

The Bauhaus

Seventy years after its foundation in Weimar, the Bauhaus has become a concept. The respect that it commands is associated above all with the design it pioneered one that we now describe as the Bauhaus style. The teachers at the Bauhaus acquired fame including attracting what were to be the most legendary artists of all time among them Wassily Kandinsky, Lyonel Feininger, Paul Klee and Oskar Schlemmer. The Bauhaus became an abbreviation for the radical modernisation of life and its positive and negative side –effects.

The development of the Bauhaus unfolded more or less in tandem with the history of the first German republic. Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus in 1919 in Weimar, where the national assembly had met to draw up a democratic constitution. This then led to the closure of the Bauhaus in 1933. Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer became architects and architecture teachers at Harvard university whilst Laszlo Moholy-nagy founded the new Bauhaus in Chicago in 1937. The Bauhaus continued to attract people even after the official closure, it was like a tribute to its achievements in the few years that it had been open.

There were many artists that were employed to teach at the Bauhaus by Walter Gropius. Among those were Itten, Moholy-Nagy, Klee, Kandinsky and Albers. Paul Klee a Swiss born painter and graphic artist whose was born December 18 1879 and died in June 29 1940. Klee was always into primitive art, surrealism, cubism and children's art that he turned into delicate paintings in watercolours and steady drawings. Klee grew up in a musical family and was himself a violinist. Klee decided to take up art instead of music and found himself attending at the Munich Academy.

When Paul Klee accepted the offer to teach at the Bauhaus, he had no previous teaching experiences. He had attended an academy only briefly and had acquired the vast part of his knowledge and skills by people instructing him. His interest in new school programmes had started in 1900 in the Munich revolution where he was taught by the painter Franz Von Stuck. Not long after that Oskar Schlemmer (who was spokesman for the Stuttgart art students) had unsuccessfully been able to secure him an appointment at the Stuttgart academy.

Klee, the subject of three monographs published almost immediately in 1921, was still unknown to the public. He was well-respected in avant-garde circles. In 1920 he was foreseen and considered as one of the most important of the expressionist artists. Klee's work always reflected the spirit of the age and now becoming a teacher this was an additional reason to change the technique, style and content of his art. At the same time to develop a method of art instruction for an introductory course.

Klee and Schlemmer took over the life drawing course from Itten, each teaching a term at a time. In the winter term of 1921/22, his classes became a 'pictorial form theory' that then led to colour theory classes in 1922/23.

Klee then began a course of his own by studying elementary forms and later introducing the primary colours. Their function was to encourage the infinite potential of design; using proportion, rotation and reflection.

They were abandoned altogether at the Dessau Bauhaus, and the drawing from nature which Klee had taught became a part of Albers' Vorkurs. Although, in his pictorial form theory course, Klee systematically and comprehensively reflected the experiments and knowledge he had gained through painting since 1922. Klee described his teaching: "I see my role more and more clearly as time goes on, namely to communicate the understanding I have gained through the shaping of ideas regarding the organisation of multiplicity into unity."