

Tracing history and path-finding at the World Cultural Heritage Zollverein

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On 14th december 2001 the colliery Zollverein, which was shut down in 1986, as well as nearby coking plant Zollverein, which had been in use until 1993, were officially declared World Cultural Heritage.

The 100 hectares of land, that had been awarded, included an old and a new shaft, storage spaces and track systems. It also consisted of a little heap and the entire area of the cokery, boasting an impressive row of blast furnaces, workshops, laboratories and warehouses, which had been built for the chemical processing of byproducts.

Colliery Zollverein was put into operation in 1851. It has been among Europe's biggest and most powerful collieries ever since. In 1961 the colliery first started to supply newly built cokery Zollverein, at that time one of the world's technically most up-to-date cokeries. The cokery was quickly expanded and already consisted of a row of 600 ovens in the seventies.

During a period of almost 50 years, Fritz Schupp, an expert in industrial architecture designed the entire complex, and supervised its building process.

Apart from the impressive chimney behind the boiler house, measuring 106 mts in height, hardly any important buildings have been torn down while the colliery was in operation.

Thus, Zollverein's unique architecture and authenticity were able to fulfill UNESCO's requirements for World Cultural Heritages.

At present there are two crucial issues at Zollverein; firstly the maintenance of the complex and secondly the transforming into an attractive tourist destination, with an inviting park and a carefully redevelopped "exhibition landscape".

Before being shut-down Zollverein used to be a completely closed off area, designed solely for machines and industry, because of the huge number of tracks and tubes even dangerous for the workers. The new decisive challenge at Zollverein is know to save its identity and its demands as a World Cultural Heritage, to bring together the interests of the new users with those of the visitors who want to explore the beauty of Zollverein, its history and also its different cultural offers and events.

Working as guide and member of staff at Zollverein for several years the speaker has had the opportunity to gather experience of visitor's needs and wishes. Her most important wishes have not come true yet

1. „Big stuff“- Zollverein needs an attractive heritage information center
2. Zollverein needs at least one viewpoint, offering an overview of the entire complex and it's surroundings that is publicly accessible.
3. Guidelines, such as designations and explanations of buildings and paths are needed.
4. Many visitors demand designated routes, in order to avoid missing some of the attractions.
5. True „path finders“, especially young visitors, prefer to discover the area on their own. They are attracted by hidden paths and places and, most of all, things to discover and comprehend.
6. Last but not least: Zollverein should open more of its former workshops and halls not only for guided visitors but to all visitors to make them sure that they are really

Welcome at the World Cultural Heritage of the Ruhr area.