



Design in search of new ways



It is only a few steps from the campus of the Anhalt University of Applied Sciences in Dessau to the Bauhaus Building. The geographical proximity characterises the programme for the Department of Design, the educational institution established in 1993. With the world heritage building in the background it was easy to venture into new territory almost 20 years ago. "From the very beginning it involved an innovative educational concept", says Prof. Brigitte Hartwig. Design in its various facets should be seen and taught holistically. Three platforms provide students with a basis for acquiring broad skills with comprehensive knowledge. Prof. Hartwig mentions the

main emphases on communication design, product design and media design. Despite their different orientation they shall be brought together and linked with each other through an interdisciplinary, broadly based fundamental education. The "Dessau Model" involves a form of generalist design education. The professor sees this as the advantage for the education. She is certain that this does not function throughout the Federal Republic as in Dessau. This renders a noticeable gain in experience for the approximately 300 students. Whoever has graphic designer as a career goal can and should deal with product design. There is an opportunity to become acquainted with the latest trends of electronic media. In this context it appears to be perhaps incidental whether a person designs a short film or gets an advertising trailer off the ground. "Getting fit for the future counts", says Prof. Hartwig. Cooperative projects of the three Department of Design platforms make it easier to find the holistic view. Peter Weisbrich is studying in his seventh semester. He has retained his goal of becoming a graphic designer. The fact that the term "communication design" is very broadly conceived in Dessau particularly stimulates him. Quite extraordinary projects come into being there, relates the young man. A seminar entitled "homosexuality and music" preoccupied him for a whole semester. This incorporation of socio-political themes is "an advantage" that expands horizons. Such themes are not considered as merely an in itself. The seminar results are to be published and appear soon as a magazine. Among other things, graphic ability once again plays a role in this context. How does Weisbrich see his future work? "I would like to develop concepts, achieve something organisationally", he says. He has developed a predilection and found his strengths due to the comprehensive offers of his university. Even while studying there are a vast number of possibilities to try things out. The idea for "VORORT" came into being with other fellow students. The catalyst for this campaign was the reduction of funds for the cultural domain in Dessau-Roßlau. A bank eventually provided a rent-free shop in the inner city near the city hall. The notion of utilising this as a working area for students had to be discarded. Instead, exhibitions, readings and other cultural activities have been offered there for nearly two years. A place for debates, exhibitions and encounters – i.e. a branch of the university in the heart of the Bauhaus city – emerged. The multidisciplinary and cross-thematic projects which students and teachers implement as well as how they take part in life and blend in are constantly visible there. "We always react to current developments with our basic approach to studies. Particularly in terms of design there are constantly changing and reorienting solutions. Everything is in a state of flow. We want to prepare our students for this", says Prof. Brigitte Hartwig. She thinks it is important that young people can open their mind and be made fit for a career. When equipped with all the necessary fundamentals they could be very proactive while seeking their place in the art scene. The project "Vom Sattel in die Kissen" ("From the saddle to the pillow") is one example of this approach. It examined how a hotel for cyclists could be created in an old laundry. Theoretical exploratory works, computer visualisations and visions were incorporated in the project. Or the designer reported on innovative problem-solving approaches for touristic guidance systems. Simply "putting up a few signs" in the classical sense is the false approach. The university explored where guests arrive with which means of transportation for the region. Concepts which are now waiting on a realisation emerged on this basis. Such considerations are indispensable nowadays, assures Prof. Hartwig. It is important to think in scenarios, to actively develop cities. Agencies in Germany have started to take up these ideas and abandon trodden paths. In the meantime, the integral whole is often combined with social design. Hartwig refers to Dessau as a shrinking city which shares this fate with other municipalities in the newly-formed federal states. Demographic causes are a catalyst for this trend, which has meanwhile also reached the first West German cities. Designers should also react to this. Visions for dealing with these trends should be developed in interdisciplinary collaborations, for instance with architects. The six-semester Bachelor of Arts in the Department of Design at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences is conceived as an "integrated degree course in design". This means that the three fields featuring communication design (2D), product design (3D) and time-based media (4D) will be offered within one course of studies. Through integration the students will learn to apply, combine and coordinate graphic, typographic, shape design, photographic, filmic, audio, interactive and general digital and technological means of design in different media. The Master of Arts in Design (MID) degree course is intended for graduate young designers and bachelor graduates from creative disciplines. They shall utilise synergies from the integrated way of thinking and working in complex conceptual formulations in order to arrive at new and extraordinary solutions. In the international degree course, 30 women and men from the USA, Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, Thailand, Australia, Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Pakistan, China, Greece, Japan, Korea and Georgia (among others) are currently learning in Dessau. For them the Bauhaus in the city on the Mulde River with its inspirations is a bridge with worldwide importance which has its starting point in Saxony-Anhalt. Author/ photo: Klaus-Peter Voigt Contact: Anhalt University of Applied Sciences Department of Design Schwabestraße 306818 Dessau-Roßlau Prof. Brigitte Hartwig: +49 340 5197-1735 E-Mail: b.hartwig@design.hs-anhalt.de Web: www.design.hs-anhalt.de

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