

Press Information

German Historical Museum

History is booming – in Berlin's baroque Zeughaus

History is booming – the German Historical Museum has certainly experienced a surge in interest since its foundation, with numerous temporary exhibitions, an interest which has only increased since its permanent exhibition was opened in 2006. Germany's two thousand year history, as chequered as it is dynamic, is placed in a European context in an exhibition entitled "German History in Pictures and Documents" and presented to the public in Berlin's baroque Zeughaus, or former Arsenal. More than 8,000 exclusive exhibits from the German Historical Museums' collections, whose historical testimonial value is utterly unique, are displayed over 8,000 square metres, presenting a lively, vivid tableau of bygone days. German history is thereby placed in an international context which takes account of both the diverse events demarcating political and historico-cultural exchange, in addition to its integration with neighbouring states' cultural heritage. The permanent exhibition is supplemented by temporary special exhibitions housed in the modern exhibition building, which was designed by the Chinese-American architect I. M. Pei. The spacious new building, with a foyer constructed of glass and steel and a striking helical staircase, was opened in 2003, and can also be accessed via the inner courtyard of the Zeughaus. Significant events and formative facets of German history are displayed across four levels.

The 300-year old Zeughaus is one of the most important buildings of the Baroque period in Berlin and the oldest buildings at the boulevard Unter den Linden. Four architects were responsible for the development of the Zeughaus from 1695 until its definit use in 1729: Johann Arnold Nering (1659-1695), Martin Grünberg (1655-1706), Andreas Schlüter (1659-1714) and Jean de Bodt (1670-1745). The Zeughaus' special place in the history of art is in no small way due to the high quality of its sculptural decoration. The most famous are the twenty-two keystones, in the form of giants' masks, which Andreas Schlüter created for the inner courtyard.

Today, one can reach the Exhibition Hall through the courtyard. Transparency, light and motion are the architectural hallmarks of this masterpiece of urban planning with impressive perspectives and spatial interplay. The triangular body of the Exhibition Hall is joined to the Zeughaus by a glass foyer, out of whose sweeping façade a glass stairway emerges. Here I. M. Pei has used deliberate visual axes to create an architectural correspondence between historical and contemporary structure.



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