

Adolf Loos and Vienna

From 1 December 2011 until 17 February 2012

- Concept:** Marco Pogacnik, Adolph Stiller
- Exhibition venue:** Exhibition Centre in the Ringturm
VIENNA INSURANCE GROUP
1010 Vienna, Schottenring 30
- Opening hours:** Monday to Friday: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., free admission
(closed on public holidays)
- Press tour:** Wednesday, 30 November 2011, 11.00 a.m.
- Speakers:** Marco Pogacnik, Adolph Stiller
- Official opening:** Wednesday, 30 November 2011, 18.30 p.m. (by invitation only)
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Adolf Loos is regarded as Vienna's most important architect and architectural journalist of international importance and as a pioneer of modernism. Taking place more than 20 years after the last significant exhibition of his work, the new exhibition at the Exhibition Centre in the Ringturm is focused on different aspects of creativity in Loos' adopted home city. The exhibition presents the results of years of research by the architectural historian, Marco Pogacnik (University of Venice). After major monographic exhibitions dealing with Mies van der Rohe (Haus Tugendhat), Sverre Fehn, Josef Plečnik as well as Bohuslav Fuchs and Boris Podrecca, Vienna's most world-renowned name, Adolf Loos, now has his turn in the "Architektur im Ringturm" series of the Vienna Insurance Group. There will a closer look taken at three aspects behind the meaning of the eponymous topic, "Adolf Loos and Vienna":

Vienna's avant-garde trailblazer

In newspaper articles from the period – collectively published under the title "Spoken into the Void" – Adolf Loos began a critical examination in essay form of various cultural questions, especially those dealing with habitation. He quickly became known throughout the city through these articles and was commissioned by the bourgeois avant-garde upper class to design and furnish apartments.

Adolf Loos was influenced by his "Anglo-Saxon experience" – from 1893 to 1896 he lived in the USA and had a long stopover in London before returning to continental Europe. This powerful influence – from cultural nuances all the way to everyday habits, foods and clothing – is reflected in numerous apartment furnishings by Adolf Loos. At the exhibition comparative displays with original pieces of furniture bear three-dimensional witness to this.

"In 1909, Loos had reached an intellectual maturity that gave him a substantial sense of security with regard to his own means and abilities; this made him unyielding when it came to any kind of mediocre compromise. In order to achieve a synthesis of the formal aspirations of his own era, Loos maintained the notion that, as a profession, architecture must be both individual and communal, creative and anonymous, singular and collective. For Loos, the authority of the architect was more important than authorship", sais curator Marco Pogacnik, describing Adolf Loos' approach to architecture.

Adolf Loos' plans for Vienna

Immediately upon his return from America, Loos began to grapple with the potential planning and development of Vienna. He worked for some time in the office of Mayreder, an architect involved with a city development plan (Vienna plan of 1908), and gathered experience that would later find its way into the so-called "Adolf Loos Vienna Plan" (together with Paul Engelmann). Among other things, he suggested a re-ordering of the buildings on Ringstraße. His individual, original remarks on urban issues are examined closely for the first time at the exhibition. There are unmistakable parallels in the tower architecture that emerges time and time again in Loos' designs (e.g. in the construction project for the Modena grounds) and the cityscape today – for example in the gate construction of the Ringturm at Schottenring to the Danube Canal.

Adolf Loos: "There is something special about the architectural character of a city. Each one is unique...In Vienna, it is the straight cornice end with no roof, dome, bay or other superstructures... and then there is the lime plaster... For there is a very specific reason why Danzig is a brick-shell city and Vienna a lime-plaster city (...) Fischer von Erlach did not need granite to make himself understood. He used clay, lime and sand to create the works that so powerfully move us... A king in the realm of materials"

Last but not least, the urban-planning integration of the so-called Loos Hhouse into the urban context is a master achievement which falls under this topic and which is represented with a model of the environment. Recovered sketches and drawings of his legendary "city walks" reflect this avant-garde view of Vienna. References to the architectural models are contextualized in images of the 1908 map of the city in order to visually replicate the architectural models that Loos repeatedly mentioned.

Moving photomontages, prepared using large-scale "scans" of Michaelerplatz and the façade of the Loos House (completed by specialists at the Antiquities and Monuments Office of Venice), show the outstanding urban-design integration of his main work in Michaelerplatz from various perspectives.

A total of four animations clearly explain the urban-planning integration, structural characteristics, architectural models and spatial composition.

Try of a masterpiece

Numerous documents that, until now, have rarely or never been published (Adolf Loos Archive in possession of the Albertina; construction documents from city and State archives; plans from Municipal Department 37) address the significance of the Loos House, which was created for the Goldman & Salatsch tailor shop: his masterpiece in the heart of the city, and an architectural icon of international stature.

Unique documents trace the history of the Loos House from the discovery of the plot outline, through the initial planning steps and the completion of multiple renovations and extensions, to the restoration of its original condition – in chronological order – and communicate its significance in the history of architecture.

Curator Marco Pogacnik: *"The house on Michaelerplatz is the first building in which Loos made perfect use of the floor plan – that compositional principle that he himself described as one of the most important innovations introduced into architecture in the twentieth century. This principle of the floor plan does not appear in his early designs, not even in his contemporaneous design of Steiner House."*

In particular, the meticulous transcription of the hand-written construction documents (documented in the accompanying catalogue) convey the dispute between the municipality and the owner regarding the façade, and reviews a piece of the city's history. Today this dispute is an anecdote known throughout the city. Throughout the dispute, the principal stood loyally behind his architect and helped him to fight stiff opposition from the city administration.

The exhibition also displays garments from the collection of the Vienna Museum, which were produced by Goldman & Salatsch, who were the most outstanding tailors at the time for men's clothing.

Exhibition

An excursive overview based on the three main topics is also given for other buildings designed by Adolf Loos at the same time as the Loos House. Plans, documents and large models of some famous houses (Mandl House, Strasser House, Steiner House, Rufer House) complete the exhibition.

Catalogue

Architektur im Ringturm XXVI. Adolf Loos and Vienna. Ed./Marco Pogacnik, ca. 220 pages with numerous images.

Price: 28 euros; students, persons performing military and civilian service, pensioners (with valid identification): 15 euros