

GERMAN CULTURE COURSE

Bauhaus & German Design

The school, its people and its legacy, with a method for testing design claims

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BAUHAUS & GERMAN DESIGN

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Bauhaus & German Design

Course 1 · Chapter 1 · What Was the Bauhaus? Scope & Sources

"Bauhaus" is one of the most used and least precise words in design. It names a real school, the Staatliches Bauhaus, which existed in Germany from 1919 to 1933 (check), and it is also used loosely for a look: plain shapes, steel tubes, white walls. The two are not the same, and much of what people say about "the Bauhaus" is about the look and not the school. This opening chapter separates them, sets out what the course covers and leaves out, lists common myths to test, and says which sources to trust. Names, dates and attributions are from general knowledge and flagged for checking, since design history is full of disputed credit.

A School, Not Just a Style

The school

The Staatliches Bauhaus ("State Building House") was an art and design school founded in Weimar in 1919 by the architect Walter Gropius, which moved to Dessau in 1925 and to Berlin in 1932 before closing in 1933 (check each date). It had three directors: Gropius, Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (check the years).

The style

"Bauhaus style" is a later and looser label for modern, plain, industrial-looking design. Many people who used the look never studied at the school, and the school itself changed its look over its 14 years (check the length).

The idea

The founding idea was to bring art, craft and architecture together in one training, so that designers would understand materials, making and building (check Gropius's 1919 programme). How far industry and mass production were part of it from the start is debated (Chapter 4).

Why It Matters

- **Its teaching method.** The preliminary course and the workshop training shaped how design is taught in many countries (check the extent of the influence, which is itself argued over).
- **Its objects.** Chairs, lamps, typefaces and housing ideas associated with the school are still produced, copied and discussed (Chapters 6 and 8).
- **Its people.** Teachers and students scattered across the world after 1933, taking the ideas with them, and women played a larger part than the old accounts allowed (Chapters 5 and 7; check the evidence).
- **Its story.** A school closed by a dictatorship is also a story about politics and culture in Germany between the wars (check how far the school was political).

What the Course Covers

- **Before and during.** The background of craft reform and the Werkbund (Chapter 2), then the school itself in Weimar, Dessau and Berlin (Chapters 3 to 7).
- **Themes.** Teaching and workshops (Chapter 4), the women of the Bauhaus (Chapter 5), and design for the everyday home (Chapter 8).
- **After.** Exile, and the post-war story through the Ulm School of Design, Braun and divided Germany (Chapters 7 and 9), then the Bauhaus today (Chapter 10).
- **Left out.** Detailed biographies and the full history of fine art. Painting is covered only where it fed the teaching, and the course describes objects in words and tables, because many photographs and designs are still in copyright (check).

> **The right question**
>
> A better question than "what is Bauhaus design?" is "what did this school actually do, who did it, and which of the things attributed to it came from somewhere else?". The chapters that follow answer that period by period, with Chapter 10 giving a method for testing claims about any designed object.

Five Myths to Test

The claim	The problem with it (check each)
"Bauhaus means white, flat-roofed boxes."	The school's first years were crafts-based and the teaching of architecture came later in the school's life (check the date); the white-box look is largely a later and wider modern-architecture style.
"The Bauhaus invented the tubular-steel chair."	Marcel Breuer's steel furniture at the school was important, but tubular steel was also being used by other designers at about the same time (check who and when).
"It was all about mass production for the masses."	Many Bauhaus objects were hand-made or expensive in practice, and the balance between craft and industry shifted over time (check examples and prices).
"The Bauhaus was a single, agreed style."	The school had different directors and teachers with different views, and its approach changed; the early Weimar years and the Dessau years look quite different (check).
"Gropius designed everything."	Much of the school's best-known work was by teachers, students and workshop teams, and credit has been unevenly given (check attributions, especially for women).

Sources and How to Check Them

- **The Bauhaus institutions.** The Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung in Berlin, the Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau and the Klassik Stiftung Weimar (the Bauhaus Museum Weimar) publish collections, scholarship and visitor information (check the websites and which sites are open).
- **UNESCO.** The World Heritage listing for the Bauhaus and its sites in Weimar, Dessau and Bernau gives dates and descriptions (check the inscription years).
- **Museum collections abroad.** The Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard holds Gropius's archive, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York staged an influential Bauhaus exhibition in 1938 (check both).
- **Histories by specialists.** Books by curators and historians, such as Magdalena Droste's Bauhaus (check the title and edition), are better starting points than general design books.
- **Brands and shops.** Companies that sell "Bauhaus" furniture and lamps present a simplified story; check against museum catalogues.

A British comparison

Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Glasgow School of Art building, begun in the 1890s and finished in the 1900s (check), is a UK design school and building of the same broad era, and shows how differently a school's look and teaching can develop. Placing the Bauhaus next to a school you can visit, or know, helps you see which features are specific to it and which belong to its age.

Check the details

Dates, titles, who designed what and when each object was first made are routinely disputed, and the same object can be credited to different people in different sources. Where a name or year here is marked "check", verify it with a museum or archive before quoting it.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain the difference between the Bauhaus school and the "Bauhaus style", and give two reasons the difference matters.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Pick one of the five myths and say what you would look up to test it, and which kind of source you would trust most.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

A shop describes a chair as "an original Bauhaus design". List three things you would check before accepting the description.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **The school:** the Staatliches Bauhaus, 1919 to 1933, in Weimar, Dessau and Berlin (check)
- **The directors:** Gropius, Hannes Meyer, Mies van der Rohe (check the years)
- **The style:** a later, looser label; not the same thing as the school
- **Themes:** teaching, women, the everyday home, exile, the post-war legacy
- **Sources:** the Bauhaus institutions, UNESCO, museum collections, specialist histories

Bauhaus & German Design

Course 1 · Chapter 2 · Before the Bauhaus: Craft, Industry and the Werkbund

The Bauhaus did not appear from nowhere in 1919. By then Germany had spent two decades arguing about what design should be in an industrial country: should objects be crafted by artists, or made well by machines, and who should decide how they look? The answers were tried out in craft workshops, in an artists' colony, in a famous electrical company and in a national association called the Deutscher Werkbund, founded in 1907 (check). Many of the people who shaped the Bauhaus came out of that argument, and one of its founding questions is really theirs. This chapter sets out the background, the main figures and the big 1914 disagreement. Names, dates and attributions are from general knowledge and flagged for checking.

The Problem They Were Trying to Solve

Industry had arrived

Germany industrialised fast after unification in 1871 (check), and factories were turning out furniture, tableware and buildings in large numbers, often decorated with imitation historical ornament.

Critics disliked the result

Reformers argued that machine-made goods were ugly or dishonest, and looked to craft traditions for a better model (check which critics, and how widely their views were shared).

No agreed answer

One camp wanted a return to handwork, another wanted good design for industry, and a third wanted a new artistic style. The debate between them runs through this chapter and into the Bauhaus.

Three Ingredients

Ingredient	What it was	Why it matters here (check each)
Arts and Crafts (Britain)	A reform movement, associated with William Morris and his firm of the 1860s, that valued hand craftsmanship and honest materials.	German reformers studied it closely; Hermann Muthesius lived in London in the 1890s and wrote about English houses (check the dates and the book).
Jugendstil (Germany)	The German form of Art Nouveau, named after the Munich magazine *Jugend* (check), with flowing, plant-like ornament.	It showed that artists could design everyday objects, but its decoration was later criticised as too ornamental for industry.
Artists' colonies and workshops	Places such as the colony at Darmstadt (1899) and the Deutsche Werkstätten at Hellerau, which made furniture to artists' designs (check both).	They tested making good design available to more buyers, and showed the tension between craft and machine production.

The Deutscher Werkbund, 1907

The Werkbund was founded in Munich in 1907 as an association of artists, architects, manufacturers and writers (check the date and place). Its aim was to improve the quality of German goods by joining design, craft and industry, in part so that German products could compete abroad (check the stated aims).

- **Who.** Founding members included the architects Hermann Muthesius, Peter Behrens and Richard Riemerschmid, the designer Bruno Paul, and the politician Friedrich Naumann as a prominent supporter (check the list of founders).
- **How.** Exhibitions, a yearbook and publications, and links with firms that wanted better-designed products (check the main exhibitions).
- **What it believed.** That quality, honest materials and good form could be a national and commercial strength, though members disagreed about how to get there (see the 1914 argument below).
- **Why it matters.** It made design a public topic in Germany, and gave the future Bauhaus a ready-made climate of ideas and a network of supporters and critics (check how directly the two are linked).

The AEG Case: Design for a Company

Peter Behrens was an architect and designer who became artistic adviser to the electrical firm AEG in Berlin around 1907 (check the date and his exact title). He designed AEG's factory buildings, products and printed material, which is often cited as an early example of a coherent corporate design (check how new this was).

Buildings

The AEG turbine factory in Berlin, completed in 1909 (check), is famous for its large glass and steel hall and is often called a landmark of modern industrial architecture.

Products

Behrens designed products such as electric kettles and lamps with simplified forms that could be made in series (check which products and the extent of his role).

Identity

He also worked on the company's logo, typography and publicity so that the firm looked consistent (check the details).

A link to the Bauhaus

Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and, for a while, Le Corbusier are all said to have worked in Behrens's office in the years around 1907 to 1911 (check each, including the dates). If so, two of the Bauhaus's three directors learned from the man who showed that an architect could shape a whole industrial company, which is close to what Gropius later wanted a school to teach.

The 1914 Argument: Standard or Individual?

At the Werkbund's exhibition in Cologne in 1914 (check), a disagreement about the future of design came into the open. It is usually told as a clash between Hermann Muthesius and Henry van de Velde (check the account, and note that historians say the real positions were less neat).

Side	Position as usually summarised (check)
Muthesius	Design should move towards standard types (*Typisierung*) that suit mass production and an international market. Standardisation would raise taste and make goods that could compete.

Side	Position as usually summarised (check)
Van de Velde	Artists must remain free to create individual forms, and a fixed standard would stifle invention and the artist's role.

- **What was at stake.** The role of the designer: an artist expressing a personal vision, or a professional serving industry and society.
- **What happened.** The argument was never settled, and the First World War began later in 1914 (check what happened to the exhibition).
- **The Bauhaus's place.** The school inherited both sides. Its early years leaned towards the artist and the workshop and its later years towards standard types and industry (Chapters 3, 4 and 6; check how clean this split is).

The Road to Weimar

- **Van de Velde in Weimar.** The Belgian designer Henry van de Velde set up an arts and crafts school in Weimar around 1907, in a building he designed (check), which the Bauhaus later used.
- **The handover.** When he left Germany during the war, he is said to have suggested Walter Gropius, among others, as a possible successor (check; the history of this recommendation is disputed).
- **The merger.** In 1919 Gropius combined the arts and crafts school with the Weimar academy of fine art to create the Staatliches Bauhaus (Chapter 3; check the institutions' names).

A British comparison

William Morris's firm and the Arts and Crafts movement came from Britain, and German reformers openly learned from them (check). The Werkbund's turn towards industry was, in part, a decision to go further than the British model. Comparing the two helps explain why German design reform became so closely tied to machines and mass production, which Chapter 8 returns to.

Check the details

The Werkbund story is often told as a neat conflict between craft and industry, or as a straight line to the Bauhaus. Historians describe a messier picture with many members and

changing views. Dates, founders, who worked for whom, and the exact wording of the 1914 debate vary between sources, so verify with a specialist history before quoting them.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain what the Deutscher Werkbund was, when it was founded, and what it tried to achieve.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Summarise the 1914 disagreement between standardisation and individual artistic freedom, and say which side the Bauhaus was closer to, and why that is debated.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Give three ways in which Peter Behrens's work for AEG joined design and industry, and explain why that mattered to Gropius.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Background:** Arts and Crafts, Jugendstil, artists' colonies and craft workshops (check)
- **The Werkbund:** founded in Munich in 1907 to join design, craft and industry (check)
- **AEG:** Peter Behrens's work from about 1907, including the 1909 turbine factory (check)
- **The 1914 argument:** Muthesius (standard types) versus van de Velde (individual artists), as usually told (check)

- **The road to Weimar:** van de Velde's school, then Gropius's merger in 1919 (check)

Bauhaus & German Design

Course 1 · Chapter 3 · Weimar, 1919: A School Is Founded

In April 1919 (check), in the months after Germany's defeat in the First World War, Walter Gropius opened a new art and design school in the small city of Weimar. He called it the Staatliches Bauhaus, "State Building House", and published a short manifesto with a woodcut of a cathedral on the cover. The school began as a craft-based, idealistic and somewhat mystical place, quite unlike the plain, industrial image later attached to the name. This chapter describes how it was founded, what the manifesto said, who the first teachers were, and why Weimar and the school came to quarrel. Names, dates and quotations are from general knowledge and flagged for checking, including the wording of translations.

The Setting

A defeated country

Germany had lost the war and the monarchy had ended in 1918 (check). The country was poor, politically unstable and short of materials, and many artists hoped for a fresh start.

A new republic, in Weimar

The National Assembly that wrote the republic's constitution met in Weimar in 1919, which is why the period is called the Weimar Republic (check). The school and the republic began in the same town in the same year, a coincidence often noted.

A town with a past

Weimar was the city of Goethe and Schiller, proud of its cultural heritage and conservative in many ways (check). A radical art school there was always going to be controversial.

How the School Was Created

- **Two schools, one.** Gropius joined two existing institutions in Weimar: the academy of fine art and the school of arts and crafts that Henry van de Velde had set up (check the exact names and the date of the merger).
- **The director.** Gropius had been named as a possible successor to van de Velde in 1915, and was appointed head of the combined school in 1919 (check; see Chapter 2).
- **A state school.** It was funded by the state of Thuringia, which is why "Staatliches" (state) is in the name (check). That tied its survival to local politics (see below).
- **Guild language.** Teachers were called masters, students apprentices and then journeymen, borrowing the vocabulary of the medieval building lodge (check the terms and how strictly they were used).

The Manifesto and the Cathedral

Gropius's founding text, the Manifesto and Programme of the Staatliches Bauhaus, appeared in April 1919 (check). It is short, passionate and not very practical.

Element	What it said or showed (check wording and translation)
The aim	That "the ultimate aim of all creative activity is the building", and that all the arts should again be brought together in architecture.
The call to craft	That architects, sculptors and painters must "return to the crafts", because there is no essential difference between artist and craftsman.
The attack on class	It rejected the "arrogant barrier" between craftsmen and artists, and called for a new guild of craftsmen.
The woodcut	The cover showed a cathedral with three stars, by the painter Lyonel Feininger, often read as a symbol of a shared, spiritual, collective building project (check the title and meaning).

> **Not what you might expect**
>
> The founding document speaks of crafts, guilds and cathedrals, and says almost nothing about machines or mass production. The famous Bauhaus slogan of "art and technology: a new unity" belongs to 1923, not 1919 (check; Chapter 4). If you read the manifesto expecting the plain, industrial Bauhaus, you will be surprised.

The First Masters

Master	Role at the start (check each)
Walter Gropius	Founder and director; an architect.
Johannes Itten	Swiss teacher who ran the preliminary course from 1919 and was very influential until he left in 1923; known for unusual methods and for his religious interests (check the details).
Lyonel Feininger	Painter and printmaker, who made the manifesto woodcut and led the print workshop.
Gerhard Marcks	Sculptor who led the pottery workshop.
Georg Muche	Painter who joined in 1920 and taught the weaving workshop alongside others (check his role).
Later arrivals	Among them Paul Klee and Oskar Schlemmer (1921) and Wassily Kandinsky (1922), and László Moholy-Nagy in 1923 (check each date).

- **Two teachers for each subject.** Early workshops were run by a master of form (an artist) and a master of craft (a skilled craftsman), reflecting the aim of joining art and making (check the system and its length).
- **Who studied.** Several dozen students at first, growing to a few hundred over the school's life, including many women (check the numbers; Chapter 5).

A School at Odds with Its Town

Local suspicion

Many townspeople and local artists distrusted the school's unconventional students, its politics and its parties (check the sources, which often come from opponents).

Pressure inside

Gropius and Itten came to disagree about the school's direction, craft and spirit against industry and design, and Itten left in 1923 (check the causes).

Politics and money

After a change of government in Thuringia in the early 1920s, funding was cut and the school's contracts were ended, leading the masters to look for a new home in 1924 and 1925 (check the dates and sequence).

- **The result.** The school left Weimar for Dessau in 1925 (Chapter 6; check the date), after about six years.
- **Why the story matters.** It shows how a state-funded art school depended on regional politics, a theme that returns when the school is closed in 1933 (Chapter 7).

A British comparison

Edinburgh College of Art was formed in the early twentieth century by joining several earlier schools (check the date and the schools). A merger of this sort, bringing art and craft teaching under one roof and one director, was a recognisable way to reform art education in Britain too. What was unusual in Weimar was the founding manifesto, and the claim that building should be the goal of every art.

Check the details

Quotations from the manifesto come from translations that differ in wording. Many accounts of the school's early years repeat the views of Gropius, Itten or their opponents, and numbers (students, masters, workshops) vary between sources. Check dates and quotations against the Bauhaus-Archiv or another specialist source before quoting them.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Describe how and when the Staatliches Bauhaus was founded, and which two schools it brought together.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Summarise the aim of Gropius's 1919 manifesto and explain what the cathedral woodcut stood for. Say what the manifesto does not mention that people expect.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Give two reasons the school and the town of Weimar came into conflict, and say why the school's funding made it vulnerable.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Founded:** April 1919 in Weimar, by Walter Gropius, merging two schools (check)
- **The manifesto:** building as the aim of all the arts; a return to crafts; Feininger's cathedral woodcut (check)
- **Early masters:** Gropius, Itten, Feininger, Marcks, Muche; Klee, Schlemmer and Kandinsky later (check)
- **Early character:** craft-based, guild-like and idealistic, not yet industrial
- **The conflict:** local suspicion, internal disagreement and Thuringian politics, leading to the move to Dessau in 1925 (check)

Bauhaus & German Design

Course 1 · Chapter 4 · Teaching and Workshops

What the Bauhaus is most remembered for in education is a method: every student began with a preliminary course in basic form, colour and materials, then moved into a workshop to learn a craft, and finally, in theory, into building. That method, more than any single chair or lamp, is what spread to art schools around the world. This chapter describes how the teaching worked, what the workshops made, how the school's stated aim changed in 1923 from craft towards industry, and why historians disagree about how sharp that change really was. Names, dates and descriptions are from general knowledge and flagged for checking.

The Shape of the Course

1. The preliminary course

All new students took the *Vorkurs*, usually for six months, to unlearn habits and explore materials, colour, texture and form (check the length and whether it was compulsory throughout).

2. The workshops

Students then trained in a workshop, such as weaving, metalwork or carpentry, and could take a journeyman's examination before the local craft chamber (check the process).

3. Building

The manifesto's goal was architecture, but a full architecture department was not set up until later, under Hannes Meyer in Dessau (check the date; Chapter 6). Many students never reached it.

The Preliminary Course

Teacher	Approach (as usually described; check each)
Johannes Itten (1919 to 1923)	Exercises on contrasts, textures and rhythm, using natural materials; a strong personality who also brought in physical exercises and unusual

Teacher	Approach (as usually described; check each)
	beliefs (check). He left in 1923.
László Moholy-Nagy and Josef Albers (from 1923)	Moholy-Nagy brought a more technical, constructivist approach; Albers, who had been a student, focused on how materials behave and on making more from less (check the division of roles and dates).
Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky	Taught form and colour theory in separate courses; Klee on the principles of pictorial form and Kandinsky on analytical drawing and colour (check titles and dates).

- **The idea.** A common grounding in basic elements for every student, whether they became a weaver, a carpenter or an architect (check how far this was achieved).
- **The legacy.** The "foundation course" in art and design schools around the world is often traced to it (check how direct the line is).
- **A myth to test.** A popular story says Kandinsky asked students to match the three primary colours with a circle, a square and a triangle (check the source and what he actually said).

The Workshops

Workshop	What it made or did (check each)
Weaving	Textiles, rugs and wall hangings, later fabrics for industry; large and with many women students (Chapter 5).
Metal	Lamps, tableware and fittings; later strongly linked with industrial prototypes (Chapter 6).
Carpentry / furniture	Furniture, from expressive early pieces to the plain steel-and-wood designs of the Dessau years.
Pottery	Ceramics at a site outside Weimar for a time; closed or moved in the 1920s (check).
Wall painting	Colour schemes for rooms and buildings; later wallpaper designs (check).
Printing and typography	Posters, books and publications; later advertising and a new approach to lettering (Chapter 6).
Theatre	Experimental stage work led by Oskar Schlemmer, including the Triadic Ballet (check the date and the relationship to the school).

- **The dual system.** Each workshop had a master of form (an artist) and a master of craft (a skilled maker), in the early years, to join art and making (check how long the system

lasted).

- **Making things people could buy.** Workshops took commissions and sold products to raise money, which pushed the school towards producing designs that could be reproduced (check the extent and the income).

1923: "Art and Technology"

In 1923 the school held its first big public exhibition in Weimar and published a catalogue (check the dates and the title). Gropius's lecture "Art and Technology: A New Unity" is the best-known statement of a shift in emphasis: from the craft ideal of 1919 towards design for industry and machine production (check the lecture's exact title and wording).

The exhibition

Held in the summer of 1923, it showed work from the workshops and a model house, the Haus am Horn, designed under Georg Muche's direction (check the designers and the date).

The shift

Industry, standard types and low-cost production rose in importance, and mystical and expressive ideas, such as Itten's, receded (check how fast and how completely).

The reasons

Possible reasons include the economic crisis of 1923 and the need to earn money, the influence of constructivist ideas, and Gropius's own interests (check; historians weigh these differently).

Sharp turn or gradual drift?

Older accounts present 1923 as a clean break from craft to industry. More recent studies stress continuity: workshops kept making hand-crafted work, and industry was part of the Werkbund debate long before 1923 (Chapter 2; check). A fair summary is that the emphasis moved, not that one idea replaced the other overnight.

Books, Parties and Theatre

- **Bauhaus Books.** A series of volumes by teachers and others, published from 1925 to the early 1930s (check the number and the dates), spread the school's ideas.
- **Festivals and parties.** The school was known for lively parties and festivals, such as the lantern festival, and for costumes, which were part of its culture and also part of what annoyed critics (check the examples).
- **A community.** Students and teachers often lived, ate and worked together, and the school developed a strong group identity (check how typical this was across the years).

A British comparison

Many British art schools had a foundation year, and the "basic design" movement of the 1950s, associated with teachers such as Victor Pasmore and Richard Hamilton, drew on ideas that came, directly or indirectly, from the Bauhaus (check the line of influence). If you have studied art or design in Britain, some of what you learned may be a descendant of the preliminary course.

Check the details

The Bauhaus is often described as if it had one curriculum. In fact the teaching changed with the teachers and directors, and surviving documents (curricula, student records) do not always match later accounts. Dates, teacher titles and workshop names vary between sources. Verify with the Bauhaus-Archiv or a specialist history before quoting them.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Describe the Bauhaus preliminary course: what it was for, who taught it, and why it mattered for later art education.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Explain the early "two masters" system in the workshops, and say what problem it was meant to solve.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain what changed at the Bauhaus around 1923, and why historians disagree about how sharp the change was.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **The course:** preliminary course, then a workshop, then (in theory) building (check)
- **Preliminary course teachers:** Itten (1919 to 1923), then Moholy-Nagy and Albers; Klee and Kandinsky on form and colour (check)
- **Workshops:** weaving, metal, furniture, pottery, wall painting, printing, theatre (check)
- **Two masters:** a master of form and a master of craft, in the early years (check)
- **1923:** the exhibition and "Art and Technology: A New Unity"; an emphasis shift, not a clean break (check)

Bauhaus & German Design

Course 1 · Chapter 5 · The Women of the Bauhaus

The Bauhaus admitted women from the start, at a time when most German art academies did not (check), and many of its best-known objects, textiles, photographs and toys were made by women. Yet for decades the standard accounts named almost only men, and the school's own practice did not always match its declared equality. This chapter looks at what the school said, what it did, some of the women whose work is now recognised, and why credit was so uneven. It is an area of active research, where accounts keep being revised, so names, numbers and dates are from general knowledge and flagged for checking.

What the School Said, and What It Did

The statement

In 1919 Gropius told the first students that there would be no difference between the "beautiful sex" and the "strong sex" and that all would be treated as equal craftspeople (check the wording and the occasion). Women were admitted in large numbers from the first year (check the numbers; some accounts say about half of the first intake).

The practice

Within a year or two, Gropius and the masters grew concerned about the number of women and, in practice, many were steered towards the weaving workshop, sometimes called the women's department, and away from architecture and heavy crafts (check the decision and its date).

The result

Weaving became the workshop where women's work was concentrated and, in time, among the school's most commercially successful (check the figures), though it was often rated below "serious" disciplines in the school's own hierarchy.

Women Whose Work Is Now Recognised

Name	Workshop or field	Why remembered (check each)
Gunta Stölzl	Weaving	Studied from 1919 and led the weaving workshop in Dessau as a "young master" in the later 1920s, often described as the only woman to hold such a post at the school.
Anni Albers	Weaving	Joined around 1922; became an influential textile artist and writer after emigrating, with a solo textile exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1949.
Marianne Brandt	Metal	Designed tea infusers, ashtrays and lamps from 1924; her objects are among the most reproduced Bauhaus designs.
Lucia Moholy	Photography	Documented the school's buildings and products; the photographs that illustrate many accounts are hers, and a dispute over her negatives is well known.
Alma Siedhoff-Buscher	Carpentry / toys	Designed children's toys and a set of building blocks in the 1920s.
Otti Berger	Weaving	Innovative fabric designer; murdered in the Holocaust in 1944 (check the details and the place).
Gertrud Arndt	Weaving, photography	Known both for textiles and for a series of self-portrait photographs in costume.
Marguerite Friedlaender	Pottery	A leading figure in the pottery workshop, who later worked on porcelain design in other countries.

This is a selection, not a list of everyone: many more women studied and worked at the school, and research continues to identify them.

The Weaving Workshop

- **A craft with a future.** Textiles were a field where industry was keen to buy designs, and the workshop produced fabrics that were suitable for industrial production (check which firms and when).
- **A source of income.** Sales from the workshop supported the school (check the extent), which made it important financially even when it was undervalued in the hierarchy.
- **Innovation.** Weavers experimented with new materials such as cellophane and synthetic threads, and with fabrics for acoustics and light (check the examples and who made them).

- **Why it was fertile.** Some historians argue that being assigned a "minor" craft gave women the freedom to experiment without much interference; others see the assignment as discrimination, and both can be true (check the discussion).

Why Credit Was Uneven

Several things at once

Early accounts were written by men, often the school's masters, and concentrated on architecture and furniture. Objects produced in workshops were often credited to the master, the director or the school as a whole, not to the student who made the prototype. And some women's work was lost, destroyed or not documented (check the examples, such as the dispute over Lucia Moholy's negatives, and the records that survive).

- **Authorship.** A design made in a workshop could be recorded under a teacher's name, even when a student produced it (check specific cases).
- **Photography.** The photographs that shaped the world's view of the Bauhaus were mostly made by a few people, and not always credited (check the case of Lucia Moholy).
- **Emigration and war.** Records and objects were lost when the school closed in 1933 and during the war, and several women had to emigrate or did not survive (Chapter 7).
- **Later scholarship.** Since the 1990s, historians have worked to restore names and give a fuller account (check, for example, Anja Baumhoff's study of gender at the Bauhaus, and Magdalena Droste's work).

A British comparison

The "Glasgow Girls" were a group of women artists and designers associated with the Glasgow School of Art around 1900, including Margaret Macdonald and Frances Macdonald (check the group and dates). Their work, like many Bauhaus women's, was long credited to male relatives and colleagues, and has been reassessed in recent decades. Looking at the two groups together shows that the pattern was not a German peculiarity.

Check the details

Statistics about women at the Bauhaus (how many enrolled, how many became masters, how many studied each workshop) differ between sources and depend on how "student"

and "master" are counted. Individual attributions are sometimes disputed. Check with the Bauhaus-Archiv or a specialist history, and avoid repeating a single number as settled.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain the difference between what the Bauhaus said about women and what happened in practice, and give one reason historians treat the weaving workshop as both a limit and an opportunity.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Choose one woman from the table and describe her work, and say what kind of evidence you would use to confirm it.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Give three reasons the contributions of women to the Bauhaus were under-credited, and say how you would check the attribution of a design.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Stated aim:** equality, with women admitted from 1919 (check)
- **In practice:** women were steered towards weaving (check)
- **Notable women:** Stölzl, Albers, Brandt, Lucia Moholy, Siedhoff-Buscher, Berger, Arndt, Friedlaender (check)

- **Weaving:** commercially successful and experimental, yet undervalued in the school's hierarchy
- **Under-credit:** male-written accounts, credit to masters, lost records, emigration and war

Bauhaus & German Design

Course 1 · Chapter 6 · Dessau, 1925: The Building and the Objects

The Dessau years (1925 to 1932, check) are the period most people mean when they say "Bauhaus". The school had a purpose-built home designed by Gropius, its workshops were producing prototypes for industry, and the objects that made its name (a tubular-steel chair, a metal lamp, a lower-case alphabet) date from this time. It is also the period in which the school's image of plain, functional, industrial design took shape, and in which it began to cooperate seriously with manufacturers. This chapter covers the move, the buildings, the objects, the typography and the industrial partnerships. Names, dates and attributions are from general knowledge and flagged for checking, and credit for individual designs is often disputed.

Why Dessau?

An offer

After the Thuringian funding cuts (Chapter 3), several towns made offers, and Dessau, an industrial city in Saxony-Anhalt, agreed to fund the school and build it a new home (check the town's role and the mayor's, Fritz Hesse).

An industrial city

Dessau was home to the Junkers aircraft works and other industry, which suited the school's growing interest in industry (check the connections).

A new status

In Dessau the school was renamed the Hochschule für Gestaltung (a college of design), with professors instead of masters (check the dates and the titles; many people kept saying "masters").

The Building and the Houses

Project	What it is and why it is known (check each)
The school building (1925 to 1926)	Designed by Gropius's office; opened in December 1926. A set of linked wings, with a workshop block famous for its glass curtain wall, a studio block with balconies, and a connecting bridge.
The masters' houses	A group of houses in a pine wood near the school for Gropius and the teachers, including Klee, Kandinsky, Moholy-Nagy and Feininger; plain white volumes in the new style.
The Törten estate (1926 to 1928)	A housing estate in Dessau built with standardised, factory-made parts, an experiment in low-cost housing (check, including the technical problems that were later reported).

- **What it was meant to show.** That a building could be designed from its functions, with the workshops, classrooms and living spaces arranged in separate wings joined together (check how Gropius described it).
- **Its fate.** Damaged in the Second World War, restored later, and inscribed as a World Heritage site together with other Bauhaus places (check the dates; Chapter 10).
- **The look.** This is the building people picture when they say "Bauhaus architecture", but it came after six years of a school in Weimar with a different character (Chapters 3 and 4).

The Objects

Object	Designer and story (check each, attribution is often disputed)
Tubular-steel club chair (1925 to 1926)	Marcel Breuer, who led the furniture workshop; later nicknamed the "Wassily" chair after Kandinsky (check when and why the name came). A story says he was inspired by bicycle handlebars (check). Tubular steel was also used by other designers around then (see Chapter 1).
Table lamp with glass and metal (around 1923 to 1924)	Associated with Wilhelm Wagenfeld, with Karl Jucker, made in Weimar rather than Dessau, but a standard example of the "Bauhaus lamp" (check the designers, the date and the place).
Kandem lamp (about 1928)	Associated with Marianne Brandt and Hin Bredendieck; a bedside lamp made in volume by an industrial firm (check the designers, the manufacturer and the date).
Wallpapers (around 1929)	A wallpaper range produced with a commercial firm and sold widely (check the firm and the numbers).

Object	Designer and story (check each, attribution is often disputed)
Textiles	Fabrics produced for industry, many by women in the weaving workshop (Chapter 5).

Prototypes for industry

The Dessau workshops aimed to make prototypes that firms could produce in large numbers, and some did reach the market (the Kandem lamp and the wallpapers are the usual examples). But many of the best-known Bauhaus objects were produced in small quantities and sold at prices that were not low (check the numbers). Whether the school achieved cheap design for the masses is one of the standing questions, and the evidence is mixed.

Typography: One Alphabet?

- **The new look.** In Dessau the printing workshop became a printing and advertising workshop under Herbert Bayer, who designed plain, sans-serif lettering (check his title and dates).
- **Lower case.** Bayer's "universal" alphabet of 1925 used only lower-case letters, on the argument that spoken language has no capitals, and the school's stationery adopted small letters (check the date and the reasoning).
- **The argument.** Supporters thought it was simple and logical; critics found it harder to read in German, where nouns are capitalised (check the debate).
- **What it influenced.** The sans-serif, grid-based layouts associated with the school shaped twentieth-century graphic design, but many other designers in Germany and elsewhere were working in similar ways at the same time (check, and note the "New Typography" movement).

Cooperation with Industry

- **How it worked.** The school sold designs to firms, often through a company the school set up for the purpose, and took a share of the income (check the arrangement and the firm's name).

- **The results.** Lamps, wallpapers and textiles reached customers, which brought money into the school as well as publicity (check the extent).
- **The tension.** Teachers and students disagreed about how far the school should serve industry and how far it should stay a place of experiment, a debate that continued under the next director (Chapter 7).

A British comparison

Isokon, the modernist block of flats built in Hampstead in the 1930s, had links with the Bauhaus: Gropius and Breuer spent time in London after leaving Germany (check the dates and the details of their involvement). It is one of the most direct places in Britain to see Bauhaus ideas after the school closed (Chapter 7), and a useful comparison with the Dessau building.

Check the details

Attributions of the best-known Dessau objects vary between sources, and some designs are credited to different people in different museums and company histories. Dates of first production, the names of manufacturers and the "Wassily" naming story are all disputed or simplified in popular accounts. Check with a museum catalogue before quoting them.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Describe the Dessau school building and say why it became the image of "Bauhaus architecture", even though it came after six years in Weimar.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Choose the tubular-steel chair or the Kandem lamp. Describe it, say who is credited with it, and give one caution about the attribution.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain the argument for a lower-case-only alphabet, and why it was controversial in German.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **The move:** to Dessau in 1925, funded by the city (check)
- **The building:** Gropius's school (opened 1926) with its glass workshop wall, plus the masters' houses and the Törten estate (check)
- **The objects:** Breuer's tubular-steel chair, the Wagenfeld lamp, the Kandem lamp, wallpapers (check the attributions)
- **Typography:** Bayer's plain lower-case alphabet, 1925 (check)
- **Industry:** prototypes sold to firms, some made in volume, many not cheap (check)

Bauhaus & German Design

Course 1 · Chapter 7 · Closure and Exile

The Bauhaus lasted fourteen years (check) and had three directors. Its last years were shaped by rising political pressure in Germany, and its end in 1933 sent teachers and students across the world, which is a large part of why its name is known today. This chapter covers the two later directors, the political events that led to the closure, and the way the school's people and ideas spread abroad, with a caution that the picture of a neat "Bauhaus export" is a simplification. It deals with a dictatorship and with people who were persecuted, so it takes care over what is documented. Names, dates and accounts are from general knowledge and flagged for checking.

Three Directors

Director	Years (check)	Character of the school
Walter Gropius	1919 to 1928	From the craft ideal of Weimar to the industrial cooperation of the first Dessau years (Chapters 3 to 6). He resigned in 1928 to return to architecture.
Hannes Meyer	1928 to 1930	A Swiss architect, left-wing in outlook, who set up a full architecture department and stressed the social purpose of design, summed up in a phrase usually translated as "the needs of the people, not the need for luxury" (check). He was dismissed by the city in 1930 after political controversy (check the reasons).
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe	1930 to 1933	An architect already famous for the Barcelona Pavilion (1929) and the Tugendhat House (1930) (check). He tried to keep politics out of the school and made architecture the centre of the curriculum.

- **A split image.** The school's reputation as left-wing or as apolitical depends on which director and which years you look at (check).
- **A building for a trade union.** Meyer's team designed a trade-union school at Bernau near Berlin (1928 to 1930), now part of the World Heritage listing (check the details).
- **The cost of fame.** The more the school was publicised abroad, the more it attracted attention, and criticism, at home.

The Road to Closure

When (check each)	What happened
1930	Meyer dismissed; Mies takes over and expels students seen as political agitators (check the numbers and reasons).
1931 to 1932	The Nazi party gains strength in Dessau and in Saxony-Anhalt; in 1932 the Dessau council, with Nazi support, votes to close the school (check the votes and the date).
Autumn 1932	Mies reopens the school in Berlin as a private institution, in an old factory building (check the site and the arrangements).
April 1933	Police search and close the Berlin school after the Nazi seizure of power; talks follow about reopening it on conditions (check the sequence).
July 1933	The teachers vote to dissolve the school (check the date and the reasons).

Closed, or closed itself?

Accounts differ on how to describe the end. The school was shut by the authorities in 1932 in Dessau and again in 1933 in Berlin, and then its masters formally dissolved it rather than accept conditions (check). It is accurate to say it was driven out by political pressure from the Nazi movement, and also accurate to note that the final decision to dissolve was the teachers' own. Both statements appear in serious histories.

Exile and Spread

Person	Where they went and what they did (check each)
Walter Gropius	To England in 1934 (working with Maxwell Fry and linked with Isokon), then in 1937 to Harvard's school of architecture in the United States.
Marcel Breuer	To England, then to Harvard, where he taught with Gropius, and later a prominent architect in the United States.
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe	To Chicago in 1938 to head the architecture school at what became the Illinois Institute of Technology, and designed its campus.

Person	Where they went and what they did (check each)
László Moholy-Nagy	After London, to Chicago in 1937 to found the "New Bauhaus", which closed quickly and was refounded as the School of Design and later the Institute of Design.
Josef and Anni Albers	To Black Mountain College in North Carolina in 1933, where Josef taught for many years (check).
Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee	Kandinsky to France; Klee, dismissed from a German academy, to Switzerland (check the dates and places).
Bauhaus-trained architects	Several went to Palestine, where buildings in Tel Aviv's "White City" are often called Bauhaus in style and are part of a World Heritage listing (check how directly they link to the school).

- **Not everyone left.** Some Bauhaus teachers and students stayed in Germany, and some worked in the Nazi state in various ways (check the individual cases and avoid generalising); others were persecuted and some died (Chapter 5).
- **The 1937 exhibition.** The Nazis' "degenerate art" show included works by Bauhaus teachers such as Klee and Kandinsky (check the details), showing that the school's culture was condemned by the regime even if its architecture and graphics were sometimes borrowed.
- **The United States.** The 1938 Museum of Modern Art exhibition on the Bauhaus and the American schools helped establish the school's reputation (Chapter 1; check).

A simplification to avoid

It is common to say the Bauhaus "went to America" and shaped modern design there. The truth is more complicated: the people who emigrated took their own versions of its ideas into institutions with their own traditions, and modern design in the United States and Britain had other sources too. The influence is real, but it is a story of individuals and schools, not of one idea being moved intact (check, and see Chapter 9).

A British comparison

Gropius and Maxwell Fry designed Impington Village College near Cambridge in the late 1930s (check the dates), one of the best-known buildings in Britain by an émigré from the Bauhaus. Along with the Isokon flats (Chapter 6), it shows how the school's people brought their ideas into British architecture during the 1930s.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Describe how the school's character differed under its three directors, and say why a single description of "the Bauhaus" is risky.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Set out the sequence of events from 1930 to 1933 that ended the school, and say in what sense it was closed and in what sense it dissolved itself.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Choose two people who emigrated, say where they went and what they did, and explain why "the Bauhaus went to America" is too simple.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Directors:** Gropius (1919 to 1928), Meyer (1928 to 1930), Mies (1930 to 1933) (check)
- **Closure:** Dessau council votes to close it in 1932; Berlin school shut in April 1933; the masters dissolve it in July 1933 (check)
- **Exile:** Gropius and Breuer (England, Harvard), Mies (Chicago), Moholy-Nagy (Chicago), the Alberses (Black Mountain), others elsewhere (check)
- **Not everyone left:** some stayed in Germany; some were persecuted
- **Caution:** the spread of the Bauhaus was a story of individuals and institutions, not of one idea moved intact

Bauhaus & German Design

Course 1 · Chapter 8 · The Everyday Home

Much of what people call "Bauhaus" in the home, from the flat roof to the fitted kitchen and the standard paper size, did not come from the school at all. It came from a wider movement in Weimar Germany that tried to house millions of people well, cheaply and quickly, using new methods and standard parts. The Bauhaus took part in that movement, and shared many of its ideas, but it was one strand among several. This chapter sets out the housing problem, the "New Building" movement, three famous examples (the Weissenhof estate, the Frankfurt kitchen and DIN standards), and where the Bauhaus does and does not fit. Names, dates and attributions are from general knowledge and flagged for checking.

The Problem

A housing shortage

After the war and during the 1920s, Germany's cities were short of decent, affordable homes, and many families lived in crowded, poor conditions (check the figures).

Public money

City governments and housing associations built large estates, supported by taxes and public funding in the mid-1920s, which gave architects the chance to try new ideas on a big scale (check how the funding worked and when it ended).

A new approach

Architects and officials wanted to use standard parts, rational planning and plain forms to build well at low cost, a movement often called Neues Bauen, "New Building" (check the term and its relation to New Objectivity).

Three Landmarks

Landmark	What it was (check each)	Link to the Bauhaus
Weissenhof estate, Stuttgart (1927)	A Werkbund exhibition of model housing directed by Mies van der Rohe, with buildings by about seventeen architects from several countries, including Gropius, Le Corbusier, Behrens, Oud and Mies himself.	Gropius and Mies, two Bauhaus directors, designed buildings there, but the exhibition was the Werkbund's, not the school's.
The Frankfurt kitchen (1926)	A compact fitted kitchen designed by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky for the city's housing programme under Ernst May, installed in thousands of flats (check the numbers).	None. It belongs to the New Frankfurt programme, not to the school, a common mix-up.
DIN standards (from 1917)	A German body for industrial standards, whose paper size standard (the basis of A4) dates from the early 1920s (check the dates and the standard's number).	Shares the aim of standardisation, which Muthesius argued for in 1914 (Chapter 2); the Bauhaus used DIN sizes but did not create them.

Weissenhof, 1927

- **The idea.** To show, in real buildings, how people might live in the modern city, with terraces, flat roofs, large windows and open plans (check the descriptions).
- **The people.** Mies directed it and invited well-known architects; the group portrait of leading modernists is often cited (check who took part).
- **The reaction.** It drew large crowds and strong criticism, with some opponents calling it un-German (check the quotations and the sources, which come from both sides).
- **Its fate.** Some buildings were destroyed in the Second World War and several survive as museums and housing, and some are part of a World Heritage listing for works by Le Corbusier (check how many remain).

The Frankfurt Kitchen

The design

The thinking

A small, carefully planned kitchen with built-in storage, a fold-down ironing board and labelled containers, laid out to save steps (check the features).

It drew on ideas of efficiency and household rationalisation, and on studies of work movements (check the sources of the ideas, which included American writing on scientific management).

The debate

Supporters saw it as freeing women from drudgery; critics found it cramped and thought it assumed a woman would work alone in the kitchen (check the arguments, and Chapter 5).

Standards and the Standard Object

- **The idea.** If sizes of paper, bricks, windows and fittings are standard, they can be mass-produced and combined, which lowers cost and makes parts interchangeable.
- **Where the Bauhaus fits.** Gropius promoted standardised building parts and prefabrication, and the school's Törten estate tried it (Chapter 6; check the results, which were mixed).
- **The 1914 question again.** Standardisation was what Muthesius wanted and van de Velde feared (Chapter 2). The Weimar housing programmes put the argument into practice on a large scale.
- **The criticism.** Some residents and critics found the estates monotonous, and technical problems such as leaking flat roofs were widely reported (check the cases and whether they were typical).

Where "Bauhaus" is the wrong label

Weissenhof, the Frankfurt kitchen and DIN are often described as Bauhaus, but each belonged to a different organisation with its own goals. A good habit is to ask "which institution made this?" before accepting the label (check any specific case). The Bauhaus was part of a large, mostly non-Bauhaus movement, and its fame has pulled that movement under its name.

A British comparison

Kensal House in west London (1936 to 1937), designed by Maxwell Fry with the housing campaigner Elizabeth Denby, is a British example of modern, planned working-class housing influenced by continental ideas (check the dates and the details). It shows how the Weimar approach to housing reached Britain and why estates like it were also debated and criticised.

Check the details

Counts of buildings and kitchens, dates of standards, and who designed which element are often given differently in different sources, and popular articles routinely attribute New Building projects to the Bauhaus. Check each claim against a museum, an archive or a specialist history of Weimar housing.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Describe the Weissenhof estate of 1927: who organised it, what it was meant to show, and how it relates to the Bauhaus.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Explain what the Frankfurt kitchen was, and why it is wrong to call it a Bauhaus design.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain what DIN standards are, and connect them to the 1914 Werkbund argument from Chapter 2.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **The movement:** Neues Bauen, "New Building", for cheap, planned housing (check)
- **Weissenhof (1927):** a Werkbund exhibition directed by Mies, in Stuttgart (check)
- **The Frankfurt kitchen (1926):** by Schütte-Lihotzky for Ernst May's housing programme; not the Bauhaus (check)
- **DIN:** German industrial standards, from 1917, including paper sizes (check)
- **The Bauhaus's part:** Gropius's prefabrication and the Törten estate; one strand among several

Bauhaus & German Design

Course 1 · Chapter 9 · After the War: Ulm, Braun and Divided Design

After 1945 Germany was in ruins and then divided in two. Design had to be rebuilt in both halves, and the Bauhaus, closed twelve years earlier, was a contested inheritance: celebrated by some, distrusted by others. In the West, a new school at Ulm and a company, Braun, turned some of its ideas into a recognisable post-war German style. In the East, the Bauhaus was at first condemned and later reclaimed. This chapter follows those stories and asks, as before, how much of what is credited to the Bauhaus really belongs to it. Names, dates and attributions are from general knowledge and flagged for checking.

Rebuilding

A discredited past

After the Nazi years, the modern design movement of the 1920s could look like a way of rebuilding a clean, honest culture, and some of its refugees returned or visited (check the examples and attitudes).

A West German project

The Federal Republic set up bodies to promote "good form", including the Rat für Formgebung (a design council) in the 1950s (check the date and aims).

A divided inheritance

The Dessau building lay in East Germany, and the school's archive and many of its people were in the West or abroad, so the legacy was split along the border (Chapter 10).

The Ulm School of Design

Element	What it was (check each)
Founding	The Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm opened in 1953, founded by Inge Scholl, Otl Aicher and others, with Max Bill, a former Bauhaus student, as the first rector

Element	What it was (check each)
	(check the date and the roles).
Link to the Bauhaus	Deliberate: it used a foundation course, workshops and the idea of design as a social task, and Bill brought Bauhaus teachers' methods (check how closely it followed them).
Change of course	Bill left in the late 1950s after disagreements, and the school moved towards a more scientific, methodical approach, with subjects such as semiotics and systems thinking, under figures such as Tomás Maldonado (check the details).
Closure	It closed in 1968, after funding was withdrawn by the regional government and the school itself was divided (check the reasons).
Legacy	Its graduates and teachers shaped industrial and graphic design in Germany, including the corporate design of airlines and the pictograms of the 1972 Munich Olympics, by Otl Aicher (check the attributions).

A school that did not copy the Bauhaus

Ulm is often called "the new Bauhaus", but it changed course away from the art-and-craft spirit of the original, towards science and industry. The argument between Max Bill, who wanted design to stay close to art, and the teachers who wanted it to become a discipline closer to engineering, echoes the 1914 argument between artist and standard (Chapter 2; check how fair the comparison is).

Braun and Dieter Rams

- **The firm.** Braun, a Frankfurt electrical company, was led from 1951 by the brothers Erwin and Artur Braun, who set out to make well-designed consumer products (check the dates and the people).
- **The link with Ulm.** Teachers from Ulm, such as Hans Gugelot, worked with the company, and the radio-phonograph known as the SK 4 of 1956 is credited to Dieter Rams and Gugelot (check the credit and the date).
- **Dieter Rams.** A designer at Braun from the mid-1950s and head of design from 1961 (check), known for plain, ordered products and for a phrase that sums up his approach, "less, but better" (check the German and its use).
- **Ten principles.** Rams later listed ten principles of good design, including that good design is innovative, useful, aesthetic, unobtrusive, honest, long-lasting and as little design as

possible (check the list and when it was written).

- **The legacy.** Braun's products are often cited as an influence on later consumer electronics (check the claims, which are frequently exaggerated); the link to the Bauhaus is one of ideas, not of staff.

> **Credit again**
>
> Braun's products were made by teams, with engineers, designers and managers. Attribution to one designer is common but simplified, and which person designed which product is sometimes disputed (check a museum catalogue or company history).

East and West

Side	Attitude to the Bauhaus (check each)
West Germany	Gradually embraced as a model of democratic, modern design; the Bauhaus-Archiv was founded in 1960 and later moved to Berlin (check), and Ulm and Braun drew on its ideas.
East Germany, early 1950s	Officially condemned as "formalist" and cosmopolitan, in favour of a style based on traditional forms (check the policy and the examples such as the Stalinallee in Berlin).
East Germany, later	Partly rehabilitated; the Dessau building was restored in the 1970s and reopened (check the date), and industrial design was supported by state design bodies (check their names and roles).
Everyday objects	East German products ranged from plain, well-made household goods to cars such as the Trabant, made in part of a plastic called Duroplast (check), and the quality and design were uneven.

- **Different schools.** In the East, schools such as the arts schools at Berlin-Weißensee and Burg Giebichenstein in Halle kept design teaching alive, with Bauhaus-linked teachers at times (check the names and dates).
- **Reunification.** After 1990 the divided legacy was brought back together, and the Bauhaus sites became a shared heritage (Chapter 10).
- **A caution.** Describing East German design only through the Trabant, or West German design only through Braun, would be unfair to both. Both sides produced plain and ornamental objects, good and bad.

A British comparison

Britain set up the Council of Industrial Design in 1944 (check), and the Festival of Britain of 1951 promoted modern design to the public (check). These parallel the West German efforts to promote "good form". A comparison of British and German post-war design bodies shows how each country tried to rebuild its image through design.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Describe the Ulm School of Design: when and by whom it was founded, how it related to the Bauhaus, and how it ended.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Explain Dieter Rams's "less, but better" approach, give one example of a Braun product, and add a caution about attributing it to one person.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Compare the attitude to the Bauhaus in West and East Germany after the war, and say why the East's attitude changed.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Ulm:** opened 1953, Max Bill's Bauhaus-inspired school, later more scientific, closed 1968 (check)

- **Braun:** company led by Erwin and Artur Braun from 1951; designs by Gugelot, Rams and teams (check)
- **Rams:** "less, but better" and ten principles of good design (check)
- **West:** embraced the Bauhaus as a democratic modern model
- **East:** condemned as formalist in the early 1950s, later partly reclaimed, Dessau restored in the 1970s (check)

Bauhaus & German Design

Course 1 · Chapter 10 · Capstone: Reading a Designed Object

The first chapter promised a better question than "what is Bauhaus design?": what did this school do, who did it, and which things attributed to it came from somewhere else? Nine chapters later there is enough to answer it, and to turn the answer into a method you can use on any chair, lamp, poster or building. This final chapter looks at the Bauhaus today, gathers the myths and what the evidence says, sets out a timeline, and then gives a practical way to read a designed object with a worked example. Names, dates and attributions are from general knowledge and flagged for checking.

The Bauhaus Today

Museums and archives

The Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung in Berlin, the Bauhaus Museum Weimar and the Bauhaus Museum Dessau (both opened in 2019, check), plus the Dessau building itself, hold collections and run programmes (check which are open and the current state of building works).

World Heritage

The Bauhaus buildings in Weimar and Dessau were inscribed by UNESCO in 1996, with the trade-union school at Bernau added later (check the dates), and Tel Aviv's White City is listed separately (Chapter 7).

The centenary

In 2019 Germany marked a hundred years since the founding with exhibitions and events across the country and abroad (check the programme and its critics).

- **A brand.** "Bauhaus" is now used to sell furniture, lamps, graphic styles and even DIY stores (the German chain of that name is unrelated to the school; check), and the loose "style" sense of Chapter 1 is common everywhere.
- **A teaching tradition.** The foundation course and the workshop idea survive in design education in many countries (Chapter 4).

- **A target for critics.** Writers have blamed the Bauhaus and its descendants for soulless modern buildings, as in Tom Wolfe's polemic *From Bauhaus to Our House* (1981, check), while defenders say the school is blamed for what its imitators built.
- **A living debate.** Historians continue to revise the story, especially on the role of women (Chapter 5) and on the school's politics (Chapter 7).

Myths Versus Evidence

Myth	What the course found (check each)	Chapter
Bauhaus means white, flat-roofed boxes.	The early school was craft-based and expressive; the white-box look is later and wider.	1, 3, 6
The Bauhaus invented the tubular-steel chair.	Breuer's chair was important, but others used tubular steel at the time.	1, 6
It was about cheap design for everyone.	Some designs reached industry, but many objects were low-volume and not cheap.	6
It was a single agreed style.	Three directors, many teachers, and a changing approach.	3, 4, 7
Gropius designed everything.	Teams, teachers and students, with credit unevenly given, especially to women.	5, 6
The Bauhaus made the modern kitchen and the modern estate.	The Frankfurt kitchen, Weissenhof and DIN belong to a wider movement.	8
The Bauhaus was closed by the Nazis and that was that.	It was closed twice by the authorities and then dissolved by its masters; its people spread widely.	7
The Bauhaus "went to America".	Individuals took versions of its ideas into existing institutions.	7

A Timeline

Year (check each)	Event
1907	The Deutscher Werkbund is founded in Munich; Behrens begins work for AEG.
1914	The Cologne Werkbund exhibition and the argument over standard types.

Year (check each)	Event
1919	Gropius founds the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar.
1923	The first exhibition and the shift of emphasis towards industry.
1925 to 1926	The move to Dessau and the opening of the new building.
1927	The Weissenhof estate in Stuttgart.
1928	Gropius resigns; Hannes Meyer becomes director.
1930	Mies van der Rohe becomes director.
1932 to 1933	Closure in Dessau, the Berlin school, and dissolution in 1933.
1953 to 1968	The Ulm School of Design.
1996	UNESCO lists the Weimar and Dessau Bauhaus sites.
2019	The centenary and the new museums in Weimar and Dessau.

A Method for Reading a Designed Object

Choose any object that someone calls "Bauhaus", "modernist" or "classic design". Ask these questions, in order, and write the answers down, marking each as *documented*, *claimed* or *unknown*.

1. Who?

Who is credited as the designer, and does a museum or archive record agree? Were others involved (a team, a workshop, a student)?

2. When and where?

When was the design first made, and when was this particular example made? At the school, at a factory, or decades later under licence?

3. Which institution?

Was it the Bauhaus, the Werkbund, a city housing office, a company such as Braun, or a school such as Ulm? Which period of that institution?

4. How was it made, for whom?

By hand or by machine, in what quantity, at what price, for which buyers? Did it achieve the aim claimed for it?

5. What changed since?

6. What is the evidence?

Has it been modified, copied or renamed (as the "Wassily" chair was)? What does the present version share with the original?

Which sources back each answer, a dated object in a museum, a document of the time, a specialist history, or only a shop's text? Where do two independent sources agree?

A Worked Example

Question	The Dessau tubular-steel chair (check each)
Who?	Marcel Breuer, head of the furniture workshop (documented in museum catalogues; the "bicycle handlebar" story is claimed).
When and where?	About 1925 to 1926 in Dessau; a chair on sale today is almost certainly a later licensed copy.
Which institution?	The Bauhaus in its Dessau period, under Gropius, working with industry.
How, for whom?	Made in small numbers at first, later by manufacturers; not cheap in practice.
What changed since?	Renamed "Wassily" later; reproduced by firms with permission and without it.
Evidence?	Museum catalogues and specialist histories; weaker for the naming story and for claims that Breuer "invented" tubular steel.

The pattern

Most answers come out the same way: part documented, part claimed, part simplified over time. That is not a reason to distrust all design history. It is a reason to ask which part of a statement is the documented part, which is the plain statement of a brand, and which is the unproven story that everyone repeats.

A British comparison

Try the method on something nearer home: a Mackintosh chair, a Glasgow Style tea-room, or a mid-century British lamp (check the examples). Many of the same questions apply, and the answers often show the same blend of documented credit, team work and later legend.

Check the details

Every name, date and attribution in this course comes from general knowledge and is marked "check" where it is uncertain. Museums revise their catalogues, historians revise their accounts and companies rewrite their histories, so verify against current museum and archive sources before quoting anything.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Choose a designed object that someone calls "Bauhaus" and write answers to the six questions, marking each as documented, claimed or unknown.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Pick three of the myths in the table and write one sentence each, in your own words, saying what the evidence supports.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Write a short timeline of five events that, in your view, best show how the school changed, and say why you picked each.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **The school:** 1919 to 1933, three directors, three cities, a changing approach (check)

- **The afterlife:** exile and spread; Ulm and Braun; divided legacies; museums and UNESCO sites (check)
- **The method:** who, when and where, which institution, how and for whom, what changed, what evidence
- **The habit:** label each claim documented, claimed or unknown
- **The caution:** "Bauhaus" is often a label for things the school did not make

Course complete

You have finished *Bauhaus & German Design*: the craft and Werkbund background, the school in Weimar and Dessau, its teaching, its women, its closure and exile, the everyday home, the post-war story of Ulm and Braun, and a method for testing claims about any designed object. Related courses include the other Germany-specific Culture courses on the site, such as *The Bundesliga: A History* and *German Music*.