

A Place of Hospitality

On December 17, 2001, Schott formally opened the second section of the Schott GlasMuseum in Jena in the villa that was once the home of the company's founder.



► The second section of the Schott GlasMuseum was formally opened in the former villa just in time for the 150th birthday of company founder Otto Schott (1851-1935). "The Schott Villa is an important piece of our history. It speaks of the corporate culture that Otto Schott founded and lets us feel his presence even today," says Dr. Udo Ungeheuer, member of Schott's Board of Management and Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Schott Jenaer Glas GmbH, in explaining the significance of the building.

Renovation was carried out with great care. The floor plans of the rooms were changed as little as possible, and the interior design and furnishings, were chosen to match the historical period. Architect Thorsten Czech succeeded in building a bridge to the present by adding an exterior elevator made of glass. The concept of the museum corresponds to how Schott views itself. "We have created a modern museum with the most up-to-date multimedia technology.

Visitors can view tools, documents, sculptures, explanatory texts and images, as well as multimedia video clips, with all information available in English and German," explains Dr. Juergen Steiner, Manager of Corporate Culture and Project Manager of the museum. This historical building is more than a museum. "Just as in Otto Schott's time, the villa is a place of hospitality. Meetings and conferences are also organized here," says Wolfgang Meyer, Managing Director of Schott's Jenaer Glas GmbH.

Scientist, businessman, and personality

Exhibition designer Frank Joerges has strived to illustrate Otto Schott's life work in all its many facets. "The first section of the Schott GlasMuseum presents the milestones in the history of products and technology, whereas the exhibition in the villa focuses on Otto Schott's life work and personality, as well as subjects concerning the history of Schott," said museum director Dr. Tilde Bayer.

From company villa to day-care center

The neoclassicist villa was built in 1890 and has survived an eventful history. It was renovated and expanded between 1901 and 1922. After Otto Schott's death, it then served as the home to his son Erich and his family from 1935 to 1945. After the war the Jenaer Glaswerk became state-owned property, and the villa was used as the company's day-care center from 1950 to 1990. In 2001, the building was thoroughly renovated for its current use as a museum.

The trip back in time begins on the ground floor. In the entrance hall, visitors are confronted with the question, "Who was Otto Schott?" Video animations evoke curiosity, but provide no concrete answers. Museum guests find those in the exhibition area, where they can discover interesting facts about Schott's life in Witten, where he established the scientific basis for modern glass production between 1879 and 1882.

Walking to the next room, visitors see a citation projected onto the floor. The excerpt from a letter by Ernst Abbe to Otto Schott from 1882 reads: "... move here to Jena ..." This was the start of the Jena epoch for the firm's founder. Together with Abbe and Carl and Roderich Zeiss, he founded the "Schott & Associates Glass Technology Laboratory" in 1884 – the nucleus of the current Schott Group.

The villa not only shows Schott the businessman, but also offers a glimpse of his private life. In the former living room, visitors encounter an oversized group photo with life-sized faces of family members taken at his 80th birthday celebration. In the study, we see personal items like his telephone, letter scales and briefcase. The upper floor reveals Schott's great passion in an exhibition of part of his antique collection from the Greek and Roman periods.

Mirroring German history

Another exhibition is dedicated to Erich Schott, Otto Schott's son and successor. He led the firm during the years of its re-establishment in Mainz following World War II. From the division of Germany until reunification, visitors can learn about the dismantling, expropriation and conversion of Schott Jena into a state-owned enterprise. In parallel, there are historical pictures of the new main factory under construction in Mainz. Subsequent material portrays the stages in the company's development until German reunification.

In addition to the permanent exhibition, the villa also provides a room for temporary exhibitions. "This allows us to offer glass artists or talented young artists working in other media an interesting forum to display their creations," explains Meyer.

In a room with a skylight at the center of the upper floor visitors can assimilate all they have seen and heard, while subdued piano music, much like that often played by Otto Schott's wife Kaethe, can be heard in the background. ◀

"Time capsules" symbolize the important events in the years after the war.



Modern presentation techniques in the historical Schott Villa.



Terracotta "Medusa" head from the antique collection of Otto Schott on loan from the Reiss Engelhorn Museum in Mannheim, Germany.



Schott GlasMuseum

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Opening hours:

Tuesday to Friday from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Group tours can be arranged.
Admission is free.

Schott GlasMuseum and Schott Villa are wheelchair accessible.