

Celebrate the Art Nouveau World Day with the **Réseau Art Nouveau Network**...

... and Katalin Keseru from **Budapest (Hungary)**!

What does your job consist in?

Katalin K.: As a professor emeritus at the Institute of Art History, University Eötvös Lóránd, Budapest I teach as I did before and organized a foundation for helping young scholars and students. We work together on the art historical questions about the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Could you describe the Art Nouveau heritage of Budapest in one word?

Katalin K.: Colourful

Which is, in your opinion, the most significant Art Nouveau work/building in your city?

Katalin K.: The Postal Saving Bank, designed by Ödön Lechner.



Postal Saving Bank, designed by Ödön Lechner, 1901,
Budapest (up)
Ödön Lechner (1845-1914) (left)

Which is your most powerful memory linked to an Art Nouveau work?

Katalin K.: As the director of the Ernst Museum (a former private museum, designed in Art Nouveau style) I organized several exhibitions on the Budapest Art Nouveau and its international (French and Finnish) connections (2000-2007).

Which are the current or next Art Nouveau projects in Budapest?

Katalin K.: The restoration of the Museum of Applied Arts has begun by the planning. Regarding the centenary of the death of its architect, Ödön Lechner, this year, we are organizing an international conference about his work for the fall.



Main façade (up-right), interior (up-left) and ceiling detail (left) of the Museum of Applied Arts, designed by Ödön Lechner, 1896, Budapest

The turn of the century marks one of the most important epochs, the golden age of Budapest. After the revolution and the war of independence (1848-49), which were followed almost twenty years later by the period of national resistance, the city reached the crowning point in its development in about 1900. Budapest, the capital of Hungary, evolved from the old towns of Óbuda (Old-Buda), Buda and Pest, six years after the Austro-Hungarian agreement and the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the city grew to a surprising degree. Constructions were planned and supervised by the capital's Council for Public Works, the central organisation responsible for city planning.

The buildings display two noticeable styles, those of Historicism and Art Nouveau, or rather several variants of Art Nouveau. In contrast to Historicism, Hungarian Art Nouveau is based on the national architectural characteristics. Taking the eastern origins of the Hungarians into account, Ödön Lechner (1845-1914), the most important figure in Hungarian Art Nouveau, was initially inspired by Indian and Syrian architecture, and later by traditional Hungarian decorative designs. In this way, he created an original synthesis of architectural styles. By applying them to three-dimensional architectural elements, he produced a version of Art Nouveau that was specific to Hungary.

Turning away from the style of Lechner, yet taking inspiration from his approach, the group of 'Young People' (Fiatalok), which included Károly Kós and Dezső Zrumeczky, were to use the characteristic structures and forms of traditional Hungarian architecture to achieve the same end.

Budapest is part of the Réseau Art Nouveau Network since 1999.

HAPPY ART NOUVEAU WORLD DAY!

More information: www.artnouveau-net.eu

