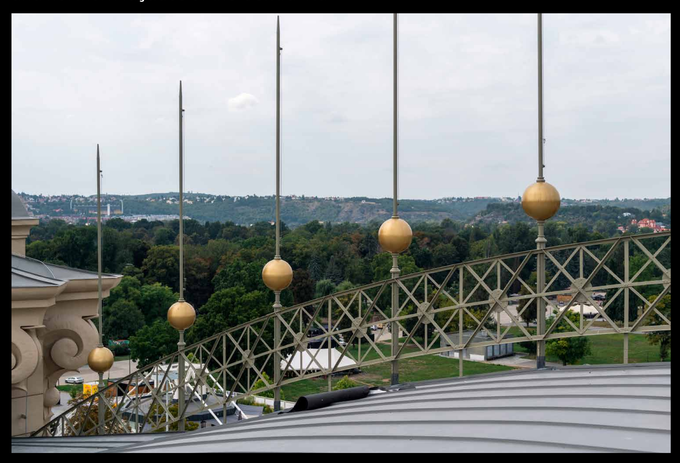
Giant Flourishes

A boldly austere structure, extensive glazing and plenty of daylight – this was typical of many exhibition buildings at the end of the age of steam. The Industrial Palace, however, is different. Inside and out, its architecture is softened by hundreds of ornamental details, many made from metal – a symbol of technological progress at the time. In the spring of 1891, dozens of blacksmiths, goldsmiths and ornamental metalworkers worked on the palace. The same crafts also played an important role in its recent restoration.

The fine metalwork elements are crafted down to the finest detail.

Flagpoles restored to the southern and northern façades of the Central Hall.



Some metal elements were restored, while others were recreated and returned to the palace after many decades. Some had been removed for ideological reasons after the fall of the monarchy, during the Nazi occupation and following the Communist takeover in 1948. These included the Czech coat of arms on the main façade and the Crown of Saint Wenceslas at the top of the main tower. Other lost features have also returned, including the serrated parapet and flagpoles.

Ornamental metalworking requires not only great skill but considerable physical strength. Using hammers of various shapes and sizes, craftspeople shape metal into intricate decorative forms. And although it may not look like it from the ground, some of the palace's metal ornaments really are gigantic.

Did you know...?

- The crown atop the clock tower caught the eye of visitors to the 1891 Jubilee Exhibition both day and night. Fitted with electric light bulbs, it lit up after dark alongside the nearby Křižík Fountain.

- The uppermost sections of all four corner towers may look like stucco, but appearances are deceptive. They are actually richly decorated sheet-metal shells mounted on wooden structures. The reason was purely practical: the towers were built during winter, when freezing temperatures made stucco work impossible. Sheet metal provided the solution.

- More than 10 different specialist workshops contributed to the restoration and recreation of the palace's metalwork.

Decorative volutes soften the appearance of the Industrial Palace's steel structure.

Restored attic on the sides of the main building.

Photo: Jiří Šabek

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