

KuBus 63

The Reconstruction of Dresden's Frauenkirche

00'00 BA

00'13

Dresden, the 22nd of June, 2004. After 12 years, the time has come to lift the tower "cap" - along with its pinnacle cross - into place, outwardly completing reconstruction of the world famous domed Frauenkirche. Suspense mounts as 60,000 onlookers await the big moment.

00'36

From 1743 onwards, the Frauenkirche was a dominant feature of the Dresden skyline. The church was built with donations from the local citizens, though King August "The Strong" liked to see himself as the true patron and contractor.

00'52 Original sound, Eberhard Burger, senior engineer

"The Frauenkirche is a citizen's church. Built from 1726 to 1743, the city council was responsible for the entire construction project. The council's master of carpentry was master-builder of the church."

01'13 Original sound, Eberhard Burger, senior engineer

"What George Bähr created here is an architectural one-off, its particular form unique worldwide. With this construction the master builder achieved, among other things, an outstandingly high level of functional design: here, he managed to translate the content of the Protestant church service at the beginning of the 18th century into architecture."

01'49 Original sound, Thomas Gottschlich, architect,

Frauenkirche Foundation, Dresden

"It is simply the Lutheran ground plan common at the time - it's a preacher's church. At the interface between the deeper-set central, round church space and the slightly higher altar area, stands the pulpit, that's to say the priest; the spoken word is the central statement in the ground plan for *this* church as well."

02'14

For more than two hundred years, the emblematic stone "cap" of the biggest domed church north of the Alps defined the image of Dresden; the "stone bell" was the symbol of the city.

02'25

February, 1945: this film was shot just a few days before the start of the catastrophic events that were to descend upon the city in the last weeks of the war. Allied air raids had hit almost all larger German cities. Dresden had thus far been spared. In the night of the 13th to the 14th of February, radio broadcasts for the first time announced massive bomber squadrons heading towards Dresden.

02'50 Original sound, Ursula Silbermann, Dresden resident in

1945

"All of a sudden they said: the first bomber formations have reached the outskirts of Dresden. An air strike is to be expected."

03'01 Original sound, Ursula Silbermann, Dresden resident in

1945

"Dresden was packed with refugees. The main station was full of refugees It was a firestorm - you couldn't hold out against it - I ran down the street, with a wet blanket over my head just so that I could keep going . . . you found dead bodies at every turn, and that didn't even bother you anymore - there were so many That's how we experienced the air raids. ... when I went into town and saw the church, after the bombing, I wept and couldn't calm down for days afterwards. One was haunted by the image ... you didn't want to believe it ... you repressed it!"

04'04

Baroque Dresden was extinguished in a single night, the old town section nearly completely destroyed.

04'16

After the war, Dresdeners wanted to rebuild their Frauenkirche. The GDR powers-that-be rejected the plans, but did allow the rubble heap of church ruins to remain in place as an anti-war memorial.

04'29 Original sound, Eberhard Burger, senior engineer

"Even the mound of rubble had a special significance for Dresden citizens in GDR days. Though it was the then regime leaders who refrained from having the ruins cleared, it was the people of Dresden who actually maintained and protected the site."

04'51

1992: After German reunification a citizen's action group began gathering the funds for reconstruction. The work began by safeguarding the rubble 'archaeologically'.

05'02 Original sound, Andreas Wycislok, construction engineer

"Archaeologically means to save as much of what remains as possible in order to re-use it again in the new structure, always, of course, paying attention to where each individual piece of rubble was found. This is extremely important for the accurate reconstruction of the church later on."

05'27

Each piece of rubble was registered, numbered and labeled before removal for further examination. The chalk 'hatching' emphasized the stone's contours for the special camera gathering data for computer evaluation.

05'40 Original sound, Andreas Wycislok, construction engineer

"The rubble is very important to us, each piece of rubble should remain intact to be re-integrated in the construction."

05'48

Software developed for the project helped to analyze the data. With

3-D computer-generated pictures, the exact location of the stones in the original structure was determined. Precise plans for an archaeological reconstruction took shape. This data was also invaluable for the stonemasons' hand-restoration of the many critically damaged stones.

06'13 Original sound, Eberhard Burger, senior engineer

"The reconstruction is basically a balancing act between the knowledge and application of the old handicraft techniques, in use since the Middle Ages, and the implementation of modern technology."

06'24

Despite the technology, opponents see just a copy of the old Frauenkirche.

06'29 Original sound, Eberhard Burger, senior engineer

"With the use of about 44 % original construction materials in all, this cannot rightly be called a copy."

06'40

On the computer, the church appeared to be nearly resurrected already. In reality, reconstruction took many years - even with work continuing day and night throughout the year.

06'53

60 bricklayers and stone masons worked in two shifts to push construction onwards. Even with labour-saving modern technology, the builders used the same basic methods as their "guild ancestors" used over 250 years previously.

07'07

This 'trick' animation shows how construction progressed over the years – the work moved on apace.

07'23

In May, 2004, the keystone of the Frauenkirche could be laid - one year ahead of schedule. The bricklayers' and stonemasons' work was done.

07'44

2,000 bits of rubble was all that was left of the ornate baroque church altar, made by Johann Christian Feige according to George Bähr's designs. The painstaking reconstruction took several years, reproductions replacing missing pieces.

08'01 Original sound, Thomas Gottschlich, architect,

Frauenkirche Foundation, Dresden

"Our task with the altar and with the Frauenkirche in general, but most especially with the altar, is to show the *healed* wound, as opposed to keeping the wound artificially open, so to speak. This way the destruction that did in fact occur to this building is portrayed so that it's visible at second glance."

08'21

A photo was all that sculptor Vinzenz Wanitschke had for reference for a part of the altar that had to be entirely re-created: the gloriole around the 'eye of God', embedded in billowy clouds.

08'32 Original sound, Vinzenz Wanitschke, sculptor

"It is very complicated indeed, because everything has first to be modeled in clay, from which you then make a plaster mold ... you throw away a lot, you throw away the clay model you'd worked so hard at - throw the clay back into a crate; the mold you've made is hacked up again - like stone sculptors, you chip that away and then you're left with the original that you then also have to work on, grind and polish - so it's all quite an arduous process ... Yes, and one thing leads to another - the

color comes after that, then the gold, and in the end everything shines once again - astonishingly, because you'd have hardly believed it was possible beforehand."

09'18

October, 1993 – during rubble removal, the pinnacle cross from atop the dome had been recovered. Too damaged for restoration, the Dresden Trust, an English group supporting the project, took it in hand to have a replica made.

09'32 Original sound, Peter Nardini, Dresden Trust

"The money for this, half of it, more than half of it came from ordinary British people, giving as little as two, three euros, but they gave it every year for nine years and eventually we raised over possibly a million euros - in order to build this".

09'48 Original sound, Alan Smith, artisan blacksmith

"My father was a pilot, a Lancaster pilot in the bombing raids on Dresden. The only real bombing raid he ever talked about was the Dresden raid, how much horror there was when he was flying back and to Switzerland and 150 miles away they could still see the flames. Years later he discovered about the amount of devastation, the amount of destruction and obviously the terrible loss of life that was here and he used to sort of talk about it as a lesson why war is so bad."

10'20

The 1.2 ton cross took Grant MacDonald's artisan blacksmith team, under the direction of Alan Smith, six years to create. Financed by

thousands of donations in Britain, the *symbolic* value of the cross is doubtless far higher than its material worth.

10'35 Original sound, Peter Nardini, Dresden Trust

"This is a statement from the British people, from all the people in Britain to all the people of Germany and of course to the people of Dresden to say 'look! We start now, this is only a small piece of reconciliation ... but it's a good start'."

10'57

A few weeks after the cross was mounted on the church dome, a gigantic crane was brought into position outside the Frauenkirche. The entire construction, weighing more than 30 tons, had to be hoisted atop the church. The undertaking was not entirely without risk - a too strong wind could force the termination of the enterprise. The event was shown live on German television; more than 60,000 onlookers gathered at the site. Minister-president Milbradt of Saxony and the Duke of Kent, the British royal patron of the Dresden Trust, took part in the official ceremony.

11'38 Original sound, HRH, the Duke of Kent

"As we work together today to build a peaceful, free and united Europe, we should not try to forget our painful and difficult past. We must preserve it in our memory, so that it can never again be repeated."

12'03 Original sound, Eberhard Burger, senior engineer

"Lord, we pray that now, as we mount the pinnacle cross, everything will go smoothly, and that the remaining time together until the official church opening will be spent in good fellowship - for this we ask Your blessing."

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