern Housing*, London: George Allen & Unwin 1935, plates, 27.



Fig. 11: Anni Albers' signature in textile work *With Verticals*, 1946

Black Mountain College in North Carolina.³⁹ At this American educational centre, where Josef and Anni Albers, together with other artists fleeing from Germany, had ended up after the closure of the Bauhaus in 1933, and where Anni, from her position as a teacher of a committed and dedicated new generation, was able to listen to Bauer.

In 1949, after leaving teaching, Anni Albers became the first person to exhibit a textile monograph at the MOMA in New York. In its press release, the museum acknowledged that »Her background has given her a clear understanding of the principles of modern architecture and has thus enabled her to produce textiles that are an integrated part of modern living space«. ⁴⁰ The recognition of her research in the field of textiles allowed her to spread her legacy more widely. If we carefully observe her signature alone, duplicating the first letter of the Latin alphabet, which corresponds

39 See <http://www.blackmountaincollegeproject.org/ARCHITECTURE/CHRONOLOGY/CHRONOLOGY.htm> [9 May 2019].

40 See <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2736> [9 May 2019].

to her two initials, and transforming them in turn into three triangles, the complete »Gestalt« Theory is summarized. (Fig. 11)

It is a verifiable fact that the American emigration of talents such as Anni Albers was not an isolated event. The dispersion of former students and teachers throughout more than 30 different countries contributed to turn the Bauhaus mindset into a global way of thinking and its main characters, far from losing contact, joined and helped each other as a fraternally connected chain over the years. One of the many examples is the architect Wera Meyer-Waldeck, interceding with Walter Gropius in order to endorse Fritz Hüffner to be able to travel to Yale in 1959. Due to his Russian past in the brigade, led by the architect Ernst May in which the students Gerda Marx and Lotte Beese, enrolled in the construction course (*Bau*), also participated, he was barred from obtaining a visa to travel to the USA. Meyer-Waldeck managed to get Gropius to send a letter to the American consul in Mehlen with the purpose of unblocking this situation.⁴¹ The severe economic crisis, the war and the German division into two opposing countries ended many hopes, but none of this could prevent two distinguished elderly ladies from remaining connected. From Switzerland, fabric teacher Gunta Stölzl congratulated designer Marianne Brandt on her 85th birthday in Kinschberg (Saxony, former GDR) in a letter ending with these words:

Man, house, garden and above all my loom enhance my days. I trust that you are in good health, surrounded by your beloved ones. As a reminder of our beginnings, our ideals and shared experiences in Weimar, I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart.⁴²

We must not take for granted that the only possible tale is the one that the same people have told us over and over again. Art critic Hans Hildebrand stated in 1928 that the work carried out by Lilly Reich was performed under a certain degree of anonymity, insomuch as »Who ask themselves in an exhibition who should be thanked for the pleasure of enjoying a good expository arrangement?«⁴³

Today no one asks that kind of question anymore. Life today is not easy, nor was it easy in 1919 in Weimar where it all began. Today life is certainly more comfortable, maybe lacking illusion, orientation, but whenever we think that another better world is possible, we have to think about carrying it out. This is what the Bauhaus did a hundred years ago and this is what all of us should do, always including women.⁴⁴

As Hannah Höch told her sister at the end of the Great War: »We have PEACE and a fresh start in a fallen Europe. And now, onward!!«⁴⁵

41 Letters exchanged between Meyer-Waldeck and Gropius, Open Archive Walter Gropius. Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin.

42 Letter from Gunta Stölzl to Marianne Brandt, October 1, 1978. Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin.

43 Hildebrandt, Hans: *Die Frau als Künstlerin*, Berlin: Rudolf Mosse Buchverlag 1928, 151–152.

44 On the 50th anniversary of the Bauhaus, in the first catalogue of the exhibition (German edition), out of 99 exposed biographies of people worthy to be remembered, only 11 were women (11 %, less than the female ratio of the school, of around 30 %). In these biographies, there is no mention of any of the certified female architects or of any of the female students from the construction workshop.

45 Hille, Karoline: »...This never-ending evolution. Reflected in her Art – Hannah Höch in the 20th Century«,

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Fig. 1: Source: (No author) in *Die Woche* n° 1, 4 January 1930, 30

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Fig. 11: Picture taken by the autor, 2017

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in: *Hannah Höch*, Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia 2004, 325. Höch wrote this sentence on a postcard to her sister on November 14, 1918. In the book it is commented (p. 18) that under the direction of Mies the school invited Hannah Höch to hold an exhibition in 1932 at the Bauhaus, although unfortunately the show was finally canceled by the Nazi authorities.

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