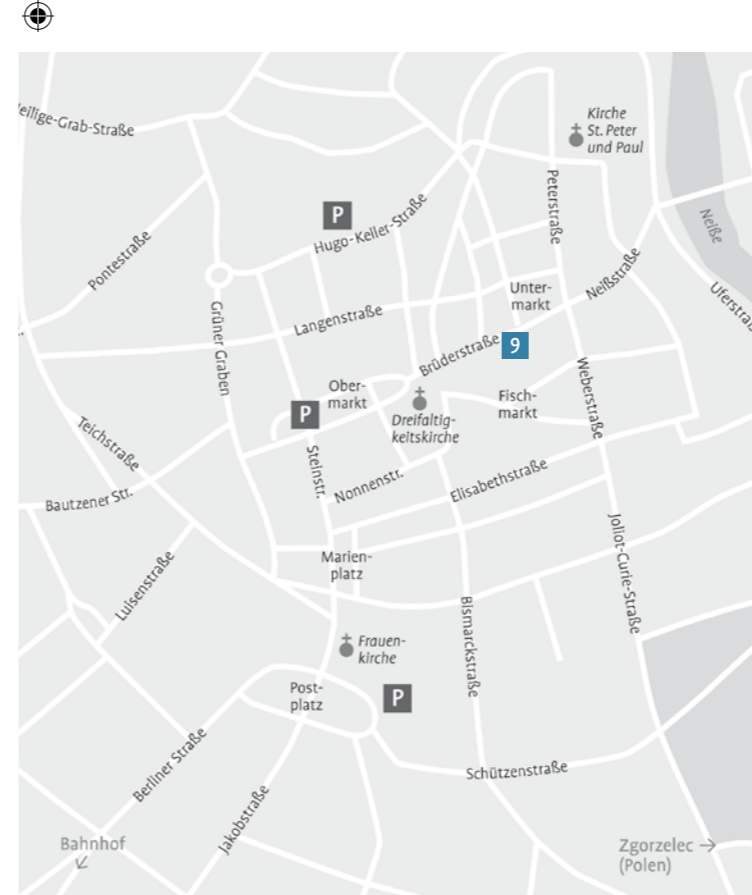


Although the presentation of the merchant palaces in the city is very impressive, they still do not reveal their inner affluence nor their enormous depths. Often, far more than sixty rooms are hidden in the walls, and they are all spread over several floors and grouped around the central light- and stairwells. These mighty constructions served as domiciles, breweries, and business centers, and for travelers they were exclusive lodging.

In addition to its cultural-historical significance, the building at Brüderstraße 9 is also a witness of recent history: the last family in this building left in 1994. Since then, the former tenement has been empty and offers a view into Görlitz's living conditions during the time of the German Democratic Republic.

The geographic distribution of similar structures with light and stair halls was – based on Görlitz – primarily in cities of Eastern and Central Europe along important trade routes. Each occupied a prominent location in its respective city. Most of these buildings outside of Görlitz also had privileged positions as breweries.

The photographs of Ulrich Schwarz displayed in the exhibition show a selection of exemplary buildings along the Via Regia in Poland in this synopsis for the first time. The stations along the route are Lubomierz (Liebenthal), Gryfów Śląski (Greiffenberg), Świdnica (Schweidnitz), Krakow (Krakau) and Jarosław (Jaroslau).



# MERCHANT PALACES ON THE VIA REGIA

Curator: Frank-Ernest Nitzsche  
 Photography: Ulrich Schwarz  
 Film: lightframe fx  
 Lego-Animation: Rayk Grieger



## The Görlitz Hall Buildings

An Exhibition and Research Project

Görlitz - Brüderstraße 9 | Free Admission

Based on an architectural model created in a 3-D printer and dissected into vertical slices, the refined anatomy of the buildings is made visible and intelligible.

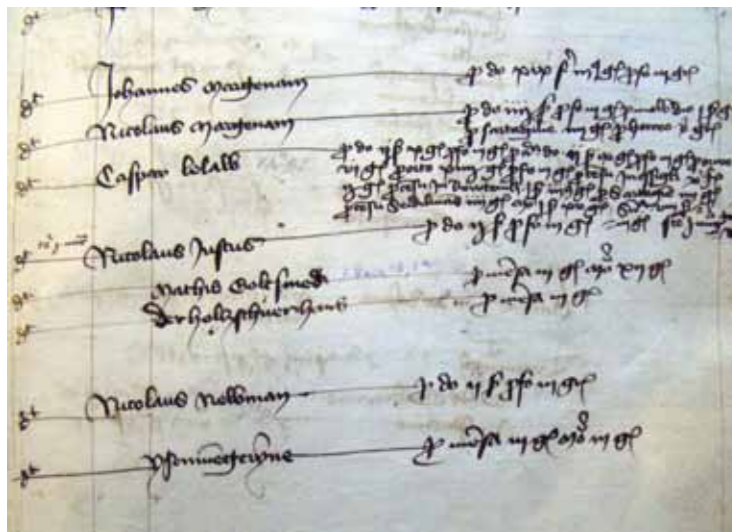
A photographic animation of a provisional and playful reconstruction in the exhibition shows the stages of development in the style of Lego bricks.

Organizer: the City of Görlitz  
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exhibition MERCHANT PALACES ON THE VIA REGIA  
 Brüderstraße 9, 02826 Görlitz, Fon: 49 (0) 3581 67 24 10

Opening Hours: Tuesday to Sunday 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM  
 Monday closed

Tours available upon request, Free Admission



Bulletin 1426, Council Archive Görlitz



Trade routes do not only assist in the movement of goods; they are also streams of intercultural communication. Cities, economies, and cultural centers appeared along these routes. Goods, religions, worldviews, knowledge, and ideas were transported. The Via Regia, which extended from France to Russia, was among the most important west-east routes. It was first mentioned in 1251 as the “strata regia”. The city of Görlitz arose along its central European segment.

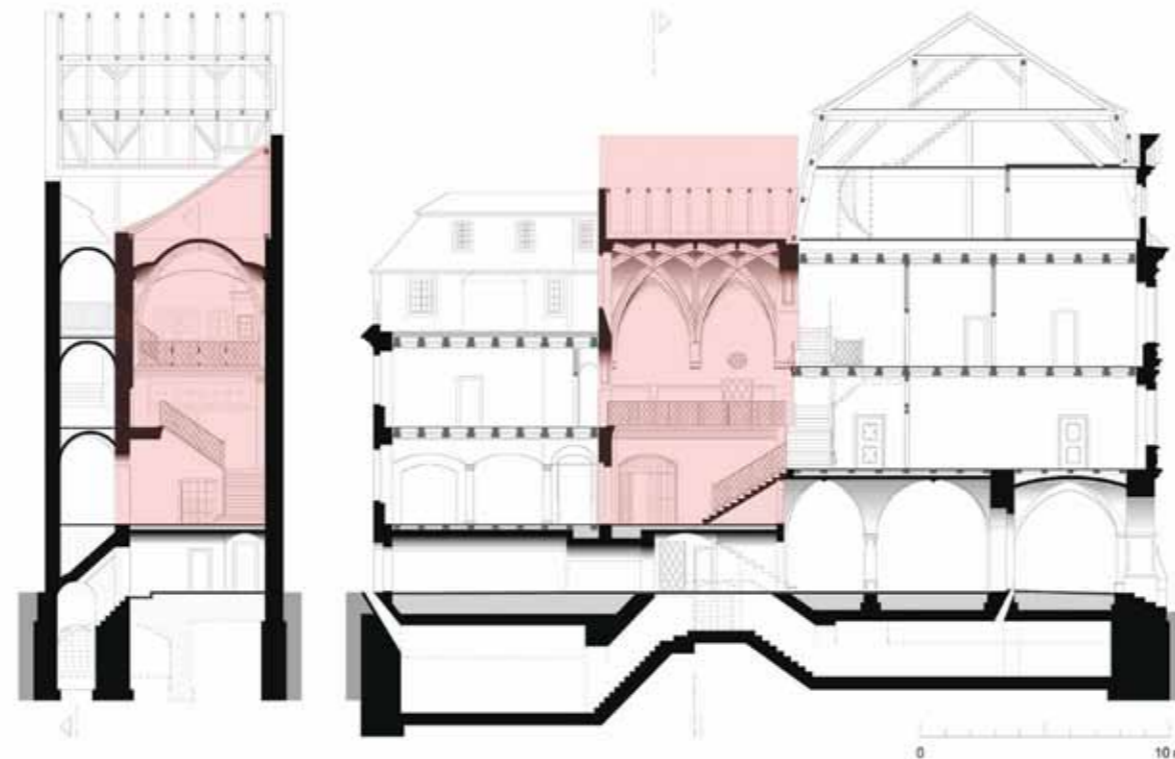
The city’s position at a crossing of the Lusatian Neisse River led to rapid development. In the late Middle Ages, Görlitz became the most important trading center between Erfurt and Wrocław primarily through weaving, the trade of woad and fabric, and impressive privileges.



Geographical distribution of still preserved town houses with central exposure and stairwells after on-site inspection 2013 along the via regia between Görlitz and Jaroslau. (Drawing: Frank-Ernest Nitzsche, 2013)

Around the year 1500, the innovative influences of the time came together and inspired construction styles here. Profane architecture reached its zenith with the concept of the Zentralhalle (central hall), a stairway and light hall set in the core of a building. It represents a comfortable and new concept of accessibility and unifies the utility of trade with prestigious lavishness.

With this innovation, cloth merchants created exclusive Kaufmannspaläste (merchant palaces) in accordance with the example of this architecture of magnificence. The most important display of this exhibition is therefore the site itself, the as-yet unrenovated structure of the Hallenhaus (hall building) at Brüderstraße 9.



An animated film is shown in the exhibition which attempts to retrace the historical development of the hall buildings against a backdrop of Görlitz’s development since the thirteenth century for the first time. The development from the first stones to the merchant palace reflects the demands of wholesale and long-distance trade as well as their transformation until the early 16th century.

The exhibition refers to – besides the actual history of the construction of the building at Brüderstraße 9 – the network of Görlitz’s cloth merchants along the Via Regia as well as their self-image, which can be seen in the city’s architecture. The exhibition allows the fickle histories of the builders, owners, and occupants to be relived.

In the latter half of the 13th century, the first building sections made of stone were erected in a prominent position on a plot next to the contemporaneously constructed Untermarkt. From that point on, the estate developed continuously. Baroque expansions and modifications – partially of exceptional quality – as well as encroachment at the end of the 19th century and in the recent past changed the building’s magnificent Renaissance structures.

The building’s utilization shifted from the function of a commercial building inhabited by a family to purely residential use as a multifamily domicile.

The building was ultimately modified into a tenement for poorer citizens and workers in the latter half of the 19th century. Its architecture thus reflects the economic history of the Via Regia in Görlitz.

Görlitz, Untermarkt 3. Cross and longitudinal section of the late Gothic Görlitzer hall house. (Drawing: Frank-Ernest Nitzsche, 2013)

The building at Brüderstraße 9 is also used for research purposes. In 2019, a restorical building research was conducted on the ceiling, walls and floor structure in the former room in the first floor. The interior of the structure and the programme of historical decorations will be presented for the first time from 2020.

Research: Sabrina Gabriel