

Press release

**Training the senses through art:**

## **Great László Moholy-Nagy exhibition at the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung in Berlin**

**The exhibition makes the visionary quality of the major Bauhaus teacher's multimedia work accessible to all of the senses.**

**Berlin, 7 October 2014. From 8 October 2014 to 12 January 2014, the Bauhaus-Archiv is presenting the complex media art of the famous Constructivist and Bauhaus teacher László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946) in the exhibition 'Sensing the Future: László Moholy-Nagy, the Media and the Arts'. As a pioneer of multimedia and conceptual art, Moholy-Nagy was one of the twentieth century's most influential artists. In addition to his own works dating from the 1920s to the 1940s, the exhibition will also be showing works by contemporary artists such as Olafur Eliasson and Eduardo Kac, who have taken up Moholy-Nagy's ideas – underlining his continuing relevance. Moholy-Nagy explored the interactions between the various media and the senses both in practice and in theory, and he experimented intensively with film and photography.**

Some 300 exhibits – ranging from paintings and sculptures, photos, photograms and graphic works to films and stage designs, light and sound installations, tactile boards, manual sculptures and publications – provide a multisensory approach to Moholy-Nagy's work. The objects include numerous international loans, including works privately owned by his daughter, Hattula Moholy-Nagy, and the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Moholy-Nagy's well-known 'Light Prop for an Electric Stage (Light-Space Modulator)', several new constructions of installations he designed but did not execute, and a reconstruction of a work that was destroyed can be seen. The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive supporting programme for adults, young people and children. It is accessible for the blind and visually impaired and also for wheelchair users. Audio guides for children and adults, as well as audio guides specifically intended for the blind and visually impaired, are available. Docents are able to offer visitors information about the art works personally in direct conversations. The exhibition, curated by Oliver Botar, Professor of Art History at the University of Manitoba in Canada, is a cooperative venture with the Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art (Winnipeg, Canada) and is sponsored by the Hauptstadtkulturfonds (The Capital Cultural Fund) in Berlin, the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, the Salgo Trust for Education (Port Washington, NY), and the Moholy-Nagy Foundation.

'László Moholy-Nagy was fascinated by the urban life-world and by the new media of his time. At the same time, however, he saw the necessity – in conditions marked by an increasing specialization of knowledge and by floods of information – for people's senses to be trained in order to counteract their alienation from themselves and their environment. He regarded this as being a task for artists, and this is why he was so strongly committed to educational work,' explains Dr. Annemarie Jaeggi, Director of the Bauhaus-Archiv. Moholy-Nagy taught at the Bauhaus from 1923 to 1928, and in Chicago from 1937 until his death in 1946 – initially as the Director of the New Bauhaus and starting in 1939 at the School of Design, which was later to become the Institute of Design.

Oliver Botar, guest curator and expert on Moholy-Nagy, sums up the current relevance of Moholy-Nagy's work: 'Moholy-Nagy's film and photographic experiments, his light and sound art, his kinetic and multimedia works and his participatory installations, as well as his thoughts on media theory, have continued to inspire artists and scientists down to the present day. His work is a fruitful starting-point for thinking about the influence of new technologies on our sensory experience of reality and about the importance we want to give to these innovations in our lives.'

The exhibition provides information about key topics in Moholy-Nagy's art that are closely connected with the Lebensreformbewegung (life reform movement) and biocentric approaches of the 1920s. He believed that in an increasingly technological modern world, the organic development of the individual would only be possible through the integration of all of the human senses and the intellect. He saw potential for this in both the old and new media, in high culture and popular culture, and in the arts and sciences, and he extended his view beyond the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell to include the sense of movement and depth as well. New technologies were to serve to expand the human sense organs, and he rejected hierarchical views of perception and media. Moholy-Nagy regarded art as information and all of the media as potential means of implementing an artistic idea. Central aspects of his work such as interdisciplinary and multimedia qualities, multisensory perception, Neues Sehen (New Vision), immersion and participation, transparency, reflection and movements are illuminated more closely from this viewpoint.

The presentation of his designs for the '*Kinetic Constructive System*' (1922–28) illustrates Moholy-Nagy's role as a pioneer of participatory and immersive art. His *enamel series* (1922–23), also known as telephone pictures, illustrate his importance as a pioneer of a conceptual media art, as the works anticipate digital art forms to some extent. The exhibition 'Sensing the Future: László Moholy-Nagy, the Media and the Arts' is also showing several of Moholy-Nagy's films, as well as paintings, photograms and photos in which light is used as a raw material for art. Works by contemporary artists such as '*Aromapoetry*' (2011) by Eduardo Kac and Olafur Eliasson's '*World illuminator*' (2014) are continuations of Moholy-Nagy's approaches, while other artists have executed some of his uncompleted concepts specially for the exhibition, in homage to this visionary universal artist – such as Lancelot Coar and Patrick Harrop, with their attempt to implement Moholy-Nagy's idea for a multidimensional polycinema. A book is being published to accompany the exhibition.

Publication:

Oliver Botar, *Sensing the Future: Moholy-Nagy, the Media and the Arts*, Lars Müller Verlag (Zurich), approx. 200 pages with approx. 400 illustrations, ISBN 978-3-03778-434-1 (German edition), ISBN 978-3-03778-433-4 (English edition), price: € 35.

Contemporary artists taking part in the exhibition:

Eduardo Aquino; Naomi Clare Crellin; Lancelot Coar and Patrick Harrop; Olafur Eliasson; Ken Gregory; Gottfried Jäger and Karl Martin Holzhäuser; Eduardo Kac; Erika Lincoln; Guy Maddin; Bernie Miller; Javier Navarro; Freya Olafson; Floris Neusüss and Renate Heyne; Peter Yeadon and others.

Lenders:

International: Hattula Moholy-Nagy; The Guggenheim Museum (New York); National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC); Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (Edinburgh, United Kingdom); Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno (IVAM, Valencia, Spain); Kunstmuseet Brundlund Slot (Denmark); Kunstmuseum Winterthur (Switzerland). From Germany: Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung Köln (Cologne); Sprengel Museum, Hannover; Kunsthalle Bielefeld; Städtisches Museum Gelsenkirchen; Saarland Museum Saarbrücken; Museum Wiesbaden; Museum Folkwang Essen.

Exhibition Design: Rodney LaTourelle und Louise Witthöft

Public supporting programme (in German):

Every Saturday at 3 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.: bauhaus\_führung (free of charge plus museum admission fee)

Wed. 8 Oct., 7 p.m.: exhibition tour: 'László Moholy-Nagy and Contemporary Art', with curator Prof. Oliver Botar. Admission free. Registration: [visit@bauhaus.de](mailto:visit@bauhaus.de)

Wed. 8 Oct. / Sun. 9 Nov., 23 Nov. / Sat. 6 Dec., each at 3 p.m.: guided tours for the visually impaired. Regis-

tration: [visit@bauhaus.de](mailto:visit@bauhaus.de)

Sun. 12 Oct. / 9 Nov. / 11 Jan., 11 a.m.: 'bauhaus\_brunch': brunch, admission and guided tour: € 19, members € 15. Registration: [visit@bauhaus.de](mailto:visit@bauhaus.de)

Mon.–Fri., 20–24 Oct., 10 a.m.–2 p.m.: bauhaus\_kids 'The World of Light and Shade': age 8 up, fee € 30, materials € 5. Registration: [info@jugend-im-museum.de](mailto:info@jugend-im-museum.de)

Sun. 26 Oct. / 30 Nov. / 14 Dec., 11 a.m.: bauhaus\_family 'Tightrope Walking, with Mixed Materials': family workshop, age 5 up, fee: children € 6, adults € 9, materials € 4.50. Registration: [info@jugend-im-museum.de](mailto:info@jugend-im-museum.de)

Fri. 5 Dec., 7 p.m.: lecture: 'László Moholy-Nagy, the Media and the Arts' by curator Oliver Botar. Venue: Canadian Embassy, Leipziger Platz 17, 10117 Berlin. Please plan time for passing security checks at the entrance to the Embassy (passport or identity card required).

Sat. 6 Dec., 2–4 p.m.: guided tour of the special exhibition by the curator, with Prof. Oliver Botar. Participation: € 6, concessions € 3. Registration: [visit@bauhaus.de](mailto:visit@bauhaus.de)

#### Biography of László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946)

László Moholy-Nagy was born László Weisz in Bácsborsod, Hungary, in 1895. He initially studied law in Budapest, before serving in the Austro-Hungarian army from 1915 to 1918. As a member of the Budapest circle of activists led by Lajos Kassák, he learned about the activities of the Italian Futurists and the Expressionists. After briefly attending a private art college, he moved first to Vienna in 1919 and then in 1920 to Berlin, where he encountered the cross-media Dadaist art of Raoul Hausmann and Kurt Schwitters. Through his first wife, Lucia (Schulz) Moholy, he came into closer contact with biocentrism and the ideas of the educational reform movement. In 1921, following his initial contacts with Russian Constructivism, he started to produce material constructions and abstract paintings. In 1922, he wrote several manifestos and articles describing his future programme of work and had his first exhibition in the 'Der Sturm' gallery in Berlin. He worked as a teacher at the Bauhaus from 1923 to 1928, and published the *bauhausbücher* (Bauhaus Books) and the *bauhaus journal* there. In 1925, he published his first book, *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, which was to become a key manifesto for media art. In 1928, he left the Bauhaus to work as freelance graphic artist in Berlin and he separated from Lucia Moholy. He published an account of his educational approach in *Von Material zu Architektur* in 1929. From 1929 to 1932, he produced documentary films in the style of the New Vision. His experimental mechanical device for light painting, *Light Prop for an Electric Stage*, was presented at the German Werkbund Exhibition in Paris in 1930. He met his future wife, the actress and screenplay writer Sibylle Pietzsch, in 1932. Following the Nazi rise to power in 1933, he decided – as an avant-garde artist and Hungarian with Jewish origins – to move abroad. His first daughter was born. He moved first to Amsterdam in 1934, and then with his family to London in 1935. He became the Director of the New Bauhaus in Chicago in 1937 and after its closure in 1939 he opened the School of Design, which was later to become the Institute of Design. He died of leukemia in 1946. His book *Vision in Motion* was published posthumously in 1947.

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