

Residence Ensemble Schwerin – Cultural Landscape of Romantic Historicism

As a complex of buildings in an exceptional state of preservation, the Residence Ensemble Schwerin is an outstanding example of the last flourishing of court culture in the 19th century. It epitomises the representation of small German states and was created between 1825 and 1883 under the grand dukes Friedrich Franz I, Paul Friedrich and Friedrich Franz II.

The heart of the ensemble is the residential castle. The castle complex was expanded into the urban area with the construction of buildings for court and public administration. These buildings include the Erbprinzenpalais (“palace of the hereditary prince”), Kollegiengebäude (governmental building), court theatre and museum for the grand-ducal art collections, which were built in close proximity to each other around the residence square known as the “Alter Garten”. Their architecture complements the square as a symbolic centre of the state and a forecourt and festive prelude to the castle. The square, with the complex of buildings orientated towards the castle and water, has a special urban-architectural quality. However, the Residence Ensemble includes many other buildings, such as the churches, defensive barracks for guarding the grand-ducal residence, the Neustädtisches Palais (“New Town Palace”) and functional buildings, such as the Marstall complex (former grand-ducal stables) or the Hofwäscherei (“court laundry”). All of these buildings have a multifaceted visual reference to each other and to the lake-studded landscape of Schwerin.

The castle was reconstructed in the style of historicism from 1843 to 1857 under Friedrich Franz II, becoming an aesthetic reference point in Schwerin’s cultural landscape. In the spirit of Romantic historicism, the cultural landscape thereby became part of a picturesque staging and was created based on designs by Peter Joseph Lenné. The castle responds structurally to its surroundings with its multiple façades, which allow it to be appreciated from all angles, and functions as an architectural link between the princely seat and the natural landscape. Over time, as the castle surroundings were developed in the 19th century by the addition of lakeside paths, many new picturesque views of the castle as the centre of governance were created; these views resemble landscape paintings. The area of lakeshore near the city, with the Alter Garten and Marstall, was developed with an orientation towards the water; governmental buildings, elegant villas and esplanades were built here, with the island Kaninchenwerder incorporated into this concept of a park landscape. This unique situation created in the 19th century, highlighting the Romantic character of the ensemble, can still be experienced today. The quality of connectedness between architecture, nature and water is unique in Europe and the world.

The most outstanding structure in the ensemble is the castle, as the political and cultural centre of the state. It is the historic birthplace of Schwerin. A Slavic fort was built on this site as early as the 10th century. This structure was later rebuilt as a Germanic stronghold that developed into the residential castle of the dukes of Mecklenburg in the 14th century. The castle represents a high point of historicist castle architecture in Europe. Several renowned architects were involved in its planning and design, including Gottfried Semper, Friedrich August Stüler and Ernst Friedrich Zwirner.

In the Schwerin Castle, all of the architectural and symbolic aspects essential for the residence of a ruling grand duke culminate once again with the political elements of historicist architecture. The castle is a characteristic reflection of its period, which was marked by the perseverance of the monarchy in the doctrine of divine right against the liberal forces of the 1848/49 revolutions and the years leading up to them (the period described by the German term *Vormärz*). Dynastic consciousness and the triumph of the reaction after 1850 are manifested in this

structure. It reflected a reliance on the power of history to legitimise monarchy and dynasty, illustrated and represented, monument-like, through an iconographic programme from the history of monarchism. This aim was also served by the incorporation of older structural elements from the 16th century. The designers intentionally used elements of French Renaissance, inspired by Chambord, to make reference to a royal structure, emphasising the grand duke’s claim to king-like status among the sovereigns of Europe. The beliefs of the Lutheran grand duke are reflected in the construction programme: by choosing to preserve the castle chapel, he consciously paid tribute to his ancestor Johann Albrecht I, who carried out the Reformation in Mecklenburg and built the castle chapel, which was the first Protestant place of worship in the state. The religious and historical orientation of Friedrich Franz II was also reflected in other construction and reconstruction projects: for example, he resurfaced the old ducal crypt in the Schwerin cathedral, renovated the baroque Church of St. Nikolai with the ducal burial place of the 18th century and built the Church of St. Paul from 1863 to 1869 in memory of his father, with a visual reference to the castle.

The noticeable shift from an agrarian to an industrial society during the 19th century is also manifest in the Residence Ensemble. Modern cast iron was used in the architectural structures as support beams for arches and staircases, as well as in the glass and cast-iron construction of the Orangery. The theatre was opened in 1886 as the first building with electricity in Schwerin and had its own power house for generating electricity and heat. These are examples of how the Residence Ensemble Schwerin vividly illustrates the era of the 19th century in all its manifold aspects with a unique level of intactness.

Criteria met [see Paragraph 77 of the Operational Guidelines]:

(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)	(vii)	(viii)	(ix)	(x)
		x	x						

[iii] Testimony to a cultural tradition:

In its specific character, the Residence Ensemble exemplifies the late phase of court culture in 19th-century Europe. It clearly demonstrates the sovereign status of the grand dukes among the monarchs of Europe, as well as the high point and final stage of a historical development. This is most clearly manifested in the spatial structure of the castle, which houses Europe’s last fully preserved “throne apartment”, a new ceremonial layout of rooms established under Napoleon I and adopted by a large number of German rulers in the Confederation of the Rhine and the German Confederation. The exceptionally high-quality series of ceremonial and residential rooms, with furnishings by several designers, including Friedrich August Stüler and Heinrich Strack, are testimony to a lost, specifically court culture orientated towards ceremonialism; they also represent an extraordinary monument of cultural tradition, unique in their state of preservation. The surrounding representative and functional buildings of a princely residence linking the castle to the fabric of the city have survived with practically exemplary completeness. They illustrate the extent to which the court and territorial lordship pervaded the city as princely seat.

[iv] Type of architectural ensemble illustrating a significant stage in human history:

With its various buildings, the Residence Ensemble illustrates all functions and uses associated with the residence of a grand duke or other European minor prince in the age of revolution and restoration: from castle and theatre to infrastructure like the stables and laundry. The churches with burial places bear witness to the dynastic practice-

es of commemorating the dead (memoria) as well as to the close connection between throne and altar, underscoring the divine right of monarchs in an era of major upheavals. The residential castle served as a cultural and political centre. The monarchy's endeavour to use history to legitimise its rule is manifested in the castle's historicist architecture. It was the first residential castle in Europe built in strict historicist style. However, in the use of classical orders, it is fully appropriate for a princely residence and commensurate with its need for majestic architecture; bastions signify the military authority of the ruler and the fear of revolution.

The incorporation of the ensemble into the lake-studded, terminal moraine landscape left behind by the last ice age is indicative of the Romantic view of the landscape as a large painting. The reference to the water illustrates a new way of looking at the landscape. Until well into the 18th century, the landscape of lakes was generally viewed as a protective area of economic importance; by the time of the castle's reconstruction, however, it had become an idealised, artistically elevated space. The castle represents its crowning glory, a focal point for all angles of sight and an observation point offering magnificent views over the lakes. With its island location, the castle functions as a link between the city and the surrounding gardens and natural areas – an unparalleled situation for urban development. Human creation and nature blend harmoniously. The residence reacts ideally to the surroundings through its architecture and the orientation of its individual buildings towards the water. The weather and lighting conditions, which change continually over the course of the seasons, are nature-dependent and represent an essential element of this architectural staging and the emotional perception it was intended to produce in the observer.

Statements of authenticity and integrity

Authenticity: The Residence Ensemble, with its landscaped parks and gardens and numerous buildings, is authentic and has survived with a rare level of intactness. It, therefore, illustrates in an exemplary manner not only the architectural trends and style discussions of the 19th century, but also the infrastructure and functions of a princely residence. The garden landscape, including the island Kaninchenwerder, has also survived largely intact; the gardens, still used as recreational space, are part of the "Lakes of Schwerin" bird reserve, which is an EU Special Protection Area. The integration of the ensemble, with its various points of visual reference, into the surrounding landscape has not undergone any significant change since the 19th century. The original intention of the planning is clearly evident.

As the state capital, Schwerin, with its castle, boasts a long continuity and exemplifies the development of a German federal state from a historical principality. The castle has served as a focal point for the region since at least the 10th century. It demonstrates in an exemplary manner the early penetration and merging of the Slavic and medieval Germanic cultural areas with respect to epochal processes that influenced the history of north-eastern Central Europe in connection with the Germanic expansion to the east during the Middle Ages. The result, owing to the continued existence of a Slavic dynasty that, according to historical documents, had been connected with Schwerin since the 12th century, was a unique concentration and materialisation of these coherencies in a manner that cannot be found elsewhere. Schwerin became a seat of German counts in the 12th century and a seat of the Duchy of Mecklenburg in 1358. Around 1500 the city was chosen as the new ducal residence. The ducal family resided in the castle, which was rebuilt and expanded in the 19th century with deliberate reference to the Slavic history. Its footprint traces the circular path of the Slavic fortress wall.

Schwerin was the seat of government, fortress and residence of the House of Mecklenburg, the only dynasty of Slavic origin (Obotrites) that ruled in Germany until 1918. The castle houses authentically preserved state and private apartments from the mid-19th century that have not been preserved elsewhere in this level of quality and

intactness. They are a testimony to the self-portrayal of sovereign monarchs in the pre-revolution period (*Vormärz*) and the era of revolution and reaction.

After 1918 Schwerin remained the state capital and became a parliamentary seat in the Weimar Republic. In communist East Germany, it was the seat of the Landtag (state assembly) and then of the Bezirkstag (regional assembly). The addition of the plenary assembly room in 1949 in the Burgseeflügel, which had been gutted by fire in 1913, underscores this continuity. Since 1990 Schwerin has been the state capital of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The castle, as the seat of the elected state parliament, is the political centre of the federal state.

Contributing to the continuity and associated authenticity are the cultural institutions that have remained part of the Residence Ensemble: from the State Theatre with the Mecklenburgische Staatskapelle, a symphony orchestra that evolved from the court orchestra, and the State Museum with the former ducal art collections, which are still largely intact and constitute the foundation of the museum's holdings, to the Landeshauptarchiv (state archives) and Landesbibliothek (state library) with its highly significant collection of sheet music.

Integrity: The Residence Ensemble experienced only marginal losses from war and post-1945 demolition measures. It is situated in a largely intact landscape, and the views from and of the buildings in the ensemble have changed little since the 19th century. Furthermore, much of the landscape near the shore has remained undeveloped. Over recent years the castle garden has been carefully restored to its original state, including its visual axes and paths.

The individual architectural monuments and open spaces of the Residence Ensemble are listed as historic monuments and are in well-maintained condition. Their continued maintenance is ensured by municipal and state heritage-management programmes. The castle has been undergoing restoration since 1974 on the basis of historical architectural documents and source studies. Since 1990 restoration work has been expedited through significant investments in foundation work and restoration measures important for the structural stability and integrity of the buildings. Since German Reunification important buildings of the ensemble have undergone extensive restoration for use by ministries and administrative offices.

Comparison with other similar properties:

To date there are no similar properties inscribed on the World Heritage List: no intact residence ensembles of this kind embedded in a landscape of parks and nature, and no similar castles or ensembles from the 19th century or in the historicist style.

In comparison with other similar ensembles, Schwerin is distinguished by its unique state of preservation and its completeness, which convey with special authenticity not only the court culture and aristocratic lifeworld of the 19th century but also the evolved character of the residence. In other important German *Residenz* cities (where sovereign rulers resided), this authenticity has been lost through the effects of World War II. In these cities, not only the residential castles but also the complexes, which are essential elements of a residence ensemble, have been extensively damaged or even destroyed. Of these sites, the ensembles in Munich and Dresden convey the most cultural history; however, most of the buildings are recreations of the original structures. Owing to losses suffered during the war, the other residential castles in Germany no longer have the original inner structure with a throne apartment typical of the 19th century. Furthermore, no other important German residence from this era has an intact ensemble of associated buildings for court and public administration. Elsewhere, characteristic elements of the ensemble are lacking, such as museum buildings, which have been preserved in Berlin but without the castle as important reference point.

Schwerin is also unique with respect to its integration into a lake-studded landscape with the reconstruction of a residential castle involving extensive new construction on a historic site. This distinguishes the Residence Ensemble from baroque residences like Turin or Nancy. Unlike the contemporary Romantic garden landscape of Potsdam, which has a series of different visual foci and is now missing the City Palace (Stadtschloss), the Residence Ensemble with the castle in Schwerin is the focal point of all intangible and tangible connections with the surrounding region. And in contrast to the Wartburg, another monument of dynastic and national history constructed in the style of historicism, the Schwerin Castle is a residential building that has been used continuously and whose horticultural integration into the cultural landscape serves the intentional staging of the official residence of a ruling monarch.

Schwerin is the site of the first residential castle whose external and internal designs made strict use of historical styles. It represented a departure from the classical architecture that had been used until then for the construction of residential castles and a move towards historicist forms. It was followed by the neo-Romanesque Welfen Castle in Hanover, the neo-baroque reconstruction of the Buda Castle and, lastly, the expansion of the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. Other residential castles, such as the Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul, which was built during roughly the same period, or those built later in Sofia, Belgrade and Bucharest, do not exhibit the same strict adherence to the architectural style of historicism and cannot be linked to such old tradition and history as an essential architectural point of reference. Furthermore, these structures are also not situated in such close spatial relationship to the other important court or public administration buildings.

The Residence Ensemble Schwerin marks the site of a tradition of governance that has lasted more than 1000 years without interruption, from Slavic times to the present day, as no other cultural asset can demonstrate in this way, documenting the development of a region from a historical principality to a modern democracy.