

ARTIS THEMED WALKS
SECESSION TAILORED TO
THE INQUISITIVE WALKER



SUBOTICA

1 CITY – 5 BUILDINGS – COUNTLESS STORIES

SAVINGS BANK (1907)

4 Korzo Street



Situated on the main Subotica promenade, the building of a former savings bank attracts the eye like a magnet with its fairy-tale façade. An onlooker might think it is some kind of a monumental version of the famous little house made of marzipan and gingerbread cookies from the tale about Hansel and Gretel by the Grimm brothers until he finds out it is the Hungarian Secession style decoration, designed by two prominent architects Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab who left an indelible mark on the urban character of Subotica and the nearby Lake Palić. Built in 1907, Komor and Jakab's bank was a herald of new style in the north of Bačka. Having the characteristics of all tenement palaces, the Savings Bank building is a multipurpose space. In addition to the bank premises, the street level area hosted a restaurant while the apartments for rent occupied the upper floor. There is a corner entrance to the building and the façade walls are brought to life with protruding elements, decorated with ceramics, stone and wrought iron. The two noted architects competently combined banking symbols with folk art motifs and designed a façade featuring squirrels (collecting nuts – frugality), owls (wisdom) and beehives (diligence – labour), as well as floral ornamentation, geometric details, hearts and peacock feathers typical of the Hungarian Secession. Particular attention is drawn to the busts of two young women resting their chins on their hands. Placed in the consoles on the façade wall facing the promenade, they are a charming blend of Secession and bay windows, a familiar feature of everyday life in Vojvodina. These are protruding windows from the main walls of houses offering a view of what is happening outside, in public space. Such funny, attractive detail gives this building a particular charm. Its pastel colours and fine ornamentation made of Zsolnay ceramics give an impression of embroidery in the façade. Locally known as "Putnik" (a traveller) since it used to be the home of a well-known Yugoslav travel agency for many years, the Savings Bank building was restored in 1992.

Tenement Palaces

The term "tenement palace" emerged in the mid-19th century when the industrial revolution started a massive migration into cities. With the development of cities, their urbanization and a specific lifestyle typical of large settlements, a tenement palace came into the picture offering a practical, representative, cost-effective office and residential space designed with taste. Consequently, investors with an entrepreneurial flair started putting up buildings with shops and offices at street level and differently categorized apartments – on upper floors – from those luxurious ones on the first floor to tiny rooms in the loft. The choice of location, the building's functionality, and particularly its appearance, were crucial for the cost-effectiveness of such investments. Although tenement palaces could be seen in European cities even before Secession, there is no doubt that some of the finest among them were built in this style.

Strict House Rules

Doing business and living in tenement palaces, such as the Savings Bank building, required both possessing considerable funds and observing strict house rules. The rentiers, a new occupation to emerge with the development of modern cities, cared very much about the reputation of their buildings. The tenants were allowed to wash, dry and air their clothes and bedding only at a specific time and place, as it is noted in the house rules of the Town Tenement Palace in Subotica preserved from 1930. The rules that prohibited making any kind of noise, disposing of garbage outside of designated spaces, unnecessary wasting of water and a series of other regulations proved that the rentiers were quite serious. However respectable and rich, a tenant could have easily gotten evicted if he failed to observe the house rules. The same could have happened if the tenant's servants used the main entrance and staircase and not the hallways designated for them. All of this is a positive proof that the term "palace" associated with these buildings was not just a fine metaphor since the rentiers did their best to provide high living conditions, almost like those in a royal palace.



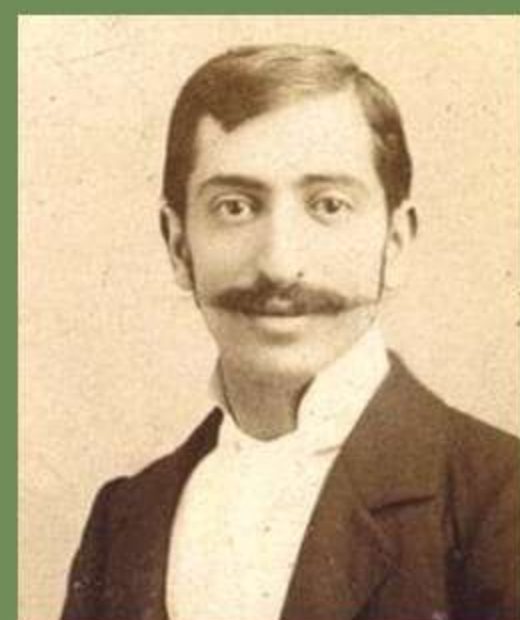
CITY HALL (1907–1912)

3 Sloboda Square



The construction and interior decoration works on this master-piece of the Hungarian Secession, the administrative and commercial monumental building of the City Hall in Subotica, were carried out between 1907 and 1912. The deep red and delicate pink façade walls of the City Hall, its high tower and roof covered with Zsolnay ceramics are a fruit of the design by Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab. Believing that such a luxurious building should have its own funds for maintenance, the two distinguished Hungarian architects designed the City Hall aiming to include a restaurant and office space for rent on the ground floor at street level, while the upper floors were intended for tax administration and other city services. Once you pass through the entrance hall and climb the grand staircase richly decorated with moss-green Zsolnay tiles to reach the first floor, there are doors opening to three impressive halls – Grand, Yellow and Green. While the Yellow and Green Halls were designed as offices for the Mayor and County Prefect (Subotica used to be the seat of Bács-Bodrog county), the Grand Hall hosts important social gatherings and Assembly meetings. It boasts lavish decoration, its highlights being stained glass windows featuring faces of rulers and historic figures from the period of Austro-Hungarian rule. The stained glass windows were crafted by famous Hungarian artists Miksa Róth and Sándor Nagy. It took two years for the team of highly skilled masters of art crafts to complete the decoration works on the City Hall. However, their efforts did produce an extraordinary effect of a treasury inspired by the Hungarian folk-lore ornamentation. Every detail in this magnificent edifice – from the motifs of tulips, hearts, peacock feathers, to the fine frieze featuring artisans on the main staircase – echoes with Secession and its expertly shaped forms in playful colours, leaving the onlooker intoxicated. The prevailing gold and yellow are interspersed with the patches of cheerful yellow, light purple, deep red and other colours with a remarkable skill as is often seen in folk embroiderers and weavers.

The brilliant works in ceramics, stone, wood and glass, the carefully designed lighting and the charm of isolated details clearly show how much it meant to Subotica's city officials from the early 20th century that the City Hall reflected both the financial power as a centre of commerce on the major rail route from Szeged to Rijeka, as well as the sense of aesthetics and keeping pace with the leading art trends in Europe.

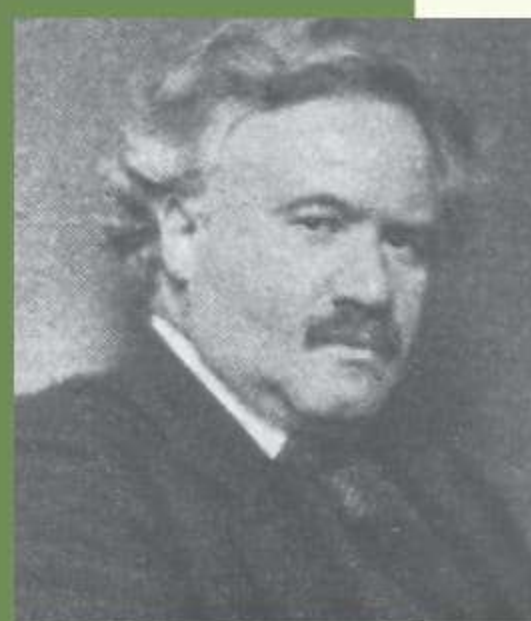


Marcell Komor



Marcell Komor (1866–1944) and Dezső Jakab (1864–1932)

Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab, two Hungarian architects of Jewish descent, were the students and followers of Ödön Lechner, the father of Hungarian Secession. They both majored in architecture at the University of Technology in Budapest and worked for a while at Lechner's architect studio in the Hungarian capital. During that time, Komor co-designed the Museum of Applied Arts and the Hungarian Institute of Geology in Budapest, while Jakab was engaged in the design works for the Ministry of Agriculture. Their rise began in 1897 with the decision to open their own studio where they would design numerous buildings all around the former Kingdom of Hungary for the following two decades, until the end of World War I. Komor specialized in the concept of buildings, their structure and functionality, whereas Jakab was an expert for interior design and decoration. Having completed his studies, Jakab travelled around Europe at the time when the European Secession was on the upswing. Komor was an active journalist and even founded the "Entrepreneur" magazine where he mostly wrote about modern architecture. If Ödön Lechner is rightfully considered the father of Hungarian Secession, there is no doubt Komor and Jakab are his truly creative sons. One just needs to look at the City Hall in Târgu Mureș (Romania), the hotel in Oradea (Romania), the concert hall in Bratislava (Slovakia) or the Erkel Theatre in Budapest, and compare them with Subotica's City Hall, Savings Bank, Synagogue or the structures by Lake Palić. Komor and Jakab definitely incorporated the concept of national style into the key ideas of Secession with such excellence that they were practically unrivalled among their contemporaries.



Dezső Jakab

SYNAGOGUE (1902)

6 Sinagoga Square



If there is a building that gives a visitor the impression that he has entered a precious jewelry box, this is no doubt the Subotica Synagogue. Built in 1902 to the design of Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab, it was based on the idea of Moses' Tent of Meeting. It is a masterpiece of Hungarian Secession in every sense of the word. From the construction design which perfectly unites many details within a functional whole, to the exceptionally elaborate decoration combining glazed and unglazed brick, ceramics, stuccowork, wrought iron, wood carving, wall painting and stained glass. A wide variety of windows in different shapes and sizes, decorated with stained glass by Miksa Róth, creates a magical light effect in this space dominated by shades of soft green, terracotta and golden. Apart from its aesthetic value, the Synagogue is a kind of an engineering miracle in terms of construction of the central and side domes. Marcell Komor demonstrated there both his expert knowledge in engineering and quite an avantgarde way of thinking. The octagonal plan of the Synagogue is perfectly balanced with the complex, five-dome roof structure, and its unique ornamentation featuring the motifs of the Star of David, poppies, peacock feathers, tulips and hearts is brought into complete symbolic and aesthetic harmony. There is an interesting story about how this architectural design came to be executed in Subotica. Namely, Komor and Jakab submitted this design proposal in a design competition for the construction of a new synagogue in the nearby Szeged in 1899. However, the winner was a more conservative and more traditional design by architect Lipót Baumhorn. The Jewish community of Subotica, already intent on building a synagogue, followed this competition with due attention and promptly decided to buy the second-prize winning design by Komor and Jakab with some minor changes. At the time, no one ever imagined that the construction of synagogue would enable this duo of architects to put up other impressive public edifices in Subotica. Such developments laid the foundation for Subotica to become the capital of Secession in Vojvodina a century later. The Synagogue was fully renovated in 2017 with the funds provided by the Republic of Hungary and the National Council of the Hungarian Ethnic Minority, under the supervision of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia – Belgrade and the Intermunicipal Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments – Subotica.

Gold-plated Key from the Architect's Hands

Back in those times, the Subotica press described 17th September 1903, the inauguration day of the new synagogue, as an unprecedented event in the town's history. After a proper ceremony, blessings of chief rabbi Mór Kuttna, a solemn hymn and speeches by eminent officials, one of the architects, Jakab Dezső, handed over the gold-plated key to the temple to the president of the Jewish religious community, Dr Géza Blau. Dr Blau asked the mayor Károly Biró to take the key and as the town's chief official present the synagogue to its sacred purpose. This is how Károly Biró came to be the one to unlock the new temple and the first to enter the space that can easily accommodate around 1600 people. On this festive, joyful day no one ever imagined that only four decades later the Jewish community in Subotica would almost be wiped off the face of the earth.

Miksa Róth (1865–1944)

A mosaicist and stained glass artist Miksa Róth is not so famous as his slightly older American colleague Louis Comfort Tiffany, but there is no doubt that he ranks among the world's greatest artists in this field of applied art. A Hungarian of Jewish descent, Róth learned the glass working skills from his father. His extraordinary talent and a pioneer spirit very soon earned him the status of a royal glass master and urged him to set sail into the waters of Secession. It is not an overstatement to say that Miksa Róth's studio glazed the windows of the entire Budapest – from the Parliament building to St. Stephen's Basilica. And not only Budapest since Róth's stained glass windows are found all over Austria, on the Royal Palace of Amsterdam, and as far away as Mexico on the spectacular glass dome of their National Theatre. An educated, curious traveller, Róth carefully studied art in his travels so it is no wonder that some of his works were influenced by the English Pre-Raphaelites and William Morris. Although academic art prevailed in his works because of the commissions he received, with his designs he left an indelible mark on the Hungarian Secession art.

TENEMENT HOUSE OF MIKSA DÖMÖTÖR – CITY MUSEUM, SUBOTICA(1906)

3 Sinagoga Square

The tenement house of Dr Miksa Dömötör, the present-day City Museum of Subotica, is an interesting echo of Viennese Secession and German Jugendstil in a town dominated by the Hungarian variant of Secession. Built to the design by prominent Budapest architects of Jewish descent, brothers József and László Vágó, Dömötör's house is a representative example of modern spatial organization and elegant, reduced façade decoration. Designed to accommodate a five-bedroom apartment and a doctor's office for the owner, as well as two shops on the ground floor, two apartments for rent, and a printing house in the courtyard, this stylish building with a soft yellow façade is quite functional. Namely, the Vágó brothers solved the issue of this fairly complex designation of space in the manner that allowed the tenants not to meet each other, and had they decided otherwise, they could have simply passed from one spatial unit to the other. Created to fulfill the needs of a dynamic personality with varied interests and an entrepreneurial spirit, Dömötör's house preserved the characteristic "signature" of the Vágó brothers in terms of decoration. The pastel shades of harmonic, mostly geometric ornamentation, stylized hearts and birds – a trademark of this architectural duo – flatter the façade like a necklace lying against the neck of a beautiful woman. Particularly interesting details include the heads with gaping mouths, as if shouting to each other, placed in the cornice as a reminiscence of the medieval Gothic sculpture. Dr Dömötör sold his beautiful house already in 1910 to Subotica Trade and Credit Bureau, and in 1923 it passed into the hands of Vojvodina Trade and Transport Company. Two years later, the Minerva Printing and Publishing Company, owned by the pioneers of Subotica journalism, brothers Ferenc and Lajos Fenyves, founders of the newspaper *Bácsmegyei Napló*, bought Dr Dömötör's house which remained its seat until the end of World War II, when the house and company were nationalized. The City Museum of Subotica, established in 1892, entered the premises in 2008, allowing the public to learn more about the Secession legacy and other content related to the rich, interesting history of the town and its surroundings.

József (1877–1947) and László Vágó (1875–1933)

Brothers József and László Vágó were born in the Romanian town of Oradea at the time when it was part of the Hungarian territory. They received a degree in architecture from the University of Technology in Budapest and designed a large number of public buildings and private houses together until 1910. They were initially strongly influenced by Ödön Lechner, but over time, as they collaborated with Ignác Alpár, they came under his influence and began searching for their own style closer to classicism and minimalism. Together they designed several buildings in Budapest – Nemzeti Szalon (National Salon), Petőfi House, Gutenberg Otthon building with ornamentation irresistibly resembling the one on the façade of Dr Dömötör's house, Árkád-Bazár, and Városliget Theatre in the city park. László died in 1933. His tombstone features the engravings of all the buildings he designed. József had to leave Hungary because of his socialist beliefs. From 1920 on, he lived in Switzerland and Italy where he was soon recognized as a talented architect. He is one of the four architects of the Palace of Nations in Geneva, a winner of several prestigious awards and an author of authoritative books on architecture.

Dr Miksa Dömötör (1868–1944)

A member of the Hungarian Royal Medical Chamber, pediatrician Miksa Dömötör came to Subotica from Budapest in 1894. A distinguished intellectual figure with an inquisitive, active and entrepreneurial spirit, he left an indelible mark on the history of Subotica during his short stay there. As a physician and scientist, he was the first to apply diphtheria serum, he successfully treated trachoma – an infectious eye disease – and was among the pioneers of diagnostic x-ray procedures. In addition to his private practice, he was a physician at an insurance company, published translations of medical books written by his distinguished peers and his own publication "About Serums" which received a prestigious award. He also took an active part in business as deputy director of the "Favorit" soda water factory, a member of the executive board of the Marble Industry and a stonecutting company. He was one of the founders of the Trade and Craft Self-Help Cooperative and even managed to establish the first bee-keeping magazine in southern Hungary.



József Vágó



The enchanting Raichle Palace would not have such a charming appearance had this famous architect not wished to build his private house on a plot across the main railway station. Together with railway stations, trains – the wonder of the 19th century – were treated as a first-rate adornment of those cities lucky enough to be along a railroad. Consequently, town officials cared about the impressions that the stations left on travellers. For this reason, Raichle's first design of his family house was rejected as insufficiently presentable so Raichle faced a challenge to build a wonder never seen before. And wonder did happen in the form of a two-storey (ground floor+upper floor) magic with a high front façade wall and lavish decoration made of Zsolnay ceramics, Murano mosaics, stained glass windows and wrought iron. Subotica was presented with a superior work of art in the Hungarian Secession style and art historians were given a precious opportunity to study a house an architect built for himself. Apart from an elaborate façade dominated by floral and heart motifs, characteristic of the Hungarian folklore, Raichle devoted much attention to the interior. Every room – from his design studio, to the drawing room, to the part of the house facing the back yard – was designed with an attention to the smallest of details. From lighting and stuccowork, to fine woodwork, grand staircase and a fantastic, omega-shaped window, so typical of Secession, facing the garden. A masterpiece of Secession, Raichle Palace is a precious example of an elegant, sumptuous private mansion from the early 20th century. Unfortunately, it did not stay long in the architect's possession for he had the reputation of a bohemian and risk taker. His business was not going well. He went bankrupt in 1908 and his palace was sold at an auction. Today it is the home of the Contemporary Art Gallery.

FERENC RAICHLE PALACE (1903–4)

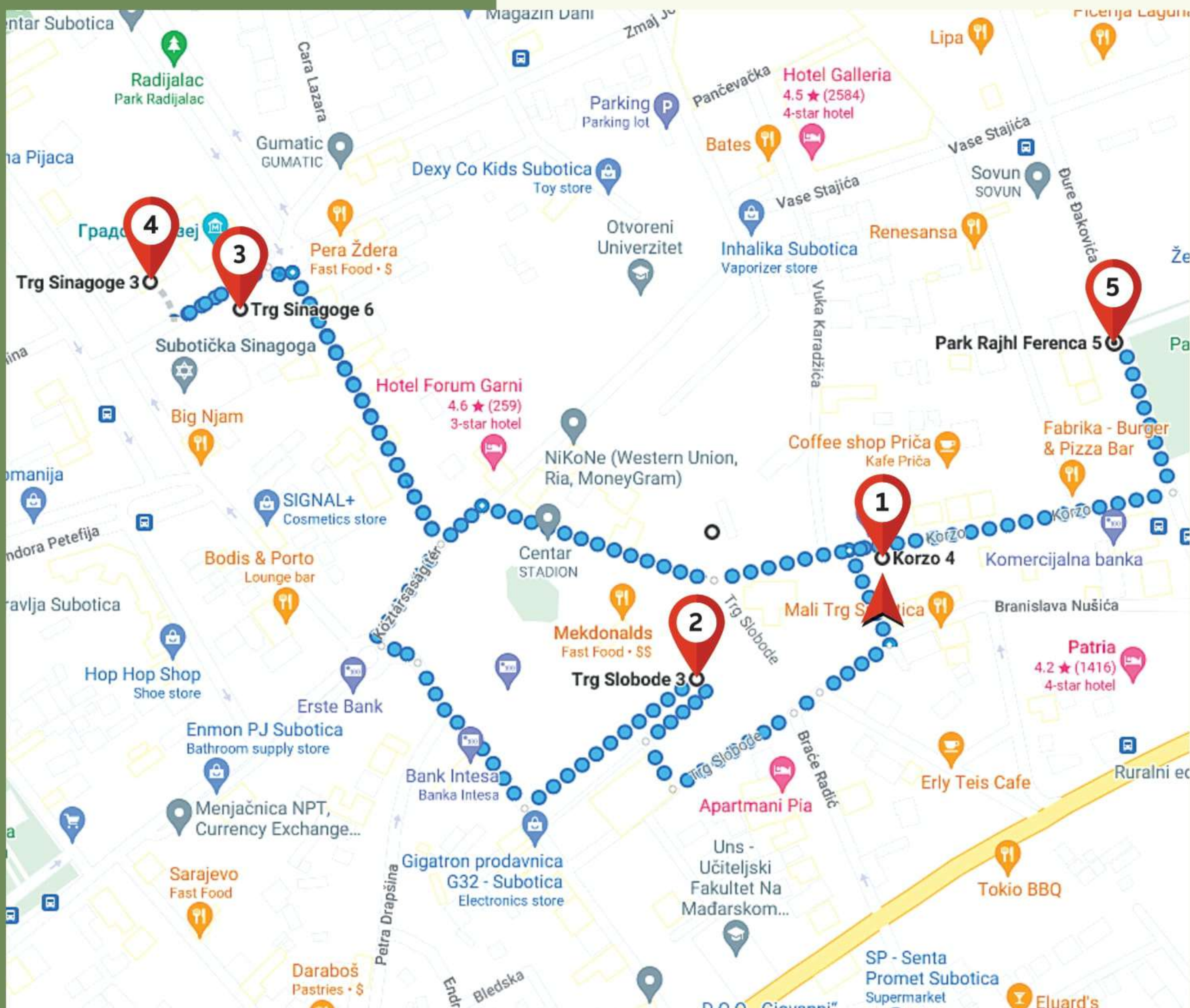
5 Ferenc Raichle Park



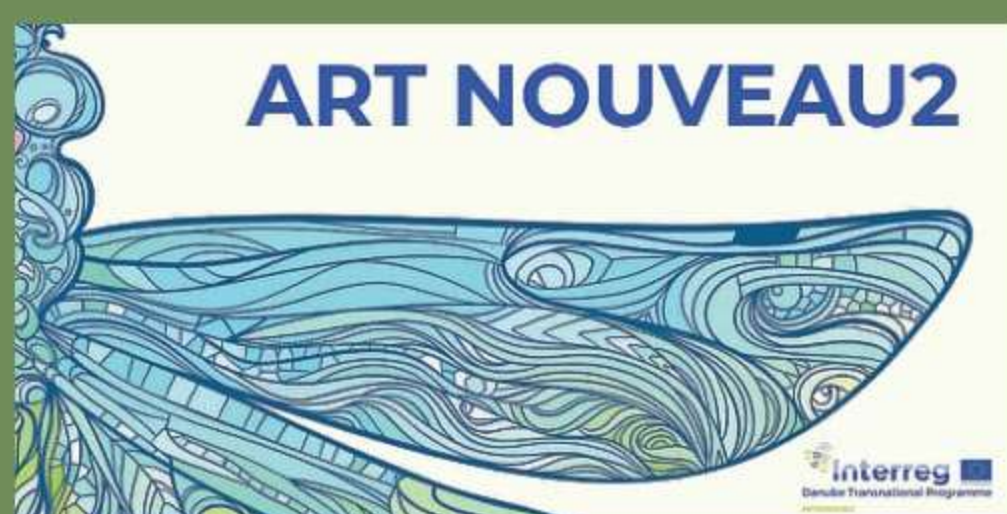
Ferenc Raichle (1869–1960)

Born in Apatin, Ferenc Raichle received a degree in architecture in Budapest in 1891. After his studies, he travelled around Europe at the time when the old continent saw the birth of a new art movement – Secession. Several years later he was commissioned to redecorate the façade of the National Hotel in Subotica. At the same time he was working on a Neo-Baroque design for the National Casino building which today hosts the City Library. He won the first prize for the Subotica grammar school building. In the meantime, he was engaged on the construction of the barracks building. He was given the opportunity to try his hand at a new style when he designed his own tenement houses in Vase Stajića Street (they were regrettably torn down sometime ago), and afterwards while working on a palace for his family and a tenement building right next to it. Obviously, the Subotica investors were not ready for the new style but it did not prevent Raichle to experiment on buildings that were his own property. After going bankrupt in 1908, he moved to Szeged where he designed his famous Secession buildings – Vastag House, Móricz House, and Gróf Palace. He died in old age in Budapest, the only city where he never created any major designs.

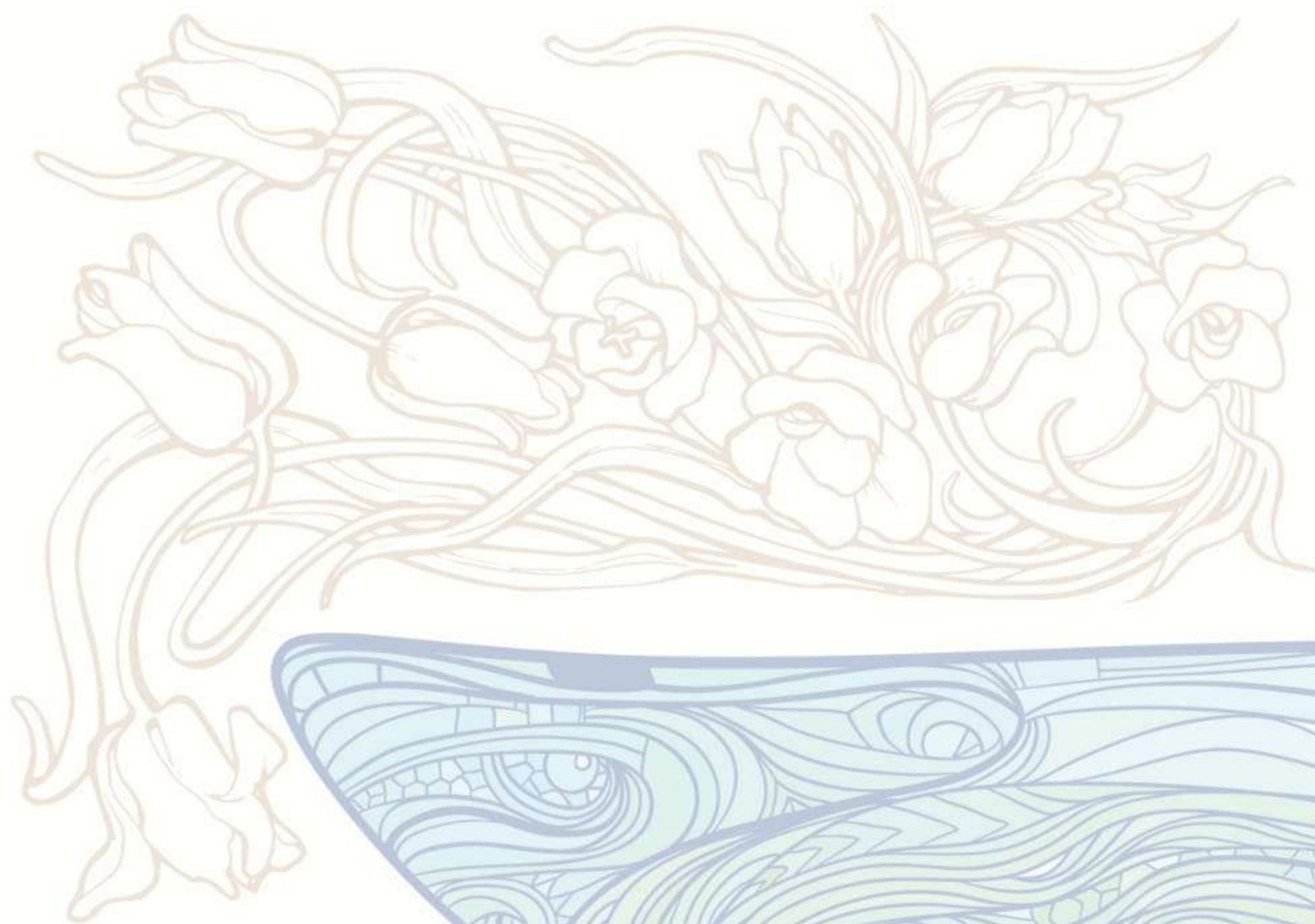




Brochures on themed walks inspired by the Secession heritage in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Subotica are available for free download from Republic institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments website at www.heritage.gov.rs and Artis Center website at www.artiscenter.com.



An original concept of Artis Center, the "Secession Tailored to the Inquisitive Walker" programme has been carried out within the project Art Nouveau 2 – *Strengthening the Danube Region's cultural identity by building on common heritage of Art Nouveau*, where Republic institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments features as a project partner, and the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia as an affiliate partner.



Artis Themed Walks

SECESSION TAILORED TO THE INQUISITIVE WALKER

Belgrade, Novi Sad, Subotica

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