



CITY CINEMA WITH LIBRARY, 1930S

MESTSKÉ KINO S KNIŽNICOU,
30. ROKY 20. STOROČIA

Source Zdroj: Zemplén Museum

The Multifunctional Cinema and Public Library Complex in Užhorod

Multifunkčný komplex kina a verejnej knižnice v Užhorode

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Budova bývalého mestského kina a knižnice v Užhorode bola znakom modernosti mesta – či už to bolo formou architektúry, multifunkčným riešením, alebo rešpektovaním historického priestoru centra mesta. Text štúdie prináša najmä fakty zozbierané počas výskumu v Štátnom archíve Zakarpatskej oblasti v Berehove o vzniku tohto objektu a doplnené o analýzu súvislostí a vtedajších trendov v dizajne kín v ČSR a iných štátoch. Štúdiá dopĺňa predchádzajúci vyše 10-ročný výskum prezentovaný v rozsiahlej monografii Architekt Oelschläger – Ůry (2012) o komplexný súbor poznatkov o ďalšej tvorbe tohto architekta, ponechávajúc priestor pre nové objavy.

Keď sa Podkarpatská Rus na začiatku dvadsiatych rokov 20. storočia stala súčasťou 1. ČSR, počet obyvateľov Užhorodu rapídne vzrástol. Mesto sa stalo hlavným krajinským mestom a prichádzali sem úradníci a iní odborníci z rôznych oblastí. Prvýkrát v histórii mesta bol vytvorený regulačný plán územia a bola vypracovaná koncepcia jeho budúceho urbanistického rozvoja. Podľa plánu architekta Adolfa Liebschera sa na doteraz neurbanizovanom území vysušeného močiaru realizovala výstavba administratívnej a obytnej štvrte Malý Galagov. Vďaka skvelému konceptu, ktorý český urbanista vypracoval spoločne s referátom verejných prác v Užhorode, sa podarilo zachovať takmer celé historické centrum Užhorodu v nezmenenej podobe. Administratívne a verejné budovy Malého Galagova, ako budova Zemského úradu, Jubilejná Masarykova škola, budovy súdov a väznice, Dom národného zdravia, Žandársky úrad, referát verejných prác, palác pobočky Národnej banky, moderný poštový a telegrafný úrad a ďalšie budovy sa účelne a citlivo striedali s obytnými súbormi zamestnancov týchto oddelení. V relatívne krátkom čase bola od základov vybudovaná administratívna a obytná štvrť a zregulovalo sa koryto rieky Už. V centre mesta bolo v tomto období postavených len niekoľko pozoruhodných budov, väčšinou financovaných magistrátom, niektorými organizáciami alebo súkromníkmi. Takmer všetky stavby realizované magistrátom v centre mesta i na jeho perifériách sa však stali dôležitou výplňou mestského tkaniva. Išlo väčšinou o novú, modernú infraštruktúru, kultúrne, spoločenské, rekreačné a iné zariadenia. Medzi najvýznamnejšie pre historický vývoj mesta patrí sanatórium, verejný mestský bazén, chudobinec, remeselnícka škola, rómska škola (prvá v Európe a vo svete), mestský bitúnok a komplex mestského kina a knižnice.

Polyfunkčná budova mestského kina a verejnej knižnice sa stala prioritou kultúrneho života Užhorodu. Nebolo to prvé kino v histórii mesta, no magistrát mal ambíciu vytvoriť ho čo

najmodernejšie. Kino sa objavilo v Užhorode v roku 1909 — keď tu otvorili pobočku maďarského kina Urania, ktorá premietala populárno-vedecké filmy. Ukrajínofilská spoločnosť Prosvita v roku 1928 postavila kultúrny dom podľa návrhu miestnych architektov Bélu Fodora a Emila Egressiho, v ktorom umiestnili aj nové kino Urania.

Samosprávu tak inšpirovala urýchlennému hľadaniu vhodného miesta pre vlastné mestské kino a vyhláseniu architektonickej súťaže. Okrem technických požiadaviek mali súťažiaci aj neľahkú úlohu, stavbu osadiť do priestoru historického centra na terén s citelným výškovým rozdielom a zohľadniť perspektívu vytvorenia súboru s obchodnou pasážou končiacou avantgardnou funkcionalistickou budovou paláca Baťu (1930) od Josefa Gočára. Toto technické riešenie bolo pre mesto nielen komerčne výhodné, ale riešilo aj otázku požiarnej ochrany kina, keďže bol núdzový východ z kina plánovaný práve do obchodnej pasáže.

Prvé miesto nebolo udelené v architektonickej súťaži na návrh mestského kina a knižnice v Užhorode, vypísanej v lete 1930. Návrhom tak bol poverený košický architekt Ľudovít Oelschläger ocenený druhou cenou. Ten realizoval projekt v spolupráci s kolegom Eugenom Valczom. Ľudovít Oelschläger bol významný medzivojnový architekt nemeckého pôvodu (od roku 1939 používal meno Vítěz Ůry Lajos), narodený v roku 1896 v Košiciach. Po absolvovaní Maďarskej kráľovskej technickej univerzity Jozefa Nadora v Budapešti v roku 1921, praktické skúsenosti nadobúdval v architektonických kanceláriách v Berlíne, Mníchove, Stuttgarte, Viedni a Budapešti. Bolo to obdobie nielen odbornej prípravy, ale aj postupného formovania vlastného originálneho štýlu, ktorý mu pomohol uspieť v mnohých architektonických súťažiach. V čase súťaže na užhorodské kino a knižnicu architekt mal už za sebou bohaté skúsenosti práve s projektovaním multifunkčných kín. Medzi jeho najvýznamnejšie diela patrí ortodoxná synagóga a židovská škola v Košiciach; košické kino Fórum; sanatórium v Tatranskej Polianke; radnica v Michalovciach; budova Obchodnej a priemyselnej komory v Košiciach; kino Capitol v Michalovciach; mestské kino, židovské gymnázium a židovský sirotinec v Mukačeve; Obecný dom vo Vinohradove (vtedy nazývaný Sevl'uš) a ďalšie budovy. Pre Užhorod architekt navrhol okrem mestského kina a knižnice, Židovské kultúrne centrum so školou, mestské letné kúpalisko a vstupnú budovu mestskej vodárne.

Portfólio architekta zahŕňa viacero polyfunkčných stavieb vrátane kín. Koncept polyfunkčných komplexov, ktorý sa v Európe objavil koncom 19. storočia, sa v Československu rozšíril

v medzivojnovom období. Oelschlägerov projekt mestského kina a knižnice sa stal vzorom architektovej schopnosti citlivo a logicky zaradiť novostavbu medzi historické budovy. Trojposchodovú budovu kina charakterizujú vyvážené proporcie, horizontálne línie a pravé uhly. Stĺpy v parteri, charakteristické pre modernu, opticky odľahčujú uličnú fasádu kina a knižnice, objemovo nedominujú ulici, hoci zaberajú takmer najdlhší úsek v tejto časti mesta. Luxus fasáde dodával elegantný obklad medziokenných priestorov vytvorený pruhmi čierneho a sivofialového opaxitu. Hladká štruktúra materiálu pripomínala lesklé povrchy divadiel na Broadwayi, či ultramodernú hollywoodsku eleganciu tridsiatych rokov minulého storočia. Vďaka tomu riešeniu a použitiu dekoratívneho „zlatého“ bešenovského travertínu v parteri uličnej fasády, dostala funkcionalistická

budova výrazné prvky štýlu art déco s určitými odkazmi na Streamline Moderne. V architektúre kín v Európe a Spojených štátoch boli prvky art déco využívané do začiatku druhej svetovej vojny, na rozdiel od iných verejných budov, ktoré vznikli po druhej polovici dvadsiatych rokov.

Vďaka polyfunkčnému riešeniu tohto objektu existuje jeho hlavný objem s uličnou fasádou dodnes (2022), aj keď vo veľmi zanedbanom stave. V roku 2009 magistrát mesta predal bývalé Mestské kino v aukcii do súkromných rúk a v roku 2016 noví developeri jeho interiér úplne zničili. Poschodie, ktoré patrí knižnici, je stále vo vlastníctve mesta, a tak je nádej aspoň na čiastočnú obnovu tejto významnej pamiatky modernizmu. Kino, ktoré bolo dlhodobo významným kultúrnym centrom mnohých generácií, dnes v mestskej infraštruktúre centra Užhorodu chýba.

Uzhhorod – a new metropolis on the map of the new state

after the end of the First World War, the map of Europe changed dramatically. Huge empires disintegrated and were replaced by young, mostly democratic states. One of the several independent states created out of the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the first Czechoslovak Republic with its capital in Prague. The borders of the young state, led by President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, were definitively formed in 1921. According to the Saint-Germain Treaty, the territory of Podkarpatská Rus (Subcarpathian Ruthenia) became a part of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1919, and the city of Uzhhorod became its administrative centre, thus requiring a new modern infrastructure. A large number of Czechoslovak officials, entrepreneurs and construction specialists came to the region's capital to carry out extensive construction.

For the first time in the city's history, a detailed analysis was undertaken of the extant situation and a strategic plan compiled for its comprehensive territorial development. Architect Adolf Liebscher designed the municipal plan for a new modern part of the city – the administrative and residential district of Maly Galagov,¹ with its construction was realised over the large area of a previously drained swamp. In parallel with the preparatory work for the construction of Maly Galagov, extensive regulation of the Uzh riverbed was performed with the embankments purposefully landscaped for recreation. In 1928, an alley of linden trees, over a kilometer in length, was planted here, also forming a symbol of the new republic.

Modern administrative and infrastructure buildings soon rose in the Maly Galagov quarter, as among them a temporary government building, the Provincial Office, the Masaryk Jubilee School, the Judiciary Complex, the Public Healthcare House, the military headquarters building and the police headquarters, tax office, Department of Public Works, branch building of the National Bank, the modern Post and Telegraph Administration, health insurance company, residential complexes for various employees, city apartment blocks and others. The projects were developed by well-known Czechoslovak architects, among them Adolf Liebscher, František Krupka, Josef Gočár, Petr Kropáček, Alois Dryák, František Šrámek, Bohumil Sláma, Bedřich Adámek, or František Sander. From Liebscher's plans from the years 1921 – 1923, a colony of family houses was built in Velyky Galagov,² with construction starting in 1929 (developer: the Subcarpathian Bank).

Additionally, more colonies of family houses and multi-storey residential buildings for government officials, public administration buildings, new medical buildings, schools, or large industrial buildings, including the power plant complex, began to appear in Uzhhorod.³ Thanks to the construction of a new airport (1928 – 1929), Uzhhorod gained air connections with the capitals of the republic, as well as the nearby city of Košice. In 1930, a sewerage network was laid and a municipal water supply system was built.⁴ The industrial and infrastructural projects in Uzhhorod were implemented by the most prominent Czech engineering corporations – Lanna a.s., Václav Nekvasil s.r.o., Müller & Kapsa, Brenner & Kopecký and others.

As early as 1935, the town's population rose to 30,000, compared to the figures of 20,601 Uzhhorod residents in 1920 and only 16,044 in 1910.⁵ Overall, during the first 12 years of the construction boom, the number of homes in the city increased by 75%.⁶ In parallel with the state projects, most of which directly targeted the severe lack of infrastructure and housing in the region's capital, the

CITY PASSAGE AND REAR FACADE OF THE BAŤA STORE

MESTSKÁ PASÁŽ A ZADNÁ FASÁDA
BAŤOVHO PALÁCA

Source Zdroj: State District Archive
of Zlín



city office actively financed new industrial and technical facilities, such as the city slaughterhouse project (1926 – 1927) with modern refrigeration equipment designed by Škoda Pilsen⁷ or the city water supply. The city administration also financed important buildings within the development in the context of the historic city centre: the city swimming pool, almshouse, vocational school, Roma school (the first in Europe and in the world),⁸ music pavilion in the city park and more. In particular, the modern multifunctional building of the city cinema and public library became a significant stimulus for local cultural life.

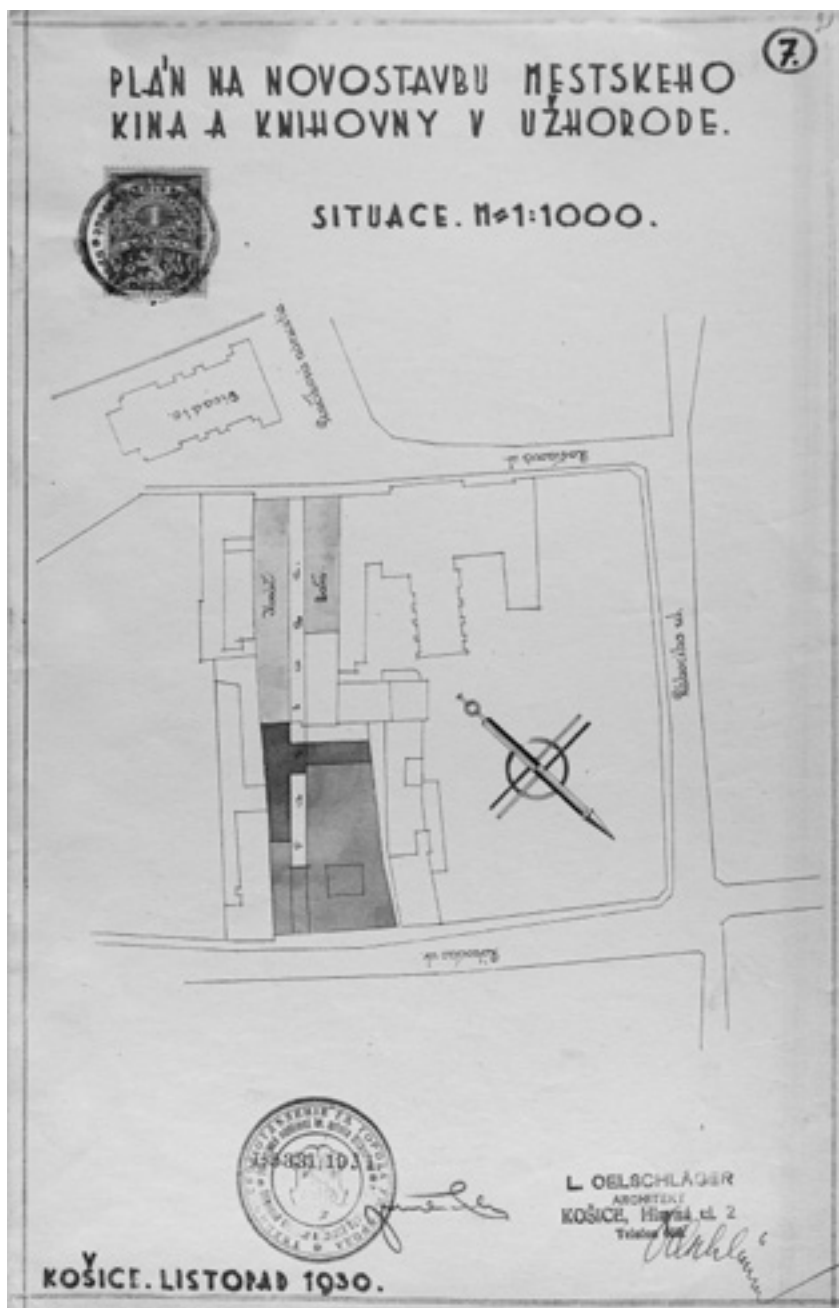
Construction process: problems, challenges and solutions

cinematography appeared in Uzhhorod in 1909 with the opening of a branch of the Hungarian cinema network Urania, in which popular science films were screened.⁹ In 1911, the company “Brothers Lendvai and Árpád Révész” (*Lendvai testvérek és Révész Árpád*) won its first film concession in Uzhhorod and organised regular film screenings at the Korona Hotel. Until the second half of the 1920s, there was only one cinema in Uzhhorod, which was located in the town theatre, and the possibility of showing films was limited to times after 8:00 p.m. As a result, about 300 evening screenings were lost to the program each year and the city cinema failed to make a profit. The city needed a new cinema and later acquired two new concessions.¹⁰

The concession was granted to the city of Uzhhorod on the condition that the cinema would be managed by the municipality and all revenues from commercial activities would be directed to the city’s social needs. However, the city authorities decided to lease the facility and formally circumvent these restrictions.¹¹

Construction of the cinema building was not easy. In 1927, the city of Uzhhorod considered buying land from the Nehrebecký family near the synagogue on Fencik Square and building a three-storey cinema with a restaurant on this site. The Jewish community opposed this plan, as the entertainment facility would have stood directly beside the temple. Later, the municipality considered leasing a hall from the Podkarpatsky Bank, managed by Konstantín Hrabar, a man who had a significant influence on the political elites and the city council, instead of building its own cinema building. In 1928, the bank announced its own plan to build a modern four-storey department store in Uzhhorod, with a modern cinema with 665 seats situated in the basement level. The building was proposed for situation on the land of the Hillmann family at the corner of Masaryk Square and Kušníerská Street – now respectively Petőfi Square and Kyiv Embankment. A project was actually prepared by the prominent Prague architect Bohumír Kozák, which would have included an arcade with dozens of smaller shops passing directly through the department store.¹²

From the very beginning, it seems that the city council did not take this plan seriously with regarding the construction of its own cinema, as on 26 July 1928 the technical department of the Uzhhorod municipality approved the Podkarpatsky Bank project and on 28 November of the same



LOCATION SCHEME OF THE BAŤA DEPARTMENT STORE AND CITY CINEMA WITH LIBRARY

SITUAČNÝ PLÁN OBCHODNÉHO
DOMU BAŤA A MESTSKÉHO KINA
S KNIŽNICOU

Source Zdroj: DAZO

year the bank's proposal to lease the city's future cinema was accepted. as Already by December 1928, however, the city council rejected all proposals of the Podkarpatsky Bank, justifying its rejection by the possible financial losses and the assumption that the construction would last 1.5 years.

Another objection to the construction of the city cinema was lodged by the Prosvita Society, which owned the building where the Urania cinema had been operating since 1928. As early as 1925, this Society planned to build the imposing structure of the "People's House", containing its own cinema, on what was then Masaryk Square. In 1926, plans were drawn up for a modern building by the Brno architect Miroslav Kopřiva,¹³ yet the proposal was declined by the city authorities the following year, as the land on the square was not allocated by the city for construction.¹⁴ In 1928, however, Prosvita built a new cultural house in a different location from the design of the architects Béla Fodor and Emil Egressi – a building that similarly contained a Urania cinema. As the new city cinema could compete with Prosvita's commercial enterprise, which eventually happened, the company tried to prevent the city from implementing the plan. On the other hand, the opening of

the Urania cinema forced the municipality to speed up the search for a suitable place to build its own city cinema.

Two localities were considered – a plot of land on Fencik Square with an area of 600 square metres for 400,000 crowns and a plot of land on Rákoczi Street (now Vološin Street) with an area of 1,200 square metres for 450,000 crowns.¹⁵ The plot on Rákoczi Street belonged to the Gerstl family.¹⁶ Since the shoemaking magnate Tomáš Baťa had bought an old building next to the Korona Hotel in 1929, planning to construct a modern four-storey Baťa department store on its site,¹⁷ the city decided to negotiate with the Baťa corporation on the creation of a shared arcade, with the aim of ensuring access to the cinema from both Rákoczi Street and Fencik Square. This technical solution was not only economically advantageous from a commercial point of view, but also addressed the issue of fire protection.¹⁸

At the end of March 1930, as soon as the city and the shoe company agreed on the joint plans, the municipality bought the land from Mayer Gerstl to start construction of the cinema. The city council soon commissioned the Uzhhorod architect Béla Fodor to draw up sketches for the study of the planned cinema and library. From the prepared sketches, it was evident that only a combination of two adjacent plots could provide the space necessary for the construction of the entire complex of cinema, library and shopping arcade.¹⁹

In the summer of 1930, an architectural competition was announced for the design of the city cinema and library in Uzhhorod. Only eight days were given for submission, and the prizes for the first, second and third place in the competition were 20,000, 10,000 and 7,000 crowns.²⁰ Twenty projects were delivered to the competition committee²¹ — from Budapest or other Hungarian cities, but also from Berlin, Bratislava, Prague and Košice. Jury members judged the competing projects under anonymous code names, such as “Cloud”, “In the Spirit of Time”, “Blue Circle with White Stripe”, “Metropol”, “New Uzhhorod” and others. Examination of the proposals revealed that none of them fulfilled all the conditions of the tender in full and no proposal could be implemented without significant alterations; consequently, no first prize was awarded. Second prize was awarded to project No. 9, code-named “Red Circle”, whose author was Košice architect Ľudovít Oelschläger and his colleague Eugen Valcz. The third prize was given to the project “In the Spirit of Time” by Prague architect Milan Babuška.²²

Based on the decision from 15th August 1930, the Uzhhorod city council commissioned the winner of the competition, i.e. Ľudovít Oelschläger, to prepare the necessary plans (floor plans, sections and views) for the 1:100 cinema building with drawings of special structures and equipment. The remuneration for the architect was 135,000 crowns.²³

The author of the Uzhhorod cinema and library

Regarding the authorship of the Uzhhorod Cinema project, no consensus long prevailed in academic circles and among researchers. It was most often attributed to the Prague architect Martin Reiner,^{24 25} or the Uzhhorod architect Eugen Valcz,²⁶ who was Oelschläger's partner in the Uzhhorod branch (a branch of the architectural office). Confirmation of authorship by the Košice architect Ľudovít Oelschläger was provided not only by examination of the relevant archival materials (drawings and period documentation) of the cinema building, but also by the presence of a memorial plaque with his name on it in the past.

Ľudovít Oelschläger was an important interwar architect of ethnic German origin (though after 1939 assuming Hungarian nationality as Lajos Őry), born in Košice in 1896.²⁷ His most important works include the Orthodox Synagogue and the Jewish School in Košice; Košice's Forum Cinema; the sanatorium in Tatranská Polianka; the town hall in Michalovce; the building of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Košice; the Capitol Cinema in Michalovce; the city cinema, the Jewish grammar school and the Jewish orphanage in Mukachevo; the Town Hall in Vynohradiv (Sevluš')²⁸ and other buildings. For Uzhhorod, the architect designed several interesting and original contributions, such as the city cinema and the library, the Jewish cultural centre and school, the city swimming pool²⁹ and the building of the city water infrastructure.³⁰ Some private houses and villas in Uzhhorod, but also in Mukachevo, have distinctive features of his stylistic traits or show the influence of Oelschläger's works, but the authors of the study have not yet found archival or other evidence of his personal authorship.

In the 1920s, the city of Košice became one of the important cultural centres of the First Czechoslovak Republic. The period of the national rise of the newly formed Czechoslovak Republic

**ARCHITECT LUDOVÍT
OELSCHLÄGER**

ARCHITEKT LUDOVÍT
OELSCHLÄGER

Source Zdroj:
Adriana Priatková's private archive

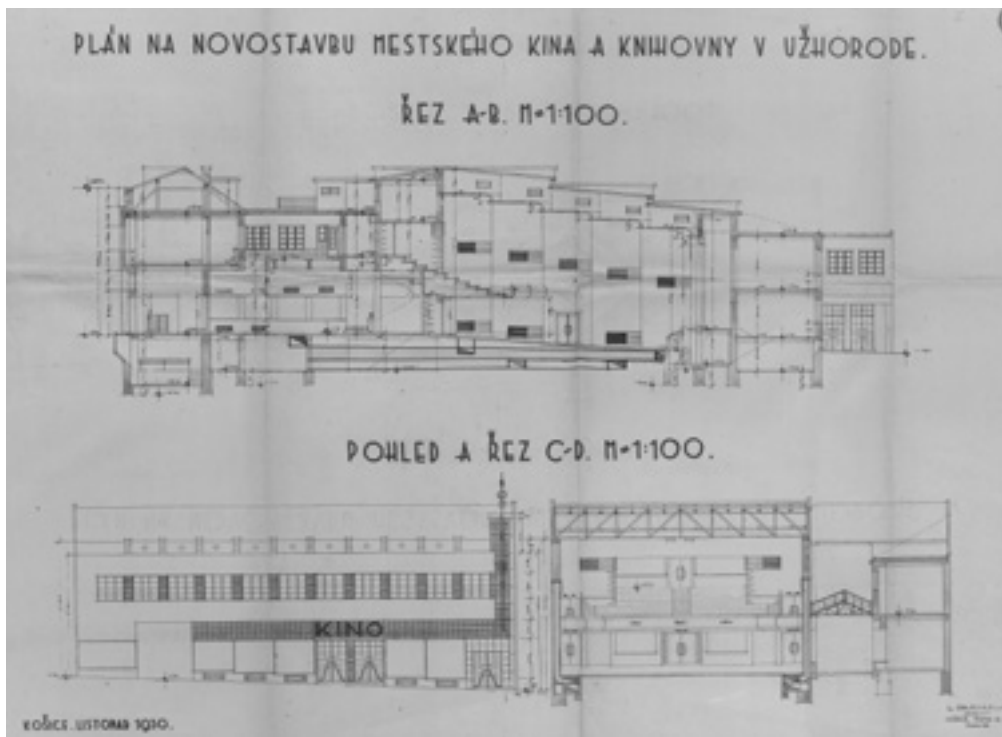


and the subsequent construction boom, which coincided with the development of modernism on the international scale, also affected Slovakia's second-largest city. Among the figures of its cultural life – artists, architects, philosophers, writers, actors – a central goal was to create an image of the modern state. Managing to combine current European trends, avant-garde thinking, and specifically local national characteristics, they worked towards the identity of a modern democratic state, as well as the city,³¹ leading to the emergence of what became known as “Košice modernism”, which included various types of fine arts, architecture, philosophy, music, and literature. Creative people moved freely within Europe, studying, exchanging ideas, ideas and the opportunity to implement their progressive projects, which the young state actively supported and implemented.

Professionally, and personally, the trajectory of Oelschläger followed the same pattern. Immediately after graduating from the Hungarian Royal Technical University of Archduke Josef in Budapest in 1921, Oelschläger gained practical experience in architectural offices in Berlin, Munich, Stuttgart, Vienna and Budapest, gaining not only professional training, but also gradually forming of his own distinctive style, which helped him succeed in several architectural competitions. Already in 1923, he won – together with his colleague Zoltán Géza Boskó – high ratings from an international jury in the international architectural competition for the project of the Trade Academy in Mukachevo. During the design work and construction of the business academy building (1924–25), the 28-year-old architect opened an architectural office in Mukachevo and later a branch in Uzhhorod.³² Not only this major commission, but equally the prospects for further greater opportunities in the rapidly developing new state of Czechoslovakia inspired the young Oelschläger to return home to Košice after graduating and working in a Budapest architectural studio in 1924.

Spurred by his first great professional success (until 1929, mostly with his colleague Z. G. Boskó), Oelschläger continued the ambitious implementation of the winning competition projects for other public and private buildings. As the state competition projects of that time in Košice were realised mainly by Czech architects who worked from the centres, from Prague or at most from Bratislava, the range of his clientele as an architect consisted of city councils, individual customers, private entrepreneurs and religious institutions.³³ A similar trend can be observed in the works of the architect in Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Through the realisations of these constructions in Uzhhorod, Mukachevo, Berehovo, Vynohradiv and Svaliava, it is possible to follow Oelschläger's professional development, the gradual formation and harmonisation of his own style with current modern world trends in architecture.

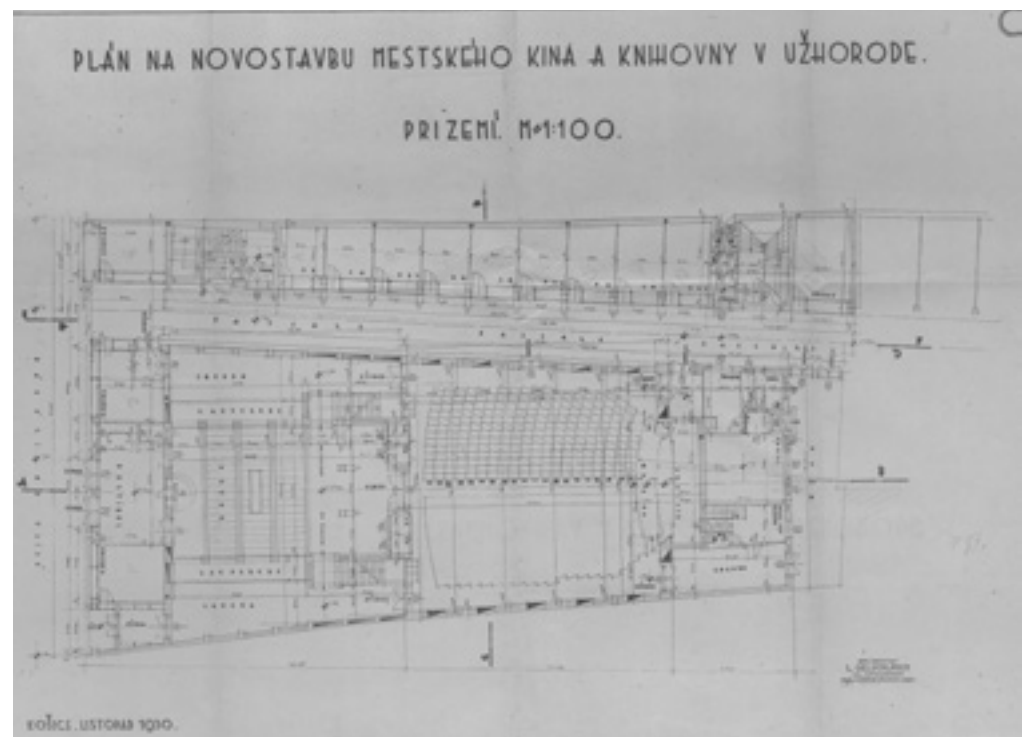
In his works in the second half of the 1920s, there is evidence of a fascination with the motifs of the architecture of the East, as well as the Spiš Renaissance.³⁴ Spirally wound flutes often



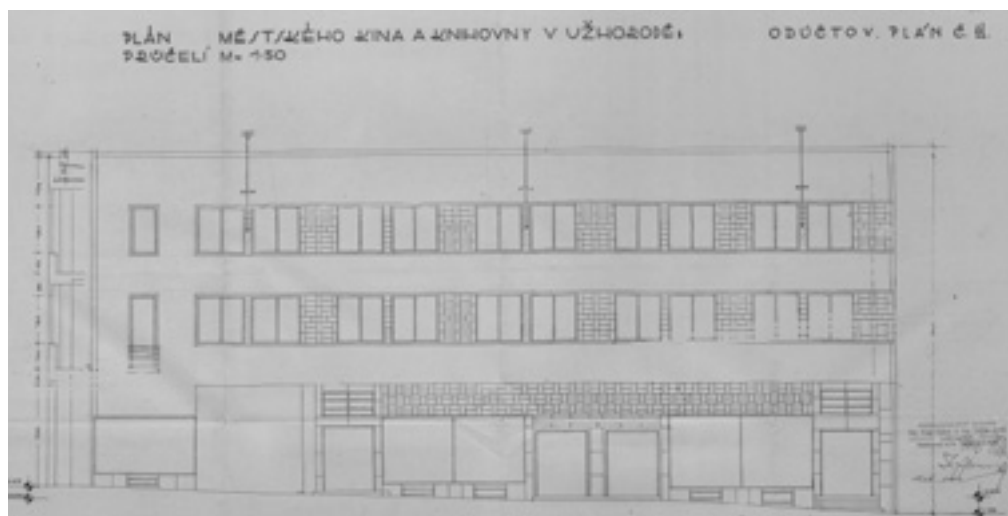
FIRST SERIES OF DRAWINGS OF THE CITY CINEMA WITH LIBRARY, LUDOVÍT OELSCHLÄGER, 1930

PRVÁ SADA PLÁNŮV MESTSKÉHO KINA S KNIŽNICOU, LUDOVÍT OELSCHLÄGER, 1930

Source Zdroj: DAZO



occur on the tapering columns characteristic of Oelschläger, as well as on Renaissance columns. Combined semicircular windows, doors with contrasting light framing, stylized merlons on the attic – here we can observe parallels with both Renaissance and Eastern architecture. In 1930, Oelschläger completed his Uzhhorod City Cinema in a Functionalist style, but richly combined with Art Deco elements. A parallel project of the architect was the city cinema Scala in Prešov (1929), which has typical features of functionalism: ribbon windows, a flat roof-terrace, a free floor plan. The façade of the ground floor of the Prešov cinema, in this case thanks to the light-green organic



NORTHERN FACADE OF THE CITY CINEMA WITH LIBRARY, LUDOVÍT OELSCHLÄGER, 1931

SEVERNÁ FASÁDA MESTSKÉHO KINA S KNIŽNICOU, LUDOVÍT OELSCHLÄGER, 1931

Source Zdroj: DAZO

ceramic cladding, also refers to Art Deco through its decorativeness. Furthermore, even before the realisation of the Prešov and Uzhhorod cinemas, the architect already had several realisations of municipal cinema projects in his portfolio: Forum in Košice (1926 -1927), Capitol in Michalovce (1927) and Scala in Mukachevo (1926 – 1928).³⁵

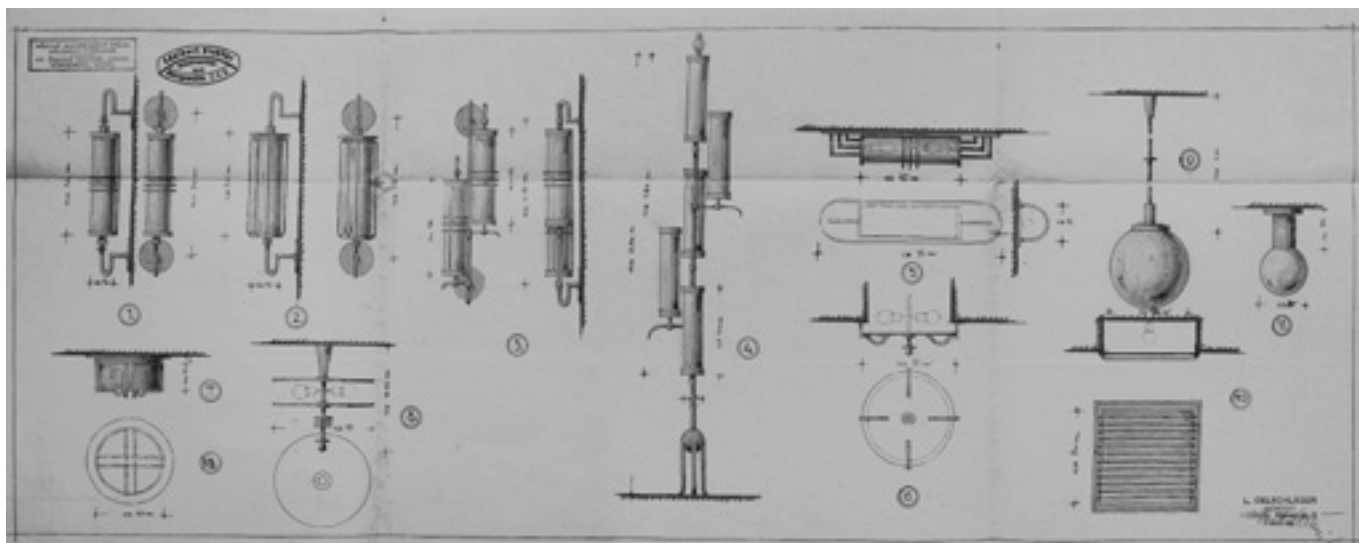
Architect Eugen Valcz was born in 1900 in Zlaté Moravce (then known primarily by the Hungarian name of Aranyosmarót). He graduated from secondary school in Košice and obtained a university degree at the Technical University of Budapest in 1924.³⁶ After 1925 he worked in Košice, where he collaborated with architects Oelschläger and Boskó.³⁷ Later, he shifted his activities to Mukachevo and from 1929 also in Uzhhorod, where he was a partner of the architect Oelschläger in a joint company.³⁸ Valcz helped Oelschläger in the competition for the city cinema project and carried out construction supervision during its construction. After the Vienna Arbitration and the Second World War, he remained in Uzhhorod, where he continued to work as an architect under Soviet rule (for example, he co-authored the “Avangard” stadium project, which was built in 1953).³⁹

The project and implementation of the cinema and library complex

Work on the cinema project began in 1930, with the first series of drawings signed by Ludovít Oelschläger dating back to November of this year. Judging from these documents, the building initially bore clear signs of late Art Deco. At this stage, the volume of the frontal part of the cinema was planned as a two-storey form. The project was characterised by a clear rhythmic division of the facade elements, opaxite⁴⁰ cladding across part of the facade, the presence of broken window openings, a monumental slender metal flagpole and other features. During the construction process, it was later decided that the front volume of the building would be of three storeys. The change in the project also introduced several elements typical of functionalism – a flat roof, an additional series of ribbon windows and others. The internal structure of the complex did not change, but the space became more functional and the decoration more minimal. Subsequently, the author of the project rejected the glass roof above the pedestrian arcade: the deployment of open space without unnecessary details became a priority and corresponded to the spirit of the time.

According to the final project, the cinema together with the city library building formed a single unified complex. Thanks to the multifunctional solution of this building, its front volume with its street façade still exists today (year 2022), even despite its severely neglected condition. In 2009, the former City Cinema was sold to private owners by the City Council at auction, and in 2016, new developers completely destroyed its interior. One floor of the front façade of the complex belongs to the library, which is still owned by the city, so there is hope for at least a partial restoration of this important monument of modernism.

As in most of the Oelschläger cinemas built in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, commercial space was also planned in the Uzhhorod project.⁴¹ The concept of multifunctional complexes, which originated in Europe at the end of the 19th century, spread to Czechoslovakia in the interwar period. It should be mentioned that another important multifunctional project implemented at the



**INTERIOR LIGHTING SYSTEMS
COMMISSIONED BY ADALBERT
RICHTER, 1931**

SYSTÉM INTERIÉROVÉHO
OSVETLENIA, PODĽA NÁVRHU
ADALBERTA RICHTERA, 1931

Source Zdroj: DAZO

same time in the historic city centre, emerged as a no less important cultural, leisure and entertainment centre for Uzhhorod: the complex of buildings of the Legiodružstvo (Legio Partnership) department store (1929 -1932) by the Bratislava architect of Czech origin František Krupka,⁴² in which, in addition to apartments and craft workshops for former Czechoslovak legionnaires and shops, there was also the Purma café. Owned by Bohumil Purma, chairman of the Uzhhorod Association of Slovak Craftsmen, this café became an informal art centre in the 1930s, hosting exhibitions and regular meetings of members of the Association of Fine Artists in Subcarpathian Ruthenia,⁴³ as well as exhibitions of the local branch of the Czechoslovak Association of Engineers and Architects (SIA).

At the request of the Uzhhorod municipality, the construction of the cinema and library began in 1931. As the previous estimate of construction costs was 4 659 303 Czechoslovakia crowns,⁴⁴ beyond the city's own resources, the municipality had to take out a loan of 2 million crowns from the savings bank "Sporobank" in February 1931.⁴⁵ At the end of 1932, the total construction costs increased to 5 300 000 crowns, with 4 334 000 crowns assigned the cinema and the rest for the library.⁴⁶

The municipal government recommended the appointment of the Košice construction company Ing. Hugo Kaboš & Ing. Zoltán Arató⁴⁷ estimated at 2 863 109 Kč, by deducting the production cost of the auditorium seating, which had already been assigned to the Uzhhorod furniture and veneer factory, and, spol., then part of the Thonet-Mundus holding.⁴⁸

Per agreement with the main contractor, work on the construction of the city cinema and library was to begin on 11 April 1931 and end on 11 December of the same year, though in reality took place from 9 May to 22 December.

On April 5, 1931, the Uzhhorod municipality determined the final winners of the contracting tender. Leopold Pásztor from Uzhhorod was commissioned for plumbing and water facilities. Electrical wiring, including the installation of emergency lighting powered by rechargeable batteries, was performed by the Košice branch of Siemens; switchboards, telephones, signalling devices and electric clocks were supplied by Siemens-Elektrotechna.⁴⁹ The central heating was installed by the Košice company Instalator.⁵⁰ The metal screens and metal-framed windows of the main facade were made by A. Kraus from Bratislava, using the firm's patented Kraus system.⁵¹ Production of neon sign boards for outdoor lighting and interior lighting systems was commissioned from the Adalbert Richter Beleuchtungskörperfabrik in Jiřikov, North Bohemia.⁵² Painting and varnishing work was performed by the company Uzhhorod company of Ignác Landesman. The artificial-stone stairs were made by L. Di. Valentino from Košice.⁵³

The cinema was rented on a for-profit basis by entrepreneurs Moritz Spiegel and Adolf Rothmann, who were already tenants of the Uzhhorod Radio (Urania) cinema as well as the Mukachevo City Cinema.



3D RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CITY CINEMA WITH LIBRARY NORTHERN FACADE, 2017

3D MODEL REKONŠTRUKCIE
MESTSKÉHO KINA KNIŽNICE,
SEVERNÉ PRIEČELIE, 2017

DETAIL OF THE NORTHERN FACADE WITH NEON SIGN

DETAIL SEVERNEJ FASÁDY
S NEÓNOVÝM PÚTAČOM

Source Zdroj: Oleg Olashyn



The city cinema as an icon of modernity in the historical core

Despite its austere, almost monolithic appearance, the building of the city cinema and library had a truly complex spatial composition consisting of three volumes that reveal the internal functional structure. The street volume of the building, situated along today's Vološin Street, contained the cinema foyers on the ground floor, as well as the library premises on the upper floors. Through the foyer, the visitor continued into the largest volumes of the cinema halls, which were located in the depth of the built-up plot.

Perpendicular to the axis of the street stood another volume, separated by a pedestrian arcade from the main volumes of the cinema and connected to them by passages at the level of the second and third floors, where various commercial premises and the library were located. The three-storey cinema building is characterised by balanced proportions, horizontal lines and right angles. From an stylistic point of view, the project can be assigned to Functionalism, yet also marked with typical Art Deco details. The main entrance to the cinema building is located to the right of the central axis of the building, while the cinema exits were placed on both sides, with additional emergency exits included in the rear of the projection hall. The library has its separate entrance located in the arcade below the gallery, which connects the volume of the viewpoint with the volume of the library in the complex. Highlighting the entrance portal was a double-sided KINO sign made of neon tubes mounted on a sheet-metal plate.

Oelschläger brought a touch of luxury to the façade of Uzhhorod cinema with the elegant cladding of the window pillars, made of strips of black and grey-purple opaxite. In addition, this decorative impression visually emphasises the location of the ribbon windows and optically expands the façade. On a subconscious level, the smooth structure of the material reminds us of the glossy surfaces of Broadway theatres, the ultra-modern Hollywood elegance of the 1930s. The horizontal lines of the ribbon windows, supported by contrasting strips of opaxite glass on the street façade, increased the building's dynamism. Similar parallels occur in the architecture of the American Streamline Moderne School, where speed lines mimic the flow of air in a wind tunnel.

In general, the appearance of horizontal lines or ribbon windows and the use of overall horizontally oriented architecture occurred in both American Streamline Moderne and the project of the Uzhhorod cinema under the influence of the aesthetics of New Objectivity, a movement connected with the Deutscher Werkbund. The pioneer of new cinema architecture was the German architect Erich Mendelssohn, who in 1928 designed the Universum film complex in Berlin: the first cinema making use of avant-garde architecture and significantly influencing the development and formation of cinema architecture in Europe and the New World. In the United Kingdom, for instance, most cinemas were designed according to the New Objectivity tradition and the related idiom of Streamline Moderne until 1939. The same tendencies can be observed in the architecture of cinemas in Riga, Latvia,⁵⁴ or in the Romuva cinema (arch. Aleksandras Mačiulskis, 1940) in Kaunas, the interwar capital of Lithuania.⁵⁵ In fact, it was through cinema architecture that the stylistic lifespan of Art Deco remained extended in public buildings until the beginning of World War II.

Though a similar solution with ceramic cladding on the window pillars can be found in Oelschläger's unrealized cinema project for Sabinov,⁵⁶ the main façade element in Uzhhorod was the use of glass opaxite tiles of the Chodopak brand. Opaxit, as a unique material produced in interwar Czechoslovakia, became one of the most modern decorative materials of the 1920s and 1930s on building facades and interiors of department stores, banks, hotels, cinemas, rental apartment buildings in the centres of large cities, especially in the Czech lands: e.g., Bohuslav Fuchs's Modernist landmarks in Brno, as the Hotel Avion (1926 -1927), Alfa Palace (1931 – 1937, in collaboration with František Hrdina, Karel Bezrouk) and Moravia Bank (1928 – 1930, in collaboration with Ernst Wiesner), have façades completely covered with opaxite or opaxite slabs.⁵⁷ This versatile and enduring material was also generously used in black -and-white patterning by architects Vilém and Alois Kuba, on the façade of their apartment building with shops on Česká and Veselá streets in Brno (1936 -1937); unfortunately, their Petrůj Cinema on Česká has not survived. Here, the elegant monolithic black surface of the basement and the first floor of the building in which the cinema was located was made of small squares of black opaxite while only the entrance area with its minimalist roof was highlighted by white opaxite.⁵⁸

A cross-section highlighting of the entrance to the arcade on the left side of the façade of the Uzhhorod cinema, where the library is located, is offered by a square support column lined with travertine. Compared to the upper – two-storey volume of the complex, the ground floor from the street is slightly lowered. Additionally, the visual lightening of the ground floor by the receding façade, which gives the impression of lifting the building above the ground, was itself accentuated by the lighting in the strip along the lower plane of the volume of the two upper floors.

Slovak travertine from Bešeňov, known as “Zlatý Bešeňovský” travertine, a luxury material popular even overseas, such as the hall interior of Manhattan's 20 Exchange Place, was used in the exterior for tiling the plinth, columns and the entrance portal of the cinema. Stylish artistic details – semicircular balcony, metal poles, bronze doors, etc. – all complemented the carefully thought-out architectural ensemble. The stucco facades of the building were, in turn, executed through the faux stone technique with a structured surface, all corners of the building and cornices decorated with notches using the same technique.

The interior of the cinema and public library complex

The concept of the cinema's internal layout was determined by its functional division into zones and consisted of three main rooms – vestibule, foyer, and auditorium. The retail spaces were relatively small and had almost no effect on the overall design of the building. The lobby, foyer, and auditorium located on the ground floor were arranged according to the principle of the enfilade. On the second floor of the cinema, above the entrance hall, was the director's office, a smoking lounge and an open space – an atrium with a transparent glass-concrete floor above the foyer. During the summer season, the atrium functioned as another smoking zone.

An original technical solution was used as an insert into the construction of the transparent ceiling of the foyer: a “sandwich” design based on iron supporting beams with opal glazing in a square module attached from below. Then, transparent panels were mounted on top of the beams, using the glass-concrete fittings of the Duplex-Prismat prismatic lighting system. From above, these glass-brick elements also served as the floor of the open atrium for smokers.

The 34-year-old architect Oelschläger already had a recognizable style at that time and an elaborate arsenal of artistic solutions and techniques typical of his personal vocabulary. As in the case of his previously realised cinemas, the interior of the Uzhhorod cinema was designed in the Art Deco style. The foyer, stairwell, and part of the cinema's auditorium were decorated with opaxite plates, mostly in equal-sized stripes of grey-purple and light emerald, with a subtle touch of black. Notably, Adolf Loos chose an identical light emerald colour in combination with black to decorate the interior of the Müller Villa in Prague (1928 -1930)⁵⁹. A similar solution with horizontal contrasting stripes of opaxite on the walls of an auditorium was also found in the previous project of Bohumír Kozák for the cinema of the Podkarpatsky Bank from 1928⁶⁰.

Use of opaxite decoration in the representative entrance areas of public buildings, as well as on the façades, was quite common in the interwar architecture of Czechoslovakia during the early 1930s. For example, the previously mentioned Bohumír Kozák also used black (along with green and off-white) opaxite in the walls, pillars, and columns inside in the complex of the post and telegraph office in Košice (1926 – 1929), especially the elegant post office hall and on the street façade.



**CITY CINEMA INTERIOR IN SOVIET
ERA, 1980S**

INTERIÉR MESTSKÉHO KINA ZO
SOVIETSKÉHO OBDOBIA, 80. ROKY
20. STOROČIA

Source Zdroj: Volodymyr
Karpov's private archive

Similarly, in the interior of Košice's Slovan Cinema (1926 – 1927), Oelschläger used a combination of black and grey-violet opaxite to decorate the walls and columns of the entrance hall, though only later did he use this combination in the exterior and choose brighter colours for the interior.

The ceiling of the cinema hall and library in Uzhhorod was decorated with geometric stucco ornaments in the Art Deco style, characteristic of many of Oelschläger's works. Compositionally and stylistically similar relief decoration can also be found in the architect's other buildings, for example in the entrance areas and auditorium of the Slovan Cinema (1926 – 1927) in Košice,⁶¹ in the exterior and interior of the Košice Chamber of Commerce and Industry (1929 – 1930),⁶² on the ceiling of the main hall of the People's House of Duchnovič Society (1930 – 1931) in Svaliava⁶³ and his other public buildings in Slovakia and Ukraine. The creator of these original works of art was probably a sculptor and plasterer from Košice, Július Krištof (Gyula Kristóf), who realized the stucco decoration on almost all important buildings by Oelschläger.⁶⁴ The floor in the foyer was created with a combination of black and grey RAKO tiles of curvilinear shapes, which formed a distinctive geometric pattern in the Art Deco style.

The cinema was designed with a two-level cinema hall with an auditorium, divided into a parterre and balcony. The entrance to the lower part of the cinema hall "the parterre" led directly from the foyer. The side entrances to the lower level of the balcony were located on the landings of stairs. Four special boxes were situated on either side of the entrance to the balcony – two on each side.

The ceiling of the hall was formed by a suspended plastered rabbit frame with characteristic steps that corrected the sound level.⁶⁵ The embossed stucco decoration on the ceiling in the form of a repeating ornament was not only an artistic but also a functional element, additionally dampening the sound waves. Similarly, the walls of the cinema hall were divided by stepped protrusions to improve the acoustic properties of the room. The wall surfaces were lined with sound-absorbing

**CITY CINEMA AND LIBRARY.
NORTHERN FACADE, 1978**

SEVERNÁ FASÁDA MESTSKÉHO
KINA S KNIŽNICOU, 1978

Source Zdroj: VOINA, Vladimir, 1978.
Zakarpatyie – kray turistskiy. Moscow:
Progress, 23 p.



acoustic panels. The stage of the cinema hall was decorated with stripes of black and grey-purple opaxite.

The lighting fixtures for the cinema and auditorium, as well as for other cinema and library rooms, were all individually designed by Oelschläger. The shades were made of alabaster glass as well as cryolite opal glass, while the metal fittings of the bulbs were made of brass.⁶⁶ A Triumphator projector from the German company AEG and a Tobis-Klang sound system were installed in the technical room.⁶⁷

The library can be accessed through an inconspicuous separate entrance from the arcade. In the volume of the building adjacent to the current Vološina street, there is a book storage room, a reading room, a director's office and a room for library services. According to the project assignment, there was also a small, comprehensively equipped apartment for a library and cinema employee.⁶⁸

Although the decoration of the interior of the library is much more modest than the decoration of the cinema, it fully corresponds to the functional purpose of the premises. Though not boasting shiny colourful opaxite or other luxury materials, it uses the collection of books for a stylistic echo of the cinema interior along with the geometric embossed stucco on the ceiling and other details. In the tiling of the staircase leading from the library, for instance, we find the same Bešeňovský golden travertine as was used on the facade of the cinema.

Current state of the building

unfortunately, the negative trends that began in Soviet times have continued up to today. Oelschläger's masterpiece is in a perilous state, almost at the verge of destruction. The current owners have almost completely destroyed the interior of the cinema, leaving a gaping abyss in



**GEOMETRIC STUCCO ORNAMENT
ON THE CEILING OF THE
VESTIBULE, JÚLIUS KRIŠTOF**

GEOMETRICKÝ ŠTUKOVÝ
ORNAMENT NA STROPE VESTIBULU,
JÚLIUS KRIŠTOF

Source Zdroj: Lina Degtyaryova, 2019

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place of the auditorium. Only a few remnants of the opaxite still left on the walls, the authentic RAKO tiles on the floor and the hot-air heating ventilation grilles, with a design characteristic of Oelschläger's unique style, remind us how important and even avant-garde this building was not only in the context of Uzhhorod. With four different states alternating as rulers, the city's cinema continued to be a popular cultural and leisure space for citizens. Today, this work of an important Košice architect could be not only a rare architectural monument, but also a cultural place of entertainment for the current inhabitants of Uzhhorod. After all, Uzhhorod is perhaps the only European city of this size without a single cinema in the historic center.

Thanks to the survival of the library and the facade of this former multifunctional building, once the pride of the city, there is a hope of restoring the magnificent monument of interwar modernism.⁶⁹ Over the course of 4 years, the present authors collected rare archival materials and findings about the cinema and library from contemporary literature and the daily press. In addition, they have also prepared⁷⁰ visualizations of the original appearance of the building façade, in the event of a future refurbishment of the cinema and library complex, if such an opportunity arises at all.

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- 17 *Lidové noviny*. 37(550), p. 5.
- 18 *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*. 9(56), p. 9.
- 19 DAZO, f. 93, sign 1, fol. 1717.
- 20 *Podkarpatské hlasy*. 6(171), p. 2.
- 21 DAZO, f. 93, sign 1, fol. 1139.
- 22 DAZO, f. 93, sign 1, fol. 1139.
- 23 DAZO, f. 93, sign 1, fol. 1717.
- 24 Martin Reiner (1900, Kispeszt – 1973, Praha) was a Prague architect and sculptor of ethnic German origin. He studied at the Brno University of Technology and from 1921 to 1926 at the Czech Technical University in Prague. The designer of residential house projects and a sculptor with a strong sense of plasticity, he paid great attention in his architecture to the entrance passages, where he often used mirror or opaxite tiles. From the mid-1960s, he returned to sculpture, emphasising the reduction of the work's dependence on optical reality (Dve ženy, Kontemplácia, Ležiaca, Hudba).
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- 41 PRIATKOVÁ, A. and PÁSZTOR, P., 2012, pp. 93, 196.
- 42 František Krupka (1885, Skuteč – 1963, Praha) was an architect of Czech origin who realized most of his projects in the territory of Slovakia. After his first studies in Prague, he was trained in Vienna at the Academy of Applied Arts, the Technical University and finally the Academy of Fine Arts under Professor Friedrich Ohmann. After graduation, he assisted Ohmann with his restoration of the Hofburg in Vienna. After WWI, Krupka moved to Bratislava where he started work in the newly established department for cultural monuments preservation under Dušan Jurkovič. Krupka opened his own office in 1922 in Bratislava at the time of his first large-scale project, the Police Directorate building. His later commissions and realised projects primarily were situated in the territory of Slovakia and Subcarpathian
- Ruthenia. Krupka created a project for the Legiodružstvo and Regional Government (Zemský úrad) buildings in Uzhhorod.
- 43 The association was chaired by Vojtech Erdélyi and its members numbered about 40 artists, including the most famous artists of Podkarpatska Rus – Jozef Bokšaj, Vojtech Borecký, Andrej Doboš, Ernest Kontratovič, Andrej Kocka and others.
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- 47 Hugo Kaboš, born in 1884 in Zákamenné in the Orava region of Slovakia, worked in Budapest before the First World War. Later, the Košice firm of Hugo Kaboš was a long-term partner of Ľudovít Oelschläger, with whom he realized most of his projects. (see: KOLIVOŠKO, Štefan, 2001. *Slovník židovských osobností Košic a okolí*. Košice: Verejná knižnica Jána Bocatia, p. 79; PRIATKOVÁ, A. and PÁSZTOR, P., 2012, p. 17); Zoltán Arató was born in 1895 in Berehove (then Beregszász), completed his secondary schooling in in Košice and attended university in Budapest (see: CSÍKVÁRY, Antal, 1940. *Ungvár és Ung vármegye: Ungvár és Ung vármegye közsegei*. Budapest: Vármegyei Szociográfiai Kiadóhivatala, p. 6).
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