

Dr.-Ing. Helmut Stelzer
Chief curator - Institut für Denkmalpflege der DDR
Department of Halle
Vice-president of the ICOMOS National Committee of the GDR
International Symposium of the 8th ICOMOS General Assembly
"Old Cultures in New Worlds" - Sub-theme 3
The conservation of buildings and gardens of the Dessau-Wörlitz
reformatory work

Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von Erdmannsdorff was born in
Dresden on 18 May 1736.

After having received an excellent education in the splendid
residence of the Saxon Electors and the Polish kings and after
studying at the University of Wittenberg, he got acquainted with
Leopold Friedrich Franz in August 1756, the hereditary prince of
Anhalt-Dessau. As they had many views, interests and aims in com-
mon, the first meeting led to a friendly relationship and co-op-
eration that lasted for decades. After the end of the Seven-
Year's War their common aim was the peaceful construction of
Anhalt-Dessau.

Between 1765 and 1820 (Erdmannsdorff lived until 1800) buil-
dings and gardens came into existence, which were integrated in-
to a landscape called "Gartenreich" (garden realm), since it
appeared like a garden in blossom.

Erdmannsdorff, together with Prince Franz or with the garde-
ner Friedrich Wilhelm Eysenbeck, went to Italy, Holland, Great
Britain and France to come to know the advanced political, cul-
tural, economic and social conditions prevailing there.

Prince Franz and his architect Erdmannsdorff used their know-
ledge of the economic and social developments in the offing,
their special interest in architecture and the fine arts, their
knowledge of Roman Antiquity, Italian Renaissance, French archi-
tecture and the buildings influenced by Palladio in England in
order to initiate a large-scale reformatory work.

Erdmannsdorff's lifework and the reformatory work in Dessau
cannot be separated from each other. Today we regard it not only
as an historical and cultural achievement of early classical
architecture and landscape gardening, but as a result of com-

prehensive reformatory efforts to shape society which, of course, was put into practice only within the limits of its time.

One result of the reformatory endeavours is the architectural reshaping of Dessau and of many communities as well as of the so-called "Gartenreich", which extends from Wörlitz over the Luisium and the Georgium to Gross Kühnau over a territory of 25 km and has its northern border on the Elbe.

Today the Dessau-Wörlitz buildings and Parks - fine specimens of the art of gardening, architecture and visual art - which were created with a view to uniting beauty with economy, ideal nature with agriculture, and which were intended to serve the implementation of an ideal programme of life, one's own perfection and "bliss", are the only witnesses of that period in the GDR.

That is why the man-made landscape of Wörlitz has been protected by law since it was included in 1979 in the "list of monuments of particular national and international importance - Central List of Monuments" - under the 1975 law on the conservation of monuments.

National protection extends both to individual monuments and to the landscape surrounding them - areas classified as national monuments -, which we all protect as carriers of historic and scientific messages and artistic impact. Since 1957 the above-mentioned landscape has been protected as part of the "Mittlere Elbe" nature reservation.

Of course, today we only find there what has been preserved in over 150 years after the creation of the "Gartenreich", in a changed environment and in a partly changed form. Changes were caused by the industrial development which began in the middle of the last century and led, among other things, to the building of railway lines.

In our century the character of the Gartenreich was impaired by the construction of a motorway, increasing industrialization, the extension of the network of roads, etc.

The greatest losses were caused by the destruction of Dessau

by the bomb attacks in the war unleashed by German fascism. There was almost nothing left of the works of Erdmannsdorff in the centre of the city.

The countryhouses, many other buildings and parks of the Dessau-Wörlitz man-made landscape, however, remained. Efforts are aimed at preserving their stock and, as far as this is possible, at going back to original conceptions that may be traced, as well as conserving and restoring them.

The conservation of monuments in the GDR is not only the job of an individual department, but has become a concern of the whole society. National and institutional establishments, enterprises and social forces closely work together. Measures for the conservation of monuments, which were introduced immediately after the end of the Second World War, today are based on scientific studies and documentation and are taken in line with legislation adopted for that purpose. This includes a study on the historical development of the plant stock and its originality made in 1983 or a plan made for Wörlitz in 1978 which fixes certain areas around the Wörlitz parks where no buildings may be established. Institutions for nature and landscape protection worked out landscape conservation plans for the city of Dessau (1984) and for the district of Gräfenhainichen (1986), in which Wörlitz is situated today. The Institut für Denkmalpflege has had an important share in elaborating a framework for the conservation of monuments, which will continue to provide a basis for specific measures concerning the conservation of monuments.

To prepare the 250th anniversary concentrated efforts had already been made in the 1970s and increased in the early '80s.

On the basis of the framework for the conservation of monuments maintenance and restoration work has been started and continued on the Wörlitz countryhouse, the Gothic House, the Georgium in Dessau, the Luisium near Waldersee and on the parks and gardens as well as on many other Erdmannsdorff buildings in close co-operation with the councils of Dessau and Gräfenhainichen, with the National Castles and Gardens of Wörlitz-

Oranienbaum-Luisium, with enterprises and social organizations.

The Wörlitz countryhouse was built from 1769 to 1773, replacing a hunting lodge dating from the 17th century, as a summer residence of the prince. It is considered to be the first neo-classical building on the European continent. This countryhouse, just as the Luisium and Georgium countryhouses, were no longer castles in the traditional sense of the word, no feudal buildings for representative purposes, no baroque wing buildings.

The Wörlitz castle was built as a "country house" (Rode) according to the Palladian model of English country seats. It was built in the Wörlitz Park begun in line with plans of the gardener J.F. Eysenbeck in 1765 after his first trip to Great Britain. There is an important model - the castle of Claremont - which was built according to plans of Henry Holland from 1763 to 1764. In addition to buildings of classical and Renaissance art, Erdmannsdorff's models, such as the publications of the Englishman Wood on Palmyra and Baalbeck, provided a basis for his architectural designs. The window architectures taken from this publication today have again determined the methodological decision regarding the restoration of the colours of the facade. The vertical window linings of the upper floor were not set off in colour, although from an aesthetic-architectural point of view we would have expected it.

The restoration of the outer facade of the castle was performed after a detailed examination and documentation of all colour layers existing on the building: the plaster was repaired and damaged or lacking decorative parts and ledges were replaced. The final new paint followed a colour design on the results of the examination, records and analogies.

The necessary conservation work was carried out with extreme caution in the interior of the castle and its furnishings created by Erdmannsdorff according to Roman Pompeyan models which have been preserved for the most part until today.

The Gothic House in the Schoch Garden, which was built from 1773 to 1813 and designed for the princely collections, was

restored just as carefully as the castle.

The Gothic House consists of two parts forming an angle, with the "Italian" part erected in 1773 on the Wolfskanal according to the model of the Maria dell'Orto Church in Venice and one part built in 1785/86 in English Tudor Gothic style facing the park.

The restoration of the Gothic House only required some completions to decorative parts and a new paint. Works on the Luisium, a park erected from 1774-1792 according to plans by J.F. Eysenbeck with the little castle Luisium (1774-1778) by Erdmannsdorff, situated in the middle of a star-shaped visual axis, were much more comprehensive. A renewal of the roof structure of this pavilion-type two-floor building having a square ground line - a building type which has been repeated, for example, in the Wörlitz town hall and the Georgium castle - has been necessary due to extensive dry rot damage in 1982. The tent-roof, crowned by a Belvedere, had to be renewed. The new roof was put in its traditional form as a steel construction. Currently the restoration of the interior is being underway. After finishing restoration work in the interior the castle will be used as a museum.

The construction of the little Georgium castle or Georgenhaus designed by Erdmannsdorff, which is situated in a landscape park bearing the same name, started in 1780. It was also a pavilion-style two-floor building to which lateral extensions were added in 1893, which essentially changed its original effect.

In addition to conservation measures for the castle and other buildings, such as the flower house with its restored flower garden, the vase house, the prince's seat, the black seat and Monopteros, special importance was attached to the landscape park of Georgium. The gardeners Johann Friedrich Eysenbeck (1734-1818) and Johann Georg Schoch (1758-1826) worked there in agreement with the prince and Erdmannsdorff. Despite some changes extending up to the 1960s, the park has kept its basic

form and structure. Since 1963 restoration work has been underway according to historical plans.

The Wörlitz park with the castle described before today can no longer be conceived exclusively in the form of the park as wished by Prince Franz and his famous friend and architect.

This park once was laid out with different trees and plants from foreign countries. Completed by the results of the efforts of domestic cultivation, the park has developed into a form which we would see as an expression of the time of its origin. After almost two hundred years of work by clever gardeners and a permanent growth of rare plants it changed its appearance again and again. If we examine the peculiarities of the Wörlitz park today, it is our aim to pay special attention to original effects, spatial positions, visual axes and points of special attraction. Some examples are intended to furnish proof of a creative and scientific conservation of garden monuments, as it has been carried out since the early 1980s on the basis of the framework for the conservation of monuments.

The view from the way along the Wolfskanal to the Temple of Flora has been cleared through the removal of undergrowth; likewise the view from the Wolfsbrücke bridge to the Temple of Venus has been reestablished and additional undergrowth has been removed as exemplified again by the visual divisions from the wall at the Golden Urn.

We know that the Dessau-Wörlitz Gartenreich, which for us as curators of monuments in the GDR is an important object of research, methodology and execution, can be preserved, cultivated, used and developed only in agreement with all the present and future vital interests of mankind. Our social system offers excellent opportunities for this. Therefore we are pleased that tens of thousands of visitors today seek edification, recreation and relaxation in the countryhouses and gardens of the Dessau-Wörlitz reformatory work.

Dr. Ing. Helmut Stelzer, ICOMOS National Committee of the G.D.R.
The conservation of buildings and gardens of the Dessau-
Wörlitz reformatory work

Summary

18th May 1986 marked the 250th birthday of the architect Friedrich Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorff. He was one of the most important figures of the Dessau-Wörlitz reformatory work, which was set up as a programme in the small principality of Anhalt-Dessau according to the model of advanced European states such as Great Britain in the last third of the 18th century. This reformatory programme was established in keeping with an advanced art and culture in which architecture, urban and landscape development occupied an outstanding place. A great many buildings by F. W. von Erdmannsdorff as well as the gardens and landscape parks surrounding them in which he also had a share, are still existing today, for example the Wörlitz castle built in the style of an English country house, the first neo-classical building on the European continent. It is situated in the park of the same name, the first and biggest landscape garden in the English style. Moreover, there are the Luisium and Georgium castles with their parks as well as the Gothic House in Wörlitz and other buildings which are today used as museums and are thus accessible to all citizens of and visitors to our country.

The permanent preservation of these buildings which are over two hundred years old, the maintenance of and repair works on the historical gardens, parks and landscape parks, with which they form an artistic and non-physical unity, are of great artistic, scientific, historical and methodological interest, especially with a view to their integration into the present and future cultural life of people in the GDR.

In the castles and gardens of the Dessau-Wörlitz reformatory work, which are protected by the national conservation of monuments, tens of thousands of visitors seek and find edification, recreation and relaxation today.

Dr. Ing. Helmut Stelzer, ICOMOS Comité Nationale de R.D.A.

Résumé

L'entretien des bâtiments et des jardins de l'Oeuvre réformatrice de Dessau-Wörlitz

Le 18 mai 1986 a été commémoré le 250^e anniversaire de l'architecte Friedrich Wilhem von Erdmannsdorff. Il était l'un des personnages les plus importants de l'oeuvre réformatrice de Dessau-Wörlitz, qui fut établi en tant que programme dans la petite principauté d'Anhalt-Dessau selon le modèle de pays avancés européens comme l'Angleterre pendant le dernier tiers du 18^e siècle. Ce programme réformateur comprenait aussi un art une culture avancés, qui ont donné une place importante à l'architecture, à l'urbanisme et à l'aménagement de paysages. Beaucoup de bâtiments créés par F. W. von Erdmannsdorff ainsi que les parcs y appartenant existent encore aujourd'hui, par exemple le château de Wörlitz construit en style de maison de campagne anglaise, le premier bâtiment de style néo-classique sur le continent européen. Il se trouve dans le parc du même nom, le premier et plus grand jardin anglais. Il y a là aussi les châteaux Luisium et Georgium avec leurs parcs ainsi que la Maison gothique à Wörlitz et d'autres bâtiments qui servent aujourd'hui de musées et qui sont ainsi accessibles à tous les citoyens et visiteurs de notre pays.

Les travaux conservateurs permanents à ces bâtiments qui ont plus de 200 ans, la préservation et l'entretien des jardins, des parcs et jardins anglais historiques, avec lesquels ils forment une unité artistique et non-matérielle, sont d'un grand intérêt artistique, scientifique, historique et méthodologique, particulièrement en ce qui concerne leur intégration dans la vie intellectuelle et culturelle présente et future des gens en R.D.A.

Des douzaines de milliers de visiteurs cherchent récréation et relâchement dans les châteaux et jardins de l'oeuvre réformatrice de Dessau-Wörlitz, qui sont protégés et entretenus par l'Etat.