THE BAUHAUS

WALTER GROPIUS

DESSAU, GERMANY

TYPE OF PROJECT:
ART SCHOOL

DATE COMPLETED:
March 21, 1926 -
"Topping-out"

APPROX. SQUARE FOOTAGE:
32,450 SQUARE METERS

STRUCTURE:
REINFORCED CONCRETE
SKELETON, WITH WALLS AS
DIVISIONAL ELEMENTS, NOT
STRUCTURE

PARKING:
NONE

COMMENTS:
THE BAUHAUS BUILDING
AT DESSAU WAS INTENDED
TO BE A MODEL OF ALL THAT
MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND
THEORIES OF THE
BAUHAUS CAN ACHIEVE. THE
BUILDING IS MADE OF
REINFORCED CONCRETE,
WHICH IS EXPOSED
THROUGHOUT. THE WIND-
DOWS FRAMED IN STEEL.
THE MASSING AND ORGANI-
ZATION IS SIMPLE: Func-
TION ENCRIPTION SEPARATED
INTO WINGS. THE THREE MASSES
CONSIST OF CLASSROOMS,
WORKROOMS, AND LIVING
SPACES. THESE ELEMENTS
ARE THEN CONNECTED BY
INHABITABLE BRIDGES. THE
ELEVATIONS ARE ALSO
SIMPLE—A CONTRAST
BETWEEN ALMOST ENTIRE
WALLS OF GLASS TO STARK,
SOLID WHITE WALLS.

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Photos, this page (clockwise, from above): Site plan, with north arrow in upper left ("Norden"); vestibule drawing, done when renovations began; typical studio for students; workroom photo, showing room as it was in Gropius' days; elevation drawing of the studio building; overall building from above.

Photos, opposite page (clockwise from upper left): Typical classroom/workroom area; overall of the building, showing the Bauhaus portion of the project, including workshops to the left, and living quarters to the right; bridge leading to technical wing; view from street, under the bridge, with the technical school to the left, Bauhaus to the right; one of the opposing entrances into the separate schools. Lower left: corridor in the bridge.
THE PLAN OF THE BAUHAUS CAME ABOUT BY NECESSITY. THE SITE AT DESSAU ALREADY HAD THE ROAD WHEN IT WAS GIVEN TO THE BAUHAUS GROUP. GROPIUS USED THIS CONDITION TO SHOW THE SEPARATION OF THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL FROM THE ACTUAL BAUHAUS PORTION OF THE BUILDING. THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL WAS PUT ON ONE SIDE OF THE ROAD, AND WAS CONNECTED TO THE BAUHAUS PORTION BY A BRIDGE ELEMENT. THE ENTRANCES TO EACH SCHOOL ARE ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ROAD, OPPOSITE AND FACING EACH OTHER.

GROUND FLOOR


THE STUDIOS IN THE LIVING WING ARE ALL BASICALLY THE SAME, WITH A SMALL BED, AND VERY LITTLE FURNITURE. EACH FLOOR ALSO HAS ITS OWN SMALL KITCHEN. THE WORKSHOP WING IS ONE LARGE OPEN ROOM WITH ONLY THE STRUCTURE INTERRUPTING THE CONTINUOUS SPACE. ON ANOTHER LEVEL, IT HOLDS CLASSROOMS.

THE PLAN OF THE BUILDING IS NOW MUCH DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT USED TO BE, PROVING GROPIUS' POINT THAT THE WALLS IN HIS BAUHAUS ARE MERELY DIVIDERS.
WALTER GROPIUS PROVIDED THE BAUHAUS WITH TWO GREAT STAIRCASES. AS ONE TRAVELS BACK AND FORTH WHILE ASCENDING OR DESCENDING THE STAIRS, THEY ARE PROVIDED WITH CHANGING VIEWS. THE STAIRCASE ALSO CHANGES FROM A WIDE, SINGLE WIDTH STAIRCASE TO TWO SMALLER-WIDTH SPACES FLANKING THE LARGER STAIR. THESE SHIFTS ARE DESIGNED TO STIMULATE THE MIND, AS WELL AS STUDENT INTERACTION.

Since the stair was a daily experience in the students' lives, Gropius strove to make it special, keeping in mind the great baroque stairs of the past. Glass walls at the end of some flights provided sweeping views of the school. The stairs themselves were simple black and white.

The staircase is immortalized in Öskar Schlemmer's 1932 "Bauhaustreppe" (above), which is said to depict the dance of students on the steps. One Bauhaus theory is that space must be experienced through movement, thus making the stairs an example of Gropius' architectural theories as well.
Glass is a common theme in Gropius' Bauhaus. The workshop wing is encased in a glass curtain wall, with the structure exposed to the inside. One can see the floor slabs as well and the structure even from the outside of the building. Because of the heavy steel framing the windows, however, the glass does not seem as transparent as one would think. The "mesh" formed by the steel is closely woven, creating a grid. This proportions of this grid are kept in all of the parts of the building, whether it be in a glass curtain wall or a small window in a studio.
ATA THIS TIME IN HIS LIFE, WALTER GROPIUS WAS VERY INTERESTED IN THE USE OF GLASS IN HIS BUILDINGS. GROPIUS USED WINDOWS TO REFLECT THE FUNCTIONS BEHIND THE ELEVATIONS. HE FELT AS THOUGH THE WORK AREAS NEEDED A LARGE AMOUNT OF LIGHT, SO THIS PORTION OF THE BUILDING HAS A CURTAIN WALL MADE ENTIRELY OF STEEL-ENCASED GLASS. THE STUDENTS' ROOMS, HOWEVER, HAD SMALL OPENINGS TO THE OUTSIDE.

THE FACADES OF THE BUILDING HAD VERY LITTLE ORNAMENTATION, WHICH CAME AS A SHOCK TO SOME. MANY PEOPLE ALSO THOUGHT THE WORKSHOP WING LOOKED UNSTABLE, WITH ITS WALL OF GLASS, WITH THE FLOOR SLABS OF THE BUILDING PEEKING OUT FROM BEHIND.

GROPIUS CLAIMED THAT GLASS WAS "THE UREST BUILDING MATERIAL", AND SAID IT HELPED TO BLUR THE LINES BETWEEN INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR. HE FELT AS THOUGH GLASS WOULD HELP THE NEW, MODERN MAN TO EXPERIENCE HIS SPACE BETTER. THUS, THE ELEVATIONS OF THE BAUHAUS ARE A CONTRAST IN WALLS OF GLASS, WALLS OF STARK WHITE, AND SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.
**ANALYSIS DIAGRAMS**

Diagram of the switchback double to single stairs, with glass at the ends, to provide views and experience.

Diagram showing entry into the building, with main entrances into the two schools opposite and across the street from one another.

Diagram highlighting the structure, and how it affects the shape and function of the room. Also, note that on the left-hand side of the space, the structure is within the glass wall, a new concept at the time.

Diagram sketch showing transparencies: the workshop wing is very transparent, with many views out, while the technical wing, with mostly classrooms and offices, has many windows, and the living spaces, which have just a few windows.

**MASSING DIAGRAM**

Division of functions: Light grey to the left is the technical school, L-shaped, darker grey building is the workshop, dark rectangle in the back is the studios, and the black is the bridges.