

= Amber Room =

The Amber Room (Russian : ????????? ??????? , German : Bernsteinzimmer , Polish : Bursztynowa komnata) is a world @-@ famous chamber decorated in amber panels backed with gold leaf and mirrors , located in the Catherine Palace of Tsarskoye Selo near Saint Petersburg . Originally constructed in the 18th century in Prussia , the Amber Room disappeared during World War II and was recreated in 2003 . Before the room was lost , it was considered an " Eighth Wonder of the World " .

Construction of the Amber Room first took place around 1701 in Prussia . The room was designed by German baroque sculptor Andreas Schlüter and Danish amber craftsman Gottfried Wolfram . Schlüter and Wolfram worked on the room until 1707 , when work was continued by amber masters Gottfried Turau and Ernst Schacht from Danzig . The amber cabinet remained in the Berlin City Palace until 1716 when it was given by the Prussian King Frederick William I to his then ally , Tsar Peter the Great of the Russian Empire . In Russia , the room was expanded and after several renovations , it covered more than 55 square metres (590 sq ft) and contained over 6 tonnes (13 @,@ 000 lb) of amber .

The Amber Room was looted during World War II by Army Group North of Nazi Germany and brought to Königsberg for reconstruction and display . Its current whereabouts remain a mystery . In 1979 , efforts were undertaken to rebuild the Amber Room at Tsarskoye Selo . In 2003 , after decades of work by Russian craftsmen and donations from Germany , the reconstructed Amber Room was inaugurated at the Catherine Palace near Saint Petersburg .

= = History = =

= = = Creation = = =

The Amber Room was begun in 1701 with the purpose of being installed at Charlottenburg Palace , the residence of Frederick , the first King of Prussia , at the urging of his second wife , Sophie Charlotte . The concept and design of the room was drafted by Andreas Schlüter . It was fabricated by Gottfried Wolfram , master craftsman to the Danish court of King Frederick IV of Denmark , with help from the amber masters Ernst Schacht and Gottfried Turau from Danzig .

Although originally intended for installation at Charlottenburg Palace , the complete panels were eventually installed at Berlin City Palace . The Amber Room did not , however , remain at Berlin City Palace for long . Peter the Great of Russia admired it during a visit and in 1716 , King Frederick I 's son Frederick William I presented the room to Peter as a gift , which forged a Russo @-@ Prussian alliance against Sweden .

The original Berlin design of the Amber Room was reworked in Russia in a joint effort by German and Russian craftsmen . It was Peter 's daughter Empress Elisabeth who decided the amber treasure should be installed at Catherine Palace , where the Russian Imperial family typically spent their summers . After several other 18th @-@ century renovations , the room covered more than 55 square metres (590 sq ft) and contained over 6 tonnes (13 @,@ 000 lb) of amber . The room took over ten years to construct .

= = = Evacuation during World War II = = =

Shortly after the beginning of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in World War II , the curators responsible for removing the art treasures in Leningrad tried to disassemble and remove the Amber Room . However , over the years the amber had dried out and became brittle , making it impossible to move the room without crumbling the amber . The Amber Room was therefore hidden behind mundane wallpaper , in an attempt to keep German forces from seizing it . Predictably , the attempt to hide such a well @-@ known piece of art failed .

German soldiers of Army Group North disassembled the Amber Room within 36 hours under the

supervision of two experts . On 14 October 1941 , the priceless room reached Königsberg in East Prussia , for storage and display in the town 's castle . On 13 November 1941 , a Königsberg newspaper announced an exhibition of the Amber Room at Königsberg Castle .

= = = Last days in Königsberg = = =

Orders given by Hitler on 21 and 24 January 1945 ordered the movement of looted possessions from Königsberg . This allowed Albert Speer , Reichminister of Armaments , and his administration team to transport cultural goods of priority . However , before the Amber Room could be moved , Erich Koch , who was in charge of civil administration in Königsberg during the final months of the war , abandoned his post and fled from the city , leaving General Otto Lasch in command .

In August 1944 , Königsberg was heavily fire bombed by the Royal Air Force . It suffered further extensive damage from artillery from the advancing Red Army before the final occupation on 9 April 1945 .

= = In popular culture = =

A fictional music box from the Amber Room is the macguffin plot device throughout the first two seasons of the USA television series *White Collar*

The Amber Room is also the central plot device in Steve Berry 's first novel *The Amber Room* (2003) .

= = Reconstruction = =

In 1979 , the Soviet government decided to construct a replica of the Amber Room at Tsarskoye Selo , a process that was to last 24 years and require 40 Russian and German experts in amber craftsmanship . Using original drawings and old black @-@ and @-@ white photographs , every attempt was made to duplicate the original Amber Room . This included the 350 shades of amber in the original panels and fixtures that adorned the room . Another major problem was the lack of skilled workers , since amber carving was considered a nearly lost art form .

The financial difficulties that plagued the reconstruction project from the start were solved with the donation of \$ 3 @. @ 5 million from the German company E.ON. By 2003 , the work of the Russian craftsmen was mostly completed . The new room was dedicated by Russian President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder at the 300th anniversary of the city of Saint Petersburg .

In Kleinmachnow , near Berlin , there is a miniature Amber Room , fabricated after the original . The Berlin miniature collector Ulla Klingbeil had this copy made of original East Prussian amber .

= = Architecture = =

The Amber Room is a priceless piece of art , with extraordinary architectural features such as gilding , carvings , 450 kg (990 lb) amber panels , gold leaf , gemstones , and mirrors , all highlighted with candle light . Additional architectural and design features include statues of angels and children . Because of its unique features and singular beauty , the original Amber Room was sometimes dubbed the " Eighth Wonder of the World " . Modern estimates of the room 's value range from \$ 142 million (2007) to over \$ 500 million (2016) .

= = Disappearance and mysteries = =

After the war , the Amber Room was never seen in public again , though reports have occasionally surfaced stating that pieces of the Amber Room survived the war . Several eyewitnesses claimed to have spotted the famous room being loaded on board the *Wilhelm Gustloff* , which left Gdynia on 30 January 1945 , and was then promptly torpedoed and sunk by a Soviet submarine .

In 1997 , an Italian stone mosaic that was part of a set of four stones which had decorated the Amber Room was found in Germany , in the possession of the family of a soldier who claimed to have helped pack up the amber chamber . The mosaic came into the hands of the Russian authorities and was used in the reconstruction effort .

In 1998 , two separate teams , one German and one Lithuanian , announced they had located the Amber Room . The German team pointed to a silver mine while the Lithuanian team believed the amber treasure was buried in a lagoon ; neither of the two suggestions turned out to hold the Amber Room .

In 2004 , a lengthy investigation by British investigative journalists Catherine Scott @-@ Clark and Adrian Levy concluded that Amber Room was most likely destroyed when Königsberg Castle was heavily damaged , first during the bombing of Königsberg by the Royal Air Force in 1944 , when the castle completely burned down , and later by the Soviet shelling of the remaining walls . Documents from the Russian National Archives revealed this as the assessment of a Soviet report , written by Alexander Brusov , head of the Soviet team charged with locating the Amber Room following the war . The report stated :

These dates correspond with the end of the Battle of Konigsberg , which finished on 9 April with the surrender of the German garrison . A few years later , Brusov publicly voiced a contrary opinion ; this is believed to have been done due to pressure from Soviet authorities , who did not want to be seen as responsible for the loss of the Amber Room .

Among other information retrieved from the archives was the revelation that the remaining Italian stone mosaics were found in the burned debris of the castle . Scott @-@ Clark and Levy concluded in their report that the reason the Soviets conducted extensive searches for the Amber Room , even though their own experts had concluded that it was destroyed , was because they wanted to know if any of their own soldiers had been responsible for the destruction . Scott @-@ Clark and Levy also assessed that others in the Soviet government found the theft of the Amber Room a useful Cold War propaganda tool . Russian government officials have since denied these conclusions . Adelaida Yolkina , senior researcher at the Pavlovsk Palace , reportedly stated : " It is impossible to see the Red Army being so careless that they let the Amber Room be destroyed " .

After the report was made public , Leonid Arinshtein , who was a Lieutenant in the Red Army in charge of a rifle platoon during the Battle of Konigsberg , said : " I probably was one of the last people who saw the Amber Room " . At the same time , he explained that the whole city was burning due to artillery bombardments , but also denied allegations that the Red Army burned the city on purpose by saying : " What soldiers would burn the city where they will have to stay ? " .

A variation of this theory by some present @-@ day residents of Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg) , is that at least parts of the room were found in the Königsberg Castle cellars after World War II by the Red Army . The Amber Room was allegedly still in good condition ; this was not admitted at the time so the blame could fall upon the Nazis . To preserve this story , access to the ruins of the castle , which was allowed after World War II , was suddenly restricted to all , including historical and archaeological surveys .

Then in 1968 , despite academic protests worldwide , Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev ordered the destruction of Königsberg Castle , thus making any onsite research of the last known resting place of the Amber Room all but impossible . In more recent years , the search for the Amber Room has continued in different locations including near Wuppertal , Germany .

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