

# original bauhaus

**the centenary exhibition**  
**6 sep 2019 – 27 jan 2020**  
at the berlinische galerie  
press conference 4 Sep, 11 am  
opening 5 Sep, 7 pm

The Bauhaus existed for only 14 years in Germany, but for 100 years its ideas have flourished and its products have been relaunched, imitated and further developed. Marking the centenary of the Bauhaus, the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung presents the exhibition *original bauhaus* at the Berlinische Galerie featuring more than 1,000 famous, familiar and forgotten Bauhaus originals and recounting the history behind the objects. *original bauhaus* showcases works of art and design from the holdings of the Bauhaus-Archiv, exceptional loans from international collections and artistic positions which take a new look at the Bauhaus legacy.

On the basis of 14 key objects, the exhibition presents 14 case histories: How did the woman sitting on the tubular steel chair become the most famous anonymous figure of the Bauhaus? Does the Haus Am Horn in Weimar have a secret twin? Why have Marianne Brandt's tea infusers which were created as prototypes for industrial production always remained one-of-a-kind pieces? *original bauhaus* sheds light on how unique works and series, remakes and originals are inseparably linked in the history of the Bauhaus. The fact is that Bauhaus artists did not see art and technology as opposed to one another. Instead, they used technical innovations to create exceptional works of art, and they took serial production into account from the moment they began drafting their designs. Today we look back at almost 100 years of responses to the Bauhaus, compared to only 14 years of Bauhaus production. Reproductions, re-editions and remakes have made the Bauhaus the 20th century's most influential school of architecture, design and art.

Interactive stations allow visitors to experience the tactile qualities of Bauhaus objects. In cooperation with the Bauhaus Agents programme, the exhibition invites visitors to try exercises from the famous Bauhaus preliminary course. International experts from the fields of dance, paper art, photography, architecture and Breathology will be offering preliminary course workshops every Sunday.

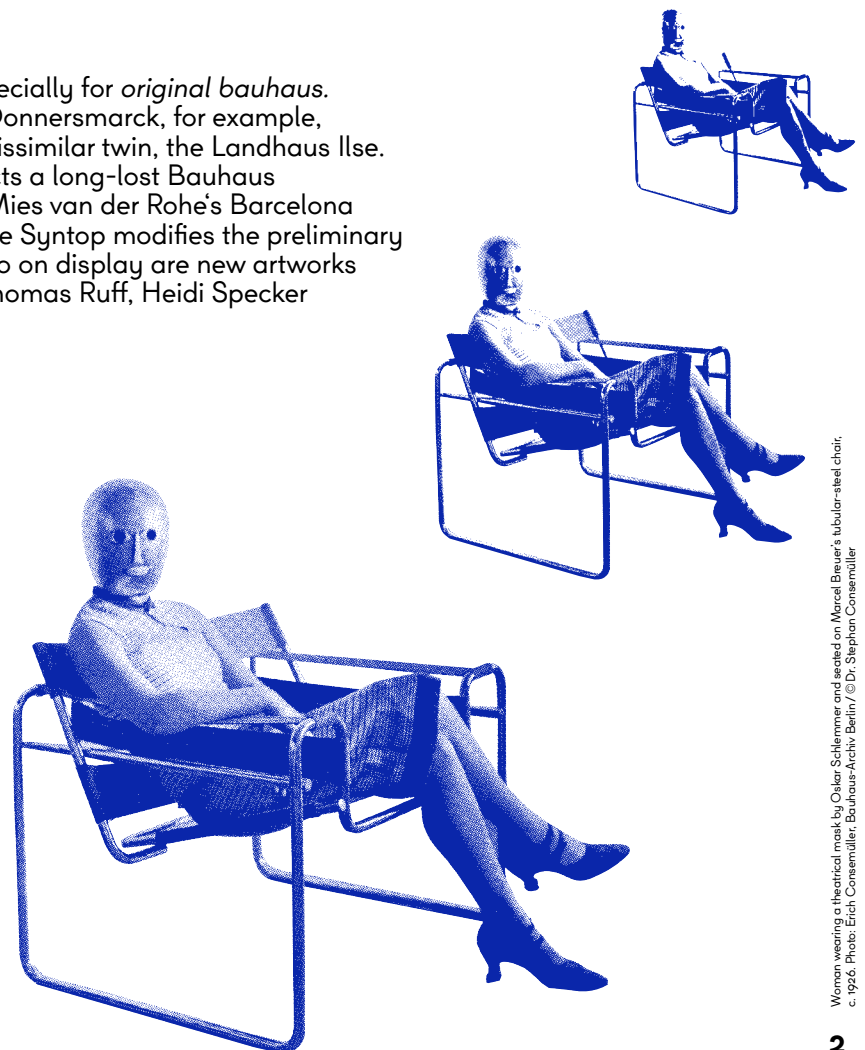
**Curator:** Dr. Nina Wiedemeyer, Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung

## 1,000 Bauhaus originals

In an exhibition venue spanning 1,200 square metres, *original bauhaus* presents over 1,000 Bauhaus originals owned by the Bauhaus-Archiv together with special loans from international collections. These include seven tea infusers by Marianne Brandt shown together for the first time, Oskar Schlemmer's sketches for the »Triadic Ballet«, photograms by László Moholy-Nagy and Lucia Moholy, the carpet »Thost« by Gertrud Arndt, Marcel Breuer's tubular steel chairs, as well as numerous smaller objects such as 250 fabric patterns created in the Bauhaus textile workshop, Walter Gropius's glass slides and index cards, and historical Bauhaus photo postcards. These are supplemented by photo montages by Hanna Höch and her address book from the collection at the Berlinische Galerie, photograms by Man Ray and El Lissitzky and a copy of Oskar Schlemmer's »Bauhaus Stairway«, which his brother Casca Schlemmer painted in the 1950s.

## 12 new artworks

Twelve new artworks were created especially for *original bauhaus*. A video installation by Anna Henckel-Donnersmarck, for example, compares the Haus Am Horn with its dissimilar twin, the Landhaus Ilse. Juliane Laitzsch graphically reconstructs a long-lost Bauhaus carpet. Veronika Kellendorfer transfers Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion into glass. The artists' collective Syntop modifies the preliminary course exercises for the digital age. Also on display are new artworks by Thomas Demand, Ursula Mayer, Thomas Ruff, Heidi Specker and Tobias Zielony, among others.



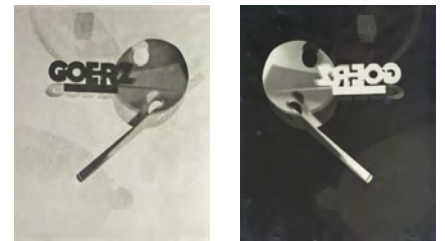
Woman wearing a theatrical mask by Oskar Schlemmer and seated on Marcel Breuer's tubular-steel chair, c. 1926. Photo: Erich Consemüller, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin / © Dr. Stephan Consemüller

## 14 case histories

Based on 14 key objects from the Bauhaus era, *original bauhaus* explores the relationship between production and reproduction, original and copy, one-of-a-kind and series throughout 100 years of Bauhaus history. The exhibition presents 14 case histories, including:

### Production – Reproduction

In 1922 László Moholy-Nagy published a short text entitled »Production – Reproduction«, in which he considered how reproduction techniques could be artistically put to use. Together with Lucia Moholy, he experimented with camera-less photography, projecting images directly onto photo paper. Moholy was not interested in the original as such, but rather the reproduction of his original in what he called photograms, created through repro-photography or reversed exposure. A number of other artists, such as Man Ray, Bertha Günther and Christian Schad were also experimenting with camera-less photography around the same time. Indeed, the process is as old as photography itself and is still used by artists today.



László Moholy-Nagy, poster design for Goerz, photogram in positive reversed exposure, 1925, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin

### Unity in Diversity

For the first time ever, seven tea infusers by Marianne Brandt are displayed together at *original bauhaus*. Although the teapots are considered Bauhaus classics today, they were not »master pieces«. At the Bauhaus, students often created works in their courses which consisted of a dual focus on artistry and artisanal training. Marianne Brandt, one of the first women enrolled in the metal workshop, manually wrought the metal to form. Originally produced as industrial prototypes, the tea infusers were to forever remain one-of-a-kinds.



Marianne Brandt, tea infuser (MT 49), 1924, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, Photo: Gunter Lepkowski © VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2019



Haus Am Horn, Weimar, architect: Georg Muche, photo: Atelier Hüttich-Oemler, 1923, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin

**Dissimilar Twins**

In the small town of Burbach in the Siegerland region there lies the twin sister of the model Haus Am Horn in Weimar, built in 1923 to showcase innovative Bauhaus architecture. The Landhaus Ilse, however, has little resemblance to her twin in Weimar. Although they share similar floorplans, the essential elements differ considerably. Was the architect of the Landhaus Ilse familiar with the Weimar model house? And if so, why then did he build a hybrid that combined the radical approaches of New Building with conventional, middle-class elements?

**Yours Modernly**

The Bauhaus was extremely adept at utilising modern media to its advantage. With a series of photo postcards of the new school building in Dessau, the Bauhaus crafted a media-effective image of itself. The photos taken by Lucia Moholy were among some of the most popular views of the Bauhaus in Dessau. Modern architecture was a common postcard motif at the time, and photos of the ADGB Trade Union School in Bernau designed by Hannes Meyer and Hans Wittwer were also made into postcards. Unlike conventional holiday greetings, the postcards of new architecture did not serve to celebrate past achievements, but rather mark the advent of a modern future.



Bauhaus building Dessau, campus postcard sent by a Bauhaus student to his mother, 1927, photo: Lucia Moholy, 1925 - 1926, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin © VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2019

### Becoming Famous

The sitting figure wearing a mask is possibly the most famous unknown woman of the Bauhaus. The photo by Erich Consemüller appears in countless publications and has even featured on a record cover. It exemplifies the symbiosis of the most important workshops and techniques at the Bauhaus: furniture, textile, metal, theatre and photography. In this cleverly staged photo featuring a fashionably dressed woman in a skirt and mask, the Bauhaus presented itself as young, clever and chic. As for the identity of the woman, *original bauhaus* suggests several possible candidates. A photo installation invites visitors to take pictures of themselves as the woman with the mask.



Woman wearing a theatre mask by Oskar Schlemmer and seated on Marcel Breuer's tubular-steel chair, c. 1926. Photo: Erich Consemüller, dress material: Elisabeth Beyer-Volger, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin / © Dr. Stephan Consemüller



Bachelor's wardrobe on castors, design: Josef Pohl, 1930. Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin / Fotostudio Bartsch

### Simple

The so-called »bachelor's wardrobe« on castors by Josef Pohl is a prototype of a multifunctional, space-saving closet for the single man. It captures the spirit of the times as much now as it did back then. The free-standing wardrobe made of lightweight veneered wood symbolises flexibility, mobility, a modest lifestyle and the aesthetics of simplicity. Designed as a sheer cuboid, its cleverly arranged shelving offers ample space for a man's entire wardrobe – jackets, shirts, trousers, shoes and neckties. At *original bauhaus*, the Danish designer Sigurd Larsen responds to the historical closet with a contemporary piece of furniture art.



## Press conference

4 Sep 2019, 11 am  
Berlinische Galerie

## Speakers:

Thomas Köhler, Director of the Berlinische Galerie  
Annemarie Jaeggi, Director of the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung  
Nina Wiedemeyer, curator of the exhibition, Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung  
Friederike Holländer, Bauhaus Agent, Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung  
Christine van Haaren, Head of Education, Berlinische Galerie

Followed by a guided tour of the exhibition by the curator.

If you would like to attend the press conference, please register via e-mail at [presse@bauhaus.de](mailto:presse@bauhaus.de) by 3 Sep.

## Exhibition opening

5 Sep 2019, 7 pm  
Berlinische Galerie

## Speakers:

Thomas Köhler, Director of the Berlinische Galerie  
Annemarie Jaeggi, Director of the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung  
Klaus Lederer, Senator for Culture and Europe  
Hortensia Völckers, Artistic Director of the German Federal Cultural Foundation  
Nina Wiedemeyer, Curator of the exhibition, Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung

Free entry, no registration

## Press images

Available to download at [bauhaus.de/en/presse/aktuell/](http://bauhaus.de/en/presse/aktuell/)

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## Tickets

Available online at [berlinischegalerie.seetickets.com](http://berlinischegalerie.seetickets.com)  
Prices: € 12 / € 9 (reduced rate) / Groups € 9 per person

## Catalogue

The exhibition is supplemented by a catalogue and the *original bauhaus workbook* featuring a selection of the most important preliminary course exercises in one publication for the first time.

## Guided tours

Public tours are offered every Saturday and Sunday. Tours for the handicapped are offered in cooperation with the Museumsdienst Berlin. More information: [museumsdienst.berlin](http://museumsdienst.berlin). For information about our curator-guided tours and other services, visit [berlinischegalerie.de/en/education/guided-tours](http://berlinischegalerie.de/en/education/guided-tours)

A free audio guide is available to visitors of the exhibition.

## Education

In addition to the preliminary course workshop series »Vorkurs üben« every Sunday, school classes can participate in free workshops and tours offered in cooperation with Jugend im Museum e.V. More information: [berlinischegalerie.de/en/education](http://berlinischegalerie.de/en/education)

## Accompanying programme

The exhibition is accompanied by an international symposium, artist talks and Bauhaus film nights. More information: [berlinischegalerie.de/en/calendar](http://berlinischegalerie.de/en/calendar)

## Handicapped accessibility

Our handicapped accessible education programme offers services to the blind, visually-impaired, deaf and hearing-impaired, as well as persons with learning difficulties. Offered in cooperation with Museumsdienst Berlin. More information: [museumsdienst.berlin](http://museumsdienst.berlin) and [berlinischegalerie.de/service/barrierefreiheit](http://berlinischegalerie.de/service/barrierefreiheit)

## Berlinische Galerie

Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur  
Alte Jakobstraße 124 – 128  
10969 Berlin  
Tel +49 (0) 30 789 02 600

Wed – Mon 10 am – 6 pm  
Tue closed

[bauhaus.de](http://bauhaus.de)  
[berlinischegalerie.de](http://berlinischegalerie.de)  
#originalbauhaus

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# the bauhaus was a school

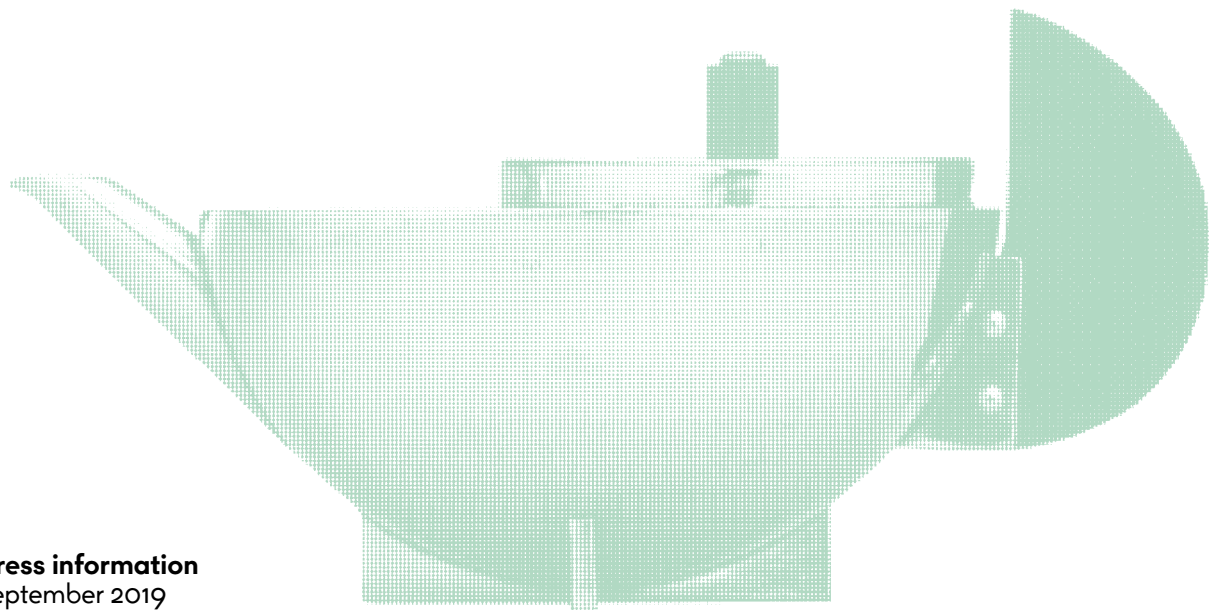
education & activity programme for

## original bauhaus

the centenary exhibition  
6 Sep 2019 – 27 Jan 2020  
at the berlinische galerie

Like so many other design classics, the tea infuser by Marianne Brandt is not a »master-piece«, as she was just a student when she created the now-famous teapot in class. The exhibition *original bauhaus* not only celebrates the material legacy of the Bauhaus, but also its role as a school. The famous preliminary course takes centre-stage in two exhibition chapters, a workshop series and a publication. Important impulses were provided in cooperation with the Bauhaus Agents programme, funded by the Federal Cultural Foundation, and secondary-school pupils from Berlin.

With interactive exhibition elements and a diverse accompanying programme, *original bauhaus* offers visitors the opportunity to sensually and practically experience the teachings, ideas and products of the Bauhaus. The hands-on stations are designed to allow visitors to explore the tactile qualities of the Bauhaus objects. Every Sunday international experts will hold preliminary course workshops based on the motto »Vorkurs üben«. The programme includes curator-guided tours, tours with German sign language, free workshops and tours for school groups. The exhibition is accompanied by an international symposium, Bauhaus movie nights and an artist talk.



press information  
september 2019

## »Doing the Preliminary Course« Interactive media station

In preparation for the exhibition, secondary-school pupils involved in the Bauhaus Agents programme completed historical preliminary course exercises in order to learn more about the instruction practices at the Bauhaus. What would the Bauhaus preliminary course look like today? The artists' collective Syntop selected several preliminary course exercises for an interactive media station in the exhibition and modified them for the digital age. Two experts will be on hand throughout the exhibition period to provide information to visitors about this »contemporary preliminary course«.

## Guides

In addition to an audio guide, the interactive »original bauhaus guide«, developed in cooperation with the Bauhaus Agents programme, introduces visitors to alternative approaches to themes featured in the exhibition.

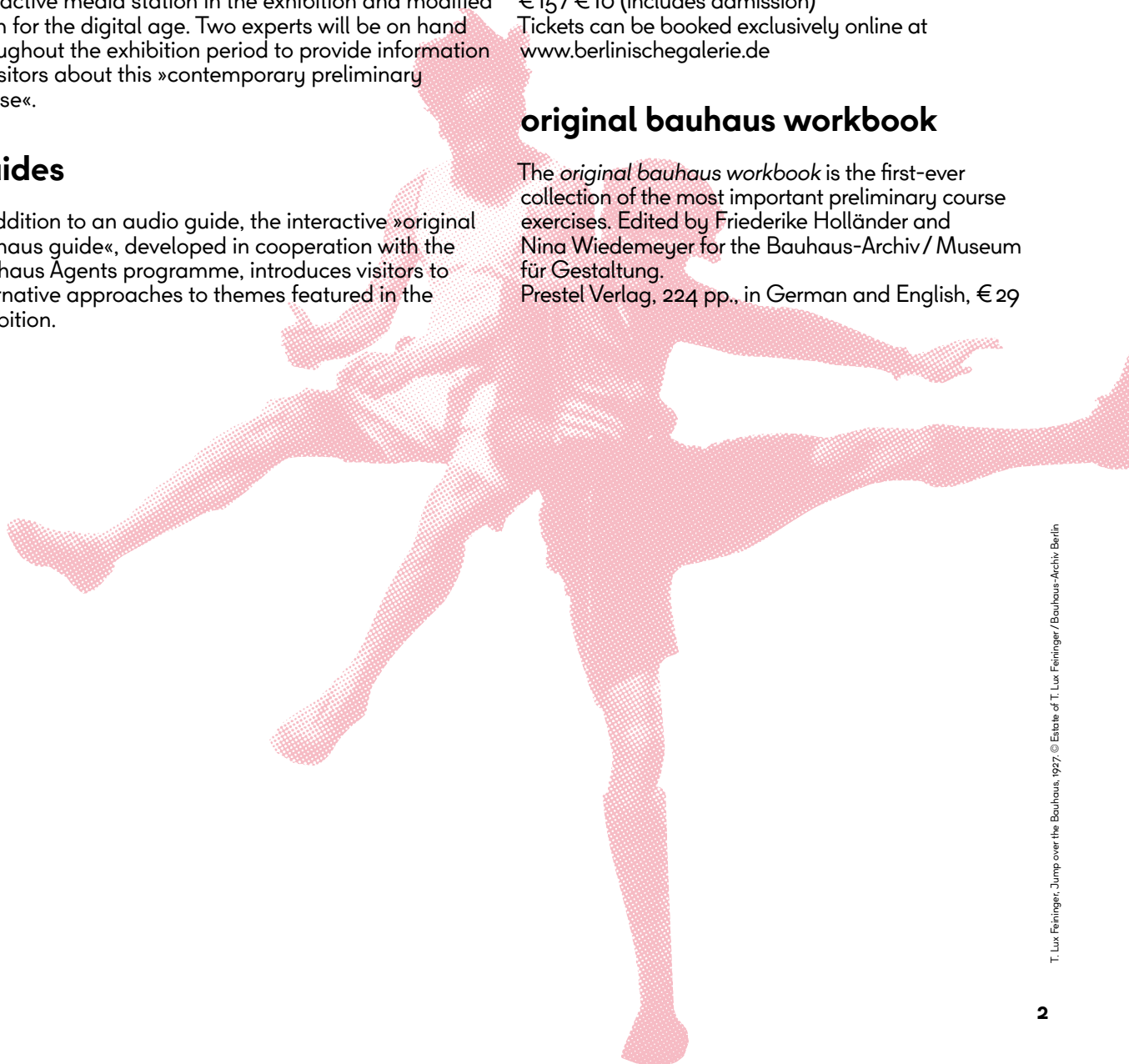
## Every Sunday, 11 am – 2 pm »Vorkurs üben« Workshop series

This workshop series explores the exercises assigned to students in the famous preliminary course at the Bauhaus. The workshops are offered by international experts in the fields of dance, photography, paper art, architecture and breathing techniques. In German and English

€15 / €10 (includes admission)  
Tickets can be booked exclusively online at [www.berlinischegalerie.de](http://www.berlinischegalerie.de)

## original bauhaus workbook

The *original bauhaus workbook* is the first-ever collection of the most important preliminary course exercises. Edited by Friederike Holländer and Nina Wiedemeyer for the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung. Prestel Verlag, 224 pp., in German and English, €29





### Accompanying programme

11 October 2019, 6 pm  
**Movie night »Bauhaus & Film«**  
curated and introduced by Thomas Tode (in German)  
Included in the price of admission, no registration required.

29 – 30 November 2019  
**»Taking a stand«**  
The Bauhaus and »Neues Bauen« under National Socialism, in emigration or exile, and in a divided Germany  
An international symposium with contributions from participants of the Bauhaus Agents programme. In German and English with simultaneous translation, free admission. Please register by 27 Nov 2019 at welcome@bauhaus.de.

6 December 2019, 4 pm  
**Artist talk**  
with Veronika Kellndorfer (in German)  
Included in the price of admission, no registration required.

10 January 2020, 7 pm  
**Movie night »Bauhaus-Tanzkörper«**  
curated and introduced by Thomas Tode (in German)  
Included in the price of admission, no registration required.

### Guided Tours

Public tours in English are offered every Saturday and Sunday. Tours for the handicapped are offered in cooperation with the Museumsdienst Berlin. Curator-guided tours are regularly offered on Mondays. Limited number of participants.

### School classes

Free workshops are available to school groups in cooperation with Jugend im Museum e.V. More information and booking: berlinischegalerie.de/en/education.

Free tours for school groups offered in cooperation with Museumsdienst Berlin.

### Handicapped accessibility

The handicapped-accessible education programme offers services to the blind, visually-impaired, deaf and hearing-impaired. Offered in cooperation with Museumsdienst Berlin. More information: museumsdienst.berlin.

**Complete programme, services and events**  
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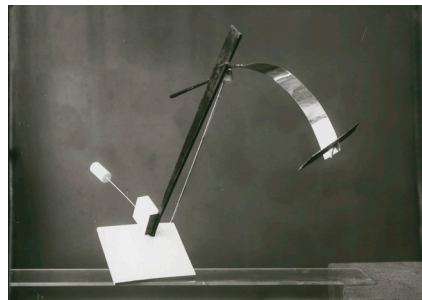
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Tatehiko Mitsuomi, Three-part sculpture from Albers's preliminary courses, 1927 / Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, photo: Fotostudio Bartsch

# original bauhaus

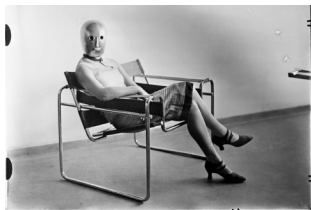
the centenary exhibition  
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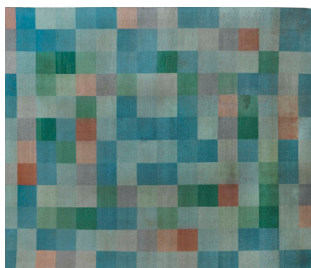
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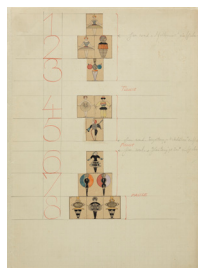
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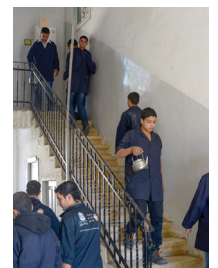
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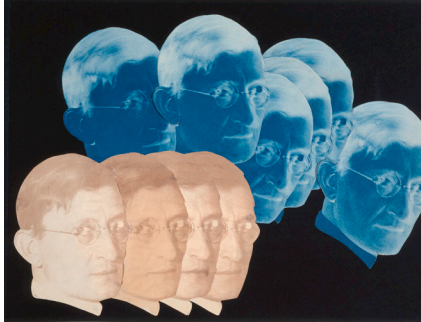


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1. Balance study from László Moholy-Nagy's Preliminary Course, photo: Lucia Moholy, 1923, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin ©VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2019
2. Haus Am Horn, Weimar, architect: Georg Muche, photo: Atelier Hüttich-Oemler, 1923, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin
3. Woman wearing an Oskar Schlemmer mask sitting on Marcel Breuer's Wassily Chair, around 1926. Photo: Erich Consemüller, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin / © Dr. Stephan Consemüller
4. Veronika Kellndorfer, Reconstructing Modernism, shortly after dawn, 2019, 3-panel silkscreen print on glass, overall dimensions 230 x 390 cm, for *original bauhaus* Veronika Kellndorfer ©VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019
5. Marianne Brandt, Tea infuser (MT 49), 1924, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, Photo: Gunter Lepkowski ©VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2019
6. Oskar Schlemmer's Triadic Ballet, all figurines, 1927, photo: Ernst Schneider, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin
7. Bachelor's wardrobe on castors, design: Josef Pohl, 1930, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin / Fotostudio Bartsch
8. Carl (Casca) Schlemmer, Bauhaus Stairway, 1958, oil on hardboard, 162 x 103 cm, private property, photo: Markus Hawlik
9. Bauhaus building Dessau, campus postcard sent by a Bauhaus student to his mother, 1927, photo: Lucia Moholy, 1925 - 1926, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin ©VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2019

10. Gertrud Arndt, Teppich Thost, 1927, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, photo: Markus Hawlik ©VG Bild-Kunst Bonn
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14. Tobias Zielony, School, 2013, 27 x 18 cm © Tobias Zielony and KOW, Berlin
15. Portrait of Josef Albers, collage of photo positives and negatives from »9 jahre bauhaus. eine chronik«, farewell present of the Bauhauslers to Walter Gropius, 1928, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin
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18. Thomas Ruff, r.phg.02, 2013, loan by the artist, Courtesy Sprüth Magers ©VG Bild-Kunst 2019

# original bauhaus

Edited by Nina Wiedemeyer for the  
Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung

**bauhaus-archiv**  
museum für gestaltung

**PRESTEL**  
Munich · London · New York



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Annemarie Jaeggi

*Director of the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung*

Thomas Köhler

*Director of the Berlinische Galerie*

original bauhaus

*The Centenary Exhibition—*

*100 years of bauhaus*

With *original bauhaus* the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung is using the centenary of the Bauhaus's founding as an opportunity to trace the current relevance of the maxims and ideas developed there. This avant-garde school, which existed from 1919 to 1933, still continues to stimulate the same enormous fascination it always has. With its visions and designs for society-changing reforms in architecture, building and residential living, the Bauhaus offers numerous points of departure that can provide important impulses for an intensive engagement with discussions about fundamental questions of attitude, life and design—and this is particularly true within today's polarised society.

When the Bauhaus was founded, it was already not primarily focused on the creation of singular works of art. Instead, the aim of Walter Gropius's concept for the school was to develop new approaches for building and living and to arrive at new solutions through an experimental occupation with materials and media—a method that continued to be pursued in subsequent years, under directors Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. New technological processes increasingly played a role in both the manufacture of mass-produced objects and the composition of works of fine art. Collaboration with industry became more and more important and the creation of prototypes and models became a central objective of the Bauhaus's workshops. At the same time, teachers like László Moholy-Nagy were propagating the

new artistic possibilities brought through the use of machines. Unlike many of his contemporaries, who assumed a critical attitude with regard to this process, Moholy-Nagy saw reproduction techniques aimed at mass production as a vehicle for training people's senses, developing new perceptual possibilities and, in doing so, generating unimagined insights.

Thus, under the title *original bauhaus*, we raise (then and now) pressing questions about the meaning and interpretation of semantic fields associated with this topic—reproduction and copy; prototype and model; replica, imitation and plagiarism; homage, satire and forgery—to serve as a basis for taking a new and critical look at the history and reception of the Bauhaus. In doing so, we have deliberately deviated from a purely historical and chronological narrative and, instead, used 14 exemplary objects and groups of works to trace these different approaches to artistic production and orientation. Twelve contemporary, internationally present artists have also devoted their attention to these different approaches and reflected on the current relevance of Bauhaus originals in order to underscore this link to the present. How do derivative works, reconstructions or imitations relate to the original? Which image of the Bauhaus is evoked in contemporary remakes? Our great aspiration is to use the approximately 700 works shown in the centenary exhibition—which include well-known icons and international loans, but also works presented publicly for the first time—to

stimulate a renewed, and certainly also contentious, engagement with the Bauhaus and its ideas and to maintain the vitality of the diverse themes associated with the Bauhaus so that the critical exploration of them also continues after the centenary has passed.

For the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung it has been an enormous pleasure to have found—in the Berlinische Galerie—an ideal host and simultaneously a cooperating partner for our exhibition celebrating the centenary of the Bauhaus's founding. In this context, it is not just the synergies in the exhibition's planning and realisation and our shared thematic connection with artistic modernism that have proved exceptionally fruitful: with 'Dada and Bauhaus', new light could also be shed on a little-known chapter in the historiography of the Bauhaus. We hope that this collaboration can also serve the future as a successful example for working in partnerships and networks.

We extend our great thanks to the Federal State of Berlin and the German Federal Cultural Foundation for their generous funding of the centenary exhibition. We additionally owe a special gratitude to the exhibition's curator, Nina Wiedemeyer, as well as the teams at our two institutions, who have realised this outstanding exhibition with great dedication and in the spirit of cooperation.

Klaus Lederer  
*Mayor and Senator for Culture and Europe  
of the Federal State of Berlin*

Foreword

The time has finally arrived! With *original bauhaus* Berlin is opening its major centenary exhibition. It is the result of the productive cooperation between the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung and the Berlinische Galerie and, for me, it successfully brings us closer to the essence of the Bauhaus in more than one respect.

The 100th birthday of the Bauhaus has certainly also given cause for scepticism. Weren't we just celebrating a brand name in order to polish Germany's international image? Or would it actually be possible to identify ambivalent aspects and to not simply reproduce the 'Bauhaus brand'—which is, after all, significantly newer—and instead achieve a contemporarily relevant engagement with the shifting and contradictory history of this school as well as the history of its reception and legacy?

It is not just in Berlin that many of those involved have demonstrated that we can approach the Bauhaus from more than just one perspective and that we do not have to reduce it to 'just' an extraordinary school of design. In an event initiated by the Bauhaus Cooperation Weimar Dessau Berlin, we engaged in 'A Critical Discourse'. Together with the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, we asked 'How political is the Bauhaus?'. At the Akademie der Künste we were able to experience a magnificent opening exhibition for the centenary. *bauhaus imaginista* has tracked down the international links and stories of this insti-

tute. With *original bauhaus* we are once again showing in Berlin that an intensive engagement with the Bauhaus, with the friction between art and society, can also provide a genuine source of inspiration in our contemporary world.

100 years of bauhaus: this motto stands equally for the event of its founding in Weimar 100 years ago and for the many subsequent movements and artistic developments which it has now, in 2019, been initiating, influencing and shaping for 100 years. After the beginning of the First World War had put an end to the Werkbund's debates about the function of art in society, I also see the Bauhaus as standing precisely for the attempt to once more try to place this question on society's agenda.

The Bauhaus school existed from the year of the Weimar Republic's founding to the year of its abolishment. This alone points to how eminently political this institute was as, in the words of Hannes Meyer, an 'archetypical child of the German republic' and as a 'European, indeed, international educational centre'. However, the traces of the Bauhaus, the works of its heirs, are now to be found all over the world. Searching for them, pursuing them with curiosity, uncovering buried roots—this can advance our knowledge and convey new insights. Engaging with the 14 case studies, the unusual stories about unknown pieces as well as famous 'classics', forces us to connect the object with the present.

*original bauhaus* enables us to become intensely engaged with the Bauhaus, but it also allows us to take part in the dialogues of the twelve international artists who have commented on and questioned Bauhaus originals for the exhibition. This brings us back to the friction between art and society ... I wish the exhibition *original bauhaus* many enthusiastic visitors, who it will enable to experience, feel and recognise the Bauhaus in all its facets.

Hortensia Völckers  
*Executive Board / Artistic Director*  
Alexander Farenholtz  
*Executive Board / Administrative Director*

Foreword by the  
German Federal Cultural Foundation

This book is part of a nationwide programme celebrating the centenary of the Bauhaus, which has brought together more than a dozen of Germany's 16 federal states and over a hundred communities. Bauhaus artefacts are delighting their audiences in all these places, and new museums are opening their doors. With its functional and aesthetic qualities, Bauhaus design enjoys cult status all around the world. Nonetheless, after 100 years, it still remains true that our exploration of the Weimar Republic's most famous art school still remains incomplete. The indispensable celebration of this cultural heritage also involves looking at the complex ambivalence with which the Bauhaus gave shape to the modernist project—stretching between the poles of craft and technology, fine and applied art, cosmopolitanism and esotericism, paternalism and social experiment. And those are just a few of the aesthetically and politically decisive trajectories along which the effects of the Bauhaus developed. 'The complete building is the final aim of the visual arts': when considering this motto formulated by Walter Gropius, it is thus not just steel and glass and white cubes that come to mind during this centenary, but also that architecture of ideas which, like the entire project of modernism, remains pressingly unfinished and open. In this way, it resembles the countless questions that link our crisis-plagued 21st century with the Bauhaus: questions about the freedom of art and education, global resource justice, gender relations, affordable housing, urban quality of life and the dominance of smart

technology in a post-human modernity. Experiment and memory—the German Federal Cultural Foundation has constantly sought to pursue both aspects in allocating funds for the centenary. Thus, five million of over 17 million euros in total funding have been devoted to the 'Bauhaus Agents' programme alone. It focuses on cultural education and a lasting collaboration between the Bauhaus museums and young people, who will be developing their own positions on how they want homes and towns to be built; how to dance, take photos, eat and dress; how we will be writing and speaking in the future—and what role the Bauhaus can play in all of this.

The German Federal Cultural Foundation thanks the Bauhaus Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung, its director Dr Annemarie Jaeggi and particularly curator Dr Nina Wiedemeyer and project coordinator Britta Denzin; the Berlinische Galerie, its director Dr Thomas Köhler and especially Ursula Müller; and also everyone else involved in the project—including Friederike Holländer and the other Bauhaus Agents—for realising the centenary exhibition *original bauhaus*, which examines the originalities of material and immaterial Bauhaus icons and subsequent elaborations upon them from a rich variety of perspectives. We wish this initiative all the best and an audience just as large as this book's readership.



## Nina Wiedemeyer

## original bauhaus

Why is the Bauhaus so important?<sup>1</sup> To understand why, *original bauhaus* has inquired into the contribution of different forms of reproduction and appropriation—100 years after the founding of this school of design, art and architecture.<sup>2</sup> And we are not referring here to the replicas of the famous Bauhaus lamps or to advertising slogans for white prefab houses with flat roofs. The centenary exhibition opens up new perspectives on the rich material and immaterial culture of the school—with new artistic creations and with originals from the collection of the Bauhaus-Archiv as well as international loans. These include familiar friends, but also forgotten objects, because the Bauhaus also produced less famous things, such as Dadaistic photomontages or the ingenious assignments from its art classes.

In the museum a reproduced tubular steel chair becomes a unique object. Just like the original assembled in the metal workshop of the historical Bauhaus, it enjoys museological conditions and special protection—and, much to the chagrin of some visitors, no one is allowed to touch it. It is to be preserved, because examining it can provide insights into the conditions under which it was produced, for example, or because the chair documents a foyer furnishing particularly typical of its time. By contrast, in the consulting room of a

doctor's office, the same chair is simply a status-signalling utilitarian object. The slanted seat of Marcel Breuer's *Club Wassily-Chair* may force waiting patients to exert themselves a bit when rising from this re-edition of the *B3*, but it will also grant them an insight not usually possible in a museum.

It is precisely when circumstances change in the biography of an object, with reproductions becoming unique objects, that things become exciting for *original bauhaus*—or also when originals are first generated through their re-makes and artists aim to shift these boundaries. This is to say that things become exciting every time they are not clear, and the exhibition's organisers very decidedly should not dictate what could be christened an original. How much Bauhaus copy, based on the model home of Weimar's Haus am Horn, is there in Burbach's Landhaus Ilse (Ilse country home)? In this and in other cases, it is a question of the hybridity of things: it is precisely their ambiguity and diversity that is to be put up for discussion. An object often becomes typically Bauhaus only with its reproduction—and this always also brings changes with it.<sup>3</sup> By no means is this just hair-splitting among scholars of cultural studies. It is a matter of attitude and values: fundamental-

ly this is, after all, very much about cultivating diverse voices and living with differences. This is exactly what we could learn today from the Bauhaus, this school founded three times in Weimar, Dessau and Berlin.

A rich repertoire of terms is available for inquiring into the original. Some of these are historical and were used by Bauhaus members themselves, while others are current and familiar: prototype, unique work, series, copy, remix, revival, assignments. *original bauhaus* uses 14 key objects from the Bauhaus period to explore the relations of production and reproduction. These represent the 14 years, from April 1919 to July 1933, during which the school existed as a state-funded and then as a private institution. The case studies include, for example, famous Bauhaus classics like the *Triadisches Ballett* (Triadic ballet) by Oskar Schlemmer, which has repeatedly been brought back onstage—or in the park—by numerous professional productions and by amateurs, or the photograph with the famous anonymous figure on one of Breuer's *B3 Chairs*, which is discussed in the case study 'Becoming Famous'. The case of 'Unity in Diversity', on the other hand, is about the production of a perfectly formed teapot by Marianne Brandt which, even if it was meant to be a prototype, never went into serial production.

The standard works about the Bauhaus have been written; there you can find the chronology and narratives of its history arranged ac-

1 Christian Demand explores this question in his contribution, which opens the chapter 'Becoming Icons'.

2 The fundamental idea is thus to understand reproductions not as a 'means to an end, but as productive in themselves', see Probst 2011, p.10.

3 Stephan Gregory has reflected on the power of the copyist in his teaching and lectures: at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, in the seminar 'Das kopierende Subjekt: Glanz und Elend der Imitation', and in his lecture of 8 March 2018 at the conference 'Abschrift, Ablichtung, CC (et vice versa)', also there: 'Duplikat und Eigensinn: Subjekte des Kopiervorgangs'.

ording to director, workshop and art form. *original bauhaus* is based on a different logic and develops indicative case studies: within this context, the paths leading through the exhibition and the book each follow their own medial and spatial logic. In the book all of the case studies are grouped into three chapters: ‘Becoming Icons’, ‘Writing History’ and ‘Forming a School’.

Whether a product of human or mechanical labour is a unique artwork or a multiple that can be mechanically reproduced is a question which has been haunting art historians and the art market since the 1920s, and artists have appropriated the friction of these distinctions for themselves. The Bauhaus’s László Moholy-Nagy was one of those media artists who engaged with the distinctive characteristics of conditions of production in theory and practice. Entirely unlike Walter Benjamin in his widely read essay on the ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, Moholy-Nagy placed his faith in the artistic potential of technology.<sup>4</sup> He scratched gramophone records and produced unique photographic works in order to immediately multiply the singular; he used a telephone to communicate the coordinates for his pictures to a craftsman.<sup>5</sup> Benjamin’s attitude was substantially more sceptical, and he dissected his period’s use of media, for example, in the spread of advertising in urban spaces. He saw the possibilities for utilising unique works as source material for production on a massive scale as devaluing the original. However, it is only through reproductions that modern icons are created. Through experimentation—as Moholy-Nagy emphatically formulates his proposal in the essay ‘Production – Reproduction’—artistic qualities could be wrested from mechanical media, such as the gramophone or photography. His own photographic works play with uniqueness and reproduction in a complex manner and thus reflect on both the medial conditions of technology and the status of the artist as creator. In Moholy-Nagy’s art, technology becomes a co-creator.<sup>6</sup>

The name of the school stands for a minimalist and functionalist architectural style, and its design classics continue to be released in re-editions today. Nonetheless the Bauhaus—although it is sometimes forgotten—was not a manufacturing facility for modern design and modular architecture. It is true that the institute spun off its own independent limited company to market its own products and that it was already attempting to use them to earn money in Weimar. However, this was not just based on economic considerations. The idea of linking training with industrial production had already been developed by the Bauhaus’s institutional predecessor, the Großherzoglich-Sächsische Kunstgewerbeshule Weimar, the school of applied arts headed by Henry van de Velde.<sup>7</sup> Handcrafted objects were to provide models for mass production: on the one hand, this was certainly due to competition with industry for commissions, but it was also a fundamental principle of a form of training that was not to be carried out fully removed from the real conditions of production. In its early phase, shortly after the First World War, the Bauhaus’s beginnings were economically precarious. It took on personnel from the disbanded school of fine art as well as parts of the workshop equipment from the former school of applied arts: the school’s initial orientation was improvised and experimental. The workshops were to be provided with commissions. In 1923 the Haus am Horn resulted from a major collective effort. All of the workshops were involved in realising, furnishing and publicly presenting this detached home serving as a model house.<sup>8</sup> Bauhaus students went through a dual course of training in artistic and workshop practice. They could leave the school with a universally recognised certification of their training as apprentices. Professional trade associations defined the relevant standards and also carried out the testing. Their by-laws specified which techniques had to be learned. A Bauhaus diploma possesses

a high symbolic value today; however, during the Bauhaus period, graduates could surely get more out of their certification that they were master craftspeople or had completed a craft apprenticeship. The network they were able to build up in the international art and architecture scene was, of course, also valuable and—particularly after the Nazis came to power—became necessary for the survival of many of them.

Whether products developed in the workshops permanently remained prototypes because their serial production would have been too expensive, too luxurious in terms of material,<sup>9</sup> or simply because they did not correspond to consumer needs may be a far less relevant question than that of the experiences involved—which also included the intensive engagement with the material, including mistakes and failures. The Bauhaus pursued a ‘don’t do it [all by] yourself’ method, in the sense of a sound course of training in which students were not left on their own and, instead, were able to build on the presence of the highly dedicated teachers accompanying them—with the goal of making them experts in their field.<sup>10</sup> Personal experience stood at the heart of things, but even in the preliminary course, which was put in place to provide students with fundamentals before their training in the workshops, students could not get far with anything that was just quickly thrown together. In the textile workshop in Dessau, there was also criticism of the pressure to perform created through the transition to a manufacturing operation and a commercial line of furniture and textile products for interiors. From the weavers’ perspective, this left too little space for experimentation.<sup>11</sup> And that aspect which is today rightly considered particularly progressive about the Bauhaus—the intense and not immediately goal-oriented engagement with materials and production processes as well as the invention of techniques, to enable

4 Benjamin 1980.

5 Rech 2012.

6 Moholy-Nagy 1922.

7 See Wahl 2007.

8 In her Case Study, ‘Exhibiting the Bauhaus’, Ute Farnalla discusses the Bauhaus travelling exhibition under Hannes Meyer’s directorship at the Bauhaus, which was intended to develop international awareness of the work and products of the school.

9 Thus, for example, Robin Schuldenfrei focuses on luxury as an argument for why the Bauhaus failed, see Schuldenfrei 2018.

10 For an insightful analysis of the culture and consequences of dilettantism, see Wirth 2017.

11 See Bittner/Padt 2017, p. 138.

innovation above all—was not admired by everyone as obviously appropriate in its own day.<sup>12</sup> Thus, an open letter by students at the Bauhaus in Dessau expressed doubt about the purposefulness of the preliminary course, which is still considered today to be one of the most influential elements of training at the school. Their question was how it was supposed to provide a preparation for their later training. The students could not recognise any connection between the tedious exercises and their later training in the workshops and demanded a more goal-oriented approach.<sup>13</sup> Not everyone saw the independent and free exploration of the qualities of materials as positively as someone like Hans Fischli, who looked back on the time he spent in the preliminary course: ‘The weeks spent occupied with paper made the material seem ever more valuable to us through dissatisfaction and disinclination, until we finally loved it and expertly grasped its nature with our eyes and sense of touch. Paper became an object of wealth’.<sup>14</sup>

Slide projectors, typewriters, shorthand, drawing boards, craft workshops and analogue cameras were the media of choice for teaching at the Bauhaus. One hundred years later, we find ourselves in the midst of the digital revolution; the media typical of the Bauhaus are no longer part of school pupils’ and university students’ daily lives—if they are familiar with them at all, it is as hip retro practices. The decisive question that has driven us during this centenary is: how current is the Bauhaus, and what relevance does it have today? And transferring the teaching methods of that period to the present can hardly provide a satisfactory response. The Bauhaus and its pedagogy are not timeless: they existed within the context of the school reform move-

ment around 1900, a number of newly founded schools and an understanding of the importance of craft and artistic training like that also cultivated at other schools of applied arts and fine arts.<sup>15</sup> The development of utilitarian objects and architecture stood at the heart of the Bauhaus. Both fields have always had a different understanding of the unique work from fine art, which has of course—with its printing and casting processes—always also pursued its own artistic techniques of reproduction. Successfully producing an identical object can be a demonstration of mastery in the crafts, because it is only through the trained gestures of work and implicit knowledge that regular repetitions become possible and, with them, the planning required to produce, for example, the right lid to fit a container. In architecture there was an emphatic effort to make working processes more economical, that is, reproducible.<sup>16</sup> And one of humanity’s oldest cultural techniques, weaving, crosses out any linear understanding of original and copy. With the pattern repeat, reproduction is a precondition for the possibility of textiles—even of their originals.<sup>17</sup>

There is a precise distinction to be made between the same thing and a thing that is the same. Originals can be both: the unique as well as the reproduced object. Reproduction makes things accessible and is thus always also a social practice: even if many products from the Bauhaus are marketed today in a more or less exclusive manner, diverse forms of appropriation and inspiration still exist. The nimble and witty manner in which artists like the musician Olaf Bender or the architect Barbara Brakenhoff approach the

Bauhaus (we had both of them interviewed about aspects that link them to the school for a video installation by Torero Film) reveal that false reverence based on the importance of this institution is unnecessary. After 100 years, our understanding of the Bauhaus is once again becoming very much like the Bauhaus: less value is placed on proper form and style than on critical practice, challenging teaching and vigorous discussion.

Proven experts, some of them with decades of scholarly and/or curatorial expertise, have written for this book on the history of the Bauhaus. Others, specifically without being Bauhaus specialists, have introduced new perspectives—from their research, teaching and practice—on so-called Bauhaus classics as well as lesser-known objects, and they have reflected on how these became icons, wrote history and formed a school.

I would like to express my very personal and warmest gratitude to all of the authors, artists and designers, to Thomas Köhler and the team at the Berlinische Galerie—particularly Ursula Müller and Ralf Burmeister—to Annermarie Jaeggi for far more than just the idea for this exhibition and all of my colleagues at the Bauhaus-Archiv—especially Britta Denzin and Nicole Opel—and to the many dedicated people possessing know-how in various areas, without whom a project like this could not have been realised.

12 ‘The increasing dissatisfaction with the instruction in the preliminary course has led us to state our position regarding these questions. It seems useless to us to spend our time here with work whose purpose we cannot recognise.’ Anonymous, ‘Vorkurs’ (c. 1930), in Weimar-Dessau-Berlin, Folder 63, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin.

13 Ursula Müller reports on students’ high level of satisfaction with the goal-oriented instruction under Mies van der Rohe in her contribution dealing with the Case Study of ‘The Model Teacher’ in this catalogue.

14 Fischli pp. 37–38.

15 The two essays introducing the chapter ‘Forming a School’ devote themselves to this aspect. On the one hand, Carina Burck discusses the Frankfurt Art School, an example permitting a comparison with a school contemporary to the Bauhaus. On the other hand, Nora Sternfeld deals with the problematic implications of modernist utopias from today’s perspective, and points to two updated versions of the preliminary course.

16 The consequences of industrial production and the problematic implications of modernist utopias are examined, for example, by Bernhard Siegert in the research project *Die Baracke: Utopie der Moderne und biopolitische Praxis* at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, see <http://infar.architektur.uni-weimar.de/service/drupal-mediaarch/node/40> (accessed 14.5.2019).

17 See Schneider 2011.