

LOOS AND PILSEN / An Exhibition Exploring the Secret of Adolf Loos's Pilsen Interiors

Press Release, Gallery Czech Center New York, January 21st 2021

The Czech Center New York is delighted to introduce a multi-media exhibition project, which aims to present Adolf Loos' unique interior design work as a result of the architect's long-term activity in Pilsen, Czech Republic, which is not very well known to the international audience. The project was initiated in 2020, marking the 150th anniversary of the birth of Adolf Loos (1870–1933), a world-renowned epitome of modern interwar architecture of Moravian descent, whose ideas and implementations influenced contemporary architecture and inspired later events and trends in contemporary architecture on an international scale.

An online discussion with experts and an online concert streamed from Pilsen will be held as a part of the additional programming.

The main goal of the exhibition is to set Loos' work in Pilsen in wider context: the circumstances of the origin of the first designs after 1907 and the crucial role of the extended Hirsch and Beck families and their connection to Vienna will be described; attention will also be paid to the architect's return to Pilsen in 1927 and work for the Brummel and Semler families, as well as for the Vogls, Krauses and numerous other investors. The exhibition will also include an account of the respective families' and flats' fates from 1939 to the current reconstructions and opening up of several of the flats and established cooperation with several of the families now living in Australia, Great Britain and the USA.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Pilsen was a dynamic industrial city in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which also meant the presence of significant financial capital and the desire of its holders for modern life, also demonstrated by quality housing. A number of local successful companies belonged to the families of Jewish entrepreneurs – the educated and cultivated class with kinship and business contacts outside the Czech lands. It was in Vienna that Loos met his first Pilsen clients, who paved the way for his further contracts in this city. Their openness to cooperation with an innovative and unorthodox architect and, at the same time, abundant financial means gave rise to the renowned series of apartments and interiors, later revitalized and reconstructed. These are a perfect example of the architect's way of thinking about the Modernist conception of lifestyle, hidden mainly in burgher's houses of eclectic, classicizing styles. At the same time, thanks to the character, walks of life and fates of their owners, they are a disturbing statement about the socio-cultural history of Pilsen and Central European countries. They touch on topics related to the Holocaust, exile, the communist totalitarian regime and the post-revolutionary period of the free Czech Republic following the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

Adolf Loos was significantly influenced by his visit to the United States. During his three-year stay (1893–1896), Loos earned his living by manual labor. He studied the style of Louis Sullivan, a significant representative of the Chicago school. The unsuccessful proposal of the Chicago Tribune building remains his most important work related to the American continent. His design, reminiscent of a Doric column, inspired the Postmodernists by the usage of metaphors and historical motives. After returning from the U.S., Loos used some elements of American houses in his work, such as a lounge area with a fireplace and beamed ceiling.

MARTIN BAXA, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF PILSEN:

"Pilsen is proud to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of Adolf Loos, as he is the most important architect who has ever worked in the city in the entire history of Pilsen. Today, he is recognized worldwide and his implementation, in addition to Pilsen and Prague, can be found throughout Europe, especially in Vienna, but also in Paris, Montreux, Semmering and elsewhere. We are proud that, thanks to the exhibition in the Czech Centers, the awareness that a unique set of restored interiors can be seen in Pilsen will spread throughout the world's capitals."

MIROSLAV KONVALINA, DIRECTOR OF CZECH CENTER NEW YORK:

"The Czech city of Pilsen will have its second debut in New York in quite a short time. This time it will present the stories of important Pilsen' families in connection with a unique architecture, which was inspired by the Anglo-American style of living and transferred the concept of luxury living spaces from Vienna, through Prague to Pilsen. The exhibition at the Bohemian National Hall, a follow-up concert and an online conference are also an invitation to visit this West Bohemian city."

ROMAN MUSIL, DIRECTOR OF THE GALLERY OF WEST BOHEMIA:

"At the turn of 2011 and 2012, the West Bohemian Gallery in Pilsen presented one of its key exhibition and publication projects by Petr Domanický and Petr Jindra: Loos - Plzeň - Context, thus initiating negotiations on the transfer of one of the most important Loos interiors in Pilsen, the so-called Semler residence, into her report. In 2013, the reconstruction of the residence was started and at the same time a plan was created to locate the Center for Architecture Research in these premises. Therefore, I am glad that the exhibition for Czech Centers is being prepared by our institution, which can bring closer to the international audience not only the hitherto lesser-known chapter in Adolf Loos's work and personal life, but also draw attention to extremely interesting personalities and investors in Pilsen's Loos interiors."

- **Exhibition Opening: Loos And Pilsen - January 21, 7pm ET.** Event will be held online.
- **Online Conference: Adolf Loos: In Search of Space for Modern Life - March 4, 2pm ET**
- **Online Concert: Pilsner Jazz Band live from Loos' interior in Pilsen - February 26, 8pm ET**

<https://new-york.czechcentres.cz/en/program/loos-a-plzen>

The current project is being developed in cooperation with the Gallery of West Bohemia (represented by its curator of architecture collections Petr Domanický), and the Corporate City of Pilsen, whose history is inseparably connected with the name of Adolf Loos.

Partners of the project in New York: CzechTourism, Austrian Cultural Forum New York

CZECH CENTERS

Czech Centers, a contributory organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, are the core instrument of public diplomacy of the Czech Republic's foreign policy, and strive to support the reputation of the Czech Republic in the world. Czech Centers are members of the network of European cultural institutes – EUNIC. At present, there are 25 branches across three continents – in addition to Czech Centers these also include the Czech Houses in Moscow, Jerusalem and Bratislava. www.czechcenter.com

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