Our Museums

SM
B Staatliche Museen
zu Berlin

STAATLICHE
KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN
DRESDEN

BAYERISCHE
STAATSGEMÄLDESAMMLUNGEN
MÜNCHEN

Essays by Bernhard Schulz

Front cover:
Caspar David Friedrich
The Ostra Gehege near Dresden, 1832
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Sunflowers, 1888
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Portrait of Heinrike Dannecker, 1802
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S M
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zu Berlin

Berlin

The Current Situation

The Museumsinsel Berlin, or Museum Island Berlin, has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1999. With this the global cultural organization acknowledges not just the architectural appearance of the five museum buildings, built within a period of less than 100 years, but also explicitly the entirety of the collections that are kept in them. Even it is not the collections themselves that are designated as "world heritage," the recognition always referred to the whole of outer shell and contents. The collections cover 6000 years of the history of art and of mankind between the Middle East as the cradle of, among others, classical culture and the actual Western world from the Mediterranean up to northern Europe.

Thus the Museumsinsel, which, in fact, refers only to the northern tip of the island in the middle of the river Spree, offers an opportunity to view and research the material evidence of a history which only a few decades ago still presented itself, according to Western consensus, as *the* history: the history from the roots of antiquity to the present, conceived as a linear progression. This consensus has been shattered, as other cultures have claimed the right to their own history and to telling this history themselves. The Berlin museums were already fundamentally aware of this even at the time of their rapid expansion at the end of the 19th century, for it was here that the first museums devoted to Islamic and Asian art, at least within Europe, were established as clear testimony to the diversity of human culture.

View of Museumsinsel Berlin
© bpk/DOM publishers, 2009

Yet in the five buildings of the Museumsinsel it is the narrative of the Western world that is presented on an epic scale. Located behind the Altes Museum which forms the narrow side of the museum ensemble facing the Lustgarten park, are the Neues Museum and Alte Nationalgalerie, and located behind these are the almost monolithic structure of the Pergamonmuseum and, at the island's tip, the Bode-Museum, with the two sides of the structure of the latter, in making full use of the tight space, sitting atop the island's retaining walls. Whereas the Paris Louvre and the British Museum in London are housed in uniform structures, the Museumsinsel is architecturally as heteromorphic as the collections kept inside are varied. Until the James Simon Galerie, the central entrance building designed by award-winning British architect David Chipperfield, is built, each museum has to be entered separately. Construction has started only recently.

The Museumsinsel constitutes the nucleus, but by no means the entire universe of the Museums in Berlin. And there is every reason to describe the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin as a "universe," for taken together they add up to a universal museum similar in scope to the Hermitage Museum

in St. Petersburg or the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. They comprise altogether 15 collections, with the Nationalgalerie alone presently maintaining six locations. On the other hand several institutes share one and the same building, as in the case of the Neues Museum on the Museumsinsel. Visitors could care less about the organizational structure, for they know that there is no, or virtually no, distinct field of world culture that is not represented by a collection of its own within the Staatliche Museen.

The Staatliche Museen zu Berlin are accordingly scattered all over the city, with the Museumsinsel in its geographical and historical center. There is a second "museum island:" The Kulturforum near the previous and reclaimed center of Potsdamer Platz. Institutes of various nature cluster at the Kulturforum: museums, concert halls, and Germany's largest library. This forum, too, is a built symbol, a symbol of the culture of reading, listening and (contemplative) viewing that is traditionally fostered especially in Germany, a concept of culture that is anchored primarily in reflection and contemplation. Yet at the Kulturforum this concept of culture takes on an architecturally contemporary guise, one that intimates timelessness even today by virtue of the quality of the architecture. This applies in particular to the Neue Nationalgalerie, which translates the theme of the temple into 20th century forms. The Gemäldegalerie, located obliquely behind it, is an introverted structure guarding its valuable holdings of European painting.

Finally there is a third museum complex in Dahlem, in close proximity to Berlin's Freie Universität. The artifacts of non-European cultures, the cultures of India and the Far East, as well as of Africa, the Americas and Oceania, have their home here. And then there are yet other museums that are part of the Staatliche Museen, spread across the city, in Charlottenburg as well as near Hauptbahnhof, the main railway station, testifying to the growth of a museum network that continues to attract objects and collections. Viewed as a whole, these museums and their structures project an image of consistent growth and consistent contemporaneity, as they have ever since the completion of the first building, the Altes Museum, in 1830.

Bode-Museum
Museumsinsel Berlin
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Bernd Weingart

Colonnade courtyard
Museumsinsel Berlin
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Bernd Weingart

Neue Nationalgalerie
Kulturforum Potsdamer Platz
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Achim Kleuker

History

The architectural expansion of the museums is closely related to the rapid growth of the city of Berlin in the 19th and 20th centuries. The museums do, in fact, have a common origin in the Kunstkammer, or Cabinet of Curiosities, which was housed in the city palace of the Prussian kings and whose character changed considerably over the centuries. But with the opening of the museum building at Lustgarten, assertively placed across from the palace, this connection ended. From this moment on, and for all to see, the museums were governed by laws of their own. These were the great tenets of education that motivated the Prussian polity at the beginning of the 19th century. The museums were created as educational institutions that were subject to the same rules of academic study and scholarship as, for instance, universities. At the same time the possible impact of exhibits on viewers, that is, on the larger middle-class public, was likewise taken into account from the start. "Erst erfreuen, dann belehren," or "delight first, then teach," the motto of Wilhelm von Humboldt, the great reformer of education, included both options – aesthetic delight and cognitive effort –, even if they were not without potential conflict. These two – at times, in fact, conflicting – priorities shape the Berlin museums to this day, even if the ideal of classical antiquity, for instance, which was unchallenged at the time the first museum building was conceived and erected, has by now all but lost its authority.

The detachment of the museum and its holdings from its courtly and lordly background was explicitly reaffirmed by the royal house. The rapid expansion of the collections, which according to the dedication inscription of the Altes Museum focused on the artifacts of all civilizations, and the need for an extension led King Frederick William IV to declare the entire northern tip of the island in the river Spree behind the Altes Museum a "sanctuary for art and scholarship," that is, an area removed from royal dominion and political influence. In relatively rapid succession the other museums were realized, bringing with them a division and specialization of the once unified collection. As a result of the extraordinary successes of German archaeology at the time of the Empire a huge number of objects found their way to Berlin, allowing the museums to no longer feel inferior to the older archaeological collections in Paris and London. What was uniformly characteristic of the Berlin collections was that they came to the German capital as evidence of an historical context that had been subjected to scholarly study, rather than as spoils or occasional acquisitions. The same approach underpinned the great excavation campaigns in Egypt and the expeditions to central Asia, which yielded self-contained collections within the various museums.

As a result of the Nazi regime's anti-modern cultural policies the collection of the Nationalgalerie suffered severe losses in the field of modern art. Hundreds of paintings were confiscated and either sold abroad or destroyed. During World War II all of the museum buildings sustained major damage, while some were entirely destroyed. The collections had at that time already been moved to supposedly secure depots far from Berlin, yet those that were located in parts of Germany which were occupied by the Red Army were confiscated and taken to the Soviet Union. In the late 1950s a total of 1.5 million objects, most of them from Berlin and Dresden, were returned to the GDR, but core holdings of the Berlin collections, such as the cache of gold and other artifacts excavated by Schliemann in ancient Troy and known as "Priam's Treasure," are kept back in present-day Russia to this day. Having started hopefully after the break-up of the Soviet Union, negotiations on their return have long since stalled for reasons that museum representatives – on both sides – have no control over, especially since, in 1999, the Russian parliament signed into law the nationalization of so-called "looted art."
Already by the end of the 19th century space requirements for the growing collections created the need for museum buildings outside of the limited island site. It is at this time that the decision was made to move the non-European collections that were most relevant to contemporary scholarship to the western suburbs of Berlin, to a site where other novel, non-academic research facilities were planned as well. Following World War II and the political division of Berlin into two parts that, in 1961, were completely sealed off from one another, these plans were implemented. At the same time the collections that had been kept in the western parts of Germany, the territory of the future Federal Republic, returned to Berlin, albeit to West Berlin where there was a shortage of adequate museum buildings. At this time it was also decided to locate institutions whose original homes were in the eastern part of Berlin, which was now inaccessible, in the area of what would become known as the Kulturforum. Thus a new Nationalgalerie and a new Staatsbibliothek were built, followed many years later by a new building for the Gemäldegalerie. The museums in East Berlin were able to continue using the existing structures, even though each and every one of them had sustained war damage, yet the museums stagnated in terms of their collections. In West Berlin, on the other hand, serious efforts were made to close the gaps that had opened up as a result of the war and to foster collections in new areas, particularly in the field of contemporary art.

German reunification proceeded at a faster pace in the case of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin than in most other areas. In theory it seemed obvious to return the collections to their original homes on Museumsinsel, yet in practice the fact needed to be taken into consideration that individual collections had grown considerably compared to the time before the war and that the buildings on Museumsinsel were all in need of rehabilitation, if they were not still lying in ruins and completely unusable, like the Neues Museum. The restoration of the Museumsinsel has been ongoing for more than twenty years now. In the process the cautious and historically very careful reconstruction of the destroyed Neues Museum, intended mainly to accommodate the Egyptian antiquities, has been praised throughout the world as a textbook example of monument preservation.

The next major task that is scheduled is the relocation of the collections of non-European cultures to the city center, in a new and innovative cultural center called Humboldt-Forum to be built at the site where the city palace of the Hohenzollerns used to stand until it was destroyed. By combining exhibition, scholarship and consistent dialog the Humboldt-Forum intends to live up the maxims of its eponym. The central tenets that have informed the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin since their beginnings – scholarship and comprehensibility, expert knowledge and participation – will define the Humboldt-Forum as well.

Berliner Schloss – Humboldt-Forum: Schlüter Court, view from the northeast © Stiftung Berliner Schloss – Humboldt-Forum/Franco Stella

Highlights

Museumsinsel Berlin – Archaeology

Following the reopening of the Neues Museum in 2008 the three museums devoted to the archaeological collections – Altes Museum, Neues Museum and Pergamonmuseum – one again form a continuum, not spatially, for they have to be visited separately, but in terms of the sequence of periods and collections. Geographically, the objects are from the cultural sphere of the Middle East and Mediterranean, extending from Mesopotamia to the provinces of the Roman Empire. In terms of imagery this wide range is reflected by the Processional Way from Babylon, which was to a certain extent remodeled, but for the largest part reconstructed from original reliefs at the Pergamonmuseum, and the bronze statue of the "dumb waiter" from the 1st century AD, that was found in the town of Xanten on the lower Rhine and today quietly stands in attendance in the Bacchus Room of the Neues Museum. Originally, classical antiquity was supposed to be the measure of any contemplation of art. Accordingly, Schinkel designed the Altes Museum around a central dome hall reminiscent of the Pantheon in Rome. It is identified as a place of contemplation by its wreath of columns alternating with ancient statues. Here, in the face of timeless antiquity, visitors were supposed to learn, in the spirit of Goethe and Weimar Classicism, to think of themselves as Greeks and thus as quintessentially human. The placement of the two goddesses of victory from Roman imperial times on both sides of the passageway in the rear, which point to the bronze statue of the "Praying Boy" from around 300 BC – Napoleon had looted all three sculptures from Berlin – alludes to the victorious outcome of the War of the Sixth Coalition and, by extension, to the rebirth of Prussia in the spirit of antiquity.

The Neues Museum which, after lying in ruins for six decades, has been undergoing cautious reconstruction since the 1990s, is currently a huge draw on Museumsinsel. The walls of plain brickwork, large parts of which have been left exposed and bare, provide a magnificent setting for the objects, primarily artifacts from ancient Egypt that are themselves fragile and have often sustained damage in the course of time. Even Berlin's most celebrated exhibit, the bust of Queen Nefertiti, is not entirely unscathed. She was returned to "her" original museum, albeit to another location in the North Cupola Room that, judging by the photographs of the Greek Courtyard before the war, is considerably more imposing. From here the visual axis points to the sun god Helios, a marble sculpture from the Roman province of Egypt, at the opposite end of the building. Among the highlights of the collection of the Egyptian Museum are the finds from Amarna that

The Praying Boy, c. 300 BC
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Johannes Laurentius

Ishtar Gate from the Processional Way in Babylon
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Maximilian Meisse

Bust of Quenn Nefertiti, c. 1340 BC
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Achim Kleuker

Rotunda of the Altes Museum
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Johannes Laurentius

revolve around the founder of a new religion, Pharaoh Akhenaten, and his wife Nefertiti. Arranged on a terrace in the former "Egyptian courtyard," these objects form a surprisingly harmonious whole with the surrounding architecture.

The huge Pergamonmuseum, by far the largest of the five museum buildings on the island, is devoted in particular to the architectural monuments. In the heyday of the excavation campaigns around 1900, parts of entire structures found their way into the European museums. In Berlin these are the finds from Babylon, the Pergamon Altar from Asia Minor, which gave the museum its name, as well as the Roman Market Gate from Miletus and the façade of the early Islamic Qasr Mshatta, or "Winter Palace."

The Pergamon Altar consists of a frieze in high relief depicting the so-called Gigantomachy, the battle between the Giants and the Olympian gods. Dating from the second century BC, the marble relief panels were found in Asia Minor; in Berlin they were reconstructed, together with fragments of columns, into a complete monumental altar structure. Like most of the collections from the Museumsinsel, the frieze was taken to the Soviet Union in 1945 and returned to Berlin only in 1958. Interestingly, the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, where important parts of the collections of the Berlin museums are retained to this day, ever since keeps plaster casts of the Pergamon frieze and, as one of the very few museums, displays these casts on an equal footing with original objects.

The friendly relations that existed between the German and Ottoman Empires made it possible to accomplish by means of excavations, what elsewhere was assembled as colonial booty. This equally applies to the façade from Mshatta in Jordan, which dates from the year 744 and thus from the belligerent early period of Islam. It is the showpiece of the Museum für Islamische Kunst which was established as a separate department as early as 1904. As a result of the religious diversity within the Ottoman Empire objects of Christian and Jewish origin or iconography are included in the collection as well, making it unexpectedly relevant in today's age of rekindled cultural strife.

Pergamon Altar,
2nd century BC
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Thomas Bruns

Market Gate of Miletus,
2nd century AD
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Johannes Laurentius

Museumsinsel Berlin – Alte Nationalgalerie

Opened in 1867, during the period of German unification, the (Alte) Nationalgalerie is dedicated, on its pediment, to "German Art." Even if this restriction soon became obsolete, the collection still focuses on German, particularly north German, art of the 19th century. Caspar David Friedrich, though living in Dresden, found recognition above all in Berlin. Conceived as companion pieces, his two paintings "The Monk by the Sea" and "Abbey among Oak Trees" were purchased by the royal court from the exhibition of the Berlin academy. In its radical nature "The Monk by the Sea," in particular, was a seminal work, and the art historical strand that links German Romanticism to, say, abstract painting in the United States has long been identified. Equally inseparable from Berlin is Karl Friedrich Schinkel, to whom the Berlin museums owe their very first building at Lustgarten. Yet Schinkel was active as a painter as well, with his paintings showing idealized views of classical Greek as well as Gothic architecture, the two poles that define his own architectural designs from the early 19th century.

Among the painters of the second half of the century Adolph Menzel is indisputably the most important. His huge estate of more than 6000 drawings is part of the collection of the Nationalgalerie. Menzel's small-scale interiors, such as the 1845 "Balcony Room," are characterized by an artistic license similar to that of French impressionism, which – prudently – would emerge only later. The "Iron Rolling Mill" of 1875, recognized as a magnum opus and acquired for the Nationalgalerie only a year later, is arguably the most significant depiction of industrialization and factory work. Menzel created numerous preparatory drawings in order to achieve the greatest possible verisimilitude, fully dedicated to the most trivial details, which Menzel elevates into art.

As a counterweight to German painting, the Nationalgalerie owns an exquisite collection of French painting and sculpture from Manet to Rodin. Painted in 1879, Edouard Manet's large-scale painting "In the Conservatory" entered the collection of the Nationalgalerie 17 years later as a gift from Berlin collectors – at the time the only way to acquire impressionist paintings that still stirred public controversy, yet also evidence of the support that existed among open-minded art lovers for the staunch advocacy of modern art by then director Hugo von Tschudi.

Edouard Manet
In the Conservatory, 1879
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Caspar David Friedrich
Abbey among Oak Trees, 1809/10
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Karl Friedrich Schinkel
Gothic Church on a Rock by the Sea, 1815
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Jan Vermeer van Delft
The Glass of Wine, 1661/62
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn
The Mennonite Preacher Anslo
and his Wife, 1641
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Jan van Eyck
The Madonna in the
Church, 1425
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Kulturforum Potsdamer Platz – Gemäldegalerie

The Gemäldegalerie is important less for its individual masterpieces – of which it does, indeed, own ample – than for the systematic nature and completeness of its collection. This had been a central ambition from the beginning when, as early as 1797, classical scholar Aloys Hirt outlined the program for a future museum. And after the opening of the Altes Museum, which first accommodated the Gemäldegalerie, a contented Wilhelm von Humboldt was pleased to note: "The Royal Gallery here is characterized by the fact that it systematically extends across all periods of painting." The expansion of the holdings was accounted for by repeated moves, eventually, in 1998, into the new building at Kulturforum where as many as 1500 paintings can be displayed, even if this is still only a limited portion of the collection. Yet the division between two "schools," an Italian and a Netherlandish one, as the two main strands of painting, a dichotomy that traced back to the Baroque period, remained defining throughout the 19th century. Still, the Berlin museums were fortunate to be able to follow up on their stated aim and fill in exactly this systematization through the acquisition of extensive private collections.

One such collection is the one that was acquired as early as 1821, with the future museum in mind, from the English businessman Solly – a collection of as many as 3000 paintings, including outstanding works by early Italian masters of the quattrocento and even of the trecento who were still underappreciated at the time, as well as by early Flemish painters such as the Van Eyck brothers. Half a century later a second collection of this stature found its way into the Gemäldegalerie with the Suermondt collection, which focused on Netherlandish painting. Systematic additions to these collections followed, with the majority of acquisitions happening in the golden age of the Berlin museums, which coincided with the era of the German Empire from its founding in 1871 until the beginning of World War I in 1914.

One of the smallest-scale works in the Gemäldegalerie, Jan van Eyck's "The Madonna in the Church" (1425) is at the same time one of the most marvelous architectural renderings from the late Gothic period. The rich sacred art of Burgundy is illustrated by the three magnificent winged altars that Rogier van der Weyden probably painted in ten-year intervals between 1435 and 1455. Leaving no gaps, the Gemäldegalerie traces the line from here to the second flowering of Dutch and Flemish painting during the Baroque period. While painting from the catholic Low Countries, with Rubens at its apex, is underrepresented in Berlin – especially after the loss

Raphael (Raffaelo Santi)
Madonna Terranuova, c. 1505
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Sandro Botticelli
Mary with the Child and Singing Angels, c. 1477
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Caravaggio
Cupid as Victor, 1602
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio)
Venus with the Organ Player, c. 1550-52
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

of all large-scale paintings in a horrific fire in a Berlin bunker at the end of the war that destroyed more than 1300 works –, the collection of works by Rembrandt is one of the leading ones in the world, along with those in Amsterdam, St. Petersburg and New York. Wilhelm von Bode, the long-time director of the Gemäldegalerie, had a particularly keen interest in Rembrandt. Thus in 1894 the double portrait of "The Mennonite Preacher Anslo and His Wife," a work from 1641 and Rembrandt's largest-scale painting, found its way to Berlin. Three years later, Bode acquired the "Man with the Golden Helmet." Admired for decades as a work that epitomizes Rembrandt's chiaroscuro, the painting had to be reclassified as a work by Rembrandt's circle in the wake of a critical reassessment of all of the painter's works. The exclusion especially of an alleged key work such as this is testimony to the scholarly ethics of the Berlin museums. Late 19th century stylistic analysis has long been complemented by scientific methods, yet precisely a lengthy debate such as that regarding the "Man with the Golden Helmet" shows that the connoisseurship of curators is essential, even if their verdict can never be considered final.

The collection of Italian painting likewise takes us on a near-continuous path through art history, with highlights from the early Florentine Renaissance in two works by Botticelli, as well as in an extraordinary panel from Urbino (only two comparable works exist in the world): an architectural image that shows an ideal city of the time just before 1500, probably illustrating one of the many treatises on architecture that were written in this period.

The High Renaissance in its Venetian manifestation is splendidly represented by Titian's "Venus with the Organ Player," most likely a representation of the virtues of hearing versus seeing, a subject frequently addressed in Renaissance literature. An unexpected focus of the Berlin holdings is Baroque painting, which was acquired as early as 1815 with the Giustiniani collection. The provocative message of Caravaggio's 1602 painting "Cupid as Victor" may be hard to appreciate today, but in its consummate painterly perfection the work is as fascinating as ever. Caravaggio presents an irritatingly literal reading the words of Virgil, "amor vincit omnia," Love conquers all, showing a rather cunning Amor who, under the banner of a very earthly notion of love, tramples on the symbols of fame and power and of science and art, thus spurning the symbols of the loftiest aspirations of man.

Yet another emphasis – an unusual one outside of the Anglo-Saxon countries – is the collection of English painting, which is small, yet in art historical terms similarly exhaustive. Paintings by Reynolds, Lawrence and

Gainsborough found their way into the Gemäldegalerie at the time the museums were divided. The huge increase in prices on the art market, however, impedes continuing efforts to complete the collection in the 21st century.

Kulturforum Potsdamer Platz – Neue Nationalgalerie
It is impossible to talk about the collection of the Neue Nationalgalerie without referring to recent Germany history. The establishment in 1919 of the Modern Department of the Nationalgalerie, which at the time was still undivided, marked a milestone in international museum history. For the first time a museum was established – at the Kronprinzenpalais, very prominently located on Berlin's grand boulevard Unter den Linden – that was devoted exclusively to contemporary art, including works that the Alte Nationalgalerie had, in fact, run out of space for, but that above all were to be singled out for their own intrinsic value. The Nazi regime's hatred of Modernism which had already led to modifications to the selection of works soon after 1933, culminated in the infamous campaign against so-called "degenerate art" in the summer of 1937: about 400 paintings from the Berlin collections were confiscated and subsequently sold or, indeed, destroyed. It was and will be impossible to close the gaps that were thus torn. Still, the acquisition policy since the resumption of museum activities after World War II has been focused on closing gaps in an exemplary fashion, so as to restore at least to some extent the original completeness. The museum building that the former director of the Bauhaus, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, was able to design for a site in the, at the time, still war-ravaged city center near Potsdamer Platz is itself a commitment to the present. Ever since the opening of the new glass building in 1968 the holdings have expanded continuously to the point that post-1960s art already has had to move to another building.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Potsdamer Platz, 1914
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Sometimes new acquisitions outweigh losses. This the case, for instance, with Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's 1914 painting "Potsdamer Platz," which is not only the largest of the artist's celebrated Berlin street scenes, but indeed one of the most important works of German expressionism and provides a focal point for the Nationalgalerie's outstanding collection of works by the Brücke group of artists. At the Kronprinzenpalais a gallery was devoted exclusively to the work of Max Beckmann, the leading German painter of the interwar period. The paintings from that time are irrecoverably lost to the Nationalgalerie. Yet with "Geburt" and "Tod," a pair of paintings created during the Nazi period, two key examples of Beckmann's enigmatic, mythology-impregnated imagery are on view.

The post-war period brought with it not only the challenge of making up for losses, but also the mandate to participate in art's progress. American abstract painting, internationally acclaimed since the late 1950s, was added in the form of some high-quality examples. The addition of Barnett Newman's large-scale 1970 painting "Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue IV" was controversial at the time, causing the Nationalgalerie to once again face criticism over its acquisitions, as it had in the 1920s. Today the painting is one of the icons of the collection, supplemented by the loan of Newman's bronze sculpture "Broken Obelisk," which for several years now has dominated the terrace first in front and, since its relocation, to the side of the glass building's entrance – and hopefully will keep doing so in the long run.

Barnett Newman
Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue IV, 1970
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2011
Photograph: Jörg P. Anders

Museen Dahlem

The museum district in Dahlem has lost some its former drawing power following the relocation of the Gemäldegalerie to the Kulturforum in the center of Berlin. Still, with the Ethnologisches Museum it is home to an entire complex of collections, which deserves to be discussed at length by itself. Yet another of the Dahlem museums should be singled out: the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, where the collection of East Asian art unfurls a panorama of the arts of China, Japan and Korea in separate sections. Here, too, the contribution of art patrons, so characteristic of the Berlin museums in general, has been instrumental, be it in the form of the collection of Japanese painting and East Asian lacquer ware of Berlin-born and Tokyo-based collector Klaus Friedrich Naumann, or in that of the Berlin Yuegutang collection featuring Chinese ceramics from the Neolithic period up to the 15th century. In the more distant future, the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, too, will have its location in the Humboldt-Forum, in the center of Berlin, as the appropriate place for the dialog of world cultures.

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Dresden

The Current Situation

Bernardo Bellotto,
also called Canaletto
Dresden Seen from the Right
Bank of the Elbe below the
Augustus Bridge, 1748
© Staatliche Kunst-
sammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Jürgen Karpinski

Dresden has congealed into a single image: that of the city center on the river Elbe as seen from the opposite bank. It was this view that the Italian-born Saxon court painter Bernardo Bellotto, who took the name of his uncle from Venice, Canaletto, painted in 1748, showing the tallest buildings, with three of them dominating the Dresden cityscape: the castle tower, Hofkirche (the church of the Saxon royal court) and the dome of Frauenkirche. An additional church tower is visible in the background and later, up into the 20th century, other towers were added, particularly the one of the Neues Rathaus, or New City Hall. Still, the view of Dresden, the image of this "Florence on the Elbe" which engraved itself into public awareness in Germany and far beyond, is defined by the friendly dualism of courtly palace and civil Frauenkirche captured by Bellotto.

Since 1918 – that is, since the end of the monarchy, which came rather noiselessly in Dresden – the royal castle and its adjacent buildings represent the focal point of the Dresden museum scene. The castle is the cradle of the collections and today again the most important home of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD), the organizational structure comprising the Dresden museums. The castle symbolizes the fact that the Dresden collections and their expansion were the result of courtly efforts and evidence of the importance of the Saxon court. Largely destroyed during World War II, the castle's central function is again apparent as a result of a resolute reconstruction campaign in the wake of German reunification. Any tour of the Dresden museums should start with the castle and the numerous individual collections it once again houses, for it is only in this way that the various branches – if the term be allowed – become comprehensible as the result of continuous growth.

Located opposite the castle's west side, which itself is subdivided into several wings, is the sprawling complex of the Zwinger. An outstanding example of Baroque architecture itself, the Zwinger was closed off on all sides and turned into a four-wing complex only around the mid-19th century when the so called Semperbau, or Semper Building, named after its architect, was added. Conceived as a gallery building to house the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, or Old Masters Picture Gallery, the Semperbau was already the second building to house the painting collection outside of the castle: amassed according to scholarly principles, the painting collection grown into a picture gallery of its own. On the other hand, the objects and scientific instruments from the natural science collections, initially called "Palais Royal des Sciences," early on found their way into the Zwinger's pavilions, with the measuring and optical instruments being absorbed into

the Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon. In the second half of 20th century they were joined by the extensive porcelain collection.
Located at the end of the Brühlsche Terrasse, or Brühl's Terrace, that protects the inner city from the river Elbe, is the third building complex of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, which includes the Albertinum. At its heart is the Armory of the electoral army, which was built in 1559. Rebuilt in Baroque forms in 1740, it received its present-day Neo-Renaissance shape only around 1880, when the building with its long rectangular inner courtyard was redesigned to accommodate the sculpture collection and the Main State Archives (the latter would later move out again). Only much later, after World War II, the Galerie Neue Meister, the collection of 19th and 20th century paintings, was added. After having been joined temporarily by several other collections whose homes had been destroyed during the war, these two collections now share the completely renovated building that reopened to the public in 2010.
Across the river from these main components of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, which are clustered within a tight urban space, stands the Japanisches Palais, a favorite project of Augustus II the Strong, Elector of Saxony, who wanted to create his "porcelain palace" here. Until 1876 this palace, a structure that was redesigned to echo Asian architectural forms, was indeed home of the porcelain collection as well as, for a somewhat longer time, to the collection of antiquities.
For several decades now the building houses the ethnological museum, which since 2010 is part of the cluster of museums maintained by the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

Dresden Castle
Small Castle Courtyard
© Peter Kulka Architektur Dresden GmbH
Photograph: Jörg Schöner

Albertinum. Art from Romanticism to the Present
View from the Brühlsche Terrasse
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: David Brandt

Courtyard of the Zwinger Palace.
View of the Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: David Brandt

History

In the past year the Dresden art collections celebrated their 450-year anniversary. Even if this exact date should be viewed with caution, as there were definitely first signs of systematic collecting activity before that date, the earliest credible record of the Kunstkammer is indeed from the year 1560. At the time Kunstkammers, literally “art cabinets,” became fashionable as collecting points for natural as well as artificial, meaning man-made, objects: just prior to the one in Dresden a Kunstkammer had been established at the imperial court in Vienna. Remarkably, first records of visits to the Dresden Kunstkammer by people from outside of the court date from as early as 1590. Surely we cannot speak of a public museum at this point, but it does mark the very beginning of a trend toward public accessibility, which in Dresden can be traced through several stages.
The spin-off, in 1586, of a treasury in a specially designed architectural setting, called the Grünes Gewölbe, or “Green Vault,” after the malachite color that originally adorned the columns in the gallery of valuables, gave Dresden a new asset of great appeal that has survived to this day. The collection of treasures that expanded rapidly under Augustus the Strong, benefiting also from the fact that the most precious handcrafted objects were created in Dresden itself, was placed and, in fact, put on display here, for the Grünes Gewölbe indeed served to represent the splendor of the rulers from the house of Wettin.
In general, the “Augustan era” marked a decisive break. The term refers to the time of the two Saxon electors, Frederick Augustus I and II who, as kings of Poland, also carried the name Augustus (II and III respectively). They sought to demonstrate their new royal status – for which they paid dearly – by turning their capital Dresden into a leading center of the arts within Europe. This is how the Dresden that we know – again – today took shape. Augustus II, called “the Strong,” had the collections, which as a result of his acquisitions had expanded tremendously, subdivided according to current scholarly standards and spread over several houses, from 1728 on in particular at the Zwinger, which originally had been intended as the entrance to an entirely new palace complex. This period also saw the establishment of the so-called Kupferstich-Kabinett, or Print Room, the first of its kind in the German Empire, which assembled drawings and prints.
Since 1707 the holdings of paintings at Dresden castle had been consolidated into a picture gallery in a space of its won, comprising a sizeable collection of around 600 works. The continuous acquisitions and, later on, targeted purchases were topped by the acquisition of as many as 100 paintings of the Italian Renaissance and the early Baroque periods, which

Augustus II managed to obtain from Modena in 1745. A network of commercial agents throughout Europe made acquisitions possible, among these, nine years later, the purchase of Raphael's "Sistine Madonna" – for the considerable sum of 20,000 ducats – from the church in Piacenza for which Raphael had painting this altarpiece.
Upon acquiring the collection of the Duke of Modena, Augustus II turned to converting the building adjacent to the castle, itself a Renaissance-style structure that had been used as stables, into a picture gallery. The subdivision of the holdings into an Italian and a Netherlandish "School" was a natural result of the acquisition of the Renaissance collection. This balanced division survives until this day in Dresden. With the installation of the collection, now called "Royal Gallery," in the stables building, the basic elements of a public museum started to develop: the holdings were catalogued, the gallery could be visited during specified hours, and starting in 1765 a handy gallery guide for the general public was published.
Finally, the Japanisches Palais draws the line for the expansion of the Augustan collections. Originally intended to accommodate only the porcelain collection, which by 1735 already included 35,000 items, the four-wing complex for a long time housed the collection of antiquities as well, before gradually being converted into the Saxon State Library in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Shown at the Japanisches Palais, last year's exhibition celebrating 300 years of the Meissen Porzellan-Manufaktur can be seen as a first step toward reclaiming the building which, ever since the war, has been mostly off the beaten tourist path.
The most important addition to the Dresden museum complex in the 19th century was the addition to the Zwinger of the Semperbau housing the picture gallery that was opened in 1855 and that today is called Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister. At the time the Semperbau was the most advanced museum building in Europe, even if the contemporary holdings, which were growing continuously, were stored elsewhere and shown in temporary exhibitions at various venues. Eventually these contemporary holdings found their home at the Albertinum in 1959, when the split-up of the Galerie Alte Meister and the Galerie Neue Meister was implemented on the organizational level.
This was, however, preceded by the ruptures of World War II and its aftermath – the destruction of, or at best severe damage to, each and every one of the buildings and the evacuation of the larger part of the Dresden collections to the Soviet Union. For ten years, politically imposed silence surrounded the holdings and their fate, then the Soviet Union returned

Gegenwart

altogether more than 1.5 million objects from the Dresden and Berlin museums to the GDR, its close alley. The collection of paintings from Dresden was the first to arrive in 1955 and 1956 and has since been partly on display again in the gallery building. In 1958 the holdings of the other museums returned. The following year a selection of works from each of the various collections of the Dresden museums was presented at the Albertinum, until the individual museums were gradually reestablished at their historical locations – with the exception of the castle, a gutted ruin that would punctuate the cityscape until the late 1980s when its reconstruction as a museum castle was finally tackled.

Albertinum. Art from
Romanticism to the Present
The glass depot on the
ground floor
© Staatliche Kunst-
sammlungen Dresden
Photograph: David Brandt

Albertinum. Art from
Romanticism to the Present
Atrium with Berserker 1–3
(2007-08) by Stella Hamberg
in the foreground
© Staatliche Kunst-
sammlungen Dresden
Photograph: David Brandt

Highlights

Grünes Gewölbe, historical and new

No other part of the Dresden collections is as intimately linked to the dynasty of princely and royal rulers who created and tirelessly fostered them as the Grünes Gewölbe. Since 1586 the Saxon treasury is located in the west wing of the castle, behind walls that are a meter thick. The columns in this vault-like space were originally painted a malachite color, which gave rise to the name "Green Vault" that is still used today. Treasuries and Kunstkammers were showcases of royal splendor, intended to document the wealth, as well as the ingenuity, of their owners and containing expertly manufactured human artifacts, called "artificalia," as well as curiosities of nature, called "naturalia." Over time the two categories blended, as rare objects of nature such as large seashells received ornate mountings and particular materials such as ivory were worked and turned into artworks in their own right.

Following an extensive renovation that was completed four years ago, the Grünes Gewölbe today again presents itself, after a 60-year hiatus, as it was originally designed and furnished under splendor-loving Augustus the Strong. Both in its appearance and in the treasures on display, the historic Grünes Gewölbe reflects late Baroque arrangements. The display cases and mirrors, the etched glasses and gilded carvings provide the setting in which the objects are to be admired. Wealth and artistry are carried to an extreme in the Jewelry Room, where as many as ten complete sets of jewelry from the king's collection are displayed. Yet in the center of this room stands the "Obeliscus Augustalis," a monument to the ruler in a style echoing Egyptian obelisks. Completed in 1722, during his lifetime, this work elevates Augustus, beyond his identity as a collector, to a timelessly exemplary ruler, thus suggesting that his treasury be viewed as a reflection of the state he ruled.

Although predominantly from the Baroque period, the holdings of the Grünes Gewölbe also include remarkable objects from earlier periods. The sumptuous drinking cup of Russian tsar Ivan the Terrible from 1563 may not be particularly conspicuous among all the treasures, yet it is a unique historic object. On the one hand it is evidence of the high level of craftsmanship at the Moscow Kremlin even at this early time, and on the other it points to the political and dynastic ties that existed in Europe independent of all alliances and wars.

In 2004 the Neues, or New, Grünes Gewölbe was installed on the royal castle's upper floor as a treasury museum that meets the latest standards of conservation and presentation. The abundance of the Historisches Grünes

Obeliscus Augustalis
Dresden, probably 1719-21
Detail: pedestal with enamel portrait of Augustus the Strong by Georg Friedrich Dinglinger, mounting by Johann Melchior Dinglinger
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Jürgen Karpinski

Historisches Grünes Gewölbe
View of the Pretiosensaal
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: David Brandt

Historisches Grünes Gewölbe
View of the Silber vergoldetes Zimmer
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Jürgen Karpinski

Gewölbe and the desire to make it possible for outstanding individual objects to be viewed close up, and especially from all sides, largely motivated the current installation. Many of the objects shown here were originally displayed on tables in the Historisches Grünes Gewölbe – a situation wholly incompatible with today's continuous stream of visitors. The development of the Dresden holdings through history is easier to trace at the Neues Grünes Gewölbe. Thus we get to see the rich collection of objects from the 16th century, including on the one hand items such as a Nuremberg nautilus cup from 1587, an artistically mounted found natural object and, on the other, mechanical instruments of utmost precision, such as the 1602 rolling ball clock from Augsburg. Incidentally, more clocks of similarly superb quality are to be found at the Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon, one of the core collections at the Zwinger since its completion in 1728, among them a 1587 Nuremberg tabernacle clock that was a Christmas present to Christian I, the then elector, who within days committed it to the Kunstkammer. The fact that is was lifted out of this context 250 years later illustrates the dual status of such early handcrafted objects as technical instruments and splendid decoration.

"The Palace at Delhi on the Birthday of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb" (partial close-up) designed by Johann Melchior Dinglinger
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Jürgen Karpinski

The ostentatious display of splendor was a central concern of Augustus the Strong. Over decades his court jeweler, Johann Melchior Dinglinger, manufactured or reworked countless pieces. Within a ten-year period, between 1697 and 1708, he and his well-staffed workshop created two works that, as Dinglinger was most likely aware, would forever remain unsurpassed. One is the "Golden Coffee Service," a splendid set that was never intended for use and would soon be imitated throughout Europe, seizing on the fashion for coffee and drinking chocolate that spread in the wake of the Ottoman Wars. The other is "The Birthday of the Grand Mughal Aureng-Zeb," a toy tableau alluding to the Indian mughal who was a contemporary of the Saxon-Polish king and, at the same time, epitomized THE oriental ruler. 132 small golden and enameled figures summarize the travel reports painstakingly evaluated by Dinglinger and, by extension, what was known in Europe about the Far East. The showpiece centering on the mughal's throne was, by the way, an non-commissioned work; when the king purchased it from Dinglinger, it was priced at a little under 60,000 thalers, the same amount that had peen paid for the shell construction of the Moritzburg hunting château.

Türckische Cammer

For more than two centuries the threat posed by the Ottoman Empire was part of the history of European nations. Saxony could pride itself on having played a key role, for Elector Johann Georg III with his army of 11,000 had a crucial part in defeating the Turks in 1683 and ending the siege of the imperial capital Vienna. The following period saw a veritable "turkomania" spread across a Europe aware of its victory and succumbing to the appeal of the exotic. However, Ottoman crafts, particularly the manufacture of weapons, had been held in high esteem long before that. Thus in 1610 in Prague, the royal capital of Emperor Rudolph II, craftsmen created life-size models of horses to serve as supports for sumptuous saddles. One of these carries an inscribed dedication to the Saxon elector, indicating that the work was commissioned from Ottoman saddle makers. The same was often the case with ornate guns that were popular reciprocal gifts. The Dresden collection of Ottoman objects grew, and starting in 1674 the term "Türckische Cammer" gradually became accepted as the name for this part of the armory, the weapons collection. Incidentally, the polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz at the same time published his seminal ideas on future museums that would be based on scholarly principles, ideas that would fall on fertile ground in Dresden.

The showpiece of the "Türckische Cammer," a 60 ft. long sultan's tent suspended from three poles and marvelously decorated with a floral pattern on red cotton fabric, may have been part of the spoils of war gathered in 1683 before Vienna. Originally it may have served as a mobile dining room. Augustus the Strong brought the tent with him from his royal palace in Warsaw, and in 1730, when graphically demonstrating the results of his military reform in a large army camp, he had this and numerous other tents of Ottoman origin set up and used. Even later the sultan's tent remained in use and, thus, subject to wear and tear, so that it recently had to undergo restoration for over a decade before being permanently installed in the newly configured "Türckische Cammer" within Dresden castle. Since the tent's fabric is too delicate to carry its own weight, the tent is, in fact, suspended to avoid tension and, with one side panel lost, visitors can traverse its entire length.

Türckische Cammer
Side view of display case with orientalizing princely arms from the 16th and 17th centuries
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: David Brandt

Türckische Cammer
Horse trappings from the Johann Michael set Johann Michael, Prague, 1610-1612
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: David Brandt

Türckische Cammer
Tent gallery: The large three-mast tent (approx. 22 yards long, 9 yards wide, 6.5 yards high) Ottoman, 17th century
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: David Brandt

Zwinger, Porzellansammlung

Even though they are a marvelous fit in the so-called Porcelain Pavilion and arched galleries of the Zwinger, this was not the location that the porcelain objects were originally intended for, but rather one that chosen only after World War II. During the reign of Augustus the Strong, Saxony saw the first successful production of white porcelain in Europe in 1708 and, only two years later, the establishment of the Meißen porcelain manufactory, which exists to this day. By his own account stricken with the "maladie de porcelaine," the Saxon-Polish ruler combined pleasure and economic interest in spending huge sums on the purchase of original Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Japanese porcelain, as well as on the efforts, at first rather alchemistic in nature, to have the "white gold" produced in his own country. How far this could go is illustrated by a deal Augustus II made with the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm I – a ruler more interested in military things than in splendor –, which involved the exchange of 151 pieces of blue and white painted Chinese porcelain against 600 Saxon soldiers or "dragoons." Several sets of these vases that became known as "dragoon vases" – they are contemporary Chinese export porcelain from around 1700, the time of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing dynasty – are on display at the Zwinger.

The Japanese porcelain objects that are similarly mounted in baroque fashion within individual wall panels of the Zwinger's arched gallery date from the same time: lavishly painted vases and decorative vessels in "brocade style" with gilded and, in some cases, figuratively decorated lid knobs, they eminently corresponded to baroque taste.

Thanks to the rapid adoption of essential technologies the Meissen factory was able to produce porcelain in Far Eastern forms. A singular Meissen contribution are the monochrome white animal figures and busts created by Johann Joachim Kaendler and Gottlieb Kirchner. In the animal gallery of the Zwinger, which was redesigned by Peter Marino, the porcelain pieces are once again arranged in groups according to what is thought to have been courtly taste. That such objects were not necessarily intended merely for the display of splendor, but for everyday amusement as well, is illustrated by the bust of the court jester Gottfried Schmiedel who is shown keeping a straight face while three mice sit on his shoulder, his hat and between his lips respectively.

Two lidded vases, c. 1725
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Jürgen Karpinski

Japanese porcelain in the 17th century Imari style
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Jürgen Lösel

View of the Animal Gallery
Redesigned by architect Peter Marino 2010
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Jürgen Lösel

On the other hand the design for an equestrian statue of King Augustus III demonstrates the representation of power in its most monumental form: the monument was supposed to be made of white porcelain and to be 33 feet tall. Upon receiving the commission in 1751, Kaendler still managed to create this model, which, itself measuring almost 50 inches, dominates the main gallery of the Porcelain Pavilion at the Zwinger. Shortly afterwards the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in 1756 put an end to Saxony's and Poland's, and its ruler's, claim to imperial grandeur that was visualized by this monument.

The Animal Gallery with Meissen porcelain birds from the 18th century
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Jürgen Lösel

Tureen with Galatea and Amor from the Swan Service for Count Heinrich von Brühl, c. 1736
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Herbert Jäger

Model of an equestrian statue of King Augustus III. Meissen, 1735 Modelled by Johann Joachim Kaendler
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Jürgen Karpinski

Raphael (Raffaelo Santi)
Sistine Madonna, 1512-13
© Staatliche Kunst-
sammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Estel/Klut

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

The special character of the Dresden picture gallery becomes noticeable to visitors when facing the paintings of Bellotto, which preserve the outward appearance, and even more so the atmosphere, of Dresden around the mid-18th century. Having been appointed court painter by King Augustus III in 1747, Bellotto introduced himself with the two views of the royal capital from the opposite bank of the river Elbe. Everyday life in Electoral Saxony is reflected in views of the city and its bourgeois milieu, as well as in depictions of the fortifications around Dresden and towards neighboring Bohemia. With his detailed rendering of the tower of the gothic Church of the Holy Cross that was destroyed by Prussian shelling during the Seven Years' War, Bellotto created a gloomy document of the end of the "Augustan Era" and of Saxony's European ambitions.

The primary objects of any visit to the picture gallery, however, are the two sky-lighted galleries on either side of the octagonal hall beneath the building's dome. Along the visual axis, Raphael's "Sistine Madonna" of 1512/13, a masterwork of the Roman High Renaissance, comes into view. Augustus III who acquired it had been very keen on possessing a painting that was demonstrably done by Raphael, and the "Sistine Madonna," a well-documented altarpiece that for 240 years had not moved from the location where it had originally been installed, met this requirement. At the same time, however, Raphael's masterpiece is the final work to be added to the Renaissance collection, the largest part of which had arrived in Dresden from Modena only a few years earlier.

Conversely, this extensive addition had been preceded by Giorgione's "Sleeping Venus" (c. 1510), a work that was already acquired by Augustus the Strong. The composition of the reclining Venus, on which the young Titian collaborated, was introduced into Venetian painting by Giorgione.

Yet other Venetian works stand out among the 100 paintings in the collection of the Duke of Modena, notably Titian's 1516 painting "The Tribute Money," the first ever depiction of this theologically challenging subject and as such proof of painting's ability to illustrate even abstract subjects. A work that for centuries was similarly celebrated as "The Tribute Money" was Correggio's "Nativity" (1530). Long admired as an artist in whom the Renaissance culminated, Correggio's four large-scale altarpieces point to the prevailing taste at the time it was acquired by the Dresden ruler in 1746, as they already segue into Baroque pathos and thus into the period that Augustus the Strong himself was still part of.

Similarly, it is possible to identify a few defining acquisitions for Netherlandish painting. Corresponding to the division of the Low Countries, both Peter Paul Rubens and Rembrandt are outstandingly represented. Two versions of Rubens' "The Drunken Hercules" are on view, and among the six paintings that are recognized as works by Rembrandt himself, the almost comic version of the classical subject of "The Rape of Ganymede" stands out. Acquired just one year apart, the two paintings by Vermeer alone bring the Dresden picture gallery to European prominence.

Somewhat overshadowed by the Augustan acquisitions are the German paintings that are verifiably from earlier periods. In the course of Reformation and as a result of their own rise in rank the Saxon electors were, in fact, important patrons. Dürer's seven-panel painting of the "Seven Sorrows of the Virgin," an early work much discussed among scholars, was already kept at the castle before 1588. In the past year, for the first time since it was broken up sometime before 1588, the altarpiece was reunited again with its central panel from Munich's Alte Pinakothek – even if only for the duration of a special exhibition, but still as a remarkable symbol of the cooperation between the two large museum clusters.

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio)
The Tribute Money, c. 1516
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Estel/Klut

Jan Vermeer van Delft
Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window, um 1659
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Estel/Klut

Giorgione
(Giorgio da Castelfranco)
Sleeping Venus, c. 1508-10
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Hans-Peter Klut

Albertinum

At the Albertinum two collections converge that are in every way far apart: the Galerie Neue Meister, or New Masters Gallery, and the Skulpturensammlung. The former begins around 1800, while the latter spans five millennia, and whereas the Galerie Neue Meister was only established in the postwar era – even though it had already been in the making decades earlier –, a sculpture collection is central to any courtly art collection. Both museums now have adequate space as a result of a radical renovation of the Albertinum that was completed in the spring of 2010 and that additionally provided the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden with a flood-proof depot. Moreover, it marks the first time that the four-wing complex of the Albertinum, a feature not visible from the outside, is made full use of: the new tour of the galleries extends around the inner courtyard, leading from art of the Romantic period all the way up to the present.

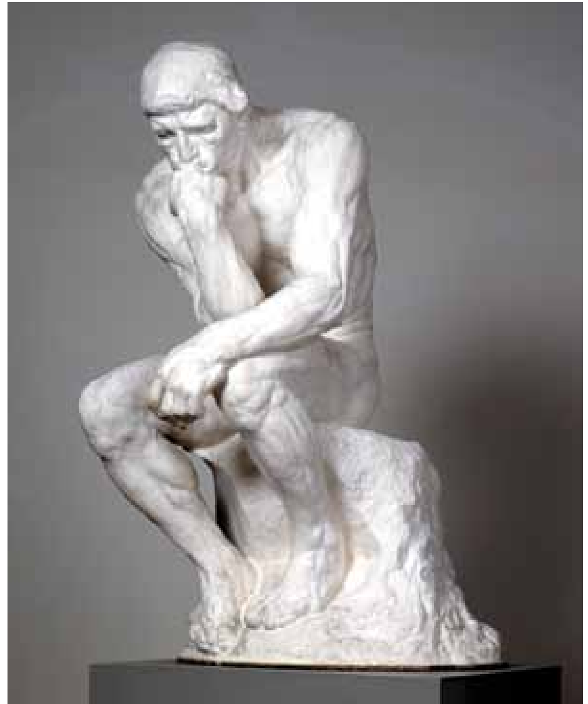
The mid-19th century saw a growing desire to acquire art of the time, especially since the Dresden art academy had become an art school of considerable renown within Europe. One of the first modern works is Caspar David Friedrich's 1820 painting "Two Men Contemplating the Moon," which entered the collection in 1840 as a gift. At the time the art of C. D. Friedrich was sliding into obscurity, from which it would be saved only by the 1906 Centennial Exhibition in Berlin. The painting was gifted by Johan Christian Dahl, like Friedrich a leading painter of the Romantic period in Dresden. Dahl himself painted the "View of Dresden at Full Moon," taking up the aforementioned vedute which Bellotto had painted a hundred years earlier. Dahl's painting was acquired yet another century later, in the ominous year 1937 when the Nazis intensified their campaign against so-called "degenerate art" and numerous artworks were confiscated from the Dresden collections, never to return. Particularly affected were the works of "Brücke" artists, a group formed in Dresden. It was thus extremely fortunate when a decade ago the opportunity presented itself to acquire Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's 1910 painting "Railway Underpass at Löbtauer Straße in Dresden," a major work of German Expressionism and a reminder of the movement's firm roots in Dresden.

In addition to major works of Classic Modernism that were created in Dresden – by Paula Modersohn-Becker, Otto Dix and Oskar Kokoschka, among others – and painting from the time when Germany was divided, the new permanent exhibition reflects a clear commitment to contemporaneity. With Gerhard Richter, Georg Baselitz and A. R. Penck three

Edouard Manet
Lady in Pink, 1879-81
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Hans-Peter Klut

Gerhard Richter
Aunt Marianne, 1965
YAGEO Foundation, Taiwan.
On loan to the Galerie Neue Meister der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden
© Gerhard Richter
Photograph: Sotheby's London

Caspar David Friedrich
Two Men Contemplating the Moon, c. 1819-20
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Hans-Peter Klut



world-renowned artists with ties to Dresden present a representative cross section of their work in galleries of their own.

From now on closely associated with the sculpture collection, which had the Albertinum to itself prior to World War II, the Galerie Neue Meister is developing into a "Museum of Modernism" comprising art from the Romantic period to the present – not as a mere catchword that is overused today, but as evidenced by its actual presentation. Two sculptures in the new lobby facing Georg-Treu-Platz, Balthasar Permoser's 1695 "Chronos" and Ulrich Rückriem's 2009 "Egyptian," indicate the range of the collection, which altogether spans five millennia. Sculpture's dwindling importance, at least in the eyes of the larger public, since the end of the 19th century, is an additional incentive to dovetail the two art forms of sculpture and painting within the Albertinum. As a key work of Classic Modernism, Rodin's "Thinker" is prominently placed, and an arc peculiar to Dresden is traced from here to the type of figurative sculpture that was fostered in the GDR under the umbrella term of the "human image." The Klinger gallery, in combining works by the eponymous sculptor Max Klinger with paintings by artists such as Franz Stuck, becomes an "epochal room" tracing the fin-de-siècle "Tendency towards the Total Work of Art" in a concentrated form rarely seen elsewhere. On the other hand, the work of Dresden sculptor Ernst Rietschel brings memorial art, long discredited, back into view as an art form that once served to create a sense of identity, illustrated, for instance, by the design for his Goethe and Schiller memorial in Weimar.

The structural changes in the Dresden museum cluster are obvious. The Albertinum lays claim to presentness – very deliberately all the way across the cataclysms of the German 20th century – and faces up to this ambition itself, meaning that the collections in their current presentation are incomplete and open to future additions as well as to subtle changes in the art historical consensus.

Edgar Degas
The Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer, c. 1878-81
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Jürgen Karpinski

Auguste Rodin
The Thinker, 1881-83
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: Werner Lieberknecht

Albertinum. Art From Romanticism to the Present
Sculpture Hall with an 1980 work by Tony Cragg in the foreground
© Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photograph: David Brandt

BAYERISCHE
STAATSGEMÄLDESAMMLUNGEN
MÜNCHEN

Munich

The Current Situation

The Munich cityscape combines the grown structure of the Middle Ages with the systematic layout of Classicism. The process of growth concerns primarily the area north of the old royal capital, which provided space and opportunity for a systematic city expansion. Section by section, the Maxvorstadt street grid was beset with and ennobled by cultural buildings, from the magnificent arrangement of Königsplatz, with the Glyptothek as the first publicly accessible museum building in the Kingdom of Bavaria (Bavaria became a kingdom in 1806 and the Glyptothek was opened in 1830), all the way to the two Pinakotheks. Freestanding and surrounded by a large expanse of grass, the Alte Pinakothek majestically dominates an entire block.

Today the Kunstareal, or museum district, is a loosely connected ensemble, echoing the older complex at Königsplatz where the Glyptothek and the Collection of Antiquities are located across from one another. The more recent section is arranged around the freestanding Alte Pinakothek that serves as its focal point. One block to the north, the Neue Pinakothek is aligned with it, while the Pinakothek der Moderne creates a link between the city center and the two older Pinakotheks. The two entranceways that are diagonally inserted into the recently added structure of the "third Pinakothek" direct the visitor's eye towards the Neue Pinakothek, and when exiting the Pinakothek der Moderne the narrow side of the Alte Pinakothek comes into view. Adjacent to the Pinakothek der Moderne the Museum Brandhorst takes up again older plans that had called for perimeter block development to the north of the Pinakothek der Moderne.

Exterior view of the Alte Pinakothek
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Haydar Koyupinar

Exterior view of the Neue Pinakothek
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Sibylle Forster

Exterior view of the Pinakothek der Moderne
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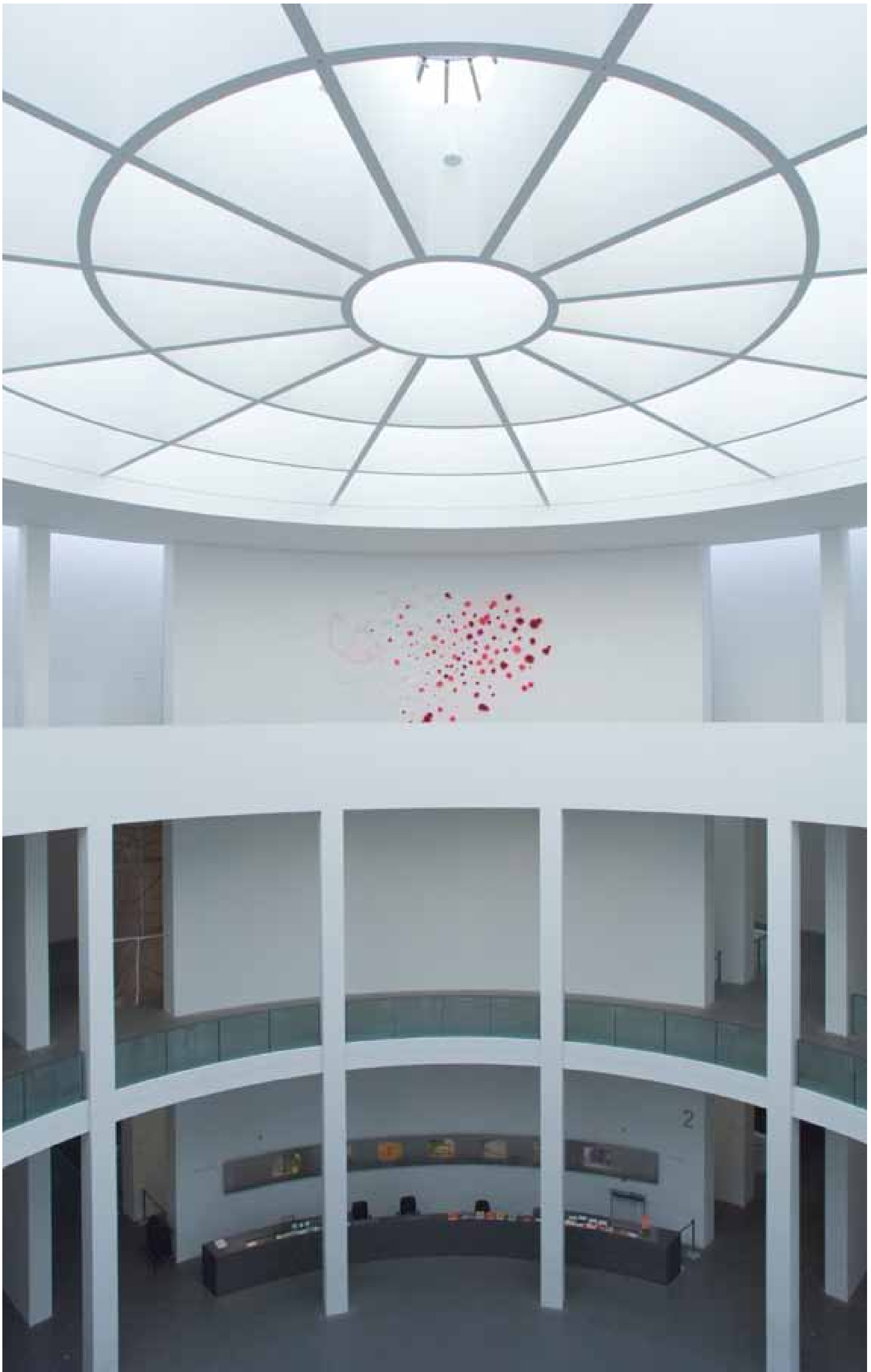


History

The holdings that form the core of the painting collection of the Bavarian ruling dynasty, the Wittelsbachs, date from the early 16th century. Through the centuries the Wittelsbach collections grew considerably and received significant additions in particular around 1800, when three independently established picture galleries of different branches of the house of Wittelsbach – from Mannheim and Zweibrücken in 1799 and from Düsseldorf in 1806, as well as from Schleißheim Palace outside of Munich – came to Munich. Thus more than 3000 paintings found their way into the royal capital of Bavaria. During secularization yet another 1500 paintings from monasteries and churches were added to the collection. In the wake of the French Revolution church property was secularized and the old German Empire was dissolved. Movable church property was forfeited to the state represented by the electoral princely and, as of 1806, royal house.

An indirect result of secularization was the acquisition of two collections of early German and Netherlandish art. In 1827 the collection of the Cologne-born brothers Boisserée, which Bavaria and Prussia in particular were vying for, was won for Munich. It included mostly religious art. King Ludwig I used funds of his own to acquire the 216 paintings from the early German collection. Only a few months later the collection of the Princes of Oettingen-Wallerstein came to Munich as well.

At the time of crown prince Ludwig the holdings in Munich were a combination of princely acquisitions from the early Renaissance as well as Baroque periods, and systematic additional acquisitions. These methodical acquisitions reflect on the one hand a newly awakened sense of national identity which had emerged at the time of Napoleonic occupation and, on the other, the philosophy of art of Romanticism which, related to the national idea, glorified the notion of a return to the Italian High Renaissance as the consummation of a Christian-based art of universal aesthetic validity. Among the more ambitious construction projects of Ludwig I, the Alte Pinakothek was designed to house these heterogeneous holdings and opened its doors to the public in 1836. With construction starting in 1846, it was joined by the Neue Pinakothek which, when it was opened in 1853, became one of the first, if not the first museum in the world to be devoted to contemporary art and, moreover, to view this art as the result of an uninterrupted and continuing flux leading up to the present. To this day the holdings of the Neue Pinakothek are the most comprehensive and important collection of its kind in Germany.

The rotunda of the Pinakothek der Moderne
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Haydar Koyupinar

World War II saw the destruction of the Neue Pinakothek in a bombing raid on April 25, 1944. A fire in December of 1944 left the Alte Pinakothek in ruins. The extraordinarily rich decoration of its building was completely lost, its middle section destroyed down to the ground floor. Plans for its reconstruction sparked one of the seminal debates in the new Federal Republic on how to proceed in working with historic structures. Rebuilt in pointedly altered, yet in turn monumental forms based on designs by architect Hans Döllgast and reopened in 1957, the new building of the Alte Pinakothek came to symbolize the way in which the recent German past was dealt with architecturally. The collections themselves had survived the war nearly unscathed at various external storage sites and in the late 1950s went back on view. The ruins of the Neue Pinakothek had been condemned as early as 1948, creating the need for a new building to accommodate its holdings, which, however, would be realized only in 1981. In the meantime the west wing of the Haus der Kunst offered a temporary solution for alternating presentations of the collection. The Staatsgalerie moderner Kunst (State Gallery of Modern Art), which was established at the same venue to fill the gap in the field of modern art and eventually achieved considerable depth and breadth particularly as a result of numerous donations and bequests, received its proper architectural setting with the opening of the Pinakothek der Moderne in 2002. This "third Pinakothek" at the same time completes the Kunstareal within the street grid of the well-planned Maxvorstadt district.

The stairs in the lobby of the Alte Pinakothek
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Haydar Koyupinar

The most recent addition to the collections and buildings is the Museum Brandhorst, erected adjacent to the Pinakothek der Moderne for a private collection-turned-foundation affiliated with the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen and opened in 2009. The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen thus encompass five museums – Alte Pinakothek, Neue Pinakothek, Sammlung Schack, Pinakothek der Moderne and Museum Brandhorst – in addition to maintaining branches throughout Bavaria, currently twelve in number, with locally specific displays of significant holdings, such as Flemish Baroque painting in the former royal city of Neuburg an der Donau.

Highlights

Alte Pinakothek

Built by Bavarian court architect Leo von Klenze between 1826 and 1836, the Alte Pinakothek is one of the first large buildings in Germany to be originally conceived as a public museum. Exclusively a picture gallery, the Pinakothek, in fact, constitutes an entirely new type of museum, for it was the first time that a museum building was designed with an existing collection and its system of classification in mind, whereas earlier galleries accepted artworks subject to the available space, which was usually wrested from other, previous uses. Moreover, the Pinakothek was the visual expression of an arts policy and aesthetic program, a visualization that was lost due to wartime destruction. The Roman Renaissance was identified as a time-transcending model epitomized by Raphael who, even in the opening address, was held up as an unrivaled example. As a previously princely and royal collection that had been converted into a public one, the Pinakothek became a national monument that would serve, not just for Bavaria but for the entire German cultural nation, as a site of self-assurance of a constitutional Republic and its now civil society.

In the Pinakothek architecture and use are brought into perfect harmony. The classification of the suite of galleries culminated in the art of Raphael. (Today this is no longer the case.) When the first stone was laid, it was stated that the entire holdings of the museum pointed to Raphael "as the mind who created the most noble and exquisite work, who surpassed all those before him and remained unrivaled by those who came after him." The original arrangement of the paintings conformed to this ideal of art with the two antipodes Dürer and Raphael as representatives of a northern and southern European Renaissance respectively.

Large parts of the holdings that are on view today were already in the Pinakothek at the time of its opening in 1836. At no other museum is early German painting as superbly represented as at the Alte Pinakothek. Albrecht Dürer's "The Four Apostles," gifted by the artist to his hometown of Nuremberg in 1526 as a politically motivated bequest, was already transferred to Munich a century later at the request of Elector Maximilian I; it is a composition that is unparalleled in early German painting. Equally outstanding is Dürer's famous self-portrait from the epochal year of 1500, both as an expression of the artist's individuality and as a visualization of the studies in proportion specifically taught by Dürer.

Albrecht Dürer
The Four Apostles, 1526
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Bruno Hartinger

Of similar importance are the major works of Albrecht Altdorfer. His 1529 painting of the "Battle of Issus" (also called "The Battle of Alexander"), part of a cycle of history paintings with secular and Old Testament subjects commissioned by William IV, Duke of Bavaria, and thus among the oldest holdings of the Munich collections, is a unique work depicting an epochal and defining event for the entire subsequent history of the Western world and, at the same, unfurling a panoramic "world landscape." The achievements of perspectival representation are confidently reflected in the way the scene of the actual battle with its myriad details is fused with a bird's eye view of the entire Eastern Mediterranean.
In terms of the history of museum presentations it is noteworthy that it was only Hugo von Tschudi, director of the Alte Pinakothek from 1909 until 1911, who introduced the arrangement of early German painting that has been accepted ever since. Tschudi had important paintings, among them Lucas Cranach the Elder's "Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg before Christ on the Cross," a work purchased in 1829, transferred to the Alte Pinakothek from the numerous museum branches across Bavaria that are still maintained by the Staatsgemäldesammlungen today.
The gallery devoted to the Italian Renaissance includes three paintings by Raphael that are all part of the old holdings. The 1506/07 "Canigiani Holy Family" was a gift of the Medici to Johann Wilhelm, Elector Palatine, who resided in Düsseldorf and whose collection was transferred to Munich in 1806. A carefully calibrated triangular composition, it was considered an expression of perfect harmony. One of the few later acquisitions, albeit one of tremendous importance is Leonardo's 1475 painting "The Madonna of the Carnation," acquired at the end of the 19th century from a private collection. Leonardo's authorship, repeatedly called in question, was again confirmed by recent scientific research that was made accessible to the public in an exhibition.
It is, however, the Rubens gallery midway through the building that constitutes the architectural center of the Alte Pinakothek. The holdings of works by Rubens came mostly from the gallery in Düsseldorf. The centerpiece is "The Great Last Judgement," which determined the height of the central gallery's archway. Its provenance reflects the Wittelsbach family's widely ramified network of power: it was commissioned by Wolfgang William, Count Palatine of Neuburg, for the chapel royal in Neuburg an der Donau and brought to Düsseldorf by his grandson Johann Wilhelm II, an art-loving member of the house of Wittelsbach who is revered to this day in Düsseldorf as "Jan Wellem."

Raphael (Raffaelo Santi)
The Canigiani Holy Family, c. 1506/07
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Sibylle Forster

Leonardo da Vinci
The Madonna of the Carnation, c. 1475,
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Sibylle Forster

The Rubens paintings came to Munich in 1806, wenn the entire holdings of the Düsseldorf Gallery were merged with the collections of the Bavarian electoral princes.
The Rubens holdings are matched by a similarly extensive collection of works by Rembrandt. Coming from the Mannheim-based Wittelsbach collection, "The Sacrifice of Isaac" is one of the Dutch painter's large-scale biblical history paintings and is on view in Munich as a second version painted with workshop assistance. The four surviving paintings of the so-called "Passion cycle" are, in turn, from the Düsseldorf gallery.
Following the turmoil of the Reformation period and the Peasants' Wars, no painting of comparable quality emerged in the German lands. Still, the Alte Pinakothek owns a small-scale oil-on-copper painting that is a pivotal work in the history of European art: Adam Elsheimer's "Flight into Egypt," painted in Rome in 1609. It includes the first scientifically correct rendering of the Milky Way as well as of the moon's topography, viewed with the aid of Galileo's newly constructed telescope. Only recently the actual extent of Elsheimer's knowledge and the importance of his cabinet painting as witness to the history of science in Europe were established in an exhibition. It is just one of many paintings to substantiate the argument that no other museum in the world illustrates the course of western painting as exhaustively and, at the same time, through such extraordinary works as the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.

Peter Paul Rubens
The Great Last Judgement, 1617
© Bayerische Staats-
gemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Bruno Hartinger

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn
The Sacrifice of Isaac, 1636
© Bayerische Staats-
gemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Bruno Hartinger

Neue Pinakothek

The Neue Pinakothek is the world's first museum to be built for the permanent display of contemporary art. It was a favorite project of the Bavarian King, Ludwig I, who both financed its construction from his own so-called privy purse and made his personal collection of paintings available for public display. The king intended the museum building explicitly for "paintings of our and future centuries," as a legacy enduringly exhorting the acquisition of contemporary art at any future point in time. Based on designs by Friedrich von Gärtner and August von Voit, both leading architects of the time, the building was erected between 1846 and 1853 as a counterpart to the Alte Pinakothek with similar dimensions. (Von Voit also provided the designs for one of the most technologically advanced structures of the day with his 1854 Munich "Glaspalast," a large exhibition building modeled after London's Crystal Palace which had been completed only three years earlier.) In the same way in which the Old Masters were glorified in the Alte Pinakothek, frescoes designed by Wilhelm von Kaulbach on the façades of the new museum building depicted the "recent development of art." Upon Ludwig's demise the Bavarian state, at the time a constitutional monarchy, accepted the obligation to acquire contemporary art with the help of an annual – and over time significantly increased – budget "particularly for commissions from outstanding masters (primarily from Munich) and for the acquisition of distinguished works on the occasion of art exhibitions, in particular those recurring periodically." Thus it became obvious that the purpose of state acquisitions was to support local arts as well as the art market – particularly vis-à-vis the competition of Berlin, the capital of the German Reich, which toward the end of the 19th century increasingly presented itself as a hatchery of the latest art trends within Germany.

Wilhelm von Kaulbach
Surrounded by Artists and Scholars, King Ludwig I Rises from His Throne to View the Sculptures and Paintings Presented to Him, 1848
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Bruno Hartinger

The Neue Pinakothek building and its furnishings were severely damaged in a bombing raid during World War II, and after the war its ruins were cleared. Only in 1981, after decades of makeshift solutions, a new building was inaugurated at the same site, its galleries – at the time quite controversially – modeled after the original building in terms of their dimensions and size-based arrangement. Whereas the unchallenged ideal of the museum around 1980 was to not dictate any specific course to visitors and, consequently, not to present a particular sequence of art, the new Alexander von Branca-designed building indeed did allow for such a sequence. Yet this is, in fact, consistent with the collection whose subject, the 19th century, constitutes an established and as a whole easily overviewed chapter in the history of art.

This does not, however, imply an immutable presentation. With the rearrangement of the collection in the anniversary year 2003 the strictly chronological sequence was subordinated to a reading of the history of ideas as reflected in art that aims to elucidate how artists dealt with the tremendous changes of the 19th century. Thus the tour starts off with works by Goya who as an artist witnessed the demise of the Ancien Régime and the emergence of bourgeois society and came to be a seminal figure for the realistic manner of representation in 19th century art.
Within the international context German art, the primary focus of the collection activities of King Ludwig I, presents itself as backward looking. This is particularly true of the programmatic painting of the so-called Nazarene movement, Friedrich Overbeck's "Italia and Germania," a Utopian image drawing on an idealized past and representing the union of North and South, of Dürer and Raphael, expressed through the personifications of Germania and Italia. Created in 1828 and soon after acquired by the king, the painting traces back to a pictorial concept from around 1810, when the Napoleonic occupation of Europe seemed to preclude any national future for Germany, thus fostering the historically embellished dreams of the Nazarenes. The ideal landscapes painted particularly by Joseph Anton Koch in the 1820s epitomize a depiction of nature based on realistic principles, yet informed by a deep longing for Italy.
A Munich peculiarity are the depictions of Greece. When in 1832 Ludwig's son Otto became the first regent of the Kingdom of Greece, established under the aegis of the European Great Powers, the fascination with Greece that had been widespread in Classicism and Romanticism alike found its tangible object, as reflected in Peter Hess' paintings of contemporary events. Thus it became possible for the first time to paint the Greek landscape. Carl Rottmann, who earlier had created a series of frescoes devoted to Italy for the arcades at Hofgarten, the royal gardens adjacent to Munich's Residenz, soon received a commission to paint a series of Greek landscapes that would eventually be completed in 1850. Initially executed in an encaustic technique that was thought to be classical in origin, the uniformly sized paintings found a home in a gallery of their own at the Neue Pinakothek. The damage they sustained during World War II – fortunately they were the only works from the collection of the Neue Pinakothek to come to harm – made it necessary for them to undergo extensive restoration. Only with the rearrangement of the collection in 2003 a gallery was again devoted entirely to Rottmann. The 14 of the series' 23 painted panels that are on view in it convey an image of the Greek landscape that is far from

Friedrich Overbeck
Italia and Germania, 1828
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Bruno Hartinger

Carl Rottmann
Olympia, 1839
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Bruno Hartinger

Carl Rottmann
Marathon, 1847
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Bruno Hartinger

Vincent

idealizing. As a contemporary observer noted with regard to one of the paintings and as equally applies to the other works in the series: "Where usually the busy Greek would rush down the street in brisk traffic, now a camel drags itself through a barren steppe, looking for food." The unflattering depiction of a desolate and nearly deserted country contrasts with Rottmann's renderings of the sky and clouds, which are as exquisite as any painting in his day.

An important component particularly of the history of art in Munich was large-scale history painting, a genre fostered at the local art academy. When Wilhelm von Kaulbach's "The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus" (1846) and Carl Theodor von Piloty's "Thusnelda Led in Germanicus' Triumph" (1874), two monumental works that had long been considered artistically inferior, were included in the presentation in 1981, this indeed elicited critical responses. Still, in its current juxtaposition with contemporaneous landscape painting in the adjacent gallery, which is naturalistic and devoid of any heroization, it reveals the range of art of the time.

From here the collection extends into international territory. The works of Delacroix and Gericault, as well as of the Barbizon school of painters led by Corot, introduce the magnificent holdings of French painting from the late 19th century. Among the works that entered the collection under the direction of Hugo von Tschudi and shortly after his early death in 1911 were mostly impressionist paintings of the highest quality, including Edouard Manet's "The Luncheon" (1868), Paul Cézanne's "The Railway Cutting" (1870) and Auguste Renoir's "Gardens of Montmartre" (1896), as well as works by van Gogh, especially one of the total of five versions of the "Sunflowers" from 1888. With these acquisitions Munich once again took the lead in Germany as far as modern art was concerned.

Vincent van Gogh
Sunflowers, 1888
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Sibylle Forster

Edouard Manet
The Luncheon, 1868
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Sibylle Forster

Sammlung Schack

The Sammlung Schack, or Schack Collection, is unique among Munich's museums as well as within the larger museum world of Germany. It is the legacy of Count Schack (b. 1815) who was a renowned literary historian and an expert on southern Europe, particularly Spain. While living in Munich from 1856 and pursuing his literary historical and orientalist studies, he gradually amassed an art collection. In 1874, long before his death, he bequeathed his collection to the German Emperor, who in 1909 had a building erected for its presentation, keeping the entire holdings in the Bavarian royal capital of Munich. Count Schack continued what Ludwig I, King of Bavaria, had started in the 1820s: the acquisition of works by contemporary artists. Schack would support in particular the painters Anselm Feuerbach, Arnold Böcklin and, for a short period, the completely unknown and difficult Hans von Marées, artists who would later become known as the Deutsch-Römer, or German Romans, yet at the time, the 1860s and 1870s, were still awaiting public recognition. A special feature of the Sammlung Schack are the copies of masterworks of the Italian High Renaissance, which Count Schack commissioned in particular from the young Franz von Lenbach, who would subsequently move on to become a dominant figure in the Munich art world. The large skylighted gallery of the Sammlung Schack, which was originally named after Lenbach and which included his consistently high-quality copies after the likes of Titian, Giorgione and Giovanni Bellini, epitomizes the specific ideal of art that was cherished in 19th century Munich. With the completion of the building's restoration in 2009, in time for its 100-year anniversary, the large skylighted gallery has become accessible again for the first time since World War II, housing the copies that for decades had not been deemed museum-worthy.

Standing out among the original works in the collection is Böcklin's "Villa by the Sea" (1865) which prompted Heinrich Wölfflin, one of the founders of art history as a scholarly discipline, to state that, "in the future, when discussing the 'sentiment' of the 19th century, mention will have to made of the 'Villa by the Sea.'" The elegiac mood that prevails in the Sammlung Schack is only rarely punctuated, notably by the "Shepherd Boy," painted by a young Franz von Lenbach who at the time, in 1860, was still the collector's most important painter of copies, along with August Wolf. As a genre painting eschewing deeper meaning this work appealed much more to the taste of an emerging middle class than the aristocratically dark paintings that Count Schack preferred.

Arnold Böcklin
Villa by the Sea,
second version, 1865
© Bayerische Staats-
gemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Sibylle Forster

Max Beckmann
Temptation (The Temptation of Saint Anthony), 1936-37
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2011
Photograph: Bruno Hartinger

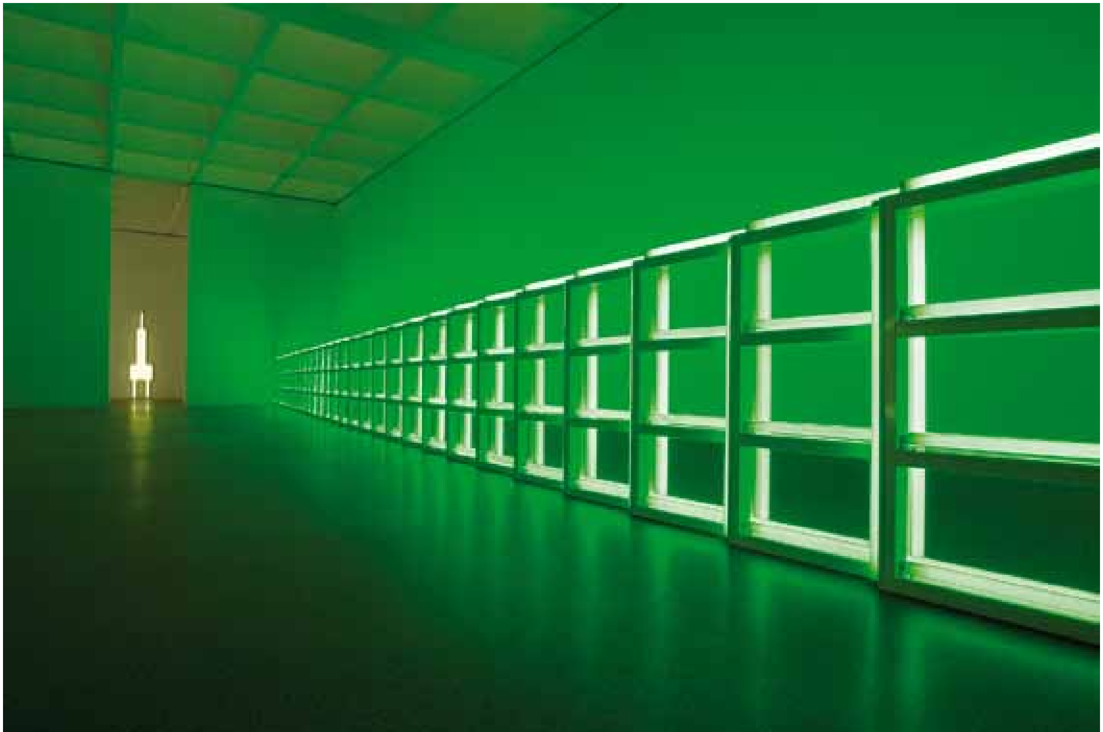
Pinakothek der Moderne

With the opening of the Pinakothek der Moderne in 2002 twentieth century art for the first time came to be presented in a museum building of its own in Munich. For five decades the "Staatsgalerie moderner Kunst" had, of all places, been housed in the Haus der Kunst, a showcase building of the Nazi regime originally called "Haus der deutschen Kunst" (House of German Art) and a symbol of the defamation and oppression of modern art. As the "third Pinakothek," the Pinakothek der Moderne is designed to grow and include art of the new 21st century. As opposed to the linear sequence of galleries in Klenze's Alte Pinakothek, Munich-based architect Stephan Braunfels created four clusters of galleries on the main floor that are arranged around the central rotunda.

In the decades since World War II the collections have grown tremendously, as exemplified by the bodies of works by Max Beckmann and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, which without exception came together after the war – in Beckmann's case the first still during the artist's lifetime. Acquired through purchase in 1977, exactly forty years after its completion, Beckmann's "Temptation" triptych, one of nine triptychs he painted, ranks among the greatest works of Modernism and among the most allusive in terms of contemporary history, as it interprets the unfreedom experienced firsthand by the artist as a time-transcending condition of human existence.

Mainly defined by a private bequest, the acquisition of works by Kirchner extended into the year 2002 when his "Self-Portrait as a Sick Man" (1918), a work essential for an understanding of the artist, was added to the collection. Kirchner's 1913 painting "Circus Rider" links him to Beckmann who frequently incorporated vaudeville and circus scenes into his compositions. Kirchner was interested in the immediacy of the sensuous experience, which he indeed conveyed very directly in this work by masterfully skewing the perspective.

Particularly noteworthy is the Sofie and Emanuel Fohn Collection which was donated to the Staatsgalerie moderner Kunst in 1964 with the stipulation that it be henceforward shown en bloc. The collection includes only paintings that the Nazis dismissed as "degenerate," removed from public collections and disposed of. The presentation of this collection as a whole in a gallery of its own reminds us both of this barbarianism and of Mr. and Mrs. Fohn's rescue efforts at the end of the 1930s.



A work complex of similar importance for the period leading up to the present as the holdings from the interwar period was amassed with the works of Joseph Beuys. Beuys' installation "The End of the Twentieth Century," created in 1983 and acquired by PIN. – Friends of the Pinakothek der Moderne in 1986, takes up an entire gallery. In their materiality and mysterious arrangement the rough-hewn basalt columns make it difficult to view the entire work at a glance. Pushing us to the side, the work literally forces us to "take a stand."

The Pinakothek der Moderne also reserves galleries to individual exponents of Minimal Art. An entire gallery is devoted to Donald Judd's serially conceived wall and floor sculptures, and a group of closely interrelated fluorescent tube sculptures by Dan Flavin is on view as well. The Pinakothek der Moderne owns four of the works from Flavin's 1964 series of "Monuments for Tatlin," which created a sensation when exhibited at the artist's New York gallery in 1970. Also on view as a distinctive contribution to Minimal Art are Fred Sandback's highly subtle space drawings or virtual sculptures made of acrylic yarn.

Dan Flavin
Untitled (to you, Heiner, with admiration and affection), 1973
© Estate of Dan Flavin/
VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2011
Photograph: Haydar Koyupinar

Video art is impressively represented by Bruce Nauman's 1996 work "World Peace (Projected)", a video projection conceived for a 33 by 33 foot space. Perhaps more comprehensively than any other museum in Europe, the Pinakothek der Moderne thus allows viewers to follow the development of American postwar art from its early, Abstract Expressionist period as reflected by works of Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline, and by a series of works by Robert Motherwell, through 1960s and 1970s Pop Art represented by works of Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns and through the aforementioned works of nearly contemporary Minimal Art to the present-day art practice of a Bruce Nauman.

Interior view of the Museum Brandhorst showing part of Cy Twombly's Lepanto cycle
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Photograph: Haydar Koyupinar

Museum Brandhorst

Recently a collection of particular breadth came to Munich with the stipulation that it be presented in a museum building of its own. Thus the Museum Brandhorst was opened in 2009, named after the collectors Udo and Anette Brandhorst, whose collection focused mainly on European postwar art, as well as American art since Pop Art, with a particular emphasis on the works of Andy Warhol and Cy Twombly. It also includes outstanding work by American artists who are otherwise rarely represented in German museums, such as John Chamberlain, Ed Ruscha and Alex Katz. After having been transferred into a foundation named after the collectors in 1993, the collection was contractually committed to the Free State of Bavaria in 1999, which in return erected – and maintains – a dedicated museum building. Designed by Berlin-based architects Sauerbruch Hutton, the building boasts a striking façade of multicolored ceramic straps and, in its interior, a specially designed polygonal space for Cy Twombly's "Lepanto" series that makes the narrative interrelatedness of these paintings vividly apparent.

The Brandhorst Foundation offers the opportunity for purposeful additions to the holdings of the Pinakothek der Moderne. As a result the collection of modern and contemporary art on view at Munich's Kunstareal today is unparalleled in Germany.

Colophon & Contact

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