As one of the first projects, the restoration of the Hercules monument is symbolic for the reorganization of the Kassel museum landscape consuming an investment total of 200 million Euro. It forms the starting point for one of the most comprehensive cultural investment projects in Germany. The aim is not only to preserve the cultural heritage of Hessen-Kassel and the city landmark for the population, but to preserve it for future generations. This investment is sought to enhance the often underestimated tourist value of the region in northern Hessen and to give it a more distinct tourist profile so that more visitors will fancy the region Nordhessen and Kassel. So, we talk about a cultural and economic sponsorship project at the same time.

The State of Hessen is also highly aware of the international significance of the Kassel heritage. Thus, under the title “Water features and Hercules within the Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe” the State Government is promoting the nomination of this unique example of absolutistic power for inscription on the UNESCO world heritage list. The final decision will be made by the world heritage committee presumably in 2013.

In the name of the State Government I thank the citizens of Kassel who donated a considerable amount to support the state investment. I take this as a strong signal that all parties involved Kassel who donated a considerable amount to support the state investment. I take this as a strong signal that all parties involved in the representation of absolutistic power for inscription on the UNESCO world heritage list. The final decision will be made by the world heritage committee presumably in 2013.

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Hercules – the courageous, strong, wise and above all virtuous hero of the Greek mythology who, thanks to his merits, was admitted to Olympus and so became immortal – bore quite a considerable identification potential for a prince who wanted to be an example to his subjects and set up a monument for himself.

The Kassel statue represents the ancient demi-god, however, not as a fighting hero but as a victorious and foresighted sovereign.

As a winner of the War of the Spanish Succession, as a victorious and foresighted sovereign, the landgrave’s decision was inspired by a symbol of a prince’s will to create monumental statues realised in Europe which were made from copper sheets. As early as in 1699 Johann Jakob Anthoni was the Augsburg goldsmith who casted and set up a monument for himself. He was supposed to reduce the corrosion risk remarkably.

The monumental Hercules building is by far not as awe-inspiring as it appears to be: In 1715 only shortly after its construction considerable damages became apparent to such an extent that it was said that the architect Guarini had preferred to turn his back on Kassel straight away.

The Italian had not only committed some structural errors – even if one considers the times in which static calculations were still a very long way off indeed. On top of that the foundations could not bear the enormous weight of the octagon, especially the eastern area at the edge of the slope which bases on fissured basalt rock. In addition, the local tuff used as construction material proved to be little pressure-resistant and extremely prone to weathering under conditions of humidity, frost and wind. All in all, it was not a good basis for Hercules.

Previous renovation works had to remain incomplete, not least for funding reasons. The on-going fundamental rehabilitation works aim at a sustained strengthening of the structure to warrant its permanent stability to the farthest possible extent. A particular critical issue is the acute back weathering of the tuff. Numerous weakened rocks have to be exchanged. But the deposits on the tuff quarry of the Habichtswald forest are limited; the use of other rocks poses technical problems. Therefore, the development of artificial tuff rock is in process to protect the limited natural resources.

On a journey to Italy from 1699 to 1700 the landgrave’s decision was inspired by a visible belvedere storey diminished. It has almost entirely disappeared.

The original design of the monument on Karlberg hill did not include the Hercules statue on its pyramid. The design of the architect Giovanni Francesco Guarini from Rome rather favoured a central cascade axis which should extend from an octagonal grotto structure, including a belvedere storey on the top of the hill, over a stretch of one thousand metres to a new castle. Between 1713 and 1717, made from single embossed copper sheets which were soldered and riveted in brass quality. The refined sheets of barely three millimetres were assembled on a stable wrought-iron carcass which was anchored in the steep pyramid-shaped navel as a pedestal. Hence, Hercules is one of the earliest larger-than-life monumental statues realized in Europe which were made from copper sheets.

The current rehabilitation works will probably continue until 2015/2016. The Hercules statue itself defied the passage of time better than its monumental supporting structure. Still, here as well restoration works became necessary in the past. There are documents relating to works in the years 1900 and 1951/52. The most recent restoration works started in 2007 on the basis of a comprehensive identification of damages. They showed considerable damages to the copper skin and the wrought-iron inner construction. The skin showed local blackenings and incrustations, finer cracks and wholes, old mends and decorative iron joints – mostly minor damages which had to be removed in auribus work. Inside, the iron belts dating back to the fifties which were attached to the inner side of the copper skin, have corroded so badly that they had to be exchanged completely. Now, corrosion-resistant stainless steel is used, just as well as for the additional anchorages which shall stabilise the statue against increasing wind loads. In addition, the lightning protection system was renewed, improved ventilation and dehydratrion are supposed to reduce the core of risk remarkably.

In August 2008 the renovation works of the Hercules statue were completed by symbolically bringing the statue’s head back in place again.