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Gert Gröning at 70 – More than 40 Years of Research in the History of Garden Culture

Volume 22 of the CGL Studies entitled “From Dangast to Colorado Springs – Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff 1892–1983. Notes on the Life and Work of the First Woman Graduate in Landscape Architecture”, appears on the occasion of Professor Gert Gröning’s seventieth birthday, to commemorate his outstanding way of advancing and enriching our knowledge by his research in the special field of the history of landscape architecture in the twentieth century. However, the volume is not a festschrift in the usual sense to which male and female colleagues are invited to write contributions. In the present case, we have asked the person to be honoured to act himself as an author.

On the occasion of Gert Gröning’s sixtieth birthday, there already appeared the festschrift “Gegen den Strom” [“Against the Current”] in which many colleagues reflected in individual contributions on the thematic breadth and scientific excellence of the jubilee, at the initiative of Uwe Schneider and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn.¹ That volume is devoted above all to discussion among professionals of open space development and garden culture and to bringing out the way Gert Gröning sees himself as a scholar, conceiving science as an activity that often has to be pursued against resistance: he critically questions established views, regards even the seemingly inconspicuous as important, puts uncomfortable questions in emphatic terms, while insisting on an answer to them, and – what is crucial for science – despite the often minimal resources of the universities, he tries to make sure that the knowledge gained is and was ultimately published. This kind of scientific work “against the current” is especially distinctive of Gert Gröning.

Five years later, on the occasion of Gert Gröning’s sixty-fifth birthday, Stefanie Hennecke organized the conference “Kunst Garten Kultur” at the University of the Arts in Berlin. Since 1985 that is where Gert Gröning directed the field of garden culture and open space development at the institute of history and theory of design and represented his field of studies as a professor of landscape architecture both in design practice and in theory-based seminars.² The conference in July

1 Uwe Schneider and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Gegen den Strom. Gert Gröning zum 60. Geburtstag*. Beiträge zur räumlichen Planung. Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Grünplanung und Gartenarchitektur der Universität Hannover, vol. 76, Hannover, 2004.

2 On the teaching activities of Gert Gröning at the Berlin University of the Arts, see Stefanie Hennecke, *Freiraumplanung im interdisziplinären Kontext. Ein Gespräch mit Gert Gröning*, in: *Stadt und Grün*, 58 (2006), 10, p. 7–16.

2009 and the subsequent conference volume “Kunst Garten Kultur”³ edited jointly with Gert Gröning were devoted to the interdisciplinary perspectives opened up by the topic of the garden culture when permitted by the openness of those researching the topic. Among the themes selected for discussion were the garden cultural aspects of the history of music, the dance, the fine arts, comics and the culinary art, without failing to discuss the socio-political dimension in each case.

The two titles, “Gegen den Strom” and “Kunst Garten Kultur” characterize each in its own way Gert Gröning’s special personality as a researcher with which the authors of the introduction to this volume and coeditors of more than one “predecessor” festschrift feel a special bond. Starting with supervising our doctoral programs and continuing with common teaching projects followed by numerous research projects and publications,⁴ we can both look back to many years of working together with Gert Gröning. Our collaboration with this CGL volume is therefore primarily a note of thanks to him for the support and the suggestions we have received over so many years and which we continue to receive, and which have appreciably influenced our careers and helped them take their present form.

Instead of now publishing a festschrift No. 3, we decided to give the person to be honoured the chance to speak himself in the way that has always distinguished him: by presenting his indefatigable research activities. Even five years after retiring from higher education, he continues to act at a high level as a scholar and

3 Stefanie Hennecke and Gert Gröning, *Kunst Garten Kultur*, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin, 2010.

4 On common publications with Stefanie Hennecke, see e.g. *Hwa Gye und Da Guan Yuan. Beiträge zur koreanischen und chinesischen Gartenkultur*, Universität der Künste Berlin, Berlin, 2009. On common publications with Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, see e.g. Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Die Liebe zur Landschaft*, part I, *Natur in Bewegung. Zur Bedeutung natur- und freiraumorientierter Bewegungen der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts für die Entwicklung der Freiraumplanung*, Ulfert Herlyn and Gert Gröning (eds.), *Arbeiten zur sozialwissenschaftlich orientierten Freiraumplanung*, vol. 7, Minerva Verlag, Munich; Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Die Liebe zur Landschaft*, part III, *Der Drang nach Osten. Zur Entwicklung der Landespflege im Nationalsozialismus und während des Zweiten Weltkrieges in den “eingegliederten Ostgebieten”*, Herlyn, Ulfert and Gert Gröning (eds.), *Arbeiten zur sozialwissenschaftlich orientierten Freiraumplanung*, vol. 9, Minerva Verlag, Munich, 1987.

author.⁵ In order to take at least some of the load off his overflowing desk, we felt it was an appropriate birthday present to him to bring to a conclusion – probably only provisionally, as so often in the past – one of his research projects which we had already known about for a long time. We acted as it were as catalysts and invited him to complete his studies on Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff as a manuscript for a book. Gert Gröning accepted, and this is how volume 22 of the CGL Studies came about.

Since its opening in 2006, the CGL Studies, the series of publications of the centre for garden art and landscape architecture of Leibniz University Hanover, has been devoted to the most varied subjects. Among the important subjects of the research activities of the CGL might be mentioned, by way of example, religion and the history of the garden culture,⁶ as well as the connections between National Socialism and landscape architecture.⁷ Until now the only biographical study devoted exclusively to a representative of landscape architecture, was the one in volume 8 on the work of Bernard Lassus: *Die Kunst, Landschaft neu zu erfinden [The Art of Reinventing Landscape Anew]*.⁸ This volume was published on the occasion of the eightieth birthday of the artist and landscape architect Bernard Lassus, who has been for many years a member of the advisory council of the CGL. In volumes 21 and 22 two further biographies are now to be published in the CGL series, one almost immediately after the other. The contrast could hardly be greater between the two professional lives represented and discussed in

5 Deputizing for a different publisher, let us call attention to a recent contribution to the international garden plot culture: Gert Gröning, *The Meaning of Land Use Planning for Urban Horticulture – The Example of “Kleingarten” in Germany and Comparable Kinds of Gardens Elsewhere*, in: Nono-Womdim, R., Gutiérrez Méndez, D. and A. Sy Gaye (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Urban and Peri-Urban Horticulture in the Century of Cities: Lessons, Challenges, Opportunities*, Acta Horticulturae 1021, pp. 103–120, Leuven, Belgium, 2010. Also worth mentioning is the edition of a country-specific series of bio- and bibliographical tools. The STOLO volumes for Italy, Switzerland and Spain have appeared in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively: Uwe Schneider and Gert Gröning, STOLO, *Bibliographische Findmittel zur Gartenkultur – Ein Verzeichnis bio-bibliographischer und auch sonstiger bibliographischer Findhilfen und Literaturquellen zur Geschichte und Theorie der Gartenkultur nebst angrenzender Gebiete in Mittel- und Westeuropa*, Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, Worms. They provide a bio- and bibliographical record together with other bibliographical research tools and literary sources on the history and theory of garden culture in each country together with adjoining areas in Middle and Western Europe. See the bibliography of Gert Gröning under http://www.udk.berlin.de/sites/igtg/content/mitglieder/prof_dr_gert_groening/schriftenverzeichnis_gert_groening/index_ger.html.

6 See e.g. volumes 1 and 2 of the CGL-Studies: Inken Formann, *Vom Gartenland so den Conventualinnen gebürt. Die Gartenkultur der evangelischen Frauenklöster und Damenstifte in Norddeutschland*, CGL-Studies, vol. 1, Martin Meidenbauer, Munich, 2006; Bianca Maria Rinaldi, *The “Chinese Garden in Good Taste”, Jesuits and Europe’s Knowledge of Chinese Flora and Art of the Garden in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Martin Meidenbauer, Munich, 2006.

7 See Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke Bulmahn (eds.), *Naturschutz und Demokratie!?*, CGL-Studies, vol. 3, Martin Meidenbauer, Munich, 2006; Hubertus Fischer und Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.), *Gärten und Parks im Leben der jüdischen Bevölkerung nach 1933*, CGL-Studies, vol. 5, Martin Meidenbauer, Munich, 2008.

8 Andrea Koenecke, Udo Weilacher and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.), *Die Kunst, Landschaft neu zu erfinden. Werk und Wirken von Bernard Lassus*, CGL-Studies, vol. 8, Martin Meidenbauer, Munich, 2010.



Ill. 1. View of the mud-flats with migratory birds in Dangast 2013 (photo: Gert Gröning)

these volumes. Volume 21, written by Andrea Koenecke is devoted to the life and work of Walter Rossow who was of outstanding importance as a representative of German landscape architecture and had a great public impact.⁹ By way of contrast, in Volume 22 Gert Gröning does not deal with a personality of “outstanding” importance in our field as his subject. Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff is a landscape architect who has remained completely unknown until today. He gained access to his subject via his family’s relations to Dangast where Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff lived for a long time (Ill. 1 and 2).

The present biographical study of Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff therefore occupies a very special place in the series of volumes. Its subject is a remarkable landscape architect whose life and work afford fascinating insights into the social, cultural, political and, of course, professional life situations over seven decades. This makes the book an important contribution in the area, little researched up to now, of the professional situation of women in the garden culture of the modern period. As Gert Gröning himself surveys the state of research in the area in the following pages, we will refrain from giving such a survey here. The study of Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff is an impressive example characteristic of Gert Gröning’s

⁹ Andrea Koenecke, *Walter Rossow (1910–1992): “Die Landschaft im Bewusstsein der Öffentlichkeit”*, CGL-Studies, vol. 21, Akademische Verlagsgemeinschaft München, Munich 2014.



Ill. 2. Gert Gröning in Dangast 2013 (photo: Elisabeth Gröning)

scholarly activities. It testifies to his excellent, indefatigable and critical discussion of the history of the profession. It also testifies to the fact that he does not always devote himself primarily to the ‘Lennés’ of our profession – although he has also made important contributions to their work¹⁰ – but primarily to the less prominent and lesser-known whose work has frequently been ignored and repressed.

An impressive example of this is Gert Gröning’s work on the activities of the Jewish nature conservationist Siegfried Lichtenstaedter who published in 1932 a remarkable book on nature conservancy and Judaism: a neglected chapter of Jewish ethics. Because of National Socialism this book and its author, who was

¹⁰ Gert Gröning and Uwe Schneider, Gut Reichenbach (Radaczewo), Pommern – Modellhafte landwirtschaftliche Einflüsse bei einer Gutsanlage der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts, in: Birte Pusback and Jan Skuratowicz (eds.), *Landgüter in den Regionen des gemeinsamen Kulturerbes von Deutschen und Polen – Entstehung, Verfall und Bewahrung*, *Majątki ziemskie na obszarze wspólnego dziedzictwa polsko niemieckiego – problemy rozwoju, degradacji i konserwacji*, in: Małgorzata Omilanowska (ed.), *Das gemeinsame Kulturerbe – Wspólne Dziedzictwo*, vol. IV, pp. 177–192, Warsaw, 2007; Gert Gröning, Peter Joseph Lenné und der “Verein zur Beförderung des Gartenbaues in den Königlich Preussischen Staaten”, in: Florian von Buttler, im Auftrag der Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umweltschutz (on the orders of the senate administration for city development and environmental protection) (ed.), *Peter Joseph Lenné, Volkspark und Arkadien*, pp. 82–90, Berlin, 1989.

murdered in the concentration camp Theresienstadt, were displaced for more than seven decades from the history of German nature conservancy.¹¹

At the beginning of Gert Gröning's examination of the life and career of Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff there were only a few pieces of information available which were published in 1997 in the "Grüne Biographien"¹² (Ill. 3). A lecture delivered on 15 November 2010 at the CGL entitled "Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff 1892–1983: The unusual journey through life of the first woman to graduate as a landscape architect at the training and research institute for horticulture in Berlin-Dahlem" as well as an article¹³ on Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff reflected the author's gradually growing knowledge about Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff and showed at the same time how impressive her professional as well as personal life had been and how she made her way against the greatest obstacles.



Ill. 3. Entry for Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff in the "Green Biographies"

When our author is 'gripped' by a new theme, it liberates extraordinary energies within him and he devotes himself to his investigations with inexhaustible energy. Thus his research on Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff led him several times to Colorado Springs in the USA and to Gernot Heinrichsdorff, the son of the landscape architect who is still living. Thanks to the detective obstinacy in his research, he was able to gain further important pieces of information from friends and relatives of the landscape architect as well as from various archives. Today, in the year 2016, we have a richly illustrated study on Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff containing one hundred pages where a few years ago there were only a few lines

11 Gert Gröning, Vom Naturschutz "vergessen", Der Schriftsteller Siegfried Lichtenstaedter: Naturschutz und Judentum, in: Hubertus Fischer, Julia Matveev and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.), *Natur- und Landschaftswahrnehmung in deutschsprachiger jüdischer und christlicher Literatur der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, CGL-Studies, vol. 7, Martin Meidenbauer, Munich, 2010, pp. 231–254.

12 Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Grüne Biographien, Biographisches Handbuch zur Landschaftsarchitektur des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*, Patzer Verlag, Berlin, 1997.

13 Gert Gröning, Unscheinbarkeit als Rollenmodell in der Gartenkultur, Anmerkungen zum Leben und Werk von Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff, in: Constanze Rora and Stefan Roszak (eds.) *Asthetik des Unscheinbaren, Annäherungen aus Perspektiven der Künste, der Philosophie und der Ästhetischen Bildung*, (Johannes Bilstein, ed., Pädagogik und Theorien), vol. 27, Oberhausen, 2013, pp. 107–123.

of specialized knowledge of her. Beyond this, this publication affords important insights not only into the recent history of the profession, but also into the social and cultural history of the twentieth century. And last but not least, the book reaches in some places the suspense-creating potential of a good detective novel.

The CGL dedicates this volume to Professor Gert Gröning in grateful recognition of his support of many years, especially by his service on the advisory council. As a member of the advisory council, he deserves special thanks for advocating and actually organizing the symposium on garden culture in Russia which was held at the CGL in Hanover in 2012.¹⁴ But even before his collaboration in the advisory council he supported the CGL decisively and worked with it professionally. Thus he was the co-initiator of the conference on “Nature Conservation and Democracy!?” which was eventually held in 2004 at the Drachenburg near Königswinter in cooperation with the Foundation on the History of Nature Conservation and with the support of the Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Reactor Security. Based on earlier joint research projects and publications with Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, the conference advanced the critical examination of the history of German nature conservation.¹⁵



Ill. 4. The entrance to the house in Colorado Springs that Irma Franzen-Heinrichsdorff used in the last years of her life as both residence and workplace (photo: Gert Gröning)

14 See Gert Gröning, Anmerkungen zur Gartenkunst in Russland, in the special issue of *Die Gartenkunst* which published the results of the symposium on garden culture in Russia held at the Centre of Garden Art and Landscape Architecture (CGL) of Leibniz University Hanover on 9 to 11 May 2012 in: *Die Gartenkunst*, 25 (2012), 1, pp. 3–8.

15 See Gröning/Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.), *Naturschutz und Demokratie!?* (cf. n. 7).