

THE REICH CHANCELLERY

A WORK ANALYSIS

— CHRISTOPH NEUBAUER —

THE ENTRANCE HALL

ALBERT SPEER

New Reich Chancellery/ Interior/ Voßstraße 5/ 1937-1950

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Anyone who entered the Entrance Hall usually couldn't simply walk straight into the Mosaic Hall. The SS servants took the jackets or coats from the visitors in the Entrance Hall

and moved them from here to the cloakrooms. The Entrance Hall was the first gathering point where the guests could come to rest before making their way to the state rooms.

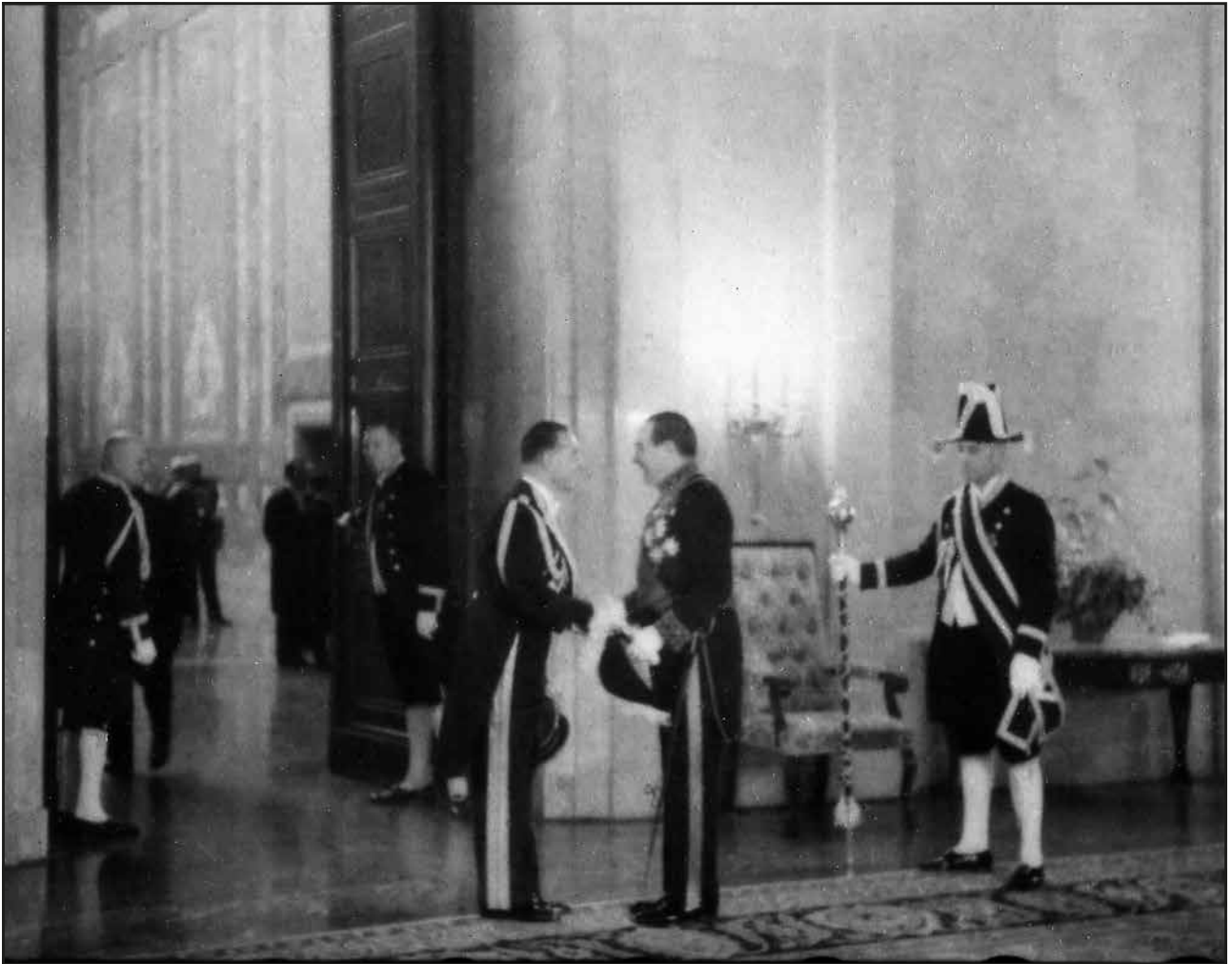


Fig. 43 The photo (ca. 1939) shows how SS servants welcome the guests at the door to the Mosaic Hall

The function of the Entrance Hall as a relaxation room was also underlined by Albert Speer's design. The Entrance Hall had no direct visual connection with the outside world. Life on the street was completely sealed off from the interior spaces via deep soffits of the double windows. Even a view of the Court of Honor was not possible from the Entrance Hall because the glass of the two windows were etched and partially colored. Through the Entrance Hall, visitors to the New Reich Chancellery entered a world removed from real life, isolated and disoriented and therefore helplessly dependent on the guidance of the SS servants.



Fig. 44 The east wall with the two windows

The space between the windows of the Court of Honor and the Entrance Hall was approx. 2.3m deep. In order to prevent these deep window shafts from becoming visible, Albert Speer, like Leonard Gall before him, decided to install independent windows in the Entrance Hall. In this way he ensured that the very deep window reveals could not be seen from either the Court of Honor or the Entrance Hall. However, due to the east wall being

more than 2 meters thick, it also meant that no direct light could reach the Entrance Hall through the window openings. This was not only due to the thickness of the wall, but also to the depth of the portal in the Court of Honor. Considering that these two windows were the only source of natural light for the room, one can assume that without the use of additional artificial lighting, the Entrance Hall would have been extremely dark.



Fig. 55 Section through the window shaft - inside and outside windows were approx. 2.3m apart

But despite the obvious presentation of power at this point, Albert Speer still designed the door with a level of attention to detail that placed the greatest emphasis on the overall aesthetic appeal. In the door to the Entrance Hall he varied the basic design principles that he also used in the designs of the outer doors of the New Reich

Chancellery. The Entrance Hall, however, was a festive space. Therefore, Speer replaced the rivet heads that were otherwise attached to the outer doors at the hinge crossing points on this door with detailed floral ornaments. The demonstration of power in this door dissolved almost unnoticed in the architect's attention to detail.



Fig. 65 Detailed view of one of the floral ornaments on the intersection of the bands

The chairs designed by Albert Speer especially for the Entrance Hall actually had no practical function because it is unlikely that there were occasions when someone would have found the time to sit on them. The fact that they were positioned so far apart from one another made it clear that these chairs were not really intended to be used.

In terms of design language, the chairs corresponded to the wall tables. Albert Speer designed the front chair legs in the same basic shape as he designed

the legs of the wall tables. Speer had the seats and armrest padding of the chairs covered in pink brocade. The covering had an ornamental floral motif and was therefore visually related in shape and color to the flower-shaped inlays on the drawers of the wall tables and the pink of the marble on the walls. The floral ornamentation of the seat covers was also in direct dialogue with the floral decorations on the plant bowls that were set up during social events and were firmly integrated into the design of the Entrance Hall.



Fig. 85 The chairs, placed strictly in the mirrored surfaces of the walls, had a purely optical function.

Albert Speer designed a long rectangular table for the position on the northern wall of the Entrance Hall. The frame of the table was made of a solid wooden frame on which a marble top rested. The table had a fixed, prescribed place in the Entrance Hall because it not only served as a place where the flower bowls could be placed during so-

cial events. The main function of the table was to visually separate the small hall in the floor area from the Entrance Hall. It was positioned at the transition between the Entrance Hall and the small hall because it served as a room divider and thereby reinforced the visual demarcation between the Entrance Hall and the small hall.



Fig. 87 The floral decoration was used to specifically support the architectural effect of the Entrance Hall.

One set of furniture stood out from the overall design of the Entrance Hall due to its design. However, this set can only be seen in a later photo of the Entrance Hall, this was a standing mirror with a small side table. It is interesting that in the construction drawings of the furniture in the dining room there is a drawing for a side table that is very similar to the table in the Entrance Hall.

This table was apparently never set up in the dining room, as it cannot be seen in any of the surviving photos of the dining room. It can therefore be assumed that the table set up in the Entrance Hall came from the dining room. It was probably only later realized that at the receptions the ladies had to be given the opportunity to take a final look at their appearance after handing in their wardrobe.



Fig. 95 The southwest corner of the Entrance Hall with the wardrobe furniture that was later installed here

the current state of research, it cannot be clarified whether the door was removed for practical reasons or whether it was stored together with other art objects.

The Entrance Hall only had one outer wall with its east wall. This wall was also set back behind the portal of the courtyard. Above the Entrance Hall there were two further floors. Due to this relatively protected location, the Entrance Hall remained undamaged by bombs and artillery during the Battle of Berlin.

The whereabouts of the furnishings in the Entrance Hall are unclear. It can be assumed that the carpet was seized before the fighting. It is unclear where the carpet is today.

The whereabouts of the inner windows, the bronze door, the chairs and the wall tables are also unclear. Since there are no photographs of the Entrance Hall tak-

en after 1944, it is not clear whether the furniture was secured before hostilities began.

However, it should be noted that the furniture in the Entrance Hall does not appear in any photographs taken after 1945.

It can therefore be assumed that if the furniture had not been secured before the start of hostilities, it, like other furniture in the Reich Chancellery, would have been carried by the Soviet soldiers to the Court of Honor to be used there during guard duty.

It is therefore likely that the furniture in the Entrance Hall was not destroyed but was moved out of storage before 1945. Their whereabouts remain unknown.

5. *Bundesarchiv (R43-II-1055a)*

6. *Bundesarchiv (R43-II-1104b)*



Fig. 109 Court of Honor (May 1945) / walled up window, removed door, missing inner bronze window