

TOWARDS A NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS

Challenges in Design Education & Research

The 2022 annual conference of the European Association for Architectural Education will take place as a hybrid event including keynote lectures, round tables and paper sessions. The conference is hosted by the ETSAM School of Architecture at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid.

On September 16, 2020, the President of the European Commission presented the New European Bauhaus, an ambitious ecological, economic, and cultural project. The initiative will implement the EU's future objectives based on three fundamental pillars: sustainability, inclusiveness, and aesthetics. Conceived with an eminently practical sense, the New Bauhaus will “demonstrate how sustainable innovation can be translated into tangible and positive experiences in our daily lives.”¹ In other words, its purpose is to make certain ideals physical, an issue insisted upon in all the documents produced to date, for “everyone should be able to feel, see and experience the green and digital transformation and how it improves our quality of life.”² Thus, it will tackle a problem of spatial design: “how to make our buildings better and fit for the future.”³

Far from sticking to abstract goals, the EU continues to delve deeper into the meaning of its proposal. Recently, the first edition of the New European Bauhaus Prizes was held in Brussels. Several awards were awarded for the design of building materials, furniture projects, housing projects, or heritage rehabilitation and urban intervention. The winners share the desire to promote social cohesion and to respect our shared environment.

But, chiefly, they all avoid ambiguous reflection and place the focus of the debate on concrete designs. In short, they show what the EU seeks: to recover the potential of design to get involved in the political programs of a society.

The designs emerging from the New European Bauhaus must not simply be a reflection of culture, but an active instrument in its formation. Hence the choice of the Bauhaus as the insignia of contemporaneity. It seeks to rescue an idea of critical production and the ability to think through design. The name also gives the project a pedagogical orientation. In that German factory-school it was important to make, but also to teach how to.

The Bauhaus, old and new, represents the link between production and experimentation, a model capable of covering all scales: from the detail to the building, and from the building to urban and territorial planning.

Consequently, the New Bauhaus challenges both active designers and schools of architecture. The skills of the future designer have to be oriented, now more than ever, to authentic experience. Speculation on intellectual positions must give way to reflection on action: the focus is now on the work itself and the value in its design process. Years of debate have led the EU to set out a clear way forward. Sustainability, social value, and aesthetics are the critical position. Now, the challenge for architecture schools is how do we teach future designers to translate those values into livable spaces, how to bring the New Bauhaus into a reality.

[1] European Union. 2021.
New European Bauhaus: new actions and funding to link sustainability to style and inclusion.

[2] European Union. 2021.
New European Bauhaus Prizes.

[3] EIT Urban Mobility. 2021.
What is the New European Bauhaus? Interview with Xavier Troussard, EU Policy Lab Director



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TOPICS

By bringing a strong critical background to its proposal, the EU shuns the revival of the Bauhaus as a mere brand and transforms it into a productive engine to address the problems of the 21st century.

As topics, we propose three aspects that the New Bauhaus must face: what should be the role of design practices with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); what should the new professional teams be like and what should be their relationship with the design schools, and what critical avenues can be opened today to promote continuous improvement.

These are current challenges that any professionals and schools of architecture are confronting. In this time of uncertainty and instability, it is more necessary than ever to defend design as a problem-solving enterprise.

Likewise, it is necessary to make room for non-conventional practices and the new avenues opened by social networks and online and digital learning. Although the following topics are proposed, they are not restrictive. We invite participants to combine, expand them or open new lines of debate.

01. The New European Bauhaus and the SDGs

Designs that make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Designs that ensure inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

How to achieve gender equality through design.

The relationship between space, power, culture and collective identities.

02. The New European Bauhaus and multidisciplinary design.

Collaborative possibilities between different professionals.

Transfers between professional practice and teaching.

Involvement of users in design processes.

Second digital turn and new methods of design.

03. The New European Bauhaus and critical positions

Old Bauhaus: lessons for the 21st century.

Needs in contemporary architectural thought and practice.

New frontiers for the New Bauhaus.

New imaginaries and the need to educate in discernment.