

ERICH KÄSTNER

The Urban Author and his four Cities Dresden – Leipzig – Berlin - Munich

The Travelling micromuseum® Exhibition 2014 is concerned with the depiction of reality of urban life, which changes through time. It particularly focuses on the four cities where Erich Kästner, exemplary German writer of the 20th century, lived and wrote.

At the beginning of the 20th century, at least, the citizens' socioeconomic circumstances were considerably influenced by industrialization and expansion of the cities. . Artists and writers include their experiences in cities in their work and so did Erich Kästner. In his texts as well as works of other writers who lived at his time, the depicted city comes alive, becomes itself the protagonist. The character of the respective city is reflected in many ways in the texts; at the same time the question arises whether the literary transformation in turn influenced the city's development.

With regard to these aspects, the exhibition focuses on the four cities which illustrate Erich Kästner's states in life: Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin and Munich. Born in 1899 and grown up in Dresden, Kästner moved to Leipzig after he finished his A-levels. He studied there until 1925 and published his first articles in magazines and newspapers. In Berlin, he witnessed the time of National Socialism; he stayed there until the war was almost over. In 1945, he moved to Munich and lived there until he died in 1974.

The Travelling micromuseum® Exhibition connects city characteristics and city development with essential biographical events in Erich Kästner's life and work. The structure of the urban organism as well as Kästner's mundane life in the cities and its literary conversion are part of the exhibition. These literary transformations do not only show the collective reality of life but also reflect Kästner's personal impressions and opinions on the awareness of life.

The exhibition's conceptual model is the Erich Kästner museum in Dresden which – just as the Travelling micromuseum® Exhibition – was designed by the Irish architect Ruairí O'Brien and opened in Villa Augustin in 2000. Similar to the Erich Kästner Museum, the autonomous discovery is to the fore of the exhibition. The cities are introduced in four modules, the four "city houses" which contain exhibits for taking out and touching. Apart from documents about the city's history and its development, Erich Kästner's works as well as publications of noted authors of these cities are presented. Moreover, there are descriptions of characteristic places and relevant people who influenced Erich Kästner in the current city. This way of preparation shows the richness and versatility of Erich Kästner's life and work and orients itself especially by the visitor who can playfully and interactively discover Erich Kästner's life and working.