

History and Modern Architecture: Prellerhaus, the Bauhaus residential colleges in Dessau (1926-1932)¹

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Abstract: With the present article, I intend to investigate the architecture and space of the residential college of the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* (Germany), inaugurated at the beginning of the second phase of the Bauhaus, when it was forced to leave the city of Weimar and settle in Dessau, between 1926-1932. A reference for the history of modern architecture, this residence was part of the set of buildings designed by the architect Walter Gropius, who was the first director of what was to be the first design school in the world, whose expression became internationally recognized for its concept and innovative aesthetics. To produce this article, I used sources and bibliography that are mostly located at the Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin, among which I highlight manuscripts, letters, architectural plans, photographs, manifestos and newspapers.

Keywords: Modern Architecture; Bauhaus; Residential Colleges

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1. Introduction – *The Bauhaus architecture: a brief history of an avant-garde school (1919-1933)*

The Bauhaus is considered by the historiography of architecture as a school that was organized shortly after the end of the First World War (1919), and that brought with it innovative objectives that had a strong impact on different artistic and architectural manifestations. As a school, it had a short existence, as it was forced to witness the definitive locking of its doors by the German Nazi regime in the 1930s, however, there are countless examples that record the language of this avant-garde artistic movement that profoundly marked the architecture of the 20th century.

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When Walter Gropius² founded the *Staatliche Bauhaus* in the city of Weimar (Germany) in April 1919, and took on the management of the institution, he immediately defended, among its main purposes, that it would train architects, painters and sculptors at all levels according to their abilities, in order to become competent, creative and independent professionals who would contribute to the organization of a community of artisan-artist workers, capable of designing harmonious buildings in their entirety: structure, finishing, ornamentation and furnishing. (Gropius, 1919, p. 2) This principle was to be confirmed in his text «*Idee und Aufbau des Staatlichen Bauhauses Weimar*», written in 1923 and considered to objectively present the «Bauhaus Method», the premise of which was based on each student's creativity.

The premise of the Bauhaus method was that the potential for creativity already lay within the individual, and that the job of the educator was to 'unleash' this potential. At the Bauhaus this was the particular task of the *Vorkurs* or Preliminary Course; after this, instruction followed two parallel routes, instruction in craft (*Werklehre*), to teach the student ability to make, and instruction in form (*Formlehre*), to give the student the mental equipment with which to shape his own ideas. This system of instruction by two masters - craftsman and an artist - was seen by Gropius as a necessity imposed by the division that had grown up in society between art and craft. (Swenarton, 1987, p. 206).

In this sense, since its inception, it was the understanding of the Bauhaus that its pedagogical proposal was that educational actions aimed at building a large-scale industrialization of its products could be a modern tool for the democratization of the world. Gropius also made a point of emphasizing to his male and female students the importance that rejection of the traditional historical forms of the past had in their education, as he believed that they would only become daring and fearless in thought and action once they broke free from a culture that had disappeared long ago. (Gropius, 1943, p. 75).

One should not confuse the laws inherent to building and the material used in it with the laws of art itself. For every work of art there is, undoubtedly, perfect agreement between technical form and aesthetic form, complete harmony between stability of number and stability of expression, supreme perfection – everything that is human thought and action tends to not unite with this final objective – but, first, it is necessary to have considerable willpower, so as to make one and other coincide harmoniously.³ (Gropius, 1930a, p. 7).

² Walter Gropius, 1883-1969. Berlin architect, founder and first director of the Bauhaus (1919-1928). Later, in London, he joined the firm of the modernist architect and painter Edwin Maxwell Fry (1934-1937) and, shortly thereafter (1937), accepted an invitation from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design (United States) to teach at its architecture course. With Marcel Breuer, his friend and architecture teacher at Harvard, (Breuer was also his student at the Bauhaus in Weimar and fellow teacher, in Dessau), he organized an architecture firm (1938 - Cambridge, Massachusetts). He is considered and researched as one of the greatest exponents of the Bauhaus and as a representative of modern 20th century architecture. (Isaacs, 1991).

³ Seulement il ne faut pas confondre les lois inhérentes à la construction et à la matière

Despite this premise, studies and research on the Bauhaus explain that the success of its pedagogy in training professionals was largely due to the interaction that extended throughout the entire duration of the course, between renowned masters and their students. Among them, avant-garde artists hired from different parts of Europe to teach, give lectures and teach new topics to students. Artists were predominant in the first generation of teachers, such as Gerhard Marcks,⁴ Gertrud Grunow,⁵ Gunta Stözl,⁶ Georg Muche⁷ and Oskar Schlemmer,⁸ all of them originally German. But other masters were also hired, including the Russian Wassily Kandinsky,⁹ the Swiss-born German Paul Klee,¹⁰ the American Lyonel Feininger,¹¹

employée avec les lois de l'art lui-même. Une concordance parfaite entre la forme technique et la forme esthétique, une harmonie complète entre la stabilité du nombre et la stabilité de l'expression, c'est là sans doute, pour toute œuvre d'art, la suprême perfection - tout ce qui est pensée et action humaine ne tend'il pas à se rejoindre à ce but final - mais il faut d'abord une force considérable de volonté, avant d'amener l'une et l'autre à coïncider harmonieusement.

⁴ Gerhard Marcks, 1889-1981. A Berlin sculptor and plastic artist, Marcks was a teacher at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar, 1919-1925), responsible for the ceramics workshop. After his teaching experience at the Bauhaus, he was appointed director of the *Giebichenstein-Halle* School of Applied Arts. After World War II, he taught at the Hamburg Regional Art School. (Marcks, 1977).

⁵ Gertrud Grunow, 1870-1944. A Berlin musician, she was the teacher responsible for the Theory of Harmony classes at the preliminary course (*vorkurs*) at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar, 1919-1923). (Nebel-Heitmeyer, 1946).

⁶ Gunta Stadler-Stözl, 1897-1983. A Munich weaver, she was the first female student at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar, 1919-1925). In Dessau, she took on the role of tapestry teacher and, later, was the teacher responsible for the weaving workshop at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* (1927-1931, Dessau). (Welte, 1993).

⁷ Georg Muche, 1895-1987. Painter and plastic artist (born in Querfurt), he was invited by Gropius to work as a master carver at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (1920, Weimar). The following year, he took over the coordination of the weaving workshop (1921-1926, Weimar and Dessau). He had the task of organizing the first Bauhaus exhibition (1923, Weimar) in the house (*Haus am Horn*) that he designed especially for that occasion. (Droste, 1980).

⁸ Oskar Schlemmer, 1888-1943. Painter, sculptor, choreographer and graphic designer (born in Stuttgart). Hired by Gropius, he worked as a teacher at the Bauhaus (1920-1929, Weimar and Dessau) in several teaching departments, such as sculpture, mural painting, metalwork, drawing and, above all, choreography. He became famous for his abstract paintings of the human form and for his avant-garde ballet productions. (Herzogenrath, 1973).

⁹ Wassily Kandinsky, 1866-1944. Russian abstract art painter (born in Moscow) who, before pursuing a career as a mural painting teacher at the Bauhaus (1922-1933, Weimar, Dessau and Berlin), studied under Franz von Stuck at the Munich Academy of Arts (1900, Germany) and founded the Museum of Pictorial Culture (1919, Moscow). (Düchting, 2000).

¹⁰ Paul Klee, 1879-1940. Swiss painter (born in Münchenbuchsee), was a teacher at the Bauhaus (1922-1931, Weimar and Dessau), responsible for the glass, fabric and painting workshops. (Partsch, 2007).

¹¹ Lyonel Feininger, 1871-1956. American painter, printmaker and caricaturist (he was born in New York but immigrated with his family to Germany as a child), author of the famous woodcut «Kathedrale» published on the back cover of the Bauhaus Manifesto (*Das Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses im Weimar*) by Walter Gropius (Gropius, 1919). He was an engraving teacher at the Bauhaus (1919-1932, Weimar and Dessau). (Luckhardt, 1989).

the Swiss Joahannes Itten¹² and the Hungarian László Moholy-Nagy.¹³ The second generation witnessed the arrival of architects, responsible for one of the most striking identities of the Bauhaus, the nature of which set its aesthetic sense, understanding constructivism in art as a language present in architecture and in the built object itself. Considering, therefore, this phase, still under the management of Walter Gropius, certainly, as he himself states, the theme of design was the one that permeated all the artistic and educational methodologies of that institution, when it set up workshops for tapestry, metalwork, photography, ceramics, advertising, painting and carpentry, with special emphasis on furniture design. (Gropius, 1923, p. 4). Gropius' intention was to make the Bauhaus the first school to propose a union between architecture and design. It was not just about a particular project for a house, building or even a piece of furniture, his teachings consisted of creating a work of art. It was, therefore, a didactic project that permeated all these items, emphasizing, above all, the idea of total art in which the colorful would play an important role.

Walter Gropius's administration was remarkable in the history of the Bauhaus, as he had the courage to apply teaching methodologies found in the kindergarten. Thus, the famous Bauhaus experimentalism originates from the principles of the Activity School of the German educator Georg Kerschensteiner, a contemporary of Maria Montessori, in Italy, and of John Dewey, in the United States, all of whom dealt with the use of education methods in which children participated directly in their own learning process. For him:

Educating children when they are young and still untouched is of great importance. The new types of schools with an emphasis on practical exercises, such as the Montessori schools, provide excellent preparation for the Bauhaus constructive program, as they develop the whole human organism. The old conservative schools tended to destroy harmony within the individual through exclusive mental exercises. The Bauhaus keeps in touch with new experiences in education.¹⁴ (Gropius, 1923, p.12)

¹² Johannes Itten, 1888-1967. Swiss expressionist painter (born in Südern-Linden), he had a controversial period at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar, 1919-1923) as a teacher at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* Preparatory Course (Weimar, 1919-1923) and as a teacher of several subjects such as stone sculpture, wood carving, metalwork, weaving, stained glass and mural painting. However, his proselytizing practices in the classroom in defense of mysticism and Zoroastrianism led to a conflict with Gropius that resulted in his dismissal from the school. (Rotzler & Itten, 1972).

¹³ László Moholy-Nagy, 1895-1946. Austro-Hungarian expressionist painter and photographer (born in Borsod), he was director of the preparatory course at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* (Dessau, 1925-1928) and coordinator responsible for the metalwork workshop (1923-1928, Weimar and Dessau). (Engelbrecht, 2009).

¹⁴ Denn bei den Jüngsten, Unverbildeten muß begonnen werden. Die neuen, auf Werkarbeit aufgebauten Schultypen (Montessorischule, Arbeitsschule) geben eine gute Vorbereitung für eine aufbauende, breit eingestellte Arbeit, wie sie das Bauhaus will, da sie bewußt dem ganzen menschlichen Organismus Entwicklung geben, während die bisherigen Schulen durch ihre fast ausschließliche Kopfarbeit die Harmonie des Individuums zerstörten. Das Bauhaus hat mit den neuen praktischen Versuchen auf dem schulischen Gebiet Verbindung aufgenommen.

During the years of its activity in Weimar, the school faced problems with the extreme right-wing nationalist groups that took over the city's politics and considerably suppressed its budget, forcing it to transfer from that location. Gropius' decision was to move, in 1925, to a safer environment, far from an ideology that was slowly spreading across Germany, and the chosen city was Dessau (about 160km away from the former site).

According to Magdalena Droste (1990), towards the end of the 1920s, the growth of the political leadership of the NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* - National Socialist German Workers' Party), better known as the Nazi Party, facilitated the propaganda of its leaders, co-religionists and sympathizers who classified the Bauhaus as a harmful and dangerous institution for German youth. Following the victory of the Nazis in the municipal elections in Dessau, the situation became extremely complicated for the school. Firstly, they considered it to be deeply influenced by cultural Bolshevism, a promiscuous environment and frequented by Jews. Secondly, because they managed to convince the Municipal Council to drastically reduce funding for the Bauhaus and, for the second time, the school was unable to find viable options for its survival in the city, forcing it to close its doors again, in 1932, with no option but to leave. The options of the cities of Magdeburg and Leipzig were put to one side and its next, and final destination, was cosmopolitan Berlin.

Although the internationally renowned architect, Mies Van Der Rohe,¹⁵ director of the school at the time, managed to reopen it in October of that same year in an old disused telephone factory in Berlin, the attempt made by Mies and the students for the school's survival was not successful, but rather suffocated by the persecution of the Nazi Party and, in particular, by the *Geheime Staatspolizei* (Secret State Police), the *Gestapo*, the actions of which included its invasion of the Bauhaus facilities, on April 11, 1933, in an orchestrated and overwhelming search for communist propaganda there. Within a few months, even after receiving authorization from the Provincial School Council to continue functioning under unacceptable conditions, being allowed to charge monthly fees and sell licenses for its products, it did not raise enough financial resources to sustain itself and succumbed definitively, in mid-1933. (Droste, 1990).

The National Socialists were suspicious of the international faculty (teachers from Switzerland, Russia, the Czech Republic and other countries), and the social claim of their program. Despite not intending to be socially revolutionary or political, but with a focus on design, housing and urban planning issues, it was not without political explosiveness. From the beginning, the Bauhaus depended to a great extent on the support of the political center. To the same extent that the political center began to lose influence, the basis of the Bauhaus' existence also began to disappear.¹⁶ (Franz, 2019, p. 145).

¹⁵ Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1886-1969. German architect (born in Aachen, former kingdom of Prussia), he was a pioneer of modern architecture, along with Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Alvar Aalto, among others, who revolutionized the architectural language of the 20th century. (Neumeyer, 1986)

¹⁶ Suspekt war den Nationalsozialisten der internationale Lehrkörper (Lehrende aus der Schweiz, Russland, Tschechien und anderen Ländern) sowie der soziale Anspruch des Programms, obschon dieser

During its existence, the Bauhaus as a school was an institution marked by misunderstanding and prejudice towards its avant-garde proposal, considered by the Nazis as a degenerate cultural space and by others as a propagator of an art strongly influenced by industrial technology. In turn, the historian Peter Gay relates the Bauhaus architecture of the 1920s-30s directly to the Weimar Republic, interpreting it as one of the strong expressions of democratic thought in Germany, before the rise of Nazism. (Gay, 1970).

2. The Modern Architecture of the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* (Dessau)

Following its involuntary departure from Weimar, the plans for the buildings that would become the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* were submitted by Walter Gropius to the Dessau Municipal Council, which without delay approved the building of an architectural complex composed of administrative spaces, workshops, teacher's offices, classrooms and a student residence that would house 28 students. (Nerdinger, 1985).

The building work began in April 1925 and ended in December 1926, on a site measuring 32,450 m² donated by the local municipal council, resulting in buildings with a total area of 2,630 m². During its planning and building, Gropius was helped by several architects, painters and designers, such as: Karl Fieger,¹⁷ Max Krajewsky,¹⁸ Ernst Neufert,¹⁹ Bernhard Sturtzkopf,²⁰ Otto Meyer-Ottens, Richard Paulick,²¹

Anspruch nicht sozialrevolutionär oder politisch gemeint war, sondern in Ausrichtung auf Gestaltung, Wohnungs- und Städtebau-Fragen, die in sich aber politische Brisanz trugen. Das Bauhaus war von Beginn an stark auf die Unterstützung aus der Mitte angewiesen. Mit demselben Ausmaß, mit dem die politische Mitte an Einfluss verlor, verschwand auch die Existenzbasis für das Bauhaus.

¹⁷ Karl Fieger, 1893-1960. A German architect (born in Mainz), he worked with Gropius on the projects for the Fagus Factory (Alfed, 1925-1926), when he was already a drawing techniques teacher at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar, 1921-1925). He continued to teach this subject at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* (Dessau, 1927-1928) and, shortly afterwards, also taught civil engineering in 1928. (Thöner & Perren, 2018).

¹⁸ Max Sinowjewitsch Krajewsky, 1901-1971. An architect of Polish-Russian origin (born in Szydłowiec), he was appointed by Gropius to design the lighting projects for the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* complex (Dessau). This experience led to an invitation to continue working with Gropius in the building of two famous residential complexes: Törten (Dessau, 1926-1928) and Dammerstock (Karlsruhe, 1928-1929). (Krajewski, 1976).

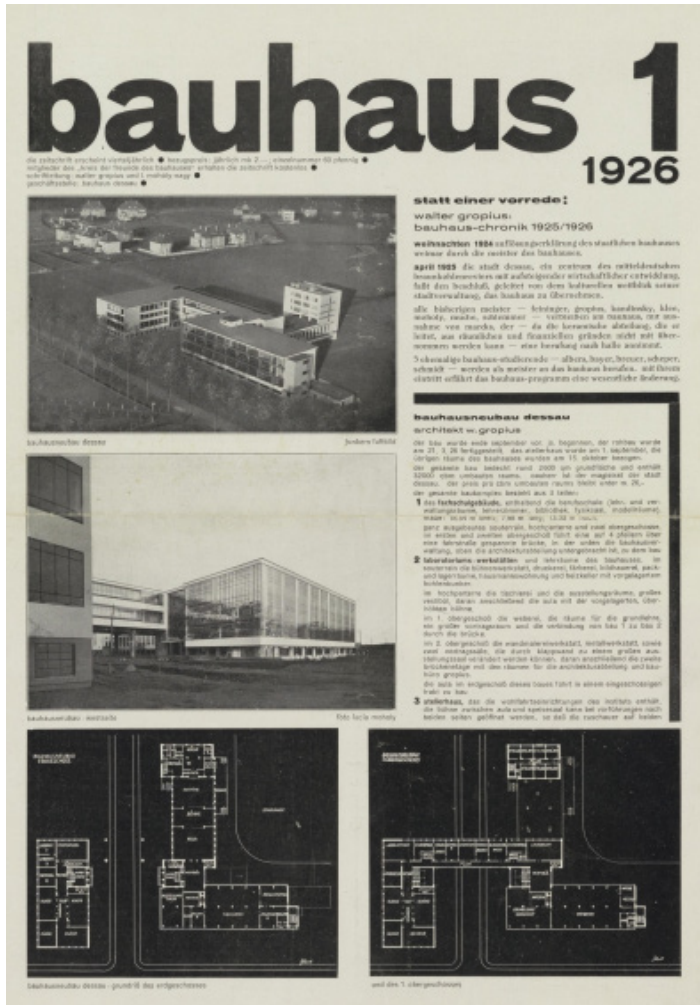
¹⁹ Ernst Neufert, 1900-1986. Of German origin (born in Freyburg), he graduated as a building technician at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar) and worked very closely with Gropius. He published several architectural manuals that contributed to the training of architects in German higher education institutions. (Nerdinger, 1993).

²⁰ Bernhard Ludwig Karl Franz Joachim Sturtzkopf, 1900-1972. A German architect (born in Wellerode), he was a former *Staatliche Bauhaus* student (Weimar, 1920-1922) who, after his contribution at Dessau, took part in projects with the Dutch plastic artist Theo van Doesburg. (Neumann, 1985).

²¹ Richard Paulick, 1903-1979. A German architect (born in Roßlau) who attended classes at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar) and became Gropius' assistant in Dessau. Prior to that, he worked with the painter and artist Georg Mucho (Müller, 1975).

Franz Throll, Walter Tralau, Heinz Nösselt,²² Herbert Schipke, Hans Volger,²³ Fritz Levedag²⁴ and Friedrich Hirz. (Gropius, 1930b, p. 12).

Figure 1 – Zeitschrift Bauhaus, nummer 1 (1926)



Source: Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin (BHA)

²² Heinz Nösselt, 1900-1950. A German painter who was a student at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* in Weimar. (Bauhaus, 1976).

²³ Hans Volger, 1904-1973. A German architect (born in Straßburger), who soon after completing his studies at the *Staatliche Bauhaus*, in Weimar, became the coordinator of the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* department of architecture (Dessau). (Bauhaus, 1976).

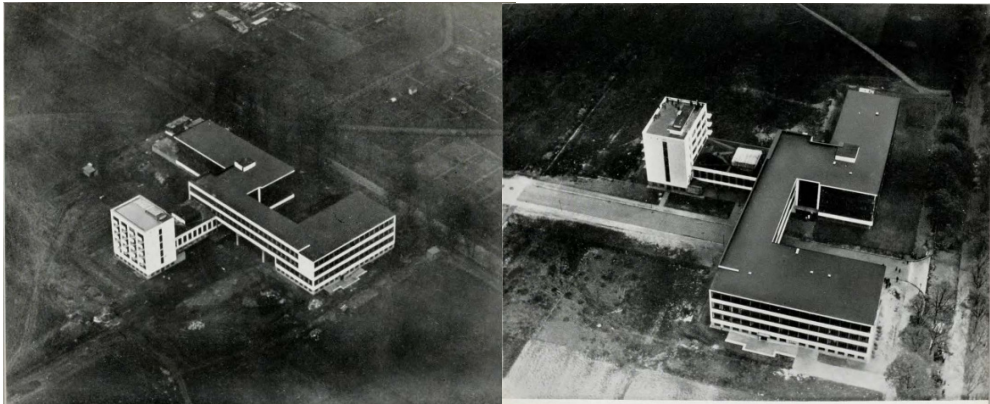
²⁴ Fritz Levedag, 1899-1951. A German painter and sculptor (born in Münster), he was a student of Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* (Dessau, 1926-1929). (Franz & Hirt, 1999).

The first issue of the Bauhaus magazine (Figure 1), consisting of 6 pages and 26 illustrations in German, was distributed to guests from other European countries and the United States who were present at the inauguration of the new Bauhaus space. Immediately, on its first page, among the two illustrations of the new building, an expressive aerial photograph by Lucia Moholy²⁵ (wife of one of the Bauhaus teachers, the famous Hungarian painter László Moholy-Nagy)²⁶, specially commissioned for this commemorative issue, along with two floor plans showing how its interior space was organized by Walter Gropius in a functional and modern perspective.

The repercussion of this proposal in the scenario of modern vanguard European architecture, made the interpretation of the composition of this complex the target of countless speculations by architects and architectural historians, as one of the most discussed languages of Western architectural grammar of the first half of the 20th century.

One of these testimonies is that given by the Swiss architectural historian, Sigfried Giedion, with the publication of his book, *Raum, Zeit, Architektur. Die Entstehung einer neuen Tradition*, in 1941, when translating the buildings of the Bauhaus school, in Dessau, as a set of juxtaposed and simultaneous cubes that gave the impression of floating above the ground due to the generous use of glass in its façade (Giedion, 1992). We can see, in Figures 1, 2 and 3, together with Giedion's observation, Gropius' proposal for a unitary composition, which opted to use an interconnected system that united different asymmetries without losing the harmony of the spaces that housed the various activities of the school.

Figures 2 and 3: Aerial photographs of the Bauhaus buildings in Dessau

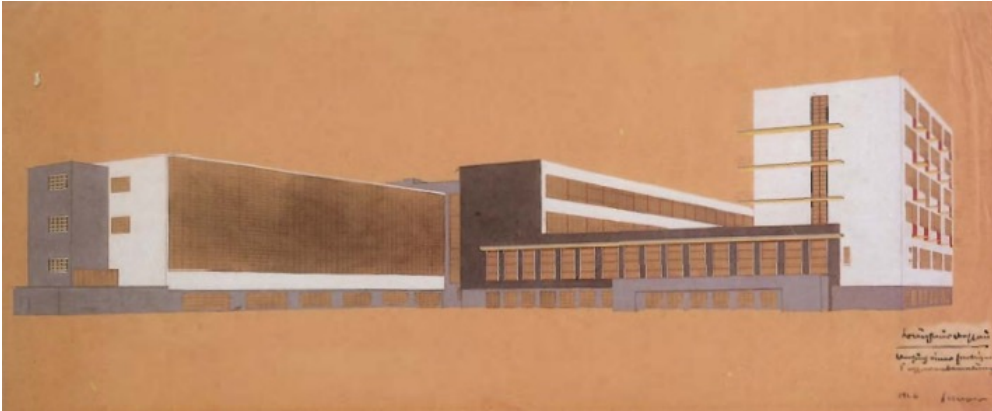


Source: Gropius, 1930b, pp. 16-17

²⁵ Lucia Moholy, 1894-1984. An Austro-Hungarian photographer (born in Prague), with her photographs she captured countless scenes of the daily life of *Staatliche Bauhaus* students and teachers (Weimar, 1924-1925), as well as the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* (Dessau, 1926-1928), when she was one of the residents of the *Meisterhäuser* (Masters' House), together with her husband. (Schuldenfrei, 2013).

²⁶ See footnote 13.

Figure 4 – Study for a color composition of the façade of the Bauhaus in Dessau (68x100cm) (Hinnerk Scheper,²⁷ 1926)



Source: Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin (BHA)

The aerial panoramic view shows the care with which each volume was integrated into the unitary composition. The eye cannot catch this complex at a glance; it is necessary to look at it from all sides and from above and below. This resulted in new dimensions for the artistic imagination, a previously unknown versatility. The floor plan has no tendency to remain internal: it expands and spreads out on all sides of the site. In general terms, its profile resembles those fireworks, like «weather vanes», radiating from a center with three arms in the form of a hook. The impression is similar to that of the glass staircase in the 1914 Cologne exhibition: a movement in space that is suddenly apprehended and immobilized.²⁸ (Giedion, 1992, p. 313)

Gropius's affinity with flat surfaces may also lie in the way he sometimes places black surfaces between them, and thus again produces horizontally accentuated surfaces that are balanced by the building's vertical tendency. The best examples of this art are found in the workshop building.

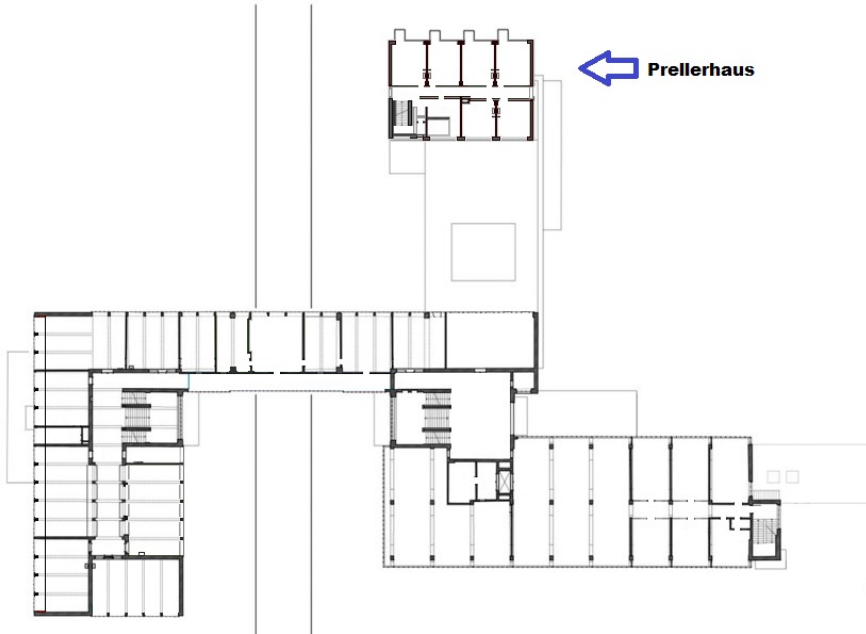
Similarly, the Italian art historian, Giulio Carlo Argan, was to recognize the importance of Gropius' project for the architectural complex of the Bauhaus, in

²⁷ Hinnerk Scheper, 1897-1957. A German painter and designer (born in Wulften), student of Johannes Itten and Paul Klee at the Staatliche Bauhaus (Weimar, 1918-1919). With effect from 1925, he coordinated the mural painting workshop, until its closure, in Berlin, in 1933. (Ridler, 2022).

²⁸ Die vogelschau zeigt, wie sorgfältig jedes element in der einheitlichen komposition aufging. Das auge vermag diesen komplex nicht mit einem blick zu umfassen; es ist nötig, ihn von allen Seiten her zu umschreiten und ihn von oben sowie von unten zu betrachten. Dieses ergab neue dimensionen für die künstlerische imagination, eine vorher unbekannte vielseitigkeit. Dem grundriß fehlt jede tendenz, sich nach innen zu konzentrieren: er dehnt sich aus und breitet sich allseits über den grund. Im umriß gleicht er jenem feuerwerk, dem feuerrad, das mit drei hakenförmigen armen von einem zentrum ausstrahlt. Der eindruck ist ähnlich dem des gläsernen treppenhauses der Kölner Ausstellung von 1914: eine bewegung im raum, die plötzlich ergriffen und festgehalten wird.

Dessau, as one of the great works of European architectural functionalism in the quest to achieve a way of working that did not privilege certain theories of form.

Figure 5 – Floor Plan of the Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus (Dessau)



Source: Author's drawing based on the Zeitschrift Bauhaus, nummer 1 (1926), p. 1.

In the view of Magdalena Droste, Gropius' project was an example of innovative architecture in the *De Stil* style. And as can be seen in its floor plan (Figure 5), there is no main façade, as is usual in other architectural languages. Its components, organized in order to functionally house the various workshops for practical classes, student residence (*Prellerhaus*), administration and architecture studio, maintained a dynamic and asymmetrical balance caused by its horizontal structures. This altered sense of space that gave it rhythmic mobility, buoyancy, lightness, with the use of new building materials such as iron, glass and reinforced concrete. (Droste, 1990).

3. *Prellerhaus*: the student residence in Dessau

In addition to the didactic facilities and learning workshops, Gropius decided to incorporate into his project a building to serve as a students' residence, which became known as the *Prellerhaus*²⁹ and, despite being designed to house students,

²⁹ This designation is a tribute to the painter K. A. Louis Preller, who provided a house in Weimar as a residence for *Staatliche Bauhaus* students.

junior teachers were also allowed to live there, such as Max Krajewsky³⁰ and Marcel Breuer.³¹ The vast majority of students came from various regions of Austria and Germany, and a peculiar fact is that not all of them belonged to financially elite groups. Poor student(s) who were exempt from school fees were unable to afford the cost of lodging at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* or at boarding houses in Dessau, and under these conditions were allowed to sleep, precariously, in the gymnasium located on its ground floor. Despite the unfavorable economic context that that Germany experienced in the years after the First World War, this situation was not always a solution that pleased its student community, as it was forced to face the division that existed between the few selected for housing and those who were waiting for a new vacancy in order to live there. (Isaacs, 1983).

As such, considering the number of enrollments at Dessau (Box 1), the possibility of living in one of the 28 *Prellerhaus* studios was quite limited, even among students with favorable financial conditions, which explains, in part, the consent of the school administration to overnight stays in the gymnasium for the most vulnerable. This situation was worse for females, who were fewer and were allocated to the studios located on the 2nd floor of the building, with the 3rd and 4th floors being for the exclusive use of males.

Box 1: Enrollment Records. Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus (Dessau, 1926-1932)

Year	Summer Course		Winter Course	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1926	60	21	73	28
1927	43	110	125	41
1928	128	47	130	46
1929	122	51	143	58
1930	130	47	No data	
1931	No data		144	44
1932	139	38	Move to Berlin	

Source: Compiled by the author based on information found in Sudhalter (2010).

In any case, Gropius wanted to inaugurate an original architectural concept that combined the advantages in organizing the interior space of this student housing with the facilities arising from the umbilical and territorial affiliation with the other teaching spaces and their workshops:

³⁰ See footnote 18.

³¹ Marcel Lajos Breuer, 1902-1981. A Hungarian architect and designer (born in Pécs), he began his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, but within a few weeks he went to study at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar, 1920-1921). He became the coordinator of the carpentry workshop (Weimar 1921-1926 – Dessau, 1926-1928). (Cobbers, 2009).

The top five floors of the building are comprised of 28 studio residences for Bauhaus students, plus a tea kitchen on each floor. All four floors of the building and the terrace are connected to the kitchen by an elevator. On the ground floor of the studio building there are bathrooms, a gymnasium with changing rooms for those who practice sports and an electric washing machine.³² (Gropius, 1930b, p. 15)

Certainly, the solution adopted by Gropius for this building did not provide all the necessary facilities for a student residence suited to the modernity of the first half of the 20th century. However, it must be recognized that part of its facilities were not so much as taken into consideration in student residence architecture in Europe at that period, starting with the novelty of its location since, according to Reginald Isaacs, the *Prellerhaus* is considered the first student housing in the history of Germany, common to male and female genders, without restrictions against homosexuals or bisexuals, to be spatially integrated into the academic territory of students (Isaacs, 1983). As they are studios (about 20m²), the comfort of each unit met the expectations of those who spent part of their lives there.

From the point of view of its aesthetics, what caught the attention of *Prellerhaus* users, visitors and observers, in addition to the construction elements (concrete, glass and iron), its modern furniture designed in its workshops that became references for the furniture industry, as well as lamps and woven items, were the famous balconies on the east side of the building for 16 (sixteen) of the 28 (twenty-eight) of its studios, considered a hallmark of Gropius and first-generation Bauhaus architecture. (Figures 6, 7 and 8).

³² In den fünf oberen geschossen des atelierhauses sind 28 wohnateliers für studierende des bauhauses untergebracht, auf jeder etage außerdem eine teeküche. Alle vier geschosse des atelierhauses und das begehbare dach sind durch speiseaufzug mit der küche verbunden. Im sockelsgeschoß des atelierhauses liegen bäder, gymnastikraum mit garderen für sporttreibende und eine elektrische waschanstalt.

Figure 6: East view of the Prellerhaus (Dessau, 1926-1927)



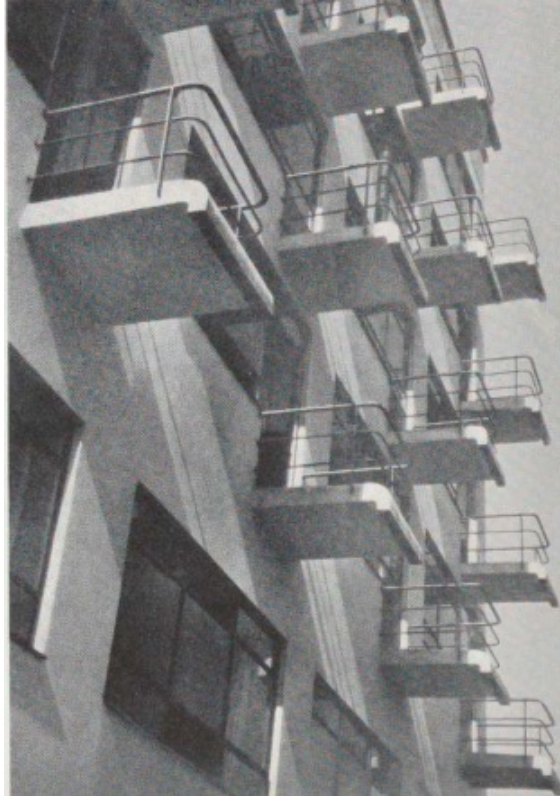
Source: Photographer Leonard (Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin - BHA)

Figure 7 – Dessau Bauhausköpfe (1931-32).



Source: Unknown photographer. (Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau - SBD).

Figure 8 - Prellerhaus balconies. (1925-1926)



Source: (Bayer, Gropius & Gropius, 1938, p. 107).

This was a prominent architectural element used by the students in moments of relaxation (and carefreeness), when they perched on their railings for different photographic records (Figure 7). In addition to moments of fun, they also functioned as informal communication «bridges», as recalled by Xanti Schawinsky³³ and Marianne Brandt:³⁴

Individual balconies became ideal communication stations; from there, contact with neighbors could be established by shouting, without having to go and find each other.³⁵ (Schawinsky, 1998, p. 105)

³³ Alexander (Xanti) Schawinsky, 1904-1979. A Swiss painter and photographer (born in Basel), he was a student at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar, 1924-1925), and continued his studies at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* (Dessau, 1926-1928). (Munder & Gyax, 2015).

³⁴ Marianne Brandt, 1893-1983. A German metal designer and photographer (born in Chemnitz), she began her studies at the *Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar, 1924). After Moholy-Nagy's departure from the Bauhaus, she became deputy coordinator of the metalwork workshop at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* (Dessau, 1928). In 1929, she began working at Gropius' Berlin construction company and left the Bauhaus. (Otto, 2005).

³⁵ Die individuellen balkone stellten sich als ideale kommunikationsstationen heraus; der

All you had to do to call a friend was to step out onto your balcony and whistle. (Schawinsky, 1995, p. 134)

How happy we were in the studios, and how lighthearted were the conversations that occasionally drifted from one balcony to the next!³⁶ (Brandt, 1985, p. 157)

Inside the *Prellerhaus*, the kitchen, similar to what happened in traditional living spaces, especially in rural places, also became one of the nuclei of informal coexistence of the Bauhaus community (students, teachers, employees and visitors), competing in a friendly way with the studios, terrace and open spaces around it. (Isaacs, 1983). It should be noted that Gropius commented on the importance of the central location of the kitchen at the time of the *Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar*, when he emphasized:

Collective work cannot prosper if the simplest living conditions are not given to the members of the community. (...) The Bauhaus kitchen gives every member of the Bauhaus the opportunity to eat well and cheaply. The poor economic situation of most of the apprentices and journeymen made the implementation of the kitchen a primordial necessity. It came true thanks to the willingness of Bauhaus members and friends to make sacrifices.³⁷ (Gropius, 1923, p. 17).

In Dessau, the nature of this coexistence continued, this time perfected by creative spaces that were carefully planned when the new project was being drawn up, stimulating fraternization between the typically academic, cultural and residential areas. Thus, for example, the auditorium was planned to serve as a collective meeting place for students for conferences, concerts, cultural presentations, the Oskar Schlemmer stage workshop, etc. (Rehm, 2005), enabling its users to establish dynamics of community living that split the hours of study, household chores, rest and different categories of leisure, mixing them with the enjoyment achieved through the environments with what had been prescribed by Gropius, as we can see in the following citation:

The stage, between the auditorium and the dining room, could be opened to both sides during a performance, so that the audience could sit down. For

kontakt mit nachbarn konnte von dort aus hergestellt werden, durch zurufe, ohne dass man sich gegenseitig aufsuchen musste.

³⁶ Wie schön wohnten wir in den Ateliers, und wie vergnüglich ging gelegentlich die Unterhaltung von einem Balkönchen zum anderen!

³⁷ Gemeinschaftliche Arbeit kann auf die Dauer nicht gedeihen, wenn nicht die einfachen Lebensbedingungen der Mitglieder der Gemeinschaft allmählich ihre Erfüllung finden (...). Die Bauhausküche gibt jedem Bauhausangehörigen die Möglichkeit, sich gut und billig zu beköstigen. Die schlechte wirtschaftliche Lage eines großen Teils der Lehrlinge und Gesellen machte die Einrichtung der Bauhausküche zu einer Lebensnotwendigkeit. Sie konnte durch Opferwilligkeit der Angehörigen und Freunde des Bauhauses ins Leben gerufen werden.

festive occasions, all the walls of the stage could be opened, so that the dining room, stage, auditorium and foyer formed one large area. The kitchen and adjacent rooms adjoined the dining room. In front of the dining room there was a spacious terrace, connected to a large sports playground.³⁸ (Gropius, 1930b, p. 15)

According to Giulio Argan, the coordinates stipulated by Gropius's architecture could be reversibly altered, as they represent the beginning and end of the spatiality of the built object that convey the idea of fullness or emptiness of the construction. This spatial principle recognized that the building would only have aesthetic value for those who use and experience its interior. (Argan, 1951). And over the years, such precepts stipulated in the architectural project were amalgamated with fragments of the sensibilities of other students and their memories of their time at the *Prellerhaus*, which were used as records of memories that, once selected and publicized, makes it possible for us to get close to the community atmosphere experienced by them. Like the one experienced by Japanese architect and photographer, Yamawaki Iwao, in one of the letters he wrote during his stay at Dessau.

Life in the country is really amusing. I must say. Germans, French, Dutch, Russians, Czechoslovakians, and two Asians, including myself, as well as some Turks and blacks, form a large international body. During the festivals, which take place four or five times a year, we raise quite a ruckus, and at the same time manage to fully savor the flavors of the various countries represented. Last spring, I finally had to build a real stage and perform what I might call a classical Japanese dance. (...) On Friday and Saturday nights we invite each other to our dormitories (which double as work areas). My *sukiyaki*³⁹ has gained a reputation among the junior classmen, who fight to come over. I have a portable cooking stove I bought in Berlin, a frying pan from the old lady downstairs, and cryptomeria chopsticks; the dining table is a drawing board, the bed and beer cases are chairs (...) one can relax and enjoy oneself. (Iwao, 1985, p. 64-65)

In another of his letters, Yamawaki wrote about his first moments, after disembarking in Dessau, where he sought to enhance his studies at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* in the summer of 1930.

The Dessau station before noon is really rather serene. Unaware perhaps that the train had come in, there were four or five porters in conversation on the sunny plaza. Directed by a railroad employee, I crossed the bridge. Following along the railroad tracks for about two blocks, past the roofs of scattered buildings

³⁸ .. die bühne zwischen aula und speisesaal kann bei vorführung nach beiden seiten geöffnet werden, sodaß die zuschauer beiderseits sitzen können. Bei festlichen gelegenheiten lassen sich sämtliche bühnenwände öffnen, sodaß die raumfolge speisesaal, bühne, aula, vestibül zu einer großen festebene vereint werden kann. An den speisesaal schließt sich die küche mit nebenräumen an. Vordem speisesaal liegt eine geräumige terrasse, an die ein großer sportspielplatz anschließt.

³⁹ Typical Japanese food made with various vegetables and boiled mushrooms, meat (beef and/or pork) fried in butter. It accompanies cooking, soy sauce, sake and sugar.

of red brick, there entered into my vision the white building of the Bauhaus with which I was very familiar through photographs. Under the noon sun, the brass railing of the dormitory was glistening yellow. The window was open and a red mattress was being dried. In the empty lot to the left of the building I could see two white poles, high-jump poles, perhaps, standing as if waiting for someone. At the entrance was an abandoned bicycle. I was thoroughly familiar with the floor plan and knew where the kitchen was. I went to the reception desk on the second floor. It was extremely quiet. It must have been summer vacation. The first in the office said, «None of the staff is here. They're all gone away for the summer». Of course, I could not meet Mr. Meyer either. Even Mr. Albers, whom I had come to see, had gone home. The person who came out at last was a very intellectual-looking female student wearing very thick glasses. (Iwao, 1985, p. 59-60).

Even considering the political course Germany was taking, heading with firm steps towards the consolidation of a Nazi state, the accounts of the students concerned about what could happen to their school did not fail to signal times of euphoria in the student residence of the Bauhaus in Dessau. However, it is necessary to consider two important moments in the history of that building. The first of an internal political nature, in 1930, concerns the reaction of director Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to the militancy of communist students who saw the replacement of Hannes Meyer by him as a maneuver that would weaken the participation of the students in school's academic decisions. Mies, with the support of the Council of Masters, expelled students close to the leftist ideas of his former director and started a process of «readmission» of all students, in addition to notifying, without just cause, all Prellerhaus residents to immediately vacate the building, converting the studios into classrooms and workshops. (Droste, 1990).

The second moment, this time of an external nature, is related to the reasons for the school leaving the city of Dessau and its total dissolution in the city of Berlin, in 1933. The reasons are set out in the introduction to this article. However, what I wanted to highlight is the use that the Nazis made of the entire complex in Dessau, including the *Prellerhaus*, in an attempt to transform the buildings designed by Gropius into a Nazi regime memorial. In the article is published entitled *What will become of the Bauhaus?*, the newspaper aligned to the extreme right of the city, besides praising the closure of the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus*, indicated the new use that the municipal authorities should make of the buildings:

With the disappearance of this so-called «faculty of design», one of the most outstanding sites of Jewish-Marxist «art», it will cease to exist on German soil. Let its complete demolition come soon and we want the «aquarium», where today stands the sober glass palace of oriental taste, to use the vernacular of Dessau. This means that homes or facilities will soon be built that will offer the German people a home and recreation.⁴⁰ (Anhalter Anzeiger, July 10, 1932)

⁴⁰ Mit dem Verschwinden dieser sogenannten,«Hochschule für Gestaltung» wird eine der markantesten Stätten jüdisch-marxistischen «Kunst»-Willens von deutscher Erde verschwinden.

In 1933, the facilities were modified from their original design, to accommodate a *Landesfrauen-Arbeitsschule* (State School for Women's Work, dedicated to teaching cooking, dressmaking and sewing, crochet, childcare, ironing, among other activities related to the domestic world), to meet the demands of the Dessau Housewives' Association, as well as a *Nationalsozialistische Gauwalterschule*, a type of school dedicated to the training of officers of the Nazi regime (Figures 9, 10 and 11). In an attempt to fix in the minds of the Germans the erasure of a memory that previously operated an avant-garde school there, the regime did not miss the opportunity to display the national flags of Nazi Germany on its façades and photos of Adolfo Hitler inside the building.

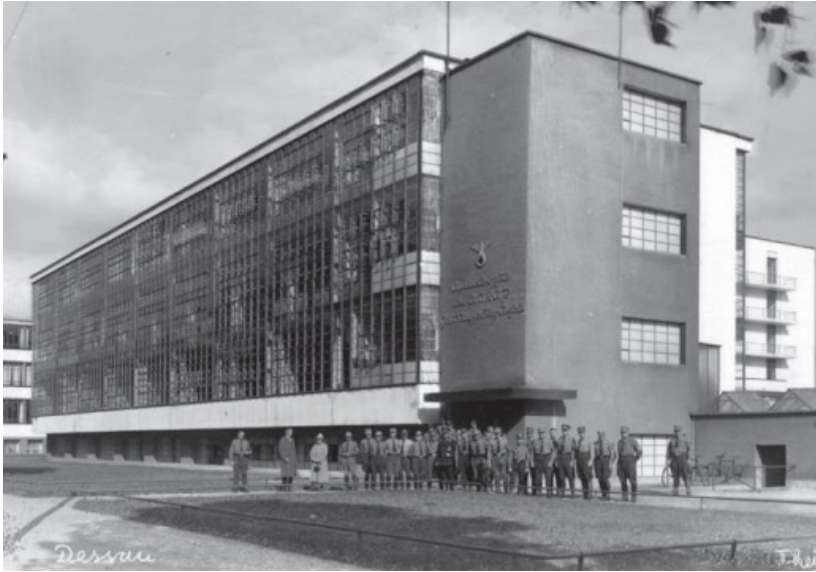
Figure 9 - Die Landesfrauen-Arbeitsschule im Bauhaus (1933)



Source: Anhalter Anzeiger, September 2, 1933.

Möge bald der gänzliche Abbruch folgen und möchten dort, wo heute der nüchterne Glaspalast orientalischen Geschmacks steht, das «Aquarium» wie es im Dessauer Volksmunde heißt, bald Heimstätten oder Anlagen entstehen, die deutschen Menschen Heimat und Erholung bieten.

Figure 10 - Die NS-Gauwalterschule im Bauhausgebäude Dessau (Postcard, 1933)



Source: Photograph by Emil Theiß (Stadtarchiv Dessau)

Figure 11 - Bauhausgebäude Dessau mit Hakenkreuzfahne am Prellerhaus (1933)



Source: Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin

Undoubtedly, although temporary, the melancholy decision that guided the Nazi regime in relation to the *Prellerhaus* and other Bauhaus buildings in Dessau, did not prevent them from being identified by the historiography of modern architecture as a contribution that was to definitely influence the architecture of the second half of the 20th century. Its concepts were assimilated by European, American and Israeli architects in an attempt to include references recommended by Walter Gropius and Ludwig Van der Rohe, with the use they made of large glass surfaces protected, when necessary, by *brise-soleil*. The experience of the *Prellerhaus* bears witness to the vainglory manifested by Gropius in the architectural syntax he adopted. However, in addition to the social importance of the building as a student residence, it was also to stand out for the grandeur of its modern architectural design.

In this sense, the *Prellerhaus* architecture, by expressing the plastic beauty of the built object, transforming it, according to Antonio Vinão (1998), into an academic space as a territory, meant that, throughout the post-war decades, this plasticity was recovered to the point of reproducing extolling reactions that recognize its importance for the history of the Bauhaus, as well as the avant-garde architecture of the 20th century. This movement to reclaim a place of memory, which, furthermore, rightfully belongs to Bauhausian historicity, led the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) to restore part of the original architecture of the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* in the 1970s. But it was only with the granting by UNESCO, in 1996, of the title of World Heritage Site that the unified Germany (Federal Republic of Germany) began a second and, definitive, restoration that lasted 10 years (1996-2006), thus reestablishing its historical and artistic value. (Markgraf, 2007).

4. Final Considerations

The challenge for an investigation that deals with an object as peculiar as the architectural experience of a building idealized to be a student residence intended to serve the student community of the Bauhaus, in Dessau (1926-1930), is part of the efforts of researchers of architecture, history and education that, more recently, have sought explanations about the importance of this type of building and its experiences, and how they contribute to the historical understanding of spatial, aesthetic, bodily sensibilities, etc., with interpretative approaches that enrich the history of European and American universities.

Inspired by the treatise written by the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius (1st century BC), we have extracted teachings that we make use of in our final considerations with the assurance that we are not committing any anachronistic slip given that this is an article about modern architecture in the 20th century. In this sense, we refer to the lesson on his idea of architecture, published in the first chapter of his masterpiece «*De Architectura*»:

The architect's science is adorned with various disciplines and various forms of knowledge, by which all works carried out by other arts are tested. It is the result of theory and practice. Practice is continuous use and is perfected by exercise, which is carried out by the act of giving the material intended for any work, the form presented by a drawing. Theory, on the contrary, can

demonstrate and explain things that have been built by skill and reasoning based on proportion.⁴¹ (Vitruve, 1847, p. 27 and 29).

The concept adopted by Walter Gropius for student housing that we have covered in this article is accompanied by an impressive innovation in architecture aimed at students. We can speculate that Gropius only realized the importance of the *Prellerhaus* for the modern movement, years later, when it became an object of study in the forums that established the canons of avant-garde architecture in the 20th century, in particular, the CIAMs (International Congresses of Modern Architecture).

Certainly, like Vitruvius, he revolutionized the scenario of his artistic and professional performance, presenting novelties that were still unusual, such as: glass walls, flat roofs, modulated rhythm of the building structure. Guided by syntactic and emblematic values, this symbolic-functional system has not gone unnoticed by urban planning in the face of the need for residential housing, including student and university housing.

It can therefore be deduced that the *Prellerhaus* idea of architectural space is associated with the principle expounded by Gaston Bachelard, who believes that each and every space, truly inhabited, that transcends the geometric, brings with it the essence of the notion of home (Bachelard, 1957), which coincidentally is expressed in the particle *Haus* (house) of *Prellerhaus*. Therefore, the representative space of this building transcends the geometric character for which it was designed, and takes on the (un)conscious self-understanding of its users as a place-territory, not just shelter (nest) and physical protection (shell). And in this sense, to conclude, the *Prellerhaus*, as a place-territory experienced by students, we conjecture that their personal and academic relationships were preponderant in their coexistence, by involving in the relationships established with that space: diverse cultural experiences; happy, nostalgic, sad and traumatic sensibilities; collective and intimate emotions; daydreams, (un)peaceful relationships etc, all of them, remarkable for those who lived there.

5. Illustrations

Figure 1 – Zeitschrift Bauhaus, nummer 1 (1926) - Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin (BHA)

Figure 2 – Aerial photographs of the Bauhaus buildings in Dessau – (Gropius, 1930b)

Figure 3 – Aerial photographs of the Bauhaus buildings in Dessau – (Gropius, 1930b)

⁴¹ Architecti est scientia pluribus disciplinis et variis eruditionibus ornata, cuius indicio probantur omnia, quae ab ceteris artibus perficiuntur opera. Ea nascitur ex fabrica et ratiocinatione. Fabrica est continuata ac trita usus meditatio, qua manibus perficitur e materia cuiuscum que generis opus est, ad propositum deformationis. Ratiocinatio autem est, quae res fabricatas sollertia ac ratione proportionis demonstrare atque explicare potest. (French version: L'architecture est une science qui embrasse une grande variété d'études et de connaissances ; elle connaît et juge de toutes les productions des autres arts. Elle est le fruit de la pratique et de la théorie. La pratique est la conception même continuée et travaillée par l'exercice, qui se réalise par l'acte donnant à la matière destinée à un ouvrage quelconque, la forme que présente un dessin. La théorie, au contraire, consiste à démontrer, à expliquer la justesse, la convenance des proportions des objets travaillés.)

Figure 4 – Study for a color composition of the façade of the Bauhaus in Dessau (68x100cm) - Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin (BHA)

Figure 5 – Floor Plan of the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Bauhaus* – Personal collection

Figure 6 – East view of the *Prellerhaus* (Dessau, 1926) – Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin (BHA)

Figure 7 – Dessau Bauhausköpfe (unknown photographer, 1931-32). Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau (SBD)

Figure 8 – *Prellerhaus* balconies (1925-1926) - (Bayer, Gropius & Gropius, 1938)

Figure 9 - Die Landesfrauen-Arbeitsschule im Bauhaus (1933) – published in the *Anhalter Anzeiger*, September 2, 1933 - Stadtarchiv Dessau

Figure 10 – Postcard Die NS-Gauwalterschule im Bauhausgebäude Dessau (*Emil Theiß, 1933*) - Stadtarchiv Dessau

Figure 11 – Bauhausgebäude Dessau mit Hakenkreuzfahne am Prellerhaus (1933. Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin (BHA)

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