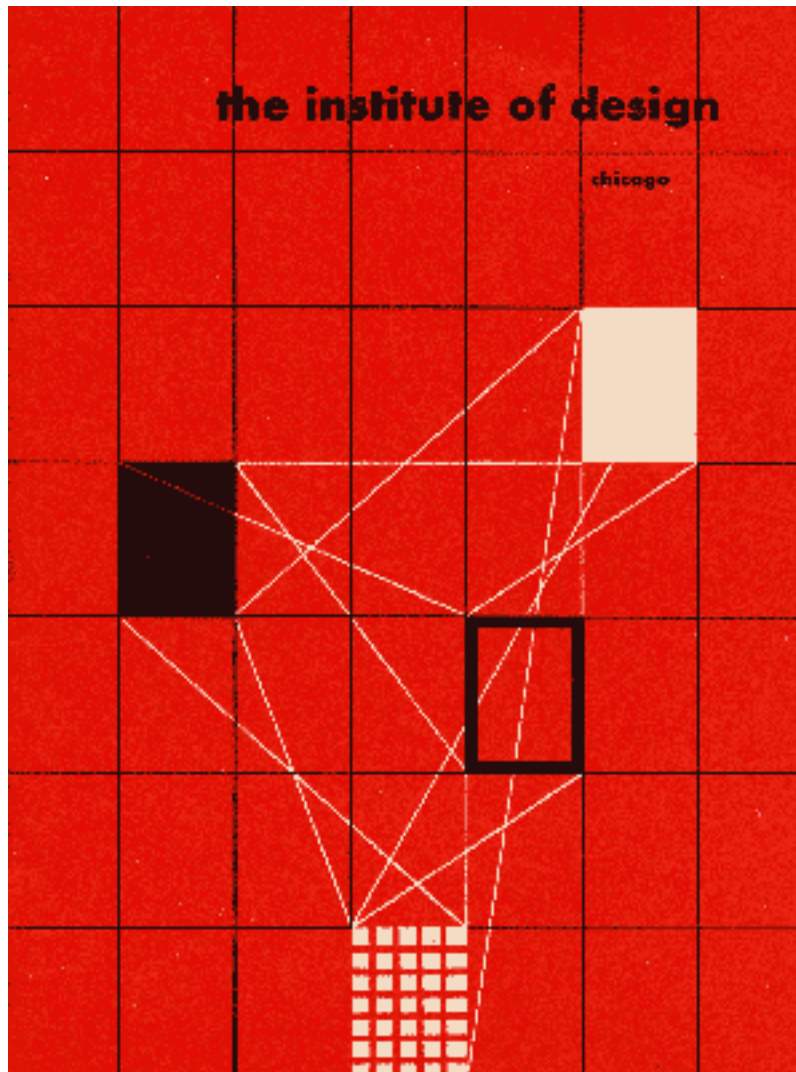


Designing the Future: The Institute of Design Collection at Illinois Institute of Technology



1948 Academic Catalogue designed by Harold Walter; used by permission.

One of the premier collections of the IIT Archives housed in the Paul V. Galvin Library is a superb grouping of original manuscripts documenting the early years of the Institute of Design. The collection, while not large in volume is rich in content, including examples of the creative output of the school's faculty and students. Many print items, presumed to be the only surviving example, and several original and unique works, by themselves merit this collection a prominence enjoyed by few others. Inclusion of over 2,000 different images (the total number of photographs in the collection is more than 3,000), in addition to the printed materials, assures that this collection deserves recognition well beyond that accorded to most. Even more remarkable is the realization that this collection is, in reality, nothing more than one in a series of rather routine collections of the university's official academic records. Because the academic program which these records document, however, is the seminal design school of those in existence today, the collection has prominence far beyond the walls of the university which owns it.

The collection covers the years 1937 (the founding of the school) to approximately 1955 (when the school moved to Crown Hall on IIT's main campus). Coverage is more sporadic than comprehensive, but the

apparently haphazard collecting nature has resulted in survival of some exceptional pieces which might have been overlooked in a more directed collecting effort. This extraordinary find, tucked away in various locations in the Archives, came to light in 1999 when IIT created the position of University Archivist and committed itself to a comprehensive effort of processing over 100 years' worth of school records. Yet to be done is the definitive study needed to fully evaluate the significance of these items and the impact of the Institute of Design in its formative years on the future of design, both as a professional field and as an academic discipline. Also greatly needed is funding for professional conservation of several key items.

This exhibit is currently installed in Galvin Library and will be on view through May 2001. Copied below is some of the text which accompanies the exhibit. Additional resources including essays by Hattula Moholy-Nagy, daughter of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and a link to the official Moholy-Nagy website appear at the end of the text.

Moholy-Nagy

The Institute of Design owes its existence to the creative genius of one man. A talented visionary, a gifted artist, a dedicated teacher - Laszlo Moholy-Nagy was one of the early masters of The Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau, Germany. Banned by the Nazis in 1933, The Bauhaus philosophy lived on in the professional work of a few core members who emigrated, leaving behind their homelands and native cultures, but not their convictions and allegiance to Bauhaus principles.

From the venue of The New Bauhaus in Chicago, Moholy-Nagy championed Bauhaus methods even as he adapted them in his creative output of paintings, photographs, sculptures, photograms, and films as well as in professional design assignments undertaken for private industry and government, and in developing course curricula for the school's classes.

The New Bauhaus

A group of Chicago business people representing the Association of Arts and Industries enticed Moholy-Nagy to come to Chicago from London with their offer to establish a school here to carry on the work of the original Bauhaus. When the association withdrew its support at the end of the first academic year leaving the school without funding, Moholy was able to garner the support of faculty and key associates to continue the school program in 1939, this time under the name of School of Design.

Children's Classes

Moholy frequently encouraged his students to view the world as through the eyes of a child, holding no preconceived notions of the "right" way to do something. Appreciating this creativity in children, classes designed specifically for young children were a significant part of the School of Design's program almost from the beginning. Later, Moholy enlisted student Robert Erickson to become the first Master of Arts candidate after the school received accreditation, and upon his completion of the program, Erickson was hired to teach the children's classes.

Exhibits

Exhibits were frequent occurrences at the school and fell into two groups, those created by school personnel, which served as students' final exams or to showcase the professional works of faculty, and traveling exhibits hosted by the school which exposed students to design developments from beyond the school walls.

Institute of Design

A 1944 reorganization brought about accreditation of the school and a new organizational structure which freed Moholy of the administrative activities of running the school. To mark the change, the old name, School of Design, was changed to Institute of Design, and the official typeface was returned to a slightly different version of the font used during The New Bauhaus era. Moholy remained as director until his death in 1946. He was succeeded by Serge Chermayeff, and the school continued to enjoy the support of Walter P. Paepcke with annual financial contributions from Container Corporation.

Curriculum

The school's academic program was a four-year course requiring all students to take several "foundation" classes, regardless of their prior education, training, or experience, before selecting an area in which to specialize. Visual Fundamentals, Basic Workshop and Basic Design were among the first challenges encountered by students. Other classes included graphics, shelter design, typography, sculpture, and textile design. One of the school's most acclaimed programs was photography.

Camouflage Class

In what must have been one of the earliest efforts of applying the Bauhaus principle of integrating art, science and technology for practical use, a class in camouflage art was taught during World War II. The class carried a War Services Project number with materials produced by the class serving as official government documentation.

Student Work

The Archives' collection includes numerous examples of work created by ID students. It is hard to distinguish between student works produced as class assignments versus portfolio items versus commissioned projects. The items in the collection seem to encompass all three. Some pieces representing students' work after their departure from the school are also included in the collection.

Commissions and Professional Work

From its beginning, the school collaborated with industry to design products for commercial development. While the records of the collection are not complete enough to determine the impetus for the items seen here, it is obvious that these designs were taken beyond "concept" stage to a level that suggests production capability.

Inventing the Future

To classify Institute of Design as an art education school would be to miss what Moholy intended. The school's principles of instruction from its founding in 1937 stressed the curriculum's focus on relating design to function and using technology to create designs that functioned well. Much of what we accept as standard today may have had its origins in Institute of Design experiments several decades ago.

2,000,000 Words

If "one photo is worth a thousand words," then the Institute of Design collection is worth two million words. A series of 15 photograph albums each averaging 60 pages with two 5" x 7" prints per page and a few hundred additional unmounted photos total more than 2,000 images, the majority of which are unique. As such, they provide almost encyclopedic coverage of the school's early history in visual form. It can be assumed that the

photographs preserved by the school's administrators represent the "cream of the crop." And given that the school was turning out professional photographers, the Institute of Design's "photo albums" feature artistically-composed and technically-polished images.

ID & IIT

In 1949, the Institute of Design merged with Illinois Institute of Technology. Under Serge Chermayeff, who had become director after Moholy-Nagy, the school initially remained at its downtown location. In 1955, it moved into S. R. Crown Hall, the building Mies van der Rohe had designed for IIT's architecture program, which he headed.

Today, the Institute of Design is an integral part of IIT, offering a graduate level program and functioning as a college of the university on equal par with the College of Architecture, Chicago -- Kent College of Law, Stuart Graduate School of Business, Armour College, and Institute of Psychology. Currently under the directorship of Patrick Whitney, the Institute of Design is once more located in Chicago's Loop. There it enjoys close ties with the business and industry community which supports ID programs by making financial contributions, participating in research initiatives, and hiring students and graduates as summer associates.

László Moholy-Nagy: A Brief Biography

by his daughter, Hattula Moholy-Nagy

László Moholy-Nagy was born on 20 July 1895 in the village of Borsód (present-day Bácsborsód) in southern Hungary. In 1913 he enrolled in the Royal University in Budapest to study law, but World War I interrupted his studies. While serving as an artillery officer he made innumerable drawings, many on postcards. He was wounded in 1917 and returned to Budapest. By 1918 he had decided to become an artist. He left Hungary late in 1919, and after six weeks in Vienna, arrived in Berlin, at that time the major cultural center for Central and Eastern Europe.

Although he apparently made camera photographs before he left Hungary, by 1922 he was creating his first photograms, camera-less images, with the help of his first wife, Lucia Moholy. An exhibition of his work at Der Sturm gallery came to the notice of Walter Gropius, the founder and director of the Bauhaus in Weimar. Moholy became a teacher or master at the Bauhaus and he and Lucia moved to Weimar in the fall of 1923. In 1925 the Bauhaus students and faculty, including the Moholys, moved to Dessau.

In 1928, Gropius resigned the directorship of the Bauhaus and established an architectural office in Berlin. The Moholys also moved to Berlin, where they separated. Moholy supported himself by commercial work, designing advertising, labels, exhibitions, posters, and stage-sets. He published numerous articles and photographs, and also traveled extensively in Europe. In 1929 he completed his first short film, *Marseille Vieux Port*, which was followed by several other short films from 1930 until about 1945.

After Hitler came to power in 1933, Moholy joined the exodus of many artists, writers, and architects, who were no longer able to work in an atmosphere so pervasively hostile to the avant-garde. The Bauhaus, which had moved from Dessau to Berlin in 1931, was closed by the Nazis in 1933. Moholy moved to Amsterdam in 1934 and then to London in 1935. He and his second wife, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, had two daughters, Hattula and Claudia.

In 1937, he and his family moved to Chicago where he became the director of The New Bauhaus: American School of Design, sponsored by the Association of Arts and Industries. After this school closed in June of 1938, he decided to found his own school. This school opened in February of 1939 with the support of Walter P. Paepcke, the chairman of the Container Corporation of America. It was called The School of Design in Chicago, and it closely followed the philosophy and methods of the German Bauhaus. In 1944 it was reorganized as The Institute of Design.

During the nine years he lived in Chicago, most of Moholy's time was taken up by the School. Nevertheless he managed to create a large body of paintings on canvas and plexiglas, numerous works on paper, and several sculptures of plexiglas. He continued to produce and exhibit photograms. He made at least seven short films about the School and its activities, mainly for promotion purposes. He also continued his camera photography with black and white and color film, although apparently no longer published any of these images.

He completed his last book, *Vision in Motion*, shortly before his death from leukemia on 24 November 1946. This book is the definitive statement of his pedagogical philosophy, exemplified by the activities and products of the school that he founded.

(To view images of Moholy-Nagy's art, see <http://www.moholy-nagy.com/>)

-- 21 April 1997 (updated 7 June 2000)

Institute of Design: A Brief History

by Hattula Moholy-Nagy, daughter of the founder

The history of the Institute of Design ultimately began in 1919 Germany, with the founding of the Bauhaus in Weimar by the architect, Walter Gropius. The Bauhaus was a school whose stated purpose was to educate architects and designers, who could apply good modern art and design to the manufacture of industrial products. More than that, the Bauhaus had a strong humanistic bent that aimed for cultural integration. Its intent was also to educate the whole person, to give them the means to live more harmoniously in the industrialized world.

In 1922 the Association of Arts and Industries was established in Chicago to further the application of good design in industry that would enable it to better compete with European products. The Association hoped to establish a school to train artists and designers to work in industry. Arrangements with the School of the Art Institute did not work out and some of the members of the Association of Arts and Industries turned to the Bauhaus as a model of what their school should be. Walter Gropius had left the Bauhaus in 1928 and the Nazi regime had closed the school permanently in 1933. In 1937 the Association invited Walter Gropius to direct a new design school in Chicago. Gropius had just accepted a position with Harvard University, but he recommended one of his closest Bauhaus collaborators, László Moholy-Nagy, who had taught there from 1923 to 1928.

Moholy became director of the school, called The New Bauhaus: American School of Design, and classes began in October, 1937, in the remodeled former Marshall Field mansion at 1905 South Prairie Avenue. Its curriculum was essentially that of the German Bauhaus with the introduction of some academic classes taught

by faculty from the University of Chicago. However, financial problems and other factors led the Association to abandon their support of the New Bauhaus and it did not reopen in the fall of 1938.

In February, 1939, László Moholy-Nagy opened his own school, The School of Design in Chicago. Its first campus was at 247 East Ontario Street. Many of the faculty and students of the New Bauhaus joined the School of Design and the school also had the support of former Association of Arts and Industries members, especially Walter P. Paepcke, the chairman of the Container Corporation of America. The School offered day and evening classes, and Saturday morning classes for children. In 1939, 1941, 1942, and 1945-1947 a six-week summer course was held at a property near Somonauk, Illinois, which was made available by Paepcke. There was also a rich program of guest lectures.

In 1944 the school was reorganized as the Institute of Design in Chicago. In 1945 the ID moved to 1009 North State Street. During the summer of 1946, a six-week symposium was held there, "The New Vision in Photography." In fall the ID moved again to 632 North Dearborn Street, where it remained for a decade.

In November, 1946, Moholy died of leukemia, and was succeeded as director by the architect, Serge Chermayeff. *Vision in Motion*, the definitive statement of Moholy's educational philosophy, was published posthumously in 1947. It is copiously illustrated with activities and products of the Institute of Design.

In 1949 the Institute of Design became part of Illinois Institute of Technology during the administration of Henry Heald. In 1956 it moved into Crown Hall on the IIT campus on South State Street. Its teaching philosophy has evolved considerably over the course of six decades, and it now operates as one of IIT's professional schools offering graduate programs in human-centered design, design planning, and photography and a post-graduate program in design research. Currently under the directorship of Patrick Whitney, the Institute of Design is now located in a renovated building at LaSalle and Kinzie Streets in downtown Chicago.

7 June 2000

Source: https://web.archive.org/web/20160319202310/http://archives.iit.edu/id_exhibit/