

GAGOSIAN

Gagosian to Present Roy Lichtenstein's Monumental *Bauhaus Stairway Mural* in New York

On View Beginning Tomorrow, September 9, at 555 West 24th Street



Roy Lichtenstein, *Bauhaus Stairway Mural*, 1989, oil and Magna on canvas, 26 feet 5 3/4 inches × 17 feet 11 3/4 inches (807.1 × 548 cm) © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein

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Bob Adelman: *Why mural painting?*

Roy Lichtenstein: *For the pleasure of the dance.*

NEW YORK, September 8, 2023—Gagosian is pleased to announce the installation of Roy Lichtenstein's *Bauhaus Stairway Mural* (1989) in the gallery at 555 West 24th Street, New York. This is the second time that Gagosian has exhibited a Lichtenstein mural, following the replication of *Greene Street Mural* (1983) at the same location in 2015.

In the 1960s, Lichtenstein forged a new approach to painting by fusing popular culture and Western art history. His work is rooted in the seductive powers of advertising, and elevates the graphic imagery of popular print media and comic book illustrations to the realm of high art. Employing a handmade process, he mimicked the printing techniques of magazines and newspapers, making Benday dots and bright color synonymous with Pop art. Lichtenstein produced murals throughout his

career, from *Girl in a Window* for the New York State Pavilion of the 1964 World's Fair to *Times Square Mural*, designed in 1994 and installed in 2002.

Measuring more than 26 feet tall and painted in oil and Magna on canvas, *Bauhaus Stairway Mural* pays homage to German abstract artist Oskar Schlemmer (1888–1943) and his painting *Bauhaustreppe* (*Bauhaus Stairway*, 1932). Lichtenstein's mural was commissioned for the main atrium of the headquarters of the Creative Artists Agency (CAA) in Beverly Hills, which the building's architect, I.M. Pei, envisioned as a meeting place for writers, directors, actors, musicians, and agents—an emphasis on cross-disciplinary interaction that resonated with Lichtenstein's interest in accessible creative forms.

Founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar, Germany, in 1919, the Bauhaus school was devoted to uniting the fine and applied arts—a pedagogic vision that resonates with Lichtenstein's intermingling of “high” and “low.” Schlemmer—who taught mural painting, stage design, and sculpture there—painted *Bauhaustreppe* shortly before the school's 1933 closure by the Nazis. Alfred H. Barr, inaugural director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, saw Schlemmer's painting in an exhibition at the Württemberg Art Society, Stuttgart, and, when the show was shut down after its condemnation in a Nazi newspaper, persuaded Philip Johnson to purchase the work for MoMA's collection.

With its imagery of modernist architecture, Schlemmer's canvas—inspired by a photograph by fellow instructor T. Lux Feininger—represents the Bauhaus's aspiration and achievement. The image of the banister expresses stability and direction in a chaotic period, while the geometric bodies of the students reflect Schlemmer's belief in humanity as “an organic as well as mechanical creation.” The figures in the lower right-hand corner and upper left-hand corner of Lichtenstein's mural appear to reference Schlemmer's costume designs and volumetric renderings, as well as Schlemmer's interest in mechanical movement. Lichtenstein pays tribute to the German artist's vision through a Pop aesthetic, using his own distinctive visual language to convey the Bauhaus's innovative spirit. Finally, both Schlemmer's painting and Lichtenstein's mural, through their depiction of a bustling common space primed for dialogue, collaborative effort, and upward movement, speak to a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art, in which artists, designers, and artisans work together toward a single higher goal—an ethos that continuously guided the founders of CAA.

The new installation coincides with *Lichtenstein Remembered* at Gagosian, 980 Madison Avenue, New York (September 9–October 21), an exhibition of sculptures and studies curated by Irving Blum in recognition of the centenary of the artist's birth.

Roy Lichtenstein was born in 1923 in New York, where he died in 1997. His work is represented in collections worldwide. Retrospective exhibitions include *All About Art*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (2003, traveled to Hayward Gallery, London; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, through 2005); *Classic of the New*, Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria (2005); *Meditations on Art*, Triennale di Milano, Milan (2010, traveled to Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany); and *A Retrospective*, Art Institute of Chicago (2012, traveled to National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris, through 2013). In 2015, Gagosian presented a full-scale replica of Lichtenstein's *Greene Street Mural* (1983) in the gallery at 555 West 24th Street, New York. Other recent exhibitions include *Artist Rooms: Roy Lichtenstein in Focus*, Tate Liverpool, England (2018); *Order and Ornament: Roy Lichtenstein's Entablatures*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2019); and *History in the Making, 1948–1960*, Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME (2021, co-organized with Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC, and traveled to Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY; Columbus Museum of Art, OH; and Nasher Museum of Art, through 2023). In 1995, Lichtenstein was a recipient of the Kyoto Prize, Inamori Foundation, Japan, and National Medal of the Arts, Washington, DC.

#RoyLichtenstein

ROY LICHTENSTEIN

Bauhaus Stairway Mural

September 9–December 22, 2023

555 West 24th Street, New York

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