

Appeal to Europa Nostra

Dear Sir or Madam,

Berlin enjoys a unique lighting situation, being equipped with gas street lighting and more than 40,000 single gas lanterns located in 2800 streets which represent more than half of all gas street lights worldwide that are still in operation. There is no other place on this planet where testimony of technical and cultural development has survived to such an extent. The Berlin Frohnau district, for instance, has the world's biggest coherent gaslight network with approx. 60 km of gas-lighted streets. Gas lighting is also widely used in the central districts of Berlin, e.g. in the Charlottenburg district where 75 % of streets are still illuminated by gas. On account of this historical background, Berlin possesses a unique feature in the world.

Gaslight was one of those major technical achievements that allowed the industrial revolution to advance. In 1826, the first gas lanterns were installed on "Unter den Linden" and began having a major impact on Berlin's everyday culture. About 100 years later, in the 1920s, the European gas lighting industry had built their headquarters here and Berlin was nicknamed "Gasopolis". Accordingly, all types of Berlin gas lanterns were developed and manufactured in Berlin. Despite continuous technological development, Berlin gas lanterns have retained important elements from the early days of street lighting history until today. The gas lantern, along with its operational medium gas, bears witness to the early history of industrial development in Berlin and therefore represents a unique industrial-historic heritage that must clearly be regarded as a technical monument. The four basic models of gas lanterns that can be found in Berlin are the Schinkel luminaires from 1892, followed by tear drop luminaires (since 1905), pole top luminaires (around 1920), and the type of *Gas-Reihenleuchten* which represent a distinctive element of Berlin's post-war modernity. These models and their special forms, briefly described in the attachment, are demonstrations of different stylistic periods. Another characteristic of Berlin are those city districts where the four lantern types act in combination within so-called gas lighting ensembles, according to their various traffic-related historical tasks, and therefore form a unity with regard to the cityscape design. In the early 1990s, this situation and other reasons led to a resolution by the Berliner Abgeordnetenhaus (Parliament of Berlin) that aimed at generally preserving the Berlin gaslight network in its entirety.

However, the current plans of the recently published light concept of the outgoing Berlin Senate show the intention of fully dismantling the Berlin gas street lighting network. By 2020, all gaslights are to be replaced by electrical lighting installations. The plans call for a minimum of gas street lighting in only a few village greens, but even that isn't guaranteed and not at all sufficient considering the importance of the Berlin gaslight network for the history of the city. The reasons given by the Senate for the dismantling - financial reasons and environmental concerns - are not at all undisputed by experts. Also, the attempt to divide the Berlin gaslights into historical and non-historical types is unfounded. All four types of gas lanterns are equally historical and therefore worth protecting. The idea of operating a small share of gas lanterns as replicas with LED will also result in the loss of historical treasures. Only the historic operational medium gas will make this industrial-technical illumination culture come alive for later generations.

We would like to call on you as an internationally working cultural organization to do whatever you can to help prevent the imminent dismantling of a unique illumination culture. The Berlin gas street lighting needs an appropriate place in the overall structure and has to be integrated into a well thought-out lighting concept that is built upon the principles of gentle urban renewal and takes into account its historical and artistic importance. In spite of the current resolutions, it is not too late yet, but time is running out. The call for tenders for dismantling the first gas lantern type has just started, but the contract hasn't been awarded yet. The current coalition talks between SPD and CDU offer another possibility to correct earlier planning errors and to ensure the survival of the Berlin gas street lighting as a European monument at least on a representative scale.

Yours faithfully,

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Since 1985 Gaslicht-Kultur e.V. is an association of technical and cultural specialists who work together with other committed people to prevent the Berlin gas lighting from being dismantled. Some of our current activities include appeals to the commission for petitions of the Berlin parliament, proposals to protect the Berlin gas lighting officially as historical heritage and expert guided tours through berlins gas-lit scenery as touristic event.

References of Gaslicht-Kultur e.V.:

- *Participation in Lange Nacht der Museen (popular semi-annual museum night)*
- *Participation in Tag des offenen Denkmals (Open Memorial Day)*
- *Co-Winner of the Be Berlin-Campaign*

We advocate the concept of cautiously modernizing a city – that means, an adequate coexistence of electrical lighting and gas lighting, which is part of a street culture typical for Berlin. The Berlin gas lighting is unique in the world and therefore it has great potential for tourism. Its singular light quality is part of the Berlin identity. We lobby for planners und political decision-makers to also adopt this perception.

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