

ubu

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## BAUHAUS / NEW BAUHAUS PHOTOGRAPHY & COLLAGE

Tuesday, June 10 – Friday, August 1, 2003

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**Ubu Gallery** announces its second exhibition at its new location – **416 East 59<sup>th</sup> Street** – with a selection of photographs and collages by over 30 masters and students of the **Bauhaus** (Weimar, Dessau and Berlin) and **New Bauhaus** (Chicago). The Bauhaus, founded in Weimar in 1919, was a progressive school of art and design and a haven for avant-garde artists in Germany during the period of radical change following World War I. It sought to bring together the fine and applied arts, human ingenuity and modern technology in order to create new art fit for the modern era. The Bauhaus in its various incarnations lasted until 1933. Under the directorship of László Moholy-Nagy, the principal theorist and advocate of experimental photography at the Bauhaus, these goals were furthered beginning in 1937 at the New Bauhaus and its successor institutions (the School of Design in Chicago and the Institute of Design).

Although there was no formal workshop devoted to photography at the Bauhaus prior to 1929, it became a focus with the arrival of the Hungarian Constructivist, Moholy-Nagy, whom the Bauhaus's founder, the architect Walter Gropius, appointed to lead the preliminary course and metal workshop in 1923. Moholy-Nagy advanced his theoretical position on photography in his seminal tract *Painting, Photography, Film* published in 1925. In his striking photographs, he demonstrated unusual vantage points and various darkroom techniques that he believed constituted a "new vision" for a medium that was surely the expressive vehicle of the future.

Just as traditional media and materials were being reappraised at the Bauhaus, Bauhaus artists experimented with even the most basic photographic processes. The "photogram," created by placing objects on photographic paper and exposing it to light, and the "negative" (or "reverse") print, created from a film positive produced from the original negative, exemplified Moholy-Nagy's belief that the medium, formerly valued for its ability to reproduce truthfully, was capable of producing entirely new art. Bauhaus artists also gave credence to Moholy-Nagy's contention that photography had the power to generate fresh views of reality by rendering the familiar unfamiliar through unexpected vantage points, extreme close-ups and radical croppings. Bauhaus artists also assimilated a great number of impulses from other avant-garde movements of the time, such as the new collage techniques of the Dadaists and the dizzying juxtapositions of unrelated objects utilized by the Surrealists.

With the closing of the Bauhaus by the Nazis in 1933 and the relocation of Moholy-Nagy to Chicago in 1937 to lead the New Bauhaus, the axis of experimental photography shifted to America. It was within the turbulent atmosphere of World War II that New Bauhaus artists in the "Workshop in Light and Color," as the photography program was known, expressed their primary concern with shape, texture, spatial relationship, luminosity and contrast through the employment of such techniques as *cliché-verre*, solarization, photomontage and distortion. While abstraction –the revelation of pure form– was advanced as a means of penetrating the essence of visual experience, not all New Bauhaus production eschewed the visible world as recorded by conventional photographic methods. Yet even in images having a specifically documentary character, the primacy of artistic intent was an exploration of the possibilities of form and image as defined by light.

This exhibition brings together the work of over 30 Bauhaus and New Bauhaus masters and students, including László Moholy-Nagy and György Kepes (both Bauhaus and New Bauhaus); Paul Citroen and Umbo (both Bauhaus); and Nathan Lerner and Arthur Siegel (both New Bauhaus).