

Institution: Royal College of Art		
Unit of Assessment: 32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Revealing the international and contemporary relevance of the Bauhaus		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2016-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Grant Watson	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Tutor	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2015-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2018-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The Bauhaus is the most famous school of art, design and architecture of the 20th century, celebrated for its key role in European and American modernism. 'bauhaus imaginista' was a three-year international research project directed and curated by Grant Watson and Marion von Osten, commissioned to mark the Bauhaus centenary and realised through exhibitions and events in 11 countries. This major international project challenged the European- and Western-centric view of Bauhaus history, transforming audience perceptions of the school in Germany, and generating international research collaborations, whose impact has been the rethinking of modernist legacies in contexts including China, Turkey, Nigeria and Britain. Through an extensive series of discursive events in Germany and internationally, a second impact has been to highlight the Bauhaus's relevance today to education and society, and to cultural appropriation and nationalism.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>'bauhaus imaginista' was a major project by the Bauhaus Kooperation (Berlin, Weimar, Dessau), the Goethe Institute and Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), Berlin, supported by a €3 million budget from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Federal Cultural Foundation on the occasion of the school's centenary. It was a collaboration between the artistic directors, Grant Watson (RCA) and Marion von Osten (artist and curator), who, between 2016 and 2019, contributed a 50/50 share to its intellectual and artistic leadership, each bringing their specific expertise into play.</p> <p>'bauhaus imaginista' commissioned extensive research collaborations and curatorial outputs in Germany, Morocco, China, the United States, Japan, Russia, Brazil, Nigeria, India, Turkey and the United Kingdom. This was a two-way process, facilitating insights for the project and generating impacts on academic and curatorial practice, as well as public perception, in different parts of the world (as outlined in section 4.)</p> <p>As artistic directors, Watson and von Osten devised an overarching curatorial structure, designated lines of research, forged international partnerships, recruited teams in Germany and internationally, and delivered exhibitions and events. The overarching research question concerning Bauhaus internationalism was explored through four sub questions looking at: radical pedagogy; cultural appropriation; design and ideology; and art school experimentation. This was a way to identify particular histories and locations, and break down larger questions of Bauhaus internationalism into specific case studies. Insights gained were exchanged by an extensive network of scholars and practitioners from different disciplines and traditions, many of whom met and formed panels as part of two conferences in Berlin, as well as through the online journal <i>bauhaus imaginista</i>.</p> <p>Research undertaken between 2017 and 2019 involved three stages, as follows: Phase one (2017): site visits to eight international locations by the co-curators. Phase two (2018): a series</p>		

of exhibitions, discursive events and workshops on location in eight different countries, as part of the research process. **Phase three** (2019): a large-scale exhibition, *bauhaus imaginista*, at HKW, Berlin (3.1), which subsequently toured to Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, and SALT, Istanbul; and two conferences, 'The political imaginista' and 'A New School', also at the HKW.

Under Watson's and co-curator von Osten's direction, research was undertaken through collaborations with a team of 30 core researchers, including artists, designers, architects, academics and international partner institutions. These included Le Cube, Rabat; China Design Museum, Hangzhou (3.2); Goethe Institute and partners, New York; The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto; Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow; SESC Pompeia, São Paulo; Goethe Institut, Lagos; Kiran Nadar Museum, New Delhi; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (3.1); Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern; Nottingham Contemporary (3.3); and SALT, Istanbul. These partners shared regional expertise, made available material from their collections, co-funded exhibitions and discursive events, and generated audiences for the research. In many instances, 'bauhaus imaginista' facilitated international partners to pursue new lines of research into regional modernism.

Overall outputs representing iterations of this project featured: ten exhibitions, locations including Hangzhou, Kyoto, Moscow, São Paulo, New Delhi, Berlin, Bern, Nottingham and Istanbul, as well as a worldwide 'Collected Research' tour (3.4); nine conferences in Hangzhou, New York, Tokyo, Moscow, São Paulo, Lagos, New Delhi, Berlin and Bern; four publications: *bauhaus imaginista - A School in the World* (Thames and Hudson); *bauhaus imaginista: Learning From* exhibition guide for Sesc Pompeia, São Paulo; *bauhaus imaginista* HKW exhibition guide; and the online journal, *bauhaus imaginista* (3.5, 3.6).

This three-year research project went through a rigorous and ongoing peer-review process. The curatorial concept and research trajectory were agreed at a meeting in May 2016, convened by the three commissioning partners, including the heads of each institution as well as international delegates. Co-curators reported to the three commissioning partners at a quarterly board meeting and presented to international partner institutions prior to each collaboration agreement.

3. References to the research

3.1 *bauhaus imaginista*, exhibition, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 15 March–10 June 2019. All four thematic chapters were presented by Watson and von Osten, specific international research findings were presented by Watson.

3.2 *Moving Away*, inaugural exhibition and symposium, China Design Museum, Hangzhou, 8 April–8 July 2018, co-curated by Watson, von Osten, Zoe Zhang and Gao Yuan.

3.3 *Still Undead*, exhibition, Nottingham Contemporary, 21 September–24 November 2018, co-curated by Watson, von Osten, and Thorne. Watson presented research on transcultural modernism in Britain, focusing on three periods: 1930s, 1960s and 1980s.

3.4 *Moving Away*, exhibition and screening series, SALT, Istanbul, 28 January–3 April 2020, co-curated by Watson, von Osten, and Meriç Öner, Director of SALT.

3.5 Exhibition guides and catalogue: Exhibition Brochure and Wall Texts, SESC Pompéia, São Paulo: <http://www.bauhaus-imaginista.org/articles/3854/brochure-and-wall-texts-from-the-exhibition-at-sesc-pompeia-sao-paulo>; HKW Exhibition Guide, Berlin: https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2019/bauhaus_imaginista/start.php; and Watson, G. and von Osten, M. (ed.), *bauhaus imaginista - A School in the World*, London: Thames & Hudson (2019).

3.6 *bauhaus imaginista*, online journal, co-organised and edited by von Osten and Watson, 2018–2020, www.bauhaus-imaginista.org

3.1-3.6 are included in Watson's multi-component output submitted to REF2021.

4. Details of the impact

'bauhaus imaginista' has had significant and wide-ranging impacts on understanding of international and regional modernisms and of the school's relevance for contemporary society.

Through the project's international programme of exhibitions, workshops and discursive events, taking place in 11 locations across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, 'bauhaus imaginista' was able to change perceptions of the Bauhaus for broad publics internationally. As a result of international collaborations with museums, art institutes, cultural centres and academies of art, design and architecture, the project has also impacted on curatorial practice, perspectives and methods for mediating the Bauhaus legacy. As the Senior Curator of Special Projects in Modern Art at the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, wrote: 'The range and subtlety with which the legacy has been explored and teased out is fascinating: whether in India at Santiniketan in the late 1920s or Morocco in the 1960s, it opens unexpected avenues of enquiry [...] In short, it left me excited for more, and eager to keep thinking about the longevity of this institution so fragile and experimental in its lifetime and yet so enduring in its impact.' (5.1). Key impacts are described below.

China Design Museum, Hangzhou

The exhibition *bauhaus imaginista: Moving Away*, 8 April–26 August 2018, formed part of the inauguration of the \$25.35 million China Design Museum (CDM) in Hangzhou. This exhibition and symposium focused on design disciplines from the Bauhaus workshops, and how concepts, methods and forms were adapted and transformed in China, India and the Soviet Union. This facilitated a reconceptualising of early 20th-century modernism as a transnational phenomenon, with an emphasis on a China Bauhaus connection. The *bauhaus imaginista* collaboration impacted on the curatorial work of the CDM and led to subsequent Bauhaus-related exhibitions at the museum, including *A Face of Second Modernity: The Braun-Design 1951–1967*, 2019, which included the Ulm School of Design (5.2). The Assistant Curator of the CDM states: 'One of the most important features of the exhibition (*bauhaus imaginista*) is not to study the history of the Bauhaus itself, but to focus on the transformation and acceptance of Bauhaus concepts in non-European regions. All of us agree that the decentralised research method will be very valuable to China Design Museum for research and curatorial work in the future. We not only understand the importance of Bauhaus history, but also focus on its localisation process in China' (5.2). *bauhaus imaginista: Moving Away* also put Bauhaus designs and prototypes on display in the context of the Chinese Art Academy (where the CDM is located), responding to the museum's aim to enhance public understanding of the Bauhaus and modernism in Asia, and using Bauhaus design to inform young designers entering the sector. Of the 122,300 people who attended the exhibition during its 12-week run, the Assistant Director of CDM has stated that 60 per cent were classed as 'young people', including students training as industrial designers and architects at the Chinese Art Academy (5.3).

Haus der Kulturen de Welt, Berlin

The *bauhaus imaginista* presentation in Germany in the centenary year was at the Haus der Kulturen de Welt, Germany's national centre for international contemporary arts, in Berlin. Here the research was brought together in a large-scale exhibition featuring exhibits from the locations visited in phase 2, providing a unique opportunity to cross-reference the transcultural legacy of the Bauhaus from Asia, Africa and the Americas. The Director of the London office of the Munich Institute observed that: 'The exhibition in Berlin at the HKW was where all the chapters came together, like a big world meeting of all imaginations of Bauhaus [...] the effect was a very interesting one as the exhibition didn't teach about Bauhaus but invited the audience to "learn together" about an interactive Bauhaus, about the interactions of cultures. Bauhaus wasn't the historic epoch of modern design any more, but a dynamic source for intercultural dialogues' (5.4). The impact of this exhibition was to transform public understanding of the Bauhaus, which had been tied to German heritage and cultural identity, and broaden it to include an extraordinary network in art, design, architecture and pedagogy. *bauhaus imaginista* reinterpreted modernism as a political multicultural and international movement, as Pablo Larios, senior editor of *Frieze* magazine, noted: '*bauhaus imaginista* tells a different tale, of an intellectual and artistic cosmopolitanism during the interbellum years, in which pedagogy was political and in which the school's activities in multicultural Weimar resonated with similar reformist educational movements well beyond Germany. This version views the school as a diasporic formation' (5.5).

In addition to the historic material on display, *bauhaus imaginista* commissioned seven artists, including the Otolith Group, Wendelien van Oldenborgh, Zwi Efrat, Alice Criescher, Kader Attia, Doreen Mende and Luca Frei, to research how the Bauhaus legacy exists in the present. For example, van Oldenborgh's film invited urbanists and present-day inhabitants of buildings by Bauhaus architect Lotta Stam Beese, in Khrakov and Rotterdam, to reflect on the current use of modernist architecture, including questions of housing policy, migrant communities and structural racism. The 'political imaginista' conference at the HKW addressed contemporary far-right populism and xenophobia with reference to the National Socialists' hostility to the school, as reflected in Iwao Yamawaki's 1932 collage, *Attack on the Bauhaus*, which featured in the exhibition. The HKW director agreed that *bauhaus imaginista* 'provided the historical frame through which contemporary urgencies could be addressed' (5.6). The project's overall impact can also be tracked through its record-breaking attendance: *bauhaus imaginista* drew some of the largest audience figures ever seen at the HKW – 32,000 visitors, with many reporting that they were first-time visitors (5.7). Further impact was achieved by the production of new audio guides and tours for the partially sighted, in response to the exhibition's popularity (5.7). HKW reported not just large visitor numbers but also evidence of good engagement via social media, and positive feedback. One typical social media post stated: 'The current show at @hkw is for me the perfect intersection of art and knowledge production. I spent most of the time reading the books they provided and will come back with more time on my hands and a notebook. Perfect environment to get inspired. #withinexhibitions #bauhaus #design #hkw #hausderkulturenderwelt #berlin' (5.7).

Nottingham Contemporary, UK

Nottingham Contemporary's exhibition *Still Undead: Popular Culture in Britain Beyond the Bauhaus* was the most significant exhibition of the Bauhaus in the UK during the school's centenary year (5.8). Through a collaboration between *bauhaus imaginista* and the Nottingham Contemporary curatorial team, this exhibition explored the little-known reception and influence of the Bauhaus in the UK during the 1930s, 60s and 80s. The exhibition changed visitor understanding, with audiences expressing surprise and appreciation for this unique account of an alternative history. The Director of Nottingham Contemporary noted: 'We were very much aware that, 100 years on, most ways of doing an exhibition about the Bauhaus had been done. We had also seen a number of books and exhibitions that had tried to make the claim that the Bauhaus had a real impact in the UK in the 1930s. It felt to us that using the centenary could become a much more generative and idiosyncratic way of asking questions about cultural education today [...] In the event, it wound up that this was the largest Bauhaus exhibition in the UK in the centenary year [...] We've really had a huge response, from mainstream critics and art historians and art critics' (5.8).

The exhibition drew 60,976 visitors during its 16-week run, making it the fifth most attended exhibition in the gallery's history. Visitor responses and survey feedback demonstrate its success in presenting a new picture of Bauhaus influence: 'Its aim was to show the legacy of the Bauhaus in education, art and design in the UK from the 1930s to the 1980s and it certainly succeeded. Although the Bauhaus is perhaps best known for its modernist architecture and iconic furniture, who would have guessed its direct influence on 1960s hairstyling or the teaching of music to primary school children, to name just two of many possible examples? Above all it was informative and fun' (5.9).

This new interpretation of Bauhaus was also noted by Will Gompertz in his review of the exhibition for the BBC: '[...] the curators have served up a very different but utterly compelling show [...] It leaves you thinking that is what we need now: a revolutionary approach to art and education. There's no reason it shouldn't start here in the UK. After all, that's where the seeds of the original Bauhaus were sown' (5.10).

Recognising and Preserving Ile Ife Campus, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria

A specific impact of *bauhaus imaginista* comes in the decision of Obafemi Awolowo University to seek UNESCO World Heritage Site status for its campus buildings designed by Bauhaus architect Arie Sharon. This follows the *bauhaus imaginista* symposium 'Decolonising the Campus', held in Lagos in November 2018, which focussed on the campus architecture and a

film commissioned from Zwi Efrat. As the project developer points out: 'It was entirely due to the *bauhaus imaginista* project that the status of the Ile lfe campus was recognised. It is now considered one of the most interesting Bauhaus sites in the world' (5.11). As a result, the project has received to date a Getty grant of \$180,000 (5.12) as well as multiple in-kind donations and commitments from organisations such as the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation towards the UNESCO application.

Further impacts

Through its specific curatorial approach and meaningful collaborations with local partners, *bauhaus imaginista* was able to galvanise research into regional art histories in multiple sites, including in Turkey, where the presentation of *Moving Away* at SALT Istanbul inspired the curatorial team to investigate pioneering approaches in Turkish art and design education, presented in the exhibition *Pedagogical Adaptations in Turkey* (2020). As the Director of SALT explains: 'This multi-layered research enabled us to look into particular subjects taught, and unique environments formed, at the academy from the 1950s to 1980s. The overall project framework and its methods of questioning the memorised facts of the Bauhaus encouraged this line of research' (5.13).

This transcultural approach was also noted by the Director of the London office of the Munich Institute, who observed that in São Paulo, the project's 'curatorial strategy had a great impact on the audience [...] It was a totally new view on the influence of Bauhaus on local design and – what was even more important – the influence of indigenous and original arts and crafts on the Bauhaus' (5.4).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Senior Curator of Special Projects in Modern Art, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, testimonial email, January 2020.

5.2 Assistant Curator, China Design Museum, Hangzhou, testimonial email, February 2020.

5.3 Assistant Director, China Design Museum, Hangzhou, testimonial email, November 2019.

5.4 Director of London office and Head of North-Western Europe Region, Munich Institute, testimonial email, February 2020.

5.5 Pablo Larios, 'Ends and Means', review of *bauhaus imaginista*, *Frieze* online, March 2019.

5.6 Director, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, testimonial letter, November 2020.

5.7 Head of Communications and Cultural Education, Haus der Kulturen de Welt, Berlin, email correspondence including visitor statistics and visitor feedback forms, 16 October 2019.

5.8 Video interview with Director, Nottingham Contemporary, November 2019.

5.9 Visitor feedback form, Nottingham Contemporary, February 2020.

5.10 Will Gompertz, 'Still Undead: Will Gompertz reviews the Bauhaus show in Nottingham', BBC online, September 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-49735809>

5.11 Corroborator 1: Project developer, Obafemi Awolowo University development, August 2020.

5.12 'Keeping it Modern: 2020 Grants Awards,' Getty Foundation, Los Angeles, CA, 2020: https://www.getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/current/keeping_it_modern/grants_awarded_2020.html

5.13 Director, SALT, Istanbul, testimonial email/letter, 17 August 2020.