

## PÜCKLER AND AMERICA

Conference at the Stiftung Fürst-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau in Bad Muskau, June 22–25, 2006. Jointly organized by the GHI and the Stiftung Fürst-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau. Conveners: Sonja Dümpelmann (Auburn University, GHI) and Cord Panning (Stiftung Fürst Pückler Park Bad Muskau).

Participants: Hubertus Fischer (University of Hanover), Peter Goodchild (GARLAND The Garden and Heritage Trust, York), Gert Gröning (Universität der Künste Berlin), David Haney (University of Newcastle upon Tyne), Thomas Hansen (Wellesley College), Ulf Jacob (Berlin), Michael Lee (Rhode Island), Christof Mauch (GHI), Keith Morgan (Boston University), Daniel Nadenicek (Clemson University), Lance Neckar (University of Minnesota), Andreas Pahl (Stiftung Fürst Pückler Museum Park und Schloss Branitz), Linda Parshall (Washington, DC), Elizabeth Barlow Rogers (Foundation for Landscape Studies, New York), Michael Rohde (Stiftung Preussische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg), Erika Schmidt (Technical University, Dresden), Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (University of Hanover).

The writer and landscape designer Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785–1871), known in Germany for his landscape gardens in Bad Muskau, Branitz, and Babelsberg, as well as for many of his writings such as his “Briefe eines Verstorbenen” (1830–31) and “Andeutungen über Landschaftsgärtnerei” (1834), never actually traveled to the United States. However, Pückler had in 1834 intended to cross the Atlantic and had, in fact, already planned his route on the North American continent. His American plans fell through and he traveled to North Africa instead. Even though Pückler himself never reached America, his literary works and knowledge of his landscape works did. The intentions of the conference “Pückler and America,” organized by the GHI and the Stiftung Fürst Pückler Park Bad Muskau, were to trace Pückler’s reception by writers and landscape architects in the United States and to enhance transnational and transatlantic scholarship in landscape history.

Elizabeth Barlow Rogers began the conference with an evening keynote speech in which she juxtaposed the landscape gardens of Prince Hermann von Pückler Muskau in the German states with the urban public parks of the social reformer Frederick Law Olmsted in the democratic United States. Despite the differences in intention, locale, and political context, Rogers also emphasized commonalities in the landscape works

of these two figures. Both Pückler and Olmsted were influenced by the romantic idea of nature as a means to remedy the ills of civilization and to foster national identity. Contextualizing these two prominent figures in German and American landscape history enabled Rogers to identify Pückler and Olmsted as two of the last figures indebted to Romanticism before landscape architects increasingly adopted a more formal design language and Beaux-Arts approach in park design.

Ulf Jacob opened the first conference day with a presentation of aspects of Pückler's biography. Jacob exemplified how an approach that combines sociological, historical, and art historical research methods can shed further light on Pückler, who is so often characterized by clichés such as dandy, adventurer and lady-killer. If Pückler, as Jacob showed, was influenced by the ideas of Saint-Simonism, he was later also receptive to Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy. Jacob drew attention to childhood experiences and the influence of artists and intellectuals such as Leopold Schefer (1784–1862), Maximilian Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Grävell (1781–1860), and Joseph Emil Nürnberger (1779–1848), and to Pückler's consequently changeable philosophical convictions, which become visible in his symbolically laden landscapes at Bad Muskau and Branitz.

These landscapes as well as Pückler's work in Babelsberg Park were the subjects of three talks, by Cord Panning (Bad Muskau), Andreas Pahl (Branitz), and Michael Rohde (Babelsberg). Having gone bankrupt due to his extravagant lifestyle, which included his first landscaping experiences on his Bad Muskau estate, Pückler had to sell that estate, and in 1845 he moved to his smaller landholding in Branitz. There he continued his landscaping work, and would eventually be buried in the earth pyramid he constructed for this purpose. From the 1840s until 1867, Pückler also engaged in designing the new park for the Prussian Prince William, later the German emperor William I, and his wife Augusta in Babelsberg Park. While Pückler kept most of Peter Joseph Lenné's overall design, he added several narrow pathways, numerous young trees, and in particular set to work on the pleasure ground and other areas near the Schloss. Besides the history of these parks in Pückler's time, Panning, Pahl and Rohde also offered insights into subsequent developments and today's restoration and reconstruction work in the parks. Pückler's legacy and significance for landscape architecture in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany were discussed by Erika Schmidt. Peter Goodchild explored how the features of the picturesque and gardenesque discussed in British landscape gardening throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were used by Pückler in Germany and Andrew Jackson Downing in the United States. A tour of the German side of Park Bad Muskau provided the opportunity for an on-site exploration of some of the issues and design features discussed.

Gert Gröning began the afternoon session with an overview of "Pückler's significance for landscape architecture in America," which he structured into five phases: "the pre-professional phase," "the encyclopedic phase," "the enthusiastic phase," "the professional phase," and "the phase of mellowed professional interest." Gröning's structure permitted the observation that the knowledge and interest in Pückler among North American landscape architects reached its peak in the "enthusiastic" and "professional phases" at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Keith Morgan focused his attention on one of the most important figures with regard to the American reception of Pückler's landscape works. Charles Eliot Jr.'s enthusiasm for Pückler was based on his readings of Pückler's "Hints on Landscape Gardening" and his visit to Pückler's estate in Bad Muskau during his year of travel in Europe. Morgan showed how Eliot, appropriating and reinterpreting Pückler's working methods and design principles, adopted Pückler as a kind of mentor. Morgan exemplified Eliot's reception of Pückler with the landscape architect's designs for White Park in Concord, Massachusetts for the Pitcairn family commissions and his comprehensive plans for metropolitan Boston. David Haney further elaborated on Charles Eliot's importance for the reception of Pückler's works tracing the complex transfer of ideas in landscape architecture between Germany and America at the beginning of the twentieth century. Haney pointed to the German interest in Eliot's Boston metropolitan park system at the beginning of the twentieth century and revealed that landscape architects and planners such as Werner Hegemann and Leberecht Migge considered the vast open space systems developed for American cities useful models for future German city planning. Hegemann considered Eliot's works to have been influenced by Pückler and therefore claimed that they were also rooted in the German tradition.

The second day of the conference was dedicated to a discussion of Pückler's cultural world and literary fame. Comparing the literary figures Christian Cay Laurenz Hirschfeld and Prince Hermann Friedrich von Pückler Muskau, Linda Parshall discerned both differences and similarities in their descriptions of landscape. If Hirschfeld, according to Parshall, can be characterized as a sentimental albeit analytical exponent of the *beatus ille* tradition who to a certain degree anticipated the Romantic movement, Pückler clearly combined the pastoral and romantic. Both writers, however, considered language an inefficient means of adequately expressing feelings and experiences. In landscape gardening they found the superior art which could express "poetic sentiment." Parshall framed her presentation with insights into Edgar Allan Poe's reception of Pückler, which was elaborated on further by Thomas Hansen. Hansen analyzed Pückler's role in Poe's writings. Poe, who did not speak or read

German, knew of Pückler through the Prince's translator Sarah Austin (1793–1867). Intrigued by the English translations, Poe used them for his tales, especially for his "A Landscape Garden," later renamed "The Domain of Arnheim." Though Pückler inspired Poe's text, Hansen enumerated the contrasts between the two authors' concepts of art and nature. If Pückler believed in the artistic improvement of nature, Poe merely understood art to cause the change and decay of nature. Although Poe not only used some of Pückler's writings, but also a review of Andrew Jackson Downing's practical "Treatise on Landscape Gardening," his landscape in "The Domain of Arnheim" remained fantastic and illusionary.

Hubertus Fischer's topic was Pückler's "Briefe eines Verstorbenen." Fischer defined various character traits that distinguish Pückler's letters from the work of contemporary travel writers such as Heinrich Heine, Fontane, Fanny Lewald, and Ida Gräfin Hahn-Hahn. While Pückler aspired to Heine's "Portrait of a Journey" and deeply admired Walter Scott, his own literary accomplishments were both praised and looked at with critical distance by his fellow German writers. All factions, however, perceived his individuality. In fact, quite atypical for the genre, the Prince's letters were based on real correspondence, and like no other writer, Pückler described his objects in such a way that they evoked powerful illusions in the reader.

Before a guided tour led the conference participants through parts of the Polish side of Park Bad Muskau, Lance Neckar summed up issues relevant to the discussion of Pückler and his works in his paper "Pückler-Muskau: Imagination as *Weltanschauung*." Touching on manifold aspects of the cultural, social, and political context of Pückler's time, Neckar also posed the question of how Pückler's landscape writings and works can be compared to those of Andrew Jackson Downing, Horace William Shaler Cleveland, and Frederick Law Olmsted in the United States a few decades later. Daniel Nadenicek's paper provided material and observations for addressing this question. Nadenicek showed how the combination of the useful and the beautiful expressly sought by Pückler was also promoted by the American transcendentalists in the first half of the nineteenth century and consequently had an impact on the design philosophy of some of the first American landscape architects, namely Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903), Robert Morris Copeland (1830–74), and Horace William Shaler Cleveland (1814–1900). Nadenicek showed how transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and Horacio Greenough (1805–1852) aimed at creating an American aesthetic based on the useful and functional, and considered landscape architecture an appropriate means. Olmsted, Copeland, and Cleveland shared transcendentalist beliefs. Whereas in his design work Olmsted seems to have been more influenced by Ruskin's aesthetic ideals, Nadenicek pointed out that

Copeland and Cleveland gave aesthetic expression to transcendentalist thought in their design for Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord. Avoiding artificial embellishment and using predominantly native plant species, Copeland and Cleveland carefully embedded their design into the existing landscape. Thus, they created a place that made people realize they were part of nature.

The last conference paper, presented by Michael G. Lee, gave insights into Pückler's role in Harvard University's landscape history curriculum throughout the twentieth century and until 2005. Researching the contents of the garden history courses in Harvard's landscape architecture department, Lee explored how Pückler was regarded by various landscape history professors and how their personal interests in different facets of Pückler's work shaped knowledge of German landscape history in the United States. Lee concluded that the continuing interest in Pückler and his landscapes and the neglect of other relevant German landscape architects of the same period, such as Peter Joseph Lenné, can be traced back to Olmsted's and Charles Eliot Jr.'s powerful legacies during the early years of Harvard's landscape program. Lee pointed out that this narrow view of landscape history in Germany has been broadened only in the last few decades.

In his concluding remarks, Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn summed up the main points made by the speakers. The conference on the American reception of Prince von Pückler Muskau's literary accomplishments and landscape gardens points out some relevant transatlantic connections in the realms of landscape architecture and literature. Wolschke-Bulmahn stressed the fact that the conference showed that more research into the international aspects of landscape architectural history is needed.

The conference was followed by a one-day tour of Pückler's landscape gardens in Branitz and Babelsberg. The group was guided by Andreas Pahl in Branitz and Michael Rohde and Karl Eisbein in Babelsberg. A publication based on selected papers of the conference is currently in preparation.

*Sonja Dümpelmann*