

## **Sculptures**

Sculptures are an essential element of Baroque garden design. Often the exhibition in a garden is ordered according to a certain iconography, but no single one can be proven for the Grosssedlitz Baroque Garden. Nevertheless various thematic groups are clearly arranged. The sculptures are decorative elements of the green space and are to enhance the areas of the garden which are especially important. The eight pairs of lovers at the end of the unfinished Forest Cascade represent ancient mythology and demonstrate how water fountains were especially important in the conception and layout of the gardens.

The Baroque garden is famous in Saxony for its extensive collection of Baroque sculptures. More than 60 figures and vases adorn the grounds and give it a special atmosphere. Most of them are valuable copies dating from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but 24 originals can still be found in the garden. Documents from the time when the gardens were first laid out are sparse. Therefore there is no indication as to who the sculptors were who created them. Not all of the sculptures can be credited as the work of a particular artist, but “The Four Seasons” (although there is uncertainty about “Autumn” and “Winter”), “The Four Parts of the Earth” and “The Four Elements” are known to have been created by the court sculptor Johann Christian Kirchner (1691 –1732).

The eight couples, lovers from mythology, are very probably from the workshop of Johann Benjamin Thomae (1682 – 1751). These detailed sculptures are original elements from the period when Baroque sculpture in Saxony was blossoming out. The details, the expressions on the faces, the folds in the gowns as well as the superior posture and dynamism which these sculptures radiate are especially admirable. Here you can see the extraordinary talents of the stone sculptors who were employed by the Saxon court building authorities, where the only sculptors you could find were the best.

The valuable Baroque sculptures, originals as well as copies, require constant care to preserve them for the next generation. Sadly this was neglected again and again for several decades, and it has only been in the years since 1995 that a planned report on their condition has been compiled, followed by extensive restoration. Well-known Saxon sculptors and restorers were engaged for several years on the cleaning, desalination and making these works of art secure. Insofar that it is necessary, additions must be made to the sculptures. Two figures in the group “Silent Music” were so badly-damaged, that it was only possible to save them by full acrylic resin soaking, an expensive and laborious means of restoration. Such soaking, which is an irreversible process, was carried out on all the original balusters.

Thanks to this work, the figures and vases are now in an excellent condition.