

A mysterious discovery

In 1975 a cardboard box with a few pieces of metal was handed over to the depot department of the State Palaces and Gardens Potsdam-Sanssouci by Fritz Leweke (1901-2001), a church painter and restorer from Halle/Saxony-Anhalt. The enclosed note in the box said that the metal pieces were found and retrieved by Leweke in the "Ovale Saal" (oval hall) of the Palace Martinskirchen/Saxony, which belongs since 1814 to Brandenburg.

The Palace Martinskirchen (<http://www.schloesser-gmbh.de/13-martinskirchen.php> und <http://www.fv-schloss-martinskirchen.de/>) was owned by the brother of the Earl Heinrich von Brühl, who was the prime minister of the Elector of Saxony and the King of Poland. In this palace there is still a room with decorations of the typical Saxon rococo style. All the other palaces with this special decoration style were destroyed by the Prussian King Frederick II. during the the Seven Years War.

No one could assign a function to these pretty uncommon metal pieces, and therefore, they remained in their box and were not inventoried. In 2008 the author of this article found incidentally a picture with the title "glass sconces with brass socket and nozzle" while doing online research on the Boughton House in Northamptonshire. The pieces on the picture were dated around 1700 and had an almost identical look to the pieces of the Palace Martinskirchen. The only difference was that the pieces of Martinskirchen had two instead of one nozzle on the wall plate (see picture <http://www.historic-house.org/history/part2/history-87.html>, Fig. 321). And this was the answer to the mystery! The metal pieces conduce to carry in their nozzles simple glass arms which could be equipped with candles if required and lighted.

Even for research, this discovery is of utmost importance because it is an early proof of manufacturing glass arms for candleholders. But no examples are existing anymore because of the fragility of the material or their meaning was not realized.

In the meantime, there are more locations known, where this special kind of wall light existed or still exists: For example, they are depicted on pastels of Cornelis Troost (1696-1750), which are located in the museum Mauritshuis in Den Haag (<http://www.mauritshuis.nl/nl-nl/verdiep/de-collectie/kunstwerken/rumor-erat-in-casa-het->

[werd-rumoerig-in-huis-189/](#) Cornelis Troost, 'Rumor erat in casa', 1740 or <http://www.mauritshuis.nl/nl-nl/verdiep/de-collectie/kunstwerken/nemo-loquebatur-niemand-sprak-er-186/> Cornelis Troost, 'Nemo loquebatur', 1740). On both pastels these special wall lights hang beside the fireplace. In one case, they are equipped for two candle arms, and in the other case, just for one candle arm. You will find such candleholders also in the collection of the Palace Wilanow near Warsaw (www.wilanow-palac.pl).

To show how these candleholders once looked alike, the glass issuer Petra Matela from the north Bohemian city Novy Bor (Sklářský Atelier s.r.o., www.sklarskyatelier.cz) made two appropriate glass arms available, which were copied for another project according to historical models, but not used because of little failures for that project.

On September 30th 2014 the candleholders were handed over by personnel of the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg to the friends' association of the Palace Martinskirchen and to the governing mayor of the town Mühlberg/Elbe, Ms. Hannelore Brendel.

Further references about this kind of wall lights are very welcomed!