

Weaving Words and Drawing Lines: The Bauhaus Masters Endeavours to Establish a Universal Visual Language within Foundation Education

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Abstract:

This study investigates the roots of interdisciplinary architectural and design education and methodology in Europe and the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. In particular this thesis is concerned with the establishment of the principles of a universal visual language within this context. Walter Gropius' (1883-1969) efforts to propagate a universal understanding of architecture, art and design at the Bauhaus is a central focus of this study along with the use of a universal visual language to facilitate such an ideal.

This thesis argues that the instigation of the Bauhaus preliminary course, the Vorkurs, developed by Johannes Itten (1888-1967) and matured by Bauhaüslers Lázsló Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) and Josef Albers (1888-1976) offered vitality, integrity, creativity and longevity to Bauhaus pedagogy and posits that the beliefs and practices of the Vorkurs contributed significantly to the translation of European modern design education in the United States.

Although Bauhaus pedagogical translations were refuted by some and misunderstood by others in the wholly different economic context of the United States, this study proposes that the translations of the Vorkurs methodology, by the émigré Bauhaüslers, Moholy-Nagy at the New Bauhaus in Chicago, Albers at Black Mountain College and Yale and Gropius at Harvard contributed to the codification of modern twentieth-century design education, and as such continues to offer relevance in current architectural and design pedagogical environments.

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