

The House of Daniel Chodowiecki and Günter Grass

The House of Daniel Chodowiecki and Günter Grass will be a new interdisciplinary cultural centre based in the historic buildings of 6 and 8 Sieroca street, Gdańsk. It will present the works of both these prominent artists associated with Gdańsk as well as of contemporary artists. It will be a place of art education, workshops, lectures, and conferences. The planned cinema and theatre hall will house both literary and musical events.

The selection of the site for the House of Chodowiecki and Grass is not incidental, and it will enable a very interesting example of C18 architecture in the form of an orphanage to be saved. The building was constructed in 1698-1699 by a municipal builder, Bartel Ranisch. In consecutive years, a school was constructed as well as a so-called side building and a garden pavilion. This Charity Home, managed by councillors from the Old and the Main Cities, initially operated as an orphanage for children and a poorhouse, with the aim of teaching skills for work. Later, it functioned only as an orphanage. It operated there until 1906, gradually fulfilling other functions, including as council housing. Today, this space will become available to the general public once again, as an international interdisciplinary cultural centre inspired by the works of Daniel Mikołaj Chodowiecki and Günter Grass as well as by the site's history.

Plans include the refurbishment of the existing two facilities and the reconstruction of the building of the former school and the garden pavilion (both destroyed in 1945). Traces of the notions and works of both patrons will be visible in all the artistic and cultural activities organised in the House of Chodowiecki and Grass. Therefore, it will be a venue for the presentation of unique graphic and printing techniques, and include laboratories to teach their use, a conference-workshop centre for international intertextual and interdisciplinary programmes within literature and arts, an incubator of cultural activity for residents, and workshops for young artists from Gdańsk. The House will also organise artistic education classes.

The opening of the House of Chodowiecki and Grass is planned for 2021. At present, the preparatory work for the investment project has started (research and the creation of necessary documentation, and the process of raising external funds for the implementation of the project), accompanied by work to introduce artistic activity into the space of the future House of Chodowiecki and Grass. You are already welcome to come to exhibitions and workshops organised here and to cooperate in creating this new space. Ideas for projects can be put forward directly to the Project Office (Gdańsk, ul. Sieroca 6/13, e-mail: sieroca@gdansk.gda.pl), while information on on-going events is available at www.facebook.com/domchodowieckiegoigrassa/.

The foundation of the House of Chodowiecki and Grass, while promoting culture and science, aims to present the inseparable relationship of the life and artistic works of the artists with Gdańsk. It is commonly known that Daniel Mikołaj Chodowiecki and Günter Grass were both born in Gdańsk on 16 October, but 201 years apart. Grass – a writer, graphic artist and sculptor – studied at the Faculty of Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts. Chodowiecki – a painter and graphic designer – was the Vice-Chancellor of that same College (at that time known as the Royal Prussian Academy of Arts and Technical Sciences). Daniel, whose father was a Polish nobleman from near Gniezno and whose mother was a French Huguenot, were the first of the Chodowiecki family to settle in Germany. The Grass family, on the other hand, has Kashubian and German roots. Their childhoods spent in Gdańsk determined the identities of both artists. Their works present an image of Gdańsk and their times, although Grass' trilogy is known to a much wider group of readers than Chodowiecki's *Journey from Berlin to Danzig, 1773*, which contains more than 100 drawings. Grass created unique illustrations for his own novels, while Chodowiecki's engravings illustrated Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Diderot's *Jacques the Fatalist*, Voltaire's

Candide, and Basedov's alphabet book. Grass referred many a time to the figure of Chodowiecki, perceiving him as the embodiment of a true European and a man open to the world. The achievements of both artists have become an inherent part of the image of Gdańsk as an inspiring centre of culture and a place open to all artists and art lovers.

