

THE BAUHAUS AND HERBERT BAYER AND BANKNOTES

the bauhaus was founded in 1919 in the german city of weimar by architect walter gropius—and it's hard to write a more succinct intro than the one alexa griffith winton wrote for the metropolitan museum of art:

its core objective was a radical concept: to reimagine the material world to reflect the unity of all the arts. gropius explained this vision for a union of art and design in the proclamation of the bauhaus, which described a utopian craft guild combining architecture, sculpture, and painting into a single creative expression. gropius developed a craft-based curriculum that would turn out artisans and designers capable of creating useful and beautiful objects appropriate to this new system of living.

in 1921 herbert bayer (1900–1985) enrolled at the bauhaus, working mainly in the wall-painting workshop¹ under wassily kandinsky. he graduated in february 1925, and later that year was appointed director of the printing workshop at the school. there he developed the typographic style most associated with the bauhaus: justified texts set in sans serif types without capital letters and display lines set with widely-spaced sans serif caps.²

in germany during and after the first world war, money was in short supply—as was the metal required to make coins. to alleviate this problem, the state bank allowed local governments to issue their own money, called 'notgeld.'³ in 1923, when just 23 years old,⁴ bayer was commissioned by the state of thuringia to design its notgeld—for which he had just two days to come up with the design. the notes were printed overnight and in circulation the next morning with the ink still wet.

1 the guiding principle of the wall-painting workshop was to use color as an architectural component in the design of a room—so the workshop was about more than just putting paint onto walls.

2 we've taken this approach here because we will hopefully never again have the excuse to do something so bonkers. (also, usually we would never justify such a narrow column of text, but we are committed to the present experiment.)

3 the word 'not' means 'emergency' in german, and 'geld' means 'money.' so, this was 'emergency money' during a period of hyperinflation. you'll see the notes to the right were valued in the millions. bayer also designed a 1 billion mark note in this series.

4 bayer designed notgeld for lembach in 1920, but those notes are nothing special—except for the fact that they are so wildly different from what he designed just three years later.



the bauhaus and herbert bayer and banknotes was arranged by guest curator michael russem for katherine small gallery.¹ the exhibit opened on february 15, 2019, and closed on march 16 of the very same year. the entire staff of katherine small gallery encourages you to use the preceding pages as you see fit, but please do credit the gallery and let people know that we can be found at 108 beacon street in somerville, massachusetts (in the united states); online at ksmallgallery.com; and on instagram, twitter, and facebook (if you must) via [@ksmallgallery](https://www.instagram.com/ksmallgallery).

¹ russem also designs all our exhibits, catalogues, posters, and printed materials. to learn more about his work for other clients, go to his out-of-date site, katranpress.com, or look him up on instagram, twitter, and facebook (if you must) via [@katranpress](https://www.instagram.com/katranpress). then tell him to get back to work.