MODERN ARCHITECTURE OF SLOVAKIA



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Architecture is a bridge to knowing our own history

The quality of architecture stems directly from the cultural and economic conditions of its creation. It speaks not only to the state of culture and civilisation, but also profoundly reflects prevailing societal values. It serves as an instructive bridge, linking an understanding of history with the discovery of those values and putting future visions into focus. The foundational concept behind Modern Architecture in Slovakia is built upon this unique architectural mission. It mirrors an era marked by groundbreaking technological discoveries and social transformations, embodied by the emergence of major, influential buildings across Slovakia that shaped the character of its cities and landscape. This volume traces the dynamic development of modern architecture in Slovakia from 1900 to the present day, a period punctuated by tectonic historical milestones, including two world wars, the Velvet Revolution in late 1989, Slovakia's independence a little over three years later, and its 2004 accession to the European Union.

Groundbreaking technological breakthroughs and the rapid expansion of information technology have uniquely characterised both the twentieth century and the first quarter of the twenty-first century, exerting a tremendous impact on how architecture develops and is produced. The shift from hand-drawn sketches and drafting boards to digital workflows has unlocked unprecedented, rapid capabilities for architectural visualisation, including virtual reality and parametric modelling. Now capable of fabricating even full-scale (1:1) houses, 3D printing is swiftly replacing hand-crafted physical models. A century after the first public broadcast of moving images, the limitless possibilities of the internet and artificial intelligence are now being navigated.

The 159 architectural works spanning 126 years are brought together under the unified title of Modern Architecture in Slovakia. Dividing this history into distinct chronological eras organises it systematically, elevating and clearly framing the architecture within the context of pivotal professional milestones. Generally speaking, modernism significantly departs from historicist styles, prioritising simplified forms and embracing advanced technologies. Yet, these core principles continuously evolve, exerting a fluid influence on architectural form over time, as this book clearly captures.

The selected works comprise those that most fully embody the fundamental principles of the Modern Movement, though each interprets them through its own definite architectural concept. Our objective was to showcase diverse architecture across Slovakia, highlighting its development well beyond the major urban centres. Each of the architects profiled here aspired to create distinctive works that reflect his (and later her) unique perspectives, creativity, and distinct constraints—an ambition clearly mirrored in the selected projects. Classifying or categorising these works in greater detail is hardly necessary. What matters is that, at the time of their creation, they were influential, significant, debated, and acclaimed, though sometimes unfairly criticised due to widespread public misunderstanding. These structures deserve attention, as much as the architects who designed them. While modernism rejected historicist styles, it did not spurn history itself.
Indeed, numerous references to historical models, elements, and details, as well as historic inspirations, can be found throughout contemporary architecture, building upon what has emerged and, over time, proven to be timeless and valuable. A growing trend toward preserving historic structures and industrial brownfield sites has materialised, giving rise to an entirely new design approach that derives its identity from a strong sense of place and layers of history. Simultaneously developing what has been preserved and creating something new upon that foundation fosters vital continuity, sparking renewed interest in and necessary respect for the past.

Over more than a century of development, modern architecture has embraced various schools of thought, oscillating from purist, minimalist tendencies to visually richer concepts. Grounded in a common denominator and the foundational principles of functionality and utility, a new aesthetic gradually formed. Yet, classical building tectonics have fundamentally shifted, with substantially more glass and transparent facades now defining architectural expression. In urban environments, high-rise structures have elevated the vertical gradient. While rectilinear geometry still predominates, ellipses, arches, and gentle curves have appeared, rendered in a richer, more vibrant materiality that accentuates the overall form. In this regard, architecture knows no boundaries. The turn of the century and the dawn of the new millennium symbolically marked the beginning of a new digital era, linked to these advanced technologies and innovative building methodologies. This new path was blazed not just by stylistic pluralism, but also by a heightened sense of responsibility, resource efficiency, and a search for meaningful, deep-seated solutions.

Published concurrently in English, Modern Architecture in Slovakia serves as an invitation to discover the profound values and diversity of the country's architectural landscape. This volume is crafted for professionals in the field and anyone seeking to understand the unique identity of Slovak architecture within a broader European context.

The authors would like to acknowledge the mayors and chief architects of Slovakia's regional capitals for providing the financial support and official patronage that made the publication of this book possible. We would also like to thank Czech Architecture Week and its publisher, Petr Ivanov, who initiated this project and tirelessly encouraged our team of authors throughout the process. Special thanks go to our fellow architects and photographers, who generously provided the source materials and valuable insights necessary to compile this volume. I would finally like to thank my co-author, Professor Matúš Dulla, for his patient collaboration, and Hanka Kopecká for her impeccable editorial assistance. Andrea Bacová, author and editor (/ab)

What is modernity?

Modern architecture? But what does modernity actually mean? Oscar Wilde sarcastically remarked (in his 1895 play, An Ideal Husband) that "nothing is so dangerous as being too modern. One is apt to grow old-fashioned quite suddenly." In 1934, Oskar Singer commissioned photographs of Nitra's modernist state lower secondary school that had just been completed according to his design. During the shoot, he deliberately had his new car parked in front of the school: the image of a modern school and a modern car. Looking at the photograph today, the building might still look thoroughly modern. On the other hand, the car has long since become an antique.

Modernism is a somewhat elusive yet easily recognisable quality of the buildings constructed in Slovakia since roughly the end of the First World War. It was never truly shaken by the historicist detours that opposed it, whether factually or ideologically. Debates over its modern principles have opened new horizons: rich forms and ornamentation have ceased to be taboo, residential blocks are more than prefabricated panel structures, no city need be as soul-crushing as a mass housing estate, and the street and the square are no longer dismissed. Yet, underpinning both architecture and urban planning remains a constant and enduring modern functional rationality, purity of form, and beauty stripped of unnecessary embellishments.

To stay in tune with the spirit of the age means to be modern in the broadest sense of the word. In the early years of the twentieth century, courageous architects strove to harmonise architecture with the innovations of the new era. Taken for granted today, reinforced concrete was then a total novelty, an invention whose raw possibilities creators were only beginning to explore. A prime example is the 1910 Secessionist church in the small village of Mul'a, now located on the Slovak-Hungarian border. Here, the new material remains hidden beneath Secessionist ornamentation. Even the church's vault was assembled from precast components. In essence, these were the earliest modern prefabricated elements–or panels–anticipating the very principle upon which entire housing estates would be erected decades later. In this sense, the little church stood at the absolute dawn of modernism.

Over time, this modern aesthetic surfaced on the exterior of buildings, directly exposing their internal arrangements, much like the expansive terraces of the Tatra Mountains sanatoria designed for patient treatment. Buildings shed unnecessary formal symmetry whenever it conflicted with their internal layouts. Along with several other factors, these developments formed the core pillars of modern architecture.

Modernism came to Slovakia from diverse directions. Because the region lacked its own architectural schools, practising architects learnt their craft across Europe. Friedrich Weinwurm, a strict functionalist trained at German universities, viewed modernism through a completely different lens from Dušan Jurkovič. A graduate of the Vienna School of Applied Arts, Jurkovič arrived at modernism through a deep admiration for the innate simplicity of folk architecture. Furthermore, the young Czech architects who had graduated from Prague schools and relocated to Slovakia during the early years of interwar Czechoslovakia drove the widespread adoption of modernism across the region.

Above all else, modernism valued functionalist clarity, deriving a building's layout and appearance directly from its purpose. Spreading rapidly, its domination of Slovakia's architecture was virtually complete by the late 1930s. Yet, modernism's true zenith would only be reached in the 1960s when, fuelled by the fresh enthusiasm of the earliest graduates from Slovakia's first school of architecture, it merged with Europe's broader postwar architectural boom. The era left behind a series of remarkable and visually striking works, such as the Slovak Radio Building in Bratislava, the innovative cable-suspended high-rise in the centre of Považská Bystrica, and the first sprawling housing estates.

Postmodernist debate reopened the question of why an entire urban section should be transformed into a mass housing estate. It also reintroduced the notion that the new Slovak National Theatre could draw upon more traditional architectural values. Furthermore, it demonstrated that a church, such as the one in the KVP housing estate in Košice, could feature a richly articulated vault structure, or that a building could sport geometric lacework along its parapet, as seen at the Danubiana Gallery on the southern edge of Bratislava. However, several relatively recent works are perceived as essentially contemporary. Since the 1990s, large-scale new construction has aligned with the most progressive currents of European modernism, while introducing designs by top international architects, including Zaha Hadid, the world's most illustrious architect.

This monograph presents nearly two hundred architectural examples spanning over a century and a quarter, profiling half of them in greater detail. These works were chosen based on their critical resonance within the profession, their public reception, and the architectural accolades they have garnered. While the vast majority of these structures endure, a few have unfortunately succumbed to demolition or the ravages of time. With rare exceptions, these buildings can be visited and experienced both inside and out. Admittedly, the selection includes several private villas celebrated as landmarks or masterpieces of exceptional architects.

Naturally, the authors' personal preferences played a minor role in shaping the accompanying narratives, and a few included works even reflect a healthy divergence of opinion between us. In exploring these pages, you will undoubtedly find structures that reverberate deeply and others that feel more distant. Yet it is precisely through such debate and differentiation that modern architecture has evolved over the past 125 years. Because of these creative tensions, rather than despite them, the modernist movement has demonstrated a lasting vitality, proving itself to be both mature and remarkably vibrant. Matúš Dulla, co-author (/md)

THE PATH TO MODERNISM
1900 – 1930

The Path to Modernism
1900 – 1930

When Slovakia was part of the Habsburg-ruled Austro-Hungarian Empire, its cultural development as a small, predominantly agricultural country of two million was shaped by the national revival of Ľudovít Štúr's generation, alongside powerful creative impulses from Budapest and Vienna. Fuelled by the expansion of railways, new technologies, and structural engineering, these imperial capitals were experiencing a massive construction boom. It was during this period that the Otto Wagner School emerged in Vienna, bringing leading architectural figures of Viennese Modernism who would profoundly influence the European architectural discourse at the turn of the 20th century.

They included Josef Hoffmann, who designed the Stoclet Palace in Brussels in 1911; Hubert Gessner; Josef Plečnik; and Jan Kotěra, all of whom left an impact on Slovak architecture. Among Wagner's students, the Hungarian architect István Medgyaszai also erected two buildings here.

During this period, Slovakia's architectural landscape was crafted predominantly by prominent Viennese and Budapest-based designers. Prominent Viennese figures active in the region included Franz Wieser, Eduard Hübner, Friedrich Wimmer, and the celebrated theatre-design duo of Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer. They worked alongside major Hungarian contemporaries such as Károly Adler, Ödön Lechner, Ignác Alpár, Zoltán Bálint, and Lajos Jambor.

These architects brought with them highly experienced construction firms that modernised local building practices. Among them were Julius Kittler and Karl Gratzl, as well as Adolf Pittel and Viktor Brausewetter; the latter's engineering firm became a true pioneer in reinforced concrete construction, famously executing the innovative reinforced concrete vaulting and open galleries of Bratislava's iconic Blue Church.

Michal Milan Harminc and Dušan Jurkovič belonged to the first generation of native Slovak architects who actively contributed to the architectural landscape of the early 20th century. Drawing deeply from local traditions, they developed a distinct national style that left a long-lasting imprint on Slovakia's architecture. Harminc initially evolved traditional Classicist principles, exemplified by Bratislava's Carlton- Savoy Hotel (1928), before transitioning toward Functionalism, a shift captured in his Lutheran Church on Legionárska Street.

Dušan Jurkovič, just a year Harminc's senior, took a different path, anchoring his designs in vernacular architecture and traditional timber construction. Fascinated by regional ornamentation and folk embroidery, he studied these elements, translating them into highly original, unmatched masterpieces such as the Skalica Community Centre (1905) and his own villa in Brno (1906). Jurkovič also left a defining mark on the spa town of Luhačovice with several exceptional examples of Folk Secession architecture, including the Jurkovič House (1902) and the Sun Baths (*Slnečné Kúpele*, 1903). He explored early concepts of standardisation and modular design for single-family homes and school buildings. Through their prolific output and civic engagement, both architects laid the unyielding foundations of 20th-century Slovak modernism.

Various associations and magazines concurrently played a critical role by organising architectural exhibitions that reflected Central European Secessionist influences, helping shape the emerging modernist movement. For instance, Harminc was an active member of the Hungarian Association of Engineers and Architects before World War I. Within these professional circles, architects vigorously debated artistic philosophies during a period marked by the decline of historicism and eclecticism. Driven by the search for a new stylistic language, the discipline increasingly responded to technological progress.

The Paris World's Fair in 1889 and the construction of the Eiffel Tower had already ushered in a progressive, anti-historicist movement. This new current embraced innovative materials such as glass, steel, sheet metal, and reinforced concrete, while simultaneously delving into decorative, botanical, and geometric ornamentation. This gave rise to the Secession movement, which established a fresh, captivating aesthetic and yielded numerous remarkable works. More than a style, it signalled a deliberate rupture from older, conservative associations, a concept embedded in the movement's very name, derived from the Italian secedere, meaning "to withdraw" or "to separate", as epitomised by the Vienna Secession of 1987. Ultimately, the rapid evolution of modern steel structures and advanced materials gradually shifted the architectural repertoire toward simplified forms and a strict emphasis on utility.

Milan Rastislav Štefánik's diplomatic genius steered the founding of the first Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918. Through his vast international network and immense respect that he commanded, Štefánik swayed European politics, championing a visionary ideal of harmonious coexistence. The birth of the new state triggered an era of extensive postwar reconstruction and the establishment of vital state and judicial institutions, all of which demanded prominent urban sites and highly representative architecture. The city of Pozsony was renamed Bratislava, ascending to the status of Slovakia's capital with the ambition of meeting the urgent demands of its new political and administrative role. In this shifting urban environment, lingering historicist tendencies collided with modern currents explicitly rejecting the imperial vocabulary of the old monarchy. Quite naturally, the emergence of a joint state for Czechs and Slovaks sparked a quest for a distinct visual identity, manifested in the National Style. This ethos of Czechoslovak solidarity was intentionally leveraged to cultivate a shared national sovereignty, heavily influencing the stylistic expression of the period's architecture.

Stirred by the Czech avant-garde, several apartment buildings in the Rondocubist style emerged in Bratislava, designed by architects like Klement Šilinger, Jiří Merganc, and the duo of Alois Balán and Jiří Grossmann. Nonetheless, this National Style never achieved the dominance in Slovakia as it did in the Czech lands, rendering its local appearance somewhat episodic. Instead, Slovak architecture adopted a highly specific strain of decorativism. In the hands of certain designers, such as Dušan Jurkovič, it was distinctively fused with traditional folk motifs.

The spirit of modernism, European trends, and the sheer momentum of the new industrial era brought a fresh outlook on life, transforming lifestyles, core values, and aesthetic standards. Functionalism assertively took root, and this shifting architectural vocabulary became clearly evident in Klement Šilinger's career as he transitioned away from Rondocubism. His Trade Association Building (1928-30) and the Lafranconi Hostel and Canteen (1927-33) in Bratislava serve as powerful testaments to this evolution–a gradual emergence of avant-garde architecture that was mirrored in the work of numerous architects across Slovakia.

Meanwhile, the discipline's intellectual foundation was actively shaped by various organisations and their activities. The recently established Slovak Art Association (*Umelecká beseda slovenská*), with Dušan Jurkovič serving as its inaugural president, fostered the development of a national culture and strengthened Czechoslovak cultural ties. Additionally, starting in 1919, the Bratislava branch of the Association of Czechoslovak Engineers became highly active, organising lectures, hosting debates, and publishing professional journals.

As cities developed dynamically, regulation of urban sprawl and the drafting of master zoning plans gathered pace, bringing the preservation of historic urban centres to the forefront. At the time, no institution specialising in architecture or urban planning existed within Slovakia. Instead, design impulses and seasoned professionals flowed into the region from Budapest, Vienna, and Prague, where many had studied before World War I. Modelled on the German Bauhaus, the School of Applied Arts (*Škola umeleckých remesiel*) opened in Bratislava during the 1930s, largely through the efforts of Czech intellectuals Josef Vydra and Antonín Hořejš. The school pioneered a progressive approach to art education rooted in material experimentation and practical studio work. Prominent Slovak modernists Ľudovít Fulla and Mikuláš Galanda, along with the celebrated ethnographer and filmmaker Karol Plicka, were among the key figures appointed to its faculty.

Concurrently, an international architectural movement championing the principles of the Modern Movement was gaining momentum across Europe. These ideals were vividly embodied in Le Corbusier's *Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau* at the 1925 Paris International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts. The geometrically pure, concrete-and-steel building proclaimed a revolutionary vision of functionalism and a modern understanding of architecture.

By the late 1920s, cities across Slovakia were already attempting master zoning plans. However, such efforts moved sluggishly as rapidly evolving urban realities consistently outpaced the development of formal concepts. In 1929, an international competition for Bratislava's master plan was won by a collaborative scheme from Juraj Tvarožek, Alois Dryák, and transit specialist Miroslav Chlumecký. This followed a 1926 study for Greater Bratislava presented by the then-young partnership of Alois Balán and Jiří Grossmann. Similar planning efforts were seen in Trenčín, when a 1931 architectural competition verified the zoning concept for the city's Horná Sihoť district. Spanning approximately 107 hectares, it remains one of Slovakia's finest functionalist neighbourhoods, built out through the contributions of architects Ferdinand Silberstein, Karel Říha, František Balcárek, Karel Kopp, and Jakub Hrubý.

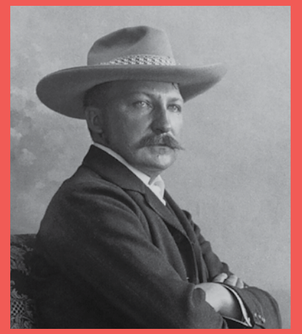
Crucially, these shifting planning philosophies allowed bold, modernist architectural forms to penetrate compact urban fabrics. These new structures did more than alter the streets' visual scale. They introduced an entirely new spatial discipline, redefining setback requirements and property lines. This physical transformation was demonstrated by the construction of the Považská Agrarian and Industrial Bank (1930) in Žilina, designed by Ignác Vecsei and Friedrich Weinwurm, and Vladimír Karfík's Baťa Footwear Shop (1931-32) in Bratislava. Shortly thereafter, landmarks such as Bratislava's Manderla (1934-35), designed by Augustín Danielis, Christian Ludwig, and Emerich Spitzer, and the Slovak General Insurance Company (1938-39) in Košice by Alexander Skutecký underscored the urban densification of these cities. These groundbreaking changes should be viewed as the emergence of yet another historical layer within Slovak cities—one of exceptional cultural value. Ultimately, this convergence of the old and the new has yielded many profoundly positive developments throughout the country's architectural history.

Social housing for the lower socioeconomic classes figured prominently during this period. In 1930, at the Third International Congress of Modern Architecture in Brussels, Karol Teige and the left-leaning Czechoslovak CIAM delegation presented their progressive lecture on "Modern Architecture and the Housing Question in Czechoslovakia". During the same period, the Czechoslovak Werkbund (*Zväz československého diela*) organised the Nový dům (New House, 1928) and Baba (1932) exhibitions, which crystallised evolving views on both spatial function and architectural form. Ultimately, the Czech architectural scene set the primary tone, heavily influencing developments in Slovakia.

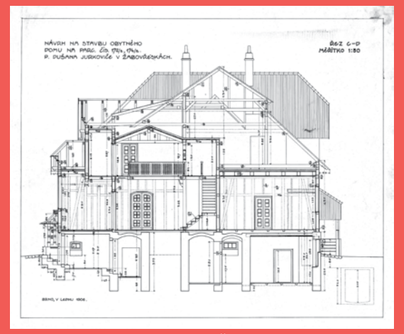
The interwar period saw the rise of several avant-garde housing projects strongly driven by the architectural duo of Friedrich Weinwurm and Ignác Vécsei, whose work embodied a distinct, Loos-inspired purist architecture, seen in the Unitas housing complex and the Phönix Life Insurance Company Building at Grösslingová 9 in Bratislava. In Košice during the 1930s, Jozef Polášek designed the Masaryk Colony, a well-known residential complex for bank clerks rooted in the principles of collective living. Similarly, the *Svojdomov* housing cooperative in Žilina, designed by Michal Maximilián Scheer and Július Stein, served as a model development showcasing a new culture of single-family housing. Meanwhile, in Nitra, architect Oskar Singer left a distinct functionalist footprint across both residential and public architecture.

The erection of small rental apartments was further incentivised by the 1930 Housing Construction Act, which provided state assistance through government-guaranteed loans covering up to 90% of building costs. This booming development was reinforced by theoretical research, most notably popularised in Karol Teige's *The Minimum Dwelling* (*Najmenší byt*) and *Sociological Fragments of Housing* (*Sociologické fragmenty bývania*) by Jiří Kroha.

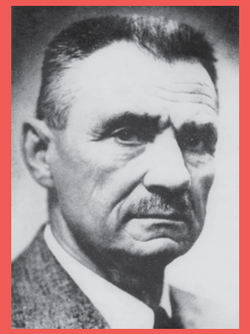
Marking a shift in tone, the Slovak Art Association's gallery and headquarters, constructed in 1925-26 following a successful competition entry by Alois Balán and Jiří Grossmann, is characterised by an artistic lightness, a masterful articulation of form, and an innovative integration of exposed brick with Constructivist elements. Standing as a definitive milestone of the mid-1920s, this building symbolically launched the era of modern architecture in Slovakia. /ab



Milan Michal Harminc



Dušan Samuel Jurkovič: Villa in Žabovřesky, Brno, 1906



Dušan Samuel Jurkovič



Emil Belluš (centre) in Czech Technical University's drawing room



Postage stamp depicting the Tomb of M. R. Štefánik



Dušan Samuel Jurkovič bicycling in Luhačovice



Die Wohnung (Housing): poster from the Werkbund Exhibition, 1927



First International Congress for Modern Architecture (CIAM I), La Sarraz, 1928



Cover of *Horizont*, No 18-19, 1928



Cover of *Nový svet*, 24 June 1937, Vol 12, No 29



Le Corbusier: *Vers une Architecture* (*Toward an Architecture*), Crès Publishers, "L'Esprit Nouveau" Collection, Paris, 1923



Poster by Vojtěch Preissig: Slovakia is already rising, throwing off its shackles

1889 Eiffel Tower inaugurated at the Paris Exposition

1900 Dušan Jurkovič's *Pustevny na Radhošti* published, documenting the Radhošt hermitages

1905 Skalica cultural centre completed (designed by Dušan Jurkovič)

1906 Dušan Jurkovič's private villa in Brno-Žabovřesky constructed
General Regulatory Plan for Bratislava produced by Anton Palóczy

1908 Society of Architects in Prague established and *"Styl"*, a magazine dedicated to modern architecture, town planning, and applied crafts, founded by the Mánes Association of Fine Artists

1911 School of Architecture established by Jan Kotěra at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague

1913 Club of Architects founded for progressive young architects
Czech Werkbund formed in Prague, with Dušan Jurkovič actively participating
Dušan Jurkovič takes over ownership of a brickworks

1914 War declared by Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Josef I

1918 Czechoslovakia proclaimed on 28 October)
Armistice ends World War I on 11 November
Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk elected the first President of the Czechoslovak Republic

1919 Milan Rastislav Štefánik dies in an airplane crash
Independent Bratislava branch of the Association of Czechoslovak Engineers and Architects (SIA) established to spearhead regional engineering and infrastructure in Slovakia (main office based in Prague, and before 1918, it was the Association of Architects and Engineers in the Kingdom of Bohemia, founded in 1865)
Comenius University in Bratislava established as the first modern state university on Slovak soil
Walter Gropius founds the Bauhaus (*Staatliches Bauhaus*) in Weimar
Independent state monument administration and nature protection system in Slovakia created, Dušan Jurkovič appointed inaugural leader of the newly established Government Commissariat for the Protection of Monuments

1920 Czechoslovakia's first formal democratic Constitution adopted on 29 February

1921 Slovak Art Association (Umelecká beseda slovenská) founded in Bratislava, with Dušan Jurkovič serving as its inaugural chairman
Left-wing avant-garde art collective Devětsil established in Prague, incubating the Purism movement

1922 "Stavba" magazine founded under editor-in-chief Oldřich Starý

1923 Le Corbusier publishes *Vers une architecture* (Toward an Architecture)

1924 Launch of the progressive bilingual design journal *Bytová kultura*/*Die Wohnungskultur*, edited by Adolf Loos, Bohumil Markalous, Jan Vaněk, and Arnošt Wiesner
Quarterly magazine *DAV* launched

1925 Le Corbusier constructs his Pavilón de l'Esprit Nouveau model home pavilion at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris

1926 Cultural illustrated magazine *Nový svet* (New World) launched

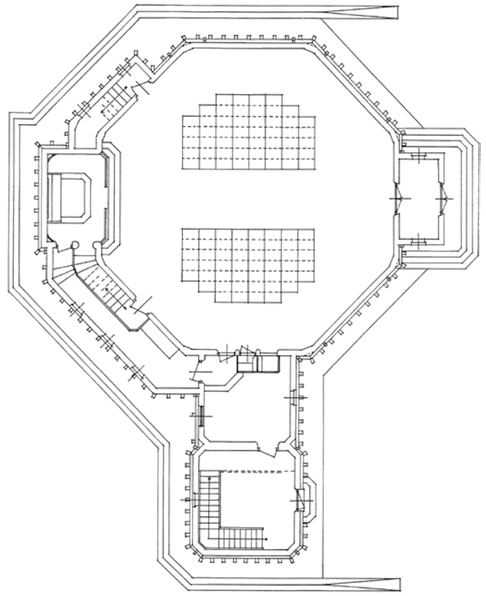
1927 Seminal Weißenhof Estate exhibition of *Die Wohnung* (Housing) hosted in Stuttgart by the German Werkbund
Horizont magazine launched in Brno by Jiří Kroha

1928 Launch of *Architekt SIA* journal, published by the Association of Czechoslovak Engineers
Nový dům (New House) exhibition in Brno organised by the Association of Czechoslovak Engineers
International Congresses for Modern Architecture (CIAM) founded at the Castle of La Sarraz in Switzerland
First television-transmitted picture
Ground broken on *Svojdomov* in Žilina (completed in 1932)

1929 Second CIAM convened in Frankfurt
International regulatory competition for Bratislava announced
Wall Street Crash triggers the Great Depression
Exhibition of the Association of Slovak Artists organised

1930 Bratislava School for the Applied Arts founded
Foundation of Czechoslovak CIAM Group
Third CIAM convened in Brussels, with the Czechoslovak delegation participating for the first time
Housing Construction Act enacted
International Architects Congress in Budapest, attended by Czechoslovak architects presenting their latest functional designs

Church of St Elizabeth



Muľa (Rárósmúlyad)
Architect: István Medgyaszay
Completed: 1910
Photo: Ján Sláma

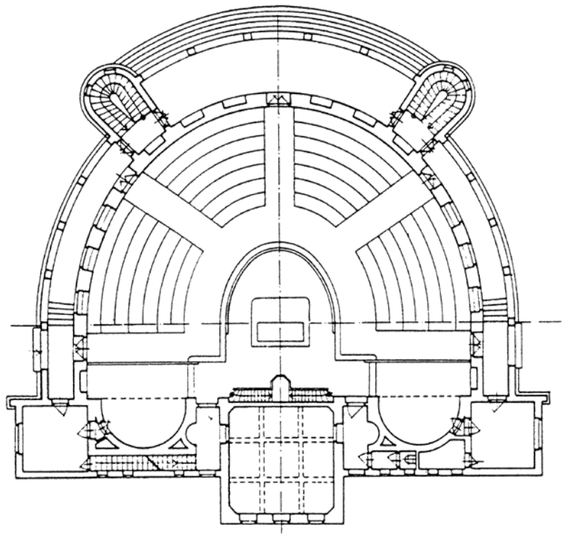
Modern architecture has drawn upon multiple diverse sources and influences, some of which remain hidden beneath highly traditional exteriors. This is evident in the small border village church that appears to have little in common with modernist movements. Architecturally, it stands as a classic exemplar of Hungarian Secessionism, a short-lived Art Nouveau variant celebrated for its exuberant floral decoration. The structure represents the first known instance in the former Kingdom of Hungary where reinforced concrete was applied to traditional sacral architecture. Its central dome was assembled from separate, pre-manufactured segments, effectively marking the dawn of structural prefabrication long before it became a mainstay of mass housing estates and contemporary construction.

The technical innovation in a rural setting resulted from a commission by Count Rudolf Körffy's family, who hired the brilliant Budapest architect István Medgyaszay. The gifted Medgyaszay (born Benkó) had studied architecture concurrently at Vienna's technical university and its Academy of Fine Arts before completing his degree in Budapest. He later spent time in Paris working with François Hennebique, a true pioneer of reinforced concrete. Medgyaszay synthesised these novel insights into a landmark 1908 Vienna lecture entitled *The Artistic Solution of Reinforced Concrete Architecture* and applied his theories immediately to this project.

The octagonal church features a vault composed of thin, precast reinforced-concrete shells bound by a prominent, visible concrete tension ring. The ring is adorned with cherubim, also cast in reinforced concrete by sculptor Ferenc Sidló. Anchored to the main volume is a slender bell tower with an open arcade and a steeply tapering spire, constructed entirely as a thin, monolithic reinforced-concrete shell. /md



Trnava Lutheran Church



Shortly after World War I, Trnava's Lutheran Church congregation commissioned a new church based on guidelines developed in 1923 by Bishop Fedor Fridrich Ruppeldt, pastor of the Žilina church. These specified an amphitheatre floor plan, reflecting the spirit of the Lutheran rite. When the design competition failed to produce a first-prize winner, despite entries from František Lydie Gahura and Juraj Tvarožek, the commission was awarded to Josef Marek, then overseeing the Coburg Works' housing development.

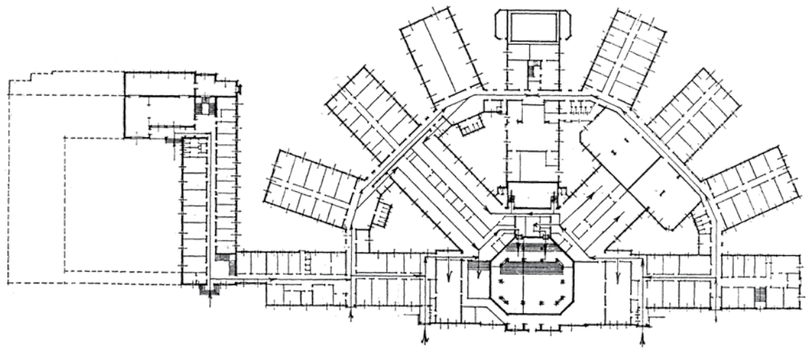
Located in the former moat just outside the city walls at what is now SNP Square, the building's semi-circular massing directly outlines the interior amphitheatre. This central volume is flanked by cylindrical staircase towers leading to the choir loft. The ground-floor arcade surrounding the entrance was originally glazed. The smooth façade, defined by a series of recessed windows and semicircular arcades, some larger and others smaller, gives the church a distinctive, proto-modernist character. Inside, the altar occupies the centre, backed by a stepped pulpit and a recessed organ niche, with smaller lateral niches for the choir and baptismal font.

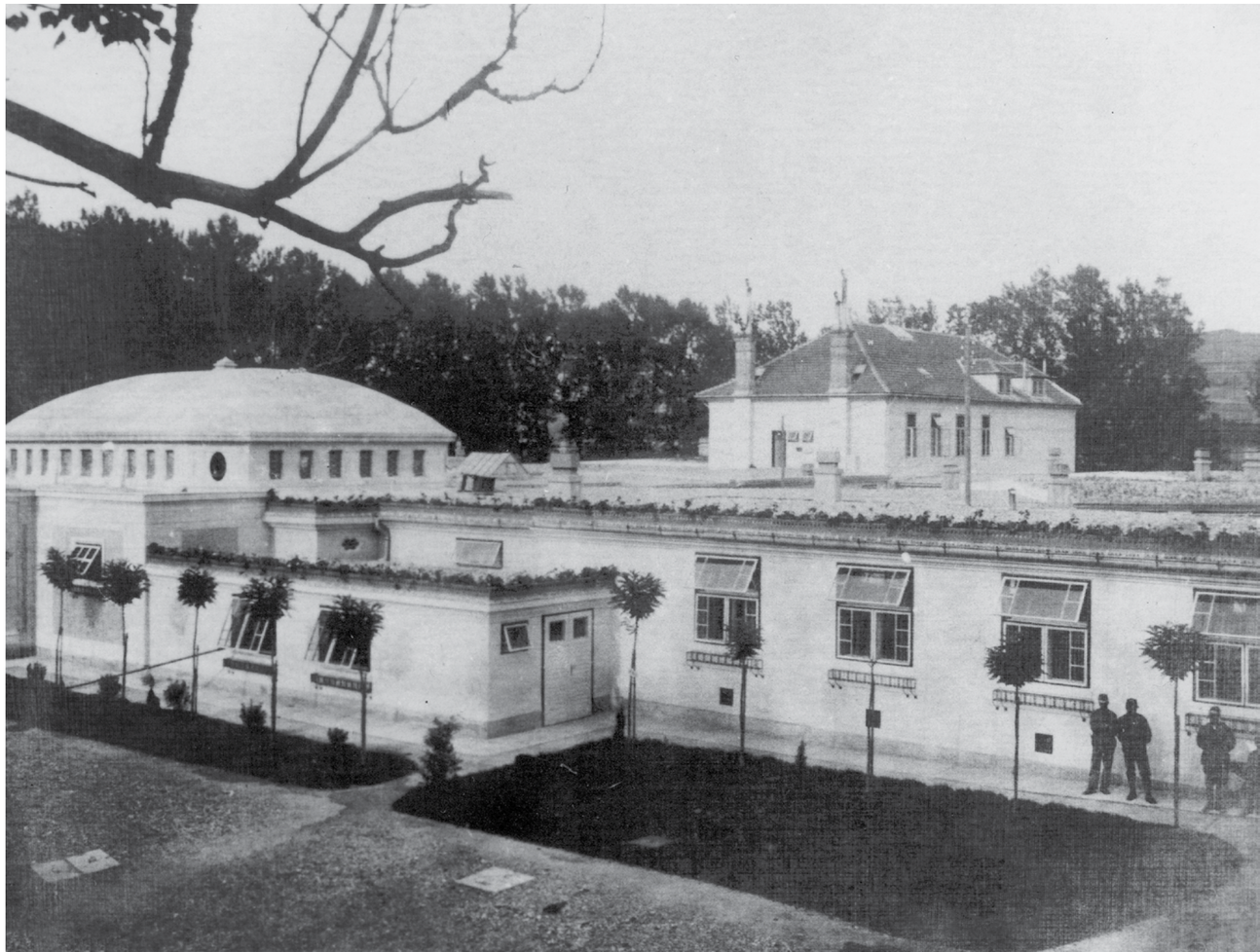
Attached to the north façade and resting directly against the medieval city walls, a square tower houses five bells cast by renowned Trnava bell founder Adolf Fischer, whose sound still rings through Trnava today. While the arched elements retain a classical influence, the building's bare surfaces and geometric purity foreshadow the unadorned architectural era soon to emerge. /md

Trnava, Námestie SNP 5
Architect: Josef Marek
Constructed: 1923 – 1924
Photo: Ján Sláma



Pro Patria





Architectural historian Ľubomír Mrňa often noted that Piešťany possesses a building quintessentially functionalist even before the movement's formal arrival, specifically the proto-functionalist Pro Patria.

Constructed during the First World War to meet the urgent needs of the Austro-Hungarian military, this combined spa and accommodation facility then had a capacity of 500 beds. As the conflict intensified, the influx of wounded soldiers grew. By 1918, an estimated 8,230 officers and 108,575 soldiers had been treated there. Developed by industrial magnate Ľudovít Winter and designed by his preferred Budapest-based architects, the project was completed in just one year with funding from the Hungarian military administration and labour provided by prisoners of war.

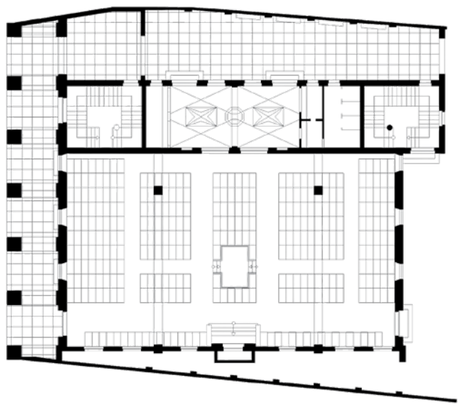
Pro Patria is one of only three spa buildings situated directly atop a thermal spring. Its layout is a masterclass in functional efficiency: the central balneotherapy facilities and mud baths are positioned precisely over the springs, with nine residential wings fanning out in a radial arrangement, all linked by a curved corridor. Each wing was designed to be self-sufficient, containing its own dining areas to ensure comprehensive care. Originally centred on the façade, the main entrance was later relocated toward the curved corridor during the expansion of the Cyrilov Dvor wing. While the exterior once featured modest Secessionist ornamentation and the "Pro Patria" inscription above the entrance, these details eventually vanished, as if the building sought to emphasise that its true value is contained within its functional core. /md

Piešťany, Kúpeľný ostrov 3598/18
Architects: Henrik Böhm, Ármin Hegedűs
Completed: 1916
Photo: archive Balneological Museum Piešťany

Orthodox Synagogue

Bratislava, Heydukova 11 and 13
Architect: Artur Szalatnai
Completed: 1926
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho, Rudolf Klein





Bratislava's Orthodox Synagogue was designed by Artur Szalatnai, likely following a successful competition entry. At the time of its inception, the street was only beginning to be developed, with height limits being the only established urban constraint. Szalatnai oriented this monumental, Modern Classicist building so that the main hall's side wall faces the street, while the entrance is accessed via an underpass. This layout was necessitated by the requirement for a traditional eastward liturgical orientation, which precluded a direct street-front entrance.

Inside, two staircases flanking the entrance vestibule lead to the women's galleries. The facade is defined by a colonnade of seven massive prismatic pillars with minimalist capitals. Upon closer inspection, the stone blocks of the central pillar appear slightly shifted, a misalignment attributed to a historical earthquake in Bratislava. The windows behind these pillars and in the rear wing feature abstract stone tracery, balancing modernist simplicity with a lingering Orientalist atmosphere.

A significant technical innovation of the era is the expansive, flat reinforced-concrete ceiling spanning the main hall. The now-decommissioned women's gallery and its adjacent staircase have housed the Jewish Community Museum's permanent exhibition since 2012. The architect's name and the synagogue's completion year, 5684 according to the Hebrew calendar, remain engraved on the pillar to the right of the underpass entrance. /md



Institute of Anatomy, Comenius University

Bratislava, Sasinkova 2
Architect: Klement Šilinger
Constructed: 1926 – 1927
Photos: Josef Hofer, archive Bratislava City Museum

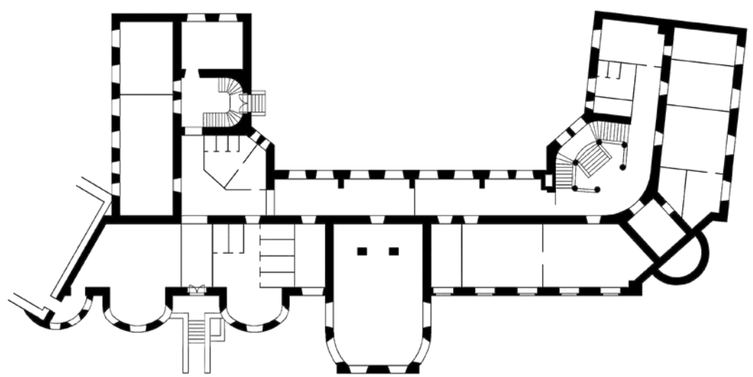


Shortly after the establishment of Comenius University in 1919, it commissioned Klement Šilinger to design its medical faculty building. Having previously completed several Rondo-Cubist projects, he was seeking to establish that movement as the definitive Czechoslovak national style. Even as the resulting Institute of Anatomy is recognised as a masterpiece of this genre, it simultaneously integrates elements of Constructivism and Functionalism.

Šilinger drafted the initial floor plan in 1923, while still serving at the Ministry of Public Works. Within the two-winged structure, defined by a prominent corner, he arranged standard laboratories alongside specialised facilities, including autopsy theatres, operating rooms, and lecture halls. Crucially, these spaces are no longer behind a uniform façade. Reflecting formal honesty, the building's internal functions instead dictate its external form. On the ground floor, two semi-cylindrical dissection rooms project outward, their arched glazing supported by seven slender lattice trusses, a hallmark of Modern Constructivism. Above, a large lecture hall opens onto a flat-roof terrace.

The building's representative three-flight staircase is housed within a cylindrical corner volume, designed with a dignified historical sensibility. These impressive cylindrical motifs and cornices mirror the fading poetics of the "National Style". By the mid-1920s, the popularity of Rondo-Cubism was waning as modernism, defined by functionality and structural integrity, began to dominate. Šilinger's Institute of Anatomy is a prime example of this stylistic pivot. /md





Lutheran Deaconesses Orphanage and Hospital



Bratislava, Partizánska 2
Architect: Gyula Dezső Schmidt
Constructed: 1912 – 1914
Photos: Matúš Dulla, archive Matúš Dulla

In 1910, the Lutheran Church announced a design competition for a combined orphanage and hospital, selecting the proposal by Budapest architect Gyula Dezső Schmidt as the winning entry. As a young practitioner, Schmidt had travelled to the United States to assist Pál Horti with the installation of the Hungarian pavilion at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, subsequently embarking on a journey through Central America, Japan, and Ceylon. Their itinerary closely mirrored Frank Lloyd Wright's contemporary voyages. Tragically, Schmidt realised only a handful of projects, passing away at the age of 36 in 1915, shortly after the Bratislava complex was completed.

The Lutheran Deaconesses Building stands as a remarkable architectural achievement, displaying the defining hallmarks of early modernism before World War I. It was considered an exceptionally treasured monument for the wave of young Czech architects who arrived in Bratislava following the postwar political turnover of 1918. In the words of Alois Balán, it was "a highly valuable modern building that seemed to form a bridge almost to today's architecture."

Although its massive volumes, high-pitched roof, and expressive sculptural reliefs might evoke medieval Romanesque motifs, the building is dominated by a clear reduction of ornament and a functional articulation of its masses. The window apertures, particularly on the courtyard facades, forgo formal symmetry to reveal the internal spatial organisation directly. Furthermore, the use of brick-like facing material strongly recalls Dutch Modernism. Originally, the building was one storey lower, featuring a prominent chapel in the north wing that rose an entire floor above the rest of the complex. This silhouette was altered between 1939 and 1940, when architect Christian Ludwig designed the building's upper-floor extension. /md

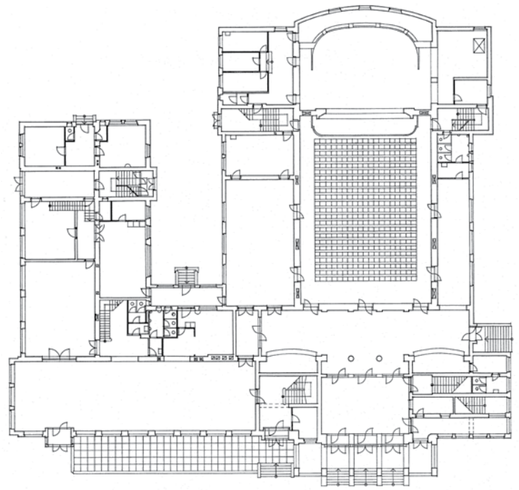


National House

Banská Bystrica, Národná 11
Architect: Emil Belluš
Constructed: 1927 – 1929
Photos: Rudolf Sandalo

The National House (*Národný dom*) is a complex, multipurpose structure that required the seamless integration of a hotel and a theatre. The final project emerged from a series of design competitions Emil Belluš had entered as a young local architect. He had grown up in Banská Bystrica, where his father served on the city council. While elements of Rondocubism are visible in his early drafts, the definitive design more strongly reflects the traditional architectural education Belluš received under Antonín Engel, a professor at the Czech Technical University in Prague. Built between 1927 and 1928, with the interiors completed in 1929, the building's architecture leans toward the classicist rather than the modernist. Nonetheless, its distinct operational zones are expressed on the exterior in an almost functionalist manner.

The ballroom, theatre, and dance hall are accessed via a grand entrance hall, which features *The Allegory of Banská Bystrica*, a monumental painting by local artist Július Flache. The main entrance is further highlighted by a two-storey columned portico clad in travertine. The complex has undergone numerous modifications since its inception. The hotel wing was refurbished in 2008, achieving a three-star classification, with all guest rooms upgraded to include en-suite bathrooms. The restaurant and café spaces were also fully renovated. The theatre wing experienced an even more extensive modernisation and today serves as the permanent home of the State Opera ensemble. The expansion yielded new accommodations for visiting performers, a dedicated rehearsal stage, an orchestra rehearsal room, dressing rooms, and administrative offices. /md







Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Košice, Hlavná 112, Bačíkova 2
Architect: Ľudovít Oelschläger
Completed: 1930
Photo: archive Department of Architecture,
Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences

The shorter of this three-storey building's two wings faces Hlavná Street, which serves as the public entrance, while employees of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry used a side entrance on Bačíkova Street. The building's corner features a solitary ground-floor column set before a distinct quarter-circle recess. An impressive grouping of seven narrow, round-arched windows is arranged along the side elevation, giving the building a uniquely abstract, historicising character that evokes Italian Fascist architecture. The dark-red facades heighten this Mediterranean affinity, showcasing Ľudovít Oelschläger's favourite motif of columns with flat, downward-tapering capitals, complemented by unusual demi-swallowtail crenellations rising above the parapet line. The original, simple two-span structural layout has been preserved without major modification, along with original materials including travertine, artificial stone, finely textured plaster, and decorative metalwork. Today, the historic core houses a VÚB (General Credit Bank) branch integrated with a 1950s-era rear extension.

A remarkable yet politically controversial figure in the regional architectural scene, Ludwig Oelschläger was born into a German family in 1896. Later, he chose to identify with the Hungarian community as Lajos Őry. Having accepted a prestigious civilian decoration from Admiral Miklós Horthy, regent of the interwar Kingdom of Hungary, he spent the postwar years in Hungary until he died in 1984. Oelschläger practice was remarkably prolific, concentrated primarily in Košice and Transcarpathian Ukraine, then part of Czechoslovakia. His stylistic repertoire was incredibly broad, shifting effortlessly from a monumental, expressively stylised historicism to purely functionalist, unadorned compositions based entirely on client preferences. He left behind an extensive, multifaceted body of work stretching from Tornaľa eastward to Vinohradiv in present-day Ukraine. /md



Eden and Excelsior Hotels



Piešťany, Winterova 58 and 60
Architect: Pavel Weisz
Constructed: 1929 – 1930
Photos: Rudolf Sandalo

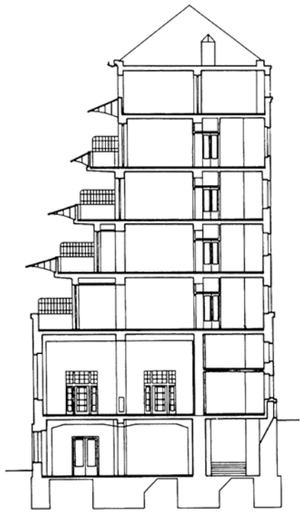


At the entrance to Piešťany's central pedestrian zone, the Eden and Excelsior hotels form a prominent modernist corner ensemble. Designed by the local architect Pavel Weisz before he reached the age of thirty, the two buildings were commissioned by different owners but constructed almost simultaneously. Sharing identical heights and with similar guest capacities, their histories are mirrored: the Eden began as a medical spa house operated by Dr. Ludwig Neuwirth before its conversion into a hotel, whereas the Excelsior–commissioned by the Winter family–transitioned from a hotel to a spa house during the interwar period. In the socialist era, the latter was renamed the Hotel Jalta.

The Eden features an L-shaped footprint with a distinctive, streamlined, rounded corner reminiscent of German Expressionism. Its service and circulation areas face a modest courtyard, while single and double guest rooms line the exterior perimeter. Conversely, the Excelsior utilises a three-aisle layout with a short rear wing extending into the courtyard.

The facades are quintessential examples of functionalism, characterised by glazed ground floors, airy balconies with horizontal tubular railings, and flat roof terraces. The inclusion of circular 'porthole' windows on the corners reflects the influence of Nautical Modernism, an aesthetic inspired by the sleek engineering of ocean liners rather than historical precedent. The architect, Pavel Weisz, was born into a Jewish family in 1901. Having evaded deportation to the concentration camps, he ultimately lost his life fighting in the 1944 Slovak National Uprising. /md

Dr. Szontagh Sanatorium



Nový Smokovec IV 76
Architect: Milan Michal Harminc
Constructed: 1917 – 1925, Expanded: 1934
Photo: archive Matúš Dulla

During World War I, Slovakia's most proficient architect, Milan Michal Harminc, designed this expansive sanatorium in the High Tatras for the Liptov industrialist Gustáv Hubka. Even though the shell had been constructed between 1917 and 1921, post-war economic instability delayed the building's completion until 1925. The sanatorium introduced several pioneering technical and spatial innovations, most notably a bed-in-air system of deep, terraced loggias on the southern elevation designed for patients to rest in the open mountain air.

The building's architecture intersects monumental historicism and nascent modernism. The northern entrance façade remains anchored in the past, characterised by eclectic window geometries, prominent cornices, an accentuated parterre, and a massive central projection topped by a complex mansard roof. The date "1917" inscribed above the entrance marks a farewell to historical styles as the building's southern side is already resolutely functionalist.

On the southern face, Harminc opted for long, stepped loggias entirely devoid of historicist ornament. The structural logic of the skeletal frame led to a minimalist aesthetic that extended to the pergolas, the circular gazebo, and the perimeter fencing. This shift toward the contemporary continued in the later staff residential block, which is purely functional in character. Following the 1933 economic crisis, the General Pension Institute acquired the sanatorium, which was subsequently expanded and modernised by the Prague-based studio of architect Josef Záruba-Pfeffermann. /md



Coburg Works



Trnava, Coburgova ulica
Architects: Siegfried Theiss and Hans Jaksch
Constructed: 1917 – 1921
Photos: Tomáš Manina

At Trnava's industrial periphery, an exceptional structure stands amidst neglected factory buildings, ranking among Slovakia's earliest unadorned modernist structures. It is positioned to the right of the geometrically ornamented gates leading to the former ironworks of the mining and metallurgical company founded by Prince Philip of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. The original 1921 wire mill plant was designed by the prominent Viennese partners Siegfried Theiss and Hans Jaksch. Though based in Vienna, Jaksch originally hailed from northern Bohemia, and Theiss was a native of Bratislava. Their prolific office executed numerous commissions across Austria, along with a select few projects in Slovakia, including the Lutheran churches in Prievoz and Grinava.

Although a fundamentally simple structure, its distinct gables and side elevations are clearly articulated by structural, reinforced-concrete, load-bearing piers interspersed with large, unadorned windows. Historicist ornamentation first proved obsolete within industrial architecture before this reductive modernist ethos spread to civic typologies traditionally masked by decorative envelopes and classical motifs. Following prolonged decay, the plant was recently converted into studios, workshops, and offices without compromising its architectural integrity, leaving the historic concrete roof structure entirely unaltered.

In 1929, the adjacent residential colony became a radical experiment: worker housing featuring a structural steel frame infilled with Heraklith wood-wool insulation panels. Today, these buildings are severely dilapidated. Unlike other pioneering steel-frame structures of the era, such as Bratislava's Nová Doba residential complex or Palace Sanatorium in Nový Smokovec, Trnava's experimental colony ultimately failed to withstand the test of time. /md



New Post Office

Košice, Poštová 20
Architect: Bohumír Kozák
Constructed: 1928 – 1930
Revitalised by: Radoslav Mokriš
Photos: archive Matúš Dulla, Matej Hakár

Newly established Czechoslovakia was deeply committed to modernising eastern Slovakia, historically less developed than the western administrative core. In Košice, it materialised in a monumental post office complex. The prominent architectural historian Ladislav Foltyn later classified it as the first public structure in Slovakia executed in a truly modern spirit. The Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs was a highly progressive institution, championing avant-garde design as it spearheaded radio broadcasting. Consequently, the complex includes the historic *Radiojournal* studio that has broadcast from this exact location without interruption.

The extensive urban block was designed by Prague architect Bohumír Kozák, who in 1922 had also engineered the nearby transmitter station in Haniska pri Košiciach, the site of Slovakia's maiden radio broadcast in 1925. The Košice complex comprises two taller four-winged structural blocks, connected by a unified single-storey wing at the ground floor. A spacious entrance leads to the main counter hall, crowned by a monumental arched glass-brick ceiling. It remains the largest postal hall in Slovakia and has been preserved in its original splendour. While Kozák had decorated the Haniska building in the expressive regional style of Rondocubism, he completely abandoned ornamentation here, opting to clad a vast portion of the facades in unadorned, textured face brick.

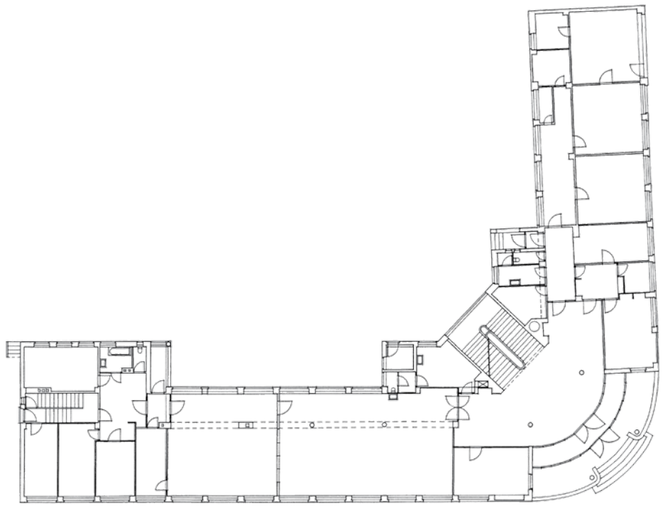
In 1941, the post office suffered damage during an air raid that killed six employees. It remains unknown whether it was a deliberate German provocation or a tragic navigation error by Soviet bombers. Because Hungary had annexed the city, the incident was exploited for a declaration of war on the Soviet Union the next day. A plaque on the façade marks this event. After 95 years, the entire complex recently underwent a comprehensive restoration supervised by heritage preservationists. Today, it continues as the main post office alongside various other public institutions. /md







City Block of Four Buildings



This city block in Banská Bystrica brings four architecturally significant buildings together into a single, compact urban complex. The historical anchor is the combination plaster-and-brick building at Horná and Kukučínova streets, designed by Alois Balán and Jiří Grossmann to house the district social insurance office. The corner is defined by a semi-cylindrical glass-brick stairwell tower, topped by sculptor Ladislav Majerský's statue of a hammer-wielding worker above the parapet line. This collaborative artistic synthesis mirrors the architects' concurrent insurance building project in Bratislava.

At Kukučínova and Československej armády streets, Žilina-based architect František Eduard Bednárik experimented with another arrangement of structural masses for his 1935 notary hostel, setting its cylindrical corner deeply back into the building's footprint. In 1953, he returned to design a five-storey structure featuring a gently convex sweep, bridging Horná and Československej armády streets. The façade sports ochre-coloured stone window reveals, a signature motif. Today, a medical centre and pharmacy occupy two wings, while the south wing contains residential apartments. Internally, a magnificent spiral staircase winds against the sweeping backdrop of a curved glass-brick wall. It remains a historical marvel how Bednárik managed to resist the diktats of 1950s Socialist Realism to deliver such a purely modernist work.

The block was completed in 1967 along its western edge with the addition of the Regional Trade Union Council building, designed by Igor Teplan Sr. and Ladislav Kmeť. Its curved façade masterfully traces the established street line, utilising an ochre-toned trim that harmoniously and convincingly unifies it with Bednárik's older structures. Taken as a coherent whole, these four interconnected buildings stand as a textbook of mid-century architectural evolution deserving of comprehensive heritage protection. /md



Banská Bystrica, Horná ulica, Československej armády, Kukučínova
Architects: Alois Balán, Jiří Grossmann, František Eduard Bednárik, Igor Teplan Sr., Ladislav Kmeť
Constructed: 1927 - 1967
Photo: Matúš Dulla

Koch Sanatorium

Bratislava, Partizánska 27
Architects: Dušan Jurkovič, Jindřich Merganc, Otmar Klimeš
Constructed: 1929 – 1930
Renovation Architects: Dušan Dinaj, Viktor Šišolák
Renovated: 2008 – 2011
Photos: Photo: archive Department of Architecture,
Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Monika and Ľubo Stacho

In a residential villa district above Bratislava, Professor Karel Koch commissioned a specialised women's sanatorium. A late work by Dušan Jurkovič, designed in collaboration with Jindřich Merganc and Otmar Klimeš, the four-storey facility initially contained 36 beds, an operating theatre, and a chapel. Following a meticulous renovation by Dušan Dinaj, the building—now the Koch Women's Hospital—has been restored to its original quality, balancing modern medical standards with strict heritage preservation.

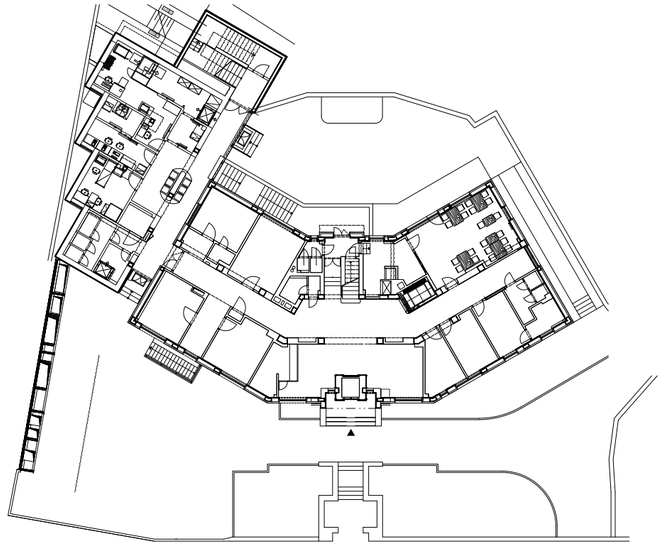
Significant damage to the original face bricks, produced by Jurkovič's Trnava brickworks, necessitated a complete replacement of the façade. Internally, the most notable alteration involved opening up the original operating rooms. While recent additions moved the climate-controlled operating and delivery suites to a new wing, the original structure continues to serve as the inpatient ward.

The building features a reinforced concrete frame with brick infill, clad in characteristic ceramic tiles with accentuated horizontal joints. Its elongated V-shaped plan integrates harmoniously into the sloping terrain. Architecturally, the hospital is a prime example of refined functionalism, utilising a three-aisle layout with a central corridor and rear-facing balconies that overlook a dendrologically diverse garden established by Jozef Mišák. Recently restored by the city, it is now open to the public.

The façade is defined by large windows and a central ribbon window, reflecting the "modern machine for healing" aesthetic prevalent in 1930s Czechoslovakia. At its inception, the Koch Sanatorium was considered the most advanced facility of its kind—a legacy it maintains today. /md

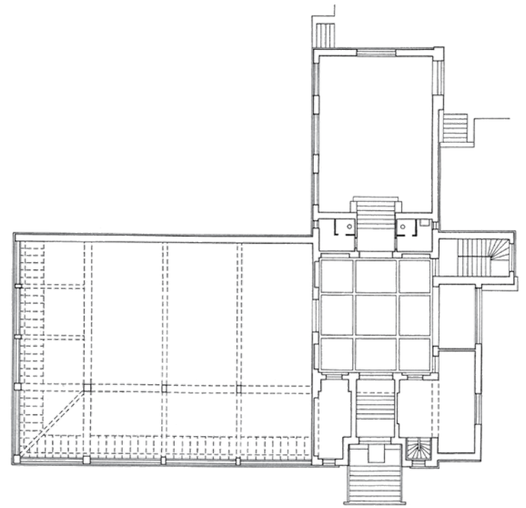






Slovak Art Association Building







Bratislava, Dostojevského rad 2
Architects: Alois Balán, Jiří Grossmann
Completed: 1926
Photos: Michal Bogár, archive Matúš Dulla

The Slovak Art Association (Umelecká beseda slovenská) was an organisation of Czech and Slovak artists founded in Bratislava in 1921. Composed of fine arts, music, and literary sections, the association's mission was to serve the arts, cultivate an appreciation for beauty, and, most of all, promote Czechoslovak culture. The 1924 competition for its headquarters was won by Alois Balán and Jiří Grossmann, young Czech architects who had moved to Bratislava shortly after the founding of Czechoslovakia. They had already completed the city's YMCA building, whose brick facades signalled a definitive break from ornate historicism.

While their initial proposals for the UBS building retained older motifs, these were ultimately abandoned in favour of a design that symbolises the dawn of modern architecture in Slovakia. The Slovak Art Association building's primary exhibition spaces are a large hall for paintings and a smaller hall to the rear, with a dedicated entrance for sculptures. The upper floor and its terrace house the association's club rooms. While the entrance area retains a traditional coffered ceiling, the main exhibition hall utilises reinforced-concrete frames and an industrial-style roof with north-light glazing to provide the consistent, indirect light essential to any artist's studio.

The exposed brick of the facades is reminiscent of early Dutch Modernism, a style that inspired many contemporary architects, such as Jozef Gočár, a Slovak native who became an outstanding Prague architect, and the architects who simultaneously designed the Ostrava House of Art and the UBS Building, František Fiala and Vladimír Wallenfels, during the same period. /md

Baťa Department Store





Bratislava, Hurbanovo námestie 6
Architect: Vladimír Karfík
Completed: 1930
Renovated by: Peter Valach, Andrej Gürtler (1990); Vladimír Mrázek, Iveta Raková (2005); Daniel Debre (2027)
Photos: Josef Hofer

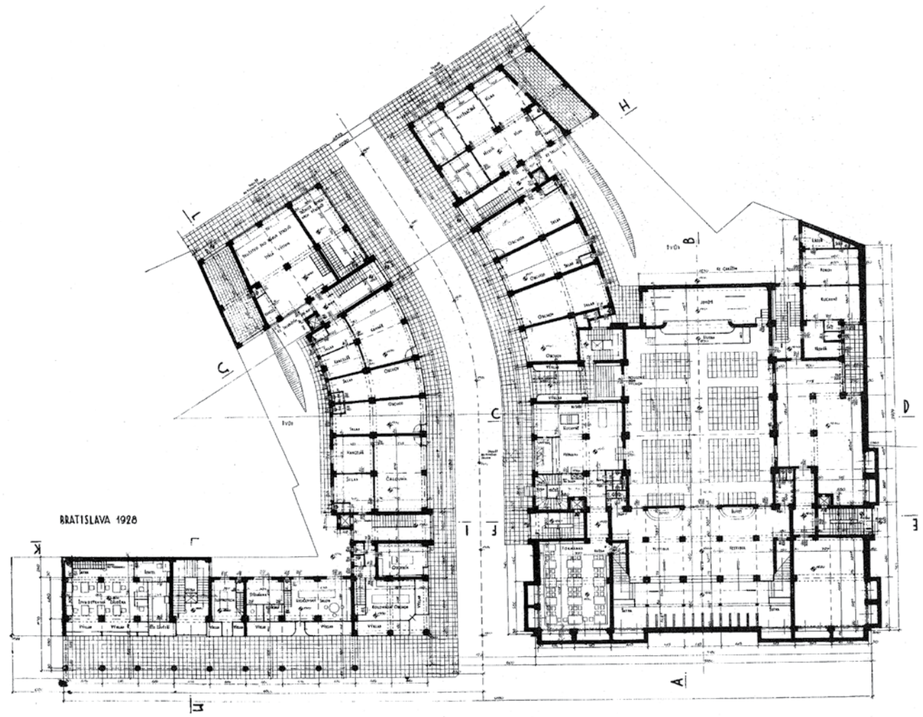
On the former site of the Smidt-Hansl inn, Vladimír Karfík, the Baťa Corporation's principal architect, designed a new three-storey department store. The initial proposal featured long ribbon windows, but concerns that the structure would obscure Michael's Tower drew opposition from the city council and local architects. In a flexible response, Baťa and Karfík adjusted the massing, reducing the corner section to two storeys while increasing the rear volume to five.

This "speed over ego" compromised the intended effect of the modernist ribbon windows. Ultimately, only one remains on the upper floor of the lower section, fronting originally streamlined, efficiently organised retail spaces. Karfík brought a wealth of experience to the project, having designed Baťa outlets across Czechoslovakia, including Brno and Liberec, and even as far afield as Amsterdam.

The building's corporate rationalist architecture, entirely devoid of any historical ornament, was originally enhanced by bold advertising signage and dazzling nocturnal neon lighting. Though it may lack the extreme refinement of Karfík's landmark Zlín structures, what was later nicknamed Veľký Baťa (Big Baťa) after another, smaller Baťa opened on Obchodná Street, became an iconic fixture of the Bratislava cityscape. Renovations in 1988, during Karfík's lifetime, and in 2005 introduced a new staircase and a glass lift, while substantially altering the utilitarian character of the original "House of Service". Following current adaptations, the building will reopen in 2027 as "European House", serving as the administrative and conference headquarters for the European Parliament and the European Commission in Slovakia. /md

Trades House





Bratislava, Kollárovo námestie 22, Vysoká 21, Živnostenská
Architect: Klement Šilinger
Constructed: 1929 – 1930
Photo: Josef Hofer

In 1927, Klement Šilinger won the competition to design the immense headquarters for the Trade Association, still known by its portmanteau Živnodom. It consists of two massive blocks connected by a bridge spanning Živnostenská Street, a thoroughfare created specifically by the building's spatial division. The lower wing's grand colonnade even reaches the height of the adjacent traditional buildings, reflecting the ambitious urban visions for Bratislava's interwar transformation. Šilinger's modernism was characterised by a monumental dignity, achieved through the generous massing of elements and soaring interior volumes.

The complex was a multifunctional hub housing commercial workshops, offices, a restaurant, and a café, with retail shops at street level and 76 luxury apartments with terraces above. The lower block's corner at Vysoká Street originally featured a two-storey "craft market hall". The auditorium currently used by the New Scene Theatre originally served as the Alfa Cinema. Its interior was famously adorned with abstract murals by Ľudovít Fulla, a revolutionary avant-garde gesture for 1930s Czechoslovakia, though the fate of these works remains unknown.

Even the strictly functionalist architect Friedrich Weinwurm praised the structure, declaring it world-class architecture by international standards. While a later sketch by Šilinger depicts the facades with continuous ribbon windows, it is unclear if this was his original intent or a retrospective modernist revision. In 1990, the theatre section was renovated by Ferdinand Zbuško, who added a theatre portal. /md

Tomb of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik

Brezová pod Bradlom, Bradlo Hill
Architect: Dušan Jurkovič
Designed and Erected: 1927 – 1928
Photos: Matej Hakár

Architectural historian Oldřich Starý described the monument to Czechoslovakia's first Minister of Defence, Milan Rastislav Štefánik, as 'a modern and monumental work of classical grandeur'. Marking the pinnacle of Dušan Jurkovič's career, this is his most renowned work. Conceived as unadorned at a time when modernism was gaining prominence, the design masterfully synthesises simplicity with classical monumentality.

Jurkovič himself proposed Štefánik's interment atop Bradlo Hill, overlooking the General's birthplace, and even choreographed the funeral rites—an event he described as his 'greatest and most daring artistic achievement.' The body was moved to this final resting place from a spot near the crash site, marked by a stone pyramid Jurkovič designed, where he lay with the three Italian pilots who died with him: Gabriele Aggiusti, Giotto Mancinelli-Scotti, and Umberto Merlini.

This tragic brotherhood is immortalised in the monument's composition: a central tomb flanked by four obelisks, which echoes Jurkovič's earlier design for the Rotunda war cemetery in Western Galicia. The modest, classically balanced forms of the white travertine mound crown a prominent summit in the White Carpathians above the town of Brezová. Although Jurkovič regretted having to scale down the complex due to budgetary constraints, the realised monument remains imposing. It is structured across two terraces: the lower measuring 93 × 62 metres, the upper 45 x 32 metres. The latter houses the central inscribed tomb and four 12-metre-high obelisks. Constructed entirely of travertine from Spišské Vlachy, the monument also bears the architect's name on a discrete inscription on the lower level. /md





FUNCTIONALISM
1930 – 1939

Functionalism
1930 – 1939

In the 1930s, an entire range of outstanding functionalist works emerged in Slovakia, clearly aligned with the programmatic principles of modern architecture. The functionalist tenets championed by the German Bauhaus, alongside the purist aesthetics of Le Corbusier, the titan of European modernism, were directly mirrored in the designs of architects active in Slovakia. Several of them had visited the 1925 Paris International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, where they were struck not by the decorative displays, but by their complete absence in Le Corbusier's pavilion. It was precisely then, in the mid-1920s, that the architects in the young Czechoslovak state lost their admiration for the decorative, Cubist-inspired "National Style" and began redesigning their projects in a modernist spirit.

Alois Balán and Jiří Grossmann did exactly this with the Slovak Art Association building. Accessed through a vestibule with a traditional coffered ceiling, the main exhibition hall is aggressively modern and unadorned, its glazed ceiling intentionally evoking an industrial workshop rather than a conventional gallery.

Nearby, the Bratislava Municipal Savings Bank (*Mestská sporiteľňa*), designed by Juraj Tvarožek and completed in 1931, represented another breakthrough on the path toward functionalism. Although his original competition entry featured a traditional façade, he promptly replaced it in 1930 with a starkly geometric glass curtain wall of superb abstract elegance. As a contemporary review noted, it was "something new, unseen here or anywhere further east: a true creation of contemporary functionalism."

A historian of Slovak architecture, Ladislav Foltyn, described the massive post office and radio transmitter complex in Košice, designed by Prague architect Bohumír Kozák and completed in 1930, as the first modern, unadorned building outside the Bratislava metropolitan region. As the decade continued and functionalism fully established itself in Slovakia, historicist tendencies rapidly receded into the background. Despite their natural proximity to the Prague-inspired National Style, even Czech architects active in the region abandoned these decorative methods. Not long afterward, one of them, Alois Balán, went so far as to characterise the style as an error to which almost all architects of the younger generation had succumbed. Even the senior figure among them, Klement Šilinger, who had designed a series of Cubist and Rondocubist apartment buildings in Slovakia, embraced functionalism in 1930 with his Trades House (*Živnostenský dom*) and the Lafranconi Hostel and Canteen. Simultaneously, Friedrich Weinwurm, who had studied in Germany, drew inspiration directly from avant-garde modernist sources there, becoming Bratislava's most resolute proponent of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity). Meanwhile, left-leaning architects stood firmly on the front lines of this movement, convinced that modern architecture was the harbinger of a profound and positive societal transformation.

However, not everyone transitioned breezily to the new modernist style. Artur Szalatnai, the architect who designed the Bratislava synagogue, had studied in Budapest's more conservative academic environment. Reflecting on his own transformation, he observed: "I felt myself becoming modern, even as traditional sensibilities still slumbered in my consciousness." Likewise, Dušan Jurkovič felt reluctant to abandon expressive ornamentation, pointing out that modern trends stem from forced economy. "People are looking for something cheap, though they won't honestly admit it." Nevertheless, he and the Czech architects working in his studio aligned with the modern movement in the design of Bratislava's Koch Sanatorium (1930) using unadorned brick facades. Even the highly adaptable Michal Milan Harminc slowly shed historical elements from his designs, including his religious structures. His Lutheran churches in both Bratislava and Žilina belong firmly to the functionalist architectural tradition.

It was no easy task for architects to promote modern design concepts. While the Great Depression reduced demand for construction, its related economic deprivations may have spurred the elimination of superfluous historicist decoration to some extent. In terms of creative approaches and the institutions these architects had attended, Slovakia's architecture scene tolerated a high degree of diversity. After all, the most celebrated work by a foreign architect on Slovak soil, the Neolog Synagogue in Žilina by Peter Behrens, a co-founder of European modernism, masterfully integrates it with traditional religious motifs. Because Slovakia lacked an architectural faculty of its own until the 1940s, local practitioners had been educated in major European cities such as Prague, Munich, Vienna, Budapest, Zurich, and Paris. When Emil Belluš arrived in Bratislava with a degree in architecture from the Czech Technical University in Prague, he noted the scarcity of Slovak engineers in the city when describing local architects as varied in nationality, age, calibre, professional education, and work methods. Yet, functionalism as accepted in Europe had steadily become the foundation of their practices.

The shift was most pronounced in Bratislava, where a cohort of young Czech graduates from the Czech Technical University in Prague and the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague established themselves. They were deeply convinced that modernism would usher in a completely new world. Košice, Slovakia's eastern metropolis, was incubating many of Europe's leading avant-garde painters and could likewise boast of its own architects drawn to modernism. A prime example of their contributions is the recently restored municipal swimming pool complex, an elegantly modern design by the prolific Ľudovít Oelschläger, whose career spanned projects in Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, then also part of Czechoslovakia.

As the Great Depression lumbered on, an acute housing shortage pushed the issue of social housing to the forefront, turning it into a core ideological mission for left-wing architects. Construction of housing for the working and lower classes rose considerably following the passage of the Housing Construction Act, resulting in rationally designed apartment buildings that prioritised health-conscious layouts and novel functional spatial arrangements. Foremost among these admittedly avant-garde buildings were several early-1930s residential complexes in Bratislava, including the Unitas deck-access apartment blocks and the Nová Doba complex, both by Friedrich Weinwurm and Ignác Vécsei, and Emil Belluš's municipal housing blocks on Miletičova Street. The middle class likewise embraced modern living, epitomised by Josef Marek's expansive Avion Housing Cooperative (1932) in Bratislava and the Masaryk Colony in Košice. Designed by Brno-based architect Josef Polášek for civil servants, the latter colony integrated collectivist elements. It served as the home of architect Miroslav Kopřiva, the first professor of architecture at the newly established Dr. Milan Rastislav Štefánik Technical University. In Žilina, it culminated in the construction of the *Svojdomov* colony, a development of modern, rational single-family homes designed by Michal Maximilián Scheer, Július Stein, and Žigo Wertheimer that stood as the Slovak equivalent to the famous interwar housing estates of Stuttgart, Brno, and Prague.

Even though many architects held leftist views, their political standpoints did not prevent them from accepting tempting commissions from wealthier clients to design modernist villas. Friedrich Weinwurm designed several such villas, and even Eugen Rosenberg–perhaps the most internationally acclaimed architect from Slovakia–left behind an exceptional villa in Topoľčany built for a local physician named Mokrý. Rosenberg had studied and built a career in Prague before fleeing to the United Kingdom to escape the Holocaust. In London, he founded the YRM studio and designed several expansive buildings. The sensitive architect Jindřich Merganc also designed a villa, today a national cultural monument, for Jaroslav Dvořak, an attorney married to Slovak author Zuzka Zguriška. Approaching Merganc directly, the couple had specifically requested a more daring modernist design. Meanwhile, one of Slovakia's most expressive modernist villas, the Jaroň Villa, was designed by Alois Balán for Karol Jaroň, a Bratislava engineer. It was even included in an international anthology of world functionalist architecture. Regrettably, it no longer stands.

Any chapter on functionalist architecture should not overlook Czechoslovakia's interwar efforts to upgrade healthcare institutions. In the High Tatras settlement of Vyšné Hágy, a massive tuberculosis sanatorium complex was constructed in the latter half of the 1930s, based on a design by Prague architects František Albert Libra and Jiří Kan. Construction of Rudolf Stockar's design for the grand spa house in Sliač spanned a decade, from 1927 to 1937. Nonetheless, the undisputed pinnacle of Czechoslovak functionalism, in terms of absolute architectural quality, remains the Machnáč Sanatorium (1932) in Trenčianske Teplice. Unfortunately, this architectural gem was left abandoned and has been deteriorating for decades. By contrast, the Želená Žaba (Green Frog) thermal swimming pool complex (1938) on the opposite slope exhibits equally outstanding qualities. It has fortunately undergone a dignified restoration to be once more operable. The spa town of Piešťany has likewise undergone exceptionally sensitive interventions. Emil Belluš designed an elegant post office building alongside what is arguably his most poetic work: the Colonnade Bridge (Kolonádový most) crossing the Váh River between Spa Island and the town centre.

Modern architecture quickly penetrated Slovakia's smaller towns, too. Scheer had already introduced it to Žilina in the late 1920s. His Financial Palace (*Finančný palác*), completed in 1931, stands as a unique achievement on a nationwide scale. Nitra native Oskar Singer frequently lamented the challenges of what he called "working on the periphery", and yet his legacy is an elegant functionalist school and a villa. Partially raised on pilotis in the manner of Le Corbusier, the villa was recently restored to its full splendour. Nitra and Trenčín also possess buildings designed by Tomáš Baťa's chief architect, František Lýdie Gahura. Another prominent architect in the service of the Zlín industrialist, Vladimír Karfík, made his mark in Bratislava with the iconic Baťa Department Store and in the development of Partizánske, Slovakia's only entirely new, planned functionalist modern town.

Functionalism also made rapid inroads into educational architecture. Influenced by the German Bauhaus, the School of Applied Arts was founded in Bratislava in 1928 and eventually gained recognition far beyond Slovakia's borders. It elevated local design culture and industrial output by fundamentally transforming the quality of apprentice education. The institution was housed within a new apprenticeship vocational school, which Alois Balán and Jiří Grossmann had designed in a stark, functionalist aesthetic. Constructed in phases between 1928 and 1937, the building today serves as the central headquarters of the Slovak University of Technology.

New industrial structures were naturally scarce during the systematic dismantling of manufacturing capacity in the wake of the Great Depression. Despite the economic crisis, a few industrial projects were actually completed. In Trnava, Emil Belluš's strikingly composed flour mill (1938) stands out for its bold functionalist expression. He would later return to Trnava to design another landmark engineering structure, the municipal water tower, built between 1942 and 1947.

Architecture inspired by the principles of the European functionalist avant-garde has become an integral part of Slovakia's modern architectural heritage, subject to national historic preservation and the focused attention of DOCOMOMO, an international organisation dedicated to documenting and conserving the modern movement. Unfortunately, many of these modernist landmarks have fallen into disrepair in plain sight. Masterpieces like the Machnáč Sanatorium in Trenčianske Teplice and the Helios Spa House in Štrbské Pleso suffer from chronic neglect, amateurish alterations, and contemporary renovations carried out without expert consultation or respect for the integrity of the original designs. /md



Nová Bratislava (*New Bratislava*), 1931



Sina Pool in Trenčianske Teplice



Poster for a talk in Bratislava by Hannes Meyer, second director of the Bauhaus



Edvard Beneš visiting the Zelená žaba (Green Frog), from *Nový svet* 11, 25 July 1936



Elán, a magazine edited by Ján Smrek, who also wrote about architecture inside it



Advertisement for a talk by Le Corbusier in Prague



Forum, a magazine printed in German, Hungarian, and Slovak



Klement Šilinger standing in front of the construction site for Živnodom in Bratislava



Caricatures by Jaroslav Kándl of major Czech and Slovak architects



Svojdomov Colony under construction in Žilina

1930 Housing Construction Act (No 45) enacted
Apprentice schools complex in Bratislava completed
Legendary poet and editor Ján Smrek launches "Elan", featuring a progressive column on architecture (run ended in 1947)

1931 Masaryk Colony designed in Košice by Josef Polášek
Core professional journal *Slovenský staviteľ* (Slovak Builder) published to track regional engineering and technical innovations (publication ceased in 1942)
Sophisticated architectural and lifestyle monthly *Fórum* magazine first released (its publishing run would end in 1938)
Nová Bratislava (New Bratislava) published until 1932
Development starts on Horná Sihoť in Trenčín

1932 Baba housing estate exhibited in Prague
Svojdomov development in Žilina completed
First curtain wall facade in Slovakia featured at the landmark City Savings Bank (*Mestská sporiteľňa*) in Bratislava
Left-wing, avant-garde designers' Socialist Architects Union established
Jaromir Krejcar's Macháč spa house in Trenčianske Teplice completed

1933 Central Union of Czechoslovak architects founded
Fourth CIAM Congress in Athens, with the Athens Charter drafted

1934 Bloc of Architectural Progressive Associations (BAPS) established in Prague

1936 Horná Sihoť quarter in Trenčín completed

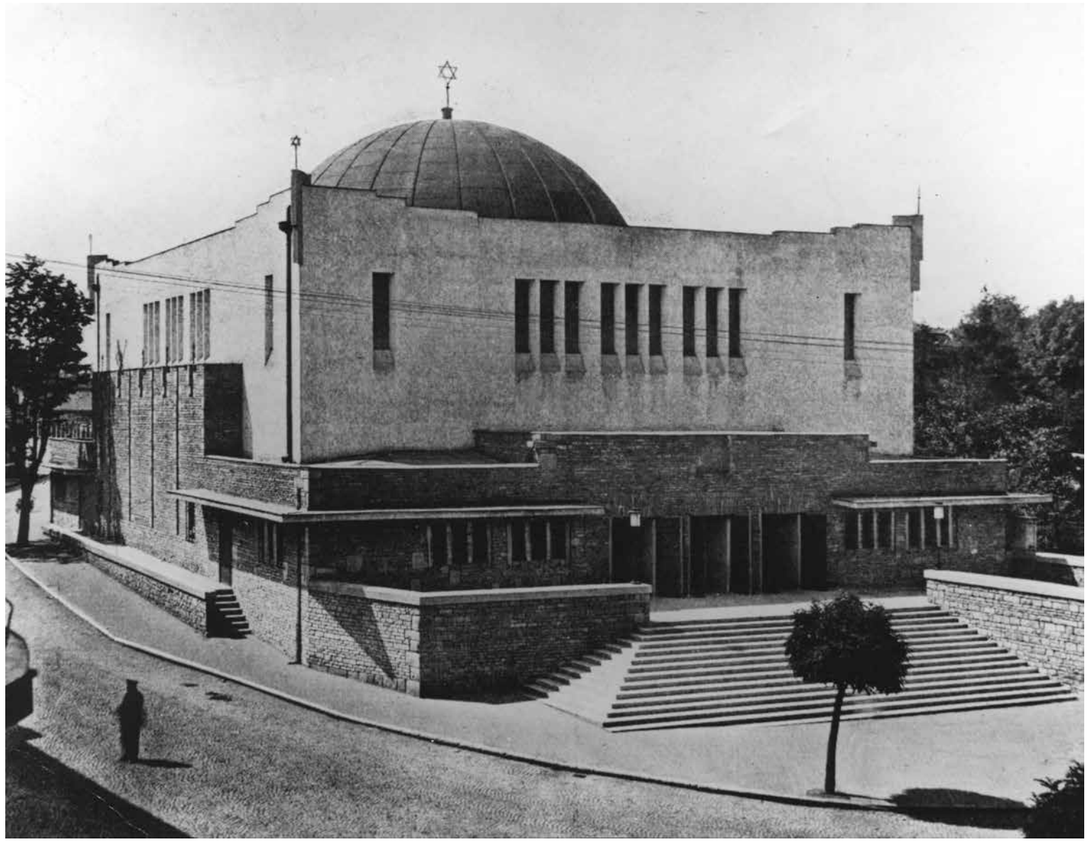
1937 M.R. Štefánik Technical University chartered in Košice (today Slovak University of Technology)

1938 Emil Belluš's NUPOD automatic mill in Trnava completed
Avant-garde publications Stavba, Stavitel, and Styl merged to form national professional journal *Architektura ČSR*
Retrospective of Dušan Jurkovič's life exhibited at the Slovak Art Association building in Bratislava
Czechoslovak East (*Výstava východu ČSR*) exhibition opens in Košice



Emil Belluš standing in front of NUPOD Družstevné domy (Cooperative Homes)

New Synagogue

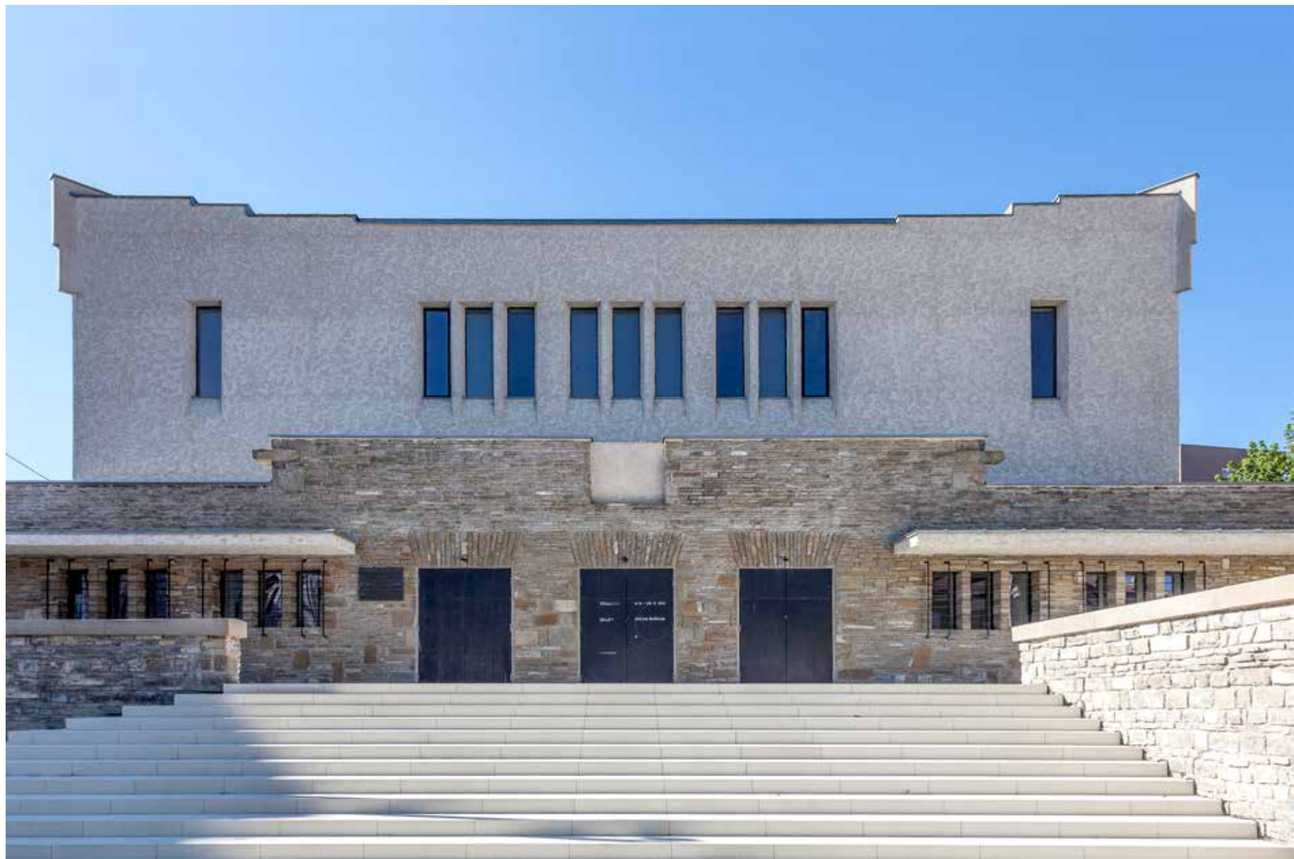


Žilina, Hurbanova 11
Architect: Peter Behrens
Constructed: 1929 – 1931
Revitalised by: Martin Jančok, Michal Janák, Eva Štrocholcová
Revitalised: 2011 – 2017
Photos: archive Faculty of Architecture and Design,
Slovak University of Technology, Monika and Ľubo Stacho

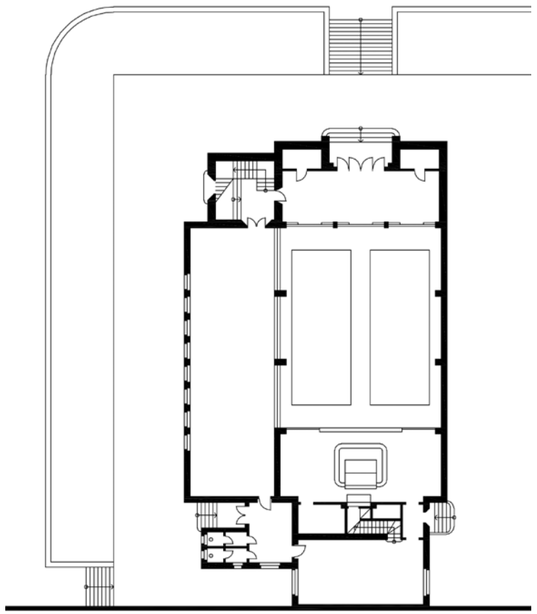
The former Neolog Jewish synagogue is Slovakia's most significant monument to European Modernism. Despite its irregular, sloping corner lot, the building maintains a symmetrical core, with transitional sections integrated through terraces and staircases. Commissioned by Žilina's influential Reformed Jewish community, the interior was designed to accommodate 450 men on the ground floor and 300 women in the gallery. A small winter prayer room is located in the rear wing. The building's emphatic horizontal massing lends it a solemn, dignified character.

The structure is a rare example of a traditional synagogue interpreted through Modern Functionalism, though its stone masonry and compositional symmetry remain rooted in classical tradition. Its architect, Peter Behrens, was a titan of European Art Nouveau and later Modernism. His Berlin atelier employed Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe, leading figures of modernism. In 1928, while a professor at the Vienna Academy, Behrens won the design competition against other luminaries, including the Secessionist Josef Hoffmann and the prolific synagogue architect Lipót Baumhorn.

This was the last great synagogue constructed in Slovakia. Following the Holocaust, the decimated Jewish community could no longer maintain the site, leading to its repurposing as a warehouse, a puppet theatre, a cinema, and an assembly hall for the University of Žilina. In recent years, the building has undergone a pietistic restoration led by architect Martin Jančok and the Plural Studio, in collaboration with the Truc Sphérique, a civic association headed by activist Mark Adamov. Today, it serves as a vibrant, progressive cultural centre. /md



Žilina Lutheran Church



Following his success with the new Lutheran church in Bratislava, Milan Michal Harminc was invited to design a similar project in Žilina. The local pastor, Fedor F. Ruppeldt, was instrumental in the era's Lutheran architecture, advocating for amphitheatre-style layouts. Although this progressive seating plan was not used in Žilina, Harminc introduced another innovation: a large, distinctive lateral vestibule running the entire length of the main hall. Separated by a series of glass doors, the auxiliary space can be integrated into the nave to accommodate larger congregations.

The church's architecture is devoid of historical references, defined instead by a tranquil, modern dignity. The church itself maintains a balanced poise, with its tower positioned asymmetrically to the right on the hill's highest point. Although the rectory was supposed to be part of the church, it was eventually built separately and showcased a more radical functionalist asymmetry until renovations obscured it. Inside, Ruppeldt's precise liturgical vision is evident in the spatial relationship between the altar, pulpit, and organ, all illuminated by an impressive stained-glass window.

The construction was a true community effort: Ruppeldt raised 46,000 korunas from Slovaks living in the United States, President Masaryk contributed 5,000 korunas, and further donations came from Žilina's Czech residents and the local Jewish community. The names of the creators remain visible today, carved into the entrance portal's travertine trim: architect Harminc on the right and builder Michal Kováč on the left. /md



Žilina, Martina Rázusa 1290
Architect: Milan Michal Harminc
Constructed: 1935 – 1936
Photo: archive Matúš Dulla

Red Cross Building



In Nitra, the corporate architectural legacy of the Baťa enterprise survives in the Red Cross Building, designed by the company's chief architect, František Lydie Gahura. Two outstanding architects anchored the Baťa architectural bureau: Gahura and Vladimír Karfík. While Karfík operated as a strict rationalist, Gahura's approach was deeply artistic, reflecting an early desire to study sculpture before he ultimately pursued architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. On the other hand, Karfík graduated from the Prague Institute of Technology.

Gahura's most celebrated masterpiece is the iconic glass-walled Tomáš Baťa Memorial in Zlín. Yet his career yielded just two projects in Slovakia, only one of which stands today. The contemporary Sázela Villa in Trenčín was unfortunately demolished in 2005 due to severe neglect. Conversely, the Nitra complex has endured, originally serving as a residential home for abandoned children before becoming the regional headquarters for the Red Cross, which continues its mission in the building.

Architecturally, the Red Cross Building features a semi-cylindrical glazed stairwell tower, a classic functional motif found in only a handful of interwar structures across Slovakia. Here, it is masterfully balanced by a cantilevered, generously glazed entrance corner. Built around a robust reinforced concrete frame, the building displays austere, characteristically simple functionalist facades defined by large, thoughtfully composed windows. Regrettably, the original structural elegance of Gahura's design has been somewhat compromised following a sequence of modern alterations and unsympathetic window replacements. /md

Nitra, Mudroňova 7
Architect: František Lydie Gahura
Completed: 1931
Photos: Rudolf Sandalo



Slovak Rowing Club

Bratislava, Viedenská cesta 24
Architect: Emil Belluš
Constructed: 1930 – 1931
Restored by: Juraj Fecanin, Henrich Kupec, Štefan Polakovič
Renovated: 1993
Photos: Josef Hofer, Matúš Dulla

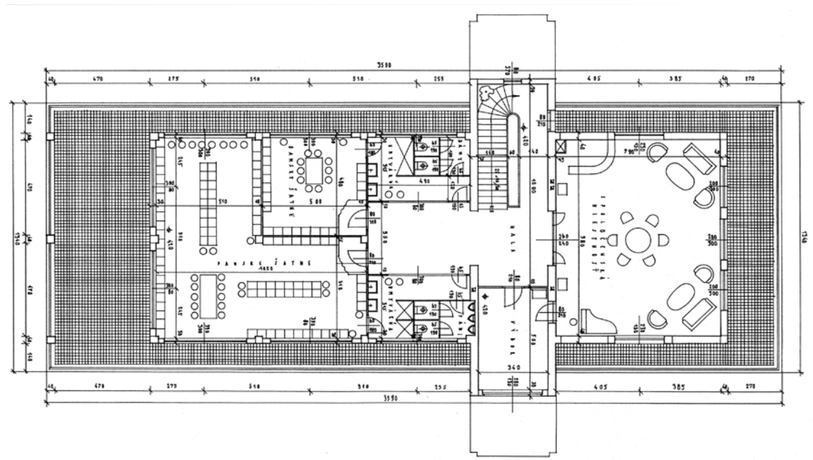
The Slovak Rowing Club is one of the earliest and most avant-garde works by the young Emil Belluš, who was himself an active rower. Functionalism is expressed here through the main section's free facade, ribbon windows, airy terraces, and strong horizontal emphasis. The building's larger wing serves as the primary storage area for racing shells, where its reinforced concrete, cantilevered frame is perfectly suited to this function, allowing for a continuous, uninterrupted ribbon window along the projecting wall.

The secondary wing, constructed using traditional brickwork, originally housed the clubhouse and motorboat facilities. An elevated circulation core containing the staircase sits between these two distinct volumes. Originally conceived as a lightweight seasonal pavilion, the building featured expansive glass surfaces and social terraces furnished with modern, slender tubular steel furniture. During the 1993 renovation, the structure was insulated for year-round use, and a restaurant was established in the west wing.

Belluš also designed the nearby landing dock for a ferry boat, the Propeler, which once crossed the Danube. Although the ferry no longer operates, Ján Bahna restored the preserved larger pier on the city-centre embankment opposite the rowing club. Today, both the docks and the rowing club continue to exude the understated charm of pure modernism. /md







German Rowing Club

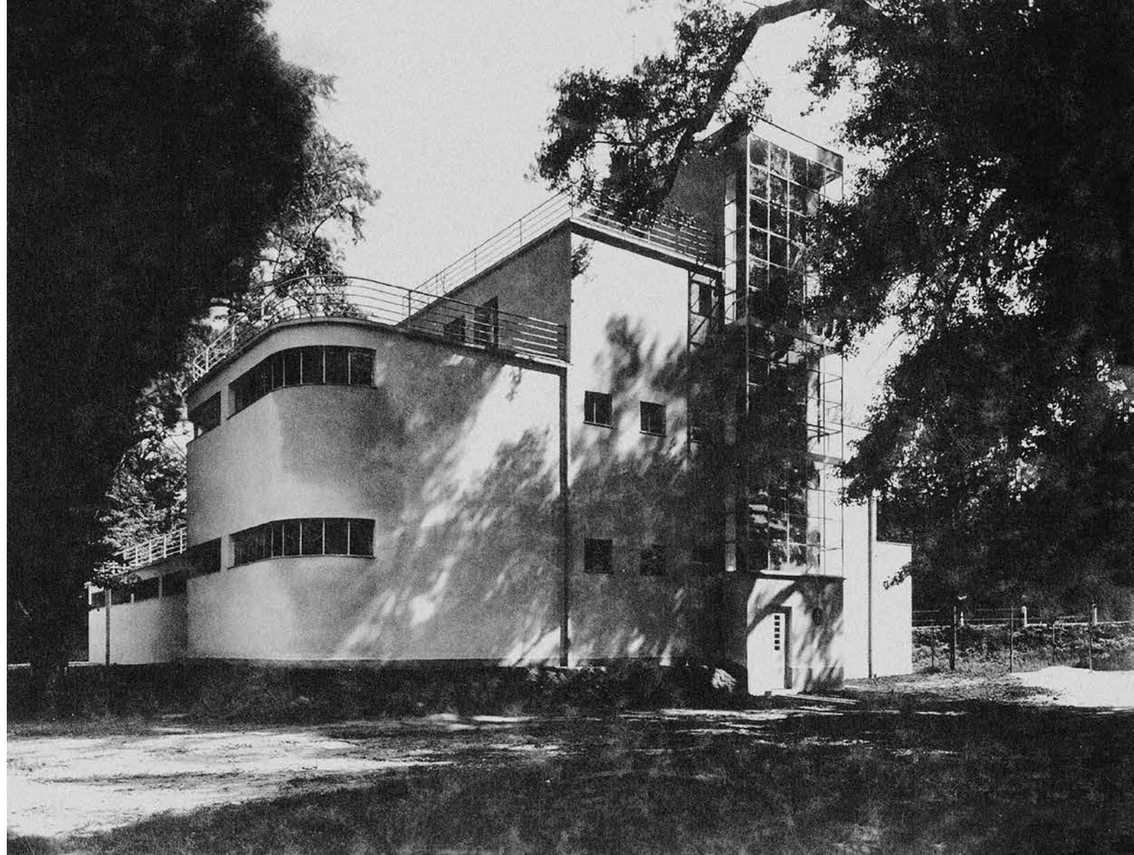


Bratislava, Viedenská cesta 22
Architect: Josef Konrad
Completed: 1931
Photos: Rudolf Sandalo

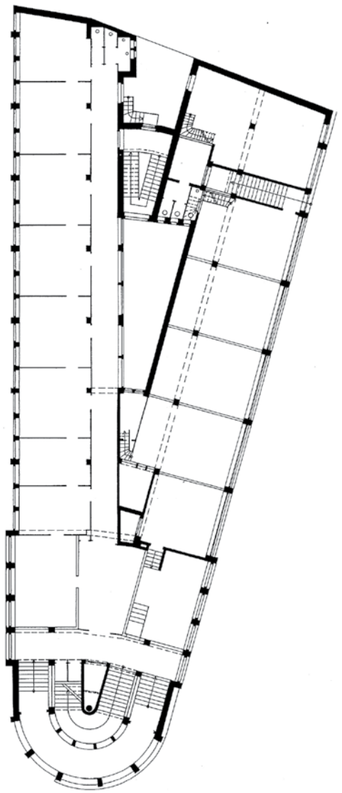
On the right bank of the Danube stands a building that, according to architectural historian Štefan Šlachta, represents one of the purest examples of Functionalism in Slovakia. Now in a state of advanced disrepair, this was once the home of the Donau German Rowing Club, constructed simultaneously with Emil Belluš's adjacent Slovak Rowing Club. It is widely considered the finest work of architect Josef Konrad.

Unconstrained by traditional conventions, Konrad's composition of volumes evokes a ship, the quintessential motif of Nautical Functionalism. The structure features terraces reminiscent of ship decks, tubular railings, rounded corners, and circular porthole windows. Notably, the staircase is enclosed by a glass wall that wraps seamlessly around both corners. The primary interior was dedicated to a boathouse for storage, supplemented by changing rooms, club facilities, and a restaurant. Subsequent renovations obscured several distinctive features, like the rounded-corner ribbon window. After serving as a television archive for several years, the building has fallen into ruin.

From 1895, the Pozsony Rowing Club–later renamed the Hungarian Rowing Club–stood a short distance downriver. Designed by Raimund Jeblinger, the building resembled a romantic castle with a tower. This landmark was dismantled during the construction of the Slovak National Uprising Bridge. Though its components were reportedly stored elsewhere, they vanished over time. It is hoped that Konrad's masterpiece will be spared a similar fate of total erasure. /md



Financial Palace



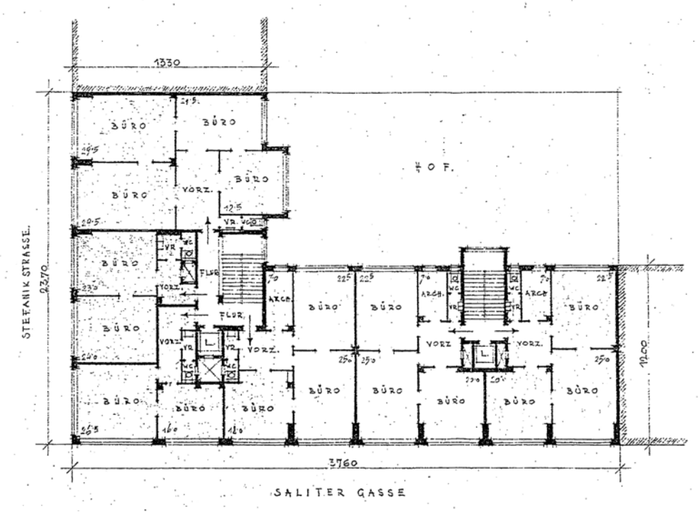
Žilina, Hodžova 11
Architect: Michal Maximilián Scheer
Constructed: 1930 – 1931
Photo: archive Faculty of Architecture and Design, Slovak University of Technology

Formerly the seat of Žilina's tax and revenue administration authority and popularly known as the "Financial Palace", this building occupies a prominent, tapering corner lot. It consists of two wings unified by a semi-cylindrical stair tower at the corner, a bold massing choice reminiscent of Russian Constructivism. The construction of an additional floor in 1949, to what had originally been a four-storey structure, somewhat diminished the staircase's prominence. The side facades are articulated by vertical piers that extend to the parapet, revealing the building's reinforced-concrete frame. Inside, the office spaces are rationally organised. The wings follow a double-aisle layout, narrowing to a single-aisle arrangement at the site's sharpest point.

The Financial Palace is considered the most significant of the many elegant functionalist structures Scheer developed in Žilina, all of which radiate the optimistic spirit of the early interwar era. In 1928, Scheer incorporated a rooftop garden in a house he designed, coincidentally the same year Le Corbusier codified his Five Points of Architecture.Unfortunately, that residence has since been altered. Like the house, subsequent renovations to the Financial Palace in 1998 further compromised its original elegance. Architectural critic Peter Szalay has noted the insensitive replacement of the staircase's transparent glazing with reflective blue-tinted glass, describing it as a hallmark of post-socialist banking aesthetics, with the owners' own notions of luxury frequently clashing with heritage value. /md



Allianz Building





formerly Assicurazioni Generali and Moldavia Generali
Košice, Pribinova 2, Hlavná 4
Architect: Alexander Skutecký
Constructed: 1938 – 1939
Photos: archive Matúš Dulla, Ján Krcho

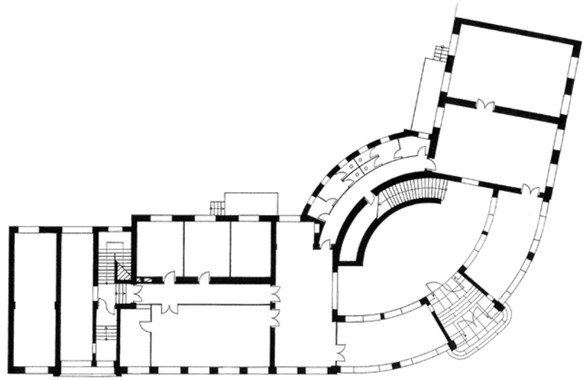
Following his 1935 design of a sprawling corporate headquarters for the Assicurazioni Generali and Moldavia Generali insurance companies in Bratislava, architect Alexander Skutecký was commissioned by them to execute a similarly ambitious project directly on Hlavná Street in Košice. Erected on the site of the former Stark House, the spectacular eight-storey tower was completed in 1939, instantly becoming a commanding landmark along the avenue and across the wider city centre. Alois Novák, a Košice-based builder of Czech origin, constructed the building, but before it was completed, the city had fallen under Hungarian administration. Following the Second World War, the premises housed the state-run Slovan insurance company, and today it remains a branch office of the Allianz insurance group.

The two-storey base, featuring large display windows on the ground floor and broad windows on the upper level, is clad in polished travertine slabs crafted by local stonemason Angelo di Valentino, an artisan of Italian descent whose signature remains visible on the pavement near the entrance. The austere facades of the tower section feature simple, four-pane windows, while long loggias animate the lower wing. In a departure from his sharper Bratislava project, Skutecký opted for a slightly more traditional expression, capping the structure with a roof slab that projects slightly beyond the facades and is supported by a rhythm of small consoles.

The architect was the son of the prominent Romantic-Impressionist painter Dominik Skutecký. The younger Skutecký studied architecture at the Technical University in Budapest and maintained a highly successful independent practice in Bratislava. Tragically, his life and career were cut short when he was killed during the Slovak National Uprising. /md



Post and Telegraph Office







Piešťany, Kukučínova 15
Architect: Emil Belluš
Constructed: 1929 – 1931
Photos: archive Jelica Janotová

The partially anachronistic block letters *Poštový a telegrafný úrad* still adorn the entrance to the elegantly curved building where Kukučínova and Poštová streets intersect in the centre of Piešťany. By the late 1920s, the Ministry of Posts in Prague had ceased to favour the prevailing Rondocubuism, superseding it with unadorned modernism. This progressive institutional stance was embraced by the young Slovak architect Emil Belluš when he was commissioned to design Piešťany's post office. He anchored the building using a sweeping arch at the corner, positioning the main entrance and the two postal halls directly at its centre, with a single-flight curved staircase at the rear linking them. The ground floor initially housed the parcel service, while other administrative services occupied the upper floor. Some of the original interior furnishings remain preserved.

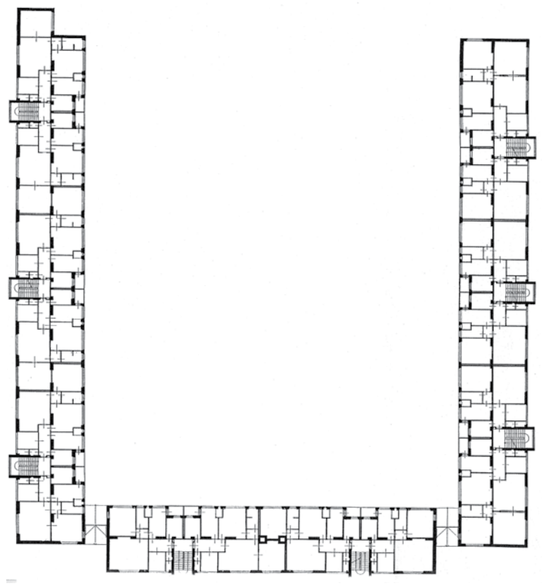
The austere, functionalist façade features a premium travertine-clad base and matching window reveals. A low-pitch gable roof tops the structure. Because the roof is hidden from view at street level, it heightens the building's starkly modernist, flat-roofed appearance. During recent renovations, the corroded window frames were replaced, the original vibrant red hue was restored, and the internal room layout was slightly modified. Nevertheless, the striking spatial impression visitors receive from the halls' concentric layout and the seamless internal connection remains completely intact, preserving the building's core architectural identity. In 1999, a bust of Belluš, sculpted by Alexander Trizuljak in 1979, was placed at the head of the entrance hall where a bust of President Masaryk once stood, marking the centenary of the architect's birth. /md

Masaryk Housing Estate

Košice, Jesenná 1 – 3, Jarná 21 – 25, Letná 10 – 14
Architect: Josef Polášek
Completed: 1931
Photos: Rudolf Sandalo







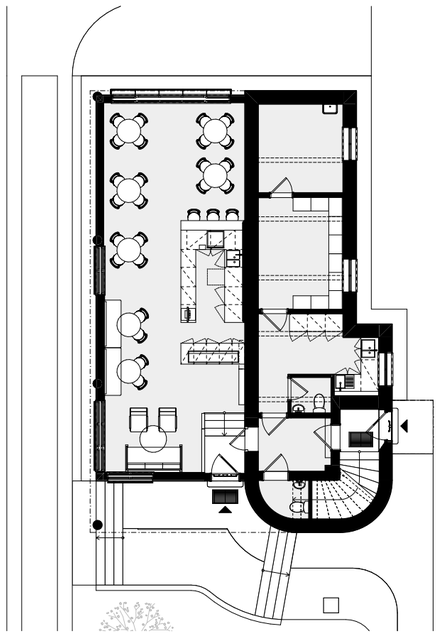
A cooperative of 48 families employed at Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian banks in Košice commissioned Josef Polášek to design and construct the Masaryk Housing Estate at what was then the city's northern edge. The complex consists of a partially enclosed three-wing block of four-storey buildings arranged in a U-shaped footprint. Originally, the top floors housed mechanical laundries, while the estate offered a mix of 21 three-room, 21 two-room, six four-room, and five studio apartments. The inner courtyard featured gardens, a playground with a pool, a pylon bearing a bust of President Masaryk (removed in the 1950s), and rooftop terraces landscaped with greenery. The project was a showcase for the benefits of communal living, then a novelty, incorporating central heating, hot and cold running water, two shared laundry facilities, and centralised management.

Polášek was a well-known architect based in Brno, then a hotbed of functionalism, who had begun his career as a bricklayer before graduating from a civil engineering school and subsequently studying under Pavel Janák at the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague. Inspired by the leftist collectivist trends of the era, he gave the estate a simple, orthogonal character enlivened by projecting glazed stairwells and recessed corners featuring underpasses and loggias. The estate's completion was a resounding success, immediately prompting another sixty civil servant families to seek interest in similar housing developments. /md

Vila K

Nitra, Kmeťkova 22
Architect: Oskar Singer
Completed: 1934
Renovated by: Juraj and Paula Fabrici
Renovated: 2024
Photos: Lenka Némethová





Nitra's most prominent interwar architect was Oskar Singer, who designed several modernist villas and functionalist public buildings across the city. His output includes an austere functionalist prism that served as a workers' cultural centre. It once featured a monumental painting by István Bíró before an additional wing was built onto the unassuming structure. Singer also designed the nearby riverfront school, now the Prince Pribina Elementary School. Among his residential commissions, the most celebrated design is Villa K, which he created for the Kollman family.

Villa K's defining characteristic was that a portion of the house stood elevated on pilotis, directly reflecting Le Corbusier's famous *Five Points of a New Architecture*. By Slovak standards, the open ground floor and its generous layout were exceptionally progressive. Yet just three years after the villa's completion, half of this free space was built over and enclosed. The aerodynamic rounding of the building's corners further heightened its avant-garde, modernist character. A recent revival of interest in local architectural heritage brought well-deserved attention back to the villa, attracting functionalist architecture enthusiasts. A civic association fully restored the property in 2024, converting the space to offer stylish lodging and a boutique café.

Born in Dolné Vestenice, Oskar Singer was of Jewish descent and studied architecture in Budapest and Brno. He focused his interwar practice primarily in Nitra, solidifying his place as one of Slovakia's leading functionalist architects. Shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, he emigrated to the United Kingdom. /md



Svojdomov Colony

Modern architectural history frequently highlights the famous European model housing estates that pioneered new approaches to individual living, such as the Weissenhof Estate (1927) in Stuttgart, Baba in Prague, and Nový dům in Brno. However, Žilina-based architectural historian Dušan Mellner points out a comparable modernist experiment that was successfully realised in Slovakia. Developed in 1930, the Slovak equivalent to these estates further west was Svojdomov, a cooperative housing development of freestanding homes built in the Šefranica neighbourhood just outside downtown Žilina. Despite its smaller scale, tighter design palette, and more limited circle of architects, the estate remains an extraordinary urban artefact, with 48 functionalist houses still lining three residential streets.

Constructed throughout the 1930s, the development comprised various detached and semi-detached configurations. The first residents could choose from an adaptable range of floor plans tailored to their needs, spanning single-room layouts, two-room variants with attics or mansards, multi-family duplexes, and larger three- or four-bedroom houses. The architectural team of Michal Maximilián Scheer and Július Stein designed the houses, employing the unadorned, boxy volumes and flat roofs central to the international modernist idiom. While many of these homes have undergone later modifications, a few select examples retain their pristine architectural character, including the textured, scraped *Brizolit* plaster finish, which became a signature motif of Scheer's functionalist practice. /md



Žilina, Na Šefranici, D. Krmana and Stárkova
Architect: Michal Maximilián Scheer with Július Stein
Constructed: 1928 – 1932
Photos: archive Dušan Mellner, Monika and Ľubo Stacho





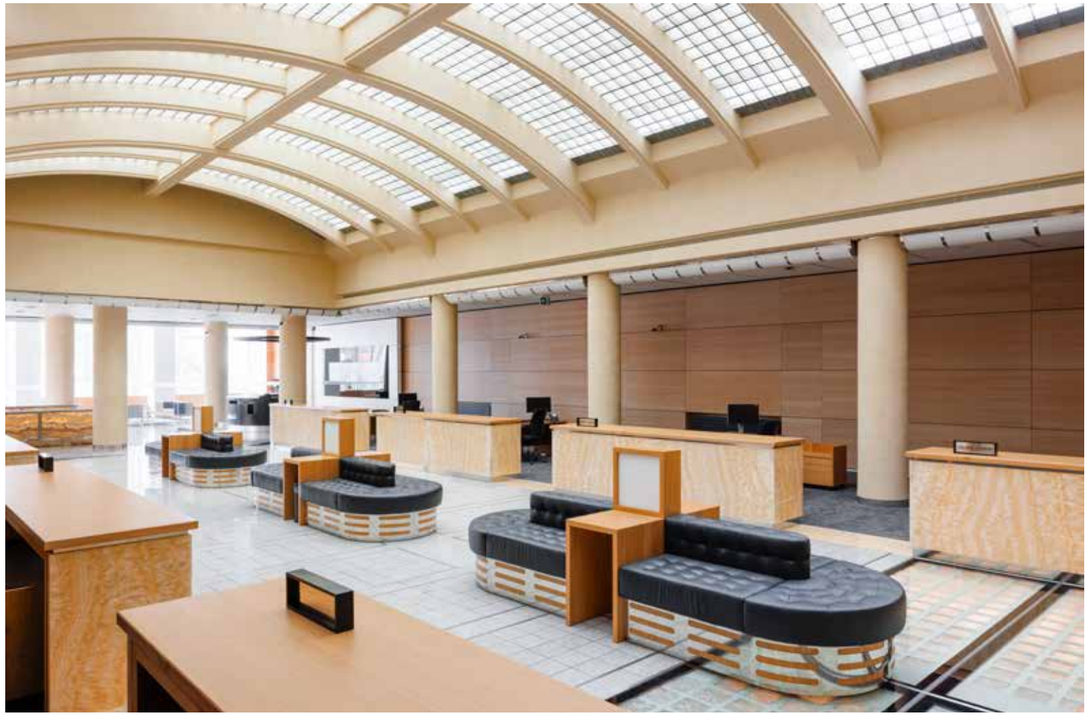
City Savings Bank

Tomáš Tvarožek, the director of the City Savings Bank, commissioned his brother Juraj to design the institution's new headquarters. The result was exceptionally bold for the early 1930s, and it remains a pioneering presence even today, mainly due to the orthogonal grid façade–a steel structure infilled with large windows and panels of Opaxite glass–which constituted the very first curtain wall in Slovakia.

On the first floor, a remarkable banking hall is sheltered by a vaulted glass-concrete ceiling. The floor was originally constructed of glass-concrete, allowing natural light to filter down into the ground-floor passage, which was intended to extend through the entire city block to Grösslingová Street. The entrance areas, clad in golden onyx from Levice, evoke the masterly use of stone veneers by Adolf Loos, the Viennese pioneer of modernism. The upper floors were designed for offices, apartments, and briefly housed the faculties of Comenius University.

Today, the building is occupied by Slovenská sporiteľňa – Allianz. A major renovation by Ján Bahna integrated the bank with the adjacent 1939 Luxor building, designed by Brno architect Jan Víšek. Following insensitive modifications in the 1970s, subsequent renovations, including Bahna's in the early 2000s and a 2017 project by Siebert+Talaš, have sought a return to the original design. While the original glass-concrete floor and continuous stone counters were not fully reinstated, new materials subtly reference the original textures. The arresting onyx elements and staircase walls have been carefully restored, original furniture replicated, and the façade re-glazed in two distinct tones. The ground-floor passage was also adapted for expanded retail use. /md

Bratislava, Námestie SNP 18
Architect: Juraj Tvarožek
Constructed: 1930 – 1931
Reconstructed by: Ján Bahna; Matej Siebert
Reconstructed: 2001; 2017
Photos: Matej Hakár, Fero Hauskrecht



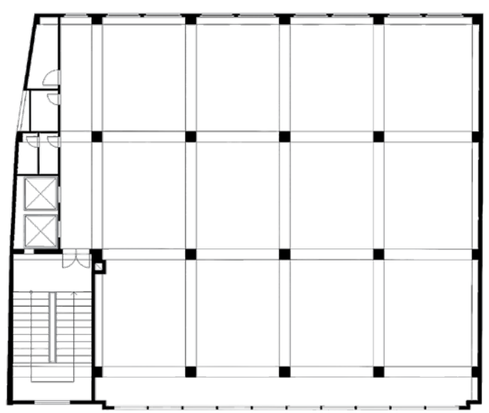


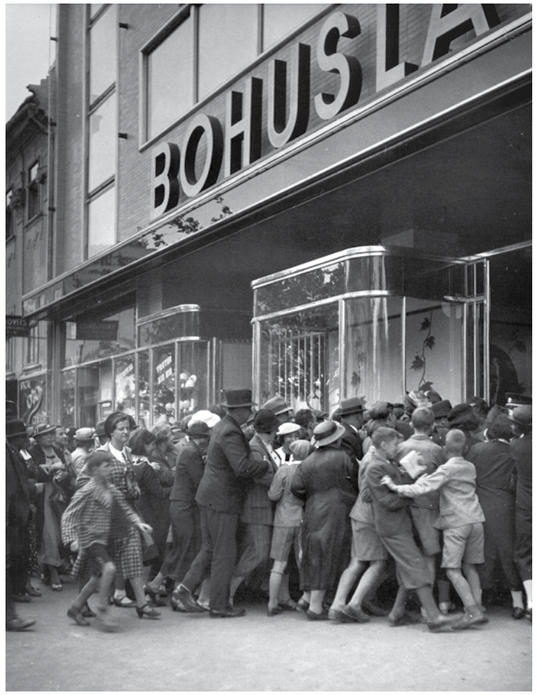
Dunaj Department Store

Bratislava 1, Námestie SNP 30
Architect: Christian Ludwig
Completed: 1936
Photos: Viliam Malík, Josef Hofer

Drawing inspiration from Miloslav Kopřiva's 1934 Brouk & Babka department store in Brno, Christian Ludwig designed a similar establishment for a vacant infill site on what was then Republic Square. Construction progressed rapidly between April and August 1936. The building's internal layout is easily discernible from the exterior: a prominent vertical window reveals the main staircase, while expansive horizontal windows frame the large, open-plan retail floors. The façade was clad in pale green ceramic tiles, with rounded stainless-steel profiles framing the glazing. At night, neon tubing illuminated the entire perimeter of the building. Notable technical innovations included freestanding, four-sided display cases set within a recessed entrance foyer, and the introduction of underfloor heating, the first system of its kind installed in Slovakia.

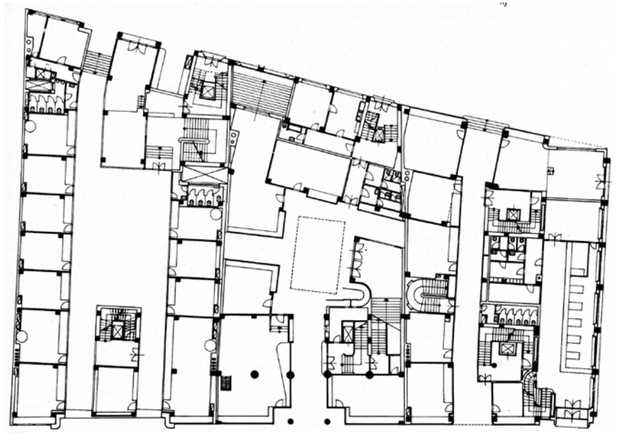
Widely considered Ludwig's masterpiece, the department store has finally undergone a dignified restoration after decades of neglect. Its architect, a native of Pressburg (now Bratislava), lived a turbulent life. Following his architectural studies in Munich, he spent his formative years working alongside Franz Wimmer and Endre Szőnyi–architects known for their classicising modernism– before establishing an independent studio with Augustin Danielis in 1928. Ludwig emigrated to Linz after World War II, and it was not until 2004 that his remains were returned to his hometown, where he was laid to rest alongside his wife and parents in the family crypt at the historic Goat's Gate Cemetery. /md







NUPOD



Bratislava 1, Námestie SNP 13, 14 and 15
Architect: Emil Belluš
Constructed: 1934 – 1939
Photos: archive Jelica Janotová, archive Matúš Dulla





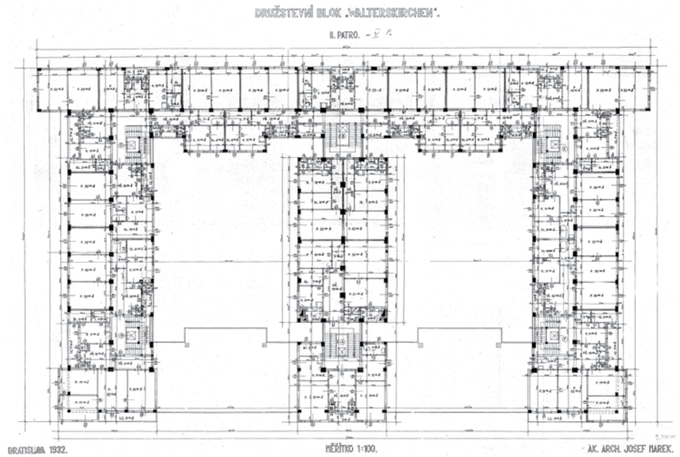
Founded in 1934 to support cooperative farmers and supply consumer goods, the Food Cooperative Purchasing Centre (NUPOD) had already grown into a powerful organisation when it commissioned Emil Belluš to design three buildings for its headquarters. Replacing 19th-century structures, they remain the most impressive landmarks on SNP Square. The ground floors house various storefronts and originally contained three internal passages.

The first building constructed, the corner structure at SNP 15, was built for the Union of Farmers' Mutual Savings Banks; its ground floor once housed the Farmers' Bank (now a VÚB branch), and traces of its original passage survive inside a shop as a barrel vault with glass blocks. Constructed almost simultaneously, SNP 13 housed the Central Cooperative, though its passage and beautiful elliptical skylight have long been closed off. The middle building, SNP 14, was erected last as the Cooperative Headquarters. Its basement cinema was later converted into a theatre, and its former passage now houses a McDonald's. From the rear street, a circular ramp leads to underground parking garages—an extraordinary innovation for the era.

The upper storeys of all three buildings once contained offices with residential apartments above. Large horizontal windows clad in dark red ceramic tiles define the administrative floors, contrasting with the stone-faced ground floor. Belluš masterfully balanced generous modernist forms without completely abandoning traditional architectural principles. Although the complex remains a vibrant urban hub, its original layout deserves greater care and preservation. In the 1950s, Miloš Chorvát designed a fourth building, the House of Arts, which seamlessly completed the block using a similar architectural language. /md

Avion





Constructed on land once owned by Count Georg Wilhelm von Walterskirchen, this massive cooperative apartment building, originally named for him, is better known today as Avion. Although plans for a new city centre on the site never materialised, Avion perfectly embodies the interwar vision of a modern metropolis. The project emerged from a design competition won by Josef Marek, whose entry triumphed over a similar proposal by Klement Šilinger. Having moved past their earlier Rondocubism, both architects offered a rational, unadorned functionalist solution.

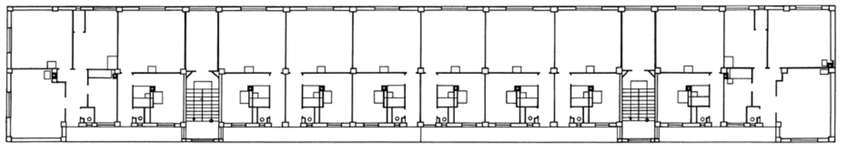
The building's base is a compact, continuous podium, with the upper levels divided into three separate wings open toward the southwest side to maximise sunlight in the two internal courtyards. The outer wings rise six storeys, while the central section reaches seven. The contrast between the commercial base and the massive rectangular prisms of the residential floors, articulated only by recessed loggias, defines the block's architectural character.

State-of-the-art 1930s construction technology, such as concrete conveyors and rapid-setting winter cement, allowed the complex to be completed in less than a year. It houses 120 apartments, ranging from one to four rooms, 25 ground-floor shops, and modern communal laundries with dryers. Avion has long been a hub for Bratislava's cultural elite. Ester Šimerová-Martinčeková's painting studio was located here, while Šilinger and another architect mentioned in this book, Marián Marcinka, had apartments in the complex. The enduring pride residents have expressed in the building's unique heritage was recently documented in a 2025 history by Katarína Haberlandová and Ľubica Voľanská. /md

Bratislava, Americké námestie, Floriánske námestie 1, Májkova ulica
Architect: Josef Marek
Constructed: 1931 – 1932
Photos: Josef Hofer



UNITAS







Bratislava, Šancová 21 – 63
Architects: Fridrich Weinwurm, Ignác Vécsei
Constructed: 1931 – 1932
Photos: Rudolf Sandalo, Josef Hofer

Constructed in the early 1930s for Bratislava's low-income population, the UNITAS complex is a seminal example of gallery-access social housing. The project was initiated by the Unitas building cooperative, founded in 1930 to leverage legislation designed to stimulate the construction of affordable housing. The cooperative acquired land previously occupied by warehouses on the city's outskirts to create an expansive residential block. Weinwurm and Vécsei broke with traditional urbanism by setting the development back from the street to improve hygiene and mitigate noise and glare. They organised the site into seven identical rows perpendicular to the street, with an eighth L-shaped block enclosing the western edge.

The buildings possess a stark, minimalist aesthetic. The smooth facades are articulated by a simple red-and-white grid that serves as a visual index of the reinforced-concrete skeleton beneath the plaster. These small-unit dwellings, each equipped with individual heating, are accessed through open galleries on the western side. The complex provides 50 two-room apartments located at the ends of the blocks and 240 one-room (studio) units in the centre. Each building features two staircases, and the architects originally outfitted the interiors with modern, tubular-steel furniture.

While the buildings have undergone numerous modifications, a recent renovation involving thermal insulation successfully preserved the original iconic colour scheme. As a rare and rigorous example of functionalist gallery-access housing in Slovakia, UNITAS reflects the lifelong mission of Fridrich Weinwurm, a staunch leftist and proponent of socially-conscious, modernist architecture. /md

Lanfranconi Hostel and Canteen

currently Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Comenius University
Bratislava, Nábrežie armádneho generála L. Svobodu 9
Architect: Klement Šilinger
Constructed: 1928 – 1929 and 1932 – 1933
Photos: Josef Hofer

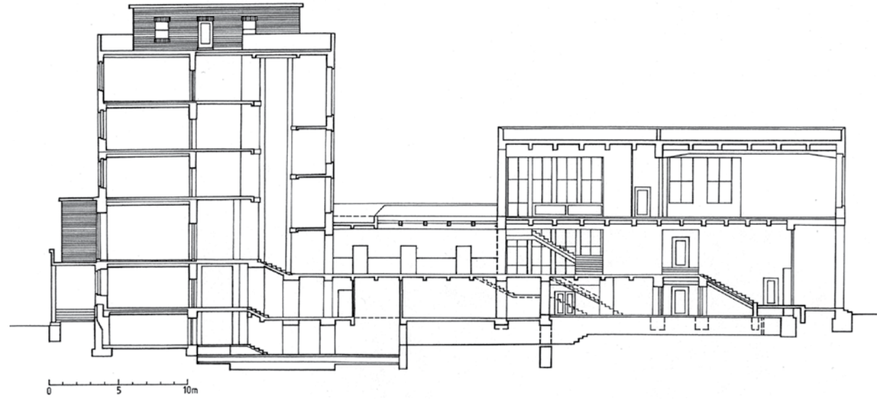
Following the post-World War I founding of Comenius University, the institution initially lacked permanent facilities–even the ruins of Bratislava Castle were briefly considered. Eventually, its home became a former grain exchange building on Šafárikovo Square, designed by František Krupka, but student housing remained a quandary. This led to a competition for a hostel on the former estate of Enea Grazioso Lafranconi, the engineer responsible for the 19th-century regulation of the Danube. The winning design came from Klement Šilinger, a prominent Czech architect in interwar Bratislava.

As the first facility of its kind in Slovakia, the complex's brick-clad towers evoke the atmosphere of traditional English university campuses. It was designed in two distinct sections: a residential and a social wing. The four-storey residential block, built first, features a double-loaded corridor with rooms facing south toward the Danube. A lower service wing then connected it to the social block, housing a dining hall, study rooms, and gymnasium, with an impressive oval staircase marking the transition between the two blocks. Above the main entrance, the structure is supported by a simple colonnade, a motif Šilinger simultaneously employed at the Trades House.

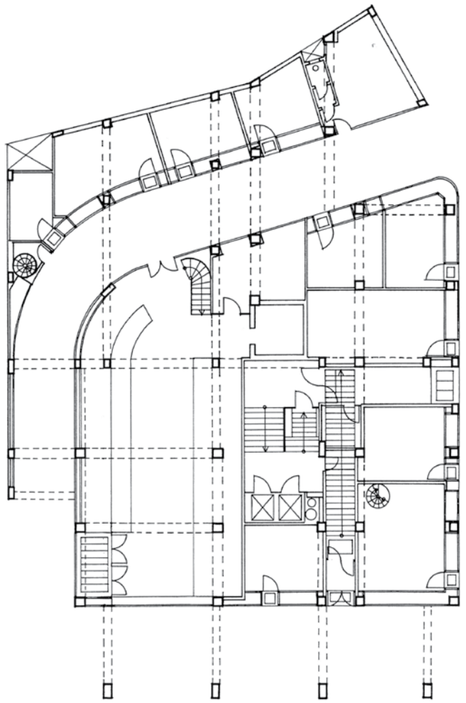
In 1961, a swimming pool designed by Ivan Matušík was added to the site. Today, the entire complex is occupied by the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, whose administrative offices are located in the lower part of the former student hostel. Representing one of Slovakia's earliest forays into modernism, the Lanfranconi complex captures Šilinger's pivotal shift toward a functionalist architectural language. /md







Manderla Building



Commissioned by Rudolf Manderla, a Bratislava butcher and entrepreneur, the building popularly known as the Manderlák was considered a true skyscraper upon its completion in 1935. Inspired by a trip to the United States, Manderla sought to create a landmark that, at 45 metres tall, reigned as the city's highest point for decades. His family chronicle boasted that the ground-floor butcher shop was the most modern in Central Europe, claiming that not even Vienna had such a beautiful store. The shop remained a local fixture until 2008, while the floor above it housed the legendary Grand Café, a haunt for intellectual celebrities such as painter Janko Alexy and poet Emil Boleslav Lukáč. The upstairs floors contained 64 luxury two- and three-room apartments, home to many famous residents like actor Milan Lasica.

Architecturally, the Manderla is a deliberately austere, functional building. It sits unusually far forward, jutting into the street not as a modernist exhibition, but because it follows the footprint of the original house that preceded it. Its load-bearing structure consists of a reinforced-concrete skeleton expressed on the front façade by projecting vertical pillars, culminating in massive frames at the top. The building was also a technological marvel for its era, equipped with hot water, central heating, gas, telephone lines, and its own electrical transformer station. Construction was completed in a record-breaking seven months. At street level, a passageway cuts through the ground floor while the rear of the building curves gracefully to integrate with the older neighbouring structures. /md

Bratislava 1, Námestie SNP 23
Architects: Christian Ludwig, Emerich Spitzer, Augustín Danielis
Completed: 1935
Photo: Josef Hofer



Health Centre



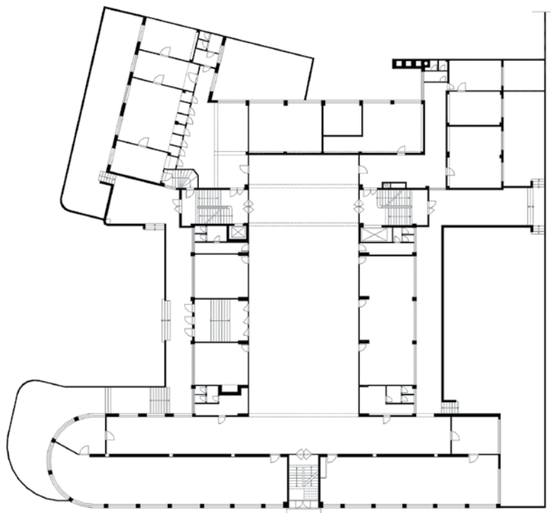


The current health centre at Bezručova 5 and the adjacent residential building at Bezručova 3 were originally constructed for the district's social and workers' insurance offices before they were converted into a hospital and maternity ward shortly after World War II. The buildings would later serve as a maternity ward, an internal medicine centre, and a surgical outpatient clinic for the Old City district of Bratislava. At the entrance to the older section, opposite the landmark Blue Church, sit two realistic 1935 labour-themed reliefs by Pavol Bán and Ladislav Majerský.

Built in 1939, the Bezručova 5 building is a grand modernist structure featuring an H-shaped footprint and a distinctive, rounded corner elevated on columns. Inside, its three-storey atrium with a glass-block ceiling was unparalleled in Bratislava, echoing the metropolitan public halls of European functionalism. Initially leading to offices, the surrounding galleries were later adapted into outpatient clinics.

In 1960, the older section was expanded and topped with a pitched roof. After decades of subsequent neglect, this national cultural monument underwent a highly debated, extensive reconstruction between 2016 and 2020. To accommodate underground parking for the residential wing, a minor, less architecturally significant section of the complex was demolished and later rebuilt in a similar style. Fortunately, the functionalist fabric of Bezručova 5 was faithfully restored. While the compromise might not have entirely satisfied strict preservationists, the building successfully retains the impressive, streamlined aesthetic of late functionalism. /md

Bratislava, Bezručova 3 and 5
Architects: Alois Balán, Jiří Grossmann
Constructed: 1930 – 1932, 1937 – 1939
Reconstructed by: Dušan Dinaj
Reconstructed: 2016 – 2020
Photos: Matúš Dulla, archive Matúš Dulla



Rectorate, Slovak University of Technology

Commissioned in phases by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, this simple building with expansive, industrial-style windows housed Czechoslovakia's first centralised apprenticeship school. Crucially, it also became home to the School of Applied Arts. Founded in 1928 and modelled on the German Bauhaus, the avant-garde institution featured lectures by design pioneers Hannes Meyer and László Moholy-Nagy, and a faculty that boasted acclaimed painters Ľudovít Fulla and Mikuláš Galanda alongside scenographer František Troster. Its mission was to elevate industrial production through advanced craftsmanship and design.

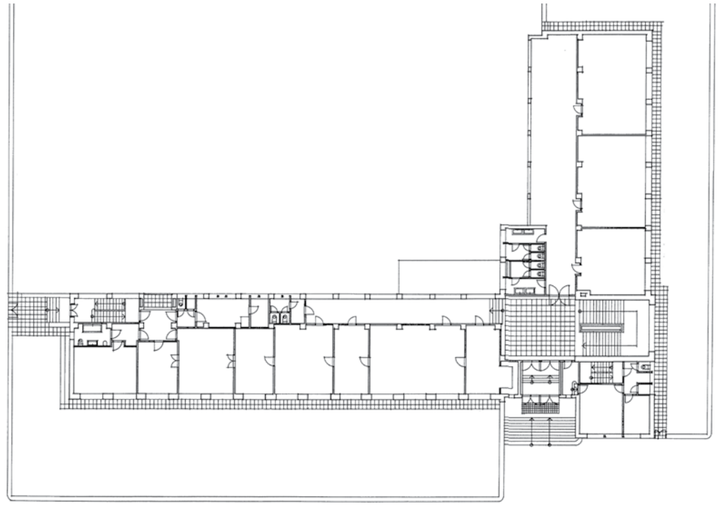
To accommodate the school, architects Alois Balán and Jiří Grossmann designed an extensive, multi-winged complex. The first phase, completed in 1930, delivered a two-wing entrance section that recedes from Vazovova Street at its central main entrance. While the initial 1924 competition entry highlighted historicist elements, the finished structure embraced an austere functionalism. Inside, the building utilises a double-loaded corridor layout with spacious hallways, positioning staircases and washrooms at the junctions of the wings. The central volume rises to three storeys, while the flanking wings stand at two. To adapt to what Grossmann termed "shifting needs", he and Balán employed a reinforced-concrete skeleton frame with thin brick partitions. The rear wing facing Mýtna Street was added after the Second World War and incorporated a large lecture hall honouring Dionýz Ilkovič, a prominent Slovak physicist. /md



Bratislava, Vazovova 5
Architects: Alois Balán, Jiří Grossmann
Constructed: 1928 – 1937
Photo: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

Business Academy







Architect Ferdinand Silberstein maintained a highly active practice in Bratislava, leaving behind many completed buildings, while also designing villas, apartment buildings, several public structures, and three schools in his native Sereď. Additionally, he was deeply involved in the development of Horná Sihoť, a new residential quarter born out of Trenčín's rapid interwar expansion. His Dr Milan Hodža Business Academy prominently stands at the primary corner along the roadway leading from the city centre.

Anchored by a vertical stairwell block clad in premium ceramic tiles, the entrance corner's dynamic, prismatic composition architecturally combines with an austere, functionalist treatment to rank the business academy among the city's finest modernist landmarks. The building utilises a double-tract internal layout, ensuring the rows of classrooms face the street to maximise natural light. Originally configured in an L-shaped plan, the longer entrance wing housed specialised classrooms, department workrooms, an auditorium, a reading room, the school director's apartment, and a staff room. The shorter wing featured a more spacious corridor layout leading to standard classrooms and departmental workrooms. Later, additions built onto the rear of the property eventually enclosed the back of the block.

Of Jewish descent, Silberstein hid in an underground earthen bunker during the Second World War and managed to escape persecution. Following the war's end, he officially changed his surname to Silván before emigrating with his family to Australia in 1949. There, he spent the remainder of his career designing industrial facilities. /md

Trenčín, Martina Rázusa 1
Architect: Ferdinand Silberstein
Constructed: 1935 –1937
Photos: Matej Hakár, archive Matúš Dulla

Viliam Pauliny-Tóth Grammar School

Imbued with the distinctive charm of late functionalism, this prominent educational institution was designed by the internationally acclaimed Brno architect Bohuslav Fuchs and completed during the Second World War. Dušan Jurkovič had prepared the site's initial design and, alongside Jan Pacl, he had recently completed the nearby Štefánik Institute. However, Jurkovič's proposal was rejected, and ultimately Fuchs was commissioned. He conceived a compact, two-winged complex anchored by a central entrance and a monumental primary stairwell. The grammar school originally accommodated twenty classrooms and progressive amenities, including a dedicated gymnasium and residential quarters for boarding students from rural areas.

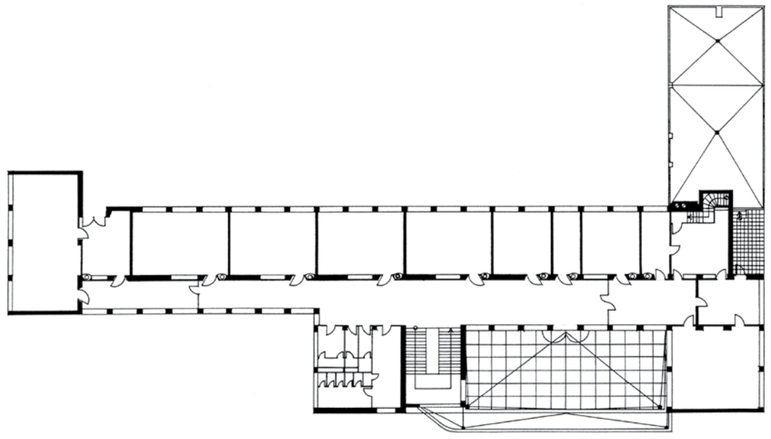
While Fuchs drafted the initial layout independently, he was later joined by Bratislava-based architects Klement Šilinger and Ladislav Rado. Although their exact creative contributions to the final architectural concept remain difficult to isolate, evidence suggests they were brought on as local co-authors following Czechoslovakia's political partition in 1939. For Šilinger, this collaboration marked the final project of his career. Conversely, Rado–a Čadca native who had trained directly under Fuchs in Brno–emigrated to the United States in 1939, where he built a highly distinguished career designing notable modernist works.

The three-storey school block forms an elegant L-shaped footprint. Its main façade derives its dynamic character from highly varied window groupings that juxtapose conventional openings with avant-garde circular apertures and sweeping ribbon bands of translucent glass brick. Inside, the main stairwell volume was further enriched in 1966 and 1967 through the installation of vibrant modernist stained-glass windows designed by celebrated Slovak artists Vojtech Stašík and Ladislav Záborský. /md

Martin, Malá Hora 3
Architects: Bohuslav Fuchs, Klement Šilinger, Ladislav Rado
Constructed: 1936 – 1940
Photos: Matej Hakár, archive Matúš Dulla







Colonnade Bridge



Piešťany, Winterova 72
Architect: Emil Belluš
Constructed: 1931 – 1933
Restored by: Bohuslav Pernecký
Restored: 2019 – 2021
Photos: archive Jelica Janotová

Having dynamically developed Piešťany spa into a major destination, Ľudovít Winter chose the young Emil Belluš to design a convenient bridge connecting Spa Island and the city centre. The structural engineering was handled by Swiss engineer Anton Schwarz for construction by Pittel & Brausewetter. Through this unique European structure, Belluš demonstrated modern architecture's ability to create a functional engineering marvel possessing a noble, humanistic dimension.

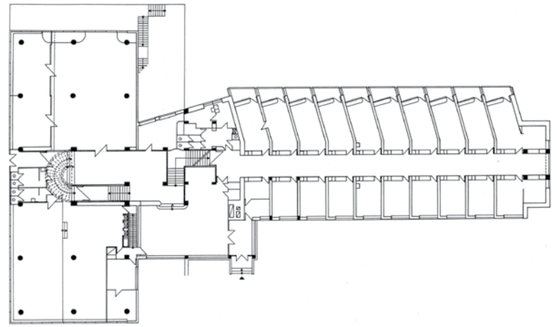
The bridge measures 141.8 metres, consists of seven bridge spans, and has six piers. The middle piers are founded on reinforced concrete caissons, while the others rest on piles. A glass wall divides the bridge lengthwise into a pedestrian walkway and a carriageway for vehicular traffic, topped by a cantilever canopy that extends its entire length. The bridge is entered through simple inscribed gates: the city side features a celebratory poem about the spa, while the island side bears the Gospel verse *Surge et ambula* (*Rise and walk*). Small shops line the first spans, and Robert Kühmayer's iconic statue of *The Crutch-Breaker* stands at the city entrance, an image later adopted into the city's coat-of-arms. Though Belluš preferred "Glass Bridge", it is known as the Colonnade Bridge after the riverbank colonnades Winter originally envisioned.

After the central spans were blown up during World War II, the bridge was reconstructed in the original style and reopened in 1956. A half-century later, local architect Bohuslav Pernecký led a revitalisation, completed in 2021, which cleared obscured glazing and restored the bridge's original light, airy grandeur. Five years later, however, river erosion of the foundation piles has necessitated further essential repairs. /md



Morava Hotel





Tatranská Lomnica 42
Architect: Bohuslav Fuchs
Constructed: 1931 – 1933
Renovated by: Tomáš Šebo, Igor Lichý, Imrich Vaško, Branislav Groch, Mária Rakúsová, Nora Vranová / Architekti Šebo Lichý
Interiors: Filip Marčák, Matej Kurajda, Branislav Groch, Mária Rakúsová, Nora Vranová, Tomáš Šebo, Igor Lichý, Imrich Vaško / Architekti Šebo Lichý / GRAU
Collaborating Architect: Peter Steiniger
Reconstructed and Expanded: 2025 – 2026
Photos: Matej Hakár

Bohuslav Fuchs, arguably Czechoslovakia's preeminent interwar architect, once remarked that he had realised his two finest works in Slovakia: the Green Frog swimming pool in Trenčianske Teplice and the convalescence home, now the Hotel Morava, in Tatranská Lomnica. Although he had initially collaborated with competition winner Karl Ernstberger, Fuchs's brilliant modernist approach undoubtedly dominates the final structure. Commissioned by the Moravian Life Insurance Company and situated on a vast clearing overlooking the town, the building is a masterclass in Functionalism.

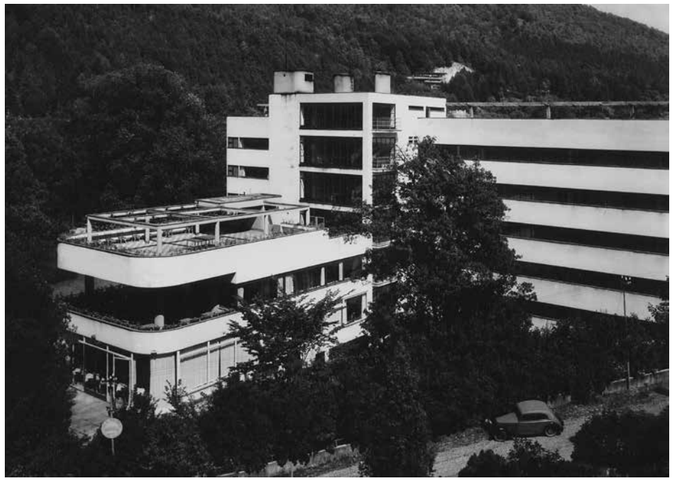
The complex comprises a primary residential block that features a distinctive sawtooth façade of south-facing loggias and a slightly lower wing for dining and social functions, characterised by expansive windows, a terrace, and a slender, lightweight staircase. Fuchs noted that the dramatic Tatra landscape inspired this rhythmic division of volumes and the stepped façade. The building's refined proportions and generous, logical layout have cemented its reputation as one of Europe's best examples of its architectural type.

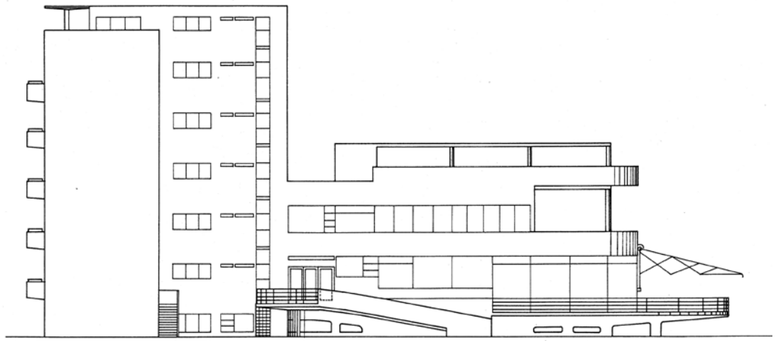
Throughout its transformation into a hotel, the building has undergone several modifications. The social spaces were renovated, and the original steel windows from the renowned Bratislava firm of Ármin Kraus were replaced. In 1978, the architect's son, Kamil Fuchs, led a renovation that installed en suite bathrooms in the guest rooms. Previously, residents had utilised communal facilities located on each floor.

A recent restoration from Architekti Šebo Lichý displayed deep respect for the original proportions. Contemporary layers were added to restore the original glazing layout of the common areas and the historic walkway to the café. Inside, every feature of value was preserved, from the glass-block walls and terrazzo flooring to the fine brass details. Standards were elevated through new bathrooms designed as integrated timber modules. Ultimately, the authentic atmosphere of Functionalism was preserved, with its tranquillity, light, proportions, and seamless connection to the Tatra landscape. /md, ab



Machnáč Spa House





Trenčianske Teplice, Ľudovíta Štúra 8
Architect: Jaromír Krejcar
Constructed: 1930 – 1932
Photos: Rudolf Sandalo

On 28 March 1930, the Private Clerical Workers' Health Insurance Company announced a competition for a new spa facility in Trenčianske Teplice. Out of 61 entries, Jaromír Krejcar's brilliantly composed T-shaped reinforced concrete frame structure was selected. His design grouped the entrance hall and public amenities, including a restaurant and café, within a glass-enclosed terraced three-storey volume accessed by a prominent ramp. Intersecting this block perpendicularly is a slender six-storey residential wing with a double-loaded layout, housing guest rooms whose balconies open directly toward the spa park – a composition strongly evocative of Walter Gropius's Bauhaus building in Dessau.

A continuous ribbon window stretches the entire length of the internal corridors. The rooms themselves were outfitted with a minimalist functionalist interior that matched the spirit of the architecture, leading theorist Karel Teige to celebrate the building as a vital prototype for future collective housing. The Machnáč Sanatorium represents a Czechoslovak counterpart to Alvar Aalto's concurrently realised Paimio Sanatorium in Finland, albeit on a substantially smaller scale. Its streamlined, rounded geometries were heavily indebted to nautical engineering, which stood as the era's supreme avant-garde aesthetic ideal.

The complex was completed at the absolute nadir of the Great Depression, an economic crisis Krejcar escaped by relocating to Moscow. Between 1933 and 1935, he collaborated there with Moisei Ginzburg on major sanatorium projects in Kislovodsk. Machnáč remains a supreme pinnacle of functionalist architecture in Slovakia and one of Krejcar's absolute finest career achievements. Tragically, neglect has left this national cultural monument of European significance in a virtually catastrophic state, prompting architectural experts and the Jaromír Krejcar Society to spend the last 15 years fighting for its preservation. /vš



Palace Spa House

The Ministry of Public Health commissioned Prague-based architect Rudolf Stockar to design Sliač's largest spa house. The original 1924 architectural competition intended for the building to accommodate only the spa's social activities, including a restaurant, café, wine bar, theatre, screening room, and administrative offices. However, the brief was expanded in 1929 to add a 249-room hotel wing. The seven-storey social and restaurant section was constructed between 1927 and 1931, and then the completed building was expanded with the five-storey hotel wing from 1931 to 1937.

Today, this 240-metre-long horizontal structure features a distinctive, glazed transverse staircase that opens onto the façade, linking the two main sections. Covered colonnades line both sides of the building, negotiating a seven-metre variation in the terrain. The result is a two-storey western colonnade contrasting with its single-storey eastern counterpart. Capping the spa complex at its highest point, the building is spotlighted by a tower-like superstructure bearing a large Kúpele Sliač inscription above the junction of the social block's two wings. Now known as the Palace Hotel, the complex represents Stockar's largest architectural work and stands as an exemplary model of grand, yet understatedly elegant modernism. Demonstrating a holistic Gesamtkunstwerk approach, he even custom-designed the interior furnishings and functional objects, down to the restaurant's cutlery. /md

Sliač-Rybáre 1, 2, 3
Architect: Rudolf Stockar
Constructed: 1927 – 1937
Photos: archive Matúš Dulla





Tuberculosis Sanatorium



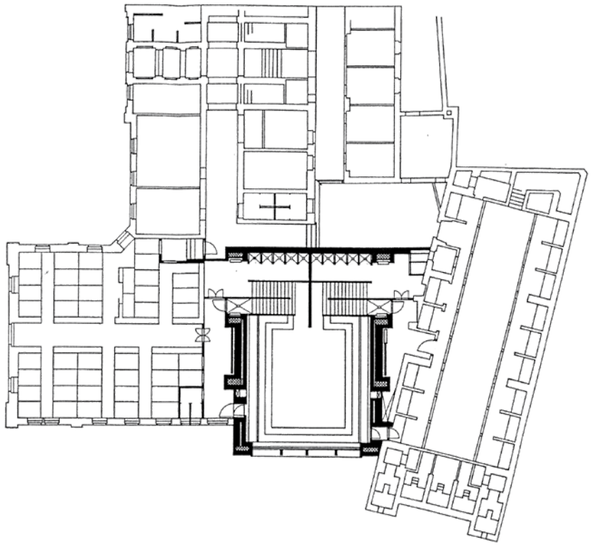
Vyšné Hágy 1, Vysoké Tatry
Architects: František Albert Libra, Jiří Kan
Constructed: 1934 – 1938
Photos: Matúš Dulla, archive PÚ SR



In 1932, the central social insurance authority announced a competition for a large-scale tuberculosis sanatorium in the High Tatras. Architects František Albert Libra and Jiří Kan secured the commission, refining their design in Prague alongside physician Svatopluk Basař. Situated at an elevation of 1,100 metres, the symmetrical, composed complex comprises thirteen buildings dominated by a nine-storey, double-loaded main block spanning 270 metres. Its primary southern façade is defined by expansive sun terraces designed for open-air patient therapy, though pharmacological advances in treating lung disease later lessened their clinical necessity. The remaining structures house staff apartments, medical and utility facilities, and the director's villa. Built to the highest technological and hygienic standards, the outbreak of World War II delayed the opening of this strictly functionalist complex until 1941. Today, it is the home of the National Institute of Tuberculosis, Lung Diseases, and Thoracic Surgery.

A graduate of Czech Technical University and a member of the Architects' Club, Libra influenced interwar and wartime architectural discourse through his designs for garden cities, banks, and factories. He was also an accomplished cellist and designed the emblem of the Czechoslovak Automobile Club. Kan, born in Riga, studied under Hans Poelzig in Breslau before working closely with Libra in Prague, particularly on the city's social housing projects. In 1942, Kan was imprisoned in the Theresienstadt Ghetto and perished at Auschwitz in 1944. Poprad-based builder Jozef Šašinka completed the sanatorium complex during the war, but he too was executed by the Gestapo for aiding partisans and Czech refugees. /md, vš

Sina Pool

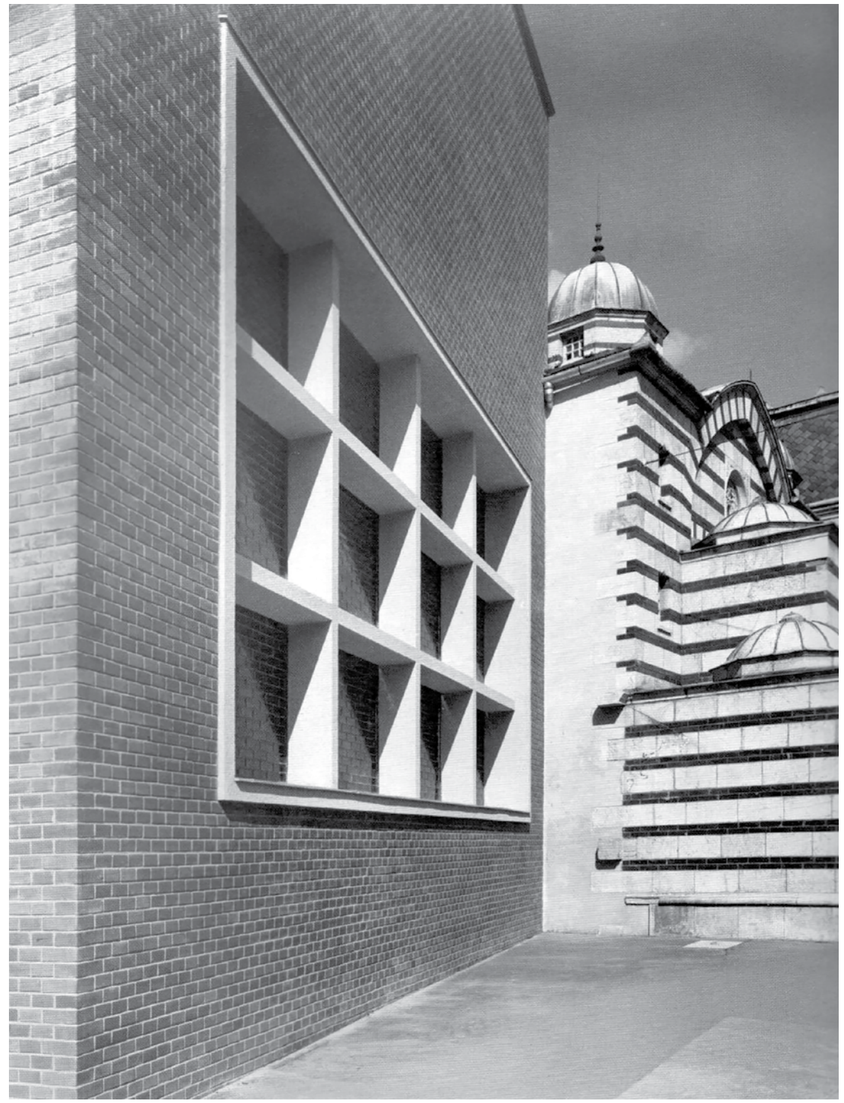




While Slovakia's spa towns traditionally take immense pride in their historicist architecture, the early 20th century introduced a wave of modernism that sought a complete break from historical ornamentation. The most illuminating juxtaposition of these eras can be seen in the addition of the Sina thermal pool to the Hammam, a Romantic, Moorish-revival bathhouse designed in 1888 by Prague architect František Schmoranz. The extension was designed by Artur Szalatnai, who, after incorporating stylised classical motifs into the Bratislava Synagogue, famously declared that he had turned toward modernism.

In designing the Sina—named after a Viennese banker and former spa owner—Szalatnai eschewed aesthetic embellishment, focusing instead on functional and technical precision. Nevertheless, his artistic sensibility remains evident. The interior, housing the pool and shower stalls, is unified by a minimalist skin of white ceramic tiles. The main hall's sculptural ceiling rises to a lantern skylight, creating a play of light that magically reflects on the thermal water's surface for a marvellous abstract composition. Yet the space's pure beauty is slightly tempered by an abstract mural by Žilina artist František Horecký on the far wall.

Due to traditional spa protocols, the pool remains reserved for men, with women generally restricted to guided tours. Because the structure is wedged between existing buildings as an urban infill, the facade is reduced to a single, unadorned brick wall with a large window. This stark simplicity stands in glaring contrast to the picturesque Hammam next door, perfectly illustrating the radical distance architecture travelled in just a few decades. /md



Trenčianske Teplice, Sinaova 1
Architect: Artur Szalatnai
Completed: 1931
Photos: Matúš Dulla,
Rudolf Sandalo

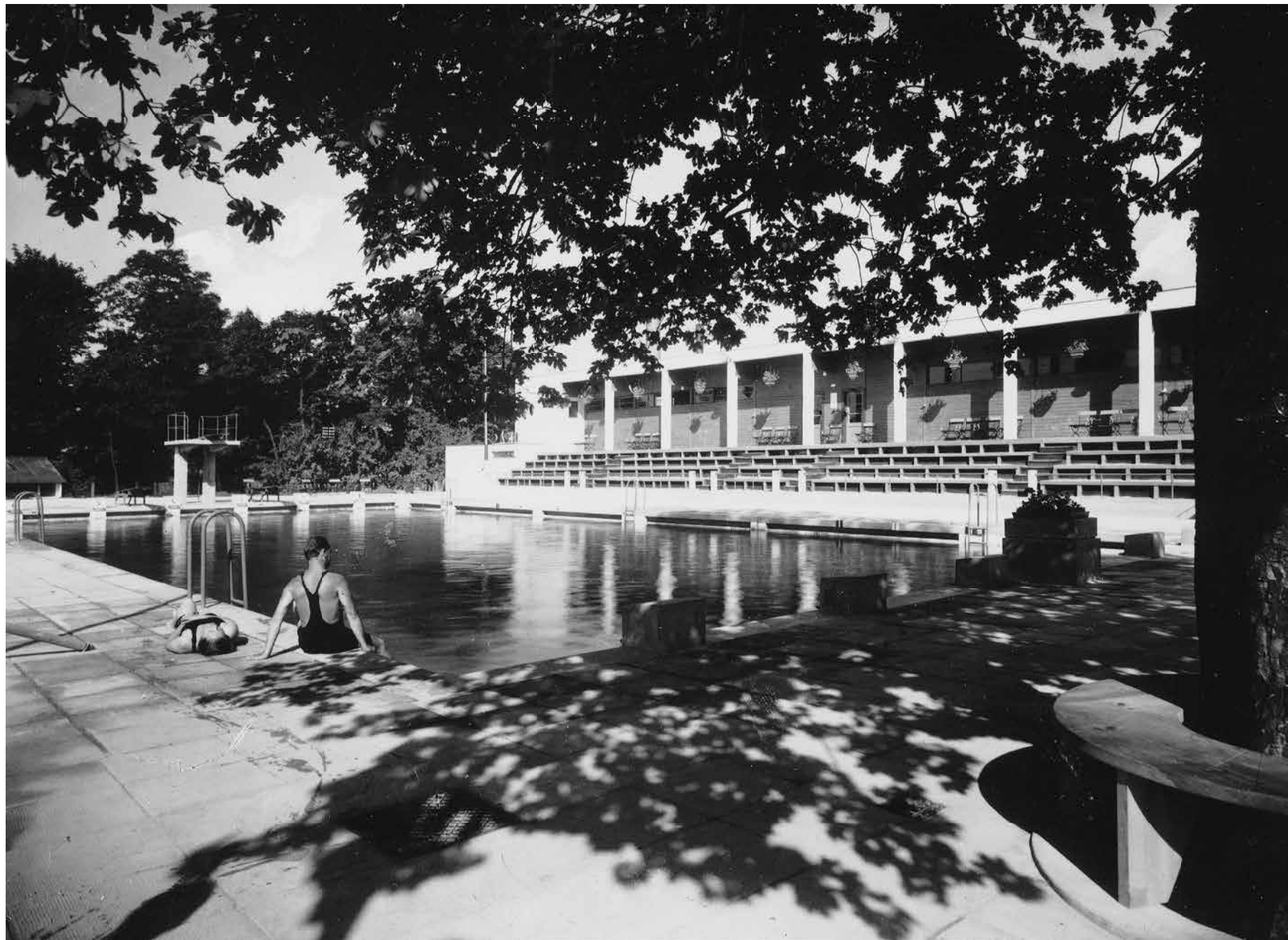
City Swimming Pool



Košice, Staničné námestie 5A
Architect: Ľudovít Oelschläger
Completed: 1936
Renovated by: Marián Šovčík and col., 2016
Photos: Photo: archive Department of Architecture, Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences

Located between the railway station and the city centre, Košice's municipal swimming pool was designed by Ľudovít (Ludwig) Oelschläger, a successful local architect who later practiced under the Hungarian name Őry Lajos. The complex featured two pools and a partially covered grandstand configured as a simple colonnade, with large-capacity changing facilities positioned behind it. Ingeniously adapted to the local topography, the pool for swimmers was elevated on a raised terrace, while the non-swimmers' pool sat directly at ground level. The height differential facilitated the gravitational filling and draining of water directly from the adjacent Mlynský Náhon millrace. Architecturally, the complex is characterised by rigid rectangular geometry, clean white facades, ribbon and circular windows, and a sculptural, freestanding Constructivist stair tower.

The pool complex was built by the Košice-based firm of Hugo Bárkány, with the specialist contracting firm Pittel and Brausewetter supplying the concrete pools. Two structural blocks frame the site along its northern and eastern perimeters. The northern wing houses the locker rooms, while the eastern volume contains a restaurant, an administrative office suite, and an outdoor observation terrace. The venue became immensely popular, and following the 1961 arrival of the Červená hviezda (Red Star) water polo club, residents affectionately adopted the club's name for the entire grounds. Between 2015 and 2016, the pool facility underwent a meticulous renovation under strict heritage preservation oversight. Original historic elements were restored, including the timber locker banks, even as the underlying mechanics were upgraded. A high-specification stainless-steel pool constructed to international competition standards was also introduced. /md



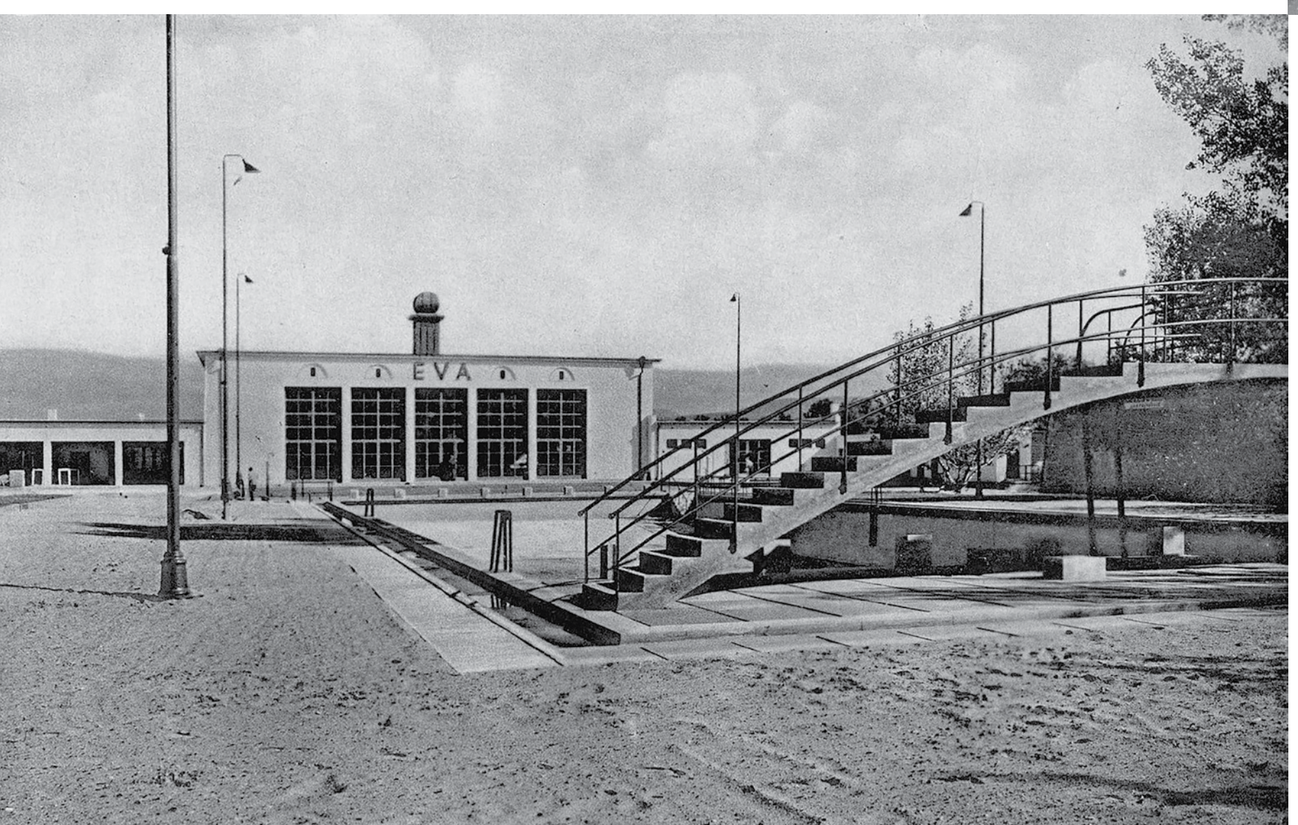
Eva Thermal Pool

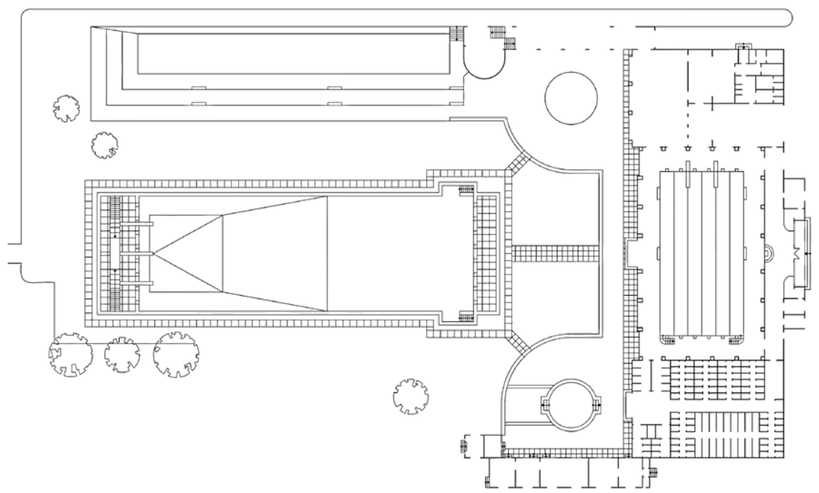
Piešťany, Kúpeľný ostrov 9
Architects: Franz Wimmer, Endre Szőnyi, Václav Kolátor
Constructed: 1933 – 1934
Photos: Rudolf Sandalo

Franz Wimmer and Endre Szőnyi were among the prominent architects who staunchly defended Bratislava's historical monuments, producing designs free of any radical modernist extremes. In Piešťany, this conservative approach is clearly evident in the Anna, Riviéra and Koss pensions, the rectory for the Roman Catholic Church of St. Stephen the King, the Cyrilov Dvor Hotel, and the cemetery layout on Bratislavská Road. Despite the duo's traditionalist leanings, Ľudovít Winter commissioned them to design a thoroughly modernist thermal swimming complex on Spa Island featuring both indoor and outdoor pools. Wimmer, who since 1929 had chaired a department at the German Technical University in Prague alongside his Bratislava practice, enlisted the collaboration of Prague architect Václav Kolátor, a competitive swimmer and leading authority on aquatic facilities.

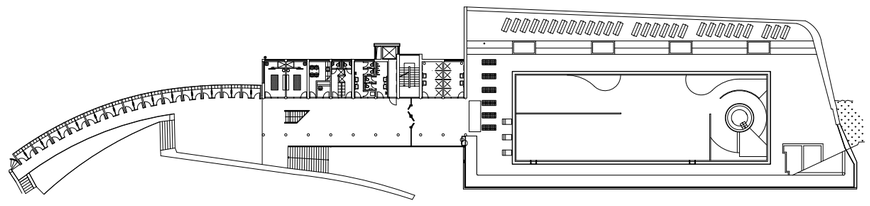
Together, the team engineered a harmonious complex that seamlessly fused modernist simplicity with rigorous technical execution. The project required anchoring a massive structural concrete envelope on highly unstable ground while protecting the foundations from the corrosive thermal sulphur water. The main building was designed to house a 25-metre indoor pool, entrance foyers, changing rooms, and showers, while a circular children's pool and an open-air 50-metre Olympic pool were positioned outside. A dramatic, arched diving platform originally stood by the outdoor pool, lending a sleek, athletic flair to the grounds. The Eva complex was one of the final grand projects through which Winter elevated Piešťany into an internationally renowned spa town. Its completion coincided with the founding of the local swimming club that, alongside the water polo team, remained among the most successful athletic organisations in Slovakia for decades. /md







Green Frog Thermal Pool



Trenčianske Teplice, Ulica 17. novembra 15
Architect: Bohuslav Fuchs
Constructed: 1936 – 1937
Reconstructed by: Branislav Bolčo, Karol Kállay, Radovan Valenta
Reconstructed: 2014 – 2015
Photos: Rudolf Sandalo, Ľubo Fussek

In 1935, Bohuslav Fuchs won the competition for the spa master plan covering Trenčianske Teplice. Shortly after, he and spa director Vavro Šrobár toured resorts in France and England, where Fuchs particularly drew inspiration from the curvilinear urban compositions in Bath. Upon his return, he was commissioned to design the Green Frog Thermal Pool above the spa centre, brilliantly integrating it into an abandoned quarry on the Grófovec slope. Following a gentle curve along the hillside contour, a linear wing of changing cabins connects to a 33-metre-long swimming pool and a café building featuring a monopitch roof, a terrace, and a dramatic spiral staircase. The café interior was originally adorned with a mural by Brno painter František Kaláb. The wine bar featured large-format photographs of Slovakia's landscapes with custom furnishings produced by AKA.

This exceptional synthesis of architecture and landscape represents a critical late-1930s transition from stark, rational functionalism toward aerodynamic, organic forms. Before World War II, Fuchs also renovated Trenčianske Teplice's main spa building, appending a library wing. It was one of many remarkable works he left behind in Slovakia. The Green Frog stands as a landmark by arguably the finest interwar Czechoslovak architect, marking the departure from his functionalist phase toward a humanistic modernism inspired by Alvar Aalto.

Between 2014 and 2015, the complex underwent a comprehensive reconstruction to halt its deterioration and fully revive its original function. While the essential geometry and forms were preserved, a modern stainless-steel pool replaced the original pool structure, and a new sauna oasis and bowling alley were added to the rear of the grounds. Given the monument's profound historical significance, a more rigorous, conservative preservation approach had originally been anticipated. /vš

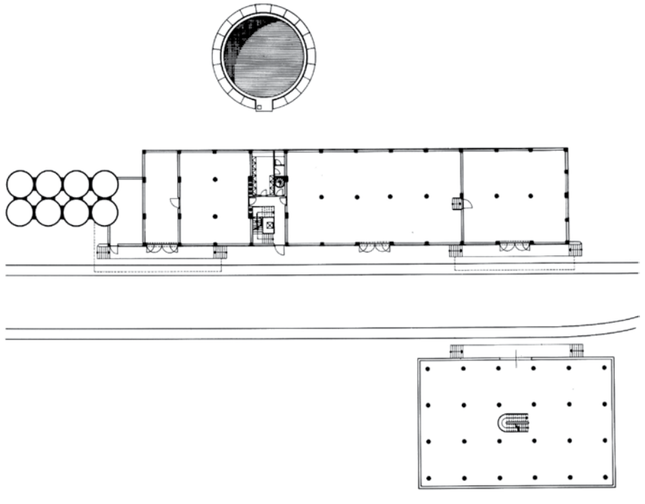






Flour Mill





Because Emil Belluš had proved so exceptionally skilled and reliable in designing the central buildings for the Food Cooperative Purchasing Centre (NUPOD) and overseeing their construction in Bratislava, the company commissioned him to design an automated mill in Trnava. The structure's industrial nature and lack of traditional ties enabled greater architectural innovation than had been possible with the city centre buildings, so Belluš could demonstrate his ability to incorporate technological requirements and shape a balanced, modernist architectural form.

The mill consists of clearly distinct, contrasting volumes: eight cylindrical silos and the mill block itself, featuring long rows of windows. An upper structure housing a hopper and a water tower connects both sections. Two sloping surfaces strikingly define the silhouette. One houses the original sloping hopper for loading grain, later replaced with a conveyor belt, while the other covers the staircase. In both cases, the inclined surfaces were a direct projection of the building's interior functions. The freestanding flour warehouse features an open floor plan and continuous ribbon windows running across the entire perimeter. Its flawless composition has led to the mill frequently appearing in compendia describing examples of modern architecture. The main elements remain intact today, even as new technologies and public health requirements place greater demands on its operation. /md



Trnava, Suchovská cesta 10
Architect: Emil Belluš
Completed: 1938
Photos: archive Department
of Architecture, Institute of History,
Slovak Academy of Sciences

ARCHITECTURE IN THE ERA OF STATE SOCIALISM 1939 – 1968

Architecture in the Era of State Socialism 1939 – 1968

The cultural climate underwent a sweeping change following the collapse of Czechoslovakia and the outbreak of World War II. The country was fractured into the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, occupied by the Third Reich, and the nominally independent Slovak State (later the First Slovak Republic), headed by President Jozef Tiso. This new political reality brought the threat of totalitarian manipulation and the introduction of conservative, monumental architecture in the vein of Albert Speer or Italian Fascist models. Nazi Germany invested heavily in expanding regional industrial production for the war effort, as exemplified by projects in Dubnica nad Váhom and an arms factory in Podbrezová. Hand in hand with this expansion came the development of dedicated workers' housing colonies.

The dissolution of the joint state devastated the professional community. The majority of Czech architects were forced to leave Slovakia, while many others emigrated abroad. Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust profoundly scarred the architectural scene, as Jewish practitioners were stripped of their licences, barred from practice, and ultimately deported to the concentration camps. Compounding these disruptions, Slovakia still lacked its own specialised higher education faculty for architecture during this turbulent period.

As this once-formidable generation of modernists crumbled, the regional momentum behind functionalism withered, paving the way for a resurgence of traditionalist architecture. This period also witnessed the demise of numerous professional journals as totalitarianism compelled the consolidation of creative figures into a single, unified association. The passage of the General Construction Cooperative Act consolidated the entire construction sector under a state-sanctioned monopoly. Major administrative and symbolic state structures were now designed and built by German architects in line with National Socialist architectural aesthetics. Prominent examples from this era include a German-language primary school in Nálepkovo, built in 1941 and designed by Josef Gretzmacher, Ernst Steiner's Union Bank (1944) in Bratislava Union, and the Bratislava headquarters of the German Party (1943), designed by the Vienna-based partnership of Siegfried Theiss and Hans Jaksch.

In a major political move initiated by Prime Minister Vojtech Tuka in 1941, an international competition was announced to construct a University City on Castle Hill overlooking Bratislava. Even the demolition of Bratislava Castle and the historic neighbourhood below it was discussed. The jury tactfully declined to award the top prize to any of the 24 entries. Emil Belluš's design, which would preserve the castle, was ranked third. A few years later, architect Alfred Piffl would lead a drive to save Bratislava Castle, then a deteriorating shell since a conflagration in the early 19th century. Piffl had been a key Czech advocate for architectural education in Slovakia alongside Jan Evangelista Koul and Vladimír Karfík.

The trend toward monumentality characteristic of the 1940s was likewise evident in the designs submitted for the 1943 competition to erect a new government quarter on Námestie slobody (Freedom Square) in Bratislava. The site was intended as a venue for large-scale military parades and was to be anchored by a statue of Andrej Hlinka. Of the six teams invited to compete, four submitted designs, and Josef Gočár was eventually declared the winner. Elements of this monumentalism can be identified in Emil Belluš's National Bank of Slovakia building (1937-38) in Bratislava and Otto Reichner's Municipal Theatre (1941-42) in Žilina. Notwithstanding, this architectural style never attained the exaggerated scale or aggressive manifestations seen in other contexts. Instead, many contemporary projects favoured an interpretation of folk architectural models and traditional motifs. Ultimately, the period of the Slovak State was marked by stagnation in the development of modernist ideas and a distinct shift toward conservative, historicist tendencies.

Against the backdrop of the postwar world order, architectural development in Slovakia after 1945 focused primarily on rebuilding war-ravaged cities, addressing acute housing shortages, and fostering industrialisation. Re-established in 1945 as a centralised people's democracy, Czechoslovakia was brought firmly into the Soviet orbit following the February 1948 coup, initiating 41 years of totalitarian rule under the Communist Party, first under President Klement Gottwald.

This era of political show trials and aggressive nationalisation brought tragic consequences, upending the lives of countless families. Among those affected was Eugen Kramár, who, together with Emil Belluš, had co-founded higher architectural education in Slovakia. On 19 November 1950, Kramár was arrested by the secret police on politically motivated charges. He spent ten long years imprisoned in Ilava and at Pankrác in Prague before later being fully exonerated and judicially rehabilitated. In 1994, the Slovak University of Technology awarded Kramár an honorary doctorate for his contributions to advancing science and technology in the field. He passed away at Bratislava Castle on 30 December 1996, during the presentation of an award by the Ministry of Culture recognising his creative contributions to Slovak architecture.

The creative potential of private architectural practices, which remained rooted in the traditions of interwar modernism, was systematically eroded during the 1950s through ideological indoctrination. Private firms were integrated into the state-controlled socialist design sector, reorienting their focus entirely toward resolving the housing crisis and managing urban development. For decades, the profession's independent practice was strictly suppressed.

The transition inaugurated an era driven by the technical advancement of construction manufacturing, defined by prefabrication, standardisation, and mass production alongside a heightened focus on the social responsibility of architecture. Several theoretical volumes emerged, including Karel Honzík's *Tvorba životného slohu* (The Creation of a Lifestyle, 1946) and Dušan Jurkovič's *Skladacie rodinné domy z pálených tehliarskych výrobkov* (Prefabricated Family Houses from Fired Clay Products, 1945). The latter proposed a comprehensive system for the rapid, inexpensive assembly of single-family homes tailored for low-income demographics. Conceived as modular, self-assembled kits, these structures advanced a vision of prefabricated construction Jurkovič had championed since the early 1920s. Their aesthetic drew deeply from folk vernacular while emphasising the hygiene and comfort of modern living. The construction sector's forceful industrialisation reshaped the architectural mainstream, gradually forging a distinct socialist manifestation of architecture.

The authoritarian regime placed immense emphasis on social welfare and housing construction, which was strictly dictated by the initial Two-Year Plan (1947-48) and subsequently by the notorious Five-Year Plans. In 1953, official design standards for residential buildings were enacted, establishing strict minimum and maximum thresholds for apartment living spaces. The prescribed floor area for a two-room apartment ranged from 31 to 40 square metres, while a three-room unit was limited to between 42 and 58 square metres. Kitchens were explicitly excluded from living area calculations. The grand ambitions driving the mass production of housing estates reached truly staggering proportions during the 1960s and 1970s.

This momentum culminated in 1966 with the announcement of an international urban planning competition to design a conceptual master plan for Petržalka, Bratislava's southern district on the right bank of the Danube. The competition drew 84 entries from nineteen countries. Tactfully mirroring previous historical impasses, the international jury withheld both first and second prizes, opting instead to award third prizes to two Czechoslovak teams and one each to entries from Japan, Austria, and the United States, along with six monetary awards and nine honourable mentions. One of the ranked entries was a linear configuration of core development running parallel to the Danube, combined with a multifunctional transverse axis in a location remarkably similar to Petržalka's contemporary layout. It was submitted by a prominent Bratislava team composed of Tibor Alexy, Ján Kavan, and Filip Trnkus, all professors at the Faculty of Architecture and Design at the Slovak University of Technology. The following year, an exhibition of the competition entries was staged as part of an urban planners' summit in Bratislava, mirroring the Ninth Congress of the International Union of Architects (UIA) in Prague. However, the scheduled international workshops intended to unite the winning collectives were abruptly thwarted by the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. Ultimately, the state design institute, Stavoprojekt, drafted the final master plan for the district under the direction of Jozef Chovanec and Stanislav Talaš. It only partially reflected the innovative recommendations the international competition had generated.

Architectural design was now subordinated to an artificially engineered ideological programme that imposed a formalist vocabulary of monumentalism, historicist classicism, and ornamentation meant to symbolise national and folk motifs. Large state-controlled design bureaus were tasked with nothing less than a totalitarian dictate. Prominent examples constructed in this vein include Jiří Kroha's planned socialist city of Nová Dubnica, the Miletičova Street Housing Estate (1952-58) in Bratislava by Miroslav Tengler and Karol Paluš, the Mladá Garda student hostel (1953) by Emil Belluš, and the youth pioneer and nature centre complex (1955) by Miloš Chorvát. Fortunately, this dark, ultra-conservative detour away from the modern avant-garde was short-lived. Furthermore, many of these imposing "Sorela" facades concealed ingenious, highly practical modern interior layouts, providing a rare canvas where skilled modernist architects could still exercise genuine spatial creativity.

Amidst this crucible, the foundations for a Slovak architectural academy were finally solidified. Although Belluš and Kramár had initiated the first-ever Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering at Slovak Technical University (later renamed the Slovak University of Technology), it was officially elevated in 1951 to the independent Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering. Led by its inaugural dean, Alfred Piffl, the new faculty assembled a formidable roster of interwar functionalist professors. Joining Belluš were Vladimír Karfík, Jan Evangelista Koula, Emanuel Hruška, Miloslav Kopřiva, and Karel Hanauer.

The first graduates of these architectural programmes primarily joined the ranks of the large socialist design organisations, seeking quite naturally to apply the principles of modern architecture to their designs. This period also witnessed the start of mass prefabricated housing construction, with sprawling housing estates comprising more than 1.2 million residential units built across Slovakia, including Central Europe's most extensive development – Bratislava's Petržalka district, home to 50,000 apartments and 115,000 residents. Prefabricated panel construction drastically narrowed the architectural repertoire, standardising residential buildings into a monotonous visual expression. The urban planning of these estates, conceived in accordance with the principles of the Athens Charter, resulted in the dramatic expansion of cities, though at the cost of large-scale demolition of many historic districts.

This era of mass production began in 1956 with the construction of Bratislava's first panel apartment building on Kmeťovo námestie, designed by Vladimír Karfík, Jozef Harvančík, Gregorij Tursunov, and Klement Šafránek, and persisted until the late 1980s. The late 1950s saw a remarkably innovative urban and architectural response in the design of the Februárka housing estate (1958-61). Developed by Václav Houdek, Štefan Svetko, and Marta Krukovská, the project utilised cast-in-place concrete technology.

A powerful catalyst for reviving creative autonomy and returning to modernist design principles arrived with the Czechoslovak pavilion's phenomenal success at Expo 58 in Brussels. Created by František Cubra, Josef Hrubý, and Zdeněk Pokorný, the pavilion was officially awarded the grand prize as best exhibit and a forerunner of the Brussels style. Later at Expo 67 in Montreal, Slovak architects made another distinct impression with the Slovak Koliba, designed by Stanislav Talaš and Vojtech Vilhan as a country chalet. Today, it survives in a heavily deteriorated, almost unrecognisable state at the Koliba Forest Park in Bratislava.

The dawn of the liberal 1960s introduced a new wave of late-modernist architecture to Slovakia. Breaking free from rigid state dictation, architects reconnected with the progressive legacies of interwar modernism and functionalism to produce several works of enduring architectural value. Notable landmarks from this prolific decade include Ivan Matušík's circular Slimák Shopping Centre (1959-60) in Bratislava and the futuristic-looking University of Agriculture (1961-66) in Nitra, designed by Vladimír Dedeček and Rudolf Miňovský. Other outstanding examples from the decade include the Slovak National Uprising Memorial (1965-69) in Banská Bystrica by Dušan Kuzma and Jozef Jankovič, and Ferdinand Milučký's outstanding Bratislava Crematorium (1967-68) in the city's Lamač district. While numerous other projects could be cited, these structures epitomised the peak of the era's architectural renaissance.

Because no professional journal had existed in Slovakia since 1939 and Slovak architects were relying on the Prague-based Architektura ČSR, the launch of *Projekt* as a proper professional journal was a major milestone. The title had actually originated years earlier, in 1955, as a bulletin issued by the state design institutes. However, it was elevated into a premier national forum when the Union of Slovak Architects assumed control in 1959. In its inaugural years, *Projekt* was edited by Dušan Kuzma before Martin Kusý succeeded him. /ab



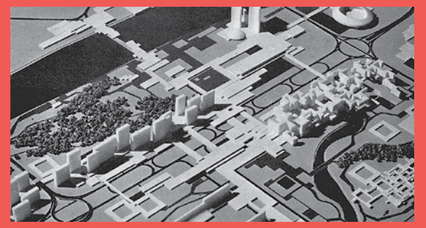
Alexander Dubček presenting an award to architect Michal Maximilián Scheer, 1967



Postage stamp depicting the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra



Emil Belluš with his grandson



Design by Tibor Alexy, Ján Kavan and Filip Trnkus, awarded third prize at the Petržalka International Competition, 1966



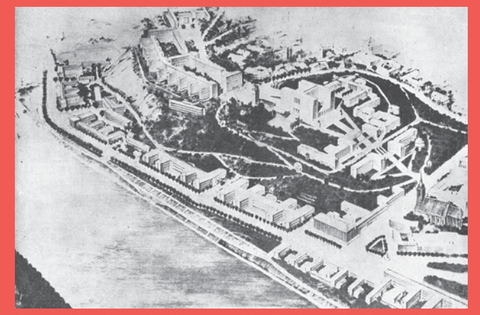
Jaroslav Fragner and Jozef Lacko, with others in Moscow, 1953



Alfred Piffl, inaugural dean at the Faculty of Architecture and Building Construction (*Fakulty architektúry a pozemného staviteľstva*), 1951



Cover of *K tvorbe urbanistického prostredia* (*Creating the Urban Environment*) by Emanuel Hruška



Competition design for University City, Bratislava, by Ernesto Bruno and Attilio Lapadula, 1940 – 1941



Cover for the first issue of *Projekt* No. 1-2/1959



Pavilion of Theoretical Institutes (*Pavilón teoretických ústavov*) in Bratislava by Emil Belluš, 1950. Today it is the location of the Faculty of Architecture and Design, Slovak University of Technology



Inaugural conference of the Union of Slovak Architects at the Hotel Devín in Bratislava, 1959



Caricature of Eugen Kramár

1939 Czechoslovakia divided on 15 March into nominally independent Slovakia (Jozef Tiso elected President) and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (Emil Hácha retained as President)
Architekt SIA magazine launched by the Association of Czechoslovak Engineers
Germany invades Poland on 1 September, beginning World War II

1940 Real Estate Expropriation Act enacted
Building cooperative legislation centralises wartime development control

1941 University City design competition announced
Vyšné Hágy tuberculosis sanatorium completed (designed by Alfréd Libra and Jiří Kan)

1944 Architekt SIA ceases publication

1945 Emanuel Hruška publishes Urbanistická forma – osídlenie a plán (Urban Form: Settlement and Planning)
Final issue of *Nový Svet* (New World) published
World War II ends in Europe on 8 May
Czechoslovak Republic re-established
Architektura ČSR resumes publication
Architectural education resumes at the College of Architecture and Building Construction (Czech Technical University in Prague), the Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering (Brno Technical University), and the School of Architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts, also in Prague
Prefabricated brick housing design developed by Dušan Jurkovič
Association of Slovak Architects restarted (dissolved in 1948)

1946 Formal architectural higher education established in Slovakia with the initiation by Emil Belluš and Eugen Kramár of the Department of Architecture and Building Construction within the civil engineering branch of Slovak Technical University

1947 Union of Czechoslovak Architects re-established (assumes publication of Architektura ČSR after 1948)
First semiconductor transistor introduced

1948 Czechoslovak coup d'état (Communist Party seizes power on 17-25 February)
State Planning and Statistical Office chartered to formulate and execute centralised economic recovery and construction master plans for Slovakia
Action Committee of Czechoslovak architects formed
Private architectural offices absorbed into state-run national studios, culminating in the creation of Stavoprojekt, a national design corporation with regional offices in Prague, Ostrava, Liberec, and Bratislava
Construction industry nationalised by the enactment of Act 121/48
Specialised institutes organised, mandating standardised building designs across the Eastern Bloc

1951 Autonomous Faculty of Architecture and Building Construction officially established in Bratislava (Alfréd Piffl appointed as the first dean)

1953 Michal Milan Harminc awarded the first honorary membership in the Union of Slovak Architects
Central Post Office in Bratislava completed (designed by Eugen Kramár and Štefan Lukačovič)
Monetary reform liquidates private savings and resets funding for national industrialisation

1955 First panel building completed on Kmeťovo námestie in Bratislava (designed by Vladimír Karfík)

1958 Czechoslovak pavilion, designed by František Cubra, Josef Hrubý, and Zdeněk Pokorný, awarded Grand Prix at Expo 58 in Brussels

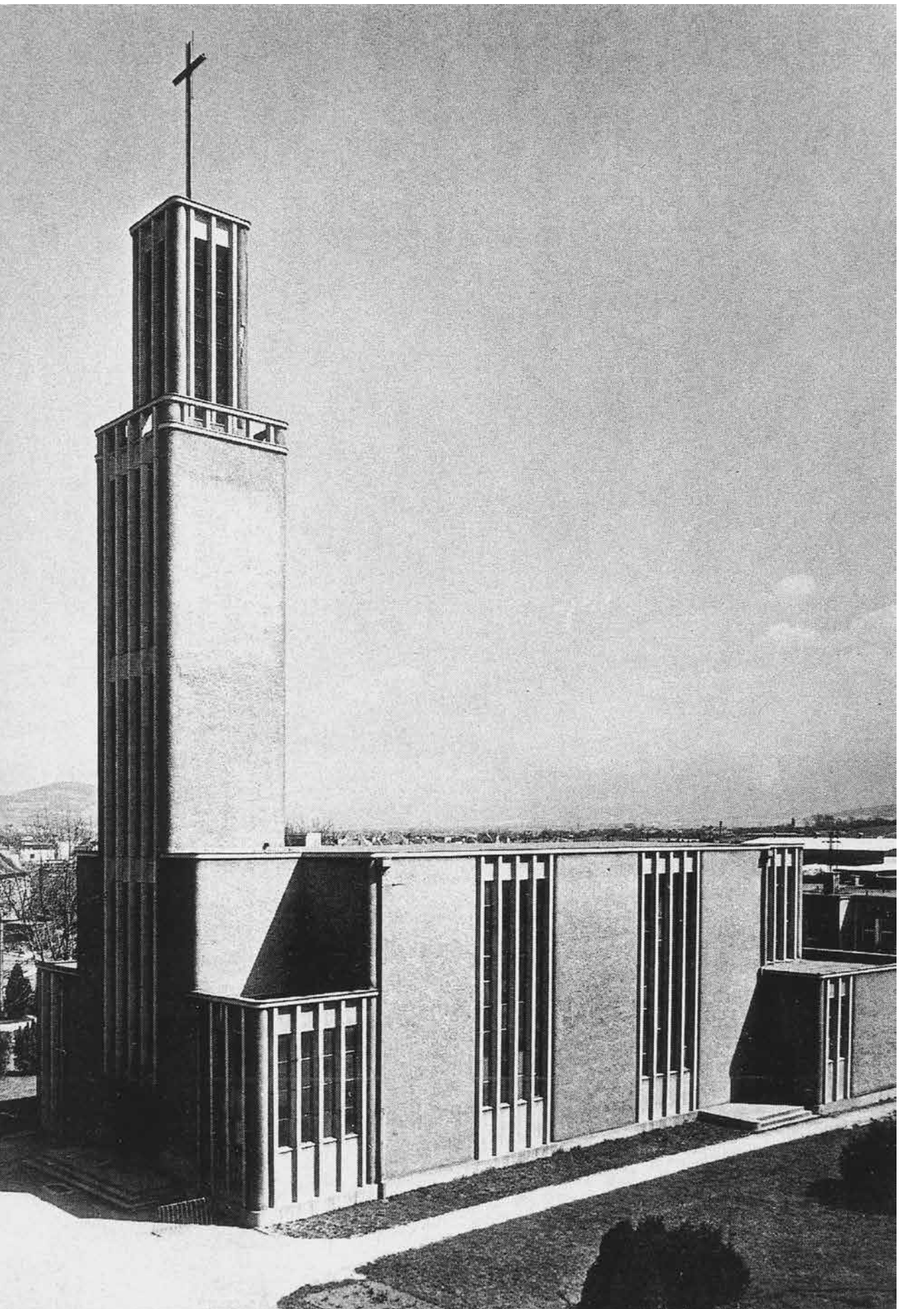
1959 "Projekt" magazine launched by the Union of Slovak Architects

1964 Dušan Jurkovič Prize established, Emanuel Hruška awarded inaugural prize for theoretical scientific book Vývoj stavby miest (Development of Urban Construction)

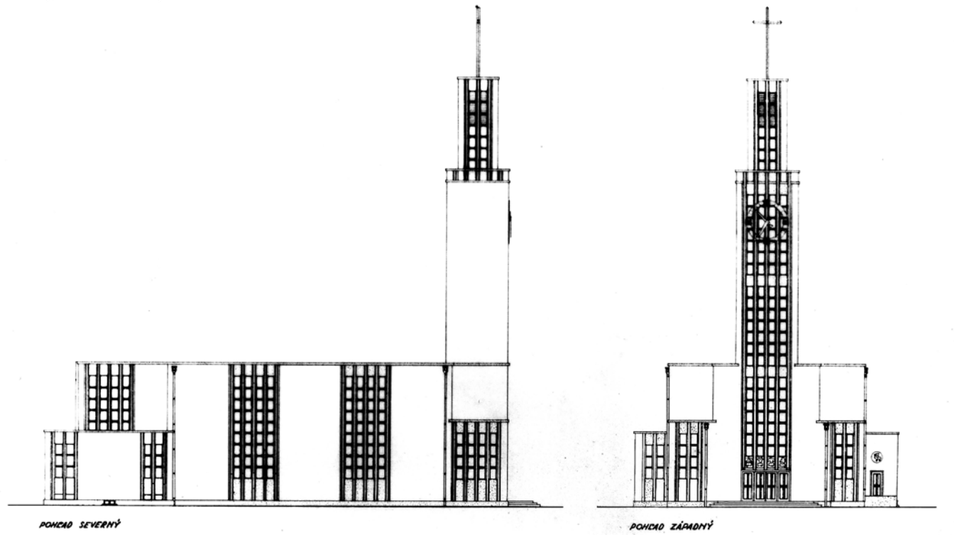
1966 International competition for South Bratislava (Petržalka) launched

1967 International Union of Architects (UIA) congress hosted in Prague
Progressive Association of Design Studios (Združenie projektových ateliérov) founded
Architektúra & Urbanizmus (Architecture and Urban Planning) magazine launched by the Institute of Construction and Architecture, Slovak Academy of Sciences (today published by the SAS Institute of History)

Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus



Partizánske, Námestie SNP 1475
Architect: Vladimír Karfík
Constructed: 1943 – 1949
Photos: archive Department of Architecture,
Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences



During his career as the Baťa Corporation's chief architect, Vladimír Karfík designed two Roman Catholic churches in Slovakia. The Petržalka church was completed in 1931, concurrently with his work on the Baťa department store in Bratislava. The other church was realised during the Second World War for the industrial company town of Baťovany, later renamed Partizánske. The building serves as a grand point de vue, terminating the primary axis of the city's planned urban fabric. For this commission, Karfík modified a 1937 design originally developed for Otrokovice. The standard Baťa structural skeleton, characterised by cylindrical concrete pillars, was adjusted from a 9.02-by-6.15-metre grid to a tighter 9.9-by-4.5-metre module, reducing the interior seating capacity from 400 to 270.

The building's cascading volumetric composition culminates in a 43-metre-high tower dominating the entrance façade. Inside, the nave features a clear height of 9.9 metres beneath a flat ribbed concrete ceiling supported by cannelured columns of Tuhár marble. The extensive sculptural programme was executed entirely by Tibor Bártfay, encompassing the central figure of Christ, the Stations of the Cross, statues of the Apostles, the reliefs of the Holy Family and the Descent from the Cross for the dual side altars, a depiction of Christ in the Tomb, the symbols of the Evangelists above the main portal, and a statue of the Virgin Mary situated within a Lourdes grotto.

Although the foundation stone was laid on 8 July 1943, wartime conditions and lack of funds severely hindered progress, delaying completion until 1949. The church itself was officially consecrated only on 2 September 1989. After leaving Baťa in 1946, Karfík became a foundational professor of architecture at the Technical University of Bratislava. In the city, he designed the Vistra and Biely Kríž residential estates, the University of Economics, and a series of administrative high-rises. /vš

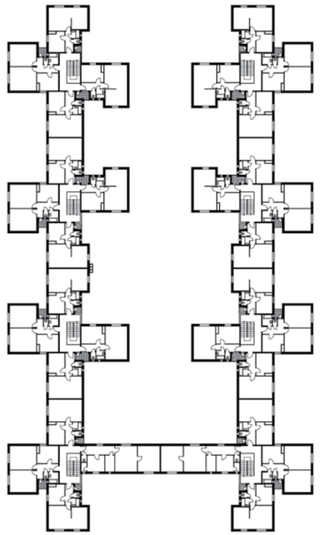


Nová Doba (New Age)



With UNITAS successfully constructed, ground was broken on Friedrich Weinwurm and Ignác Vécsei's next project, intended to alleviate the severe housing shortage that had developed in the interwar period. Over ten years, the social democratic Building Cooperative of Private Employees and Workers constructed Nová Doba, a complex of three blocks on what was then the outskirts of Bratislava. Each of the four-storey blocks contains 162 apartments. Though modest in size, with four layout types offering floor areas of 34.5, 39.5, 49.2, and 56.7 square metres, every unit featured central heating, hot water, and a communal laundry room in the basement.

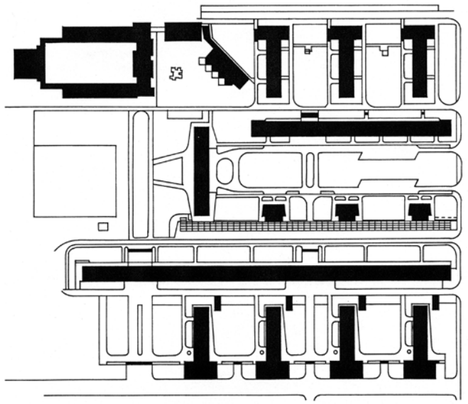
The central block, erected first, is supported by a steel skeleton, marking the first time such a structural system had been used for a building of this scale. However, the next block utilised a reinforced concrete skeleton, as did the third, which was not completed until World War II. The austere facades are remarkably devoid of any architectural ornamentation, a defining characteristic of strict functionalism. The geometric beauty of the cuboid composition lends the blocks a distinctive character. Along with UNITAS, Nová Doba ranks among the finest Czechoslovak interwar residential developments. While recent renovations, including the replacement of windows and installation of external thermal insulation, have somewhat obscured the original proportions, the overall spirit of Nová Doba's stark functionalism remains intact. The building cooperative that constructed the estate even published booklets describing the blocks in 1933 and 1936. /md



Bratislava, Vajnorská cesta 50 – 96
Architects: Friedrich Weinwurm, Ignác Vécsei
Constructed: 1932 – 1942
Photos: Josef Hofer



Februárka Housing Estate



One of Bratislava's first large-scale housing estates runs along Račianska Street. The neighbourhood is still colloquially known as Februárka, derived from the Street of the February Victory (ulica Februárového víťazstva), its name when the estate was constructed in the late 1950s. Based on designs the architectural team had successfully entered in a nationwide Czechoslovak competition for innovative residential housing, civic amenity pavilions were attached to four tall slab blocks along the main thoroughfare, with a fifth added later.

Beyond them lie further linear slab blocks and high-rise point blocks, with rows of columns supporting the generous transverse passageways through their ground floors. The structures were built from cast-in-place concrete transverse load-bearing walls fifteen centimetres thick, with the formwork still assembled using traditional carpentry methods. The estate's distinctive character stems from a subtle framing that conceals the joints between the expanded-clay concrete exterior panels for thermal insulation. However, subsequent thermal insulation retrofits on the facades have now obscured the original appearance and colour scheme of the individual buildings.

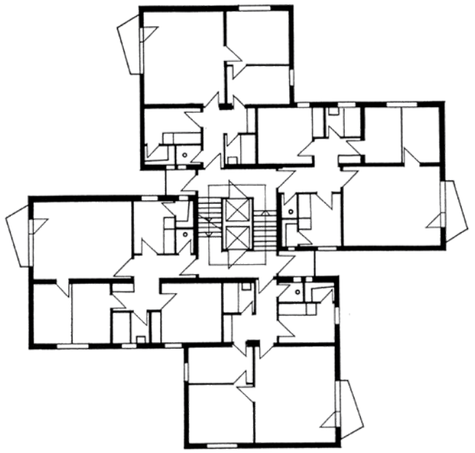
The harmonious composition of buildings of varying heights, the legible scale, and the excellent architecture–combined with structural innovations such as the transverse load-bearing system, cast-in-place concrete, framed articulation, and prefabricated apartment service cores–made Februárka one of the finest housing estates of its era. Indeed, during a visit to Bratislava, the celebrated American architect Richard Neutra remarked how the estate was equal to the world's best projects. /md

Bratislava, Račianska, Jozefa Cígera Hronského, Mikovíniho
Architects: Štefan Svetko, Štefan Ďurkovič, Mária Krukovská, Emil Vician a Václav Houdek
Constructed: 1958 – 1961
Photos: Matúš Dulla, Rajmund Müller





Ružová dolina (Rose Valley)





Bratislava, Ružová dolina 12, 14, 16, 20, 22
Architect: Karol Paluš, Co-architect: Ivan Hrivnák
Completed: 1960
Photos: archive Matúš Dulla, Tibor Škandík

The housing estate in Bratislava's Ružinov district demonstrates the dramatic ideological fracture redefining Slovakia's architecture in the mid-1950s. Its lead architect, Karol Paluš, had studied for two semesters at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and been awarded a degree in architecture from the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague. Yet he was forced to bend to totalitarian aesthetics in the development's first phase along Miletičova Street between 1951 and 1954, executed in a symmetrical style adorned with the historicist ornamentation the doctrine of Socialist Realism demanded.

In stark contrast, the second phase at Rose Valley, whose construction lasted from 1955 to 1960, delivers a self-assured turn toward modernism. This section comprises five spectacular residential towers, each organised on a pinwheel footprint resembling a compass rose with four slightly projecting wings. To optimise interior circulation around a central core, Paluš utilised a split-level configuration, vertically offsetting the apartments in two of the wings by the height of a single flight of stairs. Angled balconies slice out from the relatively solid facades, while generous, light-filled entrance lobbies feature fully glazed envelopes, free-standing pilotis, and internal partition walls perforated with circular geometric apertures.

Paluš's technical execution was equally avant-garde. He insisted on brick masonry, a bold decision when prefabricated panel construction was aggressively mandated. The towers introduced an innovative radiant ceiling heating system embedded directly into monolithic reinforced-concrete floor slabs. Each typical floor plate efficiently accommodates two three-room and two four-room apartments, with each unit claiming its own dedicated wing. The cohesion of this modern residential enclave was completed in the summer of 1966, with the opening of the sleek Delfín outdoor swimming complex at its centre. /md



1939 – 1968

Chrenová Housing Estate

Nitra, Ulice Ľudovíta Okánika, Lomnická and Nábrežie mládeže
Architect: Michal Maximilián Scheer
Constructed: 1965 – 1969
Photos: Rajmund Müller, Matej Hakár





Having left a highly distinguished mark on Žilina's interwar architecture, Michal Maximilián Scheer moved to Nitra after the war to shape the city's modern appearance. There, he authored several master plans and designed the new Predmostie and Párovce housing estates. Over time, his urban layouts increasingly broke away from traditional, rigid, and compact symmetrical blocks. This evolutionary trajectory culminated in his design for the first phase of the Chrenová housing estate, where he ingeniously organised standardised residential panel blocks into an equilateral Y-shaped footprint, successfully infusing ordinary prefabricated housing with an unexpected elegance and optimistic weightlessness.

Situated on the opposite bank of the Nitra River from the historic city centre, the estate presents a carefully orchestrated sequence of scales. Low-rise, three-storey panel blocks meander gracefully across the foreground riverfront, as independent clusters of thirteen-storey Y-shaped high-rises anchor the skyline further from the bank. Demonstrating a refined handling of structural modernism, one of the three blocks in the Y-shaped configuration is elevated on two rows of reinforced-concrete pilotis, effortlessly framing a fully glazed entrance lobby underneath. /md

First Panel Building

Bratislava, Kmeťovo námestie 4 – 5
Architects: Jozef Harvančík, Georgi Tursunov, Karol Šafránek, Vladimír Karfík
Completed: 1956
Restored by: Zuzana Sternová, Roman Horečný, Pavol Hlavenka / Technický a skúšobný ústav stavebný, n.o., pracovisko VVÚPS-NOVA
Restored: 2025
Photos: Tomáš Manina



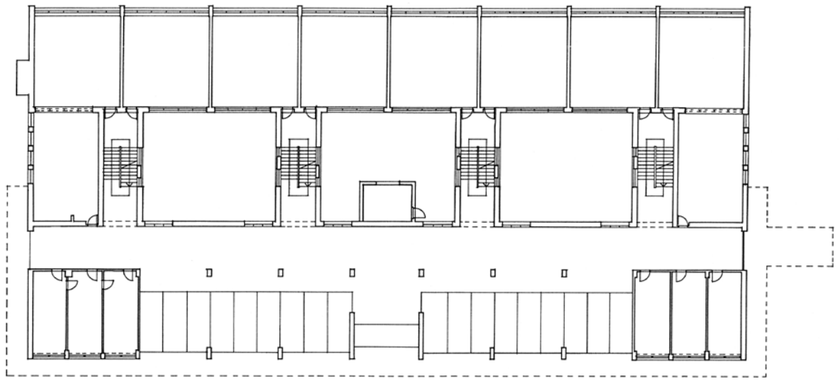


The six-storey, 36-unit residential block on Kmeťovo Square stands as Slovakia's first prefabricated panel building. Construction progressed at an unprecedented pace, requiring just 35 days to complete the structural shell and a mere three months to deliver the completed building. These extraordinary metrics and a bold experiment spearheaded by the design team of Jozef Harvančík, Georgi Tursunov, Karol Šafránek, and Vladimír Karfík proved decisive, ushering in the era of mass industrialised housing. The specialised structural system of prestressed, expanded-clay concrete panels developed for the site ultimately served as the blueprint for the BA panel system.

Architecturally, the building exhibits a formal duality where lingering dictates of Socialist Realism intersect with technically oriented Modernism. The street-facing façade deploys classical stucco ornamentation, a crowning cornice, a roof-level pergola colonnade, and heraldic reliefs depicting children at play above the entrance portals. Inside, polished stone clads the staircases, while even the exposed segments of the structural panel frames in the apartments are stylised as pilasters with capitals, literally translating classical architectural motifs into a prefabricated lexicon. Programmatically, it directly answered the contemporary state mandate to reconcile industrial prefabrication with artistic quality, even as the innovative load-bearing system enabled wider structural spans and highly flexible floor plans.

Following a comprehensive renovation in 2025, Slovakia's premier panel building remains an invaluable material testament to its era. It captures a fleeting synthesis, fusing the representational, grandiose aspirations of Socialist Realism with the minimalist, modular reality of prefabricated collective housing. This typology became postwar Slovakia's dominant urban paradigm shortly after the building's completion, and the brief architectural polyphony renders it historically unique to this day. /ab

Prievoz Primary School



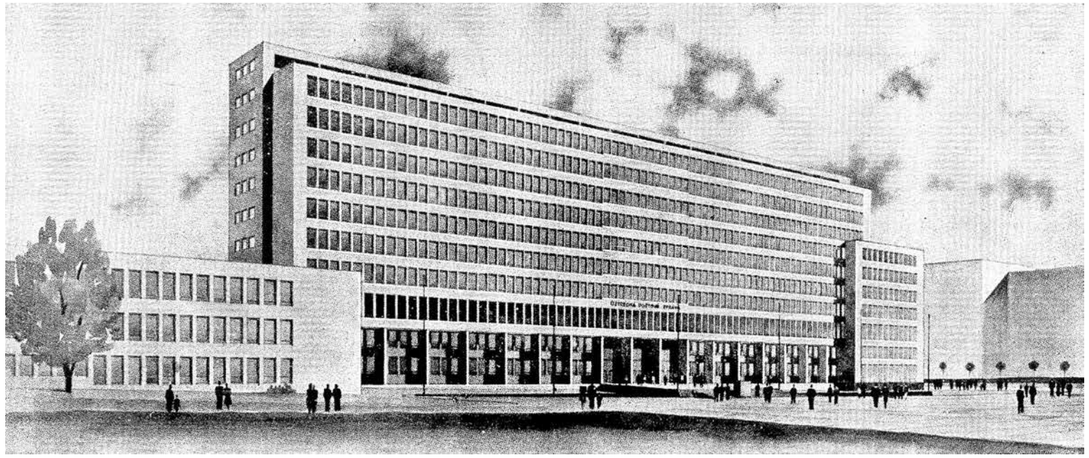
The experimental quest for new educational typologies during the 1950s and 1960s was driven by socialist visions for new-era pedagogy intersecting with the inventive climate of Late Modernism. When the prominent French magazine *L'architecture d'Aujourd'hui* highlighted a story on Marián Marcinka's highly innovative primary school layout, it achieved international renown. The project's originality lay in its brilliant rejection of standard institutional planning. Instead, Marcinka grouped double-aspect, square-plan classrooms into independent pairs accessed directly from a series of staircase landings, thereby eliminating traditional linear corridors. The complex is organised around four of these autonomous vertical communication stairwells.

To optimise natural illumination, the primary windows of the three-storey classroom blocks face south. The northern façade features narrow, elevated ribbon windows that light the auxiliary zones and department workrooms. Three open-air atria punctuate the space between the two main wings, flanked by ground-floor cloakrooms around the main entrance. Despite its unconventional cluster arrangement, the building remains exceptionally legible, navigable, and highly functional to this day. Its expressive geometric accents, such as the asymmetric stairwell apertures, the tall northern window bands, and the northern façade's sharply inclined trim, are derived from strict compositional logic rather than arbitrary ornamentation. The detached gymnasium pavilion particularly stands out, anchored by massive structural walls of translucent glass brick. Marcinka later codified these trailblazing design methodologies in *Nové smery vo výstavbe škôl* (*New Directions in School Construction*), a definitive 1963 volume he co-authored. /md

Bratislava, Mierová 6
Architect: Marián Marcinka
Constructed: 1959 – 1961
Photo: Matúš Dulla



Central Postal Administration (now Ministry of Transportation and Construction)



Although the competition for the Central Postal Administration Building was held in the mid-1940s, construction based on the winning design was not completed until 1951. This grand administrative structure of noble proportions consists of three blocks of varying heights situated on the gentle sloping terrain beside Bratislava's Námestie slobody (Freedom Square). The tallest is the main administrative section, where a recurring pattern of multiple window apertures defines its distinctive character. Erected in an area then characterised by small-scale development, the building deliberately sought to establish novel, generous proportions. This urban trend was later reinforced by other large public buildings in the vicinity, such as the technical university, the radio headquarters, and the central bank. However, Eugen Kramár himself long doubted whether such an exaggerated scale might be too much for the city to handle. Ironically, the building was deemed unacceptably "cosmopolitan" in the 1950s, leading to absurd attempts to conceal it behind a massive classical colonnade.

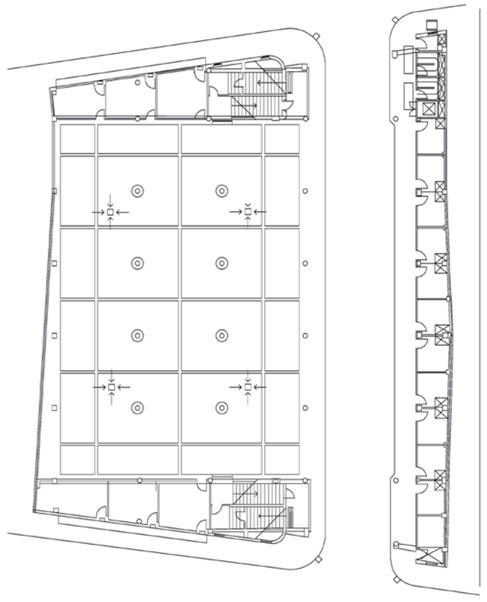
Just as the building's construction was nearing completion, Kramár fell victim to a fabricated political show trial and was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. He was later released under an amnesty and soon after rehabilitated. A tenacious architect whose wartime projects had been characterised by a solemn gravitas, Kramár fully embraced the vibrant spirit of postwar modernism in the 1960s, designing a series of further works in this style, including the FIS Hotel at Štrbské Pleso. /md

Bratislava, Námestie slobody 6
Architects: Eugen Kramár, Štefan Lukačovič
Constructed: 1946 – 1951
Photos: archive Zina Kramárová-Mihalčíková



City Market Hall







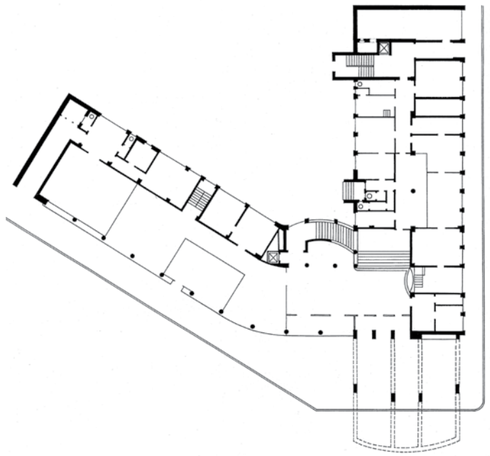
Žilina, Horný val 35 and Romualda Zaymusa 8
Architects: Mikuláš Šesták, Ferdinand Čapka
Completed: 1941
Photos: Matúš Dulla, archive Peter Štanský

During World War II, a market hall was constructed at the edge of Žilina's historic centre, filling an urban infill gap and connecting the city core via a passageway to the later housing estates stretching along the southern outskirts. It represents one of the few fine examples of Czechoslovak wartime architecture. Although compactness, fluid lines, and rounded corners had replaced the orthogonal lightness of early modernism, the architecture lost none of the compositional quality or spatial ingenuity.

Integrated into a dense urban fabric, the building featured a central driveway and covered areas for market stalls on the ground floor, selling mostly vegetables. Two side staircases led to open-plan vending areas on the upper mezzanine level dedicated to the sale of poultry, meat, and wild berries. The secured arcade passage featured a row of small shops along one side. The building was clad in ceramic clinker brick, while large expanses of the exterior facades consist of glass blocks, punctuated by dramatic circular windows. When the market hall was converted into a large grocery store in the 1960s, its interior layout lost its original purpose.

Ferdinand Čapka came from a Moravian family settled in Vienna. After studying architecture there under Peter Behrens, he moved to Žilina at the invitation of another architect, Michal M. Scheer. After the war, Čapka remained a central figure in the city's architectural community for decades, co-designing the Hliny housing estate and several mountain buildings, including the hotel at Popradské pleso. /md

United Power Generating Plant Headquarters





Žilina, Republiky 5
Architects: František Eduard Bednárik, Ferdinand Čapka
Team Member: Štefan Paulík
Completed: 1942
Photos: Matúš Dulla, archive Department of Architecture, Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences

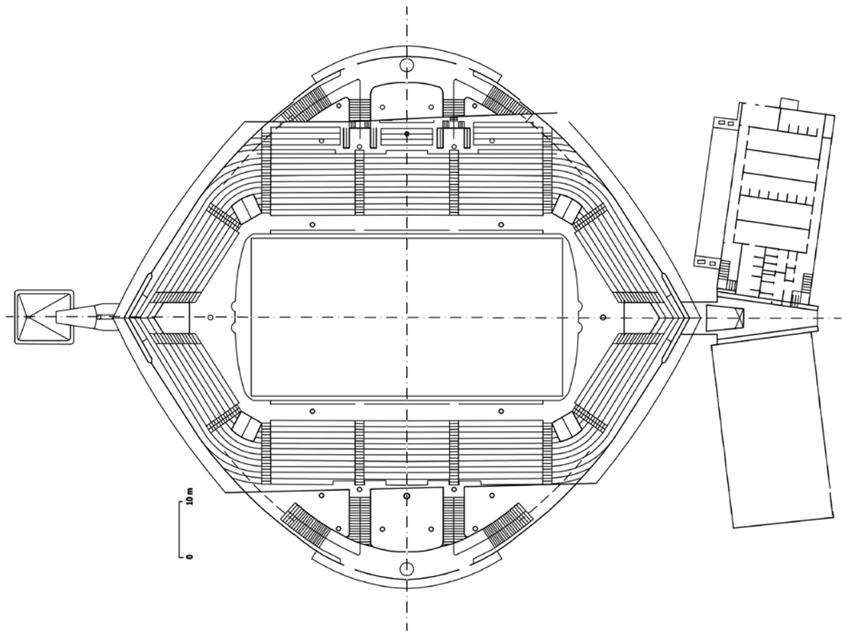
During World War II, an impressive four-storey building for the United Power Generating Plants of Northwestern Slovakia, designed by two Czech architects, was erected in Žilina at the corner of Republika Street and Kukučínova Street. One of them, František Edvard Bednařík – here using the Czech spelling of his name – owned a construction company in Žilina and frequently collaborated with his brother-in-law, Ferdinand Čapka, whose city market hall is featured elsewhere in this book.

A slightly rounded staircase structure illuminated by glass blocks and featuring an entrance canopy resting on massive pillars forms the prominent corner of the power plant headquarters. The main façade, with its long ribbon windows, is gently curved and reminiscent of the Expressionism utilised by Erich Mendelsohn. While both Bednárik and Čapka had earlier completed a series of modernist structures, neither was a stranger to the dignified, solemn architecture whose character was closer to the gloomy wartime era. This is evident in this project, where they combined the elegance of ribbon windows with the structure's massiveness above the entrance.

The shorter wing facing Kukučínova Street initially housed apartments, while the basement contained immense reinforced-concrete wartime shelters buttressed with a safety structure made of tree trunks. For a long time, the building served as the administrative headquarters for the local power plants. Its generous architectural concept and characteristic expression rank it among Žilina's most significant architectural landmarks. Today, it awaits a major renovation. /md



Pasienky Sports Hall



The late 1950s design of this indoor arena came as a true revelation for Slovak architecture, drawing direct inspiration from Polish-born architect Matthew Nowicki's similarly pioneering cable-suspended structure in Raleigh, North Carolina. Structural engineer Jozef Poštulka collaborated closely with architect Jozef Chovanec to calculate and dimension the unprecedented cable-net system. The roof cables are articulated in two mutually perpendicular directions, forming a sweeping hyperbolic paraboloid shell that spans 73.5 × 67.5 metres. The canopy is suspended between two massive concrete arches. In a key modification to Nowicki's original design, where the arches crossed near the ground, Chovanec and Poštulka terminated their arches short of an intersection, meeting instead at a unified rainwater drainage gutter.

Natural light streaming through expansive glass curtain walls once accentuated the structure's lightweight qualities and the dynamic curve of its tiered spectator stands. But the recent renovation sparked controversy, drawing justified criticism for several aesthetic missteps, most notably the darkening of the historic glazing and a radical alteration of the original colour scheme. Nonetheless, the landmark's defining feature—the elegant, cable-supported roof that embodies its audacity—remains completely intact.

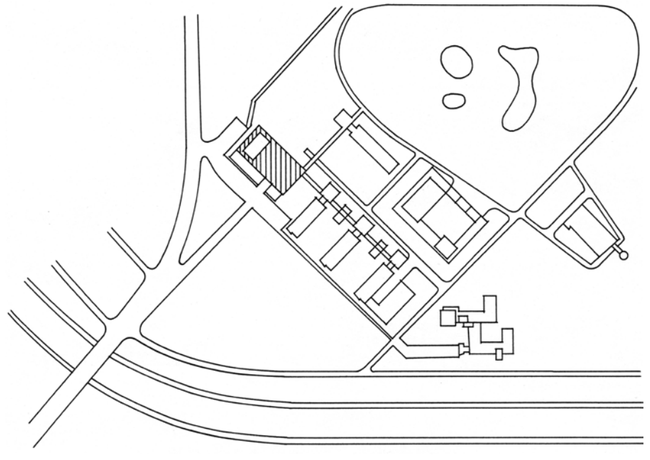
Throughout his career, Chovanec frequently distinguished himself through such bold, sweeping spatial gestures. For instance, he and Karol Paluš courageously replaced conventional staircases with continuous pedestrian ramps at a research institute in Ružová Dolina. Chovanec also maintained a strong creative relationship with Ferdinand Milučký, co-designing diplomatic missions in Moscow and Rome, before partnering with Stanislav Talaš on the final master plan for the monumental Petržalka housing estate. Unable to tolerate endless bureaucratic complications and fighting for more ambitious architectural solutions, Chovanec ultimately withdrew from the project. /md



Bratislava, Trnavská 29
Architect: Jozef Chovanec
Constructed: 1959 – 1962
Photo: Rajmund Müller

Slovak University of Agriculture

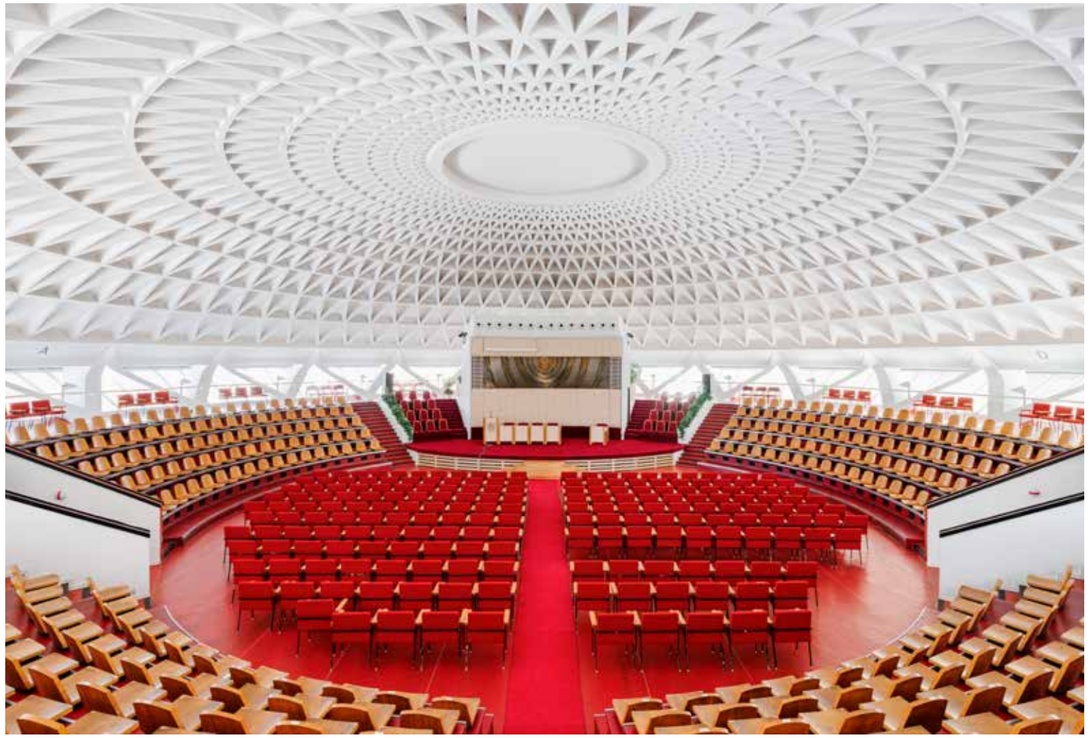
Nitra, Trieda A. Hlinku 2
Architects: Vladimír Dedeček, Rudolf Miňovský
Constructed: 1961 – 1966
Photos: Matej Hakár, František Jiroušek



Planning for a new higher-education facility focused on agriculture in Nitra had begun as early as 1955, with a former airfield on the Nitra River's left bank chosen as the site. The open, flat terrain enabled a clear pavilion-style campus integrated with greenery, allowing for phased construction. Although rigid Socialist Realism at first stylistically constrained the preliminary designs, the relaxed political atmosphere of the early 1960s permitted a free application of the latest global architectural trends. Because Rudolf Miňovský died unexpectedly in 1960 during an early stage of the project, the final campus is largely the work of Vladimír Dedeček.

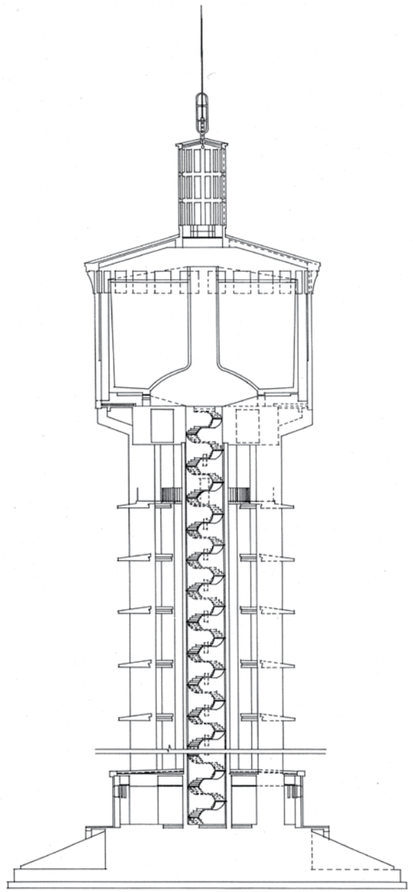
While the nine-storey rectorate and theoretical departments building stands at the complex's centre, the most visually striking feature is the 600-seat auditorium, shaped like a floating lens. It is covered by a ribbed shell vault reminiscent of the finest works of Italian engineer Pier Luigi Nervi. A continuous spine corridor runs through the complex, from which seven-storey blocks for agronomy, zootechnics, and technology branch off, incorporating dedicated dissection rooms. These blocks feature departmental offices on the south side, while practical seminar rooms and laboratories face north. The chemistry and radioisotope pavilions stand independently.

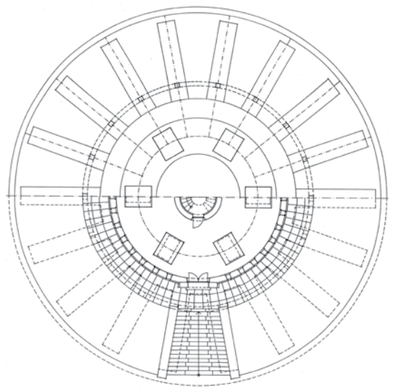
The architecture reflects the optimistic upward flight of modernism after World War II. The sculptural lens-shaped auditorium, individual pavilions, and façade compositions echo Oscar Niemeyer's centre of Brasília. For this project, both architects were awarded the 1960 Dušan Jurkovič Prize, with Miňovský receiving it posthumously. /md





Water Tower



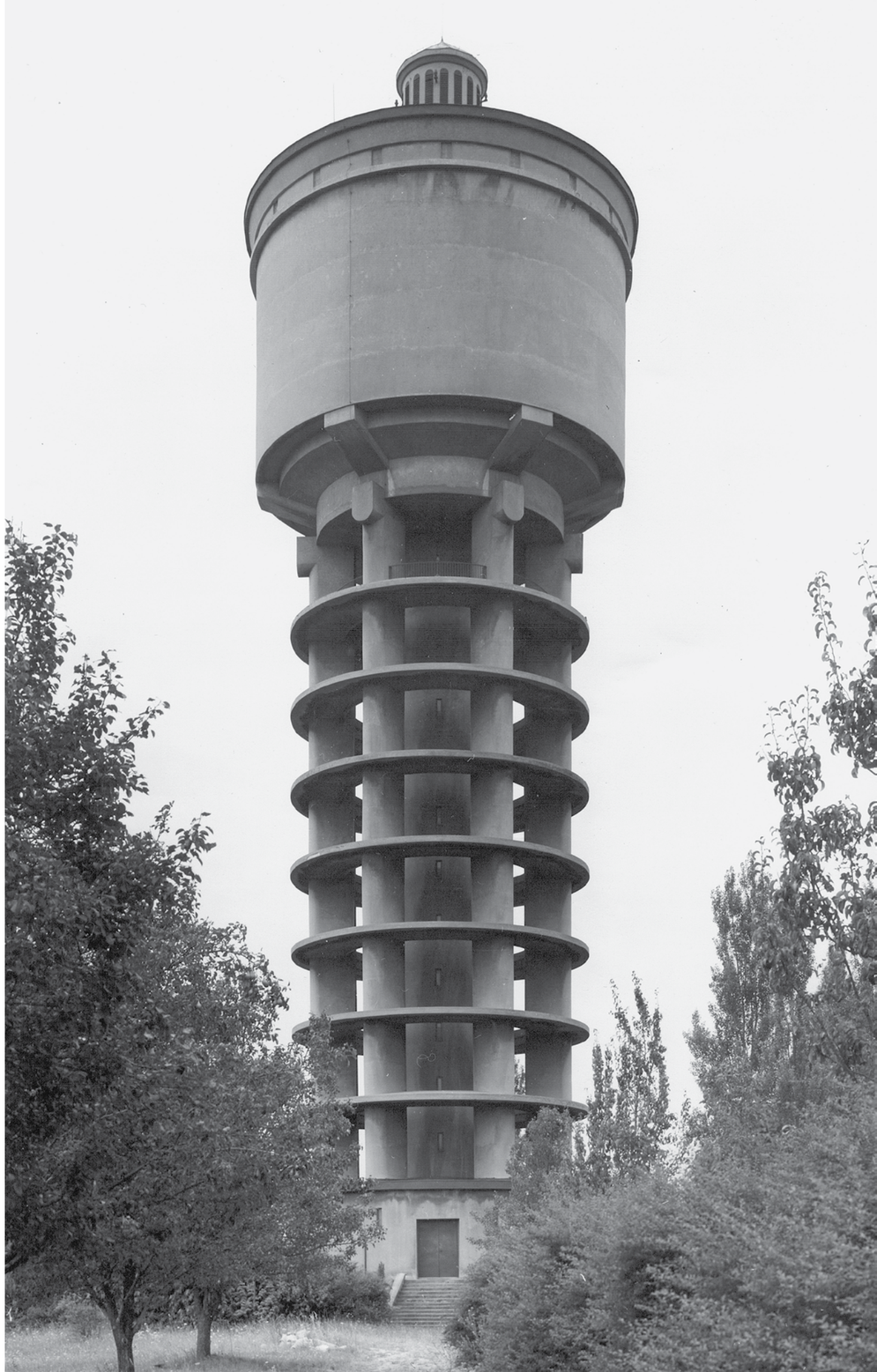


Trnava, Bučanská cesta
Architect: Emil Belluš
Designed and Erected: 1942 – 1947
Photo: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

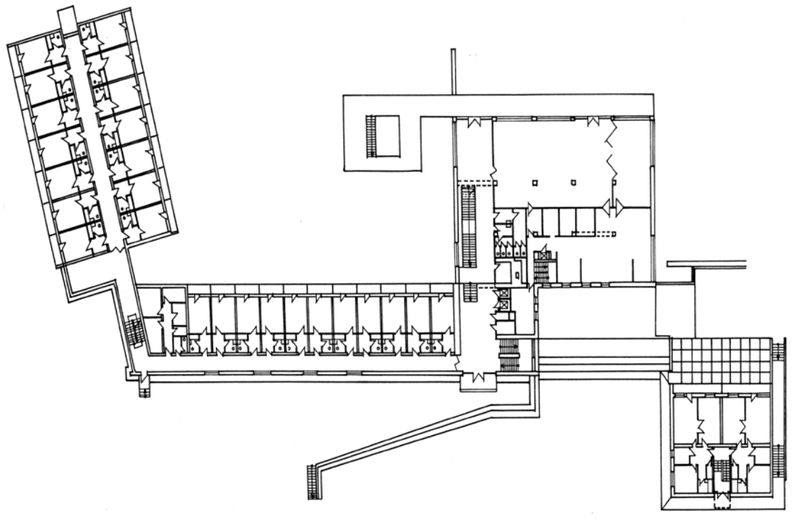
As a founding figure of Slovak architecture, Emil Belluš designed a series of pivotal functionalist works and established several national institutions, including the Faculty of Architecture in Bratislava. He by no means shied away from industrial and engineering projects, which offered him the opportunity to merge pure functionality with sensitive artistic composition. Following his acclaimed automatic flour mill (1938), he returned to Trnava to create another such structure.

His city water tower stands in the centre of a vast plot of land that also contains the water source facility. Rising to a height of 50 metres, it forms one of the city's primary landmarks. Six reinforced-concrete load-bearing pillars, braced by horizontal rings, support the cylinder of the water tank, which is crowned by a lantern for ventilation and daylighting. Ascending through the centre of the pillars is a cylindrical shaft concealing the staircase and water pipes. The tower's sculptural impact lies in the contrast between the upper tank's solid mass and the supporting structure's lightweight framework. Collaborating with Karol Havelka, who handled structural calculations, Belluš confidently shaped even these components, normally relegated to an exclusively load-bearing function.

The architectural treatment of the ordinary structure over the well reveals how the architecture of the wartime era, during which these facilities were built, was returning to historical precedents. Although the water tower currently accounts for only a fraction of Trnava's drinking water supply, its fascinating and unusual form still captures the imagination of passersby and anyone viewing it from the distant horizon. /md



Hotel Sorea Regia



The architectural trio of Ferdinand Konček, Iľja Skoček, and Ľubomír Titl, popularly nicknamed the Lords, rose to prominence with their ambitious, late-modernist masterworks of the 1960s. Beyond their expansive trade union holiday resorts in Liptovský Ján and Nové Štrbské Pleso, they designed their defining composition: the Istropolis House of Trade Unions, Technology, and Culture in Bratislava, whose highly controversial demolition in 2022 ignited a massive wave of public protests. As members of Dušan Keder's large collective, the trio also contributed to the master plan for the Ružinov housing estate (1966) and designed its prominent Foreign Trade Enterprises building.

In comparison to the quarter-century slog required to design and construct the Istropolis, the six years spent realising the House of Cultural Recreation were relatively swift. Though modestly tucked away on the hillside above the former Park of Culture and Recreation (PKO), today's Hotel Sorea Regia embodies the pure distilled essence of the Lords' architectural philosophy, standing as perhaps their most characteristic work. Its restrained, human scale allowed the architects to bypass the inherent pitfalls of the gargantuan schemes that were increasingly dominating the drawing boards of successful studios during that era.

To this day, the complex continues as a hotel serving trade unionists. Despite a series of interior modifications, it flawlessly preserves the sophisticated composition of its primary volume, its terraced wings stepped gracefully into the sloping terrain, the lightness of its slender terrace, and the transparency of its continuous glazed loggias. Enriched by an array of mid-century artworks, the building is now obscured from view by mature trees, while a sprawling yew tree similarly conceals Pavol Tóth's central courtyard sculpture, *The Seated Woman*. /md

Bratislava, Kráľovské údolie 6
Architects: Ferdinand Konček, Iľja Skoček, Ľubomír Titl
Constructed: 1960 – 1966
Photo: Rajmund Müller



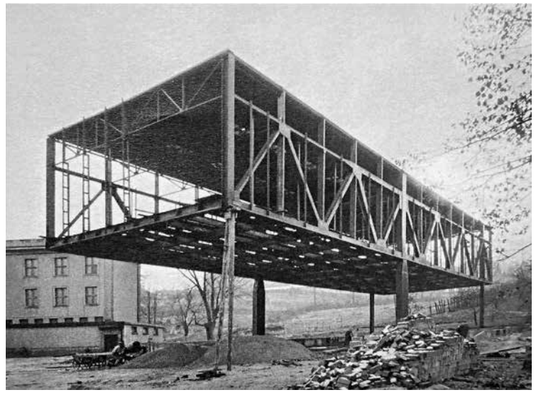
Ľudovít Fulla Gallery



Ružomberok, D. Makovického 1
Architects: Martin Kusý st., Štefan Hatala
Constructed: 1966 – 1969
Photos: Matej Hakár, archive SNG – Ružomberok

The impetus behind the construction of the Ľudovít Fulla Gallery in Ružomberok, now a branch of the Slovak National Gallery, was Fulla's donation of his extensive oeuvre to the state. The execution of the first new custom-built gallery erected in Slovakia after 1945 was undertaken by architect Martin Kusý, Sr. He possessed a deep affinity for Slovak national themes, evidenced by his architectural contribution to the Slovak National Council Museum in Myjava, and also a close personal connection to the artist, having previously designed Fulla's tomb at the local cemetery. The gallery was originally conceived as an extension to Fulla's residence in Piešťany. But Kusý fundamentally adapted the design for the relocation to the artist's native Ružomberok.

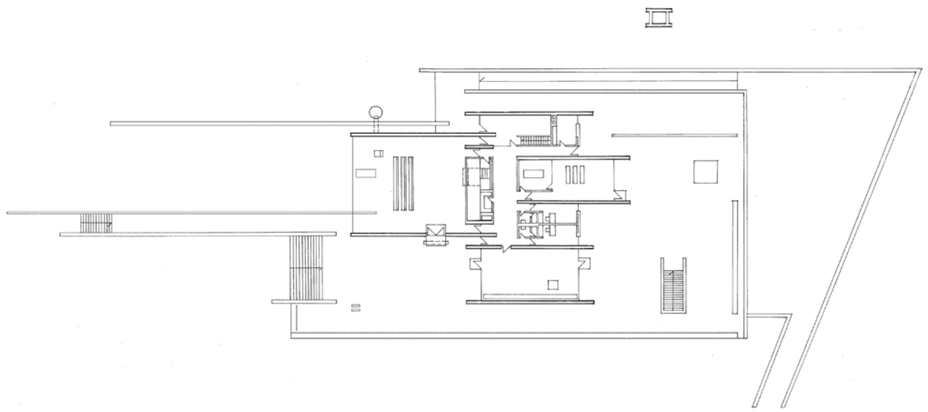
Kusý configured the new building as two rectangular volumes stacked perpendicularly, with the upper exhibition tract cantilevering fifteen metres forward with no visible ground supports. The lower level accommodates the main entrance, administrative offices, a caretaker's quarters, and the atrium apartment and studio where Fulla lived and painted for nearly a decade. Later, the space was repurposed to host international visiting artists. The upper level contains the primary exhibition halls. The projecting front façade showcases Ernest Zmeták's glass mosaic based on Fulla's iconic motifs. This elevated gallery space is illuminated by a continuous ribbon of clerestory windows lining the side walls of the cantilever, supplemented by narrow horizontal window strips. Working drawings were prepared by architect Štefan Hatala of the Stavoprojekt branch in Banská Bystrica, with ground broken for construction in 1966. Progress was temporarily halted when the exhibition hall's structural engineering was altered to replace the original framework with a structural steel frame. Currently, the gallery is closed to the public as preparations commence for a comprehensive restoration of the entire modernist complex. /md

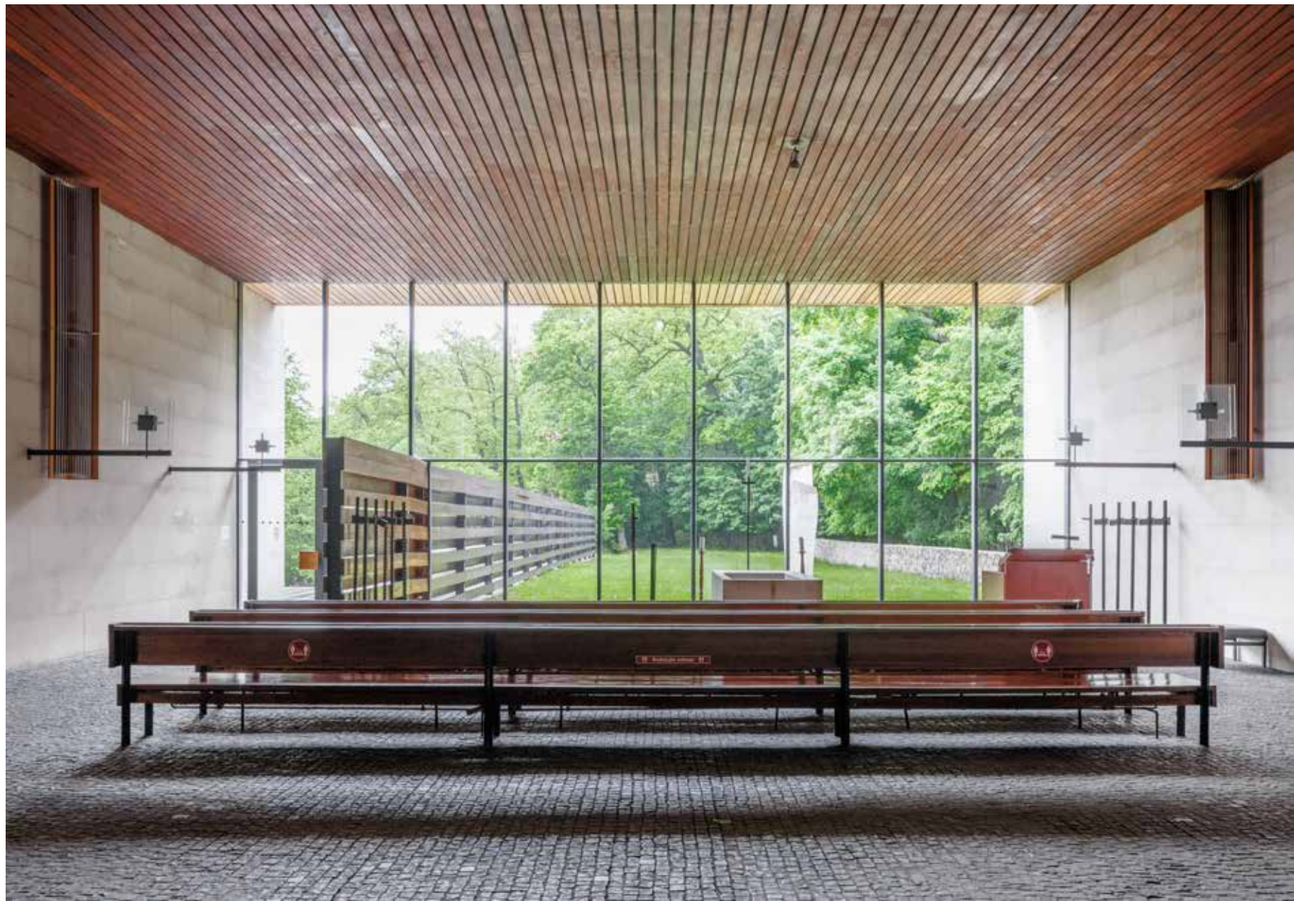




Crematorium and Urn Grove







Bratislava, Hodonínska 44
Architect: Ferdinand Milučký
Completed: 1968
Photos: Matúš Dulla, Matej Hakár

Proposed in the 19th century, a Bratislava crematorium became reality only in the more liberal climate of the 1960s. It reflected the finest impulses of European modernism, favoured by the state's atheistic regime and the Catholic Church's growing tolerance of cremation. However, the primary reason for the exceptional quality was Ferdinand Milučký's sheer talent. The building sits on the upper edge of a vast forest meadow he cleared, leaving only a few slender pines near the entrance to contrast with the crematorium's long horizontal lines stretching behind them.

A sweeping arc-shaped path skirts the central meadow and a wooden totem by Vladimír Kompánek. Basalt cobblestone paving flowing directly out of the ceremonial hall guides visitors from the entrance. Only on the expansive entrance terrace was it later replaced with large-format tiles. The central hall faces the nearby forest and a meadow containing a sculpture by Rudolf Uher visible through a massive glass wall. At the service's conclusion, the coffin descends into the basement, which houses two cremation furnaces and a small viewing room for anyone wishing to witness the cremation.

An urn grove with a scattering garden extends into the adjacent forest. The entire complex's layout evokes the Stockholm Woodland Cemetery, which Milučký knew well, while recalling the mountainous landscape of his native northern Slovakia. Deeper within the urn grove, he designed a 1972 columbarium for prominent political figures, shaped as a generous curve undulating along the contour. Milučký lived to see the complex declared a national cultural monument in 2003. Today, his own funerary urn rests at the grove's edge, closest to the structure that remains his magnum opus. /md

Tatra National Park Museum

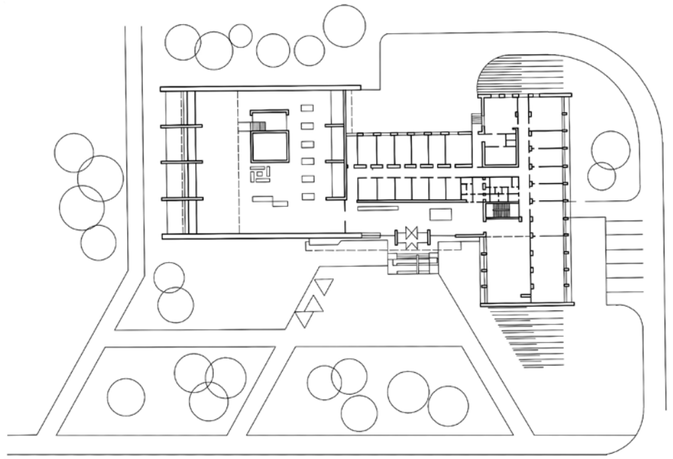




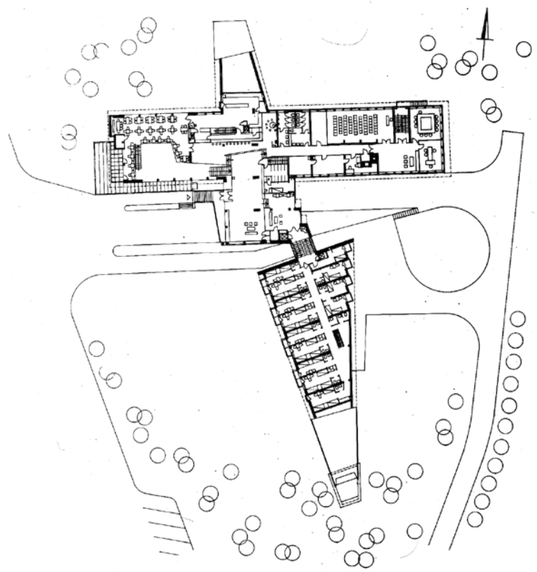
Tatranská Lomnica 63
Architect: Pavol Merjavý
Constructed: 1967 – 1969
Photos: Alexander Jiroušek

Pavol Merjavý drew upon the expressive qualities of natural materials when he designed a new building for the Tatra National Park (TANAP) Museum in a light, modernist style. The main building volume features a triangular cross-section, presenting visitors with a river-pebble gable adorned with an abstract sculpture by Juraj Bartusz. The exhibition spaces within this main mass comprise a generous, airy hall with sloping ceilings punctuated by a skylight and gallery. This space houses permanent exhibitions dedicated to Tatra geology, geomorphology, flora, and fauna. Throughout the interior, stone cladding alternates with horizontal wooden slats.

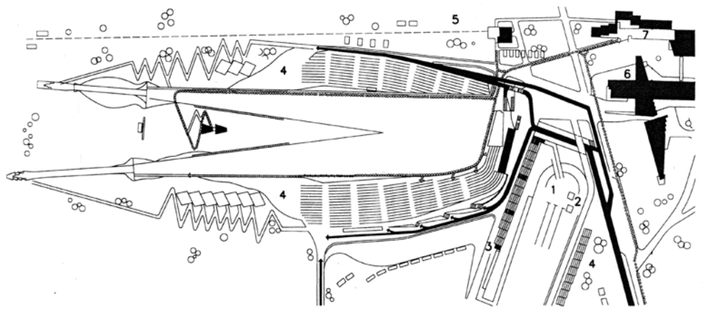
The entrance is positioned in the centre of the low horizontal section, which also contains collection repositories, administrative offices, operational spaces, and a 120-seat lecture hall featuring an articulated suspended ceiling crafted from wooden slats and tree branches. The building utilises a combined structural system of a reinforced concrete frame with stone-infill masonry, along with a sheet-metal gabled roof covering the exhibition wing. The horizontal entrance section sports an expansive glass façade, fronted by approach areas finished in diagonally laid travertine slabs. This simple arrangement and harmonious composition make the museum one of the most iconic structures in the Tatras. Celebrated for designing the Košice crematorium and the first terraced blocks in Czechoslovakia, Merjavý was awarded the Dušan Jurkovič Prize for this museum project. /md



Štrbské Pleso Ski Resort









Štrbské Pleso 32
Architects: Eugen Kramár, Ján Šprlák-Uličný
Constructed: 1966 – 1970
Photos: archive Department of Architecture,
Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences

The complex constructed for the 1970 FIS Nordic World Ski Championships integrated the ski jumps and cross-country finishing areas into a single, centralised location for the first time. Following widespread international acclaim for this innovative layout, it was dubbed the "Complex of Dreams" (*Areál snov*). The project allowed Eugen Kramár to triumphantly embrace a dynamic, late-modernist style after a forced professional hiatus and a decade of unjust imprisonment.

The resort's crown jewel is the FIS Hotel, named after the French acronym for the International Ski Federation. Kramár brilliantly reinterpreted the memory of traditional alpine pitched roofs into a modern compositional language. Crucially, the hotel's monumental scale, vastly larger than the historic log cabins that inspired it, never eclipses this vernacular reference. The thoughtful spatial layout and structural economy, characteristic of Kramár's work from the earliest days of his career, are likewise evident throughout the design.

Serving as a crisp structural counterpoint on the opposite side of the valley were slender P-70 and P-90 steel ski jumps, replacing an old wooden jump that had stood nearby. The complex also features an amphitheatre-style grandstand, a cross-country stadium, and a metal judge's tower composed of two trihedral volumes. Standing on the eastern edge at an elevation of nearly 1,400 metres, the hotel was later expanded at the rear with an indoor pool and high-altitude training facilities. While the ski jumps are now abandoned and the valley floor beneath them is crammed with gaudy tourist attractions, the hotel alone retains its timeless modernist elegance. /md



Memorial of the Slovak National Uprising

Banská Bystrica, Kapitulská 23
Architects: Dušan Kuzma with assistance from Jozef Jankovič
Constructed: 1965 – 1970
Photos: Matej Hakár

A total of three competitions were organised for the memorial complex linked to the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising. Dušan Kuzma entered all three of them, with his low-rise structure design emerging victorious in the final 1959 competition. Featuring a simple square floor plan supported by columns and situated on a terrain ridge, the austere, rational appearance was a reaction to the political pressure Socialist Realism exerted on architects to imitate historical models.

Because construction was repeatedly postponed, and a sculptural approach better aligned with Kuzma's natural sensibilities, he and sculptor Jozef Jankovič fundamentally reworked the project. Kuzma shaped the main volume as two shell-like segments of exposed concrete, with Jankovič's menacing sculpture deliberately cramped between them. The architecture clearly reflects the brutalist influence of late-career Le Corbusier, drawing inspiration from his Notre-Dame-du-Haut Chapel in Ronchamp. The museum's research facilities, storage areas, archives, and auxiliary rooms are situated within the sprawling flat base, while the museum's main exhibition is housed within the two sculptural segments.

As a student, Kuzma interned with Auguste Perret in Paris. He later became a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, where he established the Department of Architecture in 1960. His competition design, co-authored with Anton Cimmermann, became the basis for the construction of Matica Slovenská's third building in Martin, which today is home to the Slovak National Library. /md





LATE MODERNISM
1968 – 1989

Late Modernism
1968 – 1989

Inextricably linked to the Communist totalitarian regime, the onset of normalisation introduced numerous repressive measures, including press censorship, travel restrictions, and political screening. The centrally controlled economy also directly affected the development of Slovak architecture. The industrialisation of construction and the standardisation of building designs slowly and surely eroded architectural ambition even as massive prefabricated panel housing estates proliferated, squeezing out high-quality architecture, which increasingly vanished from cityscapes. The mass construction of panel buildings marked a major revolution in the construction industry on a scale that has never been repeated since. Cities expanded at a breakneck pace, though this growth came at the expense of many historic districts and monuments, which were completely cleared.

However, a separate public construction segment concurrently operated under far less restrictive paradigms, even though its new designs still required the explicit endorsement of official art commissions. A crucial catalyst during this period was "Title V", a landmark legislative clause that legally mandated the integration of fine art and sculptural works into public architectural projects. Eager to overcome the trauma of inflexible panel-house standardisation as they broke free from the state-indoctrinated aesthetic of the earlier Socialist Realist period, these architects aggressively reconnected with modernist principles and advanced them. This creative resistance unleashed a wave of extraordinary civic landmarks across Bratislava. The most iconic were the Slovak Radio Building's inverted pyramid (1983), conceived by Štefan Svetko, Štefan Ďurkovič, and Barnabáš Kissling, and the daring, asymmetric design of the SNP Bridge (1972–73) by Jozef Lacko, Ladislav Kušnír, Arpád Tesár, and Ivan Slameň. Other monumental achievements in Bratislava included Ferdinand Milučký's pristine Crematorium (1970) and Vladimír Dedeček's bold extension of the Slovak National Gallery (1969–79).

Beyond the capital, this late-modernist wave yielded the expressive concrete shells of the Slovak National Uprising Memorial and Museum in Banská Bystrica (1969) by Dušan Kuzma and Jozef Jankovič, and the dynamic *Areál snov* (Complex of Dreams, 1970), a ski resort in Štrbské Pleso designed by Eugen Kramár and Ján Šprlák-Uličný. This prolific period also produced sophisticated cultural and commercial venues such as Ferdinand Milučký's House of Arts (1980) in Piešťany, the Cultural Centre (1988) in Trnava by Jozef Danák, and a series of innovative department stores designed by the collective centred around architect Ivan Matušík.

By the late 1970s, late modernism and its application of geometric principles began intersecting with the emergence of postmodern and regional trends. These new directions gained traction primarily among a younger generation of architects who were acutely aware of global developments, particularly the ideas showcased at the inaugural Venice Architecture Biennale and the theoretical writings of Charles Jencks. Although postmodernism's tangible impact was less pronounced in Slovakia, it nonetheless sparked several passionate architectural debates. Numerous thought-provoking proposals remained confined to conceptual studies such as the schemes for Bratislava's Obchodná Street by Ivan Marko and his collective, as well as proposals by František Kalesný and Andrej Gürtler. On a local scale, this movement was chiefly a matter of urban resuscitation – a reconnection with the traditional ground plan and a site's specific, irreducible "spirit", alongside an urbanistic return to block development and the street line.

The shift in understanding of urban values is clearly identifiable in the evolving conceptual approaches to the redevelopment of Obchodná Street. In 1970, Ivan Matušík had won a major competition for the city centre with a master plan that called for total demolition and radical modernist redevelopment. Yet a 1983 study from Marko and his colleagues at Stavoprojekt presented a diametrically different view, proposing to preserve a substantial portion of the site. Four years later, another architectural and urban planning competition was announced to redevelop Obchodná Street, attracting more than seventy design teams. Two second prizes were awarded *ex aequo*: one to the team of Andrea Bacová and Michal Mašek, and the other to the collective of Jaroslav and Radomil Kachlík, Miroslav Marynčák, and Peter Beňuška. None of the submitted entries was ranked first. All of them generally emphasised a substantially greater preservation of the area's urban values, paying respect to the existing parcel layout and seeking historical continuity, even though the competition's conditions mandated the design of new structures and a certain degree of clearance remained unavoidable. Although the regulatory plan subsequently drafted by the Chief Architect's Office in 1991 envisioned a considerably higher level of historic preservation, it was ultimately never approved.

A distinct strand from this period was Eastern Slovakia's regionalist architecture, strongly influenced by Imre Makovecz. Slovak architect Peter Pásztor had briefly collaborated with this renowned Hungarian architect; thus, his signature creative philosophy became organic architecture, characterised by the expressive use of local materials. He interpreted these principles in sacral architecture, most notably in the Roman Catholic Church of the Divine Mercy in Košice, as well as in his residential designs. Pásztor further advanced these context-driven principles alongside architect Martin Drahovský within their shared studio and joint projects. When the construction of religious institutions was again encouraged after the demise of the totalitarian regime, this postmodernist sacral wave would encompass Albert Rybarčák's churches in Vojkovce (1993) and Dlhé nad Cirochou (1994), and the Church of St Gorazd and Companions (1999) in Košice, designed by Štefan Zahatňanský, Ján Fabián, and Igor Rozdobuďko.

Notable secular examples of the postmodern idiom included the 1985-94 redevelopment and infill for Suché mýto and Veterná streets in Bratislava by Ivan Marko and Marta Kropiláková. The block features the former Slovenská Sporiteľňa building, which unfortunately underwent an inappropriate refacing that severely degrades its architectural significance. Another quintessential milestone was the since-demolished Ružinov Department Store (1975-78), a seminal early postmodern work designed by Ján Bahna, Ľubomír Mihálik, František Kalesný, Pavol Čížek, and Peter Minarovič.

The 1980s saw modernism and postmodernism intertwining in the architectural profession, and it was in this charged atmosphere that Alica Štefančíková, an art historian, organised an informal, unofficial gathering of Slovak and Czech architects in October 1984. Eighteen architects from across Czechoslovakia converged on Spišská Kapitula, a secluded medieval ecclesiastical enclave in eastern Slovakia, to discuss the future of their discipline, how to dismantle the system of central planning, break out of professional isolation, and, above all, create freely. The essential ideas compiled there were captured in a samizdat proceedings volume, which spontaneously spurred a tradition of exceptional, stimulating annual meetings that played a crucial role in shaping the profession's outlook. Continuing until the Velvet Revolution in 1989, most of these events transpired in Spišská Kapitula, while others occurred in Staré Splavy and Louny. Many of the attendees subsequently took an active part in founding the Slovak Architects Society (*Spolok architektov Slovenska*) in 1990.

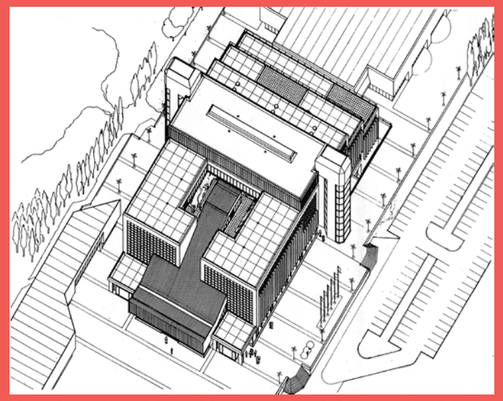
To honour this legacy, Juraj Koban and Peter Pásztor from the Department of Architecture within the Faculty of Arts at the Technical University of Košice organised a retrospective conference in December 2015 to examine the enduring impact of these Spišská Kapitula meetings thirty years later.

The VAL Group's activities could be characterised as another inspiring intellectual island of "positive deviation" during normalisation. Its name was derived from the French phrase *Voies et Aspects du Lendemain* (Ways and Aspects of Tomorrow) while simultaneously serving as an acronym for the first names of its three members: Viera Mecková, Alex Mlynarčík, and Ľudovít Kupkovič. Between 1968 and 1994, this small, isolated pocket of independent-minded, creative architects developed visionary, timeless projects that afforded them an extraordinary freedom of expression during an oppressive era. Operating without specific state briefs or bureaucratic constraints, their artistic invention pushed the boundaries of architecture into the realm of science fiction. The most famous of these was Heliopolis (1968-74), a utopian proposal for an Olympic village set in the High Tatras, which they had envisaged for the 1984 Winter Olympics.

In 1987, a fiercely critical assessment of Bratislava's environment appeared with the release of *Bratislava nahlas* (Bratislava Aloud) by the Slovak Union of Nature Conservationists. This clandestinely distributed document was compiled by nearly a hundred experts drawing from various fields, including scientific institutes of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, research bodies, universities, and state heritage and nature conservation authorities. Armed with objective data, it exposed severe systemic failures of Bratislava's urban development, environmental degradation, and the neglect of historical monuments, while courageously offering solutions. Bratislava nahlas caused a massive political sensation, signalling the urgent necessity and ultimate inevitability of impending social change. /ab



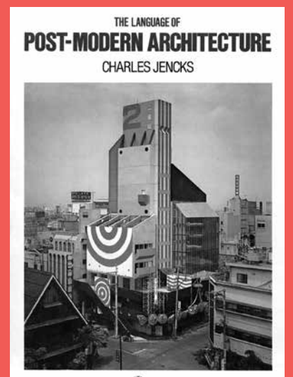
Construction of the Slovak National Uprising (UFO) Bridge, 1972



Design for the future Ružinov Department Store in Bratislava by J. Bahna, F. Kalesný, Ľ. Mihálik, P. Čížek and P. Minarovič, 1975 – 1978



Late 1970s competition design for Obchodná Street by Ivan Matušík



1977 cover for Charles Jencks's *The Language of Post-modern Architecture*



Informal meeting of Slovak and Czech architects at Spišská Kapitula, 1984



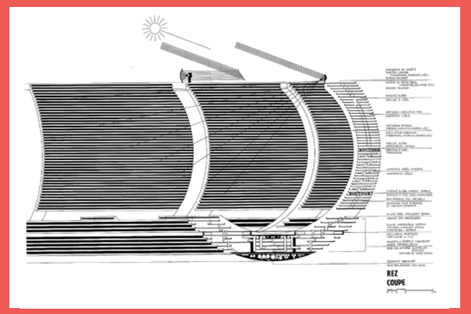
Poster for a 1984 exhibition of young architects in Bratislava



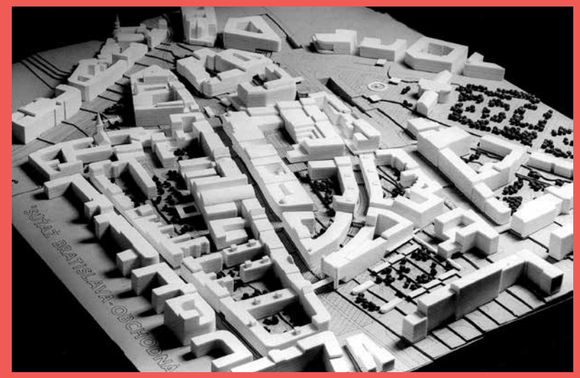
Modrá guľa (The Blue Ball) in Bratislava by Ivan Marko and Marta Kropiláková, 1985 – 1994, Source: Miesta Mesta, Adam Berka



1970 FIS Nordic World Ski Championships at Štrbské Pleso in the High Tatras



Heliopolis, VAL Group's design for an Olympic village in the High Tatras, 1968 – 1974



Winning design for the Obchodná Street international competition by Andrea Bacová and Michal Mašek, 1987

1960 Czechoslovak Socialist Republic declared
1968 Alexander Dubček elected First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
"Socialism with a Human Face" encourages a brief period of radical creative freedom in architecture and art.
Warsaw Pact invades and occupies Czechoslovakia on 20-21 August
VAL Group (Viera Mecková, Alex Mlynárčik, Ľudovít Kupkovič) founded, start of the Heliopolis project (the group's activities would continue until 1994)
1969 ARPANET deployed, connecting four nodes and establishing digital communication
Humanity lands on the Moon
1973 Completion of the SNP Bridge in Bratislava, designed by Jozef Lacko, Ladislav Kušnír, Ivan Slameň, and Arpád Tesár during the previous year
ARPANET expands to Europe with its introduction to Norway and the United Kingdom
1977 Charles Jencks publishes "The Language ofPost-Modern Architecture"
1980 Inaugural Venice Architecture Biennale, featuring the historicist Strada Novissima and Hans Hollein to signal the rise of postmodernism
1982 Digital design tools introduced
1983 Inception of the modern internet (on 1 January)
1984 First unofficial meeting of Slovak and Czech architects organised by Alica Štefančíková at Spišská Kapitula
1987 *Bratislava Nahlas* (*Bratislava Aloud*) appears, edited by Ján Budaj and published by the Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Protectors (SZOPK)
"Internet" enters common technical and public vocabulary
Obchodná Street architecture and urban planning competition announced

Slovak National Uprising Bridge



Planning for a second bridge across the Danube River had begun as early as 1956. Although Róbert Lamprecht's design for a prestressed concrete structure was ranked first in the 1966 competition, the contractor's demand for a steel bridge led to the selection of an architecturally audacious, fourth-place proposal by architects Jozef Lacko, Ladislav Kušnír, and Ivan Slameň, alongside structural engineer Arpád Tesár. They designed a 432-metre-long and 21-metre-wide cable-stayed bridge, suspended by bundles of steel cables from an 84-metre-high asymmetrical double pylon shaped like an inverted V on the river's right bank.

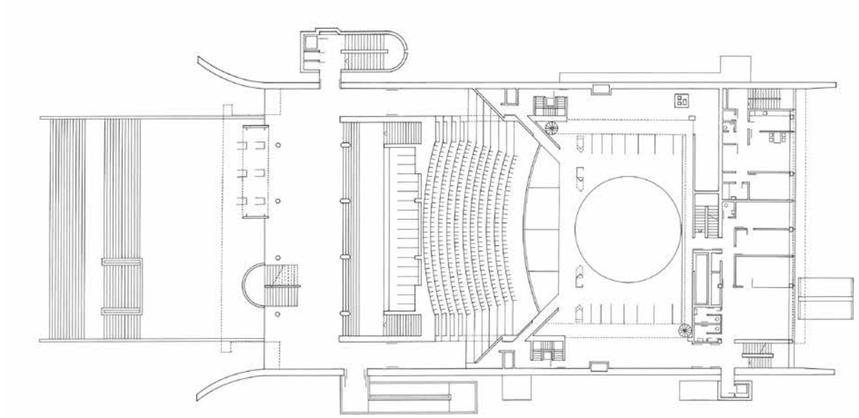
The pylon was originally intended to be topped by a triangular restaurant, but a classic disc design won out, accessible via a high-speed lift encased in the eastern pillar. Originally named Bystrica, the bridge was later nicknamed UFO for its sci-fi silhouette. The expressway running off the bridge slices directly into the former Jewish quarter. To clear a path, historic, war-damaged buildings on Židovská Street were demolished. While this urban destruction remains highly controversial, the bridge has nevertheless become a definitive symbol of Bratislava. Many may question its location, yet its bold engineering remains artistically remarkable.

Briefly renamed "New Bridge" before its official title was restored, the SNP Bridge is today a protected technical monument. Slovak Post issued a commemorative stamp featuring the architects' original perspective drawing of the pylons as seen from an approaching car. Its status was cemented at the turn of the 21st century when it won a nationwide public poll, crowning it Slovakia's "Building of the Century". /md

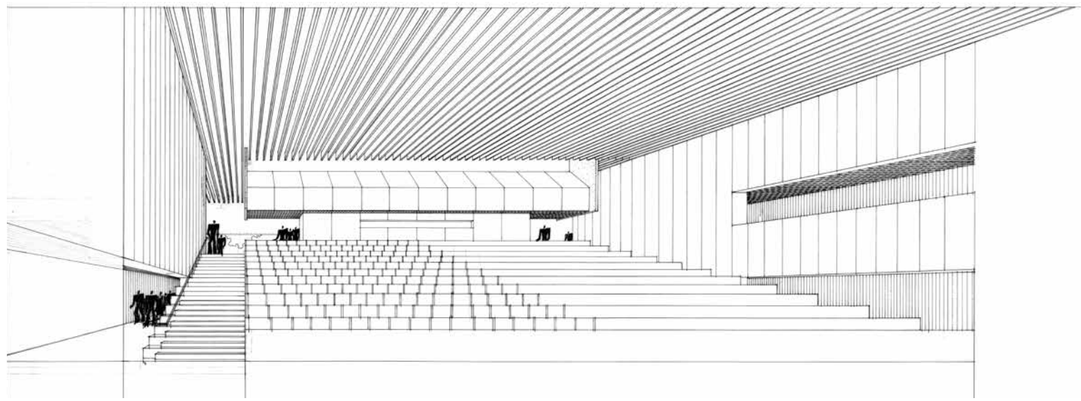
Bratislava, Rázusovo nábrežie, Nábrežie armádneho generála L. Svobodu, Viedenská cesta
Architects: Jozef Lacko, Ladislav Kušnír, Ivan Slameň; Arpád Tesár
Constructed: 1972 – 1973
Photos: Matej Hakár, Bohuslav Zemiar



House of Arts







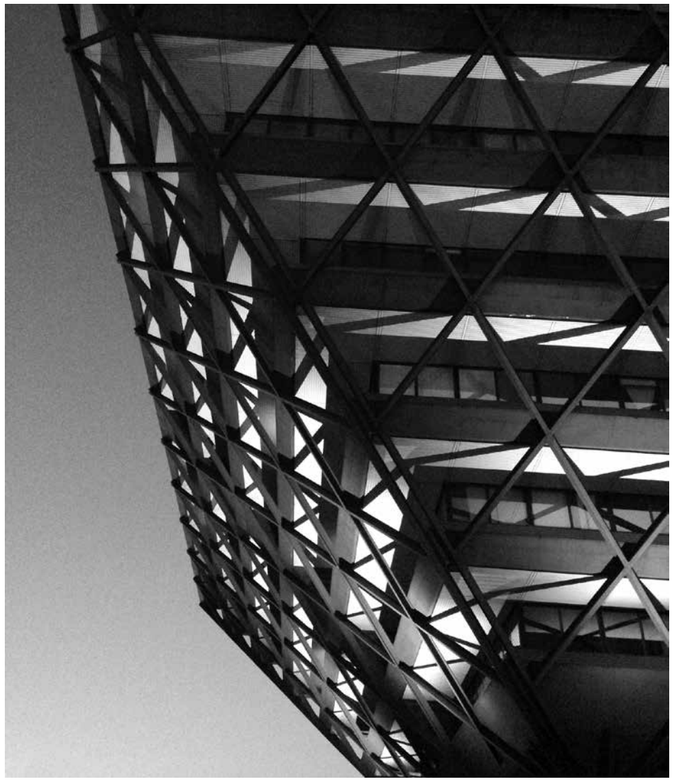
Piešťany, Nábrežie Ivana Krasku 1
Architect: Ferdinand Milučký
Constructed: 1974 – 1980
Photo: Rajmund Müller

Set back in Piešťany's spa park, the impressive House of Arts resembles a ship moored on the Váh's banks. Though the project originated in a 1956 architectural competition with a site closer to the town centre, the final location and design were only settled in the mid-1970s. The expertly sculpted building ranks among the finest created by Ferdinand Milučký, who designed the celebrated Bratislava crematorium. The House of Arts mirrors the crematorium's design language through its prominent longitudinal side walls, which flare slightly outward at the front.

These walls are complemented by dense, abstract forms of exposed concrete stripped of direct conventionality, though observers have noted subtle motifs alluding to vernacular folk architecture. For instance, the sloping concrete volume above the entrance evokes the angled gable of traditional log cabins. A wide staircase leads into a glazed lobby, defined by a vibrant mix of vermillion red on the ceiling soffit and metal elements, contrasted against the grey and beige tones of the concrete walls. The main hall's deep blue colour adds to the mix. On the upper floor, the foyer showcases Jozef Bubák's monumental 18-metre-long artwork, *Symphony of Man*.

The core of the layout is a rectangular main hall outfitted with a revolving stage, an orchestra pit, a concert organ, and a 622-seat auditorium that includes a dedicated wheelchair gallery. The ground floor accommodates a smaller 80-seat hall and exhibition space. Commissioned for the Slovak Philharmonic to provide classical music for spa guests, the main hall's natural acoustics are admittedly unexceptional. However, modern electronic equipment ensures the versatile venue hosts a wide array of cultural events. /md

Slovak Radio Building

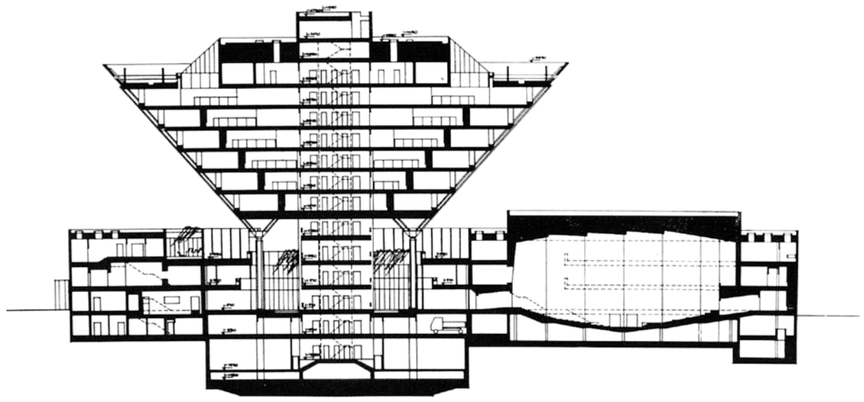




Following lengthy preparation and several competitions, the concept of shaping the central radio headquarters as an inverted pyramid emerged around 1963-64. Unconventional solutions had always attracted Štefan Svetko, a visionary architect open to grand gestures, and this radical design offered exactly that opportunity. The building's visible external steel skeleton is partly constructed on columns and partly suspended from a central reinforced concrete circulation core. Standard workspaces were arranged behind the perimeter glass facades, masking an impressive internal atrium that spans the full height of the inverted pyramid. The primary radio studios and core technical equipment are isolated deep within the layout's centre.

Although the building's extensive horizontal podium occupies almost an entire city block, the initial design intended for elevated pedestrian walkways to connect it over the roadways to neighbouring urban zones. While those connecting bridges were ultimately never realised, large portions of the base, such as the expansive zone above the entrance lobby, remain as accessible, walkable flat-roof terraces.

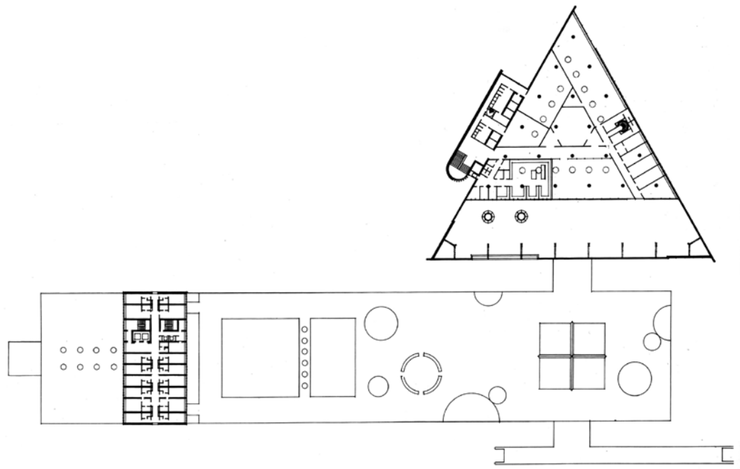
Because of its sheer technical complexity, the radio building required nearly a quarter of a century to complete. Despite a multitude of hidden engineering triumphs, including an acoustically superb concert hall floating on massive steel springs to isolate vibrations, the building's stark brutalist appearance has not escaped public criticism. Over time, however, the inverted pyramid has been warmly embraced as an indispensable landmark of the cityscape and is now officially listed as a protected architectural monument. /md



Bratislava, Mýtna 1
Architects: Štefan Svetko, Štefan Ďurkovič, Barnabáš Kissling
Constructed: 1969 – 1984
Photos: Matúš Dulla, Monika and Ľubo Stacho

1968 – 1989

Department Store and Hotel







Bratislava, Kamenné námestie 1, Rajská 2
Architect: Ivan Matušík
Constructed: 1964 – 1968 and 1969 – 1973
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho, Rajmund Müller

In 1960, the Ministry of Trade launched a competition for a new department store and hotel complex. Thirty-year-old winner Ivan Matušík's audacious design broke radically with the surrounding historical street-front development, replacing it with standalone volumes: a triangular department store and a tall, prism-shaped hotel tower rising from a horizontal podium. While subsequent critics have questioned the insertion of such isolated landmarks into a formerly compact urban fabric, Matušík responded directly to the geometry when fitting the department store onto a triangular site.

The structure features a 76-metre-long façade, a reinforced concrete frame with columns spaced nine metres apart, and an internal oblique structural grid. An entrance was placed at each corner of the store, and the interior boasted the first escalators installed in Slovakia. The façades are clad entirely in local Spiš travertine. An exceptional detail is the main façade's chiming clock by Jaroslav Kočiš, still fully functional decades later. A triangular travertine cornerstone inscribed with the opening details and including a relief plan of the entire complex was placed in front of the main entrance.

The hotel's towering guest-room block and sleek curtain-wall facade closely resemble Arne Jacobsen's celebrated SAS Hotel in Copenhagen. Together, these elements formed the largest architectural complex built in central Bratislava since World War II. Following a half-century of continuous operation, intense debates emerged on the site's reconfiguration or potential demolition. However, advocates of modern heritage emphasise it as a truly extraordinary modernist work that deserves historical preservation and respectful, faithful restoration. /md



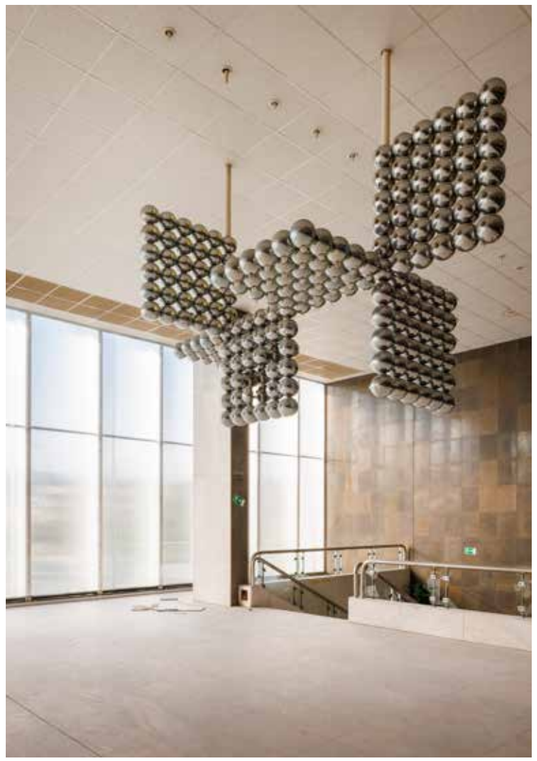
1968 – 1989

House of Culture

Banská Bystrica, Námestie slobody 3
Architect: Jozef Chrobák with Karol Tisončík, Jozef Pálka
Constructed: 1973 – 1979
Photos: Matej Hakár, archive Central Slovak Museum







The clear, rational geometric lines of this serene, sprawling building and its balanced architectural forms perfectly reflect the generosity and scale of Late Modernism. It occupies a prominent junction within Banská Bystrica's new city centre, an urban sector arrayed in front of the railway station that took shape following the 1959 design competition for the nearby Slovak National Uprising Museum and Memorial. In 1979, architect Jozef Chrobák was awarded the Dušan Jurkovič Prize for the design.

The core architectural concept emphasises maximum operational versatility and flexibility, a principle most dynamically expressed across its lower levels. The ground floor serves as the main threshold, organising entryways, a central puppet theatre, and a courtyard atrium. Directly off it sits the cinema auditorium–completed later in 1984–which dramatically projects outward from the main structural mass like a cantilever.

The true structural ingenuity becomes apparent on the first floor, with primary cultural spaces that function either independently or as a single, interconnected complex. The 787-seat multipurpose performance hall can be unified with the main foyer and an adjacent restaurant for up to 232 guests, which connects directly to a 297-seat chamber theatre. This fluid layout was supplemented around the atrium by a multi-storey cluster of clubrooms, art studios, game rooms, a library with a reading room, and dedicated children's facilities.

Until 2007, the complex was owned by the trade union federation. Following its sale into private hands, promised conservation and modernisation efforts failed to materialise, forcing the cultural centre to close its doors in 2013. The building has recently been acquired through a joint effort by the city and the regional government. A comprehensive restoration plan is now underway, promising to breathe new life into this landmark and provide a permanent home for several of Banská Bystrica's cultural institutions. /md

1968 – 1989

ROH Cultural Centre

Spišská Nová Ves
Architects: Ivan Slameň, Branislav Somora
Constructed: 1981 – 1987
Photos: Fero Hauskrecht





During the socialist era, the state strictly regulated the construction of cultural centres, guided by rigid mandates governing capacities and localised programmes. The cultural centre in Spišská Nová Ves stands out among its contemporaries for its success in translating these formal typological regulations into a solid, dignified form through an expressive deployment of materiality.

The building's distinctly fragmented mass, composed of cubic blocks of varying heights, transitions smoothly around the main entrance corner, featuring an expansive glazed wall, into a stepped bay window that connects back to the solid façade plane bearing the signage. Consequently, the primary street-facing façade remains cohesive, while the surrounding side volumes step down to respect the scale of the adjacent public plaza. The material selection reinforces the institution's civic weight. The façades are clad in local Spiš travertine. This regional stone anchors the structure to its geographical context while imparting a quiet monumentality, regularly punctuated by the bevelled spandrels of the ribbon windows.

The layout of this sprawling volume, which accommodates a 600-seat auditorium, a cinema, a library, and a restaurant, concentrates around an internal patio that channels natural light deep into the floor plate's core. Inside, custom-shaped suspended ceilings with integrated lighting fixtures introduce a dynamic sculptural plasticity to the interior spaces. Alongside a prominent relief sculpture by Ludvík Korkoš, these bespoke details underscore the building's deeply integrated artistic character. The building has undergone several changes and unwanted interventions and requires comprehensive renovation. /ab

Trnava Cultural Centre

Trnava, Trojičné námestie 140
Architect: Jozef Danák
Constructed: 1976 – 1988
Photos: Blažej Vittek



A late-modernist landmark inserted into a historic core. The Trnava Cultural Centre embodies the era's contemporary design philosophies, validated by a 1971 architectural competition that drew entries from notable architects Štefan Šlachta, Ján Fibinger and Ferdinand Milučký. The winning team, Jozef Danák and colleagues Juraj Štecko and Jozef Žiaran, sought a definitive architectural solution for integrating a massive, solitary volume into the historic fabric. Programmatically, much of the volume is occupied by a 725-seat auditorium with theatre-style seating that can be reconfigured into a flat-floor hall with a dance floor.

The building's massing responds to its urban context through a distinct vertical articulation that aligns with the site's historical layout. Strategically placed pedestrian passageways originally linked the building to the courtyard tracts of the adjacent historic structures. Vertically, the building scale adapts to its surroundings. The stepped facade facing Trinity Square is partitioned into four distinct, timber-clad volumes, each capped by a sloping roof. They are articulated by structural concrete walls that transition into the roof plane's pitched framing, successfully mediating the building's presence with the square's historical scale.

A contrasting architectural language emerges on the elongated lateral facades, which exhibit a more enclosed character dominated by bands of vertical concrete segments. Here, the design shifts decisively toward a brutalist materiality with a stark combination of exposed architectural concrete and anodised aluminium softened only by an abstract steel relief by sculptor Jozef Dóka. While the insertion of brutalist architecture into a highly historic context remains controversial, the building represents a Late Modernist style that merits serious architectural preservation. After nearly four decades of continuous operation, the Trnava Cultural Centre now requires a comprehensive capital renovation. /ab



Jednota Department Store





Trnava, Trojičné námestie 9
Architects: Lumír Lýsek, Peter Biró
Constructed: 1973 – 1980
Photos: Rajmund Müller

The department store's distinctive design represents a powerful sculptural intervention in Trnava's historic core. Developed in compliance with the centre's urban master plan, it was constructed on a cleared site near Trinity Square, rising almost concurrently with the neighbouring cultural centre (p. 184 – 185). Commissioned during the era of socialist state centralisation, when internal state contests determined large-scale civil works, the project was awarded to Lumír Lýsek following his victory in a 1969 competition organised by the Cooperative Design Institute (DRUPRO). Despite a volume exceeding Bratislava's flagship Prior, he composed the expansive complex as an assertive volume that integrates proportionally with the surrounding historic scale, engineered around a monolithic concrete skeleton on a standardised 9 × 9-metre structural grid.

The building's massing exhibits the balanced tectonics of opaque wall planes and glazed apertures punctuated by the primary entrances from Dolnopotočná Street and Zelený rínok and dominated by semi-cylindrical vertical circulation towers. The façade articulation registers a rational interior layout engineered to house a functional programme remarkably rich and multi-layered for its era. The third floor contains administrative infrastructure, a staff canteen, a communal lounge, an open-plan workspace for forty employees, and an occupational health clinic. Centrally positioned escalators link the basement grocery supermarket to three upper floors, mimicking the circulatory diagram of the contemporary Prior complex in Bratislava. The first floor extends into an observation terrace with a bistro. Though operational under adaptive temporary subdivisions, Jednota warrants a comprehensive restoration alongside the cultural centre. Both complexes stand as major monuments to 20th-century Late Modernism, underscored by Jednota winning the Slovak Architects' Union Prize in 1981. /ab

Slovak National Library





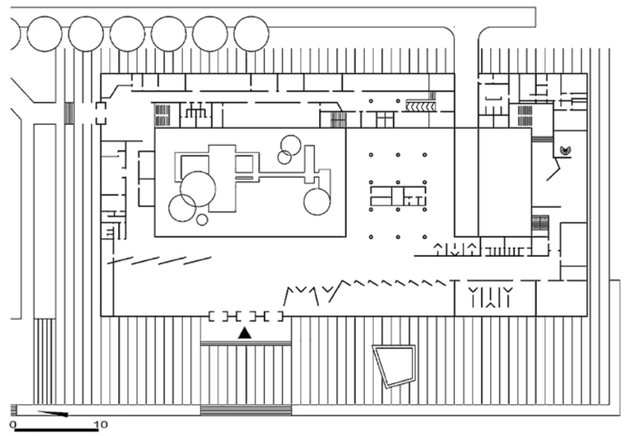


Martin, Námestie J. C. Hronského 1
Architects: Dušan Kuzma, Anton Cimmermann
Constructed: 1964 – 1975
Photos: Rajmund Müller, Matúš Dulla

The third building designed for Matica Slovenská is a slender high-rise block resting on a impressive-looking horizontal podium, combining the geometric rationality of 1960s cubism with Dušan Kuzma's penchant for sculptural forms. The latter is clearly evident in the expressive structural shaping of the concrete elements on the tower's façades. Handed over in 1975 after eleven years of construction, it became Matica Slovenská's central headquarters for its operations and archives. In 2000, the Slovak National Library separated from Matica Slovenská. Now established as an independent institution, the building became its official seat.

The multi-storey podium features two distinct atria—one landscaped with greenery and the other a service and loading courtyard. It houses the library's main public operations, including the catalogues, reading rooms, study areas, a lecture hall, administrative offices, and auxiliary technical facilities. A single, continuous ribbon window is boldly integrated on the primary entrance façade, spanning the entire length of the building volume.

The towering vertical block is the book repository, its façade shielded by specially shaped concrete brise-soleil elements. Rare lift-slab engineering called for the floor slabs to be cast on the lowest level and hoisted mechanically up circular columns. The entrance features a prominent relief by Vincent and Peter Hložník with interiors designed by Vojtech Vilhan and Gabriela Cimmermannová. Inside, a row of busts of Slovak historical figures is arranged alongside numerous artworks by celebrated national artists. The building stands on the Hostihora hill overlooking Martin, its sweeping architectural gestures appearing to float above the ordinary daily rush below. /md



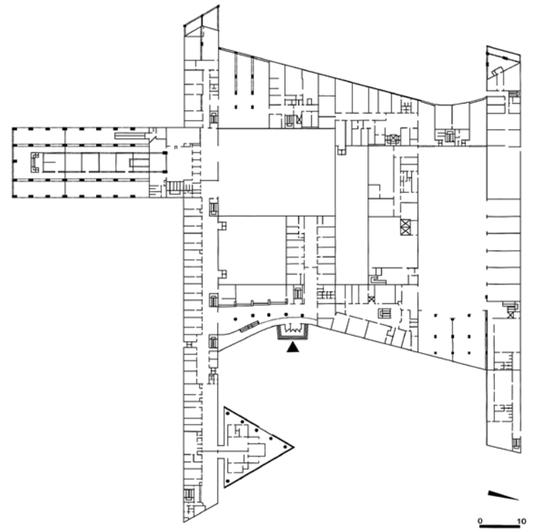
Trebišov Hospital and Clinic

Hospital planning philosophies underwent a major evolution after the 1950s. Initially, healthcare design favoured decentralised pavilion typologies, where specialised medical departments occupied standalone structures and inpatient wards were frequently arranged in three-winged, T- or Y-shaped footprints branching from a central core. One such example was Kramáre Hospital (1958-1967) in Bratislava, a project on which architect Milan Šavlík collaborated. Over time, the consolidated "monoblock" concept gained dominance. By concentrating disparate clinical functions within a single immense structure, this new model unified technical infrastructure, minimised transit times between departments, and facilitated far more flexible internal layouts.

It was upon these integrated monoblock principles that the Trebišov Hospital complex was established. The vast majority of its clinical departments are consolidated in a single central building, leaving only the infectious diseases pavilion and the administration offices to stand as detached structures. The campus is anchored by a commanding, eight-storey main wing that houses the triple-corridor adult inpatient units. A secondary, four-storey wing is dedicated to the paediatric department, while the lowest-slung volumes of the interlocking mass accommodate the operating theatres, diagnostic laboratories, and utility service facilities. The façade of the main entrance into the complex is treated with a gentle curve.

Šavlík had won an internal design competition organised by Zdravoprojekt for a standardised prototype intended to be replicated identically across Galanta, Nové Zámky, and Trebišov. Ultimately, the state opted to customise each build to its local topography and regional constraints. Šavlík was awarded the execution of the Trebišov site, producing what is regarded as the most architecturally empathetic iteration of the three regional hubs. It maintains a genuinely welcoming scale for visitors and patients alike. /md

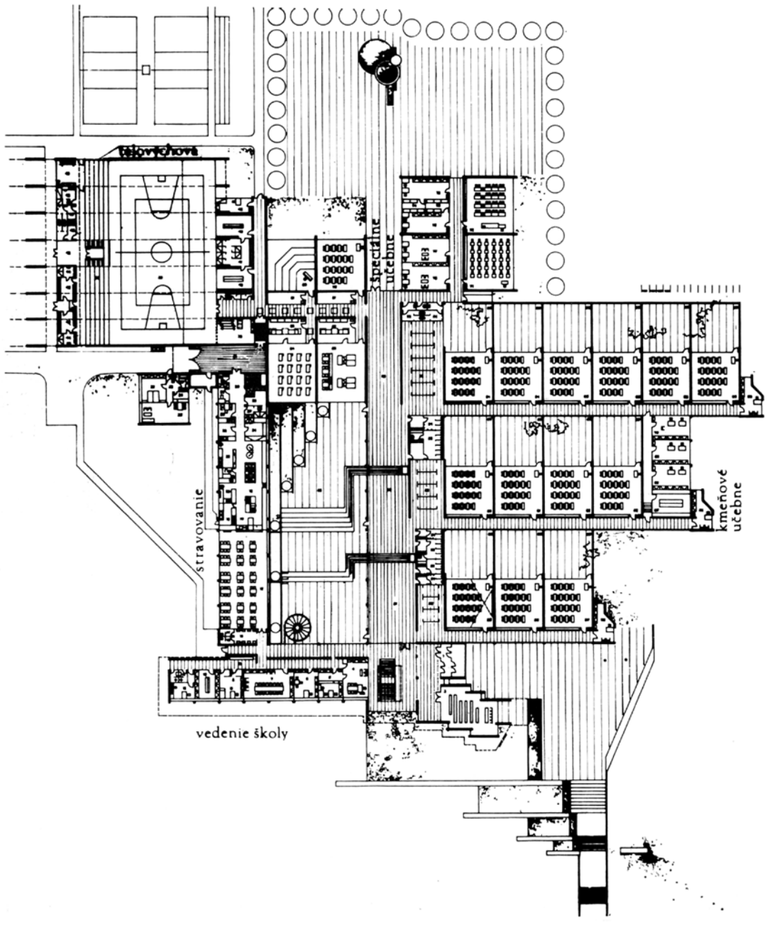






Trebišov, SNP 28
Architect: Milan Šavlík
Constructed: 1967 – 1977
Photos: Rajmund Müller

Nemecká Primary School





Nemecká, Školská 35
Architects: Peter Csellágh, Juraj Lupták
Constructed: 1970 – 1972
Photo: Rajmund Müller

This Central Slovakia village's new primary school was symbolically dedicated to the young heroes of the Slovak National Uprising. Nemecká stood as a critical flashpoint of the resistance, and in wartime reprisals, hundreds of victims were brutally executed at the local lime kiln. A nearby monument commemorates the tragedy.

The school complex was designed by young architects Juraj Ľupták and Peter Csellágh shortly after they completed their architectural studies in Bratislava. They rendered the main entrance façade in a stark Brutalist idiom of raw, exposed concrete, anchoring a relief sculpture of combat motifs by sculptor Ladislav Snopko. Immediately adjacent to this entrance portal, they integrated a memorial paying tribute to young partisans, alongside the school's administrative suite, director's offices, and a dining room, while placing a children's clubroom and library on the upper floor.

The compact, clustered organisation of the complex strongly reflects late-modernist spatial developments. Csellágh and Ľupták experimented with square-plan classrooms measuring precisely 8.4 × 8.4 m. Slanted overhead skylights pierce the roofline to optimise natural daylight, while full-height glazed walls draw primary illumination from enclosed atria. Each of the thirteen core classrooms features its own atrium as an open breakout space during recesses. The site's natural topography is elegantly drawn into the building's interior, where the sloping hillside is translated into a central assembly hall arranged in a dramatic stepped amphitheatre configuration.

Operationally, the compact layout is balanced by a functionally independent wing that segregates dining facilities and the gymnasium from the classrooms. Construction was partially financed by an enthusiastic nationwide fundraiser in 1968. These funds had originally been intended for a scenic railway system in the High Tatras until it was officially abandoned, with the proceeds redirected to the school. /md

Administration Building



Postwar architecture was defined by a spirit of structural weightlessness, a wave of "anti-gravity" design that rapidly caught on in Slovakia, propelled by the political and social liberalisation of the 1960s and a youthfulness that animated Slovakia's architectural scene. The trend toward structural dematerialisation reached its zenith when cable-stayed systems entered mainstream practice, allowing entire buildings to be literally hung from overhead networks. This structural philosophy anchors ABSO, the landmark state regional agency complex in the centre of Považská Bystrica, designed by architect Ivan Meliš and structural engineer Severín Ďuriš from the Žilina branch of Stavoprojekt.

The complex adopts a spatial composition characteristic of its era, balancing a sprawling low-rise podium against a slender vertical tower. The low-rise base consists of a single-storey volume wrapped in a continuous band of ribbon windows that overtops a deeply recessed, shadow-cast ground floor, with internal spaces drawing natural light from an inner atrium. Departing from a conventional orthogonal block, Meliš dynamically inserted a large, sculptural assembly hall shaped like a truncated cone, which projects beyond the primary entrance facade.

The high-rise tower unfolds from a central reinforced concrete core. At the tower's highest point, massive steel outrigger cantilevers with balancing rocker beams project outward. From these assemblies, suspended vertical steel tie-rods bear the dead load of the underlying floor plates. The curtain wall is deliberately recessed at one-third of the tower's vertical height to expose the delicate tension rods, creating the illusion of a floating upper volume. Structurally, each floor plate is organised around the core housing the staircase, two lifts, and washrooms, with two main corridors providing access to modular offices. The tower is enclosed by an incredibly thin curtain wall accentuated by continuous rows of ribbon windows. /md

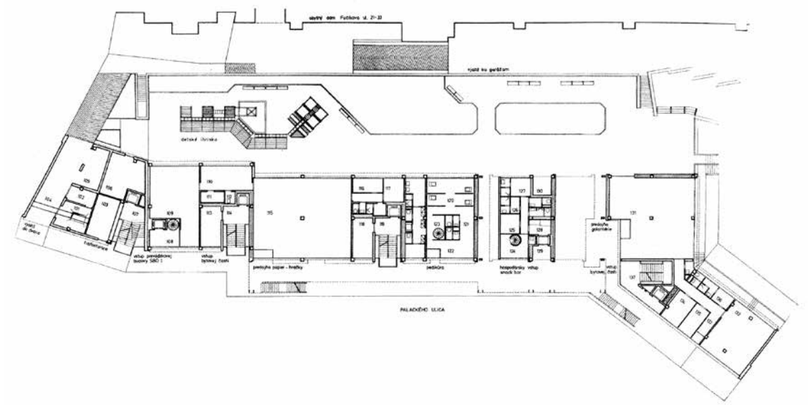


Považská Bystrica, Centrum 1
Architect: Ivan Meliš with Severín Ďuriš
Constructed: 1968 – 1976
Photos: archive Department of Architecture, Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Rajmund Müller, Matej Hakár



Palackého Residential Block

Bratislava, Palackého 24
Architects: Ivan Marko, Marta Kropiláková, Marián Šmotlák
Constructed: 1980 – 1987
Photos: archive Marta Kropiláková





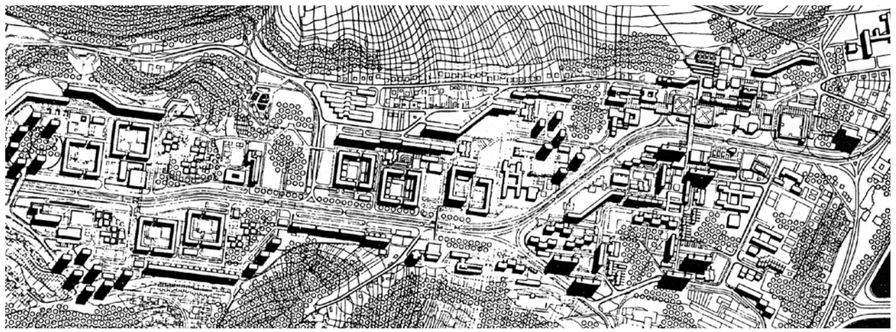
Palackého Street in downtown Bratislava belongs to those elite addresses where every vacant lot is a demanding test of contextual urban architecture. By opting to complement the established street rhythm rather than disrupt it, this apartment building passed with distinction. For several reasons, the architects divided the intervention into two separate, typologically distinct residential blocks anchored by a shared two-storey commercial podium. Utilising a prefabricated concrete skeleton with brick infill, the two blocks are arranged in an angled geometry that masterfully fleshes out the street frontage. Hardly accidental, the structural gap between them allows vital sunlight to penetrate deep into the interior courtyard.

Rather than establishing a new urban landmark, the design choice seamlessly weaves two differently composed block fragments into a single urban whole, highlighted by large-scale Copilit translucent glass channels that enclose the street front's right-hand access gallery. The architectural vocabulary is remarkably understated and precise. Horizontal ribbon windows with spandrels clad in vibrant red and green ceramic tiles lend the façade a rich sculptural plasticity. Fifty compact apartments, restricted to a maximum 65 square metres of usable floor area, adapt to the inner courtyard's spatial constraints.

Time has vindicated the decision to deploy Copilit glass as a signature element, giving it the name the "Copilit House". While this inter-block glazing has proven exceptionally durable over the decades, it now requires comprehensive restoration – like the entire complex – under a structured rehabilitation programme. This residential block stands as a quiet example of what makes late modernism in the historic city centre worth preserving: city-forming typology, a resolute material gesture, fine detailing, and an intelligent overall composition. Awarded the Slovak Architects' Union Prize in 1988, this concept remains highly relevant today. /ab



Karlova Ves Housing Estate



Bratislava-Karlova Ves
Architects: Stanislav Talaš, Jozef Fabiánek, Karol Ružek / Stavoprojekt
Collaborating Architects: Jozef Chovanec, Ferdinand Milučký, Alexander Plačko, Peter Jančo, Pavol Mrázek
Constructed: 1967 – 1976
Photos: archive Department of Architecture, Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences

Once a small winemaking village, Karlova Ves was transformed into a Bratislava borough defined by a late 1960s prefabricated housing estate nestled within a steep, verdant valley. Karloveská Street forms the urban backbone, operating as an infrastructure corridor with an integrated tram line running through a central green belt.

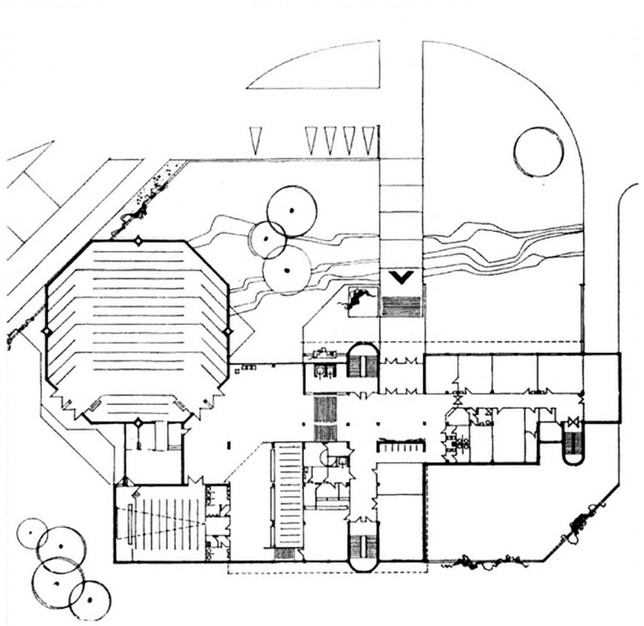
The neighbourhood's urban fabric evolved from a 1961 zoning master plan by Milan Beňuška, culminating in a finalised 1964 design based on a graduated composition of varied spatial structures. The layout deploys a scale-appropriate block morphology of four-storey residential volumes alongside taller linear buildings that reinforce the street edge, punctuated by thirteen-storey point blocks positioned as visual landmarks. The neighbourhood maintains an optimal urban density of 234 residents per hectare, offering ample green space, a high-quality microclimate, and rapid transit links to the centre of Bratislava.

Under the era's centralised planning frameworks, strict normative standards dictated the precise scaling and positioning of civil amenities, including schools, kindergartens, retail hubs, and polyclinics, within walking distance of all residential entries. Concurrently, state percentage-for-art mandates required the integration of public artworks into civic architecture. Consequently, Karlova Ves stands as a rare, highly comprehensive residential environment with a completely walkable infrastructure network. Many of these integrated artworks now require urgent conservation or greater attention. However, the 1979 Rodina (Family) fountain by Irina Kedrová and Anna Dandárová remains in relatively stable condition. A similarly holistic urban approach can be found in Bratislava's Ružinov housing estate, which equally epitomises the postwar vision of high-density modern urbanism matched with an elevated quality of domestic life. /ab





Žilina Municipal Building



former Communist Party District Building
Žilina, Námestie obetí komunizmu 1
Architect: Viera Mecková
Constructed: 1984 – 1988
Photo: archive Viera Mecková

Žilina's local Stavoprojekt Institute became a vibrant hub for a talented group of architects centred around the celebrated Ferdinand Čapka. Together, they designed several major examples of late-modernist architecture across northwestern Slovakia. Among them was Viera Mecková, whose notable achievement is Dolný Kubín's impressive cultural centre. She also contributed to a series of visionary, utopian concepts as a vital member of the avant-garde VAL Group, alongside Alex Mlynárčik and Ľudovít Kupkovič.

In Žilina, Mecková's best-known work is a highly articulated complex originally designed to house the Communist Party's district apparatus. Because it was constructed during the twilight of the Party's political dominance, the building features no overt ideological iconography. On the contrary, she delivered a universal late-modernist solution that clearly reflects its internal programming: a distinct block containing a large, octagonal conference hall attached to a primary three-span administrative volume. The artistic treatment of the exterior ceramic surfaces by sculptor Juraj Marth, collaborating with Ladislav Sulík, is exceptionally noticeable, featuring terracotta cladding that flows seamlessly into an abstract sculptural relief.

Ultimately, the building served its original political purpose for only a single year. Various public institutions were subsequently accommodated until it acquired its current function as the headquarters of Žilina's city government. In a profound historical paradox, the only remaining reference to the totalitarian regime that commissioned the structure is found in the public plaza outside its doors, renamed Victims of Communism Square. /md



Children's Town

Trenčín-Zlatovce, Na dolinách
Architects: Peter Brtko, Ľudovít Režucha
Interiors by: Peter Brtko, Pavol Čaba
Collaborating Architects: Viktória Cvengrošová, Peter Černo
Constructed: 1967 – 1974
Photos: Rajmund Müller

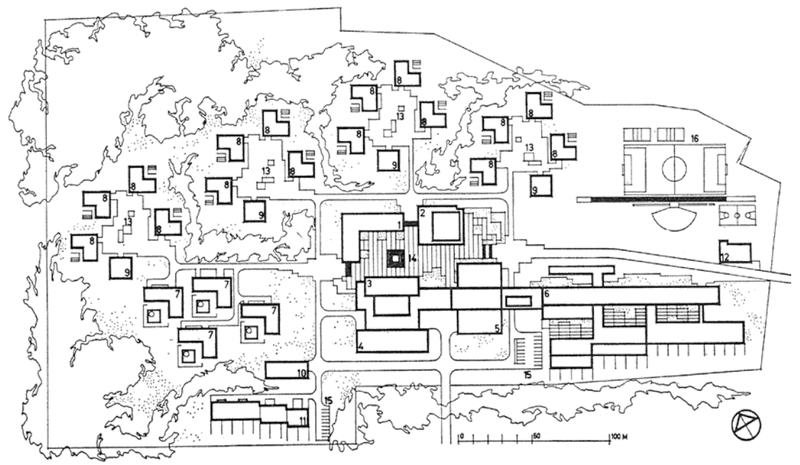
Children's Town in the Zlatovce district of Trenčín is hardly an institution in the conventional sense of the word. Designed as a campus-like complex of pavilions, its unique typology stems from Peter Brtko and Ľudovít Režucha's decision to reject traditional institutional templates. Instead of a monolithic orphanage building, they developed an alternative environment for abandoned children mirroring the spatial logic of a real town as closely as possible. The urban framework revolves around a central square that groups the core functions of community life: a multipurpose hall, a dining facility, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a health centre, a primary school, and a kindergarten.

The two-storey brick residential units, equipped with their own clubrooms, are scattered in small clusters across the landscape. This layout ensures that each group of children occupies its own distinct domain while remaining within a short walking distance of the communal core, replicating the experience of traditional civil life. Foster families reside here in independent domestic cells with their own self-contained households, allowing the children's lifestyle to approximate that of a standard family. Architecturally, the pavilions embody a clear late-modernist idiom, characterised by unadorned brick facades, flat roofs with recessed parapets, and a disciplined siting within a gentle slope which is today enveloped by lush greenery.

The exposed brickwork lends the volumes an unpretentious domestic expression while ensuring long-term structural durability. Five decades after its completion, the entire complex remains intact, though it now requires comprehensive renovation. Children's Town has been designated a national cultural monument, a distinction earned not for formal spectacularity or structural exhibitionism, but for the absolute precision of its socio-programmatic vision. The exact rationale underpinned its recognition in 1974, when the project was awarded the Dušan Jurkovič Prize. /ab







Brethren Church Congregational Hall

Situated within a residential fabric of freestanding single-family homes, the Brethren Church congregational hall by Márius Žitňanský makes no overt monumentality or grand sacral statement. Adapting to 1980s late-socialist constraints, he configured the church as an unassuming, low-profile extension of the existing residential volume containing the caretaker's flat. Prioritising communal intimacy, the church opens toward the street via an asymmetric cobblestone forecourt, creating a symbolic, chalice-shaped plaza, from which a wide staircase descends to a deeply recessed entrance threshold.

Above this entry portal, two white-plastered volumes converge at a gently pitched, arched break in the roofline, forming a subtle, ascending ridge line that references sacral orientation without disrupting the roofscape. The street-facing elevation minimises explicit ecclesiastical imagery, restricting its iconographic programme to a discreet cross motif on the house's façade and the Alpha and Omega symbols carved into the timber entrance doors. Žitňanský's architectural vocabulary is deliberately restrained and unified, relying on a clean material palette of smooth white render, dark window frames, and slender timber door canopies. Because the congregation constructed the church entirely through voluntary labour, the architect supplied a demountable model for non-professional builders to visualise spatial progression and organise phases.

The internal layout rejects a traditional relationship with the street façade, opting instead for a meditative sanctuary achieved through a cylindrical skylight that illuminates the prayer hall. This fosters an atmosphere of quiet introspection tailored to a small congregation. Illustrating the maturity of late modernism tempered by modesty, with no pathos or flashy decoration, the building features precisely measured craftsmanship alongside elements of fading postmodernism. In 1991, the church was honoured with the Dušan Jurkovič Prize. /ab







Levice, Sama Chalupku 7
Architect: Márius Žitňanský
Constructed: 1983 – 1985
Photos: Rajmund Müller

Choč Spa Hotel

This monumental building serves as the central hub and largest architectural asset within the small town of Lúčky. Rather than seeking to dominate the landscape through imposing massing, architect Jaroslav Vítek sensitively nestled the building's volume into the mouth of a narrow side valley. The site's steep natural slopes inspired a composition rich in rhythmic chamfers and faceted planes which, along with a dramatic array of stepped triangular balconies, form the exterior's primary expressive motif.

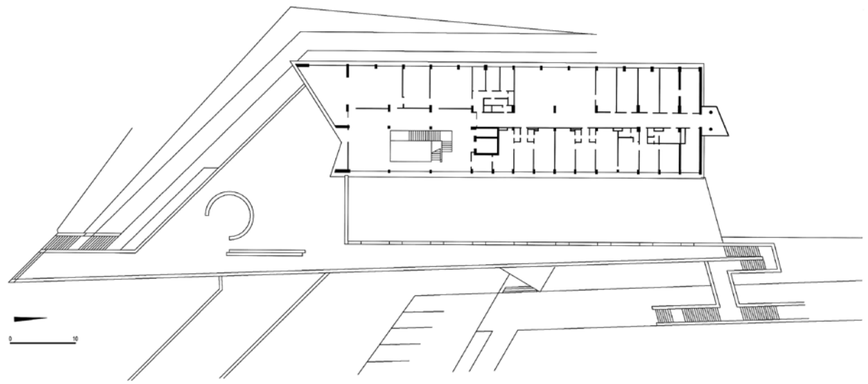
The building's high quality is equally apparent in its spatial layout. The primary communal zones and dining halls, including an integrated cinema auditorium, are arranged along a linear axis leading to a glass-enclosed elevated corridor which links the main building to the detached balneotherapy facilities. Subsequent modernisations and extensions have unfortunately crowded the original footprint, concealing the projecting exterior staircase, a signature formal element Vítek frequently utilised to anchor entry zones, as seen at his Krym Sanatorium in Trenčianske Teplice.

Vítek developed the project during his tenure at Zdravoprojekt, the state-run design institute responsible for shaping the late-modernist identity of Czechoslovakia's premier balneological resorts, stretching from Piešťany to Bardejovské Kúpele. Although the expansion of the complex and the construction of the adjacent Smrekov Hotel have visually obscured his original building, its intrinsic architectural merits remain undeniable. In recognition of its structural and contextual success, Vítek's project was bestowed the Slovak Architects' Union Prize in 1980. /md

Lúčky – Spa
Architect: Jaroslav Vítek
Constructed: 1968 – 1979
Photos: Matúš Dulla, Rajmund Müller







1968 – 1989

Baník Rehabilitation Institute

currently Bôrina Spa House
Bojnice, Kúpeľná 2
Architect: Ivan Matušík
Constructed: 1970 – 1975
Photos: Rajmund Müller



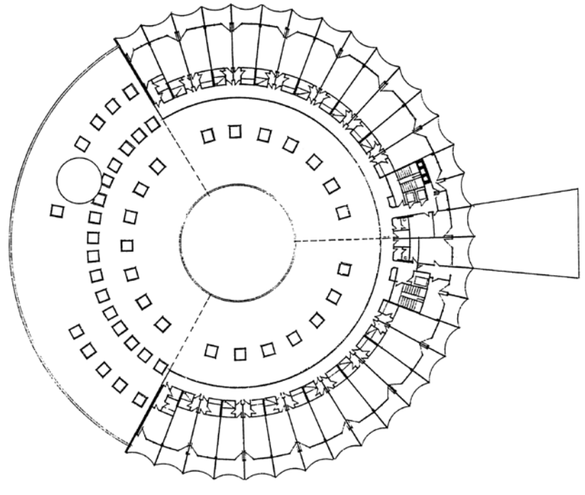
Originally called Baník, the complex was erected within the Bojnice Spa specifically for the treatment and recovery of miners from the neighbouring Prievidza region. Today renamed Bôrina, it still serves as one of the spa's primary treatment houses.

The building stands as one of Ivan Matušík's absolute masterpieces, reflecting his lifelong focus on integrating structural and conceptual clarity with a restrained, geometric approach to ornamentation. Its circular geometry directly recalls his earlier Slimák shopping centre in Bratislava, though subsequent renovations and vertical extensions have altered the latter beyond recognition. Conversely, Bôrina has stayed remarkably true to its original design. Even the contemporary Martin spa house, which opened nearby in 2025, was sited not to disrupt the cylindrical profile of Matušík's landmark structure.

The base accommodates the main reception, dining facilities, and hydrotherapy operations, all organised outward from a central hall and circular corridor around an open central atrium. An outdoor pool is situated directly behind the complex. The upper floors contain double rooms for up to 200 patients. The rooms are configured as an annular sector spanning two-thirds of the circular footprint. Along these levels, the interior corridor features full-height glazing facing the inner atrium. Originally executed from translucent Copilit U-profile glass channels that formed seamless, modular glass walls, they were replaced by conventional vertical windows.

The exterior expressive character is defined by a ground-floor podium clad in dark ceramic tiles, which contrasts with rhythmic bands of prefabricated concave balustrades fronting the rooms' loggias. Through this clever component design, Matušík achieved a sculptural articulation that poetically evokes the fluting of Doric columns, resulting in a thoroughly modernist design whose singular character stems from his mastery of highly geometric, decorative form. /md





Balnea Health Spa

Palace and Balneotherapy
Piešťany, Kúpeľný ostrov 26 and 28
Architects: Viktor Uhliarik, Alexander Plačko
Constructed: 1965 – 1968 and 1971
Grand and Splendid
Piešťany, Kúpeľný ostrov 34 and 32
Architects: Viktor Uhliarik, Jozef Schuster
Constructed: 1970 – 1971
Esplanade and Balneotherapy Extension
Piešťany, Kúpeľný ostrov 24 (28)
Architects: Viktor Uhliarik, Christo Tursunov
Completed: 1980
Spa Community Centre
Piešťany, Kúpeľný ostrov 13
Architect: Jozef Schuster
Constructed: 1979 – 1981
Photos: Rajmund Müller





One of Slovakia's largest architectural complexes, the Balnea Health Spa, was conceived to integrate hospitality, balneotherapy, and social facilities into a unified, weather-independent megastructure. Developed incrementally between 1965 and 1981 in a central sector of Spa Island, the linear complex grew as a succession of volumes, comprising the Palace and initial balneotherapy block, followed sequentially by the Grand, Splendid, Esplanade, a balneotherapy expansion, and finally the Social Centre. A continuous, covered corridor anchors the entire network, forming a structural spine nearly one kilometre long.

The 1,280-bed megastructure provides comprehensive lodging, dining, physical therapy, and cultural amenities. The programmatic layout typically partitions entrance and dining zones on the ground floor, treatment facilities on the middle levels, and guest rooms on the upper storeys. Because the entire complex follows a strict north-south axis, the guest rooms are oriented east-west for optimal solar exposure. Structurally, the buildings utilise a five-span reinforced concrete frame with brick infill masonry.

Architecturally, the earliest wings feature a delicate setup of glazed balconies imparting a distinct Mediterranean character. The later Esplanade wing exhibits a more monolithic appearance, while retaining the volumetric articulation and refinement of a balanced late-modernist typology. Completed 16 years after ground was broken, the northernmost Social Centre houses two multipurpose auditoria and exhibition spaces. Its dense, heavy masses reflect the broader stylistic shift from the airy rationalism of the 1960s. Chief architect Viktor Uhliarik, director of the medical design institute Zdravoprojekt, was awarded the Dušan Jurkovič Prize in 1972 along with Jozef Schuster for the Grand and Splendid wings. /md

Former Military Convalescence Centre



Zemplínska šírava, Medvedia hora, Kaluža
Architects: Dušan Bálent, Eduard Horváth, Ivan Kočan / Vojenský projektový ústav
Interiors by: Ján Hutťan, Milan Lovás
Constructed: 1977 – 1979
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

Medvedia hora forms a striking peninsular silhouette on the Zemplínska šírava reservoir, where its mountain ridge rises above the waterline, while twin peaks flank a natural saddle. The accommodation wing of the former military convalescence centre was inserted into this depression to secure dual-aspect panoramic views of the water and topography. The building's elongated massing is deliberately broken down into vertical bays, articulated by a prominent white grid with a 6.6-metre structural module generated by protruding transverse load-bearing walls and deep loggias. The six-storey block cascades at its flanks, providing an effective counterweight to the rolling terrain. Carefully positioned to fill the saddle, the centre naturally integrates with the terrain. Together with the disused quarry, it creates a splendid landscape backdrop. Dense forests surround the site on both sides, with easterly beaches and a western bay completing its natural frame.

To preserve the integrity of this structuralist composition, the northern communal spaces and service infrastructure are configured around internal courtyards, rendering them visually unobtrusive. The interiors reflect a late-modernist methodology, characterised by rich timber wall linings and custom joinery. Here, the double-sided entrance lobby and main dining room, the latter anchored by a ceramic relief by Karel Velický, transition onto open summer terraces communicating visually with the water.

The complex's materiality simultaneously clarifies its structuralist geometry and introduces a softening texture. This dialogue is achieved through the juxtaposition of warm timber elements, rhythmic loggia balustrades, and a white Dikoplast resin spray finish–originally developed for industrial prefabricated panel blocks–applied over the exterior elevations. Decommissioned in 2019, the building has been closed while a long-gestating reconstruction project remains stalled in preparatory stages. /ab



CULMINATION OF THE STYLISTIC HIERARCHY 1989 – 2010

Culmination of the stylistic hierarchy
1989 – 2010

In November 1989, the socialist system collapsed in the wake of the Velvet Revolution, commencing an era now marked by free expression and a market economy. Slovakia's development shifted from a centrally planned socialist system to a capitalist model. Projects previously approved were stopped in their tracks, the imposing design institutes of the past gradually disappeared, and architects established small private studios. The stylistic categorising of architecture, and with it the era of modernism, came to a screeching end. Moreover, the spread of the internet brought about a completely new perspective on the world.

As the Industrial Revolution had transformed architecture, the Information Revolution was altering the conditions for its development. The establishment of the World Wide Web and the internet's exponential growth signalled the beginning of digital CAD technologies and digital architecture, accompanied by a significant acceleration of project workflows.

All professional fields enjoyed nearly unlimited access to information, an enormous shift from the era before 1989, with data flow constantly growing. In essence, this step into the unknown drove a search for new perspectives, the formation of a new identity, and a confrontation with the West, whose influence had long been blocked by the Iron Curtain.

In the initial years following the revolution, architectural commissions experienced an immediate surge in demand for sacral architecture, a typology that had been systematically suppressed under the previous regime. After 1990, more than six hundred religious structures were built across Slovakia. These diverse typologies largely expanded upon late-modernist principles, as exemplified by the Roman Catholic Pastoral Centre of the Queen of the Family (1997-99) on Teplická Street in Bratislava. It was designed by the team of Georg Bliznakov, Matej Siebert, and Ľubomír Závodný. This minimalist rigor also extended to commemorative places, such as the Modra House of Mourning (2008) by Vojtech Krumpolec, Mária Krumpolcová, Peter Derevenec, Juraj Krumpolec, and Vladimír Vodný. Concurrently, other religious projects remained anchored in a lingering postmodern idiom, notably the Church of Saint Gorazd and Companions (1999) in Košice by Štefan Zahatňanský, Ján Fabián, and Igor Rozdobuďko.

Residential collective housing quickly discarded the uniform prefabricated concrete panel houses that still symbolise the socialist era. Fresh waves of highly original, architect-driven solutions began to redefine the multi-family apartment segment, establishing a benchmark of design continuity that persists today. This structural and aesthetic liberation is vividly evident in the playful lines of Ľubica Koreňová-Brunová's *Skelet* (2005) in Žilina, of Andrej Alexy and Andrej Klimko's Mondrian (2005) in Bratislava, and of Ivan Matušík and Sebastian Nagy's *Triangolo* (2008) in Nitra.

Simultaneously, the custom-designed family home and the luxury suburban villa witnessed a profound resurgence, yielding several prominent examples in Slovakia's capital, including Villa G (2002) by Martin Kusý and Pavol Paňák, Villa Linea (2002) by Ján Bahna and the AA Ateliér Architektúry, and Juraj Polyák's *Vila nad Dunajom* (2004). Scale became a testing ground for these new attitudes, ranging from the sprawling *Vila nad Holým vrchom* (2005), designed by Jakub Cigler, Hana Lukešová, Ladislav Hýbner, Ján Šimek, and Victor Marani, standing as one of the period's largest houses with a usable floor area of 828 square metres, to its radical antithesis, Ivan Matušík's *Elipsion* House (2002) in Senec, a compact oval jewel box of just 104 square metres. Other architects explored geometry and terrain, as seen in the fractured forms of the K1 Break House (2010) in Kynceľová by Paulíny Hovorka Architekti, and the radical, dark minimalism of House N (2009) in Petrovany by the zerozero studio.

Architecture during this transitional period responded rapidly to emerging ideological currents and the newly liberated, pluralistic intellectual atmosphere. The development of urban structures began to adopt a distinctly European perspective, as seen in the construction of Slovakia's first high-rise architectural landmarks. Prominent corporate vertical accents soon reshaped the skyline, notably the headquarters of *Všeobecná úverová banka* (General Credit Bank, 1996), designed by Ján Bahna, Ľubomír Závodný, Igor Palčo, and Miloš Juráni, and the *Národná banka Slovenska* (National Bank of Slovakia, 2001) by Martin Kusý and Pavol Paňák. This boom in new construction was balanced by a rising volume of high-quality historical renovations, reflecting a heightened professional and academic commitment to architectural conservation.

The post-revolutionary period also witnessed a sharp rise in professional engagement among architects, culminating in the establishment of the Slovak Chamber of Architects (*Slovenská komora architektov*). Replacing the socialist architects' union, it regulates professional practice. Another organisation, the Slovak Architects Society (*Spolok architektov Slovenska*), is a voluntary association of architects and design enthusiasts that has taken on the vital mission of popularising architecture and elevating contemporary design culture. The society has continued to fulfil this role by hosting professional awards and publishing Slovakia's oldest specialised journal, Projekt: Revue slovenskej architektúry. The society's first president, Štefan Šlachta, dedicated much of his historical research to mapping the lives of Slovak architects who had emigrated abroad following the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion, documenting their fates in his seminal volumes published by the Slovak Architects' Society: *Neznámi známi* (Unknown Notables, 2004) and *Návrat odídených* (Return of the Departed, 2005).

A pivotal milestone in reclaiming this lost cross-border dialogue occurred in 1990 with the historic Czechoslovak exhibition "*Incomplete Meeting of Three Generations*" at the Emmaus Monastery in Prague. This event triggered the formation of BLOK, an initiative spearheaded in Slovakia by Eugen Kramár, Štefan Svetko, Štefan Šlachta, and Marián Marcinka. BLOK's core mission remains to bridge generational divides by connecting architects, fine artists, and art historians. It operates out of the Balassa Palace, where the Slovak Architects' Society is headquartered. Besides initiating the Vladimír Karfík Prize, BLOK has curated numerous exhibitions and coordinated an extensive network of symposia, debates, and international study tours designed to shatter decades of professional isolation.

Although *Projekt: Revue slovenskej architektúry* has continuously covered the ongoing architectural discourse in Slovakia since 1959, a major transition in architectural media occurred in 1995, when Martin Mašek founded ARCH, an independent private magazine devoted to architecture and the culture surrounding it. Three years later, it established its own accolade: the ARCH Prize. For more than a quarter-century, both the magazine and the award, under the longest-serving editors-in-chief Henrieta Moravčíková and Andrea Bacová, have fostered a vital, critical, and professional platform for writing and debate that reflects contemporary architectural developments. Together with the earlier Dušan Jurkovič Prize and the later CE ZA AR awards, the ARCH Prize has established itself as one of the three definitive architectural honours.

The inaugural winner of the ARCH Prize was *Kráter* (Crater), a house on Bratislava's Vysoká Street designed by Roman Hájek. Exemplifying a bold artistic stance, it marked a paradigm shift in how architects approached designs within an urban historic fabric. The ARCH Prize's methodology was unconventional: the international jury could select only a single winner from a pool of nominees the magazine's editorial board had vetted from projects published over the preceding year. Unlike other institutional awards, architects did not submit their own work. Instead, *ARCH* independently reviewed the field and became the first in Slovakia to publish authentic, unedited transcripts of the jury's debates within its award catalogues. This independent model garnered immense authority for the prize. As Martin Kusý noted in the retrospective *15 Years of the ARCH Prize* (Eurostav, 2012):

"For a certain period, it held an almost privileged position on our architectural scene, finding a different way of doing things. It demonstrated how a private initiative can examine problems differently from a professional organisation, and afford to employ different criteria."

The onset of capitalism brought the privatisation of land and a radical shift in architectural commissions, with an influx of foreign capital and international developers radically reshaping Slovakia's construction sector. Urban planning was completely ill-prepared for these rapid changes, resulting in short-sighted municipal decisions and uncontrolled, spontaneous urban sprawl. Finding itself plunged into a deep systemic crisis, the planning apparatus quickly capitulated to market demands, leaving private real estate developers and building firms to set, as they still do today, the pace and manner of urban construction. Yet, this open market also brought positive international integration. Like in the Czech Republic, ever more foreign architects were invited to collaborate, establishing essential links between the Slovak profession and the global architectural community. This cross-pollination continues to be supported by architectural faculties through Erasmus, a programme that enables students to study abroad at European partner universities.

When viewing the final decade of the twentieth century, the overarching narrative is defined by profound social transformations: the collapse of the totalitarian regime, the birth of democracy, and the fragile emergence of a free civil society. For Slovakia, the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993 and its subsequent accession to the European Union on 1 May 2004 clearly marked the baseline of an evolving, independent state within a broader European context. Architecture naturally mirrored these new conditions. While gradually integrating mainstream European trends into the local landscape, Slovak architecture did so with a discernible, deliberate effort to develop its own authentic concepts, seeking designs genuinely original and locally rooted rather than practising pure, uncritical imitation. /ab



Original CE ZA AR Award trophy, 2002



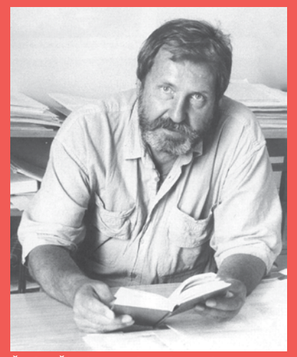
2016 Days of Architecture and Design



Emil Belluš Prize, 1990 emblem



Martin Kusý Prize, 2003 emblem



Štefan Šlachta, co-founder and inaugural president of the Slovak Architects Society, 1990



Cover of Štefan Šlachta's *Neznámi známi* (*Unknown Notables*)



1991 Emil Belluš Prize awarded to Vladimír Karfík

1990 Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (ČSFR) declared (dissolved at the end of 1992)
Tim Berners-Lee invents the World Wide Web
Incomplete Meeting of Three Generations exhibition organised by Prague and Bratislava

1991 BLOK group of architects and artists founded in Prague (chaired by prominent modernist Karel Prager)
Independent Slovak Architects Society (SAS) inaugurated (reorganised Union of Slovak Architects)
Emil Belluš Prize (lifetime achievement) and Jozef Lacko Prize (outstanding student thesis) founded
Bratislava chapter of BLOK established
Eugen Kramár Retrospective held at the Slovak Art Association (*Umelecká beseda slovenská*)
Vladimír Karfík Prize inaugurated
Monthly magazine *Fórum architektúry* (Architectural Forum) launched (published continuously by the SAS until 2014)

1992 Slovak Chamber of Architects established and assumes regulatory control over licensing

1993 World Wide Web expands into the public domain and commercial spheres
Slovakia achieves independence
Internet reaches 10 million users
Ladislav Foltyn's *Slovenská architektúra a česká avantgarda 1918-1939* (Slovak Architecture and the Czech Avant-Garde) published

1995 ARCH magazine launched (issues published until 2024)

1998 ARCH Prize inaugurated (awarded until 2024)
Faculty of Arts established at the Technical University of Košice (TUKE)

2000 First joint Slovak and Czech pavilion at the Venice Biennale

2001 September 11 terrorist attacks destroy the World Trade Centre's twin towers

2002 Slovak Architecture Prize (*Cena za architektúru CE ZA AR*) established by SKA
Clubovka formed for architects and design engineers to meet informally

2003 Martin Kusý Prize founded



Faculty of Arts, Technical University of Košice



Page from the pilot issue of *ARCH*, Slovakia's first private architectural magazine, 1985



Cover of *Fórum architektúry* (*Architecture Forum*), 2006



Cover of *Slovenská architektúra a česká avantgarda 1918 – 1939* (*Slovak Architecture and the Czech Avant-Garde (1918-1939)* by Ladislav Foltýn



2002 ARCH Prize presented to Pavol Paňák and Martin Kusý



2008 ARCH Prize trophy



Postage stamp depicting Ján Miloslav Bahna's VÚB Headquarters

2004 Slovakia accedes to the European Union (on 1 May)
Štefan Šlachta's *Neznámi známi* (Unknown Notables) published by the Slovak Architects Society
First edition of the Fénix Award for Cultural Monument of the Year

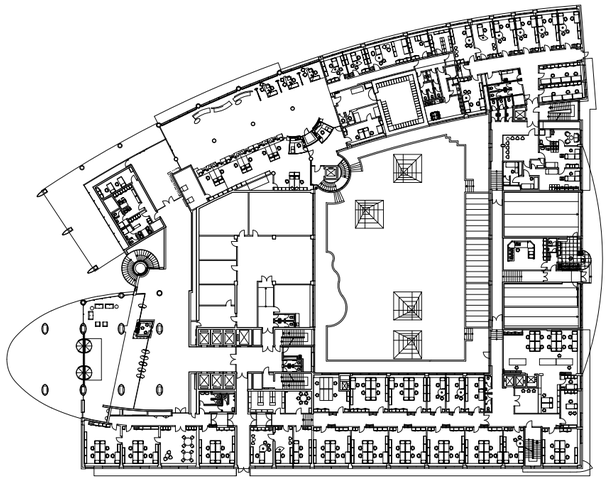
2005 Inštitútu pre pasívne domy (Passive House Institute Slovakia iEPD) founded

2007 Global financial crisis and recession (continues through 2008)

2008 Gothic Route Association established

2010 Days of Architecture and Design (Dni architektúry a dizajnu) launched
Slovak Green Building Council (*Slovenská rada pre zelené budovy*) founded
Days of Architecture and Design (DAAD) event first organised in Bratislava

VÚB Headquarters



Bratislava, Mlynské nivy
Architects: Ján Bahna, Ľubomír Závodný, Igor Palčo, Miloš Juráni
Completed: 1996
Photo: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

Rising 88 metres with a total of 24 storeys, the Všeobecná úverová banka (General Credit Bank) headquarters ushered in a new era for Bratislava's skyline at the close of the 20th century. Upon its completion in 1996, it stood as the city's tallest building, a title it held until surpassed by the National Bank of Slovakia (2001), Panorama City (2016), Sky Park (2020), and the current record holder, the 46-storey Eurovea Tower, completed in 2023. At the time of its inception, the VÚB high-rise served as a prominent landmark at the junction of two major arteries, establishing a bold urban scale for the mixed-use development emerging along Karadžičova ulica.

The geometry of the adjacent streets dictated the volumetric and spatial concept: a cluster of three wings, ranging from three to five storeys, which formed the building's podium. The graceful curve of one of these wings anchors the primary elliptical tower, which houses the main entrance and administrative zones designed with flexible, open-plan layouts. In contrast, the lower wings utilise a traditional triple-track floor plan with central corridors to accommodate smaller cellular offices.

Expansive amenities and versatile workplace configurations characterise the interior. Notably, the top floor originally featured an indoor swimming pool. The regular rhythm of the window grid on the elliptical façade emphasises the building's horizontality. At night, when accentuated by its LED lighting, the VÚB headquarters building appears to shed its mass, transforming into a prominent ephemeral silhouette within Bratislava's panorama. /ab

National Bank of Slovakia



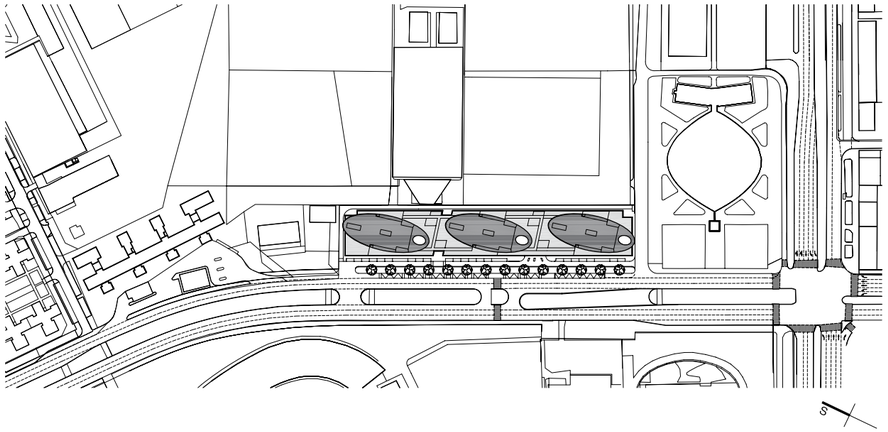
Bratislava, Imricha Karvaša 1
Architects: Martin Kusý, Pavol Paňák
Constructed: 1997 – 2001
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

This high-rise building represents a watershed achievement in Bratislava's urban development, introducing a new vertical scale to the city's skyline while mastering a formidable structural engineering challenge. The tower features a double-skin envelope with controlled natural ventilation and a rooftop helipad, while the bank's vaults remain concealed beneath an inner courtyard planted with symbolic national trees. Architect Jan Tabor, judging the 2002 ARCH Awards, noted the extremely complex technology required for a building of this height and concluded that it meets the highest international standards.

The NBS stands within a distinguished assembly of architecturally significant structures, serving as a dignified counterpart to the iconic Slovak Radio inverted pyramid (Štefan Svetko et al.), the nearby Faculty of Mechanical Engineering (Martin Kusý, Sr.), and the Ministry of Transportation (Eugen Kramár, Štefan Lukačovič). The 33-storey tower rises from a compact, block-like podium designed to echo the modernist tectonics of the surrounding heritage. Rather than a monolithic cube, curvilinear elements segment the glazed tower into several layers, with its dominant arch oriented toward the intersection of Imricha Karvaša and Mýtna streets. Here, an impressively shaped canopy marks the main entrance into the bank.

The institutional weight of the bank is further symbolised by the granite statue of Imrich Karvaš by Štefan Papčo, installed in the summer of 2025, alongside Ľudmila Cvengrošová's bronze Biatec figure. With its confident metropolitan character, the building harmoniously commands its surroundings and remains an imposing landmark in the Bratislava panorama. /ab

Three Towers



Bratislava, Bajkalská ulica
Architects: Martin Wolf, SCB & Associates, Inc., Chicago; Peter Moravčík
Collaborating Architects: Emanuel Zatlukaj, Richard Kastel,
Ivan Bučko, Stanislav Komár
Structural Engineering: Peter Hörmann
Constructed: 2006 – 2009
Photo: Pavel Meluš

By the time Tri veže was completed in 2009, both the 24-storey headquarters of Všeobecná úverová banka (VÚB) and the National Bank of Slovakia had already reshaped the skyline, sparking heated debate over the placement of future high-rises. The introduction of such tall buildings on Bajkalská Street, a heavily trafficked thoroughfare, was a bold gesture with a significant urban impact. The specification of three distinct towers led to a complex development process. The rectangular volumes envisioned during the initial planning stage were scrapped in favour of their signature elliptical form following the involvement of a foreign design partner.

The primary constraint was the plot's narrow 35-metre width, which dictated a linear arrangement. Ultimately, the architects maximised the site's potential by setting three identical volumes atop a solid five-storey podium, which is characterised by a monolithic, louvered facade. In addition to a ground floor dedicated to retail amenities, the podium houses parking and residential support facilities. The vertical circulation core is positioned at the centre of the elliptical floor plan, with corridors leading to well-appointed apartments featuring loggias. Low window sills provide expansive panoramic views from the interiors. The material standards are high yet restrained, avoiding unnecessary ornamentation. The facades maintain an elegant, uniform grey cladding, accented by the clearly legible horizontal bands that mark the floor slabs. Over the years, these Three Towers on Bajkalská have become a defining symbol of the wider city centre's eastern district. /ab

Tatracentrum

Bratislava, Hodžovo námestie
Architects: Ľubomír Závodný, Radomil Kachlík, Matej Siebert, Peter Vavrica
Completed: 2001
Photos: Pavel Meluš, Monika and Ľubo Stacho



For over 25 years, the Tatracentrum has stood as a noteworthy example of urban architecture, contributing substantially to the completion of Hodžovho Square and the thoughtful extension of Vysoká Street at its rear. While the building's height was a subject of heated debate during construction, hindsight has proven it to be the correct urbanist move for filling a decades-long hole in the square's fabric. Equally successful was the clear division of the bank into public and administrative zones, with the first two floors dedicated to amenities. Today, the building functions as a living organism; its two-storey interior pulsates with life, while logically situated entrances provide seamless connections to public transit and Poštová Street.

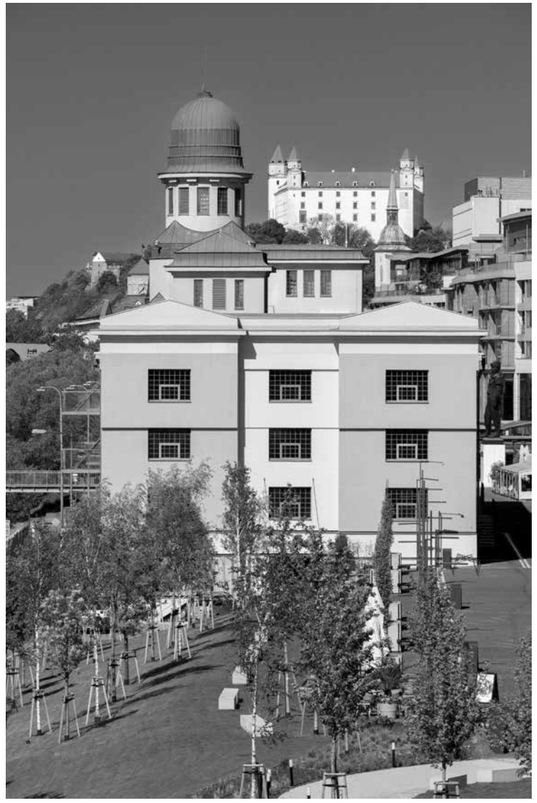
The architecture is defined by the horizontal articulation of the facades and a repetitive window rhythm, anchored by a tall, double-height ground floor and a recessed top storey with a slender, cantilevered roof. From Vysoká Street, the building's presence is softened by a projecting grid of atypical glass fins, an impressive artistic feature that doubles as effective solar shading for the eastern facade. On the visually exposed western gable, architect Ľubomír Závodný added a impressive roof visor, accentuating the building's prominent position and underscoring his strong conceptual vision. Timeless architecture ages gracefully, and Tatracentrum's enduring quality confirms its status as a modern city landmark. /ab



Warehouse No. 7

Bratislava, Pribinova ulica 32
Architect: Karel Skorkovský
Constructed: 1921 – 1922
Renovated by: Branislav Kaliský, Marek Rudohradský, A1 Respect
Renovated and Reconstructed: 2007 – 2008 (Phase I), 2020 – 2024 (Phase II)
Photos: Tomáš Manina





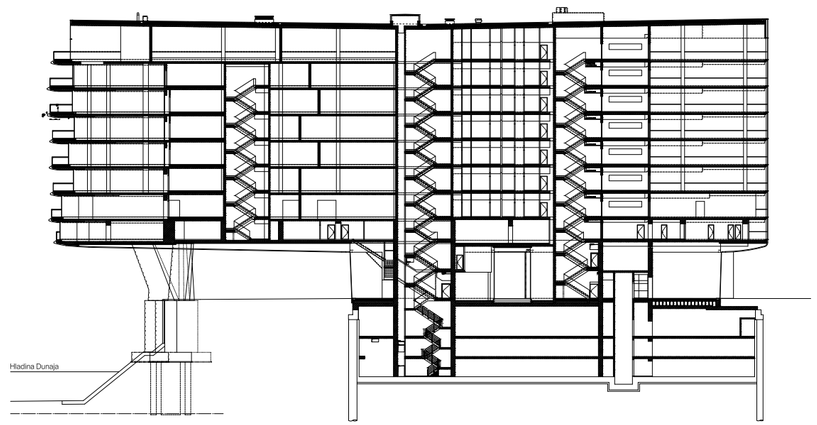
Following River Park (p. 230 – 231), the construction of the Eurovea Shopping Centre and its extensive arcade provided another major impetus for the urbanisation of the Danube embankment, further redefining Bratislava's modern silhouette. The new Slovak National Theatre had opened, and the renovation of Tower 115 (formerly the Presscentrum) was already completed. In addition, a cluster of modern skyscrapers remained in the planning stage. The Danube riverfront most notably gained a popular, fifty-metre-wide promenade between the Old and Apollo bridges.

An active component is Warehouse No 7, a historic industrial building and national cultural monument that originally formed part of the river harbour's modern technical infrastructure. Damaged during a 1944 bombing raid, it was reconstructed in 1947-48 by the construction firm of Karel Skorkovský and Vojtěch Lanna. This sprawling structure, set on a rectangular footprint, lines the Danube bank, with its Classicist, symmetrical expression and three turrets evoking palatial architecture. It stands as a rare testament to the city's historic layers. Built during the rise of Functionalism, it demonstrates a clear pursuit of a clean volumetric form while retaining Classicist accents.

The regularly articulated main façade facing the Danube, which includes a corner restaurant with an outdoor terrace, optically frames the eastern end of the promenade. The architecture reflects its technical character, featuring characteristic small grid-paned windows and cargo loading platforms on the southern elevation. The warehouse's reinforced concrete frame is notable for load-bearing columns topped with cast-iron-reinforced mushroom capitals. The initial phase of its step-by-step restoration focused on stabilising degraded structural elements and overall remediation. Subsequent sensitive reconstruction brought back original components of the façade and roof, successfully rescuing Warehouse No 7 while preserving its essential heritage value. /ab

1989 – 2010

River Park







Bratislava, Nábrežie armádneho generála Ludvíka Svobodu
Overall Urban and Architectural Concept: Erick van Egeraat / EEA
Architectural Design by: Martin Bajtek, Matúš Konček, Martin Matunák, Ľuboš Poláček (Block C); Juraj Almássy, Peter Bouda, Richard Čečetka, Ivan Masár (Blocks D and F); Naďa Doletinová, Rastislav Kňava, Igor Palčo (Block E – Kempinski Hotel River Park) Constructed: 2006 – 2010
Photos: Richard Rayman, Matej Hakár

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Dutch architect Erick van Egeraat's vision for a major section of the Danube embankment sparked debates about how to shape the urban fabric along the Danube.

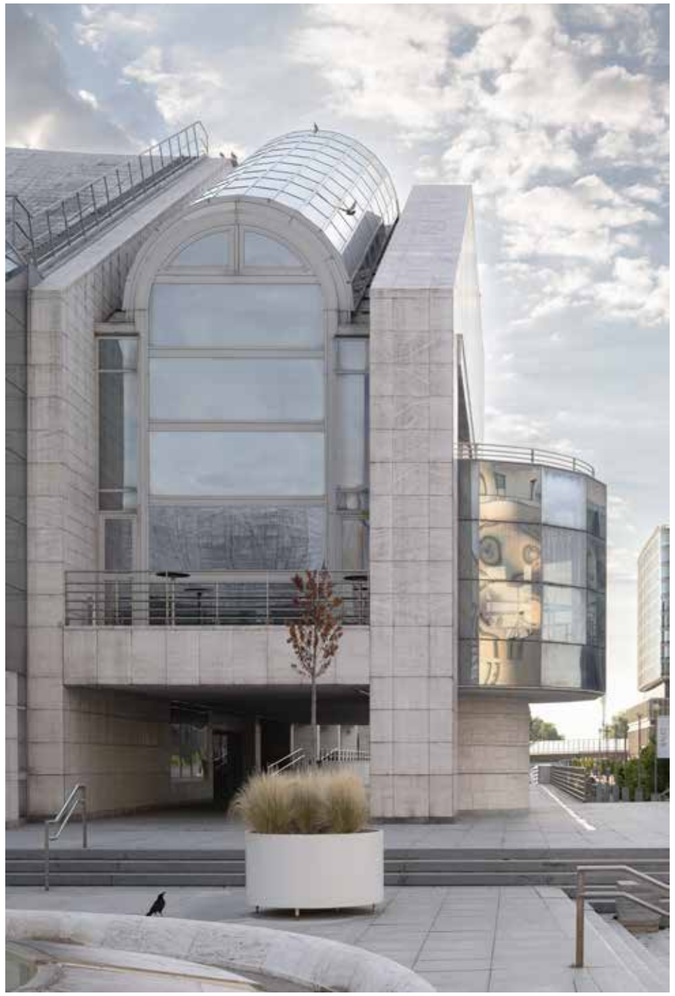
Based on his 2003 competition-winning entry, van Egeraat arranged ten- and thirteen-storey linear, mixed-use blocks in two parallel rows along the Danube, generating two distinct pedestrian axes: a dynamic riverside promenade and a more tranquil walkway traversing the inner courtyards. He deliberately punctuated this linear configuration by inserting a diagonally oriented standalone volume with a daring cantilever that juts out directly over the river. Around this signature structure, the urban fabric opens out into a generous plaza where the two parallel pedestrian arteries converge. Characterised by a horizontal façade and rounded corner, this landmark intentionally breaks the building line as the primary visual anchor across the wider landscape.

At grade, the office building provides a spacious public passageway beneath the massive cantilever offering lateral vistas toward Bôrik Hill's verdant slopes. Its architectural counterpart, Grand Hotel River Park, echoes this programmatic ambition within a more compact, enclosed geometry and a matching tonal palette, animating the waterfront promenade with its expansive outdoor terraces. The master plan's contextual sensitivity ensures a scale that respects Bratislava's skyline without competing with the dominant castle. The complex deploys a rich architectural repertoire that reflects its diverse, city-shaping programmatic mix, maintaining a high density of premium residential units. Despite occasional intersections between pedestrians and cyclists, the broad, well-landscaped promenade remains a vibrant, healthy hub of urban life, fostering a harmonious dialogue between the city and the river.

Between 2014 and 2018, the Zuckermandel complex, designed by Bouda Masár Architekti and A.M. Architects, extended waterfront development toward the historical core and beneath Bratislava Castle Hill. Although a major traffic artery separates it from the Danube, the riverside promenade strictly preserves its natural character, with a pedestrian footbridge linking River City to Zuckermandel over the infrastructural barrier. /ab

New Slovak National Theatre

Bratislava, Pribinova ulica
Architects: Peter Bauer, Martin Kusý, Pavol Paňák
Interior Designers: Eduard Šutek, Alexandra Kusá
Constructed: 1984 – 2007
Photos: Tomáš Manina, Monika and Ľubo Stacho



The construction of the Slovak National Theatre spanned more than a quarter century, beginning with a 1980 design competition and culminating in its 2007 opening. This prolonged timeline saw the project evolve through profound social changes, resulting in an unusual architectural hybrid of late-modernist massing intersecting with postmodernist details and classicist spatial principles.

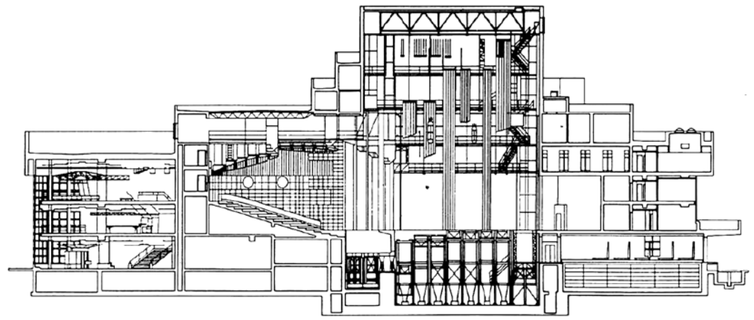
During the 1980s, planning focused on revitalising streets, squares, and blocks. Integrated into the master plan from its inception, the new theatre's architectural layout was specifically designed to support the broader spatial concept.

The theatre's layout is clearly bifurcated into two functional units: a larger hall for opera and a smaller one for drama. These wings converge in a funnel-like arrangement, linked by a generous vestibule and foyer. Their oblique axes intersect at the centre of the semicircular plaza, which extends to the Danube riverbank, a spatial concept envisioned in the 1980s but only recently fully realised.

The building reveals itself in layers. An austere, technicist rear facade transitions through balanced side sections and refined corners into the gentle sweeping curve of a heavily glazed main street façade, making the theatre resemble a mysterious lady at first glance. Aligned with the exterior's clear central axis are Alexander Bilkovič's sculpted fountain and Peter Roller's stone terraces, both masterfully integrated into the landscape. Anchored by the confidence of its original vision, the theatre remains dignified, reflecting the spirit of the late 20th century and a period of rapid stylistic changes with understated elegance and providing a vital cultural counterpoint to its commercial surroundings. /ab



Andrej Bagar Theatre



Nitra, Svätoplukovo námestie
Architects: Projektový ústav kultúry / Juraj Hlavica, Márius Žitňanský, Štefánia Rosincová
Interior Designers: František Kalesný, Ľubomír Mihálik
Plaza Concept: Juraj Hlavica, Márius Žitňanský, Imro Vaško, Michal Gavula
Constructed: 1982 – 1992
Photos: Tomáš Manina



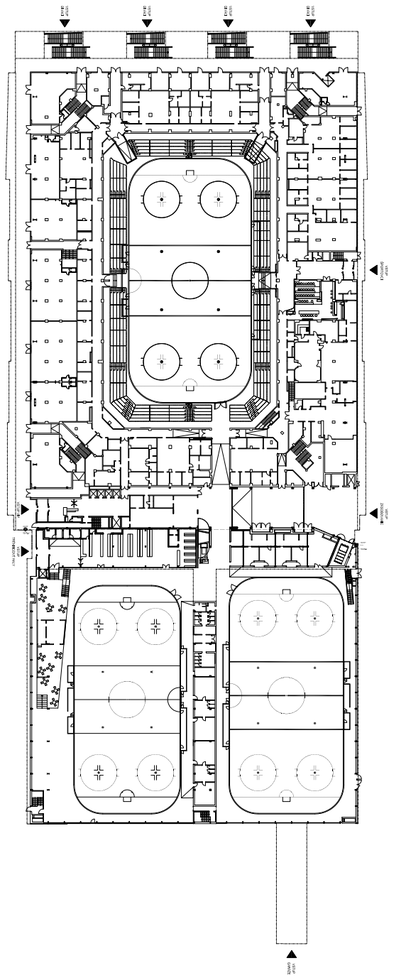


The Andrej Bagar Theatre integrates the late-modernist contemporary ideas of the 1980s, coloured by postmodern influences. Positioned not to obscure Nitra Castle and Zobor Hill, this freestanding building occupies a prominent position on the northeast corner of Nitra's circular central square, standing roughly on the site of the former theatre bombed near the end of World War II.

Although the theatre is primarily designed for dramatic performances, the 600-seat auditorium is adaptable for opera or ballet. Within the complex is a smaller 150-seat experimental studio, forming a separate cube externally with its own entrance from the square. The geometrically layered mass-and-space concept likewise reflects the theatre's division into a main hall and a studio. The intentionally segmented mass softens the overall volume. The footprint is clearly oriented toward the main diagonal axis running across the main hall and through communal spaces to the theatre's main entrance, based on the geometric principle of two intersecting irregular octagons.

Horizontally segmented limestone cladding provides the theatre's sculptural form with a sense of grandeur and elegance. Glazed ribbons framed by anodised tombac profiles form continuous horizontal bands. A tall portal with the inscription "Divadlo" (Theatre) and a postmodern, glass-enclosed convex element dominate the square. The clearly defined spiral staircases punctuating the rear façade also stand out. Several striking features can be found amidst the primarily solid, variously textured surfaces in the theatre's tectonic composition, including a façade of rusticated Kanfanar cladding in front of the studio hall. Elegant materials characterise the interior: dark red Tardos and ochre-sand Kanfanar stone with small polished brass detailing. The theatre bears the distinct mark of the era when it was built. Although it has aged gracefully, both it and the square need revitalisation. /ab

Ondrej Nepela Ice Arena



Bratislava, Odbojárov 9
Architects: Dušan Fischer, Ján Jacko, Richard Koseček,
Zoran Samoľ, Mojmír Vychodil
Interior: Katarína Fischerová, Dušan Kolenkáš, Tamara Závodná, Juraj Závodný
Collaborating Architects: Matej Brzý, Viktor Fuček, Michal Valúšek
Original Design by: Kamil Gross
Reconstructed: 2009 – 2011
Photo: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

For decades, the Ondrej Nepela Arena reliably served the purpose visualised by architect Kamil Gross when he designed the sports facility between 1940 and 1957. Originally an open-air artificial ice rink, the spectator seating was added first, followed in 1957 by a steel roof structure, also designed by Gross. After nearly half a century of use, the interior was updated with visually powerful VIP skyboxes, which received the 2006 ARCH Award.

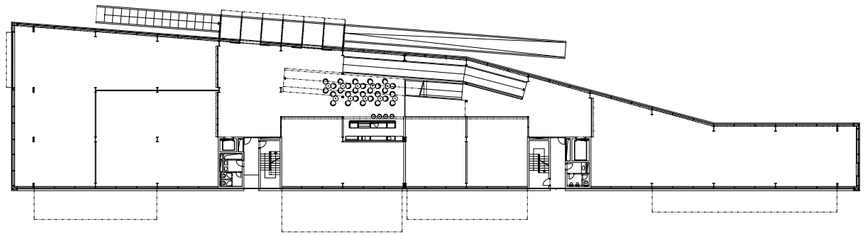
The arena acquired its current appearance after an extensive renovation accelerated by the awarding of the 2011 IIHF World Championship to Bratislava. Even as the skyboxes were removed, the reconstruction introduced several vital improvements: a new main entrance and a contemporary façade facing the square on Odbojárov Street. The architects expanded the lobby and circulation areas, increasing the building's overall volume but balancing this mass through the varied artistic treatment of the individual facades.

Despite the incredibly rapid seven-month construction pace, the project successfully increased the arena's capacity to 10,000 spectators, added two new training rinks, and installed underground parking. The deliberately dynamic and articulated glass facades reflect the surrounding smaller-scale urban fabric, establishing the area as a photogenic, free-standing landmark in the heart of the city. The retractable red ribbon-like staircases on the main façade have become a signature feature of the new square. Today, the area exudes a distinct charisma, fuelled by the artistic energy embedded in its fresh architectural silhouette. /ab



Atrium Furniture House

Bratislava, Einsteinova ulica
Architects: Ľubomír Závodný, Peter Vodrážka, Juraj Sumbal, Daniel Priehoda, Dalibor Michalák
Constructed: 2002 – 2003
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho







"... you're never bored inside. It's a new way of designing shopping centres. Positioned between the tracks and the highway, you truly sense passing trains–both inside and out–and that momentum is good for sales." This characterisation by Roland Gruber, an architect on the panel judging the 2004 Arch Awards, perfectly captures the spirit of Atrium. A highly complex site dictated the silhouette of this furniture shop, squeezed between a railway line and a heavily trafficked expressway.

The architects capitalised on these constraints, creating an angular form that appears to levitate above the terrain, its expansive glazed northern facade facing the main road. Conversely, the building's "back", oriented toward the railway, is closed, compact, and punctuated by projecting "drawer-like" cubic volumes. The steel frame facilitates a flexible interior layout for the showrooms. Within this dynamic shell, the architects integrated a highly functional and legible operational flow. A main ramp guides visitors through all three levels, providing seamless access to retail spaces. The recessed top floor, housing offices, technical facilities, and a spacious loft apartment, is formally detached to lighten the building's overall mass.

Elevated on columns, the partially sunken ground floor serves as a sheltered parking area. Describing Atrium as a mature, decisive fusion of clear functional purpose with reflections of the finest contemporary European trends, architect Matúš Dulla noted Ľubomír Závodný and his team's sculpting of an architecture that resonates with the self-assured, large-scale works of Jean Nouvel or Rem Koolhaas. In 2004, the project was honoured with the ARCH Prize. /ab

Relaxx Center

Bratislava, Einsteinova ulica 9
Architects: Andrea Klimková, Peter Kručay
Collaborating Architects: Martin Bosík, Roman Rosina
Constructed: 2006 – 2008
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

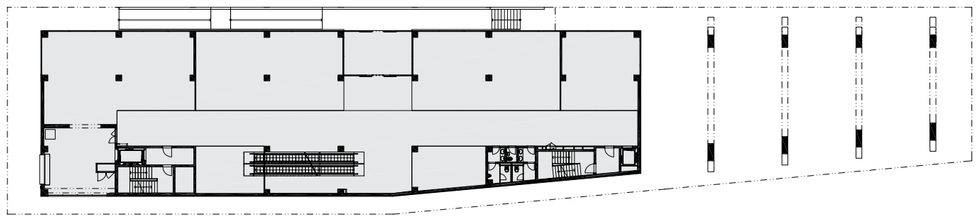
Since the early 21st century, several urban-scale buildings have emerged along Einsteinova Street, a busy corridor bisecting Petržalka from east to west. Today, the narrow strip between it and the railway tracks is almost entirely developed. Paradoxically, the constraints have inspired several remarkable projects such as Atrium (p. 238 – 239) and Digital Park (p. 308 – 309), that make a virtue of necessity.

Relaxx is a standout, notable for its dynamic, almost poetically feminine silhouette. The structure is cantilevered on four pairs of V-shaped concrete columns, raising its eastern end high above the terrain to the level of the Old Bridge, from where it becomes a prominent landmark. In the opposite direction, toward the Atrium furniture store, the volume slopes back toward the ground. This longitudinally angled mass follows the plot's natural contours, responding perfectly to its spatial context.

The 100-metre-long facade facing Einsteinova is entirely glazed, a transparent reinforced-concrete monolith that unabashedly reveals its interior, enticing both pedestrians and drivers to engage in the sports and leisure offered inside. Conversely, the southern spine is enclosed in a silvery titanium-zinc envelope punctuated with horizontal ribbon windows. In addition to retail amenities and services on the ground floor and underground parking, the interior is programmed for a wide variety of functions, hosting an indoor golf course, tanning beds, an organic restaurant, a children's playground, and facilities for fitness, yoga, and aerobics, as well as a swimming pool, whirlpool, saunas, and a bar. Quite simply, an excellent building that clearly bears the refined touch of its architect. /ab





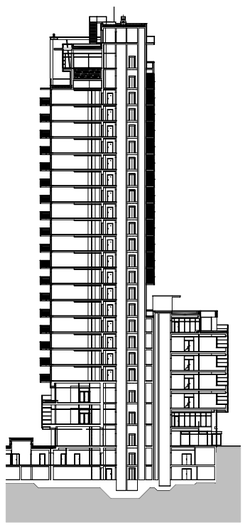


Rozadol

Bratislava, Ružová dolina, Trenčianska, Priemyselná, Mliekarenská ulica
Architects: Peter Moravčík, Juraj Šujan
Constructed: 2003 – 2006
Photo: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

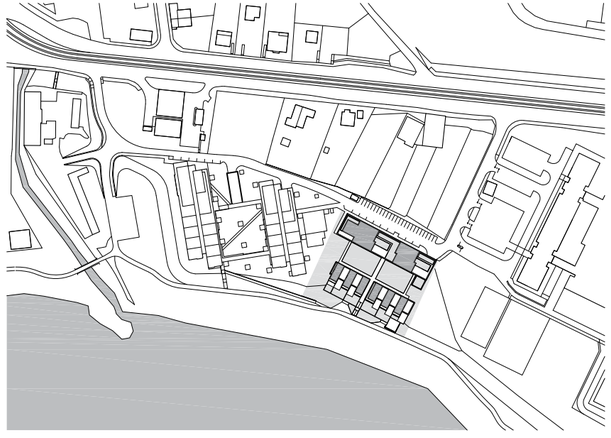
Highly rated by its residents, it counts among Bratislava's most successful complexes, evolving a proven urban scheme into a qualitatively new fabric. The project combines a gallery-access block and row housing with five identical point-access buildings, anchored by a 24-storey high-rise. This vertical accent completes a cohesive urban concept that integrates seamlessly into the neighbourhood, offering a mix of public and semi-private spaces within the interior courtyard. The "shadow" cast by the gallery-access building provides a sheltered environment for relaxation and social interaction, significantly enhancing the quality of life among residents. When Rozadol was completed in 2006, such a solution was considered exceptional.

The architecture reflects the designers' confident vision and their extensive experience in the residential sector. Rozadol is defined by its brick-coloured ceramic tiling, a material frequently used in Slovakia and yet handled here with particular distinction. The facade articulation, characterised by a precise window grid and a rhythmic pattern of balconies and loggias, lends the structures a sense of depth and artistic appeal. Despite the repetition of five identical blocks, the complex avoids monotony. Instead, it presents a vibrant, colourfully distinctive whole with a unified architectural language. The slender tower–a firmly anchored prism–is strategically positioned to contribute a positive silhouette to Bratislava's skyline. In 2007, Rozadol was honoured with the ARCH Prize. /ab





Karloveské Rameno Housing Development







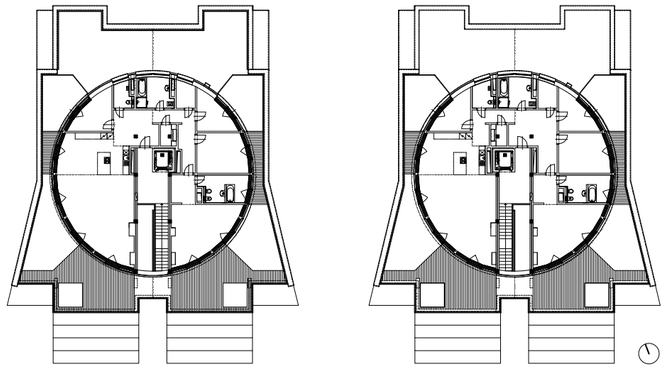
Bratislava, Karloveské rameno 6 - 8
Architects: Karol Stassel, Juraj Šujan
Constructed: 2004 – 2006
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

The turn of the millennium introduced several successful residential concepts to Slovakia's architectural scene, including the Karloveské Rameno complex. Situated in a prime location near a natural inlet of the Danube, the development transcends conventional residential typologies to offer a higher standard of living. Its two eight-storey buildings combine a corridor-access layout with terraced housing, resulting in a distinctive silhouette. The overall volume is visually softened by the stepped setbacks of the southeast gables, which face the river and project over a recessed ground floor, forming a dramatic three-storey cantilever.

The heart of each building is a generously lit circulation spine. This interior gallery is designed with proportions that encourage spontaneous social interaction among residents. The flexible layout and optimal orientation allow for a diverse mix of units, ranging from compact two-room apartments to expansive terraced residences and duplexes. The ventilated facades, featuring terracotta ceramic cladding paired with grey-coloured cement-bonding particle boards and yellow-orange accents, effectively break up the long lateral lines and lend the buildings a rhythmic dynamism.

The project's exceptional site, original concept, and premium materials establish it as one of Bratislava's most exclusive residential addresses. A second phase, completed ten years later by the same architects, complements the original design and includes six maisonettes in a terraced arrangement with front gardens. Having stood the test of time, the architecture remains a benchmark of quality and was honoured with the CE ZA AR award in 2007. /ab

Renaissance Condominium







Bratislava – Dlhé diely, Ul. Vincenta Hložníka and Albína Brunovského
Architects: Juraj Polyák, Ľubomír Závodný
Constructed: 2005 – 2008
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

The Renaissance Condominium stands as one of the early 21st century's most successful residential developments. It was constructed under challenging topographical conditions on a ridge along the southern Devínska kobyla overlooking the Karloveské rameno branch of the Danube. With an elevation change of 23-31 metres, the site has incredible views of the Danube floodplain, Bratislava Castle, and even the distant Austrian Alps on a clear day.

On an expansive 17,213 m2 plot, the architectural duo of Polyák and Závodný designed seven terraced residential blocks containing 80 large-scale apartments ranging from 70 to 225 m². These units form a curated, gated community offering upscale living and a private wellness centre. The blocks are oriented to ensure identical solar exposure and equivalent panoramic views for every resident. The floor plans are largely consistent, organised around a spacious circulation spine on the central axis featuring a single-flight staircase and lift.

Each level houses only two apartments with south-facing terraces. The typology includes duplexes with private front gardens and rooftop penthouses with circular or square geometries. The generous proportions are a rarity by contemporary standards, underscoring the significant shift in market demand and development constraints over the past two decades. The architecture is characterised by a precise, geometrically ordered hand, restrained colour palette, and sophisticated plasticity of the facades, enhanced by superior materials and the delicate detailing of lightweight metal railings. Combined with rigorous landscaping of the enclosed grounds, the complex remains a benchmark for premium residential living. /ab

Skelet Multipurpose Residence





Architect Ľubica Brunová-Koreňová faced a dual challenge. The plot earmarked for the new residential building was in the city's historic preservation district and already occupied by an exposed concrete skeleton left behind by an abandoned 1995 construction project. A design concept that leaves the district's historical character undisturbed and intelligently utilises the unfinished frame resolved the tension. The four-storey building features a setback top floor, successfully minimising its perceived height within the streetscape. Typologically, she opted to install duplex apartments across the second and third floors, transforming the rigid vertical divisions of the original concrete skeleton into a structural advantage.

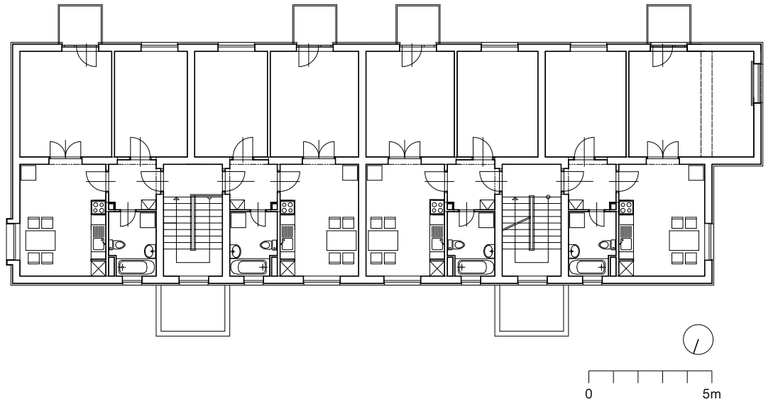
This new spatial layout was integrated into the existing structural framework, using a palette of materials that connects with the surrounding environment. The ground floor is clad in pinkish-grey stone, while the upper storeys are finished in cement-bonded particle boards in dark grey and soft pinkish tones, complemented by wooden window frames. The colour scheme subtly draws from the district's natural hues without resorting to a pastiche of historical facades, referencing tonal values rather than duplicating ornamentation. The street front exhibits a finely tuned geometric composition, characterised by precise alignment of cladding panels, subtle window offsets, and a disciplined rhythm that integrates into the historic street environment without disruptive gestures.

At-grade parking along Na Priekope Street preserves the historic core's physical integrity and frees the main façade from a disruptive vehicular entrance. As an exemplary model for working uncompromisingly with a structural fragment, Skelet maintains clear reverence for a heritage environment. The restrained materiality, thoughtful colour palette, and appropriate volumetric form were verified when it received both the Dušan Jurkovič Prize and the CE ZA AR Award in 2006. /ab

Žilina, Na priekope 39
Architect: Ľubica Brunová-Koreňová
Completed: 2006
Photos: Lajo Kupkovič, Miriam Lišková



CMYK



Prešov, Majakovského ulica
Architect: Irakli Eristavi
Collaborating Architect: Martin Jančok
Designed and Reconstructed: 2003 – 2005
Photo: archive zerozero

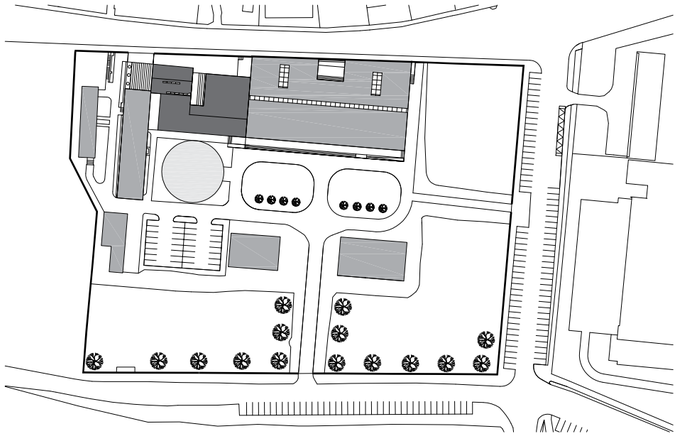
The 2003 design sets an exemplary precedent for navigating existing urban structures and adapting them to contemporary requirements. The conversion of ten older apartment blocks into buildings comprised of smaller rental units represents a rare case of residential densification. The original 1950s fabric required urgent revitalisation, prompting the city of Prešov to announce a public tender that was subsequently awarded to zerozero.

Despite stringent budget constraints, the architects transformed the original gabled forms into a composition of flat-roofed volumes. New accents were introduced with projecting masses on the western façade, finished in a blue-grey mosaic and a CMYK abstract artistic motif. The positioning of these accents intentionally references the visual link to the adjacent Tatran Prešov football stadium, asserting the buildings' presence within the wider cityscape.

Suitably landscaped public spaces and an enhanced social atmosphere complement the efficiently designed 50 m2 two-room residential units. The addition of these new cuboid volumes lends a new dimension to the facades' originally understated rhythm, ultimately resulting in a bold, persuasive architectural silhouette and a refined formal expression. /ab



Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University







Nitra, Drážovská ulica
Architects: Juraj Polyák, Ľubomír Holejšovský
Collaborating Architect: Milan Csanda
Constructed: 2001 – 2005
Photos: Pavel Meluš

Constantine the Philosopher University initiated a phased reuse of a two-hectare brownfield, formerly occupied by a tobacco factory, which it had acquired in 1999. The conversion began with the 1936 tobacco warehouse, preserving the five-storey building's functionalist character and the rhythmic proportion of its fenestration. The design cleverly incorporates other original components: the sorting hall's heavy timber trusses, exposed beam ceilings on each floor, and the historic loading dock. The last, with its dramatic four-metre cantilevered canopy, was transformed into an entrance plaza integrated with a wide staircase and barrier-free access ramp.

Inside, the original structural bays were cleared to yield luminous, deep-plan spaces for lecture halls, breakout zones, and an impressive multi-storey atrium. The lecture theatres within the former sorting hall feed directly into a wide circulation concourse serving as the primary operational spine. To secure the required floor area, the structure was capped with an airy, lightweight steel-frame vertical extension. Clad in a fully glazed curtain wall, this rooftop addition stands as a contemporary gesture intentionally contrasted against the brick-and-mortar industrial fabric. It now houses studios for the Department of Fine Arts and Art Education. Both primary elevations maintain strict symmetry anchored by a central axis. The main entrance façade utilises white ribbon windows to revive a classic functionalist vocabulary. The rear elevation features a bi-chromatic composition: a lower, deep red volume punctured by an elegant grid of narrow slit windows–interrupted by the atrium's soaring glass wall–surmounted by the white envelope of the rooftop addition.

This once-derelict factory has been revitalised into a vibrant campus hub, now hosting three of the university's faculties: Education, Arts, and Central European Studies, alongside a newly constructed music pavilion, a library, and the Pavol Strauss Pastoral Centre. /ab

Library Information Centre





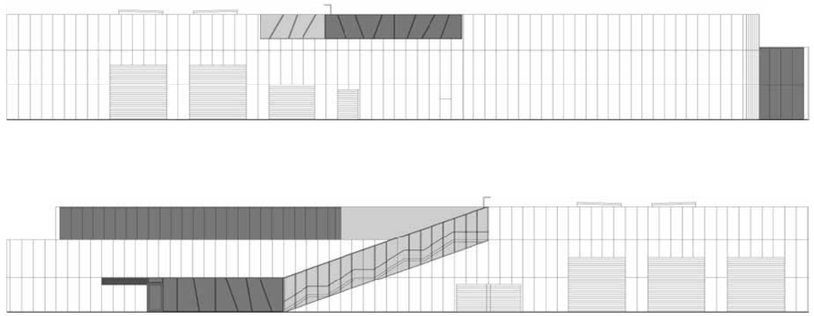
The Library Information Centre addresses a long-standing typological gap at the Technical University of Košice, anchoring an expansive spatial programme to become an integral component of the campus. On its eastern flank, the building docks directly into a lecture hall complex. It engages with the surrounding fabric by establishing another, highly accentuated campus gateway along the library's longitudinal axis, which asserts itself in long-distance views through the dominant mass of the primary fire escape staircase. Architecturally, the building's most formal gesture is the stepped auditorium volume, which projects outward over a large cantilever finished in a vibrant yellow hue.

The interior is dominated by a luminous, open volume compartmentalised only by glass partitions and a series of terraced study decks arranged around a central atrium that cuts vertically through all storeys. Suspended within this cavernous void are two distinct auditoria: a tiered lecture theatre that remains highly legible from outside as a stepped plateau, and a secondary lecture hall at the northeastern corner opening into the second floor. A network of staircases slices through the entire building. Traversing these open study zones offers a rich sensory experience accented by spectacular views of the campus.

The spatial plan is intentionally radical, even if its fluidity occasionally compromises daily operations. As co-architect Juraj Koban explained, it was envisioned as a pulsing, high-traffic hub packed with all-day academic discourse, rather than a sequence of hushed, isolated reading cubicles. Consequently, the labyrinthine multi-level interior pays tribute to the monastic library in *The Name of the Rose*. The centre actively pioneers a new typological identity, acknowledging that traditional reading has shifted to an exclusive activity in this rapid-fire digital era. Nonetheless, this innovative concept stands out within Slovakia's educational landscape. /ab

Košice, B. Němcovej 5
Architects: Juraj Koban, Štefan Pacák, Karol Gregor
Constructed: 2005 – 2009
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

Phoenix Zeppelin







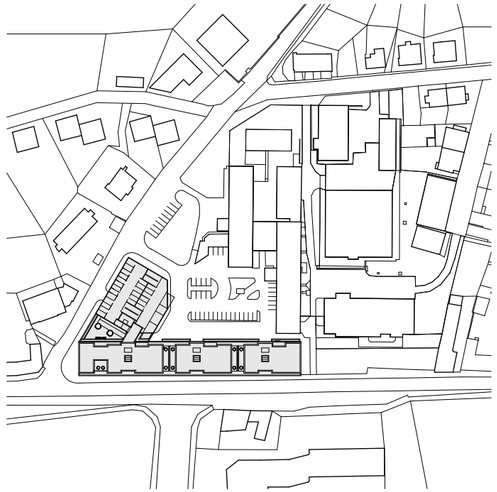
Banská Bystrica, Zvolenská cesta 50
Architects: Branislav Hovorka, Štefan Moravčík, Martin Paulíny
Constructed: 2009 – 2010
Photos: Branislav Hovorka

Located along the primary arterial road into Banská Bystrica, this headquarters has become a prominent symbol of modern architecture, successfully merging functional utility with high aesthetic standards. As Phoenix Zeppelin specialises in the sale and maintenance of Caterpillar heavy machinery, the building's design pays homage to the modernist principle of "building-as-machine". The structure is carefully oriented to its site, shielding workplaces from the adjacent high-traffic thoroughfare.

The primary glazed facades face a secluded north-facing atrium, which floods the spacious entrance hall and gallery with natural light. While this inner core is transparent and open, the remainder of the building assumes a compact, protective character, enveloped in a "metallic skin" of expanded aluminium mesh. This outer layer produces a dynamic interplay of light and shadow that shifts with the seasons and the sun's angle, concealing both the window apertures and a private staff terrace. The industrial aesthetic is punctuated by vibrant yellow accents, most notably on the expanded-metal fire escape and the southern facade, which is designed to evoke a warehouse racking system.

The architects successfully unified diverse functional zones, ranging from the gallery's administrative offices to the prefabricated steel workshops, into a singular aerodynamic form that reflects the area's kinetic energy. In 2011, the Phoenix Zeppelin headquarters swept Slovakia's top honours: the ARCH Prize, CE ZA AR, and the Dušan Jurkovič Award. /ab

Masaryčky Business Centre







Trenčín, Legionárska 7158
Architect: Juraj Polyák
Collaborating Architects: Milan Csanda, Martin Dulík, Pavol Dúbrava
Constructed: 2006 – 2008
Photos: Pavel Meluš

The Masaryčky Business Centre exemplifies how restrained civic architecture can age well, maintaining a remarkably fresh and contemporary character over extended operation. Erected on the site of the demolished Masaryk Barracks, this six-storey volume is structured into three clearly legible horizontal registers. A two-storey glazed plinth opens invitingly to the street, housing an entrance hall with escalators and vital commercial amenities that smoothly mediate the transition between the public urban realm and the building's interior. Above this transparent base, the middle two storeys are dedicated to corporate office spaces, finished in a disciplined white render and defined by sharp ribbon windows.

The composition culminates in a two-storey recessed crown, a volumetrically fragmented extension clad in dark red wood-imitation panels that features an alternating sequence of corner glazing and slender ribbon windows. The sophisticated window rhythm serves as the architect's signature form-giving element, generating a powerful spatial dynamic further enhanced by a strict formal and material economy. Juraj Polyák intentionally avoids grand, histrionic gestures. Instead, he relies on a transparent structural hierarchy that allows users and passersby to decode the building's layout and programming. Parking logistics are resolved via an independent, unobtrusive eight-storey garage annexed to the northeastern flank.

Ultimately, the Masaryčky Business Centre acts as a crisply defined urban anchor with an overwhelmingly positive civic presence. It articulates the immutable, classical grammar of the mixed-use typology through an immaculate compositional logic that has completely vindicated itself over time. /ab

Grand Hotel Kempinski High Tatras

Štrba-Štrbské Pleso
Architects: Peter Černo / cerno+architecten, Munich
Local Architect and Design Engineer: GFI, a. s., Bratislava
Interiors: Living Consulting Group AB, Sweden, CADE, s. r. o., Bratislava
Revitalised: 2005 – 2009
Photos: Matej Hakár

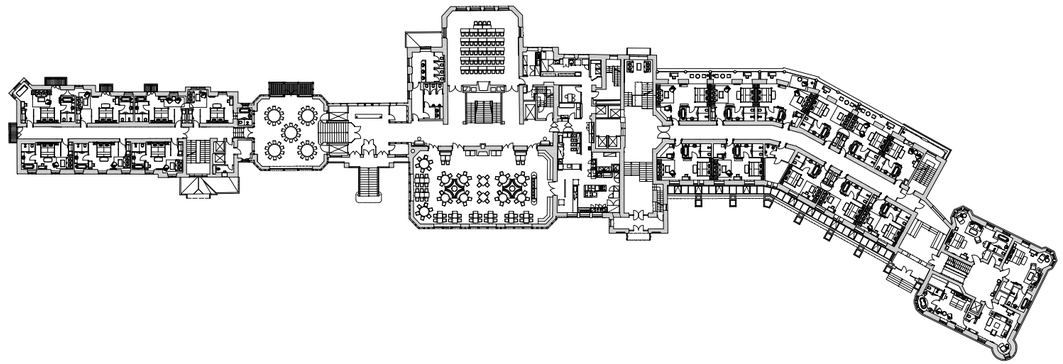


The five-star Grand Hotel Kempinski High Tatras is a complex with a long and inspiring history, formed through the revitalisation of three historic buildings that were constructed over three decades. The ensemble represents a dialogue between distinct architectural eras: the Neo-Renaissance Vila Jánošík (Gedeon Majunke, 1893), the Secessionist Grand Hotel Kriváň (Quido Hoepfner and Gejza Györgyi, 1906), and the Rondo-Cubist Hotel Hviezdoslav (Alois Pinkas with interiors by Vlastimil Hofman, 1922). Once a favoured respite for Austrian and Hungarian nobility, the complex stands as a premier landmark in the High Tatras.

The restoration sought to preserve the original character of this severely dilapidated national cultural monument and adapt it as a luxury hotel within Tatra National Park. Rather than creating a mere replica, the architects focused on stabilising the structural corpus, painstakingly restoring the roofs, historic colour schemes, half-timbered cornices, and original balustrades. Visually, the hotel has been returned to its peak historical appearance, complemented by refined interiors that embody the elegant, sophisticated atmosphere of a classic mountain retreat.

This ambitious programme necessitated significant operational updates, including a new main entrance, a grand lobby, and a substantial underground expansion housing a modern wellness centre and spa. The facades were carefully restored, with the original windows and doors replaced by faithful replicas. Flanking the longitudinal complex, two minimalist apartment wings were added, featuring gently curved gabled roofs clad in flamed stone inspired by the surrounding granite peaks. Their generous glazed facades frame panoramic views of the Tatra landscape, while their simple geometry deliberately defers to the historic hotel's ornate richness. In 2016, architect Peter Černo received Bronze at The American Architecture Prize in the Architectural Heritage category for his masterful revitalisation. /ab





Hotel Panorama



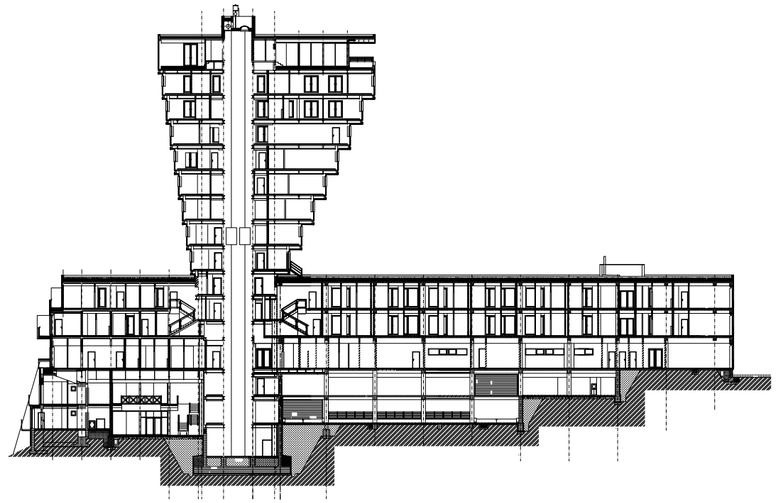
Vysoké Tatry, Štrbské Pleso, Poštová 8
Architect: Zdeněk Řihák
Constructed: 1967 – 1970
Reconstructed by: Andrea Klenovičová, Roman Klenovič / A.R.K. Ateliér
Reconstructed: 2008 – 2011
Photos: Ján Krcho

Specifically constructed for the 1970 FIS World Nordic Championships, the 160-bed Hotel Panorama was designed as the prominent high-rise landmark for Štrbské Pleso, the western High Tatras's civic and recreational mountain resort hub. Situated at the foot of a glacial moraine ridge, the hotel was designed to minimise intervention in the natural terrain while avoiding costly rock excavation. The communal zone–comprising the hotel lobby, restaurant, cafe, snack bar, and central kitchen–occupies a single-floor horizontal podium embedded into the sloping terrain on one side and, on the other, resting on the stone plinth of the former cogwheel railway.

In sharp contrast, the residential block was composed as a dynamic, vertically stepped volume that projects outward as it rises. This inverted silhouette offers varied room layouts boasting panoramic views of the surrounding alpine landscape in all four cardinal directions, while serving as a bold architectural accent from the exterior. The structure utilises a steel frame infilled with aerated concrete blocks, with the façade treated with a combination of timber cladding and a specialised textured resin emulsion plaster that was mixed with crushed marble. Inside, natural larch and pine finishes preserve a traditional mountain character.

While the hotel's provocative form directly mirrored the globally ascendant mega-structural design trends of the late 1960s, it represented an extraordinary achievement given the socialist construction industry's strict systematic limitations. Between 2008 and 2011, the complex underwent a comprehensive renovation to convert it into a four-star apartment hotel called Panorama Resort. This renewal sensitively engaged with the original geometry. Although the low-slung podium base was expanded by two storeys upward and a broad terrace was appended to its south-east elevation, the intervention ultimately granted the Panorama a more refined, unified contemporary appearance. /vš





Elesko Winery

Modra, Partizánska 2275
Architects: Kalin Cakov, Emil Makara
Collaborating Architects: Metodyi Monev, Miloš Djuračka,
Ján Obušek, Martin Boška
Completed: 2009
Photos: Tomáš Manina



In 2009, a winery called In Vino was established on the picturesque slopes of the Little Carpathian Mountains, a region with a deep viticultural heritage. It was among Slovakia's first significant examples of 21st-century wine architecture and remains a prominent landmark along the road between Modra and Dubová. Now known as Elesko, the two-storey complex is situated at the foot of a gentle slope and ranks among the country's most expansive winery structures.

The building is expertly configured to its terrain, with the production facilities located below ground to allow for the use of gravity-flow principles during grape processing. An access ramp leads to the main entrance, located on the first basement level, opening into a spacious lobby. This focal point serves as the hub for an unusually diverse spatial programme, including a gallery with hotel accommodation, a barrel cellar, a restaurant, and a wine shop, all of which maintain a visual connection to the production areas.

Architecturally, the complex is defined by two distinct layers: a long production wing with grey exposed concrete facades and, at the western end, a dominant white cube housing the gallery. The cube is clad in precast concrete panels and features a large glazed wall that opens to the landscape. These two distinctive geometric volumes are mirrored throughout the surrounding terrain, where gabion baskets, greenery, and a water feature in front of the gallery soften the winery's stark, linear forms. /ab



Church of St Bartholomew

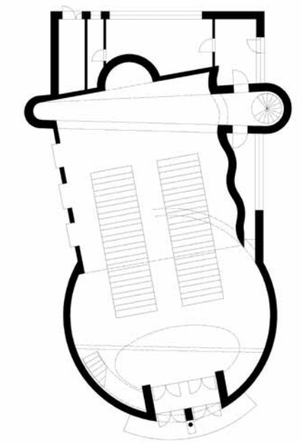


Vojkovce
Architect: Albert Rybarčák
Wall Paintings: Vladimír Popovič
Constructed: 1990 – 1993
Photos: František Jiroušek

After decades during which the construction of religious buildings was prohibited, the fall of socialism in 1989 triggered a construction boom of churches in Slovakia. Nearly 600 sacral buildings, including prayer rooms and chapels, were erected in the following decade, varying in architectural quality. Amidst this surge, the Roman Catholic Church of St. Bartholomew stands out for its subtle postmodernist approach, a hallmark of Albert Rybarčák. Working within the realm of postmodernism, he infuses his own authentic elements and original architectural vision, and the church in Vojkovce is evidence of his approach. Situated on a cemetery hillside in the historic Spiš region, known for Spiš Castle and the city of Levoča, this diminutive church harmonises a rotunda—a symbol of early Christianity—with a nave and tower in an unconventional, integrated silhouette.

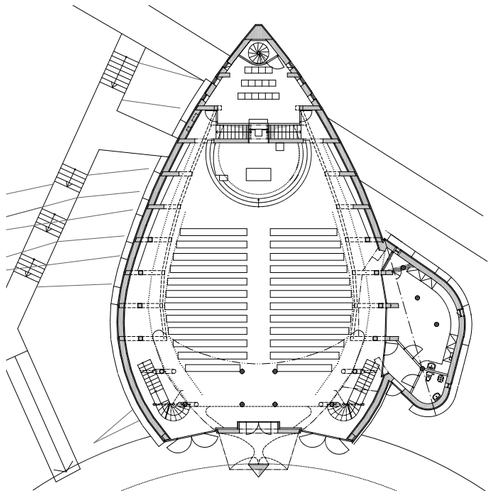
The main entrance reinterprets medieval architecture through a postmodern lens, featuring circular windows and a portal accentuated by a cross. This traditional longitudinal symmetry is intentionally disrupted by a "mythical ark", a symbolic ship with slanted walls that appears to sail into the interior, evoking the Old Testament story of Noah. Vladimír Popovič's murals, ranging from abstract forms to a folk-inspired rainbow, enhance the spiritual atmosphere.

An emotive testament to its era, the church uses an additive composition of volumes to reflect the site's vernacular simplicity. By blending ancient architectural principles with a spiritual biblical narrative, it represents a significant Slovak contribution to contemporary sacral architecture. In 1994, the project was honoured with the Dušan Jurkovič Prize. /ab





Parish Church of the Divine Mercy





Košice, Trieda KVP 6
Architects: Pavel Šimko, Richard Neufeld, Peter Pásztor, Martin Drahovský, Ladislav Friedmann, Rastislav Rozman
Constructed: 1999 – 2012
Photos: Igor Šimko, Alexander Jiroušek

The organic, expressive form of the Parish Church of the Divine Mercy provides a strikingly visceral contrast to the rational geometry of the prefabricated panel blocks that dominate Košice's KVP housing estate. Conceived as a distinct sacral landmark, the building comprises two concave, interconnected volumes clad in a sleek, metallic titanium-zinc grey envelope punctuated by a delicate lace-like termination detail along its upper crests. The underlying floor plan directly mirrors the morphology of a mandorla, the historic, almond-shaped aureole central to traditional Christian iconography. This symbolic outline resolves internally into a soaring, dramatic nave, directing the principal focus to the exposed, constructivist joinery of a light-coloured truss system supporting the roof structure. Together with a deeply disciplined approach to liturgical furnishings and ambient lighting, this strategy allows the pure material honesty of the church's tectonics and engineering to remain primary.

Flanking the main volume, a side apse morphs seamlessly into a slender bell tower capped by a minimalist cross silhouette. The configuration reflects the holistic design methodology practised by Peter Pásztor and Martin Drahovský, who bypassed general corporate typologies in favour of highly plastic natural geometries. Inspired by the legacy of Hungarian architect Imre Makovecz, an advocate of organic architecture, they utilise a design vocabulary rooted in regional vernacular organicism, with harmony between human habitation and the natural world. /ab



1989 – 2010

Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit

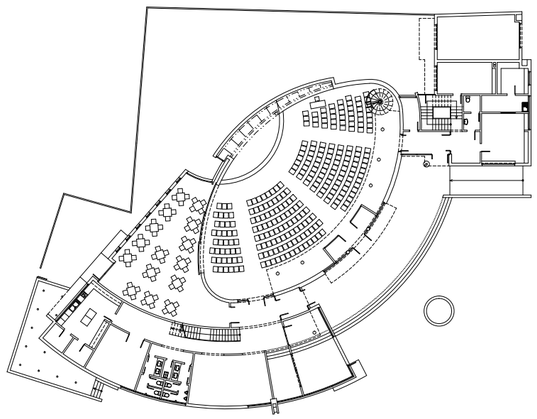


Nitra, Sládkovičova 12
Architects: Juraj Polyák,
Ľubomír Závodný
Completed: 2000
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

The Lutheran church in Nitra features a clean, balanced, and proportionate composition of three functionally distinct but structurally interconnected volumes that seamlessly unify the surrounding urban block. The central elliptical nave, defined by its lenticular floor plan, is wedged between two lateral wings, creating an inviting public parvis in front of the main entrance and its expansive glazed wall. Clerestory lighting floods the liturgical space, emphasising the interior's lofty proportions.

The minimalist white interior, accented by warm wood tones, evokes a harmonious and meditative atmosphere. While the space is anchored by a six-metre-tall bronze cross and baptismal font (both by sculptor Milan Lukáč), it is the overall spiritual aura that fosters contemplation. The lateral wings contain communal spaces and two parish halls, while a taller three-storey wing accommodates the parish offices, the pastor's and chaplain's residences, and garages.

Externally, the church's denomination is symbolised by a slender, modernist bell tower topped with a cross. The design is notable for its masterful composition of three white masses, where the proportions and tectonic interplay of solid walls and apertures are governed by geometric principles, asserting a clear vision for 21st-century sacral architecture. Stripped of grand gestures and sentimentality, the church gracefully blends the liturgical with the secular, emphasising an ecumenical mission alongside the communal and social dimensions of a modern place of worship. /ab





Salesian Church





Bratislava, Miletičova ulica
Architects: Ada and Marián Weber
Constructed: 1995 – 1997
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho, Matúš Dulla

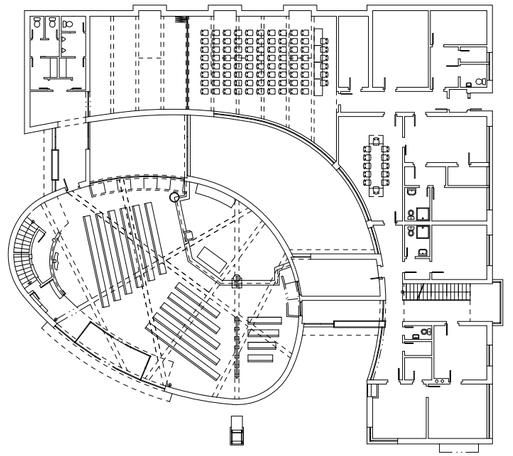
Bratislava's Miletičova Street is defined primarily by a dense 1970s prefabricated housing estate, an infrastructure setting into which Ada and Marián Weber inserted a new church for the Salesians of Don Bosco. The postmodernist language employed by the Webers eschews fragmentary, historicist rhetoric. Instead, it maintains a highly refined, restrained civic register precisely calibrated to the scale of its surroundings. The structure is composed of three clearly legible volumes: a tall, slender tower crowned with a cross; a dominant, curvilinear main nave; and a lower side wing that integrates smoothly into the street-level parterre. The facades are unified by horizontally segmented cladding in two alternating ochre tones, generating a serene surface gradient.

The building's most expressive formal gesture is the sweeping arch of the nave, terminated by a continuous band of angled louvers. While typologically referencing a traditional light-filled apse, this element functionally resolves the interior's natural illumination and ventilation. The slender tower integrates effortlessly into the composition, mirroring the materiality of the larger whole without ostentation. This sense of programmatic restraint continues throughout the interior, which features a lofty, softly vaulted nave, recessed strip lighting, pristine white walls, and austere timber pews that direct the eye toward a central composition of a bronze Crucifixion on a ceramic relief. Along the lateral wall, vertical bands of blue-stained glass introduce a rhythmic coloration into the serene sanctuary, transforming under evening light into an independent artistic motif.

The Salesian Church exemplifies a version of postmodernism that carries its stylistic idiom with notable lightness, never compromising on strict architectural grammar, but entering the prefabricated housing estate through a masterfully balanced, aesthetically captivating composition of architectural masses. /ab

Queen of the Family Roman Catholic Pastoral Centre





Bratislava, Teplická ulica
Architects: Ľubomír Závodný, Georg Bliznakov, Matej Siebert
Completed: 1999
Photos: Pavel Meluš

A balanced, harmonious composition of diverse volumes, this pastoral centre–comprising the church, a parish hall, and a rectory–integrates seamlessly into its residential surroundings. The slender, modernist vertical of the bell tower offsets the church's oval form and timber cladding. Prominently visible from the adjacent thoroughfare, the building serves as a dominant landmark and a visual beacon for the neighbourhood. Judging the project for the 2000 Arch Awards, architect Ján Stempel remarked that from whichever side the church is approached, it holds its own.

Despite its modest scale, the centre exerts a significant formal and spiritual influence. The interior reflects a contemporary approach to sacral space, where a reinforced concrete ribbed ceiling caps the oval floor plan. A clerestory of rectangular windows directly illuminates the ambo with natural light, while the roof plane's dynamic geometry lends the interior a ceremonial character, evoking a multitude of spiritual paths.

Exhaustive detailing is evident throughout, from the articulated glazed entrance and the rhythmic window grids to the church roof, which echoes the contours of the interior volume. This clean, thoughtful spatial concept, defined by its contextual sensitivity, is the signature of architect Ľubomír Závodný. The church received the ARCH Award in 2000. /ab



DIGITAL ARCHITECTURE
2010 – 2026

Digital Architecture
2010 – 2026

Entering the second quarter of the 21st century provides a compelling opportunity to look back at the accomplishments of the last twenty-five years. Viewed from a broader perspective, the development of Slovak architecture over this initial quarter-century can be evaluated as heading in a confident direction. The period yielded a wealth of exceptional works that moulded a new aesthetic, introduced novel themes, and mirrored European professional aspirations. Emerging along the timeline as milestones of high architectural value, these projects demonstrate that architecture in Slovakia has matured, becoming more self-assured, yet simultaneously more environmentally responsible and socially mindful. This evolution has been marked by a growing number of unassuming, modest, and "positively ordinary" solutions: architectural concepts that resonate deeply with both the local mindset and the surrounding landscape.

This mature, context-driven approach is unmistakable in zerozero studio's portfolio. Their projects span essential public infrastructure from the civic sobriety of the Leopoldov Municipal Office (2002) to their recent, transformative reconstruction of the Poprad Theatre (2025). This shift is likewise underscored in exceptionally celebrated restorations of Bratislava landmark structures, such as the rejuvenation of the Jurkovič Heating Plant (2021) by Martin Paško and the team from DF Creative Group, and the monumental expansion and reconstruction of the Slovak National Gallery (2022) by Martin Kusý and Pavol Paňák. Far from isolated monuments, these projects belong to a broader, high-quality wave of industrial and historical conservation and adaptive reuse. This trend is further cemented by successful industrial conversions across the country, such as zerozero's *Kasárne Kulturpark* (2013) in Košice, the transformation of the Piešťany Power Plant (2014) by Michal Ganobjak, Vladimír Hain, Martin Paško, and Zuzana Zacharová, and the GutGut studio's acclaimed Mlynica project in Bratislava (2017).

Conversely, a transformation of an entirely different scale has reshaped Bratislava's former industrial zones, such as the Gumon factory area and the Apollo Refinery, where a dense cluster of high-rise buildings has coalesced into the city's new downtown district. An island of new landmark skyscrapers is soaring along the southern to southeastern edge of Bratislava's Old Town, taking advantage of an exceptional location along the Danube, with construction continuing apace. To a greater degree, a bolder architectural expression and stylistic richness have been integrated within these large-scale brownfield projects. This internationalised urban paradigm is particularly evident in remarkable high-rise landmarks such as Sky Park Residence (2020), designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, and in extensive, mixed-use waterfront developments such as Erick van Egeraat's River Park (2007).

With the initial late 20th-century urban planning chaos having subsided, enhanced positions among city architects and their offices have strengthened the role of urban regulation and planning. The marked increase in architectural competitions organised by the Slovak Chamber of Architects is decisively contributing to the improvement of these new design concepts. The quality of public spaces has vastly improved, becoming a foundational component of contemporary development. Time-tested urban design principles are experiencing a steady revival, visible in a return to the traditional urban block with an emphasis on community functions. This is seen in *Hájpark* (2017), a residential complex in Bratislava designed by GutGut and Imagine Development, and the Zwirn District (2023) by Compass Architekti, also in the capital. Similarly, Vallo Sadovsky Architects has demonstrated a renewed focus on streetscapes and public squares in *Nádvorie* (2018), a project in Trnava. Ultimately, this reapplication of foundational urban design and spatial order is drastically improving the overall vitality of the built environment.

Encouragingly, architecture has seized centre stage in civic initiatives, attracting growing cultural interest among the wider public. This cultural shift has been sustained by the enduring success experienced by the Days of Architecture and Design (*Dni architektúry a dizajnu–DAAD*). Founded in 2010 by Tatiana Kollarová and Štefan Polakovič, the festival bridges the gap between local and global designs while keeping critical contemporary issues at the forefront, solidifying its status as a premier event in Slovakia's cultural calendar. Established in 2014, *Čierne diery* (Black Holes) has revolutionised the public's perception of long-neglected historical layers, spanning obsolete factories, decaying spa complexes, abandoned or crumbling manor houses, and overlooked icons of late-modernist architecture. The association thoroughly documents this forgotten cultural heritage, translating its research into critically acclaimed books and collectible graphic art prints. It actively funds and engages in conservation efforts at vulnerable heritage sites, such as the Coburg Manor House in Jelšava and historical properties in Betliar and Smolnícka Huta.

In 2012, Klára Kubíčková and Igor Teplan founded C.A.L.E.H, a non-profit organisation that oversees the Ladislav Eduard Hudec Centre of Architecture. A native of Banská Bystrica, Hudec achieved international renown primarily through his prolific career in Shanghai. He designed more than thirty-seven buildings, leaving an indelible mark globally as the architect of the iconic 22-storey Park Hotel (1934). Built as a skyscraper for the Shanghai Joint Savings Society, it was for three decades the tallest building in Asia. Hudec was previously thought to have left behind only two completed works in Slovakia, but recent archival research uncovered a third–a fire station in Kremnica. To honour his extraordinary international legacy, the Slovak Architects Society established the Ladislav Hudec Prize in 2013. It is awarded to Slovak architects operating successfully outside the country. Past recipients include Peter Lizoň (2013), Alena Kubová Gauché (2016), Peter Černo (2018), Ada and Marian Weber (2020), and Martin Zavracky (2025).

In recent years, architectural discourse in Slovakia has shifted toward themes prominent across Europe, including the conservation of existing building stock, the adaptive reuse of industrial heritage, and brownfield redevelopment. In addition, the urgent need to mitigate the impacts of climate change has driven the adoption of greener architectural approaches. As part of its ongoing evolution as an independent discipline, contemporary architecture has successfully risen to these complex challenges and must continue to move forward.

Setting aside the "bird's-eye view" defined at the outset and returning to ground level, even the finest architectural works must be considered against the backdrop of the broader construction trends. From this perspective, numerous shortcomings, unresolved challenges, and systemic failures are tarnishing architecture's overall image. Only those judged the most impactful are considered here. At the turn of the millennium, public commissions were virtually non-existent. New architecture was largely driven by private investors, who consequently shaped the development of Slovak architecture over the past quarter-century.

To date, however, new public buildings remain few and far between. Facilities for education, sport, healthcare, and culture continue to face a profound developmental deficit, leaving the public sector heavily underserved. While private residential construction dominates in Slovakia, a severe shortage of state-subsidised rental and social housing nevertheless persists, with new construction in this sector remaining negligible. Similarly, inadequate urban planning and the substandard architectural quality of most suburban zones have long been targets of sharp professional criticism. Yet, these shortcomings are the direct result of rapid societal transformation and prevailing economic conditions, which can be rectified through sound planning. Ultimately, they constitute a challenge for the future. The state's role here is essential and irreplaceable. Architectural history clearly demonstrates that every conscientious democracy must strive, in the public interest, to cultivate the conditions necessary for excellent architecture to emerge.

Throughout its history, architecture has mirrored society and its culture. Above all, as Dalibor Veselý points out, it is a form for representing the world. /ab

European Capital of Culture
Trenčín 2026

European Capital of Culture
Košice 2013



Czech and Slovak Architecture 1918 – 2023, exhibition held at Bratislava Castle from 16 December 2023 to 31 May 2024



Ladislav Eduard Hudec Prize, 2013 emblem



Čierne diery (Black Holes), photo by Diana Dobrescu, Vrstvy

2012	Ladislav Eduard Hudec Centre of Architecture founded (by C.A.L.E.H.) Ladislav Hudec Prize inaugurated
2013	Košice designated European Capital of Culture (with Marseille, France)
2014	*Čierne diery* (Black Holes) established First edition of Deti a architektúra (Children and Architecture), a children's art contest and a project to educate children about architecture
2018	DAAF (*Dni architektúry a filmu*) founded in Bratislava as the autumn edition of DAAD presenting film documentaries
2019	Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava created
2020	Ada and Marian Weber awarded the Ladislav Hudec Prize
2022	Institute for Architecture Adapted to Climate Change (IAACC) established in Trnava I.CON.A – first edition of the Industrial Conversion Award
2023	Czech and Slovak Architecture – Panorama of Architecture 1918–2023, an exhibition held at Bratislava Castle from 16 December 2023 to 31 May 2024
2024	Exhibition of the VAL Group held at the Slovak Radio Gallery, Bratislava
2025	New Building Act 25/2025 and Act on Land-Use Planning enacted Architectural Policy for Slovakia approved
2026	Trenčín designated European Capital of Culture (with Oulu, Finland) 17th Edition of DAAD (Dni architektúry a dizajnu) Festival 50th anniversary of the independent Faculty of Architecture and Design, Slovak University of Technology 80th anniversary of formal architectural education in Slovakia



2024 Slovak Architects Society Awards Ceremony



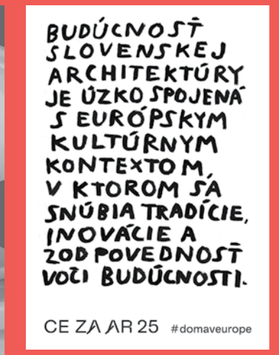
2024 CE ZA AR Awards Ceremony

*80 1946 výučba architektúry na Slovensku
*50 1976 založenie FAD STU

Logo by Lucia Suchá for the double anniversary of the Faculty of Architecture and Design



2026 Days of Architecture and Design (DAAD), Bratislava



Cover of CE ZA AR 2025 publication



2026 Days of Architecture and Design (DAAD)



The 2023 Slovak Society of Architects Award was awarded to Pavel Paňák by Igor Teplan

Slovak National Gallery

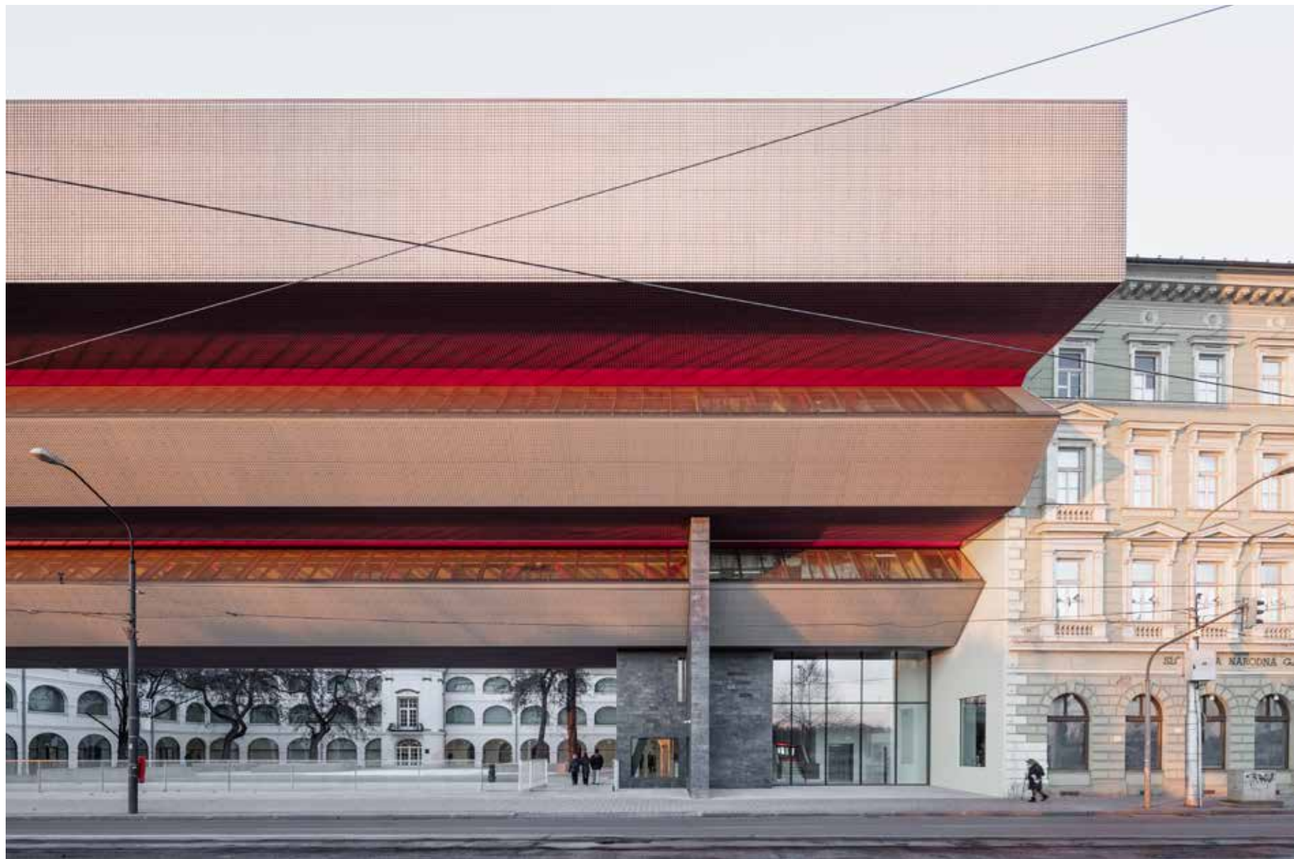


Bratislava, Rázusovo nábrežie 2
Architects: Martin Kusý, Pavol Paňák / A B.K.P.Š.
Collaborating Architects: Mária Michalič Kusá, Martin Kusý, Jr., Jana Paňáková
Architects - Baroque Wing of the Water Barracks: G. B. Martinelli,
F. A. Hillebrandt (1759 – 1763)
Architect – Baroque Wing Extension: Vladimír Dedeček (1969 – 1977)
Restored: 2016 – 2022
Photos: Matej Hakár

The reconstructed Slovak National Gallery is an exceptional architectural milestone mirroring the Kusý-Paňák team's masterful methodology and lifelong experience. Vladimír Dedeček's distinctive late-modernist idiom, anchored by the daring, 75-metre elevated gallery bridge, had long been celebrated and vilified. Emerging from winning proposals in 2003 and 2005, the B.K.P.Š. studio applied an authentic approach to the site's distinct historical strata. Rigorous analysis, invention, and profound tectonic humility synthesised disparate elements into a harmonious whole that integrates contrasting architectures.

Rather than pursue passive historic preservation, the focus moved to the complex's adaptive reuse and structural "recycling" into a new, multi-layered spatial mosaic. The protracted timeline allowed design concepts to mature, fostering a critical dialogue with Dedeček, with whom the restoration architects maintained a warm professional relationship. Key interventions include fluid boundaries between interior and exterior realms to introduce entry points and urban thresholds stitching the campus into Bratislava's Old Town. The restored bridge volume yields a novel visual connection to the city fabric while offering contemplative, elongated gallery space. Similarly, a glazed roof spanning the central courtyard generates expansive exhibition halls directly intersecting the contemporary and the historic; a dialogue reflected in the narrow canyon stairway squeezed between the modern gallery and the rear Baroque facades of the Esterházy and Dessewffy palaces.

The revitalised gallery showcases diverse spatial volumes punctuated by contemporary interventions that alternate between bold gestures and understated restraint. By threading modern systems through the historic fabric and reusing salvaged materials, a gallery campus was created that demands repeated visits to decode. Ultimately, it rehabilitates and celebrates the controversial architecture of the 1960s and 1970s. /ab



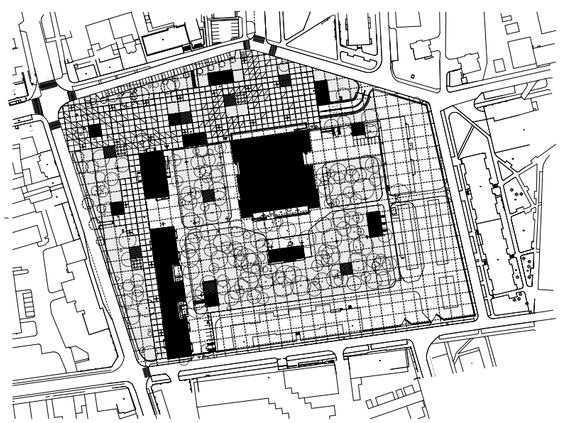
Barracks Cultural Park

Košice, Kukučínova ulica
Architect: Irakli Eristavi / zerozero
Collaborating Architects: Pavol Šilla, Marcel Benčík, Gabriel Boženík, Milan Vlček, Silvia Šillová
Designed and Reconstructed: 2012 – 2013
Photo: Robo Kočan

As part of Košice's 2013 designation as a European Capital City of Culture, nearly 25 million euros were invested in an extensive revitalisation of the former Captain Jaroš Military Barracks. Formerly a complex of supply depots and bakeries, the site was opened to the city by removing the original perimeter wall. The architects reinterpreted the rigid military layout through a new urban spatial plan, linking the structures via a geometric matrix based on an 8 × 8-metre modular grid, affirming the design philosophy that "the answer to a system is, once again, only a system."

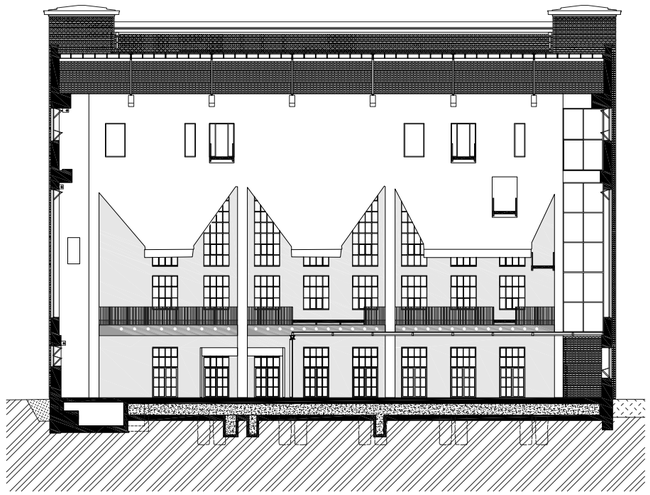
The project restored and redefined the historic substance of the three original buildings, preserving their 19th-century Classicist character while integrating new cultural functions: the Alpha concert hall, the Bravo hub for culture and creativity, and the Charlie children's science centre. The park also features eight new pavilions, whose facades are clad in polished stainless steel and glass, to create a spectacular reflective effect that mirrors the surrounding trees and visitors. The complex presents a unified, harmonious appearance defined by a monochromatic palette and a "white" central plaza, beneath which is a subterranean parking garage.

Czech architect Irena Fialová, a member of the 2014 ARCH Awards jury, considered the project to be of the highest European standard: "It's the best you can see, and I don't believe that it could have been done any better." In 2014, Kasárne/Kulturpark swept all three major Slovak architecture honours: the ARCH Prize, CE ZA AR, and the Dušan Jurkovič Award. /ab





Jurkovič Heating Plant





Amidst the curved high-rises of Sky Park (p. 300 – 301), a stark, rectangular brick factory evokes the city's industrial past. While its design is supposedly attributed to the renowned Dušan Jurkovič, the building is nevertheless celebrated today as the Jurkovič Heating Plant. Its award-winning restoration was led by Martin Paško and Zuzana Zacharová, building upon extensive preservationist research by Gabriela Habáňová, Ivan Gojdič, Pavol Pauliny, and Peter Žalman.

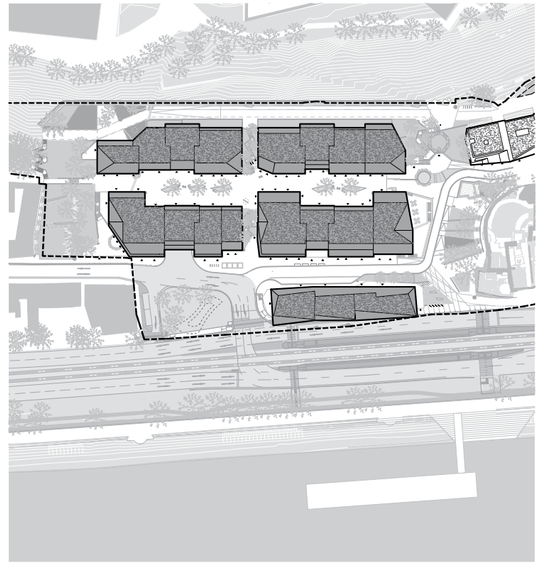
After four years of adaptive reuse, the two massive halls and three reinforced concrete coal hoppers have been repurposed. New recessed glazed walls were inserted within the historical shell, while the hoppers now serve as central focal points connected by dramatic bridges to co-working zones and offices. The complex features five administrative levels and a ground floor hosting a restaurant, café, and gallery, all set within a distinctive industrial atmosphere.

A palette of glass, black steel, concrete, and methodically restored original brickwork sustains a harmonious dialogue between old and new. Placing the plant on a lowered grade, framed by an amphitheatre-style staircase and earthen embankments, creates a protective barrier that distinguishes the building from its modern surroundings, clearly signalling its origins in a different century. In 2022, the project received the Dušan Jurkovič Prize. /ab

Bratislava, Bottova 1
Architects: Martin Paško and DF Creative Group – interior adaptation
Architectural Design Team: Zuzana Zacharová, Eva Belláková, Matúš Podskalický, Martina Michalková, Alexandra Havranová
Facade and Roof Restoration: Pavol Pauliny, Vlasta Viglašová, Ján Kresan / Pamarch
Fit-out of Tenant Spaces: Ján Antal / Perspektiv
Collaborating Architects: Roman Bányai (lead project engineer); Marta Pichová, Ivan Holub (façade and roof restoration); Pavol Pribylinec, Juraj Prokipčák, Mária Kubaliaková (structural and building works)
Designed and Reconstructed: 2018 – 2021
Photo: BoysPlayNice

Vydrica Residential Complex (Phase I)



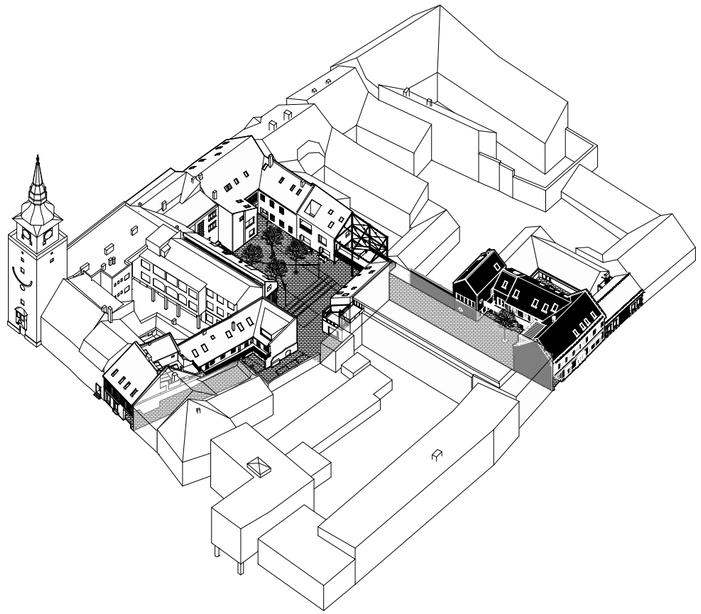


Bratislava, Žižkova, Floriánska and Oeserova ulica
Architects: Juraj Benetin, Matej Grébert, Samuel Korbeľa, Matúš Grega-Jakub, Juraj Šesták, Daniel Bartoš, Rastislav Hreha, Roman Janata / Compass Architekti; Karol Stassel, Juraj Šujan, Rastislav Moravčík / šujan_stassel
Public space concept: Marko & Placemakers
Landscape architecture: 2ka landscape architects
Constructed: 2022 – 2024
Photos: Matej Hakár

The remediation of the historic district beneath Bratislava Castle has long stood as a contested, unresolved node in the city's urban core, leaving numerous past competition proposals unrealised. The ongoing debate surrounding the revitalisation of this lost historical quarter culminated in an urban study by Compass Architekti, which establishes the morphological baseline for the current Vydrica redevelopment. Upon the completion of Phase II, a continuous link will be established between the waterfront and Bratislava's historic core, extending the traditional promenade while integrating several excavated heritage fragments. Two historic ice pits and a replica of Wolfgang von Kempelen's innovative 1770s waterworks pump have already been reconstructed, while the mediaeval Water Tower awaits restoration.

Rather than deploying literal pastiche, the master plan adapts the historic urban fabric's fine-grained density, baseline building heights, and tight street-profile widths, re-establishing a layout of three parallel streets punctuated by small plazas. High material and lighting standards at grade activate the pedestrian routes, where the active parterres of the residential blocks are progressively filled with commercial services. The architectural language of the four residential complexes features multi-textured facades subdivided into twenty-metre modules that reference the old town's historic lot widths. Executed in premium mineral plaster, stone cladding, and brickwork, these volumes utilise staggered pitched roofs to project a calculated, historicist vernacular. This traditional rhythm is sharply countered by a standalone office building that projects into the streetscape, enveloped by a contrasting, contemporary grey louvred façade. Illumination at night transforms this louvred screen into a prominent visual anchor for the new Vydrica. /ab

Revitalised Trnava Courtyard







Trnava, Štefánikova 3 – 4
Architects: Matúš Vallo, Oliver Sadovský, Marián Stanislav, Viliam Zajíček, Mateja Vonkomerová, Marcel Vadík, Zuzana Krejčířová, Elena Šoltésová / Vallo Sadovsky Architects
Designed and Reconstructed: 2013 – 2018
Photos: BoysPlayNice

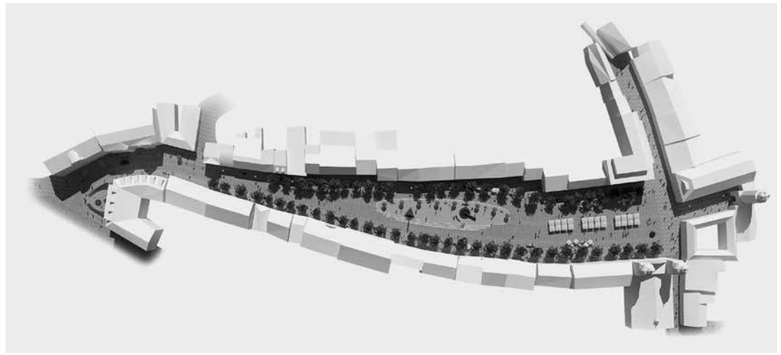
Located in the ancient heart of Trnava, near Trinity Square, this street block has undergone remarkable revitalisation with the consolidation of several parcels, enabling the insertion of a vibrant cultural and social hub into the city's historic fabric. The architects faced the formidable task of reconciling diverse layers and preserving structures, including several that date back to the 14th century. Research confirmed Gothic foundations with subsequent Renaissance and Baroque modifications. Nevertheless, working with such significant heritage proved to be a valuable advantage. Stratifying new elements, which had been created through a symbiosis of the old, and contrasting them opened up exceptional opportunities.

The architects employed a full spectrum of conservation approaches, ranging from meticulous restoration and creation of replicas to bold contemporary interventions. This transformation was driven by the enlightened vision of the Trnka family, whose aim was to provide a meaningful contribution to Trnava's communal life.

Today, the complex boasts a café and restaurant set beneath Gothic vaults, alongside three comprehensively restored burgher houses containing a small bakery with a restored 1640 stucco vault, the Malý Berlín (Little Berlin) cultural centre, and a multipurpose hall. The interior courtyard accommodates several new modern structures sensitively complementing the existing scale. By preserving the historic passages, the block maintains its urban permeability and direct connection to its surroundings, including the nearby City Tower that stands guard over the site. In 2018, the project's architectural excellence was recognised with the ARCH Award. /ab

2010 – 2026

Peace Square, Trenčín







Memento tamen neminem aliam amittere vitam quam ipsam eam quam vivat neque aliam vivere quam eam quam amittat. / Remember that no one loses any life other than the one he now lives, nor lives any other life than the one he now loses.
Marcus Aurelius

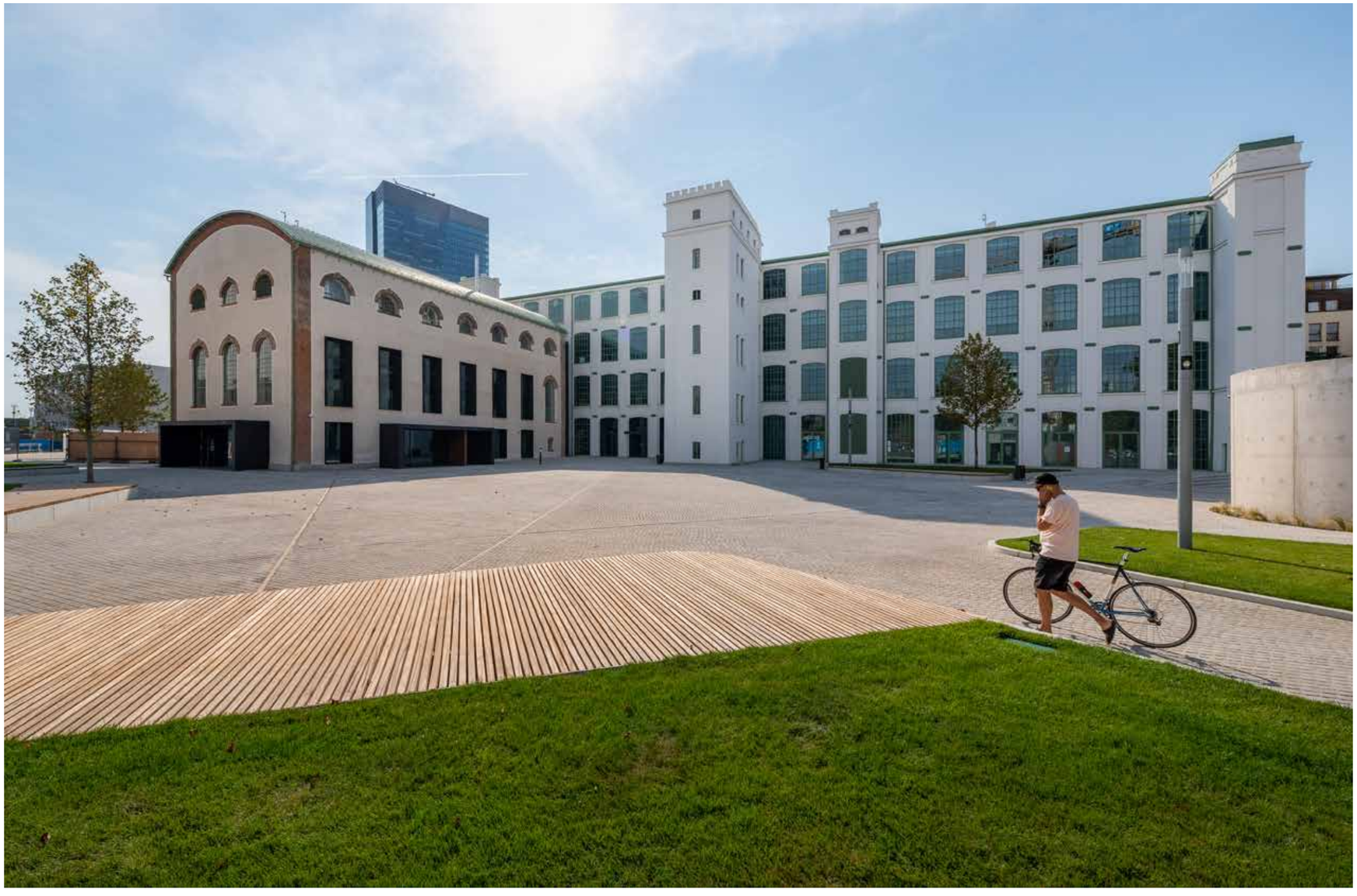
Trenčín's main square was expertly revitalised in 2018 following an architectural competition won by Atelier RAW. The heart of the city now possesses a refined appearance that highlights its unmistakable identity and echoes a history reaching back to the Roman Empire. Numerous points of interest are integrated into its elongated, lenticular form, including the Town Hall Tower and gate, the Piarist Monastery, and the nostalgic Hotel Elizabeth. From the square, the Roman inscription carved into the castle rock in 179 remains a focal point, while medieval Trenčín Castle, perched on its limestone cliff, continues to dominate the skyline.

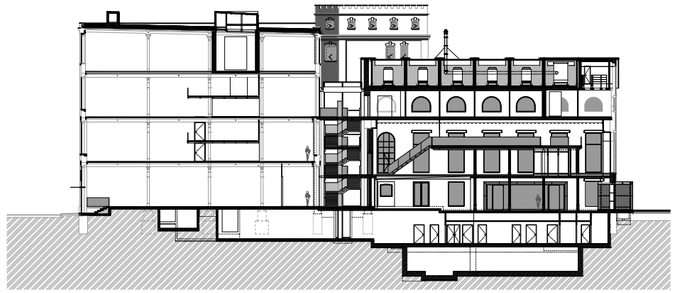
This sensitive restoration re-contextualises the square's historical strengths. Original pavestones, laid in their traditional pattern, unify the square and the surrounding parterre into a single, barrier-free level. A lighter-coloured band of rectangular stone blocks separates the split-stone mosaic pathways from the central space, flanked by a double allée of rare hackberry trees. The design is further defined by integrated lighting, minimalist street furniture, and a logical division into tranquil and dynamic zones.

At the square's spatial focal point, the Baroque plague column stands on a slightly elliptical platform of pale cut stone and lawn. Adjacent to it is the Marcus Aurelius Golden Fountain, a contemporary intervention inspired by the city's Roman past as the military encampment of Laugaritio. A tactile bronze relief model of the city further enhances the square's appeal. Ultimately, the project's understated and historically evocative character lends Trenčín's centre a new sense of nobility and elegance. /ab

Architects: Tomáš Rusín, Ivan Wahla, Petr Mutina / Atelier RAW
Collaborating Architects: Lenka Brychtová, Lukáš Vágner
Fountain designed by: Jiří Plieštik
City Model: Igor Mosný
Landscaping by: Přemysl Krejčiřík
Designed and Revitalised: 2017 – 2018
Photos: Bořivoj Čapák

Pradiareň 1900





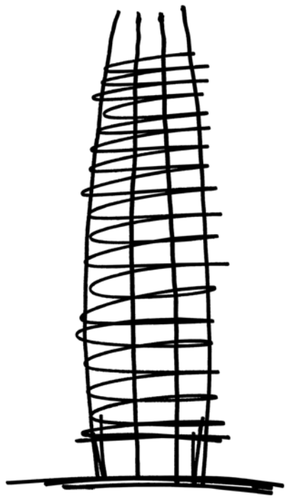
Bratislava, Svätoplukova 2A
Architects: Juraj Almássy, Peter Bouda, Richard Čečetka, Ivan Masár
Collaborating Architects: Michal Borovička, Andrea Kralovičová, Eugen Kullman, Rado Mašlonka, Ondrej Strýček
Designed and Reconstructed: 2018 – 2020
Photo: Pavel Kudiváni

Pradiareň 1900 exemplifies the conscientious approach to restoring exceptional industrial architecture from the dawn of the 20th century. Along with the adjacent Powerhouse, it is the sole survivor of a one-time thread-and-yarn factory, famously known as Cvernovka and called Závody MDŽ (International Women's Day Factory) during the socialist era. Today, this industrial landmark holds a dominant position in the new public square within the Zwirn residential district.

A sensitive revitalisation by the experienced Bouda Masár studio showcased the factory's essential characteristics: the rhythmic window grid, black cast-iron columns, and reinforced concrete ribbed ceilings. Combined with white plaster and original green window frames, the clean industrial façade conceals expansive hall interiors. These spaces were meticulously adapted to meet the requirements of a modern office building while accommodating public amenities on the ground floor.

The Powerhouse, originally the factory's energy centre, forms a separate wing with a more delicate expression, defined by exposed brickwork and coarse-grained plaster. A slender connecting tract links it to the main building. Having undergone a conservative restoration, the Powerhouse's current form references its 1902 design. This exceptional preservation of a national cultural monument is a rare gem within Bratislava's new downtown, a poignant, fragmentary trace of the city's former 20th-century eastern industrial zone /ab

Eurovea Tower Apartments



Bratislava, Pribinova ulica
Architect: GFI
Structural Engineering: Jozef Baran, Daniel Bukov, Boris Vrábel (foundation)
Constructed: 2020 – 2023
Photo: Tomáš Manina

At 168 metres and 46 storeys, Eurovea Tower was the first skyscraper constructed in Slovakia, with 408 residential units available. Connected to the adjacent shopping mall, the main ground-floor lobby offers residents and visitors direct, weather-protected access to the retail galleries. From an urban design perspective, the tower responds intelligently to its infrastructure, with Pribinova Street, the Košická Street approach to Apollo Bridge, and the projected extension of Čulenova Street converging to form a triangular parcel. Logically, the tower's footprint is likewise derived from this geometry, rounding the corners as a strategic massing tactic to soften and slim the silhouette. Within the wider urban fabric, it provides a contemporary counterpoint to Bratislava Castle, clearly visible from the Danube promenade. Indeed, the top floor hovers 27 metres higher than the castle's roofline. Equally important is the positioning relative to future master plans, anchoring the conversion of the historic Winter Port and the extension of Pribinova Street.

Structural rigidity and stability are buttressed by a robust, central triangular reinforced- concrete core housing six high-speed lifts and two scissor staircases. The inner nucleus works in tandem with a load-bearing exterior framework of structural perimeter ribbing and upward-tapering vertical piers framing the façade. This advanced engineering system integrates continuous perimeter walkways with recessed loggias around the entire building envelope, facilitating the installation of 4,364 window modules. The elegant silhouette cuts an impressive figure across the skyline from numerous vantage points during the day, while the evening lighting scheme accentuates its vertical features. Although future high-rise developments in the immediate vicinity mean the building will eventually lose its current isolation, what cannot be denied is that Eurovea Tower stands as an architecturally unmistakable vertical landmark in Bratislava's new downtown. /ab



The Mill



The Mill, an almost 70-metre high-rise, symbolises the ongoing transformations taking place in Bratislava's eastern outskirts, introducing an orderly urban structure into a heterogeneous environment. It is adjacent to the Millhaus (2026) and DiscoveryResidence (2020) apartment buildings, as well as the Jarabinky (2020) apartment complex. The Mill refers to a time in the distant past when the Danube meandered east of Pressburg, and numerous water mills lined both sides of the river.

The volumetric composition consists of two interlocking square masses of differing heights. The sculptural white Alucobond facade is this office building's key feature. The uniform window layout and contrasting black frames create a compact, grid-like, almost monumental form. The slanted jambs and lintels lend the building's silhouette artistic flair and dynamism. They produce a variety of surface perceptions, depending on changing lighting conditions, a principle shown to work well for tall landmarks. Repeating the motif more effectively emphasises the impact than excessive fragmentation. Somewhat similar to Discovery Residence, the Mill signals its prominence; its accentuated double-height ground floor extends the same layout scheme to the two top floors, housing the service areas. A well-designed central vertical core and an otherwise open layout within the structural framework guarantee that the building meets current standards. Going beyond these requirements, however, the Mill features a green roof and exterior artwork–Filip Šicko's Kolobeh– as well as the abstract works of Ašot Hass in the entrance foyer, reflecting the site's historical background. /ab

Bratislava, Mlynské nivy 55
Architects: Ladislav Nagy, Štefan Bekeš, Zuzana Farkašová, Andrej Kocian
Collaborating Architects: Lea Debnárová, Diana Divynets, Eduard Rolfes
Artworks: Filip Šicko, Ašot Haas
Constructed: 2021 – 2024
Photos: Tomáš Manina



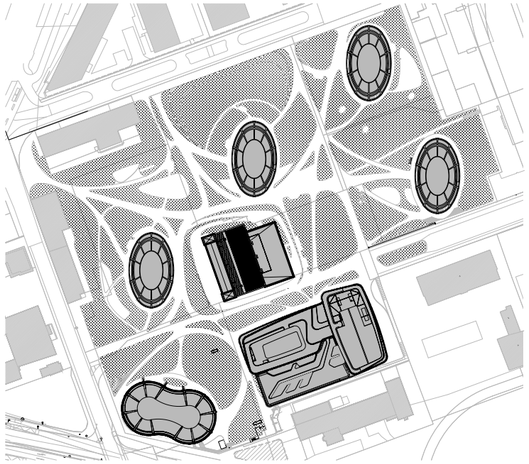
SKY PARK Residence

Bratislava, Čulenova 5, Továrenská 12, 14
Architects: Zaha Hadid Architects
Local Design: GFI
Landscaping: Marko and Placemakers, Townshend Landscape Architects
Constructed: 2016 – 2020
Photos: Matej Hakár

Bratislava's vertical horizon shifted dramatically starting at the turn of the millennium, an evolution spurred by the completion of VÚB's headquarters in 1996 (p. 220 – 221). In its vicinity, on the site of the former Apollo refinery, a cluster of high-rises has fundamentally reshaped the metropolitan panorama. They have emerged more or less spontaneously, overturning long-term strategies and impacting the local atmosphere of this relatively low-population European city. The transformation has been driven by foreign direct investment and global architectural firms, and perhaps SKY PARK Residence, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, most visibly defines it.

The skyline now features three nearly identical elliptical residential towers (the fourth was completed in 2024) distinguished by their bold, sculpturally formed façades. A massive white construction, the structural grid that wraps the building, is set against darker layers of glass panels and deep, recessed loggias. These 31-storey towers are built on a solid reinforced concrete frame with a central vertical circulation core, offering breathtaking panoramic views and a variety of well-appointed apartment layouts.

The ground floor integrates various public amenities with convenient connections to a high quality public realm. The landscaped park environment has cultivated greenery and amphitheatre-style seating atop the garage roofs. Amidst these monumental towers stands a restored industrial relic: the 1941 Jurkovič Heating Plant (p. 286 – 287). Serving as a poignant memory of the site's industrial past and vanished neighbourhoods, it remains a unique historical anchor within this island of Bratislava's modern downtown. /ab







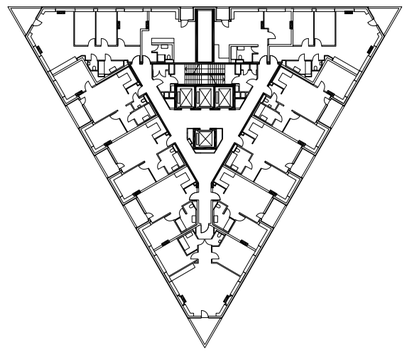
Panorama Towers



The post-industrial brownfield of the former Apollo Refinery, situated east of the Old Bridge, has evolved into Bratislava's most dynamic development zone. Its direct proximity to the Danube offers unparalleled potential for the city's emerging modern downtown. A testament to this rapid transformation is the addition of the "Danube Twins", constructed in just two years. Architect Juraj Herrmann developed the primary concept based on triangular footprints by Catalan architect Richard Bofill, while refining the design with inventive structural details.

Due to the global economic crisis of the late 2000s, the project was significantly recalibrated. The original 180-metre height was lowered to 108 metres across 33 storeys, and the facades were redesigned. The resulting photogenic white towers possess a Mediterranean freshness. Drawing on his experience with the nearby Tower 115, Herrmann employed a unitised curtain wall system. Specialised anchors mounted factory-prefabricated elements from inside, eliminating the need for scaffolding.

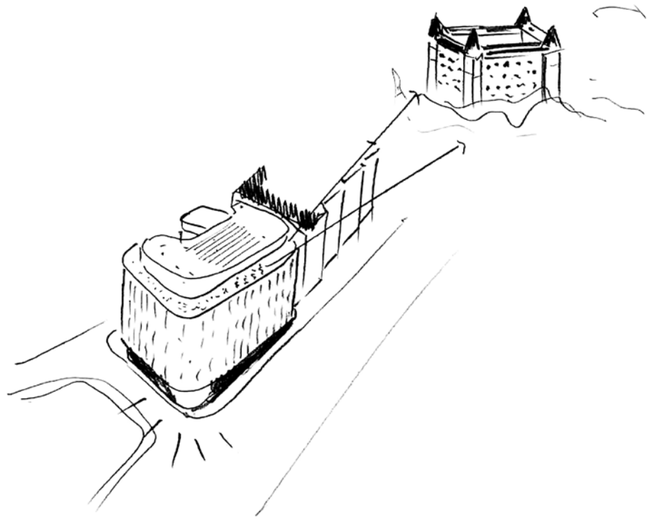
Glass and horizontal bands of sills define the towers' tectonics for precise, machine-like lines. The facades are distinguished by a filigree-like texture that softens the massing, lending the towers a delicate lace character. Corner balconies accentuate the sharp angles of the triangular plan, creating vivid perspectives where the volumes appear to lose their third dimension and resolve into flat, planar images. As Bratislava's prominent new symbol, Panorama City stood among Slovakia's tallest residential buildings upon its completion in 2015. /ab



Bratislava, Landererova – Čulenova
Architects: Juraj Herrmann / P-T ateliér Projekt-Team
Collaborating Architect: Ricardo Bofill, Taller de Arquitectura, Barcelona
Constructed: 2013 – 2015
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho



UNIQ



This office building, sandwiched near Staromestská Street, the major artery extending from the Slovak National Uprising (UFO) Bridge, integrates seamlessly into a complex spatial context. Rising only slightly higher than Vladimír Dedeček's Supreme Court Building, its rounded forms and compact façade create an unobtrusive and elegant presence that completes the city block. The ground floor, containing the main entrance and a spacious lobby, is set back to alleviate the cramped conditions of the pedestrian walkway.

The U-shaped floor plan provides expansive, divisible office spaces across six storeys, culminating in a recessed top floor with a large rooftop terrace and impressive views of the Old Town. A high degree of professional craftsmanship is evident in the balanced, dynamic window grid. The self-supporting aluminium mullion-transom system features narrow, outward-tilting windows and low fire-resistant sills. By offsetting the vertical divisions between floors by a quarter-module, the architects achieved a rhythmic interplay that gives the façade its characteristic energy.

Barbora Markechová is a Slovak architect who heads the Prague Studio of Bogle Architects, based based in London. She has succeeded in embedding balanced modern architecture into a historic, if significantly disrupted, setting. It is work achieved without grand gestures–calm, confident, and appropriately self-assured. /ab

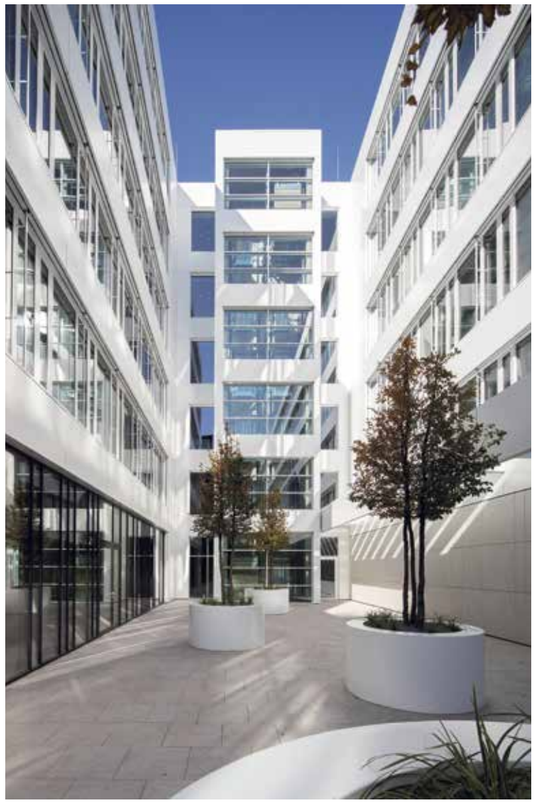
Bratislava, Staromestská 3
Architects: Ian Bogle, Barbora Markechová / Bogle Architects
Collaborating Architect: Pavol Citovický / City Project
Reconstructed: 2015 – 2017
Photo: Tomáš Manina



2010 – 2026

GBC 5

Bratislava, Galvaniho ulica
Architects: Tomáš Šebo, Igor Lichý, Imrich Vaško, Michal Romanec, Patrik Kuva, Aleš Hradecký, Juraj Murín, Martina Bognerová Hrašková / Architekti Šebo Lichý
Constructed: 2019 – 2021
Photos: Tomáš Manina

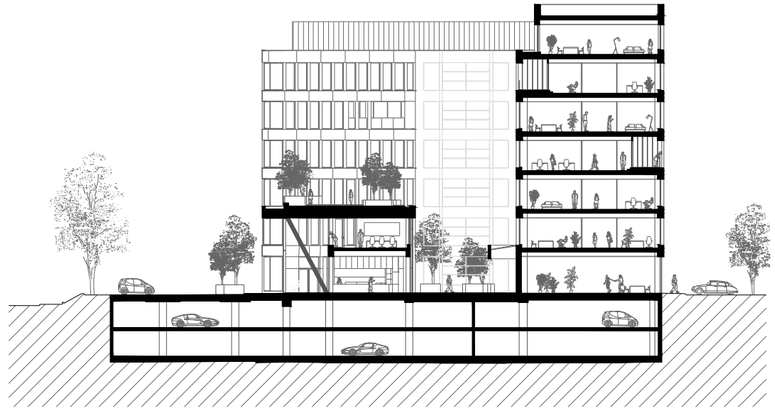


Situated adjacent to the D1 motorway axis, Galvaniho Business Centre 5 integrates into the standalone context of large urban structures, such as the Avion and Ikea commercial complexes. Its rectangular footprint directly registers to the site's spatial conditions and its adjacent transportation connections. Designed as an enclosed, solid block, the seven-storey volume is softened along its perimeters by rounded corners. An open gap deliberately disrupts this compact architectural figure at the main entry portal. Inserted into this fissure at an angle, a generously sized building entrance is oriented away from the highway corridor toward the site's quieter side. Simultaneously, a narrow, elongated inner courtyard provides a peaceful space to relax, isolated from ambient noise.

A contrasting material dichotomy, juxtaposing a dark exterior envelope with an open, bright interior void, defines the building's dynamic character. This theme is articulated on the exterior by a window grid that varies the width of its openings to respond directly to the different cardinal directions. The aluminium-clad façade is further enlivened by several volumetric recesses that function as recreational loggias. At the entrance, the shell opens up to reveal a fresh, bright-white interior characterised by abundant natural light and generous retail and amenity spaces.

The internal layout relies on a rational scheme utilising a skeleton frame, which enables open-plan office spaces designed for flexible partitioning. A fundamental component of the building's black-and-white design concept is the intentional integration of interior and exterior landscaping. By pairing these functional attributes with its distinct architectural concept, GBC 5 addresses the essential requirements of a contemporary workplace, moving beyond conventional administrative typologies to integrate harmoniously with its surroundings, even as the project layout maintains an air of balance, clarity, and freshness. /ab





2010 – 2026

Digital Park II

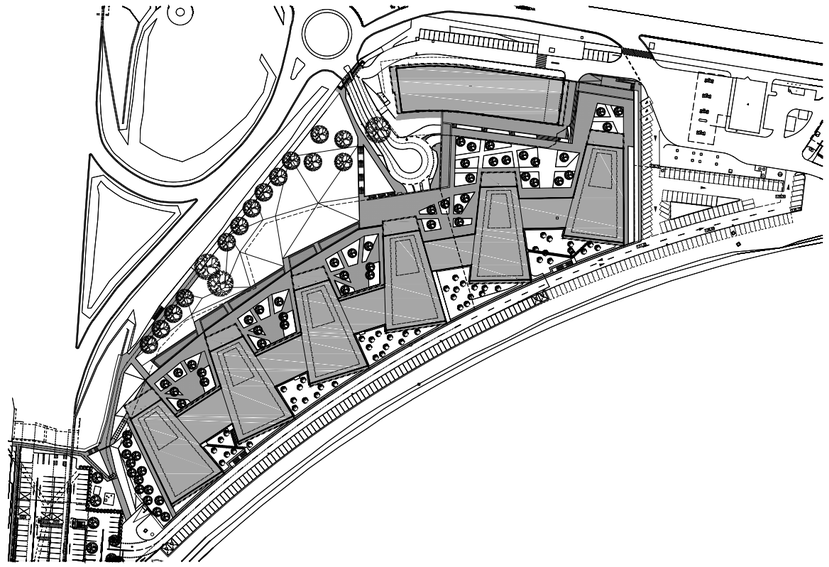
Bratislava, Einsteinova ulica
Architects: Jakub Cigler, Vincent Robert Marani / Jakub Cigler Architekti
Collaborating Architects: Petr Kužela, Tomáš Bíma, Ondřej Hrozinka,
Jan Hofman, Marián Kolbaský, Martin Vítek
Constructed: 2009 – 2012
Photos: Pavel Kudiváni

Complex spatial conditions on the Danube's right bank, with vistas of Bratislava's historic core, catalysed the conceptual design of this modern administrative complex. The site is tightly hemmed by transit thoroughfares feeding into the SNP Bridge's southeastern quadrant. A railway line further constricts the southern perimeter alongside its grade-separated interchanges. Such a setting made contextual integration a formidable challenge. Instead, their porous massing strategy involved transverse anchoring of four dynamically rotated trapezoidal blocks, with two matching volumes added during Phase III.

This fragmentation lets Digital Park establish an elegant visual dialogue with Bratislava Castle, its pinwheeling figure embracing the city from its elevated plaza terrace. Beneath the pedestrian deck lies an expansive parking garage, while the surface plane is a landscaped public space with water elements. The corporate complex's interior distribution follows a rigorous structural logic. At the geometric core of each trapezoidal footprint sits a centralised circulation and service nucleus that leaves the surrounding floor plates entirely open, exploiting concrete columns to subdivide into varied tenant layouts. The compact, dark grey envelope is equally adaptive to reconfigurations, its sleek, floor-to-ceiling glazing arranged in a disciplined vertical rhythm. The main lobbies, alongside a suite of retail and civic amenities, are consolidated within the lower podium base. Digital Park successfully introduces a sophisticated contemporary idiom to this disconnected transit zone. Through its uniform facades and precisely calibrated massing, it stands as contextual architecture gracefully taming a hostile urban environment. /ab







Zuckermandel

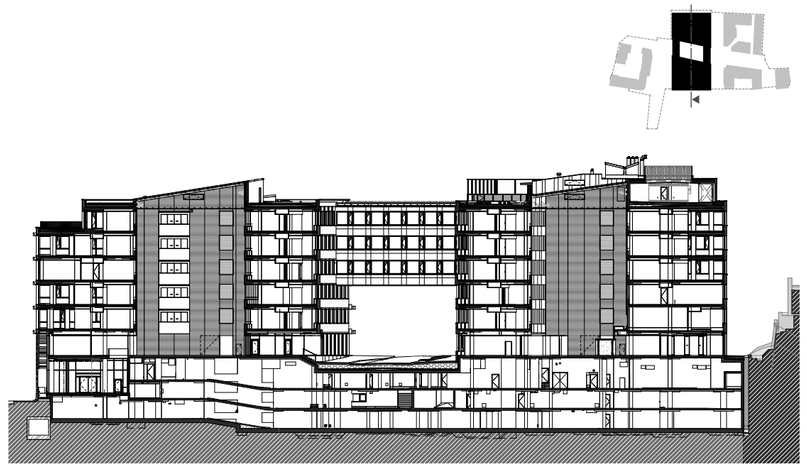
This vibrant district functions as an active urban quarter, linking River Park to the mixed-use Vydrica development. Upon completion, it will establish a direct pedestrian connection to Bratislava's historic core. Tested in numerous architectural competitions, this long-debated master plan seeks to complement the Danube riverfront embankment while harmoniously integrating the newly built interventions with Castle Hill's green, rocky massif. The recently established multi-purpose block morphology maintains a unified building frontage to the waterfront, while directly tracing the historic footprint of Žižkova Street. Building heights across the diverse architectural facades step up progressively toward the adjacent River Park development. A wide landscaped pedestrian bridge spans the primary traffic artery, stitching Zuckermandel directly to the riverside promenade.

The pedestrian infrastructure connects to the primary civic hub, F. X. Messerschmidt Square, named after the 18th-century Baroque sculptor and celebrated with a permanent installation of his characteristically expressive character heads. The square's transverse compositional axis orients vistas outward toward the Danube. The opposing view frames the rugged natural rock formation of the Skalný Nos promontory and its integrated educational trail. The revitalised Žižkova Street has been reworked as a broad boulevard with traffic-calmed zoning and active commercial parterres at grade. Along its eastern stretch, the roadway and pavements merge into a barrier-free, single-level shared surface. This configuration diverts the primary pedestrian flows away from the heavy traffic corridor to the protected interior, connecting smoothly with Vydrica. These public courtyards remain accessible, providing park-like residential zones where a cohesive urban framework, varied street connections, and diverse public spaces materialise as an exceptionally rich and texturally layered contemporary architecture. /ab

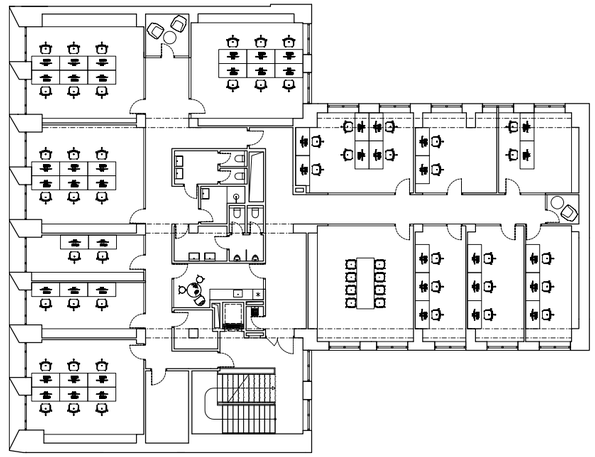
Bratislava, Žižkova ulica
Architectsi: Juraj Almássy, Peter Bouda, Richard Čečetka, Katarína Šiarniková, Ivan Masár, Laura Jakabčínova / Bouda Masár architekti;
Boris Schultz, Richard Baláži, Štefan Vrabec, Juraj Murín, Martina Boháčová, Ivana Kvietková / A.M. architects
Constructed: 2014 – 2018
Photos: Peter Čintalan







Unidom





Trenčín, Námestie sv. Anny 9
Lead Architects: Juraj Hubinský, Alexandra Kotrusová
Design Team: Peter Kuklica, Martin Smerek
Other Members: Roman Rosina (technical design and construction), HAUSLER&HAUSLER (interior)
Designed and Reconstructed: 2023 – 2024
Photos: Matej Hakár

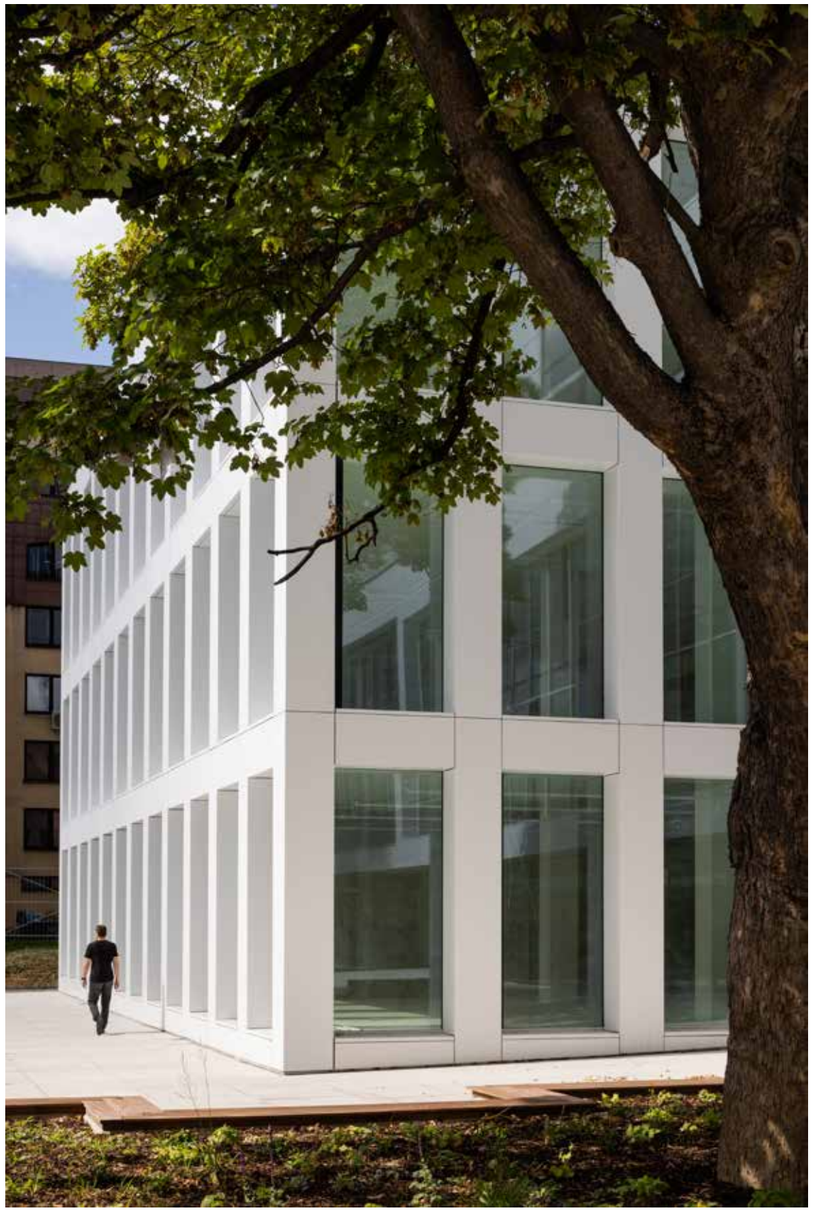
One of the most pressing challenges in contemporary architecture is preserving sound structural integrity, regardless of a building's age or historical designation. In other words, "don't pull down, restore!" At the edge of Trenčín's city centre, an older, unremarkable structure was granted a second life. The original load-bearing skeleton was retained, taking advantage of its inherent flexibility to incorporate ground-floor retail and a sophisticated office layout above.

The addition of a recessed penthouse level, distinct both structurally and visually, created further space and a terrace with views of the impressive courthouse opposite. The adaptive reuse introduced a residential atrium to the courtyard, providing a quiet, contemplative retreat, while the basement was reconfigured to accommodate an eight-car garage. The street façade's defining artistic element is the distinctive, sculpturally shaped window jambs. Clad in stone and fitted with large French balconies, these unconventional and structurally complex details create an exact grid across four storeys, producing visual effects that shift with the light. The courtyard façade is more restrained, subtly echoing the splayed jambs within a more traditional plastered finish. The architect's professional rigour is evident in the logical floor plan and the use of refined, uniform typography throughout.

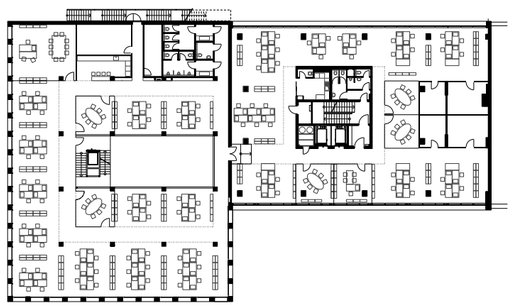
Unidom provides Trenčín with a new, recognisable landmark and serves as a vital precedent for the thoughtful treatment of the existing urban fabric. It stands as an exemplar of collaboration, from the initial invited competition through to completion. /ab



Interpolis







Banská Bystrica, Partizánska cesta 3
Architects: Martin Paulíny, Branislav Hovorka
Collaborating Architects: Natália Galko Michalová, Marek Peťovský, Veronika Kochaníková, Radovan Krajňák
Designed and Reconstructed: 2019 – 2022
Photos: Matej Hakár

The revitalisation of this early 1970s office complex, originally designed by a team of architects under Ján Hanzel's leadership at Stavoprojekt, is a successful example of how a structurally sound but functionally obsolete building can be adapted to modern demands. The 12-storey office tower was stripped back to its original reinforced concrete frame and fitted with a new facade that honours the rhythm of the original design. Its efficient open-plan layout, organised around a central circulation core, allows for greater flexibility in office configuration.

The tower is anchored to a three-storey podium that extends eastward as a long linear wing. This section constitutes a separate structural entity not included in the renovation. In contrast, the opposite end of the complex is now enclosed by a new extension whose floor plate mirrors that of the tower. A light-filled, covered atrium was introduced to enhance the interior environment. Both the tower and the extension are spatially interconnected on every floor. The extension's deeply articulated grid façade clearly distinguishes it as a contemporary addition. Seen as necessary, a parking garage was added at the rear of the site. This transformation enhances the complex's architectural character, demonstrating the inherent resilience and adaptability of mid-century structural systems. /ab

Bory Penta Hospitals



Bratislava, Ivana Kadlečíka 2
Architects: Dutch Health Architects
Interiors by: AT26
Constructed: 2018 – 2022
Photos: Richard Raymann, Pavel Kudiváni

Designed to 21st-century standards, Bory Hospital is Slovakia's first healthcare facility constructed in the post-socialist era. Located in a new residential district in northwest Bratislava, it benefits from excellent transit connections. The programmatic layout of this six-storey medical facility is consolidated into a compact, enclosed block whose upper storeys transition into a comb-like footprint. The building envelope features unified architecture, clad in three-dimensionally articulated composite panels whose contrasting black-and-white vertical lines imbue the massive volume with a calm, harmonious rhythm. Glazed fenestration clearly demarcates the ground-floor parterre and main entrance. Beyond them, the interior opens into an expansive circulation spine flanked by vertical communication cores, forming the primary axis from which the individual medical departments branch.

While the floor plane retains the dense, unified rectangle across the first two storeys, the upper levels split into parallel finger-plan blocks oriented northeast and southwest. This configuration allows natural light to enter the lower clinics through six trapezoid-shaped, intensely landscaped atria. Distinct emphasis was placed on the geometry and materiality of these circulation zones to cultivate a therapeutic, stress-reducing environment. Within the corridors, the lush greenery in the inner courtyards plays a positive role, contributing to intuitive wayfinding. The interior design employs a coordinated palette of muted, earthy pastel tones, with specific colour identities assigned to medical departments. Equal attention was given to acoustics, visual lighting comfort, and the installation of tactile, antimicrobial materials compliant with rigorous sanitary codes. Through this synthesis of functional efficiency, human-centric design, and high-tech medical infrastructure, crowned by a heliport, Bory Hospital stands as a premier example of next-generation healthcare architecture. /ab

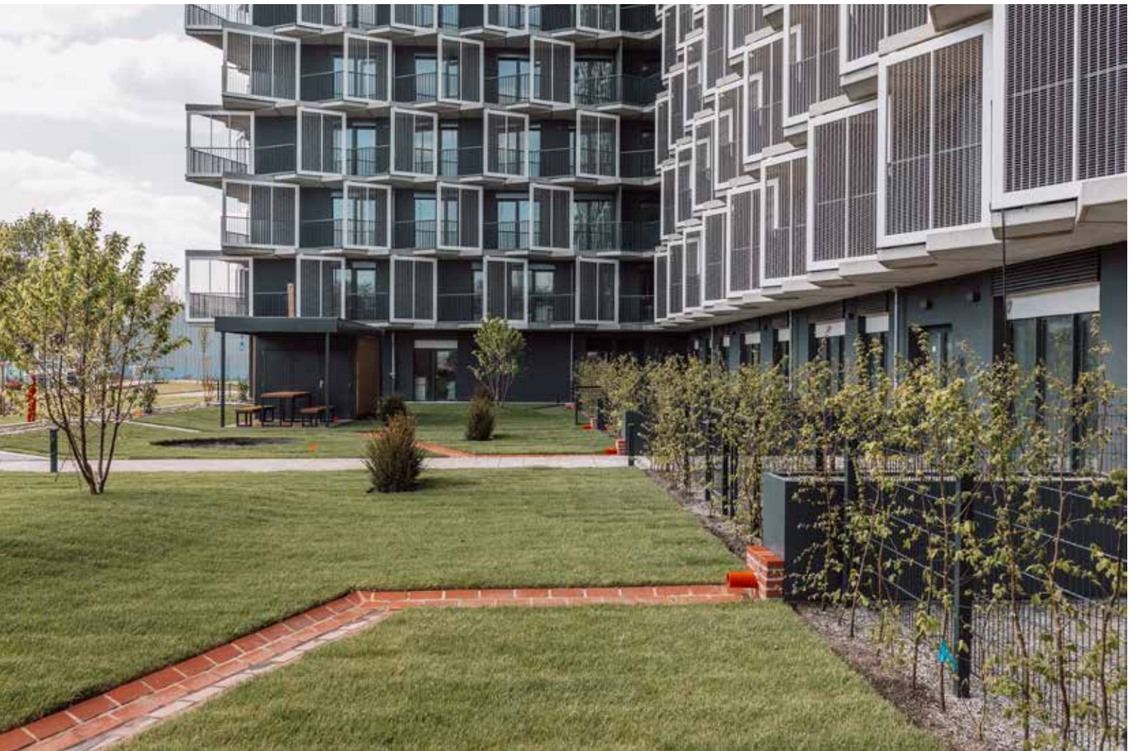


2010 – 2026

Guthaus

Račianska 64, Bratislava
Architects: Andreas Marth, Christian Waldner, Fridrich Passler, Herwig Spiegl, Rachele Albini, Ondřej Stehlík, Michal Stehlík / AllesWirdGut
Landscaping: ManMadeLand
Constructed: 2019 – 2021
Photos: Richard Raymann





Designed by a renowned Austrian studio, Guthaus kicked off the transformation of a former industrial site along Račianska Street. A parquet factory previously stood at the site, bounded on the east by a disused railway line. To the north, it will eventually adjoin the new Palma residential district, whose local hub expresses a distinct industrial character. Given the neighbourhood's vast urban potential, Guthaus will integrate into a progressively attractive spatial context. Currently, this development benefits from a carefully executed living environment and a landscape concept of green zones and rain gardens designed for maximum ecological efficiency. Complemented by extensively planted green roofs, these measures substantially reduce the carbon footprint for a sustainable residential environment.

Guthaus unites three volumes into a single complex: a central eight-storey block–the longest and lowest–flanked by a seventeen- and twenty-storey tower. Beneath them lies a shared subterranean garage with capacity for 352 vehicles. Typologically, the ensemble consists of two point blocks linked by a central circulation corridor. This arrangement efficiently utilises just three vertical cores while accommodating generous, light-filled lobbies and 285 apartments of diverse layouts. The building's sculpted silhouette is defined by zigzagging, thermally broken cantilevered balconies integrated with vertical white partition walls clad in stainless-steel mesh. From a distance, this motif reads as a massive window set against the dark façade. Coupled with its prominent height, the design establishes a conspicuous new landmark within the local skyline.

The balconies' generous depth ensures optimal summer shading while allowing passive solar gains in winter. Bolstered by advanced building services, including a heat-pump-driven radiant ceiling heating and cooling system for exceptional indoor comfort, Guthaus demonstrates an exemplary ecological approach that extends far beyond its public realms, to underscore the broad and essential scope of contemporary residential architecture. /ab

Kosmalt

Košice, Kysucká 16
Restored by: Michal Burák, Dušan Burák, Jana Varchola Buráková / Atrium Architekti
Collaborating Architects: Matúš Gomolčák, Erik Duhaň, Tomáš Eisner
Architects: Ladisla Greč, Róbert Kandrík
Constructed: 2022 – 2025
Photos: Matej Hakár

Renovating a panel block typically involves thermal insulation and wrapping it in a polychromatic envelope, a practice that denies the building's structural essence. Kosmalt's overhaul represents the antithesis of this paradigm, an intervention that leaves the original prefabricated frame visible and intentionally exposed. Erected in the 1960s, it was one of four dormitories built to house workers from East Slovakian Steelworks. Alongside its sister blocks–Kodur, Kohal, and Kosil–it was named after a specific steel grade.

Ladislav Greč and Róbert Kandrík's initial design established a modular, thirteen-storey volume defined by 22 by 13 identical bays across its east and west elevations. The layout originally comprised 21-square-metre microunits linked by shared sanitary facilities along a central corridor spine. Between 2022 and 2024, Kosmalt underwent a full renovation, preserving the historical exterior volume while completely overhauling the interior layout. The identical modular cells were reconfigured within their 21-square-metre footprint to satisfy contemporary standards. Externally, the east and west facades retain their tectonic expression, preserving the fenestration's historic rhythm and the balustrade profiles. The corrugated metal siding at the entrance volume directly evokes the site's industrial provenance.

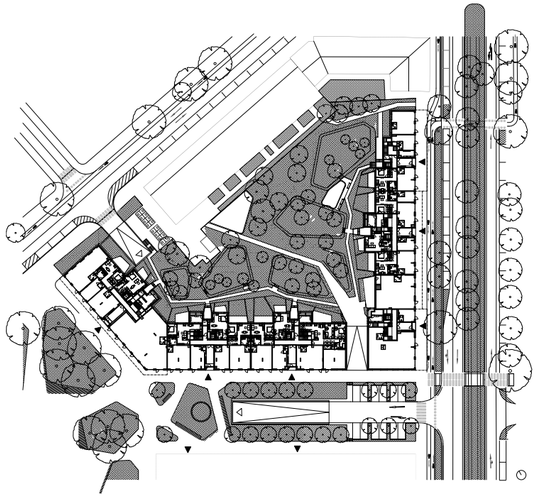
The unified envelope and hyper-regular structural modularity epitomise the purest ideals of late-modernist collective housing. Inside, the original surfaces of exposed concrete, marble flooring, travertine sills at the entry portal, and polished terrazzo across the circulation zones were revealed. Into this austere canvas, a softer layer was introduced, defined by pastel interior fittings for a refined contrast to the concrete frame's rigidity. Kosmalt stands as an exemplary model for handling the heritage of mass housing, demonstrating how rigorous architectural restraint can successfully address its legacy while safeguarding historical authenticity. /ab





2010 – 2026

Zwirn 1





Bratislava, Cvernovka
Architects: Juraj Benetin, Matej Grébert, Peter Dostál, Marcel Vadík, Peter Janeček, Daniel Bartoš / Compass Architekti
Collaborating Architects: Diana Šajdová, Monika Žažová, Ateliér DIVO (Landscaping), Veronika Šelingerová (Artwork)
Constructed: 2020 – 2023
Photos: Matej Hakár

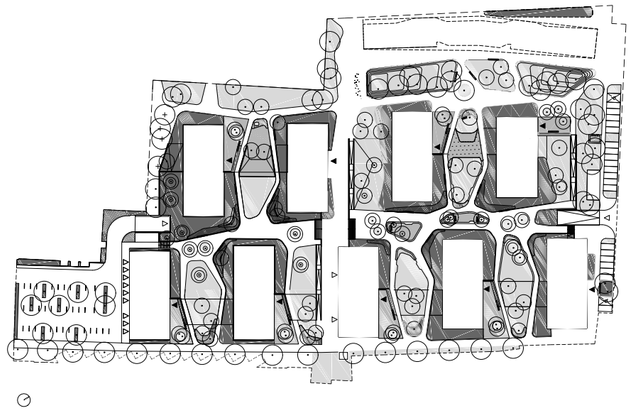


Zwirn 1 is the initial phase of a major residential complex situated on the site of a thread factory dating back to 1900. The project followed Compass Atelier's winning entry in an international architectural and urban planning competition. Spatially, it integrates with the restored Pradiarne (p. 294 – 295) and the national cultural monument's new square, preserving the industrial spirit that still permeates the district. The new complex echoes the surrounding traditional block-style development, with its first phase thoughtfully completing Dulovo Square's urban composition.

The two apartment buildings, both utilising a combined core-and-corridor layout, form a cohesive block unified by a monochromatic terracotta ceramic cladding and a lush inner courtyard. The facades are richly articulated with loggias, balconies, and expansive glazing. Notable attention was paid to the precise detailing of the textured brick-slip masonry, complemented at the building entrances with ceramic reliefs by artist Veronika Šelingerová and accentuated by the portal's monumental scale.

The terracotta colour programme is consistently applied across all primary elements, including railings and aluminium window frames. Following traditional proportions, the buildings feature a raised ground floor for retail and amenities, a main residential body, and a partially recessed top floor with green terraces. Zwirn's 267 residential units define upscale urban living while exceptional architectural rigour and high-quality landscaping honour the site's industrial heritage. This first phase has set a formidable benchmark for the rest of the development. /ab

Pri mýte







Bratislava, Škultétyho 1, Račianska 24
Architects: Tomaž Krušec, Lena Krušec, Vid Kurinčič / Arhitektura Krušec
Landscape architecture: Ana Kučan, Luka Javornik
Collaborating Architect: Tomáš Bartko, Vallo Sadovsky Architects
Constructed: 2015 – 2018
Photos: Pavel Kudiváni

Račianska Street is a vital radial artery and a backbone of Bratislava's eastern expansion, along which a mixed-use residential fabric with distinctive urban architecture has formed in stages. The corridor boasts the progressive modernist Februárka housing estate (Štefan Svetko et al.) and other milestone structures. Despite its heterogeneity, the Račianska axis maintains a pleasant scale, appropriate density, and excellent transit links.

An attractive development zone has emerged on its eastern side, at the site of the former Bratislava-Filiálka railway station. A key component is Pri Mýte, a residential complex from a collaboration between Slovak and Slovenian architects. The design skilfully integrates nine modular residential buildings, ranging from six to twelve stories, into a chequered layout. Their orientation mirrors the Februárka estate across the street, serving as a scale-appropriate and respectful architectural partner. This staggered arrangement creates permeable open spaces anchored by two perpendicular pedestrian axes. The primary longitudinal path meanders through the undulating terrain, forming an inner pedestrian artery lined with tranquil green zones.

The complex is distinguished by its monochromatic palette. The compact volumes are unified–literally enveloped–by fixed and sliding perforated aluminium panels. Based on residents' needs, the visual character of this dynamic façade shifts. It can appear fully enclosed or reveal the deep loggias of individual apartments. This understated colour scheme brings a soothing, composed quality to the architecture, a definitive choice within such a visually diverse urban context. /ab

2010 – 2026

Pri Mýte – Phase III

In recent years, Račianska Street has undergone a profound transformation along the stretch connecting the Bratislava Predmestie railway station to Račianske Mýto. Following the removal of decommissioned railway sidings, this predominantly industrial brownfield gained exceptional potential for residential development. Positioned directly across from a neighbourhood stamped by renowned architecture since the 20th century, an inviting new residential district is rapidly emerging here. Pri Mýte – Phase III is a mixed-use building that seamlessly aligns with the established street profile set by its older neighbour, the Urban Residence complex by the Compass studio. Architecturally, however, its design language leans toward Arhitektura Krušec's Pri Mýte complex, situated on its southeastern flank.

Conceived as an efficient sectional apartment block, Pri Mýte – Phase III features a slender footprint composed primarily of small studio, two-room, and three-room apartments. The units are split structurally, with open balconies punctuating the street front and deep loggias facing the quieter interior courtyard. The building's refined, elegant, and chromatically balanced profile introduces a sense of structural order and harmony to the changing streetscape. Visually, the articulation of the flanking end walls is particularly striking, with the solid massing stepping back to incorporate integrated loggias.

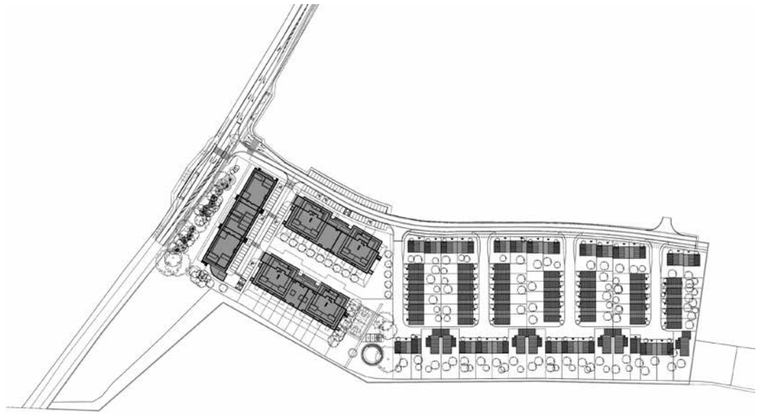
Both the overall colour palette and the full-height perforated sliding shutters for the loggias reference the design choices of the adjacent Pri Mýte complex. The delicate detailing of the balustrades, the sophisticated, understated colour scheme, a disciplined window rhythm rich in French windows, and the strong emphasis on an active commercial ground floor converge seamlessly. Ultimately, they generate a highly favourable overall impression, delivering a city-forming apartment building defined by an exemplary contextual approach. /ab

Bratislava, Račianska ulica
Architects: Tomáš Bartko, Oliver Sadovský, Branislav Husárik, Peter Janeček / Sadovsky & Architects + Superateliér
Constructed: 2022 – 2024
Photos: Matej Hakár





Sunflowers – South City, Phase 1







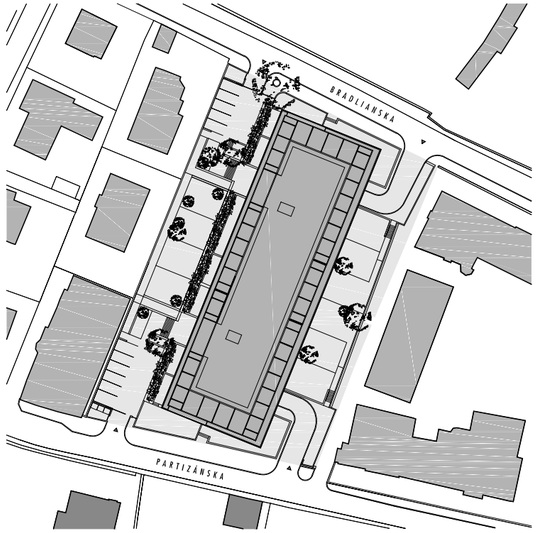
Bratislava-Petržalka, Žltá ulica
Architects: Juraj Benetin, Lenka Beňušová, Peter Cibulka, Miroslav Čatloš, Juraj Česelský, Ján Droždiak, Miroslava Gašparová, Matej Grébert / Compass Architekti
Constructed by: Konstrukt plus
Constructed: 2011 – 2013
Photos: Pavel Meluš

Central Europe's largest prefabricated housing estate, located on Bratislava's right bank, continues to expand. At its southern edge, a significant portion of Južné mesto (South City), a new residential district, has already risen. The first phase began in 2013 along Žltá Street with a mix of residential blocks and single-family homes bordering a forest. Although the development was built in the middle of a field at the time, it set a high standard for quality and determined the trajectory for the much larger residential quarter that followed.

The first completed project in the district utilised proven urban planning principles to strike an ideal balance of scale, density, and unit composition. Slnečnice (Sunflowers) provided what Petržalka had long lacked: single-family homes, approachable public and semi-private spaces, and an urban fabric defined by a diverse range of functions and refined architecture. The modular layout effectively divides the neighbourhood into functional units, ensuring clear navigation.

A mixed-use building with a combined core-and-corridor layout, consisting mainly of smaller units with one to three bedrooms, is situated along the main road. To the west, four five-storey point-block apartment buildings sit shielded from traffic. Further into the development, the design shifts from residential blocks to row houses, which comprise the majority of the area. The project's primary strengths lie in its meticulously planned public spaces, high-quality floor plans, and a unified architectural language characterised by strong horizontal lines. Today, Slnečnice is home to over 8,000 residents. After all planned stages are completed, it is expected that the neighborhood will be inhabited by up to 20,000 people. In 2013, Sunflowers – South City, Phase 1 was honoured with the ARCH Prize. /ab

Hausberg



Bratislava, Partizánska / Bradlianska ulica
Architect: Ilja Skoček, Jr.
Collaborating Architects: Danica Ščepková, Michal Dinda, Michal Kontšek
Constructed: 2021 – 2024
Photos: Peter Jurkovič



Cleverly and strategically inserted between two streets in a prestigious Bratislava residential neighbourhood, this apartment building's urban footprint is a reason Hausberg is one of Bratislava's most desirable addresses. The building's longer volume extends deep into the parcel, while its shorter street-facing facades subtly introduce a design language that unfolds fully along the sides. Named after the historic Pressburg designation for the locality, Hausberg features textured concrete facades that interpret the character of traditional roughcast plaster, punctuated by a rhythmic grid of deep, wood-panelled loggias. The building's height respects its neighbours, yet it confidently asserts its presence through a compact, restrained form and refined detailing rooted in sound craftsmanship. This is by no means common.

These strengths exemplify the younger Skoček's signature style, drawing on a proven, traditional repertoire of late modernist elements. Yet his meticulous attention to detail elevates living standards, resulting in architecture that is solid, sophisticated, and above all, timeless. The spacious communal entrance halls mirror the exterior's palette and materiality, ensuring the building's elegance is felt from the moment of entry. Ultimately, the appealing silhouette of this residence reflects a mature, cultivated, and thoroughly contextual architectural philosophy. /ab



Nová Terasa

Nová Terasa is a residential complex located near Košice's historic centre, systematically rehabilitating a formerly isolated zone bounded by the sprawling University Hospital campus and Terasa, the city's largest 1960s panel housing estate. Resulting from an invited architectural competition in 2009, the development's first phase was completed in 2013.

Characterised by crisp white volumes and an articulated roofscape of stepped terraces, this 165-apartment phase introduced a sharp architectural accent to the district. The master plan established a clear hierarchy of public and semi-public spaces, interspersed with private front gardens and inventive interior layouts, including duplexes. Four years later, the same architectural studio expanded upon Phase I with a more formally restrained yet equally sophisticated iteration. Comprising 48 two-storey row houses and 216 apartments distributed across four pairs of residential blocks in a chequered configuration, this second phase completes the envelope of the triangular site while mirroring the monochromatic palette of its predecessor.

Design quality is evident in the spatial richness of the public areas, the generously proportioned terrace programme, and the careful material and tectonic expression at ground level, where timber cladding and recessed planes frame building entries. Integrated storage and screening systems within the loggias demonstrate sophisticated attention to functional detail. Ultimately, the success of the intervention relies on its calculated urban syntax, an appropriate sense of scale and height, and a balanced typological mix of multi-family blocks and single-family homes. In 2020, the third stage was completed, consisting of 225 apartments. /ab

Košice, Inovecká ulica
Architects: Matúš Vallo, Oliver Sadovský, Branislav Husárik, Peter Janeček, Mateja Vonkomerová, Silvia Rosíková, Dušan Chupáč (Phase I) / Vallo Sadovsky Architects
Collaborating Architects: Michal Marcinov, Andrej Badin, Anna Kvasniaková, Karin Tajtiová, Andrej Morávek / Laboratórium architektúry krajiny
Authors of the third stage: SUPERATELIER, MOROCZTACOVSKY
Co-authors of the architectural design: Compass Architekti
Constructed: 2011 – 2013 (Phase I), 2015 – 2017 (Phase II), 2018 – 2020 (Phase III)
Photos: Tomáš Manina (Phase I), Pavel Kudiváni (Phase II)





2010 – 2026

Home Addition

Čachtice
Architect: Pavol Paňák / A B.K.P.Š.
Constructed: 2017 – 2018
Photos: Tomáš Manina

The addition was a chapter in a multi-year narrative starting with the discovery of Čachtice's former brickworks' exceptional architecture, with a personal sanctuary rising far from the urban bustle. Since the late 1990s, Paňák has been sensitively rehabilitating the site, converting what was first a traditional Pannonian portico house and then a brick-vaulted kiln into his studio. In 2018, he completed an extension to the main house to increase the living area for weekend family retreats.

The extension directly expands the existing house's footprint and volume. Paňák described the central theme as the character of the interior space, continuing the silhouette of the original structure. The result is a profound experience of a singular, authentic, and cohesive space where the principles of the portico house are masterfully reformulated into a compelling contemporary form.

The raw materiality, massive staircase, and precise articulation of the windows and sills underscore Paňák's design concept. He has utilised reclaimed local bricks for the gable roof's visually exposed ceiling structure. On one side, it rests against the colonnade of a glazed gallery featuring a glass ceiling. An interior wall, terminating with a large window at the height of the glass ceiling, introduces a distinctive spatial element. This veranda serves as an effective climatic buffer zone for moderating the temperature difference between the interior and exterior environments. Predating the house, the apple orchard deepens the site's atmosphere and inherent spirit. In 2020, the addition achieved a rare 'triple crown' of Slovakia's major honours: the ARCH Prize, CE ZA AR, and the Dušan Jurkovič Award. /ab





2010 – 2026

Winery S

Strekov
Architects: Tomáš Krištek, Ondrej Kurek, Michal Krcho / What architects
Collaborating Studio: Miestor
Landscape Concept Design: Lenka Gulačová
Constructed: 2020 – 2025
Photos: Matej Hakár

Winery S exemplifies a sensitive, loosely structured architectural composition, consisting of six white, single-storey masonry buildings with gabled roofs. Set amidst Strekov's vineyards, they form an inviting focal point for visitors. The use of arched window openings and shutters echoes the traditional gates and vaulted cellars of historic vineyard houses, while simultaneously softening the complex's architectural form. White-tiled gabled roofs enhance the compactness of each volume, creating a harmonious arrangement of loosely grouped structures separated by pleasant outdoor interstitial spaces.

The central courtyard opens toward visitors arriving along a road lined with a walnut alley. A preserved historic wine cellar serves as a link between the showroom and the main production facility. The project was realised following an invited architectural competition, reflecting the developer's ambition to promote premium viniculture and superior architecture at this scenic location. In 2025, the winery was honoured with both the CE ZA AR Award and the Dušan Jurkovič Prize. /ab





Château Rúbaň Winery



Rúbaň 1
Architect: Zoltán Bartal
In Collaboration with: Norbert Funczik (guest house), István Görözdi, Kinga Bartal, Zsolt Mátyás
Designed and Reconstructed: 2013 – 2015
Photos: Ede Dömötör

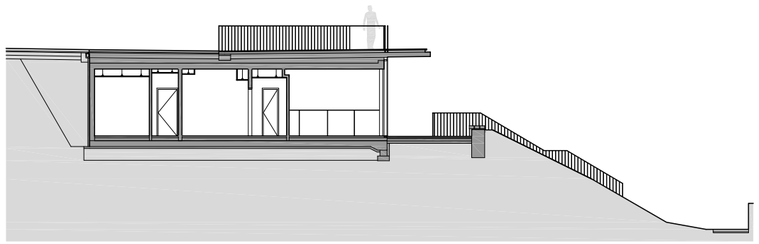
The emergence of several architecturally remarkable wineries signals a positive evolution in Slovakian viticulture. Among them is Château Rúbaň, located in the fertile Strekov region of southern Slovakia. The original 1830 manor house had passed through various hands before it fell into a state of decay following World War II. It remained neglected until 2012, when the estate and its adjacent monastery were acquired for revitalisation.

Set within an expansive forest park, the complex is organised as a linear sequence of three distinct structures. The monastery has been converted into a guesthouse, the manor house reconstructed, and a new winery established at the rear of the property. The guesthouse features a dazzling mirrored façade that reflects the site's mature plane trees, effectively dissolving the building into its surroundings. A portal of bronze-and-gold metal lamellae accents the primary entrance; although the building's broader volume remains understated, tempering the dramatic effect of the glass.

The manor house has been sensitively restored to host outdoor events, with the new winery defined by a volumetrically articulated modern form, a glazed façade, and a prominent copper-hued cantilever. Situated above the original brick-vaulted wine cellars, the winery's rectangular footprint accommodates the entire production cycle, alongside a restaurant and terrace overlooking the Strekov and Rúbaň vineyards. Despite the buildings' representation of different architectural periods, they are unified by the recurring copper palette. Château Rúbaň integrates these disparate layers into a cohesive ensemble, enriching the region's contemporary wine culture. /ab



Castellum Cafe







Castellum Cafe
Nitra, Námestie Jána Pavla II., Nitra Castle
Architects: Martin Dulík, Marek Šumichrast, Lívia Dulíková
Constructed: 2015 – 2016
Photos: Dano Veselský

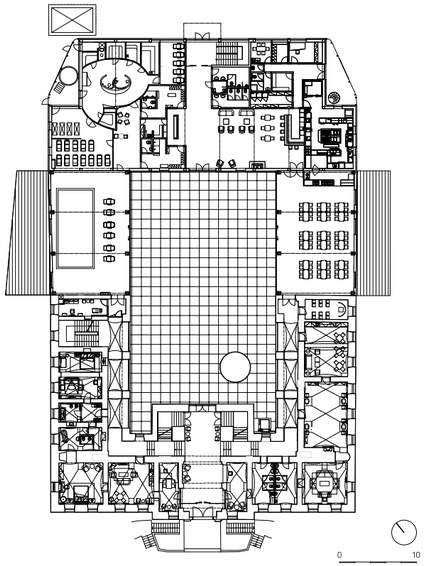
Nitra Castle, its massive fortifications, projecting bastions, the Bishop's Palace, and St Emeram's Cathedral stand as the cityscape's distinctive landmarks. Encompassing layers of history from the era of Great Moravia to the present, the complex today houses the diocesan office while remaining a major cultural destination. Central to the long-term strategy of making the castle accessible to the public is Castellum Café, completed in 2016. This intervention introduces a contemporary layer engaged in a quiet dialogue with the medieval fabric.

To minimise visual impact, the café and restaurant are embedded into the castle hill as an unobtrusive companion in a setting where history takes centre stage. This submerged approach minimises the perception of volume, which remains legible only through the glazed front and side facades. A slender concrete roof slab shades the southeast façade while expanding the rooftop observation deck.

The architectural repertoire is restrained, focusing on the exposed concrete and glass envelope articulated by black profiles and delicate metal railings. The timber-decked roof plateau, mirroring the geometry of the medieval fortifications, connects seamlessly to the castle's paved entrance for views of the fortress, Mount Zobor, and the Nitra River. Integrated skylights double as seating elements, channelling daylight into the restaurant interior. A smaller terrace in front of the restaurant, paved with andesite tiles, provides additional summer seating and integrates with the pedestrian paths. This intervention, along with surrounding revitalisation efforts, cultivates a refined public space. In 2017, the project was recognised with the CE ZA AR award. /ab

Hotel Chateau Gbeľany







The restoration of this 1756 Baroque manor house was driven by a Gbeľany native who purchased the dilapidated estate in 2011. The original U-shaped layout, organised around a central longitudinal axis and an arcaded courtyard, was carefully preserved. The elegant main entrance remains the hotel's focal point, accentuated by a delicate apse, a Baroque portal, and a tympanum. The chateau is surrounded by lush parkland, divided into a historic Baroque garden and a contemporary landscaped section.

While the renovation restored the manor's original splendour, new wings were added that echo the U-shaped footprint of a later 1864 expansion. A replica sundial on the courtyard façade complements the revived Baroque atmosphere of the enclosed central space. The clock motif appears on the facades of both the historic and contemporary northern sections.

In a deliberate conceptual move by architect Viktor Šabík, the two-storey northern addition sports a flat roof and distinct timber-clad exterior, providing a warm contrast to the historic masonry. The interior was functionally adapted to meet the demands of a four-star hotel, and additionally features a wellness and fitness centre, a bowling alley, a restaurant, a conference hall, and a bar. Notably, the historic mansard roof was cleverly utilised to house two floors of modern guest rooms.

Chateau Gbeľany's history mirrors that of many manorial estates in Slovakia that were nationalised in the 1950s and subsequently fell into ruin. Today, its revitalisation stands as a vital contribution to the preservation of Slovakia's secular cultural heritage. /ab

Gbeľany, Hlavná 140
Architect: Viktor Šabík
In Collaboration with: Marián Haberland, Katarína Fialová (interiors)
Designed and Revitalised: 2014 – 2015
Photos: Tomáš Manina

Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum

Bratislava - Čunovo, Čunovo Dam
Architects: Peter Žalman (Phase I), Ján Kukuľa, Jozef Jakuš / Ateliér 008 (expansion)
In Collaboration with: Zuzana Žalmanová, Patrícia Suchánková, Ján Kukuľa (Phase I)
Constructed: 2000 (Phase I), 2013 – 2014 (Expansion)
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho

Located on a narrow peninsula jutting into the Hrušov Reservoir, the museum formally opened in September 2000, initiated by gallerist Vincent Polakovič and Dutch art patron Gerard H. Meulensteen. The first phase, designed by Peter Žalman, featured a slender lens-shaped volume—a symbolic Roman galley in white, blue, and red (the colours of the Slovak flag). In a move rare for Slovakia's cultural landscape, Meulensteen personally financed the construction before donating the gallery to the state in 2011.

Following a decade of success, an expansion became necessary. A competitive tender was organised at Meulensteen's request, and the winning architect, Ján Kukuľa, tripled the museum's floor area. He introduced a single-storey building defined by an undulating roofline and pavilions that engage directly with the water. The design creates a seamless visitor path from the reception and art shop through a series of diverse exhibition spaces, terminating in the centrally arranged original "ark."

During this expansion, the original structure underwent a comprehensive facelift. The façade was updated with a new colour scheme, while a more pronounced, articulated parapet adds a rhythmic 'lace' to the roofline. The new wing culminates in a café and terrace opening onto the tip of the peninsula's sculpture park, which today hosts works by numerous leading artists. A walkable roof expands the exterior exhibition space, offering panoramic views of the Bratislava skyline.

Gerard H. Meulensteen passed away on 22 January 2026, but the museum continues to flourish as a testament to his legacy. /ab





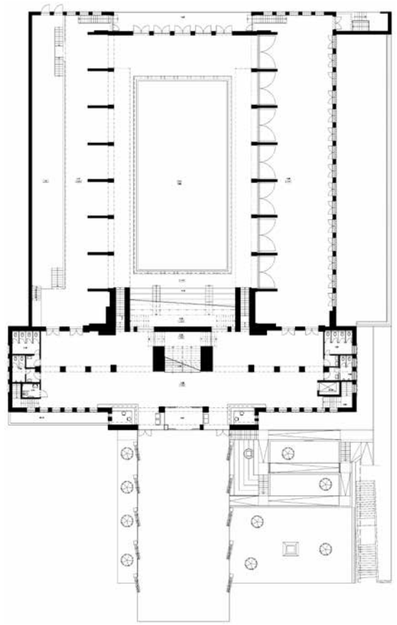


Košice Kunsthalle

Košice, Rumanova 1
Architects: Juraj Furdík, Ivor Mečiar, Peter Lovich, Kristína Šťastná,
Juraj Koban, Štefan Pacák, Róbert Kolla
Reconstrcucted: 2012 – 2013
Architect of the original design: Ladislav Greč (Constructed: 1957 – 1960)
Photos: Monika and Ľubo Stacho







Designed by local architect Ladislav Gerča in the 1950s, the hall originally housed Slovakia's fourth 25-metre indoor swimming pool. Its refined aesthetic integrates classicist motifs into a functionalist frame, with the arched dome above the pool impressively accentuating on the main façade. Regarded as a seminal work of 1960s Košice architecture, the building features an exemplary floor plan organised around a central longitudinal axis. Soon after the indoor hall opened, a 50-metre outdoor pool was added. Unfortunately, a drop in the water table eventually compromised the structure's stability, forcing the indoor pool to close in 1992.

In 2010, the city launched an architectural competition that transformed the site by "filling the pool with art". The resulting Kunsthalle opened in 2013, coinciding with Košice's tenure as a European Capital of Culture. The architects deserve credit for a sensitive restoration, preserving original elements even as they meticulously replicated those beyond repair (although the side wings required demolition).

The original wall mosaics by Herta Ondrušová-Viktorínová were restored and relocated to the expanded second-floor gallery as a permanent exhibit. Beneath the signature dome, the hall provides a vast, unconventional stage for international contemporary art displayed at the bottom of the former swimming pool. This successful adaptive reuse demonstrates how industrial or leisure typologies can be repurposed into vibrant cultural hubs. A pleasant tension now exists between the gallery's internal world and the revitalised outdoor pool area, both of which are enriched by contemporary artistic interventions. /ab

Hviezda Cultural and Creative Centre

Trenčín, Ulica Kniežaťa Pribinu 3
Architect: Pavol Balaščák
Revitalised: 2021 – 2023
Architects of the original design: Dominik Filip and Alexander Maráky (Constructed: 1938 – 1940)
Photos: Matej Hakár

The Hviezda (Star) Cultural and Creative Centre serves as a model for the preservation of interwar functionalist architecture. A national cultural monument since 2009, the building was designed by Dominik Filip and Alexander Maráky. It was originally constructed as a Catholic cultural centre between 1938 and 1940. Despite several functional transformations over the decades, it remained a cultural hub until its deteriorating structural state forced its closure in the late 1990s. Driven by Trenčín's proactive local policies and supported by the European Regional Development Fund, the monument underwent a thorough restoration and technical modernisation.

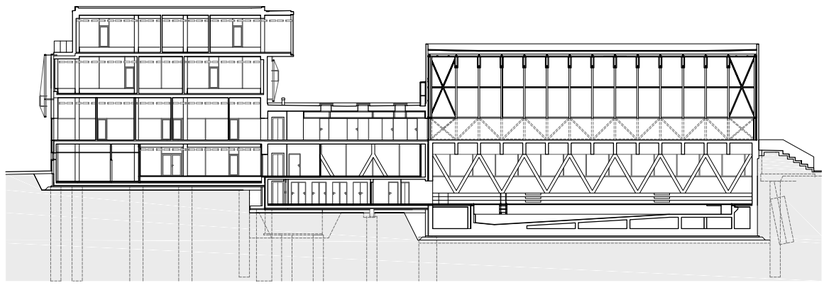
Architect Pavol Balaščák focused primarily on preserving the original volumetric and spatial composition, including the period-accurate colour scheme and white wooden window frames. By revitalising the facade's original elements and the specific texture of the plaster, the building's authentic interwar character was reclaimed. Equal sensitivity was extended to the interior, respecting the layout of the vestibule, cloakroom, and the main and secondary halls. All original terrazzo floors, staircases, and railings were meticulously restored, alongside most of the interior doors. Eschewing modern interventions, the project offers an unadulterated glimpse into interwar architecture, celebrated for its geometric rigour and a distinctive window layout rarely encountered today. /ab







Guliver Private Elementary School



Banská Štiavnica, A. T. Sytnianskeho 4
Architects: Richard Murgaš, Martin Lepej, Lukáš Cesnak / RICHARD MURGAŠ ARCHITECTS
Collaborating Architects: Michaela Žáková, Filip Krump, Viktória Saboová
Constructed: 2017 – 2021
Photos: Tomáš Manina

Following the success of the Guliver Kindergarten in Banská Štiavnica, the addition of a private elementary school was a natural progression. By Slovakian standards, this was an exceptional undertaking with outstanding results, entrusted to the same architect responsible for the kindergarten. The school's complexity and the high quality of its interior details make it stand out.

The floor plan represents a significant departure from traditional local school designs, eschewing long corridors and repetitive rows of classrooms. The central entrance foyer, spotlighted by a wide staircase, marks the building's core. The storeys are arranged on a split-level system, offset by half a floor, producing expansive recreational areas and clear sightlines between levels. This configuration serves as a central hub for circulation, allowing the building to 'breathe' and flooding the interior with natural light. Grouped into learning clusters, each floor comprises two year-group and one specialised classroom.

The school's L-shaped massing responds to the sloping terrain through a slight offset between its two primary volumes. The main four-storey building's façade is draped in an atypical textile membrane that provides optimal shading and light conditions for the classrooms. A lower wing, housing a gymnasium and a 25-metre swimming pool, features white sandwich panels contrasted by horizontal glazing and exposed yellow steelwork. Now fully completed, the campus includes an athletic track, climbing walls, a skate park, and a vocational training facility - a model for future educational projects. In 2021, the architects received the CE ZA AR Award and the Dušan Jurkovič Prize for this project. /ab





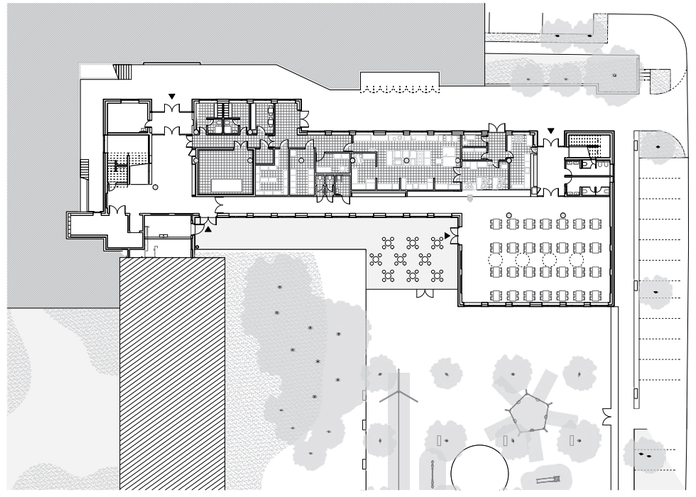
Bernolákovo Primary School

The school in Bernolákovo belongs to the rare group of architecturally significant educational facilities, both new and renovated, built in Slovakia since the turn of the millennium. In the autumn of 2025, it achieved international acclaim with its shortlisting for the Mies van der Rohe Award. The complex seamlessly blends old and new. The original school has been expanded, with a separate perpendicular wing added for the dining hall, and a new multipurpose sports hall constructed on the grounds.

The entire complex feels contemporary, reflecting a design philosophy that treats the surrounding landscape with equal importance to the buildings themselves. The extension acts as a modern counterpart to the original structure, echoing its roofline and palette while introducing a more current spatial logic. The large windows, with their low sills, allow children to remain in contact with the outdoors even while seated. When the screen shutters are lowered, the building's silhouette is transformed into a sculptural, monolithic volume that harmonises with the schoolyard's tones.

The new sports hall provides a striking contrast, wrapped in an industrial envelope of corrugated metal and galvanised grating. By utilising the site's natural topography, the architects partially submerged the gymnasium and its facilities, creating a sunken entrance patio with a staircase and access ramp. Inside, the sporting spirit of unplastered concrete blocks and exposed concrete walls is tempered by the warmth of wood-fibre acoustic panels. This expansion has created a new social hub for the community, providing an inspiring environment that fosters the growth and development of the children within. /ab

Bernolákovo, Školská ulica 1
Architects: Ľubomíra Blašková, Róbert Bakyta
Expanded: 2022 – 2024
Photos: Matej Hakár







2010 – 2026

Prešov City Cemetery



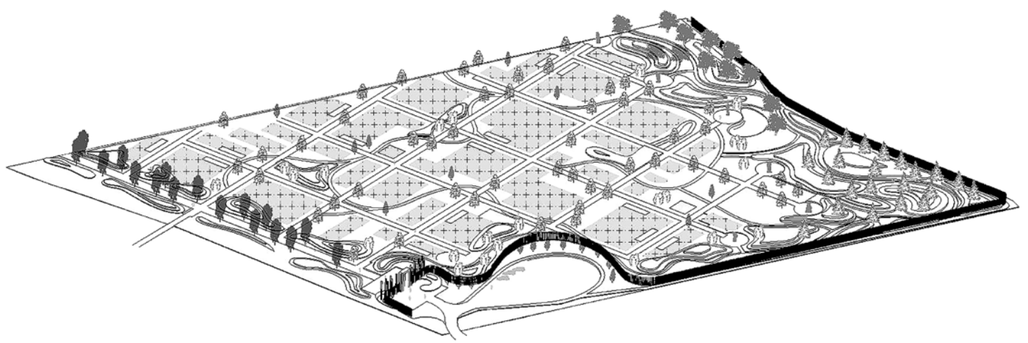
Prešov – Šváby, Urxova ulica
Architects: Andrea Macejková, Miro Macejko, Adam Macejko
Collaborating Architects: Marek Tkáčik, Martin Marušinec
Constructed and Landscaped: 2015 – 2017
Photos: Jonáš Verešpej

In Slovakia, traditional cemetery architecture seldom expands beyond a predictable inventory of graves, a central cross, and an entrance gate. Designed by STOA Architekti after it won an anonymous public urban planning competition, the Prešov-Šváby City Cemetery boldly abandons this conventional framework. Rather than designing a rigid mausoleum, the architects envisioned this sacred site as a tranquil forest park and green oasis for silent contemplation. The primary organisational layout is crisply defined: a rectangular grid of original paths demarcates the burial sectors, into which a fluid system of stabilised gravel paths winds gently through the grave plots. This juxtaposition of dual geometries – the orthogonal layout for clear orientation and the soft, organic lines for walking – forms the entire project's conceptual core.

At the southern tip of the complex, a thoughtful water feature complements the dedicated quiet zones while optimising the local microclimate. The material palette is strictly disciplined and precise. The monumental western entrance is articulated as an open portal with slender exposed-concrete columns that generate a rhythmic frame around a weathering Corten steel gate. This architectural gesture introduces visitors to the grounds without unearned pathos or pretension, yet maintains an undeniable formal dignity. Inside the cemetery, timber elements and dense, mature landscaping soften the raw concrete. To preserve the overarching visual tranquillity, grave ornamentation is firmly regulated in favour of simple, natural decorations that subtly encourage visitors to embrace a minimalist aesthetic.

In the evening, strategic lighting accentuates the underlying urban planning layout, completing a deeply harmonious local atmosphere. The Prešov City Cemetery stands as a stellar example of how to shape public funerary architecture so it remains thoroughly contemporary, human-scaled, and topographically responsive. /ab





Majer Memorial and Restored Military Cemetery

Banská Bystrica-Majer
Architects: Benjamín Brádňanský, Vít Halada, Maroš Greš / N/A
Graphic design: Boris Meluš, statika: Lukáš Kramarčík
Constructed: 2018 – 2019
Photos: Ján Kekeli

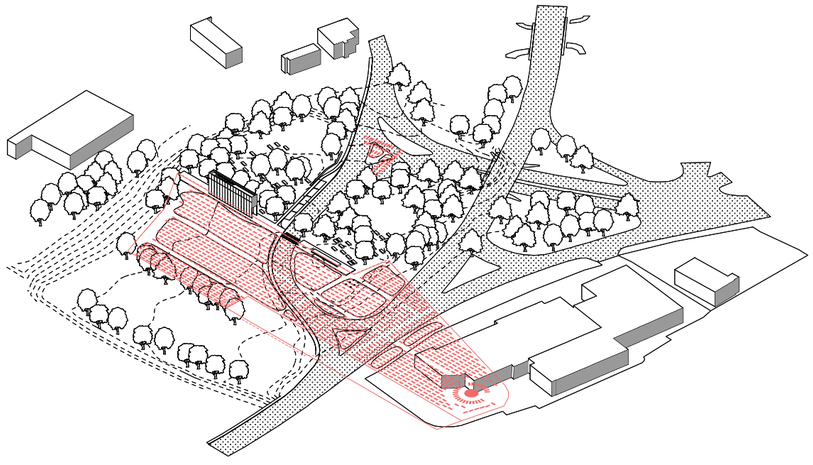
Located near a former military hospital, a World War I military cemetery in the Majer district of Banská Bystrica once served as the final resting place for 1,380 soldiers. Over decades of urban expansion, the cemetery was systematically and inexplicably erased. In the 1960s, it was bifurcated by two major roads, and by the early 21st century, a car dealership had been built over its northern section. The monument to the Czechoslovak Legionnaires was also relocated.

In 2016, the city sought to rehabilitate this desecrated site, awarding the commission to N/A, a Bratislava-based architectural studio. Rather than just a monument, their design can be seen as a functional artistic artefact that restores the site's integrity and visual legibility. Rising from a sloping terrain, the monolithic volume of weathered Corten steel houses a staircase and a small unadorned chapel containing salvaged cemetery fragments. This vertical gallery allegorically invites visitors to ascend and bear witness to the site's history. The climb culminates in a viewing platform displaying the names of the fallen and a diagram mapping the cemetery's historic devastation.

Across the grounds, slender steel steles set within the lawn and gravel paths symbolically mark the original grid of graves. The raw, oxidised steel conveys both the harsh legacy of war and the moral failures that led to the cemetery's neglect. Uncovering a nearly lost cultural layer, the architecture of this solemn space re-establishes a vital chapter of Slovakia's history. In 2020, the Majer Monument was honoured with the CE ZA AR award. /ab







Mlynica

Bratislava's Mlynica has contributed significantly to the revitalisation of industrial architecture, serving to prevent the loss of industrial memory. The site is located in a northeastern district of the city, once prominent for producing chemicals, and it bears all the hallmarks of a brownfield. Constructed in the 1960s as a factory for lightweight building materials, the structure is defined by the aesthetic of its raw concrete skeleton and prominent hopper elements.

The architects successfully converted the building for contemporary urban functions while meticulously preserving its original materiality. Leveraging the factory's large spans and generous heights, the GutGut studio integrated new functions into the original volume with its characteristic spatial ingenuity. The programme includes an event space featuring the original hoppers and a co-working zone organised around a central atrium. This area comprises 2,100 m^2 of interconnected offices, where steel truss bridges complement the primary support structure.

The material palette combines concrete with warm timber, glass, and reclaimed brick, maintaining the industrial character from the light-coloured plaster finish to the rhythmic design of the facade apertures. The functional mix is rounded out by six loft apartments on the top floor, each featuring a rooftop terrace. In 2018, Mlynica received the CE ZA AR Award and was nominated for the prestigious European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award. /ab

Bratislava, Turbínova ulica
Architects: Štefan Polakovič, Lukáš Kordík, Jana Benková, Tomáš Vrtek / GutGut
Study Team: Roman Žitňanský, Patrícia Botková, Katarína Bergerová
Designed and Reconstructed: 2016 – 2017
Photos: BoysPlayNice

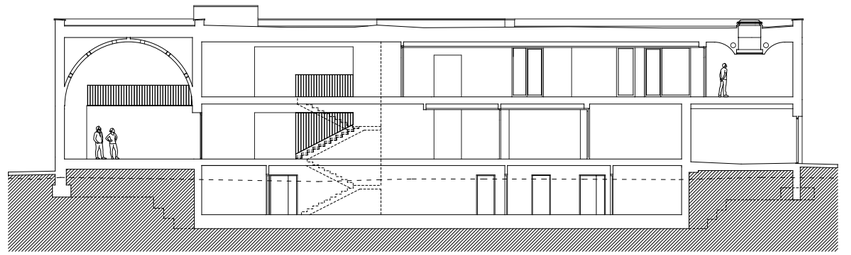






Leopoldov Town Hall







Leopoldov, Hlohovecká cesta 104/2
Architects: Irakli Eristavi, Pavol Šilla, Juraj Červený / zerozero
Collaborating Architect: Martin Ratkoš
Designed and Reconstructed: 2019 – 2022
Photos: Matej Hakár

The Leopoldov Town Hall sets a precedent for the public procurement of excellent civic architecture, and Leopoldov is a model for consistently held architectural competitions that yield exceptional results. At the 2016 CE ZA AR Awards, Mayor Terézia Kavuliaková and her predecessor, Milan Gavorník, received the Patron of Architecture Award for launching the largest architectural competition for a public building since Slovakia's independence. The architects, selected from 51 entries, were subsequently honoured with both CE ZA AR and ARCH prizes.

The design concept is deeply rooted in its context. Rather than demolishing the former hipped-roof town hall, the architects revitalised its mundane form, repurposing it as a library and community centre. The new municipal building, situated in the secondary plane, integrates spatially with the original structure to create an inviting urban piazza. Despite its recessed position, the new town hall makes a powerful statement through its understated and dignified architecture, befitting a centre of governance without becoming ostentatious. It is perfectly measured, a testament to the architects' sophisticated approach to civic tasks.

A solid street-facing wall with an embedded clock leads into an impressive, soaring entrance portal and the flagpoles synonymous with the building's function. A palette of white plaster and light-coloured concrete unifies both structures. This theme continues inside, where the interior is dominated by the wedding hall's impressive concrete vault and the council chamber's light-filled ceiling. As a sculptural monolith with a reserved, dignified form, it fosters local pride and strengthens the town's civic identity. /ab

Poprad Theatre

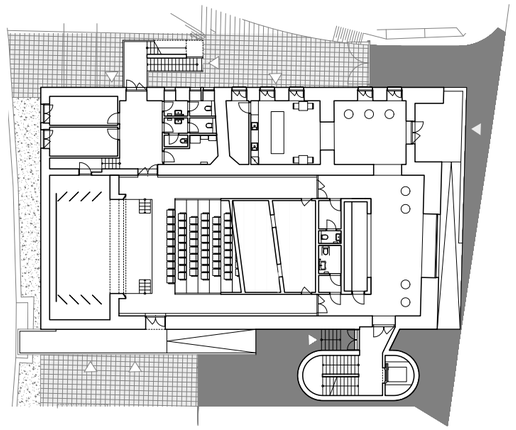


Poprad-Veľká, Scherfelova ulica
Architects: Irakli Eristavi, Pavol Šilla, Juraj Červený, Daniela Sabová / zerozero
Constructed: 2023 – 2025
Photos: Matej Hakár

The Poprad Theatre casts a luminous presence within its social and urban context, harmonising with the adjacent Early Gothic Church of St John the Evangelist. It exemplifies the sophisticated restoration, reconstruction, and extension of a site dating back to the 13th century, where two Gothic burgher houses once stood. Following a series of scarring historical renovations, the building has undergone a radical transformation.

The former mansard roof has vanished, replaced with a monolithic, sculptural massing. This confident composition of volumes reflects zerozero's distinctive hand, where clean lines and the interplay of arches and curves soften the rectangular, cuboid forms. The pristine white finish suggests a marble carving, with minimal exterior apertures reflecting its internal theatrical function. While the theatre contrasts with its surroundings, it does so without aggression. Instead, it resurrects the "memory of place," preserving the original basement vaults and historical elements within the contemporary floor plan.

Successfully fitting different-sized auditoria, two cafes, backstages, and actor residences into the existing footprint was an act of spatial ingenuity. As the terrain slopes to the Velický Stream's stone banks, the first basement level benefits from direct daylight and an inviting lounge area fronting the café. The smooth white street façade is defined by restraint. The only "ornamentation" is a deeply recessed entrance sporting subtle neon signage and a large window. Even the parapet flashing remains invisible. The interior palette is strictly monochromatic, with black performance halls and exposed concrete in secondary spaces. Come right in! /ab





Assoc Prof Ing. arch. Andrea Bacová, PhD.
Architect, university educator, and publicist

Andrea Bacová is an associate professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Design, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, where her research focuses on residential architecture. She has authored several monographs, including *Slovenský rodinný dom 2000–2015* (The Slovak Single-Family House 2000–2015).

A recipient of the Professor Martin Kusý Award for her contributions to architectural publishing and raising the profile of Slovakia's architecture internationally, Andrea Bacová has also curated numerous local and international architectural exhibitions. She served as editor-in-chief of *ARCH* magazine from 2010 to 2020 and has led *PROJEKT* magazine in the same role since 2021.

Prof Ing. arch. Matúš Dulla, DrSc.
Architect, university educator, architectural theorist and critical analys

Matúš Dulla is professor emeritus at the Faculty of Architecture and Design, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, and at the Faculty of Architecture, Czech Technical University in Prague. He has also previously conducted research at the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Professor Dulla writes extensively on contemporary architecture and has authored numerous books on 20th-century architecture and architects, including a monograph on Emil Belluš, a founding figure of Slovak architecture. His most recent publication is *Moderná architektúra Bratislavy a jej architekti* (*Modern Architecture of Bratislava and Its Architects*). A major contributor to the study of Czech and Slovak architecture, he has taught and mentored generations of specialists who continue to build upon his legacy.

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The word "modern" derives from the Latin *"modernus"*, meaning "present", "contemporary", or "new". The word itself is rooted in "modo", Latin for "now". Broadly speaking, anything that both reflects and anticipates contemporary trends is modern.

In the early twentieth century, an architectural movement emerged that proudly claimed the title of Modernism, as if it were destined to be the definitive modern movement reflecting the latest advancements. Did the architects and art historians genuinely believe that progress in engineering, technology, and art would stop in their era? Or that no meaningful development had ever preceded it? Whatever their assumptions, the adoption of the term "Modernism" introduced a certain conceptual awkwardness for anyone tasked with documenting subsequent art and architectural history.

This paradox has not deterred the authors of this book, Andrea Bacová and Matúš Dulla. With scholarly prose and professional authority, they have curated the most celebrated architectural works between 1900 and the present day. Drawing on their deep expertise as practising architects and university professors, they have selected 159 built projects that illustrate architecture's continuous evolution alongside the prevailing artistic movements of each era. It is reassuring to see that exceptional architecture was produced in every period, even if some of these works are only now receiving their due recognition.

Reading this book reveals architecture as a vital record of social progress, mirrored in the evolving topologies that societies prioritised over time. Particularly notable is the emphasis placed on healthcare and educational facilities from the early twentieth century onward. Following the Second World War, the quality and expansion of housing became an essential prerequisite for social development. In the years since the Velvet Revolution, all construction sectors have grown rapidly, culminating in today's high demand for transformative public space projects.

I do not doubt that *Modern Architecture of Slovakia* will prove an indispensable addition to specialised libraries, as well as an engaging read for anyone enthusiastic about architecture and art. **Prof. Ing. Martina Peřinková, Ph.D.**

Understanding Slovak modern architecture in the sense of "contemporary architecture" is best illustrated by the selection of architectural works in this volume, even if many of their creators would certainly have resisted the label "modern" in any context other than strictly contemporary. Spanning six chapters, *Modern Architecture of Slovakia* traces the roots of architectural practice through virtually every movement that led to its present state. Each chapter opens with an objective historical synthesis of key developments, major historical milestones and, in places, personal biographical notes on prominent architects.

Throughout, Andrea Bacová and Matúš Dulla employ established local terminology, including sorela (a portmanteau of Socialist Realism), monumentalism, regionalism, functionalism, postmodernism, and modernism in its various iterations to help clarify their specific meanings. While the chapters vary in analytical depth, this remains a remarkable synthesis by two personalities with a long-standing commitment to architecture in Slovakia. Selecting which architectural works to showcase is inevitably the main challenge of such comprehensive surveys, a constraint the authors readily acknowledge. Crucially, this volume can be received today much as Goethe famously described his discovery of Palladio's *Four Books on Architecture* during his Italian Journey: *"It was only in Padua that I found the book. Now I am studying it, and it is as though scales have fallen from my eyes. The mist is clearing, and I recognise objects for what they truly are. As a book itself, it is a magnificent work..."* In Modern Architecture of Slovakia, Bacová and Dulla have likewise created a truly fine and valuable work. **Dr. Ing. arch. Ján Krcho, PhD.**

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