

■ Schiller's skull

Two coffins lie side by side in a Weimar vault bearing the name of Goethe and Schiller. But one is now empty, since it appears the remains in Schiller's coffin were not his own. There have been two skulls in Schiller's tomb in the past, both taken from a mass grave where the beloved poet was buried in 1805. But new DNA analysis carried out by a team of international experts has determined that the latest skull, thought to be the right one, belonged to someone else. The results of the research team were broadcast in a television documentary called "The Friedrich Schiller Code."



A 3D reconstruction of what was long believed to be Schiller's visage.

■ Poets meet

As the Spanish writer Carmelo Vera Saura read his poem on Mauthausen, the concentration camp where fighters for the Republican government were held after their defeat in the Spanish Civil War, the bells of Frankfurt Cathedral began to peal. It was a poignant moment during the European Poetry Meeting held in Frankfurt on May 24.

The festival, organized by the Italian corporate alliance "Sifra - All Italy in One City," also included readings by Titos Patrikios, a winner of Greece's National Prize for Literature; Romania's Daniela Crasnar, the first president of parliament after the fall of Ceausescu; Italy's Mario Truffelli and Hartmut Barth-Engelbart of Germany.

Sifra president Emanuele Gatti has promised another installment of the series in 2009.

Those referring to the "Gründerzeit" (Founders' era) in Germany usually mean the period after 1871, once the German Empire was established. But they would be wrong. A new exhibit at the German Historical Museum in Berlin redefines this epoch and highlights the period between 1850 and 1870 instead.

Sometimes it is the little things that can illuminate an entire era – for example, lighting! Artificial light was a costly luxury item until the mid-19th century. But then, following the example set by the British, gas lighting was introduced in the larger cities and soon caught on in the countryside as well. To use the new machinery to capacity, factories for the first time could then have laborers work night shifts. With both day and night shifts, the rhythm of working life changed. Thanks to street lighting, dark and forbidding city quarters became safer and brighter at night.

"Let there be light!" – it sounds like a second Genesis. And, in fact, industrial Germany was born in the decades after the failed liberal revolution of 1848-49. The "Gründerzeit" (Founders' era), a new exhibit at the German Historical Museum in Berlin argues, had far less to do with the political founding of the German Empire in 1871 than is commonly assumed; instead, it had already begun in the 1850s and 1860s. Middle-class entrepreneurs laid the groundwork for their enterprises in those decades. Those companies shaped the economy not just of the empire but were influential long afterward.

The names of these "founding fathers" of German heavy industry is long and includes Krupp and Siemens, Opel and Pfaff, Henckels and Söhllein, Villeroi and Boch – names that resonate even today. All of them took advantage of the favorable economic conditions existing in mid-century Germany. The railroad network was rapidly extended and expanded, steelworks and mining enterprises increased their production levels and the stock market tapped into new financing sources. Scientific and technological advances also introduced new and

Let there be light

German industry predated the country's unification by decades | By Klaus Grimberg



Though the exhibition shows the red flag, critics are missing an adequate depiction of beginnings of the labor movement. Above: Ferdinand Lasalle (1825-1884) in a colored lithograph as champion of democracy.

more efficient production methods. Industrial expos and trade fairs, and in particular the very popular World's Fairs, displayed the entrepreneurial spirit and astonishing feats of engineering.

The growing self-confidence of the well-to-do entrepreneurial middle-classes was also on display. Grand villas were erected near the new "cathedrals" of industry, their interior décor no less opulent than that found in the houses of aristocrats. The clothing industry boomed, as did the serial production of art – which sold like hot cakes – suited to the refined furnishing of living rooms and salons. Posh upper middle-class society

decorated and furnished itself as befitting its new status.

That was also true of public life. Goethe's couplet "Guests by night, and toil by day! Weeks laborious, feast-days gay!" fit well with the brash self-confidence of the "founding fathers". They allowed themselves the pleasure of a stay

at a spa and hunting parties. They went to horse races and casinos. Or they enjoyed theater and opera – including the newly founded Wagner festival at Bayreuth. A pent-up hunger for education and cultivation could be stilled, finally, through the publication in large press runs of classic literary works, conversation lexica, travel reports and technical treatises. Marksman's festivals, singer's conclaves and gymnastics associations helped, in addition, to cement cohesion, particularly of "refined" society, and served to underscore the belief in national unity.

But at the same time, and in the shadows of extravagant displays

of upper middle-class wealth, a new underclass emerged. The population in the industrial centers exploded between 1850 and 1870 as younger workers poured in from the countryside. They lived in the simplest of housing and worked under appalling conditions in the factories, with long hours under dangerous and unhealthy conditions. And they did so for paltry wages and without insurance. Child labor was barely regulated at the time.

For many, the only alternative was emigration. Passenger ships regularly sailed the Atlantic to the U.S. from Hamburg, starting in 1847, and from Bremen in 1857. Passengers had to endure three to four weeks of living cheek by jowl, in steerage, onboard the great sailing ships before they could finally disembark in the New World – and thousands did not survive the trip.

It is hardly surprising, given the dramatic increase in wants and needs that the workers began to organize. In 1863, Ferdinand Lasalle founded the "Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein" – (the general German workers' association) – and this date, long before the German Empire was founded in 1871, marks the beginning of organized resistance to the inhuman working conditions in the factories and the end of their political immaturity.

However, this topic is only addressed on the margins of the Berlin exhibit. The curators were unanimous in arguing there was material enough for a separate exhibit devoted solely to the labor movement.

The epoch of the "Gründerzeit" can be understood anew, or in a different manner, by focusing on the economic rise of the entrepreneurial and educated middle classes. Successful entrepreneurs strongly influenced the decades before 1871 with their enthusiasm for progress and by the ostentatious manner in which they lived. Still more significant was how the terrain was prepared for national unity through economic upswing, international trade connections and a desire to refashion German society. Bismark's wars, starting in 1864, created the political conditions making it possible to proclaim Prussian King Wilhelm I as Emperor in Germany at the Palace of Versailles in 1871. But the economic and societal ground-work to do so had long been laid by the "founding fathers". ■

Gründerzeit
1848-1871 – The Age of Industry
between Revolution 1848 and Empire 1871
German Historical Museum, Berlin
Until Aug. 31, Daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Entrance: €5 (free for those under 18)
Catalog: €28
www.dhm.de/ENGLISH

An unfulfilled yearning

Franz Kafka loved Munich but the city gave him the cold shoulder | By Thomas Schuler

Franz Kafka wanted to study in Munich but didn't feel welcome. His later visits were not much better. Things have changed – now the Munich Literature House is dedicating an exhibition to the writer.

Munich really wasn't a good place for Franz Kafka. Between 1903 and 1916, the writer from Prague took the 10-hour train ride from Bohemia to Bavaria's capital three times. At the time, painters like Franz Marc and Paul Klee and writers such as Thomas Mann and Lion Feuchtwanger were drawn to Munich, especially to Schwabing where the university is located.

Kafka, the law student, also wanted to go there. Law bored him. He had chosen that field of study to please his father after trying out chemistry with little enthusiasm and art history and German studies with great interest, though he complained to a friend that the lectures in German studies had been a disappointment. The professor's lectures were so dry that the subject matter "turned into wood flour in his mouth."

In November 1903, the 20-year-old wanted to flee the constrictions of his home and his father's influence. At the same time, he

wanted to switch majors and study German literature again, this time in Munich. A friend was supposed to help by introducing him to university officials. Kafka waited for days, sat in Café Luitpold, read the paper and wrote four cards to his friend – in vain. He didn't answer. Disappointed, Kafka went home after two weeks.

"For Kafka, Munich was an unfulfilled yearning, unfortunately," said Alfons Schweiggert, who has written several books about Kafka, most recently "Kafka in München." According to Schweiggert, Kafka never did anything that would have opened the city up for him. Even so, Munich played a role in the author's life: In general, things that repulsed him also attracted him, a phenomenon that he transformed into literary energy.

At any rate, in 1908, he published his first stories in Munich's Hyperion newspaper. The city didn't ever let go of him entirely. In 1911, when he traveled to Switzerland with his friend Max Brod, he stopped in Munich. They drove through the city for half an hour in a taxi. The trip must have been eerie – it was dark and

pouring with rain. The tourists didn't recognize anything on this blitz tour. In his diary, Kafka wrote: "A longer stop was once granted at the Angel of Peace monument."

In 1916, during World War I, Kafka returned to Café Luitpold in Brienner Strasse and held a reading on the first floor in Galerie Goltz. It was his only reading outside of Prague and one of only two public readings. If one is to believe the critics, this visit was no success either. The story "In the Penal Colony" was deemed "too long and not captivating enough" and "repugnant in terms of material" by the critics. The writer "indulged in horror," wrote another, adding that he overstepped the limits of good taste.

Participants later said the reading made them shiver, and that wasn't meant as a compliment. Three listeners apparently snickered out whereupon Kafka snickered with irritation. Kafka returned to Prague frustrated, says Schweiggert. In 1920, Kafka wanted to visit Munich one more time but his increasing lung problems prevented him from doing so.

Almost 90 years later, Kafka is regarded as a genius who has influenced authors worldwide ranging from Paul Auster and Haruki Murakami. Even Munich is celebrating him now. For Kafka's 125th anniversary, the Munich Literature House at Salvatorplatz, which is only a few steps away from Café Luitpold, will



The complete collection of 1,200 pictures is shown in the accompanying book "Kafka's Welt" (€68) by Hartmut Binder, published by Rowohlt-Verlag.

present an exhibition on Kafka's world. From more than 1,200 photos, curators Hartmut Binder and Armin Kratzert selected 140, some of which are unknown even to experts on Kafka. An open layout of violet shelves is modeled based on the floor plan of Kafka's parents' apartment in Prague which he used as the setting in the opening scene of his story "The Metamorphosis": "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect."

Two video documents are the crowning touch of the exhibition: a television interview from 1968 with his friend, the writer Max Brod, and a conversation between the pianist Alice Herz-Sommer, at age 104, and the exhibition's curators, which took place only a few months ago.

In the interview, Brod contradicts everyone who only sees a serious, depressed person in Kafka: in small social settings, he had an "enchanting wit and liveliness" at his command, said Brod. "He was not as depressed as people present him today," Herz-Sommer says Kafka had been a "mixture of despair and humor" – none of his stories were completely without humor. To her, his work contains the hidden message that one shouldn't take life too seriously. Apparently, Kafka was always surrounded by pretty ladies but had the same problem with all of them: "He couldn't make up his mind!" ■

Kafka's World
Munich Literature House
until Aug. 3
Tue, Wed, Fri, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Thu, 11 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Sat-Sun/holidays 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Admission: €5