

# Architecture around 1900 in Central Europe

## #4 Viennese models

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In this series on popular culture, we will once again revisit one of the most inspiring moments in the history of European culture. The turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was **a special period for art in Central Europe** due to various artistic trends and an increased cultural exchange between countries politically associated with Austria-Hungary.

The architecture style of this time largely dominates the face of contemporary European cities. Many important and characteristic buildings (such as train stations, museums, universities, and parliaments) were designed by then architects, while main boulevards and plazas were designed by city planners.

Similarly to our previous series, we will present a panorama of **the Belle Époque** through examples from Central European countries.



# Vienna as a model

In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century, Vienna was one of the most important models for architects and urban planners. It was here – the capital of the Habsburg Monarchy – that institutions deciding the architectural shape of the empire's cities were located, such as architectural schools or offices influencing public procurement.



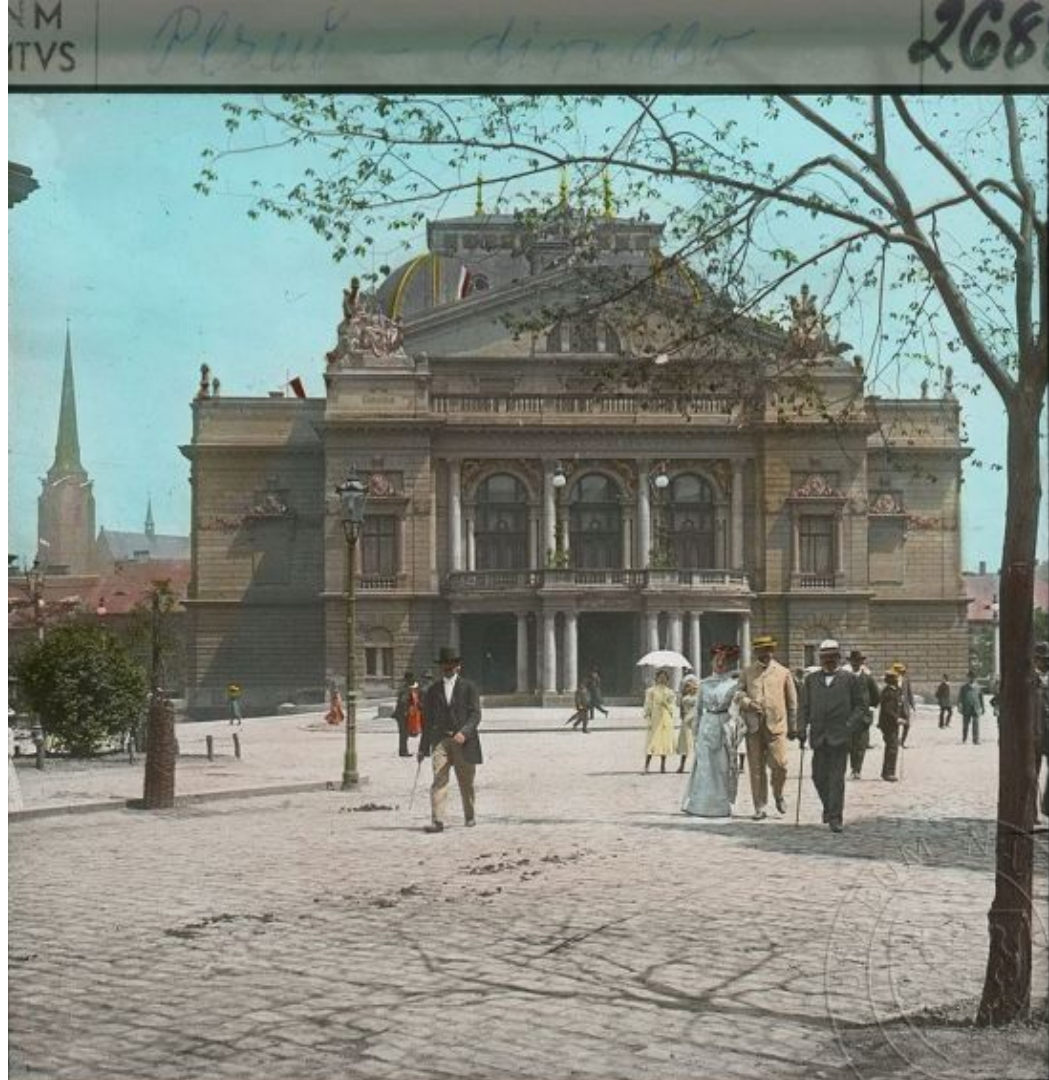
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Volkstheater in Vienna, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), 1898, Theatermuseum in Vienna

A lively artistic community developed in Vienna, and the largest and most important edifices, such as museums and theatres, were built here. These were later seen as exemplary solutions.

Designs did not always come directly from Vienna. Sometimes architects were inspired by stylistic costumes from around Europe, imitated styles typical of the era, or used similar architectural and structural solutions.

Josef Kajetán Tyl Theatre in Plzeň, Czech Republic, designed by Antonín Balšánek (CZ), circa 1900, National Museum in Prague



Although it is often difficult to determine exactly which inspirations prevailed for a given project, looking at successive cities of Austria-Hungary, one can see visual and architectural unity.

Ethnographic Museum in Budapest (originally built for the Ministry of Justice), designed by Alajos Hauszmann (HU), circa 1900, National Museum in Prague



# Neo-Baroque

Of particular importance for Vienna was the neo-Baroque style, which in time became almost the “official” style of the Habsburg Monarchy. Its most exuberant development occurred at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Models and inspirations were drawn from the work of Johann Fischer von Erlach and Lucas von Hildebrandt – the leading Viennese architects of the Baroque era.



Baroque Belvedere in Vienna, designed by Johann Lucas von Hildebrandt (AT), photo by Oscar Krammer (AT), circa 1870, Wien Museum

The neo-Baroque style was popular among the Austrian elite. The state and aristocracy saw in it a return to the times of Habsburg political domination in Central Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, while the Roman Catholic Church saw it as reference to the times of the Counter-Reformation.

Baroque was also a very diverse style that was widespread in Europe. Architects in the 19th and 20th centuries could easily find suitable examples of palaces or churches to emulate the style.

Baroque Karlskirche (St. Charles Church) in Vienna, designed by Johann Fischer von Erlach (AT), photo by Andreas Groll (AT), circa 1850–1870, Wien Museum



# Fellner & Helmer

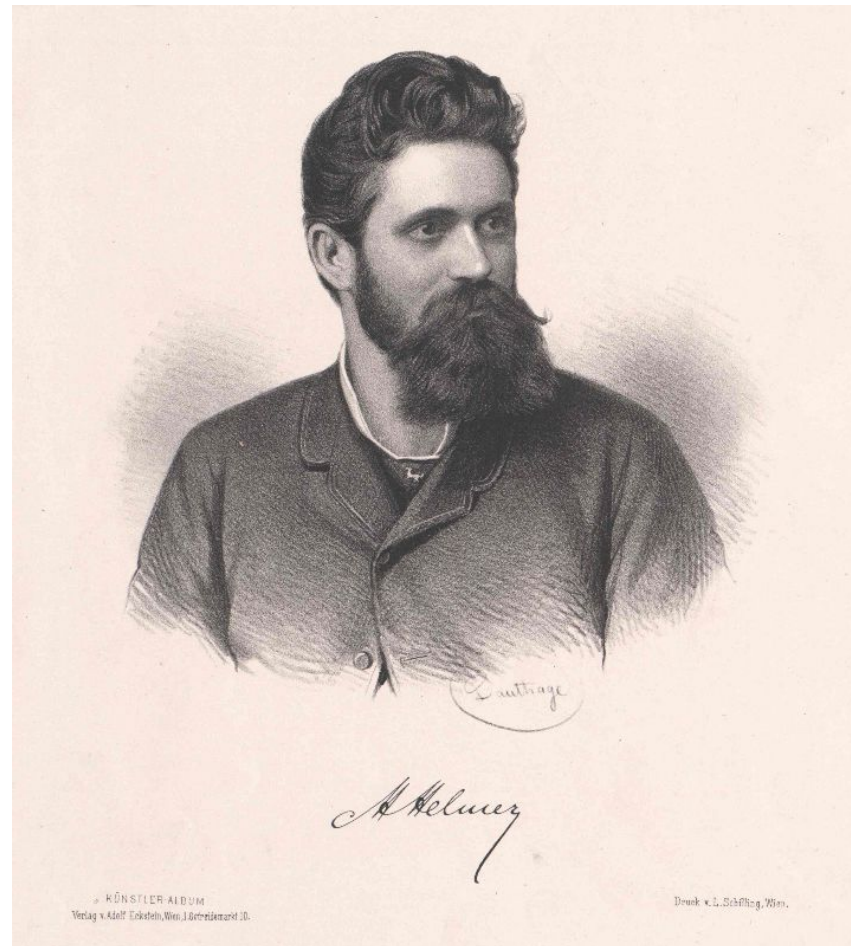
Sometimes the similarities between the cities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire resulted from the fact that the buildings were designed by the same architects. The best example of this was the Viennese architectural bureau Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer, active between 1873 and 1919.

Cluj-Napoca National Theatre, Romania, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), before 1914, Déri Museum in Debrecen, Hungary

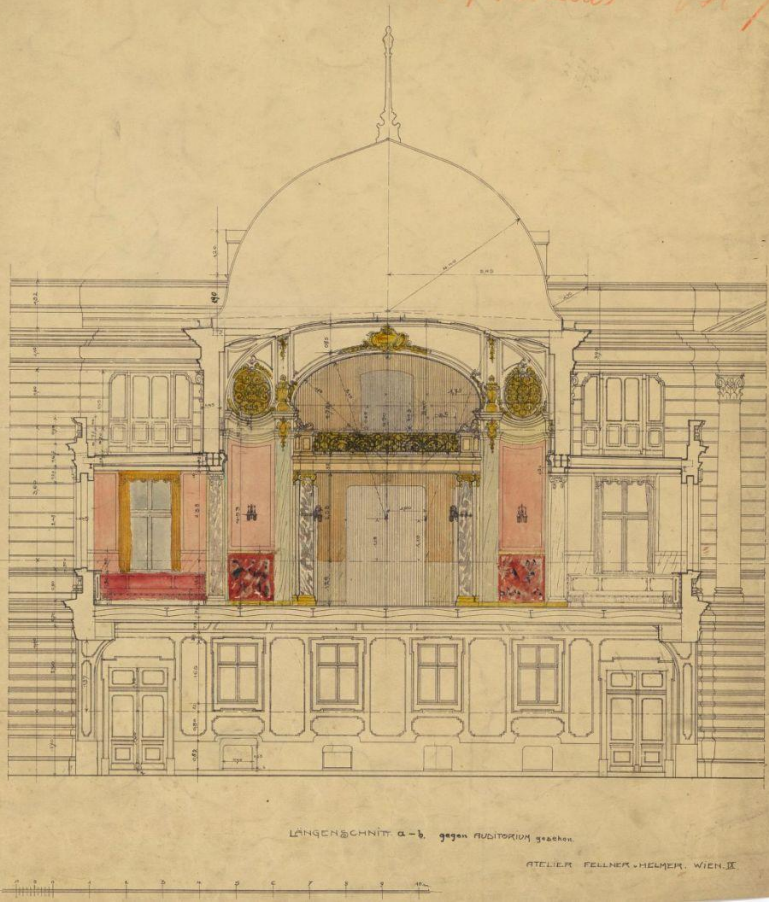
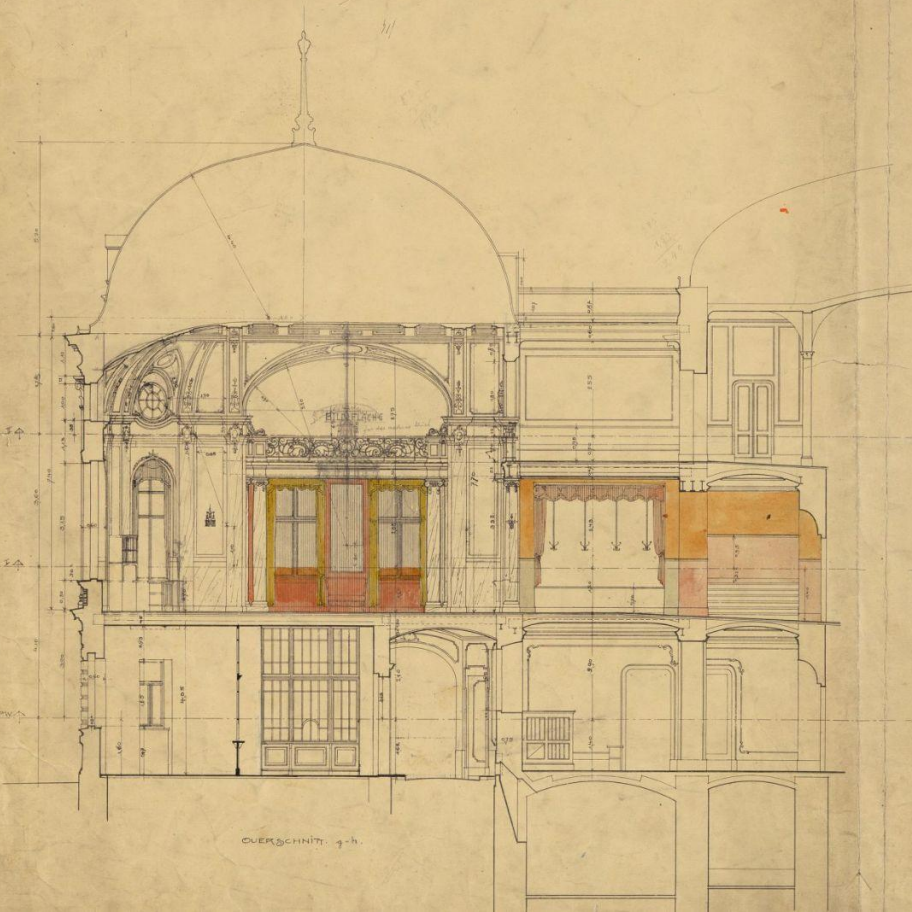


*A kolozsvári nemzeti színház.*





Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer, lithographs by Adolf Dauthage (AT) from "Künstler-Album", circa 1880, Austrian National Library



WIEN. DEUTSCHES VOLKSTHEATER MIT DEM RAIMUNDDENKMAL.



Volkstheater in Vienna,  
designed by Fellner &  
Helmer (AT), after 1904,  
Wien Museum

Together, Fellner and Helmer designed around 200 buildings in major and minor European cities, primarily in Austria-Hungary, but also in Germany and Switzerland. To cope with numerous commissions they employed an entire team of architects who were later joined by the sons of the founders.



Theatre in Toruń (now in Poland), designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), circa 1910, Kujawsko-Pomorska Digital Library



© Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

Theater in Czernowitz, Ukraine, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), 1917, Austrian National Library



Theatre in Fürth, Germany, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), photo by K. Kolb, 1901-1902, Architekturmuseum der Technischen Universität Berlin

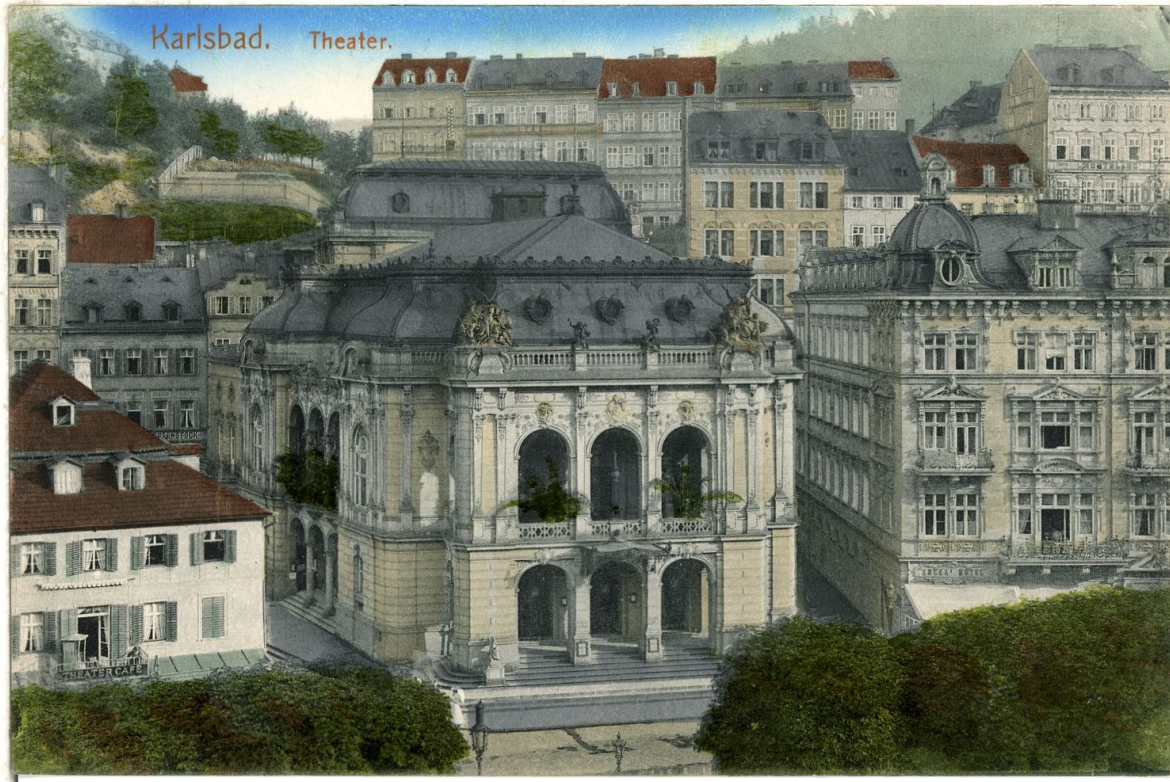


Zürich Opera House, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT),  
photo by Karl Möhsl (AT), 1897, Austrian National Library



National Theater in Szeged, Hungary, designed by  
Fellner & Helmer (AT), 1883, Austrian National

They specialized in the construction of theatres, of which dozens were built based off of their designs. There was no shortage of commissions – in the second half of the 19th century city theatres became an indicator of modernity. It was the place where social life of various classes concentrated, and its construction (due to technical reasons and the various functions it was to serve) was a challenge for the architect.



Theatre in Karlovy Vary (*Karlsbad*), Czech Republic, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), 1898, Deutsche Fotothek



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Theatre in Klagenfurt, Austria, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), 1920, Austrian National Library



National Theatre in Sofia, Bulgaria, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), circa 1900, National Museum in Prague



The neo-Baroque style was best for theatres due to its association with Italian opera. It also referred to the well-known and admired Paris opera house built in 1875 in the neo-Baroque style.

Odessa National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, Ukraine, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), circa 1890-1900, Library of Congress





Opera House in Graz, Austria, designed by  
Fellner & Helmer (AT), circa 1916-1919,  
Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz



Croatian National Theatre in Rijeka, Croatia,  
designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), circa 1910,  
National Museum in Prague



Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava,  
designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), 1900,  
Fortepan / Schermann Ákos



Theatre in Wiesbaden, Germany, designed by Fellner & Helmer  
(AT), circa 1890-1905, Library of Congress

Fellner & Helmer buildings shaped the most important boulevards and city centres. Their proposed stylistics strongly influenced the designs of local architects. For example, the theatre in Krakow, designed by Jan Zawiejski and built in 1893 clearly refers to the Viennese architectural office.



Theatre in Cracow, designed by Jan Zawiejski (PL), 1895, National Library in Warsaw



Theatre in Cracow, designed by Jan Zawiejski (PL), 1895, National Library in Warsaw



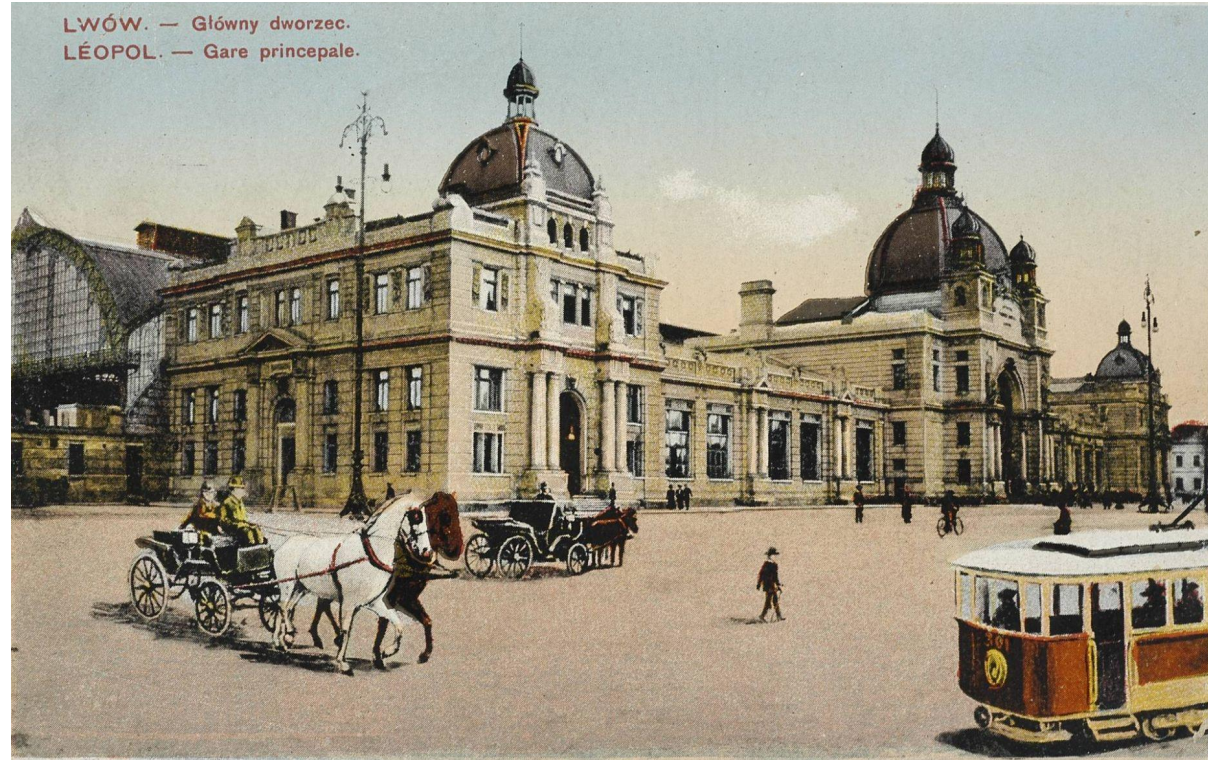
Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), circa 1917, Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb



Zürich Opera House, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), photo by Karl Möhsl (AT), 1897, Austrian National Library

# Lviv

Lviv benefited from the political reform of 1867, becoming the capital of the province of Galicia. This meant that various public buildings had to be built. The General National Exhibition of 1894 was another driving force behind the city's development.



Main railway station in Lviv, designed by Władysław Sadłowski (PL), 1912, National Library in Warsaw

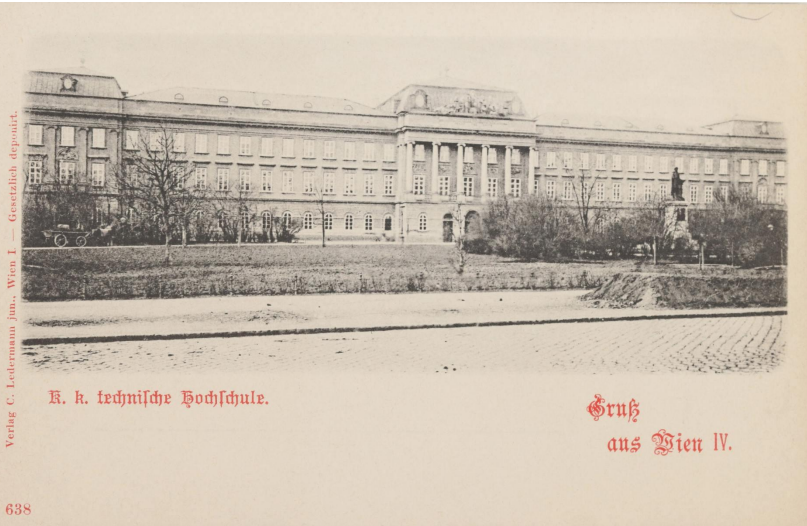
In 1877 the Lviv Polytechnic was founded, becoming an important centre of architectural training for Galicia. The building itself was modelled on the Vienna Polytechnic.



Lwów — Lemberg  
Politechnika.

Lviv Polytechnic, designed by Julian Zachariewicz (PL), 1907, University of Wrocław Museum

Vienna University of Technology, circa 1898, Wien Museum



K. k. technische Hochschule.

Gruß  
aus Wien IV.

In turn, the Municipal Theatre, built between 1897-1900 by design of Zygmunt Gorgolewski, an architect who had studied in Vienna, referenced not only the Paris opera, but also the designs of Fellner & Helmer.

This office also designed two buildings in Lviv – namely the most important hotel in the city, the “George” – and the headquarters of the Kasyno Szlacheckie (Noble casino), one of the most interesting neo-baroque projects.



Theatre in Lviv, designed by Zygmunt Gorgolewski (PL), 1915, National Library in Warsaw



Noble casino in Lviv,  
designed by Fellner &  
Helmer (AT), before 1906,  
National Library in Warsaw

*Nakład F. Niziatowskiego Lwów, Hotel Georgiét, — C. A. & Cie. No. 2799.*



VII. Gmach Kasyna szlacheckiego Lwów.

Hotel George in Lviv, designed by Fellner & Helmer  
(AT), circa 1900, National Library in Warsaw

*Nakład F. Niziatowskiego Lwów, Hotel Georgiét, C. A. & Cie. No. 2796.*



I. Hotel Georgiét-Lwów.

# Prague

Although Fellner & Helmer prepared the design of the neoclassical German Theatre in Prague, it was not a typical realization for this Czech city.



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Deutsches Theater in Prag, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), 1890, Austrian National Library

First, the Czechs preferred buildings in neo-Renaissance style, as this was the era considered to be the heyday of Czech culture. Secondly, they wanted the most important national edifices to be created by local artists.



Vinohrady Theatre in Prague, designed by  
Alois Čenský (CZ), circa 1908, National  
Museum in Prague

It should be noted that neostyles were the universal architectural language in Europe at the time, and Czech architects did not completely escape the models coming from Vienna. The National Museum – the work of Josef Schulz – clearly resembles the Kunsthistorisches Museum, while the National Theatre, designed by Josef Zíték, alluded to the Vienna State Opera.

Rudolfinum in Prague, designed by Josef Zíték (CZ) and Josef Schulz (CZ), circa 1910, National Museum in Prague





National Museum in Prague, circa  
1890-1900, Library of Congress



Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, circa  
1890-1900, Library of Congress



32. Das neue Opernhaus.

Vienna State Opera, photo by Michael Frankenstein & Comp, circa 1880, Wien Museum



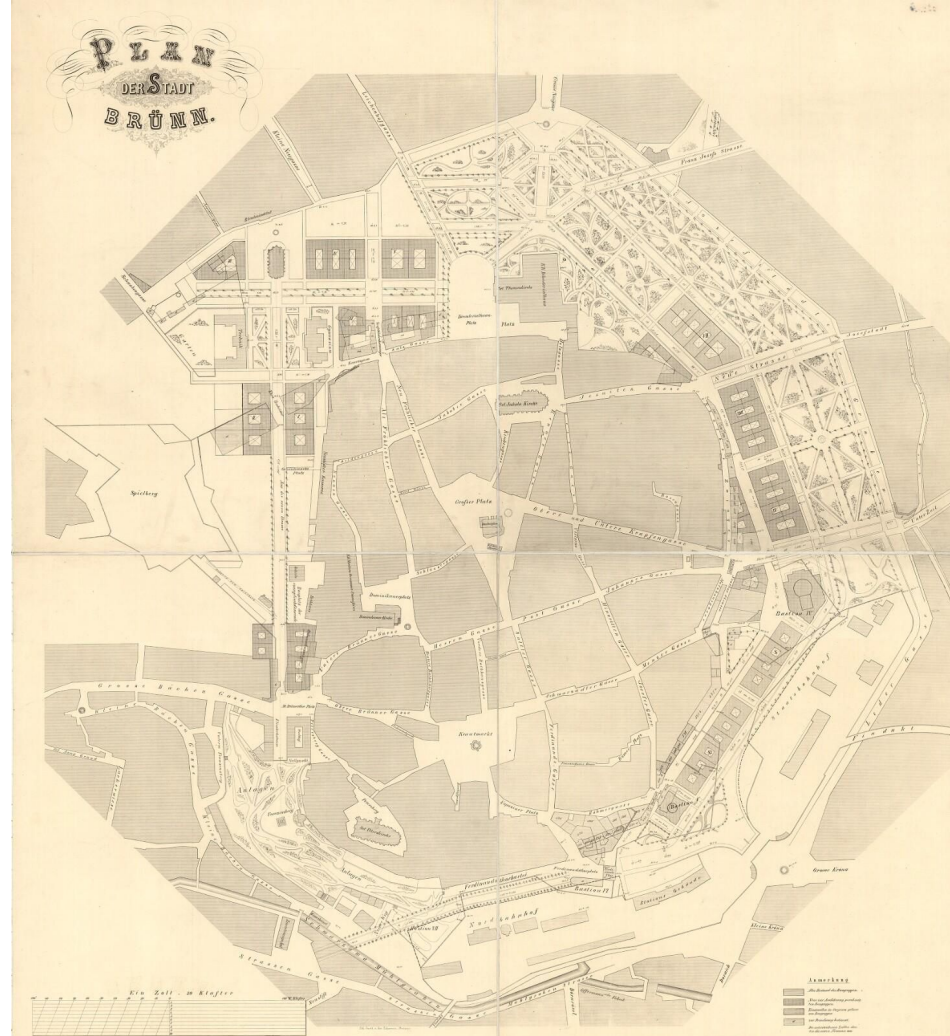
National Theatre in Prague, designed by Josef Zíték (CZ) and Josef Schulz (CZ), circa 1905, National Museum in Prague

# Brno

The redevelopment of Vienna – i.e., the creation of the Ring and the buildings around it – was widely admired and treated as a natural model for such activities in other cities.

The modernization of Brno undoubtedly had Viennese origins. As in the case of the Vienna Ring, the boulevards surrounding the centre of this Czech city were built on the site of demolished fortifications. The Austrian architect Ludwig Förster, one of the town planners previously responsible for the transformation of the Vienna Ring, was involved in this reconstruction.

Map of Brno, Czech Republic, 1860-1863,  
Moravian Library in Brno





Theater in Brno, Czech Republic, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), photo by Karl Möhsl (AT), 1900, Austrian National Library



Main railway station in Brno, designed by Johann Oehm, circa 1910, National Museum in Prague

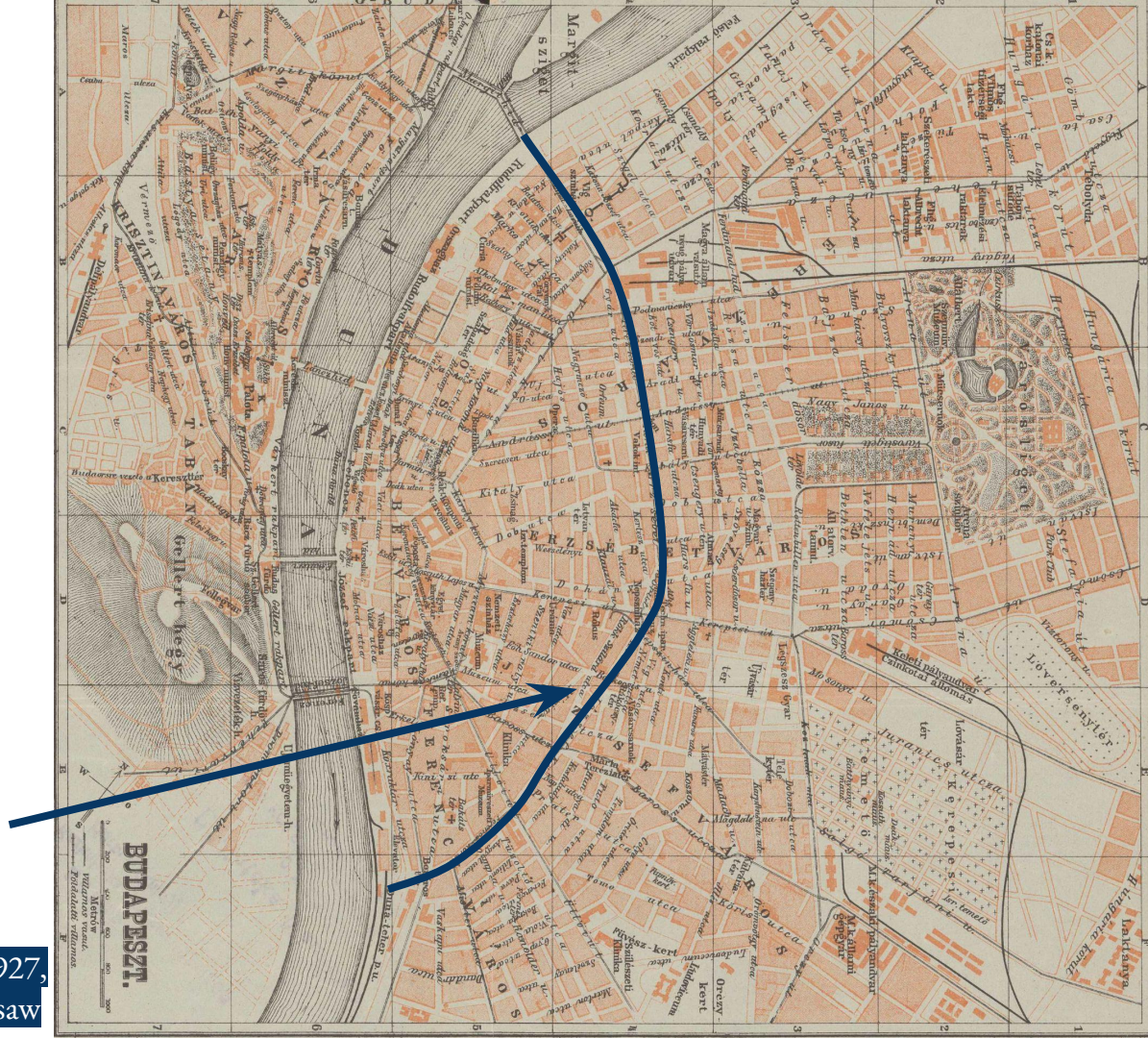


# Budapest

Partly inspired by the Vienna Ring was the Grand Boulevard in Budapest, along which stood the Museum of Applied Arts, elegant hotels, and the Comedy Theatre designed by Fellner & Helmer.

Grand Boulevard

Map of Budapest, before 1927,  
National Library in Warsaw



Comedy Theatre of Budapest,  
designed by Fellner & Helmer  
(AT), 1896, Hungarian Museum  
of Trade and Tourism





People's Theatre in Budapest, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), 1875, Budapest Capital Archives



Hungarian State Opera House, designed by Miklós Ybl (HU), circa 1910, Hungarian National Museum in Budapest

However, the redevelopment of Paris remained an equally important model for Hungarians. The new Western Railway Station (Nyugati) building was designed by the Eiffel Company, and the delineation of the representative Andrásy Avenue was inspired by the Champs-Élysées. In this way Budapest symbolically manifested its independence from the Austrian capital.



Western Railway Station (Nyugati) in Budapest, designed by Eiffel Company, early 20th century, Hungarian Museum of Trade and

Andrássy Avenue in Budapest, photo  
by György Klösz, circa 1890-1893,  
Budapest Capital Archives



Klösz Gy. Budapest  
VII. évf. sor 49.

230. ANDRÁSSY-UT — ANDRÁSSY-STRASSE

Utánzás tilos  
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BUDAPEST

KLÖSZ GY. FENYK BEEST

# Zagreb

The concept of the Vienna Ring can also be found in Zagreb. The design for the new centre was by Croatian urban planner and architect Milan Lenuci. Work began during reconstruction of the city after the earthquake in 1880.

A theatre, museums, palaces, hotels, and public buildings were built along the wide avenues. In the north, the streets led to the Old Town, in the south to the Main Railway Station and the newly established Zagreb Botanical Garden.



Main Railway Station in Zagreb, photo by Ivan Standl (HR), 1893,  
National and University Library in Zagreb

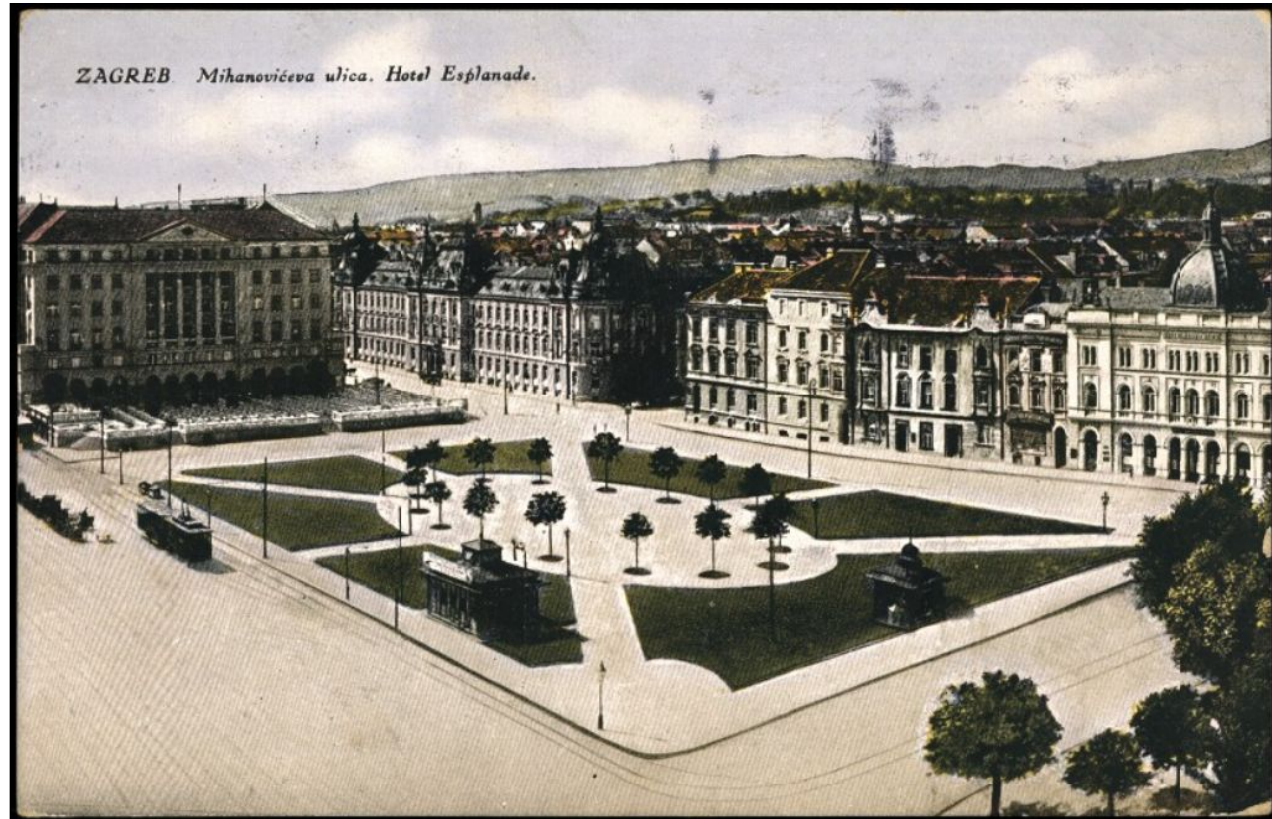


Starčević House in Zagreb, photo by Ivan Standl (HR), 1895, National and University Library in Zagreb



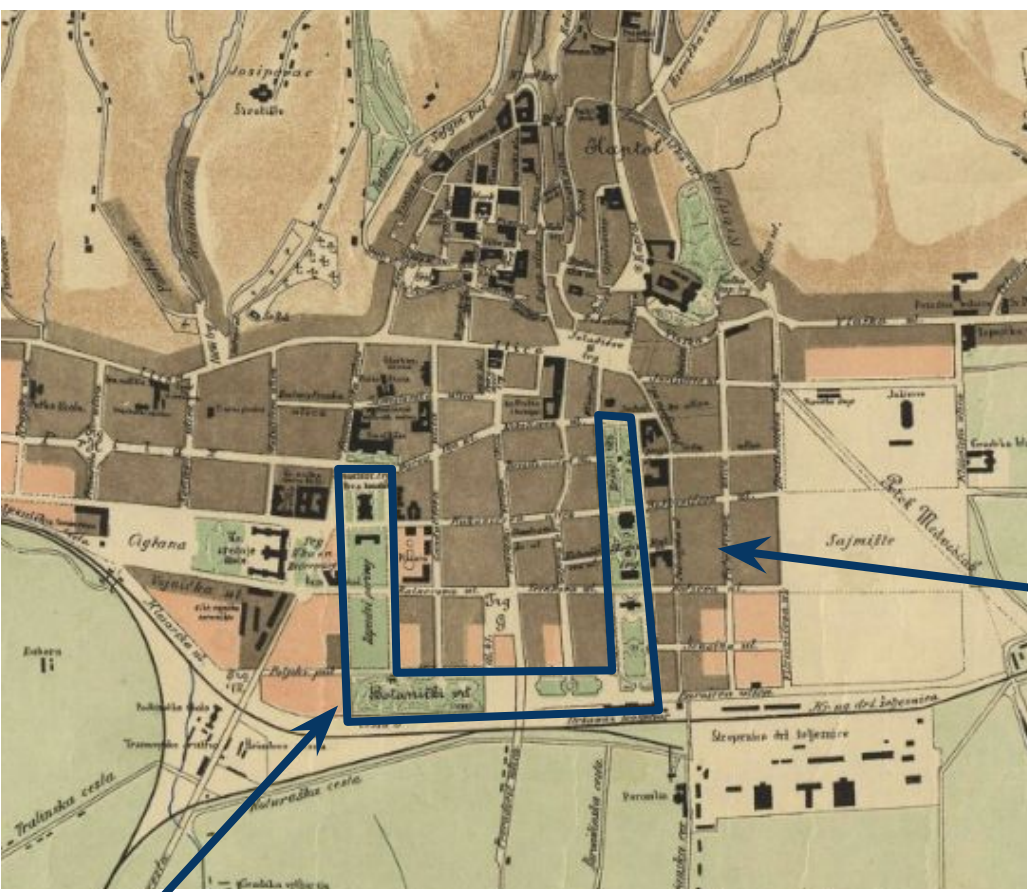
Croatian Museum of School in Zagreb, photo by Ivan Standl (HR), 1893, National and University Library in Zagreb

Lenuci took special care of the squares and parks, along which wide streets stretched. Because of the shape of this green belt in the middle of the city, which resembled the letter “U”, the whole establishment was called the Lenuci Horseshoe or Green Horseshoe.



Hotel Esplanade in Zagreb, circa 1920, Austrian National Library





Lenuci Horseshoe

Map of Zagreb prepared by the City Construction Office, 1898, National and University Library in Zagreb



The Art Pavilion was located on one of the boulevards. The building was based on the Croatian pavilion, built in 1896 in Budapest on occasion of the Millennial Exhibition.

It was built to be easily disassembled following the exhibition. Prefabricated elements were transported to Zagreb where the construction of an art gallery was planned. The design of the new pavilion – using existing elements – was entrusted to the Fellner & Helmer.



Art Pavilion in Zagreb, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), 1910, National Museum in Prague

ZAGREB → Trg Franje Josipa



Postcard showing Art Pavilion in Zagreb and part of the Lenuci Horseshoe, 1915, National and University Library in Zagreb

The Vienna office also designed the Croatian National Theatre, which was built on the northwest side of Lenuci Horseshoe from 1894 to 1895.

Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, designed by Fellner & Helmer (AT), 1910, National Museum in Prague

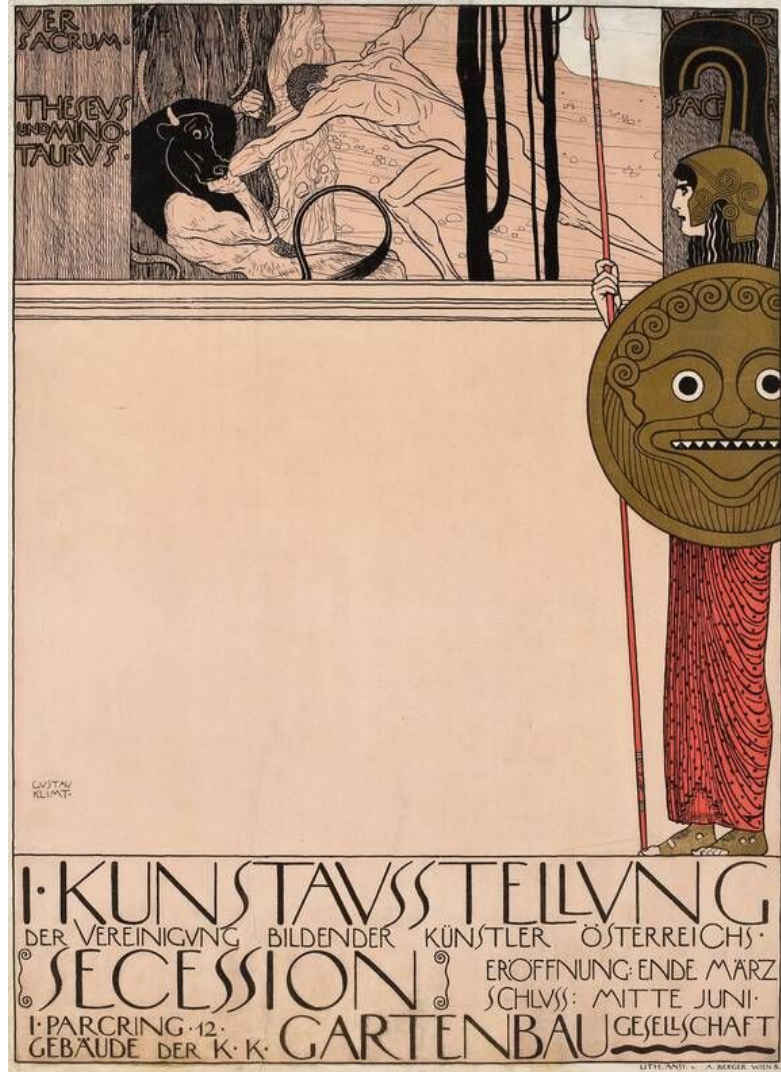


# Vienna Secession

The end of the 19th century birthed a new style – Art Nouveau. In Austria it was referred to as Secessionsstil (Secession style).

The name comes from the Vienna Secession – an association founded in 1897 by a group of Viennese artists who distanced themselves from conservative trends in art.

Gustav Klimt (AT), Poster for the 1st Secession exhibition (censored version), 1898, MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna



Viennese artists were looking for a new style that would unite many artistic disciplines. Thus, the Vienna Secession included painters Gustav Klimt and Max Kurzweil as well as the designer Koloman Moser and architects Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann and Joseph Maria Olbrich.

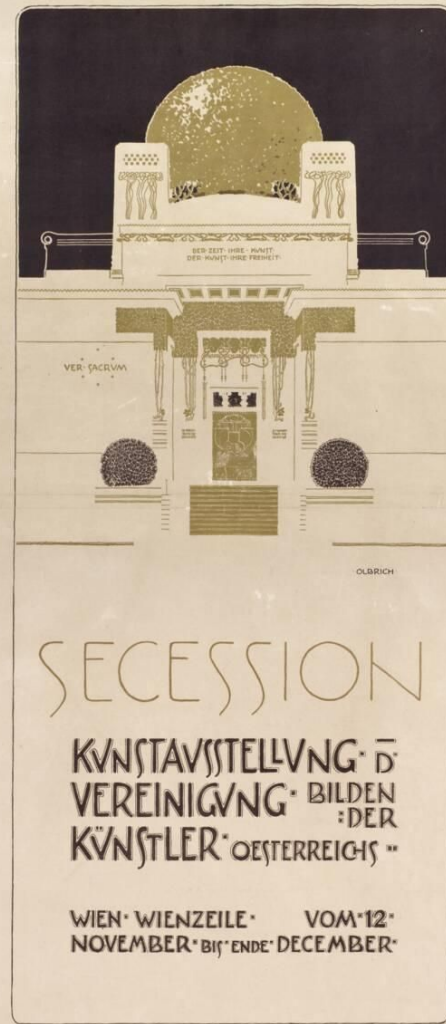


*Wild roses*, textile design by Koloman Moser (AT), 1899, MAK – Museum of Applied Arts,

One of the flagship works of the Vienna Secession was the Secession Building designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich and built in 1898. The motto on the facade read: “To every age its art, to every art its freedom”.

The entire building was dedicated to Beethoven, whose statue was in the middle of the whole building. The walls were decorated with a frieze made by Klimt.

Josef Maria Olbrich (AT), Poster with the Secession Building, 1898, MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna



People in front of the  
Secession Building in  
Vienna, 1899, Wien  
Museum





A special figure for Viennese Art Nouveau was Otto Wagner. His buildings, like the Church of St. Leopold and the Austrian Postal Savings Bank, were quickly recognized as the most important examples of Art Nouveau.

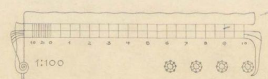
As a teacher, Wagner influenced Jože Plečnik, Max Fabiani, and Jan Kotěra, among others, who later played important roles as architects active in Slovenia, Croatia and the Czech Republic.



Otto Wagner (AT), Project of Karlsplatz Stadtbahn Station in Vienna, 1898, Wien Museum



Erwin Pendl (AT), *Kirche am Steinhof in Vienna*, circa 1907, Wien Museum



OBERBAU-VRAT-OTTO WAGNER

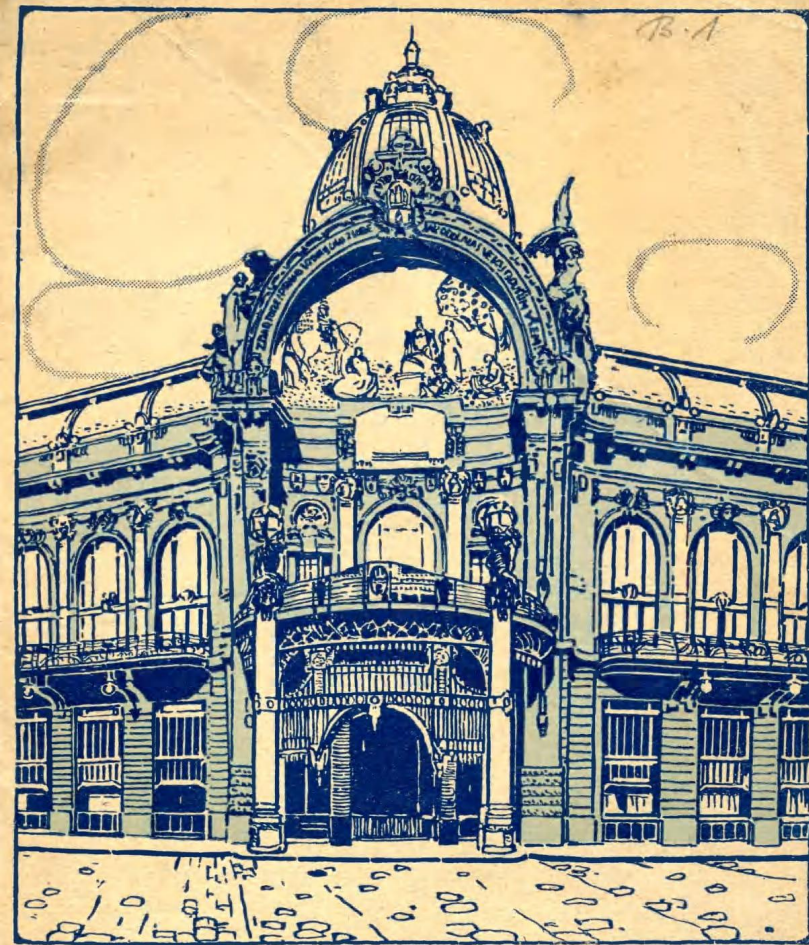
HAVPT-FAÇADE

Otto Wagner (AT), Project of *Kirche am Steinhof in Vienna* (also called the Church of St. Leopold), 1902-1903, Wien Museum

# Art Nouveau in architecture

Art Nouveau treated the building's facade differently – it rejected “overlying” or treating it as a “costume”. Now it had to truly co-create and become its integral part of the design. The colour of architectural details was also important, hence the appearance of striking multi-coloured mosaics or ceramics.

Municipal House in Prague,  
designed by Antonín Balšánek (CZ)  
and Osvald Polívka (CZ), 1912,  
Polish Academy of Sciences



DOM KRÁL. STOŁ. MIASTA PRAGI  
PRZEWODNIK.

Different materials were combined – iron ceased to be just a construction element, but it also became an element of décor. Moreover, Art Nouveau permeated virtually all fields of art: from architecture, through painting, to applied graphics and applied arts.



Karlsplatz Stadtbahn Station in Vienna, designed by Otto Wagner (AT), with floral ornaments by Joseph Maria Olbrich (AT), 1900, Wien Museum

# Viennese inspirations

The influence that Viennese Art Nouveau had on architecture did not consist in copying patterns, but rather in subtle references. This can be seen, for example, in the Palace of Art in Cracow, loosely modelled on the Secession Building in Vienna, or Kallina House in Zagreb designed by Vjekoslav Bastl and modelled on Majolica House in Vienna, a work by Otto Wagner.

Ödön Lechner also adopted elements of this aesthetic to create the Hungarian National Style.



Kallina House in Zagreb, designed by Vjekoslav Bastl (HR), authors' private archive



Kallina House in Zagreb, designed by Vjekoslav Bastl (HR), authors' private archive

Majolica House, one of the Linke Wienzeile Buildings designed by Otto Wagner (AT), 1900, Wien Museum

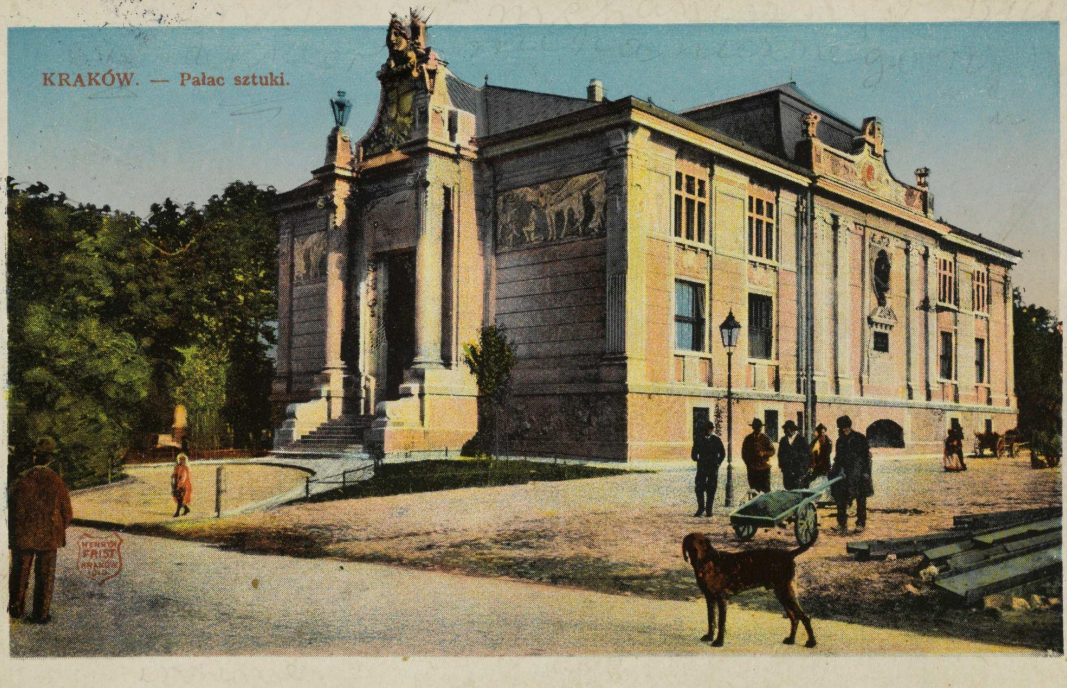


Unlike neo-Baroque, which was promoted by public institutions, Art Nouveau inspired architects with its ideas and widely admired aesthetic.



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Medallion House, one of the Linke Wienzeile Buildings designed by Otto Wagner (AT), 1900, Austrian National Library



KRAKÓW. — Pałac sztuki.

Palace of Art in Cracow, 1911,  
National Library in Warsaw

Rudolf Jettmar (AT), poster for the 27th  
Vienna Secessionist exhibition in  
Secession Building, 1906, National  
Library of France



SECESSION  
XXVII·AUSSTELLUNG·NOV·DEC  
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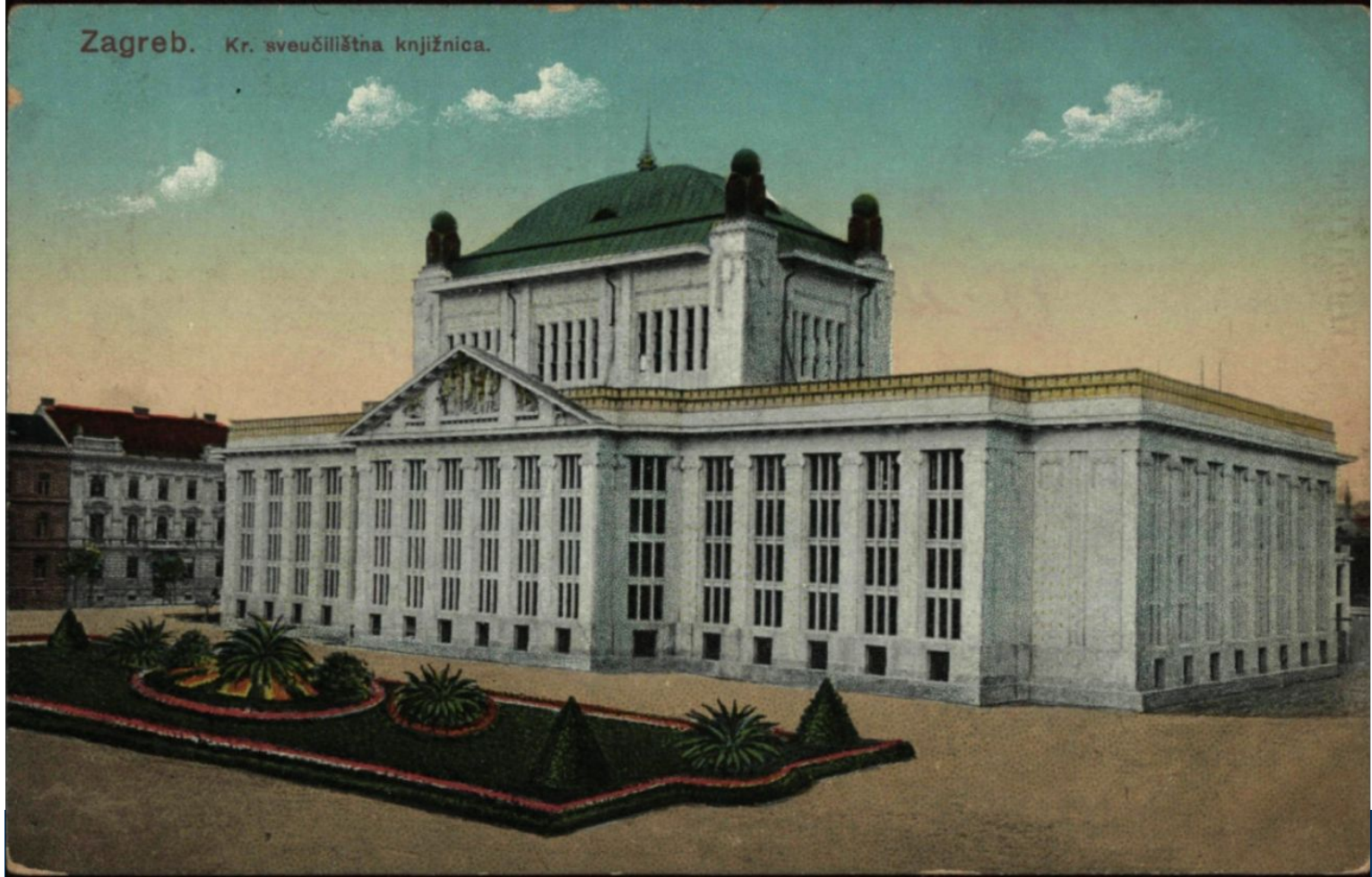


The birth of Art Nouveau came after the period of the creation of large-scale urban developments with numerous neostyle buildings. However, realizations in this aesthetic fit well with the boulevards created in the late 19th century – the Croatian State Archives was built on Lenuci Horseshoe in Zagreb, and the Fashion Hall was built on Andrásy Avenue in Budapest.

Hungarian Fashion Hall in Budapest, designed by Gusztáv Petschacher (HU), after 1911, Hungarian Museum of Trade and Tourism



Zagreb. Kr. sveučilištna knjižnica.



Croatian State Archives in  
Zagreb, designed by Rudolf  
Lubynski (HR), 1913,  
Zagreb City Libraries

Because of its influence, Art Nouveau became the last common style for Austria-Hungary. Vienna's influence can be seen in the names for Art Nouveau in Central European countries: the Hungarian "Szecesszió", the Polish "secesja", the Croatian "secesija" or the Czech "secese".



Municipal House in Prague, designed by Antonín Balšánek (CZ) and Osvald Polívka (CZ), 1914, Prague City Archives

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