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## Department store U Nováků in Prague in the context of the development of department stores in Europe

### ANNOTATION

This article is concerned with the first Art Nouveau phase (1901–1904) of the development of the famous shopping palace known under the name “U Nováků” No. 699 in Vodičkova Street in The New Town. Equally interesting is the later part of this palace situated towards the street V Jámě and realised in 1927–1929, described only marginally due to the restricted space of this article. Both parts of currently united palace complex reflect creative development of a single author – architect Osvald Polívka. Also the personality of the building owner Josef Novák is mentioned. The more complex development of department stores in Europe, mainly in Paris and Vienna, is drawn in the introduction, followed by the architectural analysis and comparison of significant realisations with the Prague palace.

### SUMMARY

The Prague palace complex U Nováků belongs to significant features within the modern development at the historic area of the New Town. This excellent work of Osvald Polívka, a Bohemian architect of historicism and Art Nouveau style, originated in two building phases. The Art Nouveau part of the palace, described in this article, is currently remarkable mainly for its decorative façade on Vodičkova Street. A wide variety of arts and crafts has been applied here, perhaps most noticeable is the mosaic covering several floors, designed in sketches and cardboards by Jan Preisler. Generally the palace decoration is considered a typical example of Prague Art Nouveau. Also the original arrangement of the interior was of high quality, mainly the vestibule with monumental double wing staircase and a gallery in the central part of the original department store U Nováků. However the original disposition vanished during general alteration and completion of the second part of the palace in the 1920s. The Prague department store U Nováků was also one of the earliest department stores in Bohemia (next to the Haas department store Na Příkopěch from the 1860s). In this respect therefore, Prague did not lag behind the world, mainly Paris, where department stores had been constructed since the 1850s. The building of the former department store U Nováků can rightfully be considered one of very successful realisations of the Art Nouveau style at the early 1920s, not only in the centre of Prague, but in the Czech Republic as a whole.

**Fig. 1.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků, No. 699. Current state of the façade (photo M. Kracík, 2016).

**Fig. 2.** Berlin, Leipziger Straße 46–49, Dönhoffplatz, department store Tietz, demolished during the WWII in 1945 (copied from Frei 1997, 81).

**Fig. 3.** Vienna, the former department store Gerngroß after the project of Ferdinand Fellner the youngest. View into the interior of the main vestibule with the staircase (copied from Kortz 1906, 369).

**Fig. 4.** Vienna, the former department store Gerngroß after the project of Ferdinand Fellner the youngest. View onto the main façade to the Mariahilferstraße (copied from Kortz 1906, 368).

**Fig. 5.** Vienna, the former department store Gerngroß after the project of Ferdinand Fellner the youngest. Plan of the first floor (copied from Kortz 1906, 368).

**Fig. 6.** Josef Novák, founder and director of the firm J. Novák in Prague. Photograph from the cover page of the journal The Commercial World from the 11th January 1904 (copied from sine 1904, 1; reprophoto archive of the author, 2016).

**Fig. 7.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 699-II, original brewery and restaurant U Štajgrů in 1900, later demolished (copied from Bečková 1998, 167; original in Prague City Archives, fond Collection of Photographs, sign. V 48/44).

**Fig. 8.** Prague 1-New Town, department store U Nováků, plans of the groundfloor, the second and fourth floor (copied from sine 1905b, 7; reprophoto archive of the author, 2016).

**Fig. 9.** Prague 1-New Town, department store U Nováků, the shopping vestibule (sine 1904; reprophoto archive of the author, 2016).

**Fig. 10.** Prague 1-New Town, department store U Nováků, the shopping vestibule (copied from sine 1905b; Table 9, reprophoto archive of the author, 2016).

**Fig. 11.** Prague 1-New Town, department store U Nováků, drawing of the main facade (copied from sine 1905b; Table 8, reprophoto archive of the author, 2016).

**Fig. 12.** Prague 1-New Town, department store U Nováků, exterior (sine 1905a, 31; reprophoto archive of the author, 2016).

**Obr. 13.** The tomb of Novak's family in the Olšany cemeteries in Prague, cemetery VI, dept. 16, tomb 14. The mason of the tombstone is Osvald Polívka and statues are by Hanuš Folkman (photo A. Oplatková, 2015).

**Fig. 14.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků. Marquee above the main entrance (photo M. Kracík, 2016).

**Fig. 15.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků, Nr. 699. The entrance with a marquee (photo M. Kracík, 2016).

**Fig. 16.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků, Nr. 699. Detail of the side staircase leading to the flats on the higher floors (photo author, 2016).

**Fig. 17.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků, Nr. 699. Flat of the owner – saloon on the second floor with windows into the street (photo author, 2016).

**Fig. 18.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků, Nr. 699. Flat of the owner – saloon on the second floor (photo author, 2016).

**Fig. 19.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků, Nr. 699. Detail of the window glazing towards the Vodičkova Street (photo author, 2016).

**Fig. 20.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků, Nr. 699. Flat of the owner – the saloon (photo author, 2016).

**Fig. 21a, b.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků, Nr. 699. Flat of the owner – detail of the plaster decoration (photo author, 2016).

**Fig. 22.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků, Nr. 699. View of the facade (photo M. Kracík, 2016).

**Fig. 23.** Prague 1-New Town, Vodičkova 28, 30, palace U Nováků, Nr. 699. Position in the street line (photo M. Kracík, 2016).

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