

The Villa Vauban: Art Museum of the City of Luxembourg (to be opened in 2009)

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The City of Luxembourg owns a collection of Dutch and Flemish art dating from the 17th to the 19th century that will be shown in a former private villa of the 19th century situated in a park close to the city centre. To this carefully restored old building a new annex is now being built that will house temporary exhibitions dealing with the main aspects of the permanent collection.

The aim of this talk is to present the collection, the architectural project with the characteristics of each, the old and the new building as well as their interaction and to sketch out an exhibition program that will help the visitor to discover ever new aspects of the permanent collection.

THE COLLECTION

Between the middle of the 19th and the very beginning of the 20th century the city of Luxembourg received three donations of art works by private collectors. The most important donation is that of Jean-Pierre Pescatore (1793-1855), a tobacco manufacturer, born in Luxemburg who made a fortune as a banker in Paris and who bought in the 1840s and 1850 mainly contemporary French works, but also Dutch and Flemish paintings (Teniers, Steen, Dou, van de Cappelle, van der Haagen, van der Heyden, Wouwerman, Koekkoek, van Os, Reekers, van Spaendonck). After his death, he donated all his art works to the city of Luxembourg where they were exhibited first at the City Hall and then, much later, from 1959 on, at the Villa Vauban.

The second collection that was bequeathed to the city of Luxembourg in 1878 was that of the banker and General Consul of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg in Amsterdam, Leo Lippmann (1808-1883) that consists of Dutch, Belgian and French paintings dating mainly from between 1860 and 1870 (Schelfhout, Springer, Maris, Linnig, Stevens), as well as of a few paintings from the Dutch 17th century (School of Rembrandt, Willem van de Velde).

Eugénie Dutreux-Pescatore died in 1902, but donated a collection that was given to her in 1853 by the descendants of a pharmacist of Westphalian origin, called Jodoc Frederic Hochhertz, who had a collection of paintings with mainly religious, allegorical and mythical subjects of the 17th century (Van Diepenbeeck, Palamedesz).

The collection was completed between in the second half of the 20th century (Van der Meulen, Berchem, Jan Brueghel the Younger, Pieter Brueghel the Younger).

THE BUILDING

After the dismantling of the 400 year old fortress of Luxembourg, decided in 1867 at the Congress of London, the Villa Vauban was built in the French historicist style on the location of the former Vauban fort. The garden was designed by French architect Edouard André. The city of Luxembourg bought the building in 1949 and used it from 1959 to 2004, with a brief interruption

between 1991 and 1995, where it was the official residence of the Grand-Duke of Luxembourg, to house alternatively the permanent collection of old master paintings and temporary exhibitions with an artistic content.

In 2005, the City Council voted an architectural project that consists in the careful restoration of the Villa Vauban itself, that will contain the permanent collection, and in the construction of a contemporary annex, that will house facilities for pedagogical activities, conferences and above all temporary exhibitions that should help to shed a new light on the works of the permanent collection.

At the opening of the new facilities, at the beginning of 2009, the exhibition space will be tripled. Whereas the hanging in the former Villa Vauban will be inspired by that in a private home, the new rooms will be neutral, functional and flexible with high ceilings and mixed or artificial light only.

THE EXHIBITION PROGRAM

Projects range from monographic exhibitions of artists represented in the collection to exhibitions organized around a theme or a stylistic school or movement. Shows with a broader, cultural and historical scope as well as the presentation of the works of contemporary artists that deal with the same subjects as their predecessors are not excluded. Suggestions are welcome!