

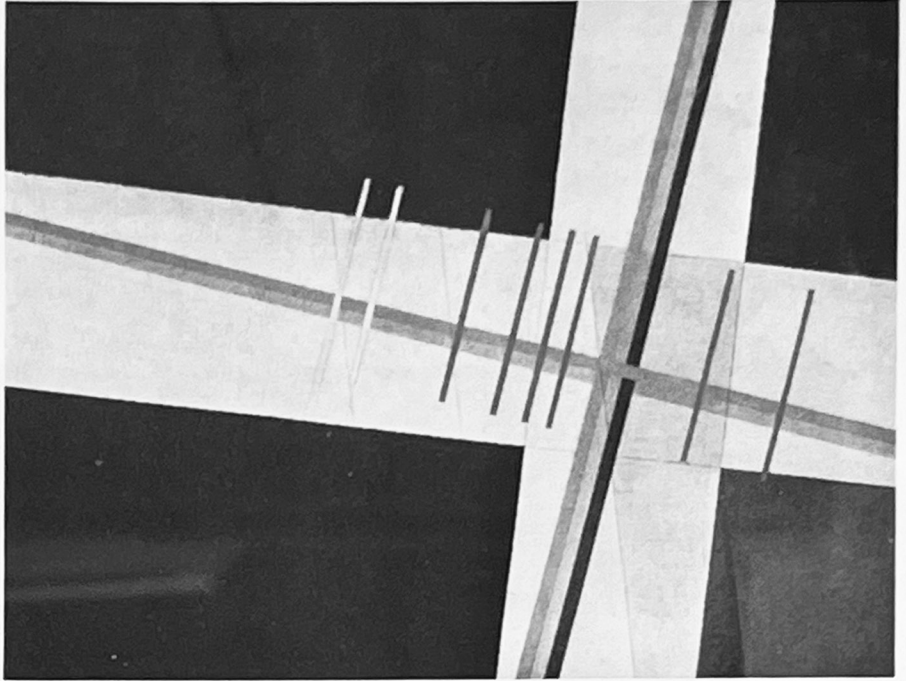


In July 1937, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy arrived in Chicago to reestablish the Bauhaus in the United States. He was invited and sponsored by the Association of Arts and Industries, an organization of philanthropic businessmen, including Marshall Field, Montgomery Ward, and Walter Paepcke. The School, called the New Bauhaus, opened on October 18, 1937. It was housed in the refurbished Marshall Field mansion; with an enrollment of 35 students and 10 faculty members.

Friction developed almost immediately between the sponsors and Moholy-Nagy. The committee misunderstood Moholy's revolutionary ideas, withdrew their support, and closed the School at the end of the first year. Instead of giving up, Moholy was more determined than ever to make a success of the School. Using his own resources he reopened, under the name of the School of Design, in an abandoned bakery over the Chez Paree restaurant. The School wavered on the brink of financial collapse, partly because private art schools are usually unprofitable and partly because the second world war was drafting most of the prospective students. But the program was a success and during these years the foundation, photography, and workshop courses were refined and adapted to the American milieu. In 1944, the name was changed to the Institute of Design. Toward the end of the war, the returning GIs boosted the student body to over 1,000.

Unfortunately, Moholy died in 1946 on the brink of real success. For the next three years, Serge Chermayeff ably directed the School through some of the most exciting years of its existence. In the quest for financial stability, Walter Paepcke, who contributed a good deal of support, recommended that the school join a larger institution. In 1949, the Institute of Design became a department of IIT and received the accreditation to grant science degrees in undergraduate and graduate design.

In 1955, the School was moved from downtown Chicago to the south side campus of IIT; here it shared space in the new S. R. Crown Hall with the departments of architecture, under Mies van der Rohe, and city planning, under



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Ludwig Hilberseimer. But in joining two schools with architecture programs, one had to go, and the Institute of Design dropped architecture.

My appointment to IIT ended a six year search that had caused much disagreement among the students and faculty. The School, in its new home and under new direction, tried to maintain the spirit of Moholy-Nagy and the essentials of the Bauhaus program. But so many generations had passed that little of the original concept remained. The programs were rebuilt to make them fit the designer to the problems of American society and industry.

Four major programs were offered: industrial design, visual communications, photography, and visual education. Since 1955, the School has grown from 92 students to the present 282 full-time students, 101 of whom are full-time graduates.

The foundation program is still based on the Bauhaus concept that divides the basic design disciplines into four sets of coordinated exercises. The workshop course is a close approxima-

1. Moholy-Nagy, "Oil on Canvas," 1923.
2. Gyorgy Kepes, "Light Experiment," 1940.
3. Experimental photograph by fourth-year student Roddy Medow, Institute of Design, 1968.
4. Studies in equilibrium from Moholy-Nagy's preliminary course.

tion of Moholy's Bauhaus program where the student works directly with tools and materials. Visual fundamentals include the elements of graphics, drawing, color, and spatial relationships. Sculpture is the disciplined use of moldable and castable materials. Basic photography, the course that Moholy instituted, covers all elements of mechanical image making—the shutter, depth of field, focus, laboratory experiments, photograms.

The industrial design program includes a series of projects in a variety of industrial design areas such as transportation, environment, tools, food equipment, and communications. The program covers various design methodologies, including computer-aided design.

Visual communications encompasses all phases of communication including persuasion graphics and visual information transactions in multimedia. The course covers advertising, packaging, exhibition, book, editorial, and other types of visual design.

The photography program has tradi-

tionally included documentary, reportorial, experimental, and other photo specialties and has been broadened into full programs in color photography and cinematography, as well as film animation.

The education group, largely graduates, investigates the entire field of visual education with special emphasis on design education as applied to the primary and secondary schools. The teachers are carefully indoctrinated in Bauhaus teaching ideas, and all are required to participate in the foundation year.

The School has come a long way, reaching a point of stability and productivity that may even exceed Moholy's vision. Its contributions to today's society are well-known; its students are at work at all levels of business and government; its programs are interlocked with today's social needs and aspirations.

In the fall of 1969, the curriculum was revised to phase out the major undergraduate departments in favor of only one degree—a bachelor of science in

design. After completion of the foundation year—a modernization of the Bauhaus program as interpreted by Moholy-Nagy—all upper-class students will elect from a large series of theoretical design, practical design, and academic courses. The program at the advanced levels will stress logical and methodological design techniques. This long transition from the original Bauhaus crafts oriented workshops brings the School in tune with the times.

This shift of emphasis, from the emotional to the technological, is undertaken because of the shift in the intellectual development of the modern university student. Today's student is more socially concerned and has far greater capacity for complex production than students of only 10 years ago. The precise cause or causes of this are still obscure, but it might be attributed to the increased bombardment of communications from early childhood. It is no longer necessary to pressure the students into concern for social benefit. What they need to develop is

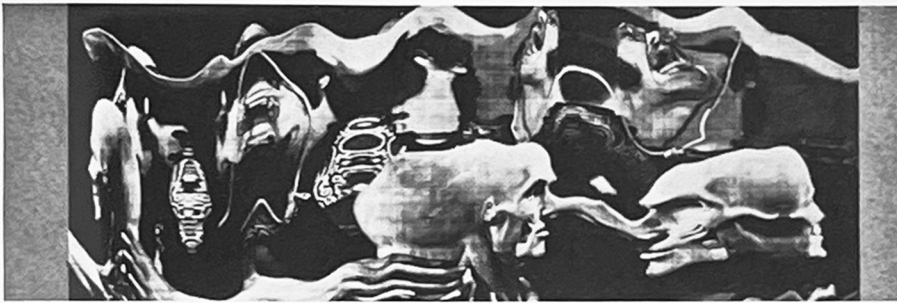
the reasoning power to deal with the enormous problems that now confront us. It is to this end that the new curriculum is devoted. It is now clear that the artist-craftsman cannot cope with the critical problems that confront urbanized society. Only young people equipped with new techniques for problem solving can hope to improve the situation. No longer is the design of a classic chair or the production of a great lithography enough. If anything, preoccupation with the refinement of an object narrows the designer's perspective to a point that defeats the possibility of solving today's macro problems.

Variations of the original Bauhaus foundation still serve well in accomplishing the goals spoken of in Moholy-Nagy's statement. But the program has been refined and compressed into a more efficient package to leave room for a new and higher level of problem solving. As Moholy pointed out, every person must be more sensitive to his environment, but sensitivity alone is insufficient for control, the proof is the increasingly chaotic world that surrounds us.

In retrospect, the Bauhaus solved two important problems: First, it broke with the traditional forms of handicraft and articulated the forms of technology. In the process its workshops produced hundreds of objects that stand as examples of its success. Second, the Bauhaus intellectualized visual education and made a program that permitted the student to synthesize for himself a proper understanding of aesthetics and creativity. But the Bauhaus left us short of solving the problems of design and education.

We are now faced with two tasks. The first is to infuse the Bauhaus principles into all levels of primary and secondary education to create a visually literate public who will demand a better world. The Bauhaus education has only been installed at the college level for those who plan to become professionals in design, architecture, or the arts. It is clear that designers cannot control the environment without the enlightened support of government, business, and the public. The forces against design are overwhelming, especially when those in positions of authority are insensitive and visually illiterate. Second, the designer cannot solve the problems with archaic intuitive design methods. New and more powerful design techniques are being developed and applied. The Institute of Design is dedicated to the solution of these two difficult problems; it is striving to go forward as Moholy-Nagy might have wished.

Jay Doblin is a former director of the Institute of Design at IIT.



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