

“Discover Design – Discover Bauhaus”: the workshop tour through twenty US states surpasses all expectations

Projects powered by business, politics, science and culture have all contributed to the success of the Year of German-American Friendship 2019 in the USA. The campaign platform “Discover Design – Discover Bauhaus”, created by the German Design Museum Foundation, has raised awareness among young people of a cultural heritage that unites our two countries and opens up new possibilities for shaping a synergetic future.

Frankfurt am Main, December 21, 2020

After an eventful two-and-a-half months in the USA, the German Design Museum Foundation has reached the end of the second phase in its cultural and educational project: the Year of German-American Friendship. The recently completed fall tour ran from 25 September to 7 December, following on from the highly successful launch of the roadshow project in the spring. The design ambassadors spent a total of around six months working on-site in person to convey the transnational dialog in their own authentic style. Whilst on tour, they delivered around one hundred and twenty workshops to different target groups, often several in one day, focusing on the Bauhaus school of art and the future of design. They visited multicultural cities and densely populated urban areas, as well as more sparsely populated rural regions with a lower proportion of non-nationals.

From east to west and north to south – new connections were forged

From Massachusetts to Oregon, Wisconsin to Texas and Florida, the "Discover Design – Discover Bauhaus" roadshow attracted nearly 2,700 participants, mainly aged 8–20 years. The workshops, led by designers, deliberately transformed places of learning such as schools, universities, cultural centers and museums. Children, teenagers and adults were invited to use them as temporary studios and futuristic laboratories. Just as in the real Bauhaus school, the students were able to learn and discuss, and even experiment on the basis of their own designs. Designer Jan Christian Schulz, who led the tour in the fall, emphasizes the importance of having such freedom: “Young people want to have a hand in shaping their world! They are curious. They welcome facts and theory if they are of practical use and can be integrated into everyday life. So this is where we focus our efforts.”

Design creates more freedom in the transatlantic dialog

The German Design Museum Foundation has also been busy at many locations with the “WunderbarTogether - Germany and the U.S.” PopUp Tour, celebrating the Year of German-American Friendship. The festive events held in the fall included the openings of the new Goethe Institut and the Bauhaus Photo Exhibition in Washington D.C., as well as the “MAEA Conference: New Perspectives in Art Education” in Boston. The enthusiasm of students and teachers, together with the praise and recognition from official guests, have transported the success of the roadshow from city to city and

from state to state. Requests for more workshops kept on popping up out of nowhere. The design workshop was not only an experiment for students, but also for teachers who were keen to be involved. “We are almost overwhelmed by this success,” reported an extremely pleased Lutz Dietzold, Vice-Chairman of the Board of the German Design Museum Foundation. “Our pioneering project has taken shape and strengthened German-American friendships.”

Although the tour may have ended in December, the newly forged ties will continue to be very rewarding. The future of the transatlantic dialog between Germany and the USA also draws on one of the Bauhaus school’s original statements: “Design necessitates the convergence of the head, heart and hand.”

Discover Design – Discover Bauhaus!

In keeping with the interdisciplinary approach of the Bauhaus movement, the workshops unite American students and teachers with designers from Germany. They work as a team to clarify basic questions posed by modern design, and integrate elementary Bauhaus principles into their creative work. After completing the creative practice exercises, they come up with their own designs modeled off the 10-minute chair. Posters provide a visual explanation of the key ideas behind their chair design.

The Year of German-American Friendship 2019 in the USA

lends prominence to the growing partnership between the two countries and conveys a multifaceted picture of modern-day Germany. It intensifies the partnership between Germany and America, which we need in order to resolve the global challenges of the future. The Year of German-American Friendship is based on an initiative of the German Federal Foreign Office. It has been put into practice by the Goethe Institut, which has been active nationwide in the USA for over 50 years. The program is supported by the Federation of German Industries (BDI), the leading organization representing German business and industry.

Additional information:

Interview with designer Jan Christian Schulz, December 13, 2019

Workshop tour roadmap from March to December 2019

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The Year of German-American Friendship is supported by:

