



Homage to a Font and a Fount

By Josef Woodard

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WHAT'S IN A WORD: Words do speak, and sometimes volumetrically. Take the word “Bauhaus.” No, not that stiff and pretentious English rock band, but the original German school for Modernist ideals and the integration of the arts and architecture, the manifesto for and output of which helped to push 20th-century aesthetics into high gear. When in Germany, any modernist — or post-modernist, or anti-modernist, or anyone aware of the world of everyday design for the past eighty-something years — ought to pay a visit to Dessau. There, a short walk from the train station, you come upon architect Walter Gropius’s famed Bauhaus building, circa 1925. You can’t miss it: It’s the largest structure on the Bauhausstrasse, the king of post-Bauhaus structures on the street. Angular chic and early modernist spirits buzz in the air here, and recognizing that Dessau was also the hometown of Kurt Weill only ups the cultural pilgrimage ante.

That iconic word “Bauhaus,” in its own curvy, onomatopoeic font, is set vertically, adorning the entrance of Gropius’s landmark building, which is full of rambling right angles and neatly assembled modules, and teeming with nostalgic utopian spirit. The Nazis were not so impressed with its Bolshevik ideology, and shut down Bauhaus in 1933. The building waxed and waned in function and states of repair until it was officially revived in the mid ’70s, making the UNESCO World Culture and Heritage List in 1996.

In a local angle once removed, another important early Bauhaus figure was Herbert Bayer, who spent his later years in Santa Barbara and was behind the public art piece “Chromatic Gate,” down by East Beach. After one has observed Bayer’s sense of design and color, especially in the Bauhaus-archiv in Berlin, the roots of that beach-tripping sculpture become clear.

For a very different architecture-related German side trip, hop on the S1 train out of Berlin to Wannsee, the lovely, idyllic, and haunting lake town where a fateful-yet-casual meeting of high Nazi officials took place in January of 1942 (as chronicled in the 1984 film, *The Wannsee Conference*). Visitors can wander around the sprawling estate, now a museum/memorial, and through the room where Nazi officials calmly pondered the “Final Solution” over coffee and treats. It’s a distinctively chilling experience, reminding us of the dire results of governmental meetings behind closed doors. (Insert your own closer-to-home analogies here.)

Meanwhile, back in post-World War II, post-Wall, post-Potsdamer Platz rebirth Berlin, early November is jazz festival time. This year’s festival was the last under the direction of the adventurous, big-eared Peter Schulze. He sidestepped flashy marquee names, but dug up plenty of sparkling sounds and visions.

Chamber jazz held forth this year, with a chamber orchestra-fortified set of **Michael Mantler’s** concertos — including one for Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason — and **Wayne Horvitz’s Gravitax Quartet**. Intriguing saxist-leader **Ingrid Laubrock’s Nonet** served a fascinating stew (featuring the alternately volcanic and poetic, and Santa Barbara-bred drummer **Tom Rainey**). A Danish theme emerged, with the limber ensemble **Simon Toldam & Prügelknabe’s** rubbery spirit and tasty Scandinavian brooding, and wily party band **Radiostar** at the club Quasimodo. British-born and Copenhagen-based keyboardist and composer **Django Bates’s** new big band, **stoRMChaser**, mostly consists of his students at Copenhagen’s Rhythm Music Conservatory, as well as great young singer **Josefine Lindstrand** — and was this listener’s festival highlight, bubbling over as it did with Bates’s usual wit and energy. This is a band to watch out for.

TO-DOINGS: Experimental and/or computer-music aficionados are in luck tonight, thanks to CREATE (the **Center for Research in Electronic Art Technology**), in concert at UCSB’s Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall. Directed by JoAnn Kuchera-Morin and associate director Curtis Roads, CREATE cultivates new junctures of technology and musical ideas, and never fails to put on a raucous and cerebral live show. Tonight’s program involves the in-house invention, the “Creatophone,” and materials digital and otherwise. Computers, dancers, a harpsichord, visual art, etc., take the stage and the house. Be there.

(Got e? fringebeat@independent.com.)

