

Overhaul of the Bode Museum

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, when Museum Island was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1999, a master plan for the overhaul of all five museum buildings was approved. In 2006, the Bode Museum was the second, after the Alte Nationalgalerie, to open its gates after renovations.

The renovation efforts addressed the façades as well as the interior, which had its own architectural and technical challenges.

The exterior included the renovation of the façades and the roofing of both domes with copper, in accordance with historical models (replacing the slate used for post-war repairs) (Fig. 1 and 2). In addition, the window dormers of the Great Dome, with their decorative crowns, were restored, which greatly enhanced the play of light in the entrance hall, with its imposing staircases and the copy of Schlüter's equestrian monument to the Great Elector.

The interior renovation had to take into account all the modern technical demands, which focused above all on light, climate, security, and fire protection as well as access for people with disabilities. But even with respect to the architecture – with its varied spaces, the main axis with both staircases, the Basilica, the Kameke Hall, the Gobelin Gallery, and the other galleries and cabinets – the goal was to maintain the original appearance while allowing a contemporary presentation using modern elements such as heating grilles, window screens, and simple pedestals and vitrines.

In the Basilica, the heart of the Bode Museum, not only was the original colour scheme uncovered, but also the still extant round arch of the

entrance area was restored. It had been rebuilt as a rectangular doorway after the war to accommodate the presentation of pair of atlases, which supported a bannister (Fig. 3). The installation of the Basilica and its works of art still reflects – as much as possible – Wilhelm von Bode's conception in place at the 1904 opening.

In parallel to the renovation, many integrated elements – such as fireplaces, portals or ceilings and works of art like the altars by the Della Robbia workshop – were restored at great expense. Highlights in this area include the Venetian ceiling in Room 219 and the Tiepolo Cabinet (Room 261), both of which had not been on view at all since 1939 (the latter because, at the end of the war, Tiepolo's frescoes were located partly in West Berlin, partly in East Berlin).

In order to bring the museum technically up to date, a structure with a freight elevator was erected in one of the five courtyards. Furthermore, an entry to the archaeological promenade was created underneath the Small Dome that, in the future, will allow visitors to access the Pergamon Museum and the other museums on Museum Island.



Fig. 1 Bode Museum, façade facing the railway tracks © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst / Florian Profitlich

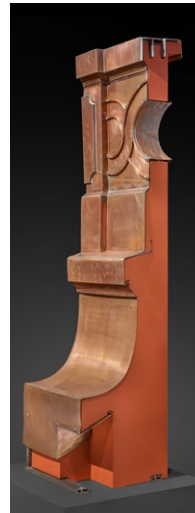


Fig. 2 Scale model for the crowning of the Small Dome (excerpt from the façade) © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst / Antje Voigt



Fig. 3 Kameke Hall, entrance to the Basilica © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst / Karin Betthausen