

The Red Wall (Queens I & II)

The Red Wall (Queens I)

A wall installation designed for the “Corbusian” ramp running from the first to second floor of the Queens Museum in New York and consisting of the diagonal ramp wall painted red plus a framed text mounted half-way up the ramp. The text is a fictional debate between three figures prominent in 20th Century art and architecture: Le Corbusier, Theo van Doesburg, and Donald Judd. The three speakers debate the optical and spatial effects of colour in architecture with each statement based on published manifestoes and interviews which are then woven into a conversation. The dialogue is also available as a pamphlet to be taken away by museum visitors.

The Red Wall (Queens II)

A second analysis of the same site at the Queens Museum, this time a pair of digital prints are mounted adjacent to the red wall. The left print is an axonometric drawing of the installation, and the right print a detail from the first drawing that erases the illusion of depth, resulting in a flat graphic composition. This is a study of the “depth threshold”, the point at which three-dimensional illusion either appears or evaporates. The huge red triangle of the *Red Wall* could be seen from a distance through the museum’s two-storey windows facing Flushing Meadows park.

Documentation: Installation views; pamphlet; details of prints for *The Red Wall (Queens II)*

The Red Wall (Queens I)

Terence Gower, 2004

Framed digital print on red wall, pamphlet

Print: 22 x 28 cm

The Red Wall (Queens II)

Terence Gower, 2005

Two framed digital prints, red wall

Prints: 52 x 47.6 cm each

[Brochure: The Red Wall](#)



Donald Judd: *The Red Wall...*

Theo van Doesburg: *It reminds me of my architectural interventions in the 1920's. I used to think we should create a new profession called "architectural colorist."*

Le Corbusier: *Well, I would say that it existed and that you were its first Modernist practitioner, though it was only one of the many hats you were wearing at the time...painter, writer, architect? Perhaps as early as 1917, when you introduced the concept of das kolorierte Haus, you became the first Modernist architectural colorist.*

TD: *Yes, the colored house. That's where I started the practice of "freeing" adjacent planes through the application of contrasting colors.*

LC: *But there was often a violence to your color juxtapositions, particularly when you introduced red planes. You really altered the formal and spatial appearance of buildings. These interventions struck me as very close to what Moholy-Nagy described as sculpting space with color.*

DJ: *I think Theo's was an incredibly dynamic and unprecedented use of color. What came after him was really just decoration.*

LC: *I would have to disagree. Think of the color schemes I worked out, often in collaboration with Amédée Ozenfant, who later became a real architectural colorist. I felt, and still feel, that colors should highlight the existing spatial qualities of a room. I like to paint a wall red to "hold the wall." But I do agree with Theo's early color applications, in which adjacent planes were always painted distinct colors.*

DJ: *Here is where I disagree with both of you. In the early 1960s I was painting entire objects cadmium red. Painting everything red was a way to show off the tonal contrast of adjacent planes. Red functioned like gray. I really can't see how colors can "hold" or "free" things—I see things as much more reduced, optically.*

LC: *I prefer a deep red with some burnt sienna. You see it on a principal wall of my Villa Cook from 1926. It's really a constructive color used in all the great periods—excellent for volume.*

TD: *I use a scarlet, but always juxtaposed with other colored planes, frequently white. The planes become so clearly defined that space can be perceived at a glance, in the blink of an eye. Not like your slow progressions up ramps and around curved walls.*

LC: *Ah yes, the progression, the promenade...*

DJ: *...and the mystery... I'm more for clarity. The planes of my red floor pieces defined against the plane of the floor. It's a clear transition from plane to plane, but it's also rather a quiet one, located somewhere between Theo's flash and Corbusier's slow progression...*

Theo van Doesburg (1883 - 1931) Painter and writer, editor of the Dutch journal *de Stijl* from 1917 to 1931

Le Corbusier (1887 - 1965) Architect and planner, developed the influential theories of Functionalism and Purism in France in the 1920s

Donald Judd (1928 - 1994) Artist, considered a leading figure of the Minimalist movement in New York in the 1960s







