

Dessau-Wörlitz (Germany)

No 534rev

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Gartenreich Dessau-Wörlitz (The Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz)
<i>Location</i>	Federal State (<i>Land</i>) of Sachsen-Anhalt, Counties of Anhalt-Zerbst and Bitterfeld and City of Dessau
<i>State Party</i>	Federal Republic of Germany
<i>Date</i>	17 June 1999

Justification by State Party

For Prince Leopold III Friedrich Franz of Anhalt-Dessau and his friend and adviser Friedrich Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorff, the study of landscape gardens in England and of the ancient buildings of Italy, undertaken during several tours, was the impetus for their own creative programme in the little principality by the rivers Elbe and Mulde. As a result the first landscape garden in continental Europe was created here, with Wörlitz as its focus. Over a period of forty years a network of visual and stylistic relationships was developed with other landscape gardens in the region, leading to the creation of a garden landscape on a scale unique in Europe. In the making of this landscape the designers strove to go beyond the mere copying of garden scenery and buildings from other sites, but instead to generate a synthesis of a wide range of artistic relationships. Among new and characteristic components of this garden landscape was the integration of a didactic element, arising from the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the thinking of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, and the aesthetics of Johann Georg Sulzer. The notion of public access to the buildings and grounds was a reflection of the pedagogic concept of the humanization of society.

Proceeding from the idea of the *ferme ornée*, agriculture as the basis for everyday life found its place in the garden landscape. In a Rousseauian sense, agriculture also had to perform a pedagogic function in Anhalt-Dessau. Through the deliberate demonstration of new farming methods in the landscape garden, developments in Anhalt-Dessau were not merely theoretical but a practical demonstration of their models in England.

It is noteworthy that these objectives - the integration of aesthetics and education into the landscape - were implemented with outstanding artistic quality. Thus, for instance, the buildings of Friedrich Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorff provided important models for the

architectural development of Germany and central Europe. Schloss Wörlitz (1769-73) was the first Neo-Classical building in German architectural history. The Gothic House (from 1774) was a decisive influence on the development of Gothic Revival architecture in central Europe. Here, for the first time, the Gothic style was used to carry a political message, namely the desire for the retention of sovereignty among the smaller Imperial territories. The churches in Riesigk (1800), Wörlitz (1804-09), and Vockerode (1810-11) were the first Neo-Classical ecclesiastical buildings in Germany, their towers enlivening the marshland floodplain landscape in which they served as waymarkers. In part of the Baroque park of Oranienbaum an Anglo-Chinese garden was laid out, now the sole surviving example in Europe of such a garden in its original form from the period before 1800.

The development of stylistic eclecticism in the 19th century had its roots in the closing years of the 18th century. Another feature of the landscape is the integration of new technological achievements, such as the building of bridges, as the expression of a continuing quest for modernity.

Through the conscious incorporation of the older layouts at Oranienbaum and Mosigkau into the pantheon of styles, the landscape became an architectural encyclopaedia featuring examples from ancient times to the latest developments.

Nowhere else in Germany or Europe had a prince brought such an all-embracing and extensive programme of landscape reform into being, especially one so deeply rooted in philosophical and educational theory.

With the unique density of its landscape of monuments, the Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz is an expression of the enlightened outlook of the court at Dessau. The landscape became the idealized world of its day. Through the conscious and structured incorporation of economic, technological, and functional buildings and parks into the artistically designed landscape, the Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz became an important concourse of ideas, in that it facilitated the convergence of 18th century grandeur of design with the beginnings of 19th century industrial society. The reforming outlook of this period brought about a huge diversity of change in the garden layout, and this legacy can still be experienced today.

The Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz can thus be seen as a designed and constructed philosophy, the "credit and epitome of the 18th century" (Christoph Martin Wieland).

[**Note** The State Party does not make any proposals in the nomination dossier concerning the criteria under which it considers this property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List.]

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*. It is also a *cultural landscape* as defined in paragraph 39 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

History and Description

History

The region between Dessau and Wörlitz has been settled since prehistory. Dessau later became one of the earliest centres of the Lutheran Reformation. A dynastic marriage in 1658 brought Anhalt-Dessau into close cultural and commercial contact with the Netherlands, and dikes were constructed along the Elbe by Dutch engineers, to reduce the periodic flooding. Tobacco growing and glass making became established in the region.

The first essays in landscape design began with the foundation of Oranienbaum, with its unified layout of town, palace, and park from 1683 onwards. The resulting complete Baroque ensemble, with obvious Dutch connections deriving from its designer, Cornelis Ryckwaert, has survived to the present day. Further developments on these lines took place around 1700 with the reclamation of marshy areas along the Elbe and the creation of planned villages and farmsteads.

During the reign of Prince Leopold III Friedrich Franz of Anhalt-Dessau (1740-1817), an extensive landscape design project was begun around 1765 over the entire principality. The ruler had paid several visits to England, the Netherlands, and Italy, and his ambitious programme was launched in close collaboration with the architect and art theorist Friedrich Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorff (1736-1800). Landscape design, public education, and encouragement of the arts were closely integrated in this scheme.

Wörlitz became the point of departure for wide-ranging improvements based on English landscape gardens and Neo-Classical architecture. Over the four decades starting in 1764, 112.5ha of landscape garden, the first in continental Europe, were laid out. It was a unified scheme of buildings, gardens, and works of art, with a pervasive educational theme (influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Bernhard Basedow) and model working practices. It became the outward expression of the Enlightenment.

Schloss Wörlitz was built in 1769-73 and was open to visitors from the outset; it was the first Neo-Classical building in Germany, two generations before Karl Friedrich Schinkel. The Gothic House (1774) established a vogue for Gothic Revival buildings all across Europe. The influence of the Wörlitz buildings can be detected in the architecture and landscape design of, for example, Weimar, Berlin, Potsdam, Braunschweig, Gotha, and elsewhere.

A number of other landscape projects in the principality date from this period. One of the most innovative was the Chinese garden at Oranienbaum (1790), based on the theories of the English architect Sir William Chambers. A dense network of sightlines and avenues progressively connected the various gardens and their buildings. At the same time the agricultural use of the countryside was integrated with the gardens, drawing the aesthetic, educational, and economic aspects of the entire landscape into a coherent whole. The roads and dikes that were essential for infrastructural development were planted with avenues of fruit trees, giving them an ornamental aspect.

By the time Prince Franz died in 1817 virtually the entire principality had become a unified garden. His successors maintained this quality intact throughout the 19th century. When the system of local roads was upgraded in the second half of the century, no new routes were cut through the

Garden Kingdom, and the characteristic avenues of fruit trees were maintained when widening took place. Despite industrialization and the consequent expansion of Dessau since 1900, the characteristic features of the landscape have been preserved. Regrettably, however, the construction of the *Autobahn* in 1937-38 and the railway to serve the coal-fired power station at Vockerode in 1937-42 divided the Garden Kingdom into four parts.

Dessau suffered during World War II, but the Garden Kingdom escaped relatively unscathed. Subsequently, there has been some degradation of the agricultural landscape from the removal of field boundaries and the construction of large buildings for livestock. However, closure of the power station and the 1970s glasshouse complex at Vockerode in 1994-95 has resulted in a process of ecological stabilization, which has been favourable for the Garden Kingdom.

Description

The Garden Kingdom lies in the meadow landscape of the rivers Elbe and Mulde, the floodplains of which reach in places to the parklands.

The core of the Garden Kingdom is the historic gardens, with their buildings and sculpture. They are linked by a network of carefully planned sightlines and roads. In addition to the historic garden enclosures Neo-Classical and Neo-Gothic structures such as dike watch-towers, hostelrys, statues, and bridges are to be found widely distributed, acting as key features of the landscape. The agricultural areas, such as fields, meadows, and orchards, have been improved by ornamental tree plantings, so as to enhance the aesthetic appearance of the landscape.

- The western group: the Kühnauer Park, the Georgium, and the Beckerbruch.

The 77.5 ha of the Kühnauer Park, on the southern shore of the Kühnauersee (21.4ha), is a narrow elongated garden laid out in 1805 with views over the lake and its islands, which are included in the nominated area. Its orchards and vineyard have been partially restored. The main viewpoint is the Vineyard House (*Weinbergschlösschen*), an Italianate classical building of 1818-20. Other buildings are the Neo-Classical Schloss Kühnau (c 1780) and the Romano-Byzantine Church (1828-30).

The Georgium or Georgengarten is a small Neo-Classical country house designed by von Erdmannsdorff, surrounded by a garden of 21.3ha in the English style. The garden contains a number of buildings and monuments, including the Roman Ruin (based on the Temple of Concordia in Rome) and an open rotunda temple. The adjacent area of the Beckerbruch (97ha) was left relatively untouched as a landscape of marsh and meadows, with a few statues and small structures inserted into it. It is designed so as to merge gradually into the Georgengarten.

- The central group: the Luisium, the Sieglitzer Berg, the Tiergarten (part), and the villages of Mildensee and Waldersee (part)

A wetland covering some 20.5ha to the north-east of Dessau forms part of this group. The area of meadows in the bend of the Mulde was originally part of the system of dikes surrounding Dessau, laid out as garden scenery; it is now the Schillerpark.

The 3456ha Tiergarten (Deer Park) was originally an enclosed princely hunting area. At the end of the 18th century it was redesigned as the eastern approach to Dessau and connected to the park at Diebold, demonstrating again the progression from park to agricultural land.

Mildensee consist largely of architecturally improved dike fields on the edge of the Tiergarten. Neo-Classical and Neo-Gothic buildings are located here in a former meander of the Mulde: they include the Tower of the Winds (based on the structure in Athens) and the Hunting Lodge (*Landjägerhaus*) with its shingled roof in the form of an upturned boat.

The country house known as the Luisium was built for Prince Franz to the designs of von Erdmannsdorff in 1774-78 as a residence for his wife, Luise, from which it takes its name. It is a cubic building with a belvedere cap, very characteristic of the architect. The clean lines of the exterior are reflected in the interior arrangements, with small rooms decorated in the Pompeian style. An English-style garden of 14ha was laid around the house, with features such as the Serpent House (*Schlangenhaus*), an orangery, and a "ruined" arch. The park also included a fruit and vegetable garden, and connected to it is a stud farm in Neo-Gothic style, sited amid the fields in the manner of a *ferme ornée*. Herds of mixed cattle have been maintained here up to the present day.

The area around the Leinersee lake and the section of dike known as the Kuppenwall form the link between the ornamental parks and gardens of Dessau and those of Wörlitz. The Kuppenwall, which is still in use as a flood dike, passes through a varied natural landscape of fields and woodland.

The Sieglitzer Berg is a 25.1ha woodland garden on the hill in a bend of the Elbe west of Vockerode. When it was laid out in the late 1770s it was cited as an example of "improved nature." The grounds are laid out on the garden front of a small house in the form of a Doric temple known as Solitude. The estate office takes the form of a "ruined" Roman tomb. Whilst the park has a number of decorative statues and other elements, it makes greater use of natural stands of trees than the other parks and gardens.

- The Möster Wiesen

This is the most southerly part of the Garden Kingdom, an extensive area of meadows (346ha) characterized by marginal plantings and sweeping woodland edges. An area of 10ha has been reinstated as a typical 18th century fruit plantation, using historic varieties.

- The eastern group: Fliederwall, Wörlitz Park, the Schönitzersee and Riesigk, Rehsen, Oranienbaum, and Griesen

The historic route to the eastern part of the Garden Kingdom runs along the flood dike between Vockerode and Wörlitz. Watch-houses (*Wachhäuser*) are located along its length to supervise the dike and the floodwaters. These were the work of von Erdmannsdorff and are important elements in the scenery.

Wörlitz Park is the core of the Garden Kingdom; it was here that Prince Franz and von Erdmannsdorff developed the overall concept. A well planned system of sightlines links all the components of the garden and with the surrounding countryside. These sightlines are punctuated with buildings,

statuary, and tree plantings. The educational element is represented by different forms of bridge construction and the large areas given over to agriculture and fruit growing.

The inner area (112.5ha) is ornamented with many Neo-Classical and Neo-Gothic buildings, among the most significant of which are the main house and the Gothic House. There is a smooth, subtle transition from this designed area to the outer, agricultural area (123.3ha). The farmstead, the work of von Erdmannsdorff, consists of a group of buildings around a Palladian villa, now somewhat modified and used for other purposes.

The outskirts of the historic part of the village of Wörlitz were accentuated by von Erdmannsdorff with striking buildings on the newly laid out Christian and Jewish cemeteries. These link with his other buildings in the village (outside the nominated area) such as the town hall and the synagogue.

East of Wörlitz the flood dikes extended as far as the former state boundary. In addition to the watch houses (one in the form of a Roman fortlet), further flood protection installations were incorporated into the landscape. Two striking buildings, the Neo-Classical *Kommunalbau* and the Neo-Gothic church serve as an educational focal point on either side of the main street in Riesigk. The oxbow lake of the Elbe known as the Schönitzersee is now a nature reserve.

The 12th century village of Rehsen is surrounded by a ring of flood dikes, along which there are several watch houses and lodges, the latter built by Prince Leopold I (1676-1747) for army veterans.

The Dutch architect Cornelis Ryckwaert began building Schloss Oranienbaum in 1683 for Princess Henrietta Catharina. The regular layout of the town and the 22ha garden are oriented on the house in the Dutch manner. Oranienbaum is one of the few Baroque ensembles of this type to survive in Germany. It was absorbed into the overall concept of the Garden Kingdom. A number of notable additions were made subsequently, notably the 1811 orangery, one of the largest in Europe and still in use for overwintering plants, and the 18th century Anglo-Chinese garden, inspired by the work of Sir William Chambers, with its pagoda, teahouse, and bridges.

In and around the community of Griesen there are several objects related to Wörlitz by means of sightlines. The Münsterberg farmstead represents the economic function of the countryside and the Palladian village school evokes the educational message of the Enlightenment. It is separated from Wörlitz by a wide stretch of meadowland, which emphasizes the visual link. Prince Franz had a mausoleum, in the form of a circle of earthen mounds, laid out around 1775 on the 1.8ha Drehberg, strategically sited with relation to Wörlitz and other important features of the Garden Kingdom. It was in fact never used for its intended purpose.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The Gartenbau Dessau-Wörlitz is fully protected under the following legislation:

- Decree establishing Nature Reserves and a Landscape Area of Central Importance with the General Title of the Biosphere Reserve Mittlere Elbe, September 1990;
- Conservation Law of the State of Saxony-Anhalt, October 1991, which requires owners of monuments to “conserve, maintain, and repair monuments according to conservation principles and to protect them from damage”;
- Official Regulation on the Conservation of Monuments in the State of Saxony-Anhalt, December 1997;
- Nature Protection Law of the State of Saxony-Anhalt, February 1992.

The following development plans have also been approved and are being implemented:

- Regional Integration Scheme (*Teilraumkonzeption*) for the Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz, January 1998;
- Restoration programme for the Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz, March 1998;
- Development Plan (*Landesentwicklungsprogramm*) of the State of Saxony-Anhalt, June 1992;
- Regional Development Plan (*Regionales Entwicklungsprogramm*) for the District of Dessau, January 1996.

There is a draft Local Development Plan (*Kreisentwicklungsplan*) for the County of Anhalt-Zerbst currently in process of promulgation and a Regional Plan for the Revival of the Historic Infrastructure in the Garden Kingdom Dessau-Wörlitz recently approved.

Since more than 80% of the nominated area is situated within the first biosphere reserve designated in 1979 for Vessertal and Steeby-Loddritzer Forst, enlarged in 1988 to cover the entire Dessau-Wörlitz cultural landscape, it is also protected in all its environmental aspects under the State Nature Protection Law.

Management

There is a number of autonomous bodies responsible for management within the nominated area. These include the State Ministries of Culture and of Planning, Agriculture, and Environment, the municipalities of Dessau, Wörlitz, Oranienbaum, and Luisium, the State Monuments Protection Department, the Wittenberg Municipal Environmental Department, and the Administration of the Mittlere Elbe Biosphere Reserve, but there is no overall official coordinating body. A large part of the nominated area and the major houses are managed by the Dessau-Wörlitz Cultural Foundation (*Kulturstiftung Dessau-Wörlitz*). In addition, there is the Forum for the Dessau-Wörlitz Garden Kingdom set up in 1996, to ensure communication between the various bodies.

There is also as yet no plan in force for the study, analysis, and overall reclamation of the nominated area. However, work is well advanced and the first stage, that of preliminary analytical studies, is now almost complete. It is hoped that the second stage of the plan, which is meticulous and highly professional, will be completed within the next two years.

Conservation and Authenticity

There can be no doubts about the authenticity of the various elements that have been preserved, ie almost all the major and minor architectural and artistic monuments. The conservation and restoration work that has been carried out and is still in progress is in accordance with the highest principles of contemporary conservation and restoration.

However, the overall structure of the landscape has undergone a good deal of deterioration. Nonetheless, it will be possible to reclaim much of this, and important work has already been carried out, opening up sightlines and vistas that have long been covered by vegetation.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS mission visited the nominated property at the end of February and beginning of March 2000. ICOMOS also benefited from the comments of its International Scientific Committee on Historic Gardens and Cultural Landscapes. It was possible as a result to compare the present nomination favourably with that originally submitted by the State Party and examined by ICOMOS in 1990.

Qualities and comparative analysis

The Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz is one of the most emblematic and representative European designed landscapes. The originality of the landscape created by Prince Leopold III Friedrich Franz derives from the English landscape tradition, but enriched with influences from Italy and France. The Wörlitz Palace is one of the earliest and most influential examples of Neo-Classical architecture in the region.

ICOMOS comments and recommendations for future action

One of the major problems is the main 107 road that passes only a few metres away from Rousseau Island, one of the most beautiful and representative landscapes in the nominated area. It is essential that the short stretch of this road that is involved should be re-routed with the minimum of delay. The *Land* has undertaken to do this within a period of not more than three years, but this condition should be reiterated in the Committee's decision.

It is impractical to consider re-routing the *Autobahn*, the impact of which is less serious. However, the authorities should be required to draw up a plan designed to minimize its environmental impact within a reasonable time period.

There is also a need to make certain modifications to the boundaries of the nominated area, which were discussed by the ICOMOS expert mission. These have been accepted by the State Party.

Brief description

The Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz is an exceptional example of landscape design and planning from the Age of the Enlightenment of the 18th century. Its diverse components – outstanding buildings, landscaped parks and gardens in the English style, and subtly modified expanses of agricultural land – served aesthetic, educational, and economic purposes in an exemplary manner.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii and iv*:

Criterion ii The Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz is an outstanding example of the application of the philosophical principles of the Age of the Enlightenment to the design of a landscape that integrates art, education, and economy in a harmonious whole.

Criterion iv The 18th century was a seminal period for landscape design, of which the Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz is an exceptional and wide-ranging illustration.

At its meeting in June 2000 the Bureau requested the State Party to confirm that the 107 road will be re-routed within three years from inscription and that an environmental study of the *Autobahn* will be carried out with the minimum delay. This assurance had not been received at the time this evaluation was prepared for printing.

ICOMOS, September 2000