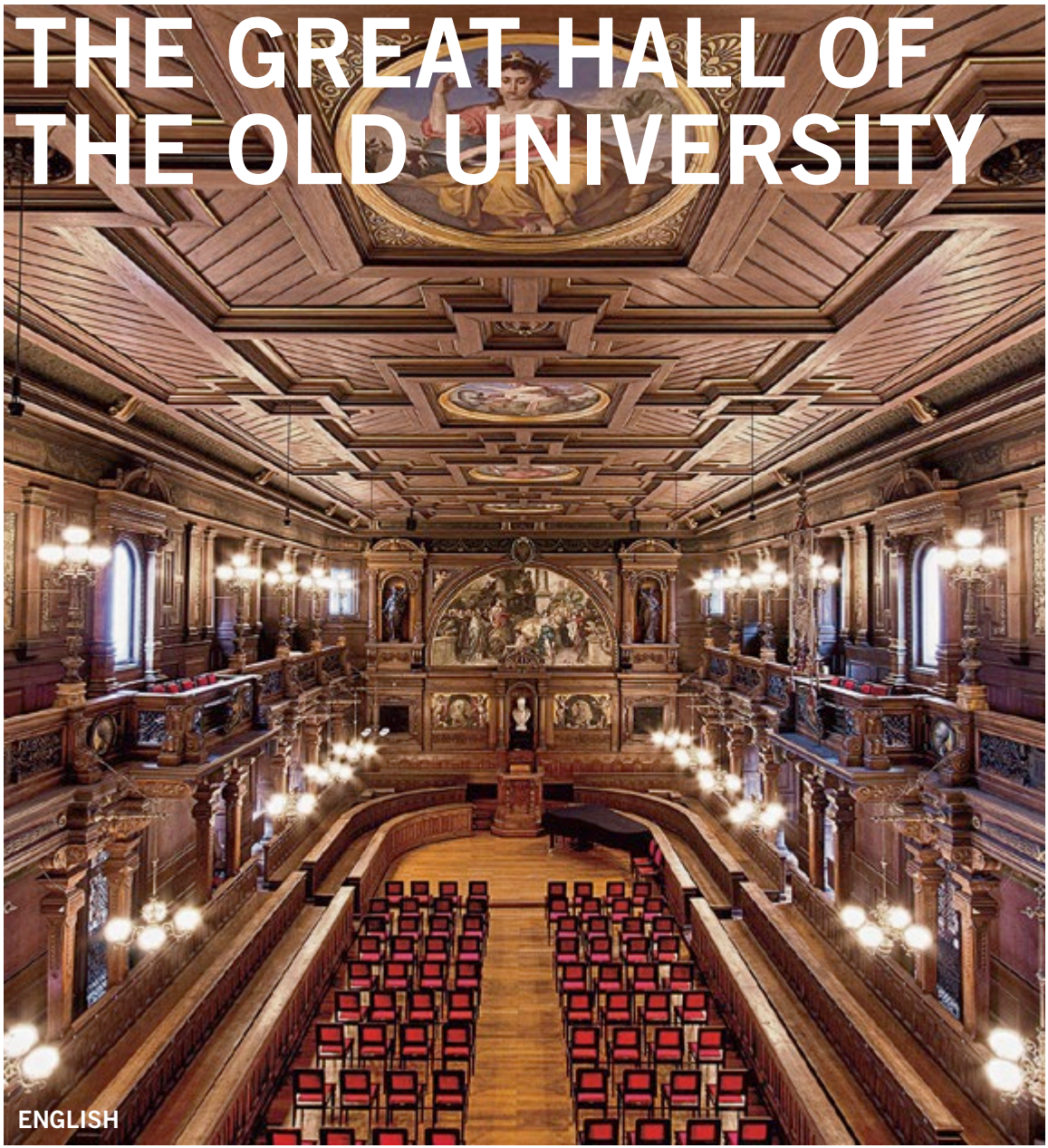
UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

THE GREAT HALL OF THE OLD UNIVERSITY



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INTRODUCTION

The Great Hall of the Old University building, or simply the »Old Hall«, is not just the ceremonial hall of Heidelberg University; it is the heart of this institution and illustrates the history and identity of the oldest German university in numerous allegories and metaphors. Originally built in the baroque style, the Old Hall was redesigned completely on the occasion of the University's 500th anniversary. The magnificent room, donated by the Grand Duke of Baden for the anniversary, is today one of the few remaining intact ensembles of the Karlsruhe woodcarving school.

At all times, the University was aware that the outer form shapes an institution's identity and helps to develop and bring together individual skills and talents to create »the University«. It is the people who make the University and – through their diversity – create the academic cosmos. The artwork in the Old Hall embodies these values, which epitomise the idea of a European university then and now: internationality, as illustrated by the international circle of professors from the University's inception, with its Parisian founding president Marsilius of Inghen, to today; interdisciplinarity, represented by the four ceiling medallions of the founding faculties that show the disciplines originally taught at the University: theology, law, medicine and liberal arts; free scientific discourse, symbolised by the two speakers' balconies facing each other. From hypothesis and antithesis, the auditorium creates synthesis.

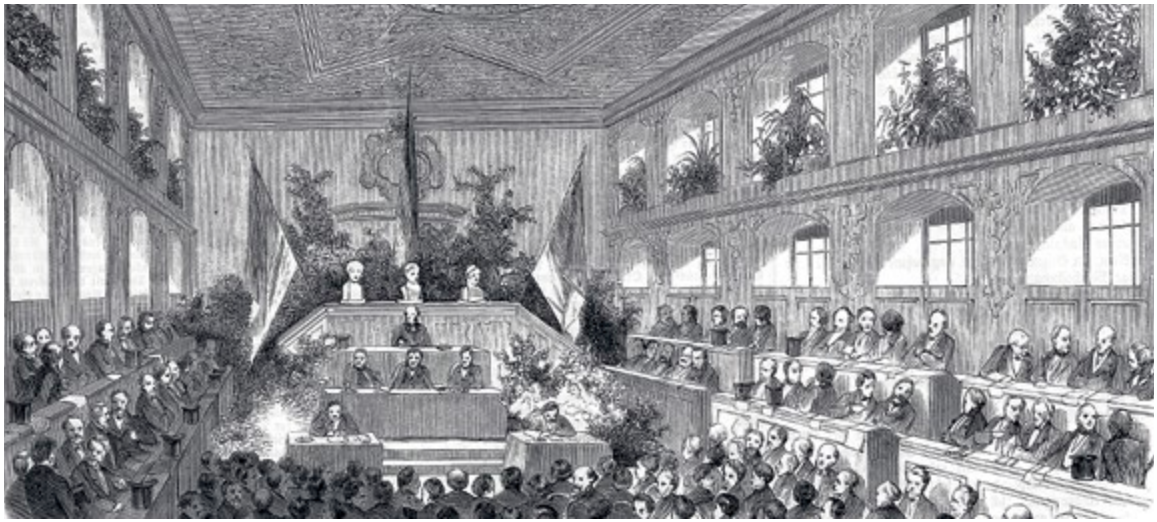
The Old Hall also symbolises the continuity of these values, which have retained their significance across the centuries based on the academic freedom of research and teaching and which were affirmed in remarkably similar words at pivotal points in the University's history: at its founding by Rupert I, Elector Palatine in 1386; at its refounding as state university by Charles Frederick, Grand Duke of Baden, in 1803; at the reopening of the academic programmes immediately after the end of the Second World War in 1945. The motto SEMPER APERTUS makes it clear that this scientific cosmos is open to new ideas and people coming in, as it is open to seeing others leave. The University's attractiveness and role as a beacon of science and knowledge keeps it alive and young. Every new generation leaves its mark on this institution and carries it forward. No other place illustrates this coming and going, the inspiration of new ideas, the values at the root of the academic community and the traditions it can build on more clearly than the Old University building and its Great Hall.

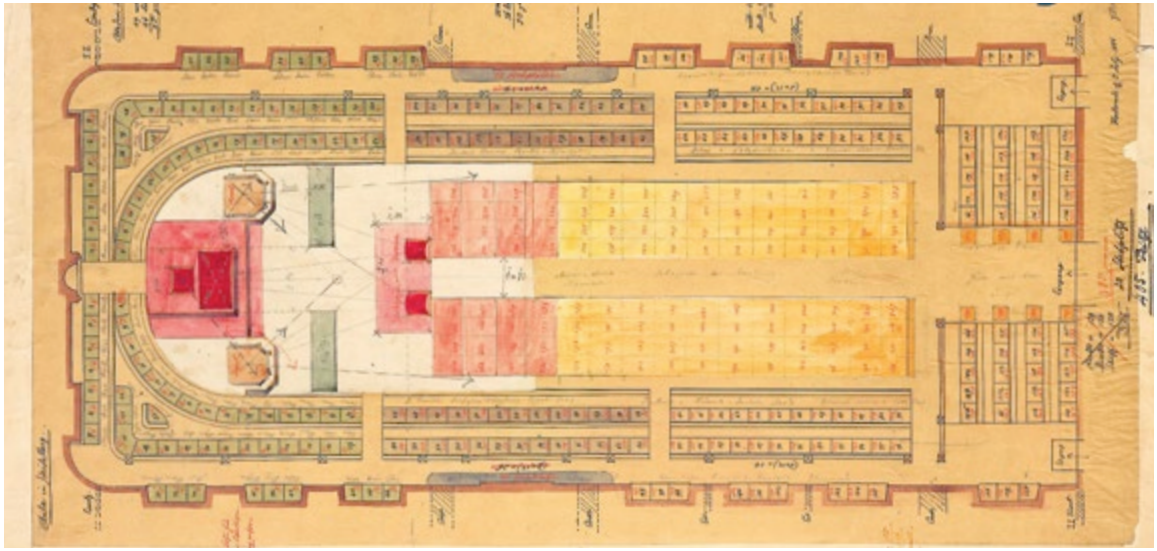
Prof. Dr Dr h.c. Bernhard Eitel
President of Heidelberg University

THE HISTORY OF THE OLD UNIVERSITY

The foundation stone for the Old University building, constructed in the baroque style under the direction of architect Johann Adam Breunig, was laid in June 1712. The building project was part of the reconstruction of the city of Heidelberg, which had suffered heavy damage in the War of Palatine Succession (1688–1697), and replaced a collegiate building belonging to the University that stood in the same location. Construction at today's University Square (Universitätsplatz) was divided into two phases and lasted into the 1720s. The building was named »Domus Wilhelmiana« after its sponsor, Johann Wilhelm, who was Elector Palatine from 1690 to 1716. The name »Old University« that is commonly used today dates back to the 1930s and the construction of the »New University« building on the opposite side of University Square.

For two centuries, the Old University building housed essential parts of the University's operations, among them several lecture halls, administrative units and, until the early 19th century, the University Library. The characteristic clock tower on the roof of the building was also installed during this time. The clock itself, as well as a bell, were taken from a city gate that had been torn down in 1827: the Mitteltorturm (Middle Gate Tower), located at the corner of Main Street and University Square. Today, the Old University building houses the office of the University President and is the meeting place of the Senate and the University Council. In 1996, the University Museum was opened on the ground floor. In the 18th century, an adjacent building on Augustinergasse that is connected to the main building was equipped with arrest cells for student delinquents – a campus prison that can be toured as part of the University Museum.





View of the (Old) Hall before the renovation in 1886

Seating chart of the (Old) Hall for the anniversary in 1886

Ceremony in 1903 commemorating the 100th anniversary of the University's reorganisation

THE GREAT HALL OF THE OLD UNIVERSITY

One of the main attractions of the Old University building is the Great Hall. The magnificent baroque room, which included a stuccoed ceiling, was completely renovated in the Renaissance Revival style for the University's 500th anniversary in 1886, based on the plans of architect Josef Durm. A gallery at the entrance and the two long sides divides the room into two levels; the University's history is detailed in the artwork of the oak-coloured wood planking.

Historic seating charts from the time when the hall was used as a meeting and lecture room show the hierarchy of the attending individuals and groups of persons. The front part of the room with its characteristic round benches and the lectern, for instance, was reserved for the representatives of the four faculties and the inner circle of the Senate.

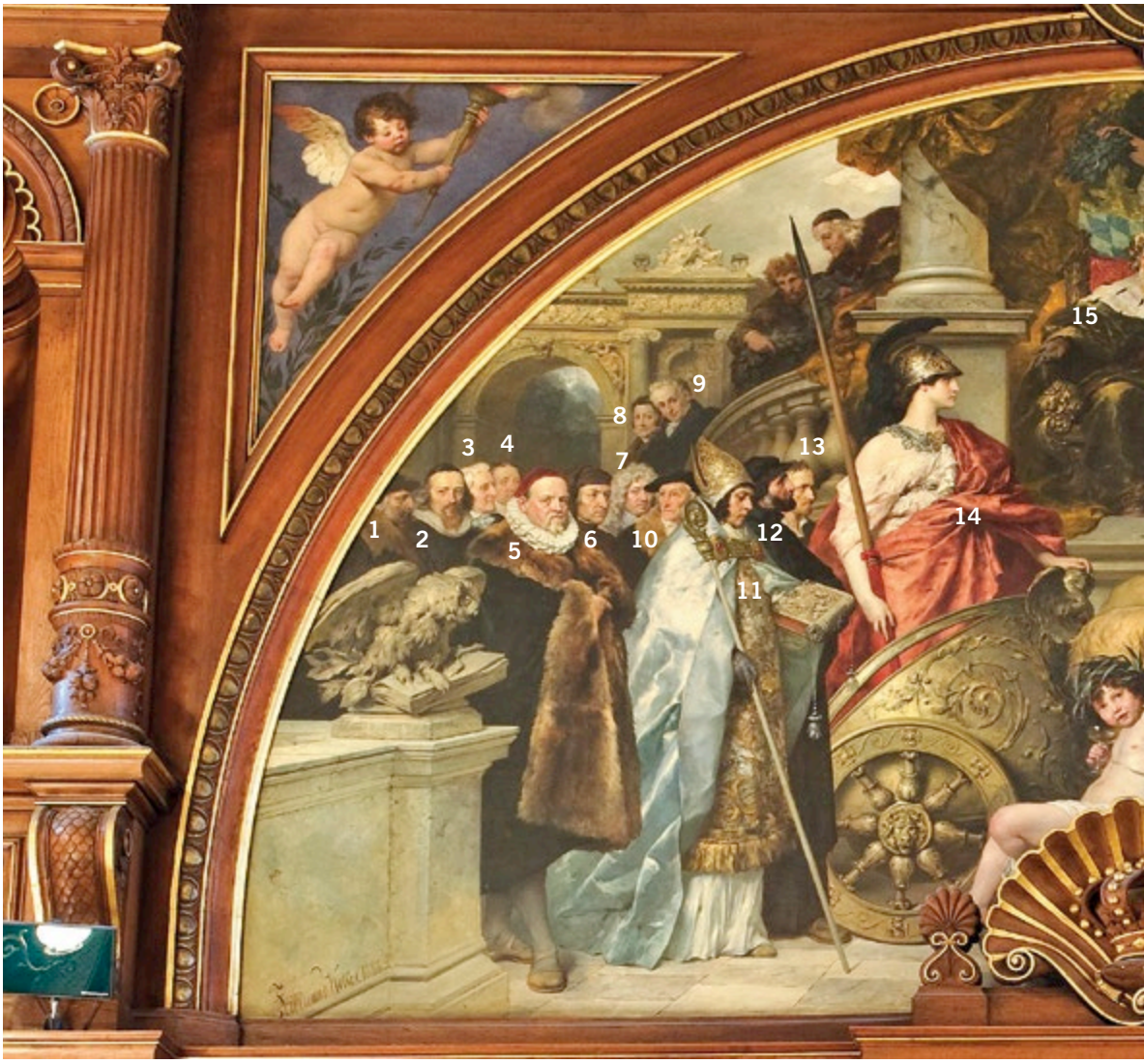
Today, the Old Hall is used for official functions of Heidelberg University, such as academic ceremonies of the faculties or the University's traditional anniversary celebration at the beginning of each winter term. The Old Hall is also a popular venue for public concerts, lectures and celebrations to which the dignified ambience of this rooms lends a unique elegance.

FRONT SIDE

The highlight of the room composition is the strictly symmetrical wall at the front side with architectural elements symbolising a triumphal arch. At its centre is the painting »Gründung der Universität Heidelberg« by historical painter Ferdinand Keller, an allegorical portrayal of the founding act and history of the University. It shows Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and the arts, entering the city of Heidelberg in a chariot – led by Nike, the goddess of victory. She is followed by personalities from Heidelberg's university and intellectual history from the 14th to the 19th century – most of them scholars from the humanistic and Reformation eras. The image also depicts part of the Heidelberg castle, the residence of the Elector Palatine, and personifications of the Neckar river and the city.

Two bronze statues of draped women, created by sculptor Adolf Heer, frame the picture on the left and right; they carry a trumpet (symbolising glory), a wreath and a torch (symbolising science).

Below them are three portraits of noble rulers: A bust by sculptor Karl Friedrich Moest showing Grand Duke Frederick I of Baden (1826–1907), who was the University's President in 1886, is framed by two portrait paintings by Ernst Schurth. The painting on the right shows the University's founder Rupert I, Elector Palatine, (1309–1390), the one on the left Grand Duke Charles Frederick of Baden (1728–1811), who refounded the University at the beginning of the 19th century.



PAINTING »GRÜNDUNG DER UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG«

by Ferdinand Keller

(Explanation of the depicted persons, left to right:)

1. Thomas Erast (1524–1583), professor of medicine and personal physician of Elector Palatine Ottheinrich
2. Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583), theologian and principal author of the Heidelberg Catechism
3. Friedrich Christoph Schlosser (1776–1861), a historian associated with the liberal movement
4. Anton Friedrich Justus Thibaut (1772–1840), legal scholar and vice-president of the University
5. Hugo Donellus (1527–1591), French legal scholar and professor at the University
6. Rudolf Agricola (1444–1485), humanistic author and scholar
7. Samuel von Pufendorf (1632–1694), philologist and legal scholar, pioneer of the Age of Enlightenment
8. Maximilian Joseph von Chelius (1794–1876), professor of medicine and head of the Department of Surgery at Heidelberg University Hospital

9 Leopold Gmelin (1788–1853), natural scientist and editor of an important handbook of theoretical chemistry

10 Sebastian Münster (1488–1552), professor at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and a renowned cosmographer

11 Johann von Dalberg (1455–1503), chancellor of the University from 1480 to 1482

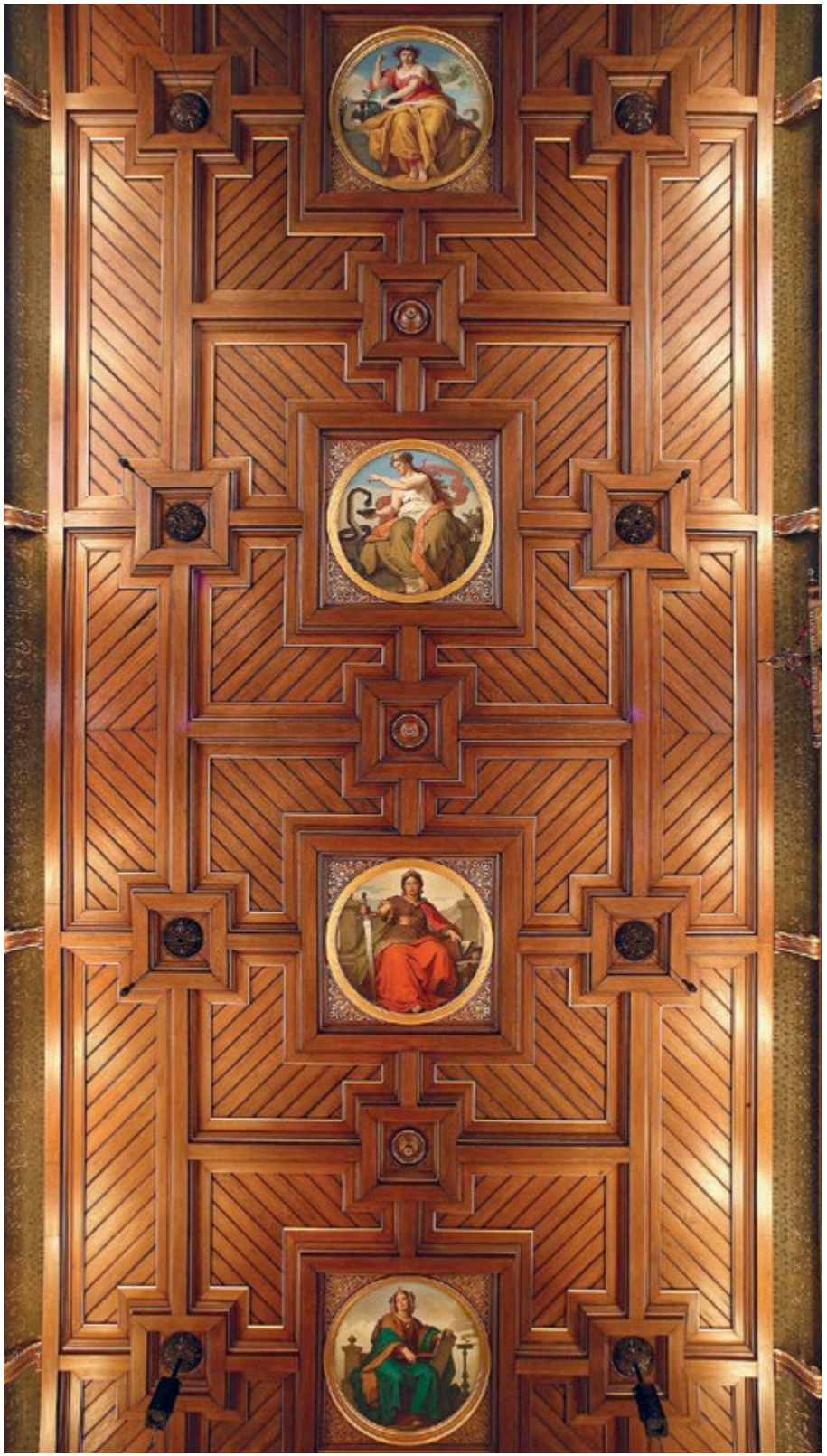
12 Marsilius of Inghen (ca. 1340–1396), president of the University of Paris and in 1386 founding president of Heidelberg University

13 Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560), the famous reformer studied in Heidelberg and in 1557 contributed to the revision of the University's constitution

14 Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom and the arts

15 Rupert I (1309–1390), Elector Palatine and founder of Heidelberg University

16 Nike, goddess of victory



THE CEILING

The special elements decorating the ceiling include four round images by artist Rudolf Gleichauf, allegories that symbolise the four historical faculties of Heidelberg University: The images depict sitting women with characteristic attributes like the Bible and a tablet with the Ten Commandments for theology, the executioner's sword and a deed for law, a snake and chalice for medicine and a scroll and globe for philosophy (bottom to top).

LONG SIDES

Along the two long sides and on the entrance side of the Old Hall, we can find the names of 37 famous Heidelberg scholars arranged in two rows – in the upper friezes and on plaques along the gallery railing. They range from Marsilius of Inghen, the founding president of 1386, to professors from the 19th century such as chemist Robert Bunsen or physiologist and physicist Hermann von Helmholtz.

On the right-hand balcony of the gallery is the ceremonial banner that was created for the University's 500th anniversary. At the centre of the banner we can see an allegory of the sciences. The back carries a dedication:
»DONATED / BY / WIVES AND DAUGHTERS / OF THE / ACADEMIC TEACHERS / 1886«.

NAME PLAQUES OF HEIDELBERG PROFESSORS AND RESEARCHERS

17 Clockwise, beginning in the upper right corner of the front side

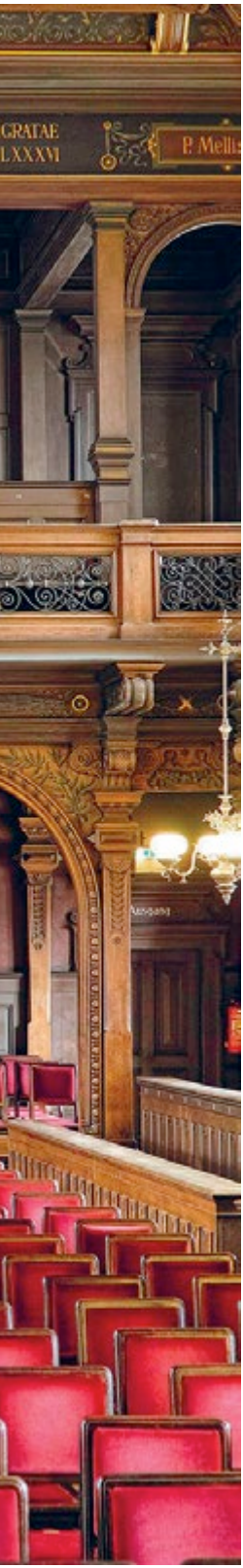
- Marsilius of Inghen (ca. 1340–1396), founding president – Faculty of Liberal Arts: logic, theology
- Jakob Wimpfeling (1450–1528), Faculty of Liberal Arts: poetics, rhetoric
- Sebastian Münster (1488–1552), Faculty of Liberal Arts: Hebrew language
- Jakob Micyllus (1503–1558), Faculty of Liberal Arts: Greek language
- Petrus Lotichius Secundus (1528–1560), Faculty of Medicine: physiology, botany
- Kaspar Olevian (1536–1587), Faculty of Theology: dogmatics
- Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583), Faculty of Theology: dogmatics
- Immanuel Tremellius (1510–1580), Faculty of Theology: Old Testament, Hebrew language
- Thomas Erast (1524–1583), Faculty of Medicine: pathology, therapeutics
- Hugo Donellus (1527–1591), Faculty of Law: Roman law
- Iacobus Theodorus Tabernaemontanus (1522–1590), Faculty of Medicine
- Paul Melissus Schede (1539–1602), director of the Bibliotheca Palatina
- David Pareus (1548–1622), Faculty of Theology: Old and New Testament
- Heinrich Alting (1583–1644), Faculty of Theology: dogmatics
- Johannes Freinsheim (1605–1660), Faculty of Philosophy: classical philology
- Samuel von Pufendorf (1632–1694), Faculty of Philosophy: international law, philology
- Johannes Conrad Brunner (1653–1727), Faculty of Medicine: physiology, anatomy, botany
- Carl Daub (1765–1836), Faculty of Theology: dogmatics, exegesis
- Johann Heinrich Voss (1779–1822), Faculty of Philosophy: classical philology
- Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771–1858), Faculty of Philosophy: classical philology
- Anton Friedrich Justus Thibaut (1772–1840), Faculty of Law: civil and criminal law, Roman legal history

18 Clockwise, beginning in the lower right corner of the front side

- Gustav Robert Kirchhoff (1824–1887), Faculty of Philosophy: physics
- Carl Salomo Zachariae (1769–1843), Faculty of Law: constitutional law
- Franz Carl Joseph Naegelé (1778–1851), Faculty of Medicine: pathology, physiology, obstetrics
- Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (1761–1851), Faculty of Theology: exegesis, church history
- Leopold Gmelin (1788–1853), Faculty of Medicine: chemistry, pharmacology
- Friedrich von Tiedemann (1781–1861), Faculty of Medicine: anatomy, zoology, physiology
- Robert Wilhelm Eberhard Bunsen (1811–1899), Faculty of Philosophy: chemistry
- Friedrich Christoph Schlosser (1776–1861), Faculty of Philosophy: history
- Carl Joseph Anton Mittermaier (1787–1867), Faculty of Law: criminal law
- Maximilian Joseph von Chelius (1794–1876), Faculty of Medicine: surgery, ophthalmology
- Carl Daniel Heinrich Rau (1792–1870), Faculty of Philosophy: national economics
- Carl Adolph von Vangerow (1808–1870), Faculty of Law: Roman law
- Richard Rothe (1799–1867), Faculty of Theology: New Testament, dogmatics
- Robert von Mohl (1799–1875), Faculty of Law: administrative law, general constitutional law
- Ludwig Häusser (1818–1867), Faculty of Philosophy: history
- Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894), Faculty of Medicine: physiology

19 Head of Pallas Athena (to the right and left side of both balconies)

20
FRIDERICVS MAGNVS BADARVM DVX RECTOR MAGNIFICENTISSIMVS VNIVERSITATI LITTARVM PERTO CONDITAE A CAROLO FRIDERICO REDINTE
SEXTVM SAECVLVM AVSPICATVRAE DOMVM ACADEMICAM ANTE ANNOS C L X X IIII FVNDATAM NVNC CVLTV INSTAVRANDAM CVRAVIT ANNO M D CCC
21



ENTRANCE

20 Frieze inscription
»Frederick, Grand Duke of Baden, Rector Magnificentissimus, furnished (this) academic building, constructed 174 years ago for the University founded by Rupert and restored by Charles Frederick, which is hopefully entering its sixth century, with new ornamentation in the year 1886.«

21 Congratulatory plaque of the University of Freiburg:
»To the Ruprecht Karls University of Heidelberg, a stronghold of the arts and sciences, the oldest in the German Empire, bearing the dignity of glory and age, which was founded by the magnanimous decision of Count Palatine Rupert I and rose to universal fame through the scholarship, fervour and consistency of men of immortal memory, which has benefited not just the general homeland but the entire human race with its counsel by sowing the seeds and fostering the growth of free science and, although itself the victim of harsh changes of fortune through the ages and, stricken both by turmoil at home and by the cruelty of wars, nearly brought to destruction, has yet risen from the ruins to thrive again and, nurtured by the unique benefaction of Prince Charles Frederick of Baden, given new brilliance to its former splendour and still flourishes today as an ornament of German science; which is joyfully celebrating its five-hundredth anniversary; bound to the elder sister by strong and manifold ties, the Prorector and Senate of the University of Freiburg, offering heartfelt congratulations and devotedly wishing that it may complete the journey through its sixth century, on which it is now embarking, with health and happiness, have expressed their wish that this bronze plaque may be an eternal sign of their felicitations. On this 3rd day of August in the year 1886.«

(German translation: Prof. Dr. Reinhard Düchting)

Oleandrus Ursinus
Leop. Gmelin.

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