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Bauhaus Criticized

HENRY McBRIDE, critic of the *New York Sun*, was not in the least impressed by the Modern Museum's Bauhaus exhibition; he considered the movement a product of over advertising for the benefit of susceptible Americans and suspected most of the artists as "being modern for the sake of being modern."

"What appears to be a forlorn gesture, wrote Mr. McBride, "is the clumsily installed exhibition of the Bauhaus Movement in the Modern Museum. It has been well advertised. The Bauhaus people think well of themselves and are thoroughly convinced that if they can only shout loud enough the rest of the world will accept them at the value they have placed upon themselves. The American people, it is true, are very susceptible to advertising, and many of them dutifully believe what they are told, but there is a stratum of common sense in the fabric of our society that usually saves us in the end from disastrous impracticalities.

"They will be induced to go, easily enough to see the exhibition, for they are always willing to try anything once, but it is doubtful if they will be much attracted by the typography in the Bauhaus books when only a short distance further up town the brilliant typography and title-pages of Bruce Rogers are on view in the Grolier Club; nor with the Oskar Alexander Schawinsky posters at a moment when the Toulouse-Lautrec posters are on view; nor at the unfortunate textiles, the clumsy modernistic chairs, tricky photography, and much of the rest of it. Some of the instructors and head men in the Bauhaus School have their unquestioned merits; but the contributions of the pupils illustrate the fact that talent cannot be transmitted just by submitting to the teaching.

"With all the best wishes in the world, it is impossible to suppress the feeling that there is something essentially heavy, forced and repellent in most of the Bauhaus work. They are under suspicion of being modern for the sake of being modern and not because of any necessities of their system of living. They want to astound even when they have nothing with which to astound."

Emily Genauer of the *World-Telegram*, at the end of long, engrossing review, concluded

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that "the reasoning of the Bauhaus instructors was logical, their training thorough. One could wish, though, that they didn't discount so completely that certain something in art, that spontaneous manifestation which reaches above science into the realms of emotion and the spirit."

To Jerome Klein of the *Post* the Bauhaus exhibition was "a curious melange of practical industrial design and torturous fantasy, of the useful and the vaguely abstract, of clarity and metaphysical mysticism." While the Bauhaus program, he added, "calls for a broad, unified social-artistic engineering which would transform man's environment for the benefit of man, the Bauhaus men are stumped about how to put it into effect . . . Until the Bauhaus leaders face the facts of life, their theories of a new unity can only lead, like so many products of their workshops, into Utopian abstraction."

The Bauhaus survey was to Edward Alden Jewell of the *Times* little short of a fiasco, considering the public service such an exhibition could render. "It is chaotic," writes Mr. Jewell. "Where simple eloquence was called for, the result is voluminously inarticulate. Instead of a progression of marshalled detail, each step leading logically to the next, within a measured field, there is disorganized promiscuity . . . The exhibition, bewildering in the multiplicity of its items, looks somewhat like an old-fashioned fire sale, just as the cluttered, uninviting Bauhaus book, to which one turns for help, resembles a mail-order catalogue."

"As installed, the material—often of deep intrinsic significance—takes on the aspect of a jazzed, smart potpourri of dated modernist 'isms.' ~~And for anything of that kind the Bauhaus emphatically did not stand.~~"

Royal Cortissoz of the *Herald Tribune* found the furniture "stark and uninteresting," the pottery and textiles "making only the mildest appeal," the paintings "dull abstractions," and the architecture "most disappointing of all." If there is one thing, continued the critic, "which more than another seems to have been left out of the Bauhaus hypothesis it is the element of taste, which some one, I think 'Omar' FitzGerald, once defined as the feminine of genius."