

Giebichenstein is one of the oldest areas of settlement within the city of Halle. Since the early 9th century it was part of the Frankish Kingdom. The salt production in the Wittekind valley, the strategic position on the cliff at a river crossing, and the close proximity to trade routes made this location ideal for building a castle. In 961, Holy Roman Emperor Otto I gave the settlement to St. Mauritius monastery of Magdeburg (Moritzkloster). With the foundation of the archdiocese of Magdeburg in 968 Giebichenstein went into the ownership of the archbishops. The castle was first documented in the 10th century as Castle 'Giucansten'. The name 'Old Castle' has been used for the complex on the grounds of the Amtsgarten since the 17th century. However, there are no visible remains of the 'Old Castle' left today.

### The Upper Castle

Research excavations and reconstructions provide evidence that the Upper Castle was built as a representative castle complex in the 12th/13th century. During the second half of the 12th century the main role was increasingly transferred from the 'Old Castle' to the newly constructed castle. The steep ascent to the Upper Castle, the narrow passageway of the gate tower, as well as the existing architecture and fortification on the cliff made outbuildings necessary.



The oldest image of Giebichenstein Castle, City Archive Halle

This function could well still have fallen to the 'Old Castle'. The oldest parts of the Upper Castle are the northern curtain wall, the keep, the great hall, the castle chapel, the cobbled courtyard, and the substructure of the gate tower. The castle complex was added to in the following two centuries. The excavated remnants of the great hall and keep with columns and fire places illustrate the castle's function as the residence and administrative seat of the archbishops of Magdeburg. Since the late 14th century it was their main residence for their role as town lords of Halle. The Upper Castle was also a customs house and mint.

### The Lower Castle

In the mid-15th century the Lower Castle with its outer walls and five towers was constructed. The granary in the castle yard was built in 1473. The residence, refectory building and brewery followed until 1500, the barns on the southern part were added in the 16th century. In 1503 however, the archbishop of Magdeburg moved to the newly constructed Moritzburg Castle within the town walls. Castle Giebichenstein outside the town walls was subsequently used as a customs house and administrative seat. A fire destroyed Upper and Lower Castle in 1636, though. Only the Lower Castle was reconstructed.



The Lower Castle with the granary

In 1680, a new time of prosperity for the Giebichenstein administration started when Halle and the surrounding region Saalkreis became part of Brandenburg-Prussia. Many changes were made to the complex in the 18th century which still define the appearance of the Lower Castle today. Notable among these modifications are the addition of the guildhall on the east wing, the pigeon loft in the castle yard, the stone bridge, and the steward house to the north underneath the porphyry rock. The Lower Giebichenstein Castle has been home to today's University of Art and Design since 1921. After research excavations the Upper Castle was opened for the public as a museum of architecture in 1966.

### The Amtsgarten

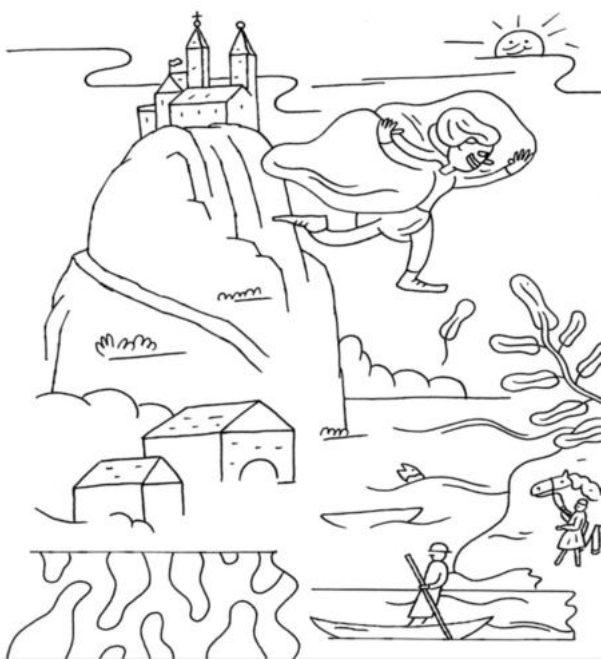
The first gardens known as the Amtsgarten date back to the beginning of the 18th century. It was redesigned as a baroque garden around 1740, and once again reimagined in the style of an English garden forty years later. The idyllic garden and the ruins of the Upper Castle Giebichenstein fascinated the romantics and inspired many literary works. Today, the Amtsgarten is considered one of the 40 most beautiful and important gardens in the state of Saxony-Anhalt.



The Amtsgarten

## The legend of Louis the Springer

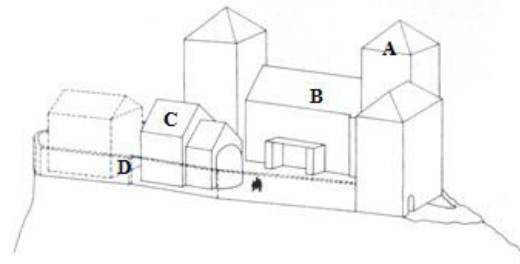
Many centuries ago, Thuringian landgrave Louis was in gaol for murder at Giebichenstein Castle. Two years and eight months had already passed, and the verdict of the emperor, who had been out of the country for a long period of time, was to be expected soon. But Louis had a cunning plan. He feigned fatal illness and asked for a coat to guard him against the cold. The gaolers took off his manacles. With supposedly the last of his strength Louis walked over to see the sun one final time. Catching the guards by surprise, he jumped out of the window and into the river Saale. The ballooning coat lessened the impact. With some help from his summoned loyal followers he was able to escape. He has been dubbed 'the Springer' ever since.



Impression out of the colouring book of the Upper Giebichenstein Castle, City Museum Halle. Available for purchase at the ticket office.

## Book the venue for your birthday party!

Simplified reconstruction scheme of the building stock



in the Romanesque period (Schunke, Kűbner 2005)

- A: gate tower
- B: great hall
- C: chapel
- D: entrance to the vaulted cellar

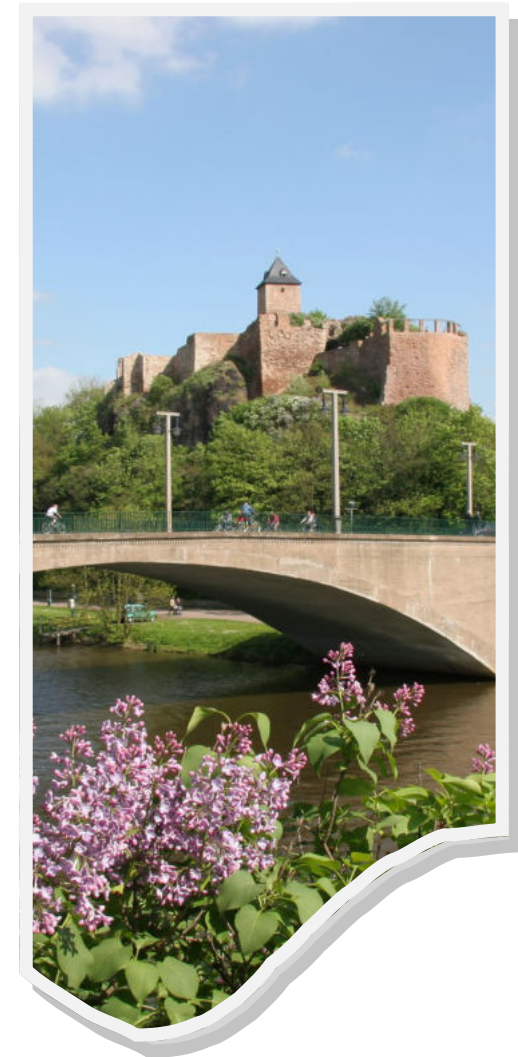
*The Upper Giebichenstein Castle is part of the Romanesque Road.*

### Visit us here as well:

City Museum Halle  
Große Märkerstraße 10  
D-06108 Halle (Saale)  
T: +49(0)345 221 30 30  
[www.stadtmuseumhalle.de](http://www.stadtmuseumhalle.de)

Or in the Red Tower (Roter Turm)  
and Hausmann Towers (Hausmannstűrme)

Photographie: City of Halle (Saale)/Thomas Ziegler



**"There stands a castle over the valley..."**

**– Joseph von Eichendorff**