



Villa Hammerschmidt

The Official Residence in Bonn

English edition



Der Bundespräsident

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The Villa Hammerschmidt in Bonn has been the German Federal President's official residence since 1950. Situated on the banks of the Rhine next door to the Palais Schaumburg, the Federal Chancellor's office in Bonn, the Villa is right at the heart of the old Federal capital. Over more than 40 years as the Federal President's primary official residence, the Villa Hammerschmidt became a symbol of the fledgling democracy that was the Federal Republic of Germany. State guests, politicians, artists, writers and representatives of all areas of society have gathered there.

In 1994, Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker decided to move the head of state's main residence to Schloss Bellevue in Berlin. Since then, the Villa Hammerschmidt has been the secondary official residence of the Federal President. When the President is in residence, the Presidential Standard is flown above the Villa.



Federal President Heinrich Lübke (second from left) receives John F. Kennedy (left), President of the United States of America, June 1963



Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker (right) welcomes Mikhail Gorbachev (second from right), General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and Raisa Gorbachev (second from left), June 1989



Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Elke Bűdenbender talking to pupils from Marie Kahle School in Bonn, May 2017

BEHIND THE SCENES

Because of its similarity to the White House in Washington, the seat of the US President, the Villa Hammerschmidt is popularly known as "the White House on the Rhine".

Top: View of the Villa Hammerschmidt from the Rhine side

History

The Villa Hammerschmidt was built in classicist style in around 1860 for the merchant Albrecht Troost to plans by Bonn architect and building surveyor August Dieckhoff. In 1868 Troost sold the house to Leopold Koenig, a Russian Imperial State Councillor. In 1878 Koenig had the building remodelled and extended by the architect Otto Penner. Today the Villa basically looks the same as it did then. The 50,000 square metres of parkland around the Villa were designed and planted in 1888 by Hamburg director of gardens Rudolph Philipp Christian Jürgens.



The Villa Hammerschmidt in around 1870



The Hammerschmidt family



The Villa Hammerschmidt in around 1900, following the conversion

The Villa and surrounding land were purchased in 1899 by Rudolf Hammerschmidt, a Prussian Privy Commercial Councillor who had made his fortune in the cotton industry in St Petersburg. Hammerschmidt moved in two years later. At that time the Villa Hammerschmidt served as a centre for Bonn's high society. Following Hammerschmidt's death, his son-in-law Ernst Poensgen acquired the property in 1928 and allowed the Villa to be leased and divided into apartments. The Hammerschmidt name was retained, but all the furnishings and the entire art collection were auctioned off.

In 1945, having survived the Second World War unscathed, the Villa Hammerschmidt was requisitioned by the Allied occupying powers.



Federal President Theodor Heuss (centre) and his family outside the Villa Hammerschmidt, September 1959



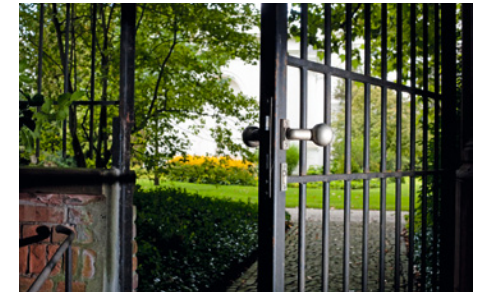
Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier with young people in the park of Villa Hammerschmidt, May 2017



Open day at Villa Hammerschmidt, June 2018



Federal President Theodor Heuss (right) and Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, September 1959



Garden gate in the park between the Villa Hammerschmidt and the Palais Schaumburg

On 5 April 1950, the Federal Republic of Germany purchased the property, comprising the Villa, outlying buildings and park, from Rudolf Hammerschmidt's heirs. The German Bundestag designated the Villa Hammerschmidt the official residence of the German head of state. At the end of 1950, Theodor Heuss became the first Federal President to move into the Villa, which served as his official and private residence, and on 4 January 1951 he hosted the first Federal President's New Year Reception there.

Heuss had the Villa completely renovated, getting rid of the two towers which had dominated its external appearance. While the interior is divided up more or less as it always was, very few of the original fittings or decor remain. The building was converted and renovated several times in the years thereafter.

The Villa Hammerschmidt also served as the official seat of Theodor Heuss's successors – Heinrich Lübke, Gustav Heinemann, Walter Scheel, Karl Carstens, Richard von

Weizsäcker and Roman Herzog –, some of whom lived there too.

Since 1994, the Villa Hammerschmidt has been the secondary official seat of the Federal President.

Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, like his predecessors, has kept up this tradition. Today the Villa is used for meetings, events and talks between the Federal President and his guests from home and abroad.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer loved the special atmosphere of the Villa Hammerschmidt. He often popped through the gate in the park from the Palais Schaumburg. The Federal President still regularly receives the Federal Chancellor and members of the Federal Cabinet to exchange views.

Ground floor

Rooms used for official functions are located on the ground floor. Many of the Villa's current furnishings and artworks are owned by the Federal Government, others are on loan from German museums or from the artist Karl Otto Götz (1914 – 2017).

Götz's paintings can be seen in the entrance hall. Works by Bernard Schultze (1915 – 2005) hang in the grand hall and dining room. These two artists, both closely linked with the Rhineland, were among the founding members of the "Quadriga" group of artists in 1952. As representatives of the "informal art" movement, they combined elements of abstract painting and Expressionism. With the expressive colours, movement and abstraction in their paintings, they had a lasting influence on the post war German art scene and helped open it up to the world again.



Fireplace room



Grand hall



Gallery



Entrance hall



Dining room

The fireplace room and gallery are dominated by the imposing portraits of famous Germans including Ernst Haeckel, Mary Wigman and Richard Strauss by the artist Hugo Erfurth (1874 – 1948). The fireplace room is also home to pictures from the series "People of the

20th Century" by the German photographer August Sander (1876 – 1964), depicting people in the Weimar Republic, for instance a farmer and his family, or a confectioner. Sander's works contributed considerably to the recognition of photography as an artistic medium.

First floor

The first floor houses the Federal President's private quarters, as well as the fireplace room and balcony room, which are used for meetings. The arrangement of the rooms in the Villa has never been altered, despite the repeated renovations.

The fireplace room on the first floor is dominated by Karl Otto Götz's painting "Talbo" (1986). Previously, another Götz painting, "60 Years", which he painted to mark the 60th anniversary of the Basic Law in May 2009, hung there. A further painting by the artist, "Nova Neige II" (2000), is to be found in the stairway.



Fireplace room

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Villa Hammerschmidt's furnishings, in the 1830s French Empire style, come from Schloss Wilhelmshöhe near Kassel.

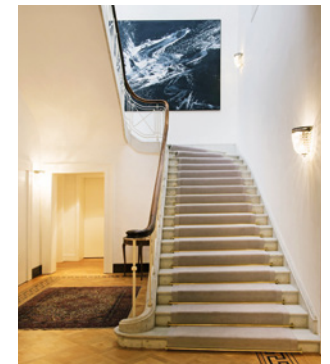
Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker initiated the art and furniture exchange scheme with German museums in order to be able to present modern German art to the Villa's many visitors.



View of the Rhine from the balcony



Balcony room



Stairway

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