

## 100 Years of Bauhaus Dessau: How the Visionary Hugo Junkers Supported the Bauhaus

**One hundred years ago, the Bauhaus moved from Weimar to Dessau, where it experienced its heyday. Hugo Junkers, a Dessau-based entrepreneur, played a significant role in this development. He campaigned vigorously for the establishment of the Bauhaus in Dessau and later equipped the Bauhaus building and the Masters' Houses with, among other things, heating equipment. When the anniversary "To the Core. Bauhaus Dessau 100" is celebrated this year and next, Hugo Junkers' contribution will also be honored.**

In April 1919, the architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969) founded the "Staatliches Bauhaus" in Weimar. His idea was to ideally combine art, architecture, and craftsmanship and to create the "building of the future" as a total work of art. This idea soon garnered considerable attention, and by the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921, Gropius was able to appoint renowned artists such as Oskar Schlemmer and Paul Klee as masters at the "Staatliches Bauhaus." Other famous artists followed, and the Weimar Bauhaus soon became a meeting place for the international avantgarde.

But the Bauhaus in Weimar also faced fierce criticism. Conservative and right-wing parties called it "utopian" and "Bolshevik." In the elections to the Thuringian state parliament in February 1924, these parties joined forces and gained a majority in parliament. At the end of the year, they massively cut the budget of the Bauhaus, which they disliked, and dismissed the masters "as a precaution" as of April 1, 1925. While financially justified, this politically motivated harassment made continued work impossible. On December 26, 1924, the Bauhaus masters declared the dissolution of the Bauhaus effective April 1, 1925.

Subsequently, other cities offered themselves as new locations, including Cologne, with its then mayor and later Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. The choice, however, fell on Dessau – an up-and-coming industrial city governed by the Social Democrats. Among the most important local companies was the Junkers Works, whose founder, Hugo Junkers (1859–1935), was instrumental in establishing the Bauhaus in Dessau. The mayor of Dessau, Fritz Hesse, also supported the establishment of the school in the city. The school received moral and practical support from the "Circle of Friends of the Bauhaus," whose members included Marc Chagall, Albert Einstein, and Gerhart Hauptmann.

And so, in 1925, the Master Council decided to move to Dessau. On December 4, 1926, the Bauhaus Dessau received its own school building, the Bauhaus building designed by Gropius. It was granted the official status of "School of Design," and Gropius became its director. Also completed in 1926 were the Masters' Houses, designed by Gropius and financed by the city, which served as homes and workplaces for the Bauhaus masters. Both the school building and the Masters' Houses are now UNESCO World Heritage sites, as are the arcade houses designed by the later director, Hannes Meyer.

### Modern Heating Technology Made Everyday Life Easier

Hugo Junkers was responsible for the heating systems for the Bauhaus building and the Masters' Houses in Dessau. The free-thinking engineer and inventor had already contacted Gropius in Weimar and equipped the "Haus Am Horn," the first Bauhaus model house, with heating technology. The Masters' Houses in Dessau became prototypes and showcases for the New Building and Living of the 1920s. Equipped with heating, running hot water, and modern kitchen appliances, everyday life was made easier. Gas bath heaters from Junkers & Co. promised, according to their advertising, "bathing days every day."

Further collaboration with the Dessau Bauhaus artists arose when the designer and architect Marcel Breuer designed the tubular steel furniture. The prototypes of the famous tubular steel chair were created in the Junkers factory. This was preceded by a test and development phase for the chair, which Breuer and the experts in the Junkers training workshop successfully completed through practical experiments with various materials and their design. In Junkers, they had found the ideal partner for the technical implementation of their artistic ideas. Gropius had already turned away from a focus on craftsmanship in Weimar. The new direction was now: "Art and Technology – a New Unity."

The Junkers "People's Thermal Baths" were especially popular with the less affluent population, who could now finally enjoy warm tap water. The thermal baths were used all over the world and provided Junkers with funding for his research projects. He now turned his attention primarily to aircraft construction. The aircraft was to be made entirely of metal—contrary to the prevailing belief that metal couldn't fly. The breakthrough came with the F 13, the world's first all-metal commercial aircraft, equipped with a heated cabin for four people. The F 13, with its corrugated aluminum skin, became a huge sales success: Between 1919 and 1930, the Junkers Factory produced 322 of this type.

### Aviation Icon: "Aunt Ju" on Display at the Technology Museum

The Junkers factory ultimately achieved another extraordinary success with a three-engine passenger aircraft variant, the Ju 52,

which quickly became the standard model for German and foreign airlines due to its high performance. The aircraft, nicknamed "Aunt Ju," became an aviation icon. The F 13 and Ju 52 aircraft are now on display at the "Hugo Junkers" Technology Museum in Dessau-Roßlau.

Shortly after the Nazis seized power on January 30, 1933, Junkers was forced to surrender his works and patents, and the Nazis continued to operate his companies under his name for military purposes. Junkers was placed under house arrest in his vacation home in Bavaria and was no longer allowed to enter the city of Dessau and his factories. Junkers did not live to see the aircraft used in World War II. He died on February 3, 1935, his 76th birthday, in Gauting near Munich. On the 100th anniversary of the first flight of the F 13, a nine-meter-high monument honoring Junkers was unveiled in Dessau in 2019. It is an oversized representation of the company logo.

The Bauhaus Dessau also did not survive National Socialism. In October 1932, the Dessau City Council, whose members already predominantly belonged to the Nazi Party, voted to close the "School of Design." For them, the Bauhaus was a gathering of communists and troublemakers that should be banned. The architect Mies van der Rohe, the third and last director of the Bauhaus since 1930, attempted to save the school and continued it as a privately run "Free Teaching and Research Institute" in Berlin-Steglitz. But his efforts were in vain. The Gestapo sealed the building.

On July 20, 1933, van der Rohe and the remaining masters therefore decided to dissolve the Bauhaus, thus putting an end to the experiment. The most famous Bauhaus teachers, including Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Wassily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee, emigrated in the years that followed. This marked the exodus of the modernist avantgarde from Germany. In his final years, Walter Gropius frequently returned to Berlin, where, among other projects, he designed a nine-story apartment building in the Hansaviertel district in 1957. He died in 1969 at the age of 86 in Boston, USA.

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**More Information:**

To mark the anniversary, Bauhaus Dessau is celebrating in 2025 and 2026 with an extensive program – from the pop-up exhibition "An die Substanz. Bauhaus Dessau 100" to interactive workshops for children, young people, and adults, as well as lectures and discussions at various locations, including Braunschweig and Berlin. More information can be found at:

<https://bauhaus-dessau.de/veranstaltungen/100-jahre-bauhaus-dessau/>

More information about the "Hugo Junkers" Dessau Technology Museum and its program can be found here:

<https://technikmuseum-dessau.org/>

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<https://press.invest-in-saxony-anhalt.com/2025-10-23-100-Years-of-Bauhaus-Dessau-How-the-Visionary-Hugo-Junkers-Supported-the-Bauhaus>