

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Bauhäusler on the Franco-Spanish Border

Laura Martínez de Guereñu

This article focuses on the travels of Bauhaus masters and instructors and on the transport of Bauhaus products to Spain in 1929, when the Franco-Spanish border was still culturally permeable. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer introduced their tubular-steel furniture in the Spanish market. Mies and Lilly Reich designed the interiors of all German industrial sections at the Barcelona International Exposition, where the Bauhaus sent objects from its carpentry, metal, and weaving workshops. Josef and Anni Albers traveled to see the exhibition and then went to meet Vassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, who spent over a month on holiday in the Côte Basque. Albers captured their trip in photo collages, Kandinsky registered his impressions in snapshots, while Klee wrote abundant correspondence and produced drawings. Focusing on the itineraries the Bauhäusler followed, along with the means by which they expressed their travel impressions, this article reveals the effect of travel in their later design attitudes and work. Significant cultural transfers between Germany and Spain took place in a critical moment of European history, suggesting that further developments of these learning experiences might have materialized later on both sides of the border, possibly even reaching across the Atlantic.

## Exchanges

The Bauhaus had an intense yet little known creative relationship with Spain. In 1929 six masters and instructors from the most significant and influential school of modernist thought and creation in art, architecture, and design traveled through France to the other side of the Pyrenees: the architects Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, and the artists Josef and Anni Albers, Vassily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, several objects from the Bauhaus carpentry, metal and weaving workshops were sent to Barcelona for the International Exhibition that took place the same year (IABCN 1929: 58, 66) (Stölzl 1997: 257). Buildings, interiors, everyday objects, and furniture were all means by which these architects and artists brought the principles of modern architecture and design from central to southern Europe. At the same time, they absorbed and expressed the particularities of Spanish culture through photographs, photo collages, texts, snapshots, letters, postcards, and drawings of buildings and landscapes. Their travel impressions would be reflected in subsequent lectures and work. These bi-directional interactions – from the Bauhaus to the Franco-Spanish border and back – materialized into an extraordinary amount of work produced during and after the Bauhäusler's<sup>2</sup> trips to the Iberian country.<sup>3</sup> The careful analysis of these journeys brings to light some of the important cultural transfers between Spain and Germany shortly before the project of modernism was abruptly interrupted by the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany (1933) and by the onset of the Civil

War in Spain (1936). To narrate these creative exchanges is the first aim of this article.

The second goal of this article is twofold. The first part is to examine the different nature and character of these trips – whether they be contributions to international fairs, visits to buildings and exhibitions, or mere holidays – to be able to understand the motivations behind them. The second is to critically analyze the travel documents that bear the memory of these experiences of mobility, and to reveal the effects they had on the creative attitudes and teaching pedagogies of the Bauhaus travelers.

The Bauhaus participated in the German section of the 1929 Barcelona International Exhibition, sending objects to the Palace of Textile Industries (Textilpalast) and to the Palace of Decorative and Industrial Arts (Gewerbepalast). The display spaces inside these two neoclassical palaces were designed by Lilly Reich and Mies van der Rohe (AMCB 1929, box 47174). In addition to conceiving the renowned German Pavilion and the German Electrical Industries Pavilion, Mies and Reich organized the German sections of fifteen different interiors in eight neoclassical palaces, located in the fairgrounds of Montjuïc, which had been reserved for the display of almost 350 German industries. Achieving consistency, by providing a neutral background to underscore the particularities of the German objects on display, was not a minor challenge for the architects. The structures of the given palaces ranged from ample horizontal spaces with steel columns of great slenderness to double-height volumes resting on classical columns of different orders (Figs. 1, 2). By designing wall paneling, floor coverings, and false ceilings as well as the frames, shelves, vitrines, and lettering of the various interiors, Reich and Mies succeeded in placing these distinct objects comfortably against a uniform background. Mies's chairs were



**Figure 1:** Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich. Interior view of the German installation in the Palace of Communications and Transport (Verkehrspalast), 1929. King Alfonso XIII and Baron Georg von Schnitzler visiting the stand n. 25, Daimler-Benz Aktiengesellschaft, Untertürkheim. Chrome-plated handrails dividing the stands of the different industries. Unknown photographer. AFB, Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona.



**Figure 2:** Joan Roig and Emili Canosa. Interior view of the Palace of Textile Industries (*Textilepalast*) under construction. Unknown photographer. AFB, Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona.

among the elements selected to provide this required consistency. By 1929, not only Mies's chairs, but also those by Marcel Breuer, were distributed in Spain. The Barcelona International Exhibition, with all its German and Bauhaus contributions, lasted only eight months, but the furniture designed by the Bauhäusler and sent to Spain for this occasion had a much longer lifespan.

Josef and Anni Albers arrived in Barcelona in the summer of 1929, and, after visiting the International Fair, traveled along the Pyrenees until they reached San Sebastian in the Basque Country. The photographs Albers took on both the Mediterranean and the Cantabrian sides of the Pyrenees show his interest in a variety of subjects. His photographs explore the qualities of the natural elements and their ability to absorb and reflect light, as well as the relationships between enclosed and open public spaces. Vassily Kandinsky spent more than a month in Hendaye-Plage, on

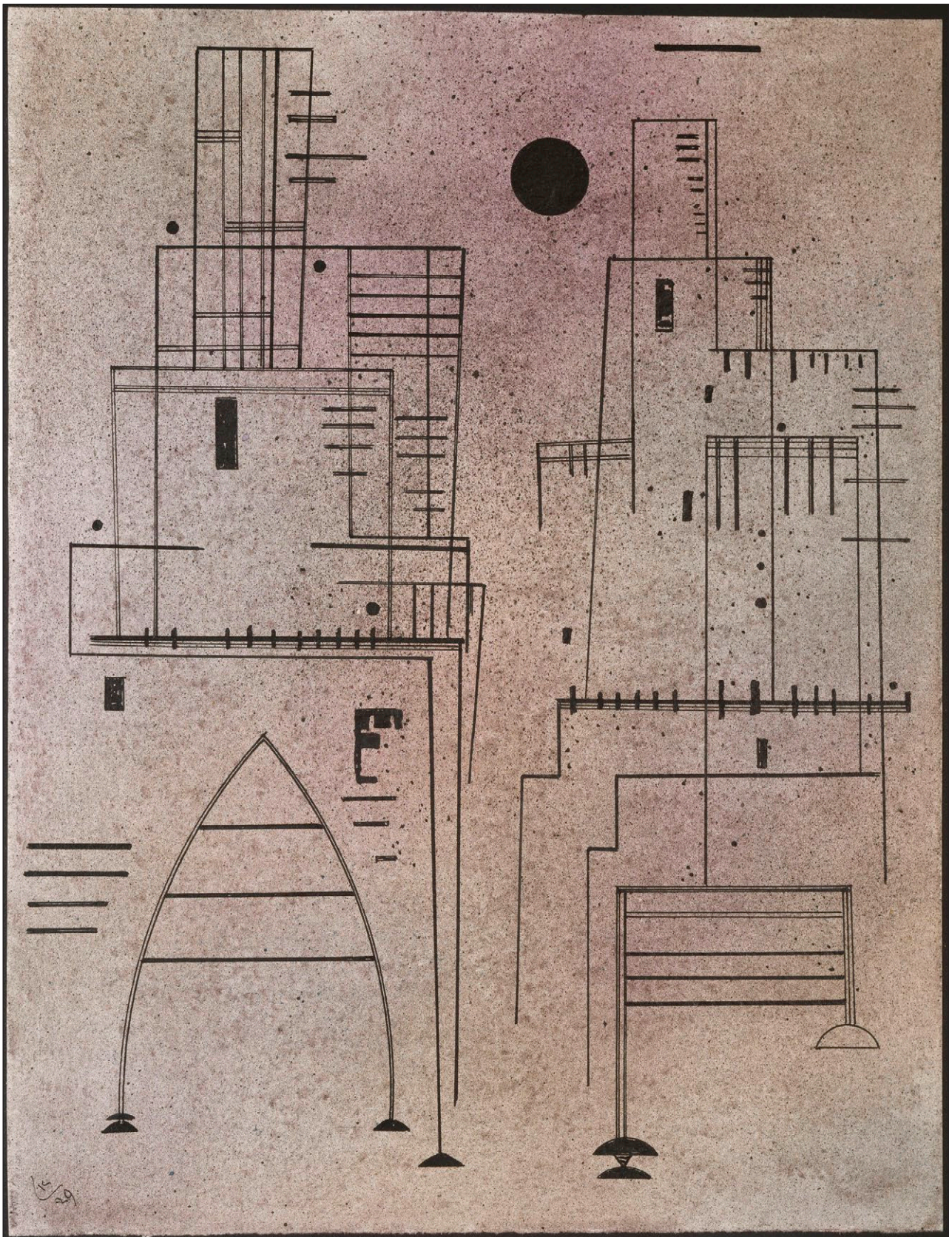
the border of the Atlantic Pyrenees, where he wrote 'Two Suggestions', a short text in which he conceded identical value to rationality and intuition that must operate in any creative endeavor (Kandinsky 1994 (1929): 735–36). Back at the Bauhaus, Kandinsky created a series of drawings and paintings that show the contrast between the old and the modern structures he had visited. The formal analysis Kandinsky carried out in the different cities is apparent, especially if we look at *Scarcely Colored Structure* (November 1929), the watercolor he created shortly after the trip, which compares the supporting behavior of old ramparts and ogive arches with modern beams and porticos, through structural diagrams (Fig. 3). Paul Klee, who spent a long holiday in Bidart, a few kilometers away along the Côte Basque, sent abundant correspondence expressing his impressions of the traditions, people, cities, and landscapes to friends and art dealers, and created various drawings. A few weeks after the trip he produced *Garden House* (1929, no. 347), an abstract oil-on-canvas painting of the house in the style of the Basque region where they had spent their vacation.

Among the six Bauhäusler who traveled to the Franco-Spanish border in 1929, Josef and Anni Albers selected two border cities as part of their prolonged European summer trip, and their motivations for doing so are particularly revealing. The first reason was to visit the Barcelona International Exhibition that had opened in May 1929, to see the display at the Palace of Textile Industries, showing works from the Bauhaus weaving workshop, as well as the German Pavilion, conceived by Mies as representative of Weimar Germany. Secondly, they went to meet some of their older Bauhaus colleagues, Klee and Kandinsky, on the other side of the Franco-Spanish border, in the Côte Basque, who spent over a month on holiday there.

Josef Albers recorded the trip across Geneva, Avignon, Barcelona, San Sebastian, Biarritz, and Paris in more than forty photographs he would later compose in the form of collage (Fig. 4). The mapping of these images reveals a geographical border between France and the Iberian Peninsula – continental and southern Europe – that in the summer of 1929 was very open and culturally lively, but would be transformed into a dark and enclosed border only a few years later.

The two poles of the border extending along the Pyrenees serve coincidentally to distinguish the Bauhäusler's different motivations for embarking on this journey. On the one hand, on the eastern Mediterranean coast and in Barcelona, a work of architecture and the contents of an international exhibition, along with the series of objects sent from Germany, were explicitly implicated in the trip itinerary. On the other hand, on the western Cantabrian side, in San Sebastian in Spain and Biarritz in France, the natural and built environment became the setting, the scenery, for a holiday encounter between friends.

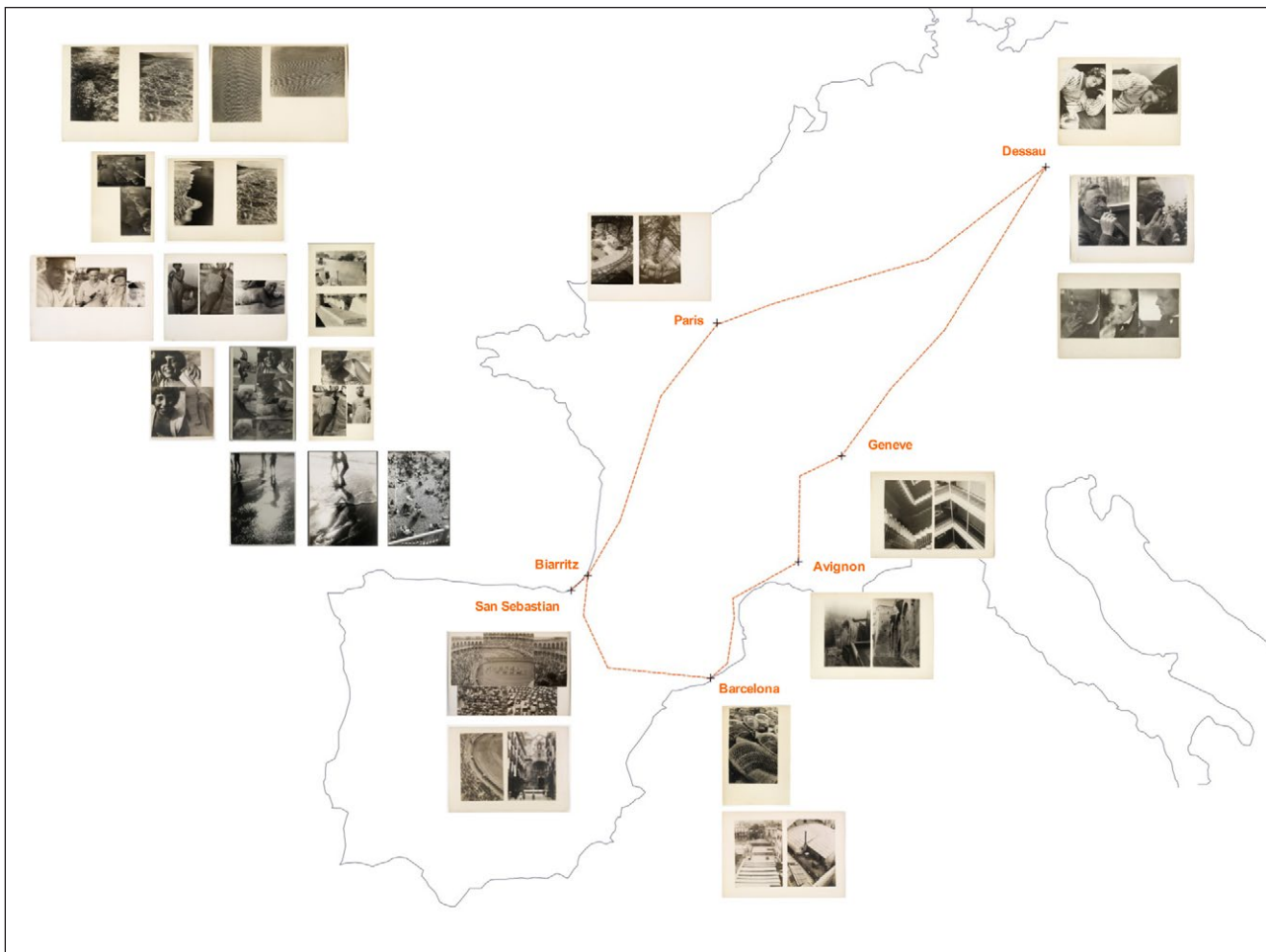
However, regardless of whether the architectural and interior designs and the Bauhaus workshop products had been an intended attraction or an unconscious background, or whether the motivations to embark on a journey had been professional or recreational, the trail the travelers left was significant. The analysis and



**Figure 3:** Vasily Kandinsky, *Scarcely Colored Structure*, November 1929. Watercolour and India ink on paper, 36 × 27.3 cm. Paris, Centre Pompidou – Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de creation industrielle, AM1976–1328. © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Jacqueline Hyde.

interpretation of the different means by which modern design from continental Europe arrived at Europe's southwestern limit, together with the diverse documents

in which the Bauhaus travelers captured and expressed their experiences, now allow us to see the impact of those early travels on their creative attitudes and the teaching



**Figure 4:** Mapping of the Alberses' southern itinerary by Laura Martínez de Guereñu, with the photo collages produced by Josef Albers during the summer of 1929.

methods. Additionally, this analysis invites us to envision an interwar moment of European history in which many creative exchanges between Germany and Spain took place, and to consider the effects these travels had on the architectural culture of Europe as well as America.

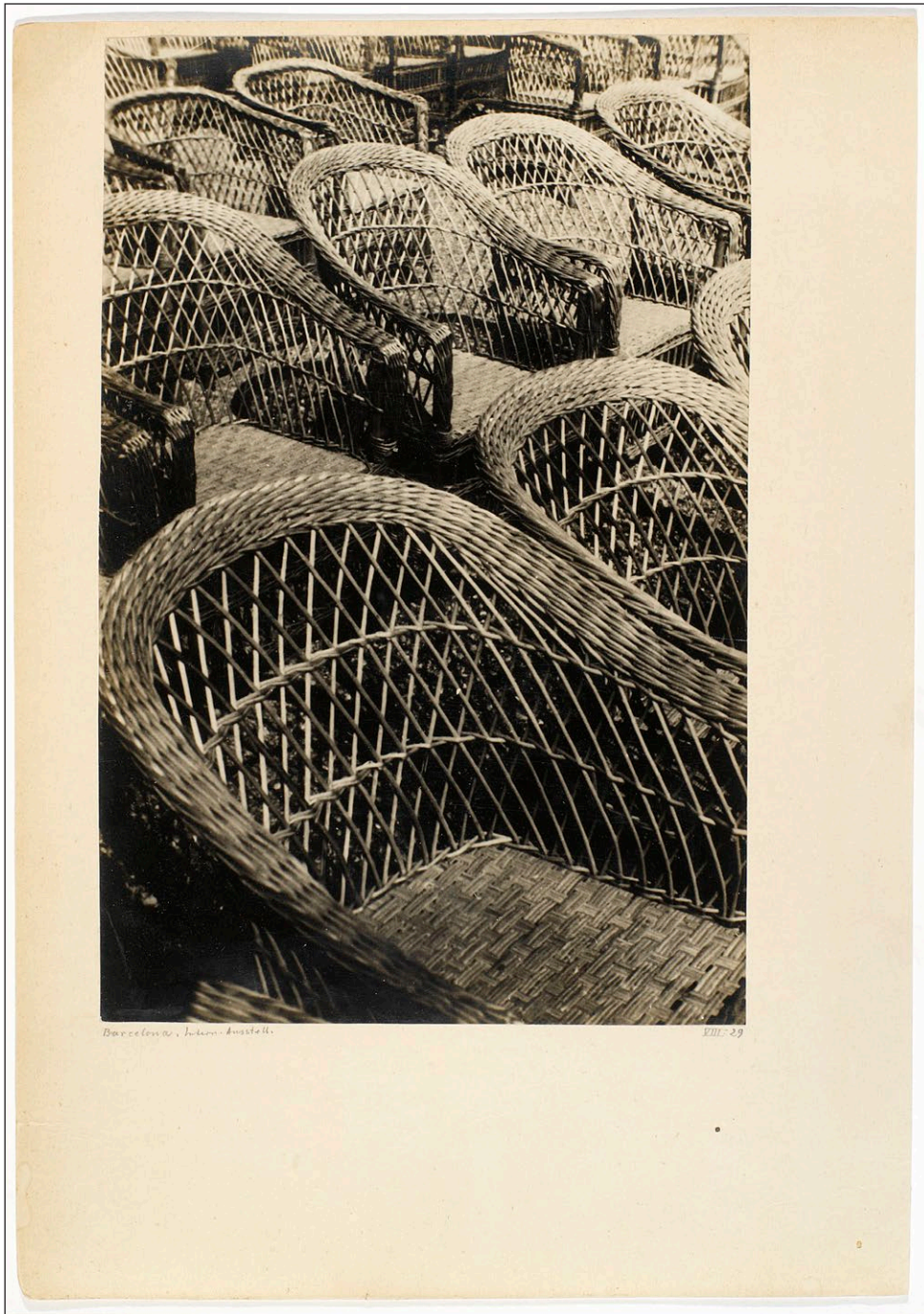
### Hearts Jumping with Joy

In the first issue of the *Bauhaus* journal of 1929, the presence of the Bauhaus in Barcelona was noted in only two lines, lost within a list of sixteen exhibits the school was participating in that season (*Bauhaus* 1929: 24). Even so, it seems likely that during the summer of 1929 most of the instructors and students at the Bauhaus would have been aware of the Barcelona International Exhibition, and perhaps were even excited about visiting the pavilion that Mies had built to represent the Weimar Republic. Nevertheless, the German Pavilion was not particularly celebrated at the school in Dessau.

Howard Dearstyne, the only American to graduate from the Bauhaus, and a student of Albers, Kandinsky and Klee at the time, lamented years later that '[he] had never even heard of the Barcelona Pavilion, though [he] was in Europe in 1929 at the time it was erected' (Dearstyne 1986: 221). Given the admiration Dearstyne professed for Mies's work and the tight relationship they would develop over time, first when the former was a student at the Bauhaus

in Dessau and Berlin and later when he was an instructor at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, the American 'regretted ever since that [he] failed to see [the Pavilion]' (Dearstyne 1986: 221). Dearstyne also recalled that, years after the construction of the German Pavilion, Mies told his Bauhaus students how gratified he had felt to win the praise of his master, Peter Behrens, who described his 'heart jumping with joy' ('Mein Herz ging auf') during his visit to the Barcelona Pavilion (Dearstyne 1986: 222).

The fact that the Alberses were two of the few Bauhäusler that went to Barcelona during the Exposition gives even more relevance and singularity to the long trip across Europe, from Dessau to a southern European country, ending at the Mediterranean. Only one photograph by Josef Albers of the International Exhibition has been found (JAAF, 1976.7.151) (**Fig. 5**).<sup>4</sup> It is an image of wicker chairs piled up on the main avenue of the fairgrounds, which not only confirms Albers's interest in series (so present at the Bauhaus at the time), but also his own obsession for the texture and the expressive potential of diverse materials. By 1929, Albers had already expressed his concern for the creation of fabrics of very different scales in more than twenty glass paintings, such as *Grid Mounted* (1922), *Park* (1924), *Fabrik* (1925), *Latticework* (1926), *Interlocked* (1927), and *City* (1928).

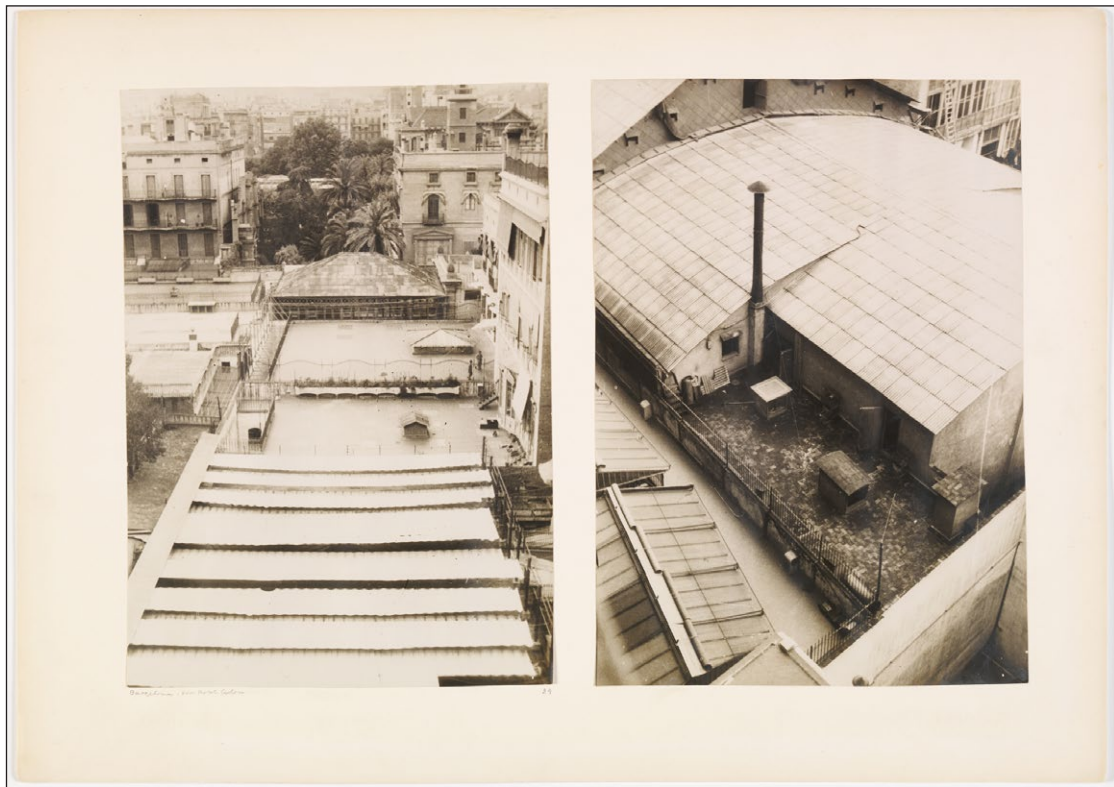


**Figure 5:** Josef Albers, *Barcelona Ausstellung*, 1929. Gelatin silver print, mounted on cardboard, photo collage, 41 × 29.5 cm. Courtesy of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany (1976.7.151). © The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

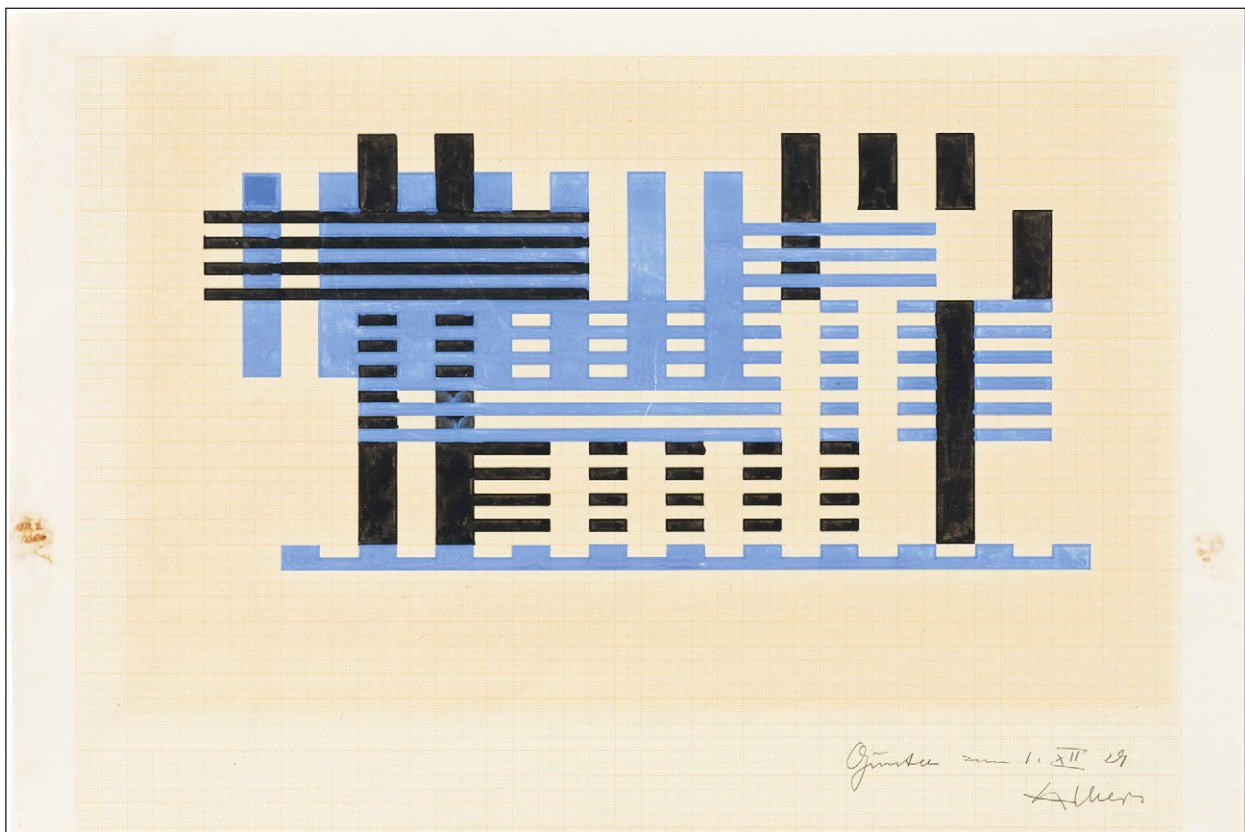
The two other extant photographs by Albers from Barcelona express this same interest in textures, but on a much larger scale: the fabric of the city. The two photographs of the interior courtyard of the Hotel Colón, where he and Anni were staying, reveal an unmistakably Mediterranean architecture (JAAF, 1976.7.11) (**Fig. 6**). The hotel was part of the 19th-century urban fabric in which the square blocks are composed of plots that enclose an open courtyard. Some of the commercial extensions of the ground level were then protected by subsequent bands of long horizontal pergolas. The glazed galleries of the different facades were covered with shutters and lattices that

produced shade, typical of the Mediterranean tradition. It is not difficult to find a close relationship between these two photographs and the last two glass paintings Albers would create in his classic 'thermometer style,' right after their trip to the Spanish border: *Bowers* (1929) and *Pergola* (1929) (**Fig. 7**).

There are no photographs or other archival documents proving that the Alberses were actually at the Barcelona Pavilion.<sup>5</sup> However, the strong resemblance to the large double-glazed wall of Mies's building in the two glass paintings with floating windows Albers created shortly after the trip, *Interior A* (1929) and *Interior B* (1929),



**Figure 6:** Josef Albers, *Barcelona from the Hotel Colón '29*, c 1929. Gelatin silver prints, mounted on cardboard, photo collage, 29.5 × 41 cm. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany (1976.7.11). © The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



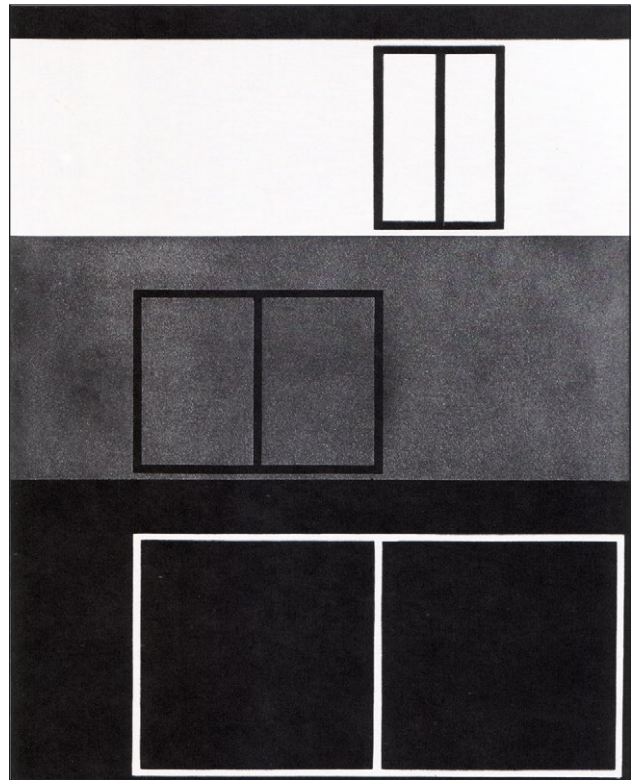
**Figure 7:** Josef Albers, *Studie für die Glasskonstruktion Pergola*, December 1929. Gouache (blue and black) and graphite on graph paper, 32.3 × 48 cm. Photo: SBD, Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau. © The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

strongly suggest the building's influence (Figs. 8, 9, 10). Not only do the glass paintings' lower windows reproduce the two parallel sheets of milky white glass that created the pavilion's only source of artificial light, but Albers was also able to represent the reflectivity of chrome (the material used for the pavilions' mullions), normally an impossible feat in a medium such as glass painting, since the color cannot be modulated. Albers achieved this by creating various versions of the same painting, in order to alter the color of the mullions and that of the background onto which they were placed.

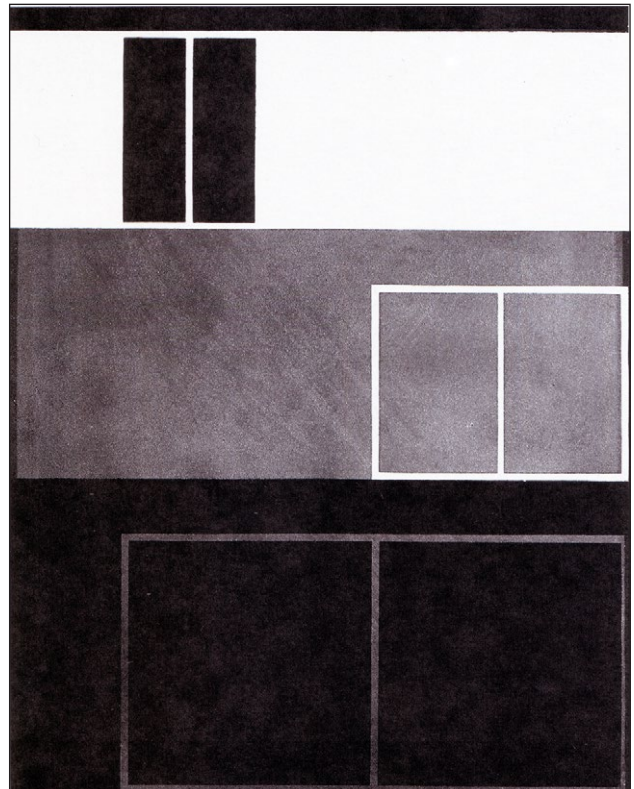
These two glass paintings in black, grey, and white have to be understood in the broader lineage of a work that Josef Albers created in the 1920s at the Bauhaus glass workshop, which marks a continuity in his tectonic explorations and his determination to surpass the anatomical condition of architecture. Since 1925, Albers had thoroughly examined and represented the architectural elements of different spatial and structural systems. Albers's glass paintings showed how modern architecture had achieved the complete continuity of space, distinguishing the supporting elements from those responsible for setting the spatial limits. They expressed the play between regular supports and cantilevers, and even investigated assorted textures and openings for building enclosures. Albers was aware of the skin-and-bones nature of Mies's



**Figure 8:** Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969) German Pavilion. Barcelona International Exhibition, 1928–29. Detail of the double-glazed wall. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Berliner Bild-Bericht. Acc. n.: Seidmann248\_CC. © 2015 Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.



**Figure 9:** Josef Albers, *Interior A*, 1929. Sandblasted opaque flashed glass with black paint, 32.5 × 25.5 cm. Courtesy of Josef Albers Museum, Bottrop. © The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



**Figure 10:** Josef Albers, *Interior B*, 1929 Sandblasted opaque flashed glass with black paint, 33 × 25 cm. Courtesy of Josef Albers Museum, Bottrop. © The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

skyscraper projects, which he had seen at the Bauhaus Internationale Architektur Exhibition in 1923 (Gropius 1925). Thus, in the following years, Albers was able to produce – with single pieces of opaque glass and with surfaces of various colors – an effect of spatial superimposition that created the illusion of transparency in a parallel way to what Mies achieved in his architecture.

Albers left behind no photographic record of the interiors of the different sections of the German industry exhibits for which Reich and Mies had been artistic directors.<sup>6</sup> The fact that the Bauhaus had sent objects to two of these exhibits might have had an impact on the Alberses' decision to embark on the journey, especially considering that some of the fabrics hanging there were woven by either Anni Albers or her colleagues at the Bauhaus weaving workshop.

The German section in the Palace of Textile Industries, a Beaux-Arts building finished by local architects Joan Roig and Emili Canosa in 1928, extended through the front axis in an area equivalent to the space beneath the main dome. This central area was occupied by Spanish stands, while the Austrian, French, and Italian industries were exhibited in the two square areas to the sides, and the Swiss ones continued through a smaller southern extension. The palace was organized according to a classical compositional *parti*. Four main columns created a central square accompanied by four pairs of smaller columns, placed at equal distances along the two axes, and thus emphasizing each

edge of the square; all of them together supported friezes that crossed perpendicularly and marked the height of the ceiling perpendicularly (Fig. 11).

Reich and Mies created a groundbreaking design for this exhibition space, which clearly contrasted with the architecture of the palace (Fig. 2) as well as the interior design of the rest of the represented countries in the very same building. They introduced a false ceiling, of one-meter-wide hanging textile bands, and a continuous linoleum floor.



Figure 12: Lilly Reich and Mies van der Rohe, Interior view of the Palace of Textile Industries. Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin. © VG Bild-Kunst Bonn für Mies van der Rohe.

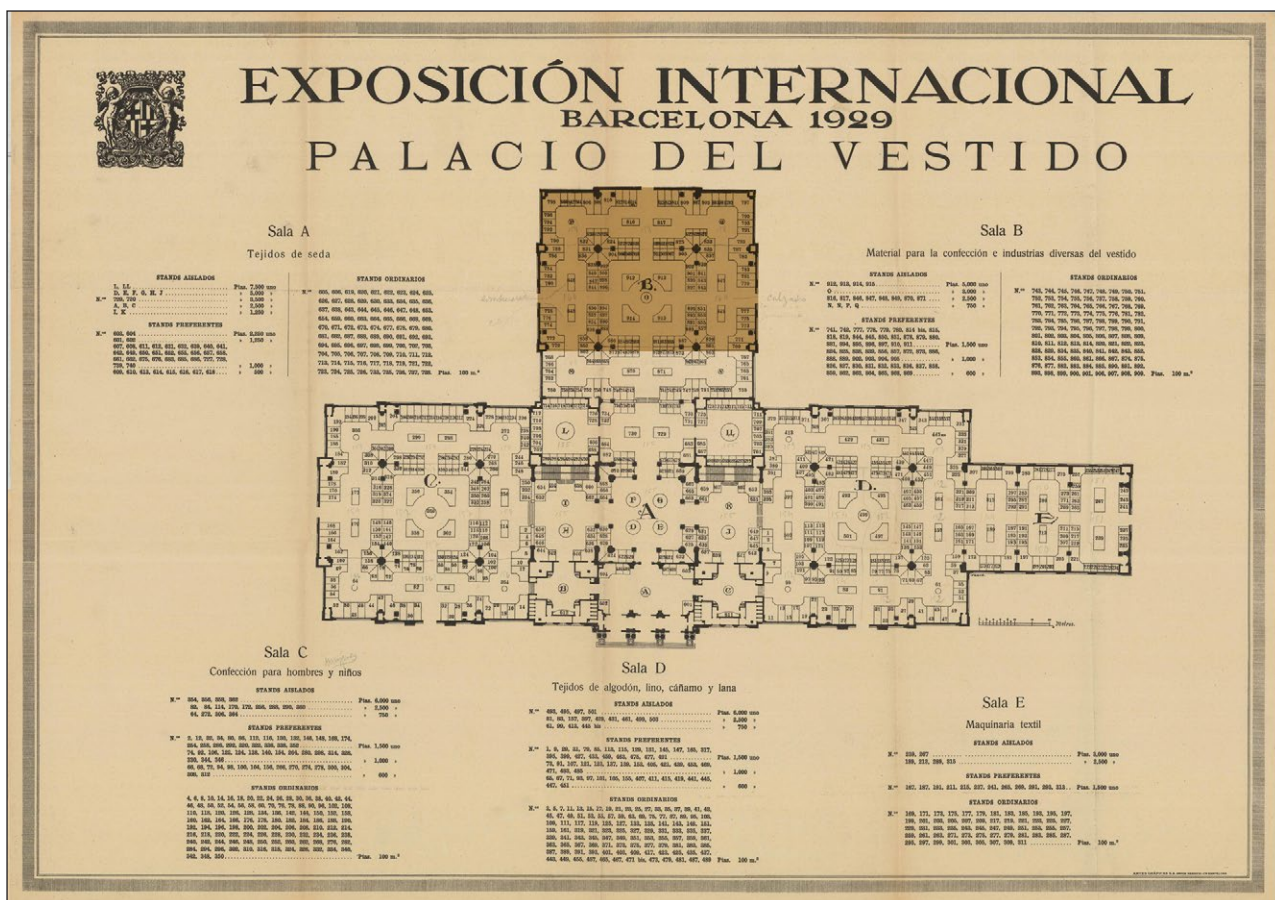


Figure 11: Joan Roig and Emili Canosa. Ground floor plan of the Palace of Textile Industries, Room distribution A-E. Barcelona International Exhibition. Impres Arts Gràficas S. A., 1929. AMCB: Fons Institucional Exposició Internacional de Barcelona 1929, c. 45387.

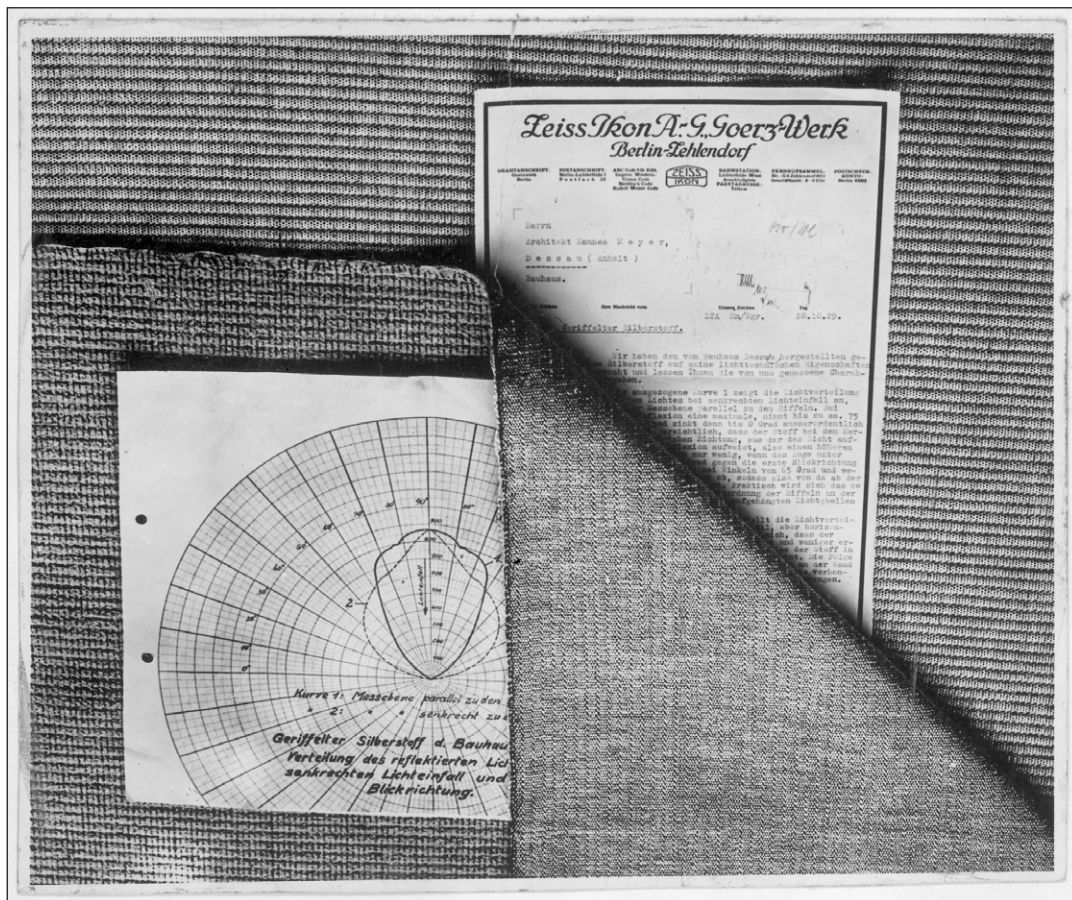


They covered all the perimeter walls with modular white paneling and created four cabinets in the form of an L (facing each other towards the central space) that distinguished a perimeter circulation from a central space (Fig. 12). In this central area, the weavings were hung from freestanding bars of different width and height that advanced over an array of isolated colored glazed walls with steel carpentries plated in chrome. These colored-glass walls, including a curved one, divided the space, while allowing a view through it. The L-shaped cabinets, as well as the perimeter walls, served as backdrops for the freestanding colored glass walls and the textiles hanging from them. Thus, the modular repetition of the white wood panes in the background, the four cabinets in L shape, and the freestanding glazed walls created a balanced atmosphere in which the objects on display were foregrounded.

The Bauhaus was exhibited in one of the cabinets of the perimeter spaces on the north-east side, among thirty-eight other German industries distributed throughout the entire section, including the renowned Deutsche Seide (AMCB 1929, box 47174: 4–6). The silk industry had been the first in deciding to participate in the Barcelona Exhibition and the one that spent the most on product display (Trillo 2016: 29). Mies had previous contacts with some of the most important textile manufactures of

Krefeld, such as the art collectors Hermann Lange and Josef Ester, for whom he was constructing two residences in neighboring lots at the time. The objects the Bauhaus had sent to this section, which were exhibited on the perimeter of Deutsche Seide, were samples of drapery, upholstery, and wall-covering materials (IABCN 1929: 58), the three types of utilitarian and anonymous weavings Anni Albers designed, together with her own artistic wall-hangings, at the Bauhaus weaving workshop.

A few months later, Anni Albers would design her final weaving project, which was a wall-covering material for the Bundesschule Auditorium of the Federal School of the ADGB (Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) in Bernau, which Hannes Meyer, then director of the Bauhaus, was finishing in collaboration with the Bauhaus workshops. The weaving was industrially produced to cover the entire vertical interior surface of the auditorium. It was an innovative weaving of a straw-like synthetic material with chenille backing, a silver finishing and two different sides: one functioning as acoustic absorption, the other as light reflection. The light-reflecting straw-like material on the surface allowed her to leave the walls white, since the chenille construction was left on the back (Fig. 13).<sup>7</sup> For this weaving Anni Albers experimented with a new synthetic material from Italy (Welliver 1965: 42), seen on display in



**Figure 13:** Anni Albers. Wall-covering material for the auditorium of the Allgemeinen Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundesschule, Bernau, Germany, 1929, showing the reverse side with the label indicating the reflection light as analyzed by Zeiss Ikon, Berlin. Graduating weaving, 1929, for Hannes Meyer’s ADGB Building. Courtesy of the Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin.

the Italian section of the same hall where the Bauhaus objects were exhibited in Barcelona.

Anni Albers's weaving, which solved a technical problem rather than an aesthetic one, could by definition be considered an architectural element. As an artist, she was concerned with the tectonics of weaving and with 'form, line, color, proportions, and surface per se' (Welliver 1965: 44). However, she always defended the idea that weavings were 'serving objects', an expression she had once heard Klee say, so that they could be endowed with a 'lasting beauty in the art sense' (Welliver 1965: 44). For her, time dedicated to development was necessary to endow the 'quality of really carefully considered form' to any object, which was essentially how the beautiful intermingled with the practical. This quality was not only present in her own work, but also in the work of Mies, who, according to her, 'took his time to make proportions good' (Welliver 1965: 45). The Barcelona Exhibits was indeed a project in which Mies and Lilly Reich had painstakingly controlled the formal consistency of the industries sections, their overall design, the furniture, and the lettering and signage, even to the point of reserving the right to approve or reject each individual exhibit (Neumann 2006: 395).

The 'quality of carefully considered form' experienced in the thematically organized halls of Barcelona had to do with the overall design decisions Mies and Lilly Reich made, such as the pairing of continuous floors and uninterrupted ceilings to create neutral horizontal spaces, and the free opening of the ceilings into double height spaces, to distinguish between the light industries (Chemical Industries, Textiles, Decorative and Industrial Arts, Graphic Arts) and the heavy industries (Electricity and Motive Force, Projections, Communication and Transport). It also had to do with the many linear meters of horizontal and vertical vitrines they designed for the most heterogeneous products, from books and chemical products to objects of decorative art. And most importantly, it had to do with Mies's ability to naturally introduce, in every single corner of each palace, 'still-lives', that is, fragments of domestic spaces composed by his own tubular-steel furniture, such as the MR10 and the MR20 chairs, the MR30 table, and the MR1 stool.

Mies was very successful in composing space through the arrangement of different pieces of furniture for visitors, whether it was at the bold stand of the five-hundred-year-old Munich beer factory in the Palace of Agriculture; in the central space of the Textile Palace; along the edges of the Palace of Chemical Industries; right in the midst of different large-scale machines in the Palace of Electricity and Motive Forces; or even interspersed with cars and motors in the Palace of Communications and Transports. These pieces of furniture were integrated as mass-produced objects of everyday life throughout the exhibition, not only constituting the perfect excuse for a short rest but also introducing German products to Spain's furniture market.

Mies was not the first to invent the bent-steel cantilevered chair. However, he was the first to fully exploit the pliant properties of Mannesmann steel tubing with his MR10 chair (Droste 1992: 18). The MR10 was commercialized by Joseph Müller's Berlin Neukölln firm, whose advertisement was included in one of the catalogs

from the International Exhibition in Barcelona (Ocón Fernández 2004: 3). The Basque architects José Manuel Aizpurúa and Joaquín Labayen chose this chair in wickerwork, which could be seen in every corner of Barcelona, to furnish the bar-restaurant of the Nautical Club House they inaugurated on August 15, 1929, in San Sebastian. The photographs of the building published at that time clearly reveal this choice (Sanz Esquide 1996: 48, 79, 81, 99). Additionally, the Basque architects also chose Mies's MR20 chair and MR130 table to equip their Studio at Prim 23, along with Marcel Breuer's chair B3 (Sanz Esquide 2004: 91, 97).

Breuer's furniture was known in France and Spain by the summer of 1929. Robert Mallet-Stevens had equipped the interior of his Casino in Saint-Jean de Luz (1928), 35 kilometers away from San Sebastian on the other side of the Franco-Spanish border, with the tubular steel B5 chair, the B10 table, and the B11 armrest. Josep Lluís Sert also chose Breuer's B33 cantilever-based chair to furnish the interiors of his duplex apartment at Muntaner House in Barcelona (1929). The Residencia Fundación del Amo (1929), designed by Spanish architects Rafael Bergamín and Luis Blanco-Soler, was another one of the first buildings to introduce Breuer's furniture in the Iberian country (Ocón Fernández 2004: 11).

The success of Breuer's tubular-steel furniture, not only in Spain, but elsewhere, became a reliable source of income for him, strong enough to sponsor a sabbatical period he would enjoy in Spain from November 1931 to March 1932 (MB CSU1 1931).<sup>8</sup> By mid December 1931, Breuer was complaining about Thonet's delays on payments: 'I would have paid this back and also the borrowed Rm. 50, if Thonet hadn't delayed payment so much' (MB CBBA1 1931), and began to get worried about his financial situation by January 1932: 'Thonet is weighing heavily on me,' he lamented (MB CBBA2 1932).

Mies, however, took the marketing of his furniture in Spain very seriously. By taking advantage of the contacts he had made during the development of the Barcelona commission, and to protect himself from the controversy surrounding the originality of the bent-steel cantilevered chairs of Mart Stam and Breuer, he patented two of his chair designs in Spain in June 1929 (OEPM M1) and January 1931 (OEPM M2) (López Martín 2016: 205). These chairs of tubular steel, delivered in chrome, nickel or lacquered in color, were already synonymous of modernity (with their clarity, purity, and abstraction) and in some sense, synthesized the principles of his architecture and his goal to achieve the maximum effect with minimal means.

Josef and Anni Albers, who shared this creative principle with Mies throughout their lives, probably felt their 'hearts jumping with joy,' in a very much Behrens fashion, when experiencing the formal consistency of the different exhibits and the compelling transparency of the German Pavilion in Barcelona.<sup>9</sup> This could be a logical explanation as to why, years later, the Alberses still thought of Mies in connection with Spain. Even at the end of their careers, after a lifetime of sharing the same design principles, the Alberses used an expression in Spanish to congratulate Mies on his eightieth birthday: 'Viva Mies' (MR C1, b. 4, 1966).

## Champagne Waters

After Barcelona, the Alberses continued their trip up through the southern European border to meet Klee and Kandinsky on the Cantabrian Sea. Given the deep admiration both Josef and Anni felt towards the Swiss and Russian artists,<sup>10</sup> this encounter must have been important for them. One year earlier the Alberses had moved to one of the master's houses on what was then called Burgkühnauer Allee in Dessau, and had been neighbors of the Kandinskys and the Klees since then. However, there was still a considerable distance between the great and the junior masters at the Bauhaus.<sup>11</sup> Josef was already forty-one in 1929, but he was still quite young in terms of professional accomplishment. A Bauhaus master since 1925, he had recently received his first public recognition, when exhibiting his work in Basel together with that of Lyonel Feininger, Oskar Schlemmer, Kandinsky, and Klee (Bauhaus Dessau 1929: 5, 13, 15). Anni, who was still a student at the Bauhaus weaving workshop, had always recognized that she owed 'most of [her] insight into problems of form' to Klee (Welliver 1965: 41). Kandinsky and Albers became colleagues when Albers was appointed master of the Bauhaus, although Kandinsky was twenty-two years his elder. Indeed, the four of them were in very different moments of their careers in the summer of 1929. Klee would turn fifty the following December and was already regarded as one of Germany's most internationally respected artists. Kandinsky had reached the peak of his career. The promoter of new architecture and editor of *Cahiers d'Art*, Christian Zervos, would publish an article about him in November of the same year (Hoberg 2008: 300).

The summer of 1929 was not the only occasion in which the Alberses enjoyed the company of their Bauhaus colleagues outside the school. The following summer, in 1930, they would also travel to Ascona, in Switzerland, to spend some vacation days at Lago Maggiore with Walter Gropius, Herbert Bayer, and Xanti Schawinsky, among other Bauhäusler. There are numerous photographs bearing witness to the quality of that vacation time. Likewise, the photo collages, snapshots, and written correspondence of the summer of 1929 at the Côte Basque suggest how much it meant for the Bauhäusler to spend that time together.

The memories of Felix Klee, the son of Paul and Lilly Klee, who spent the first part of the Basque holiday with his parents, frame that time eloquently:

In the summer of 1929, coming from Spain, I arrived in the French Basque country. I got in touch with my parents and found a pension for the three of us, Villa Louisiana, in Bidart, near Biarritz. The temperate, rather rainy climate of the Basses-Pyrenees was just to my mother's liking. Since bathing in the pounding surf was not exactly to be recommended, we mostly spent our time on outings in the magnificent country on both the French and Spanish sides of the border. Later the Kandinskis [sic] came to the vicinity, and we had many jolly hours together (Klee 1962: 63).

Felix had been the first to reach Spain in July 1929. Those were the years in which he was starting his career, so it is very probable that he arrived before his parents for professional reasons. The correspondence sent by Lilly Klee to Felix reveals what the Klees were looking for: 'It would be good if you could look around in the coast for a suitable seaside resort [...] the main thing is a beautiful beach and a pleasant and charming hotel' (LK C2 1929).<sup>12</sup> The holidays in the Atlantic Pyrenees were organized even before Felix traveled to Spain, since in early July, Lilly assumed that 'perhaps [he] had already looked at the coast around Guéthary, Bidart, St. Jean de Luz or Hendaye' (LK C1 1929).

At that time, this region of the Côte Basque, and especially Biarritz, was very much appreciated by the upper class society as a resort. The invention of the 'Rivage Basque' goes back to Napoleón III, who built a palatial summer residence there for his wife, the Empress Eugénie, who was in love with the region (Narbaits-Fritsch 2008: 3). There is also a strong link to Russia in the area, since Empress Eugénie herself invited the Russian nobility to vacation there. And in 1892 a monumental Orthodox church dedicated to Saint Alexander Nevski was erected in front of her residence, the Hôtel du Palais. Indeed, one of the drawings Klee made during their holiday represents a church of this style and is entitled *Santa A. in B.* (1929: 170). Kandinsky's deep connection to his native country was reason enough for them to travel to the Côte Basque. The shimmering colors of the interior of Orthodox churches had not only 'taught [Kandinsky] to move within the picture, to live in the picture,' but also had 'saved him from the harmful side of folk art' (Kandinsky 1994 (1913): 368–69).

Paul Valéry, Pablo Picasso, Man Ray, and Sacha Guitry were some of the Paris-based contemporaries of the Bauhäusler that had previously vacationed there (Wada 2002). The fact that Kurt Tucholsky had recently published his travelogue *Ein Pyrenäenbuch* (1927), widely distributed in Germany, probably also had some weight on their choice for this destination. After all, Klee, Kandinsky and Josef Albers, like Tucholsky, represented the cultural elite of the Weimar Republic at the end of the 1920s.

In 1929, the political and commercial relationship between France and Spain was of mutual trust. The Franco-Spanish treaty of stock trading had been signed in Paris in July and many institutions were collaborating to attract tourism on both sides of the border. To broaden the aperture of the border in a social and cultural sense, the Union Franco Espagnole de Tourisme, Section Côte Basque had its first plenary meeting at the end of 1928 in Biarritz and its counterpart meeting in early 1929 in San Sebastian (CADSS, b. 3776, 1928–29).<sup>13</sup> To provide an intense commuting service to citizens, the private railway commonly known as the 'mole', linking Hendaye and San Sebastian, was designed in the beginning of the 1910s. These facts may give us an idea of the freedom with which the Bauhäusler moved around both sides of the border during the summer of 1929. The Klees expressed how much they enjoyed their excursions in many letters: 'Yesterday we went by tram to Hendaye-Plage [...] We visited the Kandinskys. Nice afternoon with them in spite of the rain [...] the ride with the tram along the seashore

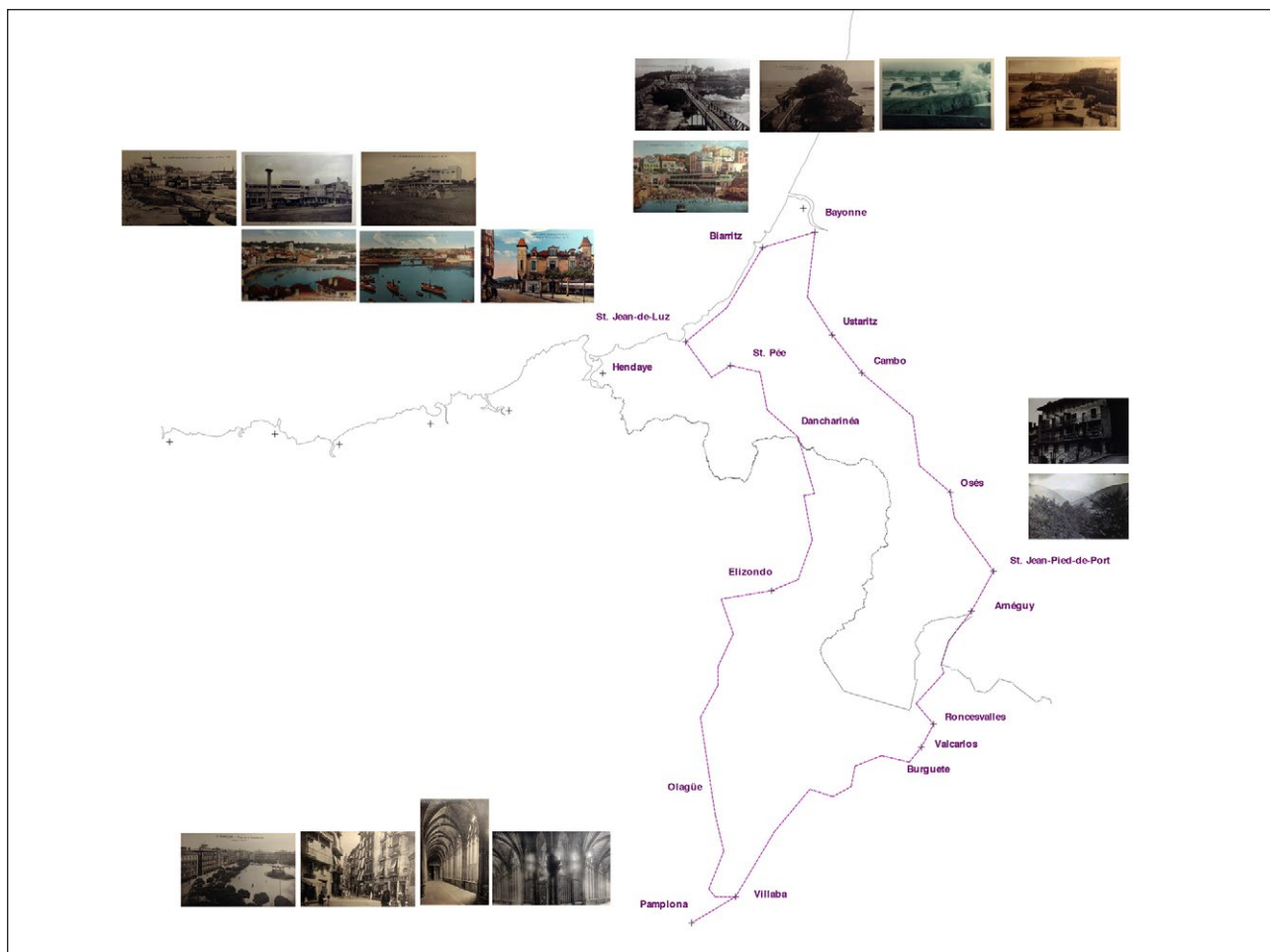
is magnificent!' (LK C3 1929). Although the trip did not have a professional goal for any of them – and they simply used their vacation time to store up impressions – the boundary between vacation and work, personal life and artistic production was utterly undefined for the Bauhaus travelers.

Paul and Lilly Klee arrived in Bidart on July 25, following an itinerary that began at the Bauhaus in Dessau and included Bern, Lyon, and Bordeaux.<sup>14</sup> The Kandinskys arrived just a few days later from Paris.<sup>15</sup> The Alberses were the last, arriving in August from Barcelona (JAAF, 1976.7.151).<sup>16</sup> Each of them relied on different means to record the impressions they gathered, whether from their formal work production or from leisurely moments. The 'Carnet des Excursions' Kandinsky kept among his papers records fifteen different itineraries to the two sides of the border, for one, two, or three days (all of them departing from Biarritz), and set up a framework in which to identify the different cities the Bauhäusler visited (VK MNAM–CCI, s. 1VK). Kandinsky collected many postcards and took snapshots to 'absorb the impressions avidly' (Kandinsky 1976: 209), while the Klees sent abundant correspondence from the Côte Basque referring to visits to specific cities. All these sources, along with Josef Albers's photo collages, allow us to now discover which landscapes, cities, and buildings they visited, to map them out, and to

connect the impressions of these painters – and trainers of architects – at the Bauhaus.

We know that both Kandinsky and Klee followed at least two of the itineraries offered in the 'Carnet des Excursions'. One of them was a 'Pyrenees-bus-tour', as the Klees referred to it (LK C6 1929), which went from Biarritz to Pamplona, covering 270 kilometers, visiting eleven other cities including one night in the capital of Navarre (SI 1929: 50–51).<sup>17</sup> The Klees wrote, 'Yesterday we were in St. Jean de Luz together with the Kandinskys [...] the Kandinskys had also taken the trip to Pamplona' (LK C4 1929). Kandinsky collected five postcards from Biarritz, all of them of different geographical features and man-made structures that connect the city to the sea; six postcards of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, including two of the bay, two of the recently opened Casino La Pergola by Mallet-Stevens, one of the old ramparts in Socoa, and one of the main square; four postcards of Pamplona, including two of the Gothic cloister of the Cathedral, one of a popular intersection of the old city between Mercaderes and Estafeta streets, and an aerial view of the Plaza del Castillo. During the same outing, Kandinsky also took one snapshot in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port and another of the landscape of the High Pyrenees (Fig. 14).<sup>18</sup>

Another trip was to 'the cities,' as the Klees wrote: 'Greetings from the Basque coast, where we have been for



**Figure 14:** Itinerary of a 'Pyrenees-bus-tour', from Biarritz to Pamplona, by Vassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee during the summer of 1929. Mapping by Laura Martínez de Guereñu.

four weeks for recreation. It is wonderful here. Spain is very close, where we have been already twice on tours. In the High Pyrénées and in the cities' (PK C1 1929). The itinerary, a round trip of over 210 kilometers, began in Biarritz and reached Loyola's Monastery (birthplace of Ignacio de Loyola, founder of the Jesuits), traveling through Labourd and Gipuzkoa, and passing by Hondarribia, San Sebastian, and Zarautz, among many other towns (SI 1929: 46–47).<sup>19</sup>

The many postcards and snapshots of the Côte Basque that Kandinsky brought with him are especially relevant for interpreting the later work of a painter such as him, who had boasted more than once about 'doing nothing at all on holiday,' and using that time just 'to look and absorb for later digestion' (Kandinsky 2010 (1934): 41). In fact, it is the matching of these postcards and snapshots to the mapping of the itinerary that will allow us now to frame his work in the following months at the Bauhaus, and to foresee the impact this had on his pedagogy.

As explained, Kandinsky spent part of his holiday comparing old and modern structures. Using the postcards he collected, he looked at such old buildings as the cloister of the Cathedral of Pamplona, the Ramparts of Hendaye-Plage, and even those of Socoa, and the modern ones of the Casino La Pergola in Saint-Jean-de-Luz and the Passerelle Eiffel of Biarritz – and even the huts on the beach, of which he took many snapshots (VK P 1929: 1297). Beyond the structural diagrams Kandinsky drew to compare the

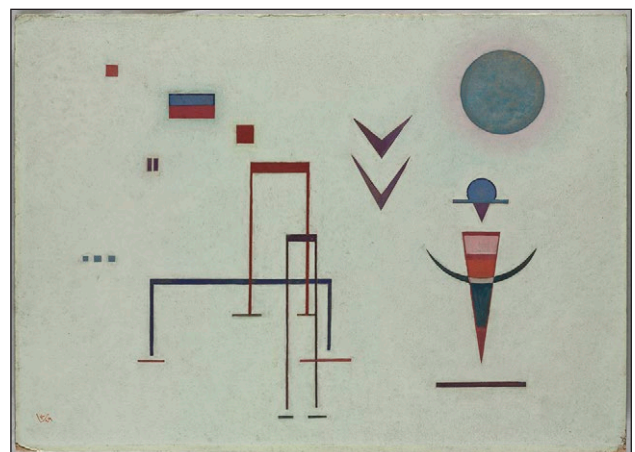


**Figure 15:** Vasily Kandinsky on the Beach in Hendaye, 1929. © Centre Pompidou – Musée national d'art moderne – Bibliothèque Kandinsky – Nina Kandinsky (895).

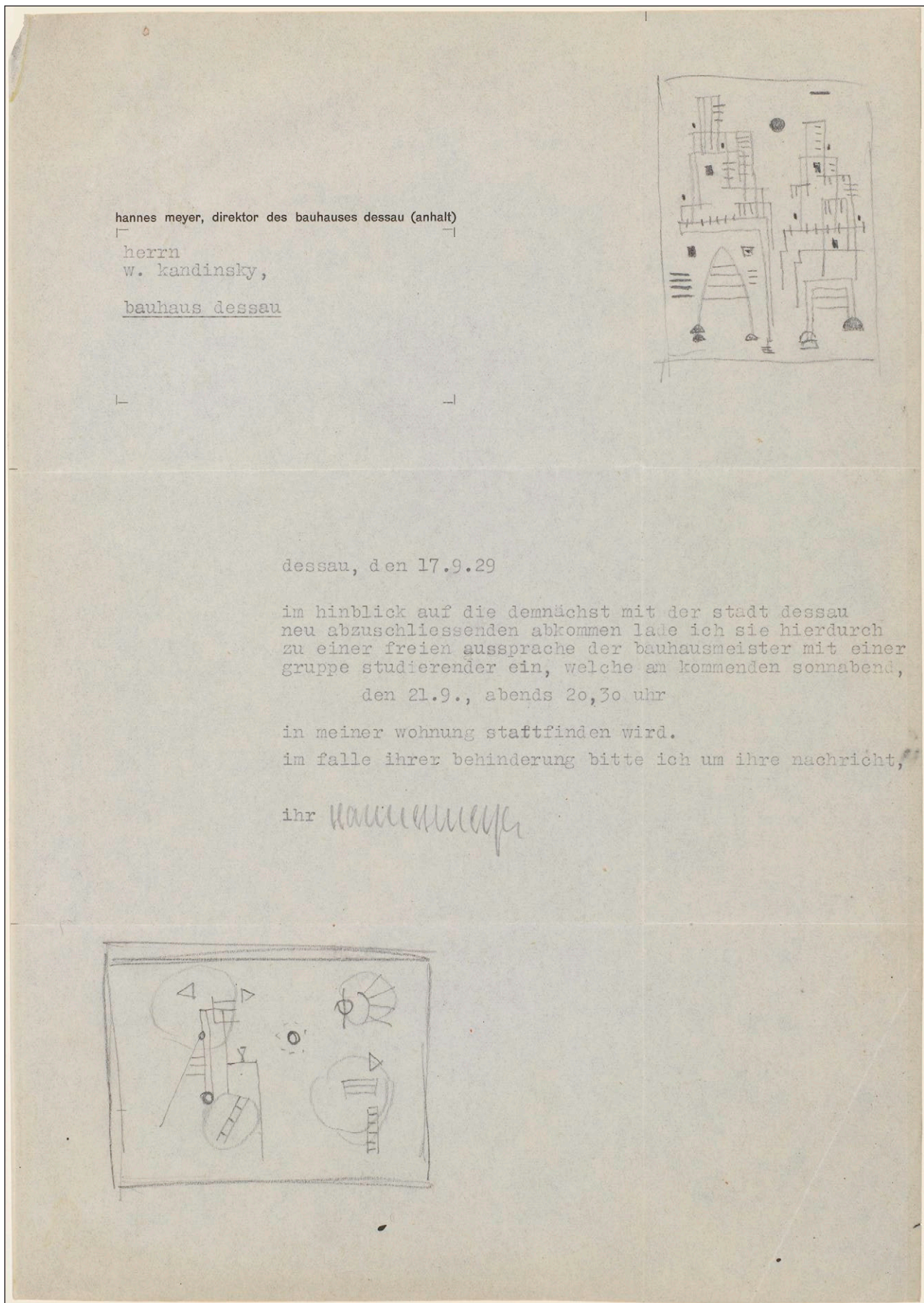
supporting behavior of traditional walls and arches with modern porticos, a strong resemblance can be noticed between his own snapshots on the beach and several other paintings he created later. The photograph of himself in the Hendaye beach, for example, is similar to the oil painting *Jocular Sounds* (December 1929) (Figs. 15, 16).

In regard to transfers between drawings and paintings, a singular incident that happened shortly after Kandinsky's return to the Bauhaus should be underlined: his reaction to a letter that invited him to share his current work at an informal gathering with other Bauhäusler. On September 17, 1929, Hannes Meyer called the masters of the school to attend a meeting at his place, to be held the following Saturday evening, and asked them 'for a free expression of their work, with a group of students' (VK C1 1929: 1). Kandinsky, who one week before, on his return from the summer holidays, had expressed how he had been 'deluged by life and events in Dessau' and shared how much he was looking forward to 'return[ing] immediately to [his] painting' (Kandinsky 2006 (1929): 174), sketched two drawings on the front and five more on the reverse of Meyer's letter (Figs. 17, 18). These drawings were the means with which Kandinsky shared the experience of his trip to the Côte Basque – and the way he had absorbed the particularities of its architecture – with his Bauhaus colleagues and students. These sketches from his summer travels may also have provided the guidelines for his work during the entire Fall semester up to Christmas, as revealed by the translation of these drawings into the gouache *Four Spots*, the oil *Gentle Hint*, and the previously mentioned watercolor *Scarcely Colored Structure* (Fig. 3).

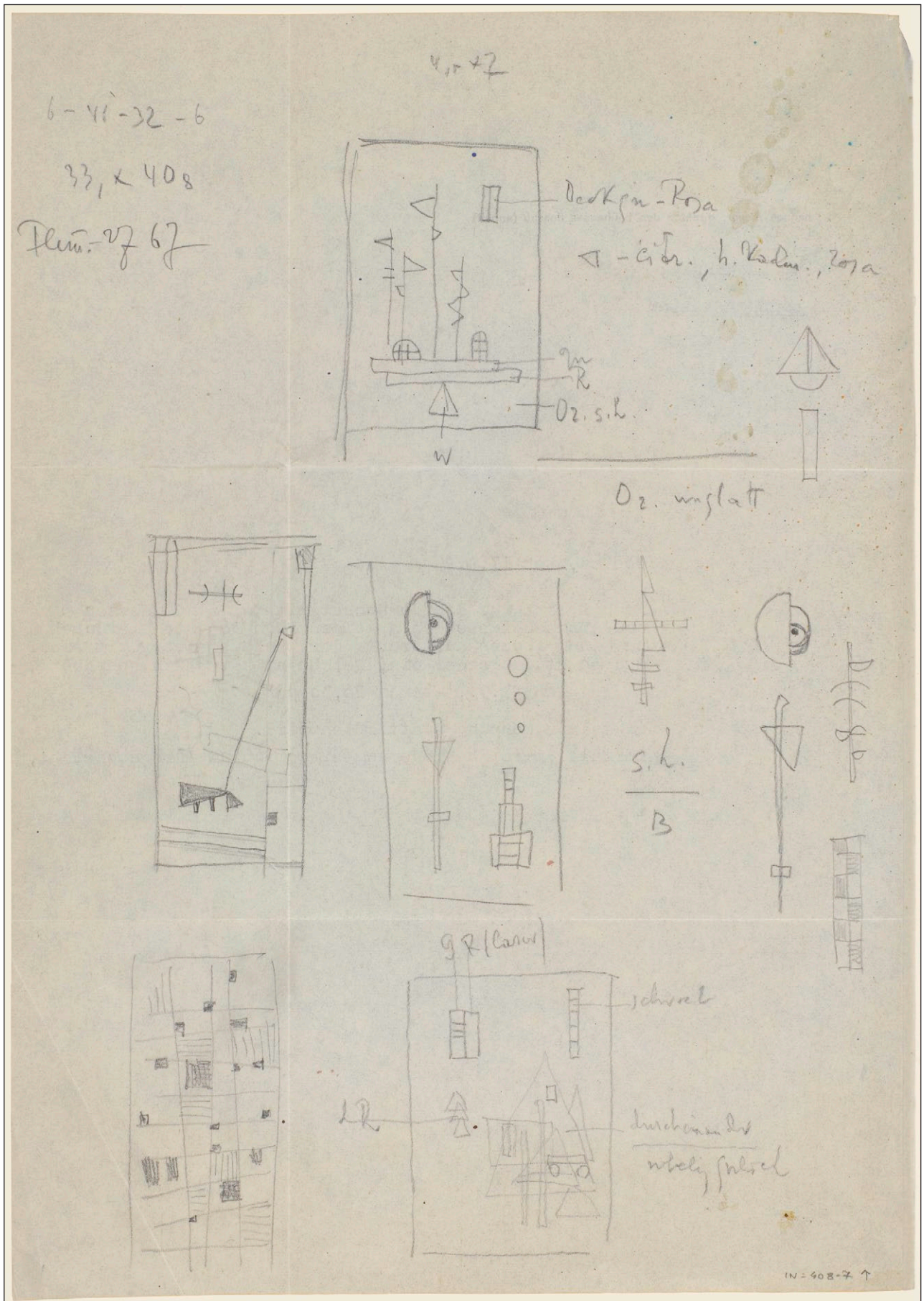
During this time, Kandinsky also reflected on the relation between inspiration and the irrational on one hand, and reason and reflection on the other (Kandinsky 1929: 735). It is important to note that Meyer, then director of the Bauhaus (as well as Mies later) did not consider Kandinsky's work scientific, but just a result of intuition



**Figure 16:** Vasily Kandinsky, *Jocular Sounds*, 1929. Oil on composition board, 34.9 x 48.9 cm; frame: 36.3 x 50.5 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Association Fund and Purchase in memory of Eda K. Loeb, BR56.54 © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College.



**Figure 17:** Vassily Kandinsky, *Without Title*. VK MNAM-CCI, Box VK11, Hannes Meyer, letter to Vassily Kandinsky September 17, 1929 (Front page). Typed paper on September 17, 1929. Crayon graphite, paper, 29.7 × 21 cm. Paris, Centre Pompidou – Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle, AM81-65-394. Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Philippe Migéat.



**Figure 18:** Vassily Kandinsky, *Without Title*. VK MNAM-CCI, Box VK11, Hannes Meyer, letter to Vassily Kandinsky September 17, 1929 (Back). Typed paper on September 17, 1929. Crayon graphite, paper, 29.7 × 21 cm. Paris, Centre Pompidou – Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle, AM81-65-394 Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Philippe Migéat.

(Droste 2014: 12). This fact discredited Kandinsky's work at the Bauhaus, especially during Meyer's directorship, when architecture and design were taught in the most objective way. Kandinsky's tectonic explorations and thorough comparative research of old and new structures during his Basque holiday ought to be understood in the context of a school with an increasing rationalist pedagogy.

Kandinsky also used activities from the different excursions for other formal explorations, such as the bullfight he attended in San Sebastian in which he took five snapshots, directing all the frames towards the center of the bullring (VK P 1929: nos. 1308, 1309, 1310, 1311, 1312). In *Sketchbook Number 33*, which he was using at the time, a pencil sketch of a centripetal form is closely related to the way Kandinsky captured the bullfight.<sup>20</sup> Josef Albers, who also went to a bullfight in the same city, although on a different day, showed interest in the circular geometry of the bullring and the activity in and around the bullfight. Albers created a photo collage out of six different images that included partial views of the arena, the terraces, and the parking lot outside, which shows his lifetime obsession with narrating spatial continuity and achieving transparency (JAAF, 1976.7.14). This was also a compelling way to relate the interior and the exterior of public spaces, which Albers continued to explore years later, as *Aquarium* (1934) or *Cosmic* (1934) reveal.

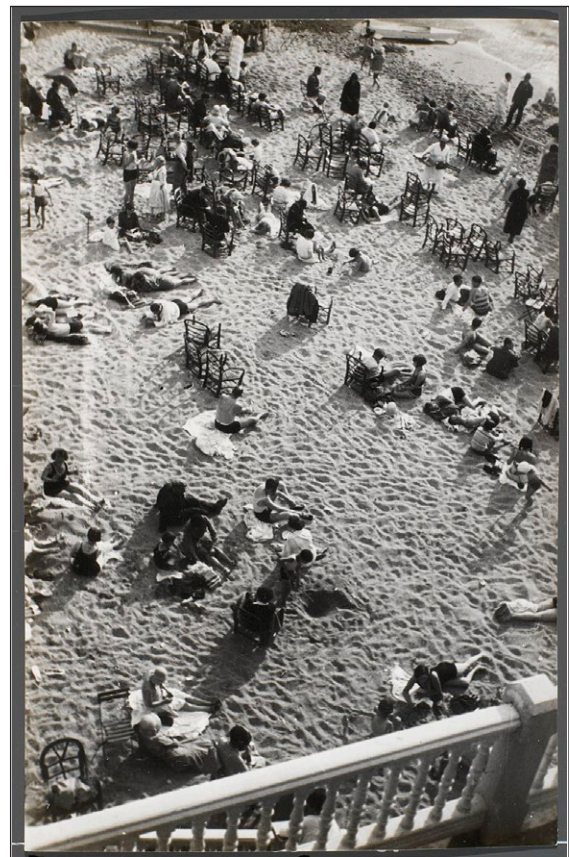


**Figure 19:** Josef Albers, *Waves in the Sun, Biarritz III*, 1929. Gelatin silver print; image: 22.2 × 16.5 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Gift of Josef Albers, BR49.9. © The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Otherwise, the Alberses spent most of their time at the beach, where Josef could indulge in his visual explorations, trying to find comparable textures in different elements of matter and scales. This is clearly seen in *Waves in the Sun, Biarritz III* (1929) (Fig. 19), a photograph of a wave seen when it breaks, and *Small Beach, Biarritz* (1929) (Fig. 20), taken from an elevated point of view, even higher than the wood banister of the promenade of the beach in the old harbor of Biarritz.

Albers showed his deep interest in tectonics and his fascination for discovering the multiple spatial readings of a single form during his vacation on the Franco-Spanish border. Indeed, Albers's explorations with photography informed a change of attitude in the way he developed his glass works from then on. After the trip, he began a new type of gray-surfaced glass painting, leaving aside the personal 'thermometer style' he had been developing since 1925 (Martínez de Guereñu 2014).

In line with the portraits Albers used to make at the Bauhaus, in which he captured not only the different facets of personalities but also the movement and passage of time, he composed a collage with several images of Klee taken on an afternoon the three couples spent together in Guéthary near Biarritz (JAAF, 1976.7.5).<sup>21</sup> The background of other snapshots from the same day, also capturing Klee, show the predominantly regionalist character of the local



**Figure 20:** Josef Albers, *Small Beach, Biarritz*, 1929. Gelatin silver print; image: 23.5 × 15.2 cm. Courtesy of The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany (1976.7.206). © The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



built environment and the strong cultural identity of the area. As this image of a tanned and relaxed Klee shows, this trip had a completely different character than the previous one the Swiss painter had taken on his own, the same year, to explore the culture of Egypt. The trip to the Côte Basque was a family vacation with his wife and son to rest and to enjoy its mild climate (LK C5 1929).

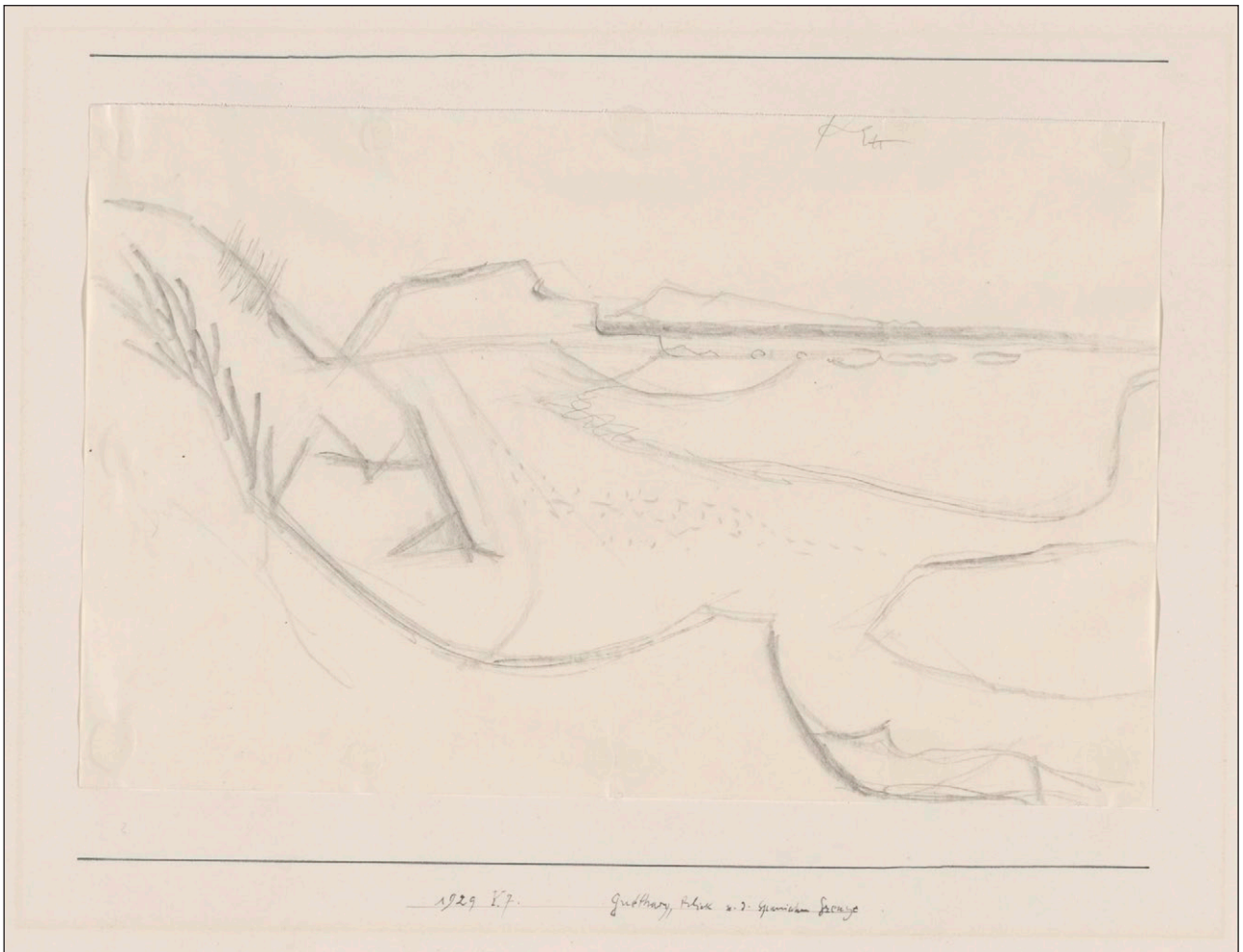
While on vacation, the pace of production was slow, at least for a prolific painter such as Klee, who, in 1929 alone, produced 347 works. But still, he created a considerable amount of drawings of the landscapes around, such as *Guéthary, Looking Towards the Spanish Border* (1929, no. 247 Y7) (**Fig. 21**), *Guéthary, Beach at Low Tide* (1929, no. 248 Y8), *In the Garden of Villa Louisiana* (1929, no. 246 Y6), *Fir Trees on Rocks* (1929, no. 245 Y5), or *Movements in Locks* (1929, no. 289). Also, beyond representing the architecture and the natural and built environment of that particular region, Klee created many other paintings that expressed what was particular of those local traditions, such as the giant and oversized head figures, as in *Mask: Cheeky* (1929, no. 255), *Mask for Falstaff* (1929, no. 22), or features of the local people, as in *The Laden One* (1929, no. 233).

The Alberses, who sent a farewell message to the Kandinskys from Biarritz to Hendaye-Plage in the form of

a postcard, were the first to leave for Paris, and then to Dessau, on August 27.<sup>22</sup> The Kandinskys also left for Paris on September 1 and arrived in Dessau on September 8, for 'no more idleness or vegetating!'<sup>23</sup> The Klees left Bidart on September 2, and arrived also on September 8. Already *en route* back to Dessau, Paul Klee wrote a postcard to Rudolf Probst that said: 'In a week the whole dream is over and I will be able to think reasonably again. In the moment I cannot think very sharply because everything is mixed with the Champagne Waters of the Sea of Biscay' (PK C2 1929).

The 'Champagne Waters' Klee mentioned was perhaps an allusion not only to their vacation mood, but also to the good political atmosphere and sparkling cultural flow in the air on the Franco-Spanish border during the summer of 1929. Over the following years, Probst, who was running the Galerie Neue Kunst Fides in Dresden, bought 63 of Klee's works from 1929. Given the intimate exchange Klee and Probst shared of the recreational and carefree nature of the Côte Basque experience, it is likely that Probst acquired many works related to the 1929 summer holiday.

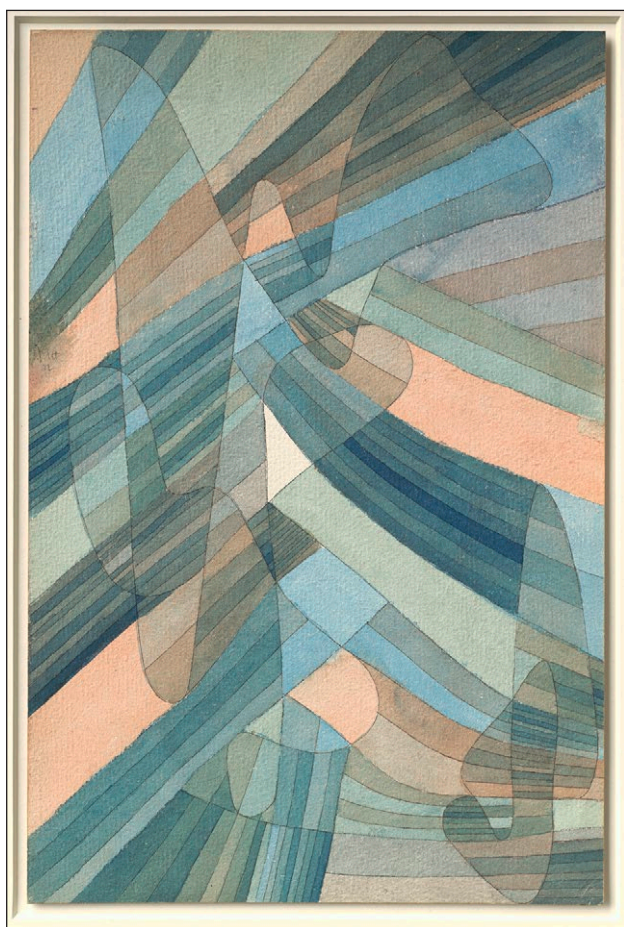
Among these lists of works from 1929, *Polyphonic Currents* (1929, no. 238 X8) (**Fig. 22**) summarizes visually the different experiences and movements of the



**Figure 21:** Paul Klee *Guéthary, Looking Towards the Spanish Border*, 1929, 247. Pencil on paper on cardboard, 21 × 32.8 cm. Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Schenkung. Livia Klee.

Bauhäusler during that summer: the visits to different cities on the French and the Spanish sides, the explorations of the new and the old in the built and natural environments, the sweet and long hours on the beach, the hikes to the High-Pyrenees, and the thorough appropriation of the surrounding landscape. Klee might have also perceived the multiple cultural resonances coinciding in a geographical site and moving across the two sides of the French-Spanish border, which would explain the transparency and overlapping richness of the different layers and colors in this work.

*Polyphonic Currents* very soon changed hands from Probst to Alfred Flechtheim, and then to Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler and finally to Karl Nierendorf.<sup>24</sup> In 1939, coincidentally, Mies who had already immigrated to America, would buy this particular work in New York and would bring it with him to Chicago. As is well known, Klee was Mies's favourite painter (Barnett 2001) and during his life the latter collected a total of 25 works by Klee (ZPK database). *Polyphonic Currents*, which so successfully represents the 'Champagne Waters' of the summer of 1929, remained in Mies's possession all his life. Thus, one can assert that this particular watercolor became a keepsake for Mies; a landscape of the impressions and the creative exchanges that took place on the Bauhäusler's journey along the Franco-Spanish border. With the same



**Figure 22:** Paul Klee, *Polyphonic Currents*, 1929, 238 (X 8). Watercolour and pen on paper on cardboard, 43.9 × 28.9 cm. Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

efficiency, this work remains as a vivid representation of the political atmosphere on the Spanish side before the modernist project was halted.<sup>25</sup>

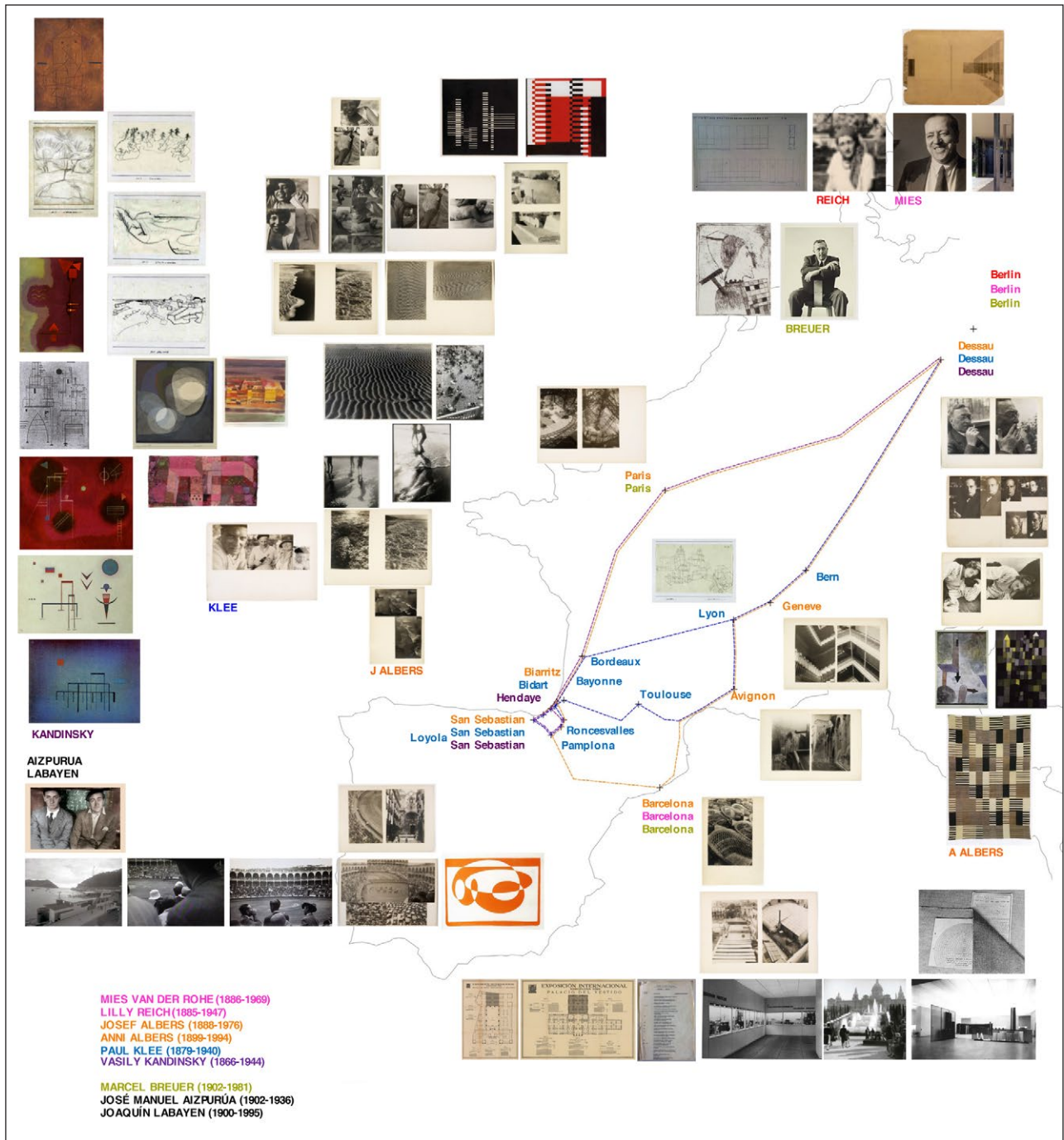
### Cultural Transfers

In 1929, design was able to freely travel throughout Europe. The innovative products arriving from the German Bauhaus in the form of interiors, objects, textiles, and furniture, coexisted with the Beaux-Arts cloaks of the palaces at the Barcelona International Fair. The chrome and nickel-plated tubular-steel German furniture was being marketed in Spain with ease. The extensive time – far longer than a month – over which the Bauhäusler vacationed on the Basque Country, considered together with the work they produced during and after that summer, reveals how permeable and culturally stimulating the southern border between France and Spain was before German and Spanish fascism came into power (Fig. 23).

During the summer of 1929 creative forces came together on the geographical border of the southwestern Europe, which, in fact, was a clearly physical one, with the Pyrenees crossing it and two seas, the Mediterranean and the Cantabrian, on each side. Barcelona, with its International Exhibition, received many travelers of the European intellectual elite, not only Josef and Anni Albers, but also Paul Valéry, among others (AMCB, box 47087, August 22, 1929). San Sebastian, with its institutional touristic collaboration with its counterparts in the French Basque Country, its active bullfighting program, and the diverse means of transportation already available connecting it to France, was almost a must-see for anybody vacationing in the 'Rivage Basque'.

Two works built in 1929 – Mies's Barcelona Pavilion and Labayen and Aizpúrua's Nautical Club House in San Sebastian – were selected to be part of the *Modern Architecture: International Style* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Hitchcock and Johnson 1995 (1932): 174, 186–88). These, being the only architectural works on display built on Spanish ground, would show in America how modernism had reached the geographical border between France and Spain and would also recall the stimulating atmosphere and cultural openness the Bauhäusler might have breathed there in 1929. However, this transparency and north-south accessibility did not last very long. Already by December 1931, and while traveling through Spain, Breuer himself had a premonition of the things to come when he wrote to Ise Gropius: 'I assume that Moscow is finished and that you are in Arosa, thoroughly enjoying the last glow of the destruction of the Western world' (MB CBBA1 1931). And even a few months later, in March 1932, he would say: 'our godfather Hindenburg has almost been reelected. Sad. And if Russia also fails, where shall I turn then? A splendid time, "our time," an interesting time, a dreadful time! Am I to design more plans for the next nine years without being able to ever realize them?' (MB CBBA3 1932).

Breuer's foreboding was not misguided. Four years later, in July 1936, the outbreak of Spanish Civil War provoked the closing of the Franco-Spanish border, which lasted no less than twelve years. The Second World War – and



**Figure 23:** Map of the southern itineraries and stays of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Lilly Reich, Marcel Breuer, Josef Albers, Anni Albers, Vassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee. Mapping by Laura Martínez de Guereñu.

the later blockade promoted by the Allies against General Francisco Franco’s government in Spain — left the southern country in a cultural, economical, and social isolation that would take decades to overcome. The fact that the Bauhaus travelers had such an enjoyable and productive time on an animated Franco-Spanish border a few years earlier, when this was still a free region of Europe, and the fact that products designed at the Bauhaus reached Spain with ease, even furnishing many local buildings, lead us to believe that cultural transfers between Germany and Spain went full circle.

That year, 1929, was a fruitful one in the history of modernism: a moment when industry was a defining

force of the age. Diverse movements linked the Bauhaus to this first geographical and later political border, and the Bauhäusler were able to move freely about, exporting their principles of modern architecture and design, while absorbing the particularities of the Spanish landscape and culture. These trips are all the more significant because they occurred at such a delicate time in European history, and they have never received enough attention. Many more features from the southern side of the Pyrenees have had an impact on German architectural culture — and internationally, due to the American immigration of many Bauhäusler — than have historically been noted.

Back in Germany, the six Bauhäusler continued teaching for almost four more academic years, until the closing of the Bauhaus at the beginning of the summer of 1933. The Alberses, who had visited both the Mediterranean and the Cantabrian edges of the Franco-Spanish border for professional and vacation purposes, were lucky enough to be able to immigrate to the United States as quickly as November 1933 to join the faculty of Black Mountain College. The Alberses brought with them the memories of the summer of 1929, and even relied on some of the features they absorbed in Spain to educate generations of architects and artists on the other side of the Atlantic.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Anni Albers took over as head of the weaving workshop when Gunta Stölzl left in 1931; Lilly Reich would teach at the Bauhaus during the directorship of Mies starting in 1932. See Droste (1996: 55).
- <sup>2</sup> The word Bauhäusler, which is used to refer to Bauhaus people, is not pluralized as in English with an s, but as in its original German form: Bauhäusler.
- <sup>3</sup> Walter Gropius spent time in Spain before founding the Bauhaus (from September 1907 to April 1908), and he traveled again to Madrid, Bilbao, and San Sebastian in November 1930, to give a lecture entitled 'Funktionelle Baukunst,' which he published in Spanish in (Gropius 1931). Joaquín Medina Warmburg has written extensively on this subject (see, for example, Medina Warmburg 2010: 133–79). Reginald Isaacs explains that during Gropius's early experiences, before he even began working at Peter Behrens' office, 'Walter's interests in Spain were unlimited', and 'he had the boundless energy to follow them: travel, social life with many attractive diversions, the monumental architecture, and the old masters' (Isaacs 1991: 20–21). Ernst Neufert also spent a full year in Spain (from October 1920 to December 1921) together with Paul Linder and Kurt Loewengarth, while he was a student at the Bauhaus Weimar. Some of the many drawings and sketches Neufert made in Spain can be found in Neufert (1970).
- <sup>4</sup> The comprehensive series of photographs kept at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation in Bethany (Connecticut) were found and catalogued in 1976, shortly after Josef Albers's death.
- <sup>5</sup> There is no way to establish whether Albers photographed this building or not. The photographic archive consulted at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation is reliable and well kept, but the records might have been lost (or eliminated by the artist) before the artist's death in 1976.
- <sup>6</sup> The eight palaces where the fifteen German interiors were distributed are: Electricity-Motive Force and Chemical Industries (separated on two sides of the same palace) [Maschinenpalast], Projections [Projectionspalast], Communications and Transport [Verkehrspalast], Textiles [Textilpalast], Decorative and Industrial Arts [Gewerbepalast], Agriculture [Landwirtschaftspalast] (separated on four different spaces of the same palace), Graphic Arts [Buchgewerbepalast] and Southern Palace [Konstruktionpalast]. See IABCN (1929).
- <sup>7</sup> A sample of this material can be found at the Architecture & Design Department at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA A&D). The Bauhaus-Archiv in Berlin also has a piece of this fabric for consultation.
- <sup>8</sup> At the end of September 1931 Breuer was already sharing his plans to spend a sabbatical period in Spain: 'I have bought a Ford and I have the intention of spending four weeks abroad, probably until the spring, since in Germany, and mostly in Berlin, an architect does not have much to find. I prefer to be in Spain doing nothing than to be in Berlin. That is cheaper and more beautiful'. (Translation from German by Muriel de Gracia Wittenberg.)
- <sup>9</sup> Mies first heard the famous and so often repeated phrase from Peter Behrens. Franz Schulze explains how in a recorded exchange with architecture students in 1960, Mies was asked about the origin of his phrase 'less is more', to which he replied: 'I said it . . . I think I said it first to Philip [Johnson]. Oh, I think where I heard it first was from Peter Behrens. Yes. You know it is not original, but I like it very much' (Schulze and Windhorst 2012: 205).
- <sup>10</sup> Retrospectively, Anni Albers explains that the Bauhaus was like a 'creative vacuum' and that they were all 'full of admiration for Klee, Kandinsky [...] who were experimenting on their own. They were finding their way [...] They were very much on the fringe of everything' (Welliver 1965: 42).
- <sup>11</sup> Josef Albers said that Kandinsky and he had a "sympathetic" relationship. Klee was a man on his own. One couldn't easily speak with him. He was a very nice man' (Fesci 1968a). Anni Albers explained how 'the people we think of as the great masters – Klee and Kandinsky – they weren't available for questions. They were the great silent ones who talked among themselves maybe, but never to small little students like me' (Fesci 1968b). The postcard the Alberses sent that summer to the Kandinskys to say goodbye, from Biarritz to Hendaye, is the first of what would become an intense exchange of correspondence over more than a decade (1929–40). The underlying tone of those letters would indicate a 'deep and warm friendship' (Weber and Boissel 2010: 8). This trip marks the beginning of that exchange and that friendship.
- <sup>12</sup> The correspondence Felix Klee sent to Lilly Klee from Spain to the Bauhaus has not been disclosed yet.
- <sup>13</sup> The main questions the institutions involved wanted to address were the creation of a 'Laisser-Passer' – a private tourist passport, of 24- or 48-hour duration, allowing access across both sides of the border; the simplification of the requirements demanded by the surveillance and customs services; the creation of reciprocal advertising so that festivities on both sides would not coincide; and the creation of a campaign for promoting the picturesque landscapes and artistic beauties of the region. The idea was to create a 'Union des Pyrénées Franco-Espagnole' that would be

divided in three sections: Côte Basque, Bearn Aragon, Catalogne.

- <sup>14</sup> The Klees took this inbound route by train: Dessau (July 19), Bern (July 20–23), Lyon (July 23–24), Bordeaux (July 24–25) and Bayonne-Guéthary-Bidart (July 25–September 2). See Sakai and Nagato (2002). Stefan Frey reconstructed the itinerary of Paul Klee's trip during the summer of 1929. I am grateful to the ZPK for sharing it with me.
- <sup>15</sup> Every Kandinsky biography — as well as Nina Kandinsky's *Kandinsky und ich* — states that the Kandinskys visited the artist James Ensor in Ostend (Belgium) before traveling to the South of France during the summer of 1929 (Bashkoff, Derouet, Hoberg 2008: 301). However, a letter exchange between Kandinsky and Galka E. Scheyer leads one to think that it was a separate trip they made in May 1929. 'My wife and I were very recently in Belgium (a birthday gift to my wife), and experienced many beautiful, interesting, and exciting things there [...] Ghent, Bruges, Ostend, and Brussels.' See Wünsche (2006: 165). Another letter Kandinsky sent to Christian Zervos on July 1, 1929, shows Kandinsky's intention to pass through Paris twice (at the end of July and the beginning of September 1929) to meet M. Léonce Rosenberg to talk about a future exhibition. See Derouet (1992: 44).
- <sup>16</sup> Albers wrote 'Barcelona Ausstellung, VIII, 29' in one of the two photo collages he put together after the summer 1929 trip.
- <sup>17</sup> The last itinerary of the 'Carnet des Excursions en Côte Basque' reads, '*Biarritz/ Pampelune* (from Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Sare, Dancharinea, Col de Maya, Elizondo, Col de Velata, Olzague, Retour par Burguete, Roncevaux, Arneguy, Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port) 270 kms. 2 days.'
- <sup>18</sup> Sadao Wada explains, from another conversation with Felix Klee, that they visited Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, sacred to pilgrims, after going through the Roland Pass. See Wada (1980).
- <sup>19</sup> Sadao Wada explains, from a conversation with Felix Klee, that they visited Loyola. The twelfth itinerary of the 'Carnet des Excursions en Côte Basque' reads, '*Biarritz/ Monastère de Loyola* (from St-Sébastien, Fontarabie, la Corniche Espagnole, Le Col de Régis, Tolosa) 210 kms.'
- <sup>20</sup> Vassily Kandinsky. *Sketchbook number 33*, page 8. Pencil sketch for an unidentified work. Inscribed l.r.: 'Aq.' And on reverse with mathematical calculations. Reproduced in Barnett (ed.) (2007: 277).
- <sup>21</sup> JAAF, *Josef Albers, Klee, Guethary (Biarritz)*, photo collage. Inscription in pencil by Albers: 'Klee, Guethary (Biarritz)/ VIII. 1929/ + from Klee.'
- <sup>22</sup> 'Dear Kandinskys. Now we shall have to save the exchange of holiday experiences for Dessau. During the last few days the sun kept us at the beach. Tomorrow morning we leave for Paris and then home. We wish you all the best for the rest of your holiday' (Weber and Boissel (eds.) 2010: 18–19).
- <sup>23</sup> Postcard from Kandinsky to Christian Zervos, Hendaye-Plage, August 24, 1929. In Derouet (ed.) (1992: 46);

Kandinsky, letter to Galka Scheyer, 10 September 1929 (Wünsche (ed.) 2006: 174–175).

- <sup>24</sup> Provenance work of the Zentrum Paul Klee: Rudolf Probst (Galerie Neue Kunst Fides; Das Kunsthhaus), Dresden/Mannheim (–1929); Alfred Flechtheim, Düsseldorf/Berlin/Paris/London (1929–); Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Paris (–1937); Karl Nierendorf, Köln/Berlin/New York (1937–1939); Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Berlin/Chicago (1939); Sammlung Mies van der Rohe, Berlin; Galerie Beyeler; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.
- <sup>25</sup> Mies used to say that Klee's works were his only life insurance. Only three of these paintings form part of the Mies van der Rohe collection today: *Encircled* (1932, 67), *Mobile to Rigid* (1932, 288), *Quarrel Duet* (1938, 148) (ZPK, Database).

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### Author information

Laura Martínez de Guereñu is an Assistant Professor at IE School of Architecture and Design, IE University, Madrid-Segovia. She studies the cultural transfers and creative exchanges between the northern and southern Europe as well as North America, through the mobility of products, the construction of works, and the travels and migrations of the architects and artists of the twentieth century. Her research has been supported by the BBVA Foundation, the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, Fundación Rafael del Pino and Harvard University-RCC, among other institutions. She holds a Master in Design Studies with distinction from Harvard University, where she was also a Visiting Fellow, and a PhD and a Professional Degree in Architecture with thesis award of excellence from University of Navarra. She has published extensively about architects, artists and thinkers of modern tradition in scientific journals and magazines, as well as in books. She is the editor of *Josef Albers. An Anthology (1924-1978)* (Fundación Juan March, 2014) and *Rafael Moneo. Remarks on 21 Works* (The Monacelli Press/Gustavo Gili, 2010).

### Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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