THE ONE-HUNDRED-YEAR-OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE

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Concept and collection of the material:
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The Hungarian National Assembly commemorates the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Parliament House with a series of events. The exhibition organised on this occasion presents the history of the building, from the architectural competition (1882) to its construction, furnishing and completion (1902). The exhibition displays a selection of the original designs and the models of the exterior sculptures, and illustrates the role of the applied arts (stained glass, ceramics, metal work). It contains a small collection of the most beautiful pieces of furniture, and of the studies and sketches for the paintings in the Parliament House. It presents the public figures, architects, artists and craftsmen responsible for the realisation of the building, as well as documents and objects concerning its construction and opening, and thus also the contemporary social environment.

Lajos Rauscher: 
The Main Staircase, 1899 
(Office of the Hungarian National Assembly)
IMRE STEINDL (1839–1902)

Imre Steindl, architect of the Hungarian Parliament, began life as the son of a jeweller in Pest. Steindl’s final studies were completed at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, where his teacher was Friedrich Schmidt, an eminent Austrian master of the Neo-gothic style. A surge of development following the Compromise of 1867 presented exceptional opportunities for the young Steindl, who, in a matter of decades, rose to the forefront of Hungarian architects. He initially imagined the New City Hall (Új Városháza) in Pest, his first major commission, in Neo-gothic style, although it was eventually constructed according to the dictates of the Italian Neo-renaissance, regarded by the Budapest of the 1870’s as embodying the essence of bourgeois ideals. Both the Pavilions of the Veterinary Academy in Rottenbiller Street and the “old” Technical University building on the Múzeum Boulevard were designed in a similar style. Steindl also progressed in the academic field, teaching at the József Technical University in Budapest until his death. In addition, Steindl ranked as one of the most sought after restoration architects of the period. In this capacity he was responsible for restoring several significant historic monuments during a period when the country was approaching the Millennium celebrations. According to the prevailing attitudes of the time, restoration included significant additions, alterations and the re-carving of stonework. Following the sudden death of the previously engaged architect, Steindl was commissioned with the restoration of Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara) Castle. The most significant of these restoration works was that of Saint Elizabeth Cathedral in Kassa (Košice). Towards the end of his life, in addition to the Parliament, there remained energy for one further work: he designed the Erzsébetváros (Elizabeth town, today Budapest, VIIth district) Parish Church in Rózsák Square, a massive creative effort in Neo-gothic style, decorated with Zsolnay ceramics. Highly lauded and honoured, but exhausted and in poor health, this sensitive and retiring master died on 31st August 1902, just a few weeks before the official opening of the Parliament.
THE COMPETITION

Construction of the Parliament was undertaken according to the XLVIIIth Article of 1880 under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister, whilst the designs were commissioned on the basis of a competition. The National Committee which organised the competition was directed by the then Prime Minister, Kálmán Tisza, and Miklós Ybl was the main architectural expert. The design programme was compiled by a separate sub-committee, based upon the general guideline that "the design of the intended permanent Parliament House – in respect of its schedule and purpose – should not be hindered by financial considerations". The competition was announced at the beginning of April 1882 with a deadline for submissions of 1st February 1883. Four equivalent prizes were proposed by the competition guidelines. Although the competition was international, this
remained a formality due to pressure from the Hungarian architectural community. Consequently the event remained an in-house competition for the Hungarian and – to a lesser extent – Viennese architects. Amongst the 19 entrants awarded were Imre Steindl, Alajos Hauszmann, Albert Schickedanz and Vilmos Freund, as well as Otto Wagner and his partners from Vienna. Eventually Steindl’s design was chosen for realisation, not in the least the result of ex-Prime Minister and ex-Foreign Minister Gyula Andrássy’s support, who desired a building resembling the Houses of Parliament in London. The decision was the subject of debate: many were in opposition to the Neo-gothic style, which they regarded as German. The Bill for the construction was passed by the Members of Parliament only after days of torrid, often politically inspired, debate. Steindl modified the original competition designs on several occasions.

CONSTRUCTION

In 1884 Count Lajos Tisza, formerly the Government Commissioner for the reconstruction of Szeged, was selected to head the newly formed Parliament House Construction Committee. Following Tisza’s death in 1898, the post was taken over by State Secretary József Tarkovich. According to the contract concluded with Imre Steindl, the architect was
responsible for the completion of detail drawings, proposals for appropriate materials, the supervision of the building contractors’ work and the certification of invoices. Steindl delegated Ottó Tandor as his second-in-charge, and in addition several one-time students and other young, talented architects found employ in his office. Technical supervision of the fulfilment of the contract was directed by the Ministerial Advisor, Béla Ney.

The first clod was turned on the site on 12th October 1885, although work ceased for a year due to the relocation of water-works from the site. When building activity recommenced, hundreds of workers toiled under spotlights by night also. The proximity of the Danube required the building of thick, continuous concrete foundations. Walls were erected predominantly in brick, with some use of stone. Sándor Hauszmann’s company was awarded the construction contract. Carved stone was used in cladding the exterior of the brick walls. More than 40 million bricks and 30 000 cubic
metres of stone were used in the construction. Special technical solutions were employed for the heating and ventilation of the building. Celebrations for partial completion took place on 5th May 1894, following which the riveted, rolled iron roof structure, manufactured by the Schlick Factory and clad in natural slate, was erected. In 1896 a ceremonial session of Parliament was held in the building, 100% complete externally yet only partially complete inside. The Parliament House was only used from 1902, and the interior works continued until the end of 1904.

STATUES AND INTERIOR DETAILS

According to Steindl’s conception (although to a somewhat lesser extent) both the exterior and interior of this massive building were covered in statues. Great figures of Hungarian history – 90 statues in all – appeared on the external facades. In front of the main entrance stand the two lions of Béla Markup. 162 full-figure statues can be found in the building. The rotunda is lined with coloured zinc statues of kings and princes, repeating the concept of a “National Pantheon” already visible on
the facade, a thought popular in Hungary at the time. Ceramic statues representing the various professions were located in the parlours and corridors. Although several outstanding artists took part in the creation of the statues (Miklós Kolló, György Kiss, Ede Kallós), very little evidence can be found of individual artistic character. The formation of the works reflects the realism of the late 19th century and a demand for historical truth.

The interior spaces were created using the best of available materials, the greatest artistic care and the formal richness of turn-of-the-century Historicism. There was a determined intention to use Hungarian materials and the products of the best local manufacturers. Fittings for the building were designed under Steindl's direction by a young colleague, Ernő Foerk. The contract for the construction of the furniture and other joinery-work was awarded to the workshops of Endre Thék and Alajos Michl. The most demanding of the Thék manufactured furniture was decorated with coloured ceramic inserts from the Zsolnay factory. Steindl also provided opportunities for the Zsolnay factory in the internal courtyards, where the window frames, the mullions, the parapets and inserts of the cornices were
all ceramic. A majority of the stained glass-work was prepared by the workshop of Miksa Róth, decorative painting was undertaken by the company of Róbert Scholtz, whilst the wrought-iron grilles and most of the lamps were manufactured by the workshops of Gyula Jungfer.
Pattern sheets of the Melocco firm for the marble mosaic floor tiles, which were also used in the Parliament House (Office of the Hungarian National Assembly)

Relatively little space remained for paintings in the Parliament. In total only the ceiling of the main staircase is covered in large-scale paintings, while small pairs of paintings decorate the walls of the two debating chambers, and there are no paintings at all under the main dome. A rarity of free wall-space and the division of the ceiling with ribbing and coffering left little space for large scale artworks, but there is also an indication that Steindl himself had little regard for large painted surfaces, which he regarded foreign to the Gothic world. Amongst the spaces on the long axis only the arched ceilings of the two parlours were painted. Large spaces located at the ends of the cross-axis and completed during the last phases of building works — the Hunting Hall (originally the restaurant), the Delegation Hall and the Delegation Corridor — were decorated with rows of large wall-paintings.

Károly Lotz painted the ceiling of the main staircase. The celebrated master executed the task with the expected routine and high artistic quality, yet gave total disregard to the constraints of the Neo-gothic architecture:
the illusionistic pictures with skywards opening perspectives reflect the world of Renaissance, or rather Baroque art. In addition to this work, Lotz received only small commissions in the Parliament House. The majority of the remaining pictures were completed by younger artists who in part followed or copied the master’s direction. Zsigmond Vajda, the painter of the parlour ceilings undertook a task seemingly beyond his capabilities. In the Hunting Hall the castle depictions of Béla Spányi and the wall-paintings of Aladár Körösföi Kriesch are refreshing exceptions: their two-dimensional decorativeness stands closer to newer artistic directions and also the Neo-gothic architecture of the building.
MUNKÁCSY’S PAINTING OF THE HUNGARIAN CONQUEST

The fate of Mihály Munkácsy’s painting, “The Hungarian Conquest”, the most significant artwork in the Parliament House, unfolded in a special way. Already in 1883 the novelist Mór Jókai proposed that Munkácsy, living in Paris and regarded as the prince of Hungarian painters, should complete a painting for the new Parliament. Serious consideration was only given to the idea following Munkácsy’s painting of the ceiling of the main staircase of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. Following this it appeared an impossibility for Munkácsy’s contemporaries that the Parliament could be completed without a work by the artist. In 1890 Count Lajos Tisza, President of the Construction Committee, commissioned Munkácsy with a representation of Árpád, to be located in the debating chamber of the Lower House.

Munkácsy set to work with great enthusiasm, requesting information from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences regarding the dress and weaponry of the period of the conquest. Travelling around the country the artist prepared photographs of various physiognomies and peoples. Many studies and sketches were made before the realisation of the final composition. His first concept, whereby Árpád received the homage of the Slav envoys in a standing position was altered according to the request of many: in the final version the leader of the Hungarian Conquest sits astride a horse. For the purpose of painting this large-scale picture Munkácsy constructed a separate studio in Neuilly.
The painting was received by a parliamentary delegation on 24th February 1894, but, as the Parliament House was still uncompleted, the work was located in the Ceremonial Hall of the National Museum, used as the Chamber for the Hungarian Upper House. Following the death of Lajos Tisza (1898), Steindl himself protested against the location of the painting in the new Parliament. He correctly argued that the painting would destroy the harmony of the Hall and diminish its usefulness. It can be supposed that jealousy also played a part in the opposition to the placing of an independently produced monumental work of art in such a central position. The painting was finally located in the Parliament in 1929 in the reception room of the Speaker of the Lower House, which was subsequently renamed the “Munkácsy Hall” and serves now as the reception room of the President of the Republic.

THE COMPLETED WORK

It was the original intention to complete the Parliament House for the Millennium celebrations in 1896 and the artistic programme was conceived with this in mind. However, on 8th June 1896, the 29th anniversary of Franz Josef’s Coronation as Hungarian King, the participants of the joint celebratory session of the Upper and Lower Houses could only admire the main staircase and the rotunda. On the occasion a ceremonial company escorted the Hungarian Holy Crown and other coronation regalia to the Parliament House. The proper handover of the building occurred on 8th October 1902, when the House of Representatives held its first session here. This event passed without ceremonious appearances — any celebration would have appeared insignificant after the events of 1896.
However, it was only then that the nation could become familiar with the building through illustrated accounts, descriptions and a large album published on the occasion.

The official cost of the construction works exceeded 37 million crowns, a figure double that of the original cost estimate prepared on the basis of the detailed plans, and four times that of the original competition entry.

With the new Parliament House the contemporaries took possession of a building which logically summarised the lessons of international parliament building and was equipped with the latest technical fittings. It counted amongst the largest buildings of the world at that time. The architecture reflects a highly individual interpretation of the Neo-gothic and the overall articulation inside and out as well as the artistic creations testify to the highest demands. Both in the original bicameral system and in the present unicameral system the building has functioned well.

The Parliament House has served Hungarian legislation and the Hungarian state for a century. During these one hundred years – thanks to good fortune and to expert maintenance – the building has predominately preserved its original form both inside and out. It is the task of forthcoming generations to continue to watch over and care for this unique building.
SZÁZÉVES AZ ORSZÁGHÁZ
A PÁLYÁZAT

The construction of the Parliament was undertaken according to the KVM's Act of 1896 under the ministry of the Prime Minister, whilst the designs were commissioned on the basis of a competition. The National Committee, which organized the competition, was directed by the then Prime Minister, Kálmán Tássy, and Miklós Vély was the main architectural expert. The design programme was compiled by a separate subcommittee, based upon the general guidelines that "the designs of the extended permanent Parliament House -- in respect of its architecture and purpose -- should not be bound by financial considerations."

The competition was announced at the beginning of April 1892 with a deadline for submissions of 1st February 1893. Four equivalent prizes were proposed by the competition guidelines. Although the competition was international, it remained a national contest due to pressure from the Hungarian architectural community. Consequently the event remained an in-house competition for the Hungarian and -- to a lesser extent -- Viennese architects. Amongst the 19 entrants were Franz von Stieler, Alajos Haaraszthy, Albert Schickedanz and Vilmos Fekete, as well as Ödön Szántó and his partners from Vienna.

Böll's design was chosen for submission, not in the least the result of the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Gyula Andrássy's support, who desired a building resembling the Museum of Parliament in London. The decision was the subject of debate among the members of Parliament only after days of storm, other publicly inspired debate. Böll modified the original competition designs on several occasions.
AZ ÉPÍTÉS


CONSTRUCTION

In 1914 Count Joseph Tschirn, formerly the Government Commissioner for the reconstruction of Buda after the war, was appointed to head the newly formed Parliament House Construction Committee. (Following Tschirn’s death in 1919, the post was taken over by State Secretary Izsak Tarkov.) According to the contract concluded with Izsak Tarkov, the architect was responsible for the completion of detailed drawings, proposals for appropriate materials, the supervision of the building contractors’ work and the certification of materials. Szovjet Tábori üzemek alatt állt. A kapitányságukban és társulásukban mellékeltek, ezen felül építésüket nyitották. A békekötés után a legfelsőbb útilseg végső formájában működött az Oroszországi Nép Belét működött.

The first sod was turned on 12th October 1913, although work ceased for a year due to the relocation of water works from the site. Work began, however, in April 1914, with the building of the basement. The majority of the Danube was regained. The building of thick, continuous concrete foundations. Walls were erected predominantly in brick, with some use of stone. Szovjet Tábori üzemek alatt állt. A kapitányságukban és társulásukban mellékeltek, ezen felül építésüket nyitották. A békekötés után a legfelsőbb útilseg végső formájában működött az Oroszországi Nép Belét működött.

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STATUES AND INTERIOR DETAILS

According to Szentágothai’s conception (although to a somewhat lesser extent), both the exterior and interior of this massive building were covered in statue. Great figures of Hungarian history 90 statues in all  appeared on the façade. In front of the main entrance stood the two lions of Buda. Markó. 362 life-size statues can be found inside the building. The interior is lined with coloured ceramic statues of kings and princes, repeating the concept of a “National Pantheon”, already visible on the façade, a thought popular in Hungary at the time. Ceramic statues representing the various professions were located in the corridors and corridors. Although several outstanding artists took part in the creation of the statues—Miklós Kádár, György Kiss, Erdey Káli, very little evidence can be found of individual artistic character. The formation of the works reflects the mood of the late 19th century and is dominated by historical truth.

The interior spaces were created using the best of available materials, the greatest artists, and the formal richness of turn-of-the-century Historicism. There was a determined intention to use Hungarian materials and the products of the best local manufacturers. Fittings for the building were designed under Szentágothai’s direction by a young colleague, Erdey Ferenc. The contract for the construction of the furniture was awarded to the workshops of Endre Thok and Alajos Muhl. The most demanding of the Thok manufactured furniture was decorated with coloured ceramic inserts from the Zsolnay factory. Szentágothai also provided opportunities for the Zsolnay factory in the internal courtyards, where the windows between the colonnades, the pampers and inserts of the columns were all ceramic.

A majority of the stained glass work was prepared by the workshop of Miklós Réthi, decorative painting was undertaken by the company Robert Schüller, whilst the wrought-iron grilles and most of the lamps were manufactured by the workshops of Gyula Jungfer.
THE COMPLETED WORK

It was the original intention to complete the Parliament House for the Millennium celebrations in 1896 and the original programme was concerned with this aspect. However, on 8th June 1896, the 26th anniversary of Franz Joseph's accession as Hungarian King, the participants of the joint celebration session in the Upper and Lower Houses could only admit the present state in the guise of a ceremony. On the occasion, a commemoration ceremony took place in the Hungarian Holy Crown in the Parliament House. The ceremonial entry of the building took place on 8th October 1897, when the House of Representatives held its first session there. This event passed without comment and appeared insignificant after the events of 1896. However, it was then only that the nation could become familiar with the building through illustrated accounts and a large album published on the occasion.

The official side of the construction works exceeded 17 million crowns, a figure double that of the original cost estimate. The building was essentially improved on the basis of the detailed plans, and four times that of the original construction area. With the new Parliament House, the contemporaries took possession of a building, which logically encompassed the losses of international parliament buildings and was equipped with the latest technical fittings.

The Parliament House has served Hungarian legislation and the Hungarian state for a century. During these one hundred years, thanks to good fortune and to expert maintenance – the building has prudently gained an original form both inside and out. It is the task of future generations to continue to watch over and care for this unique building.
SZÁZÉVES AZ ORSZÁGHÁZ

Az Országyház Hivatalának kiállítása az Országház általános századik évfordulójának alkalmából

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Építés Kit, Bencsi Ferenc intézésváltozat

A kiállított tárgyak közönséghoz köszönhetően mondunk az alábbi gyűjteményeknek
Országyház Hivatala
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Magyar Nemzeti Galéria
Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum
Magyar Orsiásos Levéltár

THE ONE-HUNDRED-YEAR-OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE

An exhibition of the Office of the Hungarian National Assembly on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Opening of the Parliament House

Curator
József Sóó art historian,
Research Institute for Art History, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Coordination
József Lukács architect,
Office of the Hungarian National Assembly,
Technical Management, Head of the Architectural Department

Design
János Gábor architect

Realization
Atelier 21 Studio Sára Ernő, László Tóth, Somogyvári Mihály, Zoltán László
and collaborators

Építés Kit led by Ferenc Bencsi

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Office of the Hungarian National Assembly
Budapest Historical Museum, Museum Kiscelli
János Pannonius Museum, Pécs
Hungarian Museum of Architecture
Hungarian National Archives
Hungarian National Gallery
Hungarian National Museum