

DRESDEN 1945

TRAGEDY AND HOPE OF A EUROPEAN CITY

DRESDEN 1945 immediately transports the visitor back to the city laid waste by the bombing of February 1945. With Dresden Town Hall tower as a viewpoint, observers can take in the scale of the destruction. Unlike with the well-known photographs of this period, visitors here are completely immersed in the devastated city characterised by pillars of smoke.

Between 13 and 15 February, British and American planes carried out four bombing raids, resulting in the destruction of large parts of Dresden and the loss of a great many lives. Several of the 'Florence on the Elbe's late-Baroque cultural landmarks fell victim to the bombing raids, including the Semper Opera House, Frauenkirche, Royal Palace, St. Sophia's Church and the Zwinger Palace.

In Dresden, Yadegar Asisi combines both the tragedy and the hope of a European city. The panorama addresses the tragedy of not just 1945, but of the whole complex history of war in Europe. Dresden takes its place alongside other cities destroyed during the Second World War, not just those in Germany. The destruction of European cities such as Rotterdam, Coventry, Stalingrad and Warsaw as a result of German attacks is also referenced by the panorama.

Asisi also pays tribute to the people of Dresden for their efforts to rebuild their city, which are ongoing amidst urban-planning discussions. Building authorities in the former East Germany didn't bother with rebuilding existing structures and structural remains. In many areas, they simply cleared away the rubble and carried out a massive clean-up exercise. And this wasn't just the case in Dresden – it's simply the way things were done at the time. Consequently, many burnt-out landmarks, such as St. Sophie's Church or the Albert Theatre, were eventually destroyed. Others, such as the Frauenkirche and the Kurlander Palais, were kept as memorials. There was a rethink in the 1980s and a reconstruction drive began. Resulting highlights are the Semper Opera House, which was rebuilt in 1985, and the Frauenkirche, rebuilt in 2005.

With DRESDEN 1945, Asisi's aim is to encourage discussion of the question: how does society today deal with the values of the past? Given the experiences and lessons of the past, are we ready to learn from and address them?

The panorama is permanently on show in the Dresden Panometer for several months a year, alternating with the BAROQUE DRESDEN panorama.