

## CfA “100 years Bauhaus - alternative perspectives and critical contributions” [June 15, 2018]

“i applaud the fact that our bauhaus is witness to the conjunction of such opposing forces. i also appreciate the struggle of these forces against one another, as long as it results in greater achievements.”-- Paul Klee <sup>1</sup>

In 2019, a flood of publications and activities are to be expected on occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the German Bauhaus of Weimar. Having become part of a German national and cultural canon, the Bauhaus will be celebrated through enormous funds, thereby assuring that its anniversary shall stand in the national limelight. In the process, however, critical perspectives on the history of the Bauhaus, of design during the German Weimar republic and of the role of design in today’s society may well fall by the wayside.

As an institution dedicated to political education, the Rosa Luxemburg foundation also wishes to celebrate the Bauhaus’ anniversary, both in Germany and, through its foreign offices, worldwide. It shall do so in the spirit of Klee’s epigraph, stressing the multi-layered and even contradictory nature of the Weimar institution and of its follow-ups in Dessau and Berlin. As part of this commemoration, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation shall edit a printed (and perhaps open-access digital) volume featuring informative as well as critical scientific articles, in both German and English.

This critical perspective may address the following aspects:

1. Did the Bauhaus represent a certain style of design and architecture or did it stand for a pedagogical principle that centered on the primordial role of, first, the individual (as in Johannes Itten’s teachings) and, later the collectivity?
2. Or was the Bauhaus mainly an institution set out to generate products in collaboration with industries, products that were meant to be accesible to a wide segment of the working and urban population (as Walter Gropius and especially Hannes Meyer called for)?
3. Has this institution, which once questioned traditional design and offered innovative challenges, turn into a tourist-oriented “brand” -- as in the official denomination of Dessau as “City of the Bauhaus”--. How is it being integrated, all too neatly, into a national sucesss story?
4. Or does the Bauhaus still represent a vanguard school of design whose reformed pedagogy, ideas, ideals and products continue to inspire today and to be politically meaningful?
5. Is it worthwhile to reconnect with the ideas and criticisms voiced by the Bauhaus? Can this endeavour result in producing a “living design”, as Hannes Meyer proclaimed, that is, a

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in [klubimbauhaus.de/%C3%BCber-uns/geschichte](http://klubimbauhaus.de/%C3%BCber-uns/geschichte)

design relevant to human existence. What artistic, technical or social challenges do design and architecture face today?

6. Was the global spread of the Bauhaus idea and the emigration of Bauhaus teachers and students a diverse, even contradictory process, which affected varied regions of the world in different ways, or can one identify dominant channels of dissemination? To what extent did especially the Cold War period contribute to an 'official' version of the Bauhaus and of its history?

At the core of these possible lines of inquiry lies the question of the nature of "hegemonic" and "counter-hegemonic" perspectives, then and now: how they form in accordance with economic and (national) political interests as well as mechanisms of exclusion, gender differences and claims of professionalism and institutionalism.

The proposed publication seeks to nourish a growing literature that questions the Bauhaus myth and its historiography. It also holds an informative purpose, disseminating knowledge of the institution among the political and cultural Left. In sum, the publication shall contribute to political education while also meeting standards of social scientific inquiry. Without aspirations of being comprehensive, the volume shall feature chapters that fall within the following three themes:

- The history and significance of the Bauhaus in Weimar Germany, and its preceding institutions and currents.
- The history of the Bauhaus' reception and impact.
- The meaning of the Bauhaus for a modern (and pluralistic) Left, today.

Contributions from all relevant disciplines are welcome: history, architecture, gender studies, political science, sociology, art and art history.

We especially encourage works from young authors and from those working outside of Germany. Also, all relevant themes and topics, even if not expressly stated here, are welcome. Texts can be submitted in German or in English.

### **Formal criteria**

Please send **proposals** (of a maximum length of 300 words), a short CV summary along with specifications as to the intended length of the submission, which which ought to range from 15000 to 40000 signs—by February 28, 2018.

Final versions of the manuscripts are to be handed in by June 15, 2018, unless otherwise agreed upon.

Authors who do not hold a permanent income might receive a modic payment for their contributions.

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[1] Cited in [klubimbauhaus.de/%C3%BCber-uns/geschichte](http://klubimbauhaus.de/%C3%BCber-uns/geschichte)