



**ICFA Annual Meeting, Coburg
with visits to Weimar, Gotha, Altenburg and Dresden**

3 -7 october 2006

FINE ART COLLECTIONS IN THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXTS



Veste Coburg

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 3 october

18.30-21h30 : Welcome Reception at Schloss Ehrenburg. Visit to the ducal appartments

Wedesday 4 october

9h15-12h : Lectures (1)

12h-12h45 : Lunch

13h : Visit to the Veste Coburg Art Collections

15h-17h15 : Lectures (2) General Assembly of ICFA

18h30 : Departure for Schloss Callenberg. Visit to the Collections

20h-22h : Diner at Schloss Callenberg

Thursday 5 october

8h : Departurefor Weimar

10h30 : Visit to Schloss Weimar

12h : Departure to Gotha

14h-16h30 : Visit to Schloss Friedenstein and its'collections

16h30-17h : Coffee/Tea

17h : Visit to Ekhof Theater

18h : Departure to Coburg

20h15 : Franconian Dinner at "Goldenes Kreuz", Coburg

Friday 6 october

7h45 : Departure to Altenburg and Dresden

11h : Visit to Lindenau-Museum Altenburg

12h : Lunch

12h45 : Departure to Dresden

15h45-17h : Visit to Galerie Alte Meister

17h40 : Frauenkirche – evening prayer wth organ concert,guided tour

20h : Diner at Galerie Alte Meister

Saturday 7 october

9h45 : Visit to Grünes Gewölbe

11h : Guided city tour

13h15 : Lunch Café-Restaurant Alte Meister

14h : End

DELEGATES LIST

Anne Aaserud, Art Museum of Northern Norway, Tromsø, Norway
Françoise Baligand, Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai, France
George Breeze, Cheltenham, UK
Duncan Bull, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Ina Busch, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany
Görel Cavalli-Björkman, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden
Henri Defoer, Utrecht, The Netherlands
Claus Grimm, Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte, Germany
Ulrich Grossmann, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, Germany
Frode Ernst Haverkamp, National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway
Roselyne Hurel, Musée Carnavalet, Paris, France
Peter Keller, Dommuseum, Salzburg, Austria
Werner Korn, Naturkunde-Museum, Coburg, Germany
Jacques Kuhnle, Palais National Château de Compiègne, France
York Langenstein, Landestelle für die nichtstaatlichen Museen in Bayern / ICOM Germany
Stephen Lloyd, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, UK
Stig Miss, Thorvaldsens Museum, Denmark
Riitta Ojanperä, Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki, Finland
Marianne Saabye, Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen, Denmark
Vibeke Salthe, Rogaland Museum of Fine Arts, Stavanger, Norway
Birgitta Sandström, Zornsamlingarna, Sweden
Clementine Schack von Wittenau, Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, Germany
Karin Siden, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden
Bodil Sørensen, National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway
Theresa Vella, National Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta, Malta
Klaus Weschenfelder, Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, Coburg, Germany
Christiane Wiebel, Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, Germany
Helen C. Wüstefeld, Kasteel Sypesteijn, Loosdrecht, The Netherlands

MINUTES

Tuesday 3 October

18.30 to 21.30 Welcome reception

The conference participants were welcomed with a buffet dinner reception at Schloss Ehrenburg in the old and picturesque centre of Coburg. The opening words by Dr Klaus Weschenfelder and Dr Stephen Lloyd were followed by a greeting from the participants to the organisers by Dr Frode Ernst Haverkamp (National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway). The warm and friendly atmosphere of the get-together, well known to all active ICFA members, also promised for the newcomers four very agreeable days to follow. Schloss Ehrenburg was built during the 16th century, on the grounds of a former Franciscan cloister, as the city residence of the Duke of Coburg. The new gothic facade of the castle, designed by the architect Karl Friedrich von Schinkel, was built in early 19th century during the reign of Duke Ernst I.

A visit to the ducal apartments, guided Mr Wolfgang Schneider, a specialist of the Coburg historical sights, was one of the highlights of the opening reception. Among the most unique interiors of the castle is the Giants' Hall with a rich stucco decoration, which dates back to the last decade of the 17th century.



Coburg, Schloss Ehrenburg

A visit to the ducal apartments, guided Mr Wolfgang Schneider, a specialist of the Coburg historical sights, was one of the highlights of the opening reception. Among the most unique interiors of the castle is the Giants' Hall with a rich stucco decoration, which dates back to the last decade of the 17th century.



Schloss Ehrenburg, The Giant's Hall

Another highlight was a musical performance by a fourteen year old talented violinist, who played the Mazurka *Dudziarz* for solo violin by Henri Wieniawski (this was to serenade Frode Haverkamp, who had his 60th birthday that day!).

Schloss Ehrenburg was the first important historical site where ICFA members were acquainted to the history of the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. This history was the context running through the thoroughly planned programme of the 26th ICFA annual conference.

Wednesday 4 October Study day at Coburg

08.45 to 09.15

Meeting of ICFA Board 2006 at the Naturkunde Museum, Coburg

Dr Stephen Lloyd, Chairman of ICFA, opened the annual board meeting and reported on the ICOM advisory meeting in Paris during the spring of 2006, which he had participated. The financial problems which were reported in the ICFA meeting of 2005 were settled and the meeting in Paris, with many interesting and important contacts, had been favourable for ICFA.

The ICOM general assembly had voted for organising the 22nd General Conference in 2010 either in Moscow or in Shanghai. ICFA's vote was for Moscow but the winner of the election turned to be Shanghai.

Jacques Kuhnle presented ICFA's financial report. The committee's financial balance is positive after the repayment of expenses of the conferences of 2005 and 2006.

Stephen Lloyd presented his plans of publishing an informative leaflet about ICFA and of collecting the information of all ICFA conferences and their themes during the past twenty-five active years. It is worth noticing that after ICFA's foundation in Mexico in 1980 a

conference has been organised every year. The list of past ICFA conferences will be published on the committee's website which will be opened under the ICOM's website. Mme Roselyne Hurel as ICFA's former secretary will help with gathering the information from the committee's archives. The board meeting fully agreed with realising these plans.

Jacques Kuhnle took up the question whether ICFA should publish reports of the papers in the annual meetings like some ICOM committees do. No decisions were taken, because the difficulties in forming a solid basis for funding and editing publications are well known.

Next ICFA meeting will be in Vienna from 20 to 22 August 2007 in the context of the 21st ICOM General Conference (19 to 24 August 2007). Suggestion for ICFA's theme in Vienna is 'Fine Art Collections and the Role of the Curator: historical perspective and contemporary practice'.

Alternative venues for ICFA's meeting in 2008 were discussed as either at Oxford or Athens. Oxford has turned to be problematic during 2008 because of the planned renovation of the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology that year, whereas Athens has renewed the invitation for 2008 last spring in Paris. Therefore the board will suggest to the Plenary Meeting a conference in Athens in the autumn of 2008. There have been preliminary discussions about a potential invitation to Ottawa, Canada, for the year 2009.

Premises for the study sessions in the morning and in the afternoon were offered by Naturkunde-Museum Coburg. The museum is responsible for an encyclopedic collection of insects, bivalves, snails, birds, plants, rocks, fossils, minerals, meteorites and anthropological artefacts. The collections originate from the latter half of the 18th century. The museum was opened for the public in 1864.

The study day was rich in professional substance with lectures deeply focused on the theme of the conference.

09.15

Opening of the conference by Dr Stephen Lloyd and words of welcome by York Langenstein, Chairman of ICOM Germany, preceded the morning session of lectures.

York Langenstein (Chair ICOM Germany) wanted to point out the importance of ICOM's international and national committees enforcing their collaboration in the future.

Peter Keller (Dommuseum, Salzburg), reading the presentation by the indisposed Carl Aigner (Chairman of ICOM Austria), presented the theme and the organisation of the ICOM General Conference in Vienna next August. Its theme will be 'Universal heritage / Individual Responsibility – Individual Heritage / Universal Responsibility'. The plenary sessions will take place on Sunday 19th August, the international committee meetings from 20th to 22nd August and the final plenary session on Friday 24th August. Thursday 23rd August will be reserved for excursions. Information about the meeting is to be found on the ICOM website: www.icom-oesterreich.at/2007

Klaus Weschenfelder (Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg): Contextualising Cranach – an introduction to the conference topic and tour

Klaus Weschenfelder took as an exemplar, Lukas Cranach, who left a major artistic legacy in Saxony, in tracing how the context of a work of art changes during the course of history, and what new meanings a work can take in the one and same place. When original historical contexts are lost, new ones are immediately created. The inevitable process of ‘museification’ since the 19th century is one of them. The change of meaning, followed by this phenomenon, is especially complex when it takes place in the same geographical location as the original context.

Two paintings by Lucas Cranach in the Veste Coburg Collections are deeply involved in Coburg’s and the Veste’s history. The Veste got a new status as a court residence in the end of the 15th century and held it up to 1542. During that year the residence was moved down to the city and Schloss Ehrenburg was built for that purpose. The Veste was then turned into a regional stronghold with no furnishing or decoration worth mentioning. During the 18th century the Veste also lost its military importance and fell into disrepair. The arrival of Duke Ernst I of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha was the new turning point in Veste’s history. The Veste was renovated in Neo-Gothic style and the ducal collections were moved there. However, the ducal collection of paintings remained in Schloss Ehrenburg.

Of some three dozen paintings by Cranach in this collection, only very few had originally been in the Veste. These include two portraits of Electors Frederick the Wise and John the Steadfast, today shown in the so called ‘Luther Rooms’ in the Veste. But in fact Luther never met his sovereign Frederick the Wise in person and Frederick never turned to the new doctrine although he supported Martin Luther. Only his brother and successor, John the Steadfast, fought for the Reformation.



Lucas Cranach, *Portraits of Electors Frédéric the Wise and John the Steadfast*, Veste Coburg

It is clear that the two portraits were never intended as ‘stand-alone’ portraits. It is more likely that they were parts of an altarpiece in the Coburg Castle chapel. After the Reformation in Coburg in 1525 the altarpiece wings were probably sawed off and the original work now exist in several fragments. During the early 20th century the two portraits served as room decoration in the Duke’s apartments in the new building attached to the old Veste, the ‘Fürstenbau’. This display finally completely ignored the paintings’ original clerical context.

The Cranach rooms in Veste Coburg are now being refurbished and the museum curators have several options for the two paintings' 'historical contexts' in the new display.

Werner Korn (Naturkunde-Museum Coburg): The Naturkunde-Museum Coburg and its sites.

The Naturkunde-Museum Coburg and its collections are closely linked to the history of the ducal family of the former duchy. The collections originate from the Duke of Sachsen-Coburg-Saalfeld from the second half of the 18th century. Long thereafter, Prince Ernest (1818-1893) and Prince Albert (1819-1861) took over the collection of stuffed birds, fossils and minerals. In 1840 Prince Albert married his cousin Queen Victoria and from England he supported the museum through monetary funding and new acquisitions.

After being opened to the public, the collections were housed in the Veste Coburg between 1864 and 1910. In 1910 Veste Coburg was renovated, leaving no space for the Naturkunde-Museum. In 1914 a new museum building, constructed by the Duke of Coburg, Carl Eduard, was opened. After the Second World War, the collections were taken over by the local administration, when the reigning duke of Coburg was made to abdicate his throne. A new building, connected to the former one, was completed in 1996.



Coburg, Naturkunde Museum, former and new building

Claus Grimm (Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte): Fine Art Collections in their Historical Context.

Claus Grimm pointed out, that the theme of the present ICFA conference is provocative from the point of view of classical aesthetics. He wants to contribute in the discussion of contextualised versus 'pure art' presentations of museum collections from the standpoint of cultural history and the theory of history.

The epoch starting from the 18th century known as the Enlightenment is used to talking about 'works of art' of 'fine art', whose aesthetic qualities are regarded as objects of 'pure' delight, in terms of Immanuel Kant. The main task of museum personnel was to make these 'works of art' accessible to the public and to draw their attention to their qualities. In the era of European classicism, such prominent presentation was an exclusively aesthetic question, whereby the classical figures were provided with a classical setting that would enhance the intention of having them seen as 'art'. This was true for all early museums during the first half of the 19th century.

The end of the 19th century, on the other hand, saw a new flow of historicising aesthetic. Many historicising rooms in museums of that period tended to give the impression of underlying the apparent and clear aesthetic will of a former era. But, anyone who enquiring into the museum objects' original circumstances, the actual historical data, and for whom the connection with original rooms and situations is of great importance, is in fact facing something opposed to this. What emerge are the dark sides and contradictions, the conflicts and weaknesses, both in human biographies and in buildings and paintings. Instead of a perfect world of 'art', you very often get the impression of something that only succeeded to a degree.

Claus Grimm asked, whether we can choose between an aesthetic and a historical approach. Hardly, unless we have a split perception, was his answer. He also stressed the need to present 'art' objects in a way which make them understandable as bearing witness to historical thought and perception, to work out what they represented and mediated. Claus Grimm wants to keep on museum professionals' agenda a reflection on what we really are doing, what we are telling and to whom our stories are being addressed. He also wants to provoke by asking whether we are art historians who do not any more believe in 'art'. This claim was spontaneously protested by some members of the audience.

Ulrich G. Grossmann (Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg): Monastery and Castle as Museum Sites.

Ulrich G. Grossmann compared the 150-year-old German National Museum (GNM, Germanisches Nationalmuseum) in Nuremberg and the projects for the German Castle Museum (Deutsche Burgenmuseum) in Heldburg Fortress.



Nuremberg, German Nationalmuseum, the cloister

The site of the GNM is a Carthusian charterhouse to which museum buildings have been added repeatedly since around 1900, most recently in around 1990. The core of the museum is the monastery church, with cloister, refectory and several monastic cells. The GNM does not, however, re-create these rooms but rather uses them as exhibition space, without direct reference to their original functions. The only exception is the monastery church, where a winged altarpiece is displayed on the place of the former altar. The goal is not

and never has been a 'historic' installation of artworks, since this, according to Ulrich G. Grossmann, falsifies more than it clarifies. One of the aims of the museum is to facilitate the appreciation of details. This is sometimes inconsistent with the original use and disposition. Thus, a museum presentation can never reproduce the original historic circumstances of the artworks. Decisive for the GNM is that rather than being categorised by genre, objects should be exhibited in their cultural-historical contexts, that is, grouped to historical periods.

The emerging German Castle Museum will deal with the castle as a medieval and early modern building type. In itself, however, it can only serve to illustrate selected aspects of the German Castle Museum. Therefore, the building itself will not feature prominently in the exhibition.



Heldburg Fortress

According to Ulrich G. Grossmann it is important for the visitor to realise, that the museum as such, and what is being shown in it, is an abstraction. It would be ideal if the preconceptions and misconceptions behind a museum could be made visible. In this context he used the reconstruction of Dresden as an example: the basis and the ideas lying behind the enormous reconstruction project should be open to considerations.

13.00 – 14.30

Visit to Veste Coburg Art Collections.

The Veste Coburg is situated on top of a hill at fifteen minute brisk walk up the slope from the Naturkunde-Museum.

Klaus Weschenfelder presented the collections of his museum in the castle Veste Coburg, known as the 'Crown of Franconia', whose history first starts in 1056 and whose heyday was in the beginning of the 16th century. Martin Luther lived in the castle for six months in 1530.

The museum's prints and drawings collection of about 250.000 works is among the more important in Germany. Works by important German masters, such as Cranach, Dürer, Grünewald and Holbein, are well presented in the art collection. Among the unique treasures of the collections are also the wood panels of the so called Hunting Room, the armour collection, the hunting weapons collection and the glass collection.



Veste Coburg, Hunting Room

After a coffee break at the Naturkunde-Museum, the conference participants were ready for the afternoon session of lectures.

Helen C. Wüstefeld (Kasteel-Museum Sypesteyn): Historic, aesthetic or instructive? Sypesteyn Castle, myth and reality.

Helen C. Wüstefeld focused on the social aspects within art history, which have made the questions of collecting art and artefacts interesting during the last decades. Sypesteyn Castle is a house-museum, situated in a beautiful garden, southeast of Amsterdam. It represents a special genre within house-museums: a collector's house museum.



Sypesten Castle

Sypesteyn Castle presents a unique conceptual vision: it is a Gesamtkunstwerk made up of the castle, collections and historic gardens. In 1902 Catharinus Henri Cornelius

Ascanius van Sypesteyn, who was the last male descendant of his family, established the Van Sypesteyn Foundation to maintain the family history. He devoted himself to reacquire and unite the former family property and to build the neo-Gothic castle to house the family history. Sypesteyn believed that he had reconstructed a Dutch manor house as it might have been built around 1600. The museum was opened for the public in 1926.

Van Sypesteyn Family claims to originate from the medieval noble house of the same name, but this cannot be documented. In fact the family was ennobled only in 1815. In his house-museum van Sypesteyn made a coherent presentation of a private collection in a domestic interior, suggesting a historical continuity that never really existed before his museum project.

Ina Busch (Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt): The ‘Darmstädter Madonna’ of Hans Holbein the Younger: basic thoughts on the problem of ‘historical context’.

There are two versions of the so called ‘Schutzmantelmadonna’ by Hans Holbein the Younger. One of them is now the best known piece in the collections of Schlossmuseum Darmstadt. The other is in the collections of the Alte Meister Gallery in Dresden. In the middle of the 19th century art historians decided to look at the Darmstadt version as the original of the two paintings. More than three hundred years this panel remained in the shadow of the Dresden copy, which had become one of the most famous pictures in Germany after it had been installed just opposite of Raphael’s Sistine Madonna in the newly built Semper Gallery in Dresden. The purpose of this was to demonstrate the equal value of the Italian and German school of painting. The so called ‘Madonnen discussion’ was born, the result of which honoured the Darmstadt version as the original. Since this moment, the Darmstadt panel figured in literature as the ‘Darmstädter Madonna’.



Hans Holbein, The ‘Darmstädter Madonna’
Würth Collection, Johanniterhall



Copy by Bartholomäus Saarmburgh
Dresden, Alte Meister Gallery

Ina Busch reconstructed the course of the vivid debate ‘Darmstadt Madonna in its historical context’. The ‘Darmstädter Madonna’ has been said to have a self-evident historical link to the town of Darmstadt, but this can be questioned. This claim indicates the painting’s important political function as part of its ‘historical context’. Use and misuse of the ‘historical context’ in the arguments could clearly be watched in the public and political discussion. With her close look at the historical facts of the two Holbein paintings Ina Busch wished to open a view for a more objective discussion.

Stephen Lloyd (National Galleries of Scotland): ‘A Caledonian Temple of Fame’: proposals for new displays and interpretations within the historic context of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

The Scottish National Portrait Gallery was founded in 1882 by a newspaper proprietor and built in the style of the Gothic revival, opening to the public seven years later as a late Victorian monument to ongoing national pride. Over the course of more than a century substantial collections of portraits of eminent Scots – including paintings, sculpture, works on paper and photography – have been assembled to celebrate half millennium of achievement. Currently the Trustees and the Director-General of the National Galleries of Scotland are considering plans to refurbish the whole building, reopening to the public in 2011.

Curators and educators are grappling with the issues of reinvigorating the displays and interpretations of the portrait collections within a remarkable building that remains both heavily historicised and highly inflexible.

An investigation of the history of the building and the history of its collections’ displays has been going on. There might be a possibility to reconstruct parts of the building to its original state. The building has been greatly altered and modernised since its opening as the first building ever built to function as a specific portrait gallery. The current situation suggests the possibility to reinterpret the rather static collection. This might also mean a new kind of art historical contextualisation of the collection in its permanent display and in temporary exhibitions. Stephen Lloyd presented the many open questions that have to be answered and many choices that have to be made. The fact remains that every generation of curators has its own will and its own right and responsibility to reconstruct the collections’ ‘historical context’.

ICFA Plenary Meeting at the Lecture Hall of the Naturkunde Museum, Coburg.

The agenda and proposals prepared in the morning meeting of the ICFA board were presented to the committee members in the Plenary Meeting.

The theme of the 21st ICOM General Conference meeting in Vienna, ‘Fine Art Collections and the Role of the Curator: historical perspective and contemporary practice’, was welcomed by the participating ICFA members, as well as the plan to have the conference of 2008 in Athens. It was noted, that in the future it will be important that ICFA was more visibly present also in the South of Europe. A dialogue between ICFA and ICOM-Europe might bring ICFA more close to the Mediterranean museum world.

It will also be important to encourage younger curators to join ICFA.

As far as the whole of ICOM is concerned, the selection of Shanghai as the site of the 22nd General Conference meeting of ICOM is a sign of ICOM's strong emphasis to be a real global organisation, which is its mission as part of UNESCO.

Departure by coach to Schloss Callenberg some kilometres away from Coburg centre. We were received by Mrs Franziska Bachner, curator of the art collections of the ducal family foundation, and Mr Wolfgang Schneider, whom we had met earlier at Schloss Ehrenburg the night before. The history of the castle dates back to 900 years. The present neo-Gothic exterior of the castle originates from the middle of the 19th century. The castle with its beautiful garden is the last one of the former residences of the ducal family of the Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to have remained in the family, used today by the foundation 'Stiftung der Herzoglich Sachsen-Coburg und Gotha'schen Familie'.



Schloss Callenberg, Portrait Gallery

The guided tour in the castle was an informative journey through the ducal family's history during the last two hundred years, with interesting family portraits within other things. The castle also houses banqueting rooms. The picturesque place is popular e.g. for wedding parties.

Thursday 5th October Excursion to Weimar and Gotha

Departure by coach for Weimar and Gotha.

On the way we heard Klaus Weschenfelder's most informative presentation about the area through which we were driving. Soon after leaving Coburg we passed the former border between the German Federal Republic (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). Because Coburg is situated near the former borderline, Germany's division in two strongly affected the everyday life of many inhabitants of the area, families were disconnected by the most guarded border of the 'iron curtain'. The border was closed in 1952 and 11,000 people had to move away from the no-man's land between the two countries. The border was reopened and Germany reunited in 1989. The economic situation in the area is still difficult, and despite great efforts it has been difficult to raise the standard of living in the former East Germany to an equal level with the former West Germany.

The historical sites in Weimar have been quite well preserved through the decades after the Second World War. The city has been accepted on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list. In 1999 Weimar was the Cultural City of Europe. Weimar used to be the centre of the German intelligentsia, and the memory of Goethe, Herder and Schiller has always been

kept alive. The 'Weimar Republik' was announced in the city's National Theatre after the First World War. The first office of the Bauhaus School under Henry van de Velde was opened in Weimar in 1919.



Weimar, The Bauhaus

The town did not suffer from major damages during the Second World War, but tragedies have occurred, like the fire in the famous Duchess Anna Amalia Library in 2004. Despite the losses, important material was saved, too.

Visit to the Schlossmuseum, Weimar



Lucas Cranach the Elder, *The Christ in the insults*. Weimar, Schloss Museum

We were received by Mr Hermann Mildenerberger, curator of the prints and drawings collection. The Schlossmuseum houses a good collection of European art from the Middle Ages and the Reformation to the beginning of the 20th century. The museum's collection of Northern Renaissance paintings by Lucas Cranach the Elder, Albrecht Dürer and their contemporaries is of special interest. Also German landscape painting from the 19th century is well represented.

An important restoration and rebuilding of the castle took place during the 1790s. Some parts of the interior are among the best preserved interiors from the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries in the whole of Germany. Three architects were active in designing the neo-classical interiors after the ideas of J. W. von Goethe, who wanted to create for the Festival Hall a special iconographic program. The building of these unique interiors also marked the last years of the neo-classical period in Weimar before the Napoleonic wars.

Visit to the Schloss Friedenstein with its collections and the Ekhof-Theater in Gotha.

Duke Ernest I of the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha chose Gotha as the royal residence town. He had the Friedenstein Castle built on a hill between 1643 and 1654. It is one of the largest Early Baroque castle complexes in Germany. The castle houses a range of collections of fine art (with old German and Dutch paintings), crafts, china, furniture etc.

Frau Gerlach guided us through the exhibition halls, e.g. the 17th and 18th century kunstkammer collection with natural and exotic objects together with art objects.

After coffee served in the theatre lobby we entered the Ekhof-Theater, which is one of the most special spaces in the castle. The Gothaer Hofteater was founded in 1774 under the actor Conrad Ekhof and it was the first theatre in Germany to have permanently employed actors. The theatre space is even older, dating back to the 1680s. It is today the oldest Baroque theatre in Europe with an almost completely preserved historic stage equipment from 1681. The use of the theatre's technical equipment during the performances required 8 to 10 workers. Mrs Elisabeth Dobritzsch, who showed the theatre to us, had arranged a special demonstration of the moving wings, the wind machine, the thunder storm effect etc. The stage architecture was designed by using e.g. a special perspective effect which makes it seem larger. The theatre was out of professional use for a long period which caused the preservation of the historical interior and technical equipment. Today, historical theatre festivals are presented in it during the summer.



Gotha, Ekhof Theater



Ekhof Theater, The machine-group

The route from Gotha back to Coburg led us through the winding roads of the mountainous Thüringer Wald which is one of the three major forest areas in Germany.

Friday 6th October
Excursion to Altenburg and Dresden.

Visit to Lindenau-Museum Altenburg



Altenburg, Lindenau Museum

We had another warm welcome by the director of the Lindenau Museum, Mrs Jutta Penndorf. The highlight of the museum's collections is the Old Italian Masters collection with about 180 pieces from the 13th to the 16th century, with works by Guido da Siena, Pietro Lorenzetti, Masaccio etc. The Lindenau collection is one of the largest collections of early Old Italian Masters outside of Italy. The museum is under renovation and therefore the collections were not on display. Despite of this, we were lucky enough to see a selection of Old Italian Masters hung in an exhibition hall for our visit. A project of publishing a catalogue of the Italian works is going on but not yet finished.

The works were collected by B. A. von Lindenau (1779-1854) who was a politician and a 'Renaissance character' with a deep interest in art and culture. It was his original plan to donate his collection to the state of Germany. After Lindenau's death the collection had no curator until the time after the Second World War. The new curator started to acquire in the collections works of 20th century art, e.g. of the Dresden school of late expressionism.

In the hall for temporary exhibition was just being finished the hanging of an exhibition of an ambitious educational project. Pieces of the museum's antique and renaissance art had been used as models for childrens' workshops.

Visit to Galerie Alte Meister in Dresden

We were received by Mrs Ute Neithardt, deputy director of the museum. The history of the overwhelming fine arts collections is as dramatic and tragic as the history of the city of Dresden. The extremes of history did not end with the time of the Second World War nor with the reunification of Germany. The floods of the river Elbe in Dresden in 2002 caused a serious danger for the works in the storage rooms in the museum buildings cellars, when the

water level in the storages was rising. The museum staff managed to save the works by carrying them up in the upper floors of the building in the dark of night with no electricity for lightning or for using the lifts. The biggest paintings, which were impossible to carry out from the cellars, were attached near the ceiling, above the water level. The rising of the water level stopped before reaching the paintings.



Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

Evening prayer in Frauenkirche with an organ concert

The famous church was originally built between 1726 and 1743. It was one of the most important examples of Lutheran Baroque church architecture. Towards the end of the Second World War, during the night between 13th and 14th February 1944, Dresden was heavily bombed by the allied forces and the Baroque city centre was badly destroyed. The church was left in ruins for about 45 years. The reconstruction project was started in 1994 and finished in 2005.



Dresden, Frauenkirche, before restauration



Dresden, Frauenkirche, after restauration

Dinner at Galerie Alte Meister

This was the last banqueting dinner for the whole group together in a special room with a long table. At this point, although it was not yet the time to disperse, Stephen Lloyd presented the warmest thanks to Klaus Weschenfelder for the magnificent programme and arrangements of the conference. There is no doubt that everybody agreed with him!

Saturday 7th October

Continuation of the excursion to Dresden

Visit to the historic ‘Grünes Gewölbe’

The historical Green Vault was originally an important realization of Augustus II the Strong's (1670-1733, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony) wish to create a Baroque Gesamtkunstwerk. This happened between 1723 and 1730. The rooms designed for precious objects were part of the Dresden Royal Palace, which now houses several museums. The treasury was heavily destroyed in 1945 and it was reopened for the public after renovation in September of 2006. This restoration also lasted for about ten years.



Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe

Guided city tour by foot in the historic city centre

The program ended with an interesting tour in the old and restored Baroque centre of Dresden. Despite the rain the streets of Old Dresden were filled with interested tourists. The constant flow of travellers is a rather new phenomenon in Dresden and it is due to the restorations. Dresden has taken back its position as one of the most important cultural locations in Germany and in Central Europe.

Opera night in the famous Semper-Oper for those who stayed in Dresden over to the next day or longer.

Riitta Ojanperä
Curator, Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki
ICFA Deputy Secretary