



VILLA Urge

1.100 m² of living accommodation on about 20.000 m² of land in an exclusive position with a view of the Ruhr valley – that's what Mülheim's leather manufacturer, Jean Baptiste Coupienne, and his wife, Martha, built for themselves in 1913. Using as an example the architecture of his wife's parents' home, Blegge House, an 18th century moated castle in Paffrath near Bergisch Gladbach, they commissioned the architect Franz Hagen with the building of this square-shaped villa. It is a classic representative of the pre-modern period: The typical monumentalism was paired with neo-baroque and classical elements of architecture. The turning away from historicism is also reflected in the symmetrical, severe and compact style of the two-storey building with its garret roof.

The two towers on the garden side with their „French-Swiss“ caps and the conservatory built out onto the terrace are particularly noteworthy. The front of the villa, which faces the road, is characterised by a porch born by ionic pillars with a balcony above and a large round window.

The initials HS on the weathervane bear witness to the fact that the Coupiennes were not the house's last owners. HS stands for Hugo Stinnes whose company bought the villa in 1924 which had been purchased the previous year by Gustav Stinnes.

Apart from the period 1945 – 1958, when the villa was used by the British as an officers' mess, Hugo Stinnes lived in it up until the beginning of the 1970's. In 1973, the *Max-Planck-Institut für Kohleforschung* (institute of coal research), which was closely linked to the Stinnes family and located nearby, purchased the house, which since 1988 is a listed building, and used it until the beginning of the new millennium as a guest house for foreign scientists.

Since July 2004, it has been rented to ZENIT GmbH which converted and redeveloped it to comply with the requirements of modern office communication and staging of events. ZENIT was supported in this by the City of Mülheim with public funds and by the Max Planck Institute.

The Interior

As was common at the time it was built, the layout of the house was functional: Whilst the ground floor with its large entrance hall, the conservatory, a living room and study, the dining room as well as the two kitchens served representative purposes, the upper floor with its bathrooms, bedrooms and nurseries was above all a place for the family to retreat. The attic housed housekeeping rooms and the quarters of the female staff. All housekeeping activities took place via a second staircase.

It would appear from old photos and drawings that up until the 1950s the ground floor of the villa was far more extravagant than today. Architectural elements such as the double doors to the conservatory or the intarsia parquet were replaced by a simple glass door and a travertine floor, wooden doors had to make way for new metal doors. The wood-latticed windows in the conservatory were replaced by a modern steel construction.

The vaulted cellar is an unusual feature. Apart from the wine cellars with adjoining wine bar common in houses of this size, during the Second World War, the mining department of the Matthias Stinnes colliery and the Mülheim Mining Society built a private bunker with several entrances and space for about 3.000 people. It was Hugo Stinnes' intention for it to be of this size in order to offer protection to civilians from the neighbourhood too. The local population used it frequently.