

Architecture around 1900 in Central Europe

#3 Challenges of modernity

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In this series on popular culture, we will once again revisit one of the most inspiring moments in the history of European culture. The turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was **a special period for art in Central Europe** due to various artistic trends and an increased cultural exchange between countries politically associated with Austria-Hungary.

The architecture style of this time largely dominates the face of contemporary European cities. Many important and characteristic buildings (such as train stations, museums, universities, and parliaments) were designed by then architects, while main boulevards and plazas were designed by city planners.

Similarly to our previous series, we will present a panorama of **the Belle Époque** through examples from Central European countries.



Urbanization and globalization

Increased industrialization and urbanization of cities forced 19th century society to face previously unknown challenges. These struggles shaped what we today call modernity.

Among the most important inventions were the iron railroad, steamboats, the light bulb, and the telegraph – hence the 19th century is sometimes referred to as the “Age of Steam and Electricity”. The photo camera made it possible to capture “real” images, while mass-published press ensured the rapid circulation of information from almost every corner of the globe.

Ferdinand Keller (DE), Poster of the Electrotechnical Exhibition in Stuttgart, Germany, 1896, Albertina



With increasing trade and the development communication systems the world became more and more globalized. The telegraph network made it possible to transmit information faster than ever, and the development of railroads forced the need to implement universal time.

The challenges of modernity were also reflected in architecture.

Postcard showing “Trip to Vienna in the future”, circa 1910, Wien Museum



Ein Zukunfts-Ausflug nach Wien

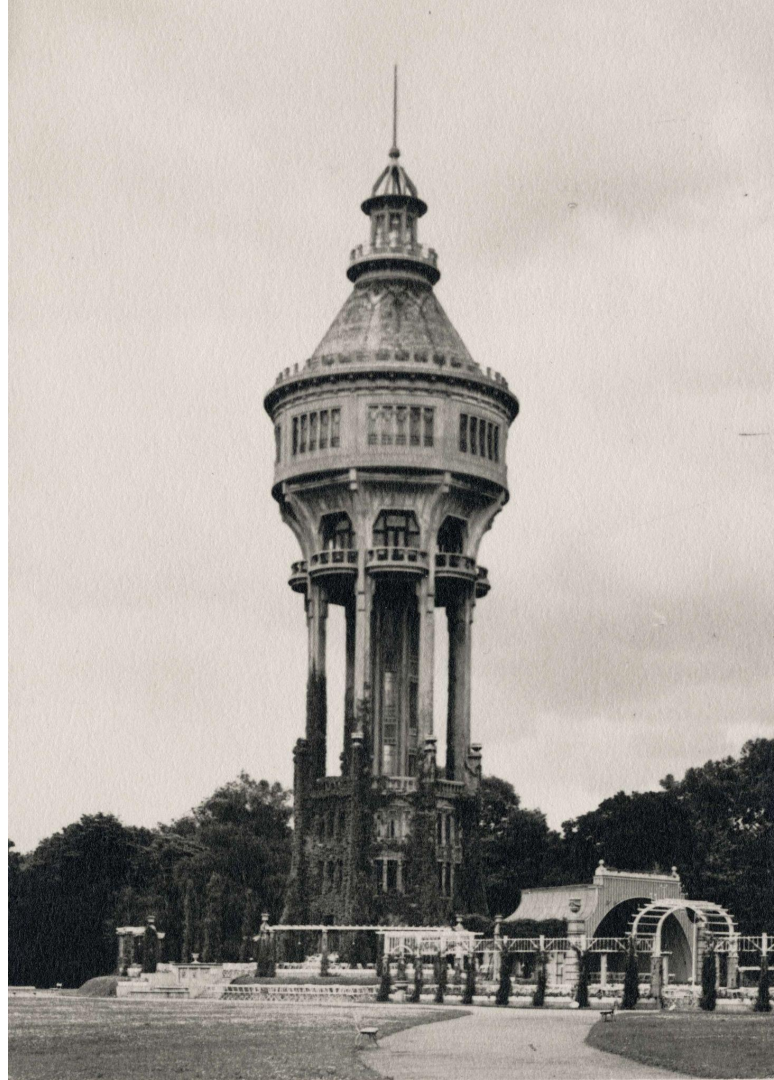
Inventions

Increasing populations moving to expanding cities increased the need to connect individual neighbourhoods. Streetcar tracks were laid in the streets, depots were built, and the electrical wiring of the city began. The largest investment – only few cities could afford – was the construction of a subway.



Laying streetcar tracks in Prague, circa 1900, National Museum in Prague

To ensure access to clean water and the disposal of sewage, water and sewage networks were constructed, which brought with them the construction of filtration buildings and water towers.



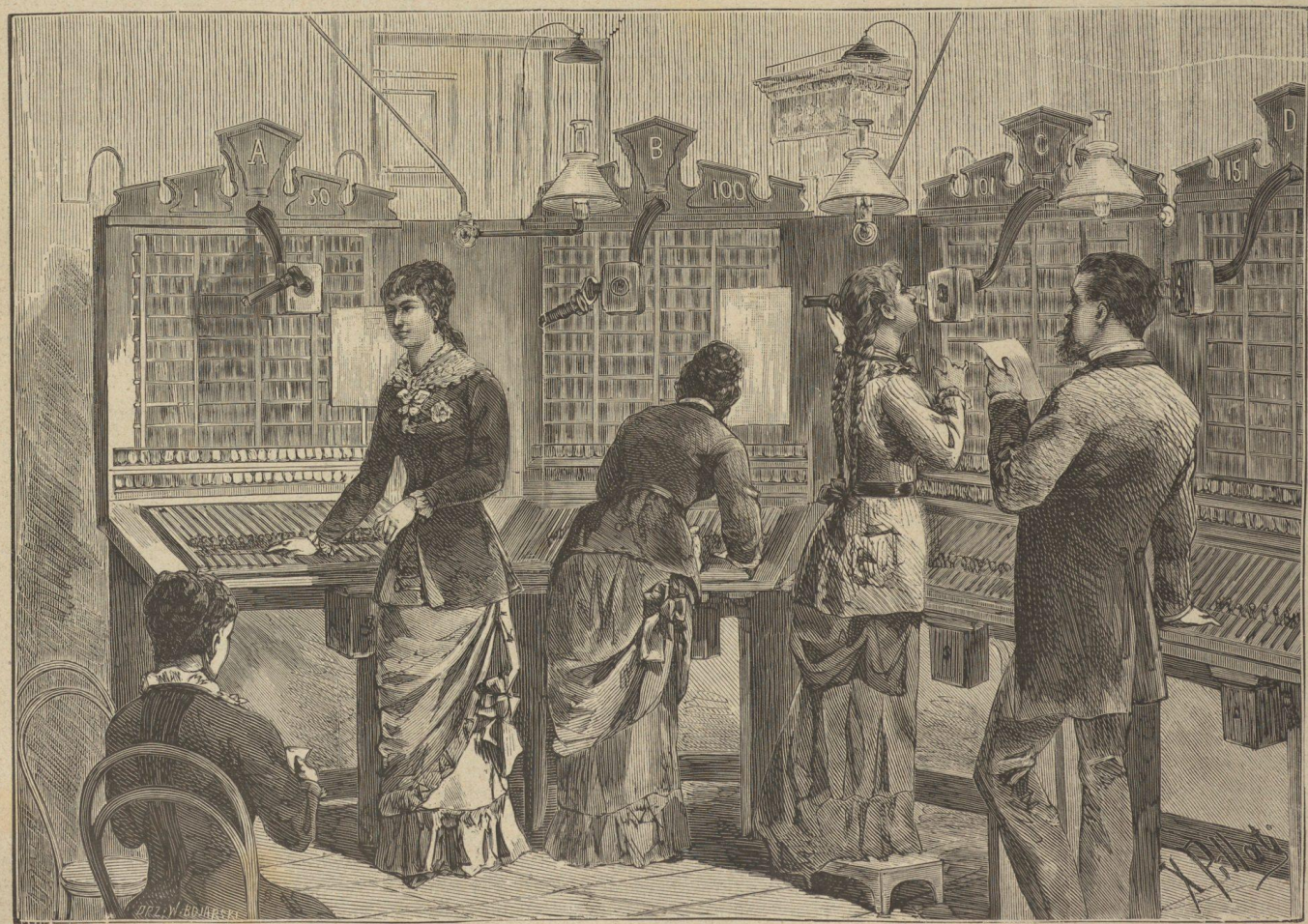
The Water Tower of Margaret Island, Budapest,
1931, Budapest City Archives

City communication was provided by the mail (or even pneumatic tube mail), the telegraph, and later by the telephone network. Their operation required the construction of specialized postal buildings and telephone exchanges.

Central telephone station of Warsaw,
illustration from "Kłosy", 1882,
Mazovian Digital Library



Stacya Główna Telefonów przy ulicy Nowopróżnej w Warszawie.
Fig. D.

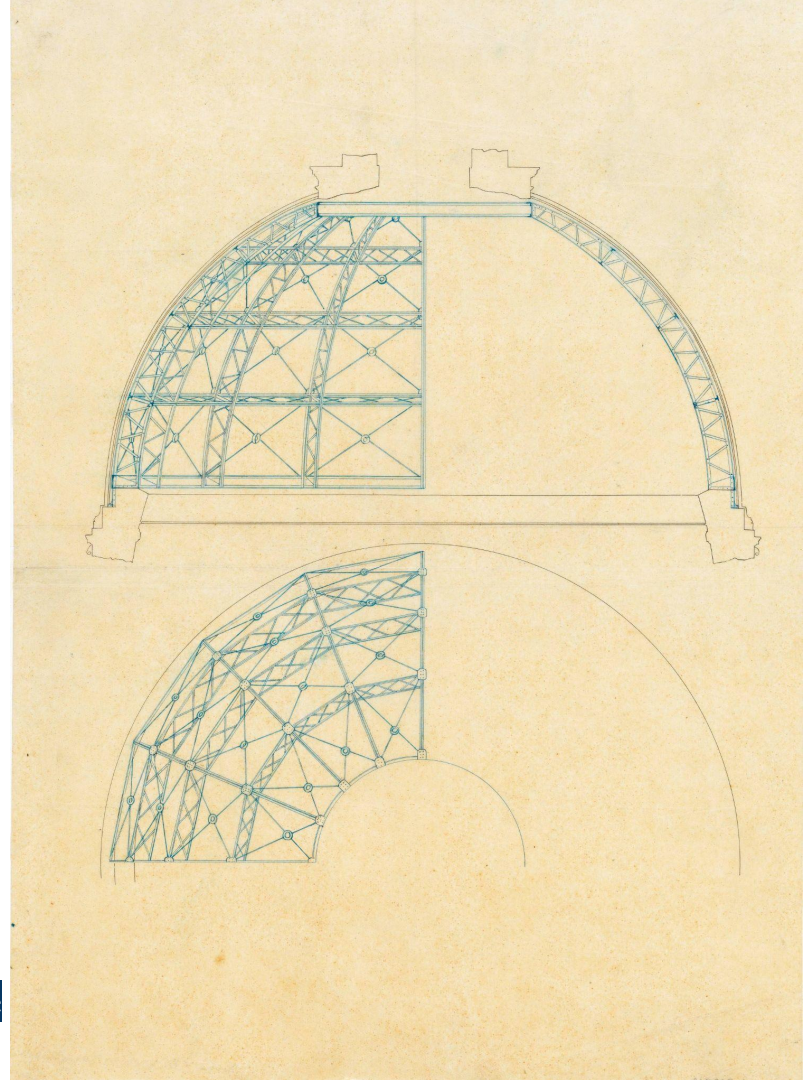


Central telephone station of Warsaw, illustration from
“Tygodnik Powszechny”, 1882, National Library in Warsaw

New materials

The 19th century also brought a change in construction materials. In addition to wood, brick and stone, reinforced concrete appeared, while the structural role of iron and glass increased.

The new materials were cheaper and easier to produce allowing for faster construction. In turn, improvements in construction meant that buildings became sturdier and more stable and therefore larger. Skyscrapers soon completely changed the skyline of cities, especially those in America.

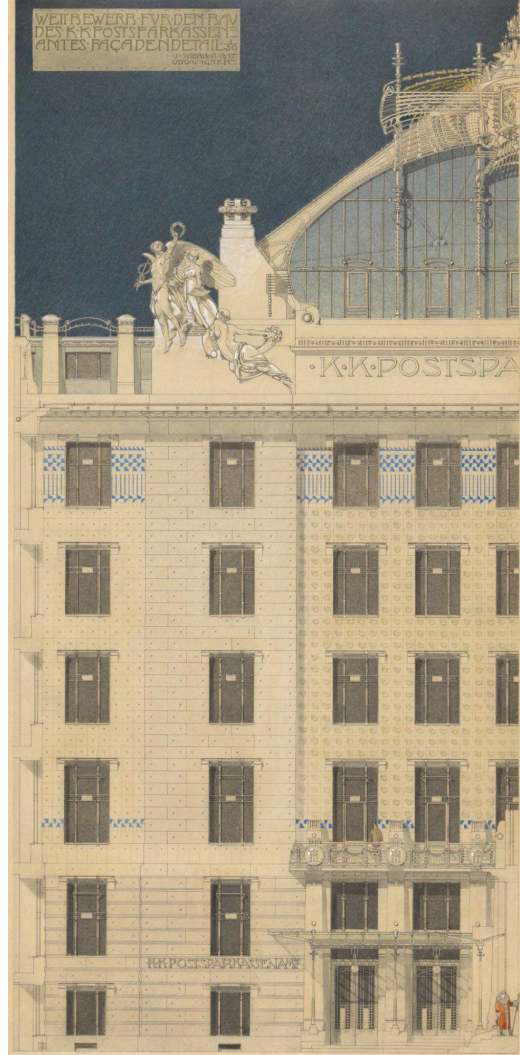


Otto Wagner (AT), Project of the iron dome structure, circa 1880, Wien Museum



Main hall in the Austrian Postal Savings Bank in Vienna, 1907, Wien Museum

Otto Wagner (AT), Project of Austrian Postal Savings Bank in Vienna, 1903, Wien Museum



The new construction possibilities were eagerly taken advantage of by Art Nouveau architects who wanted light structures and flowing lines.



Karlsplatz Stadtbahn Station in Vienna, designed by Otto Wagner (AT) and Joseph Maria Olbrich (AT), 1900, Wien Museum

Politics, administration and education

One of the greatest challenges of the 19th century became the governance of the state, which through its actions covered ever increasing areas of life.

In addition to parliamentary buildings, monumental ministerial and judicial edifices were constructed not only to provide a place for officials to work but also to visually emphasize the role of the state in managing the lives of its citizens. This led to the emergence of a new social group – civil servants.



Ministry of War in Vienna, 1913,
Wien Museum



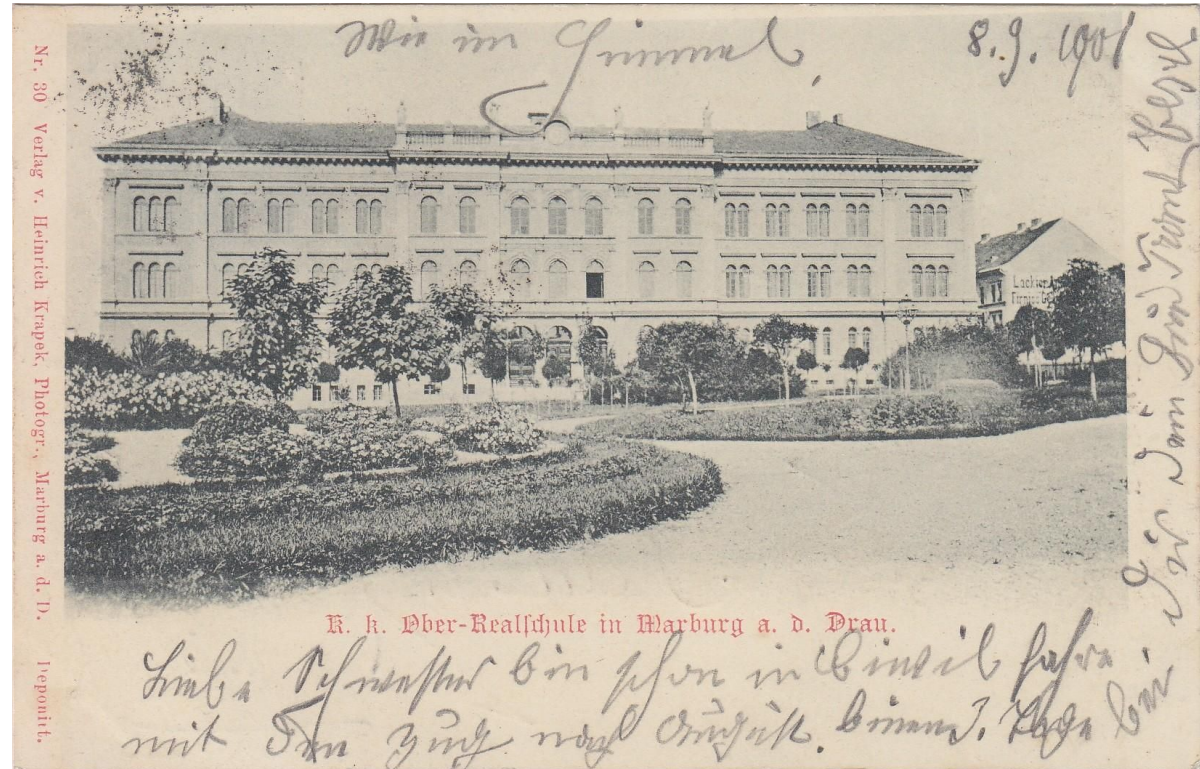
Palace of Justice in Vienna, circa
1898, Wien Museum



Urania Observatory, Vienna, 1912,
Wien Museum

The introduction of compulsory schooling and the modernization of the teaching of trades meant that vast schools and university establishments were built to allow for mass education.

The progress of medicine and modern health care was in turn associated with the construction of hospital complexes.



School in Maribor, Slovenia, 1901,
Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz

Trade

As the urban population grew, so did the problem of providing fresh food. Existing markets ceased to serve their purpose – they took up too much space, were exposed to changes in the weather, and required daily deliveries. Moreover, some markets were open only on certain days of the week.



Józef Pankiewicz (PL), *Vegetable market in the Iron-Gate Square in Warsaw*, 1888, National Museum in Poznań

The solution turned out to be the construction of market halls, or large covered spaces where traders could move.

In this way they gained storage space and could sell every day. Efforts were made for each city district to have its own hall.



Market hall in Warsaw, circa 1910, National Library in Warsaw

Among the best examples is the Great Market Hall in Budapest with a façade clad in glazed brick from the famous Zsolnay porcelain factory and a spacious interior roofed by an iron and glass structure.



Great Market Hall in Budapest, 1908,
Hungarian Museum of Trade and Tourism

Trade was also affected by industrialization and the birth of capitalism. Mass-produced products appeared on the market in factories and had to be sold somewhere. Shopping centres and department stores began to appear in city centres.



Mariahilfer Zentralpalast – department store in Vienna, circa 1911, Wien Museum



Industry

Some of the largest buildings constructed were factories. They had to accommodate large production lines and many workers, as well as be well lit, fireproof, and connected to the railroad network.

Iron foundry in Buckau near Magdeburg,
photo by Gustav Härtwig (DE), circa
1875, Albertina, Vienna

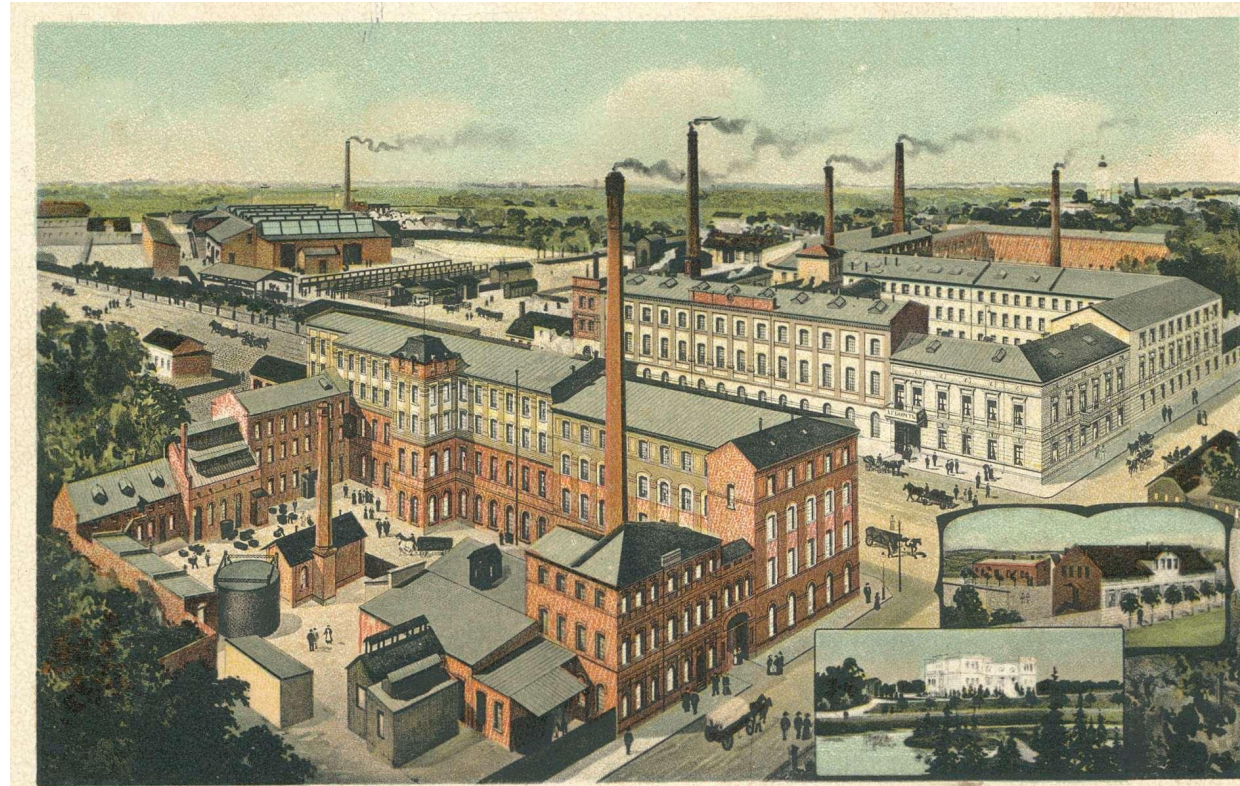


Adolph Menzel (DE),
Iron rolling mill,
1872-1875, Alte
Nationalgalerie, Berlin



Sometimes factories formed whole complexes, becoming the nucleus of newly emerging districts. In terms of decoration, factory buildings were rather modest – above all utility was important.

Manufactures in Zgierz,
Poland, before 1918,
National Library in Warsaw



Manufactures de draps A. G. Borst à Zgierz, société en actions
Tuchmanufaktur A. G. Borst, A.-G., Zgierz.

They contrasted with the palaces of factory owners, which can be seen, for example, in Lodz. Built in grandiose eclectic style, they showed the wealth and aspirations of the entrepreneurs.



Izrael Poznański's Palace in Lodz, Poland, early 20th century, City Museum of Lodz

Izrael Poznański' factory in Lodz, Poland, circa 1910, Regional Digital Library of the Lodz Region

Travel

Inventions that changed the way we communicate made travel faster, cheaper and more accessible. It was in the 19th century that modern tourism was born.

The influx of travellers required the construction of huge train stations and modern hotels.



Main railway station in Zagreb, circa 1925,
Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb



Hôtel Wandl,
Wien,
I., Petersplatz 9,
Centrum der Stadt.

Hôtel.



Speisesaal.



Gruss aus Wien
Hôtel Metropole

J. 188. — LENZNER & POPPER, PRAG.

Verlag von
F. C. W. S. 1888

Postcard from Hotel Wandl in Vienna,
1905, Wien Museum

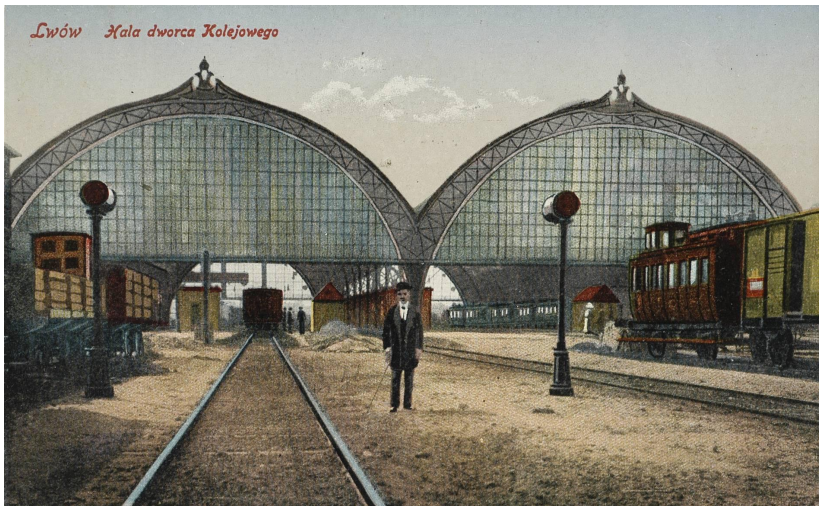
Postcard from Hotel Metropole in
Vienna, before 1905, Wien Museum

Architects designing railroad stations had to consider not only waiting rooms and ticket offices, but also the organization of railroad traffic and appropriate roofing of the platforms. Massive, monumental station facades with ornaments in various styles, from neo-Gothic to eclectic, popped up in the main streets. Behind them, iron and glass structures rose above the tracks.



Postcard of the Eastern Railway Station (Keleti) in Budapest, 1911, Gömöri Museum in Putnok, Hungary

Lwów Hala dworca Kolejowego



Railway station in Lviv, 1914, National Library in Warsaw

LWÓW. Główny Dworzec.
LEMBERG. Zentral-Bahnhof.



Railway station in Lviv, 1917, National Library in Warsaw

In metropolitan cities several stations, so-called dead-end railway stations, were often built in different parts of the city, serving as routes for different destinations. For example, from Western Railway Station (Nyugati) in Budapest one could go to Paris and Vienna while from Eastern Railway Station (Keleti) to Belgrade.

Western Railway Station
(Nyugati) in Budapest, early 20th
century, Hungarian Franciscan
Library and Archive



Leisure

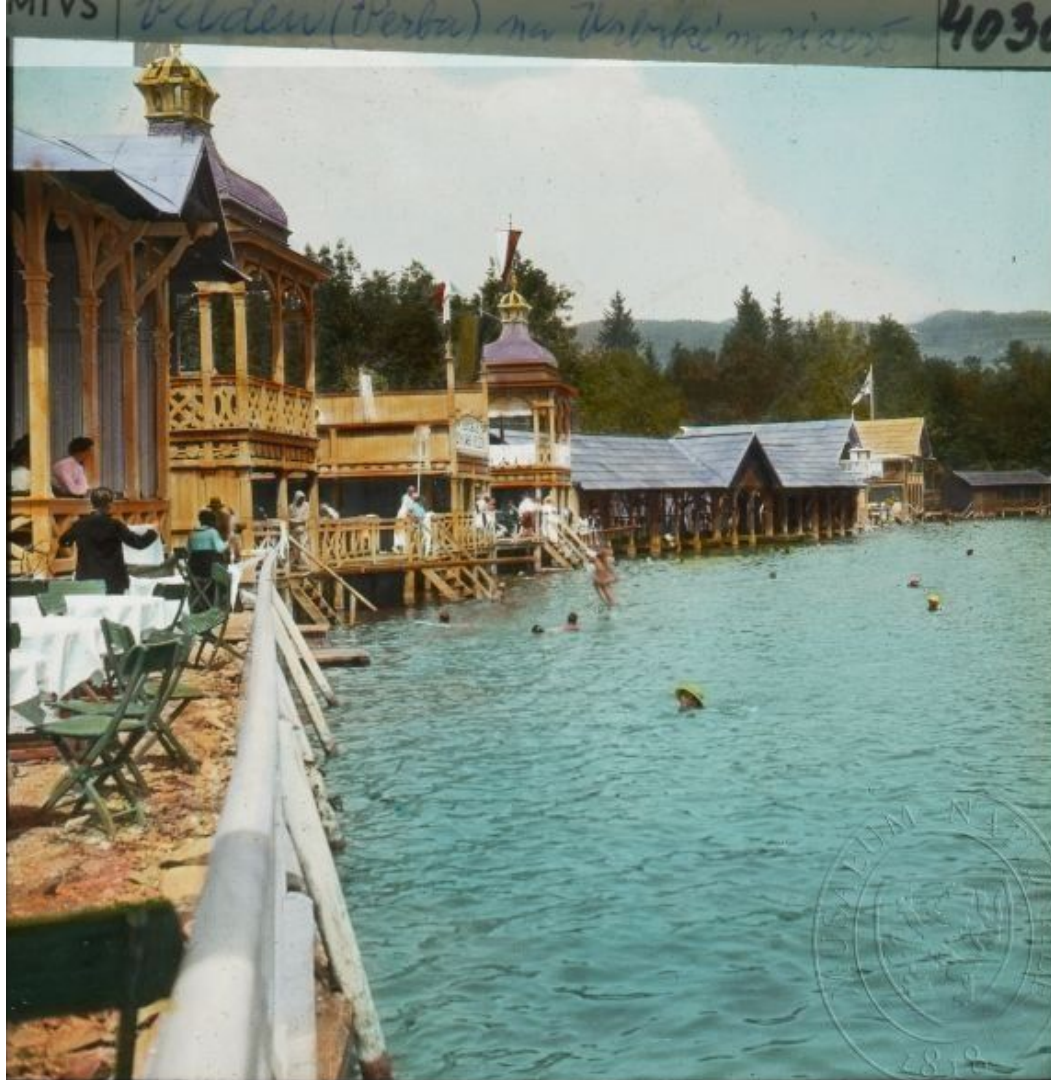
The birth of tourism was interconnected with the growing interest in the therapeutic qualities of climate and hydrotherapy.

Villages situated by the sea, lake or mountains (especially near mineral water springs) were transformed into fashionable health resorts that attracted hundreds of visitors each year. Doctors prescribed patients to bathe in healing waters or spend winters in resorts famous for their mild climate.



Josef Maria Auentaller (AT), Poster of Grado, Italy (Austrian seaside resort from 1815 to 1918), 1906, Wien Museum

Spas required appropriate design. The central building was a spa house (German: Kurhaus), where one could find a restaurant, a concert hall, or a reading room. Equally important were bathhouses for therapeutic baths, pump rooms for mineral water or rooms for therapeutic exercise. Guesthouses, hotels, bars and restaurants for visitors were built in nearby areas.



Velden am Wörthersee, Austria, circa 1910, National Museum in Prague

Among the most recognized resorts were Rijeka (Italian – *Fiume*) and Opatija (*Abbazia*) – Croatian towns located on the Adriatic Sea.



Rijeka (*Fiume*), Croatia, circa
1910, National Museum in Prague



Crikvenica, Croatia, circa 1910, National Museum in Prague



Stephanie Glax (AT), Hugo Scheyerer (AT), Poster of Opatija (*Abbazia*), Croatia, 1897-1899, MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna

Czech spas famous for their healing waters were also very popular: Karlovy Vary (German: *Karlsbad*), Mariánské Lázně (*Marienbad*) and Františkovy Lázně (*Franzensbad*).

Emil Orlik (CZ), *Schlossbrunn
in Karlsbad*, 1901, MAK –
Museum of Applied Arts,
Vienna

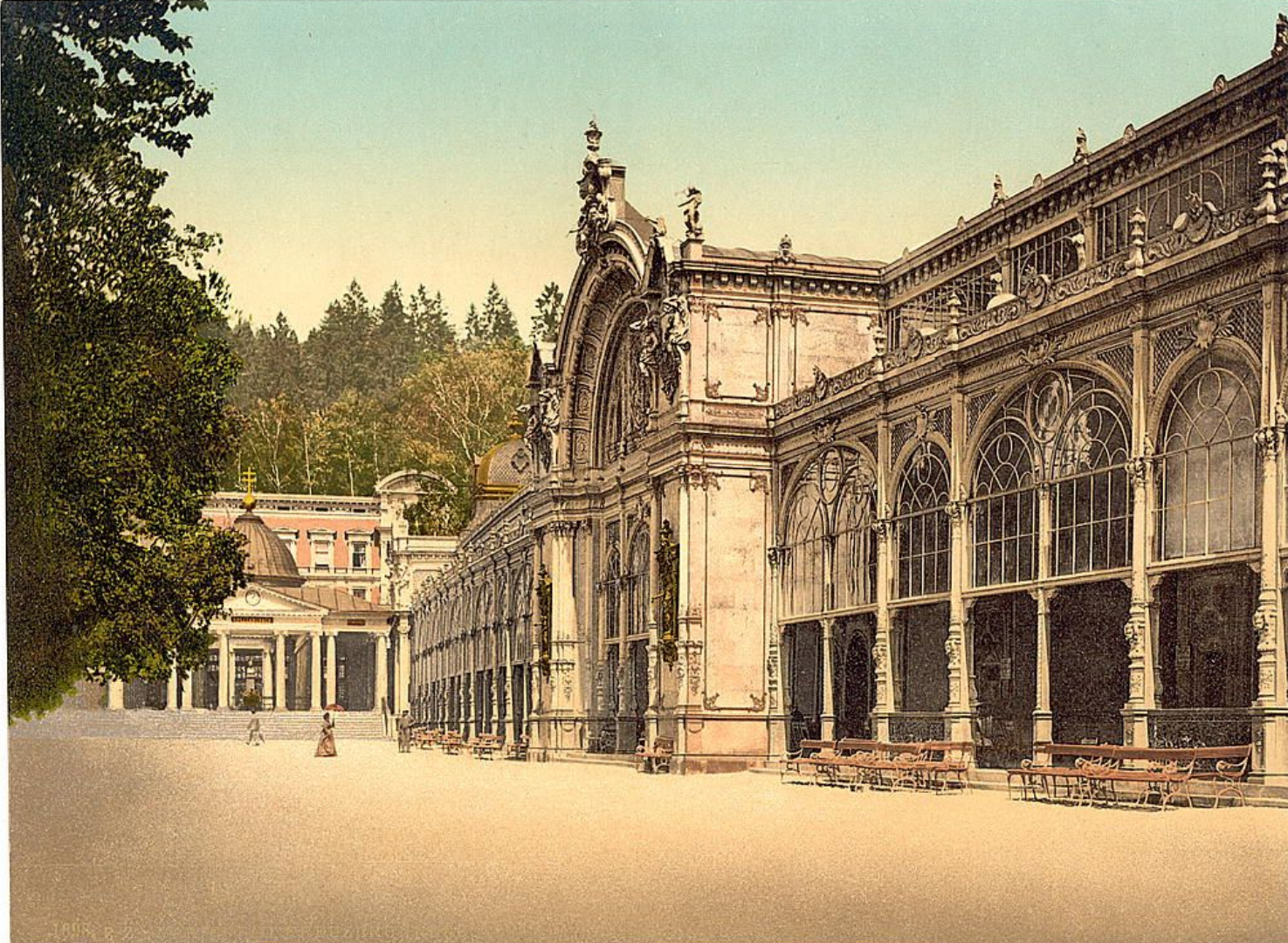




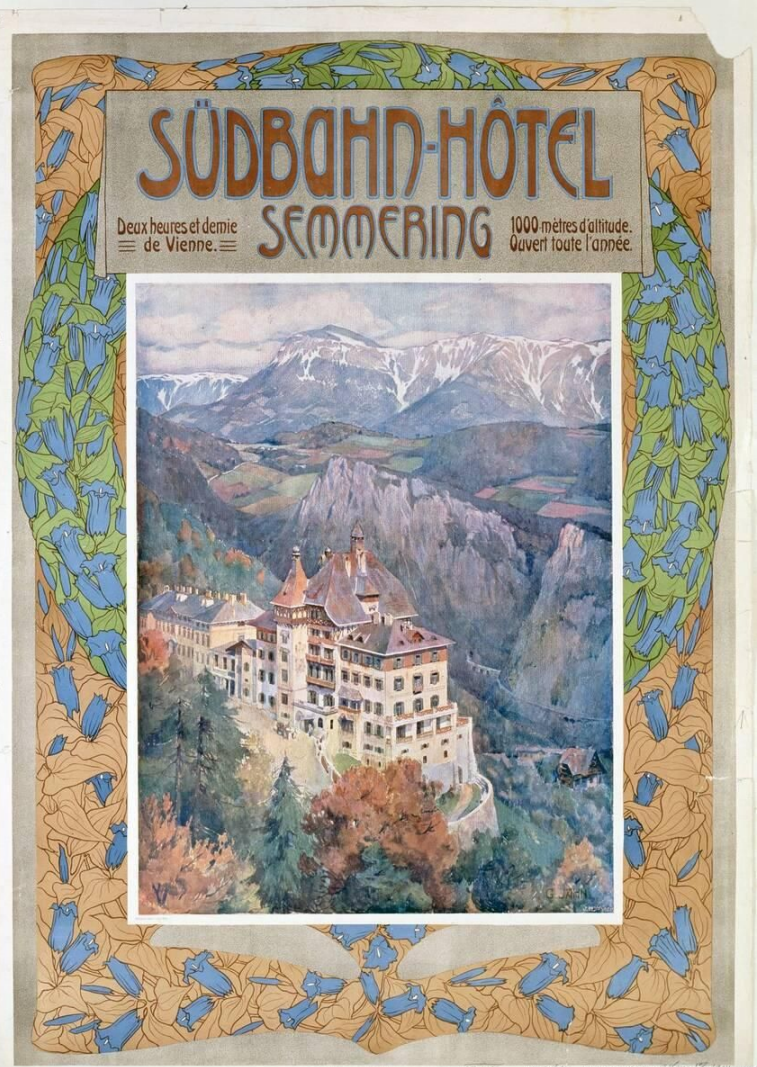
Karlovy Vary (*Karlsbad*), Czech Republic, circa
1910, National Museum in Prague



Mariánské Lázně
(Marienbad), Czech
Republic, circa 1890-1905,
Library of Congress



The rapid development of resorts was influenced by the railroad and proximity to large cities. Such an example is Semmering, located a few dozen kilometres from Vienna. The Semmering railway opened in 1854 and was the first mountain railroad in Europe.



Gustav Jahn (AT), Poster of Südbahnhotel in Semmering, 1904, MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna

Semmering railway, Austria,
circa 1890-1905, Library of
Congress



8453. SEMMERINGBAHN. VIADUCT ÜBER DIE KÄLTE RINNE.

A special case was Budapest, where the Széchenyi Thermal Baths (1881) and Gellért Baths (1912-1918) were built taking advantage of the thermal waters.

Széchenyi thermal bath in Budapest, 1913,
Budapest City Archives





Budapest. Szt. Gellért gyógyfürdő. — Kurheilanstalt St. Gerhard. — Bains de St. Gérard.

Sport

The 19th century saw the emergence of modern sport. New disciplines such as tennis, cycling, and soccer appeared, and rules began to be regulated with national and international competitions being organized. In 1896 the first Olympic Games since ancient times were held in Athens.

How did this involve architecture?
Space became necessary to practice and watch sports: such as tracks, arenas, fields, stadiums.



Berlin Ice Palace, 1909, Historische Bildpostkarten
– Universität Osnabrück

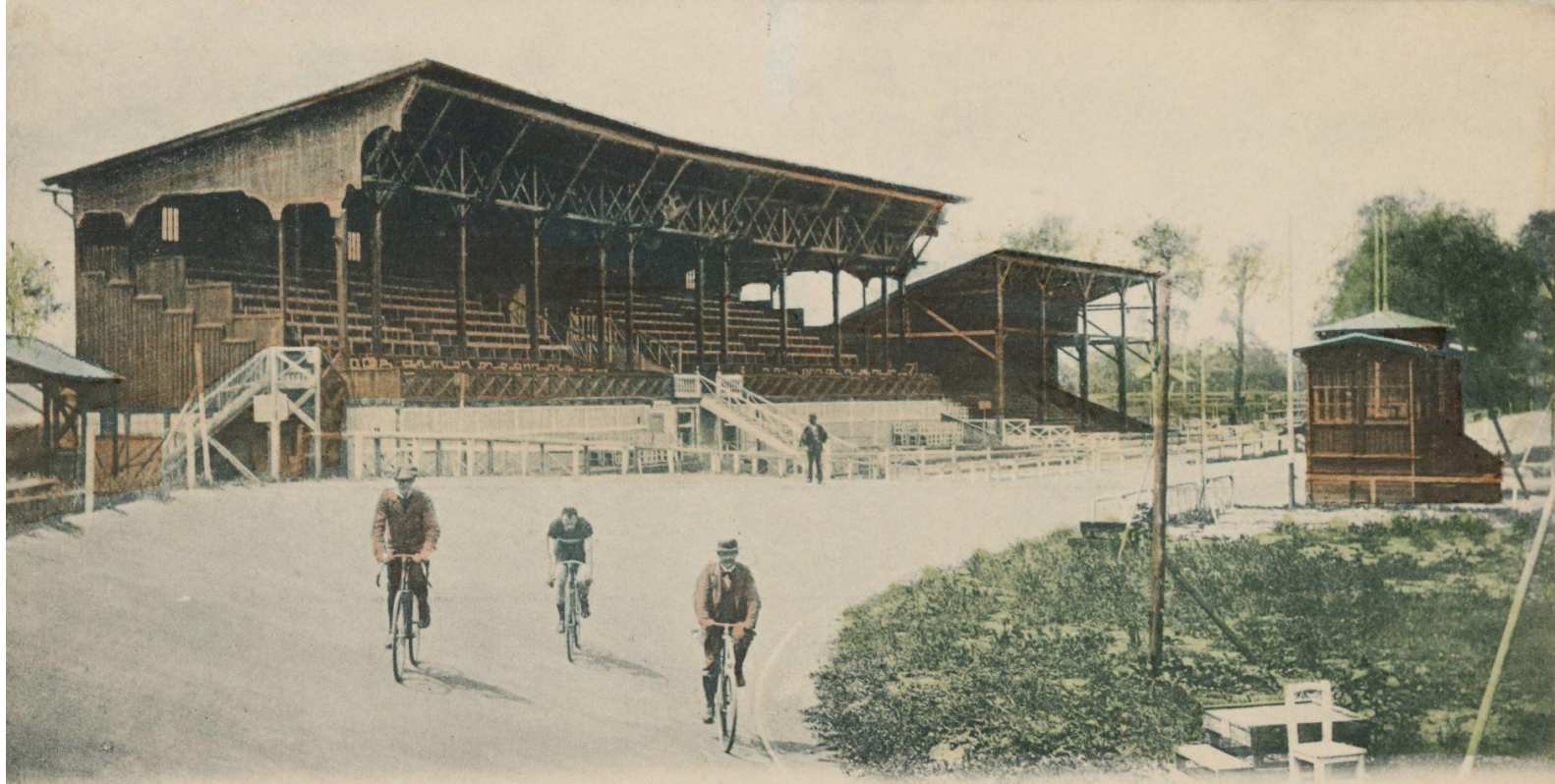
Amateur sport also gained importance. For example, football clubs for workers, such as Widzew Lodz (1905), were established in factories.

Wealthier city dwellers played their favourite sport in their spare time. In winter one could go to the ice rink – an elegant pastime with a restaurant and an orchestra. In summer the bravest tested the 19th century invention: the bicycle.

Postcard from Vienna, circa
1900-1904, Wien Museum



Racetrack for cyclists in
Prater Park, Vienna,
before 1905, Wien
Museum



Grüß aus Wien, Praterrennbahn.

II,

Nr. 267 Verlag Jos. Popper, Wien, II, Taborstrasse 9

Museums and galleries

In previous centuries art collections belonged to kings and rich aristocracy, decorating palaces and castles. In the 19th century more and more public museums were created, either open to the public by collectors or established by state or municipal governments.



National Museum in Prague, 1900,
National Museum in Prague

In addition to public art collections, museums with a different focus were also established focusing on applied arts, historical objects (for example, old weapons or memorabilia of famous figures) or exhibits related to the development of science and world knowledge (such as newly discovered plant species).

Vinzenz Katzler (AT), *Interior of Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna, 1865*, MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna



Two twin monumental neo-Renaissance museums were erected opposite each other on Vienna's Ring. The Kunsthistorisches Museum (Museum of Art History), completed in 1889, presented the imperial Habsburg art collection.

Two years later, the Natural History Museum opened, with thousands of fossils, taxidermy animals and minerals enclosed in display cases. This demonstrated symbolically the two main areas of interest of the 19th century – art and nature.



Kunsthistorisches Museum and Natural History Museum in Vienna, circa 1906-1907, Wien Museum



6340. P.Z. - WIEN K.K. MUSEUM

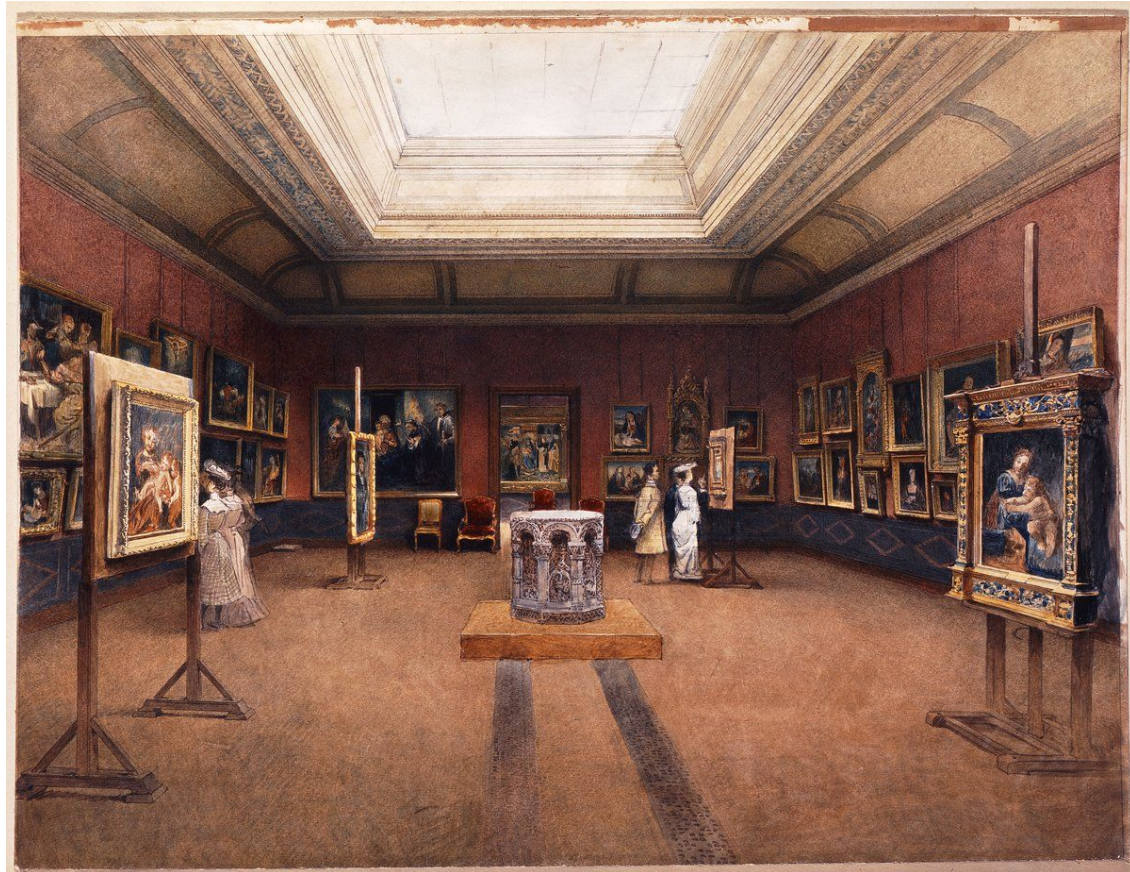
Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, circa
1890-1900, Library of Congress



Kunsthistorisches
Museum in Vienna, circa
1910, MAK – Museum of
Applied Arts, Vienna

Museum collections required appropriate architecture. The buildings had to be large enough to accommodate all the collections and hundreds of visitors all while being presentable and richly decorated as an appropriate setting for the masterpieces. The interiors needed to include large halls, wide corridors, skylights and glass cabinets for exhibits.

Gyula Hány (HU), *The National Picture Gallery: Northern Great Hall on the 2nd Floor*, 1904, Hungarian National Museum in Budapest



Art galleries such as the Palace of Art (Hall of Art) in Budapest and Art Pavilion in Zagreb were built in a similar style.



Art Pavilion in Zagreb, 1910,
National Museum in Prague

World exhibitions

The great exhibitions (international or national) organized every few years presented an opportunity to exchange ideas, showcase the achievements of civilization, and accelerate development.

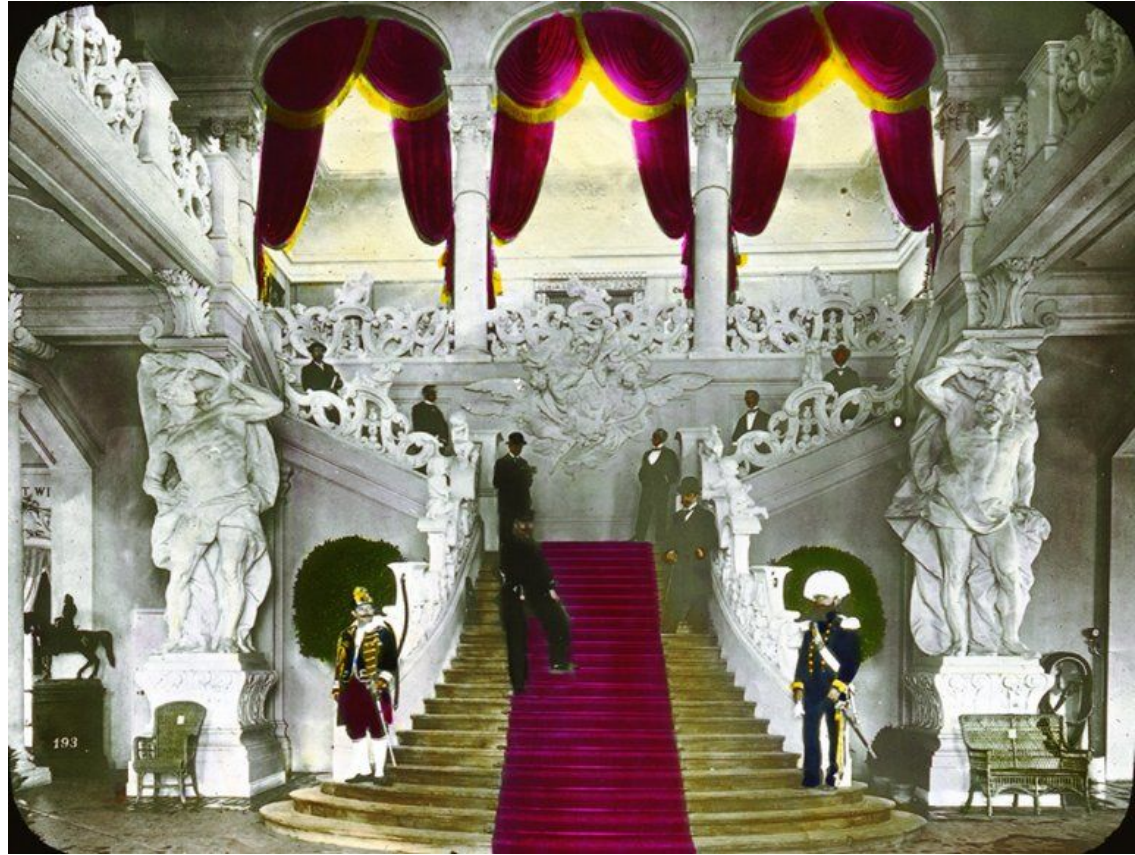
The latest inventions, crafts, or works of art were shown in large pavilions and exhibition halls built specifically for the occasion. Some of them were also used later public use.



Otto Wagner (AT), World Exhibition in Paris, interior of the pavilion, 1900, Wien Museum

The World Fair held in Paris in 1900 symbolically ended the 19th century. It contributed to the consolidation and popularization of Art Nouveau, which is sometimes called the “style of 1900”.

Such aesthetics were presented by the interiors of the Austrian pavilion, decorated by members of the Vienna Secession. The rooms were designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich and Josef Hoffmann, the frescoes by Gustav Klimt, and the carpeting by Alphonse Mucha.



Austrian Pavilion, Paris Exposition,
1900, Brooklyn Museum

Exhibition pavilions were distinguished by modern technology. The Industrial Palace – the main exhibition building erected for the General Land Centennial Exhibition in Prague in 1891 - became the venue for subsequent exhibitions and congresses.

The Hanavský PAVILON was the first Czech building constructed from iron, concrete, and glass. The Petřín Lookout Tower was inspired by the Eiffel Tower (built for the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1889).

Hanavský PAVILON, General Land Centennial Exhibition in Prague, 1891, photo by Karel Ferdinand Bellmann (CZ/AT), Moravian Gallery in Brno



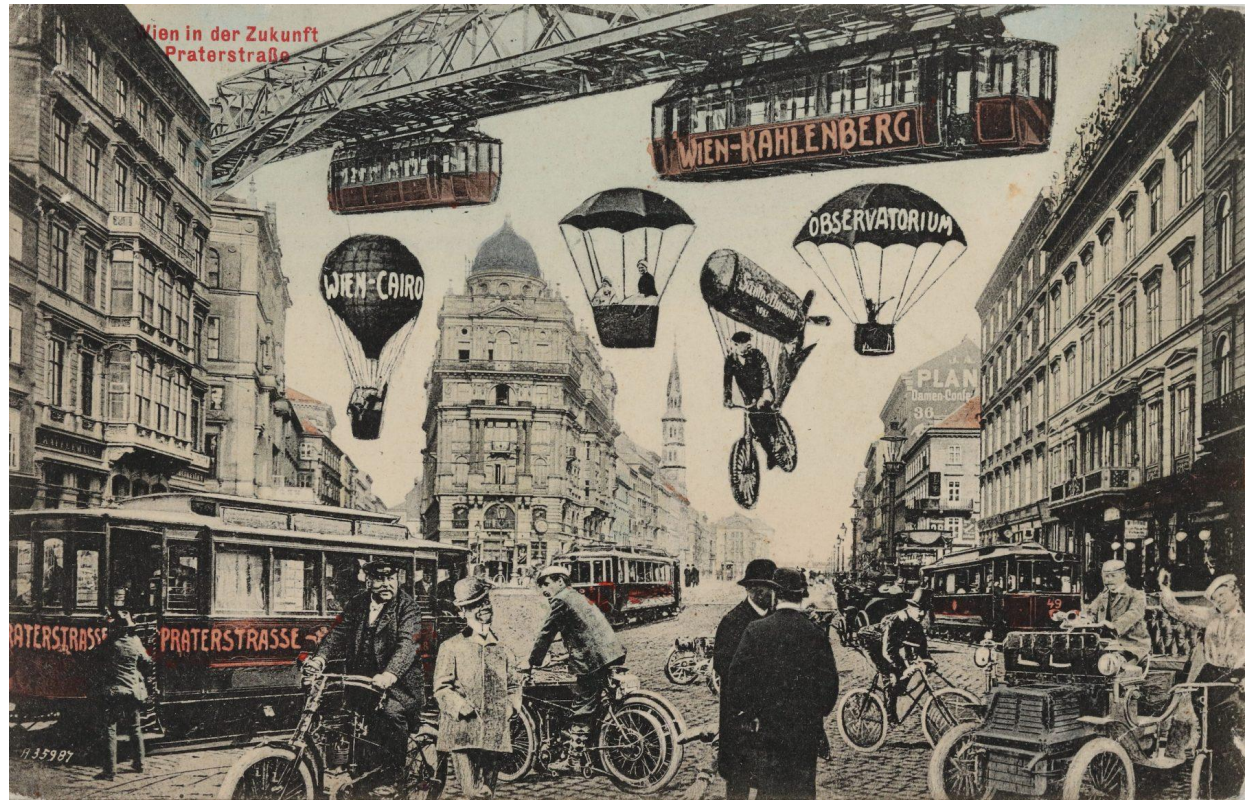
City of the future

In many ways, the city of 1900 was not much different from modern metropolises. Among the biggest changes were the advent of the automobile (which began to be mass-produced in the early 20th century), more and more skyscrapers, and larger communication networks: first telephone and then the Internet.

Poster of the Electricity Exhibition, 1912,
Germanisches Nationalmuseum in
Nuremberg, Germany



Interestingly, the “city of the future” was imagined in various ways by those in the 19th century. In Paris, for example, people wondered how many horse-drawn carriages would be on the streets in the year 2000 and, consequently, how much horse manure would have to be collected.



Postcard showing “Vienna in the future”, circa 1910, Wien Museum

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