



The Old Exhibition Building

Opava



Guide



Slezské
zemské
muzeum



Interior of the Old Exhibition Building in 1895

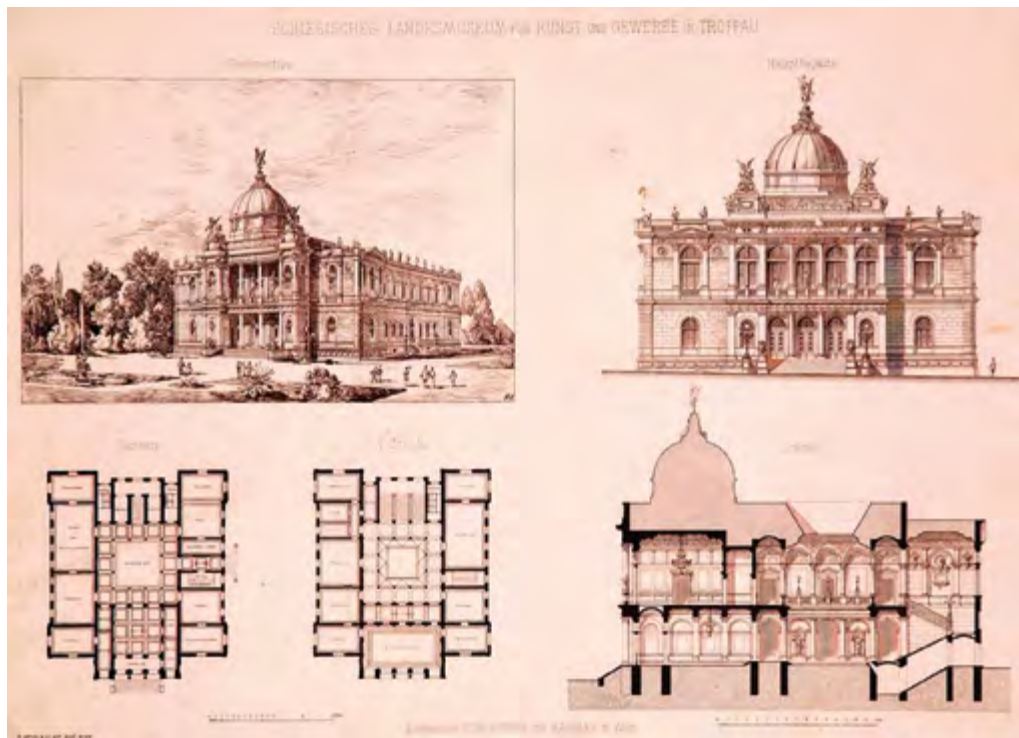
The Old Exhibition Building

The Silesian Museum is a gate to Silesia, with a scope extending from both animate and inanimate objects to prehistory, history and art history, primarily with regard to the history of Silesia, as well as north and northwest Moravia. The Silesian Museum is a contributory organisation of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. It is the oldest public museum on the territory of the current Czech Republic, with a history that stretches back to 1814. With its 2,400,000 exhibition items, it is, at the same time, the third biggest museum in the country.

The Old Exhibition Building is the museum's 'showroom', giving an overview of practically all subjects of importance to Silesia and the museum. Apart from being key to knowing the region and understanding the deeper relationships between the various themes, it also offers a taste of the best that Silesia has to offer.



Exterior of the Old Exhibition Building in 1895



Maps of the Old Exhibition Building

History

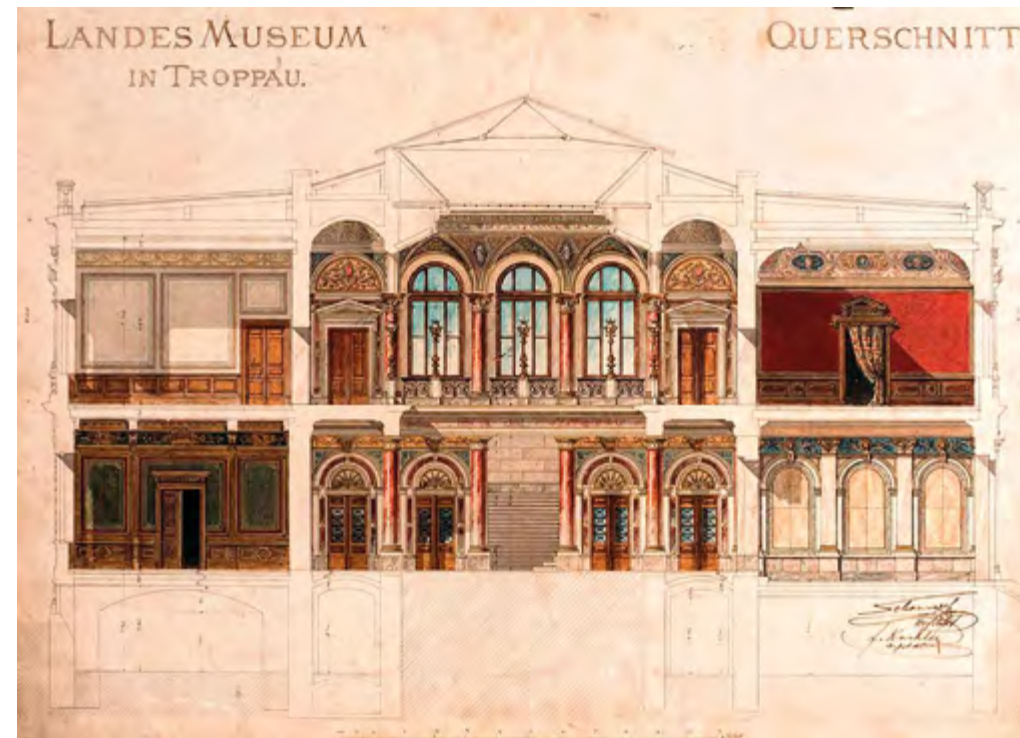
The Old Exhibition Building is one of the six exhibition premises of the Silesian Museum. It is a standalone Neo-Renaissance building, built to house the Emperor Franz Joseph Museum of Art and Crafts, founded in Opava in 1882 on the initiative of the Chamber of Commerce and Crafts, which also financed the building of the structure. The museum is built on land donated by the Prince von Liechtenstein.

The building was constructed according to a nearly square-shaped design by the Viennese architects Johann Scheiringer and Franz Kachler between 1893-95. The *Genius* and *Pegasus* statues decorating the cupola were created by the Viennese sculptor Theodor Friedel. The side facade faces Komenského street and the richly decorated frontal facade faces the municipal park. The statues decorating the frontal facade, allegorical figures representing Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, are the work of the Viennese sculptor Karl Schwerzek.

This monumental, Neo-Renaissance building was seriously damaged in air raids in the spring of 1945. The subsequent renovation process took ten years and resulted in a more modern interior design, while respecting the facade and original layout of the museum.

The year 1955 saw the opening of the first post-war exhibition in the reconstructed museum. This exhibition documented the then-current trend to give the presentation of the history of Silesia a contemporary slant. The form and concept of the second post-war exhibition, which opened in 1981, was also influenced by ideology. Called *The Development of Nature and Society in the North Moravia Region*, it addressed scientific, as well as social, issues. These themes were presented in separate sections of the exhibition, determined by the configuration of the building. In 1985 the Old Exhibition Building was declared a national heritage building.

Relatively soon after the exhibition opened to the public, the building was closed due to the engineering



Maps of the Old Exhibition Building

challenge of building a cupola in an urban area. Following the completion of the cupola, part of the former Liechtenstein Hall (i.e. the area that opened into the cupola) was refitted. Further alterations were also made to the park-facing side, where the cabin of a Tatra lorry was put on display and an educational centre was constructed. However, this part of the museum, as well as those connected to it, was removed soon afterwards – soon after the Velvet Revolution in November 1989.

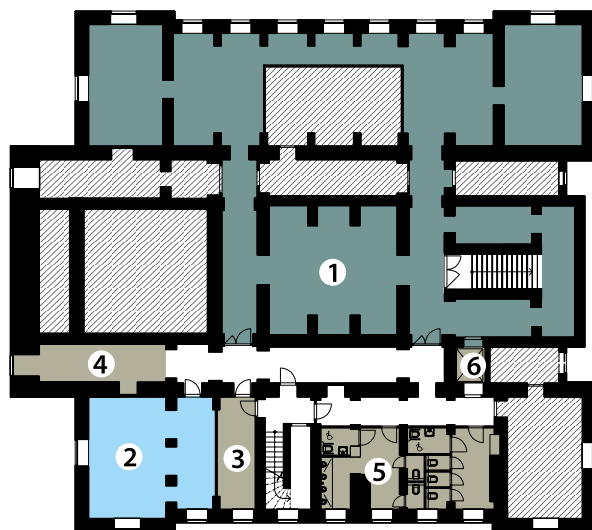
Post-Velvet Revolution changes affected the opposite part of the first floor, too, where the passageway between the exhibition halls, formed through the installation of a linking bridge across the side stairwell, was closed off. These changes were necessitated by, amongst other things, the need to repair the roof due to the leakage of rainwater into the structure. This led to the removal of the permanent archaeology and history exhibitions. The ground floor of the building repeatedly suffered from technical problems.

This brief description of the structure shows that it was in a parlous state long before 2010. Apart from structural problems, the exhibition itself suffered from short-termism and lack of a clear vision, with issues being dealt with on a case-by-case basis (e.g. the 'Opava' section of the *From Gothic to Modern* (1999) became an unplanned 'permanent exhibition', which was not removed until just before the start of refurbishment work in 2010). The necessity for a complex solution for the Old Exhibition Building was, therefore, a result of the physical condition of the building, operational and technical shortcomings and the long-term absence of the conceptual use of the building for exhibitions to reflect current state of research into the history and culture of Czech Silesia, together with a knowledge of current trends in museum presentation, while respecting the experience of previous generations of Silesian Museum employees.

The refurbished building, with its new exhibition *Silesia*, opened to the public in May 2012.

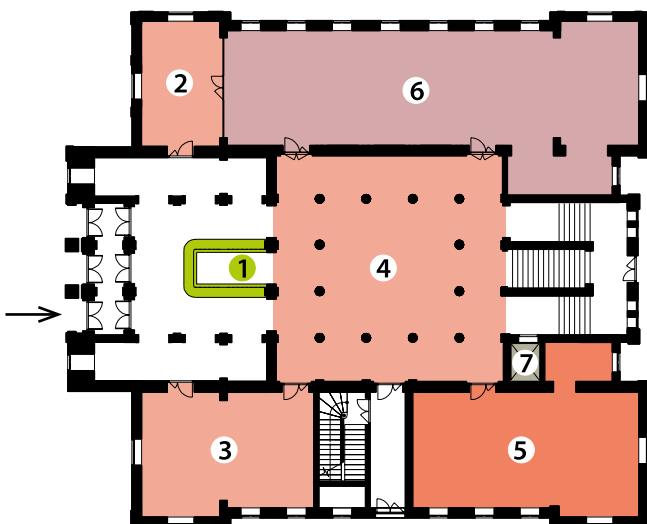
SILESIA EXHIBITION

The *Silesia* exhibition takes up all three floors of the Old Exhibition Building of the Silesian Museum.



Ground floor: Nature in Silesia

- 1 exhibition „Nature in Silesia“
- 2 education room
- 3 room for parents with children
- 4 room for bikes and baby-carriages
- 5 WC ♿
- 6 lift

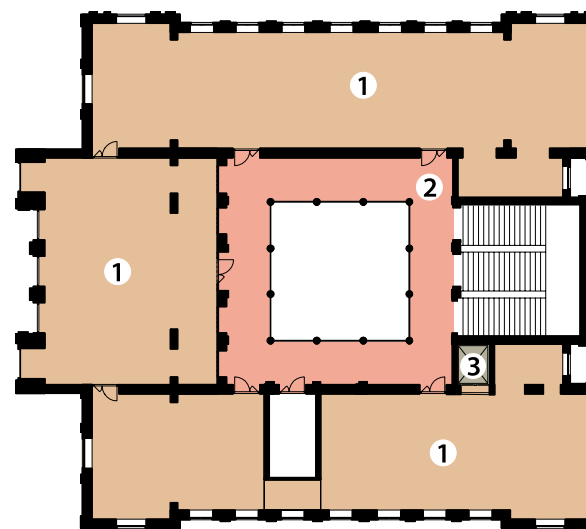


1st floor: On the Wings of Thought

- 1 ticket office
- 2 children museum
- 3 multifunctional room
- 4 hall
- 5 temporary exhibition room
- 6 exhibition „On the Wings of Thought“
- 7 lift

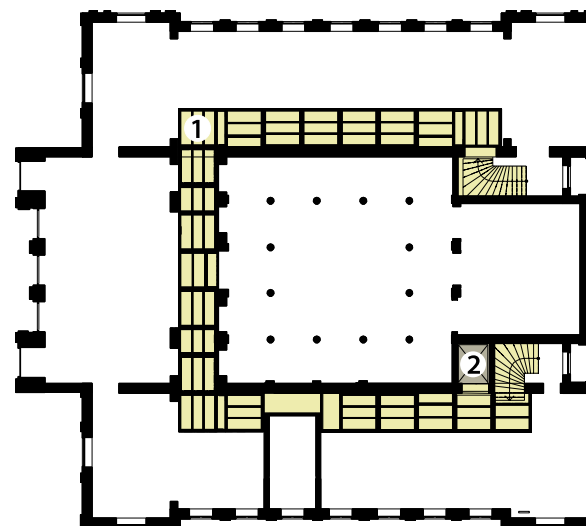
The main distinguishing feature of the *Silesia* exhibition, both as a whole and in its individual sections, is its dynamism. In contrast to the static, conservative concept previously applied, the chosen approach allows the Museum to constantly maintain its attraction to visitors through the highly flexible variation of individual exhibits or entire sections. This has helped the Museum to build a foundation for the easy updating of the displays

contained within the Old Exhibition Building. Due to the restricted amount of space available and the richness of the Museum's collection, this concept allows visitors to see the widest possible range of exhibits and topics relating to the natural and cultural richness of Silesia. It would only be a slight exaggeration to say that every time we welcome a visitor, he or she discovers something new.



2nd floor: The Encyclopaedia of Silesia

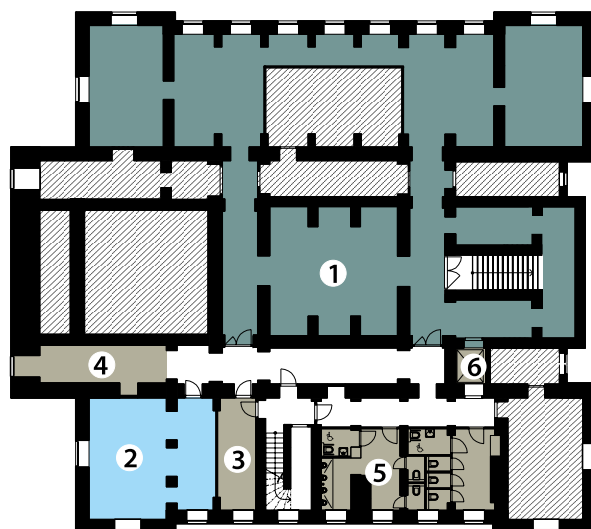
- 1 exhibition „Encyclopaedia of Silesia“
- 2 gallery
- 3 lift



Gallery: The History of Silesia

- 1 exhibition „History of Silesia“
- 2 lift

NATURE IN SILESIA



Map of ground floor

- 1 exhibition „Nature in Silesia“
- 2 education room
- 3 room for parents with children
- 4 room for bikes and baby-carriages
- 5 WC ♿
- 6 lift

The main task of the *Nature in Silesia* section of the exhibition is to document the flora and fauna and biodiversity of the region with reference to others all around Europe and the world. The Silesian landscape conceals a large amount of information on its own history. The geological part of the exhibition gives a brief overview of the origins and geological development using exhibits from Silesia and north Moravia. From a geological point of view, this is a highly varied field, because it is in Silesia that two different geological zones – the Bohemian massif and the Carpathian range – come into contact. Deposits of coal formed in the top, carboniferous layer to form the Upper Silesian Coal Basin – the Ostrava-Karviná Coal Basin.

Silesia is the most significant area of quaternary glaciation in the Czech Republic. Of special interest are the Silesian volcanoes from the end of the Neogene and beginning of the Quaternary Periods, such as Velký Roudný, Uhlířský vrch, Mezina and Bílčice. Fossils show the development of plants and animals on the territory of Silesia, from the Palaeozoic to the Quaternary Era. Apart from the carboniferous layers, Mesozoic sediments, which are particularly rich in flora and fauna, are

best preserved in the Moravian-Silesian Beskids range, part of the Carpathian range created in the Cenozoic Era.

The unique Štramberské limestone, created through the accumulation of the skeletons of marine organisms, is of special significance and is particularly rich in animal fossils. The coral reef by Štramberské is amongst the richest paleontological sites in the Czech Republic. The final Tertiary flood reached as far as the Opava and Hlučín regions and created deposits of gypsum containing remarkable exemplars of flora and fauna (for example at Koberžice, where the only currently mined gypsum deposit in the Czech Republic is located).

The botanical part of the exhibition contains exemplars of mosses, lichens and fungi, combined with herbaria of major representatives of plant families, with a focus on botanically interesting protected areas (Velká Kotlina, Praděd, Mionší, Radhošť National Parks etc.), endemic species and relicts from Silesia and north Moravia.

The zoological part of the exhibition focuses primarily on species that are found in Silesia. The display starts with the simplest life forms, moving up through single-celled organisms, via molluscs and arthropods up to vertebrates.

Geology and palaeontology

The opening part of the geological exhibition presents rocks and minerals from major locations in Silesia and north Moravia. Amongst the most remarkable terrestrial ecosystems in the history of our planet was the Carboniferous rainforest. The rainforests consisted of treelike lycophytes, horsetails, seed ferns and ferns, i.e. plants which are today primarily known in herbaceous form. The warm, humid climate of the time meant that black coal could form from the mass of Carboniferous plant life.

A large number of plant and animal fossils can be found in Carboniferous sediments of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin. The collection of fossils from the Štramberské limestone formations, which created the striking hills in the vicinity of Štramberské, is unique in the world. Kotouč Hill is the remnant of a Jurassic reef that could be compared to the coral reefs in modern-day tropical seas, albeit built by different organisms 150 million years ago. The Mesozoic fauna found in Štramberské limestone represents the largest museum collection from this locality in the Czech Republic.

Sea last covered Moravia and Silesia in the later Tertiary period, when a warm bay reached as far as the Opava region. When the sea level fell across the whole of Central Europe, the sea in the Opava region changed into an interconnected series of lagoons. In the warm climate of the time, the water in the lagoons evaporated and the agglutination of mineral salts from the oversaturated seawater created the deposits of gypsum that are mined today in Koberžice. The layers of slate deposits in the Opava bay preserved fossils of a variety of molluscs, as well as complete fish skeletons.

A group of volcanoes is located in the central part of the Nízký Jeseník range, on the border between Moravia and Silesia, where rocks have protruded through the Devonian and Kulm layers in the Nízký Jeseník and generally form striking volcanic cones. Post-volcanic activity includes mineral water springs.

The Quaternary is, from a geological point of view, a short period of time, beginning two million years ago and lasting to the present day. The early Quaternary Period saw the cyclical alternation of warm periods with periods of global cooling. A large continental glacier extended from Scandinavia, reaching as far as the northern areas of what is now the Czech Republic. Following its retreat, it left behind material that had been brought to the region by the glacier, as well as sediments laid down by water resulting from its thawing.



Bílčice – quarry



View of Praděd mountain from Petrovy kameny hill



Štramperk – Kotouč



Petrovy kameny hill and Praděd



Waterfalls on the Bílá Opava river



Černá Voda – Rampa quarry



Tertiary-period herring, Opava-Kateřinky



Písečná u Jeseníku – glacial sediment



Smolný vrch – ‘The Bowls of Venus’



View from Písečná to the crest of the Hrubý Jeseník range



Velká Kraš – grain of granite

Botany

Silesia and north Moravia are highly diverse regions. The lowlands are dominated by floodplain forests and oak and hornbeam forests, and the mountains by flowering beech or spruce. The alpine meadows in the highest parts of the Jeseníky range are a valuable forest-free zone. The uniqueness of the terrain is also emphasised by the presence of several types of plant that do not grow anywhere else in the world apart from in this region. One typical example of this is the Jeseník meadow-grass, found on Petrovy kameny hill.

One highly interesting phenomenon are also alpine cirques, known in the Jeseníky region as basins or corries. In these areas, more species can be found over an area of several square kilometres than over a larger area in other places.

The landscape profile of the Silesia region is not monotonous, and thus provides highly favourable conditions for a rich variety of moss species. Despite the major, and generally negative, influence of humans, who in the past concentrated industry in the region or changed the landscape through the mining of coal, it is still possible to find many unique localities and rare plant species. The bark of deciduous trees is home to various species of the *Orthotrichum* and *Ulota* genera, which are regarded as indicators of air cleanliness. Rotting wood along riverbanks plays host to *Buxbaumia viridis* – a rare moss included in the NATURA 2000 programme due to its endangered status.

The botanical part of the exhibition attempts to illustrate these interesting aspects and highlight the biological uniqueness of the region. The diorama is designed to show the importance in the forest of every rotting tree-stump and the range of species it hosts – from algae, mosses and fungi to insects and vertebrates.



Waterfall at Žulová (Rychlebské hory)



Fallen tree in the Salajka National Nature Reserve (Beskids)



Čerňavina Nature Reserve (Beskids)

Insect life of Silesia

The most abundant group of life forms in the world in terms of numbers of species are the arthropods. While around 1.5 million species are known, the true number could exceed 10 million. Arthropods are the most numerous part of the fauna in Silesia, too. The majority of arthropods are insects, which are of importance from the point of view of usefulness – pollination of plants, breakdown of organic waste – or their utility – the honeybee makes honey. Apart from this, however, insects are also carriers of disease and damage crops and forests, or even museum collections.

The fauna of Silesia includes around 30,000 species of insect, which are important from an economical, ecological, zoogeographical or conservational point of view. Silesia is, for example, home to the Sudeten ringlet, a species of butterfly which does not occur anywhere else in the world.

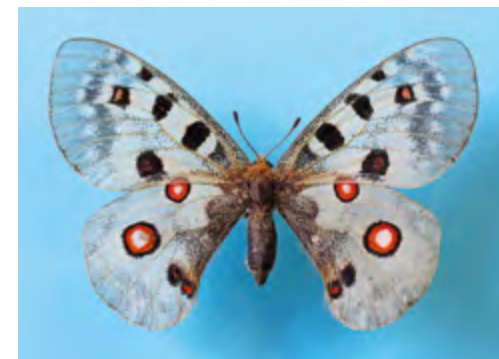
Amongst the more interesting sections of the insect exhibition are the small dioramas, which use real insect exemplars to show how insects live in their natural environment, and also include models of the larvae and pupae of several species as well as displays on intraspecies and interspecies interaction.



Harvestman



White-faced darter



Apollo butterfly



Sudeten ringlet

The mammals of Silesia

Around 87 species of mammal live on the territory of the Czech Republic. As well as large predators, such as the common wolf, Eurasian lynx and brown bear, Silesia and north Moravia is also home to one of the rarest mammals, the wildcat. Also typical for Silesia and north Moravia are, for example, small mammals, such as the forest dormouse, Ural field mouse, barbacelle (a species of bat) and the Leisler's bat. One interesting phenomenon in this field are the non-native mammal species that occur – muskrat, coypu, raccoon dog, American mink and the raccoon. Also worthy of note is the black rat – frequently confused with the brown rat. Rare alpine species – remnants of the ice ages – are the northern birch mouse and alpine shrew, and in the Jeseník region, for example, the chamois. One extremely interesting exhibit is the stuffed brown bear.



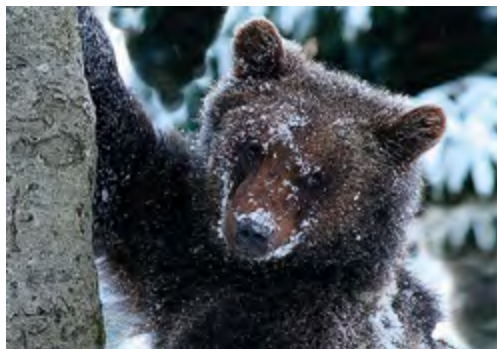
Greater mouse-eared bat



Common wolf



Wildcat



Brown bear

Cold-blooded animals in Silesia

The cold-blooded animals of Silesia include representatives of the *Cyclostomata* (jawless fish), *Actinopterygii* (ray-finned fish), *Amphibia* (amphibians) and *Reptilia* (reptiles) classes. In the Czech Republic there is a small population of Ukrainian brook lampreys, which can be found along the Morava basin and in the Račinka stream near Velké Losiny, and are one of the rarest vertebrates in the region. One rare reptile in Silesia is the common wall lizard, a small population of which can be found in some localities in the vicinity of Štramberk. Of the amphibians, the great crested newt is today an increasingly endangered species.

Of the ray-finned fish, of which there are currently around 65 species on the territory of the Czech Republic, eels, catfish, pike and perch are amongst those that can be found in Silesia, as well as the majority of the c. 20 species of amphibian, such as e.g. salamanders or frogs. Turtles, lizards and snakes also occur.



Central European Bluethroat



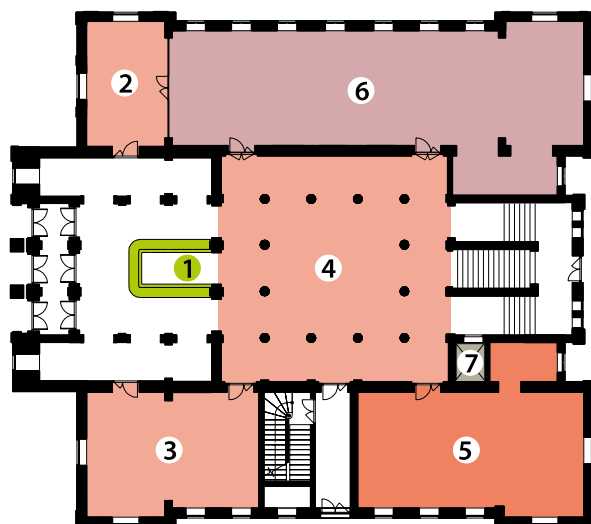
Agile frog

Birds in Silesia

With around 400 species, birds are the most numerous class of vertebrates in the Czech Republic. The rarest exhibit on display is the Levant sparrowhawk, shot near Frýdek-Místek in 1958, and representing the only occurrence of this species on the territory of Silesia. One very rare predator resident in Silesia is the Eurasian black vulture. A further unique exhibit is the glossy ibis, which was recorded in Silesia in the 19th century.

Birds that are currently found in Silesia include, for example, water birds – ducks, grebes, herons and storks. Birds of prey include the red kite, peregrine falcon and Ural owl. The lesser spotted and golden eagles are also worthy of attention. The most numerous order of birds are, however, the songbirds – larks, swallows, passerine birds, tits and finches. Silesia is also home to pigeons, cuckoos, nightjars, woodpeckers and a number of others.

ON THE WINGS OF THOUGHT



Map of 1st floor

- 1 ticket office
- 2 children museum
- 3 multifunctional room
- 4 hall
- 5 temporary exhibition room
- 6 exhibition „On the Wings of Thought“
- 7 lift

This part of the exhibition relates the history of modern-day Czech Silesia from the end of the 18th century to the First World War as an era marked by a distinct tension between the intellectual, rational and emotional in society. The era is also distinguished by a number of exceptional figures and remarkable creative, intellectual and artistic achievements that spread the fame of Czech Silesia.

This part of the exhibition provides not only an introduction to major figures in science, industry and the arts and their remarkable lives, but also evokes the intellectual milieu of the then-Austrian Silesia as a whole. We aim to give an overall view of the region – of the awareness of maintaining a constant standard of civilisation and cultural potential for the region in the sense of participation in the intellectual and artistic traditions of Central Europe. It is these traditions and their evocation that create a sound basis for the identity of the region into the future, including the present day, when political and national changes have changed regional and state borders, wiping out or overshadowing the intellectual landscape of the region.



Friedrich Bernhard Werner, Overall view of Opava from the Southwest, copper engraving, 1750s

The richness of the land

At the dawn of the modern age, the developing natural sciences of mineralogy, petrography, geology and botany started turning their attention towards Silesia and its natural richness. Later, the ideas of the Enlightenment inspired the first topographical and historiographical work by authors who endeavoured to provide a historical description of Silesia (authors such as Reginald Kneifel and Faustin Ens). At the same time, *vedute* and graphical views of Silesian towns, such as Opava, Krnov, Jeseník, Těšín and Frýdek were created by the Opava painter and architect, Franz Biela, and Viennese painter and lithographer, Jakob Alt, the descriptive precision of whose works, created in the spirit of the Biedermeier style, contributed to the creation of a Silesian regional identity. This period also saw the first attempts to document preserved monuments and works of art in Silesia (Johann Leopold Scherschchnik).

The period around the year 1800 and the first decades of the 19th century is associated with the founding of learned societies and salons, as well as the publication of periodicals and scientific publications. An important centre for education in the late 18th century was Trassler's printing press in Opava, which focused the publication of contemporary works.

The maturity of the intellectual milieu in Silesia is shown, too, by the early founding of museums in Těšín (1802) and Opava (1814), the result of the intellectual and civilisational efforts of leading figures in Silesia (Johann Leopold Scherschchnik, Franz Mückusch von Buchberg and Johann Joseph Schoessler).



Anonymous, Josef Wenzel, Prince of Liechtenstein, oil on canvas, c. 1750

The call of Nature

Nature played a varied role in Central European society of the 19th and early-20th century – it was the subject of aesthetic enthusiasm and needs, manifested in landscape painting and the use of natural motifs in literature. At the same time it formed the focus of diverse intellectual activities, frequently with widely varying motivations – the exploitation of mineral wealth and the desire to extract the maximum out of natural resources in industry, or intellectual ventures through the studying of the variety of natural phenomena.

People of the 19th century would come into contact with Nature not merely in the context of education or art, but also, for example, during their leisure time. The setting-up of municipal parks and bourgeois hobbies such as the collecting of beetles and butterflies and hiking are further evidence of Man's relationship with Nature. The educational activities of grammar and comprehensive schools would be unthinkable without the cabinets containing collections of minerals, herbaria or displays of invertebrates and vertebrates.



Abruzzian sculptor, *Maestà with apple*, beginning of 15th century, polychrome carving, gift of Hans, Count Wilczek

The Temple of the Arts

One of the most significant innovations in the field of art in the 19th century was the creation of an artistic canon, i.e. a defined corps of works that, by example, answer the questions: what is art? What is the point of artistic creation? In the great philosophical movements of the 19th century, art, together with science and religion, were addressed at the very top levels of human thought.

Music was viewed as the highest form of art and it was primarily in the form of opera (Richard Wagner) that it matured into the concept of a so-called total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*). The 19th century also saw the beginning of the process of the democratisation of the arts, where music, for example, started to extend beyond the exclusive environment of the highest levels of society via the numerous municipal bands and musical and choral societies, many of which were also founded in Austrian Silesia.

Theatre also had a rich tradition in Austrian Silesia, in the towns of Opava, Těšín, Bílsko and Krnov. In the Opava municipal theatre, founded in 1805, performances were held of contemporary plays, beginning with the works of Friedrich Schiller and ending with those of Gerhart Hauptmann at the beginning of the 20th century.

The increasing recognition given to the fine arts, starting around the beginning of the 1860s, led to the construction of modern museum buildings – secular temples of the arts. The creation of works of art continued to be a major means of achieving greater standing in society beyond the borders of Silesia; the most significant Silesian painters – Ferdinand Krumholz, Rudolf Quittner and Eugen Jettel were able to promote their works abroad, where they achieved fame and recognition.

Silesia is also associated with a number of major figures from the world of music. The most prominent of these is Joseph Friedrich Hummel (1841–1919), composer, conductor, choirmaster and first director of the Mozarteum in Salzburg, who from the years 1863–73 worked in Opava, where he founded the municipal orchestra and contributed to the development of the town opera. Another respected composer was Engelsberg (real name Eduard Schön), who wrote songs for choral societies, both in his native country and abroad.



The Silesian Museum

The Cabinet of Arts and Curiosities

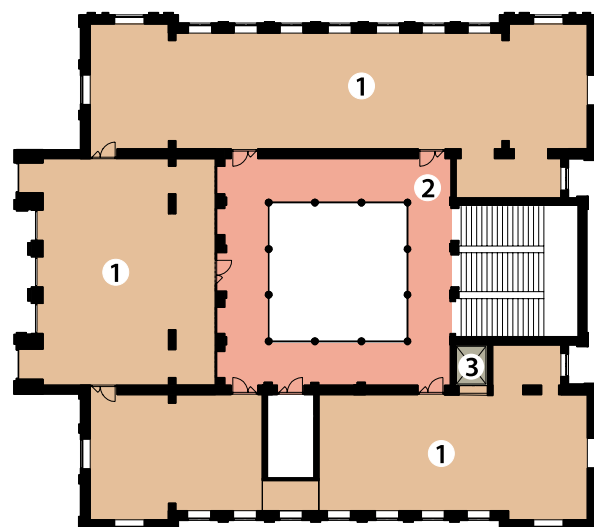
The closing part of this exhibition contains displays of works that are not necessarily associated with Silesia, but which demonstrate the support given to regional museums by private persons and public corporations. It includes donations to the Silesian Museum, including exhibition items acquired by its predecessors. Amongst those who, at one time or another, donated to the museum's collection, we find the cream of society, including lords, princes and representatives of the Church, as well as curiosities donated by adventurers, merchants or craftsmen.

Apart from the exemplars of the survival of traditional aristocratic patronage in the 19th and early-20th centuries, the Cabinet of Arts and Curiosities is intended to showcase collections and other intellectual pursuits as a form of bourgeois leisure activity. Amongst the patrons of the museum and the princes of Liechtenstein, the Teutonic Order, the Těšín Habsburgs, the aristocratic

merchants of the house of Wilczek, writer and art collector Mechtilde Lichnovsky, the writer Maria Scholz-Stona, Count Camillo Razumovský, the traveller Hans Leder and other owners of private collections. What motivated the above to build collections was not only an interest in remembering their forebears, but also an historical interest in valuable items other than merely coins. These collectors thus not only helped to popularise works of art, but also spread awareness of contemporary art, while not neglecting the exotic.

The Cabinet also commemorates major figures in the history of museums in the region (Edmund Wilhelm Braun and Karel Černohorský) and their work.

THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SILESIA



Map of 3rd floor

- 1 exhibition „Encyclopaedia of Silesia“
- 2 gallery
- 3 lift

The idea behind the Encyclopaedia of Silesia, which takes a kaleidoscopic, selective and themed look at the history of Czech Silesia from prehistoric times until the 20th century, with some essential jumps beyond this timeframe, up to the present day, is to use exhibits to present the land of Silesia – its history, culture and inhabitants. We want visitors to feel as if they are leafing through an encyclopaedia. This concept represents a critical reaction to the previous exhibitions of 1955 and 1981, which attempted to gain a 'scientific' view of the Silesian, and Ostrava, region through the application of the principles of chronological development and the delineation of specialist fields.

This new concept is based on an anthropological approach. In contrast to scientific (specialist) constructs (e.g. ethnography, archaeology and the history of art), it presents the viewer with an integrated concept of the environment and their perception of it. The display thus presents basic types of settlement (keywords: *town and village*), touches on manufacturing and consumer activity related to the riches of the land (keywords: *slate, ceramics, mining, textiles, glass, landscape, forest*), illustrates the ideas associated with human life and death (keywords: *allegory, memory, death*), addresses the idea of art as the highest expression of culture and spiritual

traditions, both with reference to specific regional manifestations (keywords: *church, organ*). Culture is perceived as a component of human communication (keywords: *language, theatre*) and in the context of civilisational standards (keywords: *roads, trade, housing*). The exhibition also deals with concepts related to an awareness of history and its regional specificity (keywords: *Silesia, peace*).



Josef Matyáš Lassler, *Wisdom Built a Temple*, ceiling fresco from hall of Minorite monastery in Opava, 1730s

Allegory

From Antiquity onwards, allegory has served to represent abstract concepts such as, for example, Justice, Providence or Deceit. In contrast to symbols, whose content is regarded as limitless, allegory can be translated into words. In the Middle Ages, allegory served primarily to convey Christian concepts, for example Faith, and was primarily associated with the Church.

The function and content of allegorical representations differed according to the social and spiritual milieu in which it was applied. For the members of the estates of the realm, it was an appropriate means of expressing their position within the hierarchy of society, most frequently by utilising themes from Classical mythology interpreted through the prism of Christian faith. During the 19th century the growing middle classes took over some themes and symbols from the past in order to represent the bourgeois virtues (Diligence, Thrift) and values (education, universal humanism) with which this social stratum entered history in the 2nd half of the 19th century.



Roofing slate, Lhotka

Slate

The mining of clay- and silt-based slate was begun in the Moravian-Silesian Kulm region as far back as the beginning of the 19th century. Slate was initially extracted via open-cast mines. Particularly wealthy landowners gradually converted to deep-mining methods. Large deposits of Lower Carboniferous slate are located in the Nízký Jeseník and Oder ranges. The name 'covering slate' is taken from its use in the covering of roofs and for wall cladding. The primary advantage of slate is its long-term durability and resistance to climatic conditions. The last few years have seen a renewed growth in interest in this naturally-occurring raw material, and not only in relation to the refurbishment of historical buildings, but also the building of new structures.

Slate was also occasionally used in the production of tools, minor utility items or in sculpture. A mixture of fine slate powder and shellac resin was formerly used in the production of gramophone discs.



Interior of chateau in Hradec nad Moravicí

Housing

Forms of housing derived naturally from the social standing of its inhabitants. The wealthier classes of society lived in grand manor-houses, such as castles and chateaux, which had previously fulfilled a defensive, now residential function. The residences of rich burghers saw a flourishing of crafts and trade. The most palatial homes stood on squares and surrounding streets. Tradesmen and the poor lived in houses along city walls and on the edges of towns. Villages consisted of farmsteads and cottagers' dwellings. The slow economic and social development of the rural population meant that their living habits did not change over time.

From the end of the 18th century the mining of coal and development of industry in Upper Silesia affected the ordering of society. Workers were able to find cheap accommodation in industrial areas. Over time the architecture of this accommodation was influenced by the building of factories and the new workers' settlements attached to them. From the 19th century onwards, and particularly in the following century, these buildings became subject to modern standards of hygiene.



Decoration featuring puppets of the Pfleger family of wandering puppeteers. End of 19th century/beginning of 20th century

Theatre

Theatre performances, related to the theatricalisation of Christian ceremonies (Passion plays) are documented in Silesia from the late Middle Ages onwards. Starting in the second half of the 16th century there are records of small groups of actors, known as 'troupes'. The territory also played host to English, German and Italian companies. During the Baroque period, performances were organised for schools and the public by the Jesuits, Minorites and Piarists, and the manor-houses of the nobility acquired considerable cultural significance for the musical and theatrical performances held there.

In the second half of the 18th century, Count Ignác Dominik Chorinský z Ledské organised a 'Teatrum' at his palace in Opava (now the Blücher Palace) and hosted a music academy, society balls and musical theatre performances, accompanied by the castle musical ensemble, at his castle in Velké Hoštice. Other famous opera theatres can be found in the castles of Jánský vrch, Javorník, Linhartovy, Hradec nad Moravicí, Slezské Rudoltice, Hošťálkovy, Bruntál etc. Influenced by the Enlightenment at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th

centuries, the function of theatres changed and they came to be associated with the new German-language municipal theatres (Opava, Těšín, Krnov, Bílsko).

Czech-language theatre was supported primarily by theatrical societies, and the first gatherings associated with theatre performances in the Opava area took place in the first half of the 1860s. In this multicultural environment of German, Polish and Czech theatre, professional Czech-language theatre could fully develop only in the years following 1945.



Opavský týdeník, Czech-language newspaper published in Opava from 1870–1912

Language

Czech literature in Silesia serves more to document changes in society than as a source of aesthetic or intellectual experiences. In modern times, Silesian society has been overwhelmingly perceived as being German-speaking; the German language was ubiquitous in theatre, the press and literature. The Czech language as a means of communication was, for many years, degraded to the level of a dialect, and Czech literature was of only marginal interest.

The first Czech-language periodicals in Silesia (*Opavský besedník* (1861); *Opavský týdeník* (1871); and the *Věstník Matice Opavské* (1878), the first specialist pe-

riodical dealing with the landscape and culture of Silesia, which continues to be published under the name *Slezský sborník*) and the opening of a Czech grammar school in Opava (1883) signalled new opportunities for the use of Czech not only as a literary language, but also as one for use in political, cultural, educational and leisure spheres. Starting from the end of the 19th century, the Revivalist function of Czech literature in Silesia lost its force, with greater emphasis being placed on the aesthetic aspect.

Disputes between the Czech, Polish and German communities were not resolved in the first half of the 20th century, and the Czech language only began to dominate after the Second World War. The period following the 1990s has been characterised by a rediscovery of Silesian identity, with studies focusing on Silesia, and in particular the history and traditions of the Hlučín, Těšín, Opava and Jeseníky regions.



Jug from Beaker culture

Ceramics

Ceramics represent a major element of material culture. The very oldest ceramic items, in the form of human or animal sculptures, date from the Late Palaeolithic period. The first vessels, whose shape or decoration give their names to a number of prehistoric cultures, date only from the second half of the 6th millennium BC. Even into later periods, types of ceramics and their decoration continue to provide a major source of information about the development of society in a given period.

The inventory of preserved ceramic items chiefly consists of utility items, both 'kitchen' utensils, used for the preparation of food, and 'technical' items, used for crafts. Special ceramics, intended for use in religious ceremonies, was produced for ritualistic purposes. The

introduction of the potter's wheel at the time of the La Tène culture represented a technological advance in the production of pottery, expanded in the Middle Ages by advances in the production of stoves and bricks, and supplemented in the 18th century with the industrial production of porcelain and building materials. The end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries saw the gradual decline of pottery production in Silesia.



Railway line from Ostrava to Opava, 1930s

Roads

As a border region, Silesia has stood at the crossroads of long-distance routes since prehistory. The so-called Amber Route led from the Baltic in the north along the Oder and Morava valleys and through the Beskid and Jeseník massifs south through the Moravian Gate and on to the Adriatic; the importance of this route declined only in the age of transoceanic voyages. A further route branched off in a north-westerly direction along the Morava river towards the Kłodzko region and further to the northwest and eastwards, away from the Oder valley towards the southeast via the Jablunkov Pass to Slovakia.

During the Middle Ages a system of five main land routes became established in the region. The construction of roads peaked between the 1780s and the 1840s, after which the function of long-distance routes was assumed by the newly-built railways. The focus of road-building turned to district roads, which in the second half of the 19th century significantly expanded the existing network.

The rise of railway transport was closely linked to the development of mining and heavy industry. The construction of railway lines from Wrocław in Prussian Silesia via the Upper Silesian industrial region towards

the town of Bohumín, where it was connected to the oldest section of Austrian steam railway, the Emperor Ferdinand Northern Railway, began in the 1840s. Two spurs (1855) also connected the towns of Opava and Bílsko with Vienna and Wrocław. The end of the 19th century saw the first development of urban transport and local tram routes. A motorway network was built in Silesia at the end of the 20th century.

The concept of communication in the sense of a means of conveying information is chiefly connected to the development of a postal service and the modern bureaucratisation of formal social relationships, and is closely connected to the development of modern communications technology (telegraph, telephone and radio and television).



Pieta, 2nd third of 18th century, polychrome and gilt wood carving, popular work of anonymous engraver

Church

During the whole of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age, the church was one of the few places where the unsophisticated believer could come into contact with works of art and handicrafts, which naturally served the

needs of Christianity and liturgy. A key component in the spread of Christianity was the concept, established in the times of Charlemagne, that images and statues were to serve the faithful, most of whom were illiterate, as the *biblia pauperum* (Bible of the Poor).

The link between paintings and sculptures and Christian content and articles of faith became ever closer from the second half of the 17th century, in the era of so-called Tridentine Catholicism, which, with few exceptions (e.g. the Těšín region) was applied across the whole territory of Czech Silesia.

The viewer and believer would be overwhelmed by the marvellous furnishing of churches, the regal architecture of altars, with their rich paintings, sculptures and engravings, heard sermons from a pulpit decorated with gilded reliefs and engravings, then taking part in the solemn Mass, which before their eyes would unfold like a Baroque theatre full of splendour and stimuli. The efficacy of the ceremony as a whole was enhanced by liturgical accoutrements such as the monstrance, reliquaries, chalices, patens, ciboria and crosses, which demonstrate the skill of craftsmen of the time.

The churches of Silesia include not only ancient, monumental cathedrals (e.g. those in Opava, Krnov and Těšín), but also simple village churches, which continue to charm us with the simplicity and homeliness of their interiors.



Landscape view. In the foreground is a meadow with shrubbery in the middle, a row of trees, fog with silhouette of landscape and sun on a dark field

Landscape

The natural diversity of a certain piece of land, known as the 'landscape', has since time immemorial been the target of discernment and creative appreciation. To capture a specific landscape motif, particularly one that de-

finer the given historical territory, and retaining in one's memory has been the goal of professional and amateur painters and graphic artists since the beginning of the modern age.

Humans remain part of this landscape. The drawing and painting of mountains, forests and hillsides, urban panoramas and paths with solitary trees are testament to not only specialist interest, but also – chiefly since the Romantic period of the early 19th century – to the effort to find the human core at the centre of a landscape motif and the concurrent desire to capture human experience as a whole.

For Mankind, the countryside is a source of sustenance, and Silesia is characterised by its specific forms of agricultural and industrial activity. At the same time, the countryside is, for humans, a place of spiritual solace, as the bond with it strengthens religious feeling and devotion; Silesia is therefore a land of pilgrimage churches and chapels. In the modern age, people have also gone to the countryside in search of health cures, and Silesia became a land with a major health-spa tradition.

The need for a precise and detailed view of the land stemmed from Czech Silesia's position on the boundaries of several states – Austria and Prussia, and then for the majority of the 20th century, Czechoslovakia and Poland. The fact that many cartographical works came into being for military and political reasons shows that the borders of Silesia were not fixed or inevitable. Nevertheless the landscape was and, to the present day, continues to be, a kind of sounding board for the human soul, as demonstrated in the Art Nouveau and modernist art of the 20th century.



Tree-stump in Mionší forest (Beskids)

Forest

The forest is a complicated ecosystem, dominated by trees and perceived by humankind chiefly as a place for recreation or a source of timber. However, its primary function is to stabilise the climate and capture dust from the atmosphere. The moss layer of the forest is a major retainer of water, aiding in the prevention of floods.

There are very few natural forests in the Czech Republic; these are mostly primeval forests in mountainous areas. Several of these are located on the territory of Silesia and north Moravia, for example Mionší, Salajka and Razula in the Beskids and the Liechtenstein Forest in the Jeseníky. Forests also play host to fungi, insects, birds and mammals.



Trunk of the gingerbread-makers' guild in Opava, 1827

Town

The towns of Silesia came into being through gradual development from older settlements, or the establishment of new settlements, especially on the basis of German law in the settlement period of the 13th century. The towns of Silesia and north Moravia naturally gravitated towards the northwest, accepting so-called Magdeburg rights, which defined the means of administration for towns of a Saxon background. Based on a document dating to 1223, Bruntál and Uničov are regarded as the oldest instituted towns on the territory of the modern-day Czech Republic.

Up until the mid-19th century, guilds formed an essential component of the urban economy. The aim of these associations of craftsmen from one or more trades was to protect their members from competition, ensure the quality and price of goods and nurture new apprentices or master craftsmen.

The guilds also fulfilled a representative, religious and social function. The rules for the functioning of a guild were defined by the guild's articles of association, which were laid out with the consent of the local ruler or municipal authorities. Guilds are documented in the larger towns of Czech Silesia since the mid-14th century. The oldest of these are generally the bakers', butchers', cobblers' and blacksmiths' guilds. Guilds did not develop in smaller towns until the 16th century. The protection of guilds was guaranteed by the municipal one-mile law, which banned craftsmen who were not members of a guild from practising their trade within one mile of the town walls. Membership of a guild, which was subject to a fee, was mandatory in order to practise one's trade within the town walls. Guilds were abolished within the Habsburg monarchy by the issuing of an im-

perial edict in December 1859, which introduced a new trade licensing code.

The development of industry in the 19th and 20th centuries led to the demolition of town fortifications and the rapid construction of suburbs. This situation gave rise to a need for urban planning regulations. In the modern age, institutions providing social and healthcare services (hospitals, social care institutions) have moved to the peripheries of towns, and basic principles of hygiene and forms of public health inspection were defined as far back as the mid-18th century (establishment of cemeteries on the edges of towns, construction of pipelines, gasworks and sewerage facilities).

A further wave of urbanisation followed at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century with the growth in services. In Silesia and north Moravia, the development of towns was associated with the first two decades of the 20th century and the 1970s. The most dynamic phase of population growth is connected to the development of the textile (Krnov) and mining (focused on Karviná, Ostrava and Ostrava-Poruba and the new town of Havířov).

Modern society has brought with it a new phenomenon – leisure time. The development of civil society would be unthinkable without the development of clubs (especially from the 1860s) and sporting activities, which continue to the present day.



Silver medallion commemorating peace talks in Wrocław in 1742

Peace

There are a number of different kinds of peace. From the 11th century, at a time of weak central state power, examples of the so-called King's peace ('Landfriede') are documented. In the Middle Ages the territory of modern-day Silesia was composed of a number of minor principalities, which faced pressure from both the Czech and Polish states. At the beginning of the 14th century, John of Luxembourg brought the efforts of the last Přemysls to gain influence in Silesia to a successful conclusion. The treaties agreed between the rulers of Bohemia and Poland in Trenčín and Visegrád in 1335 became the foundation for the future status of Silesia as one of the lands of the lands of the Bohemian crown; this status remained, with slight alterations, until 1740.

The question of faith and confession were important considerations in the two peace treaties of the period following the Battle of White Mountain – the Saxon accord of February 1621 and the so-called Treaty of Altranštadt of 1707. Both of these treaties confirmed the religious freedom of Silesian Protestants within certain, defined limits.

The Prussian-Austrian wars of the years 1740-79 resulted in the annexation of most of Silesia by Prussia. The two states were then reconciled only when they found a common enemy, Revolutionary France.

European politics between the years 1815-48 were characterised by the congress-based cooperation between the Great Powers with the aims of restoring the principle of 'legitimacy' that had been in force prior to the French Revolution and maintaining the balance of power within Europe. In the autumn of 1820 a congress took place with the participation of representatives of Russia, Prussia, Austria, England and France, the closing protocol of which authorised the pre-emptive use of force on the territory of a foreign state whose democratic development would pose a threat to the absolute monarchs.

The peace treaties that concluded the First World War changed the map of Central Europe. The complicated negotiations also touched on the setting of borders in the Czech Silesia region, and the Hlučín region (part of Poland since 1742) was added to the newly-created Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, the historico-economical and national dispute over the Těšín region ended in July 1920, with its brokered division between Czechoslovakia and Poland.



Breda & Weinstein department store (still standing), designed by architect Leopold Bauer

Trade

A network of trade routes had connected Silesia with more distant regions since prehistoric times. Trade in the Middle Ages was primarily the preserve of towns, which were awarded privileges by rulers to organise markets, levy customs duty, forbid competition from an area one mile outside the town walls, store goods and protect themselves through the building of fortifications. The traditional centre of long-distance trade was Wrocław, while trade in locally-produced items was the preserve of smaller towns. The trade relations of Silesia with neighbouring countries were disrupted by the customs war following the Prussian annexation of most of Silesia in the mid-18th century. However, the same period saw the beginning of the systematic construction of paved roads.

There were two basic types of business transaction: weekly markets for basic, chiefly agricultural, products, and fairs, which took place on fixed days every year. Apart from an expanded range of goods and a major income from customs and road tolls, fairs also gave communities a major opportunity to meet those in the surrounding area. Places of business (shops) gathered according to the goods offered (the Butchers, Fish Market etc.), which is reflected to this day in place names within towns.

Starting from the second half of the 19th century, the most widespread type of trade was in general goods. The modern shop, now called a store, was distinguished by, amongst others, the separation of production areas from the shop floor and office space and the use of tools based on a fixed currency (till) and the modern quantification of goods (based on a unified system of weights and measures). The 19th century also brought with it the

phenomenon of department stores, based on the rationalisation of means of sale and the use of floor space, to complement door-to-door sales, market and shop. The 20th century brought the sales-floor concept of hypermarkets built on the outskirts of towns and cities.

Memory

Until the dawn of the modern age in the 19th century, the option to create expensive *objets d'art* items commemorating specific events of a personal nature, most frequently associated with the death of a particular person was, essentially limited to two classes of society – the nobility and the church. In the milieu of Austrian Silesia, there are only sporadic instances of memorial images of bourgeois citizens (painted epitaphs), most of which originate from the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries.

Within Early Modern society we can distinguish between items defining one's class, such as ceremonial goblets decorated with coats-of-arms, and memorials connected to religion, such as pilgrimage medals. It is only at the end of the 18th century that the number of commemorative artefacts in the bourgeois or educational spheres started to grow, with the range of artefacts expanding in the 19th century. The rise of the middle class, who achieved prominence during the second half of the 19th century, saw the construction of public monuments declaring loyalty to the Emperor (monuments to Franz Joseph I.), as well as monuments celebrating bourgeois virtues and liberal ideas (cults of Schiller, Kudlich and Preissnitz). As a counterpoint to these public monuments, which established and defined a collective memory, a large number of memorial items and minor commemorative works were created during the 19th century that addressed more private and intimate themes – various albums, sketchbooks (including family-owned) – commemorative medals to commemorate milestones in one's life as well as events important to the numerous bourgeois clubs and associations, such as commemorative goblets and medals issued by shooting, singing and other types of society.

Tip on trip:

 **Petr Bezruč Memorial, Opava**

 **Second World War Memorial, Hrabyně**



Anton Břenek, Memorial to Alexander von Summer, provincial president from 1870-82, 1883, black-and-white photography (pre-1900)



Josef Obeth, To Vincenc Priessnitz, founder of the Jeseník spa, 1904-09



Small altar in a bottle

Glass

Glass does not exist in its pure form in Nature. The production of glass was discovered in the Bronze Age as a by-product of pottery. The first mentions of the oldest glassworks in the Czech lands date back to the second half of the 13th century. The vast forests of Bohemia provided a good basis for glassworks, as the potash gained from birchwood ash was essential to the production of glass.

The end of the 16th and the 17th centuries saw massive development in the Czech glassmaking industry. While the most well-known glassworks were located in north and south Bohemia, a large industry developed in regions neighbouring Silesia, for example northwest Moravia (Šumperk) and the foothills of the Beskids (Kunčice pod Ondřejníkem). Prior to its partition, the most famous glassmaking region in Silesia was the Lower Silesia area, for example the foothills of the Giant Mountains, now in Poland (Szklarska Poręba). Glassworks existed in Vrbo pod Pradědem and Horní and Dolní Lipová, in the western part of the current Czech Silesia, from the mid-18th century until the end of the 19th century.



Anonymous, marble tomb of Mayor Demel, Těšín, Catholic graveyard, 1897

Death

Death, which, according to the Christian faith, is one of the four last stations of man (Death, Last Judgement, Heaven, Hell), was ever-present in mediaeval and Early Modern society. The relationship to the shortness and finality of life was one of the most important elements in the spiritual life of pre-modern societies. This was reflected not only in numerous religious declarations and sermons, but chiefly also in the fine arts, for which death was one of the most important themes.

From the Middle Ages onwards, the dominant themes were primarily those associated with the death of Jesus Christ (Crucifixion, Descent from the Cross, Mourning) and his subsequent Resurrection (the Resurrected Christ), which, through painted epitaphs or sculptures, gave believers hope of an afterlife and thus a part in the salvation of Christ.

From the start of the Modern Age, the presentation of death via exclusively Christian subject matter came to be accompanied by its depiction by allegorical means, most frequently via the figure of a skeleton holding a scythe and accompanied by further attributes of decline and transience (hourglass, skull), which started to appear on images from the first half of the 15th century onwards.



Atlas of Silesia by Jan Wolfgang Wieland and Matyáš Schubert

Silesia

Czech Silesia forms part of a larger territory, the vast majority of which was annexed by Prussia at the expense of the Habsburg monarchy in the mid-18th century. Only the southern parts of Silesia – the duchies of Nysa, Krnov, Opava and Těšín – remained part of the Habsburg domains, with Opava becoming the administrative centre of this part of the region.

Silesia has always been a structurally complex region, where fragmentation is typical at many levels. The land was composed of three distinct regions, whose inhabitants spoke three languages (German, Czech and Polish) and were of a variety of religious confessions and lifestyles. The mountainous region of western Silesia, the central region around Opava and the Těšín region, lying at the foot of the Beskids, are accessed via Moravia.

This territory, more of a region than a land in terms of size, was then merged with other territorial units over the course of centuries. From 1782 the Czech part of Silesia was, following an edict of Emperor Joseph II, merged into a single administrative unit with Moravia. Silesia did not regain its status as an independent province of the Habsburg empire until 1850. Czech (Czechoslovakian) Silesia maintained this status as an autonomous province even after the annexing of part of the Těšín region by Poland and the attachment of the Hlučín region following the First World War. In 1928 it was again merged with Moravia into a new administrative unit – Moravia-Silesia. As a consequence of the Munich Agreement, large parts of the territory of Czechoslovak Silesia were subsequently ceded to Nazi Germany. The Czechoslovak government also acceded to the Polish ultimatum to cede the greater part of the Těšín region.

These lost territories were returned to Czechoslovakia following the Second World War. Administratively

it was, together with parts of north and northeast Moravia, subordinated to the Ostrava branch of the Moravia-Silesian National Council in Brno. Following the abolition of the land-based governmental structure at the end of the 1940s, there was a major decline in the awareness of Silesia as one of the Czech lands and, to this day, Silesia is synonymous with north Moravia for a large part of the populace. Following the introduction of regional government in 1949, administration of the territory was divided between the Olomouc and Ostrava Regions. From 1960 onwards the entirety of Czechoslovakian Silesia was administered by the North Moravia Region. Currently, the greater part of Silesian territory within the Czech Republic is administered by the Moravia-Silesia Region and the remainder, the Jeseník area, by the Olomouc Region.



Winter hat from the 1st half of the 19th century

Textiles

The production of textiles is one of the oldest branches of industry, and was the most significant in Silesia up until the final stages of the Industrial Revolution. The means of processing specific types of textile depended on local economic and environmental conditions. The cultivation of flax and sheep for wool was possible in hilly regions, and hemp was cultivated in the mountains and lowlands. Raw materials for cotton, jute and silk work were imported. The manufacture of cloth from natural fibres involved the preparation of materials, the spinning of fibres into yarn, preparatory work for weaving, weaving and the subsequent alteration of completed cloth.

During the Middle Ages, specialised textile guilds developed in towns, with the so-called 'cost-based' means of production (i.e., pre-industrial cottage industries) being applied in the countryside. The 18th century

saw the establishment of the first textile factories, with machine-based production later lowering the significance of tradesmen, as most textiles came to be produced in industrial facilities. Cloth of lesser quality, for the less demanding eastern markets, was produced in the eastern part of Silesia.

Industrialisation was first applied to the spinning process, then later to weaving and the alteration of cloth. The woollen industry was the prime driver of innovations in production. The most significant textile centres of the industrial era were, for the flax industry Jeseník, for the woollen industry, Krnov, Bílovec, Odry, Těšín and Bílsko and for cotton Frýdek. There was a single attempt to establish a Silesian silk industry in the second half of the 19th century. Despite significant development in the textile industry, it went into decline in the second half of the 20th century in favour of the steel industry and engineering.



'Hunt' mine cart for ore-mining in Horní Benešov

Mining

The complicated geological processes that took place on the territory of north Moravia and Silesia led to the creation of a rich variety of rocks and minerals in the region, where there are numerous deposits of useful raw materials, ores, non-ores and sediments of organic origin.

Apart from the most well-known black coal (Ostrava-Karviná coal basin) and slate (Lhotka, Svobodné Heřmanice), minerals previously or still mined in the region include marble (Supíkovice), volcanic rocks (basalt – Bílčice, tuffites – Razová), gypsum (Kobeřice), granodiorite (Černá Voda), kaolin (Vidnava), sands and aggregates (Vřesina, Dolní Benešov, Kolnovice), lignite (Uhelná), polymetallic ores (Horní Benešov, Horní Město,

Zlaté Hory), copper ore (Zlaté Hory region) and uranium (Zálesí u Javorníka).

The right to mine mineral raw materials, the so-called mining code, was, from the Middle Ages, one of the privileges of the ruler of a territory. Mining law permitted the ruler to not only mine minerals, but also to lease out this process and control distribution. The ruler would then not only be given preference when selling these minerals, but would also receive part of the proceeds in the form of the so-called *urbura*, i.e. a stipulated share of the profit which had to be paid by the *kverk*, or mine owner. The code proscribed the arbitrary mining of mineral raw materials, but also allowed mining without the permission of the owner of the given land if required. Many mines were ruined in the course of the wars of the 15th century. Mining activity in western Silesia was eventually renewed by the bishops of Wrocław, amongst others. Coal deposits were then discovered in eastern Silesia in the mid-18th century.

The development of the industrial mining of fuel and raw materials subsequently facilitated the growth of the Ostrava industrial agglomeration (the only one on the territory of the Czech state) in the 19th century, which is mirrored in the Katowice region (the Upper Silesian industrial agglomeration) in modern Polish Silesia.

The consequences of mining on the landscape are associated with sometimes curious (e.g. the smoking spoil tip in Ostrava and the leaning church in Orlová), but essentially unpleasant (devastation of topsoil, ground depression, pollution) phenomena.



Only preserved instrument constructed by Opava organ-maker Václav Thiel, 1732. Krnov – graveyard chapel

Organ

When describing the nature of Silesia we come across a phenomenon which, in contrast to neighbouring countries, cannot be ignored – organ-builders. 'Silesian organ-building' was formerly associated with the Krnov firm owned by the Rieger brothers (1873-1945), originally founded by their father, Franz Rieger, in 1844. For many years, this company defined the organ industry in the whole of Austrian, and later Czechoslovakian Silesia and in time became one of the most renowned organ-building companies in Europe. In the years following 1948, the Rieger-Kloss national enterprise enjoyed a strong, almost monopolistic influence. The legacy of Krnov organ-building persists to the present day, as a number of new companies have been created since 1990, either in Krnov or the surrounding area.

Nevertheless, organ-builders existed in earlier times and in other places. We can therefore mention at least a few of the old masters – the Opava workshops of the Ryšák family, Václav Thiel and Karel Kuttler, Stanislav Bartodějský of Ratiboř, František Horčíčka from Frýdek and the major organ-making family of Josef Staudinger

of Andělská Hora. Franz Rieger, founder of the Krnov firm, he came from this region and knew organs in his home town, Sosnová, and the vicinity from his childhood.

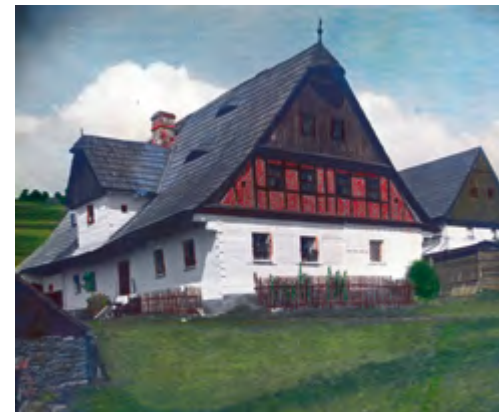
Village

The folk architecture of Silesia has been influenced by many factors, and chiefly the geographical and economic conditions of the area, availability of building materials and, last but not least, the historical development of settlements. A characteristic feature of the Jeseník region was the single-floored log-house, with its typically steep, gable-ended roof. In the area around Opava, some local, period forms of the so-called Opava houses have been preserved. The older version of these consists of a timbered ground floor, often whitewashed, with a gable-ended roof and shieldlike orientation. The more recent version is a large, single-storey, brick house with a gable-end roof and spacious interior. The mostly timbered house in the Těšín area of Silesia was a Carpathian-style house, with many regional variations.

The rhythm of village life was dictated by the work engaged in by the individual inhabitants of the village, the cycle of everyday life, holidays and ceremonial occasions, and the family relationships within the village. Working days would begin before sunrise and were filled with work, in which the whole family participated. Ceremonies and customs were oriented towards ensuring prosperity in the economic and familial life of the village as a whole.

The collectivisation of agriculture represented a major change in rural areas, causing the breakdown of village life. Collectivisation thus changed the nature of the landscape.

Rural life is not currently connected to the traditional way of village farming, but with leisure.

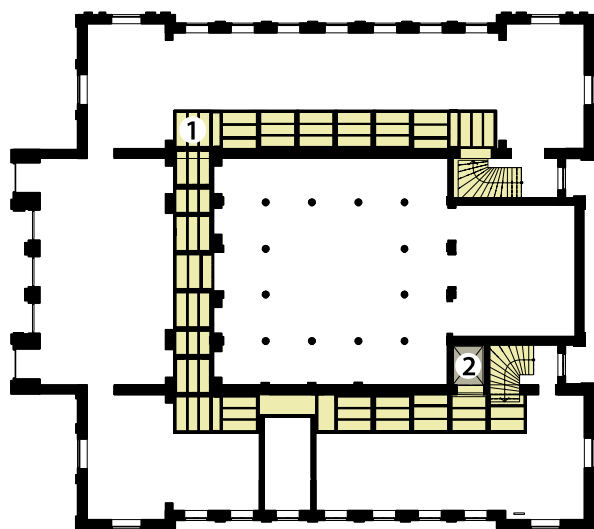


Mountain cabin with half-timbered facade, Adamov, Bruntál district



Log-cabin in Bukovec u Jablunkova

THE HISTORY OF SILESIA



Map of 4th floor

- 1 exhibition „History of Silesia“
- 2 lift

The closing part of the 'Silesia' exhibition occupies the space of the gallery on the first floor and gives a brief overview of the history of historical Silesia as a whole, and not just the modern-day Czech part of the region. Textual, pictorial and graphical information is supplemented by a selection of items of the same type, but from different periods, from prehistory to the present.

The selection of exhibits illustrates, for example, what currency was used at various periods, what people decorated themselves with and which tools they used to fight or work with. A walk around the gallery lets the visitor look down and recapitulate the entire preceding section of the exhibition – the Encyclopaedia of Silesia.



Flint axe with partly smoothed body. Late Stone Age

Prehistory

The upper and lower Oder valley has been inhabited since prehistory, and the oldest traces of inhabitation date to around 500,000 BC. Lower- and Middle-Palaeolithic cultures are documented in this region through stone tools and the well-known discovery of a c. 40,000-year old fragment of a Neanderthal child's jawbone in the Šipka cave near Štramberk. Hunter-gatherer cultures were present in the region in the Upper and Late Palaeolithic. These cultures inhabited settlements on the Landek hill near Ostrava, where the world-famous Petřkovice Venus was found, and Kylešovice hill in Opava, where a unique sample of meteorite iron was found.

In the 6th millennium BC, during the Lower Stone Age, the first farmers, and with them the Linear Ceramic culture, started entering the territory of modern-day Silesia from the southeast. These settlers introduced a settled way of life connected to the building of large, circular houses, animal husbandry and the production of ceramics. Subsequent Neolithic and Eneolithic cultures were also of an agricultural nature; these cultures were replaced by invading (nomadic) societies.

The Upper/Late Bronze Age (c. 1250–750 BC) saw the rise of the Lusatian urn culture, marked by a fire-based burial rite and large necropoleis, which survived to the Later Iron Age and connected to the Halstatt culture. One of the largest necropoleis to be studied was that near Kietrz, in modern-day Poland. Starting in the 4th century BC, Silesia was part of the sphere of influence of Celtic civilisation, which was then replaced in the 1st century BC by the Przeworsk culture, which developed during the entire Roman period up to the Migration Period.

In the 5th century BC, the peoples arising from this culture (Germanic tribes) started to abandon their homelands; under pressure from the invading Huns, they started migrating to the Danube basin and further to the west. During the 6th century, the land they left behind was gradually settled by Slavs.



Ceramic bell with handle. Late Middle Ages

Medieval Silesia

The first written reports of tribes living on the territory of what would later become Silesia come from the mid-9th century, in a manuscript by a writer known as the Bavarian Geographer. By the final quarter of the 9th century Silesia was evidently under the control of the Great Moravian Empire. Following the collapse of the empire, the territory came under the influence of the first Přemyslids and subsequently, towards the end of the 10th century, of the Polish Piast dynasty.

The decisive influence on the formation of Silesia was the creation of the Bishopric of Wrocław in the year 1000. In the 11th and 12th centuries Silesia was the subject of disputes between the Polish and Czech states, with the Polish princes eventually prevailing. Silesia then experienced an extensive colonisation process, primarily from the first half of the 13th century.

It was in the later Czech Silesia that the urbanisation of the landscape began. Bruntál, Hlubčice and Opava, which became one of the most important centres of power in the region, are amongst the oldest towns in Silesia.

While Lower Silesia was largely Germanised, Upper Silesia, long known as the Opole region, retained a largely Slavic population. Due to Polish hereditary law,

Silesia was gradually split up into a number of smaller principalities.

The process of returning Silesia to the Czech state started at the time of the last Přemyslids in the 13th century and was completed at the time of the Luxembourg monarchs John of Luxembourg, Charles IV and Wenceslas IV; it was in Silesia that members of a junior branch of the Přemyslid dynasty, the Opava Přemyslids, founded by Nicholas of Opava, an illegitimate son of Přemysl Otakar II, held the title of princes.

During the Hussite Revolution of the 15th century, Silesia sided with the anti-Hussite party, and it was for this, as well as religious and national reasons, that relations between Silesia and other parts of the Czech state started to cool. The city of Wrocław was the chief organiser of anti-Hussite activities, subsequently fighting against the Czech kings George of Poděbrady and Vladislav Jagellonsky during the Czech-Hungarian wars.



Chamber tile with imperial eagle. Early Modern

Silesia in the Early Modern Age

The mutual alienation of Bohemia and Silesia was halted by the Lutheran Reformation, which brought both regions into conflict with the Habsburgs. Thanks to the intervention of Elector Johann Georg of Saxony, however, Silesia was able to retain at least some of its religious freedom following the defeat at White Mountain in 1620. This was later confirmed by provisions contained in the Peace of Westphalia at the end of the Thirty Years' War. Amongst the symbols of this limited tolerance was

permission to build so-called peace churches in the towns of Świdnica, Jawor and Głogów. This religious tolerance did not, however, relate to territories that gradually came under the control of the Habsburgs due to the gradual dying-out of the Piast dynasty.

The last Piasts, the princes of Legnica-Brzeg, died out in 1675. Their territories were subsequently subjected to a comprehensive process of re-Catholicisation. This led to further alienation, chiefly of the Protestant German population, in their relationship to both the Czech state and the Habsburgs.

A slight abatement of the pressure to re-Catholicise came with the Treaty of Altranstädt, agreed between Emperor Joseph I and the Swedish King Charles XII in 1707, which returned to the Silesian Protestants a number of churches and permitted the construction of so-called Evangelical grace churches in the towns of Jelenia Góra, Kamienna Góra, Milicz, Żagań, Kozuchow and Cieszyn.

However, the mutual alienation between the German-speaking, non-Catholic population of Silesia and the Catholic Habsburg monarchy continued to grow. These differences, together with the military weakness of the Habsburgs, contributed to the rapid and smooth transition of the majority of Silesia to the control of the Prussian King Frederick II in 1740-1742, during the First Silesian War.



Church of Our Lady of Comfort with former Piarist monastery, Bruntál, 1930s-40s

Silesia in the Modern Age

In the Prussian part of Silesia, conditions were quickly created for rapid economic development, chiefly of the textile industry, exploitation of mineral raw materials, steelmaking and the sugar industry. In 1788, the first steam engine on the European continent was brought

into operation in the 'Fridrich' lead ore mine near Tarnowskie Góry. The year 1796 saw the start of the smelting of iron in the first coke blast furnace at the foundry in Gliwice, and in 1801 the world's first sugar factory producing sugar from the sugar beet was opened in the village of Konary, near Wołów in Silesia. Silesia became the most heavily-industrialised province of the Prussian state. The Slavic citizens found themselves subjected to a process of Germanisation and only maintained their status with difficulty in the Catholic region of Upper Silesia. The southern regions – the duchies of Nysa, Krnov, Opava and Těšín – remained part of the Habsburg monarchy.

Economic development in this part of Silesia was stifled due to the breaking-off of contact with the rest of Silesian territory. Despite this, a textile industry developed in the western part of the territory, and in the eastern part coal-mining and steel production. From a political point of view the 'Austrian' part of Silesia was initially constituted as an autonomous province of the Habsburg monarchy. Following the loss of any hope that the whole of Silesia could be won back, the pragmatic Emperor Joseph II merged Austrian Silesia with Moravia.

The revolution of 1848 wiped out the feudal system and triggered a wave of national revival movements many territories, including Silesia. There were clashes between Germans oriented towards the ideal of Pan-Germanism, Poles influenced by the idea of restoring the Polish state and Czechs focused on the renewal of the Czech state. During the 19th century Silesia became one of the most heavily-industrialised regions in Europe.



View of the brewery, Opava, 1950s

Modern history and Silesia today

Most of the political discourse in Silesian civic society focused on nationalist ideology. Conflicts peaked towards

the end of the First World War, when Silesia was, by decree of the victorious Powers, divided between Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. In 1920 the Těšín region, including the town of Těšín, was divided between Poland and Czechoslovakia.

As a result of Nazi aggression towards Czechoslovakia and Poland, the entirety of Silesia fell under German control during the Second World War and was subordinated to higher administrative bodies. The Nazi reign of terror affected primarily Jews and Poles. Resistance organisations were active in occupied territories inhabited by Czechs and Poles. The entire territory of Silesia was occupied by the Soviet army in 1945.

After 1945, the victorious powers decided to divide Silesia between Poland, which received the entire territory of the former Prussian Silesia (apart from the Hlučín region), and Czechoslovakia, which received the territory of Czech Silesia and the Hlučín territory in 1920.

The German population was expelled from the whole territory of Silesia and replaced with settlers from the Czech and Polish interior; in the Polish territories, these were Polish refugees who had been expelled from parts of Poland occupied by the Soviet Union. The industrial strength of Silesia had been virtually destroyed. The majority of towns, and in particular Wrocław and, in Czechoslovakia, Opava, lay in ruins. Industrial production was restored relatively quickly.

The current territory of Silesia lying in Poland and the Czech Republic does not enjoy any level of administrative autonomy in either state and is divided into local administrative units; within the Czech Republic it forms part of the Moravian-Silesian and Olomouc Regions and in Poland it is divided between the Silesian, Opole and Lower Silesian Voivodeships.

The post-war decision to award the formerly German parts of Silesia to the Polish state was confirmed by the intergovernmental 'Treaty on the Final Settlement With Respect to Germany', agreed between Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States of America in Moscow on 12th September 1990. One of the conditions of this treaty was the obligation of the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany to recognise the Oder-Neisse Line as the border with Poland. This was achieved through the Polish-German Border Treaty, which was signed on 14th November 1990 and ratified by both parliaments in the following year. Relations between the Czech and German states in relation to the consequences of the Second World War were addressed in the Czech-German Declaration on their Mutual Relations and Future Development of 21st January 1997.

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Visit other exhibitions and premises of the Silesian Museum



 **The Nový Dvůr Arboretum**
Stěbořice



 **The Petr Bezruč Memorial**
Opava



 **The Second World War Memorial**, Hrabyně



 **The Hlučín-Darkovičky Czechoslovak Fortification Complex**



 **The Petr Bezruč Chalet**
Ostravice

The Silesian Museum can be seen as a gate to Silesia, with a scope extending from both animate and inanimate aspects of nature via prehistory and history to art history, primarily on the territory of Czech Silesia, as well as north and northwest Moravia. The Silesian Museum is a contributory organisation of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. With a history stretching back to 1814, it is the oldest public museum on the territory of the current Czech Republic. The museum's 2,400,000 exhibits mean that it is, at the same time, the third biggest in the country.

The museum currently administers six buildings and premises: apart from the Old Exhibition Building in the centre of Opava, these are the Nový Dvůr Arboretum in Stěbořice, the Second World War Memorial in Hrabyně, the Petr Bezruč Memorial in Ostrožná street in Opava, the Hlučín-Darkovičky Czechoslovak Fortification Complex and the Petr Bezruč Chalet in Ostravice. The museum is

home to specialists from the fields of mineralogy, geology, palaeontology, botany, dendrology, entomology, zoology, museology, archaeology, ethnography, numismatics, history and art history, including the history of photography, music, literature and theatre, as well as military history, and restoration experts, museologists and librarians.

Every year the Silesian Museum organises around 30 exhibitions, with special attention being devoted to the history of and nature in Silesia and the Second World War. The museum is a research organisation involved in basic and applied research. The results of research are published in, amongst others, the peer-reviewed *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea* (Silesian Museum Journal), which is published in two editions – edition A for the natural sciences, and edition B for the historical sciences – and the *Slezský sborník* (Silesian Gazette), likewise peer-reviewed.

Guide

Guide to the Old Exhibition Building of the Silesian Museum

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