

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2009

Coinciding with the 90th Anniversary of the founding of the Bauhaus in Weimar on April 1st, 2009, Foto+Synthesis presents the international traveling exhibition: “*Bauhaus twenty-21*” Photographs by Gordon Watkinson at the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt/Main, Germany from March 7 to April 26, 2009

Press Conference: March 5, 2009 at 11:00 AM

Opening: March 6, 2009 at 7:00 PM

“In their abstract clarity Gordon Watkinson’s wonderful images recall drawn elevations or sectional views, somehow resembling the translations from design to reality that we know from renderings.”

PETER CACHOLA SCHMAL

Director of the Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt

“The Bauhaus generation’s desire for an aesthetic and high-quality but industrially produced architecture has only really become possible in the light of today’s progressive advancements in technology. It is only now, in the age of computerized mass-customization, that Gropius’ aim to “eliminate the disadvantages of the machine without sacrificing any of its true advantages” seems truly achievable.”

MATTHIAS SAUERBRUCH, Sauerbruch Hutton

Walter Gropius and the two subsequent heads of the Bauhaus, the architects Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, introduced principles that shaped the foundation of modern architecture. Their philosophy emphasized the creation of classical forms without extraneous ornamentation; while embracing technology, it stressed the search for solutions to contemporary design problems in urban planning, housing and utilitarian mass-production.

Conceived as a multidisciplinary project encompassing architecture, design, and photography, the exhibition “Bauhaus twenty-21” is the first critical and visual exploration of the Bauhaus heritage in the context of contemporary living and architecture. In a dialogue between the timeless modernism of Bauhaus architecture and the visions of contemporary practitioners, the exhibition offers a unique perspective on Bauhaus design philosophy as it relates to architecture and its relevance in today’s society – from the use of prefabricated housing techniques to create affordable housing, to early ideas in what is today sustainable (“green”) architecture.

“Bauhaus twenty-21” showcases 12 of the most iconic achievements of Bauhaus architecture in dialogue with 12 contemporary building projects by up-and-coming as well as internationally renowned contemporary architects – all illustrated by a series of images created by US photographer Gordon Watkinson. The

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exhibition, which bridges the fields of architecture, design and photography, places the heritage of Bauhaus architecture in the context of current architectural trends and visualizes its ongoing influence on 21st century architecture.

In his highly aesthetic images, photographer Gordon Watkinson focuses on the superlative quality of the buildings erected prior to 1933 by Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Hannes Meyer, Georg Muche and Richard Paulick. Stripping away all unnecessary elements in order to concentrate on the essence of his subjects, Watkinson captures the timelessness of modern architecture and juxtaposes some of its most emblematic examples to contemporary, typologically similar buildings. Among the present-day architects whose works can be seen in the exhibition are Allmann Sattler Wappner, Rolf Disch, Hanno Vogl-Fernheim, Fink+Jocher, Galli & Rudolf, Ingvarsen, Graham Phillips, Petzinka Pink, RCR Architects, Sauerbruch Hutton, Werner Sobek and Wingårdhs. Watkinson's distinctive visual approach underlines the manifold legacy of Bauhaus ideas and formal language at the beginning of the 21st century.

The numerous photographs, which highlight the aesthetics of New Objectivity and Functionalism, are complemented by the presentation of re-editions of Bauhaus furniture designed before 1933 and still manufactured today, inviting the visitors to interact and consciously experience the timeless character of these early 20th century designs in a contemporary context.

Devised deliberately as a counter-concept to the aesthetics of historicism, Bauhaus ambitions extended well beyond pure issues of design; functionally designed objects, apartments and houses as well as the renunciation of ostentatious details were all an integral part of an agenda for social modernization that sought to dismantle class and social differences. The exhibition also includes succinct theoretical texts and architectural drawings that offer a new perspective on the design philosophy of the State Bauhaus School established in Weimar 90 years ago, and its influence on subsequent generations of architecture through to the present. Today, this abstract aesthetics as championed by Mies van der Rohe is being nurtured to a greater extent than ever before, and refined with advanced building technologies. Skywood House in Denham, the brainchild of Graham Phillips, can be considered a direct descendant of Mies van der Rohe's famous German Pavilion in Barcelona. In this context even such different typologies as municipal project housing in Copenhagen, the private school in Wädenswil near Zurich, the Employment Center in Reutte/Tirol, and Villa Roser in Skara/Sweden all clearly bear common traits.

The exhibition has been conceived by US photographer Gordon Watkinson, in cooperation with Foto+Synthesis. Michael Siebenbrodt selected the twelve Bauhaus buildings; the twelve contemporary projects have been curated by Falk Jaeger who wrote the introductory texts to each of the sections of the exhibition.

Prof. Dr. Falk Jaeger is a freelance critic, editor and curator in Berlin. He worked from 1983 to 1988 for the Institute of History of Architecture at the Technical University of Berlin. From 1993 to 2000 he held the appointment of Chair of Theory of Architecture at the Technical University of Dresden. In 2001 and 2002 Jaeger was editor-in-chief of the German architecture magazine *Bauzeitung*. In 1993 he was awarded the First Prize for Architecture Criticism from the German Federal Architectural Association. He has contributed to numerous publications and exhibitions on the topics of architecture theory, history of architecture, and preservation, and has published, among other books, a guide to modern architecture, *Building in Germany* (1985), *Architecture for the New Century* (2001), and, since 2007, the series of monographs "Jovis Portfolio".

MORE

Michael Siebenbrodt is the Director of the Bauhaus-Museum in Weimar. He has published widely on the Bauhaus and the Bauhaus masters and students. He is the author, among others, of *The Bauhaus-Museum: The Kunstsammlungen in Weimar* (1996), a chronological survey of art and art schools in Weimar between 1900 and 1930, and an overview of the prominent teachers and their work and theories. From 1985 to 1988 he was the head of both the museum and the experimental theater at the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation/Design Center.

Gordon Watkinson borrowed a camera for a photography class he took at the age of 24 while attending Virginia Commonwealth University. Although he had never thought of photography in a serious way, after completing the course his professor saw enough in his work that he encouraged Watkinson to reconsider his career choice and arranged for him to begin working as a photographic assistant. Watkinson has spent the past 16 years working as a commercial photographer for a broad range of clients from the fields of advertising, architecture, design, and fashion. In conjunction with his photographic work he has directed commercials, made industrial videos, and worked directly with major corporations as well as specialized brands, helping them to develop visual strategies for targeted markets. Over the years he developed a strong sensitivity for both forms and materials, which has shaped his visual approach and strengthened his fascination for timeless and minimalist design. Watkinson shares his time between New York and Paris.

List of the Projects presented in the Exhibition

House am Horn, Weimar / Germany (Georg Mueche, 1923)

House of the Present, Munich / Germany (Allmann Sattler Wappner Architekten, 2005)

Director's Office, Weimar / Germany (Walter Gropius, 1923)

Law Office, Düsseldorf / Germany (Thomas Pink | Petzinka Pink Architekten, 2004)

Bauhaus Building, Dessau / Germany (Walter Gropius, 1925–26)

Federal Environmental Agency, Dessau / Germany (Sauerbruch Hutton, 2003)

Masters' Houses, Dessau / Germany (Walter Gropius, 1925–26)

Villa Roser, Skara / Sweden (Wingårdhs, 2005)

Dessau-Törten Estate, Dessau / Germany (Walter Gropius, 1926–28)

Solar Estate, Freiburg / Germany (Rolf Disch – Büro für Solararchitektur, 2002)

Steel House, Dessau / Germany (Georg Mueche and Richard Paulick, 1926–27)

M-Lidia House, Montagut / Spain (RCR Aranda Pigem Vilalta Arquitectes, 2003)

Apartment House Weissenhof Estate, Stuttgart / Germany (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1927)

Guldbergsgade & Nørre Allé Houses, Copenhagen / Denmark (Ingvarsen Arkitekter, 2002)

Employment Office, Dessau / Germany (Walter Gropius, 1927–29)

Employment Office, Reutte / Austria (Hanno Vogl-Fernheim, 2006)

German Trade Union School, Bernau / Germany (Hannes Meyer, 1928–30)

Zurich International School, Wädenswil/Zurich / Switzerland (Galli & Rudolf Architects, 2002)

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Balcony Access Houses, Dessau / Germany (Hannes Meyer, 1929–30)
Student Housing, Garching/Munich / Germany (Fink+Jocher, 2005)

German Pavilion, Barcelona / Spain (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1929)
Skywood House, Denham / UK (Graham Phillips, 2000)

Villa Tugendhat, Brno / Czech Republic (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe 1930)
House R128, Stuttgart / Germany (Werner Sobek, 2001)

A companion publication will be available to coincide with the exhibition, published by Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel.

Gordon Watkinson

Bauhaus twenty-21: An Ongoing Legacy

With essays by Falk Jaeger and Peter Cachola Schmal, as well as contributions by Michael Siebenbrodt and twelve prominent Architects

140 duotone photographs and 60 line drawings

240 x 290 mm, 232 pages, hardback

EUR 59,90

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Following Frankfurt the exhibition will be presented at the International Cultural Centre in Krakow, Poland from May 7 to July 5, 2009. Other venues to be determined.

Gordon Watkinson will be in Frankfurt/Main from March 3 to March 13 and will be available for interviews.

For further information, press material and interviews, please contact:

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