

**Metropolis, Place, Garden**

By Nika Grabar

It is impossible to imagine Plečnik's architecture without trees, textures, materials, sights, and columns, or without Greece, Rome, and Egypt. However, Plečnik focused more, just like every architect, on the future than on the past. In order to think (out) his works, he needed to imagine the world they would co-create, and which events would take place among their walls. Nonetheless, the thought of the future in architecture is, alongside its materiality, one of the crucial ingredients, which allows us to discuss its symbolic space.

The exhibition, with which we are commemorating the 150th anniversary of the architect’s birth, presents Plečnik’s realised and unrealised projects, notes, sketches, plans, models, and sculptures. Some of them, at least. With its selection of materials, it wants to map out Plečnik’s conceived space, created during a time of radical political changes, within the frame of three metaphors – metropolis, place, garden. Concepts that are, to a degree, connected with Vienna, Prague, and Ljubljana, but not fully. If we were to limit Plečnik’s work to the physical space of cities, we would miss his thought, which constantly interlaced all three experiences (as well as many others) within his superlative architecture.

The metropolis, Vienna, connected the creation of architectural space with modernisation, mechanisation, speculation, new technologies, and the new phantasms of the future. The processes of designing space were similar in Prague and Ljubljana, but public space needed to also be connected with the past, for the new history to become part of the collective experience of the city. Plečnik created places and attached the city’s tissue to them, with greenery and natural environments that must not be overlooked as cities also symbolised areas of cultivated surfaces for Plečnik. He understood trees and vegetation within the context of topographic features and skilfully connected them with architecture. The latter is highlighted in the last part of the exhibition, with the metaphor of the garden.

Plečnik continued to improve his alertness and sensibility of the manifold ways of living through the concepts he had developed in Vienna and later attached them to the city’s public space. Numerous projects that remain unrealised, still testify today in his urban design plans of what a city could become. We can offer two thoughts to consider from this. Firstly, if he, as an architect, never created this conceived space, although only on paper, individual works or fragments, from which we can detect the space’s outlines, would not be realised. Secondly, these fragments would not be realised, if the conceived space of Plečnik did not belong to the world of ideas that people shared at that time and still share today, to a certain degree.

Plečnik saw cultivating a city with architecture as the cultivation of memory, a thought of the future and the natural environment. His creativity and knowledge manifested through architecture so that the people living in that world could identify themselves. They could understand and accept the works, but his plans still show us who we can become. With this, Plečnik’s architectural thought is still opening prospects and possibilities for the creation of new communities, and it will continue to open them for the future worlds.



**Plečnik and Contemporaneity: Glossary**

By Maja Vardjan

How to think, interpret, and live Plečnik today?

Over time, Plečnik’s work has been discussed in various concepts and different vocabularies, each created by its era’s cultural, social, and political contexts as well as the subjective understanding of the researchers and authors. This Glossary, an independent exhibition project, is based on a reflection regarding the meaning of Plečnik’s creations for the present times. Concepts and ideas suggested by contemporary artists, architects, designers, and theoreticians, establish a new lexical fond for the actualisation and understanding of Plečnik in the context of today. Plečnik’s work and approaches were not processed as part of history but rather as an active and provocative source of new ideas, projects, and visions.

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