INTRODUCTION

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The Bauhaus emerged in Germany amid the revolutionary turmoil of 1919, during the transition from a monarchy to a republic. After the catastrophe of World War I, the initiators of the school saw the need to break with tradition; the preceding era of the German Empire with its decades of nationalistic policy, laissez-faire capitalism, and grandiose historicism had led to a dead end. What was needed now was a fresh start in every respect. By returning to basic forms and colors as well as to the spirit of the Gothic era, one sought to set the stage for a kind of "zero hour." At any rate, the Bauhaus arose out of a vehement rejection of the immediate past.
And it met with resistance just as quickly. Its founding was intensely opposed by groups on the Right, and from the outset the school was marked by conflicts both external and internal. In 1922, for example, Dutch avant-garde artist Theo van Doesburg criticized the new educational institution as too "mystical" and "Romantic," and in his Weimar studio offered an art course in opposition to the instruction at the Bauhaus. Although Walter Gropius was able to prevent van Doesburg from becoming a master at the Bauhaus, the De Stijl artist still exerted considerable influence on the school's development. There was disagreement even among Bauhaus masters, which they themselves welcomed. Josef Albers explained in retrospect: "It was the best thing at the Bauhaus, that we were absolutely independent and we didn[1]t agree on anything. So, when Kandisky said 'Yes,' I said 'No'; when he said

'No,' then I said 'Yes.' So, we were the best of friends, because we wanted to expose the students to different viewpoints."
These differences were extremely productive and contributed significantly to the success of the Bauhaus experiment. The institution called into question not only existing historical and social conditions, but also its own methods and approach. When director Hannes Meyer appointed Hungarian art theorist Ernst Kállai as editor of the journal bauhaus, for example, he was recruiting an explicit critic of the Bauhaus style. Throughout the fourteen years of its existence, the school followed no single established program, but rather reoriented itself conceptually numerous times. Because of this powerful dynamic there was no such thing as *the* Bauhaus, but rather a multiplicity of differing, conflicting, and even contradictory currents and opinions.
Even the controversies surrounding the school each had their own character and consequences. The earlier attacks on the progressive educational institution unified and strengthened it; later ones, however, were destructive both internally and externally. Although it was the result of political necessity, the move from Weimar to Dessau ultimately furthered the development of the Bauhaus, but in Dessau, political pressure from the Right increasingly weakened the school. In 1930, the openly leftist director, Hannes Meyer, was dismissed with the backing of a number of Bauhaus masters. The institution was closed and then reopened, and politically active students were expelled. As the new director, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe hoped in this way to forestall further attacks