

Paul Cockledge's Living Staircase

The British designer plants around a staircase in Soho to fashion a creative spiral



Paul Cockledge's living staircase

Paul Cockledge is a designer's designer, artfully reimagining the world for us to make it a more thought-provoking and pleasing place to be.

Punters can get a Cockledge fix through his eponymous shop, which sells such items as a loudspeaker for a smartphone configured from a vinyl LP, and a spherical Styrene lamp made of heated shrunk coffee cups).

Alternatively, aficionados can visit a Cockledge environment. In the past, these have been temporary installations like that for the Milan showroom of Italian lighting company Flos. But in recent times the studio has turned "towards the design of more permanent structures which affect the way people interact with their surroundings on a longer term basis."

"Paul Cockledge's Living Staircase," *Phaidon*. November 7, 2013.

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This change in direction will soon be apparent in London's Soho. Property developer Resolution is fashioning a £121m mixed-use development on Oxford Street for creative companies. Called Ampersand, the building is being redesigned by Darling Associates to entice bigger agencies with floors of 17000sq ft apiece. In Darling's new atrium, Cockedge has created an extraordinarily, plant-lined, spiral staircase to wow would-be tenants and inspire workers. "It was discovered that by expanding the diameter and by removing the traditional central, loadbearing pillar, a new hidden space was revealed at its centre," says Cockedge. "As you emerge onto each floor, you can now enter the centre of the spiral and into social spaces devoted to a specific activity: a place to draw, to read a novel, to pick fresh mint for tea."

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So as well as tending the balustrade's garden, workers will be hanging out and brainstorming on the circular 'landings'. Companies bend over backwards these days to find ways to get their staff's creative juices flowing. The Living Staircase is definitely a step up from most other efforts.

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