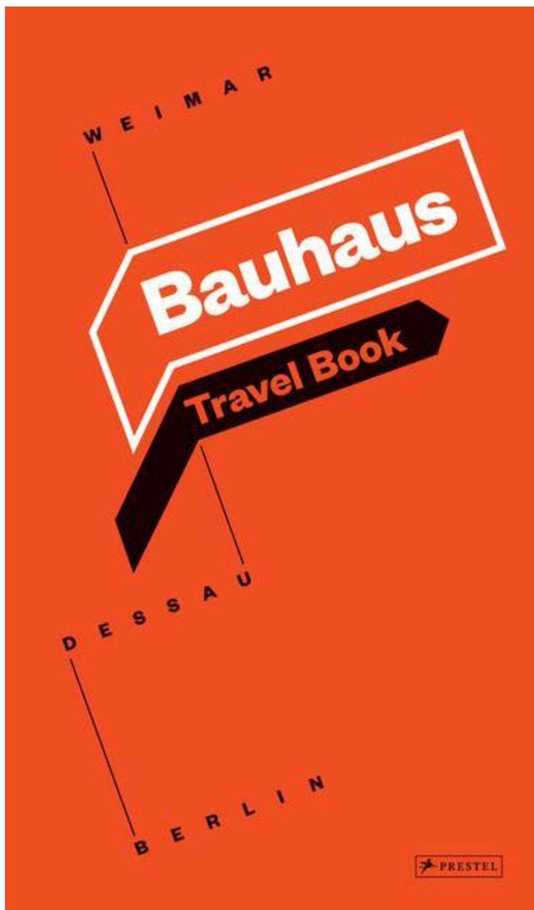

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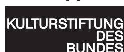

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Journey to the Bauhaus
Thoughts on a Travel Book

In 2019 the Bauhaus is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its founding. Initiated in Weimar in 1919, relocated to Dessau in 1925 and closed in Berlin in 1933, under pressure from the Nazis, the Bauhaus is still influential around the world today. In its international form, it is one of Germany's most successful cultural exports. Many realities, places, and narratives are linked with the Bauhaus. The present book provides an opportunity to point out facets of the history of its influence and reception in Weimar, Dessau, and Berlin.
The Bauhaus was a vibrant school and provided a place for experimentation in every area of design. Full of curiosity, its members explored new terrain. In doing so, they were seeking nothing less than a revolution of everyday life, in order to improve how people live and their coexistence in society. These questions are just as pressing and relevant today as 100 years ago.

Today, the Bauhaus often stands for Modernism per se: the name used to refer to the epoch as a whole. All of this raises the question of how an academy of design that existed for only 14 years and trained no more than 1250 students can have achieved such worldwide importance. There is no simple answer. According to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the third and final director of the Bauhaus, the influence of the Bauhaus arose from the fact "that it was an idea." As Mies claimed, "This kind of resonance" could not be "achieved through organization, nor through propaganda. Only an idea has the power to disseminate itself so broadly." Perhaps this also explains why today the Bauhaus is often regarded as something isolated: as placeless. Certainly, it is highly enthralling to pursue the concrete geographic stations of the Bauhaus and to examine the history of its artistic and political influence in relation to concrete locations.

The present travel book embodies a search for traces, one which leads from Weimar—where the Bauhaus was founded in 1919—to Dessau—where art and technology were joined to form a new unity—and finally to Berlin. There, in 1933, the Bauhaus experiment ended under tremendous intellectual pressure. This book, however, is not devoted to a historically correct review of the school's evolution. It seeks instead to establish connections, to delineate networks, to highlight the polymorphic character of the Bauhaus, and to inform readers about the subsequent destinies of a number of important "Bauhäusler." It is not then, simply a question of Weimar, Dessau, and Berlin, but of a number of byways as well: for example, the church in Gelmeroda, a lifelong motif for Feininger of the former Bauhaus ceramics workshop in Dornburg, or the Rabe House in Zwenkau near Leipzig, for which Oskar Schlemmer executed wall designs. Such striking stations are associated with astonishing discoveries, as historic architecture from the Bauhaus period is juxtaposed with objects through which former Bauhaus members shaped postwar Modernism. This book, then, doesn't present a process that has been terminated, but instead presents the Bauhaus as a model that still has the power to transform society, to shape the human environment—not excluding instances of failures.

The journey of the Bauhaus goes all the way back to 1915–16, when Walter Gropius was considered as a potential successor to Henry van der Velde as the director of the Kunstgewerbeschule, or School of Arts and Crafts, in Weimar. At that time, he composed an exposé that already voices the core ideas of the later Bauhaus program. It speaks of a working collective composed of "architects, sculptors, and workers of all ranks," modeled on the masons' lodges of the Middle Ages. In 1919, stimulated by seminal discussions held by the Workers' Council for Art, Gropius published a manifesto which would enter history as the founding document of the Bauhaus. "The ultimate aim of creative activity is building," it reads, before concluding in an emphatic appeal: "Together, let us will, conceive, and create the new building of the future, which will combine architecture, sculpture, and painting in a single form, and will rise one day toward the heavens from the hands of a million workers as the crystalline symbol of a new and coming faith." In Weimar, the Academy of Fine Arts was amalgamated with the School of Arts and Crafts. Gropius sought an incisive concept for this act of reform and its new program: the Bauhaus, or School of Building. It became a unique marketing device, a seal of quality, a trademark of Modernism. But the concept was never meant to become a label. During his lifetime, Gropius fought against the advertising slogan "Bauhaus style"—without success, as we know today.

For the Bauhaus Manifesto, Lyonel Feininger designed a title page that took the form of a Gothic cathedral with three towers. Invoked

by Gropius, needless to say, was not a concrete sacral building, but instead of a metaphor for the "Gesamtkunstwerk," or "total work of art," composed of architecture, painting, and sculpture. It was also a question of the "new human" who was to have emerged in conjunction with modern society. With its visionary cadences, the manifesto not only attracted numerous students, but also a series of great artists, among them Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger, László Moholy-Nagy, and Johannes Itten, all of whom Gropius brought to Weimar. But only gradually was the model character of the program fleshed out through concrete teaching practices capable of satisfying the needs of students.

In 1922–23, Gropius reworked the program, detaching it from romantic notions of a unified work of art. Now, it was a question of developing prototypes for the industrial manufacture of everyday objects. Through preliminary instruction, through the study of materials and of nature, and after three years spent working with clay, stone, wood, metal, textiles, glass, and paint, students were supposed to advance to the core architectural curriculum. Also dating from this period are the first Bauhaus products, including Marianne Brandt's teapot and Wilhelm Wagenfeld's so-called Bauhaus Lamp. But the political environment in particular was not conducive to the school's development. In 1925, humiliated by the reactionary regional government and demoralized over a period lasting many months, the Bauhaus finally moved from Thuringia to the rising industrial town of Dessau. Not only did Walter Gropius encounter progressive municipal and regional policies there; he could anticipate the involvement of major partners from industry as well. The engineers at Hugo Junkers' aircraft factory seemed especially well-suited to the implementation of his conception of "a new unity of art and technology." But although industry contributed to the production of Marcel Breuer's tubular steel furniture, for example, closer forms of partnership barely materialized. Under Gropius' administration, the Bauhaus became too much a laboratory and research institute.

With the opening in December 1926 of the Bauhaus Building in Dessau, based on designs by the founding director, the institute acquired its emblematic architecture. At this point at the latest, the school's aims became unmistakable. The workshops were given prominent settings in the fully glazed building. From now on, they were operated simultaneously as teaching facilities for beginners, as well as being testing and development centers for advanced practitioners. In addition, small series of products were manufactured here in order to generate the requisite funding. The Bauhaus Building became an icon of modernism, and was celebrated internationally as a prototype of the "modern functional building." In 1927, when instruction in architecture was finally introduced, the school attained the apex of its influence. Yet in early 1928, Gropius resigned. The political pressure was too

much for him — too demanding, especially along with the necessity of neglecting experimental activities in favor of the generation of revenues. Moreover, the emerging recession promised severe cuts in the school's budget.
The Swiss architect Hannes Meyer, already head of the architecture department, took the helm. His main interest was in a practical form of functionalism. Together with his students, he constructed real buildings, actually living his vision of a collective and advocating the "integration of all life-shaping forces." It was no longer a question of art and technology of the new unity, but rather of "satisfying popular needs instead of providing luxury." Through buildings such as the Trade Union School in Bernau, Meyer stood for crystal-clear functional analysis: for an architecture whose relevance emerged from its intended purpose. At the Bauhaus, the new director reorganized the workshops, calling for increased economic efficiency and a social impetus. The rampant proliferation of work on models was curtailed, and designs reduced to a manageable number. Nowhere else was the shift more evident than in the furniture department. Prevailing now were simple and affordable materials such as domestic woods; plywood was combined with tubular steel, and the practical and utilitarian took precedence over the beautiful. Long before IKEA, interestingly, there was experimentation in the area of disassemblable and collapsible furniture. Much of this was presented in the exhibition "The Bauhaus People's Apartment" in the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, albeit at prices not readily accessible to ordinary people. But Hannes Meyer did succeed in establishing stronger ties with industry: for example, a collaboration with the Kandem firm, a manufacture of luminaries. The most notable commercial success, however, was with the Bauhaus wallpapers, which became genuine bestsellers.

In 1930, Hannes Meyer was dismissed as the director of the Bauhaus without notice. The school's growing politicization, particularly the activities of students with a communist orientation, were a thorn in the side of Dessau's political leaders. The reform process initiated by Meyer stalled. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the third and final Bauhaus director, spent just three years reshaping the school. Above all, he needed to establish an atmosphere of calm, something he achieved through authoritarian severity. Under Mies, the Bauhaus evolved into an elite school of architecture, one with few connections to Gropius's ideals. The celebrated Preliminary Course was abandoned, workshop production halted. Nonetheless, Mies did emerge as a charismatic teacher. His principal topic of instruction was the perfected single family home, which was illustrated with examples from his own work. Little was actually built. Mies was interested in the formation of "exemplary architects." He had little enough time for the task. In October 1932, the Dessau municipal council announced the closing of the Bauhaus. Joined by the faithful, Mies withdrew to a former

telephone factory at the edge of Berlin in an attempt to restart the Bauhaus as a private school. But finally, in July of 1933, under growing pressure from the National Socialists, Mies van der Rohe and the other Masters dissolved the school. Many Bauhäusler emigrated, thereby transporting the models, ideas, and aspirations of the great school into the wider world.

The present volume contains much about the struggles with which the Bauhaus had to contend. From the moment of its conception, the school generated polarization because it worked with an eye for the future. People traveling to these locales, so charged with history, should perhaps keep this idea in the back of their minds, in order to ask whether the Bauhaus values remain valid, and where they have been revealed to be erroneous. In three stages, the authors Susanne Knorr, Ingolf Kern, and Christian Welzbacher stroll through towns that belong to the history of the Bauhaus. Brief essays scattered through the text spotlight additional perspectives. Historic photographs complement the new images by Christoph Petras. A comprehensive section on tourism services rounds out each chapter. Accompanying the travel book is a new iPhone app which makes historic locations in Weimar, Dessau, Berlin and around the world accessible via an interactive map. This program, which is available free of charge, also includes a brief lexicon and current news items from the Bauhaus world—more information at bauhaus-online.de/app.
This travel guide is the first to cover all three German Bauhaus locations. It was edited jointly by the Bauhaus Archive/Museum of Design in Berlin, the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, and the Klassik Stiftung Weimar. It resulted from a close collaboration between these institutions, which house major Bauhaus collections, and was supported by the German Federal Cultural Foundation—for which we are extremely grateful. Thanks also to the authors, photographer, and graphic designers for their tremendous commitment, to Norbert Eisold as editor, and to Nicola von Velsen for her meticulous supervision of this project.
The revised new edition now includes the new Bauhaus museums: the bauhaus museum weimar by Heike Hanada, the Bauhaus Museum Dessau by Gonzales Hinz Zabala, and the annex building of Berlin's Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung by Volker Staab.

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Berlin / Dessau / Weimar, 2016

Weimar from a Bauhaus Perspective

Weimar is referred to fondly as the cradle of the Bauhaus. In Weimar, the Bauhaus not only left the cradle, it also outgrew its first pair of shoes. The school survived its teen years here, and was just about to find itself when its continued existence in the town was called into question. There was only one solution: the school would leave. And that's the whole story, albeit in an extremely compressed form.
What remains of the Weimar Bauhaus? How did the school's earliest version leave its mark on the town? At first glance, few outward traces remain in a town which seems mainly preoccupied with the ubiquitous presence of those spirits of Classicism, Goethe and Schiller. But for a number of years now, Weimar has attempted to overcome this one-sided version of its history. Alongside the classical perspective is the Bauhaus point of view. Surfacing at many points in the townscapes are the red rectangle, the yellow triangle, and the blue circle. The souvenir industry has discovered the Bauhaus as well. The concept of the Bauhaus housing estate, a product of the 1920s, has been implemented, albeit under altered premises, but nonetheless successfully in certain instances, and doubtless in a spirit that would have appealed to the young avant-garde school. Weimar marked the ninetieth anniversary of the foundation of the Bauhaus with much fanfare and an ambitious exhibition. After an exhaustive discussion, the town and the *Klassik Stiftung Weimar* (Classical Foundation of Weimar) agreed upon a location for a new and long anticipated Bauhaus Museum. The German government and the federal state of Thuringia hold the Bauhaus in high esteem as an indispensable component of the "Weimar cosmos," and are providing generous funding. And there are students and others in the town who are interested in and committed to new artistic ideas. They tend to resist Weimar's focus on Classicism tourism, and their attitude revives something of the pleasantly refreshing