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MARGRET KENTGENS-CRAIG

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**MARGRET KENTGENS-CRAIG**

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In architecture, . . .  
[habit] by and large  
determines even  
optical reception.  
It, too, occurs  
by its nature  
less in a state  
of concentrated  
attentiveness  
than in one of  
coincidental observation.

**Walter Benjamin**

(The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproduction)

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Bauhaus, Dessau, winter of 1928–1929. (Photo: Harvard University Art Museums.)

## Introduction

**T**he Bauhaus, in 1919, was founded in Weimar by the German architect Walter Gropius. In 1925 the school was moved to Dessau, in 1932 it was moved to Berlin, and in 1933 it was dissolved.

At the end of this century, the Bauhaus remains a remarkable cultural historical phenomenon. Hardly any other artistic movement has been the subject of research and writing as extensive as this extraordinary school of design, although it existed for a mere 14 years and could boast fewer than 1,300 students. Its assimilation throughout the world can be traced through nearly eighty years in numerous buildings, artworks, objects, designs, concepts, and curricula. The movement's force has been evident during that time not only in the influence it has exercised but also in the resistance it has provoked. Few who have been exposed to the Bauhaus have been left cold by its ideas. In December 1996, the Bauhaus building in Dessau and the masters' houses, as well as the Bauhaus sites in Weimar, were added to UNESCO's international list of cultural heritage sites, thus recognizing the universal value of the Bauhaus's achievements in revolutionizing architecture, design, and art in the twentieth century.

Even in its early years, the Bauhaus's reputation extended well beyond national boundaries. The institution's basis in the unstable period between the two wars, its inextricability from the Weimar Republic, and its premature end, hastened by the Third Reich, helped raise its profile. American journals reported on the school as early as the year of its founding. The body of information grew over the following years as the Bauhaus became increasingly known in America. After its closing, many of its protagonists emigrated to the United States; thus, the school's intellectual heritage could be disseminated there as nowhere else in the world. One would expect to find a correspondingly authentic image of the historical Bauhaus there, but that is not the case. Instead, one finds a reception that tends to reduce a complex and multifaceted phenomenon to a simple formula, most often couched in architectural examples. For some, the Bauhaus became a transfigured myth, for others, a paradigm of modernism's fall from grace. The activity of Bauhaus architects in America is apparently only one explanation for this state of affairs: the appointment of Bauhaus protagonists to positions at prominent American universities, not to mention their subsequent influence, can only have been predicated on a great degree of prior acceptance. This acceptance did not arise *ex nihilo*, but rather had to be cultivated. In fact, the basis for this acceptance was created between 1919 and 1936. The key to understanding the American reception of the Bauhaus therefore is not to be sought in the émigrés' success stories nor in such impressive events as the famous New York Bauhaus exhibition in 1938. Instead, it may be found in the course of America's early contact with the Bauhaus, which itself was a vital, developing movement within classical modernism. It is the intention of this book to examine and document the course of this

process. Thus, it is not important to the author to add yet another chapter to the story of the historical Bauhaus's origins in Weimar, Dessau, and Berlin, but rather to unfold how, and with what content, the Bauhaus became known and accepted in the United States between 1919 and 1936; how specific ideas were taken up, reworked, and deployed; and how, finally, a genuine American image of the Bauhaus, one that remains influential today, resulted from this process.

This book is meant to invite a more comprehensive understanding of the United States' initial encounters with the Bauhaus and the implications of this process. It explains that by 1936, the recognition of the Bauhaus in America was the result of a consistent flow of information, of fine-tuned marketing and lobbying, and finally of a unique congruence of the demand for new ideas in the 1920s and early 1930s and their supply: the Bauhaus concepts were available at the right time at the right place. The author also discusses the history of the early reception of the Bauhaus in America as a precedent for the fame-making machinery that became a powerful commercial instrument in the professional art world after World War I.

When Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the school's last director, dissolved the school under political duress on August 10, 1933, this act represented a deep historical gash in German culture. Any hope of further developing the Bauhaus's intellectual tradition in its native land proved vain in light of the Third Reich's political and cultural direction. As Mies himself certainly knew, the Bauhaus had nonetheless always been more than an institution that could simply be closed down; it was an idea. It was therefore able to survive the termination of its pedagogic activity and continue to propagate itself. The significance of this fact for the art and architectural history of the United States is demonstrable. The Bauhaus's end in Germany marked the inception of the *völkisch* cultural and architectural politics advocated by the National Socialists, and the end of any significant (or mentionable) public recognition of the avant-gardes. Thus, the school's closure led directly to the emigration of many members of the Bauhaus. For the U.S. reception of the Bauhaus, however, the most significant changes occurred three years later, in 1936. After that point, the Bauhaus's "Americanization" began. This process included the institutional development of Bauhaus-inspired programs, the realization of its ideas on American soil, and the integration of its artists and architects into American culture. Starting in 1936–1937, Josef Albers broadened the scope of his pedagogic and artistic influence beyond the borders of North Carolina. The year 1937 marks the beginning of Walter Gropius's professorship at Harvard and the preliminary events that would lead to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's appointment to what was then Armour Institute in Chicago. The same year saw the founding in Chicago of the New Bauhaus, the immediate successor

to the historical Bauhaus under the direction of László Moholy-Nagy.<sup>1</sup> Taken together, these events mark the culmination of a 17-odd-year period over which the Bauhaus's renown in America had grown. Thereafter, Bauhaus protagonists would be active in transforming the American theory, pedagogy, and practice of art, design, and architecture. As they did so, they extended the radius of their influence by encouraging other Bauhaus participants to follow their example. These later émigrés included Marcel Breuer, Herbert Bayer, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Hin Bredendieck, and Marli Ehrmann. The early phase of reception, between 1919 and 1936, is fundamental to a comprehensive understanding of America's contact with the Bauhaus. It holds the key to insights into areas of American Bauhaus history that have been neglected until now, and thus to insights into the source of contemporary beliefs about the school.

The Bauhaus was a complex cultural phenomenon. It was simultaneously an idea, a school, and a movement. It culled its ideas from the medieval concept of the building guild, from the romantic belief in the inherent creativity of man, as well as from classicism, which encompassed Karl Friedrich Schinkel's and Gottfried Semper's recognition of industrialization's significance for art and architecture. It gathered inspiration from the achievements of French engineering in the late nineteenth century and from the arts manufacturers in England. It incorporated Richard Wagner's concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, absorbed elements of the arts and crafts movement, the Wiener Werkstätten, art nouveau, Jugendstil and art deco, the Chicago Style, and the idiom of Frank Lloyd Wright. Expressionism, fauvism, and cubism can be counted among its influences; principles gathered from the program of the German Werkbund, Peter Behrens's pioneering experiments, and the goals articulated by the Workers' Council for Art (Arbeitsrat für Kunst) were integrated into the Bauhaus's programs. Its communication with contemporaneous European avant-garde movements, such as De Stijl, l'Esprit Nouveau, and Vkhutemas, located the Bauhaus solidly within the development of pan-European modernism and guaranteed a symbiosis between indigenous and imported ideas.<sup>2</sup> As progeny of the Weimar Republic and a public institution, it was also exposed to political influence.

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1 See Peter Hahn, "Vom Bauhaus zum New Bauhaus," in Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, ed., *50 Jahre New Bauhaus*, 10. For comparison, also see Marcel Franciscono, *Walter Gropius and the Creation of the Bauhaus in Weimar*.

2 For more in-depth information on the Bauhaus's intellectual roots, Hans Maria Wingler's comprehensive study is a good source. See *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*, xviii, 1–3. Also see Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 499.

The school's identity was transformed with each change of location, program, director, and teachers. The individual institutional phases in Weimar, Dessau, and Berlin can only serve as a crude parameter with which to measure the changes undergone by its content and perspective. The most obvious stages of the Bauhaus's development can be identified relatively easily. The first was characterized by Walter Gropius and his attempts to define the school's program and orientation. The periods under the direction of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe represent further phases.<sup>3</sup> But changes were not only instigated by the three architect-directors. The other disciplines taught at the Bauhaus should not be neglected, nor should the other strong personalities who contributed greatly to the school's character. It is obvious that the Bauhaus as a single and homogeneous system simply did not exist. Bauhaus painters such as Johannes Itten and Georg Muche pursued different ideas than László Moholy-Nagy and Josef Albers. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe considered his work hardly in the same category with Hannes Meyer's. In the light of such comparisons, it seems less than useful to insist upon an absolute definition of the concept "Bauhaus," or to speak of the "Bauhaus Moderne" as a "coded system of rhetoric."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, it is justifiable to speak of the Bauhaus if one recalls that "the teachers and, in the broadest sense, all participants in the Bauhaus were committed to a series of common principles relative to the aim, content, and methods of artistic and pedagogic activity." Therefore, "the simplification implicit in speaking about the Bauhaus as an entity in and of itself is not fundamentally incorrect."<sup>5</sup>

If the Bauhaus as a whole is described here as a multifaceted entity whose pedagogical core was nonetheless homogeneous, then the same may be said of the individual disciplines, including architecture as the one discipline that became the main focus of interest in the course of the American reception of the Bauhaus. And if this premise is true, what then does "Bauhaus architecture" mean? While Walter Gropius at all times disputed any statements relating to the Bauhaus as a style, contemporary discourse has adopted the term, in particular in the United States, Germany, Israel, and Switzerland, thus acknowledging that the Bauhaus was bound to its era like any other movement. A definition of its architecture derived from realized buildings is of little assistance either, as it would be founded upon relatively few examples. In the case of the Weimar Bauhaus, which included no department of architecture, only an experimental single-family house designed by Georg Muche (1923) could be cited. In Dessau, one could point to the famous Bauhaus building itself (1925–1926), the masters' houses (1925–1926), and the municipal employment office (1927–1929), all by Walter Gropius, the Kornhaus (1929–1930) and a single-family house (1926–1927) by Carl Fieger, the experimental steel house by Georg Muche and Richard Paulick (1926), the gallery-type apartment houses by Hannes Meyer (1929–1930), a small kiosk (1932) by Ludwig

Mies van der Rohe, and the Siedlung Törten (1926–1928), which represented the Bauhaus's urbanistic as well as its social concepts. These are nonetheless too few examples to comprehend the great spectrum of architectural production at the Bauhaus.

Nor can a serviceable definition be based upon the institutional sub-structure. Such a definition would certainly allow the inclusion of theory, design, and project work, as well as of realized buildings in other locations, including the Auerbach house by Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer (1924, Jena), Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Tugendhat house (1930, Brno), and his model house built for the Berlin Building Exposition of 1931, but only if the private architectural practices of the two directors were to be admitted as an extension of the work done at the school. Until 1927, there was no department of architecture at the Bauhaus. As it was understood until then, "Bauhaus" architecture, even its most important examples, was defined largely by the work of Gropius's private office. Mies van der Rohe also maintained his own office after assuming the Bauhaus's directorship in 1930. Any definition so closely tied to the institution would necessarily preclude direct predecessors or successors. The Fagus factory (1911), the projects for two glass skyscrapers (1920-1921 and 1921-1922), the buildings at the Weissenhof-Siedlung (1927), and the Barcelona Pavilion (1929) are such milestones in the work of their authors and in the history of classical modernism that they must have influenced the work at the Bauhaus. Therefore, they cannot be excluded from a definition of Bauhaus architecture.

Modernism has become a term that requires careful definition, in architecture and other disciplines. "Bauhaus modernism" is characterized in terms of period, location, ideas, and formal considerations. It was part of the "heroic age" of modernism, in German terminology *klassische Moderne*. It is distinguished from parallel movements of the 1920s by its institutionalization and by a synthetic concept, social utopianism, and optimal degree of formal-aesthetic purity and perfection far ahead of the available technological means of realization.<sup>6</sup>

The attempt to find a binding definition for "Bauhaus architecture" is inherently endangered by a tendency to oversimplify and to exclude on formal grounds. The most viable working concept looks at Bauhaus architecture in its broadest sense, as the complex of theories, designs, and works that came into their

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3 See J. Fiske McCullough, "The House of the Bauhaus Reconsidered," 162.

4 Thomas Hasler, "Die Kirche Sankt Anna in Düren von Rudolf Schwarz," 20.

5 Karl-Albert Fuchs, "Die Stellung des Bauhauses in der Geschichte und die Bedeutung seines Erbes für die entwickelte sozialistische Gesellschaft," 440.

6 See Berthold Burkhardt, "The Conservation of Modern Monuments," 187–188.



own at the Bauhaus and which, in the 1920s and early 1930s, manifested the beliefs of the architects who determined the school's thrust.<sup>7</sup> Those architects were the Bauhaus's three directors, Gropius, Meyer, and Mies van der Rohe. This definition also allows consideration of other teachers, collaborators, and students.

From the beginning, Walter Gropius credited architecture with a fundamental role in the Bauhaus program. The wording of the 1919 manifesto that heralded the school's founding reads: "The ultimate aim of all visual arts is the complete building! . . . Architects, sculptors, painters . . . let us desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like a crystal symbol of a new faith."<sup>8</sup> The concept "Bauhaus architecture" will not be used within the framework of this study in its all-encompassing sense, as defined by Gropius in his school-founding manifesto of 1919 and his 1935 publication *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*; for Gropius's two successors, Meyer and Mies, each also impressed upon the Bauhaus their own changing concepts of architecture. In addition, these approaches were subject to transformation. Thus, in his 1923 program for a new unity of art and technology, Walter Gropius maintained that architecture "went hand in hand with technology and had developed a characteristic appearance that deviated from the old craft of building. Its identifying traits are clear, well-proportioned lines from which all unnecessary ingredients have been removed—the same traits characteristic of the modern engineered products of the machine."<sup>9</sup> Hannes Meyer defined architecture as "collective, the satisfaction of all necessities of life once the personal has been expunged; the realization of which . . . [is subject to] the law of least resistance and of economy; whose aim . . . it must be to achieve the optimum with regard to function."<sup>10</sup> Artistic expression was not Meyer's goal. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, on the contrary, advances a spiritually borne and aesthetically ambitious concept of architecture. He understands building as "the art of building [Baukunst]," as "man's attempt to deal with his surroundings in spatial terms. . . . Thus, the art of building is not only a technical problem, a problem of organization and economy. The art of building can in fact always be equated with the spatial execution of intellectual decisions. It is bound to its time and can only be manifested in the currency of its functions and the means of its times. Knowledge of the era, its responsibilities and its means, is the necessary prerequisite to work in the building arts."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the intellectual and professional divergences among these three positions resulted in equally different beliefs about what should be taught at the Bauhaus and in what manner.

Nonetheless, common characteristics do exist in the work of the three directors; and it is by studying them that the kernel of what might be called Bauhaus architecture can most probably be ascertained. With few exceptions, all three di-

rectors at the Bauhaus pursued the stylistic goals of classical European modernism. They were part of the "heroic period" of the twenties during which they became recognized as avant-gardists, meaning that they were intellectual pioneers and experimentalists. All three were closely related to the Neues Bauen or new architecture movement in Germany that evolved during the 1920s as part of postwar European abstract art and of the social goals of the Weimar Republic. All three of them, although not equally, contributed important impetuses to the Neues Bauen through the Bauhaus. They were bound to the idea that a radical break with historicizing architecture and an abandonment of traditional architectural concepts was necessary. They sought a new and universal formal language for architecture by means of abstraction; denial of symmetry, ornament, and representation; and explicit visual references to the technical building process. They used their new forms to experiment with construction, using both traditional and new building materials and methods. In this sense, their architecture was meant to be more than the definition of modern form; it was intended to offer solutions for organizing contemporary work and habitation. In the early years of the Bauhaus, in the aftermath of World War I, it was even intended to transform life and the human being itself. The Bauhaus's humanistic ideological roots and utopian concepts as well as its institutionalization and sites of production distinguish it from contemporaneous European avant-garde movements: the Bauhaus centered on education, including economically viable workshop training and production. The young people who were trained in Weimar, Dessau, and Berlin were to assert themselves in a job market controlled by industry and at the same time move the new architecture into the future.

Since this book is concerned with the processes of cultural reception, the authentic character of the historical Bauhaus architecture represents only the background, helping to reconstruct the development and details of the image of the Bauhaus and its architecture formed in America between 1919 and 1936. It is an image that deviates from the original in more than its details. The word "reception" stems from the Latin *receptio* and means, literally, "to take hold of again; to receive."<sup>12</sup> As applied to cultural history, reception research investigates the en-

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7 See Christian Wolsdorff, "Die Architektur am Bauhaus," 310.

8 Walter Gropius, "Program of the Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar," quoted in Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*, 31.

9 Walter Gropius, *Internationale Architektur*, 71.

10 Hannes Meyer, "Curriculum Vitae," quoted in Wolsdorff, "Die Architektur am Bauhaus," 313.

11 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Die Voraussetzungen baukünstlerischen Schaffens," transcript in Mies van der Rohe Files, Library of Congress.

12 German definition of *Empfang* based upon Gero von Wilpert, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*, 638.

counter of a group or individual with new ideas or their physical manifestations, and traces those ideas' dissemination, acceptance, and influence. These processes must be reconstructed in their authentic form in order to be evaluated. In the case of the Bauhaus, which Hans Maria Wingler appropriately describes as "the peak and focus of an extremely complex and furcated development which can be traced back to Romanticism and continues into the present,"<sup>13</sup> this task is not simple. The process of transfer of artistic, intellectual, and pedagogical concepts to another cultural context is at the same time a process of acculturation and transformation. Therefore, everything that is not codified in some formulaic expression is in danger of being perceived and disseminated in modified, if not distorted, form. This condition is inherent in the nature of processes of reception, which always involve a recipient whose individual predilections determine content and values to a significant degree. These predilections thus assume a decisive role in the course and result of the process. In the end, every different recipient will arrive at different conclusions,<sup>14</sup> so that objective apprehension is not always possible. It is seldom that two people see the same thing in the same way. The fact that the preconditions and standards of judgment change in the course of time only complicates matters.

The process of reception can also be fundamentally influenced by the general context in which it occurs: the concrete cultural, political, economic, and societal givens of each era. Thus, the question at stake in this book is not only what kind of Bauhaus Americans perceived in the 1920s and early 1930s and how this perception emerged, but also the kind of America that existed at the time and that became interested in the Bauhaus. The routes, means, and strategies of transmission also play a role. It may be difficult to analyze processes of reception in retrospect if historical perspective is to be respected. It is even more difficult when the issues at stake, as in the case of the Bauhaus, are extraordinarily complex and have been transferred across considerable linguistic and cultural barriers. More than a ripe old age lies between the present and the period during which the Bauhaus became known in the United States. Those years, and the world war that occurred in their course, have erased much evidence.

That is regrettable, for although Bauhaus scholarship is extraordinarily prolific, it has yet to respond adequately to the question of how the Bauhaus became known in the United States and how its principles could find a foothold. Research thus far has clarified and documented the influence of the Bauhaus, including its architecture, from the moment of its protagonists' emigration. These studies have also long been dominated by earlier Bauhaus participants or their associates. With regard to the proliferation of Bauhaus principles in the United States, research has one-sidedly focused on developments that occurred as of the late thirties and has concentrated on the role of the emigrants, especially

those who were fortunate enough to continue their careers successfully on the other side of the Atlantic. Comprehensive discussion of the processes and background conditions that provided the basis for the Bauhaus's later success have been neglected in favor of partial explanations.

The American reception of the Bauhaus in the 1920s and 1930s occurred almost exclusively within expert circles. Art and architecture periodicals served as important points of exchange and forums of discussion for the information coming from Europe, including that on the Bauhaus. Some of those periodicals were certainly among the standard library fare of higher educational institutions. Because of the close connection between the early American reception of the Bauhaus and the political reception of Germany after the First World War, periodicals with other cultural or historical emphases are also relevant. The criteria for including publications in this study was their availability and relevance for an academic and professional audience. Sources such as films were also included, as were the oral accounts of people who had experienced or influenced the process of reception. The political context of this process, finally, is described by the FBI files that were kept on various Bauhaus emigrants beginning in 1939. They fall outside the chronological brackets set for this study, but the documents depict the political climate in the years immediately before Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and other Bauhaus denizens came to America.

The American experience of the Bauhaus, it must be recalled, is neither the first nor a unilateral instance of German art and architecture's influence in the United States. A case in point is Dankmar Adler, who as a child emigrated to the United States in 1854 from the area near Weimar, and who later helped to establish the fame of the Chicago school beginning in 1881 with Louis Sullivan (whose grandfather was also German). That school's traits in turn influenced the daring skyscrapers envisioned by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe at the beginning of the 1920s, as well as the design by Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer for the Chicago Tribune competition of 1922. There is plentiful documentation of the inspiration that Frank Lloyd Wright, who as a young assistant in the office of Adler and Sullivan had worked on the Auditorium Theater, among other projects, provided for the work of Gropius, Mies, and others. Wright's 1910 visit to Berlin on the occasion of the first German exhibition of his drawings in the Academy of the Arts reinforced this exchange. In that year and thereafter, the Berlin publishing house of Ernst Wasmuth published a comprehensive two-volume monograph of Wright's work, most likely on the recommendation of Kuno Franke, a Harvard University guest

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13 Winger, introduction to *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*.

14 See Jane P. Tompkins, *Reader-Response Criticism*.

professor of German extraction.<sup>15</sup> Wright's work could therefore reach a broader audience. Mies van der Rohe summarized the impact of these publications in few words: "The more we were absorbed in the study of these creations, the greater became our admiration for [Wright's] incomparable talent, the boldness of his conceptions, and the independence of his thought and action. The dynamic impulses emanating from his work invigorated a whole generation."<sup>16</sup>

The effect of Frank Lloyd Wright's work on certain buildings and designs of both Bauhaus architects can be proven. Likewise, numerous examples can be cited to describe the influence of American artists and architects on contemporaneous developments in Germany as well as the mutuality of influence between German and American art and architecture in the early decades of this century. The large American metropolises, the "modern spirit," the exaltation of technology to a science, and the rationalization of construction provided the images that contributed to the Old World's fascination with America in the first two decades of the century. By the same token, such European cultural centers as Paris and Berlin exuded an attraction responsible for many an American Wanderschaft. Thus in 1913 Patrick Henry Bruce and Marsden Hartley contributed works to the first Deutscher Herbstsalon in Berlin. Conversely, Bruce, along with the "color-painters" Arthur Burdett Frost, Jr., Stanton McDonald-Wright, and Morgan Russell, introduced the French avant-garde to the American modernists. It is not surprising that a number of American students were matriculated at the Bauhaus in its later phases and that a short time after the Bauhaus's founding, a visual artist raised in New York, Lyonel Feininger, was hired by the school. The power of his work, his personality, and the length of his tenure there, which lasted almost for the institution's entire existence, contributed to his considerable influence at the school. The eminent Bauhaus historian Hans Maria Wingler has called him "one of the great individuals at the Bauhaus."<sup>17</sup>

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15 According to Brendan Gill, *Many Masks*, 201. The title of this first comprehensive publication of Frank L. Wright's oeuvre up to that date was *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright*.

16 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, quoted in William H. Jordy, "The Aftermath of the Bauhaus in America," 489.

17 Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*, 245.

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**POLITICAL  
AND  
ECONOMIC  
EMPOWERMENT**

All the past we leave behind,  
We debouch upon a newer, mightier world, varied world,  
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,  
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

—Walt Whitman

At the end of the First World War, the United States found itself in the position of victor, strengthened and nearly unscathed but confronted with the responsibility associated with the role of a great power, a role into which the country was forced to grow. The journalist Philip Gibbs wrote in *Harper's Monthly* in 1919: "The United States of America has a new meaning in the world, and entered, by no desire of its own, the great family of nations, as an uncle whose authority and temper is to be respected by those who desire influence in their family quarrels, difficulties, and conditions of life."<sup>1</sup> The United States accepted its new authority hesitantly. At the beginning of the twenties a tendency toward isolationism prevailed, and thus few were inclined to allow the effects of the transformations in Europe to become felt. The war had reinforced the conviction that all evil came from outside or from strangers in one's own country. The ideological challenges experienced by the Old World disquieted only a handful of citizens. Americans had known no emperor, no aristocracy, and no bourgeoisie in the traditional sense, so that movements comparable to those in Europe had no political basis for support. The leftist movements were weak in numbers and relatively powerless. In the early 1920s, the country's Communist Party counted between 8,000 and 15,000 members.<sup>2</sup> The Socialist Party numbered 118,000 in 1920 and had shrunk to 11,000 only two years later. In some states, social progressivism had come to a complete standstill. Nor did the leftist parties gain membership or influence as a result of the deep depression that began at the decade's end. The position of "capitalism" remained unbroken despite the stock market crash, even after Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president in 1933 and instituted the New Deal to prompt social change.

In only a few years, between 1914 and 1919, the United States transformed itself from a debtor to a creditor nation. In 1929, the gross national product was greater than that of Germany, France, Great Britain, Japan, and Canada combined. By 1932, the country's industrialization was essentially complete and the machine, in Henry Ford's words, had become the "new messiah." During the period in which the Weimar Re-

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1 Philip Gibbs, "America's New Place in the World," 89.

2 See William E. Leuchtenberg, *The Perils of Prosperity*, 108, 187.



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