

## The Exhibition

The Buddha House in Traben-Trarbach is a permanent exhibition of Buddhist iconography, the only one of its kind in Europe. For the first time, the public has access to what was previously a private collection. More than 1000 Buddhas and over 600 miniature Buddhas, collected over the past twenty years, now find their new home in an old wine cellar in Traben-Trarbach. The tallest figure stands nearly 13 feet high, and the heaviest among them weighs in at 1.5 tonnes. This extraordinary collection covers all philosophical threads that have their root in the Theravada tradition. The exhibits featured are from across India, Burma, China, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand, as well as other countries. As a result, this collection of different types of exhibits from various regions uncovers the rich multitude and diversity of existing Buddha sculptures.

The perfect setting for this remarkable Buddha collection is what historical heritage authorities call the world's only art nouveau winery. The building was designed in 1906 by the Berlin architect, Professor Bruno Möhring. After over twelve months of renovation work, the building was ready to house the remarkable exhibits. Fascinating works of art from Buddhist countries were moved in to occupy the building's 43,000 square feet, of which 11,000 is open space.

This large Buddha Exhibition entralls visitors in what was originally the winery building as well as in its roof garden and courtyard. Elaborate multimedia technology and an ever-growing database complement the range of exhibits. Visitors are able to inform themselves of this Far Eastern tradition in teachings and philosophy and experience Buddhism's depth and diversity. In addition, the cultural and events management organization, Media Mystika, together with other experts, organize regular talks and other events.

The Buddha-Haus in Traben-Trarbach will see more development over the next years. New exhibits will enrich, vary, and renew the collection in a continuous process. The blend of different sculptures ensure a continually changing direction. The exhibition aims to display the different Buddha statues so as to give an example of each existing Buddha type. This is done in order to unravel the complexity of Buddhist iconography to visitors. The exhibition aims to inform about the teachings of Buddhism by being informative, as well as inviting dialog and exchange on the subject. Numerous presentations facilitate this process by developing themes of outlay and content.

The Buddha-Haus is a permanent exhibition, which does not have a time constraint, but lays claim to a permanent and lasting existence. It is the hub from which various activities,

workshops, cultural events, lectures and media productions arise. Together, these promote dialog about the 'ancient wisdom' of Buddhist teachings and other social themes. These very themes should be raised for discussion if they are to enable one to achieve an enhanced understanding of life and attain mastery over it, and serve as an aid to personal development.

## **History of the Buddha**

The word "Buddha" literally means "Awakened One". A person who has experienced "Bodhi" (Awakening) is described in Buddhism as a Buddha. The honorific title "Buddha" may, in Buddhism, only be used for one who has attained spiritual purity and completeness by his own efforts. A Buddha, by definition, has attained absolute realization of all existing inner potential: complete wisdom (Prajna) and boundless yet distanced compassion (Karuna) for all living beings. A holy man who puts an end to suffering through spiritual teachings is, in contrast, called an "Arhat". The perfect Buddha (Samyaksambuddha) is treasured as the one who shows others the way to liberation by expounding his insights. However, since the life of the historical Buddha, Siddharta Gautama, another "complete" Buddha has not appeared on earth.

### **The historical Buddha, Siddharta Gautama**

Buddha is an historical figure. Scientists continue to discuss the dates of his life. It is however assumed that he lived between 560 - 480 (BCE. ). The historical Buddha grew up as the son of an Indian Raja (ruler). At around the age of 16, he married his cousin. However, thirteen years later, at the age of 29, he left his home to live life as an ascetic. This was a time of religious upheaval and it was a regular occurrence for men to leave their homes and children to pursue life as mendicants wandering through India. Siddharta Gautama, as was his original name, began his path as an extreme ascetic but soon recognized that this type of self-torture did not bring about the success he was striving for. He began to eat properly again and, through the deepest immersion in meditation, won his liberation at the age of 35. From that moment onwards, Siddharta Gautama was the historical Buddha, and was known as such by everyone. His lifetime was spent wandering through a region in Northern India and he died at the age of 80. After his body was cremated, his ashes were given to many kings and served as a relic in many pagodas throughout Asia as a reminder of his life and teachings.

The teachings revealed by the historical Buddha (Dharma) have been developed over the centuries and continue to live on today, along with the order of monks he founded (Sangha). However, they no longer exist in the place of their origins in northern India, but rather in the countries north, east and south of India's borders. Siddharta Gautama, or Buddha, did not see himself as a god, but as one whose enlightenment (Bodhi) and salvation (Nirvana) made him an exalted teacher. He considered himself one who showed the way to liberation from suffering. He modestly dismissed people's reverence and their openly displayed respect for him.

## **Buddhist Art**

The early Buddhists did not use pictures, but instead portrayed Buddha through symbols.

The portrayal of the Buddha in art only began some 450 years after his death. As a figure, Buddha is portrayed in relatively few iconographic forms. He is depicted walking, lying, sitting and standing. Of these four possible postures, each symbolizes a different epoch in the life of the historical Buddha. In order to understand these models, one must repeatedly come back to the historical Buddha's story. The cult is an element that comes later. The historical Buddha was by no means the founder of a cult. Not until much later in Mahayana Buddhism, as Buddhas became canonized in numbers, did the cults come into being. However, these portrayals no longer characterized him as an historical figure, but rather as a godlike being modeled on the legends about him that had formed with time. In contrast, Theravada Buddhism, which the historical Buddha himself founded, operated without cult.

## **History of the Julius Kayser Winery**

When the Berlin architect Bruno Möhring built the Julius Kayser Winery (between 1906 and 1907), Traben-Trarbach was the second largest wine-trading town in the world after Bordeaux. The enormous prosperity and wealth that resulted created the foundations for a surge in aristocratic construction at the beginning of the 20th century. Julius Kayser, the founder of the company Julius Kayser & Co., recognized the wine trade in Traben-Trarbach as an opportunity and decided to build a new complex of wine cellars. In doing this, however, the practical aspects of the building were to be matched in importance by the aesthetic element. Kayser chose Berlin architect, Bruno Möhring, as the right man for the project. Kayser saw Möhring as a genuine artist; one who poured his love and affection into his work. By the turn of the century Bruno Möhring had himself made Traben-Trarbach his second home, and had enriched the town with nine of his characteristic art nouveau buildings.

Until this point in his career Bruno Möhring had been predominantly known for his constructions in iron. It was not only the Moselle Bridge in Traben-Trarbach that appeared under his supervision, but also Bonn's Rhine Bridge, and other monumental bridge works across Germany. Bruno Möhring is considered one of the most important architects in Germany's Art Nouveau movement. It was not only his urban construction that had won him fame, but also his explosive art nouveau designs, his interior architecture and his artistic designs. With all this experience behind him, it was not hard for Möhring to design a massive concrete foundation - strong enough to bear the weight of a mountain - and use this to provide stable support for the building itself. Even the installation of a freight elevator between the four stories of the cellar complex did not seem to present a problem for the architect. The storage cellar could hold over 132 US gallons, the fermenting cellar 220,000 liters of wine, and roughly 200,000 bottles were kept in storage below. A construction of new wine cellars in the most modern style was completed within 18 months. The structures of this grand piece of architecture are the most impressive aspect of all. It is not the size of the building that makes it distinctive, but rather it is the immense coherence that leaves a lasting impression on the observer. Fortress-like elements give the building its character: four-centered arched windows and rounded turrets look like the fortifications of a castle. The immensely careful and detailed considerations of the building's design were drawn up in around 2,600 architectural sketches by the 43 year old Möhring.

For many years, Julius Kayser ran a successful winery, which stood out in the area throughout its time. Business was booming in Traben-Trarbach. When Julius Kayser died in 1934, the wine scene on the river Moselle also changed. Although the wine cellar remained under family ownership after his death, the producing region came under increasing pressure

from growing competition. International trade developed during the following years and yielded economic profit. Then the region was overtaken by a 'gold rush'. Everybody wanted to become a winemaker as trade was saturated by trade of the sweet grapes from the native Moselle valley. After a few years, this saturation of the market sent the wine trade into a serious crisis. The area's wine farming and juice business have suffered time and again from this.

Even Julius Kayser's winery changed hands regularly as a result of the market crash. Right up until the mid 1980's the cellars were used for the filling and storage of wine. When the once highly important company, Seagrams left the space, it was used for different purposes. A café moved in to the old winery and served as a attraction visited by bus tours, attracting as many as 300 visitors daily. In the mid 1990's the cellars hosted large-scale events and parties from neighboring schools. A commercial wine company moved in in the late '90's to make use of the rooms which had not been damaged by water leakages. In the year 2000 Wolfgang Preuss bought the fascinating construction where he would house his collection of Buddhas.