



# CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH ZENTRUM

*CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH (1774–1840) is universally regarded as the leading German Romantic landscape artist and as a painter of international standing. His works are well known all over the world. The large number of publications and exhibitions attests to the abiding fascination of his art.*

*The Caspar David Friedrich Society was founded in Greifswald in 1998 and from the outset was keen to find a building to commemorate the great painter and the town's greatest son. The obvious answer was to convert the family's former dwelling house and business premises and in that way honour the artist on the very site where he was born in 1774 and where he spent his childhood and adolescence.*

*Caspar David Friedrich left his native Greifswald when he was only twenty in order to study at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, after which he settled permanently in Dresden. But he remained closely associated with Pomerania and with his family, a point well demonstrated by a painting such as *Meadows Near Greifswald* and by the watercolour *The Greifswald Marketplace with the Friedrich Family*. This affinity with the region and with the north German countryside left a lasting mark on him as both man and artist. It also provides the focus for the exhibition on the ground floor of the Caspar David Friedrich Centre. The workshops and the displays in the basement illustrate the painter's roots as the son of a soap-boiler and chandler, while the family tree in the Family Room on the second floor allows visitors to trace the various branches from the artist's father through to the twentieth century. Special exhibitions on the first floor provide an insight into the artist's impact on the art of the present day.*

*Caspar David Friedrich's father acquired the property in 1765. It remained in the family for eight generations, finally passing out of their possession in 1976.*

*The front part of the building burnt down in 1901 and was replaced by the present structure in 1902. The exterior and a number of details in the interior of the building date from this time. The business premises survived the fire, and it was here, in the historic Soap-House, that the Caspar David Friedrich Centre was opened in 2004. The front part of the building was incorporated into this Centre in 2011. They are all listed buildings.*

## A Tour of the Caspar David Friedrich Centre

### At Home with Caspar David Friedrich

Visitors enter the building from the Lange Straße, which is Greifswald's main shopping street and now a pedestrianized zone. The house is currently numbered no. 57, although until the middle of the twentieth century it was no. 28. The number may have changed, but the building's place within the context of the town's overall design remains the same. In other words, visitors arrive at the property from the market or the harbour just as they did in the artist's day. It was here that Caspar David Friedrich came into the world on 5 September 1774, the sixth of ten children of Gottlieb Adolf Friedrich and his wife Sophie Dorothea née Bechly.

The displays in the impressive entrance area provide information on the artist's origins and career and on the historical position of Greifswald around 1774. Information on Caspar David Friedrich's life and works and his relations with Greifswald is displayed on three levels in the form of reproductions of his works, explanatory texts and quotations.

Opposite the displays – on the site where the soap and candles produced by the family were sold in the artist's day – is the museum shop, where the range of articles on sale includes postcards reproducing works by Caspar David Friedrich and others by winners of the Caspar David Friedrich Prize as well as publications about the artist and other items relating to the artist and the historic Soap-House. The shop's neo-Gothic designs are a modern realization of drawings and descriptions of shop furniture that Caspar David prepared for his brother Christian.

A small library allows visitors to consult volumes relating to the artist. There is also a touchscreen with information on the location of Friedrich's paintings as well as setting the artist's life within the context of the wider historical background. Important contemporaries and colleagues are also featured here.

### Caspar David Friedrich's Origins

A flight of steps leads visitors downstairs to the basement and to the former workshops of Caspar David Friedrich's father, Gottlieb Adolf Friedrich, who was a soap-boiler and a chandler. The displays at the foot of the stairs explain the ways in which soap and candles were made in his day. On the wall to the left is an illustration from Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* of 1751–72 depicting a chandler's workshop at the end of the eighteenth century. The tool in front of it is based on a detail from this illustration. It was used to lengthen the candle's wick. Between the displays and the illustration on the wall is a door leading to our workshop, where candles may be made as in Caspar David Friedrich's day. The furniture has been reconstructed on the basis of illustrations in

Diderot's Encyclopédie. The illustrations themselves can be seen on the two blinds.

Before you take the corridor that leads to the back of the building, you will see four displays to your right. These throw light on the history of the house and on the craft of soap- and candle-making.

An underground corridor leads to the historic Soap-House with its original cauldrons. To these have been added a number of tools typical of the period in order to give visitors an idea of the way in which soap was made in the eighteenth century. The two smaller free-standing cauldrons were discovered in the ground during renovation work. Fully restored, they may now be seen in the context in which they were originally used.

Films about Caspar David Friedrich's life and works may be viewed in the Centre's small cinema. The benches, which are on loan from the town's Cathedral, were made for the Cathedral by Friedrich's brother Christian when it was renovated in the 1820s. The original soap moulds from the Friedrich family workshop that can be seen in the display cabinet are also on loan.

## Caspar David Friedrich - the Leading German Romantic Landscape Painter

A spiral staircase takes visitors upstairs to the Rügen Room. Here you can explore facets of Caspar David Friedrich's engagement with the sort of landscapes that he discovered on the island of Rügen in 1801. Enlarged versions of the sketches that he made during his visit to the island reveal a new approach to the vast expanse of the countryside. It is clear from these panoramic vistas that he now started to use breadth as a structural element in his work.

Dating from 1829, Friedrich von Hagenow's map of Rügen invites visitors to explore the places where Caspar David Friedrich found many of his familiar motifs on his walks across the island. These studies were then taken over into his paintings, where they are subjected to a strict sense of order and to a particular structural pattern. In this way his paintings were created not in the presence of nature but in the ascetic isolation of his studio in Dresden overlooking the Elbe. The two reproductions of the drawings of the artist's studio windows that can be seen on the roller blinds give an impression of this.

In the following room visitors can see reproductions of watercolours of the ruins of Eldena Abbey. You appear to be inside the ruins, but if you look more closely, you will see that you are surrounded by outside views of the ruins seen from all four points of the compass. Caspar David Friedrich drew these ruins on frequent occasions, often from different angles, whenever he returned home to Greifswald. The watercolours reproduced here were not drawn from nature, however, but are based on exact models of which visitors can still form a clear impression today. In our diorama we have combined these four views with modern photographs of the ruins taken from the corresponding angles and using the

technique of the transparency: if you look through the peep-holes and carefully turn the little wheel to the right of each hole as far as it will go, you will see the image change as a result of the way in which the light changes from the front and from the back. This produces the sort of transitional states that are found by day and by night and that recall the artist's moonlight transparencies.

The ruins of Eldena Abbey acquired particular importance in Caspar David Friedrich's work and are the best-known stage on the Caspar-David-Friedrich-Bildweg (the Caspar David Friedrich Walk) that begins here at the Caspar David Friedrich Centre. It is a journey that will take you on a very special tour of Greifswald as a university town and a member of the Hanseatic League. It follows the various stages in the painter's life and includes vantage points that draw attention to well-known motifs from his works. These motifs have survived the intervening centuries and continue to be identifiable right down to the present day.

As you return to the front of the building, you will go past our wall of postcards. In summer you can also visit our idyllic rear courtyard. If the weather is fine, you can enjoy a cup of coffee and biscuits in return for a small donation.

## Caspar David Friedrich Gallery

If you take the main staircase to the first floor, you will come to the Caspar David Friedrich Gallery, where temporary exhibitions showcase works of contemporary art whose roots lie in German Romanticism or are otherwise related to that movement or, finally, engage critically with the ideas held by Romantic artists.

The Caspar David Friedrich Prize was first awarded in 2001 on the strength of a competition that is fundamental to the Gallery's programme. It continues to be awarded annually by the Caspar David Friedrich Society and is intended to encourage young artists. It is open to students of art from Greifswald, Copenhagen and Dresden.

## Family Room

A narrow staircase at the back of the building leads up from the Gallery to the Family Room on the second floor. The main focus of this room is the Friedrichs' family tree, which begins with the artist's father, Gottlieb Adolf Friedrich, and traces the various branches of the family as far as the twentieth century. The details relating to individual family members include portraits, paintings and explanatory texts. In order to give the room an air of authenticity, it has been furnished with furniture from the Biedermeier period. The six chairs are a reference to Caspar David Friedrich and his five surviving siblings, whose descendants are documented in the family tree.

Letters written by Caspar David Friedrich to other family members and drawings illustrating the old trade of soap-boiling and candle-making can be accessed via a touchscreen with audio commentary. In this way you can immerse yourselves in the period in question and explore the lives of the Friedrich family.

