



# SOCIETY FOR GERMAN AMERICAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings, SGAS Members!

It was so nice to see many of you at this year's annual symposium in Alexandria! The program was diverse and stimulating, the venue was outstanding, and the Saturday afternoon walking tour of German American historical highlights in Washington, DC, was fascinating. A special highlight of the symposium was the presentation of this year's SGAS Outstanding Achievement Award to Cora Lee Kluge (UW-Madison). Her laudatio, written and delivered by Bill Petig, is included in this issue. I am deeply grateful to our new President, Marcel Rotter (University of Mary Washington), for all the hard work he put into what was a very successful and enjoyable event.

Included in this issue are profiles of our new SGAS officers and other Executive Committee members. Ellen Jones (UT-Austin) represents graduate students and early career scholars, while Patrick Wolf-Farré (University of Duisburg-Essen) represents members from outside North America. YGAS Book Review Editor Marc Pierce (UT-Austin) has also joined the EC, as have Kathleen Condray (University of Arkansas) as our new Website Manager and Caroline Huey (University of Louisiana at Lafayette) as Newsletter Editor. Kathleen is stepping into the role previously covered by Antje Petty (UW-Madison), who continues her service as our Membership Coordinator. Caroline succeeds Josh Brown (UW-Eau Claire), who has just been elected our new Vice President, along with Marcel Rotter as President. Welcome and congratulations to you all!

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Starting with this issue, our Newsletter will be distributed to members exclusively by email. Since that means that we are no longer limited to a specific page count, the EC decided that going forward the Newsletter should appear twice rather than three times a year, in the summer and winter, and expand its scope. At the meeting of our membership in Alexandria, we discussed ways for the Newsletter to showcase developments in German American studies by featuring short articles (such as Brigitta Malm's piece in this issue on the Bauhaus), updates on ongoing projects, and other useful information for researchers.

One additional small but important change that affects this Newsletter as well as the Yearbook and our website has to do with the use of the hyphen in the name of our Society. Going back at least to Teddy Roosevelt, "hyphenated identity" has been a topic of discussion in American public life. Today, most style guides recommend omitting the hyphen in compounds formed of two separate words, as, for example, "Native American," "French Canadian," and "Russian German." (These compounds are different from prefixed nouns and adjectives like "Euro-American," which retain the hyphen.) Henceforth, we will refer to our field as "German American studies."

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for all the support I have received from SGAS members, and especially my colleagues on the Executive Committee, during my terms as Vice President and President. These past four years have been very rewarding for me, professionally and personally. I look forward to continuing to advance the mission of our Society for many years to come. *Vielen herzlichen Dank!*

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Mark

**Save the Date**  
**48th Annual Symposium**  
**April 4-6, 2024**



The 48th Annual Symposium of the Society for German American Studies will be held April 4-6, 2024, in Austin, Texas. The theme of the Symposium will be "German Americans and Politics."

Germans and German Americans have long had a considerable impact on US politics. For instance, in 1860 Heinrich von Struve and his brother Gustav excited ethnic Germans in New York and elsewhere to cast their ballots in favor of Abraham Lincoln, thus influencing a presidential election.

We invite proposals for presentations across disciplines on the role of Germans and German Americans in US politics. As is the Symposium's tradition, we also welcome proposals on other areas of German American studies, including, but not limited to, literature, language, history, religion, culture, etc.

Membership in the Society for German American Studies is required of those whose papers are presented. Jointly authored proposals are welcome. A call for papers will be circulated in early fall 2023.

If you have questions, please contact Marc Pierce, chair of the Organizing Committee, at [mpierc@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:mpierc@austin.utexas.edu)

# NEW SGAS OFFICERS

## President



Dr. Marcel Rotter is Associate Professor of German and chair of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, VA. His research interests include semantic aspects of text and picture in visual communication (advertisement, propaganda) in the 20th century,

US government propaganda aimed at German Americans, and the pedagogical implications of Second Language Acquisition.

Born in Polish Silesia to German parents, his family moved to Gotha, Thuringia (then East Germany), one and a half years later. At the Teacher College of Erfurt (now, again, University of Erfurt), he studied German and Russian and was afterward “dispatched” by the East German educational authorities to Frankfurt (Oder) to teach at a Polytechnische Oberschule (Grades 1-10) for four years. After unification, he moved to Cologne and taught German as a Foreign Language at a few private schools as well as the university.

Seeking new challenges, Rotter moved to Madison, WI, in 1996 to pursue a PhD in German literature. Under the guidance of his advisor, Hans Adler, he wrote his thesis „Ätzende Bilder, beißende Worte: Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten in der semiotischen Struktur von Text-/Bildmotiven im deutschen Propagandaplakat des 20. Jahrhunderts“ [“Acrid Images, Biting Words: Continuities and Discontinuities in the Semiotic Structure of the German Propaganda Poster of the 20th Century”]. Through a comparative approach to World War I posters in Germany and Austria, as well as Great Britain and the US, he focused his research on visual propaganda aimed at German Americans during the two World Wars.

## Vice President



Dr. Josh Brown is the Raymond and Tamara Skwierczynski University Fellow in Languages and Professor of German and linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He was raised in a Pennsylvania

Dutch-speaking household outside of Allentown, PA. He studied German with minors in Russian and Latin at Millersville University of Pennsylvania and the Philipps-Universität in Marburg, Germany. He returned to Pennsylvania to complete his PhD in German Applied Linguistics at the Pennsylvania State University.

Brown is a sociocultural linguist interested in heritage languages in the US and has published and presented widely on German Americans (especially the Pennsylvania Dutch), Somali refugees, and Swedish Americans. His academic website is: <https://www.joshuarbrown.com/>

Brown is also a traditional handweaver and seeks to preserve the material culture of the early German Americans through his textile work which can be found at: <https://www.thebullfroginn.com/>.

## Graduate Student & Early Career Representative

Ellen Jones began her interest in German language and culture in high school, first participating in a 6 week long exchange in Stuttgart when she was 15, and then spending a gap year after high school with the American Field Service in northern Germany. She spent that year living with a host family and going to school in the region of Ostfriesland in Lower Saxony. After returning, she didn't want to stop her learning of the language and ended up receiving her BA in German and Linguistics (with a concentration in German) from the University of Vermont in Burlington. She then spent a year working before entering the Germanic Studies PhD program at the University of Texas at Austin and plans to complete



her doctorate in Spring 2025.

Her research interests include German dialectology, sociolinguistics, and language and gender. She is currently working on the influence of social factors such as speaker sex/gender on minority and regional language maintenance and loss, with a special focus on speakers of Low German in northern Germany.

One fun fact is that she recently received the results of an Ancestry DNA test and found out that about 22% of her DNA comes from Germanic Europe!

#### European Membership Representative

Dr. Patrick Wolf-Farré studied German and Spanish philology at the University of Heidelberg. After completing his PhD in German Linguistics in Heidelberg with a dissertation on the “Language and Self-Concept of the German-Chileans,” he worked as a Lector at the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at Yale University before becoming a post-doctoral researcher at the Institute for German as a Second and Foreign Language (DaZ/DaF) at the University of Duisburg-Essen. He currently serves as acting professor of German Didactics and Applied Linguistics at the Leuphana University Lüneburg. His research deals with German in a multilingual context from various perspectives, such as German as a minority language in Latin America and language contact in the context of migration in Europe.



#### Newsletter Editor

Dr. Caroline Huey is currently Associate Professor of Germanic Studies in the Modern Languages Department of The University of Louisiana Lafayette.

For years, she researched and published in the field of Early Modern German Literature, working with Early Modern carnival plays and woodcuts – publishing *Hans Folz and Print Culture in Late Medieval Germany: The Creation of Popular Discourse* (New York, Routledge) in 2016.

More recently, she has been exploring the German immigrant population in New Orleans shortly before the Civil War, especially those immigrants arriving after the revolutions in Europe in 1848. This particular group helped the New Orleans German population form a unique group identity during the years shortly before the Civil War.

Huey very much enjoys teaching undergraduates and graduate students – although there are few German heritage speakers in Cajun Country, it’s still a pleasure to introduce them to Faust and Martin Luther every time.



#### Book Review Editor

Marc Pierce (PhD Michigan) is an associate professor in and chair of the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He has been the book review editor of YGAS since 2016 and the chair of the organizing committee for the 2024 SGAS Symposium. He teaches courses in Germanic linguistics (including the history and structure of German, German sociolinguistics, and various older Germanic languages), German-American Studies, and German literature (mainly fairy tales). His research fields include Germanic linguistics, German-American studies (especially Texas German), historical linguistics, and the history of linguistics.

## Website Manager



Dr. Kathleen Condray has been on the faculty of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville since 1999 and was recently promoted to Professor of German. Her book, *Das Arkansas Echo: A Year in the Life of Germans in the Nineteenth-Century South*, won the Booker Worthen Literary Prize in 2021. She is the co-founder and co-director of the International Engineering Program at the U of A, and her research group recently completed a grant to create Digital Humanities projects that explore European migration history in Arkansas: <https://migrantvoices.uark.edu/>

This website includes a 3D tour of St. Mary's, the German immigrant church in Altus, Arkansas. The site features St. Mary's frescoes in German and the reenactment of an organ performance of the Mozart piece enjoyed by the settlers, as well as short videos on important historical figures in Arkansas European migration history.

Dr. Condray is an avid supporter of public humanities as well and recently led a hike at Devil's Den State Park on the legacy of Friedrich Gerstäcker and Wild West Arkansas.

*SGAS members at the 2023 Symposium*

*Photo credit: Claudia Guarneri, German Embassy Washington*



# CORA LEE KLUGE RECEIVES OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

## WILLIAM E. PETIG

On behalf of the Society for German American Studies, it is my great honor to present this year's Outstanding Achievement Award to Cora Lee Kluge, professor emerita of German at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Born and raised in Lawrence, KS, Cora Lee completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Kansas, where both of her parents were on the faculty and where J. Anthony Burzle, co-founder of KU's Max Kade Center and the first editor of the SGAS's *Yearbook*, was the chair of the German Department. After graduation from KU, she studied at the University of Vienna on an Austrian Government Grant for a year. She then pursued graduate work on a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship at Stanford University in German Studies and the Humanities Program. After writing a dissertation on "The Relationship between Friedrich Schiller and Wilhelm von Humboldt," she took a position at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

At the University of Wisconsin she taught German language and culture, German literature of the classical period, and German American studies, which included a popular undergraduate course entitled "The German Immigration Experience." She has published and lectured on a wide range of German American topics, for example Friedrich Kapp's views on John Brown, the work of World War II German POWs on the Mississippi River Basin Model, and the Milwaukee German Theater, for which she helped create a searchable digital bibliography of the Milwaukee Public Library's Trostel Collection of German Theater Scripts:

[https://old.mpl.org/file/tools\\_trostel.htm](https://old.mpl.org/file/tools_trostel.htm)

In addition to articles on Friedrich Schiller, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, Mark Twain, and Bertolt Brecht, she has written on the history of German Studies in the U.S. and on German American Studies.

In her teaching and research, Cora Lee has always argued for a broad view of German American Studies. Not only does the field include the story and contributions of German-speaking immigrants and their descendants in America, but it also examines the multi-directional flow of ideas across national and linguistic borders.

Her editions of long-forgotten works include Christian Essellen's *Babylon* (1996) and her groundbreaking collection, *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of German Americans, 1850-1914* (2007), which made available a body of previously unknown literature.

She edited *Paths Crossing: Essays in German-American Studies* (2011) and was one of the co-editors of *Wisconsin German Land and Life* (2006) and *Teaching German in Twentieth-Century America* (2001). From 1995 to 2001 she edited the German Studies journal *Monatshefte*, published at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 1992, she was awarded the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching and in 2008 the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (Verdienstkreuz am Bande).

The work of many students as well as of colleagues has benefited from her sharp editorial eye and fine sense of style. She is in many respects the editor's editor.

Cora Lee served as second-vice president of the SGAS from 2006 to 2008, as vice president from 2017 to 2019, and as the first female president of SGAS from 2019 to 2021. The SGAS was particularly fortunate to benefit



(l-r) Mark Loudon, Cora Lee Kluge, and William Petig, 2023 SGAS Symposium

Photo credit: Myka Burke

from her leadership during the Covid pandemic when organizations could not meet in person. After making the arrangements for the SGAS annual symposium for 2020 in Georgetown, she was forced to cancel the symposium when the pandemic hit in March, just a little over a month before the meeting was to take place. As Cora Lee herself admits, she will probably go down in SGAS history for planning one of our most successful symposia that never took place. This is quite literally true, since the program for that symposium had well over 50% more presentations than most of our symposia, in addition to having one of the highest numbers of participants from Europe. To keep our organization functioning, Cora Lee acquired her own Zoom license and set up executive committee meetings on Zoom that were the epitome of efficiency.

Cora Lee Kluge served as director or co-director of the Max Kade Institute at the University of Wisconsin-

Madison from 2004 to 2016, during which time the Institute moved from the little farm house on University Bay Drive to the University Club on the East Campus Mall, where MKI not only has greater visibility on campus, but where it enjoys easy access to Memorial Library and to the resources of the Wisconsin Historical Society. This move was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities as well as a successful fund drive during her directorship, thus strengthening MKI's position as a viable institute at the University of Wisconsin and helping to make it the leading center for research in German American Studies in the Midwest.

For her many contributions to German American Studies, on both the state and national levels, the Society for German American Studies is pleased to honor Cora Lee Kluge with the Outstanding Achievement Award for 2023.

## JUST WHAT IS GERMAN AMERICAN STUDIES?

### CORA LEE KLUGE

[This is an edited version of the banquet speech at the SGAS Symposium in Arlington, VA.]

There is a surprising range of answers to the question "What is German American studies?" "German American studies" sounds like a college-level academic discipline or program of studies, potentially similar to other "studies" programs, some of which are departments that offer degrees or are programs that lead to a certificate. There is a growing proliferation of such academic programs in our colleges today. The University of Wisconsin-Madison, for example, offers over 300 majors or certificates at the undergraduate level, in addition to professional degrees. In Madison students can also petition that their own individually designed majors be approved. This option is defined as being "for students whose interests bridge existing departments and disciplines in ways not accommodated by an existing major or interdisciplinary program."<sup>1</sup>

German American studies in Madison is not a department, nor is it one of the UW-Madison's programs that would lead to a degree or certificate. And the situation at UW-Madison is not unusual. If there are German American studies programs in the United States, they are well hidden. The only such program I can find after checking at length is the German American Studies program at the University of Cincinnati, which leads to a Certificate in German American Studies. That University advertises its program as "the only one of its kind in the U.S.," and also praises the library and archival resources there as "outstanding." One of the surprising aspects of this Cincinnati program is the fact that absolutely *no* German language courses or knowledge of the language is required. But this, too, is not unusual for our field: more and more, German American studies, whether done in America as German American studies or in Germany as American studies, is a field that is done in the English language.

So *where* at a university does this field find its home if it is not attached to a department or instructional program? Many people might assume that one should look in a German or German studies department. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, there is no German Department as such anymore; German is now part of a larger unit known as GNS, namely the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic+. GNS+ offers 12 different majors or certificate programs, including a BA in German, a BS in German, and a German certificate. But searching the GNS website for German American studies does not produce anything except the names of a few individuals, some of whose work lies in this direction.

If one searches “German American studies” at the over-arching, entry-level webpage of the UW, one is pointed to the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies. This is an *institute*, not a *studies program*: one cannot have it both ways. And one quickly discovers that our field—German American *studies*—finds its home in several places around the country, if it has a home at all, in “centers, houses, or institutes.” These are attached to various colleges or universities, but shy away from the notion that they are studies programs. Their role is not to teach or to offer programs leading to a degree or certificate. As examples, I name the Max Kade German-American Research and Resource Center at IUPUI (Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis); and—despite its name—the Max Kade Center for German-American Studies at the University of Kansas. However, even such institutes are few and far between: most colleges and universities have nothing at all to offer in the way of German American studies. Some point to monographs in their libraries—or even to our own Society for German American Studies. The point is that, for the most part, German American studies is not a field or program that finds itself in a teaching setting. This, of course, has huge implications for our field, of which I will mention only three: (1) our field does not have access to university monies set aside for classroom teaching, which are tied to student credit hours; (2) we get none of the on-campus or off-campus visibility benefits that would go along with being a major or a certificate program; (3) we must continue to ask (and try to answer) “Just what is German American studies?”

Let us daydream a bit by asking how one could argue that we should become a teaching program that offers a certificate or even a major in German American studies.

Some answers to this question seemed to be suggested in a front-page article in Madison’s *Wisconsin State Journal* this spring on April 10. This article announced a new program at the UW-Madison leading to a Bachelor’s degree—a major—in Chicano/Chicano Latino/Latina Studies (CLS), which was approved by the UW Board of Regents in March and will be launched this fall. The main arguments presented for this new BA degree program—perhaps arguments we could use to argue for a German American studies program—were as follows:

- (1) There is large and growing cohort of students who are interested: a certificate program in CLS, which has already been in place for 30 years, has grown in the last seven years from a total of some 50 declared candidates to more than 200 today.
- (2) At least according to the newspaper article, this program will “offer students [of Latin-American heritage] not just an education, but a sense of validation on campus,” thus “a sense of belonging....”

There were other arguments, too, aimed at answering some people’s reservations, such as stressing that additional staffing would not be needed, but they are less relevant to what I am trying to say here.<sup>2</sup>

So: is there in our US universities a large and growing number of students of German American background who are interested in courses or programs concentrating on their cultural heritage—or who need to find at their universities a sense of belonging by bringing them together with other students of the same German American background or heritage? Apparently, a certificate program or a degree program in German American studies might gain an academic foothold if there were an adequate number of students eager to enroll in its courses, perhaps if there were students whose sense of belonging would be enhanced by participating in such a program. But we simply have no cohort of such students. And yet the very survival of our field depends on the interest of present and future generations in what we are doing.

*What are we doing?* We are getting older and moving from one generation to the next. There are no longer large waves of immigrants coming to America from German-speaking areas and their descendants’ acknowledgment of their German American heritage is



decreasing from one year to the next. While we would hope that the descendants of German immigrants will not forget their backgrounds, their identity, and their ancestors' language and traditions, their interest is in fact disappearing. Federal census statistics show that the percentage of Americans—even those who know of their German American backgrounds—tend increasingly to self-identify as “American only,” betraying or ignoring their heritage. And who can blame them? Perhaps they no longer speak German; perhaps they do not remember their—who was it?—their great-great-great grandfather who was the original immigrant in their families.

We are in a sad situation: is our organization essentially on life support? Our membership is declining. We are cutting back on all publications. Plans for developing interest among students and other younger people are not being made. The mood in our organization seems very dark.

Perhaps the role of centers or institutes focusing on German American studies should be to preserve antiquities: old documents handwritten in the old German script or printed in German *Fraktur*, neither of which are easy to read, even for many native speakers of German in Germany, let alone descendants of German immigrants who live in America. And German American institutes and centers indeed are engaged in such indispensable preservation. German American institutes and groups are involved in grant-writing efforts to fund the restoration of books and documents. One encounters attempts to locate books published in America in the German language. There is some urgency to this: such books are perhaps sitting in American attics, dusty and forgotten and cluttering up the lives of homeowners, who in any case cannot read them and cannot understand how they could possibly be of any value. Unfortunately, some of these material treasures are already lost forever—when, for example, a building burns down, as happened with the Faith Lutheran Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Easter Sunday of this year.

It would be great if these old books and other materials could be read and understood by their owners, but it is unlikely that those involved—individuals, but also officers and staff members of libraries and historical societies—would or could quickly learn German. And we will not get around to translating them in short order either. The people who can better appreciate them and make use of them are the German scholars of American Studies; and indeed, they have already been doing so for decades. Much of the scholarship of German American

studies is being done or at least paralleled by an organization known in English as the German Association for American Studies (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Amerikastudien*). This is an organization of *German American studies* scholars, not *German American studies* scholars. We are not part of them, and we do not really even know what they are doing. Their official journal entitled *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, which is published quarterly by the Universitätsverlag Winter in Heidelberg, is “[...] dedicated to an interdisciplinary concept of American studies and covers all areas from literary and cultural criticism, history, political science, and linguistics to the teaching of American studies,” according to the statement in the front matter of the journal.<sup>3</sup> This sounds much like the stated purpose of our own Society, which one finds in the *Yearbook of German American Studies*, if one just replaces the phrase “American studies” with the phrase “German American studies.”<sup>4</sup>

We realize, of course, that “American studies” and “German American studies” are not the same thing. And yet we are often working on the same or similar projects and materials. More than once we have even heard papers presented at our Symposia which then appear shortly thereafter in the *Amerikastudien/American Studies* journal. We have archives and materials here in our country, which scholars in Germany, arguably, can make better use of than we can. We have the materials, and *they* have the language skills.

Is it not time for us to join forces with them and seek out opportunities for engagement, dialogue, and intellectual exchange? In 2019 a two-article discussion between Werner Sollors and two others, Ingrid Gessner and Marc Prieue appeared in *Amerikastudien/American Studies*. Its topic was “New Technologies in American Studies,” and we should definitely have been part of that debate. They have made it easy for us. Though *Amerikastudien* concentrates on scholarship produced in German-speaking lands, it publishes almost exclusively in the English language. If one checks into volume 64 (2019), one finds a total of 23 articles and 41 book reviews, all in English, and not one in German. We should be working more closely with them.

The question “What is German American studies?” is not at all new. It has been asked repeatedly for many decades. Several centuries ago, there were universities that became major players in the field, for the most part either because of an individual or individuals who were there, or because of archives and collections to which

these universities had access. Pennsylvania, for example, had become a center of German immigration to the US in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, largely because of religious persecution in their European home lands. Because documents were available and interest was strong, the University of Pennsylvania (founded in 1740) became a center in the field. Founded just over 100 years later, the University of Wisconsin became another center for German American studies in the twentieth century, through the work of Professor Alexander R. Hohlfield and scholars in other departments, and because of its library holdings.<sup>5</sup> These are just two of many examples.

The long-established German studies journal *Monatshefte* has published two issues devoted to German American studies as a discipline: the fall issues of 1988 and of 1994.<sup>6</sup> One of the major questions being asked at that point—and now still—was what all should be included in the field, where to draw the boundary line. Jürgen Eichhoff was one of those who argued for a more narrow definition, such as was stated in the front matter of the *SGAS Yearbook*,<sup>7</sup> whereas I myself argued for a broader definition that includes all aspects of the mutual influencing of the two cultures.<sup>8</sup>

The problem of the boundaries or the breadth of German American studies has not yet been solved, especially if one assumes the matter of German influence on American culture is part of the field. One could indeed argue that a German American element can be found in most academic fields. And now perhaps German American studies has taken a bit too much under its wings. We do not know what the proper subject matter for German American studies is—nor, incidentally, do we even know who all should be counted as a German American. We continue to deliver lectures and publish articles that deal with various questions at hand, and a

great deal has been done. However, it is time now to press forward if we want to survive, as we celebrate the 51st anniversary of the Society for German American Studies.

<sup>1</sup><https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/college-wide/individual-major-bs/>

Accessed 28 August 2023.

<sup>2</sup>*Wisconsin State Journal*, 10 April 2023, pp.A1, A5.

<sup>3</sup>See the front matter in *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, Vol. 64,4 (2019).

<sup>4</sup>See fn. 7.

<sup>5</sup>See Cora Lee Kluge and Mark L. Loudon, “German-American Studies: An Expansive—and Expanding—Field,” and Jost Hermand, “Forced out of Hitler’s Reich: Five Eminent Madisonians,” *Paths Crossing: Essays in German-American Studies*, ed. Cora Lee Kluge (Bern:Peter Lang, 2011), 1-12 and 13-32.

<sup>6</sup>*Monatshefte*, Vol. 80, 3 (Madison: UW Press, 1988); *Monatshefte*, Vol. 86, 3 (Madison: UW Press, 1994).

<sup>7</sup>From the front matter in the *Yearbook of German American Studies*: “The Society for German American Studies was founded for the purpose of encouraging and advancing the scholarly study of the history, language, literature, and culture of the German element in the Americas. This includes coverage of immigrants and their descendants from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and other German-speaking areas of Europe.”

<sup>8</sup>*Monatshefte*, Vol. 86, 3 (Madison: UW Press, 1994): 347.

# BAUHAUS 100: THE BAUHAUS CAPTURES THE WORLD

## BRIGITTA MALM

In 2019, Germany celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the “State Bauhaus in Weimar.” The Bauhaus was a small college of architecture, design, art, and crafts at the time of the Weimar Republic. Under the leadership of the architects Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohle, about 1250 students from all over the world received instruction between the years of 1919 to 1933 in Weimar, Dessau, and finally in Berlin. After the Nazi party took over the government in Germany, the teaching staff decided to close the Bauhaus. Since so many Bauhaus masters and students were forced to flee the country, Bauhaus achieved a special position in architecture and arts schools and its influence spread around the world. The Bauhaus cannot be credited with inventing “modern architecture” as there was a trend toward streamlining following the industrial revolution. This trend was not only in Germany but also in the US with Frank Lloyd Wright, Philip Johnson, Julius Ralph Davidson, and others. It was also prevalent in the Netherlands with the “De Stijl” movement and in England with the Arts and Crafts Movement. However, the Bauhaus was unique in its combination of arts and crafts, painting, and architecture.

It all began with a museum to house the Grand Duke of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach’s art collection that led to Walter Gropius’ dream of a union of art, crafts, trade and later industry to best serve an industrialized civilization. In 1919, he assembled a group of outstanding artists including Lyonel Feininger, Joachim Itten, Wassily

Kandinsky, Oskar Schlemmer, Paul Klee, Josef Albers, and Gunta Stoezl to teach Bauhaus students. In 1922, Gropius developed a new method of teaching. In the preliminary course students were able to experiment with color, shape, and materials with the goal of creating their own designs and products and they were placed in workshops accordingly.



*View of dining area from west, Walter Gropius House, Lincoln, Massachusetts*

*Photo credit: <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ma1367.photos.080436p/>*

In 1927, Alfred Barr, the first Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, together with architect Philip Johnson, met Gropius, László Moholy-Nagy, and Paul Klee in Germany and was fascinated by their work. He eventually helped Gropius and Marcel Breuer settle in the US. Gropius taught at Harvard University and Moholy-Nagy founded the New Bauhaus in Chicago in

1937, which eventually became the Illinois Institute of Technology. In 1938, Mies van der Rohe accepted the position to head the Architecture School at the same Institute.

In 1938, Bauhaus arrived in New York City. Alfred Barr, together with Philip Johnson, arranged the first Bauhaus exhibit at MoMA covering the years 1919-1928. On display were nearly 700 examples of the school’s output, including works of textile, glass, wood, canvas, metal, and paper. It was a celebration of the remarkable creativity and productivity of the Bauhaus. The size and scope of this tribute indicated the importance of the Bauhaus to MoMA’s development: the school had served as a model for the Museum’s multi-departmental structure. A more recent exhibit “Workshops for Modernity” covered the entire fourteen years of the Bauhaus existence.

Important, too, to the Bauhaus school were Anni and Josef Albers. Anni was a famous weaver and Josef did glasswork and painting. They met at the Bauhaus in Weimar and married in 1925. In 1933, Josef received an invitation to teach at the Black Mountain College near Asheville, North Carolina. The Bauhaus had just closed, so he accepted the offer. Black Mountain College was very avant-garde, but after 25 years the College ran out of students and money. The Albers moved to Connecticut and traveled to Latin America – the influences of which are reflected in Anni’s weaving. She published a book on weaving and, with the Bauhaus anniversary, she is earning the recognition she deserves. If you are ever in Leipzig, the Grassi Museum has redone Josef’s glass windows in the stairwell.

The Bauhaus in the US is important for Germany, too. In 1942, German American architect Julius Ralph Davidson designed and built the residence of the famous German author Thomas Mann in Pacific Palisades, California. The German government purchased the house called “Das Weisse Haus des Exils” three years ago and it is now a place for cultural and transatlantic exchanges.

Bauhaus design created many transatlantic relationships. Samuel and William Wiener, two stepbrothers from Shreveport, Louisiana, traveled throughout Europe and North Africa studying historic and modern buildings. In 1927 and 1931, they visited the Building Exposition in Berlin, the Weissenhof Housing Estate in Stuttgart, and the Bauhaus in Dessau where they met Walter Gropius.

The anniversary year 2019 was much celebrated in Germany: three new museums were built, exhibits were done just about everywhere, and the book “bauhaus imaginista” created around the world. The impact of the Bauhaus is still relevant today and deserves more recognition in German American studies. As Herbert Bayer and Walter Gropius said on occasion of the 1938 exhibit at MoMA:

Emphatically, no! The Bauhaus is not dead; it lives and grows through the men who made it, both teachers and students, through their designs, their books, their methods, their principles, their philosophies of art and education.



Anni Albers (1899-1994) Design for a Silk Tapestry, 1926, Transparent and opaque watercolor over graphite on cream wove paper, Sheet: 47.8 x 31.7 cm Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts