

Press release

Extensive purchases for the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung in Berlin

Important parts of the estates of the Bauhaus artists Benita Koch-Otte, Gertrud Arndt, Alfred Arndt and Gunta Stölzl have expanded the world's largest Bauhaus collection.

Berlin, 11 July 2016: The purchase of four important groups of material from artists' estates means that hundreds of pieces from classes at the Bauhaus and central key works by the renowned Bauhaus figures Benita Koch-Otte, Gertrud Arndt and Alfred Arndt as well as important historical documents and photographs formerly owned by the Bauhaus teacher Gunta Stölzl have become a permanent part of the Bauhaus-Archiv collection. Among other things, these new purchases include Gertrud Arndt's 32 famous mask photos, Benita Koch-Otte's design for the carpet in Walter Gropius's office as director and Alfred Arndt's pioneering advertising designs and architectural plans.

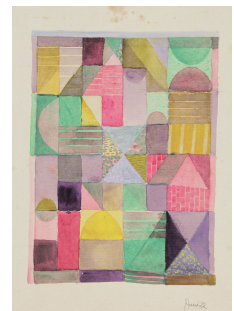
The Bauhaus-Archiv was able to purchase a large part of these works through the financial support of the Cultural Foundation of the Federal States (Kulturstiftung der Länder) and the Wüstenrot Foundation (Wüstenrot Stiftung). In addition, the Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation (Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung) has purchased valuable parts of these collections as permanent loans for the Bauhaus-Archiv. "We are unbelievably happy that these parts of the estates of the Bauhaus artists Gunta Stölzl, Benita Koch-Otte and Alfred and Gertrud Arndt have been successfully purchased for our collection. These groups of material possess a unique art historical significance on account of their extensiveness and cohesiveness. They came directly from the property of the artists' heirs and their provenance is impeccable", explained Annemarie Jaeggi, Director of the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung, Berlin.

The art historian Hans Maria Wingler founded the Bauhaus-Archiv in Darmstadt in 1960 with the support of the Bauhaus's founder, Walter Gropius. Its goal was to provide a new home for the Bauhaus's material legacy, which had been scattered around the world in 1933. The Bauhaus (1919–1933) – the 20th century's most important school of architecture, design and art – was disbanded under pressure by the Nazis. Since the founding of the Bauhaus-Archiv, its holdings have grown into the most multi-faceted and largest Bauhaus collection in the world. In the Berlin building designed by Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung presents key works from its collection. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Bauhaus's founding in 2019, Berlin's Bauhaus institution will receive a new museum building in the coming years, in order to be able to present its holdings in a manner appropriate to their international significance.

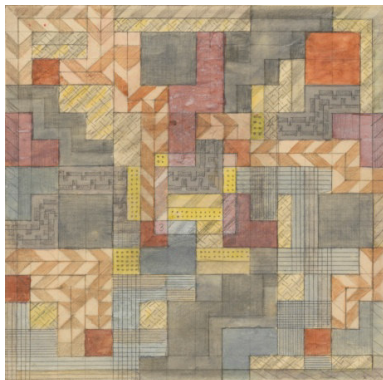
Group of material purchased from the estate of Benita Koch-Otte (1892–1976)

Benita Koch-Otte was one of the most talented weavers at the Bauhaus. In 1925 she was offered a position as head of the weaving workshop at the Burg Giebichenstein school of applied arts in Halle. The newly acquired group of works by Benita Koch-Otte comprises 116 works on paper in watercolour, ink and pencil as well as 9 knotting test pieces. The works on paper range from early adolescent works (16 sheets) to pieces from the preliminary course at the Weimar Bauhaus (8 sheets) to designs for realised (17 sheets) and unrealised (68 sheets) carpets as well as fine-art watercolours (7 sheets) from the years 1921–1930.

Among these sheets, Koch-Otte's graphic and watercolour design sketches are of particular artistic significance. These reflect the influence of the Bauhaus teachers Johannes Itten, Oskar Schlemmer, Paul Klee and Vassily Kandinsky as well as the De Stijl artist Theo van Doesburg in a remarkable way. They illustrate Koch-Otte's occupation with the most important artistic currents at the Bauhaus. In this context it is particularly the watercolours – all of which are defined by a luminous and simultaneously finely harmonised tonality – that stand out and display the impact of Paul Klee's teaching.



**Benita Koch-Otte,
Untitled (City), 1922
Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin
© Stiftung Bethel, Bielefeld**



**Benita Koch-Otte,
Carpet design for Walter Gropius's office as director in Weimar, 1923
Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin
© Stiftung Bethel, Bielefeld**

Among the 17 sketches for realised textile works, the designs for pieces as important as the lost carpet for Walter Gropius's office as director in Weimar and for the architect Ernst May's house in Frankfurt should be emphasised. Numerous meticulous knotting and weaving plans can be directly linked with the colour design sketches, thus granting us a direct look behind the scenes at production processes and techniques. These are complemented by variations of particularly successful designs, which enable us to better understand the thematic complex of the one-of-a-kind piece and the series at the Bauhaus. In its breadth this group of works allows us to gain extensive insight into exercises done for classes and workshop pieces at the Bauhaus.

Group of material purchased from the estate of Gertrud Arndt (1903–2004)

With her remarkably sensitive palette, her taste for experimentation and her talent for formal composition, Gertrud Arndt is considered one of the defining weavers and carpet-knotters at the Bauhaus. It was through her photographic oeuvre that she achieved widespread fame. After an apprenticeship in an architectural office, she went to the Bauhaus in 1923, wishing to be trained as an architect. However, after completing the preliminary course, she was assigned to the textile workshop, where she quickly stood out as a specialist for hand-knotted carpets and as a weaver of striped textiles. After completing her training in 1927 she moved to Probstzella with her husband, Alfred Arndt, and then returned with him to the Bauhaus from 1929 to 1931. She was working as a photographer at that time.

The extensive group of material comprises pieces from every field of her work as an artist – beginning with graphic sheets from the period before she went to the Bauhaus, it also includes sketches and drawings from her classes with Paul Klee and Vassily Kandinsky as well as numerous textile designs, woven fabrics and notes from her classes in the textile workshop and, finally, her extensive and sometimes painted and collaged correspondence with other members of the Bauhaus and her photographic oeuvre. The preserved sketches, drawings and watercolours from Kandinsky's and Klee's classes represent a central source and a key to understanding the fundamental structure of their teaching. In particular Arndt's sketches from Kandinsky's classes in Weimar are some of the few documents of his teaching there.

The works from the area of the textile workshop include design sketches in pencil as well as watercolour. Those dealing with knotted carpets are defined by a sensitively orchestrated use of colour and a subtle play of geometrical shapes. By contrast Arndt's woven works are characterised by tensely charged compositions of sequences of stripes that are intensified by contrasting natural and synthetic threads. A large number of preserved worksheets featuring thread test pieces, calculations for the required amount of material and labour hours and a precise indication of the weft sequences during the production process document the process-based orientation in the textile workshop. In addition to the documentation of the classes as well as the weaving test pieces and textile patterns for rolls of cloth, wall hangings and furniture, the workshop procedures are illustrated in a unique way here.



Gertrud Arndt, Wall hanging in red tones, c.1926
Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2016



Gertrud Arndt, Mask photo, c.1930
Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2016

The central element in this group of material is formed by the 32 so-called mask photos, in which Gertrud Arndt has photographed herself with ever-changing costumes, hairstyles, poses and richly varied facial expressions, thus anticipating the theme of female artists' self-staging in post-war art. In addition to portraits of her fellow students, for which she often chose unusual perspectives and experimental exposure techniques, her textile and product photos also stand out through their focus on details and strong material presence.

Group of material purchased from the estate of Alfred Arndt (1898–1976)

Alfred Arndt was both a student and a teacher at the Bauhaus. He studied there from 1921 to 1927. While still a student he was engaged as a freelance architect to create the Haus des Volkes in Probstzella, one of the central works of modernism in Thuringia. In 1929 Hannes Meyer invited him back to the Bauhaus as head of the department of interior decoration (wall painting, metal and furniture workshop). From 1932 to 1945 he worked as an advertising designer and architect in Probstzella. After the war ended he became a public building official in Jena. In 1948 Arndt moved to Darmstadt, where he continued to work as an architect, primarily for industrial clients.

The group of material includes central works from his broadly diverse artistic oeuvre – from early drawn, printed and painted works to extensive material from his classes at the Bauhaus as well as the artist's work as an advertising designer and architect.



The painting “Thuringian Landscape” presents one of the most remarkable landscape images of its time. Arndt used his fine-art drawings in watercolour, ink and pencil as well as his prints to process impulses from his classes with Vassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Johannes Itten. With their striking typography, three posters from the Bauhaus's advertising workshop are among the most important designs to have been created at the Bauhaus.

Alfred Arndt, Thuringian Landscape Seen from a Train, 1925
Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, photo: Markus Hawlik © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2016

Arndt's multi-faceted talent is also revealed in his works for the Haus des Volkes – one of the few examples of this architectural task in the modernist style. In addition to the folding chair that Arndt designed for its interior, the material from the estate also includes designs for its visual identity as well as an extensive photographic documentation of the building's furnishings at that time.



Alfred Arndt, Folding chair for the Haus des Volkes, 1927–1928
Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2016



Arndt's architectural plans for various construction projects should also be emphasised: these indicate the use of colour and demonstrate the extent to which the Bauhaus generated pioneering designs in the field of architectural painting. These plans form a key supplement to the Bauhaus-Archiv's existing collection of colour plans, such as those by Walter Gropius, Hinnerk Scheper and Heinrich Koch. Marcel Breuer's two chairs for children and matching table, which were also a part of Arndt's estate, represent a further highlight among the purchased group of material.

Alfred Arndt, Colour plan Noack flat, Roda, thüringische Landesanstalten, 1925
Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2016

Group of material purchased from the estate of Gunta Stölzl (1897–1983)

Gunta Stölzl was the only woman to succeed in advancing to the position of a master and, thus, head of a workshop at the Bauhaus and to assert herself among its male-dominated staff. As early as 1919, after completing her training at Munich's school of applied art, she went to the Bauhaus, where she completed her journeyman craftsman's examination as a weaver in 1922/1923. She was head of the workshop from 1925 to 1931. Under her leadership the textile workshop accomplished the shift from the woven one-of-a-kind piece to the modern industrial design, and it also became one of the Bauhaus's most financially profitable workshops. After emigrating to Switzerland she was in charge of a hand-weaving business in Zurich and also worked as a textile artist in the area of tapestries.

The purchased group of material comprises 43 photographs dealing with life at the Bauhaus (all vintage prints by various photographers) and numerous key documents related to the history of the Bauhaus.

These photographs include many portraits from the circle immediately surrounding Stölzl at the Bauhaus. As a master she was in close contact with the other teachers, such as Paul Klee, Vassily Kandinsky and Marcel Breuer. A close friendship linked her to Oskar Schlemmer and his family. Numerous images of the Bauhaus's textile workshop represent essential documents for this area. The photographs by T. Lux Feininger are particularly noteworthy. In addition the group of photographs contains images by Lucia Moholy as well as Judit Kárász: these belong to the categories of experimental as well as documentary photographs and stand out as individual works.



Judit Kárász
Portrait of Otti Berger with Bauhaus facade, double exposure, 1931–1932
Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin

The written documents represent important sources on the history of the Bauhaus. Particular emphasis should be placed on Gunta Stölzl's diary from Weimar: its 167 pages provide insight into the little-documented early period of the Bauhaus. Gunta Stölzl engaged in an extensive correspondence with numerous members of the Bauhaus, which makes it possible to grasp this network of relationships and biographies. Its core is made up of 40 letters as well as 15 picture postcards, which were sent by Oskar Schlemmer to his friend Stölzl between 1925 and 1943 and provide impressions of teaching and life at the Bauhaus. Their chronological horizon stretches to the Nazi dictatorship, thus shedding light on the emigrated artist Stölzl's life in Switzerland and Schlemmer's life as a painter prohibited from painting.

All of the reproductions here can be downloaded from the press area of the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung for purposes of current-affairs reporting on the recent purchases: <http://www.bauhaus.de/en/presse/>



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