



**Symposium + documentary films
for the centenary of the Bauhaus**

Moderna galerija, Ljubljana

2nd and 3rd December 2019

**100 years
of the bauhaus:
why should
we question
transparency?**

The notorious Bauhaus School was founded by the architect Walter Gropius in 1919 in the German city of Weimar. The school of fine arts, architecture and crafts operated only until 1933 in Weimar, Dessau and Berlin but was attended by students from all over the world. What is more, the reputation of this famous experiment is today as alive as ever.

Bauhaus: the Imperative of Transparency will critically question the interconnection of transparency and the ideas of the famous school in the fields of architecture, art and education, and in society in general. It will also elaborate on the influence of the Bauhaus in Slovenia and within the broader region, which was brought by Bauhaus students from the region of the ex-Yugoslavia.

Transparency was introduced systematically by the Masters at the Bauhaus, namely by Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe. Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer built the first large glass façade on a modern building – the Fagus Factory (1911). Subsequently, Gropius built the biggest curtain glass wall of the time in the main Bauhaus building in Dessau (1926), which became a revolutionary prototype in architecture worldwide. This building advocated for abstraction, technology and transparency, wherein transparency turned out to be a new vital element of architecture. It manifested the openness of modern mankind. Mies van der Rohe also established within his architecture (e.g. Seagram building, Farnsworth House, Chicago Lake Shore Drive) one of the most influential prototypes of “transparent” buildings that changed architecture radically and globally.

The quest for transparency in architecture in the 20th century, where the Bauhaus played such a decisive role, was however also the result of fundamental social changes of the modern period.

What is transparency? Do we still want to be transparent today? What is the legacy of the Bauhaus, especially in the field of transparency, that we are living today? The symposium and the documentaries of the *Bauhaus: The Imperative of Transparency* will seek answers to those questions.

The event will be held in English. The documentary films are in German with English subtitles. Entry is free of charge.

programme

Monday, 2. 12.

Bauhaus and Architecture | documentaries

4.00–5.45 pm

Bauhaus – Model and Myth

Documentary (1998/2009)

Kerstin Stutterheim, Niels Bolbrinker, 104 minutes

break

6.00–7.45 pm

Haus Tugendhat

documentary (2013)

Dieter Reifarth, 112 minutes

Tuesday, 3. 12.

Bauhaus: The Legacy of Transparency | symposium

4.00–5.45 pm

Bauhaus and Transparency | lectures

Jörg H. Gleiter

Transparency: The Evolution of the Principles
of Modern Architecture

Sven-Olov Wallenstein

Dialectics of transparency

Discussion

break

6.00–7.00 pm

**Bauhaus and its influence in Slovenia
and beyond | lectures**

Vesna Meštrić

Bauhaus as a Model for Education

Bogo Zupančič

The Echoes of the Bauhaus School, the B Course

7.00–8.00 pm

Bauhaus and Transparency | round table

Guests

Jörg H. Gleiter, Sven-Olov Wallenstein, Bogo Zupančič
and Vesna Meštrić, moderated by Mateja Kurir.

Jörg H. Gleiter

Transparency: The Evolution of the Principles of Modern Architecture

General knowledge associates the concept of transparency with glass. However, glass not only stands for transparency, but also for a lack of aura. As Walter Benjamin held in *Experience and Impoverishment*, “glass is at all the enemy of the secret”. Transparency, thus, pulls away the veil of classical beauty breaking with the inside-outside dichotomy of architecture and voyeuristically exposing the interior to the outside. In combination with electric light, glass has the potential to transform architecture from an opaque object that is illuminated by sunlight from the outside into a bright shining crystal at night. Hence, early modernist glass façades are often linked to the expressionist notion of the crystal.

Despite this modern stereotype, one has to notice that the expressionist day-night effect was a side effect and a discovery in a later stage of modernity. It would be reductive, as well, to declare transparency a mere aftereffect of the development of new building technologies. Indeed, the first modern glass façade built by Gropius in the 1911 Fagus Factory in Alfeld was not the result of a radical break with tradition but the result of a conceptual inversion of the principles of classicism. The uniqueness of the famous glass corner at Alfeld consists less in being the first of its kind than in its placing modernism within the evolutionary logic of architecture and its centuries-old tradition.

While Gropius’ glass façade of 1926 in Dessau still follows a look-through idea and thus a conventional concept of transparency, it was, albeit in theory, in Mies van der Rohe’s project of his 1919 Friedrichstraße high-rise building that the concept of glass detached itself from its hidden link to classicism, eventually discovering its own immanent architectural potential.

Sven-Olov Wallenstein

Dialectics of transparency

The talk will investigate the concept of transparency in the writings of Paul Scheerbart, Sigfried Giedion, and Walter Benjamin. Transparency was debated and theorized across the intellectual field, from architecture, the visual arts, and cinema, to literature and philosophy, and it fused theories of subjectivity and perception, concepts drawn from engineering, and ideas of an emergent social order that would overcome the division between individual and collective.

Scheerbart imagines how glass architecture would evolve from a singular building until it covered the whole face of the earth, providing a complete enlightenment, an infinite luminosity. He stresses the sensuous and voluptuous aspects of glass—what attracts him is the possibility of modulating light and shade, heat and cold, and the achievement of a state of maximum comfort and luxury, where interior and exterior blend together in a delightful continuity and our homes become “cathedrals” for the fulfilment of desires.

Sigfried Giedion's programmatic *Bauen in Frankreich* takes a somewhat different route, and proposes that transparency will undo the division between subject and object, and between the organic and the technological. In the modern world, he prophesizes, individual things will be dissolved into a single, intense, and malleable space, where mind and machine are absorbed into a new kind of spatial unity that renders all entities open to each other, which he terms "interpenetration" (*Durchdringung*). This interpenetration signals, through the changes that it effects in consciousness, a political shift toward a space of communality, a being-together of subjects and objects as well of classes and social groups.

Walter Benjamin, the third presented case, suggests that modern architecture heralds a culture characterized by positive "poverty," where the use of transparent materials like glass would reduce the space of bourgeois interiority and its psychological depth.

Vesna Meštrić

Bauhaus as a Model for Education

Functionality, inventiveness and aesthetics of pure forms are only a few of the basic guidelines of the educational programme of the Bauhaus, school for architecture, art and design, which today denotes a recognisable expression – not only in architecture and the visual arts, but also implies a specific world-view and way of life.

Six students from the territory of the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia studied at the Bauhaus: Avgust Černigoj from Slovenia; Otti Berger, Gustav Bohutinsky, Ivana Tomljenović and Marija Baranyaj from Croatia; and Selman Selmanagić from Bosnia. The lecture will present their oeuvres and the influences of educational and design models of the Bauhaus on the artistic and educational practice after the Second World War. During this period, the ideas of the Bauhaus were most pronounced through the activity of EXAT 51 Group, the programme of the Academy of Applied Arts in Zagreb, and the programme of the B Course at the Faculty of Architecture in Ljubljana, which played a significant role in the development of architecture, art and design of the second half of the 20th century in this region.

Bogo Zupančič

The Echoes of the Bauhaus School, the B Course

Prof. Edvard Ravnikar, the Head of the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy of Ljubljana, introduced a new experimental design programme – the B Course – in 1960. Along with his colleagues, he wished to convey to the younger generation the modern design principles he had been following since the 1950s. To do so, he relied on the most respected pedagogical tradition – that of the Bauhaus school and its post-war successor, the School of

Design in Ulm, Germany. The B Course design programme was crucial for the development of Slovene modern design and architecture for a number of reasons: because of its introduction of new work methods based on experimental research, its systematic and analytical approach, and its inversion of the order of the study process – and because of the enthusiasm with which students approached their studies.

Although discontinued in its second year, the B Course can be ranked among those European and North American design schools focused on modernization that, in the post-war period, underwent a revision based on modern educational ideas and practices. Most importantly, however, it represents a historic first attempt to introduce a formal university-level design programme in Slovenia.

speakers

Jörg H. Gleiter (Prof. Dr.-Ing. habil., BDA), since 2012, he is the head of the chair of architecture theory at the *Institute of Architecture* of the Technische Universität Berlin. Between 2005–2012 he was a professor of aesthetics at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. Guest professorships in Venice, Tokyo, Weimar and Providence (RI). Gleiter is the founder and editor of the book series *ArchitekturDenken*, and co-editor of the International Internet Journal for Architectural Theory *Cloud-Cuckoo-Land*. Among his publications are *Architekturtheorie 1863–1938* [Architecture Theory 1863–1938] (DOM Publishers Berlin 2018), *Architektur und Philosophie* [Architecture and Philosophy] (ed. together with Ludger Schwarte, Bielefeld 2015); *Ornament Today. Digital. Material. Structural.* (ed. by Jörg H. Gleiter, Bozen 2012).

Sven-Olov Wallenstein is a Professor of Philosophy at Södertörn University (Stockholm) and he specializes in modern European philosophy and aesthetic theory. He is the translator of works by Baumgarten, Winckelmann, Lessing, Kant, Hegel, Frege, Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Rancière and Agamben, as well as the author of numerous books on philosophy, contemporary art, and architecture. Recent publications include *Upplysningens estetik: Nedslag i 1700-talet* (2019), *Spacing Philosophy: Lyotard and the Idea of the Exhibition* (2019, with Daniel Birnbaum), and *Adorno: Negative dialektik och estetisk teori* (2019), as well as translations of Adorno's *Negative Dialektik*, *Ästhetische Theorie*, and *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomie*.

Vesna Meštrić is a Senior Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MSU), Zagreb. She graduated both in the field of art history and archaeology from the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Zagreb. In 2005, she started to work at MSU Zagreb as curator of Vjenceslav Richter's and Nada Kareš Richter's Collection. Her research interests include contemporary art, interpretation and presentation of collections, conservation, with a focus on avant-garde and postmodern movements in art and architecture. She is the author of various exhibitions, among which are *Bauhaus – Networking Ideas and Practice* (2015),

a retrospective exhibition of Vjenceslav Richter *Rebel with a Vision* (2017). She was the coordinator of the European project “BAUNET” and co-author of the *Runaway Art* project. In 2017, she participated in the MoMA workshop *Getting Started: A Shared Responsibility*, supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant.

Bogo Zupančič is Museum Councillor at the Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO), Ljubljana. He graduated in 1987 at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Ljubljana and he received his PhD in 2000 with the topic (*Housing*) *architecture in market conditions*. As a student of painting, he was enrolled in the class of prof. Vladimir Veličković at the ENSBA in Paris (1989/90). He worked as a journalist and wrote about urban issues and published articles on Slovenian architecture. He is the author of eight books: *Ljubljana Skyscraper – Money and Architecture* (2001), *The Architect Josip Costaperaria and the Modern Bourgeoisie of Ljubljana* (2004), *The Urban Stories of Ljubljana* 1–24, 25–48, 49–72, 73–93 (2005–2008), *Chamber of Engineers of Ljubljana 1919–44* (2013) and *Plečnik’s Students and other Yugoslav Architects in Le Corbusier’s Atelier* (2017). In the last years, he has prepared several exhibitions at MAO. *Plečnik’s students at Le Corbusier’s Studio* (2007, 2017) and *The B Course* (2012, 2015) should be highlighted as they were both part of international platforms. He is also working as an expert in the Slovenian Unesco WHL working group.

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