In 1710, one of Leipzig’s most beautiful town houses was bought by the affluent merchant Georg Heinrich Bose. After 1723, when the Bachs moved into the cantor’s apartments at the St. Thomas School, just a few houses away, the two families became close friends. Four of the Bose daughters became godmothers of Bach children.

The Bose house was built around a central courtyard. On the street level, there were storage rooms, stables, and a washhouse. Like many Leipzig houses, there was also commercial space for rent, used for a corner store and then for the office of a prominent municipal judge. The residential area, one level up, was luxurious and comfortable. The parlours had stoves for warmth and many of the rooms had decorative ceilings.

In 1745 Bose’s son-in-law, one of Saxony’s most important manufacturers of blue pigment, took over the house and added significantly to the collection, which included a number of works by Rubens, bought at auction in Amsterdam.

In 1765 it was “open to all art lovers on one afternoon each week for two hours.”

Art in the Bose House

Like many wealthy citizens of Leipzig, Georg Heinrich Bose owned a valuable collection of engravings and paintings. In 1745 Bose’s son-in-law, one of Saxony’s most important manufacturers of blue pigment, took over the house and added significantly to the collection, which included a number of works by Rubens, bought at auction in Amsterdam.

Displays of Minerals

Christiana Sibylla Bose’s husband Johann Zacharias belonged to the Richter family, famous for their collections of minerals. He began in the course of visiting the mining operations which had helped create their wealth. A beautifully illustrated catalogue with hand-coloured engravings of 114 of the 3,000 mineral specimens in the collection was created for the family in 1743. This important monument in the history of mineralogy contains a remarkable illustration of a room with paintings covering the walls and minerals displayed in pyramid-shaped vitrines. This room was in the neighbouring house of Johann Zacharias Richter’s brother and is thought to indicate the conventions of displaying art used in the Bose house.