

Foreword

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Like no other institution, the Bauhaus (which was founded in Weimar in 1919 and relocated first to Dessau in 1925, then to Berlin in 1932, where it was closed down in 1933) emblemizes twentieth-century German modernism. Although there is no such thing as a Bauhaus style per se, the school's products are still regarded in the early twenty-first century as constituting blueprints for an alternative to the historical reality that plunged first Germany, then Europe, and finally the world, into unparalleled catastrophe. Against the backdrop formed by this historical constellation, it seemed inevitable that the Bauhaus, its protagonists and students, its designs and aims, would retain its symbolic potency in contemporary Germany, that it would continue to substantially shape this nation's identity, its self-understanding. With justice, many of those well versed in the history of the Bauhaus have criticized the inflation of the school's profile to the level of a "better Germany." But the extraordinary ferocity of the epochal conflict between enlightened modernism and aggressive reaction that raged throughout the twentieth century, and in Germany in particular, makes any sober historical consideration of the Bauhaus virtually impossible.

Now, ninety years after the school's founding, *Bauhaus: A Conceptual Model* acknowledges this historical context and invites viewers to take a fresh look at the facts. The term "model" is used in a double sense, first to refer to something exemplary, an ideal to be emulated, and secondly as projective, as design-oriented in more concrete terms. And it is precisely this double meaning of the term "model" that is taken up as the theme of the exhibition *Bauhaus: A Conceptual Model*. Twenty years after the reunification of the two Germanys, the Martin-Gropius-Bau—designed by a great uncle of Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius—seems a highly appropriate setting for this presentation. Here, in the immediate vicinity of the Nazis' Gestapo headquarters (now the "Topography of Terror" museum) and of the former site of the Berlin Wall which divided Germany for decades, visitors are offered a comprehensive overview of the historic Bauhaus and of its sustained impact on the development of the modern man-made environment.

Today, the cultural heritage of the Bauhaus is safeguarded by three institutions, each located in one of the towns

where the historic school resided. Only Germany's unification in 1990 made it possible for these three institutes—the Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, the Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau, and the Klassik Stiftung Weimar—to genuinely fulfill this task. The three institutes have joined forces to organize *Bauhaus: A Conceptual Model*, an exhibition which for the first time provides a wide-ranging survey of the school's activities, and one which fully considers all of the relevant aspects and each of the three locations. After showing in Berlin, the exhibition will be seen in a modified form at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Not unlike the school itself, this exhibition will make its way throughout the world.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who have made this enormous project possible: to our colleagues, to lenders of display objects, to our partners and sponsors. A glance at the publisher's page of the present catalogue makes clear the impossibility of mentioning everyone by name. One sole exception, however, will serve to validate the rule. Without the support of the German federal government, the organizers would have been compelled to abandon their ambitious plans. Even during the early stages, the Kulturstiftung des Bundes chose to lend its support to this exhibition, freeing up the necessary funding base. At no other location, finally, could this exhibition have been presented so effectively than at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, which is maintained by the government, and whose director, Gereon Sievernich, graciously supported exhibition preparations in such an exemplary manner.

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