

The Bauhaus movement and its influence in graphic design, visual communication and architecture in Greece

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Summary

This paper attempts to present the elements defining the philosophical approach, the characteristics and the style of the Bauhaus movement. More specific it presents the social background of the period during which this school was established and the vision of its main representatives. It analyzes the way it influenced graphic design, visual communication and architecture in Greece. A comparison has been made between typical Bauhaus works and works of contemporary graphics aiming to find how they were influenced by the Bauhaus movement.

Especially, it presents the projects (posters and buildings) and the artists who worked according to the Bauhaus rules. This is a small research of how the Bauhaus school influenced modern graphic art and visual communication design in Greece until today.

The conclusion of this research is that the Bauhaus movement which was the first to combine art with technology to obtain clarity and functionality rather than aesthetics, still has a crucial affect on modern design, graphic arts and visual communication in Greece.

Chapter 1: The second half of the 20th century

Bauhaus's influence is obvious in many countries in the world, including Greece. The Architect Ioannis Despotopoulos (1903–1992) was the only Greek student who studied at the Bauhaus School. However, a lot of Greek designers embraced the Bauhaus movement and followed its ideas in visual communication. From the 1950 this influence can be found in many Greek designer's projects, such as in the creations of G. Vakirtzis, M. Katzourakis etc., mainly on posters designed for the Greek Tourism Organization. Later, Greeks who studied abroad, followed the Bauhaus design principles and created projects with the same characteristics, as for example the projects of D. Arvanitis, V. Karatzas and J. Kouroudis.

This influence of the Bauhaus movement in graphic arts in Greece which is obvious from the mid-20th century, postwar, is first seen in a structured production of posters made in 1946. The GNTO (Greek National Tourism Organization) assigns the poster series creation to the artists Spyros Vasiliou, Panagiotis Tetsis, Yannis Moralis (**Figure 1**), Pericles Byzantios and Lambros Orfanos to be followed by the younger generation with George Vakirtzis with movie posters, Dimitris Mytaras Michael Katzourakis, Freddie Carabott, George Anemogiannis (Rapidis, ch.i.) with printing works of Bauhaus, clearly influenced by the Swiss School (**Figure 2**).



Figure 1: Tourist poster: Hydra Yannis Moralis, Athens, 1956, Greek National Tourism Organization



Figure 2: Tourist poster, painting of Kastella George Vakirtzis, Piraeus, 1955, Teriant Museum.

George Vakirtzis specialized in engraving and graphic arts at École des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1923-1940). As an artist he worked with several advertising companies. He was the Greek version of the poster's forefather Henri Toulouse Lautrec. Their similarities are plenty. Both talented painters, they did not accept all the graphic styles but instead focused on designing posters for the promotion and communication of shows. Vakirtzis' parallel work with product promoting posters, constitutes an extension of his main job of film promotion (Margaritis, ch.i). His Expressionistic, anthropocentric imaging technique was representational but with all the features of the Swiss style and with bold, vibrant colors. This contemporary, capturing way of imaging raised this contemned kind of art to a new and unique artistic and ideological level.

In his other works, Vakirtzis seems to follow the Bauhaus principles more staunchly (MMCA).

Michael Katzourakis, Freddie Carabott's and Agne Katzourakis' posters logos and ads based on Envan image modernism, imposed a new promotional language, fresh, minimalistic and at the same time very Greek. As direct references the sidelong glances at antiquity, Byzantine tradition and folk art, interspersed with a good sense of humor, they created a globally recognizable picture of Hellenism and became the deacons of a charming, modern "Greek style" (Rigopoulos, 2007).

Michael Katzourakis, studied at the school of Paul Collin in Paris in the early 50s and was one of the most important graphic designers in postwar Greece, having obtained great excellence -together with Freddie Carabott, who had studied graphic design in London, first at Chelsea and then at St. Martin School Of Art - during hard decades for the visual communication in Greece (Diamantopoulos, 2011).

The geometric abstraction played a leading role in his art work, which is why Harry Savvopoulos referred to Michael Katzourakis as one of the pioneers of Greek geometric art. A review written about the exhibition held in Denise René gallery in Paris 1999, the following review was written: "Simplicity, economy of means, limited expressiveness, sensitivity, pulse, organic autonomy and architecture, monumetary perception of form" are some of the features of the visual artist Michael Katzourakis (Diamantopoulos, 2011).

What Katzourakis was aiming in the poster design was "to escape from the detailed illustration and instead obtain a significant visual function through the connection of a simple and clear visual style and a clear message." Michael Katzourakis and Freddie Carabott was those who brought the "idea" to Greek advertising, the famous concept (Rigopoulos, 2007).

D. Fatouros had argued, with some exaggeration, that the Greek simplicity in some foreign posters is striking, the use of symbols and forms, with an impressive use of Tschichold's rules with vertical and lateral text formatting, exclusive sans serif fonts, the use of spaces, etc. well known features from Vakirtzis' three Greek posters from the exhibition and the post-war period. The espousal of Bauhaus principles, aimed to a better way to spread the message through the clear printing.

Freddy Carabott and Michael Katzourakis appear in the field of visual communication at the end of the fifties, when the design has been transformed from an empiric situation to a full developed new art form. Posters, logos and entries had completely changed the setting. They imposed a new promotional language: minimalistic, influenced by the spirit of Bauhaus, fresh, yet authentically Greek, with frequent indirect references to antiquity, the Byzantine tradition and folk art, with an attractive, contemporary Greek style (**Figures 3-4**) aiming to achieve a fast transmission of the visual message and a clear choice of words.

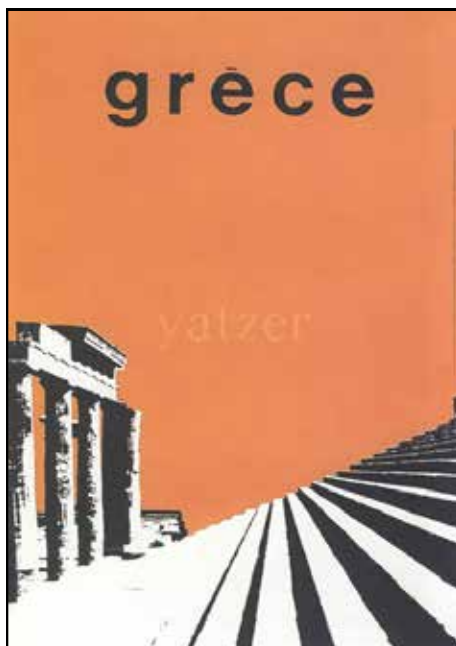


Figure 3: Freddie Carabott, 1963, Poster for GNT

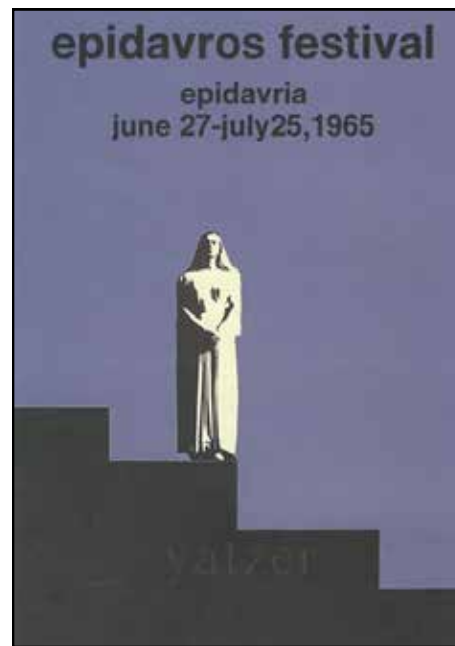


Figure 4: Katzourakis Michael, 1965, Poster for the Epidaurus Festival

The influence of Bauhaus is evident in all their works, mainly minimalism and clean fonts. In Michael Katzourakis, pioneer and founder of the Greek style, early works, the thematic start point derives from the world of everyday objects. His research steers him to the promotion of fundamental geometric elements, in the way they emerge from the correlations of the horizontal and vertical line and the interaction of the color relations to strong contrast. The use of a single photo and the simplification of material comes from the corresponding posters of Swiss Tourism (MMCA).

Michael Katzourakis had mentioned- in an interview to Thanassis Diamantopoulos (2/3/2011) concerning his team's work on tourism and tourist posters- that they worked as art consultants for the Greek Tourism Organization from 1959 -1967, with the agreement that they would have full freedom to work for new, fresh creations. The team worked the traditional way: Photographing objects, photo montage and paintings. They tried hard to get the equipment and all what was necessary for their work, which did not exist in Greece then.

Especially when the Helvetica font came in Greek, Katzourakis as a real student of the Swiss school, says that they used it, photographed it from the manuals, cut the letters one by one and glued them back together one by one again. This is a direct admission to the Bauhaus print design (*Diamantopoulos, 2011*).

Chapter 2: The last decade of the 20th century – 21st century

Dimitris Arvanitis studied painting and graphic arts in Belgium and is currently the main representative of the Swiss school in Greece. Since 1973 he works designing CD covers, books, posters and no advertising programs at all. The poster of road safety (figure 5) is a clear example of the influence of the Swiss school, the bright red color and simplified picture that fills up the surface in a “threatening” way. Arvanitis has designed dozens of Jazz posters (figure 6) in which the vertical and horizontal text formatting are dominant pointing to the 20s of Bauhaus Weimar (Nenes, G. 2012).



Figure 5: Dimitris Arvanitis, 2011, poster for road safety.

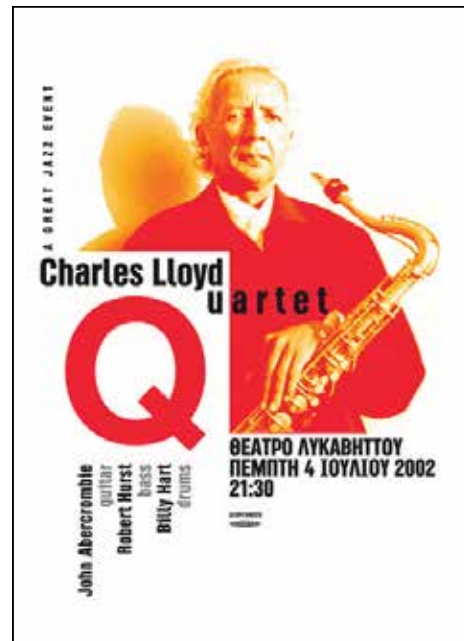


Figure 6: Dimitris Arvanitis, 2011, exhibition poster in Heraklion on the Jazz.

The Bauhaus influence in graphic design in our country is more than clear. The front pages designed by Dimitris Arvanitis for the Graphic Design and Communication magazine IFFEN (figure 7), are defined by the purity and minimalism of Bauhaus, as well as the powerful contrasts of the Swiss School.

In the book covers designed by Arvanitis, as for the magazine (Figure 8) “Routes”, the vertical and slanted text formatting are used, a style in straight line with Bauhaus principles, the excessive removal of white spaces and the leading - exclusive role of the fonts comes directly from the posters of Herbert Beyer, which also appears in the “Agenda” cover 2009 with the title “where do dreams go when you wake up?” (image 9), with powerful compositions on horizontal and vertical text formatting and the clarity provided by the placard setting.

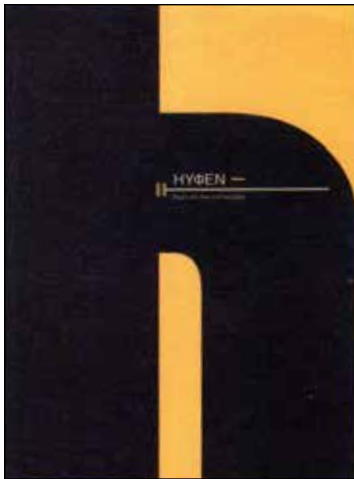


Figure 7: Dimitris Arvanitis, IFFEN cover of the magazine.

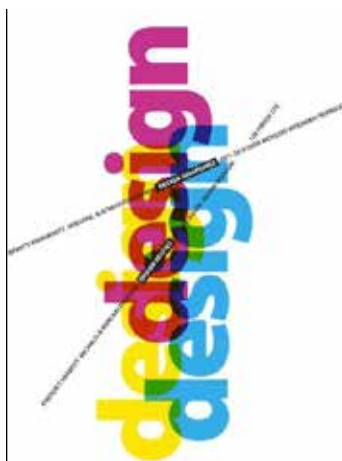


Figure 8: Dimitris Arvanitis, Cover for the Design book tracks, 2008.

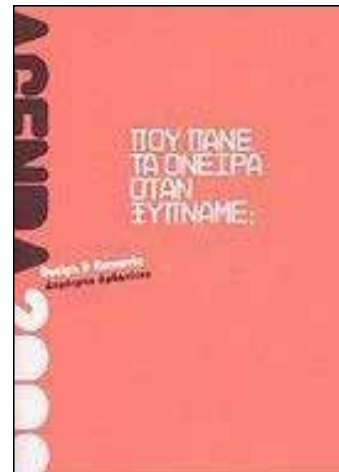


Figure 9: Dimitris Arvanitis, Cover for Agenda 2009, Scooter Books, 2008, Athens.

Young artists of the 90s, like Vangelis Karatzas who studied in England, form the design of magazines based on asymmetrical paging and Bauhaus principles. With Vangelis Karatzas, as the art director, the “Status” magazine (**Figure 10**) following the same design rules, with asymmetric text arrangement and form clarity, offers an excellent design result focusing on the visual and verbal message through minimalism. The article is now considered as a set of texts and pictures placed in a rectangle, while the rejection of the center oriented text formatting, as seen in the layout of the magazine “Pictures of the World” (**figure 11**), texts and images of of the classical typographic settlement, offers unlimited composition possibilities compared to the static classical form.

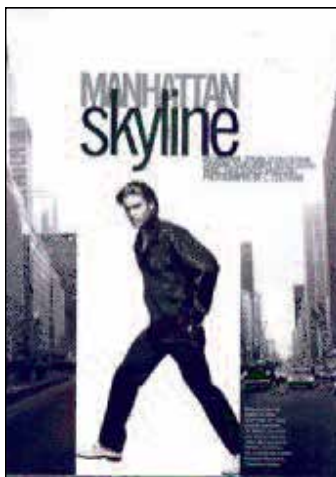


Fig.10: B. Karatzas, magazine page Status, 1996.



Figure 11: V. Karatzas, magazine page Pictures of the world, 1997.

The 16th Graphic event organized in Istanbul on April 27 an online poster competition for the World Graphic Design Day ICOGRADA, with the title “Kalimera Mellon / Merhaba Gelecek / Good Morning Future”. The poster released (**Figure 12**) is designed at 72 dpi, in jpeg format and RGB color model (Greek Graphic Designers Association, ch.i.). This constitutes a clear reference to the cover of the Bauhaus catalogue STAATLICHES BAUHAUS IN VEIMAR 1919-1923 designed by Herbert Bayer. The catalytic influence of Bauhaus is easily perceived. Placard background, expressive, powerful clarity and printing, the using of fonts without serif for instant, effortless communication.



Figure 12 Online Poster Design: 1024 * 768 pixels 72 dpi, to “climb” the official site of Grafist16.

Modern posters with cultural content was designed based on the principles of Bauhaus, that is by the use of photo printing (phototypography), the diagonal lines, geometric shapes and placard backgrounds, as the poster (picture 13) released by the Community Centre “Melina Mercouri”, Ilion municipality. According to the Bauhaus spirit was also the released poster for the Photo Festival in Old Arsakeio, in Patras (picture 14) of which the characteristic features was the diagonal arrangement of the text asymmetry synthesis and minimalism which point to the school of Bauhaus. The poster used by Konstantinos Andronis for his Photo Exhibition (Figure 15), is largely imitating the Bauhaus technique, where the text forms a picture, while the whole of that image and photography forms the final image.



Pictures 13-14-15 : Posters with cultural content. Photography Festival Arsakeio School of Patras, 2012

Greek Universities are adopting the Bauhaus design principles in the layout of their guides. The school's influence and impact on nearly all art schools around the world is apparent. It's also observed in Greece (Figure 16). The Study Guide cover of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Athens University refers to asymmetric printing of Jan Tschichold on the cover of the magazine *Elementary Typography* in 1925.

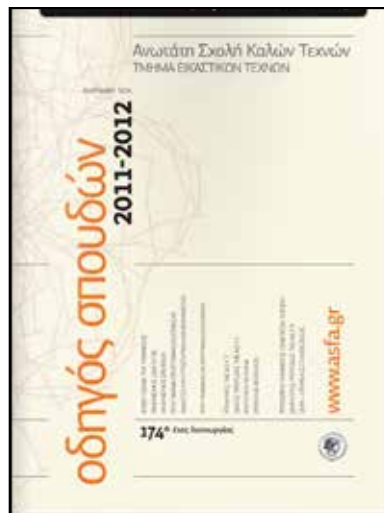


Figure 16: The cover Study Guide of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Athens University, 2012

The education and practice methods which are known as basics or as Bauhaus methods became the basis of all art teaching. This form is observed the same side layout of the text, as respectively happens in Bauhaus, while dominated by simple colors, the layout of text and placement of linear elements in italic fonts and clean geometric shapes which strengthen the minimalist spirit of design. (Tsioutis, 2010: 66,67).

Chapter 3: In the 21st century – now days

The new word, in terms of design and visual communication, does not mean that it has never existed before. This limitation set by clients, markets, technological requirements, is always formed in a way that the public can easily understand it. But for those who want to create a completely new design, the continuous link with the past is a frustrating paradox. Raymond Lowe, the industrial designer who managed to significantly change both the function and the appearance of products and equipment from 1930 to 1960, admitted the existence of this paradox and developed a concept he called “Sophisticated but acceptable.”



Figure 17: Kouroudis John, 2000; Packaging for Korres' products.; Minimalist design approach.

For the design of packaging Korre's products (Figure 17), there was a design approach of the Bauhaus principles, minimalism and simplicity. That is what the creator, graphic designer J. Kouroudis wants to explain “if you see the bottle you realize that it is the most common jar on the market and the only difference is the tops. That is the luxury we put on it, the design played a substantial role to differentiate the product from the rest. The minimal and simplicity of this creation took the luxury to simple”. The aim of this design approach is the emergence of simple, natural element that has no need of any support, until the emergence of the identity as a genuine product of a social good accessible to all (Memou,

2001, t.15: 28). The same occurs with the inclusion of dartbooks in the magazine «+Design» (**Figure 18**), where the colors, the layout of text and placement of linear elements in italic fonts and clean geometric shapes refer to the Bauhaus. Also in the poster designed by D. Arvanitis (**Figure 19**), in which is clear the influence of Bauhaus design. Clarity, geometric shapes and minimalism are the characteristics in this poster.

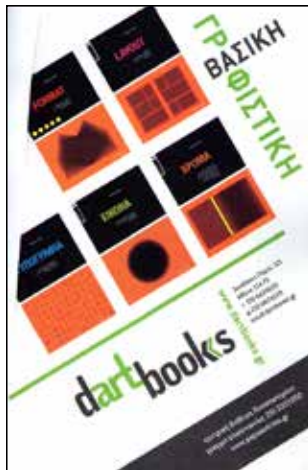


Figure 18: Dart Books: Advertising in Magazine “+ Design” September-October, Athens, 2006



Figure 19: D. Arvanitis, Poster: NO RACISM Panorama Design, 2013

It has now become a tradition in recent years, the logo of the respective Final Four Euro league basketball (**Figures 20, 21**), to be designed by Greek creators. The baton gets this year the new Greek Semiotik Design Agency, and with a signal having very strongly “design character”, having direct reports in one of the most influential schools of the last century design, which although was active in Germany, but the stigma of it is felt even nowadays worldwide.

The new logo, inspired by the Bauhaus, carries the basic features of the movement, such as simplicity and functionality, with particular emphasis on geometric forms and color, discarding any unnecessary embellishment. Direct references are in geometric forms and compositions of works of Joost Schmidt (1893-1948) and Herbert Bayer (1900-1985), and especially in the second draft of the font, Universal Alphabet and the first initial “b”.

While having as main theme the ball and the floor plan of a basketball court, a strong signal was generated, showing both the sport, and Berlin itself.

As and Euro league Basketball to the official presentation of “the logo merges the soul of basketball and the city of Berlin, combined in perfect harmony with the movement style of the Bauhaus, which has been a pioneer in setting the ground rules and patterns of modern design “.

“Athens Design” is the rebranded name of the most successful annual communication design conference in Greece. After ten years as a Design Panorama, its organizers decided that it was upon time to breath some fresh air into this respectable institution. “*We were called to help shape the new brand,*

envision an international event, with a Greek suggestion The result of our design process reflects early Greek typographic action.



Figure 20



Figure 21

Figure 20, 21: Logo for the Final Four Euroleague Basketball 2016; Semiotik Design Agency, 2016

Chapter 4: The influence of Bauhaus in greek architectural design

Professor John Despotopoulos (1903-1992) who studied at the School of Bauhaus, was involved in the development of modern architecture in Greece during the '30s. The Cultural Center of Athens is one of the most important projects, and was awarded for the study, of which held only a small part in today's Athens Conservatory (*Petridou, 2009: 12-13*).

Early Bauhaus architecture, however, can be detected in Greece, at the characteristic cubist buildings of Athens, such as the US Embassy -created by Gropius-, which was built with modern techniques, with columns inspired by the Parthenon and Pentelic marble. Also at the War Museum and the National Gallery, in front of the Porto Carras Grand Resort, designed by Gropius, the building of the National Bank in the Republic Square in Thessaloniki and numerous buildings designed by Greek architects who were influenced by modernism and the Bauhaus. Typical examples are the refugee blocks of Alexandras Avenue in Athens (**Figure 12**), the most important example of folk residence in Greece during the interwar period, the work of K. architects. Laskaris and D. Kyriakou, which according to Professor Dimitris Filippides in his book "Modern Architecture" are designed in style purely German Functionalism (*Petridou, 2009: 12-13*).



Picture 12



Picture 13

Picture 12, 13: The Refugee quarters of Alexandras Avenue, in Athens. Architects: K. Laskaris - D. Kyriakou, 1933, Photo: Konstantinos Kyriakopoulos

Nowadays, while the Bauhaus retains its value, speculation and ignorant governments are destroying many buildings of its kind. The hotels “Xenia” Aris Konstantinidis and other architects did not stand as lucky as the Refugee quarters of Alexandras Avenue, which after a long struggle finally was classified as preservation area (Elliniadis, 2009). Another Bauhaus artwork in Athens worth mentioning is the American Embassy building in Vasilissis Sofias Street (**Figure 13**), a typical work of the school, built in 1959 by the same Walter Gropius. Also the War Museum of Athens (**Figure 14**).



Picture 13: The American Embassy in Athens, Gropius, 1959.



Picture 14: War Museum of Athens, Architecture: Balentis Thoukididis, 1964

Conclusion

The Bauhaus movement influence on the visual communication designers in Greece had given birth to a stream that resulted in the creation of a series of works based on the principles of this modern style. The Minimalism and functionality of this design trend - using the vertical text formatting, the implementation of the diagonal direction both on linear elements as well as in the text - got through the times and are widely used till today. This is confirmed both by the font designers, and the poster designers, as in the case with the contemporary Frutiger font which at the end is a remake of the Frutiger font from the Bauhaus period. New technologies, through digitization, are used in graphic design without ignoring the Bauhaus principles. Their applications are not limited to fonts, but also in the whole spectrum of visual communication, in color, form and image.

The sociopolitical context of the Bauhaus period defined the new design flow that ought to shake off, whatever was connected with the past and build a more fair society. This trend occupied and influenced all the Greek post-date, applied art schools, graphic design and visual communication in Greece. Putting aside decoration and ornaments many artists created great works based on simplicity and functionality. Consequently, a design arises that favors functionality and clear forms, and this is exactly what John Kouroudis, graphic designer and creator of the packaging of the Korres products, did. He left all unnecessary features aside and kept what was useful focusing on simplicity and functionality. He applied the Bauhaus principles and achieved design optimization.

This movement's influence in graphic design was taken after by a large number of designers who implemented the clear graphic design in word and picture, reflecting the dialogue between Bauhaus and modern graphic design.

Influences of Bauhaus architecture can be also detected in Greece. The US Embassy -created by Gropius-, the War Museum and the National Gallery of Athens, the Porto Carras Grand Resort -designed by Gropius-, the building of the National Bank in Republic Square, in Thessaloniki, and other buildings were designed by Greek architects who were influenced by modernism and Bauhaus. A Typical example is the refugee apartments in Alexandra's Avenue in Athens.

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