The Bauhaus, an educational experiment undertaken at a revolutionary time, has an obscure prehistory. Founded in Weimar in 1919 by the Thuringian state initially to revive the crafts, the school, led by Walter Gropius, quickly broadened its mission to promote a radical fusion of the fine arts, the decorative arts, and architecture. As the standard-bearer of a reformed artistic culture, the Bauhaus, Gropius proclaimed, would lead postwar German society in a process of social, economic, and cultural renewal.1

Direct precedents to the Bauhaus did not exist before World War I. Yet many of the school's organizational principles, innovative curricular features, and aesthetic theories originated during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II between 1888 and 1918. After the world war swept away the Wilhelmine era's dynastic imperial rule and replaced it with the Weimar Republic's divisive, fragile democracy, Gropius's school emerged at the center of heated ideological debates about its value to the new nation. Heralded as art's cosmopolitan avant-garde and castigated by nationalist detractors as a menace to traditional German culture, the Bauhaus fought for survival in a process that shrouded the school's origins in numerous, often self-serving myths. As other contributions to this volume demonstrate, Gropius worked equally avidly to shape perceptions of Bauhaus modernism in contexts as varied as Nazi Germany and the cold war United States.

After World War II and until his death in 1969, Gropius nurtured an image of the Bauhaus as a unique artifact of Weimar-era democracy. Casting the school as an antipode to Nazism with no debts to such significant pre–World War I institutions as the Prussian state, Gropius reflected a widespread post–World War II tendency to condemn Wilhelmine Prussia as a militant and retrograde precursor to Hitler's Germany. Art and architectural historians also subscribed to Gropius's notion of Bauhaus cultural reform as a bridge from the Weimar Republic to a postwar democracy, choosing to overlook the school's relationship to reforms sponsored by various German states. In fact, a variety of Wilhelmine developments in fields as varied as architecture, art, design, politics, economics, and social reform helped prepare the way for the Bauhaus.

A key Wilhelmine contribution to the prehistory of the Bauhaus was the gradual re-definition of the relationship between architecture, the decorative arts, and the role of
artists as makers and interpreters of form. The closer integration of the fine and applied arts not only became an aesthetic end in itself but also came to be understood as a means of encouraging social unity and economic development. All over Europe in the late nineteenth century, progressive artists and designers exhibited a new determination to develop styles and working methods that no longer mimicked the historical forms typically absorbed through nineteenth-century academic training. Like their colleagues in the fine arts, progressive designers increasingly sought to develop working methods whose products could be regarded as appropriate responses to a modern age.2

Adherents of the Arts and Crafts movement, for example, revived old crafts techniques from the Middle Ages, while their art nouveau counterparts borrowed from industry to produce new forms inspired by plants and nature. Accompanying social theories and reform programs, owing much to the writings of Augustus Pugin and John Ruskin, raised the status of artists, artisans, and designers, even as they promoted a general belief that art and the design of people’s environments could play a role in improving the lives of the general populace. Rapidly exposing more readers than ever before to new images, ideas, and currents of thought, countless new arts journals arose in the 1890s to disseminate this message across international borders.

Against this backdrop there were three major overlapping prewar developments, all emerging out of the Wilhelmine empire’s radically changing political, social, and economic landscape, that prepared the way for the postwar Bauhaus. The first of these precedents, the British Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century, caught the attention of Germans and other Continental Europeans interested in the potential offered by the movement for a rebirth of design and artistic quality. Britain’s apparent shift in artistic sensibilities and revival of superior craft production—exemplified by such figures as William Morris, Charles R. Ashbee, William Lethaby, and numerous others—inspired countless European artists, craftsmen, architects, and patrons. This shift pointed to new possibilities for the fusion of old and new, recasting, so to speak, ancient artistic techniques for use under modern commercial and industrial conditions.3 Experiments in art nouveau and its German counterpart, the Jugendstil or “youth style,” were just the first in a number of developments inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement and its promise of national renewal in the artistic, economic, and cultural sectors.4

A second key Bauhaus precedent arose from the specific ways in which Prussian state government reworked Arts and Crafts ideas in the opening years of the twentieth century. Institutionalizing key Arts and Crafts principles between 1903 and 1907 to place a reformed system of design education at the service of a modern economy, it coordinated an elaborate organizational effort to improve the quality of consumer products through artistic intervention. Unlike many British reformers—who bemoaned machine production—forward-thinking German artists and their official counterparts embraced mechanization as a tool to spur design innovation, increase commercial
production, and enable Germany to catch up and compete effectively with neighboring powers.\(^5\)

Following the Prussian state’s lead in the autumn of 1907, proponents of the “new movement” in design reproduced the main elements of Prussia’s system in the private sector and, at a national scale, in the third most important Bauhaus precedent: the German Werkbund. A private association formed by two dozen architects, artists, craftsmen, and manufacturers, the Werkbund grew quickly to become the leading representative of modern tendencies in German design before World War I. Its leaders enlisted a diverse yet like-minded membership from various artistic and intellectual backgrounds. Although not itself a school, the Werkbund combined an educational and economic mission. Through publications, public lectures, exhibitions, and other positive “propaganda organs,” the Werkbund worked to educate consumers in matters of modern taste, improve the quality of German products through artistic intervention, and establish a model for Germany’s cultural renewal through a synthetic approach to economic, aesthetic, social, and technological questions. Its purposeful investigation of the role artists should play in an age of burgeoning technology and factory production endured, as we shall see, as the most important and direct precedent to the Bauhaus and to twentieth-century German design culture generally.\(^6\)

**THE INGREDIENTS OF CHANGE: GERMANY AND INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES**

Spurred by an economic boom and supported by a wide range of patrons that included prominent nobility, leading industrialists and merchants, and state and local governments, Germany around 1900 was rife with fresh artistic enterprises and experimentation.\(^7\) As the British case confirmed, the promotion of such applied arts as furniture making, ceramics, and interior decoration made good economic sense: improved quality in crafts production commanded higher prices, reinforced demand for talented craftsmen, and boosted the reputation of an entire region. For this reason, culturally and economically minded German patrons engaged in an array of efforts to educate the public in matters of taste, hoping to distinguish their city or region as one of Germany’s leading modern artistic centers.

In pursuit of these goals, many patrons sponsored talented foreign architects and artists willing to bring their fresh ideas to Germany. At the same time, because regional identity remained strong in Germany after unification in 1871, reform efforts undertaken by different patrons often reflected the particular local or regional character of German cities and states. This might well have been expected in a Wilhelmine Empire in which four separate kings continued to rule in the respective kingdoms of Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg, with Prussia’s king simultaneously reigning as German emperor. Beyond these kingdoms, five grand duchies, thirteen duchies and principalities, and three “free cities” filled out the complex political map of the Second

**WILHELMINE PRECEDENTS FOR THE BAUHAUS**
Reich. Rivalries lingered, reflecting a combination of local pride in the “homeland” (Heimat) and an unwillingness to relinquish too much influence to the dominant state of Prussia, many of whose state ministries doubled as imperial ministries. The federal constitution, which made the areas of culture and education the responsibility of individual state governments, helped preserve a measure of state autonomy while feeding a lingering sense of competition among the federated states. It also meant that the character of individual royal houses and regional governments influenced the internal dynamics of design reform. This fact was not lost on Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier after 1920) during his extensive study tour of Germany in 1910–11, which included a period of employment with Peter Behrens in Berlin.

Perhaps the most lavish of early experiments undertaken to elevate modern German taste occurred in the central German town of Darmstadt, home to the region’s wealthiest artistic patron, Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hesse. In 1899 the grand duke invited Joseph Maria Olbrich, the gifted young Austrian architect who had recently completed the Secession building and gallery in Vienna, to design a grand communal studio building called the Ernst Ludwig House (Figure 1.1). Situated atop the Matildenhöhe, a hill above the town, this cultlike “temple of work” became the monumental center for an elite colony of artists, who were housed in additional Olbrich-designed private residences. The German painter Peter Behrens also designed a house for himself, the artist’s first complete building. In so doing Behrens exemplified a popular trend, dating to the economic boom of the late 1890s, in which numerous painters (among them Hermann Obrist, Richard Riemerschmid, Bruno Paul, and Otto Eckmann) expanded their repertoires to include the design of furniture, rooms, and eventually entire buildings.

With much fanfare and religious-mystical ritual choreographed according to the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche’s notions of cultural rebirth, the entire Darmstadt architectural ensemble opened in the summer of 1901 as a public exhibition titled “A Document of German Art.” The exhibit served as a platform for the Jugendstil and the young generation’s ongoing rebellion against nineteenth-century academic doctrines, and successfully promoted increased collaboration between Hesse’s artists and commercial firms. Praised by some critics for the spirited demonstration of bright colors, bold sculptural massing, and classical and vernacular forms, the exhibition was panned by others who regarded the Jugendstil as inflated, self-important, and culturally irrelevant. The exhibition failed financially and came to be regarded by many as an artistic dead end. Two further exhibitions in 1904 and 1908, while introducing other important individual Jugendstil works by Olbrich, did not significantly alter the situation. Moreover, the young Austrian architect’s untimely death in 1908 put a halt to the growth of the Darmstadt Colony and its fame.

Henry van de Velde, a painter of Belgian origin who also embraced design and architecture in the 1890s, was a second important foreign influence on German de-
velopments. Inspired by the values of William Morris, John Ruskin, and other founding figures of the British Arts and Crafts movement, van de Velde captured the imaginations of patrons and critics alike, among them the Berlin-based connoisseurs Harry Graf Kessler and Julius Meier-Graefe. Relocating to Berlin in 1900 as one of the best-known practitioners of a Gesamtkunstwerk approach—creating a “total work of art” out of a room, its contents, and even the clothing to be worn by its occupants—van de Velde carried with him the heritage of his Belgian predecessor, Victor Horta. However, van de Velde’s emphasis on abstraction moved beyond the purely naturalistic, botanically inspired designs of Horta and his French counterpart, Hector Guimard.13

With his fame growing, van de Velde accepted a court invitation to work for another powerful member of Wilhelmine Germany’s nobility, the Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Saxony-Weimar. Like his counterpart in Hessen, Wilhelm Ernst sought a revival of the arts, culture, and the local crafts economy, and appointed van de Velde to lead a crafts seminar in Weimar in 1902. Commissioned to build new buildings for the Grand Ducal School of Arts and Crafts between 1904 and 1911, van de Velde also became the school’s founding director in 1907. The Weimar school’s structures eventually served as the first home to the Bauhaus in 1919, a consequence of van de Velde’s recommendation that Walter Gropius succeed him as school director after war-related pressures prompted the Belgian artist’s resignation and departure from Germany in 1915.14
By interpreting for themselves the lessons of the British Arts and Crafts movement and art nouveau, major foreign talents such as Olbrich and van de Velde injected fresh energy into early-twentieth-century German arts and design. Within Germany, too, artists and craftsmen took up the call for enhanced craft quality and design creativity. In 1897, the artists August Endell, Hermann Obrist, Bruno Paul, and Richard Riemenschmid, inspired by Morris, united to found their own company in Munich, the United Workshops for Art in Handicraft. Similarly, the Dresden-based master woodworker and furniture maker Karl Schmidt opened his own entrepreneurial furniture design company, the Dresden Workshops for the Applied Arts, one year later. A spate of new arts journals appeared in the 1890s to back the new movement and heralded the new paths being explored in design. Among the new titles were German Art and Decoration (1897), The Architect (1895), Decorative Art (1897), and The Youth (1896), with the latter inspiring the name Jugendstil.

Sponsorship of influential foreign artists in the late 1890s, coupled with individual initiatives toward artistic, cultural, and economic renewal, confirms that Germany's overall turn-of-the-century artistic climate was shifting radically to accommodate international currents and tastes. At the same time, a growing network of progressive journals, design firms, artists colonies, and schools formed the basis for a new German cultural awareness of the contribution that modern design could make to economic development, social reform, and cultural renewal. Yet to achieve more widespread and lasting influence, systematic changes were needed. The architect Hermann Muthesius oversaw a governmental reworking of the Arts and Crafts movement that became the core of a distinctively German modern movement whose values and goals, expressed first in the German Werkbund, would later directly influence design thinking at the Bauhaus.

**ART, COMMERCE, AND THE MACHINE: REWORKING ARTS AND CRAFTS IDEAS**

While new artistic and design experiments could be seen in many parts of Germany around 1900, the impetus for penetrating, lasting change in design culture originated in the gigantic state of Prussia. Covering more than two-thirds of German territory and employing a vast modern bureaucracy, Prussia was slow in recognizing the importance to its economy of reforms in the arts and crafts. Yet once officials acted to set the lumbering Prussian bureaucratic machine in motion, its policies proved decisive.

The government body most closely associated with issues affecting the crafts, product design, and the applied arts generally was Prussia's Ministry of Commerce and Trade. As the de facto trade ministry for the whole German Empire (which, due to long-standing disputes with the influential Prussian state, never succeeded in establishing a trade ministry of its own), the Commerce Ministry had a direct interest in managing all sectors of the economy, from agriculture and heavy industry to commercial
trade and the individual arts, crafts, and trades. The applied arts were only one sector of Germany's growing economy, but since manufacturing and exports of finished goods had long been on the rise, they naturally interested the ministry.\(^{15}\)

As the twentieth century approached, Commerce Minister Theodor Møller, a National Liberal politician and successful Westphalian industrialist, faced several dilemmas. On one hand, Møller and his circle of advisers joined other Germans in celebrating the forces of industrial and commercial expansion during the 1890s, as all signs seemed to indicate that Germany stood a good chance of one day rivaling Britain as Europe's leading industrial and commercial power. On the other hand, however, these forces of expansion, although responsible for the proliferation of new commissions for artists and architects in this decade, raised several warning flags. First, the rising concentration of power among large businesses and industrial manufacturers was proving detrimental to the far older sector of traditional arts, crafts, and trades producers, many of whom were being put out of business by these larger, more sophisticated competitors. Compounding this problem during the 1890s was the surge in popularity of the Socialist Party: since 1890, when a twelve-year ban imposed on the party by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had been lifted, the socialists had campaigned with phenomenal success among embattled workers, craftsmen, and tradesmen convinced that Germany's expanding "new economy" was leaving them behind.\(^{16}\)

Alongside this dilemma, ministry officials were acutely aware that for decades, German export products had been faring extremely poorly in international markets. As long as export revenues to Britain, France, and the United States remained comparatively low, Germany's economic expansion would be hindered, as would the nation's prospect of becoming Europe's foremost industrial power. Thus, as the Prussian Commerce Ministry saw it, something had to be done both to shore up the troubled crafts and trades sector, and to raise the overall quality of German product design and manufacturing. Failure to do so would, at best, keep Germany from becoming a serious competitor in international export markets, and could at worst lead to levels of revolutionary unrest of the sort that plagued Russia in 1905.

The Commerce Ministry responded by taking a familiar step: it sent someone to study the problem. As far back as 1826, the ministry had dispatched the renowned architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel on a study tour to report on English developments.\(^{17}\) Exactly seventy years later, it assigned Muthesius, another of its architects, to the German embassy in London to report on a variety of English technical, industrial, and artistic matters. Over the next seven years during Muthesius's time in England, and then for another decade back on German soil, what evolved under the ministry's guidance was a wholesale redirection of Prussia's program for arts and crafts education, training, and production. Guided by the findings and recommendations of Muthesius, but in reality the product of a multilayered state apparatus affecting dozens of schools and industries in Prussia's larger towns and cities, the transformation of the state's arts,
crafts, and trades education system represented the first systemwide, government-led reforms subordination of design to economic development policy.\textsuperscript{18}

The first step in this transformation began as a veritable flood of cogent articles and critical analyses, correspondence, and government reports issuing from Muthesius in England. More than 100 articles, seven books (some multivolume), and more than 1,000 pieces of correspondence combined to spark the shift in official Prussian policy. The architect’s thinking—informed by university studies in philosophy, art history, and architecture, and preceded by a two-year teenage apprenticeship in masonry and the building trades—seemed well suited to untangling the complex connections between industrial production, design quality, applied arts education, and economic policy.\textsuperscript{19}

Muthesius’s mission in England, moreover, embodied a particular current of feeling in turn-of-the-century Germany that mingled admiration and envy, rivalry and a sense of inferiority. To the visiting architect, the specific appeal of British architects and designers lay in their reaction to decades of industrialization and scientific progress—a reaction he believed led them to produce tasteful, artistic home furnishings and comfortable, well-lit, hygienic modern homes for the doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and professors who comprised the nineteenth century’s newly ascendant bourgeoisie (Figure 1.2). Addressing the calls for modern cultural renewal being issued by many Germans, Muthesius’s publications and specific policy recommendations analyzed the British scene for clues that would aid his government in improving the quality of export products and thus raise Germany’s international status.\textsuperscript{20}

In early articles the visiting German architect accurately characterized the British Arts and Crafts movement less as a single style than an approach to design. Some, like Morris, founded a firm and became active in socialist politics; others, like Lethaby, became teachers. Still others, like Ashbee, established guilds in opposition to the training of the nineteenth-century art academies. All were concerned in one way or another with the effects of industrialization and its accompanying degradation of English working conditions, living standards, production quality, and even the simple (if idealized) values of village life. Reworking British ideas in accordance with the official Prusso-German bureaucratic reform mentality, Muthesius’s articles and books downplayed such left-leaning Arts and Crafts values as guild idealism, collective citizen action, and, of course, socialist activism. His best-remembered books, such as Style-Architecture and Building-Art of 1902, argued instead that in order to raise production quality and reground modern German culture, the preoccupation of the traditional crafts with obsolete historical forms had to be abandoned. These forms, the architect reasoned, needed to give way not just to Arts and Crafts designs emphasizing fitness of form to functional purpose, but even more to scientifically objective, machined forms. Engineering design in the late nineteenth century, after all, had already provided such modern design breakthroughs as the bicycle, the suspension bridge, and the battleship.
(Figure 1.3). He believed contemporary applied artists needed to learn the material and constructional lessons embodied by such modern forms.21

The proper goal of the twentieth century, Muthesius concluded, was not for designers to seek a distinct style or look—such as art nouveau and its proponents had claimed—but instead to develop an approach to design and manufacturing that grew out of a thorough understanding of the tectonic possibilities of modern machine tools, materials, and production techniques. By tectonic, Muthesius referred to the degree of technical and artistic mastery achievable in the application of constructional principles to specific materials. Once German applied artists and industry had mastered modern machines to the same sophisticated degree that Arts and Crafts practitioners understood their hand tools, then the resulting forms—true products of their time—were guaranteed to have high quality and would therefore be competitive.

London-based arguments such as these were music to the ears of Minister Moller, who by 1904 would express the wish that Muthesius be empowered to exercise "the greatest influence in the largest possible number of fields" at the Commerce Ministry.22 Muthesius began writing his recommendations for the reform of the Commerce
Ministry's schools for arts, crafts, and trades when he returned to Berlin in the summer of 1903, producing a steadily widening scope of influential policy changes. When he began to direct more than three dozen Prussian arts, crafts, and trades schools away from the copying of historical ornaments and toward design methods based on the qualities of particular materials, he was laying important groundwork for later twentieth-century practices. And when, in 1904, he authored a ministerial decree requiring design students to get up from their drafting tables and actually build their designs in newly instituted, mandatory instructional workshops, he was implementing a change that would become a cornerstone of Bauhaus pedagogy. By encouraging schools to emphasize product functionality and at the same time requiring greater contact with local crafts industries, Muthesius aroused vehement opposition among traditional crafts practitioners and trade unions—as would the Bauhaus. Muthesius argued that raising taste, quality, and the competitiveness of German goods was part of a more general cultural renewal for which Germany was long overdue. According to him, the educated middle classes would lead this renewal of culture, and their interest in "good design" would become one of the defining features of German bourgeois culture. Under the Commerce Ministry's reforms, meanwhile, applied arts students were meant to become designers of useful modern products, and no longer mere reproducers of historical styles.

In late 1902, Møller persuaded the thirty-four-year-old Peter Behrens to direct the Commerce Ministry's flagship Arts and Crafts school in Dusseldorf. Whereas some
schools in the Prussian system concentrated on a single trade like ceramics or metalwork, larger schools like the Arts and Crafts schools in Dusseldorf, Krefeld, and Magdeburg offered a full spectrum of design, crafts, and architectural studies. Their curricula included painting, graphics, textile design, furniture making, interior design, and architecture, but could also range from fine metals and jewelry work to book design, ceramics, or sophisticated joinery. Under Behrens’s leadership the school would achieve remarkable results.23

In his recommendations Muthesius followed lessons most closely derived from new British schools like Lethaby’s Central Schools of Arts and Crafts, founded in London in 1896 through a bill initiated by the Fabian Socialist Sidney Webb. Ignoring the socialist origins of the school, Muthesius instead held it up as an example of effective reform. Publishing a detailed article about the school in an 1898 issue of Decorative Art, he noted that Lethaby and his partner, the sculptor George Frampton, had developed instructional workshop-based curricula for “no less than ninety-eight” government-supported Arts and Crafts schools.24 In his last English assignment in June 1903, he evaluated this and twenty-six other British arts, crafts, and technical training schools in a study tour organized for Behrens and three top Prussian officials from the Commerce and Finance ministries. Arriving in Berlin the following month, Muthesius embarked immediately on an analogous tour of ten top Prussian applied arts schools. In a detailed report to the Commerce minister, he harshly criticized a traditional pedagogy that emphasized teaching students to draw Gothic or classical ornaments for application to isolated objects with almost total disregard for materials or methods of assembly or for the design of integrated interiors.25

The Arts and Crafts movement’s influence on Muthesius and the Prussian system prompted the issuing of an “Instructional Workshops Decree” on 4 December 1904. This decree introduced practical workshops where students would develop their design projects in tandem with a hands-on, materials- and construction-oriented design process. It established sixty-one new trial and instruction workshops in Prussian applied arts schools.26 Van de Velde used the Prussian Workshops Decree as his model when he applied for funding to establish his own instructional workshops in Weimar.27

The impetus for the reforms was economic as well as aesthetic, as it would later be for Gropius when he called for “a proliferation of the crafts and industry in the state of Weimar as a result of the re-molding of the schools in accordance with a craft-oriented, practical approach.”28 In creating the Bauhaus, Gropius also gathered literature and advice from such respected applied arts school directors as Rudolf Bosselt of Magdeburg and Richard Riemerschmid of Munich, both of whom had been key players in the Prussian state’s prewar reform efforts.29

Instructional workshops were not new. Many European schools had followed the example originally set by London’s South Kensington Museum and School of Design where, beginning in 1853, Henry Cole had been appointed to teach ornamental art,
design, and, as Cole wrote, "the practical application of such knowledge to the improvement of Manufactures." Just over a decade later, the Viennese followed the British example and founded the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in 1864, which added a school of applied arts in 1868, while in Berlin the Prussian government founded the Berlin Museum of Applied Arts in 1867. By the opening years of the twentieth century, individual schools in Vienna, Stuttgart, and Breslau had instituted instructional workshops, inspired in part by such English examples as Ashbee's Guild and School of Handicraft in London, and by the successful entrepreneurial crafts workshops already operating in Dresden, Munich, and Vienna. However, Möller's push to enable Prussia to catch up with these individual schools assured one thing: that its reforms would affect dozens of schools and industries at a single stroke, and would provide models beyond Prussia's borders for such institutions as van de Velde's Grand Ducal School of Arts and Crafts.

Lethaby's Central School model elicited Muthesius's admiration on several counts: it advocated "teaching crafts through practical examples"; the study of nature and abstract drawing to replace historical copying; the encouragement of students' "own artistic thinking process" to set them "on the path to an artistically independent handling of a particular craft"; and, finally, the enabling of the student to "embody his thinking in his work [by] bringing the limits of materials to consciousness."

Muthesius crystallized these thoughts in the Commerce Ministry's Workshops Decree. Its language swept aside decades of historicist pedagogical methods, concepts, and long-accepted definitions in the areas of drawing, design, and execution of student work. The following excerpt explains the new mission of the Prussian workshops as de facto centers of the schools:

Teaching in instructional workshops will make it possible to bring the essential relationships between material and form to the express consciousness of the student, and thereby teach him to develop his design more objectively, economically, and purposefully. This involvement with materials will further rid the student of the mistaken notion that producing outwardly pleasing drawings—which take no account of materials and their character—is a goal worth striving for. The workshops will also convey new worthwhile artistic impulses; instead of being based on outwardly transmitted forms, these will be grounded in the insights into the working possibilities of the material that have been gained through the student's own activities. . . . The essence of the Applied Arts School implies that artistic and technical instruction in the workshops go hand in hand.

Under old methods from the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, students' ornamented designs were executed in workshops by craftspeople who had not participated in developing the drawing, but who had to figure out how to construct the object to match the drawn forms. The old methods, the decree explained, were a symptom of overspecialization.
that had led to "the one-sided training of arts and crafts draftsmen, who know nothing of materials and who are alienated from the activity of the craftsman."34

Both English and German school reform efforts regarded the workshops as "a supplement and not a replacement to instruction from master teachers." A further goal of both nations was for schools to "orient to industry."35 Here, however, a major difference between typical English schools' mission statements and the 1904 Prussian decree emerged: by its very nature, arts and crafts education in England remained on a path separate from that of industry. The London County Council expressed the wish to see the crafts made "useful to industry" and so promoted their study, but a specific English policy incorporating industry failed to materialize before World War I. Tradition, materials, and hand craftsmanship in the English arts and crafts remained evidence of the search for honesty and ethics in the industrial age.

Prussian policies, by contrast, sought in the most direct way possible to exploit the commercial potential of the Arts and Crafts movement in order to further Prussia's economic development priorities. Ashbee roundly criticized Muthesius for embodying the Prussian "commercial spirit," and for lacking the moral idealism that lent the British movement its largely anti-industrial tone.36

The Prussian workshops decree, for its part, articulated exactly where the instructional workshops were to stand with respect to industry. For example, schools establishing workshops were advised "in the first place to consider local industries, following those working techniques in which artistic value will rest primarily on the work of the artist."37 This local emphasis enabled schools to develop individualized curricula matching the economic profile of their city and region. The decree also supported having workshops led by master craftsmen as long as these had demonstrated the "artistic capabilities" to teach equally the "artistic and the technical" sides of workshop courses. In cases where this was not so, teaching was "to be divided between an artist and a technician, in which the technician works under the direction of the artist."38 Betraying the Prussian bureaucracy's deeply ingrained regard for nineteenth-century hierarchical traditions and social deference, Muthesius observed:

Doubts concerning any conflicts between artist and technician appear to me unfounded because, while the technician in such cases would be a common master craftsman, from the outset his social standing requires a recognition of the authority of the full teacher who is the institution's retained artist. The division between artist and technician in the described fashion is followed at the arts and crafts school in Vienna.39

Although in official settings the Commerce Ministry cultivated the appearance that they wished to avoid conflict with traditional arts, crafts, and trades producers, it could hardly conceal the fact that academically trained artists were to remold the arts and crafts through their expertise and, by reconfiguring the crafts workshops, improve the
artistic and economic value of their products. The Bauhaus, too, would in 1922 abandon its idealistic proclamations of an egalitarian artistic community in favor of a remarkably similar hierarchical arrangement. Denying equal status and voting rights to teaching craftsmen at meetings of the Bauhaus's council of "Form Masters," Gropius rescinded an earlier promise assuring equality among teaching artists and craftsmen.

As Muthesius was completing the final draft of the Workshops Decree, Commerce Minister Möller further expanded the architect's influence by founding a special department within the ministry to enlarge the scope of activities in arts, crafts, and trades reform. In January 1905, this department took its final form as the State Trades Board, with Muthesius, as one of five founding members, responsible for crafts and trades exhibitions, continuing education, and broadening the ongoing reform of Prussia's arts, crafts, and trades schools. The State Trades Board's charter documents nationally asserted that the new agency would enable Germany to emerge victorious in the "trades competition of the peoples."

The State Trade Board's Standing Committee on Trades Policy, created in 1905, furnished a ministerial blueprint for the later private, national German Werkbund. In addition to Muthesius, the Commerce minister, and four other ministerial members, the Standing Committee comprised leading representatives of the applied arts in their individual branches, heads of trades associations, executives from Prussian industry, directors of arts and crafts schools, mayors of several important Prussian cities, and delegates from the Prussian legislature. Members of this committee, who held their posts for five years, met on a biannual basis in Berlin. Serving as a government tool to reeducate the public about taste and quality through professional and student exhibits that bore the stamp of the new design thinking, the State Trades Board introduced organizational principles and a design philosophy that directly anticipated the Werkbund's stated mission of educating national taste and improving exports through the cooperation of artists, artisans, and manufacturers.

To conservative trades associations like the Association for the Economic Interests of the Crafts, the creation of the State Trades Board and its Standing Committee on Trades Policy, coupled with further increases in state subventions for arts and crafts schools that followed the new direction in design, represented a clear call to arms. Muthesius responded in kind. In early 1907, his inaugural lecture as the first chair of the applied arts at the new Berlin College of Commerce, "The Significance of the Applied Arts," aggressively denounced all those who refused to abandon traditional crafts practices in favor of an objective functionalism. Holding old design techniques and shoddy material practices accountable for having made the words "German" and "tasteless" into practically identical concepts, he announced that the "future belongs to those producers who subscribe to the new movement." Linking the education of consumers about the integrity of products and materials to the moral integrity of the masses and the nation, Muthesius argued that any unwillingness among
manufacturers to subscribe to this outlook represented a mortal threat to Germany’s national progress and health.

The Association for the Economic Interests of the Crafts responded by angrily demanding that Clemens Delbrück, who replaced Möller in late 1905, dismiss Muthesius from his ministerial post. The resulting “Muthesius Case” proved a focal point for Wilhelmine debates about “traditional” versus “modern” crafts practices. In a reply to the association, Delbrück wrote that Muthesius had been acting “as an academic instructor . . . and independent from his activity as a member of the State Trades Board,” and refused to fire him.47 When the matter arose for debate in the Prussian Chamber of Deputies, Delbrück defended Muthesius as “an expert colleague” whom he considered an “indispensable public servant.”48

At the height of the controversy, and to demonstrate their support for Muthesius, twelve artists and twelve crafts manufacturers formally withdrew from the association to form the Werkbund in October 1907. Although Muthesius prepared a speech for the founding meeting and would go on to be one of the Werkbund’s leading theorists of artist-designed industrial “types,” he did not attend its inaugural meeting in Munich. The furor surrounding the Association for the Economic Interests of the Crafts and the “Muthesius Case” was still too fresh in people’s minds. Moreover, his presence would only have lent credence to the association’s argument that the government backed manufacturers to the exclusion of crafts practitioners.

The aggressive provocation contained in Muthesius’s College of Commerce opening address was undeniably an extension, and in many ways a culmination, of policies he had helped to develop in the Commerce Ministry. Indeed, since the college’s bylaws showed that its trustees were accountable to the Commerce minister for such major decisions as appointing the school’s director, there was a degree of disingenuousness in Delbrück’s assertion that Muthesius was acting as an independent academic.49 By broadening his focus on the applied arts and challenging German manufacturers explicitly to embrace what he believed to be rational principles, Muthesius was following several years of ministerial economic development policies to their logical conclusion. Kept out of the spotlight for the moment by his government employers, he nonetheless quickly became one of the Werkbund’s chief officers. Never abandoning his government post, he gained prominence in the Werkbund over the next several years as the advocate of rationalized production of “types” controlled by designers.50

PETER BEHRENS:
DESIGN REFORM PEDAGOGY IN THE MODERN MARKETPLACE

If Muthesius’s rise had been gradual, Behrens’s was meteoric. The same month in which the Werkbund was formed, Behrens left his post as director of the flagship Düsseldorf Applied Arts School to accept a position that easily made him the association’s leading practitioner: he became chief artistic designer and architect for the AEG,
Germany’s General Electric Company, in Berlin. Behrens’s numerous commissions from German industry, obtained in accordance with Prussian state directives during his four-year term as the Dusseldorf school director, had prepared him well for his work with the AEG. As early as 1904, numerous exhibits of Dusseldorf students’ work from courses taught by Behrens and such talented design colleagues as Rudolf Bosselt, Fritz Ehmcke, and Johannes Lauweriks revealed a fundamental shift away from earlier Jugendstil design and the Darmstadt legacy. As Behrens wrote during his years as director, “The arts and crafts school of today must reconcile the demands of craft and the needs of industry in accordance with aesthetic directives and artistic impulses.”

Best known among Behrens’s works of this period is the templelike Delmenhorst Linoleum Company exhibition pavilion, built for the Third German Applied Arts Exhibition in Dresden in 1906 (Figure 1.4). Executing the company’s posters, brochures, linoleum flooring and wall patterns, and several exhibition buildings, Behrens rapidly consolidated his position as the acknowledged star of the German design world with dazzling displays of versatility and flexibility that dignified the commodities manufactured by his clients and the advertising through which they were marketed. His adaptation of
A monumental yet abstracted classicism struck a chord with business executives, artists, and the public alike. Tapping the roots of classical tradition while remaining sensitive to the dramatic—even theatrical—possibilities of contemporary materials like mohair, steel, concrete, and glass, Behrens embodied a modern artistic spirit that exceeded the highest hopes of the reform-minded Commerce Ministry.53

As the nation's first modern industrial and corporate image designer, Behrens set an example that was by no means lost on three of his young AEG office trainees in Berlin: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and the Dusseldorf graduate Adolf Meyer. These future leading figures of twentieth-century German architecture assisted Behrens when, in 1908–9, he designed the instantly iconic AEG Turbine Factory. The consummate image of an industrial “temple of work” erected in the industrial Moabit section of Berlin, the Turbine Factory was admired by Le Corbusier during his visit to Behrens's office in 1910 (Figure 1.5). As Stanford Anderson has observed, the Turbine Factory epitomized the moment in Behrens's career when the architect most decisively subordinated such modern materials as glass, concrete, and iron to

Figure 1.5. Peter Behrens, general view of AEG Turbine Factory, Berlin-Moabit, 1909. From Walter Müller-Wulckow, Deutsche Baukunst der Gegenwart: Bauten der Arbeit und des Verkehrs (Königstein im Taunus and Leipzig, 1929).
the creation of an inspired industrial corporate image emphasizing "corporeality and classical expression." Behrens worked with his engineer, Karl Bernhard, to imbue the AEG factory with an aura of substantiality and monumentality at variance with the kind of light-framed, open, airy edifice that one might otherwise expect from an iron structural frame with glass infill. Thus, concrete corner pylons with horizontal bands carried no structural load, although they appeared to anchor the structure and support the roof with their tapering, horizontally striated bulk. Similarly, what Anderson identifies as an impressive "corporate display-facade" required a concealed iron truss to support its main feature: a concrete pediment bearing Behrens's hexagonal-patterned AEG logo. Although supported from behind, the pediment appeared to rest on an iron beam that topped a window frame rising at an outward slant from below. At each stage of the design process, Behrens subordinated the engineering practicality and the functional dictates of materials to the generation of the most powerful visual image possible for the factory as a temple: tapering pylons, slanted windows, and angular vertical truss supports maximized the dramatic potential of linearity, shadows, light, and elemental geometries. As Frederic Schwartz has pointed out, such deft combinations of architectural imagery, corporate symbolism, and commercial expediency lay at the heart of the Werkbund's claims to be Germany's leading force for renewing culture through the harmonization of commerce and art. Strict functionality and sober objectivity yielded to monumentality of appearance and to the creation of compelling corporate images.

Gropius and Meyer, who formed a partnership in 1910, pushed such explorations even further in their factory designs. In their first major commission, the Fagus Shoe-Last Factory of 1911, they replaced the non-load-bearing concrete pylons of Behrens's AEG factory with their antithesis: seemingly dematerialized glass corners. In their model factory building for the 1914 Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne, the pair punctuated the non-load-bearing corners of the building with circular glass corner towers housing spiral staircases. In both instances, Gropius and Meyer, as trained architects, inverted some of the painterliness of Behrens's design by exploiting the architectonic potential of non-weight-bearing corners. With equally compelling visual impact, they chose to reveal, rather than hide, the manner in which their modern factory buildings stood.

Architectural examples such as these accumulated in support of the Werkbund's aim to blend art, design, and commerce to promote Germany's political, economic, and cultural goals. Working closely with the Commerce Ministry and other branches of government, the Werkbund also strove to educate Germans about the value of what it understood as quality in design, and to disseminate information about the Werkbund and its member firms' products abroad. In Berlin, for example, the Werkbund joined the Commerce Ministry in 1910 in funding the Institute for Decorative Arts, or Höhere Fachschule für Dekorationskunst. The school's students and design faculty filled Berlin's department stores, shop windows, advertising kiosks, and exhibitions.
with posters and product displays that were by turns flashy and provocative or sober and subdued.\textsuperscript{58} Beginning in April 1913, the German Foreign Ministry also took steps to support the Werkbund, directing German consulates and embassies around the world to distribute its brochures, posters, and advertisements to aid in the marketing and sales of German products in foreign markets.\textsuperscript{59} This effort was complemented by a traveling exhibition of German posters, products, and architectural photographs from Karl Ernst Osthaus's German Museum for Art in Commerce and Trade, which toured the United States in 1913. By 1915, even the Prussian Chamber of Deputies had opened its legislative chambers to the Werkbund’s "Fashion Division," which put on a show of the latest modern German dresses and accoutrements in a bid to challenge France as the world’s fashion capital. Together this constellation of government ministries, private associations, exhibitions, and events increasingly gave modern German capitalist culture a distinctive shape.\textsuperscript{60}

THE WERKBUND CONGRESS IN COLOGNE:
"AN ASSOCIATION OF THE MOST INTIMATE ENEMIES"

The first Werkbund exhibition, held in the summer of 1914, should have been Muthesius’s finest hour. In many respects it represented the culmination of all that he had been working to achieve in aesthetic and applied arts reform, on the one hand, and the implementation of the Commerce Ministry’s strategy for orderly and systematic German economic development, on the other. As had been the case since at least 1900, Muthesius served as a valuable bridge between the artistic community and government policy makers eager to translate innovations in design into a program for Prussia’s and Germany’s continued growth. Now the Werkbund offered the ministry an effective extragovernmental means to further its policy goals.

Yet by mid-1912 Muthesius would comment that the Werkbund, whose headquarters were moved from Karl Schmidt’s factory town, the new Garden City of Dresden-Hellerau, to Berlin in April of the same year, needed to be “rescued and restored from its ash-heap existence . . . and developed into a German center of culture.”\textsuperscript{61} He wrote these bitter yet still hopeful words to the Werkbund’s new executive secretary, Ernst Jäckh. Although the Werkbund’s membership expanded from 970 to more than 1,800 through Jäckh’s efforts, conflicts over self-definition, artistic direction, and leadership plagued the association until they boiled over at the Cologne Exhibition in July 1914.\textsuperscript{62}

The Werkbund’s conflicts revolved around a fundamental tension between positions within the organization—tensions the Bauhaus would inherit. Gropius fought to reconcile what the Werkbund apparently could not: the demands of industrial production versus designers’ insistence on total artistic and creative independence. Yet the famous “Werkbund debate” of July 1914 represented less the opposition of irreconcilable philosophical positions than another struggle over direction and control of the
organization. The way in which this conflict developed and played out would influence deeply both its participants and subsequent developments in Weimar Germany.

Muthesius, whom Gropius called "the black sheep" at the center of attention and hostility at Cologne, combined the Commerce Ministry's political agenda with impolitic tactics at the association's meeting during the exhibition in 1914. As Angelika Thiekötter has shrewdly observed, the diverse and ambitious group of men who formed the Werkbund in 1907 worked in relative unison as long as they turned their energies toward goals perceived to advance the association's common interests. Once they had to reach decisions on matters of internal policy and organizational direction, however, consensus, already tenuous to begin with, was all too likely to collapse into intrigue and conflict. This was especially true when it came to the planning of the exhibition, a process that triggered conflict as soon as it began in earnest in 1912.

Relocating the Werkbund central office to Berlin had been only the first step in giving the organization a new identity. Meeting in Vienna in June 1912, Werkbund members listened as Peter Bruckmann, the silverware manufacturer from Heilbronn, accompanied by Jäckh, explained the terms of the association's new orientation. In addition to seeking to double the organization's membership, the Werkbund was to concentrate on building the most direct relations possible with the German Empire's centers of economic and political power. Government officials, bureaucratic authorities, and their supporting associations would all assume unprecedented influence over the affairs of the organization. In Jäckh's later estimation, Muthesius counted as by far the most decisive personality in the Werkbund, for "he alone had the accurate conception of politics...as a synthesis of all human relations, ranging from physical matters to the metaphysics of psychology, from 'material' to 'form.'"

Such unqualified praise for Muthesius became a rarity as 1914 approached, for the architect took on a role—a personality, even—that pointed to a significant shift in attitude, a subordination of his previous valuation of architecture and artistic culture to an unbending emphasis on commerce and trade. Events leading up to 1914 strongly suggest that the government played a major role in planning the exhibition and was, perhaps, a decisive factor in prompting artistic individualists such as van de Velde, Gropius, Endell, and Bruno Taut to seek to topple Muthesius from the Werkbund leadership.

Contemporary documents suggest that Muthesius, appearing suddenly with an appointment as "second chair" to the exhibition planning committee in Cologne after the committee had already been formed, exerted considerable control over commissions for exhibition buildings and over the content of the exhibition in general. Thwarted if not hindered outright by the government architect in their efforts to build exhibition buildings, such designers as van de Velde, Endell, Gropius, and even Behrens voiced loud opposition to the bland, commercial direction pursued by exhibition planners. Although Muthesius adopted a conservative stance that he deemed would be more
appealing to potential new Werkbund industrial partners, it is significant that precisely those buildings he most opposed—Gropius's Model Factory and van de Velde's theater among them—won the greatest critical praise for their individualistic spirit and notable designs.

Muthesius's behavior also reflected another emerging pattern in his thinking that tended to eschew any overt individualism in design, and leaned strongly toward an emphasis on the "typical" in modern architecture and industrial production. What began as a meditation on the essence and importance of form in his 1911 Werkbund speech "Where Do We Stand?" evolved over the course of the planning phase of the exhibition into a firm commitment to the identification and reproduction of "types" in design.

In his contribution to the 1913 Werkbund yearbook, titled "The Problem of Form in Engineering Construction," Muthesius urged all Werkbund members to recognize that aspects of beauty and function interacted dynamically from the beginning of any design process, whether involving a household object or a building. The vital work for generations of artists in any period, he argued, was to accelerate the evolution of fitting aesthetic forms (in the Vitruvian sense of commoditas, or "fitness") for each newly invented object. This could be shown historically through an examination of the design efforts that had surrounded the first steamships (in which a steam engine was mounted on a sailing ship), the first railway wagons (which resembled earlier horse-drawn mail coaches), or early gas lights (whose forms resembled candles). Over time, designers learned to relate the forms of these objects to the expression of their capabilities and functional requirements.88

Muthesius's development of this new and unprecedented position regarding the "typical" coincided with the planning phase of the First Werkbund Exhibition between 1912 and 1914. His philosophical shift and his contemporaneous actions in the exhibition planning committee could hardly have been a coincidence, particularly since his notion of "types" so strongly favored new forms of production in the trades and industry. By Typisierung ("making of types"), Muthesius did not mean standardization or mass production, words he consciously avoided using in ten "theses" he distributed one week prior to the opening of the Werkbund's annual congress at the exhibition in early July. Instead, he advocated the recognition of tendencies toward the "typical," which he claimed could be identified through a look at any era known for the greatness of its architectural, artistic, or applied arts production. The identification and collective recognition of "types" of products and designs were the best way, he reasoned, for Werkbund artists and designers to aid German industry. "Productively capable and dependably tasteful large enterprises," Muthesius wrote in his ninth thesis, "are the precondition for such an export. [By contrast], the individually produced, artist-designed object cannot even begin to fulfill domestic demand."89 Muthesius further contended that Germany's progress in arts and crafts design and production needed to be publicized widely through a propaganda campaign, and was a national matter.
of life and death. The world, he explained, would ask for German products once these goods possessed a "convincing expression of style," for which the German movement recently had provided the basis.\textsuperscript{70}

Muthesius was again relying on the cachet of his privileged government position in an effort to impose the will of the Commerce Ministry on a newly inaugurated phase of Werkbund policy. This is most likely what made the Werkbund into a "monster" in the estimation of the architect Hans Poelzig and turned Muthesius into a conduit, as Osterhaus ominously wrote, for "underground" and "subaltern" forces, by which he almost certainly meant the Prussian government and its economic policy makers.\textsuperscript{71} All of these men battled for levels of artistic integrity, independence, and individuality that they saw evaporating from the Werkbund.

Seven years earlier, in 1907, it had been the traditional crafts practitioners of the Association for the Economic Interests of the Crafts who had opposed Muthesius's advancement of the Commerce Ministry's will. At the Werkbund Exhibition of 1914, it was the elite cadre of artists, architects, and supporters of "artistic individualism" whose ire was aroused. Spearheaded by van de Velde, the individualists rallied to draft and print ten "countertheses" the night before Muthesius gave his scheduled speech to the Werkbund assembly. These theses protested the introduction of types as well as "every suggestion of a canon" that Muthesius's types seemed to imply.\textsuperscript{72} The core of the counterprotest, supported by many of the architects and artists aggrieved during the exhibition planning process, cannot be regarded as having been against only the principle of types per se, but also against the wanton, undiplomatic, and autocratic way in which Muthesius had imposed his (and the Commerce Ministry's) will on the Werkbund membership. Not only had many designers' talents been suppressed in the preparations for the exhibition, but there was also a palpable sense that the artists, who so valued their independence and creative freedom, were simply being drafted as part of an economic program in applied arts manufacturing over which they would have absolutely no control.

Van de Velde, for example, was no foe of industry or of the concept of serial production in itself, as he had made plain in the journal Pan as early as 1897. There he explained his desire "to avoid systematically everything in furniture that could not be realized by big industry. My ideal would be a thousand-fold multiplication of my creations."\textsuperscript{73} Similarly Gropius, one of the "individualist" camp at the Werkbund debate of 1914, had written a proposal for the industrial production of prefabricated houses for farm workers as early as 1911, and as such had clearly anticipated an aspect of Muthesius's modern "types" in architectural terms.\textsuperscript{74} By opposing Muthesius in 1914, van de Velde and Gropius clearly were rebelling against authoritarian efforts to commandeer their skills for a greater institutional and national agenda, for in principle Muthesius's ideas did not run contrary to beliefs they had expressed independently.

Knowing that van de Velde had prepared his countertheses, Muthesius toned down
the address he gave before the entire assembly. Titled “The Future Work of the Werkbund,” the speech was a diplomatic effort to appraise the exhibition and to advance the new Werkbund orientation as a positive step for all. Admitting that the exhibition suffered from “a certain stillness... not to say listlessness,” Muthesius agreed that the fractious Werkbund, by staying together in spite of having been called “an association of the most intimate enemies,” offered “the best proof of the greatness of the idea that moves us beyond all differences of opinion.”

Artistry had suffered at the hands of efforts to give the exhibition the broadest possible appeal, Muthesius acknowledged, but on the positive side, businesses had begun taking the Werkbund seriously—to the point that “today the whole merchant class and the great majority of industrial producers seek to work with us.” Underlining this as the purpose of the whole exhibition, he continued: “It is of the greatest importance to establish this here. And this confirmation calls forth a certain reproach, that actual new [Werkbund] products are only to be seen in such small numbers. It raises the question, what does the German Werkbund want?”

The Werkbund, he argued, must in the end choose the direction of developing the “typical,” for that was the direction of development during all great eras of art. By shunning the unusual and seeking the orderly, the typical nevertheless also managed to bear within it the paradoxical quality of retaining “the worthwhile particular, the personal, and the unique.” He assured his audience that the call for the typical was not a demand for the artist to concentrate only on a single form: “The artist follows only his own inner drive. He enjoys complete freedom, because he can only work in this way.” Nevertheless, the character of the present day called for acknowledgment of unprecedented levels of international exchange, as well as developments in technology that “practically overcome the boundaries of time and space.” With this international quality of contemporary life arose the tendency toward “a certain similarity to the architectonic forms over the entire globe.”

Muthesius was not advocating standardization or mass production by machines as the basis for a new style, and did not discuss either of these industrial processes in his speech, but he was clearly speaking of a wish to put the Werkbund at the forefront of discovering what the style representative of contemporary life would be.

No collective decisions could be taken at the end of the congress, for the proceedings following Muthesius’s address were drowned in a sea of debate. The arguments reflected not only a lack of clarity and specificity in Muthesius’s speech but also the pent-up emotions of the individuals who had been slighted or thwarted in their various ambitions for the exhibition. It was evident that the power struggle over the leadership of the Werkbund was every bit as important as, indeed if not more important than, the confused arguments over artistry, aesthetics, and quality. Muthesius withdrew his ten theses by way of seeking conciliation with the individualist faction but assured his audience in his closing remarks that he stood by the content of his lecture.
CONCLUSION
The split that occurred within the Werkbund in 1914 did not heal during the course of the First World War. By 1916, and perhaps out of disillusionment with the policies of the government he had strained to back, Muthesius gave way and withdrew from the Werkbund. Although his name continued to appear as a Werkbund member until 1922, he was largely inactive, except for the appearance of an occasional excerpt from his writings in Werkbund publications. The architect’s arguments for the development of types remained a lively topic of discussion among the members—particularly for Gropius, who was at the Western front during the fighting. As Thieköttér has observed, his letters to Osthause reveal that the Werkbund battles seemed to agitate him more than the bullets whistling around his ears.

The Werkbund crisis cast into sharp relief the defining issues of design in an industrially and technologically sophisticated century. The individual integrity of the artist, pressures from competitive governments and capitalist industries toward cost reduction and efficiency through the development of industrial product “types,” and the implications of new materials, methods, and tools for design: all of these would survive the Werkbund conference and endure as burning questions long after Wilhelmine Germany’s defeat in 1918.

Gropius’s famous attempt to tackle these design issues saw its fruition, of course, in the Bauhaus. There, too, however, the unstable political situation frustrated efforts to unite major artistic, crafts, and architectural talents under the banners of architecture and workshop instruction. Instructional workshops were up and running by 1921, but were never fully integrated with the school’s fine arts classes. The primacy of individual artistic creativity, taught with devotion to a cultlike following in the preliminary course developed by the Swiss painter Johannes Itten, conflicted with the resurgent industrial orientation of the 1923 Bauhaus exhibition. Whether clothed in the stylized monk’s robes worn by Itten or rallying beneath the 1923 exhibition banner of “Art and Technology: A New Unity,” Bauhaus students and faculty clearly wrestled in their own context with questions that had faced the prewar Werkbund. The issue of designers’ orientation to industry and machine production demanded every bit as much attention from the three Bauhaus directors—Gropius, Hannes Meyer, and Mies van der Rohe—as it had from Commerce Minister Möller, the directors of Prussian applied arts schools, and the Wilhelmine Werkbund.

The political, economic, and social conditions underlying Wilhelmine precedents to the Bauhaus were totally unique, even if the issues introduced were not. Historians like Nikolaus Pevsner and Julius Posener, among the first and most authoritative voices to write about the modern movement’s “pioneers,” focused diligently on the contributions to design innovation of such individuals as Morris, van de Velde, Muthesius, and Gropius. They sought to characterize an emergent modern movement as politically progressive, emancipatory, and potentially redemptive. However, their works severely
downplayed attention to the influence exerted upon designers by Germany's political institutions and state economic priorities, a fact that hindered more complete understanding of twentieth-century design's origins for decades.

The story of pre-1914 Bauhaus precedents transforms as soon as the customary historical frame is widened to include Wilhelmine Germany's complex institutional and cultural contexts. The German government, as we have seen, was every bit as influential in inspiring the rise of the Werkbund as, say, the Arts and Crafts movement, even though the government's concerns regarding the arts and crafts differed considerably from those of most designers. A more complete understanding of twentieth-century German architecture and design must therefore take into account the ways that modern state interests, burgeoning consumer society, international competition, and globalization impinge on designers and design culture. From this perspective, commercial, industrial, and political forces are every bit as important as individual artistic inspirations in shaping modern design developments. Design may be primary, but it can only be understood historically after taking account of the numerous conditions that combine to create it.
1. WILHELMINE PRECEDENTS FOR THE BAUHAUS


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30 Letter from Henry Cole to J. W. Henley, 10 March 1920.


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37 VB [1905], 159.

38 VB [1905], 159–60.

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43 Ibid., p. 92.

44 The Standing Committee's full title was "General Section of the Standing Committee for Trade Educational Policy and the Support of Commerce." It is discussed fully in "Organisation des Landesgewerbeamtes und des Beirates," VB 2 (1908): 1–33.

45 Support for new commercial colleges, or *Handelschulhochschulen*, was part of the Commerce Ministry's expanding educational policy by the 1890s as well. See Friedrich Facius, *Wirtschaft und Staat: Die Entwicklung der staatlichen Wirtschaftsverwaltung in Deutschland vom 17. Jahrhundert bis 1945*, Schriften des Bundesarchivs 6 (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1959), 60.


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51 See the detailed analysis of Behrens's career in Anderson, *Peter Behrens*.

52 Peter Behrens, *Kunst und Künstler 5* (February 1907): 207.


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200 NOTES TO CHAPTER 2
BAUHAUS CULTURE

FROM WEIMAR TO THE COLD WAR

Kathleen James-Chakraborty, Editor