

Durability Assessment of the Bauhaus School in the History of Art and Design Based on its Characteristics

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Abstract—Operating from 1919 to 1933, the Bauhaus school was established in Germany with the aim of connecting art and industry. It was one of the most influential schools of art and design in the 20th century and also one of the founders of the foundation of modern design. Nearly a century after Bauhaus establishment, the school views, theories and works in various disciplines of the visual arts, design and architecture have been still impressive and inspiring the designers and artists around the world. 4 important characteristics remaining from the Bauhaus school can be the reasons for its durability in the history of art and design: 1) Bauhaus's educational and research achievements being taught in art schools up to the present time; 2) Bauhaus's ability to make a connection between art and industry; 3) Bauhaus teachings spread in the world by its professors; and 4) Bauhaus's attempts to develop modern art and its form language. This article was intended to study these 4 features of the Bauhaus school causing its durability after about a hundred years.

Keywords—Bauhaus school, durability, history of art and design, modern art

I. INTRODUCTION

The Bauhaus is the name of a school of architecture and applied arts in Germany that from 1919 to 1933 addressed to nurture artists, and played an important role in establishing the link between art and industry. Bauhaus in German language means construction house. The Bauhaus school, in its fourteen-year working period in Germany, has worked under the direction of three great architects in three different cities. First this school worked in Weimar from 1919 to 1925, then until 1932 in Dessau and finally from 1932 to 1933 worked in Berlin- when the school became closed due to the order of Nazi in Germany. After school closures, some efforts were taken to continue Bauhaus path, including establishing the New Bauhaus School in Chicago of America by a school teacher called László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946); but this school was able to continue its activities for a year.

II. PURPOSES AND MANIFEST OF THE BAUHAUS

Opening of the Bauhaus school April 1919 was along unfavorable economic, political and cultural conditions after First World War and there was public tendency to create a new social discipline.

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Academic artistic society of Germany knew the matter that the curriculum needed modification in school and the Bauhaus expressed these modifications in the form of unification of arts and handicrafts and using workshops in art education. Gropius and other professors of school did not separate fine arts from functional handicrafts and believe that new art and architecture should respond needs of new industrial society. In his first manifest, he integrated idea of William Morris (1834 –1896) about sublimation of handicrafts with unity thought of all arts and rejected boundaries among functional and decoration aspects in art.

Walter Gropius (1883- 1969) provided a four papers booklet immediately after taking management of the Bauhaus school in 1919. This booklet included manifest about purposes, perspective of development programs and details about curriculum of the school. In this manifest, the main purpose of the Bauhaus was return of architecture, sculpture and painting to handicrafts. 'The Bauhaus turned first to Expressionism; like the English Arts and Crafts movement and the Jugendstil, it initially sought reform in a return to the Middle Ages' [1]. However, in next year, Gropius did not want to speak about those days. In his manifest 1919, he expressed slogan of unity of art and crafts, but in 1923, he applied another slogan as *art and technology, a new unity* and followed new orientation in the Bauhaus. This approach continued until 1928. In his new orientation, the Bauhaus followed using technology and industrial design. Gropius in this manifest that presented along the first foreign exhibition of the Bauhaus emphasized the importance of designer-craftsman in huge industrial production that known as the main course of the Bauhaus. After that, Bauhaus workshops was introduced as laboratories for creating pre-sample of machinery production and many of products of these workshops put in the production line of factory especially table and chair, textiles and light tools with agreement of industry owners.

Although the Bauhaus changed direction several times during its short life, it initially pursued three main aims, each of which is clearly defined in the Manifesto and the Programme of the State Bauhaus in the Weimar which accompanied it. The school's first aim was to rescue all the arts from the isolation in which each then found itself and to train the craftsmen, painters and sculptors of the future to embark on cooperative projects in which all their skills would be combined. The second aim was to elevate the status of the crafts to that which the fine arts then enjoyed. The third aim, less clearly articulated in the Programme than the other two, but of increasing importance once the Bauhaus got under way,

was to establish constant contact with the leaders of the crafts and industries of the country. This was more than an article of faith, it was a matter of economic survival. The Bauhaus hoped gradually to free itself from dependence on public subsidy by selling its products and designs to the public and to industry [2].

III. THE BAUHAUS ACHIEVEMENTS

The Bauhaus school does not present today physically, but its achievements observed in all of routine life to artistic effects. The Bauhaus caused that functional design which was created for mass production proportional with economic situation of low-income people of German society. The achievements of this school obtained with efforts of managers, professors and students of the school. The Bauhaus converted to the center of modernism and functionalism in Germany and created the principles which their influence on design continued today.

From effects of the Bauhaus in different majors of art and design, we can mention regulations of color concept of Johannes Itten (1888-1967) and Josef Albers (1888-1976) in visual arts. Also, appearance of the international style in architecture, development of new typography, use of photomontage in graphic design by László Moholy-Nagy , development of functionalism in industrial design and moving statues of light and space modulator by Moholy Nagy. ‘The Bauhaus created the patterns and set the standards of present-day industrial design; it helped to invent modern architecture; it altered to look of everything from the chair you are sitting in to the page you are reading now’[3].

In this research, by using historical investigation approach, information collected from valid source about events of one century ago in artistic school of the Bauhaus in Germany. According to methodologies existed in consideration of design history, simultaneous and in time approaches used in consideration of design history. In history of research, also there is not any paper about evaluation of stability of Bauhaus school in art history even though this matter mentioned in sources of art history and more specific in Bauhaus book written by Frank Whitford (1941-).

Four main features that remained from the Bauhaus and considered as durability indexes of this school in art and design history: 1) Bauhaus's educational and research achievements being taught in art schools up to the present time. 2) Bauhaus's ability to make a connection between art and industry. 3 Bauhaus teachings spread in the world by its professors. 4) Bauhaus's attempts to develop modern art and its form language. In the following, a summary presented for these cases.

IV. RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF THE BAUHAUS

Educational approach of the Bauhaus was workshop-education system, its pattern master and student and its curriculum was a collection of theoretical teaching approaches and workshop and crafts education. In addition, theoretical lessons were beside practice lessons. In this program, students should study simultaneously in visual, handicrafts arts and technology of industrial productions. Students study art and

industry by either professor of industry or artists of beautiful arts. ‘Workshop training was already an important element in the courses offered by several reformed schools of arts and crafts elsewhere in Germany, but what was to make the Bauhaus different from anything previously attempted was a tandem system of workshop-teaching’[4]. Curriculum of the Bauhaus was set for improving personality of students and providing technical abilities for them. Figure 1 shows schematic view of this program.

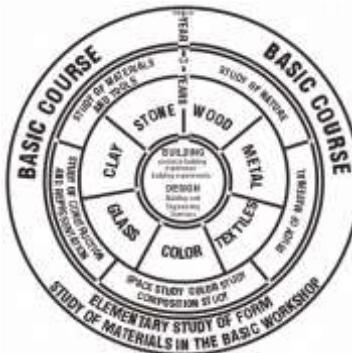


Fig. 1: schematic view of the Bauhaus curriculum, 1992.

The base of Bauhaus education consists of a six month preliminary course that focused on free experiences of color, form and materials. After initial course, students work in one of workshops of glass, clay, textile, metal, carpentry, wall painting, sculpture with wood and stone, theatre, printing and binding. ‘Stained glass, wood, and metal workshops were taught by an artist and a craftsman and were organized along medieval Bauhütte lines: master, journeyman and apprentice’ [5].

The Bauhaus known as anti-academic tendency and it was the first establishment of functional-practice education. As Frank Whitford mentioned, ‘the Bauhaus was the most celebrated art school of modern times’ [6]. The Bauhaus converted to the center of modern design of Germany in 1920th and in twentieth century to the center of publication and completion of new international experiments especially the international style of architecture and geometrical abstraction in painting and sculpture. It known as symbol of modernity in 30th and 40th decades and was entered to many countries. Until late of 1960th, most of European and American architecture and art schools accepted at least one part of Bauhaus curriculum. In its short life, the Bauhaus created a revolution in education of art that its effects still felt. Although the Bauhaus was one of several schools that permanently new ideas introduced there, but it imagined that all art educational experiences originated from the Bauhaus. ‘Every student now pursuing a foundation course at an art school has the Bauhaus to thank for it’ [7].

From these achievements are series of magazines and books that are published by the Bauhaus and they used as tool for publication of advanced and modern ideas in the field of art theories and application of them in architecture and design. The ideas of professors of the Bauhaus like Paul Klee (1879-1940), Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931), Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Walter Gropius (1883- 1969) and László Moholy-Nagy that were pioneer artists and theorist of those

days published in magazines. From the most significant series of books of Bauhaus, we can mention the series of fourteen bauhausbücher. This series that published from 1925 to 1930 had protective hardcover that covered with paper. Figure 2 shows a sample of hardcover of these books.



Fig. 2: László Moholy-Nagy, hardcover of the series of fourteen bauhausbücher, 1925-1930.

Each volume of bauhausbücher was about a special issue that one of the artists had written it. Author, title and publication year of these series of books are listed below:

1. Walter Gropius, Internationale Architektur, 1925.
2. Paul Klee, Pädagogisches Skizzenbuch, 1925.
3. Adolf Meyer, Ein Versuchshaus des Bauhauses in Weimar, 1924.
4. Die Bühne am Bauhaus, 1925.
5. Piet Mondrian, Neue Gestaltung, Neoplastizismus, Nieuwe Beelding, 1925.
6. Theo van Doesburg, Grundbegriffe der neuen gestaltenden Kunst, 1925.
7. Walter Gropius, Neue Arbeiten der Bauhauswerkstätten, 1925.
8. L. Moholy-Nagy, Malerei, Fotografie, Film, 1925.
9. Kandinsky, Punkt und Linie zu Fläche: Beitrag zur Analyse der malerischen Elemente, 1926.
10. J.J.P. Oud, Holländische Architektur, 1929.
11. Kasimir Malewitsch, Die gegenstandslose Welt, 1927.
12. Walter Gropius, Bauhausbauten Dessau, 1930.
13. Albert Gleizes, Kubismus, 1928.
14. László Moholy-Nagy, Von Material zur Architektur, 1929.

Also, other research activities of the Bauhaus included meeting. The Bauhaus was in relation with its simultaneous movement of avant-grade, De stijl and constructivism and exchanged scientific information with them. Universal meeting of 1922 and Weimar was one of samples of these three poles of avant-grade with presence of members of these three movements.

Other examples of Bauhaus research achievements are about light and shadow by László Moholy-Nagy , color theory by Johannes Itten, Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) and Joseph Albers, typography and new typography by László Moholy-Nagy , in the field of advertisement by Herbert Bayer (1900- 1985) and in photography and photomontage by László Moholy-Nagy. Each of these are considered as basic researches today.

V. CONNECTION BETWEEN ART AND INDUSTRY

The Bauhaus passed several ups and downs during fourteen years of activity and experienced different tendencies and purposes in every period. The book *Design dictionary* divides historical influences of the Bauhaus on the theory and practice of design in to five broad phases [8]. This division determines activities of the Bauhaus and its purposes in any period:

- a. The Expressionist workmanship phase (1919-1922)
- b. A shift to aesthetic functionalism (1922-1923)
- c. Exemplary manifestations of a new aesthetic for the industry and media (1924-1927)
- d. Programmatic focus on economic efficiency and technical and academic methodology (1928-1930)
- e. The Bauhaus as depoliticized school of architecture (1930-1933)

Based on manifest 1919 of the Bauhaus, most of works tended to handicrafts and expressionism in initial years of school. Bauhaus years in Weimar had full imaginary nature but after changing direction of the Bauhaus in 1923 with slogan of *art & technology, a new Unity* created a new orientation in the Bauhaus which continued until 1928. The Bauhaus followed use of technology and industrial production in its new direction.

After 1923, most of designed products in the Bauhaus workshops produced by industry. One of most successful Bauhaus workshops in creating connection with industry was metals workshop. In this workshop, products like lighting and dishes produced. ‘Making of lamps was the most characteristic object of the design work in the metal workshop’ [9]. From the silversmithing shop of the romantically expressive early years in Weimar, starting in 1923, the workshop developed in to a design laboratory for the design of lighting appliances with successful contacts to industry, and in the years up to 1930 also in to a workshop for tubular steel furniture and building installations, eventually merging with the building department. Students like Josef Albers, Marianne Brandt (1893-1983), Hin Bredendieck (1904-1995), Christian Dell (1893-1974), Gyula Pap (1899-1983) or Wilhelm Wagenfeld (1900-1990) created metal objects, which today belong to the icons of twentieth century design [10].

Miss Marianne Brandt was German designer in Bauhaus metal workshop. She was responsible for creating connection with industry in the metal workshop in 1927 to prepare industrial production of Bauhaus products by making contract. Brandt made contract with production companies of lighting like Schwintzer & Gräff in Berlin, Körting & Mathiesen (Kandem) in Leipzig. This matter changed Bauhaus activities and students began to produce prototypes for economic productions. This plan provided more social validity and income for the Bauhaus. ‘Functional lamps were now manufactured by industry everywhere. The best of them was probably those designed by Christian Dell’ [11]. In fact, the Bauhaus created a bridge for unity and coordination of artists and craftsmen.

VI. DEVELOPMENT OF THE BAUHAUS TRAINING

Development of Bauhaus training around the world can be considered in two life periods of the Bauhaus and after that.

The Bauhaus was the school that trained students and some graduated from this school during fourteen years of activity. Some of them worked as a master in Bauhaus workshops after graduation. Also, artists and craftsmen that related to the Bauhaus as master presented in the school and after leaving school entered to other schools or countries. This matter developed Bauhaus view to other scientific centers.

Also, the Bauhaus tried to relate with most expert and avant-grade artists and artistic movements of the world. In first decades of twentieth century, there were two main avant-grade artists in the world, in east, Russian constructivism and in west Dutch De Stijl. Presence of the Bauhaus and new role in art world caused some effects among this school and artistic movements like De Stijl and Russian constructivism as the important role of these two movements observed in Bauhaus and Bauhaus effect on them. Meetings, mutual projects and masters exchange with these two avant-grade movements developed Bauhaus views.

On the other hand, artistic effects and products which were introduced to society considered as avant-grade effects in those times and motivated society as other designers started their work with them and presented similar products with Bauhaus. Established effects and creativities during life of this school affected artistic movements and schools that formed in twentieth century or were forming. After closing of Bauhaus, founder and the first manager of Bauhaus went to United States and worked as official of architecture department of Harvard University and remained there until 1952. He introduced Bauhaus design principles and concepts to a generation of American architects. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) that was the last manager of Bauhaus migrated to United States in 1937 and worked as manager of architecture department of college in Chicago. László Moholy-Nagy also went to America and established the New Bauhaus school in Chicago in 1937. By establishing the New Bauhaus in Chicago, masters of Bauhaus help to develop Bauhaus architecture and converting it to prevailing conversation in architecture and modern industrial design around the world as this school retained its universal influence and considered as pioneer school in modern design of Europe.

After closing of Bauhaus and migration of most of its masters and artists to different regions of the world, some other movements and motions appeared that were affected by Bauhaus. They found name and popularity because of achievements of this school such as activities of Jan Tschichold (1890-1945), Swiss graphic design and Ulm school in Germany.

Mentioned factors like dynamic educational process of Bauhaus, relation with two avant-grade movements De Stijl and constructivism and existence of school achievements in society caused that considerable people of German society and Europe familiar with Bauhaus training. After Bauhaus closing, migration of masters and artists of Bauhaus to different regions of the world because of political pressure caused that Bauhaus philosophy considered universally and Bauhaus training developed around the world further.

VII. APPEARANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FORM LANGUAGE OF MODERN ART

Europe and Germany followed appearance and completion of Modernism in the early twentieth century. Prevailing form language in art also affected by reformist movements of late nineteenth century and initial of twentieth century and followed modern language and near decoration phase to geometrical phase. By appearance of Bauhaus, this change culminated and form language that was modern language converted to prevailing language in its period. Appearance of Bauhaus was beside reformist movements that appeared to achieve new aesthetics proportional with industrial productions. Bauhaus could realize these purposes and achieve new form language in the modern world.

Design style of Bauhaus was in line with form language that changed in initial of twentieth century in Europe and developed. This change of form language in art originated from economic, political, social and cultural conditions of twentieth century in Europe. The Bauhaus in this new form language and its development played an important role. This modern form language presented in most of Bauhaus products and developed by products and their presence in the society and also educational and research processes of Bauhaus. Bauhaus form language had features like reduction of decorations and emphasis on functionalism, using geometrical figures and primary colors, distance from historicism and design for mass production, functional, modern and costly and usable for all people, attention to social discussions of design, connection among art, industry and social matters, achieving aesthetics and new form language in its period.

Bauhaus achievements previous and after its breakup known as one of the symbols of modern art period. In future years, these training acted as artistic movement that was considered as one of the important and beneficial currents of twentieth century. Universality by collection of designers and collection of their thoughts, breaking traditions, changing aesthetics in the view of people and creating new plans can be a revolution. In the view of Bauhaus, that was revolution that shown its results next years. Ideas that Bauhaus presented them could provide globalization.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The Bauhaus is one of most popular artistic institutions of twentieth century and the matters which Bauhaus respond to them still remained today. Bauhaus efforts created important achievements in art and design. Four features remained from the Bauhaus that called durability features of the Bauhaus school in history of art and design. This paper tried to consider these four features by historical research and simultaneous approach that caused durability of this school after passing about one hundred years. These features are:

1. Research and educational achievement that the Bauhaus reached and existed today in schools. Bauhaus workshop-educational system, the way of simultaneous teaching of practice and theoretical lessons and providing initial course were the features of Bauhaus educational system. In the field of research, magazines and meetings, research findings about light, color theory, new typography and photomontage are the achievements of Bauhaus.

2. The relation that the Bauhaus could provide between art and industry. From 1923, by changing view of the Bauhaus to unity of art and technology, the Bauhaus tended to design products that have ability to be mass produced. From the years of 1925, contracts signed with industry section that design of school workshops produced in the factories like production of lighting products by Kandem Company and tubular steel furniture by Thonet Company, 3. Bauhaus training developed around the world. In the time of Bauhaus, because of dynamic activities of school in relation with presence of artists and artisans as master in Bauhaus, teaching of students and meetings, mutual projects and exchange of masters with two movements of avant-grade of those times, constructivism and De Stijl developed Bauhaus training. On the other hand, presence of Bauhaus production in society and among other artists of Germany also provided patterns for these effects. After breakup of the Bauhaus, migration of schoolmasters to different regions of the world and establishment of New Bauhaus in Chicago also developed Bauhaus training around the world, 4. Modern form language that developed by Bauhaus Form language switched from decoration to geometry and appearance of modern language that these changes observed by the Bauhaus and became prevailing form language during its era.

These features caused durability of Bauhaus effects after about one hundred years as its design is observed in routine life. The Bauhaus is one of most popular institutes of twentieth century and the problems that responded by the Bauhaus still observed in modern world.

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