

TIC BRNO



ARCHITECTURE:

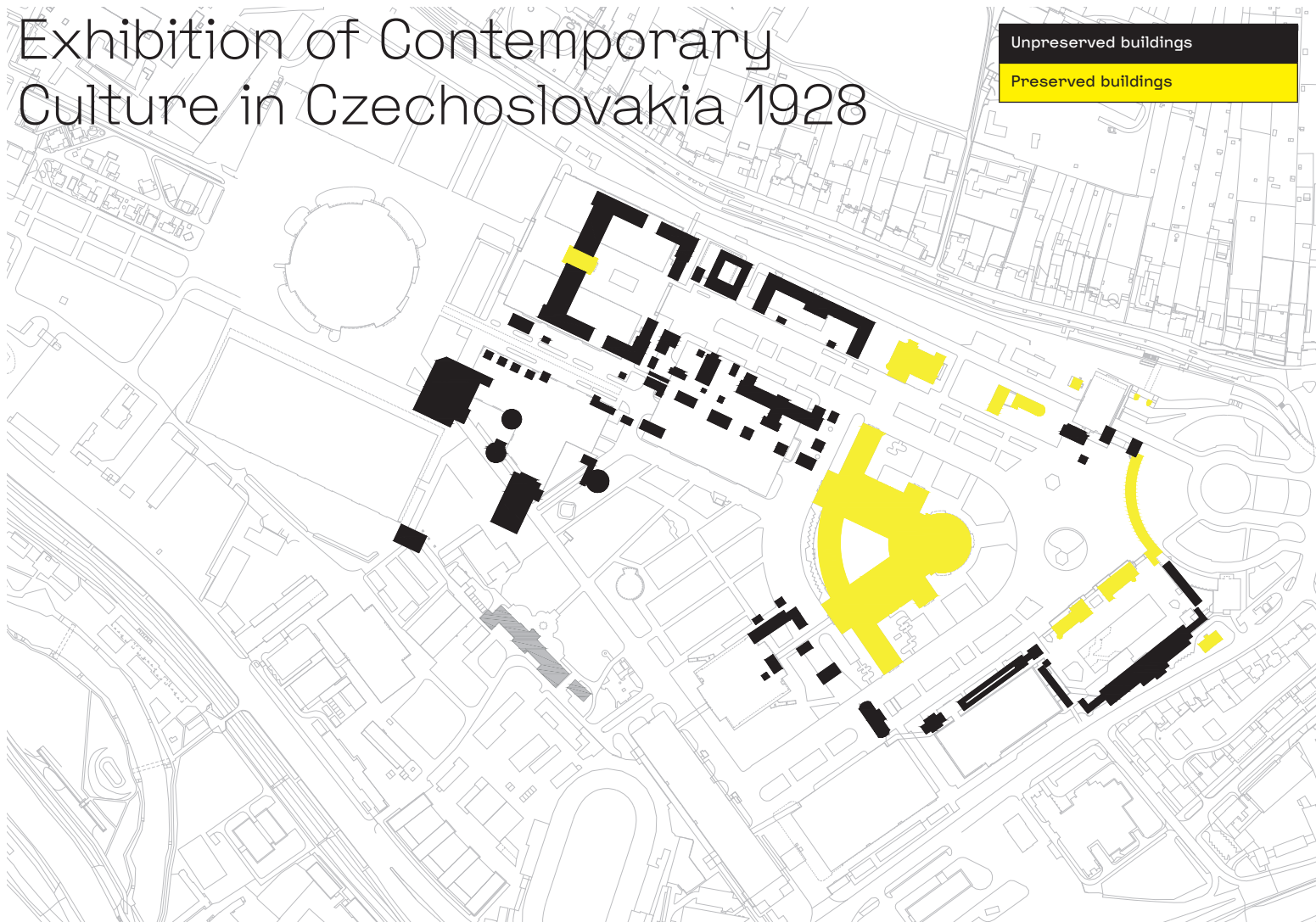
Brno Exhibition Centre



Exhibition of Contemporary Culture in Czechoslovakia 1928

Unpreserved buildings

Preserved buildings



Introduction



The present form of the Brno Exhibition Centre is the result of the joint efforts of several generations of builders, politicians, traders, architects, and artists. It was built in the 1920s for the Exhibition of Contemporary Culture in Czechoslovakia. The large exhibition area with a modern functionalist spirit was one of the greatest successes of Brno's interwar representatives. Its importance for Brno only became fully clear many years later when it enabled the city in the mid-1950s to successfully establish itself on the international trade fair scene. To hold engineering fairs, it was necessary to

expand the exhibition centre and so more architectural gems were built in Pisárky Valley. The Brno exhibition area became a national showcase and trade fairs formed an integral part of life in the city. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the next phase of building at the exhibition centre determined its current form. Today, trade fairs and other events are held mostly in the modern halls, but the historical buildings and natural surroundings give the Brno Exhibition Centre its distinctive character, setting it apart from other European exhibition areas.

Establishment of the Exhibition Centre

Brno was one of the industrial centres of the Austrian Empire at the end of the 19th century, and following the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 the city gained importance as one of the new country's administrative centres. Representatives of industry and trade had long striven to establish a permanent exhibition centre, and the decision in 1923 to hold an exhibition in Brno for the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Czechoslovakia gave them an opportunity to gain support.

City leaders purchased land in Pisárky from the entrepreneur Viktor Bauer and announced an architectural competition, which was won by a design from the Prague architect Josef Kalous. He designed a grand round entrance area from which two broad promenades lined by individual halls ran in parallel to the streets bordering the exhibition area. The original concept included the two

most important buildings: The Palace of Industry and Commerce (now Hall A) with a monumental rotunda located directly opposite the entrance and the Hall of Brno Sample Markets (now Hall G) with an observation tower at the end of the axis parallel to Hlinky Street.

Implementation of the entire area and coordination of work was later entrusted to the architect Emil Králík, who also designed an arc-shaped administrative building and a cinema café, later changed to a theatre. The Palace of Industry and Commerce was built under Jaroslav Valenta. The architect Bohumil Čermák took on the plans for the Hall of Brno Sample Markets and gave the observation tower a unique suspended glass facade, one of the first such constructions in Europe. Bohuslav Fuchs designed the Hall of Brno with its characteristic grey siding and iconic reinforced concrete spiral staircase. Right

next to this, Vlastislav Chroust designed in the same spirit the Hall of Moravia with facades dominated by large circular windows.

Most of the other halls were also designed in a functionalist style using modern construction methods. Construction was therefore completed very quickly and the entire area was finished in only 17 months (work began in December 1926). The work included building new roads, planting four rows of trees along the main alleys, and installing celebratory electrical lighting.

The Exhibition of Contemporary Culture in Czechoslovakia opened on 26 May 1928. While it was open, until September of that year, it received more than 2.6 million visitors. Throughout this period, the exhibition area itself was greatly admired and appreciated, with the press highlighting it as an excellent example of modern architecture and a unified style.



Preserved Halls from 1928

PALACE OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE (NOW HALL A)

Josef Kalous, Jaroslav Valenta

Renovations in 1980
(Ivan Ruller, Zdeněk Müller,
Petr Uhlíř, Viktor Rudiš)

During renovations, both of the hall's wings were connected to an administrative annex and the entrance rotunda was converted into a congress centre with a circular auditorium.

HALL OF BRNO SAMPLE MARKETS (NOW HALL G)

Bohumil Čermák

Renovations during 1957 and 1958
(Josef Luc, Vítězslav Unzeitig)
Renovations in 1996
(Viktor Rudiš, Martin Rudiš)

During renovations, the worn-down side wings were replaced by the large halls G1 and G2 while the original tower with a café on the first floor was preserved.

EXHIBITION OFFICE CENTRE (now known as Starý rohlík [Old Roll])

Emil Králík

The building is supported by columns and its open ground floor originally enabled many visitors to enter the

exhibition centre at once. The spaces between the columns were gradually closed and the entrance narrowed to its present form.

HALL OF THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

Josef Gočár

The original statues in three niches on the facade have not been preserved. In 1958, the hall was connected to the neighbouring Hall of the School of Applied Arts through a utilitarian joining structure.

HALL OF THE SCHOOL OF APPLIED ARTS

Pavel Janák

The facade was originally dominated by a combination of bare brick and reinforced concrete support columns with white plaster. In 1958, the hall was carelessly connected with the neighbouring Hall of the Academy of Fine Arts. During this process, the facades of the two halls were unified through plaster, completely covering the bare brick.

CINEMA CAFÉ

Emil Králík

The cinema with a capacity of more than 800 was adapted to work also as a theatre, and so the building is today marked as a theatre. During post-war

renovations, the café's outdoor terraces and the exterior spiral staircase were closed off and connected to the interior. The building has been inaccessible since the late 1990s and is being considered for renovation.

HALL OF BRNO Bohuslav Fuchs + HALL OF MORAVIA Vlastislav Chroust

The halls of Brno and Moravia originally had open ground floors. In 1958, ground-level and basement spaces were added.

SAMPLE FAMILY HOUSE

Oldřich Starý

This building was made as an example of modern economic construction. It is made of a reinforced concrete frame-work and curtain walls.

RESIDENTIAL HOUSE OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK ARTS AND CRAFTS ASSOCIATION

Josef Havlíček

This sample house for rent was presented at the exhibition centre completely furnished. In the 1970s, it was renovated and adjusted to fit administrative use.

ELECTRIC TRAM STATION

Bohuslav Fuchs

The original daring solution to mass transit to and from the exhibition centre ceased to make sense when in 1939 an order from the German occupiers made all trams switch from the left side of the street to the right.

CHATEAU

Unknown architect,
1st third of the 19th century

The oldest building at the exhibition centre originally housed the family of Viktor von Bauer. Adolf Loos contributed to renovating and furnishing the interior. Part of the furnishings from the salon and bedroom from the first floor has been preserved.

Hall A



This building, which originally bore the proud name Palace of Industry and Commerce, was built based on plans by architect Josef Kalous under the professor of Brno engineering Jaroslav Valenta, who changed the original plan for a semi-circular reinforced concrete framework into parabolic vaults, giving the building the lightness and elegance for which it is admired to this day.

Construction of the building so admired and respected by visitors and experts took what would today be an unbelievably short time – according to sources from the time, the work took only 230 days. The stone for the reinforced concrete was dug up directly within the future exhibition centre,

making the work considerably faster and cheaper. The still visible result of this digging is a pond with an added park behind the halls of Brno and Moravia.

In accordance with the requirements of the time for an exhibition space, the hall was perfectly illuminated by daylight through sizeable glass surfaces. According to Valenta's notes, 9 000 m² of glass was used. The use of skylights with overlapping glass panes enabled hot air to escape during hot summer days.

Half a century later – at the turn of the 1970s to the 1980s – the hall was adjusted to operate all year round. The building was connected to a newly built network of underground collectors and equipped with pipes in shafts for exhibitions.



The installation of an air heating system enabled the original glass skylights to be replaced with polycarbonate. During the renovations, a conference room with a capacity of 450 was added to the rotunda and the exhibition hall was enlarged with upstairs galleries to reach the current total of 11 450 m². The building's two wings were connected on the western side through an arc-shaped five-storey administrative space. At the end of the 1990s, a system of skywalks connecting halls A, B, C, D, and E into a single complex was finished. A gallery in Hall A was connected to the first floor in Hall C. All of the preserved buildings from 1928 together with several important more recent buildings are now subject to heritage conservation.

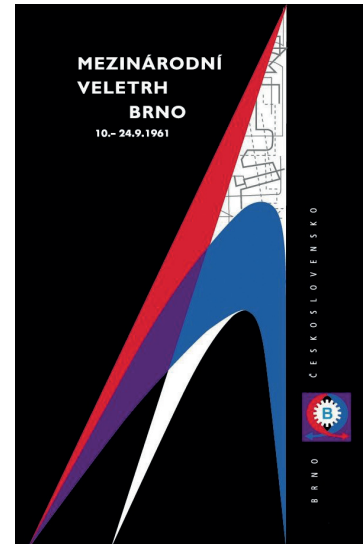
In addition to individual buildings, heritage conservation covers the urban composition of the area and greenery, namely the rows of trees on the main alleys. There are also several statues within the exhibition centre. The most well-known is undoubtedly the allegorical *Nový věk* (New Age) on a high pedestal in the entrance area. This work by Vincenc Makovský was transferred to Brno from the Brussels World's Fair in 1958, where it won a Grand Prix. During the Exhibition of Contemporary Culture in Czechoslovakia in 1928, a statue of President Masaryk by Otakar Španiel was installed in the rotunda. Only photos from the time remain; its fate is unknown.

Exhibitions' Effect on the City in the 1920s

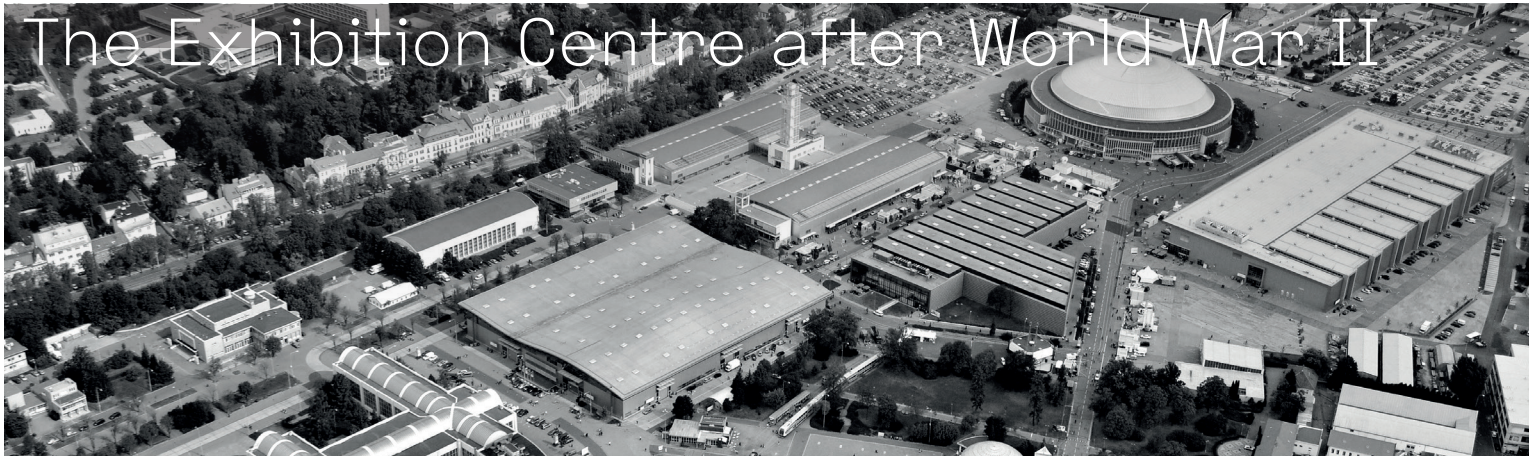
The Exhibition of Contemporary Culture in Czechoslovakia in 1928 included the Nový dům (New House) estate of sample family houses, inspired by the exhibition on Die Wohnung (Housing) in Stuttgart. In Žabovřesky beneath Wilsonův les (Wilson Forest), 16 houses were built based on plans by renowned and just-beginning architects (Bohuslav Fuchs, Arnošt Wiesner, Jiří Kroha, and others). The entire project was the initiative of the enlightened Uherka-Ruller construction company,

which financed construction and then offered the houses for public sale.

For exhibition visitors who came to Brno from all corners of the country, the City Accommodation Office was built on Bašty Street by the main train station based on plans by Oskar Poříška. For Brno residents, the curved facade of the building, which has been used by the Čedok travel agency for many years, is an indispensable part of the area in front of the station.



The Exhibition Centre after World War II



By the end of the war, the exhibition centre was considerably damaged by air raids and the fight for liberation. After its renovation and the first post-war exhibitions, the regime changed and the exhibition centre was designated to be changed into a park for culture and relaxation for workers. Not long after, however, it became clear that even in a planned economy presentations of industrial products were irreplaceable, and so the large Exhibition of Czechoslovak Engineering was held at the Brno Exhibition Centre in 1955. The extraordinary success of this exhibition led to a new phase of building and expansion at the exhibition centre. As the basis of construction, at the Brno Stavoprojekt (the building design authority) a new master development plan for the centre was created (by Zdeněk Denk, Zdeněk Pospíšil, Zdeněk Alexa, Milan Steinhäuser, and others). Based on this

plan, first halls F and H (Evžen Šteflíček, 1956–1957) were built. From 1958, the International Engineering Fair was held annually in Brno and it became necessary to continue expanding exhibition capacity. Hall B (Zdeněk Alexa and Antonín Nutz) for the heaviest exhibits was built for the fair in 1958. These exhibits were transported to the fair by a rail siding leading directly to the hall and then placed in the exhibition space with a gantry crane. During 1959 and 1960, halls C and Z were added and the main entrance received a tall office centre, elegantly connected to the existing entrance building by an arc-shaped base. The main organizational principal which enriched the urbanism of the exhibition grounds during this phase was a third axis leading from the fourth gate to the new dominant feature in the western section – Hall Z.

Over the next several years, a number of new halls were gradually added, some of which remain today, while others were later replaced by even newer buildings. It's worth mentioning Hall D (Zdeněk Denk, 1967–1975) with progressive ceiling latticework designed by Radúz Russ. From 2012 to 2014, the hall underwent complete reconstruction based on plans from the K4 studio (Jan Lacina, Zdena Němcová, Vladimír Pácek) and now houses the VIDA! Science Centre.

In addition to its large halls, the exhibition centre includes many small halls. These were often built by companies which participated in the fairs every year. A preserved example of this specific architectural form is the current Hall M (from 1978) in the middle of the exhibition centre. This small two-storey hall with a distinctive steel framework originally served the German company Vöest-Alpine.

Not far from Hall M is another interesting small building – the circular Hall Y (from 1957) with a dome roof and a simple glass facade. It's a smaller model of Hall Z, which before the expansion of halls C and Z served as a testing prototype of the unique steel roof.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the character of the exhibitions gradually changed. The exhibition halls began to be used intensively and various trade fairs were held throughout the year. Instead of expanding the constructed area, the exhibition centre's management therefore focused during this period on improving the existing exhibition spaces, and so older halls were progressively adjusted to operate year round. Various infrastructure buildings were added to the exhibition centre, including a press centre, the fair offices, and the Technical House with conference rooms.

Exhibitions' Effect on the City in the 1960s

When it began, the International Engineering Fair lasted several weeks. The presence of thousands of exhibition visitors created a need to adjust the city's infrastructure. In the 1960s, the entire space in front of the exhibition centre towards Mendel Square (Mendlovo náměstí) was changed, Veletržní Street was made into a wide boulevard lined with tall houses, and the tram line was transferred to independent tracks, including a unique covered

bridge with a prestressed reinforced concrete framework known as Karakas (after Caracas; Juránek and Zvěřina, 1965). For demanding international visitors, the International (Arnošt Krejza and Miloš Kramoliš, 1957–1962) and Continental (Zdeněk Řihák, Vladimír Kovařík, and Alois Semela, 1961–1964) hotels were built – both excelling in their progressive architectural designs and the high artistic quality of their interiors.

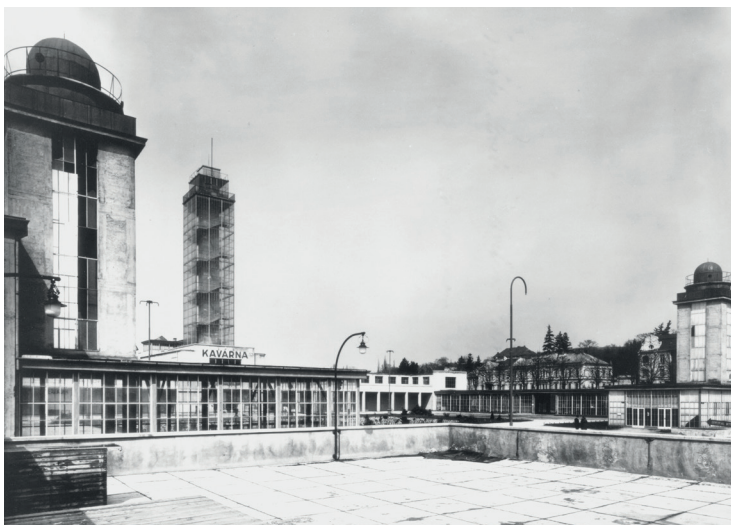
Office Centre

The 12-storey office centre sits at the end of the arc-shaped base smoothly connected to the historical entrance building by Emil Králík. It was built during 1958 and 1960 based on plans by Miroslav Spurný and Antonín Ševčík and after completion served as the headquarters of Veletržní Brno, which runs the exhibition centre. The ground and first floors have spaces for visitors and exhibitors, including a conference room and a cinema. The top floor has an observation terrace. During the 1990s, the

building underwent renovations during which the facade was changed and a unique staircase was added.

The original interior furnishings based on the design of Antonín Ševčík were originally made in workshops right at the exhibition centre. The building still has elements of the original interior furnishings and decorations, such as the lighting and spiral staircase in the entrance hall and the mosaic on the cinema lobby's wall by Oldřich Vašica.





Hall C

This three-storey hall was built during 1958 and 1959 based on plans by Miloš Matiovský and Zdeněk Valenta. It was primarily designed for presenting consumer goods, as can be seen in the choice of construction technique. It is made of a reinforced concrete framework

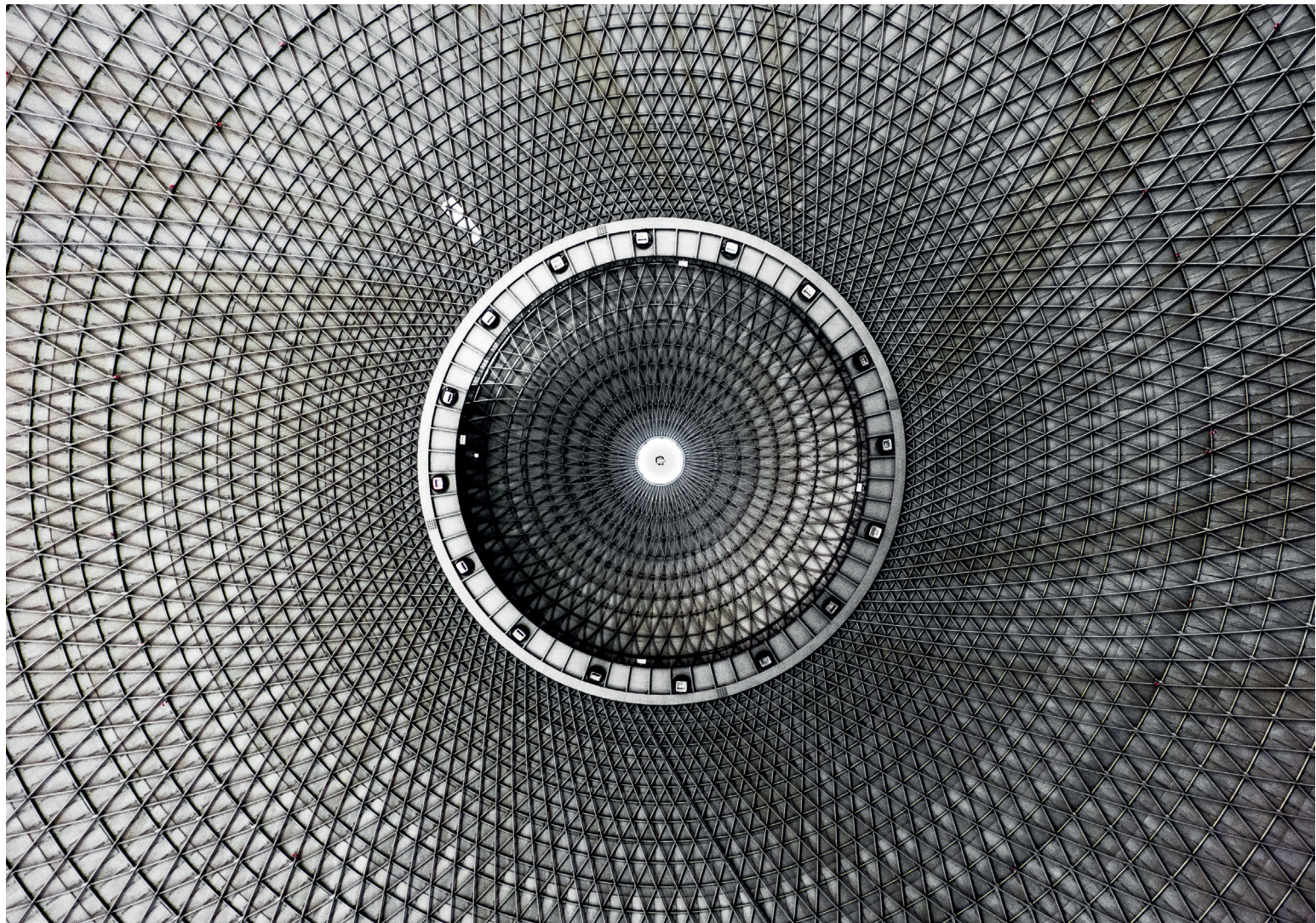
in a Zlin style, which results in an interior with a characteristic coffered ceiling and a dense network of round columns. The central atrium is covered in an elegant dome, designed by – just as the more well-known Hall Z – Ferdinand Lederer.



Hall Z

Together with Hall A and the tower on Hall G, Hall Z is one of the icons of the Brno Exhibition Centre. It was built during 1958 and 1959, and after completion its spectacular dome dominated the western part of the centre. The roof of spiral pipes was made based on plans by Ferdinand Lederer. The completely assembled steel construction spanning

more than 90 m² was placed on the reinforced concrete perimeter ring using four cranes. The hall has a diameter of 120 m, and the vertical clearance under the centre of the dome is 42 m. The architectural plans were made by the collective of Zdeněk Denk, Zdeněk Pospíšil, Milan Steinhauser and Zdeněk Alexa.



From 1989 to the Present



The fall of the Iron Curtain and the transformation of the economy marked the start of a new phase in the exhibition centre's history. In 1991, work was completed on Hall E (Luděk Štefek, Ivan Ruller, Zdeněk Müller, Tomáš Valent, Luděk Bělohlávek), the mirror facade of which represents a gentle end to the shorter of the two historical exhibition promenades. Next, the halls were gradually connected through a system of skywalks. The designers of these walkways, Miroslav and Dagmar Velehradští, gave them a distinctive appearance with spirals winding around the outside. From 1994 to

2000, all of the older halls in the exhibition centre's eastern section were connected into a single complex.

The transformation of the exhibition centre's western section into a modern exhibition area began with renovations of Hall G in 1996. The hall's two originally small side wings had to be torn down due to their terrible condition, and in their place two large-capacity halls were built. This idea from the architects Zdeněk Müller and Jaromír Stříbrný represented a unique method of connecting the historical urban

concept with the intention to build new exhibition halls in an orthogonal grid with an emphasis on efficiency. The hall was then excellently renovated by the architects Viktor Rudiš, Martin Rudiš, and Zdeňka Vydrová. After Veletrhy Brno became part of the international Messe Düsseldorf trade fair company, halls V (Jaroslav Dokoupil, 2000), F (Martin Rudiš and Viktor Rudiš, 2003), and P (Jaroslav Dokoupil, 2009) were completed in less than a decade. The total exhibition space was now almost double what it had been at the end

of the 1980s. After Hall P was finished, the exhibition centre had a total of 110 900 m² of covered exhibition space and 81 000 m² of outdoor space. In 2016, the exhibition centre became fully owned by the city of Brno, which declared its interest in further developing exhibitions in the city. The Brno Exhibition Centre annually hosts more than 20 international fairs, dozens of national exhibitions, and many smaller events which together attract around 700 000 visitors.

GO TO BRNO.cz


 BVV
 Veletřhy
 Brno

You can visit the Brno Exhibition Centre with a trained guide. Guided tours include looks inside several halls. You can find more information and specific dates at www.bvv.cz/exkurze or www.autenticke-prohlidky-brno.cz.

TIC BRNO offers unique souvenirs with themes from the Brno Exhibition Centre. You can buy them at the tourist information centre on Panenská street or in the e-shop www.darkyzbrna.cz.



Candleholder BVV, Pavilion A

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Exhibition centre today

