

The Paramour's Dresses in the Northern Gallery of Salzburg Cathedral 17.4.-1.11.2015

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Abstract

The exhibition *The Paramour's Dresses* was an installation of nine costumes of different actresses performing the role of the Paramour in the play *Jedermann/Everyman* by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929). It took place in the Northern Oratory in the cathedral, framing the former Salzburg Archbishop's residence the Cathedral Place, where the play has been performed since 1920. It marks the founding of the Salzburg Festival. The Paramour is a minor role, but of high public attention and her – mostly red - costume is seen from afar. She embodies temptation, love and beauty. The role has always been performed by famous actresses of the German language.

The exhibition's intention was to seduce the visitor walking through the space with the Paramour's dresses hanging in the exquisite vaults of the oratory. A special theatrical light design made the precious silks shimmer. There was no labelling, but a hand-out information sheet for every visitor.

Keywords: theatre costumes, Jedermann, Paramour, Hofmannsthal, Salzburg Festival, Domquartier Salzburg

Contents: Concept and Idea / The Play Everyman/Jedermann / Preparation / Installing the exhibition / Booklet and Catalogue / Video / Accompanying Activities / Press and Public Relation / Conclusion/ Links / Bibliography

Concept and Idea

The place was first: the four beautiful baroque rooms of the Cathedral's Northern Oratory with baroque vaults decorated with stucco in white and dark grey. There are almost no walls: windows to the interior of the cathedral, windows to the outside, big arches linking the rooms. The Northern Oratory is accessible to the public only since 2014, when all four museums situated in the former Archbishop's palace were united to the Domquartier, enabling a tour of the four places.



Figure 1: Ceiling of the Northern Oratory (Photo: D. Nicolai)

The oratory was used by the priests to prepare themselves for the holy service, the last room with the St. Rupertus altar shows more colourful and even richer decoration.

Dr. Erika Oehring, curator at the Residenz Picture Gallery, now part of the Domquartier, was in charge to organise a new exhibition in the Northern Oratory. With almost no walls to hang 'flat items' –as pictures in curating language are called- she came up with the idea of showing three dimensional textiles. I worked as the Costume Director of the Salzburg Festival when she asked me about a possible subject. When I saw the Northern Gallery for the first time, my immediate idea was 'The Paramour's Dresses'. The Northern Gallery is side by side the Cathedral Place, where each year since the founding of the Salzburg Festival in 1920 the play *Jedermann/Everyman* has been performed.

The Play *Everyman/Jedermann*



Figure 2: Programme of *Everyman* in 1920
(Photo D. Nicolai, with the permission of the Salzburg Festival Archives)

Everyman/Jedermann by Hugo von Hofmannsthal was directed for the first time in Salzburg in 1920 by Max Reinhardt. 1920 marked also the founding of the Salzburg Festival. Both Hofmannsthal and Reinhardt were also among the Festival's founders.

The play depicts the life and death of a rich man, as the subtitle describes and takes its form from medieval mystery plays with metaphorical roles. The Paramour, the girlfriend of the main character, is one of the smaller roles. Nevertheless it always has been performed by the most famous actresses in the German language, portraying beauty, love and temptation. So far a succession of thirty-three actresses have played the role. 2016 will see number thirty-four. Each season the revealing of the new Paramour dress is one of the most discussed topics in Austria. Most of the costumes shimmer in precious silk fabrics in various tones of red.

Preparation

The idea was accepted by the board of directors of the Domquartier, and we began with the preparations. Since 1990 the Paramour's costumes are kept in the Salzburg Festival costume stock. I chose eight Paramour dresses of different seasons, stagings and actresses, together with their shoes. And a ninth costume, the costume of Death, to refer to the subject of love and death in the play. Only once has the role of Death been performed by a woman: in 2005/2006 by Ulrike Folkerts.

We contacted the Salzburg Festival Archives to look at the designs and photographs of the various productions. We studied the programme booklets issued for the performances. I collected the documentation depicting the creation of the dresses in the Festival's ladies' tailorshop, giving references to the different silk fabrics, describing even the colour of the threads. We contacted the local television channel to provide us with all the evening reports of the different stagings. We established the timetable, including dates and decisions for publications and press release. Anneliese Kaar, the Graphic Designer took detailed photographs of the dresses.



Figure 3: Detail of Sunnyi Melles' costume, 1990 (Photo: Anneliese Kaar)

Installing the exhibition

The dresses were supposed to hang in space, on torsos covered with bleached linen, some with wooden arms. We did a 'Bauprobe' [mock up] as is usual in theatre set decoration and tried to hang one of the mounted dresses. We confirmed a certain height for the hanging, leaving space for an imaginary stage underneath, making the spectator's gaze rise to see them.

We used the steel cords and rings which normally serve to hang the pictures in the Gallery fastened at the shoulders of the torsos. The strings were attached to the huge circle fixed at the ceiling as a permanent installation in each vault. Each torso was held by three to four strings to balance the torso in a vertical position. The strings were fastened in a way where they interweaved in a pattern like a net. The front of the dresses all faced towards the middle of the circle. The dresses were shown in their pure silhouette, avoiding all supplementary details like long underskirts or coats. Only the shoes were placed underneath the dress, stuck to the marble floor with a special tape approved by the conservators.

The Paramour's dresses exhibition was set in context with the picture exhibition in the Residenz Gallery called *Temptation*.

We decided to hang one of the costumes at the end of the picture gallery- like an appetizer to make the visitor curious about visiting the Northern Oratory.



Figure 4: Brigitte Hobmeier's Dress, 2014 (Photo: Anneliese Kaar)

Brigitte Hobmeier's 2014 dress could be seen through the whole axis of the gallery, inviting the visitors to come close. A hidden wind machine made the ample skirt of silk satin and silk mousseline slowly dance in the air. The theatre light projectors made the rhinestones of the bodice glitter.



Figure 5: Northern Oratory, third room (Photo: Anneliese Kaar)

In the first room of the Northern Oratory a timeline listed all the actors of *Everyman* and the *Paramour* since 1920 and some selected renderings and the tailorshop documentation were presented. In the second and third room the dresses hung in a perspective order, four dresses in each room. The visitors could walk in between them. We decided to avoid any descriptions to keep the rooms clear.

The last room with the St. Rupertus altar and the colourful paintings on the ceiling offered a the place to sit down and watch the video showing sequences of the different productions to visualize the costumes worn on stage.

Booklet and Catalogue

A booklet to take away was offered for orientation to each visitor, available in English, German and Italian. The booklet showed photographs of the actresses wearing their costume and gave a detailed description of its cut and material. It also explained the date of the opening, director and costume designer.

The catalogue was conceived for the 'Temptation' picture exhibition and included a chapter about the *Paramour's* Dresses. Erika Oehring submitted a text about clothes and character, I wrote a text how the costumes are realized in the Salzburg Festival workshops in a complex process beginning with the designer's rendering to the costume on stage.



Figure 6: Booklets in Italian, English, German (Photo: Nicolai)

The motif of the booklet was designed following the Domquartier's corporate identity guidelines and was also used for a poster, seen all over the town of Salzburg.

Video

In the last room the visitor could watch a video showing sequences of the different stagings and actresses performing the Paramour. We tried to show the same scenes from different performances: the entrance, the kiss, the famous scream and the way the Paramour leaves the stage. It was very interesting to compare the different style of the stagings and notice each actress's individuality in the same role. The film also depicted the surroundings, the stage and the atmosphere of the Cathedral Place.

Accompanying Activities

Regularly guided tours were offered, given by the curators or staff of the Residenz Galerie.

Press and Public Relations

A press conference was held the day before the official opening, all tourist magazines in print and online thankfully referred to the show and many positive reviews which appeared in newspapers and television helped to attract a high number of visitors. In the summer season the synergy with the Salzburg Festival performances increased interest. In the end over 80,000 people saw the exhibition.

Conclusion

In times of budget limitation sometimes the synergy of different institutions in the same city allows new aspects of objects and places that always have been there to be explored. We did not need to rent or transport anything, we just carried it next door. The costumes were hanging in the Salzburg Festival stock in the dark and have not seen public light since they performed on stage. With this exhibition visitors and many residents of Salzburg, enjoyed meeting their Paramours again, and with the chance to compare them. Normally a Paramour is the only one on stage, but in this exhibition they met for the first time like friends.



Figure 7: The Paramour's Shoes (Photo: A. Kaar)

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Links

Domquartier

<http://www.domquartier.at/veranstaltung/ausstellung-die-kleider-der-buhlschaft-die-residenzgalerie-im-nordoratorium/>

Catalogue

http://residenzgalerie.at/Kataloge.36.0.html?cHash=4a41b5b7417423d0dc315c1ff327a910&tx_commerce_pi1%5BcatUid%5D=2&tx_commerce_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=228

Salzburg Festival

www.salzburgfestival.at

Residenzgalerie

www.residenzgalerie.at

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DVD

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