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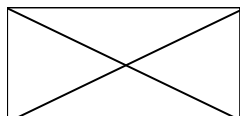
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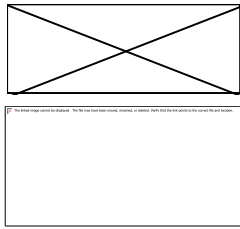
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Goethe's house: Witness to a poet's life

Features - October 09, 2005

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), the great German poet, author and artist was born in Frankfurt am Main, however, it is Weimar that is dubbed "Goethe city". This is because he spent most of his life in Weimar: in his residence in Frauenplan and in his garden house by the River Ilm.

His house in Frauenplan is a popular tourist site. **The baroque house, which was built in 1709, is much the way it was at the time of Goethe's death in 1782.** The house, now a museum, displays his collection of artwork and many of the rooms are furnished as in his time.

The number of visitors to the museum is limited in order to take care of the building and its furnishings. Taking photographs is also prohibited.

Goethe came to Weimar at 26 years of age upon the invitation of the young Duke Karl August who governed Weimar after they met each other in Frankfurt am Main. Then, Goethe, who had finished studying law, decided to stay in Weimar. He became a close friend of the duke and the duke's mother Duchess Anna Amalia. He was appointed to turn Weimar into the center of arts in Europe and was employed in the government where he was responsible for mining, finance, road construction and the war commission. From 1776 to 1782 he lived in the garden house by the River Ilm.

It is said that Goethe had 10 lovers. The house in Weimar witnessed his love story. He fell in love with a married woman, Charlotte von Stein, and the relationship lasted for ten years. Duke Karl August gave him the house in 1782 and he lived there until 1789 when he traveled to Italy to study. One of the subjects he studied was color and this was expressed in his house in which each room was painted in a different bright color, such as blue, yellow or green.

Italy changed Goethe's life. "In Italy I became a man," he once said. He lived with artists and became a bohemian. After neglecting his lover Charlotte, Goethe returned to Weimar and fell in love with Christiana Vulpius. Christiana was 23 and Goethe was 39 years old. In a term that Goethe referred to as "having a family without a ceremony", Goethe moved to the house with Christiana and their son

August. During his life with Christiana, the house had a different interior design. The Duke Karl August bought the house and presented it to him in 1794.

The house accommodates about 26,000 collected items belonging to Goethe who was an art collector, both copies and originals. The collections comprise medals, ceramics, printings, furniture but the largest collection is graphics, where there are 2,500 sketches. Drawing was important for Goethe: "It supports my ability to write poetry", he said.

Goethe was aware of the huge number of his art works. "I lived in a museum," he said. Other than being a talented person and a good organizer, Goethe also loved to meet new people. In Weimar, he became friends with poet Schiller and philosopher Herder and they debated here. His dining room was used to receive guests, among them Hegel, Humboldt and Grimms.

Goethe's private room is the place where he worked and wrote books, including *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. The room is still furnished as it was in his time. In the library that is inaccessible to visitors, there are 6,500 books in Latin, Greek, English and Italian, the languages that he also mastered. The bedroom where Goethe died at the age of 82 is also still there.

On February 1945, the house was bombed, but everything inside the house was kept in the mines that were not used, and thus his collections were saved from destruction. The house was reopened in 1949. Today, visitors continue to be warmly welcomed to Goethe's house. *Salve* which means "welcome" is written in the house's entrance way. -- **Wahyuni Kamah**

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