



School of the Art Institute  
of Chicago



the Mies van der Rohe society

ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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*IN DOWNTOWN CHICAGO, INNOVATIVE WORKS OF ART  
RE-ENGAGE THE IDEAL OF THE MODERN*

Chicago, IL—The legacy of the Bauhaus informs a wide-ranging exhibition of installation, design, video, and digital works co-organized and presented by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and the Mies van der Rohe Society at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) this fall.

*Learning Modern* is on view from September 26, 2009 to January 9, 2010 in the SAIC Sullivan Galleries, 33 South State Street, a vast, open exhibition space carved out of an architectural landmark, Louis Sullivan's former Carson Pirie Scott department store.

As well as recent and site-specific works by such emerging and established artists and designers as Angela Ferreira, Andrea Fraser, Walter Hood, Narelle Jubelin, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Kay Rosen, Staffan Schmidt, and Catherine Yass, the exhibition features such architectural experiments as Thom Faulders's *The Ames Room Project* (2009) based an optical demonstration from 1946, and Ken Isaacs's *Knowledge Box* (1962/2009), seen here for the first time since the early 1960s, when the cover of *Life* magazine heralded it as a revolutionary new multi-media environment for learning.

"It is fitting that the legacy of the Bauhaus be weighed in Chicago, where László Moholy-Nagy came in 1937 and Mies van der Rohe, a year later," says Mary Jane Jacob, SAIC Executive Director of Exhibitions, and organizer of the exhibition. "The School of Art Institute and the Illinois Institute of Technology bring a unique pedagogical perspective to the process as well, for our schools are inheritors of the Bauhaus workshop model, which has influenced the way art and design are taught across the globe."

Justine Jentes, Director of the Mies van der Rohe Society at IIT, adds: "This exhibition coincides with the Bauhaus at 90 and the Burnham Plan at 100 to reengage with modernism's ideals for a better world and the legacy of the modern as more than a style, but, rather, as a way of living and learning."

"While many of these works evoke ancestor touchstones like Mies, Moholy-Nagy, and Walter Gropius, the more surprising common thread is the application of vanguard artmaking and digital strategies to heighten perception—that is, to make us experience the moment more fully and carry that with us back out into the world," Jacob concludes.

Of the 16 works on view, four are room-sized containers for immersive experience. These range from Isaacs's cube-enclosed barrage of projected images and sounds and Faulders's parametrically modeled pod to Helen-Maria Nugent and Jan Tichy's four-room, maze-like perception box, which revisits Moholy-Nagy's experimentation with light and space. On a smaller scale, another experiential container—the iconic Sawyer View-Master, the palm-sized, plastic box that contains vistas of the world—will be the subject of a project conceived by its creator, the 78-year-old industrial designer Charles Harrison, with new images created by artists, architects, and designers for the occasion.

The signature rounded corner of the Sullivan Galleries, directly above State and Madison Streets, marks the 0,0 point for Chicago's city plan. Several works, such as that of Arturo Vittori, a co-founder of the design collaborative, Architecture and Vision, use this marker as a starting point for a meditation about space and time. Vittori's kinetic sculpture, which resembles an 18<sup>th</sup> century model of the planetary system and whose motion is linked to the movement of the sun, makes the visitor aware of being in the presence of this work that lies within the container of the building, which itself is contained within the city, and moves outward through layers into the galaxy.

Vittori's is one of several works in *Learning Modern* merging art and technology. In another, entitled *Infinite Sprawl*, Chicagoan Mark Anderson, along with Mark Beasley and Matt Nelson [The Mark-Mark-and Matt Collaboration], tap into the open source movement to create a work that summons up fantastic buildings from the texts of modernism, text messages sent by visitors in the gallery, or messages sent by anyone around the world. In the installation, these streams of text about modernism appear in a cloudlike formation on a giant table. Each word is weighted to inform a specific geometric attribute. Once a participant touches a word, it transforms it into a shape and adds to an architectural structure that appears on a nearby screen.

The roster of participating artists and designers in the exhibition are: BlackBox Studio, the research arm of SOM, Chicago; Thom Faulders, Berkeley, California; Angela Ferreira, Lisbon, Portugal; Andrea Fraser, Los Angeles, California; Charles Harrison, Chicago, Illinois; Walter Hood, Oakland, California; Ken Isaacs, South Bend, Indiana; Narelle Jubelin, Madrid, Spain; Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Chicago, Illinois; The Mark-Mark-and Matt Collaboration, Helen-Maria Nugent and Jan Tichy, Chicago, Illinois; Liisa Roberts, Helsinki, Finland; Kay Rosen, Gary, Indiana; Staffan Schmidt, Malmö, Sweden; Arturo Vittori, Bomarzo, Italy; and Catherine Yass, London, England.

#### LIVING MODERN CHICAGO PROGRAM

The exhibition *Learning Modern* is the centerpiece of the two-year long citywide program *Living Modern Chicago*, a series of courses, lectures, tours, and installations exploring the legacy of the Bauhaus, organized by The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in collaboration with the Mies van der Rohe Society at IIT.

In May and June this year intensive sessions among international students and faculty, "Bauhaus Labs," were held in S. R. Crown Hall at IIT. One lab resulted in an exceptional live event-installation, *Lighting Crown Hall*, when for one night in June 2009 the iconic Crown Hall was transformed into a brilliant beacon with a series of light projections and light drawings. ([www.coudal.com/miesnight.php](http://www.coudal.com/miesnight.php))

*Living Modern Chicago* concludes with *Moholy: An Education of the Senses*, an exhibition on view from February 9 through May 9, 2010 at Loyola University Museum of Art, 820 North Michigan Avenue, organized by the Loyola University Museum of Art in conjunction with the School of the Art Institute and the Mies van der Rohe Society at IIT, and funded by a major grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

For more information, the public may visit [www.livingmodernchicago.org](http://www.livingmodernchicago.org)

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#### PUBLIC PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHTS

*From Chicago to Berlin and Back Again*

Lecture by Kathleen James-Chakraborty

Thursday, September 24, 6 p.m.

SAIC Ballroom, 112 S. Michigan Avenue

Kathleen James-Chakraborty analyzes the creative misunderstandings that have characterized the interchange between Chicago and Berlin since the 1880s, from Frank Lloyd Wright to German émigrés to the U.S. Probing the myths that have long clouded understanding, this lecture aims to cast new light on familiar landmarks, including the Carson Pirie Scott department store, the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology, and the Pritzker Pavilion at Millennium Park. Professor and Head of the School of Art History and Cultural Policy at University College in Dublin since 2007, James-Chakraborty is the author of *German Architecture for a Mass Audience* (2000) and *Bauhaus Culture from Weimar to the Cold War* (2006), and is currently writing a book on Louis Kahn.

*Vision In Motion: Filmmaking at the Institute of Design*

Screenings

Thursday, October 1, 6-8:15 p.m. with roundtable discussion featuring Hattula Moholy-Nagy

Friday, October 2, 6-8 p.m.

Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State Street

Two nights of screenings offer a rare chance to see experimental works by former New Bauhaus/Institute of Design [ID] faculty members and students Nathan Lerner, Yasuhiro Ishimoto, Millie Goldsholl, and Larry Janiak. On the first evening, October 1, these will be set in the context by a roundtable discussion featuring Hattula Moholy-Nagy (the daughter of László Moholy-Nagy). Modeled on the modernist ethos of the German Bauhaus, Moholy-Nagy's New Bauhaus/ID was one of the first schools to develop an experimental film program in the U.S. Presented in collaboration with the Chicago History Museum, the Gene Siskel Film Center, and the Department of Film, Video, and New Media's series "Conversations at the Edge."

*SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO*

A leader in educating artists, designers, and scholars since 1866, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) offers undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs to nearly 3,000 students from across the globe. Located in the heart of Chicago, SAIC's educational philosophy is built upon a multidisciplinary approach to art and design, giving students unparalleled opportunities to develop their creative and critical abilities, while working with renowned faculty who include many of the leading practitioners in their field. SAIC's resources include the Art Institute of Chicago and its new Modern Wing; numerous special collections and programming venues provide students with exceptional exhibitions, screenings, lectures, and performances. For more information, please visit [www.saic.edu](http://www.saic.edu).

*MIES SOCIETY AT ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY*

One of the most influential architects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and director of the College of Architecture at Illinois Institute of Technology for 20 years, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe expressed his modernist vision in the IIT campus, which he designed in the 1940s and 1950s. IIT's Mies van der Rohe Society is restoring his masterworks on the campus, enhancing the buildings to serve educational needs, and reinforcing Chicago's international reputation for architectural distinction. The Mies Society is a membership organization whose fundraising has supported the award-winning restoration of S. R. Crown Hall, Wishnick Hall, and currently, Carr Memorial Chapel (Mies' only religious building). IIT is a university with more than 7,500 students in engineering, sciences, architecture, psychology, design, humanities, business and law. The celebrated Bauhaus education is woven into IIT's heritage of innovation. Visit [www.iit.edu](http://www.iit.edu).

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