



ORADEA AND THE ART NOUVEAU SPIRIT

The city of Oradea, which has developed on the River of Crisul Repede, between the West Plains and the Apuseni Mountains, has fostered intense trade and implicitly cultural exchanges. The city knew how to take advantage of being crossed by an important trade road linking Western Europe to Central and Eastern Europe, which has opened up its horizon and pervaded in the city a spirit of tolerance and cosmopolitan aspirations that inhabitants were proud of. The cultural identity of Oradea was forged through the great number of nationalities that have lived together for centuries, bringing forth identity ambitions for a beneficial cosmopolitanism.

The 19th century saw a boom in the creation of spectacular buildings, which earned Oradea the nickname of "Petit Paris". Buildings which give a unique charm to the city are a rare artistic richness due to a polished tasteful interesting vernacular architecture. A special mention to the places of worship: well maintained and respected monumental churches implicitly express the good relations which existed between the different denominations and ethnic groups of the city: Orthodox, Catholic, Greek Catholic, Protestant, Mosaic, néo-Protestant people, etc. with due respect for religion and its expression.

But the most impressive capital of artistic and architectural heritage consists of the **Secession style buildings**, real palaces built around 1900. The originality of their architectural expression is completed by a unique ornamentation deployed in stuccos, ceramic decorations and especially the ironworks of interiors. Most of the architects graduated from the Polytechnic School of Budapest were exposed to the influence of the national-Romantic style of Odön Lechner (Komor Marcell and Dezsö Jakab, Sztarill Ferenc) or the coryphaeus of the avant-garde Viennese school (the Vago brothers, Valer Mende). Moreover the Lilien style born in Berlin was familiar to them (Rimanoczi Kalman jr., the Moskovits Palace) as well as the "Coup de fouet" movement of the French school. During the first years following the end of the First World War, Art déco influences are emerging (Parc Hotel).

The first buildings that can be integrated in the new Art Nouveau style keep a classical vision, with an historicist and romantic orientation which is complemented through detail elements, especially in ironworks, through the wavy curve of the new European style (Frigyes Spiegel, the Sonnenfeld House, 1899). Innovations also appear in the construction technique, in the sense that plates with reinforced concrete ribs are introduced.

One of the first buildings decorated in the spirit of Art Nouveau is the Fűchsl Palace, designed by the architects of Budapest Bálint Zoltán and Jámbor Lajos in the years 1902-1903. The stucco as well as the ironworks of the balconies and doors include as decoration the sinuous pattern of the vine shoot. In the 1900's architecture of Oradea, one finds many original stylistic accents which are attached to heterogeneous stylistic directions. It is precisely this diversity that gives the architectural site of Oradea a special touch which makes it unique among other cities bearing the mark of the Art Nouveau spirit.