

Assessment of the historical and architectural value of the site

Lumpe Park – a unique European example of *grotto* architecture

a) Field survey

The elements that remained from what was called Lumpe Park, founded in 1908, present a unique European example of late romantic park architecture in the style of grotto buildings as implemented at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The primary site has been preserved in a surprising degree of completeness.

The basic structure consisted of two natural ravines, which bore romantic-style treatments using valuable natural materials and highlighting primary geological formations and presented a visitor attraction in their own right. They were also communication arteries and partly watercourses, to which most of the most important park structures connected – such as the castle, the cave and the artificial pond. The ravines no longer function as links; they were gradually filled almost throughout their length in the 1960s to 1980s, probably due to the technical difficulty of maintenance. Only one section above the castle has remained mostly intact, showing the admirable work of the architects. Here a Trachytic phonolite comes to the surface – a specific structure of the massif cracked in weak layers. Artificially bricked walls try to imitate this natural structure.

The most elaborate building is the artificial ruin of a castle; called Heinrichsburg, its surface is made of a special type of travertine from Thuringia incorporating numerous fossils and giving the building a “patina of age”. This material is typical of grotto architecture. The castle has primarily been preserved in its entirety. The water cascades, which contained dozens of fragile structures imitating stalactites, suffered the most damage. The original sculptural decoration has also disappeared.

The artificial cave, grotto, is much more damaged. It is a product typical of grotto architecture, the only one of its kind in Bohemia. The building was created by roofing and partition a deep ravine. Inside, the original illusion of a cave divided into two parts has been preserved; the walls are made of Thuringian travertine, complemented by a set of artificial stalactites, mostly damaged today. A special feature are the areas lined with phonolite fragments with clusters of crystals or remains of historical lighting in the form of “starry skies”. The cave, which was previously accessible, is now inaccessible due to the filling in of the ravine from both sides.

Another valuable site is the artificial body of water at the mouth of both ravines with a number of architectural interventions using natural stone in the surrounding slopes. Today they are mostly overgrown with lush vegetation, including a stone initially adapted to be a monument to the medieval German poet Walter von Vogelweide.

Outside the ravines there was the initial entrance segment of the park, where the Rose Passageway and the Krakonoš (Giant) Forest were located. A part of the initial staircase and a large collection of fossilized trunks of prehistoric tropical trees have been preserved.

b) Value assessment

Lumpe Park was one of the great “grotto complex” projects on a European scale in its time. It was a fashionable wave of the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, inspired by buildings from the Renaissance and Baroque periods fancied by nobility. In the 19th century, however, this “park architecture”, the art of landscaping, was brought to perfection by construction industry’s technological developments, especially concrete and reinforced concrete structures. In the context of the time, Lumpe Park ranks among the top works as evidenced by the preserved parts of the primary structures, which show very high quality artistic and craft workmanship. The construction works were carried out by the German company C. A. Dietrich, Clingen, one of the best known representatives of the grotto style in Germany. Only about a third of similar completed projects have survived to this day, and have recently become sought-after objects of heritage conservation. One of the most famous monuments of this type

is the trio of Henne Grottoes in northern Westphalia, made of Thuringian travertine between 1894 and 1895.

c) Conservation proposals

Ústí Zoo contains a monument with extraordinary potential that has not yet been adequately grasped. There is no equivalent of this in the Czech Republic; only the Berlin and Hamburg zoos have a similar value in Germany in the zoo segment. The restoration of the historic site to the widest possible extent would bring about the desired moment in which the “Zoo & Lumpe Park Ústí” would clearly distinguish itself from competing facilities in the Czech Republic and Germany and would thus gain a specific attraction for visitors.

The preserved main grotto structures of the castle and the cave can be precisely restored or, alternatively, preserved and the original decoration can be presented to visitors through augmented reality, which can be applied via mobile phones. Crucial to promoting the atmosphere of Lumpe Park, however, is the uncovering of the buried ravines and their rehabilitation as an attraction and communication route in the area that was formerly the Lumpe’s park. The restoration of the ravines as such will thus provide a journey of discovering the lost world of H. Lumpe in the style of post-modern archaeology, making the site attractive to the media. Making the ravines accessible will then reveal their presumed original grotto decoration and allow access to the cave itself.