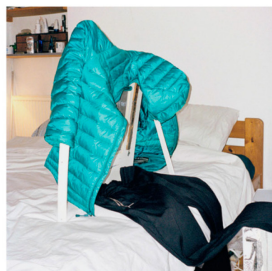




Sung Tieu, CIVIC FLOOR (2025)



Euro TV, Euro TV (2025)



Angharad Williams, NOW WATCH THIS DRIVE (2025)

Founded by Walter Gropius in the spring of 1919, the Bauhaus started off as a school of fine and applied arts in Weimar, Germany. But by the time the Nazis closed it in 1933, the name had become synonymous with a particular image of modernism: stylish but functional, cool but communitarian. Its roll call reads like a who's who of 20th century art and architecture: Mies van der Rohe, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Marcel Breuer, Josef Albers, László Moholy-Nagy. Today, the Bauhaus building in Dessau (where the school had relocated back in 1925) houses a nonprofit foundation with a museum, exhibition spaces and educational facilities. "The thing that's interesting about the Bauhaus," says Toronto born, London based artist Steve Bishop, "is that they were always into making artworks accessible. Things were produced in multiples. It was work people might take home with them."

In 2024, Bishop was among a group of seven artists invited to participate in a show taking place in the school's old Meisterhäuser, where former teachers like Klee and Kandinsky once lived with their families. Commissioned by the Bauhaus to produce a work of art, he used the money to start a record label instead.

"If you do a residency at the Bauhaus, you stay at this house," Bishop explains. "And it was basically just full of Ikea furniture, which is quite Bauhaus in itself. But they came up

with this longform semi-permanent exhibition, where they invited different artists to do something with a room. I got the upstairs: two rooms, top floor. Some people had bedrooms, kitchens. Mine didn't really have so much clear direction."

Without an obvious former function to guide him, some specific prior history to suggest a particular site-specific response, he opted instead to carry out a project he'd been mulling over for a while. He decided to build a "listening room".

Housed in the former home of Oskar Schlemmer, Bishop's Bauhaus listening room was a far cry from the kind of highly sacralised, deluxe high-tech spaces offering "immersive" classic album playbacks for concert ticket prices in cities like London, Tokyo and Los Angeles (see *Against The Grain*, *The Wire* 511). It was, he confides, "not very audiophile at all". But it drew on a rich history of design practices associated with the Bauhaus school. "I remade a Marcel Breuer side table from the last house that he built in his lifetime," Bishop says. "In 1980, in Connecticut, he made this three metre long floating credenza [cabinet] with inbuilt record player and amp, with speakers at either end. It was beautifully designed. So I made a replica of that."

The majority of the budget from the commission, however, was spent on

Unlimited Editions: Concentric Group

While on a residency at the Bauhaus school, artist Steve Bishop developed a site-specific listening room that doubles up as a label

By Robert Barry

commissioning other artists to make something to listen to there, and then pressing those audio works onto vinyl. "It was important for me," Bishop says, "that it wouldn't just be one record going in this house. That would be the impetus, but it would have this whole other life. It would be a fully functioning record label." In this way, he was able to "shoehorn" into his exhibition proposal a platform intended to outlast the show and go on to have a life of its own. The three records he commissioned for the listening room at Dessau became the first releases on the new Concentric Group label – its name taken from a canvas by Schlemmer himself, the very artist whose old house Bishop found himself squatting in.

Gropius invited Schlemmer to Weimar in 1920, and he stayed at the Bauhaus until the end of the decade. In 1925, the very year the school moved to Dessau, he painted a portrait-oriented canvas about a metre tall and just over 60 centimetres wide. Influenced by techniques drawn from Parisian cubism and Russian constructivism, the image depicts a male figure or possibly some sort of doll in various states of rotation, all superimposed on top of each other against an abstract, grid-like background. As Bishop suggests, there is something mechanical about the image, which suggested to him the rotation of a record turntable. It also recalls, somewhat eerily, the

mannequin-like Autons that used to terrorise Jon Pertwee's Dr Who in the early 1970s.

Sung Tieu, Angharad Williams and Euro TV (a duo comprised of Nicholas Chevelldave and Will Sheridan Jr), the first three artists to be released on the label, may be unfamiliar names to most music fans. In each case, Discogs lists their Concentric Group record as their only release to date. But they each have an extensive catalogue of works in the visual arts, taking in installation, sculpture, collage and so forth. For Bishop, the label's remit covers "everything from artists making music to things that were like sound art". The crucial thing, he declares, is that it should have "some kind of conceptual integrity".

Often with art works in galleries, Bishop says, "you can go in and smell the food but you can never really buy it". He was keen to do something that would bring that work "within reach", to offer people an experience of artists' work in their own homes and at their own time. And, as well as being placed in the house, Concentric Group artists' audio works will also be available on the label's website.

Although the Bauhaus has little to do with the ongoing running of the label, something of its spirit presides nonetheless: the idea of an art that would be multiple, accessible, perhaps even democratic. ● concentric.group