

Bremen (Germany)

No 1087

1. BASIC DATA

<i>State Party:</i>	Federal Republic of Germany
<i>Name of property:</i>	The town hall and Roland on the marketplace of Bremen
<i>Location:</i>	The City of Bremen
<i>Date received:</i>	22 January 2002
<i>Category of property:</i>	

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *monument*. It is a combination of architectural work and monumental sculpture.

Brief description:

The Town Hall and Roland on the marketplace of Bremen are an outstanding representation of the civic autonomy and market rights as they developed in the Holy Roman Empire in Europe. The old town hall was built as a Gothic hall structure in the early 15th century, and renovated in the so-called Weser Renaissance style in the early 17th century. A new town hall was built next to the old one in the early 20th century as part of an ensemble that survived the bombardments during the Second World War.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The city of Bremen is an autonomous Federal Land, situated in north-western Germany, on the river Weser. The site of the medieval town has a oblong form, limited by the river on the south side and the *Stadtgraben*, the water moat of the ancient defence system, on the north side. Apart from the immediate surroundings of the Town Hall, most of the area has been reconstructed after the Second World War.

The town hall is situated in the centre of the eastern part of the old city area, separating the market in the south from the *Domshof*, the cathedral square in the north. The statue of Roland is located in the centre of the market place. The town hall is placed between two churches. The *Dom*, the cathedral church of St. Peter (built from 12th to 19th centuries), is located on the east side, and the *Liebfrauenkirche* (the church of Our Lady, built in the 12th and 14th centuries) on the west. Across the market, there is the *Schütting*, the seat of the ancient merchant guilds (built in the 16th century, restored in the 19th century). On the east side of the market is the modernist building for the municipal institutions, the *Haus der Bürgerschaft*, built in the 1960s.

The nominated property consists of the town hall and the Roland statue (0.3ha). The buffer zone encloses the above mentioned market and the cathedral square with the main

buildings (36ha), surrounded by an outer protection zone (376ha). The town hall has two parts: the Old Town Hall initially built in 1409 on the north side of the market place, renovated in the early 17th century, and the New Town Hall that was built in the early 20th century as an addition facing the cathedral square.

The Old Town Hall is a two-storey hall building with a rectangular floor plan, 41.5 x 15.8m. It is described as a transverse rectangular *Saalgeschossbau* (i.e. a multi-storey construction built to contain a large hall). It has brick walls and wooden floors structures. The exterior is in exposed brick with alternating dark and light layers; the decorative elements and fittings are in stone. The roof is covered by green copper. The ground floor is formed of one large hall with oak pillars; it served for merchants and theatrical performances. The upper floor has the main festivity hall of the same dimensions. Between the windows, there are stone statues representing the emperor and prince electors, which date from the original Gothic phase, integrated with late-Renaissance sculptural decoration symbolising civic autonomy. On the market side there is an open arcade with stone columns. Underground, the town hall has a large wine cellar, later extended to the west, and now used as a restaurant.

In the 17th century, the town hall was renovated, and the middle three of the eleven axes of the colonnade were accentuated by a bay construction with large rectangular windows and a high gable, an example of the so-called Weser Renaissance. The bay has two levels, occupying a part of the festivity hall in an elaborate carved wooden structure. The lower part of the bay contains a panelled council room (*Güldenammer*). Smaller roof gables were placed on both sides of the central gable. An elaborate sculptural decoration in sandstone was added to the façade, representing allegorical and emblematic depictions. The medieval arcade was rebuilt with round arches (instead of pointed arches of the Gothic period) and ‘*Tuscan columns*’; it now forms an open balcony. In the interior, the large festivity hall has one wide span with heavy oak beams; the lower part of the walls is panelled, and the doorways (of different dates) have sculptured polychrome frames.

The New Town Hall was the result of an architectural competition, and it was built in 1909-1913, designed by Gabriel von Seidl from Munich. The building has three main floors, and it was intended for representation and chancellery. The elevations are covered in tiles (clinker); windows and details are built in south-German limestone.

The stone statue of Roland stands in the middle of the market place, in front of the town hall, facing the cathedral church. The statue is ca. 5.5m tall, and it was initially erected in 1404 in representation of the rights and privileges of the free and imperial city of Bremen. Such statues have been common in German towns and townships, representing a martyr who died in the struggle against heathens. The statue of Bremen is associated with the Margrave of Brittany, a paladin of Charlemagne.

History

The origins of Bremen go back to the 8th and 9th centuries, when it became a seat for a bishop. Its foundation is referred to Bishop Willehad and Emperor Charlemagne who supposedly granted the initial privileges. In 965, Bremen was given the rights to raise customs and to mint. The citizenry was united in a corporate body, *universitas civium*, as recognized in a diploma in 1186. There is reference to a city council whose members are called *consules*, in 1225. The City Council prepared a civic code as a law of the people, of which the 1303-04 version became the principal reference. The town entered the Hanseatic League in 1358. Though having already obtained privileges of civic autonomy, it was formally recognized as *Freie Reichstadt* (free imperial town) in 1646. From 1947, it is one of the Lands of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Roland statue in stone was erected in 1404, replacing an earlier wooden statue, and is considered the oldest Roland statue still in place in Germany. The statue used to have a shelter, which was removed in 1885. In 1938, the statue was subject to a major repair, and other restorations followed in 1959 and 1969. In 1983-84, the Roland was again provided by a protective fence as originally; the head was replaced with a copy. Over the years, the statue has had various colour schemes.

The first Rathaus of Bremen existed in the 14th century. The current Old Town Hall was built in 1405-1409, and renovated in 1595-1612. The master builder was Lüder von Bentheim (ca. 1555-1612), who already had other projects in Bremen, as well as reconstructing the exterior of the Gothic town hall of Leiden (Netherlands) beginning in 1585. The new architectural elements were designed following the plans by Hans Vredeman de Vries, Hendrik Goltzius, Jacob Floris and other masters of the Dutch Renaissance. The New Town Hall was added in 1909-1913.

The town of Bremen was heavily bombed during the Second World War, and some 62% of the buildings were lost. However, the area of the town hall survived relatively well.

Management regime

Legal provision:

The owner of the town hall and the Roland is the municipality of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen. The town hall and the Roland are under the protection of the *Denkmalschutzgesetz* (DSchG, 1975/ 1989, law for the care and protection of cultural monuments) of the Federal Land of Bremen, and are listed as historical monuments. The Lands of the Federal Republic of Germany act independently in educational and cultural matters, a principle which also applies to monument protection. All laws and regulations concerning the protection of cultural monuments are passed by the *Bürgerschaft* (Land parliament) of Bremen. Almost all buildings within the inner buffer zone are under preservation order individually, and the DSchG law applies to the Markt as a whole.

Management structure:

In the city-state of Bremen, the lower authority, *Landesamt für Denkmalpflege*, also functions as a specialised

monument authority and has the power of decision concerning applications submitted by monument owners in agreement with those owners. Once an agreement is reached, the higher authority: *Senator für Inneres, Kultur und Sport* (Senator for Internal Affairs, Culture and Sport) makes the final decision. The protection authorities are under the control of the Bremen Land government and thus of the senate. The employer is the respective senator responsible for culture.

Any alteration, repair and restoration work carried out in the town hall is done in close collaboration between the specialised monument authorities and the senate chancellery, with the participation of the competent building regulation office and the affiliated authorities. The supervision of the respective project is assumed by the *Bremer Bau-Management GmbH*, while the municipal corporation *Bremer Bau Betrieb GmbH* is primarily in charge of the planning and realisation. The competent authority for the conception and determination of city centre development in the general environs of the town hall is the *Stadtplanungsamt* which draws up binding statements regarding construction project petitions and processes construction plan schedules within the context of the approval procedure. One primary responsibility of this office is the organization of public space.

The area of the nominated property and buffer zone is subject to the regulations of the urban master. All listed buildings have their own conservation plans, established by the *Landesamt für Denkmalpflege*. The nominated property also has a ten-year management plan, which has been prepared together with the World Heritage file, and submitted for approval by competent authorities.

Resources:

The finance of all maintenance and conservation work on the property comes from the public funds. During the past ten years this has amounted to 6.5 million DM.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

Criterion iii: The Town Hall and Roland of Bremen bear a 'unique testimony' to civic autonomy and sovereignty within the framework of a state.

Criterion iv: The town hall and Roland of Bremen form an 'outstanding example' of a 'type' of town hall and its symbolism with regard to the theme of liberty.

Criterion vi: The town hall and Roland of Bremen are directly associated with political ideas 'of outstanding universal significance'; the idea of civil self-government combined with the autonomous regulation of the legal and economic circumstances of the citizenry.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Bremen in August 2002. ICOMOS has also consulted architectural historians in Central Europe and the Netherlands, as well as its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages.

The World Heritage Committee in its 27th session, decided to defer this nomination subject to a comparative study, which has since been provided by the State Party. The new information also offers a revised justification of the inscription, on the basis of which ICOMOS has revised its evaluation.

Conservation

Conservation history:

The nominated property has been under preservation order since 1909 (Old Town Hall) and 1973 (New Town Hall).

Since its construction, the town hall has undergone repair and maintenance. The main gable was stabilised in 1928–1930. The statues of the south and west façades were replaced with copies in 1959–1963. There was a comprehensive restoration of the exterior and the Upper Hall in 1964–1968. The representative rooms were restored or renovated in 1985–98. Modern lifts were also installed. Maintenance work is currently going on in the façades, including re-pointing the joints and consolidating the stone parts. The copper roof is currently under repair.

State of conservation:

At the conclusion of the repair work, the Old Town Hall is expected to be in a good state of conservation. The facades of the New Town Hall show effects of exposure to weather, but restoration is not considered necessary.

Management:

The management and care of the property is well organized.

Risk analysis:

There are no risks foreseen.

Authenticity and integrity

Authenticity:

The town hall of Bremen has had various phases in its history, starting with the first construction in Gothic style, in the early 15th century, and the substantial renovation in the Baroque period in the early 17th century. Furthermore, there have been various transformations and additions in the subsequent centuries, including the construction of the new town hall in the early 20th century. Taking into account this historic evolution, the town hall can be conceived as having historical authenticity in its form and material in respect to the various periods. It has also retained its historically established spatial relationship with the neighbouring historic buildings and market squares.

The Bremen Roland is considered to be one of the oldest and most representative still standing of such statues. It has been repaired and restored numerous times, and some of the original material has been replaced, therefore losing part of its authenticity.

Integrity:

While the immediate surroundings of the town hall have survived reasonably well, the rest of the historic town of

Bremen suffered serious destruction during the Second World War, and was rebuilt in new forms after the war.

Comparative evaluation

The new information prepared by the State Party provides an in-depth analysis of the historical-cultural context of the Town Hall and Roland, allowing a more specific definition of the qualities of the nominated property. The new analyses clarify the architectural typology and its background, as well as the art-historical, architectural and social-political meaning of the property. While previously mainly referred to the Hanseatic League and the Low Lands, the present comparison analyses the town hall in the more general European context.

Typology of architecture: the building type of the medieval town hall of Bremen, i.e. a hall construction for representative and public use, developed in northern Italy in the 13th century. The variation adopted in Bremen has its roots in the Rhineland and the Low Lands. Of this type, the Bremen town hall is considered a particularly pure example, having preserved its structural and spatial organisation intact. The arcade along the market side represents a typical feature of many town halls, but the Bremen arcade is considered the oldest and most representative of its type. Numerous German town halls were destroyed during the Second World War, and many have been modified. The Bremen town hall remains a rare example of its type to retain its authenticity.

Function of the town hall: the Bremen town hall was expressly built by the municipal authority, the City Council, as a town hall. The upper floor was reserved for representation, and the ground floor was intended for use by the market people, thus joining the population with the authority. These original functions have been retained until today. Other uses have been located elsewhere. In its historical context, Bremen is exceptional, also considering that many town halls have accommodated different uses.

Stylistic and artistic values: the current appearance of the Bremen town hall results from the renovation in the early 17th century, representing the so-called ‘Weser Renaissance’. This style refers to developments in the cultural region formed around the Weser Valley, in northern Germany, in late 16th and early 17th centuries. The sources of this style are in Italian Renaissance treatises, e.g. Sebastiano Serlio, in the work of the Flemish artist, Hans Vredeman de Vries, as well as in local artistic and building traditions. The impact of the graphic work and the treatises of de Vries was felt in many parts of Europe, from the Low Lands to Prague, but few of his architectural works survive. In this context, the Bremen town hall is considered a highly representative example.

Political and cultural values: the symbolism of the Town Hall and Roland of Bremen carries strong references especially to Emperor Charlemagne, the bishopric, and the City Council, the founders and the principal authority of the city. This symbolism reflects the autonomous status of the Bremen city state, a status that it has retained up till today. Of the numerous imperial cities only Hamburg and Bremen remain, both having retained their autonomy within the Federal Republic of Germany. Hamburg, however, has no medieval fabric left. Roland statues, symbolising market rights and freedom, were common in

European marketplaces; today some 40 still remain. The Bremen Roland is distinguished in having a proven historic reference: Count Roland, a paladin of Charlemagne. It is also one of the oldest and the most representative.

The Free Imperial City (German: *Freie Reichsstadt*) referred to the cities and towns of the Holy Roman Empire that were subject only to the authority of the emperor. Initially the position was assigned to a small number which had won independence from ecclesiastical lords (in particular: Basel, Strasbourg, Speyer, Worms, Mainz, Cologne, and Regensburg). Later, this recognition was assigned to further cities, increasing the number to over eighty in the 16th century. These cities had considerable political impact through their position and their alliances. Subsequently, the number was reduced due to changing political situations. After the Napoleonic period, only four remained, and from the end of the Second World War only two: Hamburg and Bremen.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

Referring to the revised justification, ICOMOS considers that the Town Hall and Roland on the marketplace of Bremen are an outstanding representation of the civic autonomy and market rights in the Holy Roman Empire. The nominated property is an exceptionally well preserved example of a medieval town hall, a typical Western European model. It is also an outstanding representation of the late Renaissance architecture of northern Germany, the so-called Weser Renaissance, reflecting European-wide trends at the end of the 16th and early 17th centuries. Bremen is a city of imperial foundation, maintaining its status as a 'free city state' in the modern political framework of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Criterion iii: the autonomy and sovereignty of cities in Europe arose in the 10th and 12th centuries, starting from Northern Italy and the Low Lands. Bremen, in Northern Germany and close to the Low Lands, was one of the cities to refer their foundation to Emperor Charlemagne. Its civic autonomy developed from the 12th century, though formally recognized as a free imperial city only in the 17th century. It had the designation as '*civitas*' (city), in reference to ancient Rome and the early-medieval development of Episcopal cities. Apart from Hamburg, it is today the only city to have retained its status as one of the lands of the Federal Republic of Germany. The town hall was built to represent the civic authority, the City Council, with clear reference to the imperial foundation and the bishopric. The statue of Roland at the marketplace again recalls the Emperor. The town hall and Roland of Bremen can thus be considered to bear an exceptional testimony to civic autonomy and sovereignty as these developed in Europe over the centuries.

Criterion iv: the town hall of Bremen is an exceptionally well preserved example of a type of medieval town hall, so-called *Saalgeschossbau*, which developed in German lands from north-Italian origins. Most of the other town halls of the same type have been either modified or destroyed. In the renovation around 1600, while retaining its medieval attributes and strengthening the symbolism of communal autonomy and imperial foundations, the town

hall acquired a new appearance. It became an outstanding example of the north-German Weser Renaissance style. It is also a rare example of the direct contribution to architecture by Hans Vredeman de Vries, whose influence was felt in many parts of Europe through his graphic work and paintings. The statue of Roland represents a typical feature in marketplaces, particularly in Central Europe, symbolising market freedom. The Bremen Roland is considered the most representative and one of the oldest extant today.

Criterion vi: The title of a Free Imperial City recognized a status of self-government, legal and economic autonomy, and were only subject to the authority of the emperor. The government was in the hands of the City Council, representing the citizenship, which developed from the earlier Episcopal council. The Bremen town hall was specifically built for the use by the City Council, who occupied the upper floor; the ground floor was related to marketplace functions. The architecture and sculptural decoration of the building symbolise relationship with the imperial and Episcopal foundations of the city, as well as the politics of self-government guided by the City Council. The Roland statue refers to a paladin of Emperor Charlemagne and symbolises market freedom. The statue refers to Roland, the subject of *La Chanson de Roland* (c. 1100), the earliest and most significant French '*chanson de geste*', a significant influence to European epic poetry (e.g., German, English, Scandinavian, Italian). These include *Orlando Furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto (1516), the most significant epos of the Italian Renaissance. Roland statues were erected in market places particularly in Central Europe, symbolising market rights and freedom. The Bremen Roland carries a clear reference to historical Roland, and underlines Charlemagne as the founder of the city and the privileges granted to the city by the emperor.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation with respect to inscription

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria iii, iv and vi*:

Criterion iii: the Bremen Town Hall and Roland bear an exceptional testimony to the civic autonomy and sovereignty, as these developed in the Holy Roman Empire.

Criterion iv: The Bremen Town Hall and Roland are an outstanding ensemble representing civic autonomy and market freedom. The town hall represents the medieval *Saalgeschossbau*-type of hall construction, as well as being an outstanding example of the so-called Weser Renaissance in Northern Germany. The Bremen Roland is the most representative and one of the oldest of Roland statues erected as a symbol of market rights and freedom.

Criterion vi: the ensemble of the town hall and Roland of Bremen with its symbolism is directly associated with the development of the ideas of civic autonomy and market freedom in the Holy Roman Empire. The Bremen Roland is referred to a historical figure, paladin of Charlemagne, who became the source for the French '*chanson de*

geste' and other medieval and Renaissance epic poetry.

ICOMOS, June 2004