

The Bauhaus

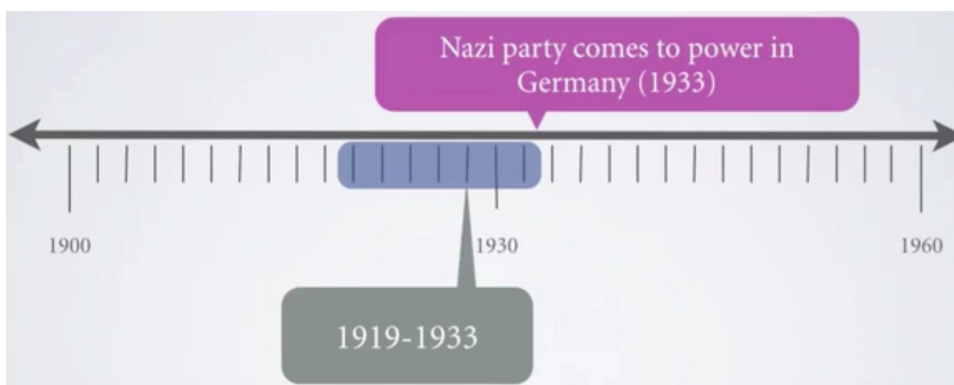
by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson is about the Bauhaus. Bauhaus was a design school based in Germany that shared many Utopian ideas similar to those of de Stijl regarding the integration of art and life. By the end of the lesson today, you'll be able to identify and define today's key terms, describe the philosophy and history of the Bauhaus school, and identify examples of Bauhaus design. This lesson will cover:

The art, architecture, and design that you'll see today dates from between 1919 and 1933.



1. Bauhaus Dessau

Today you will travel to Dessau, Germany, where one of the **Bauhaus** schools was located. The Bauhaus was an actual physical school of design, not just an idea about design, although its principles define Bauhaus more than an actual style does. Bauhaus, in a nutshell, is a physical school of design that was connected to bettering humanity through design, integrating the arts and the machine, and pro-industrialization.



Bauhaus Dessau by Walter Gropius

1925

Dessau, Germany

The Bauhaus Dessau in Germany was designed by Walter Gropius in 1925. It follows the ideas of the international style, in how the form of the building follows the intended function of the building, which he outlined in his Bauhaus **manifesto**. Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus in 1919 as a fusion of two other academies growing out of the foundation set by the Arts and Crafts movement.

Bauhaus also borrowed the idea shared in de Stijl of bettering humanity through design, as well as the Utopian de Stijl ideas regarding the blending of art and life. It was also a reaction against the perceived morbidity of expressionism in the poor political and economic situation of post-World War I Germany.



BIG IDEA

Bauhaus was a design school based in Germany that shared many Utopian ideas similar to those of de Stijl regarding the integration of art and life.



TERMS TO KNOW

Bauhaus

Literally "house of construction". A school in Germany (1919-1933) that focused on functional design and the combination of fine art and craft.

Manifesto

A public announcement.

2. Wassily Chair

Although the Bauhaus shared commonalities with the Arts and Crafts movement, they were in disagreement on some very fundamental tenets like the Arts and Crafts movement's rejection of industrialization and mass

production. Bauhaus sought to integrate arts with the machine in the creation of useful yet beautiful objects that would be cheap to reproduce and available to everyone.



A reasonable comparison might be a custom furniture designer, which would fall under the Arts and Crafts movement, versus Ikea, which would be similar to the Bauhaus. Cheap doesn't necessarily mean crummy, but rather efficient production and affordability versus handmade and expensive.

The Bauhaus was only open for 14 years before being shut down in 1933, and it had fewer than 500 students. Despite this, it went on to become one of the most influential design schools in Europe and indeed the world. Its influence can still be felt in the world today, with iconic designs like the Barcelona chair that was designed by Mies van der Rohe.

This chair is called the Wassily Chair:



Wassily Chair by Marcel Breuer

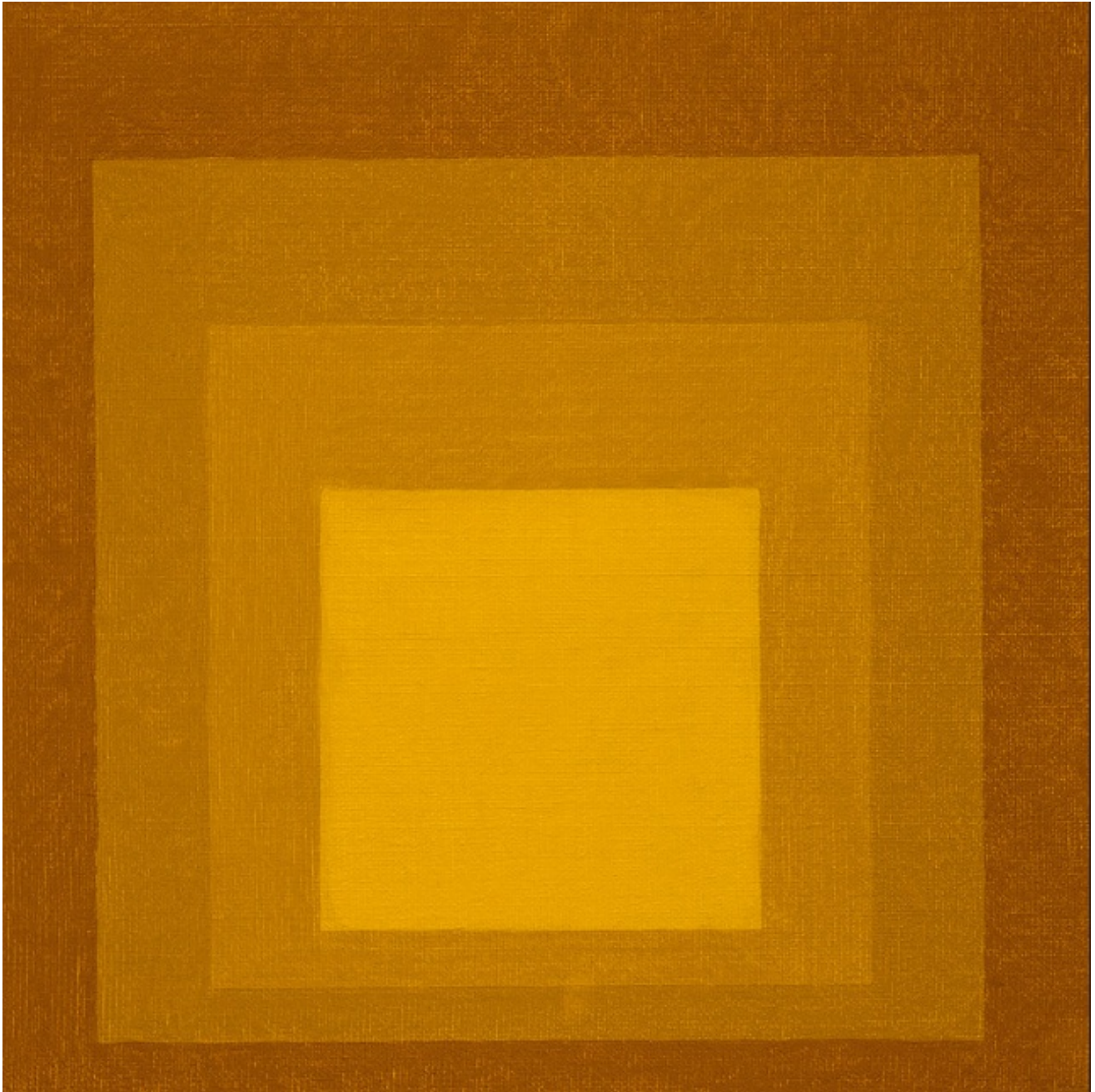
925-1926

Tubular steel and canvas (original)

It was originally made out of tubular steel with no welds and canvas. It is a classic Bauhaus design, with features like functional design, innovative materials, mass production potential, and affordability. The irony is, of course, that today these designs are notably unaffordable.

3. Homage to the Square

Josef Albers was an artist associated with the Bauhaus, and his “Homage to the Square”, one of several similar paintings, demonstrates the influence of his studies as a student there in the 1920s.



Homage to the Square by Josef Albers

1965

Acrylic on Canvas

It's an exploration of the relationship between forms, textures, and color, which interested him the most. After immigrating to the United States, following the closing of the Bauhaus where he worked for roughly nine years, he wrote an important treatise on the study of **color theory** that is still used today.

Albers was an instructor at the Bauhaus along with Marianne Brandt. The model for teaching at the Bauhaus

was **interdisciplinary** and a departure from the academy's approach to that of the medieval**guild** where students learned from masters. Aside from Albers and Brandt, other notable masters included the artists Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky.



TERMS TO KNOW

Color Theory

Rules that have been established about how colors are used and their relationships to each other.

Interdisciplinary

The combination of two or more academic disciplines or areas of study.

Guild

A formal group or association of artisans or business people with common interests or goals of maintaining specific standards and quality.

4. Teapots

Brandt's teapot design (pictured below) has gone on to become one of the most iconic, albeit less practical, designs from the Bauhaus school:



Teapots by Marianne Brandt

1924

Metal (probably silver) and ebony wood

It's a wonderful play of spherical and flat shapes that suggest the influence of Russian constructivism. Supposedly it is great at pouring tea, but not so great at holding onto as the flat handles were not very ergonomic. This is one of many designs Brandt made as a student and teacher at the Bauhaus.

5. Universal Bayer

Bauhaus designs had a huge influence on the design of furniture, household items, the fine arts, and in typography, or font design. Herbert Bayer explored this area in his Universal Bayer font:

archiType bayer

a b c

x y z

a

universum

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n

o p q r s t u v w x y z

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Universal Bayer by Herbert Bayer

1925

Typeface (font)

This was a take on the Sans Serif category of fonts, which means without Serifs, the little tiny extensions you can see here:



The most notable aspect of this font, aside from the lack of Serifs, is the fact that the letters are all lowercase with the exception of the k, which is like a tiny capital K. His design was focused on functionality, specifically making things more legible and easier to read. This is another example of the Bauhaus' wide spectrum of interests and their underlying philosophy of improving humanity through better design.



SUMMARY

Today you learned about the Bauhaus, which was a design school based in Germany that shared many Utopian ideas similar to those of de Stijl regarding the integration of art and life. You learned how to identify and define today's key terms. You also learned how to describe the philosophy and history of the Bauhaus school, specifically the **Bauhaus Dessau**. You also learned how to identify examples of Bauhaus design, through the exploration of examples of its influence in design of furniture (**Wassily Chair**), art (**Homage to the Square**), home goods (**teapots**), and even typography (**Universal Bayer**).

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Ian McConnell



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