

iors, and the central hall has been reconstructed according to a historical photograph.

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1908 Chemnitz Lawn-Tennis-Club (1908)

1908, Fritz Eugen Esche, brother of Herbert Esche and joint proprietor of the Esche stockings factory, had his own Chemnitz Lawn-Tennis-Club built on Goethestrasse, with a club house designed by Henry van de Velde. That modest three-storey building on a slope featured clear contours and sparse ornamentation, lending to it a very progressive air. The unusual building was replaced by a new one in the 1960s. Some of the furnishings were salvaged.

Next to: Priska Schmückle von Minckwitz



Chemnitz Lawn-Tennis-Club (1908)

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Villa Quisisana, central hall (2002) © László Farkas

The Henry van de Velde Gesellschaft Sachsen e.V. was founded in 1999 in connection with the restoration of the Esche villa. The society promotes the work of Henry van de Velde through public lectures, symposia, excursions, research projects, and the financing of restoration work. Its focus lies particularly on achieving an interaction between art and business. The activities of the society are supported by numerous partner organisations at home and abroad and by sponsors.

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Literature:

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Herbert Eugen Esche – Ein Lebensbild, Passage Verlag, 2001
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CHEMNITZ AND THE EUROPEAN
HENRY VAN DE VELDE-ROUTE

When the Belgian architect Henry van de Velde (1863–1957) assumed the post of artistic advisor to the Grand Duke of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach in 1902, his first architectural commission in Germany came from the industrial city of Chemnitz in Saxony: for a villa for the textile manufacturer Herbert Eugen Esche (1874–1962). Having completed that building, van de Velde received further commissions from members of Herbert Esche's family circle for various buildings and interiors. As a consequence, Chemnitz acquired a special significance in the architect's work. Three of his buildings in that city have been preserved and were extensively refurbished in recent years: the Esche villa, the Koerner villa and the central hall in the villa »Quisisana«. It is this important architectural heritage which makes Chemnitz one of the most important stops on the European van de Velde Route.

The villa Esche (1902 and 1911)

The plan Herbert Eugen Esche conceived in 1902 for a private villa followed from a commission given to van de Velde for a *Gründerzeit* apartment on the Kassberg (1898). »He wanted to have a house that radiated the same spirit as the furniture and other items which I had designed for him«, van de Velde recalled in his memoirs. Thus the architect carried out a commission which was rather unique in his career: to create the architectural framework for furniture he had already designed – a fully-furnished four-story villa with an ground area of 500 square metres. Another unusual circumstance was that just a few years after completing the villa, van de Velde was asked to build an extension. When this was completed in 1911 it imposed a much more integral, mature form on the original, rather lively structure.

When Herbert Esche left Chemnitz for the West in 1945, taking most of the furnishings with him, the Esche villa was initially used by the Soviet military, then by the German secret police, the Stasi, and finally as a training centre for the Chamber of Crafts. After the reunification of Germany in 1990, the Kunstsammlungen

Dinning-Room of the villa Esche (2002) © Hans-Christian Schink



Chemnitz were able to acquire some of the Esche furniture; the villa itself was returned to Esche's heirs, who sold it to the Grundstücks und Gebäudewirtschaftsgesellschaft, the municipal buildings and real estate management company, in 1998. The dilapidated building was restored, partly restructured, and the interior and garden largely rebuilt to their original state. In December 2001, the restored Esche villa was opened to the public; since then it is being used as a museum and a venue for events. The museum consists of two rooms (the dining-room and the music room), which have been authentically restored, and of three exhibition rooms in which other furnishings from the villa and other works by van de Velde are on show. Alongside the »Hohenhof« in Hagen (Westphalia), the Esche villa in Chemnitz offers a unique opportunity to experience one of van de Velde's architectural *gesamtkunstwerke*.

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Villa Esche (2002) © Hans-Christian Schink

The villa Quisisana (c. 1908)

Theodor Koerner senior (1855–1921), business magnate, city councillor, owner of the Beyer ink factory and father-in-law of Herbert Esche, commissioned Henry van de Velde with the reconstruction of the central hall in his Neorenaissance villa »Quisisana« around 1908. This little known work by van de Velde was spoilt as a result of the uses to which the villa was put between 1950 and 1990. In the course of its restoration, which was completed in 1996, offices and a restaurant have been installed in what was formerly a private residence. The central hall designed by van de Velde has largely been restored.

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The villa Koerner (1913/14)

Dr. Theodor Koerner junior (1882–1958) had his own residence, plus interiors, designed by van de Velde across the road from his father's in 1913/14, just a few years after Koerner senior had commissioned the Belgian architect with the reconstruction of the central hall in the villa »Quisisana«. Like many of the commissions that van de Velde carried out during his last years in Weimar, the Koerner villa is stylistically more in keeping with the ideal of the representative bourgeois house than his first villas were. By comparison with the villa Esche, the ground plan and room distribution here bear witness to the expertise the architect had gained in designing villas. In the Second World War the two upper floors of the Koerner villa were destroyed by a fire bomb. Part of the furnishings and interior decoration survived, but these were then removed in the late 1950s when the villa was sparingly reconstructed. Until the villa was returned to the Koerner heirs in 1990. It served the ERMAFA machine factory as an accounting office. The building was sold in 2001; and the new owners restored the exterior of the building, equipping the inside with offices and apartments. Van de Velde's ground plan has been maintained on the lower

Villa Koerner (2002) Foto: László Farkas

