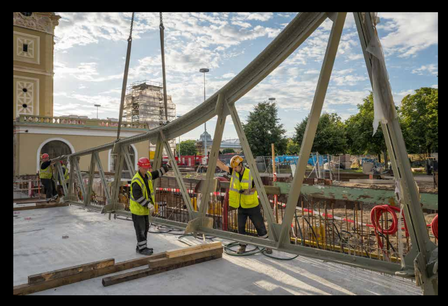
Returning to the Days of Gustave Eiffel

The first design that architect Bedřich Münzberger drew for Prague's Výstaviště depicted a classic, mostly masonry building. However, the project evolved dramatically as bricks gave way to steel.

This shift was undoubtedly influenced by the numerous study trips Czech civil engineers made to the recently concluded Paris World's Fair. After all, in 1891, Prague gained not only a new riveted palace next to Stromovka park, but also a miniature version of the Eiffel Tower built using the very same technology atop Petřín Hill. The choice of a more delicate structure was not merely driven by the era's fascination with iron and its alloys; airy, light-filled steel halls also provided far better conditions for displaying exhibits.

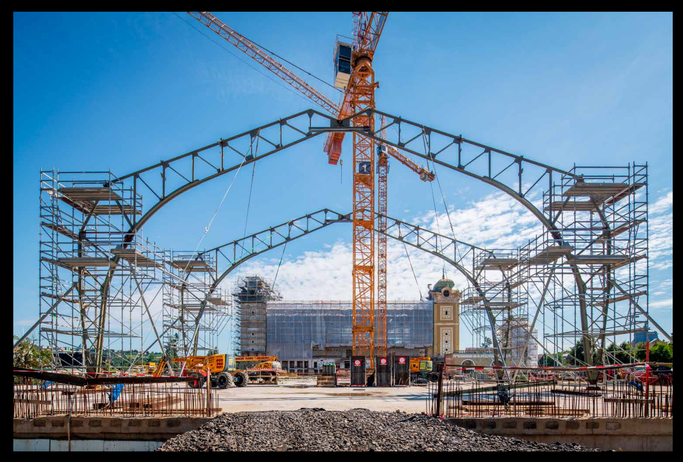
Today, one can best picture what the interior looked like 135 years ago by visiting the newly built Left Wing of the Industrial Palace, as the steel framework of the Right Wing remains concealed beneath additions built in the 1950s. The replica of the three--aisled structure was recreated according to original blueprints, though it is slightly sturdier to provide a higher load capacity. It now had to comply with modern building codes and support new features such as insulated roof cladding.

During the comprehensive reconstruction, the most heavily stressed components of the Central Hall were also replaced, including the severely corroded legs of the clock tower. Furthermore, there is another technological shift that the naked eye cannot detect: individual steel components were no longer joined by traditional riveting, but were instead welded together. Thus, the hundreds (or rather thousands) of new rivets welded or bolted onto the structure today serve no functional purpose, they remain purely as a tribute to the era of Gustave Eiffel and Bedřich Münzberger.

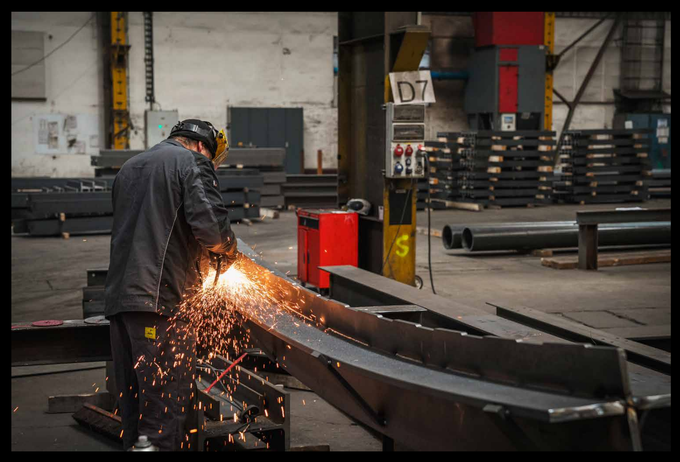


Assembly of the first new steel beam for the future Left Wing.

Steel replica rivets are now just for decoration.

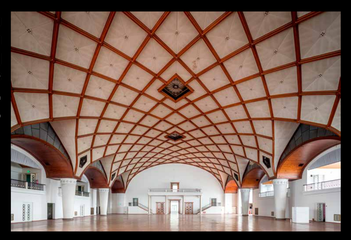


Construction of the Left Wing in summer 2023.



The steel beams were manufactured by EXCON.

The Smetana extension in the Right Wing concealing the steel structure, before restoration.



The Left Wing was built as a replica of the 1891 original.

Did you know...?

- The total weight of all steel structure components in the Left Wing reaches 412.7 tons. The individual parts were manufactured at EXCON's Teplice plant.
- In 1891, the Industrial Palace had a smaller steel "sibling" at Výstaviště. The Machinery Hall building was later sold to Innsbruck, Austria, where it still stands at the local exhibition grounds today.
- The tower of the Industrial Palace was not repaired on-site; it was carefully lowered to the ground in front of the Palace.

Photo: Jiří Šebek

Industrial Palace Na Výstavišti Architecture Na Výstavišti Reconstruction Na Výstavišti I ❤ Na Výstavišti