

Hölzel Circle as the Proto-Bauhaus:
the Situation in the Stuttgart Academy
and the Concept Brought to the Bauhaus

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Abstract

IN the very year of Bauhaus' set-up, an artist left an academy: Adolf Hölzel (1853-1934) who was born in Austria, studied in Munich, worked in the artists' colony in Dachau and was invited to the academy in Stuttgart in 1905. Even though the name of the artist is not well known now, Johannes Itten (1888-1967) who developed basic color theory in the field of art education, was one of Hölzel's students and named the artist alongside Goethe and Chevreul in his book *Art of Color*. Itten's theories and practices taught in the Bauhaus "preliminary course," in fact, owed much to Hölzel's teaching, and herein lies the direct relationship between Hölzel and the Bauhaus.

However, Hölzel's indirect contribution to the Bauhaus was much more fundamental. Not only did Itten bring Hölzel's ideas to the Bauhaus but Oskar Schlemmer (1888-1943), a master of the Bauhaus theater workshop, had also been Hölzel's student at the Stuttgart Academy with some other Bauhaus students involved. Hölzel attracted many eager students who consequently formed a group called "Hölzel Circle."

This paper first looks at the situation at the academy just before Hölzel's appointment. The academy and applied art school had a close relationship and there was a perspective to unite art and applied art in the background. It is noteworthy that Bernhard Pankok (1872-1943) was appointed to *Königliche Lehr- und Versuchswerkstätte* [the Royal Teaching and Experimental Workshop] in Stuttgart in 1901 and engaged in the reorganization of the academies. The situation in Stuttgart at that time had a similar vision to the Bauhaus.

After this introduction, Hölzel's theory, which was almost complete before his appointment, is discussed on the basis of his published writings, in which some fragments of the Bauhaus education can be seen. Itten's concepts of contrast and his analysis of the Old Masters, for example, rose out of Hölzel's methods. After Hölzel's appointment, it took some time for the Circle to arise. But in his first ten years, there were chances for the Circle to work as a group. The name "Hölzel Circle" was coined as the name of the group exhibition in 1916.

Finally, Hölzel's color theory is discussed to clarify the indirect but fundamental relationships between his ideas and the Bauhaus: the ideas of harmony and totality.

This discussion aims to position Hölzel and his circle in the context of the Bauhaus.

Keywords: Education in academy; Concept of harmony and totality; Vorkurs (Preliminary course of the Bauhaus)

Introduction: The Significance of Hölzel in the Study of the Bauhaus

THE Bauhaus, which was established in Weimar in 1919, moved to Dessau and then put an end to its revolutionary and innovative activity in Berlin in 1933. It had a solid reputation, especially for its Dessau period industrial designs. Making the significant step from the pre-modern to modern design was doubtlessly a major achievement of the Bauhaus. However, significant groundwork had been laid in the previous decade in the *Vorkurs* [the preliminary course] studies. The person at the center of these studies was Johannes Itten (1887-1967), who headed the course and shaped its basic educational program at the beginning of the Weimar period. Re-examinations of his contribution to art education and his program in the contemporary meaning have been the subject of recent attention¹⁾; thus, while this paper's viewpoint is positioned in this context, it moves further back to Itten's major influence, his teacher, Adolf Hölzel (1853-1934).²⁾

The link between Hölzel and the Bauhaus is not only this master-and-pupil relationship, but also the situation that surrounded them at that time. The academy in Stuttgart where Hölzel taught was in the midst of reformation. Its background perspective to unite art and applied art was one of the earliest of the pre-Bauhaus emerging concepts.

In the context of art education, the curriculum of the Bauhaus was a revolution against the traditional academy system. The cross-departmental preliminary course not only functioned as basic education but also served to overturn the traditional genre hierarchy. It is needless to say that the new system became the education model for art colleges post-Bauhaus, but it must be remembered that the reformation at the Stuttgart academy happened much earlier under Hölzel's direction.³⁾

Because of these multiple aspects, Hölzel and his contribution to the Bauhaus need to be reexamined. To do this, this study first examines the situation in Stuttgart, then reviews the basic concepts Hölzel had developed before his appointment to the academy, and then discusses the rise of the Hölzel Circle, all of which are situations where similar conditions to the Bauhaus could be found. Yet the underlying concept in Hölzel's color theory which was taught to the students seems to have much more fundamental clues to understanding the Bauhaus. This aspect is discussed in the last part of the paper.

1) ————— For example, the solo exhibition *Johannes Itten: Wege zur Kunst* [Johannes Itten: Paths to Art] (2002-2004) introduced lots of the activity of the Bauhaus' Vorkurs. This show was based on the study by Dolores Denaro (Itten Foundation), which first opened in Germany and toured to Switzerland and Japan. It introduced Itten for the first time in a full-scale. The exhibition held in Kunstmuseum Bern and in Berliner Festspiele *Itten-Klee. Kosmos Farbe* [Itten-Klee. Cosmos of Color] (2012-2013), which Christoph Wagner and Monika Schäfer (Universität Regensburg) curated, carefully observed the concepts of the two Bauhaus teachers, Itten and Paul Klee.

2) ————— Itten named Hölzel among seniors like Goethe and Chevreul in his book: Johannes Itten, *Kunst der Farbe* [Art of Color], Ravensburg: Otto Maier Verlag, 1961.

3) ————— Another student of Hölzel, Willi Baumeister (1889-1955), taught at Frankfurt and Stuttgart. Through him the idea of Hölzel was brought to other schools too. The ideas and concepts of the two artists have been thoroughly researched in recent years. Daniel Spanke, *Kunst ist eine Wissenschaft. Hölzel, Baumeister und die Stuttgarter Akademie*, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, 2011 (exh. cat.).

1. Situation around the Stuttgart Academy in the early 1900s

It is not easy to describe the features of the Bauhaus, which lasted for 15 years, in a single word. But as was explained by Gropius on the platform of State Bauhaus in Weimar, one of the important aspects was that it was established as a merger of *Großherzoglich-Sächsische Kunstgewerbeschule* [the Grand Ducal Saxonian school of arts and crafts] and *Großherzoglich-Sächsische Kunstschule* [the Grand Ducal Saxonian school of arts].

Preceding the emergence of the Bauhaus, a similar movement toward the reorganization of art schools had occurred in Stuttgart with the plan to found *Lehr- und Versuchswerkstätte der Königl. Württemberg. Kunstgewerbeschule zu Stuttgart* [the Teaching and Experimental Workshops of Württemberg Royal School of Applied Art Stuttgart] as an independent department in *Württembergische staatliche Kunstgewerbeschule zur Förderung der deutschen Kunstindustrie* [the Württemberg State School of Applied Art for the Promotion of German Art Industry]. William II of Württemberg activated local industry in Stuttgart through supporting artists, an idea that was modeled after the residential project by Ernest Ludwig, Grand Duke of Hesse at Darmstadt Artists' Colony. With that aim, William II invited Bernhard Pankok (1872-1943), one of the important members of *Vereinigte Werkstätten für Kunst im Handwerk* [Associated Workshops of Arts and Crafts in Munich], to play an active role in the arts and literary magazine, *Pan und Jugend*.⁴⁾

Pankok's appointment came from a suggestion by Leopold von Kalckreuth (1855-1928) and Carlos Grethe (1872-1913).⁵⁾ Both of them were teachers at *Königliche Kunstschule* [the Royal Art School], which was renamed *Königliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste* [the Royal Academy of Fine Arts] in 1901. This art school had a strong connection with the school of applied art and was officially reorganized as *Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart* [the Stuttgart State Academy of Art and Design] after the World War II. One reason why they recommended Pankok was that of course Kalckreuth had appreciated Pankok's interior design work exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in 1900 in Paris, and the other reason was that they had envisaged founding the Workshop as "an organization standing in the middle of the Art School and the Applied Art School, which can be called an educational facility for decorative or applied art." With that vision, they regarded *the Associated Workshops of Arts and Crafts in Munich* as the pioneer, having found that the system in Darmstadt was unable to develop human resources because it was not an educational institution.⁶⁾ To sum up, the vision to unite art

4) ————— Ulrike Büttner, 'Die Kunstgewerbeschule von 1896-1933' [The Arts and Crafts School between 1896-1933], Niels Büttner and Angela Zieger (Eds.), *250 Jahre Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart* [250 Years of Stuttgart Academy of Art and Design], Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart, 2011, pp. 135-150. Pankok actually began to work in 1902.

5) ————— Kalckreuth was director from 1900 to 1902.

6) ————— Aya Harikai, 'Die Übersetzung ins Japanische: Programm und Satzungen der *Lehr- und Versuchswerkstätte der Königl. Württemberg. Kunstgewerbeschule zu Stuttgart*' [Translation into Japanese: Program and Constitution of *Teaching and Experimental Workshops of Württemberg Royal School of Applied Art Stuttgart*], *Bulletin of Faculty of Education, Nagasaki University*, Combined Issue Vol. 1, 2015, pp.187-198. Harikai points out that the Pankok's appointment was first envisaged as a diversion of the *Associated Workshops of Arts and Crafts in Munich*. But people involved in Stuttgart opposed this plan, and the *Experimental Workshop* was the solution.

and applied art, in order to develop a new educational system started in Stuttgart prior to the Bauhaus. Furthermore, Pankok later became a founder member of *Deutscher Werkbund* [the German Association of Craftsman].

The situation at the Academy of Fine Art was much conventional. In 1899, in addition to the two artists, Kalkreuth and Grethe, Robert Poetzelberger (1856-1930) was appointed from the academy in Karlsruhe to Stuttgart.

Although their painting motifs were not the same, they were all painting in an academic and realistic style. People's interest or general tendency toward art in Stuttgart at that time was, as in other cities, focused toward France. Since 1901, exhibitions of French modern art had been repeatedly held in Stuttgart, and Impressionist works had been seen many times. The organizer of these shows was *Württembergische Kunstverein* [the Württemberg Art Association], which had been established in 1827 and is still active. What is interesting is that in Stuttgart at that time, many art exhibition-related organizations were established such as the *Stuttgarter Künstlerbund* (1903-), the *Verein württembergischer Kunstfreunde* (1905-1914), and the *Stuttgarter Galerieverein* (1906-). The role these organizations played in preparing artists for experimental art, therefore, should not be underestimated.

2. Fragments of the Bauhaus Education: Before Hölzel's Appointment

UNDER such conditions, Hölzel was called up by the academy in Stuttgart, which was the replacement of Kalkreuth. Hölzel himself had first studied at the academy in Wien from 1871 and then at the academy in Munich from 1876. Neue Pinakothek in Munich purchased his realistic genre painting *Hausandacht* [Domestic Devotions] [Fig.1] in 1893 and the fact shows that he was recognized as an academic-style painter.

However, Hölzel's painting style was already moving into a new phase, and it was in a different direction from the expectations of the academy. One of the Circle members Willi Baumeister (1889-1955) looked back: "Once Adolf Hölzel was called to the academy from the gray Dachau, he slowly took off his sheep fur coat in the course of his tenure and became a wolf. Otherwise he wouldn't be appointed."⁷⁾



Fig.1 Adolf Hölzel, *Hausandacht* [Domestic Devotions], ca 1890. Oil on canvas, 40×32cm, Neue Pinakothek Munich

7) ——— Quotation in: Wolfgang Venzmer, *Hölzel und sein Kreis - Der Beitrag Stuttgart zur Malerei des 20. Jahrhunderts* [Hölzel and His Circle—The Contribution of Stuttgart to the Paintings of the 20th Century](exh. cat.: Württembergischen Kunstverein, Stuttgart, 1961), p.7.

“Gray Dachau” was where Hölzel had been living after leaving the Munich Academy until just before his appointment. Dachau is a suburb city of Munich and was one of the artists’ colonies in Europe after Barbizon. Hölzel formed a group called *Neu Dachau* [New Dachau] here with Arthur Langhammer (1854-1901) and Ludwig Dill (1848-1940).⁸⁾ He also shaped the basis of his art theory in this era, papers on which were published in art magazines.

His first treatise “On Forms and Allocation of Masses in the Picture” was published in the fourth issue of *Ver Sacrum*, the journal of Vienna Secession.⁹⁾ In this article, he discussed the necessity for painters to find out a basic law in art, to admit the two dimensionality of the plane of the canvas rather than a pseudo-three dimensional space, and to create a harmonious stability based on the light and dark contrast of masses.

Then our sight is steadily bound to the place where the apparent darkness of lightness and the opposite are juxtaposed. (...) THE MORE AND THE STRONGER CONTRASTS ON A POINT ARE FOCUSED, THE MORE THE VIEWER’S SIGHT IS DIRECTED. (...) To cite as contrasts: the linear, the formal, light and dark, cold and warm, horizontal and vertical, hard and soft, large and small, calmness and disturbance etc.¹⁰⁾

Even though the concept of contrast was discussed in terms of the arrangement of the forms on the painting plane, it is easy to see how similar this was to Johannes Itten’s axis of teaching, which he kept in the middle of his educational theory from the Bauhaus to his very last activity. Itten surely wrote in his book *My Preliminary Course at Bauhaus*:¹¹⁾

The basis of my form education was the universal study on contrast. Contrasts like light-dark, long-short, wide-narrow, thick-thin, black-white, much-less, promote the study of material and texture study, form and color study, the rhythm and the expressive forms were in their contrast effects discussed and depicted.

In 1904, Hölzel wrote a disquisition “On Artistic Means of Expression and its Relation to Nature and Painting,” which was published in the magazine *Kunst für Alle* [Art for All]. In this article, Hölzel mentioned many Old Masters and his contemporaries from color scientists’ points of view. For example, he mentioned such names as Bayersdorfer, Signac, von Bezold, Fromentin and Helmholtz.¹²⁾

These studies had already been taught in Dachau. Sketches by a student at that time, Emil

8) ————— The Jugendstil expression by Dill, who was in the Munich Secession, was apparent in the style of bringing trees to the foreground in silhouette and letting wind stream go back to the distant view. The style influenced Hölzel greatly, and he kept painting in the style until 1899.

9) ————— Adolf Hölzel, “Über Formen und Massenverteilung im Bilde” [On Forms and Allocation of Masses in the Picture], *Ver Sacrum* 4, 1901, pp. 243-254.

10) ————— *Ibid.*, p.248.

11) ————— Johannes Itten, *Mein Vorkurs am Bauhaus: Gestaltungs- und Formenlehre* [My Preliminary Course at the Bauhaus: Design and Form], Ravensburg: Otto Maier Verlag, 1963.

12) ————— Adolf Hölzel, “Über künstlerische Ausdrucksmittel und deren Verhältnis zu Natur und Bild” [On Artistic Means of Expression and its Relation to Nature and Painting], *Die Kunst für Alle* [The Art for All], 20 (Jg.1904- 1905), Fritz von Schwarz (ed.), München, 1905. It is based on the serial lecture at Städelschule in Frankfurt in November 1903 and published in three volumes.

Hansen (1867-1956) shows that Hölzel taught contrast analysis of the paintings by the Old Masters as the basis of his composition studies. And we cannot help imagining that the influence of Hölzel's color studies was somehow large, even if the student had accepted them or not, when we once know that the name Hansen was Emil Nolde who made a significant mark with colorful expression.¹³⁾

A similar analysis, but with auxiliary lines to the Old Masters was shown in Goeringer's revised *The Golden Section*, which was edited by Hölzel in 1911.¹⁴⁾ In this book, Rembrandt and Vermeer were mathematically analyzed with lines and circles that derived from elements and points in their paintings. It meant that such methodology had already been known with his name when he was at the Academy. Therefore, there can be no doubt that these ideas were brought to the Bauhaus and taught in Itten's Preliminary course by Itten. In addition to these concepts, a unique training exercise called "Finger exercise" was performed in Itten's class to relax the hand and the mind before starting work, and it was also Hölzel's method tried already in Dachau. The link between the educations by Hölzel and Itten was quite direct.

3. Formation of the Hölzel Circle

AFTER these practices in Dachau, Hölzel was appointed to the Stuttgart Academy in 1905 and began teaching the following year. The title of this discussion *Hölzel Circle* mainly means a group of Hölzel's students. According to Itten, the name was first used on the occasion of a group exhibition in Freiburg im Breisgau in 1916, *Hölzel und Sein Kreis* [Hölzel and his Circle].¹⁵⁾

During the decade from 1906 to 1916, candidates of the Circle members gradually gathered around the teacher. Not all the students of Hölzel's, however, came to belong to the Circle, nor they worked under the name of Hölzel Circle. They were active students aiming a new art around Hölzel who was one step ahead from the conventional academy education. For the formation of the group and the situation in Stuttgart were inextricably intertwined. But it is also true that their activity made a tendency in Stuttgart.

Hölzel's appointment was realized with an effort by Theodor Fischer (1862-1938).¹⁶⁾ Just after Hölzel's appointment, at the beginning of 1906, the work of mural painting of *Pfullinger Hallen* [the Community Hall in Pfullingen] was assigned to him. Hölzel involved Hans Brühmann (1878-1911) and other ex-Kalckreuth students in this project, with Hölzel himself acting as the producer. Several occasions of collaborative project would have been noteworthy for the Circle to arise.

13) ——— Emil Nolde, *Das eigene Leben. Die Zeit der Jugend 1867-1902* [My Private Life, the Time of Youth 1867-1902], Flensburg, 1949. 2nd expanded edition, pp. 206-217. (First published in Berlin, 1931.) Franz Marc (1880-1916) was also among the students.

14) ——— Adalbert Goeringer, *Der goldene Schnitt (göttliche Proportion) und seine Beziehung zum menschlichen Körper, 2. Auflage, besorgt von Adolf Hölzel* [The Golden Ratio (Divine Proportion) and its Relation to the Human Body, 2nd edition], München, 1911. First published in 1893.

15) ——— Johannes Itten, 'Adolf Hölzel und sein Kreis' [Adolf Hölzel and his Circle], *Der Pelikan*, Aprilheft, 1963, p.34.

16) ——— Fischer was also a member of *Deutscher Werkbund* and gave weight to the urban design.

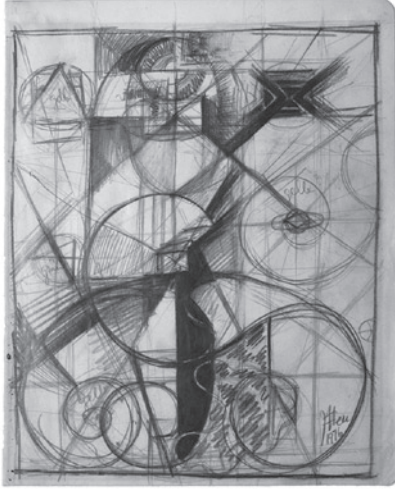


Fig.2 Johannes Itten, *Spiralen*, 1916, Pencil on paper, 19.5×4.0cm, Kunstmuseum Bern

The core students of the circle first gathered in 1912, on the occasion of a summer trip. This year Hölzel took his students to Monchau (Monjoie) for a sketch trip and to Koln for *Sonderbund-exhibition*.¹⁷⁾ But it needs annotation that here was not Itten yet.¹⁸⁾ Interestingly or like a proof of how many people were attracted to the exhibition, but Itten also visited the exhibition in Koln and might even have passed by Hölzel.

The first indirect contact between Itten and Hölzel was at Hans Brühlmann's remained work exhibition held at the Thannhauser Gallery in Munich in 1912. The following year, Itten visited the Hölzel's show at the same gallery, which encouraged him to study under Hölzel. Three months later, Itten walked to Stuttgart from Basel in a bid to become a student of Hölzel.

at the academy. The council of the academy, however, denied Itten's enrolment application, so Hölzel let him learn the basics from Ida Kerkovius (1879-1964), a master student of Hölzel.¹⁹⁾

Kerkovius had also studied at Dachau for five months in 1903. In 1908, she entered the Stuttgart Academy and from 1910 worked very closely with Hölzel. From around 1911, she was working almost as his assistant. From 1920 to 1923, she studied at the Bauhaus under Itten and Oskar Schlemmer (1888-1943).

In May 1913, *das Kunstgebäude* [the Art House] by the Schloßplatz was inaugurated and *die Große Kunstausstellung Stuttgart 1913* [the Great Art Exhibition Stuttgart 1913] was held there, though not so many works from Hölzel Circle were exhibited this time. In the same month, Oskar Schlemmer and his brother established a new gallery *Neuer Kunstsalon* [New Art Salon] and held the first exhibition of Willi Baumeister (1889-1955), Schlemmer and Hermann Stenner (1891-1914).²⁰⁾

17) ——— Mainly Gogh, and Munch, Cezanne, Gauguin, Signac, Mattice and Picasso were exhibited. In addition, works of Blaue Reiter and Brücke were shown as German Art. In Germany at that time, art broadly called "Expressionism" was attracting attention.

18) ——— Hans Brühlmann was not there either. He had died in 1911.

19) ——— Itten was unofficially present in Hölzel's class in academy every week.

20) ——— Alfred Heinrich Pellegrini (1881-1958), Otto Meyer-Amden (1885-1933) and Hermann Stenner were close to Schlemmer and his art at that time. Including Schlemmer, they were all in the class of Christian Adam Landenberger (1862-1927). Landenberger belonged to Munich Secession and was not so conservative. He tried to renew the exhibits of the Staatgalerie Stuttgart with Hölzel in 1912. But it was clear that Hölzel was much aware of new art. Willi Baumeister was the closest to Schlemmer in the Hölzel Circle, and he proceeded to abstract painting the most. Baumeister designed the Advertisement of the Werkbund's exhibition *Wohnung* [Dwelling] (1927) and taught design at the academy in Frankfurt. After the War, he came to teach at the Stuttgart Academy. Baumeister is important as an artist and a teacher who was always parallel to Bauhaus and Schlemmer.

This does not mean, however, that the works from Hölzel Circle were not shown in public spaces. For *die Kunstausstellung Stuttgart 1914* [the Art Exhibition Stuttgart 1914] at the same *Kunstgebäude* prepared a room for Hölzel Circle under the direction of Hölzel, and he named the room *Expressionist-hall*.²¹⁾

In 1914, Itten finally became a master student under Hölzel.²²⁾ With the lively art scene in Stuttgart, Hölzel was appointed the director of the Academy (until 1919) in 1916, the same year as the exhibition *Hölzel und sein Kreis*.²³⁾

4. The Concept of Harmony and Totality in Color Theory

At the *Hölzel und sein Kreis* exhibition, Hölzel exhibited 14 oil paintings and sketches; in the catalog, he wrote a small text “Several Aphoristic Sentences from a Notebook to Be Published Shortly”,²⁴⁾ in which he talked about art in general. On the other hand, Itten’s “The Fragments”²⁵⁾ in the same catalog, clearly demonstrated the use of Hölzel’s theory. It included discussions on 1. Environment and Human-beings, 2. Form artists, 3. Means of Depiction, and 4. Conclusion. Especially the third part was written about the color theory Itten had learned from Hölzel.

In the spectrum colors, various possible expressive colors exist embryonically. Each existing colors are perceivable through their contrasts. The spectrum colors are unlimitedly variable in the many combinations of well-known seven contrasts. The seven contrasts after Professor Hölzel are as follows:

1. Color to itself and for itself
2. Intensity
3. Quantity
4. Light- Dark
5. Complementary
6. Simultaneous
7. Cold-Warm

The combinations of the contrasts 1, 2, 4, 7 are a limb of the color tree and result in the spatial impact of colors. This limb especially excites my perceptive life and I am struggling to grow a new and expressive tree. A fruit of this tree would be a new mural painting. Then the mural painting becomes an architectural piece. Architecture is space expression. Therefore, a mural painting is a space expression.²⁶⁾

21) ——— The name “Expressionist” meant “New Art” at this time, which is clearly related to the Sonderbund Exhibition.

22) ——— Itten was responsible for supervising Hölzel’s students at this time.

23) ——— This exhibition was first planned to go round to Art Salon in Frankfurt, Ludwig Schames, Koln, and other cities in the West Germany. But the situation became worse for the War, and the plan fell through.

24) ——— Adolf Hölzel, ‘Einige aphoristische Sätze aus einem demnächst erscheinenden Hefte’ [Several Aphoristic Sentences from a Notebook to Be Published Shortly], *Hölzel und sein Kreis*, [Hölzel and his Circle], Strecker und Schröder, Stuttgart, 1916, pp.3-14.

25) ——— Johannes Itten, ‘Fragmentarisches’ [The Fragments], in: *ibid.*, pp.15-19.

26) ——— The reason why Itten refers to mural painting here is related to the fact that Hölzel had given the mural projective work to his student.



Fig. 3 Adolf Hölzel, *Große Abstraktion* [Great Abstraction], 1916, Oil on canvas, 125×110cm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

These seven contrasts remained Itten's most fundamental concept, and brought to the Bauhaus and beyond. However, as discussed, these ideas had been influenced by Hölzel. While the concept of contrast was not originally from Hölzel, Itten referenced von Bezold's quotation and Chevreul's, indicating Hölzel's contribution to color theory was that he had reconsidered various scientific color studies from an artist's point of view. Therefore, Hölzel's concept became firm and stable through Itten as his spokesman.

Further evidence of Hölzel's concepts about color can be found in the lecture records from the *First German Color Day on the 9th Annual Meeting of German Association of Craftsman in 1919*.²⁷⁾ This meeting invited lecturers

from the fields of science and technology, art, and education. After each lecture, there was a round-table discussion. The keynote lecturer was Wilhelm Ostwald, who had shaped one of the basic color systems today; as the representative of art division, Hölzel also gave a lecture.²⁸⁾

The lecture records show that Hölzel said that the basis of his color theory was taken from Goethe.²⁹⁾ He further noted that Goethe's theory would never be old fashioned, and it would remain true as long as human beings had sight. This statement shows his fundamental attitude that theories should be utilized based on actual experiments, but with wide and contemporary scientific eyes.

Yet, there was just one single point that he could never give over: the color circle. In this lecture note, color circles divided into eight colors and twelve colors are shown, based on von Bezold's theory. The former had four combinations of two complementary colors, and the latter had four combinations of three elemental colors. Essentially these were all "closed" non-step circles and were differently divided as needed. Like music, color needs scales or tones to ensure "accord."³⁰⁾

27) ——— *Erster deutscher Farbentag auf der 9. Jahresversammlung des deutschen Werkbundes* [The First German Color Day on the 9th Annual Meeting of German Association of Craftsman].

28) ——— In educational division, Peter Martin Schaller lectured about how the color theory can be brought into school education. On the publication of the record of the lecture, two other critics commented on it. It shows how interested people were in the systematization of colors and its application. Dr. Paul Kraus, 'Eindrücke vom ersten deutschen Farbentag' [Impressions of the First German Color Day], pp.38-41, Dr. Walter Riezler, 'Die Grenzen von Ostwalds Farbenlehre' [The Boundaries of Ostwald's Color Theory], pp.42-51. in: *1. deutscher Farbentag auf der 9. Jahresversammlung des deutschen Werkbundes in Stuttgart 9. September 1919* [The 1st German Color Day on the 9th Annual Meeting of German Association of Craftsman], Berlin, 1919.

29) ——— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Zur Farbenlehre* [Theory of Colors], 1810.

30) ——— Adolf Hölzel, 'Einiges über die Farbe in ihrer bildharmonischen Bedeutung und Ausnützung' [Several Things about Color in its Pictorial-harmonious Meaning and Utilization] in: *1. deutscher Farbentag auf der 9. Jahresversammlung des deutschen Werkbundes in Stuttgart 9. September 1919*.

However, the question is, why was a given “circle” needed to explain colors? When we actually measure and calculate light and try to build a solid system, it does not make up a sphere. This fact was already known at that time and Hölzel should have had not a small knowledge on it. Hölzel’s idea of dimensional contrasts showed that he understood the difference in color valance. Nevertheless, Hölzel never relinquished the concept of the color circle or the color sphere as his fundamental concept of harmony and totality was rooted in these basic ideas. Hölzel’s vision of totality meant that he saw the color system as a closed circular world, which was also how he regarded his paintings.

A painting is a completely perfect whole, and is a world itself, which is wished to be studied and known.³¹⁾

Conclusion

HÖLZEL and his Circle nourished Itten, Schlemmer and other artists at the Stuttgart Academy, and the Circle was supported not only by Hölzel’s theories mostly built up in his Dachau era, but also by the active artistic circumstances in Stuttgart. The relationship between art and industry or applied art was rapidly moving on around the Circle, and they were also given opportunities to collaborate like in a workshop. Furthermore, the tendency of Hölzel’s education that he tried to compose painting with analysis and contrast theories, can clearly be connected

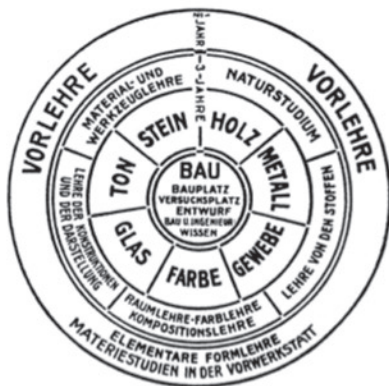


Fig.4 Curriculum of the Bauhaus published in *Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar, 1919-1923*

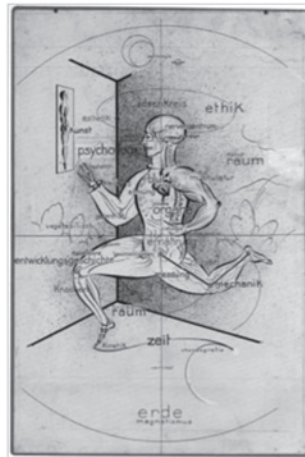


Fig.5 Oskar Schlemmer, *Der Mensch im Ideenkreis* [Man in the Sphere of Ideas], 1928, Pen, ink, gouache and colour pencil on paper, mounted on board, fabric, 74.5×48.9cm (Teaching Board for the class “Der Mensch” [Man])

31) ———— *Ibid.*

to the Preliminary course or the Free painting class at the Bauhaus. Therefore, environmentally and with many aspects, Hölzel Circle came to be regarded as the model of the Bauhaus.

Although, Hölzel's color theory was based on scientific studies, his view of formative art never moved from the closed circle idea, which he saw as a projection of his image of the world.

Examining the Bauhaus curriculum (1922)[Fig.4] from this viewpoint, it can be seen that this table mirrors the ideas of the color circle. Furthermore, the synthetic image of Hölzel's color theory and the closed circle was continued not only by Itten, but also by Hölzel's other student and Bauhaus teacher Oskar Schlemmer. The human image by Schlemmer [Fig.5] was drawn as a contented and related figure. While Bauhaus has often only been explained from a constructive viewpoint, Schlemmer's image surely had an aspect to aim fulfilled nature and the world. Hölzel should be seen as one of its origins.

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Photo Credits

Fig.1: Adolf Hölzel, *Hausandacht* [Domestic Devotions], ca 1890. Oil on canvas, 40×32cm, Neue Pinakothek Munich. Photo: Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen-Neue Pinakothek Munich

Fig.2: Johannes Itten, *Spiralen* [Spirals], 1916, Pencil on paper, 24.0×19.5cm, Kunstmuseum Bern. ©2015 by Pro-Litteris, CH-8033 Zurich & JASPAR, Tokyo E1832

Fig.3: Adolf Hölzel, *Große Abstraktion* [Great Abstraction], 1916, Oil on canvas, 125×110cm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

Fig.4: Curriculum of the Bauhaus published in *Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar, 1919-1923*

Fig.5: Oskar Schlemmer, *Der Mensch im Ideenkreis* [Man in the Sphere of Ideas], 1928, Pen, ink, gouache and colour pencil on paper, mounted on board, fabric, 74.5×48.9cm (Teaching Board for the class "Der Mensch" [Man])