

THE BAUHAUS

Walter Gropius was the founder of the Bauhaus and remained committed to that institution throughout his life.

He was born in Berlin from a middle-class family. In 1908, after studying architecture in Munich and Berlin, Gropius joined the office of the renowned architect and industrial designer Peter Behrens. Other members of Behrens's practice included Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier.

In 1910 Gropius opened his own company. He designed furniture, wallpapers, objects for mass production, automobile bodies and even a diesel locomotive. In 1911, Gropius worked with Adolf Meyer on the design of the Fagus-Werk, a factory in the town of Alfeld an der Leine. With its clear cubic form and transparent façade of steel and glass, this factory building is considered a pioneering work of what later became known as modern architecture.

In 1914 Gropius served on the Western front in World War I and experienced this war as a catastrophe. In 1918, he joined the November Group, which aimed to incorporate the impulses of the revolution in art. From 1919, Gropius was the head of the Work Council for Art, a radical group of architects, painters and sculptors. In addition, he contributed to the

Gläserne Kette (crystal chain), a chain letter initiated by Bruno Taut that called for the "dissolution of the previous foundations" of architecture and the "disappearance of the personality" of the artist.

In the same year he founded the Bauhaus School in Weimar. Gropius explained the idea of the Bauhaus in the founding manifesto. The school's most innovative educational aspect was its dualistic approach to training in the workshops, which were codirected by a craftsman and an artist. The crafts-based work was understood as the ideal unity of artistic design and material production.

For Gropius the Bauhaus was a laboratory of the arts where the traditional apprentice and master model was maintained, but where various disciplines were interconnected in a completely new way. The outcome of this approach was not established from the start but was to be discovered in the spirit of research and experimentation, which Gropius called "fundamental research" that was applied to all the disciplines and their products.

In 1923, Gropius initiated a change of course at the Bauhaus with a major exhibition under the motto "Kunst und Technik – Eine Neue Einheit" (art and technology – a new unity). The school now turned



towards industrial methods of production. With the politically motivated move to the industrial city of Dessau in 1925, a new era began for the Bauhaus. During this period, which is seen as his best and most productive, Gropius designed not only the Bauhaus Building (opened in 1926) but was also intensively involved in the development of the large-scale residential building and the rationalisation of the construction process. The buildings created in Dessau included the Masters' Houses (1925/26) that were built for the Bauhaus masters, the Deassau-Törten housing estate (1926–1928) and the Employment Office.

After moving to Berlin, Gropius dedicated himself completely to his architectural practice and the promotion of New Architecture. The most important completed buildings of this period include the Damerstock housing estate in Karlsruhe (1928/29) and the Siemensstadt housing estate in Berlin (1929/30). In 1934, Gropius emigrated to England and then on to the USA in 1937. He worked there as a professor for architecture at the Graduate School of Design of Harvard University. In 1938, he organised the exhibition Bauhaus 1919–1928 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York together with Herbert Bayer. He became an American citizen in 1944.

During the last years of his life, Gropius was once again frequently active in Berlin. Among other projects, he built a nine-storey residential building in the Hansa district in 1957 within the scope of the

Interbau exhibition. In 1964/65, Gropius designed plans for the Bauhaus Archive in Darmstadt. These were realised in a modified form in Berlin from 1976 to 1979 after Gropius's death.

Even beyond his official term as the Bauhaus director from 1919 to 1928, Gropius was emphatically committed to the recognition and dissemination of the Bauhaus idea. When he died in 1969 in Boston, the Bauhaus was at least as famous as its founder.



ANTONYMS

● Read the text again and find antonyms for the following words.

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| ① Unknown | | ⑤ Finished | |
| ② Closed | | ⑥ Worst | |
| ③ Ancient | | ⑦ Small-scale | |
| ④ Separated | | ⑧ Minor | |

ACTIVITIES



WRITING

● Rewrite the following sentences in your own words.

- ① In 1918, he joined the November Group, which aimed to incorporate the impulses of the revolution in art.
- ② Gropius explained the idea of the Bauhaus in the founding manifesto.
- ③ The school now turned towards industrial methods of production.
- ④ During the last years of his life, Gropius was once again frequently active in Berlin.
- ⑤ When he died in 1969 in Boston, the Bauhaus was at least as famous as its founder.

SPEAKING

● Explain in your own words the following quotation by Walter Gropius: "We want to create the purely organic building, boldly emanating its inner laws, free of untruths or ornamentation."