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THOMAS D. MANGELSEN PHOTO

An Alaskan brown bear preparing to devour a sockeye salmon is one of the photos found in Thomas Mangelsen's "A Life in the Wild" collection at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.

Nature loves a LENS

Wildlife photography is on display at both Notebaert and Field Museum

BY STEVE JOHNSON | Chicago Tribune

The wildlife of Illinois isn't as varied or as powerful as it once was. Outside the gallery at the Notebaert Nature Museum showing Thomas D. Mangelsen's stunning wildlife photography retrospective "A Life in the Wild," one can see traces of what we once had in the Prairie State: a wolf, a brown bear and a cougar, stuffed and mounted, reminders of a time when big predators were part of the ecosystem.

But for all that Illinoisans may have lost, there's suddenly an abundance of wildlife coming back to the state's biggest city, at least in the form of images.

It starts with "A Life in the Wild," a collection of several dozen large-scale prints certain to make jaws drop and eyes open wide so that the viewer him or herself comes across as something slightly different than human.

From an Alaskan brown bear about to close its jaws on a sockeye salmon in a rushing river to elephants marching across the Serengeti in perfect symmetry — right down to their swishing tails — to three bird photos so exquisitely composed that one might think a Japanese painter made them, this is genuine wildlife art.

"I wanted to photograph wildlife differently than most people did," said Mangelsen, now 73, in a phone interview from his home in Jackson, Wyoming. "Photographers go through this stage of trying to be like a trophy hunter: You want the biggest buck or bull elk — you know, portrait shots. And I found it kind of unsatisfying and boring.

"I mean maybe it's because I looked at more paintings than I did photography. Of course I looked at Ansel Adams' work, you know, the masters. But I wanted to

kind of raise the bar with the nature photography, I suppose, and make it more artistic. And that's what these 40 prints are about. It's the same as a painter might do with the composition and light and gesture in the moment."

For all the beauty and how-did-he-shoot-that wonder of the imagery, the exhibit throbs too with an environmental message: These creatures in these places are beyond special. In Mangelsen's compositions, there is something of the sacred to the line of gray wolves walking across a Yellowstone valley landscape or the moose on a small hill, reflected, along with the great Alaska mountain Denali, in the water below. These scenes are revealed to us not so we may glimpse a passing moment, in Mangelsen's vision, but so that we may prove ourselves worthy of seeing more like them.

But before we get back to him, there'll be more stellar wildlife photography arriving later this month at the Field Museum. On March 22, the natural history temple offers its first showing of "Wildlife Photographer of the Year," an exhibition comprised of images from the prestigious annual BBC

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The Bauhaus at 100

German design school sought to remake world

BY BLAIR KAMIN
 Chicago Tribune

The sleek smartphone you may be holding in your hand. The elegant tubular metal chair you'd love to buy but can't afford. The glass-sheathed building you admire or despise.

All these things reflect the influence of the Bauhaus, the legendary German design school that began 100 years ago and replaced Victorian clutter and

Edwardian pomp with a less formal, clean-lined functionalism that still shapes how we live.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Bauhaus helped change the way the world looks and that it made an enormous impact on Chicago. After the school's third and last director, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, moved to Chicago in the 1930s to head what is now the architecture school at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Mies and his followers, most notably the firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, remade the city's skyline through the Willis Tower and other landmarks.

But the Bauhaus, which literally translates to "building house," was about much more than buildings, as we learn from an informative yet overstuffed traveling exhibition, "The Whole World a Bauhaus," at the Elmhurst Art Museum. The location, 18 miles west of downtown Chicago, is out of the way, but the museum is not exactly podunk. Its collection includes the Mies-designed McCormick House of 1952, which was a prototype for prefab houses — a very Bauhaus idea.

Amid the show's 400-plus

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ABEL URIBE/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

A tubular steel chair by Marcel Breuer, a carpet for a children's bedroom by Anni Albers and a wood dismantlable bookshelf by Hubert Hoffman are part of a traveling exhibition at the Elmhurst Art Museum.

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DENIS BUDKOV/FIELD MUSEUM PHOTO

The Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibit is produced by the Natural History Museum in London.

Nature

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competition mounted at the Natural History Museum of London.

It'll feature some 100 images, mostly large scale, backlit by being printed on film and mounted on light-box panels, said Janet Hong, the museum's project manager for exhibitions.

"It fits in with our history of trying to capture nature, from Carl Akeley making these taxidermy tableaux here of animals he's seen in the wild to photography," she said.

Indeed, the Field Museum used to run its own nature photography competition, from World War II into the 1960s, Hong said.

The "Wildlife Photographer" show follows on the Field showing "Women of Vision," an impressive exhibition of women National Geographic photographers in 2016. This one collects the best pictures from last year's edition of the very popular British competition.

"They really have a way of just sort of folding you into the story of the photograph," Hong said.

But if those wanting to see the 1994 winner of the BBC competition will need to go to the Mangelsen show up the lakefront at the Notebaert.

That image, which Mangelsen titled, "Born of the North Wind," is a panoramic view of a polar bear alongside an arctic fox striking near identical poses at sunset, both facing outward on the precarious early winter ice that, navigated properly, will bring them to seals and sustenance. As with all the photos in the show, it features a detailed wall label offering something of the story of the picture and a quote from the photographer. But what the label doesn't say is that Mangelsen won the competition with it almost by accident.



THOMAS D. MANGELSEN PHOTO

Thomas Mangelsen might spend a long time waiting to get a shot such as this.

"I'm not usually drawn to competitions per se," he said in the interview, "and that one, actually, I didn't even enter it."

"I was away, and my editor saw the picture and sent it in for me without my knowledge. And then three months later I called the office from Montana and my secretary said, 'Well, guess what?' And I said, 'What?' She said, 'Well, you won the BBC Photographer of the Year Award.' And I said, 'Well, how could I?' "

Mangelsen at this point is as close to a brand name as there is in his field. He's been profiled recently by "60 Minutes." (Anderson Cooper is "so genuine with a great sense of humor and just the nicest guy.") The photographer, a native Nebraskan, has got seven Mangelsen — Images of Nature galleries selling limited-edition prints. The easternmost of them has been on Galena's main drag for a quarter century.

One could breeze through the exhibit just reveling in the images, a grouping that Mangelsen considers his "legacy photos," the most iconic shots he's taken in a long career spent waiting in a field for the perfect moment, bundling up to head again to the Alaskan wilds or tracking the rainfall to know when the flowers will be most vibrant on a California hillside.

But there's a whole education to be drawn from



EMMANUEL RONDEAU/FIELD MUSEUM PHOTO

Seeing a Bengal tiger in the forest of Bhutan is one of the photos that will be part of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibit that opens March 22 at the Field Museum.



E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Thomas Mangelsen's "A Life in the Wild" collection is at the Notebaert Nature Museum.

reading the labels too. There's a conservation story as Mangelsen talks about his realization that he didn't want to just document nature but help preserve it.

His photo "Spirit of the Mountains" depicts a mountain lion staring at the camera in what seems a moment of reckoning. Mangelsen spent 42 days watching this cougar with her young triplets in the National Elk Refuge north of Jackson, the card explains. Realizing that if she crossed out of the refuge, she could be hunted for sport and the cubs left to starve, he started the Cougar Fund (www.cougarfund.org) in response.

The labels also offer a mini-course in photography.

As dedicated as Mangelsen is to making images with artistic merit, he's also passionate about depicting what is actually there in nature. He won't visit game preserves, for instance, where trainers might release animals for photographers to capture. So the cards are full of tales of a long wait for that Denali moose or a quick sprint out of a car to capture a Great Smoky Mountains fall foliage tableau in those few minutes when the light and the moisture on the leaves were just perfect. And there are also, on the cards, shots of Mangelsen himself in the field, bundled up against 25-below temperatures or being poked by an arctic fox as he waited to shoot polar bears.

And he definitely will not "fix it in Photoshop," as the cliché about digital alteration goes.

"So often people say, 'Well, I'll just shoot this, and there's an extra penguin in the picture and I'll just take it out.' They don't take the time to get it right in the camera," said Mangelsen. "I really emphasize, when I'm teaching or just with people who want to learn about photography, get it right in the camera. And to me, that's the magic of photography."

"That's the challenge and I think it's the reward — when you actually get it right. And so I spend a tremendous amount of time waiting, going back to the same place — going back to wherever it might

be, Alaska for bears or Africa for rhinos or elephants. Become a good observer and know a lot about animal behavior and then about seasons. And then look around and figure out where that animal might go that would have an interesting background."

Mangelsen does have one trick of sorts that comes through in the exhibition. Time and again, he's photographing the animals in the company of some of the greatest experts on them in their natural habitats, people he's befriended over the years. So alongside "Gentle Giant," his portrait of a seemingly introspective gorilla framed by foliage, Mangelsen talks about "my dear friend, Dr. Jane Goodall," who taught him that his photography could deliver "messages of conservation."

For all his seriousness about his work, however, Mangelsen can be playful in his approach to it.

"It's a huge compliment when someone says, 'Your pictures inspired me to become a photographer,'" he said. Then he laughed. "I say, 'Well, that's probably cost you a lot of money!'"

Thomas D. Mangelsen — *A Life in the Wild* is at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum through June 2; www.naturemuseum.org. Then "Wildlife Photographer of the Year" opens March 22 at the Field Museum; www.fieldmuseum.org.

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Bauhaus

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objects, which include photographs, works on paper, architectural models, documents, films and audio recordings, are classic chairs by Mies and Marcel Breuer; geometric wall tapestries and carpets by such Bauhaus masters as the textile artist Anni Albers, wife of painter Josef Albers; and curiosities such as a yellow, blue and red cradle and flyers for Bauhaus designs.

Long before Crate & Barrel popularized sleek modern furnishings or Apple introduced the iPhone, we learn that the Bauhaus was hawking its elegantly simple wares partly to reduce the school's reliance on public subsidies.

Although the show breaks no new conceptual ground and its overabundance of material can be tiresome, I'd still recommend seeing it. It's a solid deep-dive primer even if doesn't take on the big question: How should we view the Bauhaus today?

Organized by the German international cultural exchange organization IFA and curated by Berlin-based art historian Boris Friedewald, the exhibition consists of eight thematically organized sections that explore everything from the Bauhaus' radical educational philosophy to its encounters with the outside world.

Objects are displayed on pinwheeling, perforated metal panels that evoke the



ABEL URIBE/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The traveling exhibition of the Bauhaus includes photos of items made in the school.

school's industrial-age ethos and departure from traditional symmetry. Throughout, we are introduced not only to the ever-shifting, perpetually clashing ideas that permeated the Bauhaus but also to the colorful characters behind them.

One was the charismatic Swiss artist Johannes Itten, who shaved his head and wore rimless round glasses and gurulike garb. Itten made his students do breathing exercises to improve their powers of concentration. When the school's founding director, the German architect Walter Gropius, shifted the Bauhaus' workshops' focus from distinctive crafted objects to design for mass production, the idealistic Itten left the school in 1923.

Like the post-World War I Weimar Republic in which it grew, the Bauhaus proved to be a fragile experiment. The school opened

in the republic's capital, the central German city of Weimar. But Weimar's conservative burghers found the free-thinking, often free-loving, Bauhaus students unsuitably outlandish. By 1925, the Bauhaus moved to the east-central city of Dessau, where Gropius designed its iconic, glass-walled home and established the school's architecture program two years later.

On one of the show's recordings, we hear an English translation of Gropius' aspirations for the new architecture: Its walls of glass would seem to float in the air rather than being anchored to the ground. Its floor plans would reflect modern ways of living unlike the rigidly symmetrical buildings of the past. The goal was not simply a new aesthetic. It was, one art critic wrote, the creation of "a new type of man and a new relationship to

the world."

But it was impossible to realize such goals in the poisonous atmosphere of Hitler's Germany.

In 1932 — under pressure from the Nazis, who were no fans of modern architecture — Mies shifted the Bauhaus' location to an abandoned factory in Berlin and made it a privately run architecture academy. Still being hounded by the Nazis, the school closed in 1933, the same year the Weimar republic collapsed and Hitler was named Germany's chancellor.

A Bauhaus diaspora followed.

Gropius emigrated to the U.S. and eventually became the head of Harvard's architecture department. Former Bauhaus master Laszlo Moholy-Nagy started the short-lived New Bauhaus in Chicago in 1937 (its successor, the Institute of Design, lives on today).

Anni and Josef Albers went to Black Mountain College in North Carolina. From these institutions and IIT, the Bauhaus changed the way the world was designed, both for better and for worse.

After World War II, real estate developers turned to modern architecture because they could build it on the cheap, not because it would save the world. The universal steel-and-glass look of postwar modernism made every place look like every other place. In the 1970s, it spawned a post-modern counterrevolution that brought back things the Bauhaus had made verboten — decoration, irony and a complex interweaving of contemporary construction with references to a building's physical and cultural contexts.

Today, even though modernism is back in vogue, it's still fair to ask whether the Bauhaus' celebrated designs were as humanistic as the rhetoric behind them. The 20th-century Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, whose bentwood chairs stressed the warmth and organic properties of wood, thought not. Cold steel, he argued, was just that — cold.

Indeed, it can be argued that it took a postmodernist, architect Michael Graves, to fully realize the Bauhaus' dream of spreading the gospel of good design to people of modest means. Graves' 1999 product line for Target — which came to encompass more than 2,000 products, including a simpler and less expensive version of his legendary Alessi teapot —

suggested that popular taste still favors the traditional.

So how should the Bauhaus' principles apply to the contemporary scene, when digital-age customization is replacing industrial-age standardization and architecture's impact on ecology has become a paramount concern? It's too bad that "The Whole World a Bauhaus" didn't take up these issues. The exhibition is better at looking backward than forward.

What the show does reveal is that the smooth-skinned, glass-walled buildings of the Bauhaus, and the dazzling objects created within them, are now as much a part of history as any Ionic column or Gothic flying buttress. They were expressions of their time, not just its technology or its materials, but its spirit — the desire to remake the world after the unprecedented carnage of World War I. Even if such utopian aims were guilty of naive overreach there is still great value in imagining a better future, provided it blends the universal with the particular.

"The Whole World a Bauhaus" appears at the Elmhurst Art Museum, 150 Cottage Hill Ave. in Elmhurst, through April 20. The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$12. For more information, call (630) 834-0202 or go to elmhurststartmuseum.org.

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