

Weaving at the Bauhaus: Origins and Influences

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Introduction

The Bauhaus, despite its short physical existence in Weimar (1919 - 1925) and Dessau (1925 - 1933), Germany, produced one of the most influential design movements of the 20th century. Although the Bauhaus movement is best known for its contributions to mid- and late-20th century architecture in the personae of Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and others, the Weaving Workshop of the Bauhaus became a major influence on textile design in general, and weaving design in particular, throughout the remainder of the 20th century and on into the 21st century.

At the establishment of the Bauhaus, students were to be admitted to workshops without regard to gender. However, because of the unexpectedly large number of women who applied as students, the segregation of women into the Pottery, Bookbinding, and Weaving Workshops was soon recommended. The head of the Pottery Workshop, Gerhard Marcks, was unwilling to accept women into that area, and the Bookbinding Workshop only lasted until 1922, leaving only the Weaving Workshop as a home for the female Bauhaus students.

The Weaving Workshop of the Bauhaus, as somewhat of a “female ghetto,” had many prejudices and misconceptions to overcome during its existence. Most of the foremost painters and other artists of the day, including those who were intimately involved with the education of the Bauhaus weaving students, regarded weaving as

less than “real art” and women as incapable of working in areas regarded as more demanding, such as painting, metalwork, and sculpture. Although most Bauhaus women students were shunted into the Weaving Workshop, they first attended the same basic course as the male students and learned the same theory and design principles from some of the most noted artists of their time. Furthermore, although the Weaving Workshop was regarded as inferior artistically, it was in fact the first workshop able to pay its own way through the production of its students, in keeping with the Bauhaus goal of achieving financial autonomy through its own efforts.

The general history of the Bauhaus, as well as the political and social influences both internal and external, is well documented by many sources. Therefore, this paper focuses on the artistic and design aspects of the Bauhaus movement as reflected in textile design, specifically the products and people of the Weaving Workshop.

Precursors and Early Influences

The Arts and Crafts Period

Artistically, the Bauhaus movement's roots, at least from a philosophical point of view, trace back to the Arts and Crafts movement that began in England in the mid-1800s and spread to the United States late in the nineteenth century. This movement began as a reaction to the negative social effects of the Industrial Revolution, and grew into a

backlash against the excessive ornamentation in household furnishings and architecture of the Victorian era. Where the Industrial Revolution had divorced design from production, artist from producer, the Arts and Crafts movement attempted to reconcile this separation of design and craftsmanship. This integration of art and craft became a primary tenet of the Bauhaus philosophy, though without denying the valuable role of the machine in production.

Though William Morris is the artist most closely associated with the English version of Arts and Crafts, his work still reflects the sensibilities of Victorian-era design. If instead we look to the United States, it is easy to see many similarities between the works of several of the seminal proponents of the Arts and Crafts movement in America and the textile designs of the Bauhaus in Germany. The architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Mission furniture of Gustav Stickley share the same purity of line and form and the same emphasis on function that the Bauhaus, particularly in its later years in Dessau, espoused. In fact, Wright's visit to the Academy of Art in Berlin in 1910 clearly impressed a young Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus.

German Expressionism -- Der Blaue Reiter

The other primary movement out of which the Bauhaus grew was Expressionism, the German art movement that grew out of Post-Impressionism. Like the Fauves of

France, their primary interest was in the expressive use of color to convey emotion, mood, and message. Realistic portrayal of subject matter was a secondary concern at best, and often dismissed entirely.

One of the two most prominent groups at the core of German Expressionism was *Der Blaue Reiter* ("The Blue Rider"), formed in Munich in 1911 and focused on non-figurative abstraction. From this group would come one of the Bauhaus's most prominent associates and teachers, Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky.

Johannes Itten and Paul Klee, though not directly associated with *Der Blaue Reiter*, were both associated with the Expressionist movement early in their artistic careers. By the time the Bauhaus was established, both Klee and Itten had well-established reputations as painters known for innovative use of color and design, and both men became primary factors in attracting students to the Bauhaus.

The Wiener Werkstätte, 1903-1932

The Bauhaus was not the first European institution to join art and craft into a single entity. The Wiener Werkstätte, which existed in Vienna, Austria from 1903 to 1932, began as an association of artist-craftsmen in various disciplines. Its intent from the beginning was to produce products which were both aesthetically pleasing and well-crafted, distinguishing them from poorly-designed mass-produced objects on the one

hand and conventional handicrafts on the other. The textile department at the Wiener Werkstätte was established in 1910, though fabric production may have actually begun before that time.

The primary influence on the Wiener Werkstätte fabric designs at first was the Art Nouveau movement from England and Scotland. Probably due to the influence of the German Expressionist art movement, which pushed art from realism into abstraction, this style was quite soon rejected, and the Wiener Werkstätte fabric designs moved into a free-form geometric abstraction akin to Art Deco.

Though there are similarities in the design styles of the Wiener Werkstätte fabrics and the Bauhaus textiles, they are far from identical. Whereas most of the Bauhaus textiles were designed for weaving, the vast majority of the Wiener Werkstätte fabrics were printed. On the one hand, this allowed a greater flexibility in design, allowed those designs to be reproduced in multiple color schemes and with less hard-edged color effects than can be achieved in weaving. On the other hand it provided a great temptation allow a design to lapse into decoration for decoration's sake. The Wiener Werkstätte never emphasized functionality in the way the Bauhaus did, and thus the textile department there proved, in the end, less innovative than that of the Bauhaus, with their constant quest to improve functionality without sacrificing aesthetic qualities.

The Weaving Workshop 1919-1933

The Weaving Workshop at the Bauhaus is the only workshop to have existed during the entire fourteen-year lifespan of the school itself. Although it started by offering a variety of textile-related activities, including crafting of stuffed animals and dolls, by 1921 the curriculum was firmly established as oriented towards weaving.

As with all the Bauhaus workshops, students could only enter the Weaving Workshop after completing a one-year introductory course. This course originated with Johannes Itten, and after his departure in 1923 was taught by Josef Albers and Lázsló Moholy-Nagy. This course focused on design, color theory (Itten's most important contribution to the art world) and experimentation with materials, and to some extent the curriculum of the Weaving Workshop was seen as a natural extension of this course. While almost all Bauhaus students entered with an extensive prior art education, the introductory course provided an intensive introduction to the avant-garde principles that formed the foundation of the Bauhaus design and philosophy.

Weimar

During the Weimar years (1919-1925) of the Bauhaus, weaving focused on experimentation, expression, and production of individual pieces. Often the experimentation and expression was at the cost of technique, as early pieces with their uneven selvages, buckling fabrics, and inattention to finishing illustrate. This is understandable after considering the lack of formal technical instruction in the earliest

years of the workshop -- Anni Albers told Sigrid Wortmann Weltge in 1997: "There was no real teacher in textiles. We had no formal classes. Now people say to me: 'you learned it all at the Bauhaus'! We did not learn a thing in the beginning. I learned from Gunta, who was a great teacher. We sat down and tried to do it. Sometimes we sat together and tried to solve problems of construction."¹

The Bauhaus administration eventually realized that the weavers would never develop professional capabilities without appropriate technical instruction, so they sent Gunta Stölzl and Benita Otte to Krefeld to study dyeing in 1921 and weaving and fiber technology in 1922. The knowledge the two women brought back enabled the students in the workshop to begin producing quality textiles while retaining and even enhancing the design qualities that their previous experimentation had sometimes failed to fully express.

Many of the weavers favored Gobelin tapestry techniques to produce their wall hangings and rugs, and some of the most characteristic and enduring "Bauhaus-style" designs stem from this time. Collaborations between the Weaving Workshop and the Furniture Workshop resulted in early prototypes for some of the most familiar icons of the Bauhaus movement, the Breuer chairs.

Though the Weimar-era Bauhaus textiles are stellar examples of artistic expression in a textile medium, the true influence of the Bauhaus on the weaving world would not be felt until after the move to Dessau.

¹ Weltge, Sigrid Wortmann, *Women's Work: Textile Art From the Bauhaus*, p. 46.

Dessau

Upon the move of the Bauhaus to Dessau in 1926, the emphasis of the Weaving Workshop changed from one-of-a-kind art pieces to design of contemporary fabrics suitable for industrial production, though students were still allowed and even encouraged to produce individual pieces as well. Multiple layered weavings became more popular as being a more suitable way of combining color to produce design in an industrial setting, leading to the crisp geometric designs so characteristic of the "Bauhaus style." Students continued experimenting with innovative materials in fabrics, with both Anni Albers and Otti Berger both pioneering the use of cellophane in fabric.

The curriculum in the workshop at Dessau was considerably enhanced in 1927 when Paul Klee, possibly the most respected and admired teacher at the Bauhaus, created a design course specifically for the weavers. He continued to teach this course until his resignation from the school in 1931. In addition, the remainder of the curriculum became much more structured and rigorous than it had been in Weimar, with coursework in use of materials and equipment, dyeing and finishing techniques, and industrial production in addition to design.

The introduction of Jacquard looms into the workshop at Dessau expanded the repertoire of the Bauhaus weavers considerably, and Gunta Stölzl in particular became a

master at creating innovative and exciting designs for the Jacquard loom. Her 1928 piece *5 Chöre* (5 Choirs) is without a doubt the most sophisticated Jacquard weaving to come out of the Bauhaus, with its visual trickery of design making it look three-dimensional. The presence of the Jacquard looms made the creation of structural fabrics, which derive their visual interest from the combination of structure and texture, a much more exciting possibility.

Industry began to recognize the possibilities in collaboration with the Bauhaus designers. This culminated in a contract between the Weaving Workshop and the Polytextil Company in 1930, where Polytextil would produce and market fabrics from workshop designs under the label "bauhaus-dessau." The contract provided the students with the opportunity to become involved in every phase of industrial production, in addition to providing positions for graduates of the program.

The last two years in Dessau were a time of turmoil and change for the Bauhaus in general and the Weaving Workshop in particular. After Gunta Stölzl's resignation in late 1931, Lilly Reich was appointed head of the workshop with Otti Berger as her assistant. Reich was an interior and fashion designer rather than a weaver, and had been part of the Wiener Werkstätte during its earliest years. She attempted to introduce fabric printing as an integral part of the Weaving Workshop, but before she could do so the school closed.

Dessau is where the "Bauhaus style," at least as it applies to textiles, became firmly established, and where designer and industry began to fully realize the possibilities in collaborative effort.

Bauhaus Weavers After the Bauhaus

After the closure of the Bauhaus in 1933, the remaining members of the Weaving Workshop became widely dispersed, though most ended up in either Europe or the United States. Many of the Bauhaus members were Jewish, and thus either became targets of Nazi persecution or fled Germany to avoid becoming such targets. Still others avoided the "degenerate artist" label and remained in Nazi Germany, able to continue their careers through the next decade and, in many cases, beyond.

Two of the most gifted of the Bauhaus weavers, Otti Berger and Friedl Dicker, were among the twenty or more Bauhäuserin who were executed in Nazi concentration camps. Both Berger and Dicker died in the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland in 1944.

In the 1930s, Otti Berger was probably the best known of the weaving workshop alumnae in Europe. She attended the Bauhaus in Dessau, receiving her diploma in 1930. After a year heading the workshop under the direction of Lilly Reich, she worked as a designer in the Netherlands from 1933 to 1937 and in England between 1938 and 1939,

patenting a number of new fabrics using innovative chemical treatments or new materials. The de Ploeg Company of the Netherlands even made an exception to its policy of keeping its designers anonymous, and agreed to display Berger's initials alongside the names of her designs.

Although Berger obviously intended to immigrate to the United States in 1938 to head the textile program at Lázsló Moholy-Nagy's "New Bauhaus," circumstances prevented her journey. In 1939, she returned to her hometown, Zmajavac, Yugoslavia to visit her ailing mother. It is not certain whether she failed to recognize the peril of the political situation in that area, or whether she was determined to visit her mother no matter what. Regardless, when she was denied a visa to the United States, she found herself trapped there. In 1944 she was deported to Auschwitz/Birkenau, where she was executed.

Friedl Dicker was likewise an alumna of the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop, but from its earlier incarnation in Weimar. During the mid-to-late 1920s, she and Franz Singer became a highly sought-after architect/interior designer partnership in Vienna, creating highly functional avant-garde buildings. She continued as an interior designer in Vienna after the Singer-Dicker Studio closed in 1931. In 1934 she was arrested and forced to emigrate to Prague, Czechoslovakia, where she became a political activist as she continued her design work.

After refusing the opportunity to emigrate to Palestine in 1938, Dicker was deported to Terezin (Theresienstadt) ghetto/camp in 1942. She spent the last two years of her life in Terezin teaching drawing and art classes for the children there, until she was transferred to Auschwitz/Birkenau and executed. Much of Dicker's art legacy is in the form of the works of these children, demonstrating her gifts for design and for teaching in these images of incredible beauty among utter despair.

Grete Reichert (1907 – 1984) was one of the very few Bauhaus weavers able to continue their career throughout the Nazi regime and the Communist takeover of East Germany after World War II. Little information is available about the specifics of her post-Bauhaus career, though she is known to have run an independent studio in her hometown of Erfurt, Germany until her death in 1984. She received a number of honors and commissions during the post-war years, and evidently her work in later years was far more art-oriented than industrially oriented. Probably because of her isolation behind the Iron Curtain, few of her post-Bauhaus works have been seen outside of Germany. However, German carpet manufacturer Vorwerk Teppichwerke selected one of her designs for inclusion in their "Dialog: Women of the Bauhaus" collection in the early 1990s.

Many of the other Bauhaus weavers took refuge in the United States, England, and Switzerland. While some of them faded into obscurity, others found that their departure from Germany allowed them to establish independent careers as artists. Several

achieved widespread recognition only after leaving Germany, most notably Anni Albers, Marti Ehrman, Trude Guermonprez, and even Gunta Stölzl.

Anni Albers (1899 – 1994)

Anni Albers is without question the best known of the Bauhaus weavers in the United States. She and her husband Josef were the first of the Bauhäusler to come to the United States after the closure of the Bauhaus, and through connections established before they left Germany, they were invited to teach at the newly established Black Mountain College just east of Asheville, NC. During their fourteen years there, they were major contributors to Black Mountain College's growing reputation as a major creative force in the arts.

Albers' tenure as director of the Weaving Workshop at Black Mountain College was the real start of her career as an artist. While there, she expanded her weaving in new directions, beginning with the first two pieces she created there, the wall hangings *Ancient Writing* and *Monte Alban*. These two pieces were the first pieces in which she used inlay and brocading techniques to enhance the double-woven foundation design. She continued to expand her weaving repertoire while at Black Mountain College, and switched to free-lance design when her husband accepted a position on the faculty at Yale University.

Perhaps the biggest push to Albers' career came from her writings. Her essays, influential when first published, have been collected into two books, *On Weaving* and *On Designing*, which are regarded as two of the most important philosophical treatises on their subjects today.

Albers continued to create innovative, yet practical and beautiful fabrics for functional use, as well as creative but subtle wall hangings, well into the 1960s. In the mid-1960s, however, she discovered printmaking, and by 1970 had abandoned weaving altogether for lithography and screen-printing. She brought to printmaking the same eye for line and color, the same expression, which she had brought to weaving, and in addition to producing numerous art prints created several commercial printed fabric collections. For Albers, printmaking brought her the form of expression that she had hoped to explore in the Painting Workshop at the Bauhaus before she was pushed to enter the Weaving Workshop. Nonetheless, the Painting Workshop's loss was definitely the textile world's gain in the form of Anni Albers, in many ways the consummate Bauhaus artist.

Marli Ehrman (1904 - 1982)

Marli Ehrman was another Bauhaus weaver and diploma recipient who fled Germany ahead of the Nazi purges. She became director of the Weaving Workshop at

the School of Design in Chicago, founded by the Association of Arts and Industries under the direction of Lázsló Moholy-Nagy to bring the established principles and philosophies of the Bauhaus to the United. Among her students there were prominent American textile designers Else Regensteiner and Angelo Testa. After the Weaving Workshop closed in 1947, she continued to teach at the Hull House settlement school, designed textiles for mass production by a number of firms as well as collaborating with interior designer Marianne Willisch and architect Mies van der Rohe. In addition, Ehrman opened the Elm Shop, a modernist design studio, in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park in 1956 as an outlet for her work.

Ehrman's work as a designer, important though it was, pales in significance beside her influence on the next generation of textile artists. Lenore Tawney, Else Regensteiner, Claire Zeisler, Angelo Testa -- all studied with Ehrman in Chicago and all have had a profound impact on textiles either as designers or authors.

Trude Guermonprez (1910 – 1976)

Trude Guermonprez was one of the earliest of the second-generation Bauhäusler, studying with Bauhaus weaver Benita Otte as well as original Bauhaus pottery workshop master Gerhard Marcks at the Municipal School for Arts and Crafts in Burg Giebichenstein, Halle from 1931 to 1933. Two grants allowed her to supplement this

training with studies of Scandinavian weaving techniques in Finland in 1937 and Sweden in 1946.

Guermontprez spent most of World War II in hiding in the Netherlands, though she was able to clandestinely work as a free-lance designer for the Dutch textile industry during those years. After the war, she traveled to the United States in 1947 to visit her mother and sister, who had been living at Black Mountain College in the mountains of western North Carolina since before the war. At that time, Anni and Josef Albers were preparing for a sabbatical trip to Central America, and Guermontprez agreed to step in for Albers as interim head of the weaving program at the college. She followed her two years at Black Mountain with teaching stints at artists' retreat Pond Farm in California and San Francisco Institute of Art before joining the faculty at California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland. She remained there until her death, as head of the Department of Weaving from 1960 on as well as head of the Department of Crafts from 1960 to 1971.

As head of the Department of Weaving at California College, she was an instrumental force in the development of several textile artists of the latter half of the twentieth century, most notably Kay Sekimachi. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Guermontprez continued to work as a free-lance weaver during this time, designing fabric prototypes for industry as well as art weaving pieces. Her last woven pieces, double weave hangings, continued to show the strong Bauhaus influence while

using surface design techniques to layer graphic imagery atop the weaving, providing her own personal touch to a movement.

Gunta Stölzl (1897 – 1983)

Gunta Stölzl left Germany shortly before Albers, Ehrman and Guernonprez, but rather than going to the United States, she went to Zurich, Switzerland. The turmoil of her personal life during the 1930s aside, she was able to establish herself as a handweaver and designer there in Switzerland, carrying out numerous commissions for interior fabrics over the years and collaborating with several textile companies to produce industrial prototype fabrics. In her later years, she closed her handweaving studio and, in a sense, returned to her roots by exclusively weaving tapestries.

Though Stölzl's post-Bauhaus industrial work is not familiar in the United States, her art pieces are present in the collections of the Busch-Reisinger Museum and the Museum of Modern Art. As the only female master the Bauhaus ever produced, her impact, direct and indirect, on twentieth-century textiles both in the United States and Europe is immense.

Influences on Later Generations

It is impossible to list all the fiber artists whose work, either now or during their artistic development, reflects the teachings and influences of the Bauhaus designers and the so-called “Bauhaus Style.” Therefore, the following list should be taken as only a representative sample, focusing on some of the better-known artists of the latter half of the twentieth century.

Jack Lenor Larsen (1927 -)

It is impossible to discuss twentieth-century American textile design without mentioning Jack Lenor Larsen. In his fifty-plus year career, he served as a designer, author, lecturer, and museum consultant. His company, Jack Lenor Larsen Designs, produced a vast number of now-classic fabric designs, some woven, others printed or knitted. As his reputation grew, he expanded his designs to include furnishings as well, and received many major architectural textile commissions for industry, museums, and public buildings.

Larsen's own education as an artist was at Cranbrook Academy in Michigan, which is the primary representative of the Scandinavian textile tradition in the United States. However, the Scandinavian and Bauhaus traditions have much in common. Larsen was doubtlessly heavily influenced by the Bauhaus aesthetic and philosophy as well, particularly by the work of Gunta Stölzl, whom he admired greatly. His most visible

tribute to Stölzl, though, was the suggestion that British gallery owner Christopher Farr arrange the production of a number of her designs in the mid 1990s.

Dorothy Liebes (1899 - 1972)

Although Dorothy Liebes was not Bauhaus-trained and began her weaving career before the closure of the Bauhaus, her work shared much of the Bauhaus aesthetic and philosophy. First as a custom production weaver for West Coast architects and interior designers, then as a consulting designer and stylist for industrial firms such as Goodall Fabrics, the duPont Corporation and Bigelow-Sanford, Inc., much of her work showed the vibrant color combinations used by several of the Bauhaus weavers as well as the muted desert tones favored by others. Liebes was one of the first American weavers to begin using synthetic and experimental yarns, enjoying the interplay of texture gained by mixing synthetic yarns such as nylon with the more traditional wools and other natural fibers favored by handweavers. She worked closely with the designers and architects that were her clients to make her textiles an integral part of the architectural setting in which they were installed, rather than a mere afterthought. As the first American handweaver to cross over into industrial-level production, she paralleled the Bauhaus-Dessau ideal of designing fabrics that were both aesthetically pleasing and highly functional.

Lore Kadden Lindenfeld (1902 -)

German-born Lore Kadden Lindenfeld is the best-known student to graduate from the weaving program run by Anni Albers and Trude Guermonprez at Black Mountain College. She became one of the first women to work as a designer in the American textile industry, spending ten years creating fabrics for several well-known firms. After taking time off to start a family, she began teaching in the late 1960s as she continued to do freelance work. Lindenfeld is not as well known as many of her contemporaries; however, her student and industrial fabrics played a significant part in bring the Bauhaus ideals into American fabric design.

Else Regensteiner (1906 - 2003)

Else Regensteiner is another German-born textile artist who greatly influenced the development of modern fabric design in the United States. Like Lindenfeld, she did not begin to study textiles until she immigrated to the United States in 1936 to escape Nazi rule. After settling in to her new life in Chicago, she met Marli Ehrman, herself newly emigrated from Germany. Both women realized that they had much in common, and Regensteiner soon agreed to add her teacher training and experience to Ehrman's design skill by becoming Ehrman's assistant at the Institute of Design. Though Regensteiner had no prior background in textiles, she quickly discovered an affinity and a gift for the craft,

and eagerly supplemented Ehrman's instruction by studying with Anni and Josef Albers at Black Mountain College during vacations. When she graduated from the program in 1942, she was hired as a weaving instructor at the Institute.

Regensteiner's teaching career continued at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1945 to 1971, and at the American Farm School in Thessaloniki, Greece from 1972 to 1978. In addition, she established Reg/Wick Handwoven Originals with fellow Institute student Julia McVicker. The studio produced many custom fabrics for interior designers trying to soften the hard, cold feel of the new glass-and-steel architecture that was growing in popularity, as well as industry prototypes with similar intent. Regensteiner's work became very well known, in part due to the Stiffel Company's use of Reg/Wick fabrics for its lampshades for a number of years.

Regensteiner's influence extended farther beyond the interior design and industrial textile worlds than any other Bauhaus-influenced artist. She served as director for the Handweavers Guild of America, was a co-founder of the Midwest Designer-Craftsmen, taught numerous workshops around the country, and wrote three books, *The Art of Handweaving*, *Weaver's Study Course: Ideas and Techniques*, and *Geometric Design in Weaving*, which have been regarded as classic resources for handweavers for the last three decades. These books, perhaps more than anything else, helped bring Bauhaus design principles to the hobby handweaver and thus enriched the craft.

Kay Sekimachi (1926 -)

At first glance the sculptural fiber pieces created by Kay Sekimachi seem to have little relationship to the flat-woven carpets and yardage of the Bauhaus weavers. Upon closer examination, however, several obvious influences from the Bauhaus permeate her work. Her use of nylon monofilament, a modern fiber, is very much in keeping with the Bauhaus idea of experimentation in use of materials. Its use in her multi-layered woven sculptures of the 1960s produced a method of using only shape and dimensionality to achieve the same visual complexity of light and dark contrast as in Anni Albers' wall hangings. Her later sculptural works, while using more traditional materials, demonstrate the clean and orderly use of line and shape so common to the Bauhaus style, only in three dimensions instead of two.

Angelo Testa (1918 - 1984)

In the early 1940s, a young student enrolled at the University of Chicago with the intent of becoming an archaeologist found himself embarking on a crusade to bring fabric design into the modern era. Angelo Testa had been an award-winning artist in high school in Springfield, MA, but originally intended to make art an avocation. After discovering the Institute of Design in Chicago, however, he enrolled in the program there to study design with Lázsló Moholy-Nagy and weaving with Marli Ehrman. As a result,

he remained a vocal supporter of Bauhaus principles, both philosophical and design, throughout his career as an industrial textile designer.

From the beginning, however, Testa incorporated Abstract Modernism into textile design in his own unique fashion. His designs were described as "abstract patterns employing new conceptions of space, line, and color" in an article in *Monsanto Magazine* in 1953.² His first commercially produced design, "Little Man Design," reflects the simplicity of design and emphasis on form commonly associated with the "Bauhaus style." Yet, the design itself shows an organic quality rarely seen in original Bauhaus textile designs. Later designs contain more of a geometric quality, yet the shapes are distorted out of the right-angle grid most commonly seen in Bauhaus woven textiles. Furthermore, Testa also "pushed the envelope" in his choice of materials, finding that plastic fabric provided the desired surface for his designs. Hence, Testa found that the best medium for developing many of his designs into production fabric was not weaving, but printing.

Where is the Bauhaus Today?

Museum collections

Today original Bauhaus and derivative textiles are found in the collections of numerous museums throughout the world. Among the largest collections are those at the

² "Close Up," *Monsanto Magazine*, April/May 1953, <<http://www.angelo-testa.com/>>

Bauhaus-Archiv Museum of Design in Berlin, the Kunstsammlungen in Weimar, the National Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., and especially the Busch-Reisinger Museum of the Harvard University Art Museums in Cambridge, MA.

Vorwerk Teppichwerke carpets

In 1991, German carpet manufacturer Vorwerk Teppichwerke began exploring the possibility of converting original Bauhaus designs into mass-produced wall-to-wall carpeting. Many of the drafts they examined were deemed unsuitable as either lacking the necessary pattern elements allowing for endless repetition in both length and width of the resulting product, or created as “all-round compositions” intended for multiple uses such as curtains and blankets as well as carpeting. However, a number of designs fit the parameters established by the company, and in addition had never been converted into actual product (whether one-of-a-kind or mass-produced).

The result of this study was the carpet collection “Classic: Frauen am Bauhaus” (“Women at the Bauhaus”), introduced in 1994 at Dessau itself. This collection of carpeting consists of eleven designs produced by five of the Bauhaus weavers during the Dessau years: Gertrud Arndt, Monica Bella-Bronner, Kitty Fischer, Grete Reichardt, and Gunta Stölzl. The eleven designs are clear examples of what came to be called the

“Bauhaus style,” with their precise geometric patterning and their vibrant yet clear color harmonies.

Interestingly, although Fischer, Reichardt, and Stölzl were dead by this time, the other two original designers, Gertrud Arndt and Monica Bella-Bronner, were still living and were both eager to participate in this product line development. Bella-Bronner reviewed her own design drafts and provided input into their conversion for production, while Arndt participated in the color-matching phase of development as well in the actual initial production itself. Thus, the collaboration between textile designer and textile industry envisioned during the Bauhaus years could finally manifest seventy years later.³

Gunta Stölzl Designs by Christopher Farr Galleries

In 1995, Jack Lenor Larsen was in London, England visiting Christopher Farr and Matthew Bourne of Christopher Farr Galleries. Upon seeing the works produced by Farr and his designers, Larsen suggested that Farr and Burke consider reproducing some of the Bauhaus-era designs of Gunta Stölzl as limited-edition rugs. As Larsen said:

“...it came to me that Gunta's compositions would be best realised by Asian handweavers. Still, no solution came until I found Christopher Farr's London galleries full of modern kilims and handknotted rugs woven in Anatolia. Their glistening, wiry

³ Vorwerk & Co. *Vorwerk & Co. Teppichwerke GmbH & Co. KG*. 2003.
<<http://www.vorwerk-teppich.de/produktdetail.brw?quality=04171>>

fibre from sheep bred for millennia to produce the best carpet wools added to their quality. So did kettle dyeing streaky yarns handspun from ungraded fleeces. All the organic richness was here, offset by the meticulous craftsmanship found in antique rugs. And here, it seemed, were the entrepreneurs one could trust with Stölzl's repertoire."⁴

After consultation with Stölzl's daughters, Yael Aloni and Monika Stadler, the Farr Gallery selected a circa 1926 for initial reproduction in two forms, a flatweave rug and a handknotted rug, each in a different colorway. The two rugs were shown at the retrospective exhibit "Gunta Stölzl Meisterin am Bauhaus," at the Museum für Kunst in Hamburg in March 1998. Their enthusiastic reception convinced Farr and Bourne to arrange production of other designs as well. As of October, 2000, the collection contained five handknotted designs, two flatwoven designs, and a tapestry, each in a limited edition of fifteen rugs.⁵

Anni Albers' loom

One legacy of the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop is still in use today in western Pennsylvania, available to any handweaver willing to travel there. When Anni Albers

⁴ Larsen, Jack Lenor. Afterword to *Original Contemporary Design Rugs and Carpets*. October 7, 1999. <http://www.cfarr.co.uk/past_exhibitions2.htm>

⁵ *Original Contemporary Design Rugs and Carpets*. 1999. <http://www.cfarr.co.uk/past_exhibitions2.htm>

immigrated to the United States in 1933, she brought with her an eight-shaft countermarcbe loom that she had used at the Bauhaus. She continued to weave on this loom until 1961, when it passed into the hands of her student Dolores Dembus Bittleman. Twenty years later, Ms. Bittleman sold the loom to the Weavers Guild of Pittsburgh. It was sporadically used at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts until 1996, when the guild decided that it required too much space for them to continue to keep it.

At that time, weaver and textile scholar Sigrid Piroch was in the late stages of organizing the Allegheny River Textile (ARTS) Studio. The Pittsburgh guild, upon receiving news of the new studio, decided that ARTS would be a perfect home for Albers' loom – a location where it could be used rather than sitting idle in an exhibit, or worse stored away out of view. After a year of restoration work, performed with the help of German Master Weaver Gudrun Weisinger, Albers' loom debuted in a place of honor as ARTS opened in October 1997. Today, according to Piroch, students and teachers at ARTS do indeed weave on Albers' loom, bringing the handwork legacy of the Bauhaus as well as its design legacy on into the twenty-first century.⁶

⁶ Piroch, Sigrid. Anni Albers. <http://ww.artsstudio.org/anni_albers.htm>

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