

Theophil Hansen's Spaces for Living and Working

Summary

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The 120th anniversary of Theophil Hansen's death and the upcoming 200th anniversary of his birth (*1813 in Copenhagen, + 1891 in Vienna) provide occasions for the Austrian Architects Association to illuminate the milieu in which this important architect practiced, his clients' cultural aspirations, and his significance as one of the defining architects of Vienna's Ring Street era.

Theophil Hansen was born in Copenhagen on July 7, 1813; he received his degree in 1836 at the Royal Building Academy under the tutelage of Professor Gustav Hetsch, and subsequently travelled to Greece by way of Germany and Italy. His brother Hans Christian Hansen (1803–1883), who researched the Acropolis, already resided there. At just twenty-seven years of age, Theophil Hansen became a professor; he taught from 1840 to 1843 at the Polytechnic School in Athens. His first buildings were realized there beginning in 1842.

In 1846, Ludwig von Förster summoned him to his atelier in Vienna; shortly thereafter Hansen married his daughter. Their work together lasted until 1852, and several important buildings resulted from it. These include the (Evangelical) Gustav Adolf Church on Gumpendorferstraße (1846), the Arsenal in Vienna's third district, and the Greek Orthodox Church on Fleischmarkt (1858). With the design for the Heinrichhof (1861–63, demolished 1954) for the brick manufacturer Heinrich von Drasche-Wartinberg, located directly across the Ring Street from the State Opera, Hansen established the *Zins-Palais* typology – with a commercial zone on the ground floor, a stately apartment for the landlord, and less elaborate apartments for the tenants. His clients were members of the rising neo-liberal bourgeoisie; they wanted to showcase their newly acquired self-assurance and wealth in the city's best locations on the newly laid out Ring Street.

Consequently, Hansen authored important buildings on the Ring Street – in addition to the Heinrichhof, he designed Todesco Palace (1861); Epstein Palace (1868) for the banker Gustav R. von Epstein, for which Otto Wagner was project manager; Ephrussi Palace (1872/73); the Stock Exchange (1871); and the Academy of Fine Arts (1871). Hansen was a member of the latter beginning 1848; he also taught perspective to students of painting there. Twenty years later he succeeded Eduard van der Nüll as chair of a master class at the Academy; he remained there until 1884. In the meantime he again had commissions in Greece, as well as in Denmark, Slovakia, the province Lower Austria and on Traunsee (Lake Traun). His crowning achievement, however, is the Austrian Parliament in Vienna, erected from 1873 to 1883.

The Austrian Architects Association (Zentralvereinigung der Architekten Österreichs – ZV) was established in 1907. It originally served as a professional association for architects; at present it advocates the cultural role of architecture. It also fosters the architectural and urban planning discourse and provides impulses for the development of the professional profile. What causes an

organisation that came into existence sixteen years after Hansen's death to pay homage to him today?

Many of Hansen's buildings – including the villas in Vienna and elsewhere, the palaces in Vienna's historic centre, and his crowning achievement, the Austrian Parliament – have just been or will soon be refurbished and adapted. Through these interventions, Hansen's oeuvre is brought to the attention of the general public; his legacy hinges on the quality of these adaptations.

The political debate going on within the building revolves primarily around the necessary repairs and the anticipated costs. The Austrian Architects Association seeks to illuminate this discussion, spark ideas on a contemporary-minded renovation of the building, and contribute to the appreciation of Hansen's body of work. Our organisation pays tribute to this architect's most consequential work not only because in 1956 its honorary president Architect Eugen Wörle – with his partner Architect Max Fellerer – was responsible for the architectural reconstruction of the building following the Second World War. The current aim is to gear the Austrian Parliament, a building that belongs to our cultural heritage, to the requirements of a new millennium. As an architectural and spatial endeavour, this fascinating – and by all means nuanced – task will engage architects, civil engineers and numerous experts from other disciplines. Let's see to it that Europe's finest talents are invited to make proposals.

This study consists of two texts that contain fundamental thoughts on Hansen's oeuvre:

An essay by Christian Kühn, architecture critic and professor at the Department of Building Sciences at the Vienna University of Technology, addresses Hansen's historical references, his and other architects' love of classical antiquity, the modernity of his designs, and the notion of progress in architecture.

Mara Reissberger, historian and cultural scientist, explores both the *Zins-Palais*, a typology that defined Vienna's centre during Hansen's time, and his thoughts on the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.