

**RICHARD H. DRIEHAUS PRIZE**  
**AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME**

**Saturday, March 24, 2018**

**John B. Murphy Auditorium Chicago**

**TORSTEN KULKE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH**

**(Picture #1)**

I want to thank the Jury, the Notre Dame School of Architecture and Richard H. Driehaus for awarding me the Henry Hope Reed Award for 2018 in recognition of my many years of service as the head of the Gesellschaft Historischer Neumarkt Dresden e.V. (GHND), the Society for the Dresden Neumarkt Square. This is only the second time this prize has been awarded to someone in Europe and it is the first time it has come to Germany. However, I am also accepting the award on behalf of those who have supported me. First among them is my wife and my entire family, then the members of the Society and then the architects and protectors of historic monuments who have had to work in the background.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, following the reformation, Dresden entered its first flowering. During the period of the Saxonian/Polish union in the 18th century its ruler August the Strong and his son developed the city further so that, prior to World War II, it came to stand throughout the world for art and culture, both of which it once again stands for today. (Picture #2)

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Dresden had become a prosperous city. In particular it had taken an enormous step forward through industrialization, but at the same time it had retained its beauty and its situation in the river valley of the Elbe and the surrounding landscape.

Following the destruction which occurred on February 13, 1945, Dresden was a dead desert of rubble. (Picture#3) The voices of those who wanted to reestablish the links to the old Dresden were ignored. Just as it was everywhere else in Germany, it was difficult to reestablish the architectural traditions. Owners who were prepared to rebuild their buildings were forbidden to do so and subsequently had their properties expropriated. All roots in the past were to be cut off. It is said that the losses suffered through the removal of the war ruins were even higher than those caused by the bombing attacks. The new communist state government

wanted to create a new social order and a new form of socialist human being, living in a new socialist city. Thus the old traditions were looked upon as a hindrance. Dresden was to become a modern socialist major city. Old land parcels upon which previously villas and patrician houses, many from the Victorian period, stood were rebuilt with major edifices in the style of Le Courbusier.

Nevertheless until well into the 1970s Dresden remained a massive desert of burned out ruins. (Picture#4) I can remember as a child how I traveled on the streetcar with my grandmother into the city center and saw these ghostly and yet fascinating burned out buildings. Meantime there grew up a kind of steppe of grass. All this left its mark upon me and thus arose my present day commitment.

I have not only you to thank, most honored jury and you Herr Driehaus that I am standing here today. In addition, there occurred a special fateful event, one which is only possible for a few generations: the peaceful collapse of the Berlin Wall! I grew up in East Germany. For me it was unimaginable that this wall could one day fall. It was an unbelievable feeling! This freedom has enabled us to do things which until then were unthinkable. To be sure the German Democratic Republic in its final phase had already begun some reconstruction – in 1985 the Semper Opera, designed and named after the great German master builder Gottfried Semper, was reopened. However the communist government was not in an economic position to realize a reconstruction program on today's scale. This turned out to be very fortunate since it meant that the land parcels were left unbuilt upon.

The people of Dresden had never ceased to believe in the reconstruction of the city center. On February 13, 1990 a group of Dresden citizens proclaimed a world-wide appeal asking for support for the reconstruction of the Dresden Frauenkirche under the title, " A Call from Dresden", so that this church could serve as an ecumenical center for world peace. This call was indeed heard and because of the unique contribution response, reconstruction was begun. In 2005 it was finished using among other resources contributions from the private funds of the English Queen Elizabeth II who donated the cross which sits atop the cathedral's lantern and funds given by Guenter Blobel the Nobel prize winner from New York. Presently the church belongs to the "Nails of the Cross " community started under the auspices of Conventry cathedral, England.

Now back to the Dresden Neumarkt:

In 1999 we founded the Gesellschaft Historischer Neumarkt with the goal of giving the Dresden Frauenkirche a suitable surrounding. The Dresden Neumarkt (the Newmarket Square) and the bordering areas constitute a part of the historic Old Town of the city of Dresden with European wide significance. In the background of this picture is a new structure,

an annex to the Cosel Palace on the Neumarkt, one which was deemed most unsuitable by the citizenry. (Ironically it is named the “New Palace” (Picture#5)) This new annex gave rise to an enormous concern that it could become the standard for the quality of the new construction on the Neumarkt.

Although already in 1995 Dresden architects had laid out a proposal for a set of zoning/configuration rules (which had its antecedents in German Democratic Republic planning) and called for the reconstruction of a large number of structures, it was blocked by the then governing city administration. Instead a so-called “Atelier Neumarkt 2000” Program was announced and architects were invited to participate and make submissions (Pictures 6-9). Later further competitions were announced, all with a modern plan. The pictures display what at that time was proposed and what by reason of the lobbying effort was actually constructed by investors.

It should be noted at this point that the GHND organized a movement in 2001 among architects working in traditional styles called “Contra the Atelier 2001”. The response to the Atelier Neumarkt 2000 of the citizenry which still had the pictures of the old Dresden with its beautiful baroque and classical facades in their heads, was very limited. Reconstruction therefore appeared to be the more appropriate course, supported as it was by the attachment felt by the Dresden inhabitants, in order to restore a sense of identity to the city center.

The resistance to reconstruction was formed above all by the architectural establishment. This resistance was already noticeable at the time of the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche . Our ideas were denigrated with the epithet that they were “stage scenery/Disneyland “ architecture. In addition at the beginning there was hardly any support from the political forces.

I was aware that we needed political legitimacy for our project and therefore I lead a citizens’ referendum in the fall of 2002.

They were called upon under the title, “ Yes to the Historic Neumarkt” to make a decision. Almost 80,000 people signed this referendum, including 63,338 who were inhabitants of the city. That was much more than the required 15% of eligible voters. To this very day, this success forms the foundation for the political legitimacy of the demand for the restoration of the Dresden Neumarkt to its condition before the destruction of 1945. This reconstruction is intended to be done on a scientific basis derived from the available archival sources. For this purpose blueprints, photos and paintings are being utilized. On the former 138 ground lots about 70 so-called “Leitbauten” or leading structures and “Leitfassaden” or leading facades

are being erected. They are so named because they are intended as models on which the remainder of the buildings are to be oriented.

What happened thereafter during the next decade and a half was a so-called “House to House War” over every new house with the city planning commission, the regional press and a very influential part of the architectural and monument protection community. We opposed the planning proposals of this architectural establishment with visualizations showing our ideas and through them decided public opinion via the local press in their favor . These almost perfectly photo realistic visualizations were financed by Guenter Blobel through the Friends of Dresden from New York, a non-profit organization he founded.

Because most of the land lots were city property over the sale of which the City Council made the decisions, the potential owners were forced to pay attention to the demands of the citizenry in most cases or at least offer compromises.

But, one couldn't just sit there and criticize the owners and investors. We needed an example project. (Picture #10) Therefore, under my direction the Society acquired a parcel of land, constructed a bourgeois house and transferred it for further use to a foundation. The Foundation calls itself the “The Bourgeois House Cultural Foundation “ and today very successfully promotes the international exchange of students by offering living quarters for music students at the Carl Maria von Weber College for Music in Dresden. The administration of the Foundation has been in my hands since its establishment.

It is anticipated that all of the work on the Dresden Neumarkt will be finished by 2022. The plans for the last area are already done. It is estimated that the total reconstruction effort, including the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche, will have cost one billion US dollars. Already today, before it is even completed, the Neumarkt is the most visited place in Dresden, by both city inhabitants and tourists. It is not for nothing that this area is called the “Heart and Soul” of the city of Dresden. For it is here that the city's identity and the citizenry's spirit and dedication are united.

Since 2011 I have been involved, with the Society, in the rebuilding of the former structures on the opposite bank of the Elbe River. We are speaking of the Neustaedter Markt (or New City Market Place) which, after the Altmarkt (Old Market) and the Neumarkt (New Market) is the third most important location in Dresden. In May of this year, a large international two stage competition will begin there. We are hoping thereby to be able to make a further contribution to the proper urbanization of this area which still today is divided by a major long distance highway. And in addition we are seeking to cause the district to be rebuilt in the future with traditional small structures together with a few reconstructed historic buildings.

The reconstruction of the Frauenkirche and the Neumarkt made a major contribution to the discussion of our architectural heritage. (Picture #11) Everywhere in Germany there are now reconstruction efforts underway. So for example in Potsdam the city palace of Friedrich the Second has been rebuilt and the cornerstone of the famed Garrison Church has just been laid. In Berlin we are expecting the completion of the rebuilding of the Berlin City Palace in 2019. To be sure, people in Berlin have for years been discussing the restoration of the Architectural Academy by Friedrich Schinkel and the rebuilding of the old city quarter. In the autumn of this year in Frankfurt an area between the cathedral and the famed "Roemer Platz (the Roman Square) will be opened which will contain traditional architecture as well as a few reconstructions. (Picture#12) Something has been set in motion in Germany which can no longer be halted. Once again discussions about tradition in architecture and city building are occurring. The modern style has largely subsided. It can hardly convince people any longer with its building solutions. We were in the fortunate position in Dresden as well as in Frankfurt, Berlin and also Potsdam to take part in this development and we were able to provide help to the politicians, the construction experts and the citizens from the experience we had gained in Dresden.

(Picture #13) I would like to close with the words of the famed architect, Christoph Maeckler. He has delivered a very apt analysis of the present day situation. "Whenever, through the length and breadth of the country, we erect new houses and indeed entire city quarters in historic fashion, this is nothing other than a response to a helpless cry of a society that is seeking urban surroundings with which they feel at home, comfortable, at ease and secure. --- a feeling which we architects have clearly withheld from society in the preceding decades. As long as we fail to understand this, our architecture will remain irrelevant." Please note that Christoph Maeckler himself is dedicated to the modern!

Most honorable Jury and Herr Driehaus, many thanks once again for this award for which I am deeply moved. Many Thanks!