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RESTORING ART NOUVEAU

International conference on Art Nouveau architectural decoration
Successful restoration projects



Museum of Applied Arts



Danube Transnational Programme
ART NOUVEAU

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SCHEDULE	2
RESTORING ART NOUVEAU	4
PETER TROWLES	6
LÁSZLÓ CZIFRÁK	8
EVA RADOLOVIĆ, ALEKSANDRA LASLO ...	10
ALEKSA CIGANOVIĆ	12
GÁBOR DÖMÖTÖR	14
ASTRID HUBER	16
GÜNTHER FLEISCHER	18
IOZEFINA POSTÁVARU	20
RAMONA NOVICOV	22



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RÉSEAU
ART
NOUVEAU
NETWORK

**Conference – Museum of Applied Arts,
Budapest, 6 November 2017**

Morning session 9.00–12.15

Chair: **József Sisa**
(Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities,
Institute of Art History)

9.00–9.15
Welcoming address by **Zsombor Jékely**
(Director of Collections, Budapest Museum of Applied Arts)

9.15–9.45
Peter Trowles
(Mackintosh Curator, Glasgow School of Art)
Keynote lecture on behalf of the Réseau Art Nouveau Network:
The restoration and redecoration of the Glasgow School of Art

9.45–10.15
László Czifrák
(Hungarian National Museum, Budapest)
Conservation experience of Zsolnay architectural ceramics
from the entrance hall of the Budapest Museum of Applied Arts

10.15–10.45
Coffee break

10.45–11.15
Eva Radolović, Aleksandra Laslo
(City Institute for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, Zagreb)
Renovation of two Zagreb residential buildings –
comparative analysis of two façade restorations

11.15–11.45
Aleksa Ciganović
(Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia)
Decades of restoring Subotica's Synagogue

11.45–12.15
Gábor Dömötör
(independent researcher, Subotica)
Restoration of the Raichle Palace in Subotica

Afternoon session 14.00–16.30

Chair: **Pál Ritoók**
(Hungarian Academy of Arts)

14.00–14.30
Astrid Huber
(Federal Monuments Authority Austria (BDA), Information and Training Centre
for Architectural Conservation Kartause Mauerbach)
Architectural surfaces and plaster façades around and after 1900

14.30–15.00
Günther Fleischer
(OFI, Austrian Research Institute for Chemistry and Technology)
Preliminary investigations for the restoration of the natural stone façade
from the Steinhof church by Otto Wagner

15.00–15.30
Coffee break

15.30–16.00
Iozefina Postăvaru
(National Institute of Heritage, Bucharest)
Restoring Art Nouveau buildings in deep and wide Romania: The Evangelical School in
Cinșor and the Sofian House in Botoșani

16.00–16.30
Ramona Novicov
(Faculty of Construction, Cadastre and Architecture, Oradea)
The lost beauty rediscovered: The Black Eagle and Moskovits Adolf Palaces,
examples of good practices in restoration

**Workshop – Museum of Applied Arts,
Budapest, 7 November 2017**

International restoration workshop and roundtable discussion

9.00–10.00
Ágnes Baricza, Bernadett Bajnóczi, Csaba Szabó, Mária Tóth
(Institute for Geological and Geochemical Research - Archeometry Research Group)
Deterioration of Zsolnay architectural ceramics due to environmental factors

10.00–10.30
Coffee break

10.30–11.30
Astrid Huber, Karl Stingl
(Federal Monuments Authority Austria (BDA), Information and Training Centre
for Architectural Conservation Kartause Mauerbach)
The interaction of plaster surfaces and facing brickwork on Art Nouveau façades

RESTORING ART NOUVEAU

International conference on Art Nouveau architectural decoration – successful restoration projects

As part of the project Sustainable protection and promotion of the Art Nouveau heritage in the Danube region, the Budapest Museum of Applied Arts is organizing a conference and a workshop Restoring Art Nouveau.

The Art Nouveau style of architecture and design is still very much in evidence in numerous towns and cities in the Danube region. Nevertheless, the inherent opportunities in using Art Nouveau monuments as venues for a thriving community life or as tourist attractions often go unexploited. Ten partner organisations from seven countries in the Danube region are cooperating with the aim of ensuring sustainable, coordinated preservation of Art Nouveau buildings.

As part of the project, the research programme coordinated by the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest deals with Art Nouveau building decorations, focusing attention on how the appearance of buildings can be greatly affected by the richness – or otherwise – of their erstwhile decoration. The aim is to call attention to the importance of decorative techniques and methods of Art Nouveau buildings. These decorations define the character of Art Nouveau buildings, and are an integral part of their artistic and historic value, and thus should be preserved and conserved as much as possible.

The conservation and restoration of various decorative techniques require highly specialized skills and expertise. The research project aims to collect a significant body of works representing best practices, while it also focuses on the challenges of the restoration of specific historical decorative techniques.



In the framework of the research programme, the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest organized a series of national-level workshops on 9–11 October 2017 focusing on particular techniques such as mosaic, terrazzo, stained glass, ceramics, ironwork and painted decoration. As a second step of this research project an international conference and workshop is organized on 6–7 November 2017 to draw the attention of the public and experts to the significance of the professional conservation of Art Nouveau heritage, particularly elements of building decoration.

The conference will present case studies from Hungary and abroad to highlight complete building restorations, where experts from many fields successfully worked together. This conference will strengthen the cooperation framework for preservation of Art Nouveau creating a unique opportunity for sharing and improving knowledge, while the workshops on specific topics guarantee the efficiency of the professional discussion between the restorers taking part in it and will contribute to start a cooperative discussion for the sake of preserving Art Nouveau architectural heritage of the Danube region.

Conference organising team:

Kornélia Hajtó, Zsombor Jékely, Zsuzsa Margittai

Collaborators:

Anna Bognár, Györgyi Csekő, Zsófia Kancler, Flóra Kocsis, Ágnes Rusz, Klára Szegárdy-Csengery

Peter Trowles
(Mackintosh Curator, Glasgow School of Art)

The restoration and redecoration of the Glasgow School of Art

The tragic fire that ravaged Glasgow School of Art's iconic Mackintosh Building in May 2014 has focussed minds on the value of its surviving organisational records as an indispensable tool to aid the complex task of reconstructing this world renowned building. Long overlooked photographs, period drawings, committee papers and even original receipt books have started to provide a unique understanding of the building's early history and subsequent use over the last century, and this information continues to shape the direction that this on-going restoration work takes.

In addition, scientific evidence gleaned from surviving paint samples along with the analysis of charred timber fragments has already proved invaluable as the task of rebuilding gathers pace. Much has been learnt already and there is great anticipation as to how the celebrated but completely destroyed Mackintosh library will look once rebuilt.

The intention is to completely restore the building back to what it would have looked like when it first opened in December 1909, but with one important proviso – which is that the building must continue to serve the needs of a working art school and should be fit for the 21st century.

Understandably there are areas of potential conflict. How accurate and faithful can this restoration be if the building is to meet the demands of a modern-day teaching institution? Compromises are inevitable as the task is not just about restoring an architectural monument, it's also about ensuring that the building continues to live and breathe.



However, with archivists, historians and even archaeologists working alongside conservators, architects, engineers and project managers, Glasgow School of Art is confident that the restored Mackintosh Building when it opens in 2019 will, based on surviving evidence, be as authentic as it can be. Above all, the School is seeking to ensure that the building and its Mackintosh legacy is safe-guarded for future generations.

László Czifrák **(Hungarian National Museum, Budapest)**

Conservation of Zsolnay architectural ceramics from the entrance hall of the Budapest Museum of Applied Arts

Ceramics were widely used in architecture in the second half of the 19th century. Pyrogranite, made by Zsolnay of Pécs, was particularly suited to revival and Art Nouveau buildings. It was the durability of pyrogranite that particularly suited it for the exterior decoration of buildings. It adorns many buildings in Budapest dating from the late 19th century onwards. By the end of the 20th century, however, the tiles had deteriorated to a condition that demanded conservation.

The Zsolnay tiles that line the main entrance lobby of the Museum of Applied Arts were restored between 2008 and 2010, following serious structural damage to the surface caused by moisture in the walls. In many places, the moisture had displaced the tiles and detached them from the wall surface. In addition to structural damage, the tiles suffered mechanical damage during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

The 2008–2010 restoration began with cleaning the surface using a suspension of granulated dolomite in deionised water. After this step, the pieces that were in poor physical condition and were broken or improperly fixed were carefully removed. We treated the crumbling and damaged tiles with siliceous permeation to give them additional physical strength. The detached pieces were re-attached by injecting epoxy resin and using liquid mortar.

After this structural reinforcement of the original tiles, missing elements were replaced using material matched to the original colours. Dispersing frost-resistant repair-mortar was used



for this purpose. Tiles were reinforced with purpose-made copper and steel frames and both the replacements and the detached original tiles were put back on the wall using the original technique. The latter were fixed with frost-resistant adhesive. The replacements were retouched with various pigments, potassium-glass and Acronal. The painted surfaces were treated with a protective two-component varnish.

Eva Radolović, Aleksandra Laslo
(City Institute for the Conservation
of Cultural and Natural Heritage, Zagreb)

Renovation of two Zagreb residential buildings –
comparative analysis of two façade restorations

At the beginning of the 20th century, some of the most significant public buildings, such as the Croatian State Archives or the Trades and Crafts Museum, were built in the Art Nouveau style.

Alongside or around these, numerous residential buildings were built at the same time, resulting in an elegant new district that today is highly valued and preserved as part of the protected historical city centre, due to its historical significance and architectural quality.

While the managers of grand public buildings have been able to find funding for their renovation, the owners or tenants of privately owned residential buildings are often of relatively modest means, leading to poor maintenance and deterioration of the façades.

The city authorities recognised the magnitude of this problem and attempted to find a suitable solution. In the past 20 years, the City of Zagreb has started to co-finance the renovation and restoration of façades and roofs of residential buildings.

This has led to an increase in the number of reconstructions in the historic centre of the city, generating evident improvement, and the city's image finally began to change for the better.

The presentation covers the whole process of reconstruction through the example of two residential building façades in the historic centre of Zagreb.



Comparative analysis gives an overview of the existing state of façades and describes the process of restoration of plastered parts, stucco decorations, wood and metal elements and stone parts. It displays a final result as a conclusion. The presentation is intended to show the whole process of façade renovation from the perspective of conservation supervision, which monitors and coordinates the entire workflow.

Generally, most street façades have preserved all or at least some of their original plaster and stucco decorations. The original façade is most often in very poor condition due to plaster that has lost its primary quality and is partially decomposed and ripped.

Therefore, the plaster surfaces and decorations (towed profiles) most often have to be re-made on the basis of templates made by taking measurements and imprints of the originals. All of the historical, original plaster is documented and analysed in detail before removal.

The present state of the decorative stucco elements is very diverse: some high-quality cast elements have been preserved in very good condition and require only cleaning and in-situ remediation, but stucco decorations are often in extremely bad condition and only the thin layer of surface impurities keeps them from decomposing into powder.

Aleksa Ciganović
**(Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of
Serbia, Belgrade)**

Decades of restoring Subotica's Synagogue

Art Nouveau (secession) as a stylistic and ideological movement is recognized as a cohesive factor of European continental culture. The Subotica Synagogue, a Neolog synagogue by architectural compositional plan, is the most important representative of the Art Nouveau heritage of Serbia. Its steel skeletal construction and the 8 cm-thick cobbled plaster shells also make it a technical novelty of the avant-garde. It was designed by the architects Jakab and Komor, and completed in 1902. The original decorative accents are supported by a stained-glass window made in the workshop of Miksa Róth and a roof covered with unglazed terracotta tiles made by Zsolnay in Pécs. In 1996, and again in 2000 and 2002, the synagogue was included among the 100 Most Endangered Monuments in the World.

Under the law on cultural property, the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments – Belgrade prescribed technical protection measures for the project and undertook construction and craft works for both external elements (façade and surroundings) and interiors. The conservation work was also subject to supervision under the law on the cultural property (1994) and the law on planning and construction (2009/2014). The project was launched in 2006 and systematic construction work took place in annual phases beginning in 2013, with each façade being completed in succession. Work on the interior started on 1 November 2016, at the same time the surroundings were laid out with green spaces, aimed at defining the space of the synagogue for



the purpose of culture and the performing arts, with a minimal permanent exhibition of the indigenous Jewish community. This work describes the flow of construction and craft works and explains the technical conservation protection measures. The chosen technical conservation measures include the use of modern materials with suitable construction parameters but analogous to the prefabricated concept of the original design. The key structural and decorative elements were designed to achieve authentic stylistic and artistic expression.

Gábor Dömötör
(Independent researcher, Subotica)

Restoration of the Raichle Palace in Subotica

Ferenc Raichle was born in Apatin and studied architecture in Budapest. After he married, he settled down in Subotica and pursued a career as an architect, contractor and developer. In 1903, he started to build a large house for himself and his family on a plot he had acquired at the edge of Maria Theresia Park, opposite the railway station, the most attractive site in the town at the time. He designed the house in the 'Hungarian style' of Art Nouveau, and owing to his skilful selection of the location, it still stands out magnificently today. It is a single-storey mansion that stretches out generously, with a theatrical central portal featuring a flattened arch. The main façade is accented by two side-turrets covered entirely by glazed Zsolnay pyrogranite tiles capped with sheet-metal cupolas, and two wooden bay windows, allusions to Transylvanian vernacular wooden architecture. The portal is framed by mosaic floral motifs made of Murano glass paste, and above it, two bean-shaped windows turn towards each other. They originally contained stained glass, produced in the workshop of the great master from Budapest, Miksa Róth. The portal is framed by a series of glazed pyrogranite decorative elements. Unfortunately, Raichle went bankrupt in 1906 and left the town, abandoning all his property. The Raichle Palace has had mixed fortunes since then, frequently changing owners. Since 1970, it has housed a gallery of modern art, originally called 'Artistic Encounter', and more recently with the name 'Contemporary Gallery Subotica'. The aim of this presentation is to demonstrate a case study



of the partial restoration of the Raichle Palace in Subotica. It covers the restoration of the wooden bay windows; replacement of the complete roof covering; restoration of the façade mortar with all of the decorative profiles; replacement of the missing and restoration of the damaged façade glazed ceramics (pyrogranite) elements; restoration of the Murano glass mosaic ornaments and finally, the painting of the façade. The work was carried out between 2003 and 2005 under the supervision of the architect conservers Gordana P. Vujnović, MSc. and Gábor Dömötör responsible for the restoration.

Astrid Huber
(Federal Monuments Authority Austria (BDA),
Information and Training Centre
for Architectural Conservation Kartause Mauerbach)

Architectural surfaces and plaster façades
around and after 1900

The Art Nouveau period is perhaps the most interesting time of all concerning the variety of materials used for architectural surfaces. The artistic treatment of façades around 1900 was shaped by the many new materials and technologies of the period. The new façades consisted of decorative plasterwork in different structures, together with stucco, ceramic tiles, cast metal ornaments, stone and terracotta elements, and exposed brickwork. In departing from the thinking behind revivalist tendencies, the architecture of Central Europe at the turn of the century reflected a new style and a new decorative vocabulary, and by incorporating new, increasingly industrially prefabricated products, effected a fresh architectural aesthetic that is perceptible on all surfaces and therefore in the overall appearance of buildings. In the second half of the 19th century, façades of plaster and other materials were usually painted, but by 1900, the visual quality considered appropriate for contemporary buildings was that of natural plaster. The development of new (hydraulic) binder materials for decorative renders and stucco enabled the production of special Art Nouveau plaster patterns and prefabricated cast elements. Roman cement, the first hydraulic binder, was invented in England (patented by James Parker in 1796), where it was used primarily for structures in which masonry was subjected to moisture and



needed an extremely strong binder. By 1900, Roman cement was also being used for rendering façades and especially for the production of cast elements. By the beginning of the 20th century, the use of Roman cement gradually declined as Portland cement became the predominant binder for hydraulic mortars and plasters. During this transitional phase from Roman-cement-based to Portland-cement-based renders, Portland and Roman cement were often combined in the mortars.

Although Roman cement and the highly hydraulic lime mortars containing it have now been largely displaced by modern cement-based products, they were the materials that – together with the specialised methods required to use them – enabled craftsmen to develop the independent formal language of Art Nouveau that is so admired today for both its artistry and its craftsmanship.

Günther Fleischer
**(OFI, Austrian Research Institute
for Chemistry and Technology)**

Preliminary investigations for the restoration of the natural stone façade of the Steinhof church by Otto Wagner

St. Leopold am Steinhof, originally built as a church for a psychiatric hospital in Vienna, was designed by Otto Wagner and finished in 1907. It stands as one of the most important sacral buildings of Art Nouveau architecture. Its key features are the golden dome, the richly coloured stained glass by Kolo Moser and the façade of white Carrara marble.

To address the damage suffered by the church in the Second World War and the deterioration of its condition since then, an extensive restoration was carried out between 2001 and 2006. That work was preceded by investigations of the stone façade to determine the condition of the stone elements and evaluate the possibility of preserving parts of the original stone material.

After the main damage to the façade had been assessed, some non-destructive tests were carried out in situ, such as ultrasonic velocity measurement and deformation of the stone plates. Some material was also taken from the façade for laboratory tests. Taking samples from the façade enabled investigation of the original mounting technique, which differed from modern ways of mounting stone façades.

The Carrara marble was severely weathered, and the main objective of the laboratory tests was to determine the best way of consolidating it.

The results of the non-destructive tests were correlated with those of the destructive laboratory tests to gain a full overall interpretation.



The Institute of Engineering Geology of the Technical University of Vienna carried out the investigations on the natural stone façade except for the deformation measurements, which were performed by an engineering office for survey.

Iozeana Postăvaru
(National Institute of Heritage, Bucharest)

Restoring Art Nouveau buildings in deep and wide Romania:
The Evangelical School in Cincșor and the Sofian House in
Botoșani

This paper reveals the multi-dimensional flowering of the Art Nouveau style on the territory of modern Romania. The Sofian House in Botoșani, a town in the province of Moldova in the remote northeast of the country, was built in 1894. The new style was chosen as an explicit affirmation of the economic power and cosmopolitanism of its proprietor.

Cincșor, despite its location in the centre of Romania, is a small and isolated village. The Saxon community (descendants of German settlers in Transylvania) adopted the Art Nouveau style when modernizing their confessional school in 1910 as a sign of the ethnic group's identity.

The lecture will present the aspects of the restoration process, finalized at Cincșor and in progress in Botoșani.

The school in Cincșor is one of the outstanding achievements of the gifted architect / engineer Friedrich Balthes of Sighișoara, who designed several schools, parish houses and cultural centres for Transylvanian Saxon communities. The building expresses the reforming spirit of the times and is a statement of regional specificity. Following the mass emigration of the Saxons, the school decayed to a ruin. It was restored between 2008 and 2010 to provide new functions – conference hall, information centre for rural tourism, and guest house, but these were subordinated to the recovery of the initial appearance of the building.

In Botoșani, the house of the philanthropist Neculai Sofian



embodies Art Nouveau tendencies as asymmetries, invasion of light and organic implantation in soil and context. Donated to charity along with his entire fortune and then nationalized, the house gradually reached a critical conservation state. Since 2003, when it was assigned as a sacerdotal cultural centre, the house has undergone thorough restoration. For example, for the sake of authenticity, the roof covering was restored using materials procured from the original source (France).

Ramona Novicov
(Faculty of Construction,
Cadastre and Architecture, Oradea)

The lost beauty rediscovered: The Black Eagle and Moskovits Adolf Palaces, examples of good practices in restoration

We have selected two iconic Art Nouveau buildings of the many instances of that style in Oradea: the Black Eagle and the Adolf Moskovits palaces, both currently undergoing comprehensive rehabilitation. This presentation covers the elaborate procedures used for the rehabilitation of the glazed pedestrian passage of the Black Eagle Palace, built between 1907 and 1909. The whole ensemble is the work of architects Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab and bears the marks of Ödön Lechner's stylistic vision.

The presentation highlights the rehabilitation of the severely deteriorated masonry and plaster surfaces of the glazed passage, the way in which the entire ensemble of the remaining original painting has been preserved, and how the decorative motifs have been restored.

The work in both the Black Eagle palace (restored in 2015) and the Moskovits palace (where restoration started in 2013 and is still in progress) has constantly striven to preserve the artistic components. The Moskovits Palace is the work of the architects László and József Vágó, and was built between 1910 and 1911. One can perceive here a completely new architectural vision, situated in the avant-garde of the geometric Secession – the very opposite of Lechner's vision. The façade and attics of this building have been restored, including the Zsolnay tile decoration and the semi-sgraffito at the cornice. The building has now largely regained its original appearance.