When Walls Speak

The building of the Industrial Palace is decorated with many symbols. What exactly do they mean, and what can they reveal about the era in which the palace was built, as well as its subsequent historical turning points?

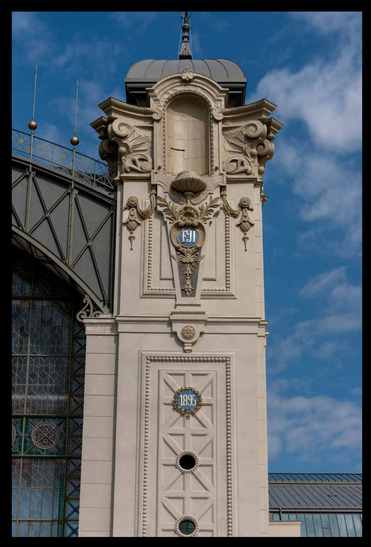
St. Wenceslas Crown

During the restoration, a large St. Wenceslas Crown returned to the Palace's main tower. In 1891, it symbolized, among other things, a silent rebuke to Emperor Franz Joseph I for never having been crowned King of Bohemia. After February 1948, the Communists replaced it with a five-pointed star at the building's highest point.

Coat of Arms with the Lion

The coat of arms featuring the two-tailed lion is also back. Originally, it was accompanied by the coats of arms of towns and cities that contributed financially to the Jubilee Centennial Exhibition: Prague, Pilsen, and Pardubice, as well as then-independent municipalities like Smíchov, Karlín, and Královské Vinohrady.

L II and FJ I



The initials on the front corner towers commemorate two Habsburg monarchs. Under the reign of Leopold II, one of Europe's first industrial exhibitions took place in Prague in 1791; one hundred years later, under Franz Joseph I, the Jubilee Centennial Exhibition was held. Statues of both monarchs originally stood in the niches above the inscriptions. They had to be removed from the facade following the establishment of Czechoslovakia.

RB, 1791–1891

Inscriptions on the rear façade and inside the Central Hall also reference the years of both exhibitions. The same motif originally decorated the main entrance to the palace. It is accompanied by the letters R and B – an abbreviation for Regnum Bohemiae (Kingdom of Bohemia).

NVČ and 1895

The abbreviation and date on the corner towers refer to the Czecho-Slavonic Ethnographic Exhibition (Národopisná výstava československá). Celebrating traditions and folk culture, the event led to the Industrial Palace being temporarily renamed the Ethnographic (Národopisný) Palace in 1895.

Viribus Unitis

The façades of both the Left and Right Wings feature the Latin inscription Viribus Unitis, meaning "With United Forces." This was the personal motto of Emperor Franz Joseph I, who ruled over an internally fragmented, multi-ethnic monarchy.

Stained-Glass Windows

The façades of both wings also feature two stained-glass windows based on designs by Mikoláš Aleš. The window on the Left Wing represents an allegory of Plowing and Hunting, while the one on the Right Wing depicts Industry and Science.

Folk Dances

During the 1950s redevelopment, an added entrance foyer replaced the original portal. It is decorated with four sgraffito works depicting folk dances created by painter Karel Svolinský.

Medallions

Medallions depicting symbols of the various industries presented at the exhibition in 1891 adorn the facades of both wings. A precise description has not survived – can you decipher them?

Photo: Jiří Šetek

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