

Something Else. The Reformation in Upper Lusatia

Major exhibition summer/fall 2017, winding up the series “Faces of the Reformation in Upper Lusatia, Bohemia and Silesia” which began 2012 in the Upper Lusatian-Lower Silesian Cultural Region.

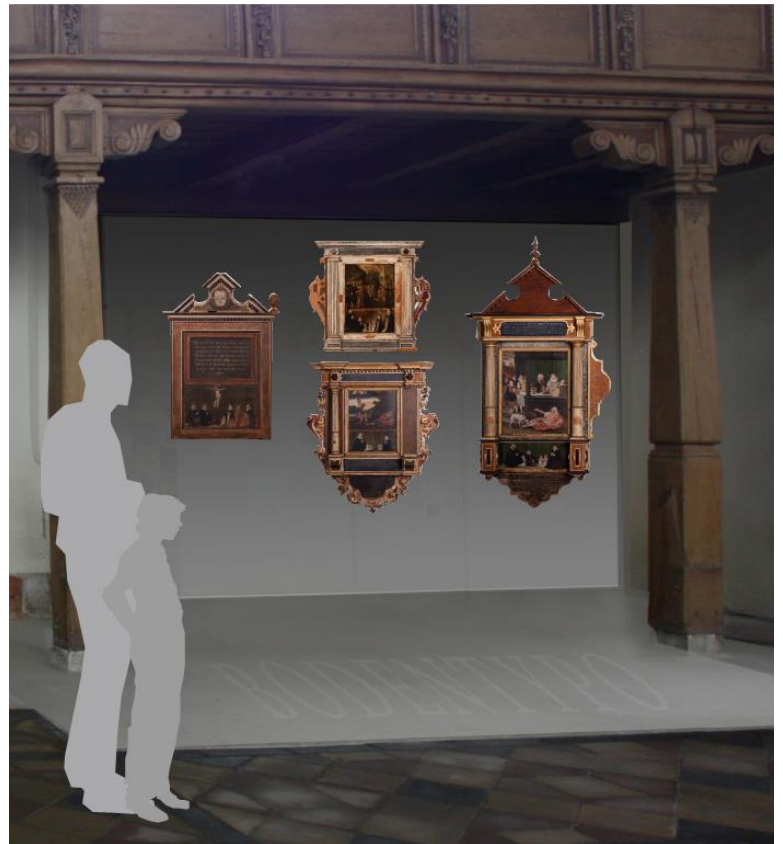


How did the inhabitants of Zittau experience the century of the Reformation? What did they believe? What did their world look like? The numerous epitaphs from Zittau's churches that have survived provide surprisingly multifaceted information in answer to these questions. They have recently been restored and are now focal points of the major Zittau exhibition on the Reformation in Upper Lusatia. In addition to the two lenten veils of 1472 and 1573, the epitaph exhibition is a further highlight among Zittau's valuable cultural treasures which draw interest near and far.

The Zittau 'Klosterkirche' or Monastery Church with historical

The Epitaph Treasure

One point of note in Zittau is the extremely rich and newly-restored collection of epitaphs dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. Epitaphs were commissioned by individuals and families in order to perpetuate their memory for posterity. Most of them are very artistically designed and consist of an inscription and a drawing or image, often depicting the family. The epitaphs afford a very impressive glimpse into the way people lived at the time of the Reformation; they testify in an intimate and moving way to belief and hope, to fate and to the hardships people of that time faced. While in many cities none or only very few of these memorials have been preserved, in Zittau over 80 of these works of art are still in existence today. This valuable epitaph collection is being presented in the Franciscan monastery Church of St. Peter and Paul, which has been restored for this purpose.



Epitaph for Zacharias Breuer and his family (1611) with depiction of the bad news being delivered to Job

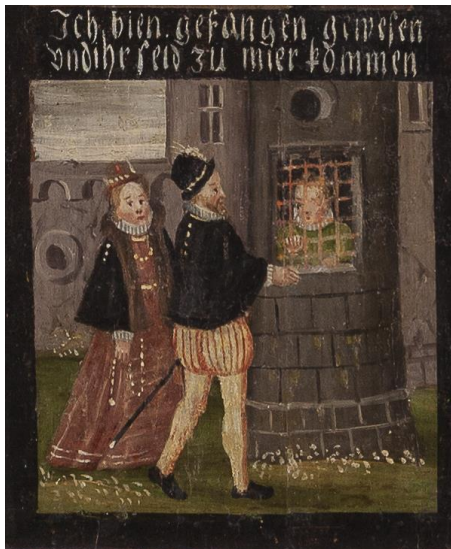
A rich and exciting history

These outstanding works of art are embedded here in the broader portrayal of the multifaceted and unusual history of the Reformation in Upper Lusatia. Alongside the cities, which for the most part converted to Reformed Christianity quite early on, large Catholic convents continued to exist in the immediate vicinity (Marienthal, Marienstern). They were closely linked in their economic development. There were also numerous mutual points of reference because of the ambitious artistic interiors of the churches. Later Bohemian exiles and Herrnhut's Bruderunität (also known as Moravian Brethren) joined them as well, further enriching the confessional diversity of Upper Lusatia. The fact that the large medieval Lenten Veil – although according to Luther absolutely inadmissible – continued to be used in Zittau through the late 17th century and that a new one was actually commissioned as late as 1573 may be surprising from our current perspective, yet is simply



further evidence of the many unusual developments at the time of the Reformation.

This exhibition of exquisite works of art in the unique double-naved church sanctuary is a “must-see” exhibition to be experienced in Upper Lusatia in 2017.



Epitaph for Matthias Schemisch and his family (1586), portraying the Last Judgement and the Seven Works of Mercy; details showing Christ as Judge as well as “I was in prison and you came to me,” and “I was a stranger and you took me in.”