

## Candle Light Impressions / Daylight Realities

Following a supper in the Schloss, Barbara Kaiser (English) and Paul Schuster (German) lead us at 20:30 in two groups up the open stairs of the courtyard. The lanterns in the loggia are lit with electric candles and as we prepare to enter, all electric light is extinguished. This creates a contemplative atmosphere and prepares us for the new level of light. Our two groups then enter the candle-lit rooms from opposite ends of the building at the same time.



As we first enter the rooms, it is still twilight outside and Mrs. Kaiser assures us that one does not get the full effect of the candles until it is fully dark. In spite of this, we are all mesmerized by this first impression and scatter in all directions, like balls on a billiard table. We have plenty of time but attempt to absorb everything at once. It is a few minutes before Mrs. Kaiser manages to shake us out of our dream-like trance and shepherd us two rooms further where she had planned to begin our tour.

The Schloss is fortunately situated in a large park, making interference from outside light

less of a problem and therefore the illusion of being back to the 17<sup>th</sup> C. is almost complete. The windows have remained as they were when first constructed - unadorned by any kind of dressing and in the night they act as mirrors reflecting the candle light back in to the room. When we walk through the rooms at the back of the Schloss, near a road and other houses, it is a bit of an irritating surprise to see that the rest of the world still has electric light. At the front of the building I gaze out of the window to see someone swinging a torch as they walk down the gravel path to the gate and I like to imagine that they are actually swinging a candle-lit lantern.

We maintain a slow pace however while Mrs. Kaiser proceeds to inform us about the history of the building and the family that had it built, adding to the facts as we move from room to room. Some rooms are lit with only one chandelier, others with two and sometimes complimented by candelabras and wall sconces. In spite of this there is not much light being emitted by the candles, and as we find out later from our colleague Rob van Beek who made some measurements, it is less than 1 Lux, this is far less than we are accustomed to today. At first one only sees the candles, but it does not take long for our eyes to adjust to this new level of illumination and we find that one can see the room really quite well, with the exception perhaps of some of the darker paintings that tend to reflect the light from their lacquered surfaces. This raises the question under discussion again; if one can see things so well with such subtle illumination, why do we need to use so *much* light today?

We linger especially long by one chandelier as it is so different in form, style and type from the others. This is a piece brought especially for the evening from Sweden by Karel Kanak for our enjoyment. A wonderfully fine rock crystal chandelier with a polished tin frame, hung with clusters of pearls and drops, the candles sitting in especially petite candle holders. These gave the team at Eggenberg a bit of a problem as all the candles were too large and too long for the chandelier but the improvisation is a



successful one.

At this point, we are only half-way around the building and it is already 22:15! Our tour was supposed to end at 22:30 - we have not only gone back in time, we have completely lost track of it!! We are all tired too, not just from the day of lectures but we also start to notice that we have been standing for a long time. It doesn't matter, most of us wouldn't leave early and risk missing something. We do pick up our pace however and move on to the highlight of the evening – The Planetary Room. Paul Schuster and his group enter from the opposite side of the room at the same time as we do, thereby giving us all the opportunity to view the 16 chandeliers and numerous wall-sconces in full glory. Together with the polished black & white marble floor, the painted allegories on the walls and ceilings and the gold frames and decorations, the overall effect is highly festive. We only need an orchestra and the dance could begin.

Using a traditional conical candle snuffer on a long pole, the candles are now extinguished one by one, first on the wall-sconces, then the chandeliers. One realizes as the wall-sconces are extinguished, how much light is provided by these sources – without them, the floor and walls are quite dark and the room seems to get smaller. Until the last candle is extinguished we remain spellbound by the impressions in this grand hall. It is now time to leave our temporary time warp and go to bed and so we traipse down the driveway to the taxis waiting for us in front of the gate.



Daytime views



Night time reflections

The next morning, we have the opportunity to view the rooms again by daylight. Fortunately we have some sun today and on the side of the building facing the light, the sun streams in unhindered by curtains or blinds. The only nods to conserving as opposed to preserving the original decoration are a couple of fabric blinds mounted on the windows of the rooms containing particularly sensitive textiles. Over the years the only real light damage has been to the painted alcoves around the windows. We are even greeted by a pair of peacocks roosting on one of the window sills keeping watchful eyes on us and the garden at the same time. We notice now that there are views out of the large Baroque windows and the paintings that were so dark in the night that one only saw ghostly faces floating in a field of shellac reflections are now visible in their entirety. There are also a lot more colours visible, by candle light everything was much more golden, the blues and greens were not as noticeable as they are now and the light comes from without instead of within.



At night this picture seemed to be a black & white painting, during the day it was revealed as a ceramic relief

There are many facts, figures and names associated with the history of Schloss Eggenberg – all fascinating, the family's rise from successful tradesmen to being the right-hand man of the Emperor, the architectural design of the building based on the Gregorian Calendar and the Zodiac and the fact that the building was abandoned for so many years. All fascinating details indeed, but one can look these up on Wikipedia or in the lovely little book on the architecture and furnishings of the Schloss that we all gratefully received as a present. One of the plans for our weekend meeting in Graz was to discuss our impressions of the differences between these rooms when lit by candles or by daylight but we had such a full program of lectures and events that we never actually did that as a group, therefore I have taken the liberty of doing just that here in my report.

A few candlelight facts for those that enjoy them:

There are over 600 paraffin candles on the chandeliers, wall-sconces and girandoles in the 26 rooms we visited. These candles are specially made for Schloss Eggenberg as they are no longer produced in this quality in large numbers. In the Planetary Room alone, there are 16 chandeliers and 28 gold-plated wall brackets displaying a total of 180 candles.

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Photos: Christina & Olivier Perrin

All the photos below were generously provided by our member Annette Jacob from Historische Leuchten Jacob, demonstrating beautifully the comparisons of how the light works in the rooms during the day in comparison to the effect by candle light at night.



Lichtwirkung am Tag



Lichtwirkung bei Nacht

At night, the room appears in a golden light and the chandeliers are the most important articles in the room. During the day, white is the predominant colour with the glass of the chandeliers disappearing into the background and the blues and greens in the paintings can be seen clearly.



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