

MODULE 1

# The white cube

## SCHOOL, WORKSHOP

Age 12–14, 2 Hours, 3 Lessons

*Crafts, Building, Paper*

*Preliminary course, theory of form, community, reduction, material, balance, can be combined with Module 4*

**YOU WILL NEED**

Paper, printed cut-out sheet, Scissors, glue sticks

Optional: **coloured Papier, coloured pencils**

Variant mobilé: **wooden rods, nylon thread**

### INSTRUCTIONS

The printed cut-out sheets serve as templates for making cubes, cuboids and pyramids out of ordinary A4 paper. Participants learn about basic geometrical forms as they make their own “building blocks” out of the simple material of pa-per. Once the building blocks have been made, small groups can work together to create shapes, sculptures and architectural models.

### BACKGROUND

From the outset, the Bauhaus propagated a reduced, unornamented style of design orientated on basic geometric forms. While each teacher pursued their own concept, priority was always given to function, production, suitability, and visibility of construction. These aspects apply at all scales from large architectural ensembles through individual buildings, to functional furniture, user-friendly utensils and unremarkable everyday objects. The buildings designed by Georg Muche, Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe resemble cubes.

When he founded the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius sought to bring together the arts and crafts. The goal was to train a new type of artist in the field of design and architecture to create products suitable for industrial mass production.

Training at the Bauhaus began with a single-semester preliminary course using new and experimental educational methods to impart knowledge of materials and basic design principles. The students developed spatial structures, concentrating on materials, construction, function and production. The aim was to optimize production and minimize use of materials, energy and time.

The Swiss painter and art teacher Johannes Itten designed the preliminary course at the Bauhaus in Weimar. Itten saw individual sensibility, subjective recognition and objective comprehension as the basis of creative design. His teaching as head of the preliminary course (1919–23) concentrated on studies of nature and materials, along with colour and form theory; analyses of the Old Masters and life drawing were also included. When Itten left the Bauhaus in 1923, László Moholy-Nagy took over the preliminary course, which he ran together with Josef Albers. Moholy-Nagy shifted the focus from artistic to technical questions, but retained Itten’s teaching methods, encouraging students to conduct their own material exercises. Rather than promoting pure individuality, he sought to systematically introduce his students – in a synthesis of the senses – to basic technical principles such as statics, dynamics and equilibrium. In 1928, Josef Albers became the official head of the preliminary course. He encouraged students to investigate the properties of materials like metal, wood

and paper by using simple tools and also placed special weight on the effect and representation of light, shade and perspective.

Module 1 takes up the idea of examining a material, as they did in the preliminary course. Students explore the properties of paper, studying its characteristics and constructive possibilities. The basic geometric forms are also introduced.

### MOBILÉ VARIATION

More ambitious students can use the geometrical forms to make a mobile. First a mobile frame is made using wooden rods and thread. Then the forms are glued to the thread. Now examine the mobile from different perspectives. How do the forms relate to one another? How do they change when the perspective changes? How do light and shadow affect the shapes? And how do the shadows on the wall change when the light source moves?

Students learn about balance and construction, as well as aspects of light, shadow and perspective. In order to underline these aspects, the mobiles can also be photographed from different perspectives.

### FURTHER READING AND MATERIALS

Folder 1: "Bastelbögen": 3 copy sheets as PDFs for DIN A4 or DIN A3  
 Folder 2: Photos of selected Bauhaus buildings in Dessau for inspiration  
 Folder 3: Photos of examples of possible sculptures with paper cubes

Ingolf Kern, Jutta Stein, Kitty Kahane: Wer wohnt in weißen Würfeln?  
 Publisher: Seemann Henschel, Leipzig 2016. ISBN-10: 3865023851  
 ISBN-13: 978-3865023858

<https://www.bauhaus-dessau.de/de/stiftung/publikationen/wer-wohnt-in-weissen-wuerfeln.html>

Ingolf Kern, Jutta Stein, Birgit Schössow: Die Bauhaus-Stadt  
 Publisher: Seemann Henschel, Leipzig 2018. ISBN-10: 3865024068  
 ISBN-13: 978-3865024060

<https://www.bauhaus-dessau.de/de/stiftung/publikationen/bauhaus-stadt-kinderbuch.html>

Ingolf Kern, Jutta Stein, Hanna Zeckau, Werner Möller: Wie kommt das U-Boot in den Garten?  
 Publisher: Seemann Henschel, Leipzig 2017. ISBN-10: 3865023975  
 ISBN-13: 978-3865023971

<https://www.bauhaus-dessau.de/de/stiftung/publikationen/u-boot-in-den-garten.html>