

GERMANY

Bauhaus and its Sites in Weimar and Dessau

Brief description

Between 1919 and 1933, the Bauhaus School, based first in Weimar and then in Dessau, revolutionized architectural and aesthetic concepts and practices. The buildings put up and decorated by the school's professors (Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Wassily Kandinsky) launched the Modern Movement, which shaped much of the architecture of the 20th century.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1996

Agency responsible for site management

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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (ii), (iv), (vi)

Justification provided by the State Party

As the first sites of a cultural development within Modernism which came to have world-wide effects in visual arts, applied art, architecture and urban planning, the buildings of the former art school (I) and of the applied art school (II) deserve the highest possible ranking from the point of view of preserving historical monuments in relationship both to historical value and artistic value because of the completed remnants of the murals. They

acquire additional axiological relevance as original architectural achievements of Henry van de Velde, which in some respects can be viewed as precursors of Modernism.

The "Haus am Horn" (III) deserves the highest evaluation from both an historical and an artistic point of view as the only architectural remnant of the Bauhaus in Weimar and as the very first practical architectural statement of this educational institution, and as an experimental structure of the "New Building Style" (Neues Bauen) for a planned - and in Dessau largely realised - "Bauhaus Settlement". The "Haus am Horn" represents the unusual case of a fully functional ongoing existence of an experimental building within the meaning of its original intention. Because its substance has been preserved almost entirely, this house has the highest degree of authenticity. It embodies the original type of the modern one-family house and is a monument to experimentation with modern building technologies (concrete block construction).

Exemplary comparisons confirm that the highest evaluation is justified for the monuments of the artistic renewal movement and of the birth of Modernism in Weimar; such comparisons could be made with the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt (which had no such influence on the development of modern art) or in Prague the architectural exhibition from which a experimental residential building has survived and is now used as an office building.

The Bauhaus building in Dessau is a central work of modern art in Europe, embodying as it does its avant-garde conception oriented towards radical renewal in architecture and design in a unique and widely influential concentration. From the point of view of art history, this building must be accounted one of the most important monuments to modern building style and as a building which "most fully reflects the creative principles of Functionalism". As a building complex of this kind, this one stands at the beginning of a world-wide development. The power of its artistic expressiveness is hardly equalled by any other Functionalist building.

In this building of 1926 the institution of "State Bauhaus" found its embodiment as did a strand of German architecture which had a special contribution to make to the structuring of the fundamentally new characteristic of contemporary architecture which since then have found recognition all over the world. Because of this context this building has a double significance for the cultural history of the twentieth century in particular: it is a historic monument of the institution and an artistic monument from the earliest period of contemporary architecture.

The Bauhaus based its creativity on production using industrial resources and strove to develop the appropriate artistic forms for that purpose. It was a centre for new ideas and consequently a point of attraction for progressive architects and artists. It made a major contribution to breaking “the power of tradition” not only in the field of architecture but also for the design of articles of daily use, lamps and advertising art it found a new practical language of form which is still influential today.

The Bauhaus represents the urge to develop a modern architecture using today's materials (reinforced concrete, glass, iron) and construction methods (skeleton construction, glass facade) and based on function. In the form it was given the building does without the traditional, historical symbols of representation. In a severe process of abstraction, the architectural forms - both the subdivided building structure and the individual construction elements - are reduced to their primary and basic forms and as a composition of interpenetrating cubes in suggestive spatial transparency they receive their expressiveness, characteristic for the architecture of Modernism.

The Bauhaus building is exemplary for the educational model developed by the institution under the direction of Walter Gropius (1919-1928), Hannes Meyer (1928-30) and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1930-1932) which was to have the widest possible influence on the renewal of artistic and industrial design in our century.

Closely related to the Bauhaus and under the supervision of the Bauhaus a whole series of other buildings arose in Dessau which make clear not only the architectural but also the social ideals represented by the institution of the Dessau Bauhaus:

- the Töten settlement, built in 1926-1928 with Walter Gropius as architect,
- the Töten “Konsum” building, built in 1928 with Walter Gropius as architect,
- the employment office, built in 1928-1929 with Walter Gropius as architect.
- the Steel House, built in 1926-1927 with Georg Mueche and Richard Paulick as architects,
- the Fieger House, built in 1926-1927 with Carl Fieger as architect,
- the Corn House, built in 1929-1930 with Carl Fieger as architect,
- the Arbour Houses (Laubenganghauser), built in 1928-1930 with Hannes Meyer as architect.

The group of seven “Masters’ Houses”, indissolubly linked to the Bauhaus, are a particularly important architectural achievement of the Bauhaus. These functional, unpretentious buildings can be viewed as an exemplary model of a basic type of residential building using the same elements in their ground plans. In them a new architectural quality was achieved which was very influential for the building of settlements during the subsequent period. Both the architectural and the social principles are of significance, since the Masters’ Houses can be considered a successful attempt to give individuality to identical elements ground-plan which had to follow typical forms for financial reasons in the housing shortage following the First World War. The original furnishings (furniture, lamps, textiles), provided by the Bauhaus workshops in accordance with a fundamental artistic goal of the work of this institution, must be deemed a special artistic achievement. A considerable part of the importance of the Masters’ Houses is, not least, their association with the artistic personalities who were drawn in by the directors, Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer and Mies van der Rohe and who were significant for the history of art and culture in the twentieth century: such personalities as Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Josef Albers, Lyonel Feininger, Georg Mueche, Oskar Schlemmer, Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee.

The Bauhaus - both the educational theory and the actual architecture - has become a model for modern architecture, influential throughout the world, and inseparably associated with the name of Walter Gropius. The Bauhaus building and the other buildings designed and built by the Masters of the Bauhaus are constitutional representatives of “classical modernism” and as such are an absolutely essential part of the image of their period in the twentieth century. Their unbroken artistic grandeur is a reminder of the project - still incomplete today - of a modernity with a human face, which wishes to use the technical and intellectual resources available to it not in a destructive way but in order to construct a living environment worthy of human aspirations. For this reason they are important monuments not only for the art history but for the history of ideas in our century. Even if the Bauhaus ideas of social reform, aiming at social and political realities, turned out to be wishful thinking - its utopia became reality at least to the extent that architecture came into existence whose straightforward friendliness still has the power to fascinate and which belongs to people of all nations as a cultural heritage as the twentieth century moves towards its end.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

Although the three buildings in Weimar have undergone several alterations and partial reconstructions, there is no reason to dispute their authenticity (apart from the reconstructed murals in the two Schools). Similarly, despite the level of reconstruction, the Dessau Bauhaus preserves its original appearance and atmosphere, thanks in considerable measure to the major restoration work in 1976. So far as the Masters' Houses are concerned, the restoration work being carried out on one of the semi-detached houses is the result of thorough research and may be judged to meet the test of authenticity. The future of the other semi-detached houses remains in doubt and so it is too early to comment on their authenticity. In the event of their being restored in the same way as No 63 Ebertallee, the question of authenticity would be resolved satisfactorily.

This nomination adopts a thematic approach, based on the specific art-historical development in Germany and the worldwide importance of the Bauhaus ideas for the fundamental renewal of architecture, the visual and applied arts, and industrial design. The group of buildings selected for nomination have a logical coherence. All have undergone restoration or reconstruction to a greater or lesser extent, but their overall authenticity is not in question. As such, therefore, they are representative of this crucial and immensely influential 20th century artistic movement.

Comparative analysis

Weimar and Dessau represent the birthplaces of one of the most significant movements in architecture and art since Palladio (whose contribution is acknowledged with the designation Of Vicenza as a World Heritage Site in 1994). For this reason comparative analysis is both inappropriate and unnecessary.

Recommendation

That this group of properties be inscribed on the world Heritage List on the basis of criteria ii, iv, and vi:

The group of buildings in Weimar and Dessau that constitute this nomination are the seminal works of the Bauhaus architectural school, the foundation of the Modern Movement which was to revolutionize artistic and architectural thinking and practice in the twentieth century.

Committee Decision

Bureau (July 1995): The Bureau decided to defer the examination of this nomination to allow the State Party to provide more detailed conservation and management plans for the group of properties proposed, and to reconsider the buffer zones.

Bureau (June 1996): ICOMOS informed the Bureau that, since preparing the written evaluation of this nomination, it had received additional information responding to all the issues mentioned in its original evaluation. The Delegate of Japan pointed out that the Bauhaus nomination should in addition be inscribed under criterion (iv).

The Bureau recommended the Committee to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of criteria (ii) (iv) and (vi) considering that the site is of outstanding universal value since these buildings are the seminal works of the Bauhaus architectural school, the foundation of the Modern Movement which was to revolutionize artistic and architectural thinking and practice in the twentieth century.

Session (1996): The Committee decided to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi) considering that the site is of outstanding universal value since these buildings are the seminal works of the Bauhaus architectural school, the foundation of the Modern Movement which was to revolutionize artistic and architectural thinking and practice in the twentieth century. The Committee also noted that this type of inscription testifies a better recognition of the 20th century heritage.

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- No change required

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: Adequate, reflects a monument zone and protection for the surrounding area and was submitted in 1996

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection**Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- Länder Laws on the Protection of Monuments; Foundation Law of Land Saxony-Anhalt
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction
- I and II seat of the Bauhaus University (teaching, research, artistic projects, Vice Chancellor's office). III Friends of Weimar Bauhaus University (Freundeskreis der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar e.V.) (tours, exhibitions, seminars and colloquia). IV seat of the Bauhaus Foundation Dessau (Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau) (research, teaching, tours, exhibitions, archives). V tours, historic exhibitions, art exhibitions, seat of the Kurt Weill Centre

Management /Administrative Body

- Steering group: Foundation Council of the Bauhaus Foundation Dessau (Stiftungsrat der Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau). The work of the Bauhaus Foundation Dessau is supported by a Scientific Advisory Board
- Legally constituted
- Management under protective legislation
- No site manager
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national, regional, local
- The current management system is sufficiently highly effective

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: January 1992
- Effective
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Owners, administrations of the Länder of the Town of Dessau, authorities for the conservation of monuments of the municipalities and the Länder

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Federal Republic of Germany, Land Saxony-Anhalt, Town of Dessau
V: Town of Dessau and Friends of the Masters' Houses (Förderstiftung Meisterhäuser)
- Funding has not been drawn from the World Heritage status
- Support from the Federation, Land Saxony-Anhalt, Town of Dessau, the European Union;

private support, the Federation, the Town of Dessau

- Funding is sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 56

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, management, promotion, education and visitor management
- Average: interpretation

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Monument-conservation training inter alia at the Weimar Bauhaus University Libraries, archives, Land Office for the Conservation of Monuments and Archaeology

9. Visitor Management

- Estimated number of annual visitors: 70-80,000
- Visitor facilities: Bookshop, club café, canteen, exhibition area with cash-desk facilities, ticket sales, general information on the Bauhaus Foundation Dessau, pamphlets, visitor service with guides, audio-visual guide system, ticket sales, small selection of books, tours through the Bauhaus Foundation Dessau
- Facilities are adequate

10. Scientific Studies

- Study related to value of site
- Scientific colloquia and publications assisted with monument conservation

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Not enough signage referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications for the property
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors; local communities, businesses and local authorities
- The Bauhaus Foundation Dessau is a member of the Association of German World Heritage sites (Welterbestätten Deutschland e.V.). The

Bauhaus is represented at exhibitions, trade fairs etc.

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- A number of restoration works: Restoration of the Art School with a replica of the Gropius Room, awarded the Europa Nostra Award

Threats and Risks to site

- Present state of conservation: good
- No threats identified

13. Monitoring

- No monitoring programme
- No need for action as the sites are maintained by the owners

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, economic and management
- Strengths: Buildings have been opened to the public, maintenance and restoration of the site, tourist facilities provided
- Weaknesses of management of site: dry rot; the renewal and maintenance processes have to be implemented and continued gradually

Future actions:

- Further restoration to be commenced shortly
- Securing funds for future maintenance and renewal of the sites