

**BOOK REVIEW: STAATLICHE SCHLÖSSER UND GÄRTEN
BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG (ED.) (2018), CASTLE
BRUCHSAL. THE BELETAGE – BAROQUE SPLENDOR
NEWLY REDISCOVERED [IN GERMAN], NÜNNERICH-
ASMUS VERLAG ET MEDIA, MAINZ AM RHEIN,
GERMANY, 512 PP, ISBN 978-3-961760-47-3**

Maria BOSTENARU DAN

researcher, PhD, "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, e-mail: Maria.Bostenaru-Dan@alumni.uni-karlsruhe.de

Abstract. In the last days of World War II bombing destroyed the Baroque castle of Bruchsal. While the masterpiece, the staircase of Balthasar Neumann was restored in the years after, it took until recent years to have the Bel Etage restored. This book documents the process of restoration which ended 2017.

Key words: Baroque, restoration, WWII, museum

The black day in the history of the small city of Bruchsal in Germany was the 1st of March 1945 when the centre of the city was destroyed by bombing. Among the victims of bombing was the Baroque castle of Bruchsal, with its staircase by the well known architect of the Baroque Balthasar Neumann, the architect of the UNESCO site of Würzburg.

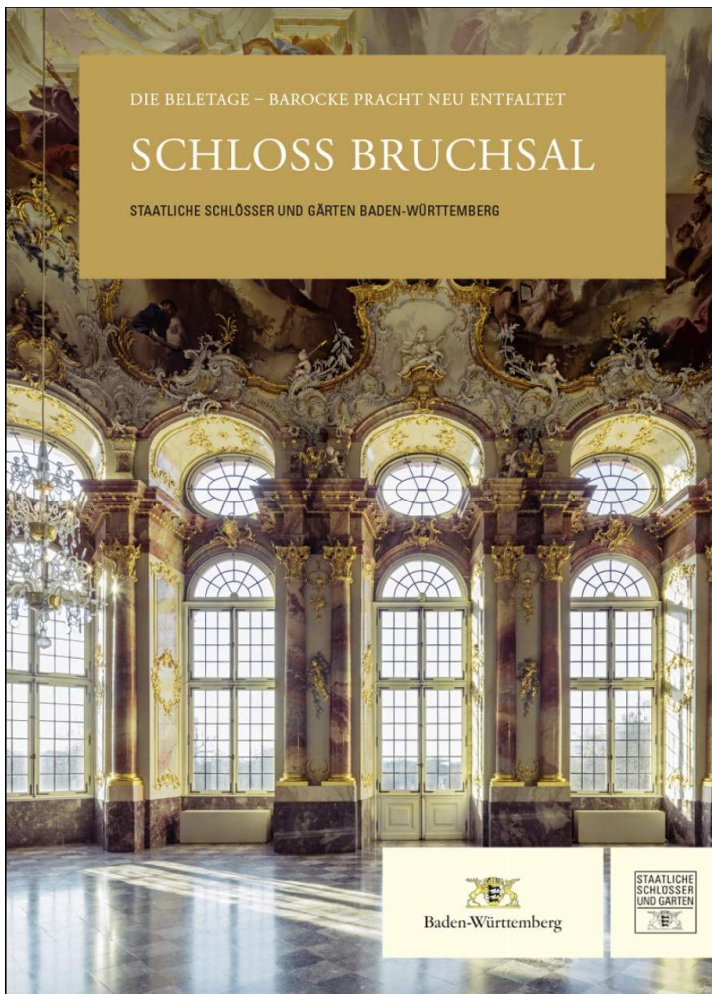
Because the walls of the staircase remained intact, and given that there was a lot of photographic material available on the staircase (for example photographs of Fritz Hirsch, prepared after restoration around 1910 or photographs from 1870 of

Georg Maria Eckert, as well as even colour photographs shortly before the bombing or some black and white from the 1930s and 1940s), between 1945 and 1975 the staircase was reconstructed as it was while in the other parts of the castle a museum of Baroque art in Baden Württemberg was done. For this the original room structure was not kept, which proved a challenge in the restoration of the Beletage later on. In the garden room of the staircase however a part is kept to show the effects of the fire after bombing as it was. The decision was that a ruin would not be so attractive and instead for reconstruction.

DIE BELETAGE – BAROCKE PRACHT NEU ENTFALTET

SCHLOSS BRUCHSAL

STAATLICHE SCHLÖSSER UND GÄRTEN BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG



Baden-Württemberg



With the years, the interest in the museum of Baroque art decreased, and in the new millennium the castle stayed in front of the challenge of a new concept after 2001. A concept was prepared for the restoration of the Beletage, not to be an exact reconstruction as the staircase but instead a construction of atmosphere using the existing inventory pieces which during the war were deposited outside the endangered railroad place of Bruchsal 1939-1944. The partition walls were a challenge of construction management, having to be hanged from girders as the floors could not carry them. For the rooms the inventory lists and existing photographs were used, which were however they were not so comprehensive as for the staircase. The costs for reconstruction also played a role as a complete reconstruction would not have been feasible. And the restoration theories today are also different in what regards authenticity. The restoration paid attention to ICOMOS principles to which Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg adheres.

About this and much more can be read in the collective volume edited by Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg [State castles and gardens Baden-Württemberg], which has its central in Bruchsal and in whose administration the castle stays. The actual story of destruction and reconstruction is contained in the second half of the book, while the first half deals with Baroque history. The first more than 200 pages deal with the castle as residence of the bishops of Speyer: history, architecture, artefacts contained, up to 1832. The next 50 pages are dedicated to the first life of the castle as museum before 1945. Another 60 pages deal with destruction and reconstruction before 2002. And the

last almost 200 pages are dedicated to the reconstruction of the Beletage 2008-2017: architecture and technique, installations, restoration of the originals. Over 30 chapters by 22 authors are depicting everything relevant to this story. The authors come from different institutions in Germany and represent different disciplines: architecture, history of art and architecture, conservation and restoration, sociology, design, archaeology, languages, history.

The book presents in a very detailed way how the effects of World War II destruction were removed even 70 years after. Several years before Castle Mannheim, another castle of Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg was restored with a different concept but also late after destruction. For castle Bruchsal also the presence of the nearly not changed garden, a different case of Mannheim, contributes to authenticity.

The book presents in a very detailed way the restoration story, but should not replace a visit to the castle itself, as seeing in place all items described in the book after reading of them is enriching. For example the ways of shadowing the exposed items, the scenography of beds which were not kept as such, the way how the partition walls are perceived. There is even a room which keeps original stuccos.

The book is in German which is a language not so spread as English but should be relevant for the German language countries in the region of the castle and others who learned the language. It is interesting for the knowledgeable tourist, who wants to know more about the castle, but also for specialists from art and architecture

history, interested in the Baroque history, for conservators and restorers, but also for those interested in construction technique and management in restoration. It is a lecture for home, given the size of the book (512 pages hard cover DIN A4). The aesthetics of the edition are very well done, on satin paper and full

color images where available in full color in original (others than the historical monochrome images). Contemporary photography is high quality and framed particularly for the book (without the visitor guide seen usually in the castle). The book is available at the castle but also in online shopping.

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