The Bauhaus 1919-1928 at the Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., 1938; the Bauhaus as an Educational Model in the United States

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The Bauhaus 1919-1928 at the Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., 1938: The Bauhaus as an Art Educational Model in the United States

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Introduction

In 1938, when the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) launched its first exhibition of the German avant-garde movement, *The Bauhaus 1919-1928*, the Bauhaus school had already ceased to exist five years earlier. From Weimar in Germany, where the Bauhaus was established in 1919, to Dresden and Berlin, where it was relocated, the institution was persistently reinvented under the directorship of its founder, Walter Gropius (1919-1928), and his successors, Hannes Meyer (1928-1930) and Mies van der Rohe (1930-1933).\(^1\) While the ideas and concepts of the institution were changing in its historical course, often imposed by financial difficulties and political constraints of the changing Weimar Republic, the Bauhaus remained an anti-traditional school that had a novel approach to art pedagogy with an emphasis on experimentation, inventiveness, and the employment of anti-traditional art educational norms, such as the abandonment of references to the arts of the past, the fusion of fine and applied arts, as well as the elimination of the boundaries between them.\(^2\)

The end of the Weimar Republic in 1933 and the beginning of Hitler’s Third Reich represented the end of the German Bauhaus.\(^3\) Around this time, the Bauhaus entered its New World phase, when students and teachers, including Gropius, were forced by the pressure of Nazism to seek refuge outside of Europe. MoMA’s first

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\(^1\) The historical information on Bauhaus in this paragraph is found in Magdalena Droste, *Bauhaus 1919-1933*, (Berlin: Bauhaus Archive, 1998).


\(^3\) National Socialists won the elections on March 5\(^{th}\) in 1933, and the Bauhaus was physically closed on April 11\(^{th}\) of the same year. Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 197-198.
Bauhaus exhibition was launched at this precise moment, when the students and the faculty of Bauhaus were arriving in the United States and establishing a Bauhaus presence in the Americas.

*The Bauhaus 1919-1928* opened on December 7, 1938, and after it closed on January 30, 1939, the exhibition traveled under the same title with the same content to four different institutions. A smaller, more concentrated version, *The Bauhaus: How It Worked* (April 1939 – June 1940), traveled to an additional ten venues. MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition, therefore, not only reached the Museum’s audience in New York but also a broader U.S. audience, specifically various educational communities and art associations. This thesis argues that the curators of the exhibition – Gropius and Herbert Bayer, a designer and former student – conceptualized this exhibition to emphasize the pedagogical foundations of the Bauhaus, to promote the school as an art educational model to U.S. audiences and institutions, and in so doing eschewed the potential aestheticization of the Bauhaus object in the U.S.

While there is a wealth of scholarship written on diverse topics surrounding the Bauhaus, in-depth research on MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition is limited. Although the exhibition is mentioned in many sources, it is most frequently discussed in connection to

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4 Under the same title as the MoMA’s exhibition, *The Bauhaus 1919-1928*, the exhibition traveled to George Walter Vincent Smith Art Gallery, Springfield, Mass. (Mar. 1 to Mar. 29, 1939); Milwaukee Art Institute, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. (Nov. 1 to Dec. 6, 1939); Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland Ohio (January 27 to Feb. 24, 1940) and Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio (Mar. 8 to Apr. 5). Under the title *The Bauhaus: How it Worked*, the concentrated version of the same exhibition, traveled to: Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts (April 10 to May 8, 1939); University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (July 14 to August 4, 1939); Florida State College for Women, Tallahassee, Florida (October 1 to October 22, 1939; Art Association of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana (November 1 to November 22, 1939); Louisiana State University, University, Louisiana (December 1 to December 22, 1939); Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (January 2 to January 23, 1940); University of Washington, Seattle, Washington (February 6 to February 27, 1940); San Francisco Museum of Art, (SFMoma) San Francisco, California (March 8 to March 29, 1940); Mills College, Oakland, California (April 3 to May 5, 1940); Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts (May 18 to June 8, 1940). Department of Circulating Records, (III.27.3:0524), MoMA, New York.
the second Bauhaus exhibition that was held at MoMA in 2009, *Bauhaus 1919-1933: Workshops for Modernity*. The *Bauhaus 1919-1928* has also been briefly noted in regards to its significance in shaping the general understanding of Bauhaus products and principles in the U.S. In his essay “Escape into the Public Sphere: The Exhibition as an Instrument of Self-Presentation at the Bauhaus,” published in the 2009 exhibition catalogue *Bauhaus: A Conceptual Model*, journalist and communications expert Patrick Rössler suggests that the significance of MoMA’s 1938 exhibition was rooted in its ability to shape the international perceptions of the institution, concluding that the show enabled the Bauhaus faculty to launch their careers in the country where they immigrated. Rössler however, does not elaborate on his legitimate argument. By promoting the Bauhaus educational methods, this exhibition undeniably promoted the creators of its pedagogy – its faculty.

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The evidence for the statement that MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition “crucially shaped the American reception of Bauhaus products and principles” is not provided in the text of Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman, *Bauhaus 1919-1933: Workshops for Modernity*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 12; In the introduction to the same publication, the director of the MoMA, Glenn D. Lowry, suggests that the catalog of Bauhaus 1938 exhibition “became one of the primary ways in which Americans learned about the school.” Lowry also does not provide the evidence for this statement.

7 In addition, Rössler remarks that the selection of objects and comments in the catalog (that was also printed in Germany after World War II) portrayed the image of the “professional, modern, international, and cosmopolitan Bauhaus.” While Rössler provides an abbreviated literature list to his essay, he does not provide the specific evidence to his conclusions about MoMA’s exhibition. Patrick Rössler, “Escape into the Public Sphere: The Exhibition as an Instrument of Self-Presentation at the Bauhaus,” in *Bauhaus: A Conceptual Model*, ed. Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin/Museum für Gestaltung, Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau, and Klassik Stiftung Weimar (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 341.
Scholars Eva Díaz and Karen Koehler claim that MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition was “historically inaccurate.” In her review of the Bauhaus literature, Díaz states that the exhibition eliminated the contradictions of its early period between 1919 and 1923 and excluded the School’s history after Gropius’s directorship. Similarly, Koehler, one of the few scholars to analyze MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition in depth argued that Gropius and Bayer purposefully depoliticized the Bauhaus in this exhibition in light of brewing crises in Europe, stating that “The style of the exhibition design, the objects shown, the images and text reproduced in the catalog…reflected the experience of exile [of Gropius and other Bauhaus members] particularly through the denial of political controversy and the avoidance of historical specificity.” While Koehler’s study is a compelling analysis of the political and social tensions of the period and the émigré status of Gropius and Bayer in the U.S. in 1938, the visual evidence from the exhibition does not adequately support her argument. Koehler suggests that the exhibition displaced the “utilitarian, polemical, and pedagogical” function of objects through photographs, models and the means of presentation. Nonetheless, the evidence from the exhibition and its correspondence, which I will discuss in Chapter 2 of this thesis, suggests that Gropius and Bayer contextualized Bauhaus objects and emphasized their functionality and educational aspects via photographs and the exhibition design.

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9 Eva Díaz, “We Are All Bauhauslers Today.”
11 Ibid., 303.
12 In addition, the overall visual organization of the exhibition, its wall labels, and the cover page of the catalog, along with its type font implicitly suggest the visual language of Constructivism and Bolshevism. The catalog of the exhibition also included the translation of the document (known as the
Other scholars, such as Mary Anne Staniszewski, have focused on the exhibition’s design. ¹³ In the form of a short essay titled *The Bauhaus Debacle* that represents a section of the chapter “Installation for Good Design and Good Taste” in her survey publication *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, Staniszewski gives a general overview of the exhibition by focusing primarily on the critical reception of this exhibition in relation to the exhibition design. Staniszewski mentions the didactic character of the exhibition as one of the exhibition aspects, but does not elaborate on this observation.

In her essay “Continuity and Transformation: Bauhaus Pedagogy in North America,” scholar Gabriele Diana Grawe suggests that with MoMA’s 1938 Bauhaus exhibition famous artists who were associated with the school as well as the historical achievements of Bauhaus gained prominence in North America. In addition, Grawe underlines the importance of Barr’s statement in the exhibition catalog about the obsolescence of Bauhaus materials and intellectual production even during its existence in Germany as the school’s characteristic. According to Grawe, this statement represents the legitimization of the educational practices of the Bauhaus in its North American succession.¹⁴ This is an important paragraph that echoes Joseph Albers’ suggestions as to the character of the MoMA’s exhibition, which will be analyzed in the Chapter 1 along with the important quote by Barr that Grawe emphasizes.

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Furthermore, it appears that there are no in-depth sources that address the significance of this exhibition in spreading the Bauhaus’s multidisciplinary approach to art education in the U.S. For example, scholar Jeanne Patricia Moynihan, who focuses on the significance of the Bauhaus faculty and students and the dissemination of knowledge of the Bauhaus within the U.S. educational system, excludes MoMA’s exhibition from her 1980 doctoral thesis, “The Influence of the Bauhaus on Art Education in the United States,” yet she uses its publication as a bibliographic resource.\(^{15}\) Moreover, in the notable publication on the cultural reception of the historical Bauhaus, *The Bauhaus and America: First Contacts, 1919-1936,* Margret Kentgens-Craig, the head of archives and collections at the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation makes no mention of the exhibition’s impact on art education and concludes that the show contributed to the identification of Gropius with the Bauhaus in the U.S.\(^{16}\)

Most importantly, there are no sources that address the version of the exhibition that traveled throughout the nation. The only comment about the significance of MoMA’s traveling exhibition comes from art historian Peter Seltz who states that: “The most significant event for art, design, and architecture and art education in California may have been the exhibition *The Bauhaus: How It Worked* in the Spring of 1940 at the Mills College Gallery.”\(^{17}\)

The goal of this thesis is to reevaluate MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition, which has been analyzed in the past decade in light of its historical inaccuracy, by arguing


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 197.

instead that Gropius and Bayer strategically framed the exhibition to promote the Bauhaus art educational methodologies not only for New York audiences but also for the broader U.S. educational community. The first chapter of the thesis briefly outlines the Bauhaus educational system, introduces the interest Alfred H. Barr, Jr. (director of MoMA from 1929-1943) had in Bauhaus as well as the Museum’s significance in promoting its ideas and faculty in the U.S. Based on exhibition documentation and publications, this chapter primarily examines the conceptualization and development of the exhibition’s subject and scope. The following chapter is an analysis of the exhibition installation design and in particular, the organization of the exhibition content and employment of photographs and photographic collages as means of narration and protection of a didactic, functional, and style-less character of Bauhaus objects. The analysis in this chapter is based on installation images and exhibition documentation. Chapter 2 also investigates the critical reception of the exhibition and the responses of various audiences to its educational content. Lastly, the third chapter gives a brief overview of art education in the U.S. in the late 1930s while analyzing the traveling exhibitions and their critical reception at colleges and other exhibiting venues.
Chapter 1

The Bauhaus 1919-1928: Past or Present

Bauhaus and Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: Promoters of Progressive Art Education

Scholars and educators broadly recognize the novelty and the progressiveness of Bauhaus educational methodologies in the nontraditional teachings of the School. Its attempt to reform the traditional academicism of art education in Germany was evident even in the terminology that the School employed. Gropius named professors “masters” and students “apprentices” in order to announce the School’s anti-academism. This terminology also suggested Bauhaus’ associations with craft but also its link to the “real, working world,” as Bauhaus historian Frank Whitford suggests.

While the relationship between masters and apprentices implied the significance of workshops, the novelty of the Bauhaus program was not the inclusion of workshops in an art school program, but rather the introduction of workshop-based teaching constructed on their synthesis. There were other arts and crafts schools in Germany in the early 20th century that included workshop training as part of their courses in reaction to German studio-based art education. However, Bauhaus workshop teaching was a fusion of fine and applied arts taught both by masters of crafts (“Workshop Masters”) and

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20 Frank Whitford, Bauhaus, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 30
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
fine artists ("Masters of Form"). While "Workshop Masters" taught students the method and technique of craft, "Masters of Form," in collaboration with their craft colleagues, were in charge of developing students’ individual formal language and inventiveness.

The Vorkurs (preliminary course), conceptualized by Swiss expressionistic painter Johannes Itten, was the foundation of the School, and it was unique to Bauhaus education. It was an obligatory course for all students and had the goal of familiarizing them with the nature of materials and liberating students’ creativity by developing their intuition. The difference between conventional art schools and the Bauhaus, as Bauhaus historian Magdalena Droste noted, is the Bauhaus’ emphasis on acquiring knowledge about “fundamentals of color, and form theory, composition and design” rather than the mere copying of nature.

Barr’s recognition of Bauhaus’ significance in modeling a progressive educational system started almost two decades before MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition. As Barr suggested in a letter to art historian Jane Fisk McCullough in 1967, his first encounter with the Bauhaus was with its publications. In 1927, a little over a decade before MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition, Barr spent three days in Dessau where the Bauhaus was located. He remarked to Gropius during the preparation for the 1938 exhibition: “I

24 Ibid.
26 Ibid
28 Ibid, 30.
regard the three days which I spent at the Bauhaus in 1927 as one of the important
incidents in my own education...”30

In the same letter to McCullough, he stressed how he was “deeply impressed by
Gropius and his policies as educator.”31 Before Barr became a director of the newly
established MoMA in 1929, he was an associate art history professor at Wellesley
College in 1926. He was the first art history professor to teach an undergraduate course
on modern art in the U.S. The Bauhaus, as Barr stated in his letter to McCullough, not
only influenced his teachings of the 1926-1927 modern art course at Wellesley, but it also
influenced his “plan for the Museum of Modern Art.”32 In particular, the Bauhaus’
progressive and novel interdisciplinary approach to arts as well as its experimental
learning methods influenced his teaching practice.33 As in the Bauhaus, Barr integrated
the various media: painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, graphic art, film and
music in the study of modern art; it was the first art history course of its kind.34

In a letter to McCullough, Barr spoke in particular about two significant aspects
of the Bauhaus. While the second aspect of the Bauhaus that Barr stressed as significant
in this letter was the “relevant importance of the masters and professors” on which the
educational practice of the Bauhaus was based, the first one he identified as the Bauhaus

30 Letter from Barr to Gropius, September 15, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
31 Letter from Barr to Jane Fisk McCullough, March 1, 1967, Alfred Barr Papers: Series 1/
Correspondence (mf:2196:1201), MoMA.
32 Ibid. MoMA, “Bauhaus Exhibit to Open: Exhibition Press Release,” MoMA,
http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/467/releases/MOMA_1938_0047_1938-12-02_381202-
33 In the letter to Jane Fisk McCullough, Barr noted that he had early on interest in the Bauhaus art
education and that “Gropius ideal of bringing together the various visual arts influenced my [Barr’s] course
in Modern Art at Wellesley in 1926-1927.” Letter from Barr to Jane Fisk McCullough, March 1, 1967,
Alfred Barr Papers: Series 1/ Correspondence (mf:2196:1201), MoMA.
34 “Archives Highlights: Hand-drawn chart illustrating the development of modern art, c. 1936,”
30, 2012).
idea. The Bauhaus idea was a concept displayed as a primary theme of the 1938 Bauhaus exhibition. In 1967, Barr defined the Bauhaus idea as “Gropius’ ideal of bringing together the various visual arts.”

Barr and the Museum promoted the Bauhaus school to U.S. students and after its closing in Germany continued to promote its faculty to the U.S. educational institutions. The museum’s importance in the endorsement of Bauhaus ideas and ways in which they are promoted are evident in the exhibition documentation. In a letter sent from the New Bauhaus in Chicago in January 1938 to MoMA’s curator John McAndrew, László Moholy-Nagy, a former Bauhaus professor who became director of the New Bauhaus American School of Design, wrote:

You may be interested to know that we are nearing the end of the first semester of the New Bauhaus and we are delighted to tell you that we have very talented students from every part of the country. We believe there are many other students who are seeking the practical through training the Bauhaus gives, since we hope it will prove of benefit not only to the individual but to the country as well. We know that your help could be invaluable in this matter because you are connected to the young generation. Thus we ask you help in circulating the enclosed folder among students and friends who are interested in the new type of education for designers.

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35 Letter from Barr to Jane Fisk McCullough, March 1, 1967, Alfred Barr Papers: Series 1/Correspondence (mf:2196:1201), MoMA.
37 Letter from Barr to Jane Fisk McCullough, March 1, 1967, Alfred Barr Papers: Series 1/Correspondence (mf:2196:1201), MoMA.
38 Phillip Johnson, “Information on the Bauhaus for American Students,” Department of Circulating Records, (III27.3:0589), MoMA; Letter from Albers to Janet M. Henrich, November 19, 1937, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
39 Letter from Albers to Janet M. Henrich, November 19, 1937 and Letter from Moholy-Nagy to John McAndrew, January 8, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
40 Letter from Moholy-Nagy to John McAndrew, January 8, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
As Mary Anne Staniszewski notes, the significance of this exhibition was not only demonstrated in the fact that the Museum had spent on this exhibition half of its annual exhibitions’ budget, but that its importance was also revealed in “the political and personal risks” to its organizers.\footnote{Mary Anne Staniszewski, \textit{The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art}, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 143.} Barr proposed the Bauhaus exhibition in 1937—the same year as Gropius’ appointment to Harvard and immigration to the U.S.—on the eve of WWII. However, the political concerns that are expressed in the communication between the Bauhaus faculty and the Museum were certainly not amply alarming given the fact that they went through with the exhibition.\footnote{Letter from Gropius to Bayer, December 15, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA; Letter from Barr to Gropius, December 10, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.} Moreover, once the exhibition was prepared, according to the announcement letter that the MoMA’s publicity director, Sarah Newmeyer, sent to the City news photo editors, the Museum held the “NEWS (not Art) Conference” as a result of “news values in the exhibition.”\footnote{MoMA, “Letter to City Editors / News Photo Editors, (December 02, 1938),” MoMA, http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/467/releases/MOMA_1938_0047_1938-12-02_381202-31.pdf?2010, (accessed on September 5, 2012).} Advertised as news, the exhibition would reach a wider audience, but at the same time, it would attract the political attention that certainly was not the priority concern of its organizers. The outreach and media attention of the MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition was clearly significant to both the Museum and Barr as well as to its curators Gropius and Bayer.

\textit{Organization and Conceptualization of the Exhibition}

My analysis of the extant exhibition documentation suggests that in the conceptualization of the MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition, Gropius and Bayer had the
final word on many issues and aspects of the exhibition, whereas the Museum’s and Barr’s primary concern was the show’s promotion, presentation in the media, and expectedly, its success.\textsuperscript{44}

In an early exhibition correspondence letter, sent in October of 1937 from the Department of Architecture, the contributors to the direction of the exhibition are described as follows:

Herbert Bayer is going to be in charge of the installation of the show, and with Gropius and Breuer will decide with us at the Museum what goes into it...Gropius is supervising the whole show, and authorizing it as a semi-official demonstration of what the Bauhaus was, and what it accomplished. Breuer, who has just gone to Harvard to teach under Gropius (and to practice architecture with him), will also help.\textsuperscript{45}

At this point of the exhibition preparation, the Museum’s plan was to include the full span of years comprising Bauhaus history. According to this early exhibition plan, the logistics of exhibition and installation were assigned to Bayer, whereas Gropius and Marcel Breuer, who was a Bauhaus student and teacher, and the Museum worked in collaboration to make decisions about the content of the exhibition. The choice of phrase “semi-official” may be related to the fact that Gropius was expected to curate the Bauhaus exhibition in the name of his successors. Nevertheless, what is clear based on later correspondence is that Bayer was in charge of the logistics and overall preparation of the catalog and the exhibition, while Gropius was supervising Bayer’s work and preparing a large portion of the textual content of the exhibition catalog.\textsuperscript{46} That Barr was

\textsuperscript{44} My analysis primarily included the communication between the Bauhaus faculty and students with the Museum.

\textsuperscript{45} Unsigned letter from the Department of Architecture to Charles W. Ross Jr., October 13, 1937, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.

\textsuperscript{46} Letter from Bayer to Barr, November 10, 1938, and Bayer to McAndrew, February 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1938 Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
not consulted in the work of the catalog is suggested in Barr’s letter to Gropius in which Barr agreed to write the introduction for the exhibition catalog: “I do not know what the rest of the text of the catalog is to be but whatever I write will be so brief that it will serve merely as an introduction.”

The Museum charged Bayer with collecting the exhibition objects, in addition to working on the layout of the catalog. In the fall of 1937, Bayer was still in Germany when he started looking for the exhibition objects and photographs. He also worked on the concept of the catalog and delegated to the curator of the Department of Architecture, John McAndrew, who was to be contacted in the U.S. for additional exhibition materials. Bayer arrived in New York on August 22, 1938. Three days later, as he noted in a report to Barr, he met with Gropius at Cambridge and started working on the exhibition. The work on the catalog and organization of the materials, according to Bayer’s report, started in the middle of September for a show that was to open three months later.

According to the exhibition correspondence, Barr suggested changes to the exhibition only three days after the exhibition opening. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether or not all of those changes were implemented according to his suggestions. In a

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47 Letter from Barr to Gropius, September 15, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
48 Unsigned letter from the Department of Architecture to Charles W Ross Jr., October 13, 1937, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
49 Bayer asked McAndrew to contact Kandinsky, Klee, Feininger and Moholy to lend their pictures. Letter from Bayer to McAndrew, February 16, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
50 Letter / Report from Bayer to Barr, November 10, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
51 Letter from Barr to Gropius, December 10, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
52 According to the following quote, the impression is that Barr was particularly interested in the medium of painting in this exhibition: “P.S. What about the paintings? I cannot recall who was to assemble them and how many by each man were to be included. Has Bayer this problem in hand. There are enough paintings by Kandinsky, Klee, Feininger, Moholy, Bayer etc.of the period 1920-1928 in this country, but for Schlemmer we have little. The fine Schlemmer Bauhaustreppen is after 1928, I think; could we not
letter to Bayer written on December 15th, 1938, a week after the exhibition opened, Gropius stated: “Barr wrote me a long letter making suggestions for captions to be changed or added in the exhibition.” Changes in captions Barr defined as “matter of details.” In the same letter, Barr proposed a change of the large wall label that represents the principle of the Bauhaus synthesis. The exhibition images of this particular wall label show that Barr’s proposed change was not implemented.

At the suggestion of Bayer, other Bauhaus students and teachers from Germany who were already in the U.S. also collaborated with Gropius and Bayer and made suggestions about exhibition materials. Among them were the Bauhaus professor of the preliminary course, Joseph Albers, who at the time of the exhibition preparation was already the head of the art school at Black Mountain College in North Carolina and László Moholy-Nagy, who became director of the New Bauhaus American School of Design, which was opened in 1937 in Chicago and was based on the German Bauhaus.

Albers expressed his opinion about the concept of the exhibition in November of 1937 clearly stating that the history of the Bauhaus via objects produced at the school include it anyway?” Schlemmer’s painting was included in the exhibition and its catalog. Letter from Barr to Gropius, September 15, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.

53 Letter from Gropius to Bayer, December 15, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
54 Letter from Barr to Gropius, December 10, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
55 Ibid. Barr proposed Gropius changes of the phrases “the Bauhaus Synthesis” with “Bauhaus Idea,” “mastery of form” with “form design,” “mastery of space with “space design” whereas skill of hand remained unchanged in Barr’s proposal. This diagram will be more discussed in the following chapter of this thesis.

56 On the title page of the Museum’s December Bulletin, which advertised the exhibition, there is an image of the diagram that Barr wanted to change. The image does not show the changes that Barr proposed. In addition, the photograph of the same diagram from the exhibition itself also does not show Barr’s proposed changes. However, it is possible that the label was changed in the course of the exhibition. Museum of Modern Art, “Bauhaus Exhibition, ” The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art, 6, no.5 (December 1938).

57 Bayer asked Barr in this letter to forward the information about the exhibition to Gropius, Moholy-Nagy and Albers; Bayer to Barr, November 10, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA. In the preface to the exhibition catalog Barr has also thanked Ise Gropius on editorial of the catalog. Ise Gropius’ name is listed on the title page along with names of Walter Gropius and Herbert Bayer. Barr also thanked Alexander Schawinsky who was also a Bauhaus student. Alfred Barr, “Preface,” in Bauhaus 1919-1928, ed. Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius and Ise Gropius (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1938).
should not be in the focus of the exhibition because its objects were obsolete unlike its educational principles and suggested the inclusion of the “living” Bauhaus in the show:

I have come to the conclusion that this show should be more one of principle rather than an historical collection with results by now out of date. I think that the Bauhaus is still living and after having been denied abroad we are apparently getting a new group of the Bauhaus movement in the United States. Therefore, we should ask the American students of the Bauhaus how their work done here has been influenced by their studies at the Bauhaus, and maybe we should also besides their results, show some results of the Bauhaus teachers who have been working for years in this country. You know that Black Mountain College was the first institution in the country to ask for art teachers from the Bauhaus, and they have been here for four years upon the advice of the Modern Art Museum; and that we have now at the college three members of the Bauhaus teaching. I therefore think that Black Mountain College should have a place at that exhibition, showing its way of studying art problems.\(^\text{58}\)

Similarly as Albers, Moholy-Nagy suggested the inclusion of the New Bauhaus American School of Design in the exhibition.\(^\text{59}\) Around the opening of the MoMA’s exhibition, the school closed, and four months before its closing Moholy-Nagy already acknowledged its possible ending in a letter to Bayer written on September 12\(^{\text{th}},\) 1938. In this letter, Moholy-Nagy seized the opportunity to propose the inclusion of objects in the exhibition created by the students of the New Bauhaus American School of Design:

I have written quite a lot of questions but a most important comes now: We have some very good material of this year’s work such as tactile charts, hand sculptures, paper work, wood cuts, sculptures in both clay and plaster, photographs and drawings of the new Bauhaus students. I wonder whether this material—especially if we have to close here—would not be of great value to the exhibition.\(^\text{60}\)

\(^{58}\) Letter from Albers to Janet M. Henrich, November 19, 1937, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.

\(^{59}\) Letter from Moholy-Nagy to Bayer, September 12, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.
The scope of the exhibition had certainly evolved from the Museum’s original plan and shifted from its history more towards the Bauhaus principles of education according to the propositions of the Bauhaus faculty. In September 1937, Janet M. Heinrich, a former student of the Bauhaus and employee of the Department of Architecture and Industrial Design, wrote on behalf of the curator John McAndrew to a former Bauhaus American student William Muschenheim: “The Department of Architecture of the Museum has under consideration an exhibition of work done at the Bauhaus. Should such an exhibition be held it would probably take place sometime during the spring of 1938. Our purpose would be to illustrate, largely by means of objects produced at school, the principles of education for which the Bauhaus stood.”61

The early correspondence for the exhibition preparation suggests that Bauhaus education by means of objects, as noted in one of the first letters from the Department, was an underlying concept of the MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition. While it is most likely that both sides—Gropius and Bayer on one and Barr and the department of Architecture and Design and the Museum on the other—agreed that the theme of the exhibition should be the “principles of education by means of objects,” the Museum was clearly interested in presenting the history of the School from its establishment in 1919 to its closing in 1933.62 This is evident in Gropius’ letter to Barr where he thoroughly explained to MoMA’s director why the exhibition could not cover the whole course of Bauhaus history in Germany:

We were very anxious to put together all the material in an historical way, giving the actual facts, dates, etc.; but, in spite of all my endeavors, I couldn’t manage to get my successors at the

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61 Letter from Janet M. Henrich to William Muschenheim, September 17, 1937, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
62 Ibid.
Bauhaus to cooperate in this. In the case of Mies, it is chiefly the difficulties in Germany which seem to hold him back from participation in this exhibition. When I first saw him, months ago, with Mr. Bayer in New York, he was still considering collaboration; but some weeks ago he definitely refused (in a letter) to take part in it. We talked the case over and over again with all of our friends in this country, but came to the conclusion that we do not feel entitled to present in this exhibition anything of the period after my leaving the Bauhaus; so we suggest as title for the catalogue and the exhibition “Nine years Bauhaus – 1919-1928.” I have asked Mr. Bayer to give you more details about all our steps. We were eager to avoid any difficulties and to make the show as objective as possible. If we show anything of the period following my departure from the Bauhaus, there might result disagreeable situations which I do not want to face; and, without their cooperation, I do not feel entitled to describe their own intentions.\footnote{Letter from Gropius to Barr, September 8, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.}

That the exhibition would include only the years of Gropius’ directorship at Bauhaus did not appear to disappoint Barr who stated the following: “I am not unhappy about stopping the exhibition in 1928. The Bauhaus after you left did much excellent work but it seems to me that all fundamental ideas were incorporated while you were still director and that we can do a more clean-cut and conclusive exhibition by concentrating upon the years of your tenure.”\footnote{Letter from Barr to Gropius, September 15, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.}

As Gropius suggested in this letter, he attempted to contact his successors in order to collaborate in creating this exhibition. Unsurprisingly, neither side was truly interested in presenting its ideas under one roof. Bauhaus was reformed after Gropius’ departure under Hannes Meyer (1928-1930) and then became a school of architecture under its final director Mies van der Rohe (1930-1933). The conflict of principles under Gropius’ directorship and his successors was clearly expressed in a letter to the Museum written by American architect Walter Petherans, a student and professor of photography of the non-
Gropius era Bauhaus, who rejected the Museum’s request to lend his Bauhaus works because of the “conflict of ideals.” He stated, “My own personal work and my teaching activities, in conjunction with that of my colleagues under the direction of Mies van der Rohe, were consciously kept away from the work of the original Bauhaus.” Similarly, American architect Bertrand Goldberg responded to the Museum’s request for his Bauhaus work:

“I wish to stress my unwillingness to see the proposed exhibit…There has been too much talk and action about Bauhaus here with too easy understanding of a principle dependent not upon philosophy but upon actual work…I think that the exhibits such as you propose further the cause of philosophizing and emasculating Bauhaus, and promote the creation of a new temporary Bauhaus style in this country. This is a great danger and will cause Bauhaus to take its place with Modern Functionalists, Internationalists, and the remainder of the ma – Holies.”

In this comment, Goldberg discusses the Bauhaus that is already philosophized, “emasculated,” and transformed into a mere style. At the Bauhaus under Mies van der Rohe’s directorship, architecture dominated the School’s curriculum, and there was a significant stagnation of workshops and elimination of fine art courses. Moreover, left wing philosophies set the utopian tone of the Bauhaus program under Gropius and Hannes Mayer, ideologies Mies van der Rohe eschewed in his leadership of the School. Criticism of the aesthetic and style-oriented Bauhaus of the Gropius era was not only found in the exhibition correspondence of former students who studied in the post Gropius years and who declined to lend their works for the exhibition, but also in the

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65 Letter from Walter Petherans to Janet M. Henrich, March 2, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
66 Letter from Bertrand Goldberg to Janet M. Henrich, September 25, 1937, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
68 Ibid., 192-196.
press and the critical reception of the exhibition. Another American student of Bauhaus who studied under Mies van der Rohe’s directorship, Nathalie Swan, in a “Letter to the Art Editor” of New York Times called the Bauhaus “esthetic stew” and its “style” the “romanticized monument to the machine.”69 In this text, which was a reaction to the exhibition, Swan did not single out the specific period of Bauhaus that promoted the stylistic and aesthetic aspects of objects nor did she stress that the exhibition itself harmed the reputation of Bauhaus, which is already by nature aesthetic and style oriented. On the other hand, Goldberg, as he suggested in the letter to the Department of Architecture and Industrial Art, feared that once the exhibition was launched at MoMA it would further stylize and aestheticize the Bauhaus.70 This opinion and prediction was most likely tied to awareness about the Museum’s formalist approach to art and architectural objects presented often on pedestals with the inclusion of minimal information about principles and ideas behind their creation that lead to objects’ de-contextualization and deprivation of their meaning.

Two earlier MoMA exhibitions, The Modern Architecture-International Exhibition (1932) and Machine Art (1934), celebrated the aesthetic and stylistic value of objects and architecture and both were connected to the Bauhaus. The Modern Architecture-International Exhibition was the celebration of the architectural “international style” phrase whose origins are tied to this exhibition.71 Critics of this phrase state that this architectural style disregarded the social, technological, and art

70 Letter from Bertrand Goldberg to Janet M. Henrich, September 25, 1937, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
historical aspects of architecture and emphasized appearance in architecture by
stylistically categorizing architects whose design ideas were significantly dissimilar.\textsuperscript{72} Gropius was among the architects whose style and approach to architecture was
recognized by the authors of the exhibition publication \textit{International Style}—architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock and the architect and the founder of MoMA’s
department of architecture Philip Johnson—as international.\textsuperscript{73}

The exhibition \textit{Machine Art} was presented at MoMA only four years earlier than
the Bauhaus exhibition showcased functional objects, such as those that were designed
and produced at Bauhaus, yet their functionality was completely ignored in MoMA’s
presentation. According to the \textit{Machine Art} exhibition press release, “Three methods of
display [were] employed: isolation—a water faucet, for example, will be exhibited like a
Greek statue on a pedestal; grouping—the massing of series of objects such as saucepans,
water glasses and electric light bulbs; and variation—a different type of stand, pedestal,
table and background for each object or series of objects.”\textsuperscript{74} While the functionality of
objects, many of which were presented on pedestals as sculptural works, was completely
disregarded in this exhibition, their aesthetic value was celebrated: “Springs, gears,
cables, chemical capsules, carpet sweepers, and kitchen cabinets are among the useful
objects that will be shown. They have been selected for the Exhibition not on the basis of
their usefulness but for their beauty of form, finish and material.”\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Phillip Johnson, \textit{The International Style}, (New York: The
\textsuperscript{74} MoMA, “Exhibit of Machine Art to Open,” (March 1, 1934), http://www.moma.org/
docs/press_archives/162/releases/MOMA_1933-34_0029_1934-03-01.pdf?2010(accessed on October 1,
2012.)
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
Negative critical reception to such an installation concept made Bayer and Gropius aware of the dangers of merely beautifying Bauhaus objects presented in the context of MoMA. The evidence in the catalog and the exhibition suggests that Bayer and Gropius attempted to shield the Bauhaus object from its aestheticization, as will be discussed in the Chapter 2 of this thesis. While Gropius and Bayer, who collaborated with other Bauhaus faculty in the U.S., made decisions regarding the content and design of the exhibition, the Museum along with its Department of Architecture and Industrial Art appeared to be primarily concerned with the press promotion and critical reception of the exhibition. Documents such as Barr’s memo “Notes on the Reception of the Bauhaus Exhibition,” which is Barr’s thorough analysis of the press criticism of the exhibition and his involvement in the press portrayal of the exhibition suggest how concerned MoMA’s director was with the critical reception of the show.

Beyond the Promised Scope of the Exhibition

Gropius had thoroughly explained to Barr why the exhibition could not include the years after his directorship. While his reasons seemed to be well justified, it is arguable how much effort Gropius had put into convincing his successors to collaborate.

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78 Letter from Gropius to Barr, September 8, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
on the exhibition. The exhibition, although not *Nine Years Bauhaus – 1919-1928* as Gropius originally proposed to Barr, remained titled *The Bauhaus 1919 – 1928.*

This exhibition is often criticized as historically inaccurate because of its incomplete presentation of the history of the Bauhaus school and more specifically the omission of its history under its two other directors. However, the title of the exhibition and its catalog did not promise its viewers and readers a complete history of the Bauhaus. In addition, the mentioning of the history of Bauhaus after Gropius’ era is not completely excluded in the catalog. Paradoxically, the history of the Bauhaus did not stop in the catalog and the exhibition with the year 1928. Both the catalog and the exhibition included information beyond the promised exhibition’s scope in which the Bauhaus is presented as an existing and living institution.

The concluding section of the catalog starts with the title “spread of the Bauhaus idea” and continues with separate pages and titles of institutions in the U.S. where the Bauhaus continued to exist through the teaching of its faculty and students: “black mountain college” (Moholy-Nagy, György Kepes, Hin, Bredendieck), “the new bauhaus, chicago: american school of design” and “laboratory school of industrial design, new york.” Moreover, additional institutions where the Bauhaus teachers and students were teaching were listed in the catalog under the section “black mountain college” including

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79 Gropius’ original suggestion “Nine years of Bauhaus – 1919-1928” implies that the Bauhaus did not only exist during those nine years. Gropius to Barr, September 8, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.

80 The exhibition catalog did not completely exclude the Gropius’ successors in spite of its title and critique. The paragraph titled “Architecture Department” includes the information about Hannes Meyer’s coming to the Bauhaus, his directorship of the School, as well as one sentence description of his pedagogic method. Included also in the catalog are two Meyer’s plans for the *Trade Union School*, 1928 (isometric view and plan). The text “administrative changes, 1928” includes the information about Mies van der Rohe’s overtaking the Bauhaus from Meyer. Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius and Ise Gropius, *Bauhaus 1919-1928*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1938), 112,114,115, 206.

81 The use of non capital letters or “single alphabet” is part of Bayer’s typographical experiment that he announced in the catalog on the page 148 in the section “typography workshop.” The experiment runs from the page 148 to 218 in the catalog.
Harward (Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer) Armour Institute, Chicago (Walter Petherans, Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig Hilbersheimer) and Southern California School of Design.

Once the exhibition was prepared, in accordance with its content in which the Bauhaus was presented as part of the present rather than the past, Barr wrote in the introduction to the catalog:

Are this book, then, and the exhibition which supplements it, merely a belated wreath laid upon the tomb of brave events, important in their day but now of primarily historical interest? Emphatically, no! The Bauhaus is not dead; it lives and grows through the men who made it, both teachers and students, through their designs, their books, their methods, their principles, their philosophies of art and education.\(^2\)

After the exhibition opening, in the Museum’s memo “Notes on the Reception of the Bauhaus Exhibition” Barr had also defined the purpose of the exhibition. One purpose, he stated, was, “to do honor to an institution which was probably the most remarkable design school of our time;” and the other “to call attention to Bauhaus methods of instructions and the results obtained so that they would be more accessible to American schools.”\(^3\)

The content of the exhibition and its final visual organization as conceptualized and organized by Gropius and Bayer inevitably introduced and emphasized the educational aspect of the Bauhaus. Objects presented in the exhibition ranged from books, magazine covers, title pages, posters, postcards, maps, plans, architectural models, masks, costumes, paintings, prints, photographs, sculptures, chairs, tables, lighting

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fixtures, bowls, platters, rugs, wall hangings, woven fabrics, and tapestries, many of which were labeled as “exercise,” “study,” “experiment,” or “research” and were included primarily in the exhibition sections which announced the School’s dual educational program of “class” and “workshop” that was visually and verbally explained in the exhibition.84

84 Installation List for the circulating exhibition The Bauhaus 1919-1928, Curatorial Files, MoMA. Besides sections on classes (Preliminary Course: Itten 1919-1923; Preliminary Course: Albers 1925-1928; Klee’s Course 1921-1928; Kandinsky’s Course 1922-1928; Color Experiments 1922-1923) and workshops (Display Design 1924-1928; Furniture Workshop 1919-1928; Pottery Workshop 1919-1923; Metal Workshop 1919-1928; Wall Painting Workshop 1919-1928; Typography Workshop 1919-1928; Weaving Workshop 1919-1928; Stage Workshop 1919-1928) other included sections in the exhibition were The Bauhaus Press; Photography; Extra Curricular Activities 1919-1928; Sculpture Workshop 1919-1928; Painting and Graphic Art; Bauhaus Building, Dessau 1925-1926; Architecture that were followed by sections Post Bauhaus that included the works of Bauhaus members created after 1928 and sections on Laboratory School of Industrial Design, New York, New Bauhaus, Chicago, Black Mountain College, North Carolina.
Chapter 2

The Exhibition as a Means to Protect and Promote the Bauhaus Educational Model

*The Bauhaus 1919-1928: Educational and Style-less Objects*

We thought the most interesting point for the introduction might be to emphasize the fact that the Bauhaus tried to find a new method of art education in opposition to the old archaeological and aesthetic point of view, and that it was not merely a school but created a certain atmosphere in which new roots of art could grow.  

This excerpt from Gropius’ letter to Barr that he wrote three months before the opening of the exhibition is a proposal to MoMA’s director to write an introduction to the exhibition catalog. It also shows how Gropius wanted Barr specifically to emphasize art education. Gropius’ request does not only imply that he recognized the significance of Barr’s words and the way they would endorse the content of the exhibition to the audience and media but it also summarizes an important aspect of the exhibition whose goal was to emphasize the Bauhaus art educational methods.

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85 Letter from Gropius to Barr, September 8, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
86 Ibid. In this letter, Gropius also asked Barr to include the statement that the Museum invited the Bauhaus students and faculty to work on the exhibition in order to protect those in Germany who, as Gropius stated, “may get into difficulties over there.” Barr included this statement in the conclusion to the preface of the catalog.
87 Barr did in fact include the essence of Gropius’ suggestion in the preface to the catalog and discussed the Bauhaus modernist approach to education. The press release of New York’s exhibit on its second page includes Gropius’ verbatim phrase “Bauhaus was not merely a School” (Gropius’ suggestion to Barr what to write in the catalog,) phrase further defined in the document “…but much more a community of architects, painters, sculptors, engineers, photographers and craftsmen who contributed their special talents and experience.” However, in the first paragraph of the New York exhibition press release, the exhibition is introduced with: “The Shapes of “things to come, “the forms of things which have recently become a part of everyday life – such as modern lighting fixtures, tubular steel chairs, . . . and fundamentally new principles that combine art and industry so that genuinely new forms and shapes can come into being.” The Bauhaus idea is only mentioned in the last sentence of the note of the press release and not clearly explained, unlike in its traveling version *The Bauhaus: How it Worked* where the principle theme of the
The exhibition publication shows an emphasis on the educational quality of Bauhaus objects against the idea of associating the Bauhaus with a particular aesthetic or style. In the introduction to the exhibition catalog, Alexander Dorner, who was a German art historian and educator and who in late 1937 became director of the Rhode Island School of Design wrote: “But to speak of a cut and dried ‘Bauhaus style’ would be to revert to the cultural paralysis of the 19th century with its ‘free styles.’” In a similar manner, the authors of the catalog remarked in the concluding section of the publication:

notwithstanding individual differences among the collaborators, Bauhaus products had a certain similarity in appearance, as may be seen in this book. this was not the result of following slavishly stylized esthetic conventions since it was against just such imitativeness that the bauhaus revolted… but the development of a bauhaus “style” would mean a return to academic stagnation and inertia. may it be preserved from such a death!  

Even Barr, in the preface to the catalog explained, “as Gropius has often insisted the idea of a Bauhaus style or a Bauhaus dogma as something fixed and permanent was at

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89 For the use of non capital letters, see note 81.

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Below the paragraph in parenthesis: (from bibl. no. 27) that responds in Bibliography of the Catalog to Gropius’ Bauhausbauten, Dessau, 1930, (221 pp., illus). While the whole paragraph may be quoted from this Gropius’ earlier writing, it is clear according to its content and placement in the concluding section of the publication that its role is to address this particular issue in regards to this specific exhibition. Herbert, Bayer, Walter and Ise Gropius Bauhaus 1919-1928, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1938), 206, 223.
all times merely the inaccurate conclusion of superficial observers.” To create an installation design that would present the Bauhaus object as style-less and educational was a challenging task in the exhibition, which consisted of a large quantity of objects created by the School’s faculty and students. The necessity of “an elaborate installation design was acknowledged in the exhibition documentation: “We are planning a fairly elaborate installation scheme, for the main idea of the show is to show what the Bauhaus was and why, rather than to be just an accumulation of objects produced there; to show this, all sorts of ingenuities of installation will be necessary.” According to the exhibition press release, seven hundred objects created in different materials were exhibited throughout the whole exhibition space at Rockefeller Center and included in the exhibition were: “paintings, architectural models and plans, original ballet costumes, photographs and cameraless photographs, typography, furniture, lightning fixtures, rugs, textiles, mobile sculpture, tin and paper sculptures, metal and glass dishes, an abstract motion picture film and many other objects...”

The note in the exhibition’s press release explained that conditions in Germany did not permit the appearance of more objects in the exhibition and therefore presented objects were “supplemented by enlarged photographs.” Installation images suggest, however, that photographs were not only used to supplement the objects in this exhibition. Their relationship to the exhibited object as well as the ways in which Bayer displayed the tangible objects reinforced both their functional and educational qualities.

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90 Ibid., 8.
91 Letter from the Museum to Charles W Ross Jr., October 13, 1937, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
93 Ibid.
The ways in which the paper materials were presented in this exhibition – with labels and pictures hanging from the ceiling, positioned on the wall and posts, some placed as if they were peeling off from the wall so that the edges of the sheet were emphasized, some tapered to its vertical edge, and others in which the whole surface was attached to the wall – overall reflect the late Bauhaus approach in experimenting with the materials and ways in which the object are presented in a gallery space (fig. 1, 2). In “Concerning Fundamental Design,” (which was quoted in the exhibition catalog) Joseph Albers, the former Bauhaus teacher and professor of Art at Black Mountain College, wrote:

For example: paper, in handicraft and industry, is generally used lying flat; the edge is rarely utilized. For this reason we try paper standing upright, or even as building material; we reinforce it by complicated folding; we use both sides; we emphasize the edge. Paper is usually pasted: instead of pasting it, we try to tie it, to pin it, to sew it, to rivet it. In other words, we fasten it in a multitude of different ways.

While the elements of MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition are found in two earlier 1930s exhibitions curated by Bayer, his use of photographs in relation to the exhibited objects appears to be unique to MoMA’s exhibition. In a collaborative project of Bayer, Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy for the Deutscher Werkbund (German Work Federation) in 1930 at the Société des Artistes Décorateurs in Paris, Bayer showed architectural images at angles from the floor to ceiling (fig. 3). In this exhibition, he originated his “Diagram of Field of Vision,” an exhibiting technique that engages the

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94 Ibid. New York exhibition press release announced that the “The entire installation will exemplify, as far as possible in the given gallery space, the Bauhaus principles of exhibiting technique in which the clarity and arresting arrangement are combined.”
viewer in the gallery space by placing the exhibited objects in the viewer’s field of vision above and below eye level (fig. 4). Bayer employed field of vision techniques in the installation design of another collaborative exhibition with Gropius, Breuer, and Moholy Nagy for the Baugewerkschafts Ausstellung (Building Workers’ Unions Exhibition) in 1935 in Berlin, where he used photographic enlargements, many of which were positioned at an angle on the wall. He also placed footprints and arrows on the gallery floor in order to guide the visitor through the exhibition and suggest the order of viewing but at the same in order to diminish the viewer’s static experience of the exhibition (figs. 5, 6). As Mary Anne Staniszewski notes, the dynamic exhibition experience methodology that Bayer used as a curator was meant to emphasize the uniqueness of time and space as well as reject the “idealist aesthetics and cultural autonomy and to treat the exhibition as a historically bound experience whose meaning is shaped by its reception.” She further explains particularly in relation to this exhibition that the visibility of the installation itself communicates the awareness of the spectators’ interaction with objects and concludes that: “The evidence of this awareness is born out in the Bauhaus installation: In Bayer’s painted footprints on the floor, and in his exhibits tilted to accommodate the viewer’s field of vision.”

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98 Ibid., 27, 34, 35.
99 Ibid., 27. In section “As Readers in Texts, Viewers in Exhibitions with ‘Fields of Vision’” of her chapter “Framing Installation Design: The International Avant-Gardes,” Staniszewski besides Bayer mentions other avant-garde artists who used exhibition installation methods in order to produce dynamic experiences that reject “idealist aesthetics and cultural autonomy” such as Kiesler, Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy.
100 Ibid., 328. In addition, in the note of her text Staniszewski remarks that today acoustic guides, didactic labels, reading rooms and text and documents on the computer are ways in which the viewers are acknowledged in the exhibition.
The dynamic method of the exhibition design for MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition appeared to be ideally suited to the exhibition’s didactic content and subject. It would not only emphasize the educational aspects of the Bauhaus, but also eliminate or diminish the aesthetic dimension of objects that inevitably would be attached to them in the context of the institution that was known at that time for its formal approach and eradication of context in the display of art objects. Bayer used the field of vision method and the overall dynamic exhibition design technique for the MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition; however, unlike in his display of mass-produced utilitarian objects in the 1930 exhibition at the Société des Artistes Décorateurs in Paris where he presented objects such as chairs attached to the wall in repetitive series in which their function was completely disregarded, in MoMA’s Bauhaus exhibition the function of the actual objects is preserved by being positioned on the floor (fig. 7).

In the section of MoMA’s exhibition titled “Furniture Workshop 1919-1928,” Bayer placed chairs on the floor, and in some instances, the image of the same chair, such as Marcel Breuer’s First tubular chair, 1925 and Josef Albers’ Wooden armchair with spring back, 1926 is found above the object on the wall (fig. 8) – methods not exclusive to the furniture objects in the exhibition. This repetitive object-image presentation confirms the fact that Bayer did not use the photograph solely to supplement the unavailable objects, as it was remarked in the note of the exhibition’s press release. Photography was an ideal means to deemphasize the single object’s style, in this

101 Installation photographs show Joost Schmidt’s cover of the journal Offset, 1926 on the wall as a photograph in the “Typography Workshop 1919-1928” but also as the actual magazine displayed in the segment of this section titled “Bauhaus Press.” In addition, other media objects in this exhibition were presented as photographic images. According to the exhibition installation shot description, one of the photographs on the right to the wall peephole behind which were Oskar Schlemmer’s Triadic Ballet costumes worn by the rotating mechanical robots depicted one of Schlemmer’s costumes presented in this installation. MoMA. The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art, 6. no 5, (December, 1938), 6.
exhibition in order to present it only as a transitory product of the School’s methodology, which encouraged constant transformation and experimentation in both teaching and the production of objects.

The same photographic collage above Albers and Breuer’s chairs of objects under the title “Furniture Workshop 1919-1928” also includes an enlarged image of 35 mm film (fig. 8, 9). The film shows six photographs of five chairs created at the Bauhaus, among which is Breuer’s Tubular Chair, presented for the second time in the photographic medium. The final, sixth image of this vertical film collage shows a woman comfortably seated in the air as if below her was a chair. In the exhibition catalog, next to each photograph appears the year in which the object was created at the Bauhaus (the earliest being 1921 and the latest 1925), whereas the year next to the image of the woman is the ambiguous “19??”\textsuperscript{102} In addition, the following information appears below the same image in the catalog: “Bauhaus Movie lasting five years. Author: Life demanding its rights. Operator: Marcel Breuer who recognizes these rights. Better and better every year; in the end, we will sit on the resilient air columns.”\textsuperscript{103}

While there is a commercial tone to this description of Breuer’s work, this image makes an important reference to the changes and evolution in design - from handcrafted to mass-produced and future defined production or from expressionistic to geometric and conceptual - and approach to the creation of objects at the School. Furthermore, including this image in this section enhances the functionality of all surrounding images of objects by the inclusion of the human figure that suggests the objects’ utilitarian purpose. In addition, this photographic collage that in a form of a filmstrip metaphorically proposes


\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
the revival of the School, in its content advocates for the advancement and perpetually changing style pertinent to the School’s experimental and progressive methodologies. By not favoring any of the Bauhaus’ particular stylistic phases, the movie starts chronologically by exemplifying the transformation of a Bauhaus object or expressionistic African Chair, (Gunta Stölzl textile), 1921 to Breuer’s Tubular Chair 1925 and lastly to a style or design to be defined in the future “19??” In other words, there is no one monolithic Bauhaus or one homogeneous style, but Bauhaus is defined by its aesthetic transformations and experimentations and this is shown didactically as well as visually in this photo collage.

Photographs reinforced both the utilitarian and educational role of objects in this exhibition as a means of narration. Art News critic Martha Davidson noted about the exhibition: “The exposition suffers gravely through the absence of material examples… The demonstration therefore consists largely of magnified photographs that, though decidedly inadequate, indicate the enormous scope of activities that constituted the training of every student that entered the school.”104 In a letter reporting on his work on the exhibition catalog Bayer notified Barr that photographs for the catalogue would be enlarged and used for the exhibition.105 The catalog of the exhibition includes photographs that show students in classrooms, and it is very likely that many of them were also included in the exhibition.106 Some of the images from the catalog that show students engaged in workshop activities are: “Draughting room of the metal workshop,

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104 The critic also notes that the objects least present were craft objects. Martha Davidson, “Epitaph Exhibit of the Bauhaus: Commemoration of a Famous Modern Source of Design,” Art News, (December 10, 1938), 23.
105 Letter/report from Bayer to Barr, November 10, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA
106 Photographs of studios and students in action were included in the installation list of circulating exhibition The Bauhaus: How It Worked.
Dessau,” “Metal workshop, Dessau,” “Weaving Class, Dessau,” “Wall painting workshop, Dessau,” “Stage class rehearsing on the Bauhaus roof.”¹⁰⁷ In the exhibition catalog, those class action shots are placed next to images of objects that were created or patented in the workshops. For instance, the image “Metal workshop, Dessau,” which shows a male and female students occupied with work on machines, is surrounded by seven images of products such as Marianne Brandt’s “Mirror for shaving or makeup” and other Brandt designs including “Wall fixture” and “Night table lamp with adjustable shade (fig. 10).”¹⁰⁸

By making sure to include the context of production for each object, these photographic narratives emphasized the significance of the production process that was a result of the School’s methodologies. For example, in the “Pottery Workshop 1919-1923” section of the exhibition, ceramic vessels are presented in photographs that show them in isolation as a single object, but they are significantly juxtaposed to other photographs of the vessels, showing them as a series and next to a photograph of Dornburg’s traditional pottery center studio (fig. 11).¹⁰⁹ The image of the pottery center studio contextualizes the pottery objects and suggests their workshop-based place of origin, and craft and function-oriented nature (fig. 12). This particular exhibition design collage includes both illustrations of isolated objects — Otto Lindig’s (decorated by Gerhard Marcks) *Earteenware Jug*, 1922, which is evidently craft inspired and Lindig’s *Cocoa set*

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 139.
¹⁰⁹ According to the installation list of the circulating exhibitions, almost all workshop sections of the exhibition included photographs of the workshops (“Photograph of Furniture Workshop,” “Photograph of Pottery Workshop,” “Photograph of Metal Workshop,” “Photograph of Wall Painting Workshop, Dessau,” and “Photograph of Sculpture Workshop, Dessau”). Installation List for the circulating exhibition *The Bauhaus 1919-1928* and *The Bauhaus: How It Worked*, Curatorial Files, MoMA.
(porcelain designed for mass production) where the repetition of identical objects in the magnified photograph suggest its mass production (fig. 13, 14). On the other, Joost Schmidt’s Cover of the journal *Offset*, 1926 is found on the wall as a photograph in the “Typography Workshop 1919-1928” but also as the actual magazine displayed in the segment of this section titled “Bauhaus Press,” where Bayer clearly places the actual object in the context of the School’s workshop (fig. 15, 16).

Furthermore, many of Bayer’s methods of displaying objects manifest his attempt to preserve and showcase their function. For example, as a part of the “Metal workshop,” lamps were presented hanging from the top of the wall shelves built closely to the ceiling where the majority of them were also lit (fig. 17). The way in which Bayer displayed the lighting fixtures suggests both the lighting’s standard placement in space as well as its function. Other objects from the metal workshop are placed in glass vitrines. Presenting kitchen utensils and household appliances in a glass showcase suggests their utilitarian function of being contained as they would be kept or displayed in the household or showroom (fig. 18). Products of the school’s designs also served as the showcases. In the catalog, Bayer included an image of a Marcel Breuer’s *Showcase*, (1925) that contains other metal objects. While one can argue that the showcase aestheticizes the objects that it contains, at the same time, this object’s function is to display the other objects, as it was shown in the catalog and the exhibition itself. Otti Berger’s *Rug*, 1930 neither appears fully on the floor nor detached from it. Its placement in the middle of the gallery’s floor still suggests its utilitarian function, whereas Anni Albers’ *Wall Hanging*,

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110 Two glass showcases on top of one another shown in the exhibition are not included in the catalog. They are most likely not Bauhaus products. In the exhibition bulletin in regards to this image, it is stated “Foreground: vitrines with objects from the Metal Workshop.” MoMA, *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, 6. no 5, (December, 1938): 3-4.
1926 fulfills its function of a wall painting (fig. 19). An art critic of *The New York Times*, Edward Alden Jewell, who was among the first to criticize the exhibition, made the following statement about Bayer’s display concept: “The incommunicative disparateness of the ensemble depends, I think, in part at least, upon a failure to segregate workshop experimentation and finished product to which such laboratory research led.”*111* Jewell suggests that maintaining the integrity of the object in terms of its production context led to a communication failure. As the art critic implied in this comment, he expected aesthetic and stylistic purity to be on display rather than a forthright demonstration of students’ experimentations — a clear indication that the curators’ goal was not to emphasize the aesthetic and stylistic quality of objects but rather to highlight the character of the School’s experimental methodologies and educational ideas.

Even the painted abstract and geometric floor design was functional and had the assigned role of directing and informing the visitor about the exhibition flow as well as suggesting thematic unity. Talbot F. Hamlin, a critic from *Pencil Point*, noted “the floor was designed to guide visitors’ movements and assist them in seeing the exhibits in proper order.”*112* Another critic from *Retailing* remarked that the floor was “made an integral part of the exhibition” and observed that “guide lines, gray footprints, abstract forms painted on the floor will all exercise a psycho-functional force upon the visitor, directing his steps.”*113* An image of Bayer’s floor plan for MoMA’s exhibition shows the painted organic forms that juxtapose the geometry of the exhibition galleries and guide the viewer through the exhibition in combination with arrows and footprints on the floor.

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*113* “Work of the Bauhaus Goes On View in N.Y.” *Retailing*, (December 12, 1938), Public Information Records, (mf 9:851), MoMA.
and hand signs on the walls, such as the pointing hand that directs the visitor to look through a peephole behind which were mechanical robots in Oskar Schlemmer’s costumes (fig. 20, 21). Additionally, the function of the painted abstracted floor forms, as the image of Bayer’s exhibition plan suggests, was also to integrate the whole exhibiting space and imply a continuity rather than division of the thematic sections of the exhibition by joining them in order to form the thematic whole.

The exhibition installation list suggests only two sections in its main titles: “Preliminary Courses” and “Craft Workshops,” whereas each section of the exhibition was introduced with one to two wall labels. However, classes and workshops as well as all sections of the exhibition, although presented as exhibits on their own, were integrated not only by the continuity of Bayer’s painted floor forms, but also, in many cases, with a mixed media installation that featured the methodological ideas of the School.

Photographs, objects and paintings, or masks, paintings and sculptural paper construction were placed in the same galleries and sections of galleries (fig. 22, 23). Such integration of objects emphasizes the Bauhaus’ educational method that synthesizes arts (described in the press material of the exhibition as promoting the unity of all branches of art, architecture and design).

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114 According to the exhibition installation images, it is most likely that the only place where the organic motifs were on the wall itself is in the case of the wall with the peephole for Schlemmer’s work. The shape of the painted forms on the wall suggests the direction of viewing and the placement of the peephole.

115 Sections on the installation list start with the introduction and section “A”, continue to section “B” where the “Preliminary Courses” start, and end with the final segment, “Y”, which features “Black Mountain College” and includes the “W” subsection “Post Bauhaus.” Installation List for the circulating exhibition The Bauhaus 1919-1928 and The Bauhaus: How it Worked, Curatorial Files, MoMA.

The art critic of Magazine of Art observed that the sections of the exhibition were presented chronologically within themselves. Mary Cooke, “Bauhaus Post Mortem,” Magazine of Art, 32, (January 1, 1939), 40.
Sections of the exhibition on Bauhaus courses are a significant part of the show. They include the “Preliminary Course: Itten 1919-1923”; “Preliminary Course: Albers 1925-1928”; “Preliminary Course Moholy-Nagy 1923-1928”; “Klee’s Course 1921-1928”; “Kandinsky’s Course 1922-1928”; and “Color Experiments 1922-1923”; the courses and experimental studies continue in the last sections of the exhibition that feature segments of “The New Bauhaus Chicago”; “Black Mountain College”; “Laboratory School of Industrial Design” and include some workshop sections on “Typography” and “Stage Workshops” (fig. 24, 25).\textsuperscript{116}

While the installation images of the classes from this exhibition are the least discussed in the literature, sections on the School’s classes are evidentially a significant part of this show; in fact, the show begins with Itten’s course and ends with Black Mountain College and Joseph and Anni Albers’ course and workshop. The first exhibition section adjoins the introduction that contains the information on “A Short History of the Bauhaus,” “Idea of the Bauhaus,” “Bauhaus Curriculum and Bauhaus Synthesis.”\textsuperscript{117} According to the installation list and images, sections on classes introduced the fundamentals of teachings of the Bauhaus faculty and presented the applied methodologies through a series of photographic and tangible examples by student and teacher alike. In the section on Itten’s Course, the viewer was shown examples of experimentation with materials and drawing, color, and rhythm. This section included Itten’s own work such as \textit{Diagrammatic Analysis of the Adoration of the Magi by Francke}, c. 1919 and \textit{Study of Hand Position While Drawing Figure Eight}.\textsuperscript{118} Other

\textsuperscript{116} Installation List for the circulating exhibition \textit{The Bauhaus 1919-1928} and \textit{The Bauhaus: How it Worked}, Curatorial Files, MoMA.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
works included in this section that exemplified the foundation of Ittens’ teaching, revealed also in the title of the objects, were students’ works such as Wassiljeff’s Composition of Plastic & Rhythmic Forms, Hoffmann’s Drawing From Nature, Bronstein’s, Composition of Various Materials, and Leudesdorf – Engstfeld’s, Drawing Showing Characteristic Wood Structure. As the installation photograph suggests, in the section “Preliminary Course: Albers 1925 – 1928,” the viewer was introduced to “Experiments with Commonplace Materials, Studies in Form and Space,” including both images of students’ constructions and experiments with materials such as paper as well as the actual objects such as Hassenpflug’s Study in Plastic Use of Paper (fig. 24).

Introducing the Bauhaus with the curriculum and the concept of synthesis as well as by placing the emphasis in the exhibition on the class sections that start and end the show suggests that the significance of the School’s educational methodologies was particularly promoted and emphasized in this exhibition.

Several significant concepts of Bauhaus educational methodologies, such as the idea of the unity of all arts and the equal importance of classes and workshops in the School’s teachings, were alluded to in the exhibition in the large scale of the presented materials. The exhibition opened “dramatically with Feininger’s woodcut,” as art critic Mary Cooke observed. The oversized image of a cathedral that hung from the ceiling overloaded the human figure, as the installation photograph suggests (fig. 26). In addition, the catalog and a segment of the exhibition “The Bauhaus Press,” included Feininger’s Woodcut with the “First Proclamation of the Weimar Bauhaus” in which Gropius announced the school’s program, which would “embrace architecture, sculpture...
and painting” and return to craft. The oversized poster of Feininger’s Cathedral suggests the significance of the school’s fundamental idea of the unity of all arts that remained significant in the course of Gropius’ directorship.

Just as the large scale of the poster reinforced the importance of the symbol of Feininger’s cathedral for the Bauhaus unity of all arts, an oversized wall collage of a hand emphasized the significance of Bauhaus teaching. An implicitly instructive collage-like wall label titled “The Bauhaus Synthesis” (fig. 27, 28) introduced the workshops section of the exhibition. A large black hand labeled “skill of hand” is surrounded on the left by a three dimensional egg object that stands for the “mastery of form” and on the right by the axonometric wall drawing of a cube titled “mastery of space.” While an egg in this presentation symbolized the preliminary courses and studies in the form, space, and color of materials, a hand represented the practical training provided in all the school’s workshops, and the crystal cube stood for the courses in architecture and design. By using Gropius’ definition of the word “synthesis” in his review of the exhibition, art historian James Johnson Sweeney explained, “Synthesis, in Gropius’ opinion, was the solution-coordinated instruction by two masters, one a craftsman and the other an artist.” The didactic quality of “the Bauhaus Synthesis” collage is represented in the clear visual representation of the School’s educational method. The painted black hand includes visual, three-dimensional forms and textures, an illustrated color chart, and a human figure supplemented with word tags accordingly including sculpture, typography,

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122 The information below the photograph from the article explains the wall collage as the Bauhaus idea and supplies the information about what each symbol represents. Elizabeth McCausland, “Shaping things to Come the Bauhaus Influence,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 15, 1939, Public Information Records, (mf 9:846), MoMA.
metal workshop, painting, glass workshop, and stagecraft. In a letter to Gropius, Barr had discussed this particular symbolic representation after the opening of the exhibition:

Most of these changes are matters of detail, but there is one point which I should like to ask you about: the symbolic group at the left of the entrance is still I think not satisfactorily labeled… “Synthesis” is a Greek word, which is not immediately intelligible until after the visitor has seen the exhibition. “Mastery of space” is rather pretentious in sound as if a rocket to the moon were involved. I would like to suggest substituting the following words…

Barr suggested that the phrase the “Bauhaus synthesis” should be substituted by the more readily comprehensible phrase “Bauhaus Idea” whereas “Form design” and “Space design” should replace Gropius and Bayer’s phrases “Mastery of form” and “Mastery of space.” The fact that this proposition from Barr came after the opening of the exhibition was most likely related to the early negative criticism of the exhibition.

While the design of the Bauhaus objects for mass industry was not completely neglected in the exhibition, it is the most emphasized in its press release and promotional materials. Gropius’ reform of the School in 1925, when he added the subtitle

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124 There are two additional textual tags that are intelligible on the installation photograph.
125 Letter from Barr to Walter Gropius, December 10, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
127 Bayer included in the section of the exhibition “Metal Workshop” pages from the catalog of factories manufacturing of Bauhaus design and some objects from workshop sections, as the exhibition installation list suggests, were examples of objects that were mass produced (such as Bogler’s Coffee Machine for mass production, and Brandt’s Coffee and teapots for mass production. Installation List for the circulating exhibition The Bauhaus 1919-1928, Curatorial Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.

The press release of New York’s exhibition introduces the exhibition with: “The shapes of things to come,” the forms of things which have recently become a part of everyday life – such as modern lighting, fixtures, tubular steel chairs, new typography – and the fundamentally new principles that combine art with industry so that genuinely new forms and shapes can come into being will be set forth in The Bauhaus 1919-1928.” The phrases “fine art” and “industry” are also used in this press release in a paragraph that explains the School’s concept. “Bauhaus Exhibit to Open: Exhibition Press Release,” MoMA, http://www.moma.org
“Institute of Design” to the Bauhaus name and when Bayer designed a catalog that featured available Bauhaus products to industry, was an ideal thematic counterpart to the Museum’s promotion of its own department of Architecture and Industrial Design that featured this exhibition. However, Gropius and Bayer’s wording in this collage – the term “synthesis” and “mastery” (comprehensive knowledge or skill) – may perhaps suggest that they primarily had in mind an academic audience when creating this exhibition, which was confirmed not only in the educational, instructive, and informative content and design of the exhibition, but also in many critical reviews of the show.128

The didactic content of the exhibition and its installation design, which was structured primarily around classes and workshops, suggested that the primary aim of the exhibition was to introduce the educational and methodological concepts of Bauhaus. The School’s methodologies were introduced with the Bauhaus curriculum and a series of demonstrated classes and experimental educational techniques that were exemplified with photographed and tangible objects. Bayer’s exhibition design had the role of reinforcing the promotion of the Bauhaus’ experimental, transformative, and progressive teachings by placing the visual emphasis on the School’s most important methodological concepts; this was achieved through the organization of the exhibition materials as well as in the classification and presentation of the exhibition’s contents.

employment of photographs that deemphasized the significance of the object and any particular style, instead emphasizing the process of production and development of ideas in the classroom.

*Critical Reception of the Exhibition The Bauhaus 1919-1928*

The exhibition *The Bauhaus 1919-1928* opened to the public on December 7, 1938 at the Museum’s temporary location in Rockefeller Center after more than one year of preparation. MoMA advertised the exhibition in its publicity material as “what will probably be considered its most unusual exhibition, and certainly one of its largest” while the show broke attendance records for its temporary venue at Rockefeller Center. The critical reception of the exhibition was controversial, and Barr stated that “the controversy aroused has been more violent than almost any exhibition that the Museum has had.”

Barr’s report to the trustees and the Museum advisory committee captured the complexity of the critical responses to the exhibition in which he divided the exhibition criticism into that regarding “the Bauhaus” (as hostile, non-committal or “half and half,” favorable, or enthusiastic) and “the exhibition itself” (as hostile, unfavorable, favorable, or enthusiastic), concluding that critics were “about equally divided.”

Barr concluded that the art critics interested in paintings and sculptures tended to write hostile criticism, whereas “the critics who were somewhat more technically competent to deal with the

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131 Ibid.
exhibition were almost without exception favorable and even enthusiastic."\textsuperscript{132} It is difficult to sum up and measure the positive and negative criticism of this exhibition as Barr did in his “Notes on the Reception of the Bauhaus Exhibition” because of the Museum’s involvement in the press discussion and the nature of the exhibition which included a large number of different media objects that captured the attention of diverse critics and authors who focused on different aspects and segments of the exhibition.\textsuperscript{133} In her review of the exhibition design, Staniszewski concludes that this exhibition was viewed as a failure by the public, critics, and the Museum and finds that the reason for negative responses by American audiences was that the “installation’s language of form – was indecipherable and somehow beyond the ability of American audiences to assimilate.”\textsuperscript{134} Nevertheless, there was an agreement in many positive and negative reviews of the exhibition that its content was well-suited to students and educators. Despite these negative responses, Gropius was pleased with the overall results of the exhibition.\textsuperscript{135}

In the criticism of this exhibition, many issues in regards to the Bauhaus were at stake including Bauhaus education in an American context.\textsuperscript{136} The New Bauhaus in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{132} Barr’s “technically competent” critics were architect and designer Leonard Cox, reviewer of \textit{Retailing}, Mary Cooke of \textit{Magazine of Art} and Lewis Mumford for the \textit{New Yorker} (Barr enclosed the copy of Mumford’s review with “Notes on Reception”). There were also others who gave overall favorable reviews of the exhibition including Emily Genauer in \textit{New York World-Telegram} and Talbot Hamlin “Architecture, People and the Bauhaus,” \textit{Pencil Point}, vol. 20, 1 (January, 1939):3,6.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Staniszewski suggests that McAndrew and Barr presented the exhibition as controversial and reviews contradictory in order to neutralize the negative responses, and she concludes that “Had Barr and McAndrew had recourse to the terminology of the early 1990s, they may have characterized the show and its reception as demonstrating the pluralism of the cultural landscape.” Mary Anne Staniszewski, \textit{The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art}, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 147.
\item \textsuperscript{134} Ibid.,144, 145.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Gropius to McAndrew, January 19, 1939 Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA
\item \textsuperscript{136} Three days after the exhibition opening, Barr also anticipated hostile criticism from four main sources: (1) Pro-Nazi anti-modern sources; (2) Pro-French anti-German sources; (3) American anti-foreign sources and (4) “People who feel that the Bauhaus is too old fashioned to be worth the trouble.” Letter from
\end{itemize}
Chicago which was established in 1937, soon faced financial difficulties, and was closed in late 1938; the news about its closing was announced in the fall of 1938, just a couple of months before the exhibition’s opening. Some reviews challenged the legitimacy of the Bauhaus idea for America, while others challenged the Bauhaus educational principles. The word “controversy” in relation to the critical reception was used in the title (“Bauhaus in Controversy”) of Barr’s reply to a text that was published in the *New York Times* and was written by Nathalie Swan, an American Bauhaus student who bitterly criticized both the exhibition and the Bauhaus and concluded that “The Bauhaus having moved from Weimar to Dessau to Berlin to Chicago, and having failed through its own weakness to acclimatize itself, has shown its ghostlike nature. This exhibition in the caverns of Radio City is a final danse macabre.” Barr opposed Swan in the next Sunday issue of *New York Times* in which two other readers’ letters also criticized Swan’s text.

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Barr to Gropius, December 10, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA. I agree with Staniszewski’s conclusion that “although prejudice and nationalism may have colored the responses of some individuals who disliked the show, these do not seem to have been dominant factors.” Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 146.


138 Ibid. Moholy-Nagy’s *New York Times* text pointed out that the Bauhaus controversy was created in an article of *New York Times* where the closing of the Bauhaus was used as a negative argument. The article indicated by Moholy-Nagy was Nathalie Swan’s “Opinions Under Postage” published in *New York Times* on December 18, 1938.

Martha Davidson, a critic for *Art News*, criticized the School’s art synthesis approach in education and concluded in her review “The integration of the main branches of art promised in the Manifesto of 1919 was clearly never achieved. Thus, America despite evident admiration for the historic importance of the Bauhaus must look forward – rather than backward to an ideology based on the naked and unencumbered art – to a functioning rather than a functional relation between architect, sculpture and painter.” Martha Davidson, “Epitaph Exhibit of the Bauhaus: Commemoration of a Famous Modern Source of Design,” *Art News*, (December 10, 1938): 23.


140 One of the letters was written by a student of Black Mountain College, William Reed, and the other by Leonard Cox who studied at the Bauhaus in Germany. Alfred Barr, “Bauhaus in Controversy,” *New York Times*, (December 25, 1938), 12X. Barr was not only involved in a direct dialogue with the press but expected along with Bayer, as suggested in the letter sent from Janet Henrich at the Museum to Feininger that “other Bauhauslers and friends of Bauhaus ought to answer the letter by similar letters to Mr.
Some reviewers criticized the exhibition, but in contrast, celebrated the importance of the Bauhaus educational methods. A critic for *Art Digest* devoted the whole segment of the review of the exhibition (entitled “Bauhaus Criticized”) to negative criticism found in other newspapers and magazines and yet remarked that “the exhibition at the Modern Museum attempts to demonstrate the program and its operation at the old Bauhaus. Its importance to America lies in the widespread transplantation of the Bauhaus idea to this country.” In this and other outlets, the comments of both critics and historians recognized the educational value of the exhibition. The architectural historian and educator Talbot F. Hamlin remarked that “the installation of the exhibition is brilliant, if occasionally erratic.” He criticized some aspects of the exhibition including the clarity of Bauhaus typography, the dominance of machine over men in its stage design, as well as insufficient architectural work, yet in his overall assessment, he declared, “Despite these lacks, the exhibition is stimulating and exciting, eloquent of a

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141 Barr also acknowledged this observation in his analysis of the critical responses to the exhibition. He did not include the text published in *Art Digest* on his list of his analyzed reviews, yet he mentioned the name of the critic in *New York Times*, Edward Alden Jewell, whose review of the exhibition Barr defined as “hostile,” while he judged Jewell’s response to the Bauhaus as “enthusiastic.” Alfred H. Barr Jr., “Notes on the Reception of the Bauhaus Exhibition,” James Johnson Sweeney Papers (I.12), MoMA.

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fresh attack.”¹⁴³ The author of Retailing suggested that the Bauhaus exhibition is significant for two reasons: “For its convincing demonstration of the wide scope and force of the Bauhaus teachings,” as well as for its “excellent” presentation integrated by the unifying ideology on which the whole school was based.”¹⁴⁴

Many press comments suggested that the show was educational in nature and required careful and time-consuming study, as well as that it was not well suited to the average visitor but rather for the student and educator sources. Edward Alden Jewell, a critic at New York Times, was among the first reviewers who criticized almost all aspects of the exhibition in a text published four days after its opening.¹⁴⁵ Jewell found that the Museum’s first goal was to “survey the aims and accomplishments of one of the most creatively conceived of the twentieth century art programs in Europe,” whereas the other goal of the exhibition and publication was apparent in their “sincere motivating wish to communicate challenges for the present and (with reference to “the shape of things to come”) tacit recommendations for the future.”¹⁴⁶ He evaluated the “survey” as “chaotic, overdramatized, disorganized promiscuity.”¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, his conclusion was that “the student of design prepared to dig and classify, will be able to make something out of all this confusion. Possibly, he will not even find it confusing. But what can so

¹⁴⁵ Jewell also criticized the exhibition installation in his first review that was published on the day of the opening of the exhibition. There is an impression that many reviews echoed this opinion of Jewell’s since it was one of the first reviews about the exhibition to be published. Edward Alden Jewell. “Reception Opens Bauhaus Display,” The New York Times, (December 7, 1938):28.
¹⁴⁷ Ibid.
heterogeneous a roundup mean to the baffled layman? Only a headache…”

Similarly, art historian James Johnson Sweeney in the *New Republic* review praised Bauhaus education and design, yet concluded that “a more modest descriptive tone through the display might have made it clearer to the average visitor that a large proportion of the exhibition is constituted of classroom exercises or their equivalent, and not of free, mature technical or esthetic realizations.”

In her review “The Bauhaus Post Mortem,” critic Mary Cooke observed that “in spite of the amount of care exercised in the arrangement, the show is by its very nature not an easy one to digest in one visit. To be understood as a whole, even if one is familiar with the material, it must be absorbed at slow stages.”

The rich informational content of the exhibition is also summed up in the somewhat sarcastic comment of a critic in *New Masses* magazine: “The documents are so overpowering that a careful study of them alone would take six weeks, or till the exhibition closes January 31.” Some of the critics remarked that the exhibition was overly educational in nature: “In their enthusiasm to show all sorts of student work, the Bauhauslers have contrived a show which though suitable for educators, was likely to confuse the patron or the amateur of art…” remarked a critic in *Technology Review*. Similarly, a critic noted in *Burlington Magazine* that the show was misunderstood by critics and concluded that the exhibition “could not be taken in at a glance, could not be merely responded to emotionally—in fact, it seemed to

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148 Ibid.
151 - “The Bauhaus Exhibition” *New Masses*, December 2, 1838, Public Information Records, (mf 9:858), MoMA.
152 - “Bauhaus Resurges?” *The technology Review*, (February 1939), Public Information Records, (mf 9:883), MoMA.
require more intellectual co-operation than the average visitor was able or willing to give.”  

According to the Museum’s visitor comments document, only ten percent of visitors registered “disapproval” as their evaluation of the exhibition. Although there is no record indicating the number of visitors who wrote comments, the document suggests that this number is very small considering that “much of the Bauhaus was fairly technical to the layman.” Furthermore, as it is noted in this document, “many visitors came three or four times, schools and colleges were our most frequent visitors.” Museum trustees had the impression, as Barr noted in the conclusion of his “Notes on Reception,” that the exhibition was “condemned” by critics. In this document, Barr’s analysis showed that there was an equally positive and negative critical response to the exhibition, and he concluded that “in any case, whatever the critical response, the popular response has been most gratifying.”

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154 - “Visitor Comments: Re Bauhaus” [undated, handwritten, single page document], Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid. Barr explains that the reason for writing this document was his “impression gathered from conversations with several trustees, that they believed that the exhibition had been generally condemned by the critics.” Alfred H. Barr Jr., “Notes on the Reception of the Bauhaus Exhibition,” James Johnson Sweeney Papers (I.12), MoMA.
158 Ibid. “Notes on Reception” was Barr’s first analysis of the exhibition’s critical reception for the Trustees and the Museum advisory committee of this kind, as he stated in the same document. Staniszewski noted that “Notes on the Reception” to the trustees and the Museum advisory committee were part of a “damage control” plan along with his personal responses to the press and McAndrew’s depiction of controversy in the Museum’s Bulletin under the title “Pro and Con in the New York Press,” which was similar to Barr’s. MoMA. The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art, 6. no 5, (December, 1938).

It is interesting to note that a similar approach to the Bauhaus was included in the Bauhaus exhibition catalog in the section “Press Comments 1923-1932” which included long paragraphs that contrasted critical reviews on the same or similar issues discussed by critics about Bauhaus. It is most likely, since Barr created this kind of analysis for the first time, as he noted in the conclusion of the “Notes on Reception,” that the idea came from the “Press Comments 1923-1932” of the exhibition publication. Herbert, Bayer, Walter and Ise Gropius Bauhaus 1919-1928, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1938): 93-96.
exhibition was measurable and was, as Barr stated, “fair and objective analysis of the criticism,” he could not have been pleased considering the great amount of time and resources the Museum and he himself put into this show. One month after the closing of the New York exhibition Barr wrote in a letter to Gropius: “While we are speaking frankly about the Bauhaus exhibition I want to assure you that, although it was one of the most expensive, difficult, exasperating, and in some ways unrewarding exhibitions we ever held, we do not in the least regret having had it.”

As for Gropius, he declared in a letter to McAndrew, “On the whole I am very satisfied with the results of the Bauhaus exhibition. The controversy raised and the large attendance showed that the idea is not dead and is giving people something to think about.”

The conclusion of the author of the text published in *The Magazine of Art* in part echoed Gropius’ opinion about the exhibition: “An average of four hundred people a day poured in to the Museum of Modern Art in New York during the Bauhaus exhibition. Publicity, curiosity, politics, may have something to do with the attendance, which was

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159 Ibid.
160 In this letter Barr criticized Gropius and somewhat contradicted his own earlier opinions concerning the catalog, Bauhaus progressive methods, and exhibition criticism. The tone of Barr’s letter suggests that he was exasperated with Gropius’ view of the critical reception and results of the exhibition. “I am under the impression from your previous letters and from conversations that you were inclined to ignore or belittle the adverse criticism, somewhat as you did in Germany fifteen years ago...Abstract art was recognized in this country by many critics as early as 1913, was revived after the War in the early “twenties” and still again during the past five years, but the fact is that in the Bauhaus exhibition a good many works were mediocre or worse, so that the critics were naturally not impressed.” Barr also suggested that Gropius should take “seriously” the criticism of the Bauhaus philosophy. About the exhibition catalog Barr wrote the following: “The catalog also was far the most expensive we have ever published on any exhibition – the cost far out of proportion to its interest, especially as it is both diffuse and confusing in character. It is probable that we shall lose a good deal of money on it.”
161 In this letter, Gropius criticized the critics of paintings and sculpture: “That the art critics concerned with painting and sculpture talked particularly against it shows where the difficulties lie today. Their points of view are so far away from creative considerations that they do not understand the whole business of approaching new art. Being very busy they don’t take time to go into this difficult matter and end by throwing the baby out with the bath water so to speak. If anything shows the necessity of a new approach, it is kind of critics we have encountered. They gave us no personal criticisms with a new creative point of view. It was all but bewildering.” Gropius to McAndrew, January 19, 1939 Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA
the largest of any exhibition in the museum since the van Gogh show in the old building. But they certainly do not account for it altogether. On the face of it looks as if the Bauhaus idea was important to Americans, or at any rate to New Yorkers."162

Depending on their particular interest and affiliations, the critics of the exhibition diversely assessed the rich informational content of the show in which Bayer and Gropius put forward in the exhibition design and content the Bauhaus experimental teachings, methodologies and development of the ideas in the classroom. While many contentions were at stake in the critical reception of the exhibition, including the Museum’s involvement in the press discussion, and debates of the validity of the Bauhaus’ education in the U.S. context, an overall agreement in the exhibition reviews was that its content was educational, instructive, and pertinent to students and educators, who according to the exhibition documentation, were the most frequent visitors of the show.

162 Magazine of Art, (Wash, D.C.), March 1, 1939, Public Information Records, (mf 9:885), MoMA; Information about 400 visitors was included in the New York Times’ announcement about the closing of the exhibition that came from the Museum. New York Times, (February 3, 1939), Public Information Records, (mf 9:887), MoMA.
Chapter 3

Educational Tour: The Bauhaus 1919-1928 and The Bauhaus: How it Worked

Bauhaus Progressive Education and the U.S. in the 1930s

Scholar Jane Patricia Moynihan concludes in her doctoral thesis, “The Influence of the Bauhaus on Art Education in the United States that “in the United States, prior to the coming of the Bauhaus, art and art education could not be characterized as experimental or innovative.” Moynihan explores the Bauhaus as a progressive, non-traditional education and finds that unlike more academic approaches to art instruction, the Bauhaus did not employ a single method of learning. Its education was based on experimentation, relativity, and diversity, while its faculty encouraged students to develop individuality, to experiment, and to rediscover traditional materials while finding solutions to problems in modern art and design. Moynihan argues that the Bauhaus method of education is significant philosophically, theoretically, and pedagogically “in its teaching of modern art and its approach to teaching art” and concludes that “The Bauhaus method reflected or mirrored a new era which would rapidly move from industrialization to a computer and then to an electronic age - often being in all these ages in the same country, during any given year.”

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164 Ibid., 292-305
165 Ibid., 292-305
166 Ibid., 294
As my previous chapters have argued, Gropius was specifically interested in promoting the art educational aspects of the Bauhaus in MoMA’s 1938 exhibition. His focus on art education can be gleaned from a confidential letter Barr wrote to Gropius one month after the closing of the exhibition.\textsuperscript{167} Barr, however, critiques aspects of Gropius’s focus on art education. This long and critical letter summarizes Barr’s perspective on the recent exhibition, criticizing Gropius for the possible “misunderstanding or underestimation of American culture.” Barr stated, “*For example, in your lectures you took great pains to explain to our members the elements of ‘progressive’ education – methods which have been employed in America for a quarter century – and for many years in the very school in which you spoke!*”\textsuperscript{168} While this quote suggests that Barr felt the progressive aspects of the Bauhaus educational model were not necessarily new in the United States at the time, just two months earlier, in a response to a letter from Gropius, Barr stated: “we must be realistic in facing the fact that the American Public is not yet very generally interested in either art education or industrial design.”\textsuperscript{169} Barr’s later opinion may have been a result of disappointment with the exhibition criticism and Gropius’ reaction to it, while his earlier estimation may be connected to the fact that a historical understanding of the Bauhaus and its educational methodology was limited to small circles in the United States at that time as well as that

\textsuperscript{167} Alfred Barr to Walter Gropius, March 3, 1939, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid. I did not come across the information what school and Gropius’ lecture Barr referred to in this statement. Barr placed an asterisk in the closing paragraph of the letter on the sentence “We should be most unhappy if you should find yourself handicapped through your misunderstanding or underestimation of American culture.” The quoted sentence in the text with an asterisk is written in the postscript of the letter.
\textsuperscript{169} This is Barr’s response to Gropius’ question about giving interest on the sale of the catalog to Bayer as well as to hire Schawinsky to help Bayer in New York for two or three weeks in working on the exhibition. In the same letter, Gropius suggests that Barr writes an introduction to the exhibition catalog, what to include, as well as to explain why the exhibition could not include the whole history of the School. Letter from Gropius to Barr, September 8, 1938, Registrar Files, (Exhibition #82), MoMA.
industrially created objects were just beginning to find its place in gallery spaces and were still overall not enthusiastically accepted by the American public and critics.

As Moynihan’s analysis shows, “new” approaches to art education existed in the United States starting with the second decade of the twentieth century and included those at the Fine Art Department of Teachers’ College at Columbia University in connection with Arthur Wesley Dow’s teaching and his publication *Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the use of Students and Teachers* that was created for public school teachers. However, even in the 1940s, most U.S. schools were still using academic methods of art instruction based on rules, a lack of experimentation and collaborative projects and were more oriented towards “specialist” rather than “general” education. New trends in U.S. education are detectable during the 1930s when modern art gained significance mainly through the Bauhaus educational ideas and its experimental approach in the employment of different materials. Moynihan concludes that while art educators recognized and agreed to accept the influences of modern art on art instruction in U.S. schools by the early 1950s, Bauhaus educational ideas began to influence art and art education in the U.S. only after the 1930s through the teachings of Bauhaus faculty and their students as well as through their writings, lectures, art works and exhibitions.

Supporting the aims of the Bauhaus art educational methodology, Moholy-Nagy expressed his belief in its relevance and significant impact on American art education as

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171 Ibid., 310, 296-311. 
172 Ibid., 320-321
173 Ibid., 324, 325
part of a response to the criticism of MoMA’s Bauhaus exhibition in The New York Times:

In fact studying the early and recent progressive educational programs of this country I see in Gropius’s art educational system a congenial approach to general educational problems which all the countries have had to face since the industrial revolution, and which have special significance for a country with so highly developed an industrial standard as the United States…It would be too early after one year of work done in Chicago to prophesy about possible results of a Bauhaus education in this country. But I want to express my conviction that the continuation of our work and re-establishing of the New Bauhaus with a solid and responsible backing would mean much more than an experiment. It would be vital necessity. 174

As noted in the publication accompanying the 1938 MoMA Bauhaus exhibition, it was “in the past few years” that the Bauhaus teaching methods were introduced to the U.S. 175

Starting in 1933, Joseph and Anni Albers taught at the Black Mountain College, and Alexander Schawinsky joined them in 1936. In 1935, the Laboratory School of Industrial Design was established where former Bauhaus teachers were on faculty. Gropius started teaching at Harvard in 1937, where he was joined by Marcel Breuer. In 1938, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Petherans, and Ludwig Hilbersheimer became faculty of the Armour Institute in Chicago, while Hin Bredendieck, György Kepes and Moholy-Nagy arrived in the U.S. in 1937 and worked at the newly established New Bauhaus in Chicago.

Therefore, the most important influence of Bauhaus art educational ideas began only a short time before the MoMA’s exhibition was launched, though the exhibition’s significance is remarkable because after its closing at MoMA, the Bauhaus educational methodologies traveled around the country with MoMA’s circulating exhibitions.

From the very beginning of the exhibition preparation, it was known that the content of the exhibition would not only be presented to a New York audience, but that it would also travel to an additional fourteen locations, primarily educational communities, throughout the country. The content of MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition, which featured the Bauhaus School’s art educational methods, could not have been more relevant for presentation at schools and colleges. After its closing in New York, the exhibition began its fourteen-month tour on the West and East coasts of the country, and there were two versions of the circulating exhibition. In addition, during the exhibition presentation, according to the existing press and Museum’s documentation, lectures about Bauhaus and its methodology occurred at the following venues: Art Association of New Orleans, Newcomb School of Art (at Delgado Museum), Mills College in California (“The Contribution of the Bauhaus to Art and Education” by gallery director Alfred Neumeyer), Henry Gallery of the University of Washington (“Mission of the Bauhaus” by German artist Johannes Molzahn), and Milwaukee Art Institute, Wisconsin (where Laszlo Moholy-Nagy gave a gallery tour and explanation of the exhibition).
The Bauhaus 1919-1928

Under the same title as the MoMA exhibition, *The Bauhaus 1919-1928*, the exhibition traveled to George Walter Vincent Smith Art Gallery, Springfield, Massachusetts (March 1 to March 29, 1939); Milwaukee Art Institute, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (November 1 to December 6, 1939); Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland Ohio (January 27 to February 24, 1940) and Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio (March 8 to April 5).\(^{178}\)

According to the Museum’s circulating exhibition promotional document that was created after the exhibition’s presentation in New York, the Museum presented the show with an abbreviated version of Barr’s “Notes on Reception” and a conclusion that equally discussed the positive and negative critical responses to the exhibition and where, most importantly, the exhibition’s content was defined as follows: “By means of enlarged photographs and actual objects designed at the Bauhaus, the exhibition illustrates graphically the principles and aims of the school.”\(^{179}\) The MoMA’s press release for this circulating exhibition included the content of the original press release except that the exhibition was not introduced with an emphasis on “the fundamentally new principles that combine art with industry.”\(^{180}\)

The installation list of the circulating exhibition *The Bauhaus 1919-1928* in its section “N – The Bauhaus Press” contains a comment stating that “It is advisable to arrange the Bauhaus books and bulletins in chronological order to show the changes

\(^{178}\) “Itinerary of The Bauhaus 1919-1928” / “The Bauhaus: How it Worked,” Registrar Files, MoMA.

\(^{179}\) “The Bauhaus: 1919-1928,” Department of Circulating Records, (III27.3:548), MoMA.

\(^{180}\) Press release for the circulating exhibition “Bauhaus: 1919-1928,” Department of Circulating Records, (III27.3:545), MoMA.
which occurred in design.” The chronology in this exhibition, just like in all its versions, did not serve to emphasize the importance of a particular style, but rather, it indicated the changes in styles of objects produced at the School that were once expressionistic and finally industrial, but originated primarily as educational.

*The Bauhaus: How it Worked*

Under the title *The Bauhaus: How it Worked*, a concentrated version of the same exhibition traveled to: Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts (April 10 to May 8, 1939); University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota (July 14 to August 4, 1939); Florida State College for Women, Tallahassee, Florida (October 1 to October 22, 1939); Art Association of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana (November 1 to November 22, 1939); Louisiana State University, University, Louisiana (December 1 to December 22, 1939); Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (January 2 to January 23, 1940); University of Washington, Seattle, Washington (February 6 to February 27, 1940); San Francisco Museum of Art, (SFMoma) San Francisco, California (March 8 to March 29, 1940); Mills College, Oakland, California (April 3 to May 5, 1940); Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts (May 13 to June 8, 1940). According to a Museum document about the content of *The Bauhaus: How It Worked*, the show included the same material that was assembled for the large collection

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181 Installation List for the circulating exhibition The Bauhaus 1919-1928, Curatorial Files, MoMA.

The Bauhaus 1919-1928, yet organized in concentrated form.\textsuperscript{183} The exhibition consisted of photographs grouped on mounts with labels that explained the “exhibits” while some of the original works in different media were also included in the show.\textsuperscript{184} It is noted in this document that the show was created as a “smaller duplicate collection of material for use in schools and colleges where space does not permit showing of the original exhibition.”\textsuperscript{185}

In the press release for this exhibition, the show is defined as a “record of principles and experiments of the Bauhaus teaching methods from 1919 to 1928,” and it explained about the school’s closing that, “The school was closed in 1933 by the National Socialists who contended that its progressive teaching was “Bolshevistic” unlike in its two other versions.\textsuperscript{186} Just like in two other press releases, the school is presented as a school of design that trains the artist to “take his place in the machine age,” yet there is less emphasis on machine art and art and industry in this Bauhaus presentation and more on the explanation of Preliminary Courses and Workshops.\textsuperscript{187} In addition, the Bauhaus idea is given as a principle theme of the exhibit and unlike in the two other press releases, it is clearly connected to the concept that the Bauhaus “was not a school in the accepted sense but much more, a community of architects, painters, sculptors, photographers, and craftsmen who contributed their special talents and experience.”\textsuperscript{188}

Moreover, in the press release from Harvard University, where Gropius was Chairman of the Department of Architecture at the time of the exhibition presentation, the show is

\textsuperscript{183} “The Bauhaus: How it Worked,” Department of Circulating Records, (III27.2:0487), MoMA.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{186} Exhibition press release, Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, The Bauhaus: How It Worked, (II.27.3:0504), MoMA;
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
introduced as an “exhibit of methods and influence of the Bauhaus, world-famous School of Design.” This press release explains the connection and purpose of the School’s Workshop programs and Preliminary Courses and expectedly underlines the School’s “particularly important effect on the development of modern architecture.”

As it was suggested in the Museum’s document about the content of the exhibition *The Bauhaus: How It Worked*, the show included the concentrated form of the same material that was assembled for the larger collection *The Bauhaus: 1919-1928*, which suggests that the focus of the content of the original exhibition displayed at MoMA was the presentation of the educational methodologies of the School that were specifically highlighted only in the title of the traveling exhibition. Introducing the exhibition to the New York press as “the shape of things to come” served to attract various audiences to the Museum but also to conceptually fit the exhibition theme to the Museum’s Department of Architecture and Industrial Design by focusing on “the forms of things which have recently become a part of the every day life – such as modern lighting fixtures, tubular steal chairs, new typography—and the fundamentally new principles that combine art with industry so that genuinely new forms and shapes can come into being.”

A comparison of two installation lists of the two traveling versions of the exhibition does not suggest any significant changes in the arrangement and concept.

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189 Press Release from Harvard University, January 9, 1940, Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, (III.27.3:0515), MoMA;
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
192 “The Bauhaus: How it Worked,” Department of Circulating Records, (III.27.2:0487), MoMA.
of the show except in the smaller number of objects and photographs included in The Bauhaus: How It Worked.\footnote{Circulating Exhibition: The Bauhaus 1919-1928 and The Bauhaus: How it Worked, Curatorial Files, MoMA.}

The nature of the School and its methodology, which synthesized various branches of art, easily tolerated different titles for similar exhibited content. At Mills College, the exhibition is referred to in some of the press articles as well as in its own documentation as “Architecture and Design from the Bauhaus,” whereas its title, according to the Museum’s finding aid at the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco was “Masters of the Bauhaus.”\footnote{“Mills College California: Annual Report (Summary-Art Gallery 1939-1940),” Art Museum Archive, Mills College (rec.3/13/8); Bulletin of the Mills College Art Gallery, no 1. (Oakland: College, March 1940): 22, Mills College; The exhibition title in an announcement of News Letter is referred to as “The Bauhaus: How it Worked” while in Tribune is only mentioned as the exhibition of “Architecture and Design from the Bauhaus.”; “The Bauhaus: How it Worked,” (press clippings), Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, (III.27.2:0521), MoMA; “Finding aid to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 1934-ongoing,” SFMOMa, http://www.sfmoma.org/assets/documents/library /finding_aids/sfmoma_exhibitions_records_1934_ongoing.pdf (accessed November 23, 2012).} While this different way of referring to almost the same exhibition content may be related to the fact that the exhibition was presented in San Francisco and Oakland consecutively, it also may suggest the targeting of the interests of different institutional audiences by articulating different aspects of the Bauhaus in the exhibition titles such as, methodology, architecture, design, and masters - a term that at the same time implies two meanings: the artists of authority in the art historical sense but also teachers in the context of the Bauhaus education.

\textit{Results and Responses to the Circulating Exhibitions}

The existing documentation on the traveling exhibition is not abundant yet it shows many positive responses and an understanding of the content of the exhibitions in
relation to the School’s methodology. While the responses to the exhibition *The Bauhaus 1919-1928* varied and in some reviews echoed the New York critics’ complaints about the organization of the exhibition, critics and reviewers of the version *The Bauhaus: How It Worked* specifically praised the exhibition for its organization. In addition, while the popularity of the exhibition is arguable because of insufficient responses from all exhibiting venues, the significance of the exhibition is unquestionable according to the comments in local periodicals and responses from the exhibiting institutions.

The critic for the *Union* (Springfield, Massachusetts) introduces the exhibition at George Walter Vincent Smith Gallery of Art as one of the most important that the Museum presented in the season and mentions Gropius’ lecture in the Gallery in 1938. Similarly, Mary Alexander, writing for a local Cincinnati periodical, called the exhibition at the Cincinnati Art Museum the most important of the year and suggested that no one should miss seeing it. At the University of Minnesota, the exhibition was part of the University gallery’s annual “summer special” and was announced before its opening by an announcement that “Progressive German Art to Be on Display Here.” According to an announcement in the Minnesota University newspaper *S.S. Daily*, published on the

196 The author of “City Makes National Art Week Plans” announced the exhibition at the Milwaukee Art Institute while directly referring to the criticism of the New York exhibition and the article published in *New York Times* that was written by Edward Alden Jewel. “City Makes National Art Week Plans,” *Journal*, 10/22/1939, (press clippings), Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, (III.27.3:0661); In *Union*, critic W.G. Rogers criticizes the installation of the exhibition at George Walter Vincent Smith Gallery of Art, yet his review of the exhibition is overall positive. W.G. Rogers, “Local Color,” Springfield, Massachusetts, *Union*, 03/01/1939, Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, (III.27.3:0660);


198 Mary L. Alexander, “The Week In Art Circles,” (Cincinnati, 03/10/1940), Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, (III.27.3:0665).

199 “The Bauhaus: July 1939,” *University Gallery Press book 1938-1940*, University of Minnesota Archives. Other titles announcing the exhibition are “Bauhaus in Northrop: Exhibit of German School Opens Today,” “Gallery Exhibit Explains Nazi-Exiled School.”
day of the opening, “Gallery attendants predict that a record number of visitors will tour Northrop’s corridors to see the exhibit.”

Some of the positive responses to the traveling exhibition were collected in a single Museum document that includes four comments from three institutions written by gallery directors and curators of the exhibiting venues and suggests the success of the exhibition. Arthur Feitel, president of the Art Association of New Orleans, stated in his comment: “It was the opinion of everyone here that the exhibition *The Bauhaus: How it Worked* was both interesting and instructive. During its showing at the Museum we had two gallery lectures, one for our Art Association of New Orleans and one for the Newcomb School of Art. We consider the exhibition a great success” (fig. 29).

Similarly, Duncan Fergusson, the head of the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Louisiana, remarked:

> The Bauhaus exhibition is turning out to be our greatest success of the year. The gallery is constantly crowded. Because of the size of the exhibition, which our gallery would not accommodate in one showing, we have had to divide it into two installments, the second of which has just gone up today. There is such a huge amount of information material in the exhibition that in some ways I think our students are getting more out of it by seeing it in two sections. I should like to congratulate you again on your superb arrangements and beautifully clear presentation of material.

In the same way, curator Halley Savery of the Henry Gallery at the University of Washington concluded: “The Bauhaus Exhibition is being very greatly enjoyed. The

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200 Ibid. The curator of the gallery, Ruth Lawrence, gave a personal response to the exhibition in an announcement (“Finis to Bauhaus”) and invited students to see the exhibition before its closing, stating: “I see the Bauhaus exhibit as important because of its meaning in contemporary life. The masters at the Bauhaus had taste and were honest, sincere, distinguished, creative artists.”

201 “The Bauhaus How It Worked / Comments about the exhibition,” Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, (III.27.2:0522).

202 Ibid. Figure 29 - November 1940 Invitation. “Arts. Societies. Art Association of New Orleans” folder. Ephemera Collection, Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University.

203 Ibid.
public schools are cooperating and bringing their classes and the university students are finding it very stimulating… We have on our art faculty, at present Johannes Molzahn, a friend of Gropius and the others in the school when it was first established… We are having him lecture on the background of the movement since he is intensely interested in and has a great deal to contribute.”

In contrast, in commentary from the Alumni Bulletin of Phillips Academy on the exhibition at Addison Gallery of American Art, it was remarked: “While this exhibition [cited as “Bauhaus” in the text] could scarcely compete with Walt Disney in general public appeal, it provided an excellent opportunity to study sources of the modern tendencies in the arts today.”

The significance of the Bauhaus exhibition at Mills College was specifically connected to the lectures and visit of Bauhaus members. The Bulletin of the Mills College Art Gallery introduces the exhibition as “Architecture and Design from the ‘Bauhaus’” but also The Bauhaus: 1919-1928 and includes the following commentary: “This exhibition will be of significance because of the plans for the coming summer session at Mills college, 1940, when the Bauhaus approach to art will be presented by Mr. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, former Bauhaus master and founder of the School of Design in Chicago, and four of his staff members.”

In the newspaper Tribune for April 14, 1940, in the announcement of the exhibition The Bauhaus: How it Worked, this coming lecture was explained in more detail:

This Summer courses at Mills will include a basic workshop, as well as workshops in modeling, drawing, color, photography, weaving, and material, volume and space. Moholy-Nagy will offer

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204 Ibid.
205 “General School Interests / Addison Gallery Exhibitions,” Alumni Bulletin, (July 1939), Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Massachusetts.
an advanced seminar in contemporary problems in art for architects and craftsmen who wish special work. As an added service to teachers, there will be a course by Alice Schoelkopf, supervisor of art in the Oakland Public Schools on “Modern Trends in the School Art Curriculum.” The entire session will be correlated by a Progressive Education Association Workshop on “The Arts in Education” to be directed by Frederick L. Redef, executive secretary of the Progressive Education Association.²⁰⁷

On the other hand, in the Mills College Art Gallery Annual Report, where the exhibition was referred to as “Architecture and Design from the Bauhaus,” it was evaluated as a “carefully prepared show” that however, “received some criticism for its too strongly commercial aspect.”²⁰⁸

Based on some of the published comments, some of the reviewers of the traveling exhibitions were generally not that familiar with Bauhaus methodologies and educational approaches and were learning from the exhibition content; sometimes this created misapprehensions and incorrect analyses. One reviewer for Phillips Academy’s newspaper, Phillippian, of the exhibition at the Addison Gallery defines the Bauhaus as “an attempt to analyze, develop, and encourage ‘modern art.’”²⁰⁹ The author identifies the Bauhaus method as an “unusual instruction method” and describes it as he or she most likely understood it from the exhibition content: “Prospective artists and craftsmen in all the various branches of the arts are all given identical courses, with little or no emphasis on specialization in their own particular fields…Another unusual idea concerned the artist’s tools; his means of expression. The school strongly advocated experimenting with

²⁰⁷ “Bauhaus Exhibit at Mills College,” Tribune, (Oakland, California, 04/14/1940), Public Records, MoMA, (mf9:901).
²⁰⁸ In the two sentence summary of the show, the author does not explain how the show was commercial. “Mills College California: Annual Report (Summary-Art Gallery 1939-1940),” Art Museum Archive, Mills College (rec.3/13/8);

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different materials, even paper and glass…”  

Similarly, the reviewer Ray Bruner, who is evidently not familiar with the Bauhaus methodology and work, wrote the text “Museum Presents 'Nightmares in Art' (but It’s Serious Stuff)” in response to the exhibition The Bauhaus 1919-1928 at Cleveland Museum in Ohio. Bruner defines the show as “One of the weirdest shows—on the first impression—that ever struck Cleveland.” He informs his readers that “The exhibit is the work of the famous Bauhaus which promoted a new approach to art during 24 stormy years in Germany and the work of Bauhaus teachers and pupils in America.” His interpretation of the exhibition suggests his interest in the content and evident familiarization with unknown concepts that he learned from the installation:

The artist trained at the Bauhaus looks into blank space with an eye untrammeled by tradition. He sees nothing that artists before him ever created. Then in his hands objects begin to take form. He cuts and snips and glues and welds and bends and twists and ties and weaves wire textiles, wood paint paper, plaster, metal, any kind of material or a combination of them. Pretty soon he has something. You cannot name it but it may be worthy to go on exhibition. This may sound fantastic, but out of this method of creation have come some striking designs for furniture, textiles, utensils and decorative objects. Many of these things may also be seen on display.

A writer from the Sunday Item-Tribune, Ethel Hutson, notes about the educational aspect of the exhibition and its instructive content: “… [Bauhaus exhibition] brought here by the Art Association of New Orleans for its educational value, has had its admirers as well as its critics, and those who study it most closely report that they have a much more adequate idea of this significant educational experiment, its theories and its

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210 Ibid.  
211 Ray Bruner, “Museum Presents 'Nightmares in Art' (but It's Serious Stuff),” News (Cleveland, Ohio, 01/10/1940), Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, (III.27.3:0664).  
212 Ibid.  
213 Ibid.
influence on modern design than even before." Another critic, at the same venue, remarked about the show: "The Memorial to the school stresses not so much its varied products but its idea and aims as a community of architects, painters, sculptors, engineers, photographers, and craftsmen, each contributing special talents and experience. Students during their first six months were urged to divert their powers from the channels of conventional pattern and to find their particular potentialities, training in workshops followed, along with formal courses for background development." 

At Harvard University, the exhibition attracted a lot of attention and overall positive response because of the presence of Bauhaus faculty. In Transcript, (possibly Boston Evening Transcript), a daily afternoon newspaper, the author of the text "Modern Design Chases Dust From Harvard’s Robinson Hall" talks with excitement about the variety of objects in the exhibition and remarks that "the exhibit has attracted considerable interest at Harvard because a modification of Bauhaus method has become part of the Design School instruction with the coming of Gropius." An author of a text titled "Harvard Bauhaus Exhibit-And Chess" in Christian Science Monitor finds that:

Under [Gropius’] direction many of the Bauhaus methods have found their way into Robinson Hall. All graduate students in the Harvard School of Design for example must spend a portion of their time in workshops gaining actual practical training; before they graduate they are not only architects but carpenters, electricians, plumbers and interior decorators as well. Courses in design include the traditional information about outline and color,

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215 "Pen, Chisel and Brush," Times-Picayune (New Orleans, La., 11/05/1939), Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, (III.27.2: 0519).
216 In 1938 Marcel Breuer was also at Harvard along with Gropius.
217 In this article clipping the title of the periodical is typed as "Transcript." "Modern Design Chases Dust From Harvard’s Robinson Hall," Transcript (Boston, Massachusetts, 01/10/1940), Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, (III.27.2: 0520).
but they also treat such subjects the properties of materials and their adaptability and usefulness.\textsuperscript{218}

Despite the fact that the exhibition as an event gained more attention at venues where Bauhaus faculty were present or were coming to lecture (as was the case at Harvard and Mills College), American audiences and specifically the broad educational communities at fourteen different venues were introduced to the School’s art educational concept. The results of the traveling exhibition were described as follows in a letter sent from the Museum to Gropius:

There has been a great deal of interest in this exhibition in the cities where it has been shown. As before, it has evoked much controversy and criticism but I am sure the effect is a healthy one. I have actually found that some art schools are trying out the methods employed in the preliminary courses at the Bauhaus. Such results seem very exciting to me and I hope one day that the effect of the show will be indicated by better design and more intelligent methods of art education in America.\textsuperscript{219}

According to this assessment of the traveling exhibition that comes from the Museum not long before the traveling show was about to end its fourteen-month long tour, its criticism was comparable to its reception in New York, and yet, as implied in the letter, Bauhaus methodologies were finding their way into some American schools as a result of the exhibition.

The news and reviews of MoMA’s traveling exhibitions were announced both in daily local and regional newspapers as well as in student publications and periodicals, and they attracted the attention of diverse audiences that ranged from academics to the general public, both liberal and conservative. Information learned from the exhibition

\textsuperscript{218} “Harvard Bauhaus Exhibit-And Chess,” Christian Science Monitor (Boston, Massachusetts, 01/10/1940), Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, (III.27.2: 0520).
\textsuperscript{219} Letter from the Museum to Gropius, May 29, 1940, Registrar Files (#82), MoMA.
content about the Bauhaus and its methodology was evidentially new for reviewers of school publications (evidenced by a reviewer for *Philipian* from Massachusetts) as well as for those writing for the popular press (such as a critic for *News* from Ohio). It appears that both art critics as well as journalists less familiar with art subjects recognized the significance of the exhibition and its content for the region where it was hosted. The exhibition was seen as a success by directors and curators of educational venues and specifically prized for its informational and stimulating content. It is clear from the responses to the traveling exhibitions that once the audience was informed by the title of the exhibition and its press release about the educational content of the show, the exhibition was accepted by its viewers and critics as containing didactically rich content that requires studying and understanding of the objects not as final products but rather as objects that resulted from the Bauhaus educational methodologies.
Conclusion

According to the exhibition documentation and visual evidence, at this particular moment in time, it was important to Gropius and Bayer as well as to other Bauhaus members that MoMA’s first Bauhaus exhibition that traveled around the country present Bauhaus objects as the direct result of the School’s methods and pedagogy. An understanding of the importance and influence of the Museum as an endorsement of Bauhaus ideas and faculty is evident in the exhibition documentation as well as in Gropius and Bayer’s alert conceptualization of MoMA’s first exhibition of the School. The faculty of the historic Bauhaus, with the help of its other masters including Albers and Moholy-Nagy, emphasized in this exhibition the School’s experimental and interdisciplinary educational methodologies in order to promote it to U.S. audiences, specifically educational communities. First envisioned by the MoMA as a complete Bauhaus history through its objects, the exhibition titled *The Bauhaus: 1919-1928* featured this period of the School with an emphasis on its educational concepts while also presenting its current New World educational activities and the applicability of its progressive art educational methodologies.

Bayer’s use of photographs and collages in the organization and display of the exhibition materials – as a means of narration that not only contextualized but also deemphasized the object and its particular style while at the same time underlining its process of production and the progress of ideas as a result of the School’s experimental methodologies – suggests that the emphasis of the exhibition was on the educational aspects of the Bauhaus. The sections of the exhibition that are the most referred to in the
existing literature, such as Metal, Furniture, Weaving, and Pottery Workshops, featured some mass-produced objects, but these were only one facet of an exhibition that needs to be evaluated as a whole. Such an evaluation would include in its analysis the photographic collages that also feature Bauhaus early products, which just as those later mass-produced examples reflect and introduce the development of the ideas and School’s progressive and experimental approach in design. Moreover, workshop produced objects originally meant to be observed in the context of the School’s classes were a significant part of the show. These objects started and ended the exhibition, which featured faculty and student exercises, studies, experiments and research, theories, and methods that lead to the creation of workshop objects.

While critics considered the exhibition a failure for various reasons – as did Barr and the Museum, though unofficially – both positive and negative reviews agreed that its content was well-suited to students and educators; yet, it was precisely the Museum’s most frequent visitors were in fact from schools and colleges. Unlike New York’s exhibition whose advertisement did not focus particularly on the educational aspect of the School, the announcements for its traveling versions _The Bauhaus 1919-1928_ and especially its “concentrated” version _The Bauhaus: How It Worked_ featured an emphasis on its didactic content. Broad audiences whose majority consisted of the educational communities of fourteen different locations on the West and East Coast of the Country had the opportunity to learn about educational concepts of the Bauhaus School from the exhibition content as well as from lectures organized at many of the venues in conjunction with the show. As suggested in the existing, although not abundant, reviews of the circulating exhibition, its educational significance was widely recognized and the
exhibition was valued specifically for its informational and didactic content. The Museum still used the word “controversy” in its evaluation of the traveling exhibitions just like in its assessment of the show presented in New York, yet remarked that the results of the exhibition are evident in several schools’ testing methods that were employed in the Bauhaus’ preliminary courses.220

Focus on the historic accuracy of this exhibition in the current literature overshadows the exhibition’s significance in spreading Bauhaus educational concepts and methodologies among diverse audiences just as the exhibition’s influence may be disregarded in comparison to the direct influence of the Bauhaus faculty in the U.S. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that this was the very first outreaching presentation of the Bauhaus pedagogy in the New World; it lasted sixteen-months, including the duration of its original New York exhibition, and reached educational venues well beyond those where Bauhaus members had just arrived.

220 Letter from the Museum to Gropius, May 29, 1940, Registrar Files (#82), MoMA.
Illustrations

Fig. 1 *The Bauhaus 1919-1928*, MoMA, 1938: Display of Photographs

Fig. 2 *The Bauhaus: 1919-1928*, MoMA, 1938: Display of Photographs

Fig. 3 *Société des Artistes Décorateurs, 1930: Display of Photographs*
Fig. 4 Bayer’s Diagram of Field of Vision

Fig. 5 Building Workers’ Unions Exhibition, Berlin, 1935
Fig. 6 Building Workers’ Unions Exhibition, Berlin, 1935

Fig. 7 Building Workers’ Unions Exhibition, Berlin, 1935
Fig. 8  *The Bauhaus 1919-1928/"Furniture Workshop 1919-19258," Display of Photographs; Breuer's Tubular chair, 1925 and Albers' Wooden armchair, 1926 as photographs and objects*

Fig. 9  *A Bauhaus Movie*
Fig. 10  The Bauhaus 1919-1928 / Exhibition Catalog, 1938 (p.138,139): Metal Workshop, Dessau and M.Brandt’s designs

Fig. 11  The Bauhaus 1919-1928 “Pottery Workshop 1919-1923”
Fig. 12 *The Bauhaus 1919-1928 /“Pottery Workshop 1919-1923” / Pottery Workshop, Dornburg*

Fig. 13 “Pottery Workshop 1919-1923,” Otto Lindig, *Earthenware Jug*, 1922

Fig. 14 “Pottery Workshop 1919-1923,” Otto Lindig, *Cocoa set*, 1923
Fig. 15 *The Bauhaus 1919-1928 / “Typography Workshop 1919-1928,”* photograph of Joost Schmidt’s, Cover of the journal *Offset*, 1926 (back wall, middle)

Fig. 16 *The Bauhaus 1919-1928 / “Bauhaus Press,”* Joost Schmidt, Cover of Journal *Offset*, 1926 (bottom right corner)

Fig. 17 *The Bauhaus 1919-1928 / “Metal Workshop 1919-1928”*
Fig. 18 The Bauhaus: 1919-1928 / “Metal Workshop 1919-1928”

Fig. 19 The Bauhaus: 1919-1928 / Otti Berger’s Rug, 1930 (center) and Anni Albers,’ Wall Hanging, 1926 (right on the wall)
Fig. 20 The Bauhaus 1919-1928 / Exhibition Floor Plan. Herbert Bayer

Fig. 21 The Bauhaus 1919-1928 / Hand and wall design pointing to the peephole with mechanical robots in Oskar Schlemmer’s costumes
Fig. 22 The Bauhaus 1919-1928 (Paintings, Graphic Art, Furniture, Photographs)

Fig. 23 The Bauhaus 1919-1928 (Schlemmer, Dancer, 1923, Sculptural Paper Construction, Masks)
Fig. 24 *The Bauhaus 1919-1928* / "Albers Course and Experiments with Common Place Materials – Studies in Form and Space"

Fig. 25 *The Bauhaus 1919-1928* / Black Mountain College Studies
Fig. 28 The Bauhaus 1919-1928 / The Bauhaus Synthesis

Fig. 29 The Bauhaus: How it Worked - the exhibition Invitation / Art Association of New Orleans
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