

## Interior Decor and Furnishings of Former Sanatorium in Trzebiechów by Henry van de Velde - Presentation of Research Results and Conservation Works in View to His Other Performances during the Weimar Period of His Work

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Henry van de Velde was extremely prolific and versatile artist. In 1902 he came to Weimar, which gave birth to his Weimar period in his arts lasting until the outbreak of the World War I. The first order he received was from Elizabeth Foerster-Nietzsche, a sister of an eminent German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. It involved the reconstruction of his home into the archive. The projects that followed included the construction of School of the Arts, and then - School of the Arts and Crafts. In Weimar, van de Velde built a house called "Under the High Poplars", in which he lived with his family. The artist also received and executed orders coming from the outside of Weimar. The most significant among them is the construction of a villa for Herbert Esche in Chemnitz, a villa of Dr. Leuring in Scheveningen in the Netherlands, interior decor and furnishings design of physiotherapy-dietary sanatorium in Trzebiechów, reconstruction of Theodor Koerner's villa in Chemnitz and construction of Paul Schulenburg's villa in Gera. Karl Ernst Osthaus' villa built in the suburbs of Hagen is considered to be one of the master's best works during the Weimar period.

Extensive research on the works of the artist began in the late 1980s. The inclusion of the Trzebiechów sanatorium into his works heritage in 2003 resulted in the commencement of research on the forgotten piece of work of the great Belgian. A unique discovery proved to be the well-preserved original interior colouring, which were given the research and conservation-restoration as well as renovation-restoration works, which resulted in the restoration of their former character. Today, they come to be one of the most representative interior complexes of the early 20th century in Poland.

Henry van de Velde designed the decor and furnishings for two buildings in Trzebiechów, i.e. wellness-spa facilities for residents and administrative-residential building - so-called the Doctor's House (Dom Lekarza), both being within the sanatorium complex built in Trzebiechów between 1902 and 1904 by princely von Reuss family's foundation. Since 1920 until the end of World War II a tuberculosis sanatorium was there. After 1945 the tuberculosis hospital operated there and since 1974 - the Nursing Home. To date, the complex remained within the historical assumptions together with the main elements of the sanatorium complex.

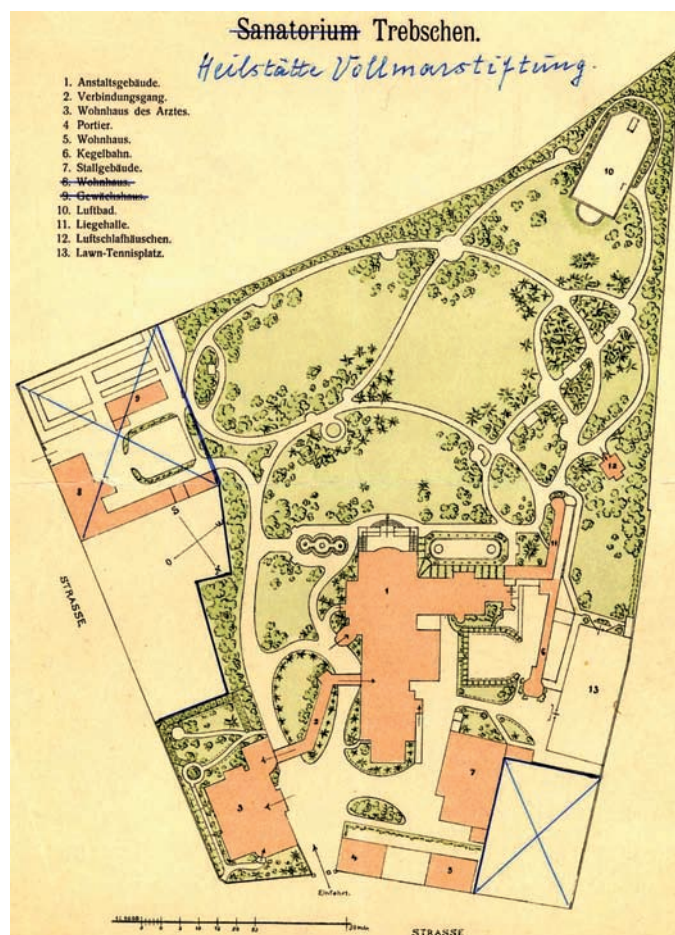
During the conservation research, the initial interior colouring assumptions and performance techniques were set. The study also confirmed the presence of extremely valuable painting decoration in the form of ornamental friezes which were decorated onto some representative interiors<sup>1</sup>.

1. D. Markowski, *Dokumentacja prac konserwatorsko-restauratorskich polichromii projektu Henry'ego van de Velde w pokoju towarzyskim w budynku głównym Domu Pomocy Społecznej w Trzebiechowie, 2005*, in the

Renovation and restoration works started in 2004 from the interiors of the so-called Doctor's House, which were kept in a palette of greens, browns and blues, with a complementary colours of the carpentry painted red, pinkish-brown, green and light blue. In 2006 window frames were renovated changing the exterior colour of the windows from white to pinkish-brown (Doctor's House) and light blue (main building). The windows from the inside were painted

archive of Provincial Heritage Preservation Office in Zielona Góra; *idem, Dokumentacja prac konserwatorsko-restauratorskich dekoracji malarskich projektu Henry'ego van de Velde w pomieszczeniach reprezentacyjnych w budynku głównym Domu Pomocy Społecznej w Trzebiechowie, 2005*, in the archive of Provincial Heritage Preservation Office in Zielona Góra.

1. Plan of the former physiotherapy-dietary sanatorium in Trzebiechów dated approx. 1901. A scan from E. Bockhorn von der Bank's private collection





2. Doctor's House joined with sanatorium building by means of a catwalk at the ground level. Photo by B. Bielinis-Kopec

red, blue and, green, purple, gray, brown - according to the colour concept of individual rooms.

In 2005, conservation research was carried out in the main sanatorium building, thus the most important discoveries of ornamental decorations that adorned so-called social rooms i.e. a gentlemen room, a ladies room and a billiard room, were made. In the same year, comprehensive conservation and restoration works were performed to restore the original colouring of the interior.

A discovery in the gentlemen room was made that proves the author's change of decoration concept and indicates the personal participation of the artist - initially the frieze was about half the width and covered only the lower zone of the current ornament (in accordance with this concept the ceiling was to be painted reddish-orange), while after the change the frieze was widened to its present width and the ceiling was painted green.

3. Sanatorium building - view from the park. Photo by B. Bielinis-Kopec



In the same year conservation research and restoration works in the dining room were performed. It was found that the vault decoration known from iconographic evidence, was destroyed, so its reconstruction was resolved. Renovation works also included windows and doors to recreate its original light-grey colour.

Next, the research was performed and the original colour range of the staircases, lobbies and corridors was restored with some furnishing and décor being conserved. During the research, the primary colours of interiors were defined and rich ornamental decorations located in the lower parts of the walls were uncovered, highlighting three ornament designs on a green background. In the corridor on the ground floor the fourth motive which was also part of the earlier artistic concept, was discovered. It was decided that this fragment would be exposed and highlighted in the form of so-called witness. In 2005 restoration works on the friezes were carried out. Interior renovation continued then in 2008. In parallel, the research was instigated and works were started on conservation and renovation of the wooden elements of the original interior design: staircase balustrade in the main stairway and two wooden benches. Some research and preservation works made also included door woodwork, which, as determined, was painted with brownish-red varnish and oil paints in grey, blue, turquoise, green and red.

In 2006-2007, some research was carried out and then the repair and restoration works were performed to reproduce the colouring of other interiors of the sanatorium building. Former colours of the two side staircases (blue-yellow and olive-green) and resident rooms which were maintained in a very diverse range of colours, among others, ocher, blue, purple, grey, green, pink, red and yellow. In the course of the works, some of the layers were not removed and the original layer was untouched, which will allow its conservation in the future.

In 2007-2009 the roofs were repaired, and in 2011 conservation works on the steel structure of the winter garden and balconies were made. As a result of these works, technical condition of the buildings has significantly improved, the monument's genuine substance has been secured and maintained as well as historic interior colouring by H. van de Velde has been restored.

In the course of 2003-2011 research, it was found that out of the former sanatorium furnishings and décor some elements that are incorporated into the buildings have survived. Henry van de Velde made comprehensive interior design projects for the Trzebiechów sanatorium. Some of those have survived until today, namely, doors (62 doors made in 14 designs) and windows (7 windows with handles and fittings). Three wooden partitions with original glazing have been preserved. The artist also designed another five staircases. Such elements as panelling, terrazzo flooring, ceramic tiles, linoleum and wall ceramic tiles are the complementary furnishings. Among others, some metal elements have survived, namely, construction of winter garden, three balcony railings, lantern, four decorative anchors of the clock and three flower bed casings. Some furniture has also survived in a very limited extent - built-in sofa staircase with original trim, two benches and two chairs. To this day, a fireplace has also remained. The artist recorded its presence by designing both construction elements and minor décor items - wooden and gypsum joists or subtle fittings, door handles and lock signboards.

A comparative analysis with other realizations of the artist during the Weimar period works including Erfurt, Chemnitz, Gera and Hagen works, indicates their numerous stylistic and formal relationships with Trzebiechów. They are particularly easily visible both in the choice of forms (especially carpentry) and colour. The research conducted in Trzebiechów confirmed some common features in the applied colour approaches during the Weimar period of creativity. The artistic colour palette ranged from bright colours through grey and pinkish intermediate tones up to three



4. Former room for men after conservation and restoration works. Photo by B. Bielinis-Kopeć



5. Former room for women after conservation and restoration works. Photo by B. Bielinis-Kopeć

intense colours: red, blue and green<sup>2</sup>. A real colour richness was encountered in Trzebiechów where, despite hereinabove colours, there also were purples, yellows, browns.

In German facilities, some remnants of genuine décor have remained in various stages. Quite rare, there are only rare traces of paint, wallpaper and fabrics, which require specialized laboratory research and expert interpretation, which accounted for the effect of damage or historical transformations that took place after World War II. By restoring the interior décor of the buildings, they were very often rebuilt.

Van de Velde's house in Weimar was divided into flats after 1945, which blurred its original functional design and led to their devastation. In the 1990s the building was subjected to comprehensive research, repair as well as restoration-renovation works<sup>3</sup>.

In the building of School of the Arts in Weimar some interior modifications took place through their secondary subdivision. Renovation works were already started in the 1990s to remove secondary walls and ceilings<sup>4</sup>. Restoration works were also performed on façades and their original yellow colour was restored. Door carpentry that survived nearly complete and in good condition was subject to renovation. The windows replaced anew based on the original design<sup>5</sup>. However, there is no evidence on the former interior

colour schemes, except the room with a lantern, which demonstrated some traces of red on the walls and grey on the ceiling. In the course of the works the original colour of the room was restored.

Also, the building of School of the Arts and Crafts in Weimar was restored to its former condition by removing among others, all interior partitions during the comprehensive renovation and conservation-restoration works carried out in 2008-2010<sup>6</sup>. Most window frames were replaced anew based on the original design. Preservation works also included door carpentry and cast iron windows. During the façade renovation, its former light yellow colour was restored, which contrasts with windows and doors that are heavily accented by graphite colour.

Also, the interior of the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar was transformed and deprived of furnishings and furniture in the 1950s. The works to restore their previous character, which was already launched in the 1980s, were based on in situ studies, which yet, did not provide full knowledge on their former appearance due to the far-reaching destruction of the original substance. Archival materials proved helpful with their detailed description of materials used, textiles and other interior design elements. During the works, the majority of the interior was reconstructed and the object was put into use in 2000 – at the 100th anniversary of the death of the great philosopher<sup>7</sup>.

In 2002, another outstanding work of the Belgian artist – Herbert Esche's villa in Chemnitz was commissioned. This property was also devastated after World War II. In 1998 construction as well as conservation and restoration works began. They were conducted based on some source materials that survived including van de Velde's projects and a rich collection of photographs, taking into account the results of the research carried out. During these, the

2. U. Wagner, *Clemens Henry van de Velde: Erste Ergebnisse der Untersuchungen zur Architekturfarbigkeit*, [in:] *Henry van de Velde – Architekt und Gestalter: Vom Gesamtkunstwerk zum Denkmal*, collective work edited by S. Putzke, S. Ritz, Arbeitsheft des Thueringischen Landesamt fuer Denkmalpflege. Neue Folge 11, p. 103.

3. See among others in A. Neumann, *Henry van de Velde in Weimar. "Das Haus unter dem hohen Pappeln"*, Muenchen 2003, *Eadem, Ein belgischer Architekt in Weimar. Das Haus "Hohe Pappeln" von Henry van de Velde als Muster moderner europaeischer Lebensart*, [in:] *Europa in Weimar, Jahrbuch 2008 Klassik Stiftung Weimar*, collective work edited by A. Jahn and T. Valk, Goettingen 2008, pp. 361-375.

4. A. Tillmann, *Henry van de Velde Kunstschulgebäude in Weimar. Renovierung 2. Bauabschnitt, 1997-99*, [in:] *Henry van de Velde – Architekt und Gestalter...*, op. cit., pp. 91-97.

5. Windows were made of two materials: lower parts, opening – of wood, lower parts, fixed – of cast iron. They were all painted grey, as in original.

6. C. Weinreich, *Harmonisches Zusammenspiel von Form und Licht. Van de Veldes Kunstgewerbeschule nach zweijähriger Sanierung wiedereröffnet*, *Der Bogen, Journal der Bauhaus - Universität Weimar*, 1/2010, pp. 8-11.

7. *Das Nietzsche - Archiv in Weimar*, collective work edited by G. Schuster and C. Gille (Hg.), Muenchen / Wien 2000.



6. Dining room after restoration works. Photo by B. Bielinis-Kopec



7. Former billiard room after conservation and restoration works. Photo by B. Bielinis-Kopec

former arrangement and composition of rooms was restored to include original furniture that belonged to the old building. Other design elements including wallpapers, fabrics, moldings, paneling or glazing (of doors, partition walls and lantern above the vestibule) were reconstructed<sup>8</sup>.

Belonging to Theodor Koerner villa in Chemnitz suffered in 1945 as a result of the bombing. For many years the building was abandoned, which contributed significantly to destruction of the original substance. Between 2001 and 2002 some renovation and construction works were carried out. Its interior was fully reconstructed and the furniture was restored based on the old photographs. New windows and doors were also made based on the former designs<sup>9</sup>.

Frequent changes of users and functions did not remain indifferent to the condition of Osthaus' villa in Hagen, in

particular, its furnishings and décor, which, to a large extent, have been lost. Renovation works started in the 1980s and continued in the 1990s initially included the repair of the building substance. Then, based on source materials, most of décor and furnishings elements were restored. During the stratigraphic research, some traces of the original paint layers were discovered, which gave rise to the restoration of the interior colour scheme at the stage of restoration<sup>10</sup>.

Among the other artist's works in Germany, Schulenburg's villa in Gera needs to be referenced. Also here, some far-reaching changes to the original layout and their furnishing. The property was abandoned, which resulted in its devastation. Only in 1996 it was purchased by a private person and two years later renovation works started. Despite significant modifications, rebuilding and destruction of the building, it was possible to find traces of the original design, i.e. stucco decorations, fabrics, woodwork colours and colourful arrangement of some rooms. With great attention to detail, using the preserved photographs and original designs as well as the results of restoration research, former spatial disposition was restored along with the interior design, similar to the original.

Former sanatorium in Trzebiechów marks out of the other works by Henry van de Velde due to considerable level of preservation of the original building's substance. While his works in Erfurt, Chemnitz, and Hagen have undergone considerable transformations which led conservation activities mainly to reconstruction and restoration of their interiors, former Trzebiechów sanatorium survived, hidden under the subsequent layers of paints, original colouring of the rooms and furnishings. Of particular note is an extremely valuable painting decoration in the form of ornamental friezes taking on geometrical forms as well as rich colours of interiors. In overall, a set of nine different ornamental motifs was differentiated, all preserved in good condition, which enabled the maintenance of most of these decorations<sup>11</sup>. The scale and quality of the artistic legacy of the Belgian artist in this unique in Poland piece of work as well as a well-preserved unique substance of the monument make it one of the most important performances of the artist during the Weimar period of his work.

8. See M. Streeztz, *Die Villa Esche in Chemnitz*, Denkmalpflege in Sachsen. Mitteilung des Landesamtes fuer Denkmalpflege Sachsen, 2001, pp. 91-98; K. Bochmann, R. Erfurth, D. Mathes, W. Wendisch, *Ein Rundgang durch die Villa Esche. Restaurierung 1998-2001*, Chemnitz 2001; K. Bochmann, W. Wendisch, *Die Villa Esche in Chemnitz*, Saechsische Heimatblaetter, 1, 2002, pp. 36-41; K. Metz, P. Schmücke von Minckwitz, T. Richter, *Henry van de Velde's Villa Esche in Chemnitz. Ein Gesamtkunstwerk zwischen Jugendstil und Sachlichkeit*, Basel/Boston/Berlin 2003.

9. M. Streeztz, *Der methodische Ansatz der Denkmalpflege bei der Sanierung der Chemnitzer van-de-Velde-Bauten*, [in:] *Henry van de Velde – Architekt und Gestalter...*, op. cit., pp. 125-126.

8. Balustrade of the main staircase in the sanatorium building. Photo by B. Bielinis-Kopec



10. S. Teubner, M. Osthaus, *Die Restaurierung des Hohenhofes*, [in:] *Henry van de Velde in Hagen*, collective work edited by B. Schulte (Hg), Hagen 1992, pp. 214-225; S. Teubner-Treese, *Der Hohenhof in Hagen*, [in:] *Henry van de Velde – Architekt und Gestalter...*, op. cit., pp. 110-117.

11. Only the decoration of vault over the dining room was restored due to the original being damaged.