



Visit to Rathgen-Forschungslabor, Staatliche Museenzu Berlin

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On the invitation of, German Federal Foreign Office, I visited Museums, Conservation Laboratory and Research Laboratory in Berlin along with the Director (Collections & Administration), National Museum (Mr. P.K. Nagta), in the month of 1st week of December. The visit was to see the Museum and sister organizations and exchange views on conservation, digitization and presentation of Ancient Relics from Central Asia. The exchange brought me face to face with Conservators, Administrators and Museum Directors & Planners having different ideas and working styles. The major Museum was the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Asian Art Museum); which was the centre of all activities.

At the Museum we participated in an International seminar based on "Current and future Conservations, Excavation and Research projects in Kizil and Turfan (China), New Delhi (India), Karabalgasun (Mongolia), Leipzig, Bonn and Berlin (Germany). It was linked to the Exhibition:-The Ruins of Khocho (Traces of the wooden Architecture on the Ancient Silk Road).

The collection at the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Asian Art Museum) is characterized by its tremendous variety, encompassing early archaeological artefacts, expressive ritual sculptures from different Asian religions, precious examples of applied arts which bear witness to the most highly developed craftwork, as well as the rich pictorial art of Asia. The

latter offers equal measures of elaborate narrative and expressive abstract representations. Individual works of contemporary art link together the traditional and the contemporary. Among the Museum's highlights are the Central Asian murals and sculptures, which predominantly originate from the Buddhist cave temples from the so-called Silk Road. They constitute the link between the sculptures of South and East Asia. Highlights also include the religious sculptures of Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism, as well as the collection of East Asian painting, Japanese woodcuts and East Asian lacquer objects. We saw the beautiful collection, the open storage (Reserve collection) and the Exhibition from Ruins of Khocho. It was captivating and interesting especially the storage.

The magnificent centrepiece of the exhibition, in terms of both the rarity of the objects themselves and the architectural setting in which they are presented, is formed by the world-famous Turfan Collection, named after the first of four royal Prussian expeditions conducted between 1902 and 1914 to the northern Silk Road, in particular to the city of Turfan (in the Uygur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang of the People's Republic of China). The Turfan Collection's murals, paintings on fabric and paper, clay and wood sculptures of the 3rd to 13th centuries originate for the most part from Buddhist Temples. area of Wall Paintings.



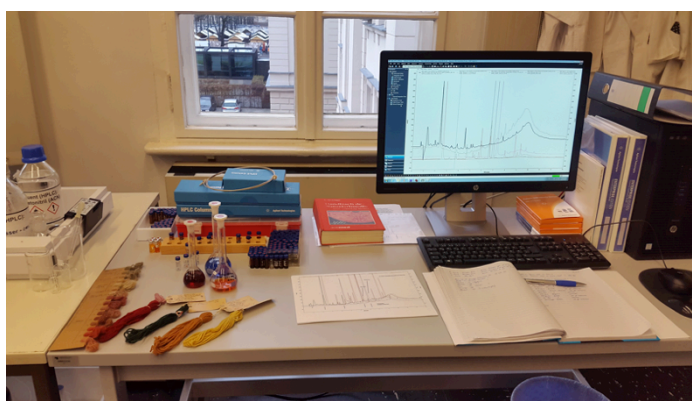
In front of Neues Museum (National Museums in Berlin)



Visual storage of sculptures

After these seminar our meetings took us to other Museums in Berlin like Neues Museum (National Museums in Berlin); where Nefertiti was the pieced resistance; along with papyrus fragments and a few Jewellery objects from city of Troy (?). We visited Museum Island too.

Then our next stop took us to Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing (BAM). In a technical unit we saw the researchers being done on the materials to be used in Museums ((like show- case, structures etc). In the National Museum, New Delhi certain showcases are being used which I came to know was duly certified by BAM!!! Finally I went into the Research Laboratory known as Rathgen- for schungslabor where their Director Dr. Ina Reicho talked in a slide Presentation about the projects, future projects and scientific tests on wall paintings. We saw some sampling of textiles / dyes / oils and other staffs in the laboratory. It was really a very important insight from the point of view of a Museum Professional, which will remain etched in my memory and do something on the similar lines in terms of conservation and Analysis.



At The Rathgen Laboratory the conservation scientist showing use of High-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) for the analysis of Dyes by taking very minute sample and describing the importance of creating a HPLC database of standard dyes.