









Crash

2012





Crash

2012





Crash

2012



Untitled

2001





Untitled

2001



Salsa

2017



Untitled

2001



Salsa



Salsa



Round Trip

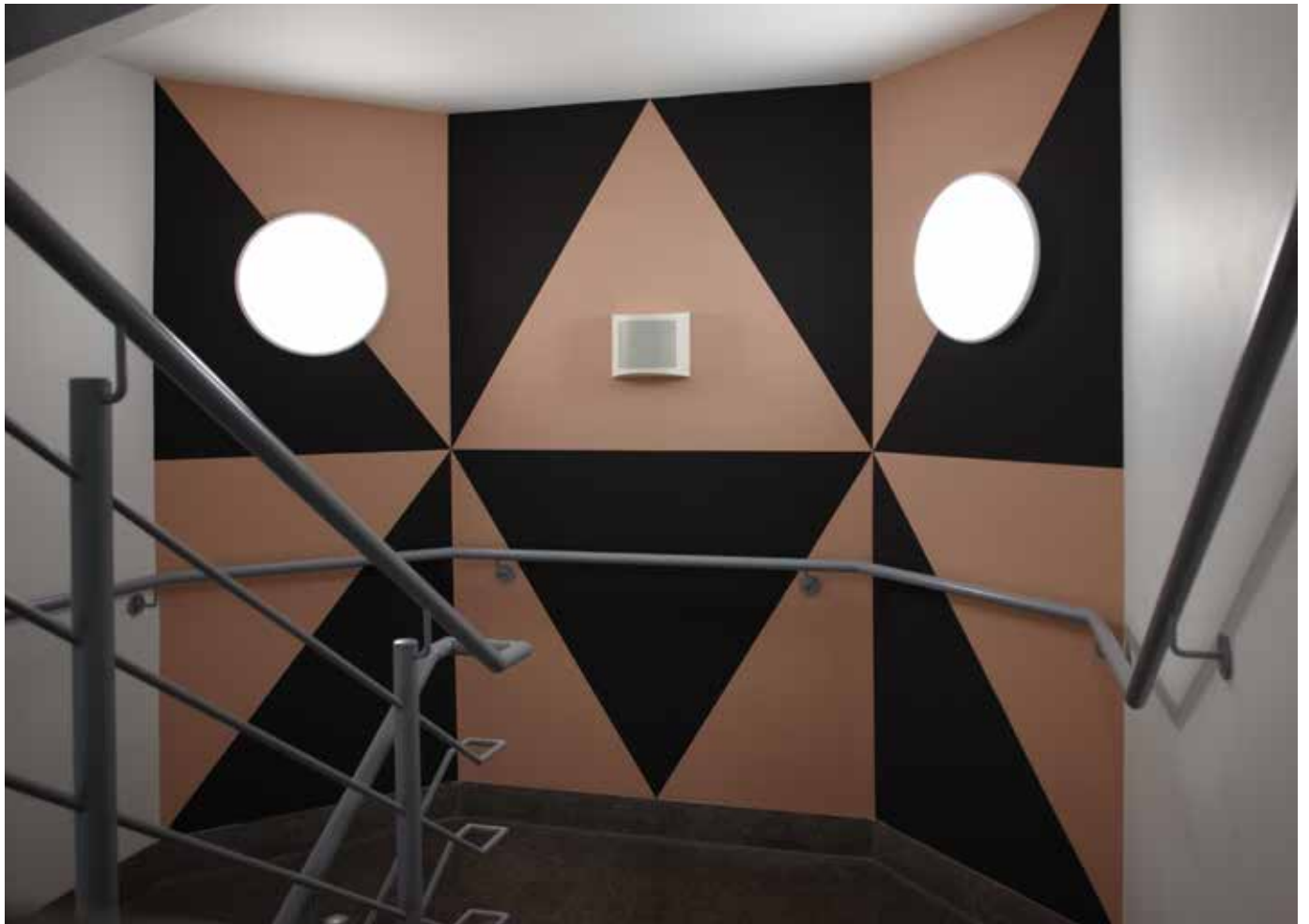


Composition for a Staircase

2016



Composition for a Staircase





Composition for a Staircase

2016



Vorhang auf



Composition for a Staircase



Wet paint – oben wie unten

2000



Composition for a Staircase

2016

Lothar Götz
Staircases

Staircases provide the veins of a building, immersing the visitor spatially in a different way to that of the traditional gallery space. I am interested in how an artwork can be experienced by one's whole body, the image changing constantly as one moves up or down the stairs. Lothar Götz

This catalogue brings together staircase commissions that Lothar Götz has undertaken from 1994 to 2017. Staircases represent a substantial aspect within Götz's painting practice, which integrates site-specific wall-painting together with a studio practice devoted to painting and drawing. Götz is well known for his large-scale wall paintings and immersive architectural displays, characterised by the use of vividly coloured abstract geometrical forms, shapes and lines, and we are delighted that Leeds Art Gallery can now celebrate the addition of the monumental painting *Xanadu* (2017), which spans the art historical to the contemporary present.

Götz's distinctive wall paintings are instantly recognisable. He is one of the most interesting

artists living and working in Britain today. His bold abstract colourful geometric wall paintings entice and invite the viewer to step up to and inside his work, immersing one in his painting. As you walk through, you are part of architecture and painting at one and the same time. *Xanadu*, produced for Leeds Art Gallery's re-opening serves to activate the original Victorian staircase, which constitutes the central artery of our historic 1888 building. Götz's boldest staircase to date, uses colours derived from palettes across art history, from the classical to the contemporary and thus successfully links the ground floor galleries, which house our classical collection with the upstairs displays sourced from both loans and our own collections. Paint is the only art material used consistently throughout the history of art and of mankind.

This wall-painting has been made possible through the Art Fund Art Happens campaign and it is one of his most ambitious commissions to date. *Xanadu* links the ground and first floor galleries, leading visitors up to the new light-filled renovated galleries above.

We are delighted that Bazon Brock has contributed such an acutely perceptive text, which takes the reader on a journey through history inviting us to explore intimately the richly detailed context of staircases throughout time and with great humour.

Our thanks go to Alex Rich, who has designed the publication with sensitivity and great insight into Götz's work and to Domo Baal, for our collaboration on the production of the beautiful catalogue.

And, of course, I would like to thank Lothar Götz.

Sarah Brown
Leeds Art Gallery

Bazon Brock

Lothar on a Stairway to Heaven

The fundamental coordinates of our relationship to the world are horizontal and vertical values – in other words we experience space in flat and vertical planes. Mankind has had a particular fascination with this intersection between height and linear distance ever since he managed to stand on his two hind legs, so as to get a better sense of the surroundings of his habitat. In order to extend their domain further, people built homes in trees or on hilltops. The first structures were built for surveillance – the basis of all power structures – for commanders and guards. Even in late Hellenic times, a king still had to perform the sacred duty of standing on Mount Haemon and in a ritual manner, survey all his surroundings by turning his body 360° to confirm the unity and cohesion of the world, through that gesture.

The *topos* of the shape of stairs provide us with another example of man's early development. Stairways are perhaps the most successful realisation of the aspiration to extend one's command over the vertical axis by progressing horizontally. A stairway combines horizontality with the dynamism of an upward and forward

movement, which – with the exception of the stairway to heaven – was a mere speculative figment of Jacob's imagination.

Early stairway constructions, such as the step pyramids of ancient Egypt, the Tower of Babel, the Colossus of Rhodes', or the internal stairway constructions in the westwork elevations of Christian cathedrals, all first appear to their makers as fantastical dream-images.

Stairways in both early civic and religious buildings, such as castle keeps and Italian towers, were conceived as imaginary ladders that would deliver us a step closer to salvation: staircases would literally take us to places where we would be safer because we were closer to God. Entire cities carved out of the rock face, were in later years connected by a network of stairways that were also accessible by animal-drawn carts.

The notion of the imaginary stairway to heaven and the architecture of the stairwell culminated

in the development of the lift, which became the device through which one could unlock vertical space the world over.

In recent art history there are three 'staircase jokes' that became lodged in practically everyone's mind. The notion of a 'staircase joke' initially referred to the hushed mutterings of domestic servants, who cracked jokes about their masters on the back-stairs. The author of this text himself is one of those humble servants of Art whose masters are the artists we serve. We write for a pittance about works of art that sell for millions and millions of dollars.

Staircase joke N° 1: Before the First World War, Marcel Duchamp submits his painting 'Nude Descending a Staircase' to the Armoury Show in New York.

Staircase joke N° 2: Eric Charrell creates the show stairway for 1920s Berlin, via which glamorous showgirls descend onto a stage for the entertainment of a male audience.

Staircase joke N° 3: Oskar Schlemmer designs the stairwell of the Dessau Bauhaus in order to any reuse of the building by the Nazis more difficult.

These three stairway jokes, avidly discussed at the time by the Vorticists who, under Ezra Pound's leadership, found a way to express them visually through their shared imagination and outlook. Vorticism means rapid rotation, a movement characteristic of both whirlpools and wind turbines in the desert. The vortices of colour, words and music inspired by these rotating columns have their origin in the Archimedes screw; the technical prototype of devices that rotate in a fixed position. Robert and Sonia Delaunay, for example, wove strings of colour to the top of the Eiffel Tower, where these colours seem to flow into the rainbows of the transcendent bridge.

And now to Lothar Götz, with his surname (which sounds like the German word for *idol*) suggesting to the astute that the working of art is idolatry. We must be careful now; we know

from the mathematical genius Schrödinger that idols have power even if they do not exist, and psychologists have taught us that placebos are effective even if patients are aware of them, suggesting that psychodynamic forces can easily stand in for missing active ingredient. And artists are professionals when it comes to making one thing stand in for another. Our usual response to visual attractors, such as those created through painting, is to scan horizontally in front of them. The bare white gallery wall is a curatorial placebo, allowing us to perceive isolated objects within a hint of framework. In any case, one's gaze moves back and forth across the surface of paintings and as we note where the works are placed, we confirm the authenticity of the continuity created.

Lothar has always consistently broken this suggested continuity by working in several smaller places within a single space. The staircase, as a form of spatial organisation, is ideal for experiencing this sense of continuity at different levels. As soon as one passes through the colour space, it becomes a memory.

Expectations about the staircase's next levels contrast with what the viewer actually sees, creating a surprising experience. As one climbs the stairs, the [viewer is] continually challenged. The colour composition that one sees on every landing is enhanced by simultaneous recall of the previous composition and anticipation of the next. The aim here is to achieve classical forms of transformation or rites of passage, a metamorphosis in the here and now. The transformation process itself (including the stationary image of the swirling column of air) conveys an experience of durable happiness. In classical terms, constant change is the sole form of proven permanence, as the Fata Morgana demonstrates to every traveller through the desert. Today, all we know about the true nature of the Fata Morgana cannot spare us, nor take us away from, the 'real' experience of the virtual, the imaginary, or the mind's power of invention.

Even this, which demystifies all creative powers by reducing them to technique informed by artistic calculus, cannot negate the illusion of the unreal made real that we call *art*. And so, thanks to

Lothar's power to create a sense of space through colour, I ascend the winding stairway, towards a heavenly space.

*(Bazon Brock *1936 is a German art theorist and critic, multi-media generalist and artist. He is considered a member of Fluxus. He was Professor of Aesthetics at the Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg, the University of Applied Arts Vienna and the University of Wuppertal)*

Bazon Brock
Lothar auf der Himmelsleiter

Die grundlegenden Koordinaten unseres Weltverhältnisses sind die Horizontale und die Vertikale, die Entfernung in der Fläche und in der Höhe. Die Menschen haben sich für die Kreuzungspunkte von Hoch und Weit in besonderem Maße interessiert, seit sie sich in den Savannen aufrichteten, um eine bessere Aussicht im Nahbereich des Lebensraums zu gewinnen. Dann wurden Bäume und Hügel besetzt, um die visuelle Kontrolle auszuweiten. Erste bauliche Formen der Supervision, Grundelement jeder Herrschaft, entstanden als Exponierpodeste für die Anführer und Wächter. Noch bis in den späten Hellenismus hinein war es heilige Pflicht des Königs, von der Spitze des Berges Haimon aus durch rituelle Drehung um die eigene Körperachse die Einheit des Horizonts über volle 360 Grad und damit die Einheit der Welt zu garantieren.

Früh hat sich auch der Topos der Raumgestalt der Treppe herausgebildet. Treppen sind die erfolgreichsten Modelle der Vermittlung von Horizontalität und Dynamik der Voranbewegung jenseits der bloß gedanklich spekulativen Vorstellung der Himmelsleiter für Jakob. Spektakulär wie

Traumgestalten sind die auf uns gekommenen frühen Treppenbauten von den Treppenpyramiden der alten Ägypter, dem Turmbau zu Babel, dem Leuchtturm als Koloss von Rhodos oder den Treppentürmen der Westwerke christlicher Kathedralen. Im Burgfried oder in den Geschlechtertürmen entwickelte man die Treppe als Verwirklichung des Traumbildes der rettenden Himmelsleiter: Oben, näher zu Gott, sollte man am sichersten sein. Ganze Städte in Felsmassiven waren Entfaltungen von Treppenräumen, die sogar mit Zugtieren und Wagen bewältigt werden konnten. Schließlich wurde die Einheit von Traumbild Himmelsleiter und Architektur der Treppe im technischen Entwurf des Fahrstuhls zum weltweiten Modell zur Erschließung der Scheibenhorizonte im Höhenraum.

In der jüngsten Vergangenheit unserer Kunstgeschichte sind drei „Treppenwitze“ in so gut wie jedermanns Gedächtnis eingeführt. Der Topos Treppenwitz bezeichnet ursprünglich das Geraune von Küchenpersonal, das in Großbürgerhäusern den Raum unter den Treppen bewohnte und auf den Hintertreppen Witze über die hohen

Herrschaften riss. Der Autor dieses Textes gehört selber zum niederen Dienstpersonal der Kunst, dessen hohe Herrschaften die Künstler sind. Wir schreiben für Niedriglohn über Kunstwerke, die für Millionen und Abermillionen Dollar gehandelt werden.

Treppenwitz N° 1: Marcel Duchamp liefert der Armory Show in New York kurz vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg sein Gemälde eines „Aktes, die Treppe hinabsteigend 1“.

Treppenwitz N° 2: Erik Charrell entwickelt für die 20er Jahre Berlins die Show-Treppe, über die Glamourgirls aus der Imagination des Herrenpublikums auf die reale Bühne herabsteigen.

Treppenwitz N° 3: Oskar Schlemmer gestaltet das Treppenhaus des Dessauer Bauhauses, um eine Umwidmung des Gebäudes durch die Nazis zu erschweren.

In der Dynamik der Vereinheitlichung von Anschauung und Vorstellung durch die von Ezra Pound angeführten Vortizisten werden die drei

damals schon meistdiskutierten Treppenwitze in Bewegung gesetzt. Vortizismus meint ja eine schnelle Drehbewegung, wie sie Wasserstrudel und andererseits Wüstenwindsäulen kennzeichnet. Den analog zu diesen Wirbelsäulen imaginierten Farb-, Wort- und Musikstrudeln liegt die Figur der archimedischen Schraube zugrunde, das technische Grundmodell einer Drehbewegung in fester Position. Robert und Sonja Delaunay schraubten die Farbräusche bis in die Eiffelturmspitze hinauf, wo sie in die Regenbögen des transzendentalen Brückenbaus einzugehen schienen.

Und nun Lothar Götz, dessen deutscher Nachname jeden Verständigen dazu verführt, die Kunstwerkerei als Götzendienst zu verstehen. Achtung: Vom Mathematikgenie Schrödinger wissen wir, dass Götzen auch wirksam sind, wenn es sie gar nicht gibt, und von den Psychologen erfahren wir, dass Placebos auch wirken, wenn man von ihnen Kenntnis hat, also weiß, dass Wirksubstanzen fehlen, aber durch Psychodynamik spielend ersetzt werden. Und etwas spielend zu ersetzen, darin sind Künstler Profis.

Gewohnheitsgemäß pflegen wir visuellen Attraktoren, etwa durch Malerei vorgegeben, durch horizontale Bewegung vor ihnen zu entsprechen. Die nackte weiße Galeriewand ist das Placebo des Kuratierens, um selbst Vereinzeltetes noch in einem erahnbaren Zusammenhang zu sehen. Auf jeden Fall geht in der Horizontalen der Blick über die Malereien vor und zurück und wieder vor; der Vergleich der visuellen Positionen wird so zur Beglaubigung von Kontinuität. Diese Kontinuität hat Lothar immer schon durch Arbeit in mehreren kleinen Räumen des einen Baus durchbrochen. Die Treppe als Raumorganisation ist geradezu ideal für die Aufrechterhaltung der Kontinuitäts Erfahrung durch Ebenenwechsel. Der soeben durchlaufene Farbraum wird zur Erinnerung und die in der Treppensbewegung erwartbaren nächsten Raumebenen rufen Antizipationen hervor, die bei jeder weiteren Bewegung zum erfrischenden Erleben der Differenz von Erwartetem und Gesehenem führen. Die auf jeder Treppenebene erlebte Farbgestalt steigert sich durch die gleichzeitige Erweiterung um Erinnerung und Antizipation, der Vorwegnahme des Kommenden. Das zielt auf klassische Formen der Übersetzung oder der rites

de passage, des Zustandswechsels im stehenden Augenblick, dem ewigen Augenblick des nunc stans. Auch der Wandlungsvorgang (bis hin zum stehenden Bild der wirbelnden Luftsäule) vermittelt noch die Erfahrung des Glücks von Dauer. Auf's Ganze gesehen, ist, klassisch gesagt, der ständige Wechsel die einzige Form bestätigter Dauer, wie es die Fata morgana jedem Wanderer durch die Wüsten des Lebens anschaulich werden lässt. Wie alles Wissen um die wahre Natur der Fata morgana den Menschen bis heute die reale Erfahrung des Virtuellen, der Vorstellung, der Imagination, der Einbildungskraft nicht ersparen oder nehmen konnte, so kann uns die Entzauberung aller Kraft der Gestaltung als handwerkliches Künstlerkalkül das Phantasma der Realisation des Irrealen, genannt Kunst, nicht nehmen. Also bewege ich mich himmelwärts auf der Treppenschraube durch Lothars raumschaffende Kraft der Farben, himmelsraumschaffend.

Staircases

Xanadu, 2017

Acrylic on wall, Dimensions variable,
Victorian staircase, Leeds Art Gallery

Photographed by Jerry Hardman Jones, Leeds

Crash, 2012

Acrylic and mineral paint on wall, Dimensions
variable, Künstlerhaus / Kunstverein Hanover

Photographed by Raimund Zakowski, Hanover

Untitled, 2001

Vinyl paint on wall, Dimensions variable,
British Council, Berlin

Photographed by Michael Franke, London

Salsa, 2017

Acrylic on wall, Dimensions variable,
Hope Street Xchange, Sunderland

Photographed by Colin Davison, Newcastle

Composition for a Staircase, 2016

Acrylic on wall, Dimensions variable,
Contemporary stairwell, Pallant House Gallery,
Chichester

Photographed by Andy Keate, London

Round Trip, 2008
Mineral paint on wall, 4 staircases, 1 x 12 floors,
3 x 13 floors, Dimensions variable,
The Ministry of Justice, London
Photographed by Government Art Collection

Vorhang auf, 1999
Vinyl paint on wall, Dimensions variable,
BauHausFischer, Wuppertal

Wet paint – oben wie unten, 2000
Vinyl paint on wall, Dimensions variable,
Kunstverein Recklinghausen
Photographed by Olav Bergmann, Witten

Untitled, 2000
Vinyl paint on wall, Dimensions variable,
Private flat, Mile End, London
Photographed by Michael Franke, London

Placement, 1994
Gouache on wall, Dimensions variable,
Cyt e. V., Wuppertal
Photographed by Sabine Bokelberg, Cologne

Step by step on different levels, 1997
Acrylic on wall, Dimensions variable,
Stevens Building, RCA, London

Untitled, 2003
Vinyl paint on wall, Dimensions variable,
Neuer Aachener Kunstverein
Photographed by Anne Gold, Aachen

Untitled, 2001
Vinyl paint on wall, Dimensions variable,
Waddington Style, Zwemmer Gallery, London
Photographed by Michael Franke, London

Flucht in den Norden, 2011
Vinyl and mineral paint on wall, Dimensions
variable, Lothar Götz – Don't Look Now,
Kunsthalle Wilhelmshaven
Photographed by Achim Kukulies, Dusseldorf

Untitled, 1998
Acrylic on wall, Dimensions variable,
MOC AK, Krakow
Photographed by MOC AK, Krakow

Lothar Götz
Staircases

Text by Bazon Brock

Designed by Alex Rich
Edited by Sarah Brown
Translated by The Translation People
Printed by Die Keure

Published by domobaal editions
3 John Street, London WC1N 2ES
in association with Leeds Art Gallery

We are grateful to University of Sunderland,
Leeds Art Gallery, Art Fund Art Happens, Arts
Council England and Leeds City Council for
their support of Xanadu by Lothar Götz
commissioned by Leeds City Art Gallery, 2017.

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ISBN: 978-1-905957-58-3



**University of
Sunderland**

LEEDS
ART
GALLERY





Round Trip





Round Trip





Round Trip



Placement

1994



Step by step on different levels



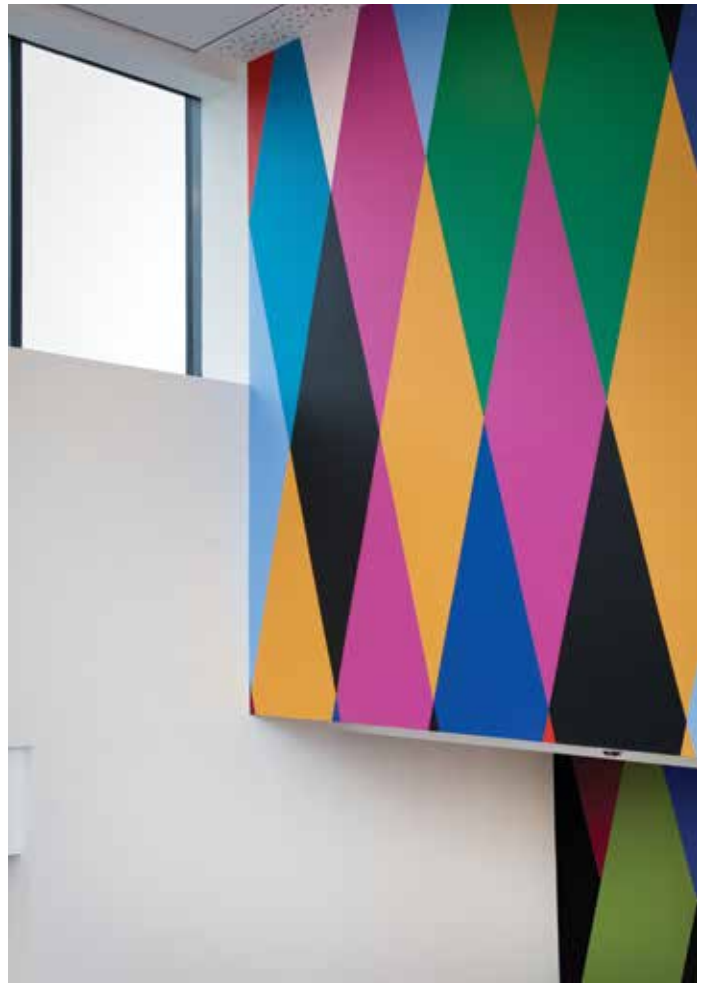
Step by step on different levels



Step by step on different levels







Salsa

2017



Untitled

2003











Flucht in den Norden









Xanadu



Crash

2012