

Resume of the article:

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Maroš Semančík: Kúpeľná kaplnka vo Vyhniach – rané dielo Ladislava Hudeca
„The spa chapel in Vyhne – an early work of Ladislav Hudec“

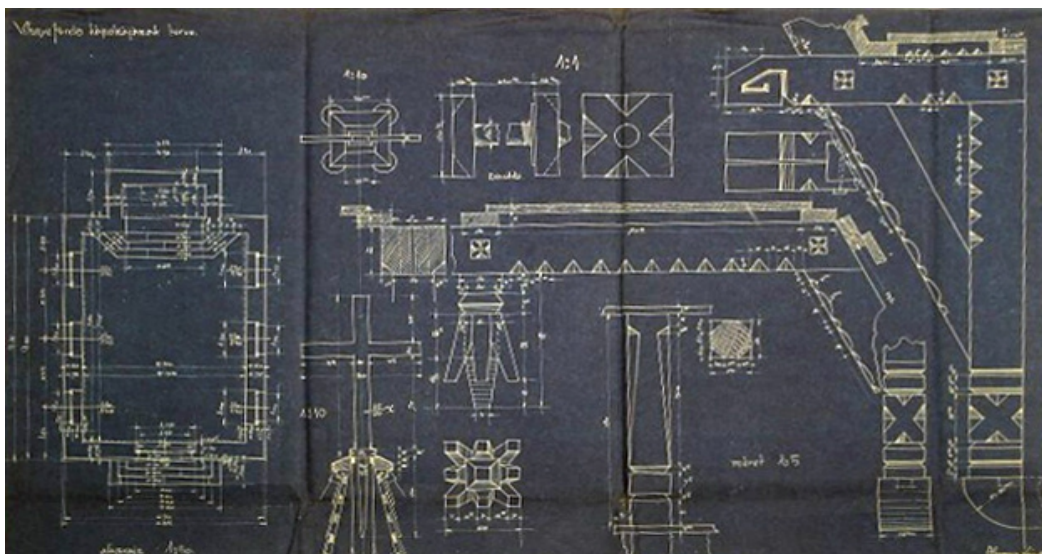
RESUME



The forested surroundings of the tiny spa town of Vyhne hide among themselves a small, almost unassuming chapel, constructed shortly before the outbreak of World War One and its ensuing seismic changes in the fates of so many individuals, nations and political entities. The chapel was the first completed architectural work of its designer, the architect Ladislav Hudec (1883 – 1958), a native of Banská Bystrica, whose own life was shifted onto a quite unusual course by the outbreak of war. As a result of the hostilities, he ended up as one of the key figures of Chinese architecture, settling in Shanghai where he achieved a position as one of the era's most sought-after architects.

Hudec's initial work, in the form of the chapel in Vyhne, is already indicative of the skills of the youthful architect who was later to reach full development far from his native land. Here, we can see his ability to work with references to the history and symbolic context of architectonic forms, even as the most immediate point of reaction were the early modernist tendencies then current in late-Hapsburg Austro-Hungary.

One of the very oldest mineral baths in Slovakia, the Vyhne spa was the property of the town of Banská Štiavnica from as early as 1564; the town also held ecclesiastical patronage over the town's main church as well as the spa chapel. In 1734, the Banská Štiavnica town hall commissioned the construction of a chapel consecrated to St. John of Nepomuk, though this structure was demolished in May of 1896 as part of the expansion of the baths themselves. A special fund was created for the construction of a new chapel, to which end a series of social fund-raisers, particularly charitable public concerts, was organised. Nonetheless, the collection of finances for the chapel proceeded very slowly.



While still a student at the Technical University in Budapest, Ladislav Hudec prepared a design for the chapel in 1913. This design was accepted for construction by the town hall in Banská

Štiavnica, under the administration of chief alderman Kálmán Horváth, and realised in the autumn of the same year by the construction firm of the architect's father, Hugyecz & Rosenauer, for the cost of 8,000 Austro-Hungarian crowns. Since the town itself could only put aside 6 000 crowns, the remainder was advanced by the construction company itself, which then waited until the town had collected the deficit for full payment. Consecration of the chapel was held on July 26, 1914, with a dedication to the Virgin Mary of Hungary. Only two days later, the Austro-Hungarian Empire issued its declaration of war against Serbia.

Situated in the former 'Upper Park' of the spa, the chapel was designed as a combination of stone and wooden construction. Formed from rough-cut squares of stone masonry, it uses the material along with the round-arched windows and openings, or the composition of architectonic masses, to evoke Romanesque architecture, possibly as a symbolic reference to the purity and unselfconscious force of religious faith in the early medieval period. Likewise, the exposition of the bare construction material expressed truthfulness in architectural structure and substance. The chief interior element of the chapel is the coffered ceiling with painted decoration. The coffering has a stylised Secessionist phytomorphic painted motif, to a great extent derived from Hungarian folk art.



In the exterior, Hudec employed the motif of a timber gable, referring to the vernacular buildings traditions of the eastern Carpathians, most specifically to the folkloric area of Țara Călatei (Kalotaszeg); one such example could be the house from Domoș. The gable is perforated with a series of cruciform shapes, arranged into three bands, likewise a modified element from Transylvanian folk architecture. Such a use of steep, high-pitched roofs with a timber-boarded gable is characteristic of the work of the Hungarian architect Károly Kós and his circle; one clear inspiration for Hudec in the formation of the roofs and their details is Kós's kangaroo pavilion for the Budapest Zoo from 1909 – 1910. In turn, the infill of the entrance is likely inspired by the doors of the side entrance to the Calvinist church in Budapest's Városligeti fasor from 1911 – 1913 by Aladár Árkay; the shapes of the geometrical articulation of the chapel's windows is in fact almost identical with that of the skylight in the main entrance of the Budapest church. In other words, this early work of Hudec represents an otherwise unique expression of architecture inspired by regional vernacular forms within the spirit of Kós's circle, itself arising from the British Arts & Crafts movement.

With its exposed stone masonry, the spa chapel fits well within the immediate natural surroundings. Moreover, the use of the prevalent local stone – rhyolite – as much as the similarity of the entrance portal to the openings of the nearby mineshafts, also makes reference to the regional identity and genius loci of the region.

In his first work, Ladislav Hudec was evidently inspired by a wide range of aesthetic stimuli, and above all the Secessionist transformation of the vernacular building practices of the Carpathian Basin in the spirit of the work of Kós and his followers. Yet equally a sense of modernity is expressed with the sawtooth binding of the stone masonry and the application of a modern construction material – the roof covering of asbestos-cement tiling. The formal simplicity of the chapel's architectonic massing simultaneously draws attention to a still deeper symbolic rooting: to a link with the timeless permanence of the forms of sacral architecture.