



# UKRAINE

## Towns\_Territories\_Traces

From 11 April until 25 May 2012

- Concept:** Adolph Stiller, Rostyslaw Bortnyk
- Exhibition venue:** Ringturm Exhibition Centre  
1010 Vienna, Schottenring 30
- Opening hours:** Monday to Friday: 9 am to 6 pm, free admission  
(closed on public holidays)
- Press tour:** Tuesday, 10 April 2012, 11:00 am
- Speakers:** Adolph Stiller, Rostyslaw Bortnyk, Jan Sapak
- Official Opening:** Tuesday, 10 April 2012, 6.30 pm (by invitation only)
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## **UKRAINE: Towns\_Territories\_Traces**

*The latest exhibition of the “Architektur im Ringturm” series of Vienna Insurance Group’s main shareholder spotlights the architecture of late 19th century of Lviv, Chernivtsi, Kiev, Kharkiv, Zakarpattia Oblast and Crimea. Over the years these cities and regions have developed their own distinctive architectural styles. The show explores a varied selection of designs of that epoch that have survived the passage of time. The properties on display also reflect the shifting tides of history which continue to shape Ukraine to this day. Present-day Ukraine has a burgeoning economy – the Vienna Insurance Group has four Group companies in the country and has declared Ukraine one of its core markets.*

### **On the cusp of the 20th century**

An architectural journey back in time to the end of the 19th century looking at Kiev, Lviv, Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia Oblast, Kharkiv and the Crimean peninsula. Ukraine is the largest country located entirely on the European continent. Despite its geographical proximity – the border is in fact closer to eastern Austria than the province of Vorarlberg – there is a disproportionate “psychological distance” between Ukraine and other western European centres. Little is known about the decisive role played by Ukraine in the creation of an independent east Slavic culture. Today, large swathes of what is now western Ukraine – known in the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria – offer up numerous architectural, cultural and, in some cases, direct family ties with Austria. Acclaimed architects Friedrich Kiesler and Oskar Laske were both born in Chernivitsi.

Any appraisal of Ukrainian modernism must be made against the backcloth of the political climate of the time. In Austria the concept of Secession was born of an ambitious younger generation’s desire to rebel against and demonstrate its rejection of what had gone before. In contrast, Ukraine’s Secessionist movement came to symbolise the young nation’s efforts to shape its own identity and find its true place in European culture following its rebirth. The focus on surviving buildings in selected territories and cities in Ukraine, each of which have their own, albeit highly distinctive style, offers a comprehensive insight into fin-de-siècle architectural realities.

### **Kiev – the undisputed capital**

The first documentary evidence of Kiev, the nation’s undisputed commercial and cultural capital, is the name “Kievan Rus”, which appeared in a document dating back to the year 839. In line with the importance of this city on the banks of the River Dnieper, two separate thematic areas are devoted to Kiev: the architectural modern age from the end of the 19th century to the early days of the 20th, and the reconstruction of the capital’s main street, Khreshchatyk, following the Second World War, including a look at the building competitions and other projects relating to its renaissance.

### **Nascent architectural movements in Galicia**

Liberal reforms towards the end of the 1860s gave the Kingdom of Galicia a considerable degree of autonomy as a crown land of the Habsburg Empire. The Kingdom’s capital Lviv, or Lemberg as it is known in German, was granted autonomy in 1870, a move that instantly put the city on a stronger economic footing.

Major investment in Lviv’s municipal utilities paved the way for new and improved urban infrastructure. The city started to grow. Streets, squares and public parks were laid out, and the transport network expanded rapidly. Administratively, the bureaucracy extended its reach, and the Galician capital soon established itself as a transport hub. Trade and commerce flourished, and cultural and academic life in the city made enormous advances. All of this was reflected in the pace of new building projects, with government offices, railway infrastructure, banks, trading houses, theatres and schools springing up all over the city. The population explosion brought with it a boom in residential housing construction. Considerable resources were channelled into financing these projects and Lviv’s construction industry grew exponentially.

From the late 19th to the early 20th century, the architecture department of the highly dynamic Lviv Polytechnic Society provided the setting for numerous architectural competitions, exhibitions and expert discussions. The subsequent reorganisation of the Imperial Technical Academy (later known as Lviv Polytechnic, Ukrainian: Lwiwska Politechnika) saw a radical improvement in the quality of architectural education in the city. These high academic standards, which led to a string of

architectural successes across the city, underscore the historical case for talking about a separate architectural school in Lviv at the end of the 19th century.

An analysis of the architectural evolution of Bukovina – including in the town of Chernivtsi – soon reveals distinct echoes of Viennese architectural style and the influence of Austro-Hungary's leading technical colleges and art institutions (Vienna Technical University, Academy of Applied Arts Vienna and Lviv Polytechnic). Various clues can be found in the use of certain aesthetic concepts, engineering approaches, cutting-edge contemporary building technologies and other technical advances.

When work began in 1864 on the construction of the official residence for the bishop of Bukovina and Dalmatia under Josef Hlavka, the main problem facing the project was the supply of building materials. Suitably qualified workers including project development engineers, bricklayers, plumbers, carpenters and specialists of all kinds were also needed. The municipal authorities, supported by Mayor Otto Ambros, approached the Austrian Emperor and the Austrian Ministry of Religion and Education for help on 19 December 1871. A formal application was submitted to open a technical college in Bukovina in the same mould as its peers in Vienna, Graz, Lviv and Prague.

### **A unique cultural landscape**

Zakarpattia exhibits a number of culturally unique phenomena, many of which have also found their way into the local building vernacular. Nowhere else have the five major linguistic groups – Slavic, Romance, Germanic, Finno-Ugric and Semitic – coexisted in such a relatively small geographical area for such a long time. The groups were left to develop alongside one another in a seemingly forgotten stretch of land without a port or major city for miles – a place where people gathered on their way to seeking their fortunes elsewhere. This region is commonly referred to as Carpathian Ukraine or Transcarpathia, the eternal province for the towns and “cities” that call it home and – for the duration of this exhibition at least – the heart of Europe. Traces of all its constituent parts have been preserved, and live on to this day. The interwar period – in which Carpathian Ukraine was turned into a pseudo-colony by the young Czechoslovakian state and a breeding ground for some of the best avant garde architects – is of particular interest.

Projects for a New Country explores the role played by Kharkiv in the nation's architectural history in the 1930s. After the October Revolution and the first Five Year plans, this city in north-eastern Ukraine witnessed the construction of gigantic, monumental buildings whose appeal endures to this day from both an architectural and urban planning perspective. Kharkiv's constructivist Derzhprom or Gosprom building was the first “skyscraper” to be built in the Soviet Union.

The Crimean peninsula – an autonomous republic within Ukraine – stands out for its unique climatic conditions and geography. The first major wave of building activity on the peninsula in the late 19th and early 20th century saw the addition of various therapeutic facilities which were designed to make the most of the region's natural resources. Rather than being at odds with the landscape, the buildings were harmoniously embedded in the natural surroundings, either cut into challenging terrain or built around geographical features. Inside, the buildings are dynamic, open, light and – typically for modern architecture – arranged to harness natural light to the full. Recent works, often realised on the smallest conceivable scale, reveal a clear tendency among young Ukrainian architects: with minimal resources and an appreciation of the room for manoeuvre granted by the current statutory framework, they are striking out on an independent path.

### **Exhibition**

Grouped according to eight different thematic focuses, the exhibition visualises the featured buildings on large-format display boards, alongside exhibits from public and private collections which have never been put on show before. Introductory texts present the different focuses in their political and architectural contexts. Historic and modern maps provide geographical orientation. An architectural model of the Gosprom building in Kharkiv gives a feel for the sheer scale of this monumental residential project. A slide show shares additional images and plans. In a second projection room, short films and videos (historic and contemporary) trigger associations between everyday life, culture and architecture against the canvas of Ukraine.

**Catalogue**

Architektur im Ringturm XXVIII. UKRAINE: Towns\_Territories\_Traces Published by Adolph Stiller with contributions by Ihor Khilko, Marjan Mudryj, Jan Sapak, Alla Sergejeva, Maria Sivers, Luka Skansi and Ihor Zhuk; approx. 156 pages including numerous photographs and images.

**Price**

EUR 25; students, schoolchildren, military and civilian service, senior citizens (with valid ID): EUR 15