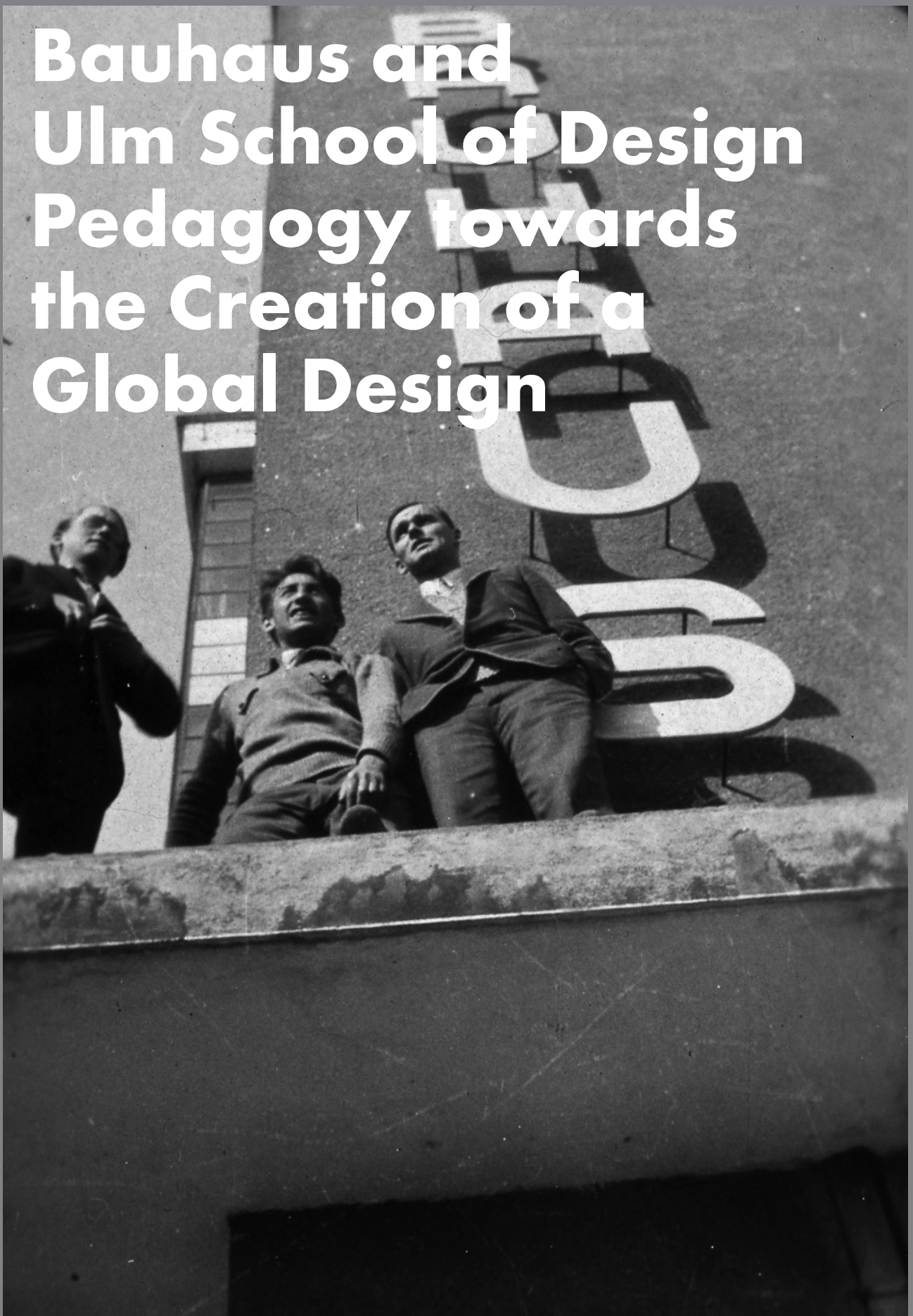


Bauhaus and Ulm School of Design Pedagogy towards the Creation of a Global Design



The relevance of the Bauhaus and the Ulm School of Design to the development of a global design is widely acknowledged. With the inclusion of the Bauhaus on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites, this received worldwide recognition, and thereby acknowledged not only the architecture, but also the pedagogical concept. Since a comprehensive analysis of the pertinent issues far exceeds the parameters of this contribution, I would like to focus on two aspects: a brief exposition of the Bauhaus building and the Ulm School of Design as built manifestoes of their pedagogical concepts and the dissemination of these concepts by the institutions' students and educators.

By Monika Markgraf

The pedagogical concept of the Bauhaus involved practice-based training for a new type of designer who worked in an interdisciplinary way and collaborated on life reform: "the primary aim for the development of the Bauhaus was the synthesis of all forms of artistic activity, the unification of all manual handicrafts and technical disciplines as the indispensable parts of a new architecture, that is, an architecture conducive to the spirited life".¹ Before beginning their training, the students attended the obligatory preparatory course, in which they were to emancipate themselves from formal conventions. At the Bauhaus, the design of products was not to be based on formal criteria, but was to grow out of the 'essence of things'. "Everything is defined by its essence. In order to design it so that it functions as it should, its essence must first be investigated, because it must completely serve its purpose, that is, practically fulfil its functions, be durable, inexpensive and 'aesthetic' [...] but a harmonious and rational functioning of everyday life is not the ultimate aim, but merely a prerequisite in order to attain a maximum of personal freedom".²

The Bauhaus building is regarded as a built manifesto of the Bauhaus concept of its founder, Walter Gropius. It is divided into parts which assimilate various functions, such as working, learning and living, and in which the volumes, façades, spatial structure and surfaces are designed differently according to these functions. The architectonic quality thrives on simple elements, balanced proportions and nuanced details. Industrial products are integrated as given elements in the design, and the collective of *Bauhauslers* in the workshops participated in the décor and furnishing of the building. In this way, functionality and aesthetics merged into a single entity, as was called for in the program of the Bauhaus.

Since its foundation, the Bauhaus was engaged in an ongoing process of reform. As such, Hannes Meyer, the director who succeeded Gropius, developed a pedagogical concept for the training of architects, in which the design process was based on systematic and detailed analyses, such as the precise calculation of the positions of the sun or the investigation of domestic processes, and incorporated aspects from sciences such as sociology or psychology. The balcony access houses in the Dessau-Törten estate and the ADGB Trade Union School in Bernau, built collectively by the Bauhaus Building Department, are regarded as built manifestoes. The programmatic layouts successfully realize the functional concept in the architectonic clarity and the practical design through aesthetic discipline.

With the third Bauhaus director, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the curriculum became more streamlined and specialized in the sense of a school of architecture, whereby the preparatory course was also dispensed with. Unlike Gropius and Meyer, Mies did not realize his goals by means of a systematic pedagogical concept. The Bauhaus finally closed in 1933 in Berlin after the National Socialists came to power.

The Bauhaus was succeeded in Germany by the Ulm School of Design (HfG), which opened in 1955. Max Bill, who had studied at the Bauhaus Dessau from 1927 to 1929, played a significant part in its foundation and in the development of its pedagogical program. Its founders Inge Aicher-Scholl, Otl Aicher and Max Bill adopted the subtitle of the Bauhaus Dessau 'School of Design', built on the ideas of the Bauhaus and developed an interdisciplinary education program with departments for architecture, product design, visual communication, information and film (the 'Ulm model'). New insights from sciences such as ergonomics, cybernetics or information theory were incorporated into the work: "Ulm's entire approach is essentially an enlightening one, namely the attempt to establish an organic connection between society and culture on the one hand, and science and theory on

< Three *Bauhauslers* on a canopy of the Dessau Bauhaus building in 1929 (Walter Gropius, 1926).

Photo by Arieh Sharon?, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.

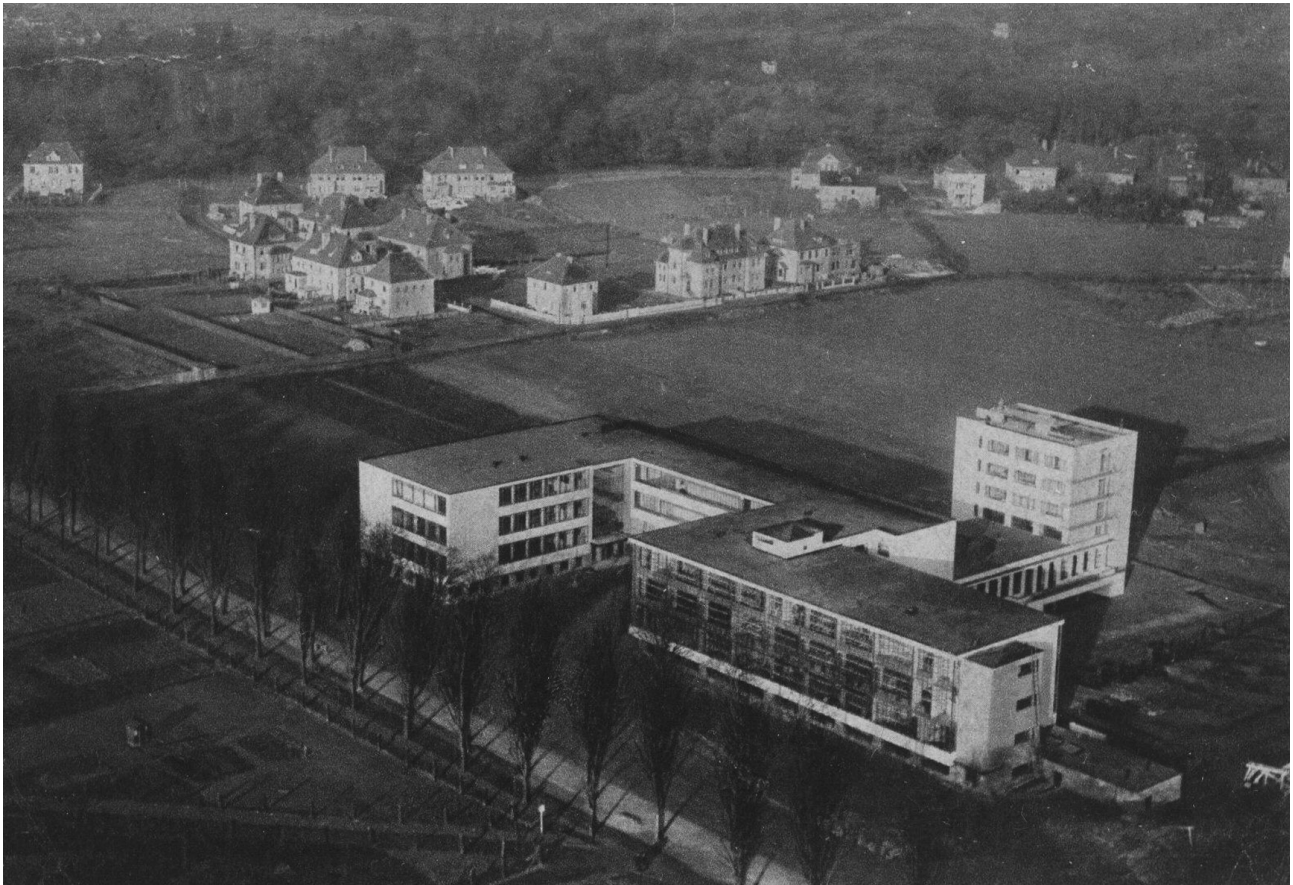
Figure 1. Aerial View of the Bauhaus Building in 1926 (**Walter Gropius**, 1926). Postcard by Junkers Luftbild. Photo author unknown, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.

Figure 2. Ulm School of Design in 1955 (**Max Bill**, 1955). Photo by Sisi von Schweinitz, © HfG-Archive, Ulmer Museen, Ulm.

Figure 3. Federal School of ADGB in Bernau near Berlin, inner courtyard with pergola, ca. 1930 (**Hannes Meyer**, **Hans Wittwer** and Building Department of the Bauhaus Dessau, 1930). Photo by Walter Peterhans, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, © Museum Folkwang, Essen.

Figure 4. Ulm School of Design terrace in 1960. Photo by: Claus Wille, © HfG-Archive, Ulmer Museen, Ulm.

the other".³ Training lasted four years, the first of which was spent on the preparatory course. The first lecturers included, alongside the former *Bauhauslers* Josef Albers, Walter Peterhans, Johannes Itten and Helene Nonné-Schmidt, young lecturers such as the Ulm graphic designer Otl Aicher, the Dutch national Hans Gugelot and the Argentine national Tomás Maldonado. Guest lecturers from all over the world, such as Charles and Ray Eames in 1958, enhanced the school's program. In 1956 Max Bill left the school, because his Bauhaus-influenced vi-



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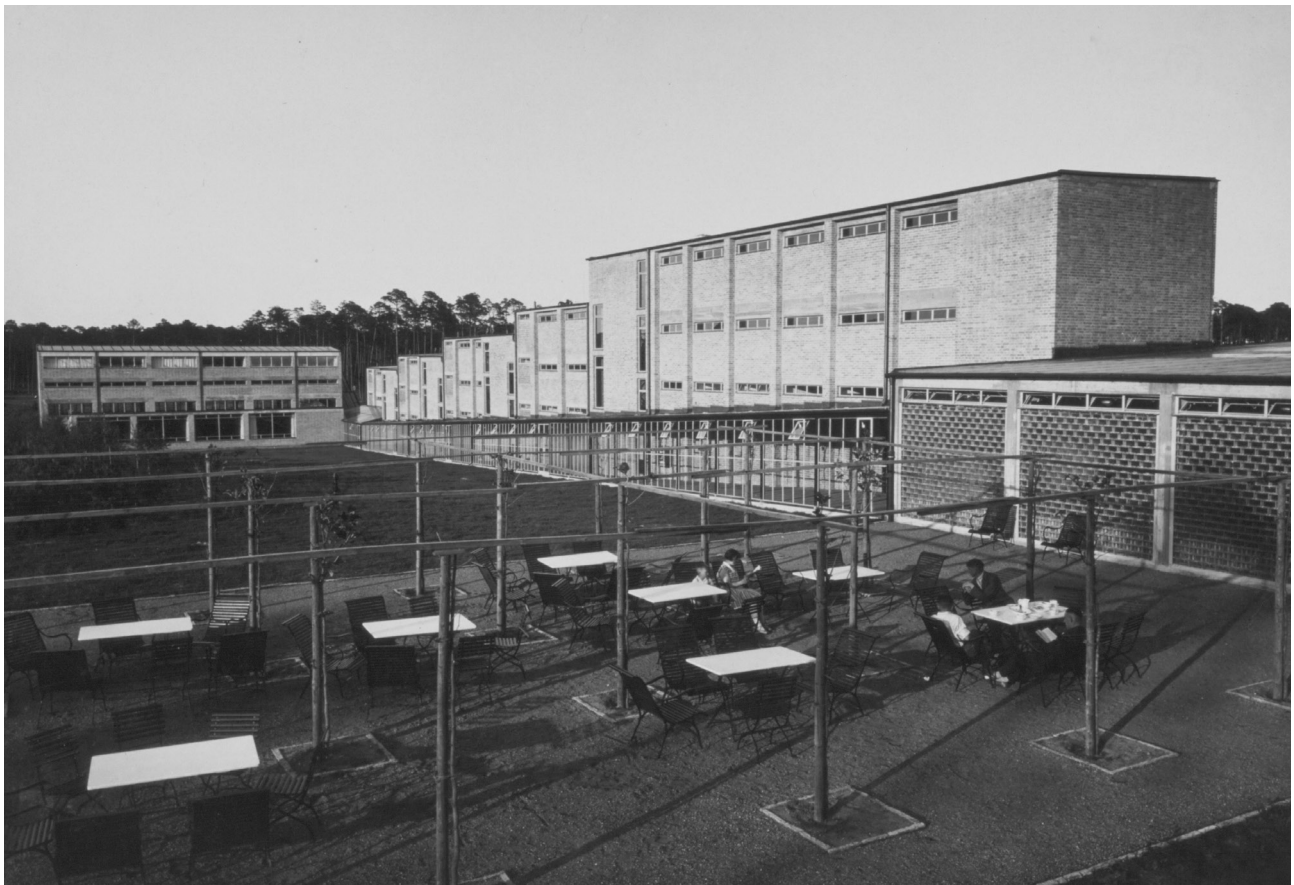


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sion of the designer at the centre of the designing process was no longer accepted. Tomás Maldonado formulated the new position, which embraced a more scientific approach to design: "the mainspring of our curiosity, our studies and our theoretical endeavors was our desire to create a solid methodological foundation for the work of design".⁴ After funding was withdrawn, the school closed in 1968, incidentally the very same year that the large touring exhibition '50 Jahre Bauhaus' opened in Stuttgart.

The architecture of the Ulm School of Design is, like

the Bauhaus building, part of the school's substantive program and documents, in both the spatial organization and the material details, the general concept of the school where working, learning and campus life merged into one. Form and materiality articulate Modernity and an emergence into a better society, whereby both space and décor are adapted to interdisciplinary work and flexibility. The distinct design vocabulary of the cubic building, its austere materiality and its great openness, are consistent with the analytical and purist approach to design.



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Figure 5. **Josef Albers** teaching at the Black Mountain College, 1944. Photo by Josef Breitenbach. Creditline: Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.

Figure 6. **Walter Gropius** teaching in Harvard University, 1944. Photo by Jerry Cooke/ PIX Inc., New York, Bauhaus Archive Berlin.

Figure 7. Members of the **Hannes-Meyer** Group in Moscow in front of the Arbatsky-Place. 1/2 Flat 3.

From left to right: **Nutza Katalan, Tibor Weiner, Pin Tolziner, Konrad Püschel, Margret Mengel, Lili Polgar, Antonin Urban**, 01.05.1932. Photo author unknown, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.

Figure 8. Students of the Building Department in front of the Bauhaus, 1932 (**Walter Gropius**, 1926). Photo by Stella Steyn, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.

Figure 9. **Max Bill** and **Charles Eames**, 1958. Photo by Ernst Hahn, © HfG-Archive, Ulmer Museen, Ulm.

Figure 10. **Tomás Maldonado** teaching *Grundlehre* (preparatory course), 1955. Photo by Ernst Hahn, © HfG-Archive, Ulmer Museen, Ulm.

Although the Bauhaus closed in 1933 and the Ulm School of Design in 1968, their influence was by no means over. The dissemination of the pedagogical concept was intended in the training, although the formal adoption of design elements was rejected. Walter Gropius was not alone in his vehement repudiation of a 'Bauhaus style': "the goal of the Bauhaus is not a 'style', system, dogma or canon, neither formula nor fashion! It will be dynamic, as long as it does not depend on the form, but seeks the aura of life itself!"⁵ At the Ulm School of Design, too, the form of a thing was to evolve from the precise analysis of all its aspects, and not from the reproduction of forms.

At the same time, a certain homogeneity in design emerged internationally, which was also apparent in the Bauhaus products since the Bauhaus exhibition of 1923 under the slogan 'Art and technology—a new unity'. In 1925 in his book *International Architecture* Walter Gropius presented this similarity of formal elements, based on selected buildings from different countries. In a brief introductory text, he explains: "a homogeneity of the Modern building form resulting from world traffic and world technology, which transcends the natural boundaries to which peoples and individuals adhere, breaks fresh ground".⁶ From this, he extrapolated the term 'International Architecture', which is characterized by elements such as precise form, simplicity in multiplicity, organization according to



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the functions, limitation to typical basic forms and series and repetitions of these. Hannes Meyer also referred to this international development in 1928 in the journal *Bauhaus*: "this functional-biological notion of building as the shaping of life processes leads logically to pure construction: this constructive world of forms has no fatherland. It is the expression of an international spirit of building. Internationality is one virtue of the epoch".⁷ With the book *International Style: Architecture since 1922*, which was published in 1932 to accompany the exhibition 'Modern Architecture: International Exhibition' in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the term 'International Style' became commonplace. While the architecture of the Bauhaus, which was also presented there, was not given the

title 'Bauhaus style' as such, it was nevertheless branded as a 'style'. In fact, the design methodology was rarely understood or implemented, and formal elements of the 'style' were copied instead.

The pedagogical concept of the Bauhaus and the Ulm School of Design was disseminated and became highly influential worldwide, essentially through the work of the *Bauhauslers*—a circumstance, which is now receiving more attention in research.⁸ While a comprehensive description of the diverse paths taken and their numerous interconnections exceeds the scope of this contribution, some aspects must nevertheless be addressed.

International mobility was already part of the program at the historic Bauhaus, because it was closely intertwined with the cultural movements in Europe and further afield. The educational program, too, not only had an interdisciplinary character, but also an international one, since many of the masters and students at the Bauhaus had come together from several different countries, such as the USA, Japan, Hungary, Russia, Switzerland or The Netherlands. The guest lecturers, too, came from different parts of the world, including, for example, El Lissitzky from Moskou, Rudolf Carnap from Vienna or Karel Teige from Prague. Some *Bauhauslers* worked for a time in other countries, such as Hinnerk Scheper, who, with his wife Lou and Erich Borchert, collaborated in Moscow on solutions to the artistic and technical problems of color design in architecture. After completing their time at the Bauhaus, the masters and students acted in diverse ways as multipliers and contributed significantly to the global dissemination of the Bauhaus ideas.

The closure of the Bauhaus in 1933 and the for many *Bauhauslers* threatening situation in Germany also initiated a process, in the course of which numerous *Bauhauslers* emigrated to other countries in order to work or teach there in the sense of the Bauhaus. Some of the approximately 50 *Bauhauslers* who ended up in the USA became highly influential. The erstwhile Bauhaus directors Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, for example, continued their work in Harvard or, respectively, Chicago, as professors and practicing architects; Anni and Josef Albers worked in Black Mountain College, Ashville, and László Moholy-Nagy endeavored to set up a 'New Bauhaus' in Chicago. The approximately 40 *Bauhauslers* who emigrated to the Soviet Union were faced with more challenging conditions. The members of the 'Red Bauhaus Brigade' led by Hannes Meyer, for instance, were initially welcomed and worked in the state planning office. However, with the onset of repressions under Stalin's rule, the situation changed. Some *Bauhauslers*, such as Hannes Meyer or Konrad Püschel, were able to leave the country again, while others such as Antonin Urban

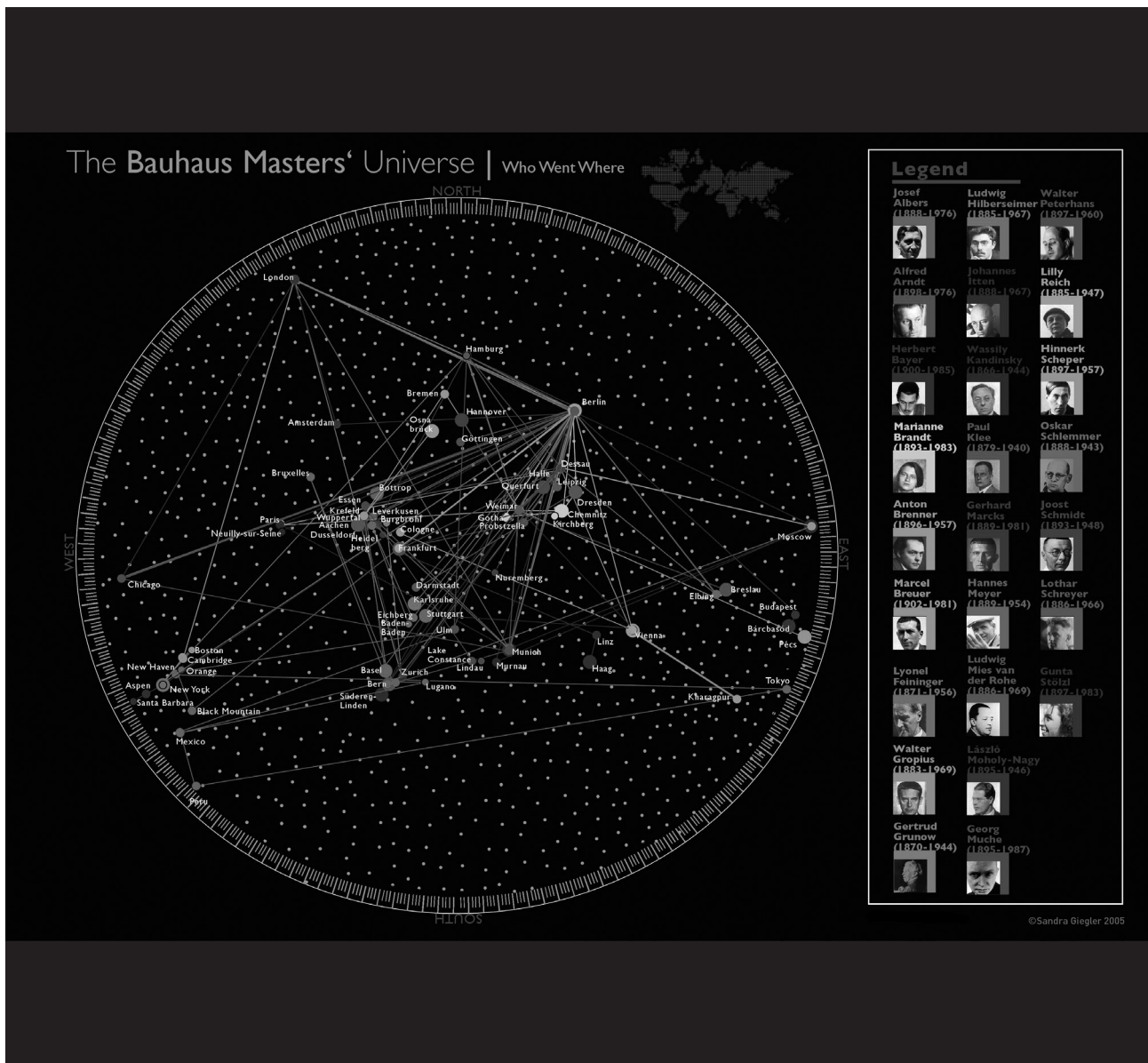
or Philipp Tolziner were murdered or, respectively, sentenced to many years' imprisonment. Many *Bauhauslers* carried the Bauhaus concept to European countries and to Palestine, such as Hans Fischli as the director of the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts in Switzerland, Paul Citroen as head of the *Nieuwe Kunstschool* in Amsterdam in The Netherlands, Arie Sharon as an architect in Tel Aviv or a lecturer in Haifa and Ruth Kaiser as the head of weaving workshops in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.

The Ulm School of Design was likewise an internationally aligned institution, the contribution of which to the competitiveness of German products on the international market is widely acknowledged. The global dissemination of the 'Ulm concepts' also occurred to a large degree thanks to the international mobility of the lecturers and students. As with the Bauhaus, many of Ulm's students came from other countries—44% of them in fact, a proportion that was not found at any of the other art schools in Germany. A majority of the 'Ulmers' came from Switzerland, others for instance from the USA, Japan or Italy. All those who actively practiced their professions and attracted international attention with their products were multipliers. Their products included, for example, the M125 furniture system designed by Hans Gugelot, devices for the company Braun, or the Carousel Slide Projector for Kodak. The graphic designs that Otl Aicher developed, for instance for Lufthansa's visual presence or the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, provide a further example. Early surveys by the 'club off ulm' have found that some 18% of the members of the Ulm School of Design subsequently took up teaching, half of those outside Germany, for example in Milan or Paris. The documentation of and research into the career paths of the Ulm students and lecturers has only just begun.

The global mobility of the *Bauhauslers* and the 'Ulmers', as well as their integration in international networks, supported the global dissemination of their pedagogical concepts and thereby the development of a global design. Their work methods and the buildings and products realized according to this systemic provided important impulses for the global development of pedagogical concepts, design methodologies and design in the 20th century.

Notes

1. Gropius, Walter, *Bauhausbauten* Dessau, Munich, 1930, reprint Mainz, 1974.
2. Walter Gropius, "Grundsätze der Bauhausproduktion", Gropius, Walter; Moholy-Nagy, László, editors, *Neue Arbeiten der Bauhauswerkstatt*, Munich, 1925, reprint Mainz, 1981.
3. Herbert Lindinger, "HfG und Industrie", Lindinger, Herbert, Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm. Die Moral der Gegenstände, Berlin, 1987.



Figur 11. The Bauhaus Masters' Universe – Who Went Where. © Drawing by Sandra Giegler, 2005.

4. Tomás Maldonado, "Ulm im Rückblick", Lindinger, Herbert, Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm. Die Moral der Gegenstände, Berlin, 1987.
5. Gropius, Walter, *Bauhausbauten Dessau*, Munich, 1930, reprint Mainz, 1974.
6. Gropius, Walter, *Internationale Architektur*, Bauhaus Books n° 1, Munich, 1925.
7. Hannes Meyer, "Bauen", *Bauhaus*, year 2, n° 4, 1928.
8. Among others the research platform 'Impuls-Bauhaus', which since 2008 has been compiling a databank on the Bauhaus' social network and its global impact and presenting it on an interactive website: <http://impuls-bauhaus.de>; the 2009 conference 'bauhaus global', the contributions of which were published in 2010: *Bauhaus Archive Berlin* (Ed.): *Bauhaus Global*. Berlin 2010; a 2011 confer-

ence, the proceedings of which will be published in 2012: Hansen-Schaberg, Inge; Thöner, Wolfgang; Feustel, Adriane, editors, *Entfernt. Frauen des Bauhauses während der NS-Zeit-Verfolgung und Exil*, Munich, 2012.

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Architect, since 1997 scientific associate in historical building research and monument preservation at the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation. Main focus: research, documentation and preservation of the Bauhaus Buildings in Dessau and other MoMo Architecture, development of a building research archive. Several exhibitions and publications. Member of ICOMOS and **docomomo** International, Chair of **docomomo** Germany between 2005 and 2010.