[Session 6] New frontiers for the New Bauhaus / Guiomar Martín Domínguez

What does it mean to 'rescue' a modernist project like the Bauhaus to envision a future? The pedagogical emphasis of the Bauhaus, which sat at the core of its approach to society and the role aesthetic and design practices could play in this, was one premised on learning through making, interdisciplinary practices and design as an enabler, not just mirror, of socio-cultural aspirations and ambitions. What is striking now, over a century later, is how this alternative model of education continues to be espoused as the future. Given the developments in gender and postcolonial studies and the politicisation of education models, this paper critically considers what the Bauhaus has come to symbolise over the past century and what elements of its approach might be critically expanding for the field of design education today.

This consideration will focus on two strands: the internationalism and exchange it used as a central tenet of its critical model, and the issues of inclusion faced within its otherwise radical educational structure.

Recent publications reflecting on the Bauhaus, such as Bauhaus Imaginista (2019), trace the impact of both its socio-cultural approach and aesthetic across the world. Whilst design, and the cultural sector overall, has continued to be emphatically global in inspiration and reach, there has been a return to an emphasis on locality, particularly in the context of sustainability. In the realm of inclusion, recent texts signal the limitations of the Bauhaus' vision: artists such as Anni Albers were sidelined into departments 'appropriate' for their gender, and the school was supported, and bore close relation to the nation-state via its funding and core students. This paper will reflect on the ways that Old Bauhaus has become used as a symbol, and what critical reflections and distance New Bauhaus might need to take from its modernist referent.

Internationalism and Inclusion in the Old Bauhaus.

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