

PREFACE

The articles in this volume are essentially based on the contributions presented at the international symposium »Verschönerte Landschaften in Mittel- und Mitteleuropa! Konzepte, Akteure und Realitäten« (»Embellished Landscapes in Central and Central Eastern Europe! Concepts, Protagonists and Realities«) organised by the Arbeitsgruppe Sächsische Gartengeschichte (Saxon Garden History Working Group), which took place in Dresden from March 30 to 31, 2023.

The aim of the symposium was to highlight a type of landscape garden art that has so far been largely ignored by garden historiography – the embellished landscape.¹

Another important reason for the symposium were three research projects based at the Chair of Professor Marcus Köhler (History of Landscape Architecture and Preservation of Garden Monuments, TU Dresden) at the time of the event, each emphasising different aspects within the topic of »embellished landscapes of the late 18th and early 19th centuries«:

- »Wilhelm Gottlieb Beckers Werk 'Der Plauische Grund' (1799) und sein Beitrag zur deutschen Gartenhistoriografie« / »Wilhelm Gottlieb Becker's publication 'Der Plauische Grund' (1799) and his contribution to German garden historiography« (funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) – 448694461)²
- »Deutsch-polnisches Modellprojekt zur integrierten Kulturlandschaftsentwicklung am Beispiel des Fürstensteiner Grundes in Niederschlesien« / »German-Polish model project for integrated cultural landscape development using the example of the Fürstensteiner Grund in Lower Silesia« (funded by the DBU)³
- »Verschönerte Tallelandschaften in Sachsen, Schlesien, Böhmen und Mähren« / »Embellished valleys in Saxony, Silesia, Bohemia and Moravia« (funded by FOSTER – Funds for Student Research)⁴.

The aim of the symposium was to present the results of the projects to the scientific and interested community and to initiate discussions.

Speakers from Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria and Germany were invited to take part in this exchange, with their research being related to the topic of »embellished landscapes« or to the person and work of Wilhelm Gottlieb Becker, in particular to his concept of the »Gartenlandschaft«/»garden landscape« (a term Becker used for embellished landscapes).

The symposium was an attempt to present various conceptual approaches under the label

»embellished landscapes«. The material, idealistic and natural characteristics of individual embellished landscapes, the associated protagonists – such as initiators/commissioners, artists, recipients – and their respective motivations were to be examined in order to visualise possible mutual references and influences as well as parallels and differences between the respective concepts.

The topic »embellished landscape« at a glance

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the potential of the open landscape – and thus of public space – was discovered in many places in Central and Eastern Europe, and aesthetic ideals were applied through minimally invasive horticultural interventions. The term »embellished landscape« was used to describe visionary concepts and expansive park-like reinterpretations of entire landscapes outside the confines of palaces and estates and their boundary fences.

This phenomenon marks the transition from the »early« to the »classical landscape garden« and was widespread not only in Saxony, but above all in the historical regions of Silesia, Bohemia and Moravia, as well as the present-day states of Austria, Hungary and Slovakia. It can be seen as a continuation of the development from the formal to the landscape garden⁵, which spread from England to continental Europe from 1750 onwards.

While the early German landscape garden was still characterised by an experimental co-existence of different styles and ideas, inspired by and imitating a wide variety of gardens in England and China, and which in some cases incorporated the client's own design solutions as well as reminiscences of contemporary literature, by the end of the 18th century large sections of the scholarly community in the German-speaking countries had already begun to reject the landscape garden style again. At the centre of this criticism (which intensified from 1790) were small-scale, artificially and iconographically overloaded gardens that were more committed to art or artificiality than to nature.

As a result of this criticism, solutions were sought and two approaches emerged which, in retrospect, proved to have a promising future: Under Friedrich Ludwig von Sckell (1750–1823) at the court of the Electoral Palatinate, a style of landscape design based on aesthetic knowledge and imitation of nature developed, which identified Sckell as a mediator between the early and the more mature landscape gardening of Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785–1871) and Peter Joseph Lenné (1789–1866), which had developed from around 1815.⁶ Another way out of the »orientation crisis of the German landscape garden« was offered by the Saxon Wilhelm Gottlieb Becker (1753–1813), whose numerous garden publications in the 1790s drew attention to the real landscape and the possibility of its careful embellishment – a concept that labelled »Gartenlandschaft«/»garden landscape«. The culmination of this endeavour was his work 'Der Plauische Grund bei Dresden', published in 1799, which is extremely interesting from a garden-historical perspective for a number of reasons. In particular, its potential dissemination should be mentioned here, which can be inferred from the list of subscribers printed in the book, which offers garden-historical links to the regions represented in this volume, among others. After all, the list includes a number of personalities (including Prince Johann I of Liechtenstein (1760–1836), the garden artist and agronomist Bernhard Petri (1767–1853), Count Mihály Viczay (1757–1831), Count Moritz von Fries (1777–1826), Baron Peter von Braun (1758–1819), Countess Károly Keglevich, née Zichy (1752–1809), Princess Marie Leopoldine Grassalkowitz, née Esterházy (1776–1864)), who can be associated with extensive gardens and large-scale embellished landscapes.

The contributions in this volume

The first article provides an insight into Wilhelm Gottlieb Becker's visionary conceptual approach to the »Gartenlandschaft«/»garden landscape« and thus serves as a conceptual point of reference for what is to follow in this volume. For a comprehensive understanding, Becker's person, the book »Der Plausische Grund« and the landscape area from which it takes its name are also discussed.

In his contribution, Gerd-Helge Vogel first traces the underlying intellectual history and names some of the protagonists who paved the way for landscape embellishment. He then turns his attention to Saxony and the landscape-shaping influence of members of the House of Schönburg in their estates of Waldenburg, Hartenstein and Wechselburg. There, concepts were realised that differed substantially in their time of origin, their fundamental ideas, the intensity of intervention in nature and the degree to which they extended into the landscape.

Marlen Höbelbarth and Justyna Jaworek-Jakubska trace the history of the development of the embellished landscape Fürstensteiner Grund (Gorge of Fürstenstein) (near the town of Waldenburg (Wałbrzych) in Lower Silesia) from the end of the 18th century up to the present. This is where the counts and later princes of Hochberg-Pless realised their creative visions over several generations, some of which arose from very different ideas and motivations. The initiating power of spa towns, which were often the starting point for the embellishment of a landscape, becomes visible here.

Gábor Alföldy introduces protagonists who are regarded as initiators of landscape embellishment in the Habsburg Monarchy – especially in Hungary. (Some of these personalities also belonged to Wilhelm Gottlieb Becker's network). At the centre of the text is the garden artist and agronomist Bernhard Petri (1767–1853), an immensely important landscape designer of his time, who is gradually becoming recognized outside of Hungary again. The article brings previously unknown facts to light: the exchange between Becker and Petri about the pocket book called »Taschenbuch für Gartenfreunde« and the mutual win-win effect that characterised this transfer are described extremely vividly. (In addition, the article is »absolutely up-to-date«, as Alföldy was able to pre-date Petri's first arrival in Vienna shortly before the editorial deadline).⁷

Christian Hlavac first reports an early example of landscape embellishment – by continental European standards: the grounds created by Count Johann Philipp Cobenzl (1741–1810) on Reisenberg near Vienna around 1776. He then looks at the extremely expansive (around 700 hectares) embellishment measures under Prince Johann I of Liechtenstein (1760–1836) in what are today the municipalities of Mödling, Maria Enzersdorf and Hinterbrühl in Lower Austria, but also in Loosdorf (municipality of Fallbach). He thus expands the spectrum of embellishments presented in Gábor Alföldy's article, which were initiated under Johann von Liechtenstein or, in the case of Loosdorf, even with Petri's co-operation. The importance of agriculture as an element of an embellished landscape and the desired balance between aesthetics and economy in such a landscape is particularly emphasised in the article.

Martin Krummholz presents the five earliest landscape gardens in Bohemia and analyses their relationship to the landscape as well as certain predispositions of a landscape that

favoured its embellishment. The gardens at Theresienthal near Gratzen (Terezino údolí) in southern Bohemia and Rothenhaus (Červený Hrádek) at the foot of the Ore Mountains in particular seem to have taken early steps towards an embellished landscape, and Theresienthal can perhaps even be described as such. The treatment of Schönhof (Krasný Dvůr) also provides possible links to Wilhelm Gottlieb Becker, who frequently travelled to Töplitz (Teplice) for spa treatments in addition to Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary) and probably also visited Schönhof on one occasion.⁸

Elisabeth Weymann reports on the development of the »Osteinscher Niederwald« near Rudesheim am Rhein. It shows that the so called »Parkwald«/»park forest« can be seen as a »proto-concept« both in terms of time and ideas, with which clear steps towards an »embellished landscape« were taken very early on (from 1764 onwards). The initiator of the area, Count Johann Friedrich Karl Maximilian von Ostein (1735–1809), as well as his passions, visions and connections to Bohemia are presented in an extremely lively manner. Furthermore, a widespread phenomenon is impressively experienced here: the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation (»Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation«) led to the (high) nobility's efforts to legitimise themselves, which also manifested itself in physical space (here primarily through reminiscences of the Middle Ages).⁹

Oliver Sukrow concludes the volume with an impressive look onto the 19th century by presenting the history of the development of the embellished »Bergstrasse« region in the Odenwald in southern Hesse with its artistic, social and political implications. In doing so, he shows how approaches with intellectual roots in the late 18th century were developed and further moulded in the 19th century.

Unfortunately, Anne Charlotte Henze and Jan Rosciszewski, who presented an overview of embellished landscapes (or »presumed cases« thereof) in Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Saxony in their colloquium presentation, were not able to complete a textual contribution for this volume for reasons of study organisation. However, they intend to publish the results of their research at a later date.

Conclusion and future perspectives

The symposium (and these conference proceedings) represent first steps towards providing a deeper insight into the state of research on the topic of »embellished landscapes« in the various regions, introducing different embellishment concepts and weaving together different regional, personal and conceptual strands.

In the process, the temporal developments, spatial expansion, personal interdependencies, transfer achievements and related approaches of various concepts have become visible.

Even though this volume attempts to concretise the term »embellished landscape«, it is apparent that a certain conceptual vagueness is part of today's reality: to date, the term has encompassed a very broad field, in which very different systems and ideas are sometimes categorised. An even finer differentiation of the individual approaches would be a task for the future, for which, however, further basic research and in-depth object-related investigations are required.

It would be desirable if the mind spaces and approaches opened up here were to be pursued further in the future, in order to fully recognise and enhance the significance of embellished landscapes and give them a permanent place in garden history in the long term.

Acknowledgements

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Finally, we would like to thank the speakers who have made their contributions available to us for this publication, thereby expanding the range of topics across borders.

With this publication, we hope to make the topic of »embellished landscape« and the interrelationships of garden-historical developments a little more tangible and wish all readers an exciting and informative and enjoyable reading.

Dresden, November 2023
Anja Gottschalk

- 1 Determining the intellectual history of the phenomenon of gardens (or garden landscapes) formed from landscapes has previously been a research desideratum in garden historiography. The embellishment of individual valleys in the Dresden region has fortunately already been the focus of research by Kathrin Franz on the Seifersdorfer Tal (Franz, Kathrin: *Das Seifersdorfer Tal*, in: Günther, Harri (ed.): *Gärten der Goethezeit*, Leipzig 1993, pp. 133–142), Anja Simonsen on the Röhrsdorfer Grund (Eppert, Anja: *Der Röhrsdorfer Grund. Auf den Spuren einer der ältesten landschaftlichen Anlagen Sachsens*, in: *Mitteilungen der Pückler Gesellschaft*, Heft 27 (neue Folge), Berlin 2013, pp. 13–52) and Stefanie Krihning on the Friedrichsgrund (Melzer, Stefanie: *Früh 6 Uhr begaben sich seine Churfürstliche Durchlaucht nach der Eremitage... zur Ausgestaltung von Friedrichsgrund und Borsberghängen im Stil des frühen sentimentalen Landschaftsgartens*, in: *Jahrbuch / Staatliche Schlösser, Burgen und Gärten Sachsen 2006* (vol. 14), Dresden 2007, pp. 173–184). In 2018, Königshain in Upper Lusatia was also mentioned in an article by Thomas Thränert in »Die Gartenkunst« (Thränert, Thomas: *Die Grundherrschaft als Erkenntnis- und Gestaltungsraum. Carl Adolph Gottlob von Schachmann and his Königshain estate*, in: *Die Gartenkunst*, issue 1/2018, pp. 63–74). Apart from these object-related individual studies, there have been no systematic studies to date – apart from the 2011 publication »Die gewidmete Landschaft« (Krepelin, Kirsten; Thränert, Thomas: *Die gewidmete Landschaft. Spaziergänge und verschönerte Landschaften um Dresden*, Worms 2011), which represents an important step towards closing the described research desideratum.
- 2 The main objective of the project is to analyse Becker's work in terms of its impact and standing within intellectual history, but above all to shed light on the visionary approaches to a new garden and landscape aesthetic discussed in it. The study thus sees itself as a contribution to German garden historiography and is being researched by Anja Gottschalk (TU Dresden).
- 3 Marlen Höbelbarth (TU Dresden) and Justyna Jaworek-Jakubska (Wrocław University of Natural Sciences) are working on the project. Using the example of the Fürstensteiner Grund in Lower Silesia, a strategy for integrated cultural landscape development is being developed at the interface of cultural history, garden monument preservation, nature and water conservation and tourism.
- 4 The one-year project was carried out by two students – Anne Charlotte Henze und Jan Rosciszewski (both from the Institute of Landscape Architecture, TU Dresden) – under the supervision of Marlen Höbelbarth and Anja Gottschalk. The main aim was to compile an overview of embellished valleys in the four focus regions through literature research and to identify previously unknown examples.
- 5 In German-speaking countries, this development did not take place until after the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), despite precursors (such as the rock gardens in Sanspareil/Bayreuth and Kuks/Bohemia).
- 6 Skell's role has only recently been recognised and described in more detail – above all through the work of Iris Lauterbach (Lauterbach, Iris: »Methode, in der Natur zu zeichnen« (1818): Friedrich Ludwig von Skell und der Zauberstab des Gartenkünstlers, in: Albl, Stefan / Frasca-Rath, Anna / Hub, Berthold (ed.): *Close Reading. Festschrift für Sebastian Schütze*, Berlin/Boston 2021, pp. 654–667) and Hartmut Troll (Troll, Hartmut: *Friedrich Ludwig von Skell und die Aufgaben des Gartenkünstlers Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Jahrbuch der Stiftung Thüringer Schlösser und Gärten*, vol. 21 (Gartenkünstler und ihr Wirken in historischen Gärten) Rudolstadt 2018, pp. 28–49).
- 7 Alföldy recently found an advertisement placed by Petri in the »Wiener Zeitung« of March 1792 (Petri, Bernhard: *An die Liebhaber der Schönen Gartenkunst*, in: *Wiener Zeitung*, issue of 3 March 1792, p. 568), according to which Petri had already worked in Austria in 1791/92. His arrival in Vienna has so far been dated to February 1793, after he had to flee from French troops who had attacked Karlsberg Castle (near Homburg in the Palatinate) on 8/9 February 1793.
- 8 Becker's »Taschenbuch für Gartenfreunde« also contains an essay on Krasný Dvůr (description of the garden at Schönhoven in Bohemia, in: Becker, Wilhelm Gottlieb (ed.): *Taschenbuch für Gartenfreunde 1796*, Leipzig 1795, pp. 1–28). In addition, the »Taschenbuch für Gartenfreunde 1799« is dedicated to the founder of the landscape park in Krasný Dvůr – Johann Rudolf Czernin (1757–1845) (see Becker, Wilhelm Gottlieb (ed.): *Taschenbuch für Gartenfreunde 1799*, Leipzig 1798).
- 9 Here, too, lines lead back to Becker: an essay by the theologian Christian Wölfling, who had travelled there in July 1792, appeared in the »Taschenbuch für Gartenfreunde« (Wölfling, Christian: *Der Osteinische Park auf dem Niederwalde bei Mainz*, in: Becker, Wilhelm Gottlieb (ed.): *Taschenbuch für Gartenfreunde 1796*, Leipzig 1795, pp. 117–133).