

GERMANY

Flood Damage

The disastrous floods of August 2002 caused incredible damage in Germany. Most seriously affected were the States of Saxony and Sachsen-Anhalt, where due to the high water of the river Elbe and its subsidiary streams many historic towns and villages were threatened and a great number of monuments were damaged or even completely destroyed. Quite a number of successful restoration projects of the past decade since the German reunification have been ruined because of the floods. In Saxony alone roughly 4500 monuments were damaged; 15% of the total of 25.300 houses and shop buildings affected by the floods are on the monument list.

In Dresden, world-famous sites such as the Zwinger, the Semper-Opera, the Art Gallery and Schloss Pillnitz were at least partly inundated.

The small town of Grimma in Saxony, large parts of which had only recently been restored, was particularly severely affected by the waters of the usually very peaceful river Mulde. The entire old town was flooded up to a height of 4 metres. At the southern end of Grimma, the water hit the buildings with such force that some were completely destroyed. After the floods had disappeared conservationists in some cases could only prevent at the last moment that historic houses were rashly demolished or that damaged historic fittings and interiors were thrown away. Unfortunately, in Grimma twenty listed buildings were nevertheless pulled down – either because they were totally destroyed or the owners simply gave up. Similar to the experiences made by our Czech colleagues (see their report on the floods, p. 71-74) this example shows that the dangers do not lie exclusively in the damage caused by high

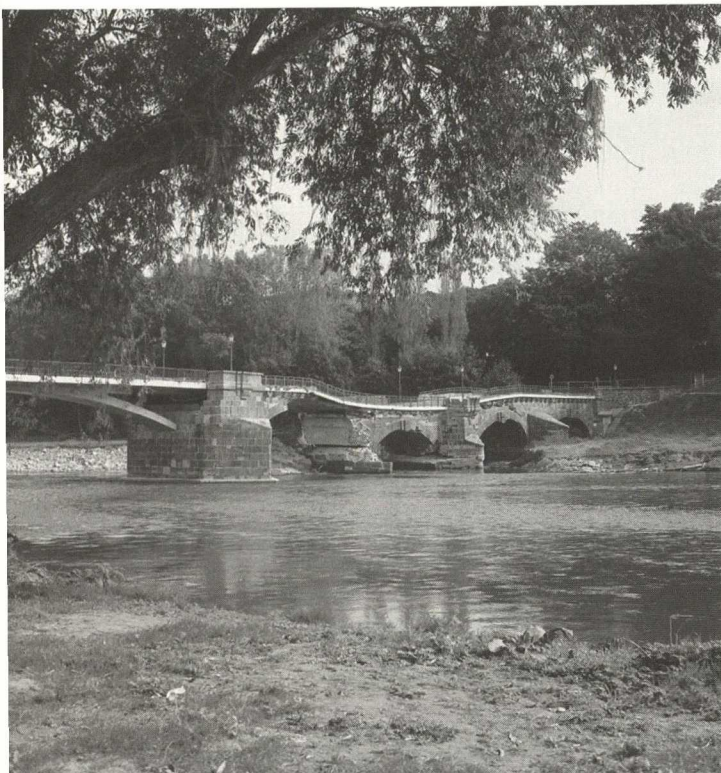
water, but just as much in clearing-up operations taking conservation requirements too little into account.

In quite a few places in eastern Germany (eg Pirna, Döbeln and many less well-known towns and villages) not only historic secular buildings were affected, but also more solidly built churches. Rather than threatening the stability of such buildings *per se*, the floods more often caused damage to the church interiors, for instance altars, sculptures, pulpits, wall panellings and pews. Long-term and often very expensive restorations will be necessary. In Döbeln the late medieval parish church of St Nicolai was inundated, though fortunately the water only reached the *mensa* of the splendid high altar from the Cranach workshop (1515/16), which only some days before the floods had been re-consecrated after a three-year restoration.

In the case of the “Garden Kingdom” of Wörlitz, a recently designated UNESCO World Heritage site near Dessau in Sachsen-Anhalt, the cellars of those buildings in the park nearest to the rivers, the Luisium and Schloss Grosskühnau, were completely submerged, and several outbuildings were filled with mud and water. Irreversible harm may also have been done to the gardens, which luckily were not completely flooded, though the water table was very high due to rising groundwater, endangering the stability of some of the follies. Moreover, ancient oaks thought to be dangerous were felled by firemen, possibly unnecessarily, thus partly ruining the historic layout with its labyrinthine paths. The total cost of restoration for the “Garden Kingdom” is estimated at 7 million euros.



Pirna, flooded town centre



Grimma, damaged historic bridge

World Heritage Sites

Lübeck and Cologne

In addition to last year's report on the department store project at Lübeck's market square, threatening the ensemble of the old town, including the town hall and St Mary's church, there is news that the city, on the World Heritage list since 1987, has in the meantime decided to separate the development of the Stadthaus property and that of the former post office. This will shorten the previous project with the department store on the northern side and enable a more differentiated design. Demolition work started at the end of 2002. The planning of the new buildings has not been completed yet.

As far as other German World Heritage sites are concerned, problems have also developed concerning Cologne Cathedral. For recent plans of a series of high-rise buildings the special role of the cathedral as the dominating feature in the city's skyline has not been taken into account: Despite the destruction of the old city of Cologne during World War II the cathedral with its two steeples, which can be seen from afar, still dominates the city's silhouette encircled by a number of Romanesque churches. Characteristic elements of the surrounding area of the cathedral, which was only completed at the end of the 19th century, are the central station and the Hohenzollern Bridge from 1907/11, built into the east-west axis of the cathedral with its head facing towards Deutz. In Deutz, on the right side of the Rhine and opposite the cathedral, the winner of an architectural competition from 2000 is planning in connection with the construction of an ICE train terminal in Köln-Deutz/Messe a ring of five high-rise buildings of more than 100 metres height. As subject of public interests ICOMOS Germany expressed its concerns about the development plans for this ring of high-rise buildings in February 2003.

Lorch am Rhein, view towards St Martin's church, Hilchenhaus and hotel complex



Destruction of the town silhouette of Lorch / Middle Rhine valley

Only recently the shell construction of a multi-storey hotel next to the historic Hilchenhaus in the small town of Lorch in the Middle Rhine valley (World Heritage site since 2002) was erected. Seen from the Rhine this building not only obstructs the view onto the parish church of St Martin, but the size of this architecture is also in total contrast to the dimensions of the urban structure. In the meantime the substance of the Hilchenhaus has been severely threatened by the complete removal of its interior structure – and now the investor is insolvent.

Finally an example of heritage of the 20th century at risk – a period in the history of architecture and art whose witnesses often require very special methods of conservation and restoration because of the use of new materials and technologies:

Dieter Roth's Mould Museum in Hamburg seriously threatened

In one of Hamburg's best residential areas – largely unnoticed by the artistic public and only visited by very few people – one of the major works of art of the second half of the 20th century, the Mould Museum by Dieter Roth, can be found. From 1991 until his death in 1998 the Swiss artist arranged one of the most astonishing installations here, a work which has become his artistic legacy.

For Dieter Roth and his assistants the Mould Museum was working space and museum at the same time. Almost all of the durable and perishable works of art for the museum were created here and countless objects made of chocolate and coloured sugar were cast and formed. In the centre of the museum the "Selbst-turm" (self-tower) can be found, consisting of many hundreds of chocolate heads with the portrait of the artist arranged on glass panes and piled up to a height of ten metres. The layers carry themselves, and it is only a matter of time before they will collapse by their own weight. Sugar and chocolate towers of sphinx and lion heads, piles made of garbage and remains of producer goods, zinc tubs filled with coloured sugared water, in which toys have been drowned, fruit and spice windows fill the rooms of this multi-storey house. "Self-tower", "garlic chest", "aniseed clock",

"lion tower", "shell gnomes", "Grand Lady" are the poetic names of these objects arranged together to form large installations.

With the installation of this Mould Museum Dieter Roth, who had started to experiment with perishable organic objects in art in the 1960s, managed to make the organic decomposition process a work of art and to transfer it to a museum context. He wanted to create a space where, contrary to the idea of a museum, the displayed objects destroy themselves in the course of time.

The museum funded by a private collector is part of the Dieter Roth Foundation Hamburg. Although one can still visit the museum in a virtual walk on the internet (www.dieter-roth-museum.de), various quarrels regarding the location and its preservation as well as the obvious lack of interest of the City of Hamburg in this "Gesamtkunstwerk" have led to a critical situation: large parts of the museum have already been dismantled and deposited. Instead of protecting the artist's concept by accepting the gradual decomposition in situ, this work of art is threatened by the idea of conserving the deposited objects.

ICOMOS Germany



Hamburg, interior of Dieter Roth's mould museum