




  
Czech Republic

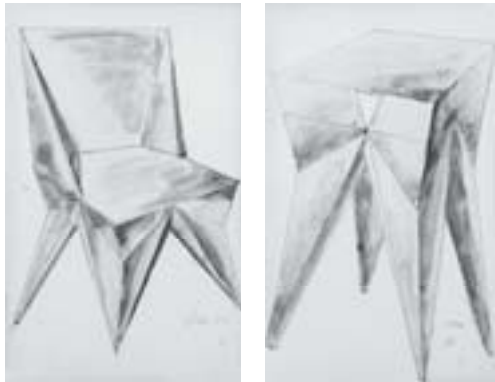
**Phenomenon:  
Czech  
Architectural  
Cubism**

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**Vlastislav Hofman**  
Furniture designs, 1912-13

## Phenomenon: Czech Architectural Cubism

The artistic trend of Cubism originated in Paris thanks to Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), who painted the first Cubist picture, *Les Femmes d'Alger*, in 1907. The principle of Cubism was to break down the portrayed object (the landscape, figure or still life), and, following its disintegration and analysis, to reconstruct it without losing its objective character.

Other artists followed in Picasso's footsteps: Georges Braque, Albert Gleizes, Jean Metzinger, Robert Delaunay, Juan Gris and Jacques Duchamp-Villon. Intense contacts between French and Czech artists led to the exciting new trend being quickly brought to Prague and other cities. Protagonists of Czech Cubism included the painters Bohumil Kubišta, Emil Filla, Antonín Procházka, Václav Špála, Josef Čapek and the sculptor Otto Gutfreund.

In 1911 the architect, town planner and theoretician Pavel Janák (1882-1956) also became enchanted by Cubism. Until that time he had ranked among representatives of architectural Modernism, and was influenced in particular by the work of two leading figures of the day in Vienna and Prague, Otto Wagner and Jan Kotěra. Janák also designed his first major construction in the Modernist style - the reinforced concrete Hlávka Bridge in Prague. He later reached the conclusion that the new rational architecture was ceasing to be an artistic discipline that fired the imagination. Inspired by Picasso's artistic Cubism, crystalline forms of nature, though also by the architecture of Late Gothic and Santini's Baroque Gothic, he laid the foundations of a new trend in architecture - Cubism. He then formulated them in his celebrated essay *Prism and Pyramid*, which he published in the new periodical *Art Monthly*, issued by an association of Czech Cubists brought together in the Group of Fine Artists: *'All other forms in inanimate nature that are geometrically*

*more complicated were created through the interaction of three forces: the diagonal rainfall is caused by the adjoining factor of the wind; in the same way snowdrifts, ravines, gorges in cliffs, caves, hollows, volcanoes, are mostly forms created positively or negatively out of inanimate substance by another, emerging force within it, one that deforms that substance and makes it diverge from the natural shape in which it was formed. The most beautiful example is crystallisation...'*

Janák also designed the first Cubist house to be built (Jakubec House in Jičín, 1911-12) and later other buildings. He was followed by only a few architects, the most interesting of whom include Josef Gočár, Josef Chochol, Vlastislav Hofman, Otakar Novotný and Rudolf Stockar. He didn't only design houses, but also works of Cubist applied art. However this new and rather extravagant style came up against the criticism of older, more conservative circles as well as representatives of the younger generation that preferred the principles of Modernism following on from the legacy of Jan Kotěra. The protagonists of the new trend, chief among them Janák and Gočár, abandoned Cubism after the founding of the independent Czechoslovak republic in 1918, instead promoting the 'national style', a Czechoslovak version of Art Deco. The final Cubist buildings came into being during the period around 1920.

This highly original architectural style was rediscovered and rehabilitated in the 1960s. Nowadays it enjoys great international popularity, and specialists and art lovers from all over the world travel in large numbers to see the few buildings that remain. Our calendar acquaints you with at least some of them.

**Zdeněk Lukeš**



**Vlastislav Hofman**  
Side table and sofa, 1912



**Pavel Janák**  
Earthenware container with a lid, 1911



**Pavel Janák:**  
**Fára House, Pelhřímov,**  
**1913–1914**

Pavel Janák (1882–1956), a pupil of Otto Wagner at the Vienna Academy of Art and the ideological creator of architectural Cubism (later also a professor at the Prague College of Applied Arts and the Prague Castle architect) made a very interesting addition to a Baroque house on Masaryk Square in Pelhřímov with a Cubist gable, a corner oriel window and a portal. He succeeded ingeniously in combining both styles into a harmonic form.

01



**Josef Gočár:  
The House of the Black  
Madonna in Prague's  
Old Town, 1911–1912**

Josef Gočár (1880–1945), another of the protagonists of Cubism, a pupil of Jan Kotěra at the Prague College of Applied Arts (and later his successor at the Prague Academy of Fine Arts) designed perhaps the best-known Cubist building – the House of the Black Madonna. He succeeded in sensitively incorporating the new building into the context of the historical architecture of Ovocný trh (the former Fruit Market) in the Old Town district of Prague. Today the upper floors house a permanent exhibition of Czech Cubism from the collection of the Prague National Gallery and the Prague Museum of Decorative Arts.

02



**Josef Gočár:  
House of the Black Madonna  
– interior of the Orient Café,  
original 1912, renewed 2005**

Fitted with Cubist furniture, the Orient Café was a beautiful space on the first floor of the House of the Black Madonna. The interior was later destroyed and the café ceased to exist. It was renewed in 2005 according to original plans and photographic documentation, and nowadays ranks among the most popular cafés in Prague.

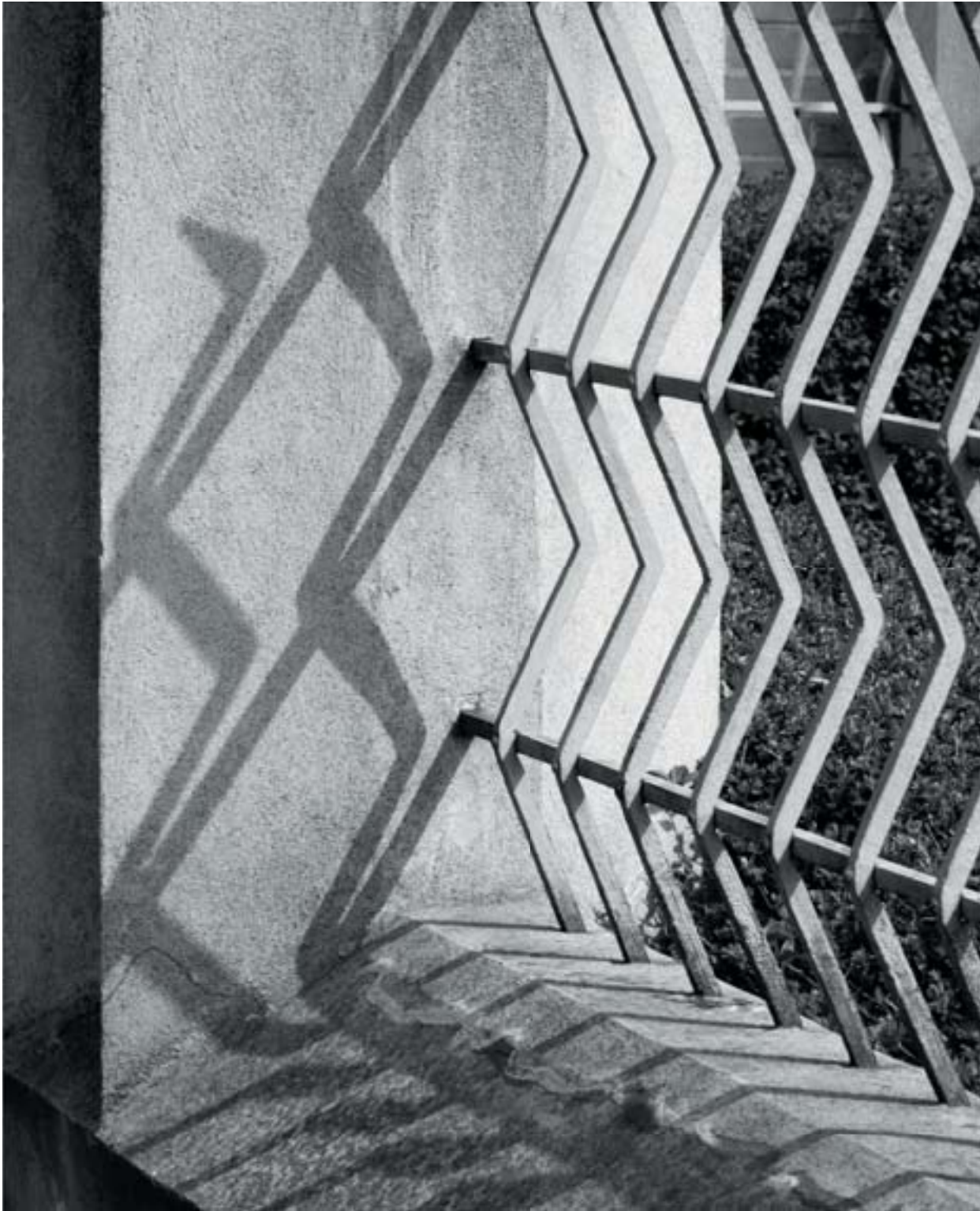
03



**Josef Gočár:  
Spa Pavilion in Bohdaneč,  
1912–1913**

Another of Gočár's major implemented projects – a spa pavilion, was built in the town of Bohdaneč in eastern Bohemia. The building, symmetrical along its axis, was later raised by Gočár to include an attic storey. The original fittings have not survived.

04



**Josef Chochol:  
Kovařovič Villa  
in Prague – Vyšehrad,  
1912–1913**

The architect Josef Chochol (1880–1956) studied at the Prague Technical College and the Vienna Academy of Art under Prof. Otto Wagner. He was considered the most radical Cubist designer. One of his most important buildings is the villa with a strikingly modelled façade designed for the builder Kovařovič in Libuřina St under Vyšehrad cliff.

05

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**Josef Chochol:**  
**Corner apartment house**  
**in Prague – Vyšehrad,**  
**1913–1914**

Chochol's best-known building once again ranks among examples of radical Cubism. A striking element is the slender corner pillar supporting the crowning cornice.

06

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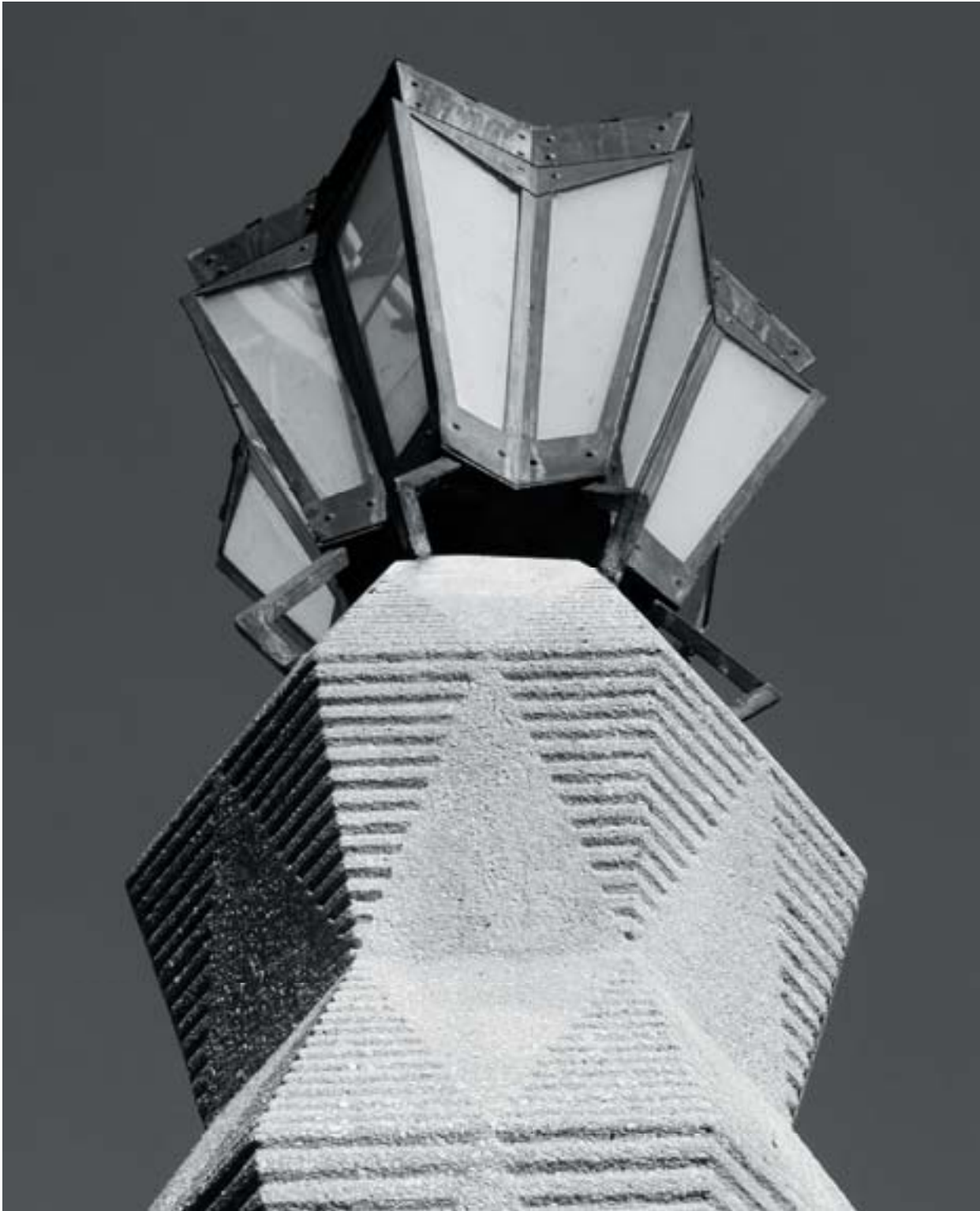


**Josef Gočár:  
Stach and Hofmann House  
in Prague-Hradčany,  
1911–1912**

This semi-detached house in Tychonova St was built in stages. The older building still features a series of elements in the style of geometric Modernism, while Gočár gave the southern house a Cubist form during its construction, as can be seen for example in the tympanum over the entranceway and the stair railings. A quaint wooden Cubist arbour stands in the garden.

07

01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31



**Emil Králíček:  
Street lamp in Prague's  
New Town, 1912–1913**

Emil Králíček (1877–1930) worked under Josef Maria Olbrich on the construction of the well-known artists' colony in Darmstadt, Hesse, and was later in charge of the design studio of the Prague builder Matěj Blecha. As part of the construction of the Adam Pharmacy in Wenceslas Square, he also adapted a quiet corner behind the house on Jungmann Square, where he placed one of the icons of architectural Cubism, a street lamp.

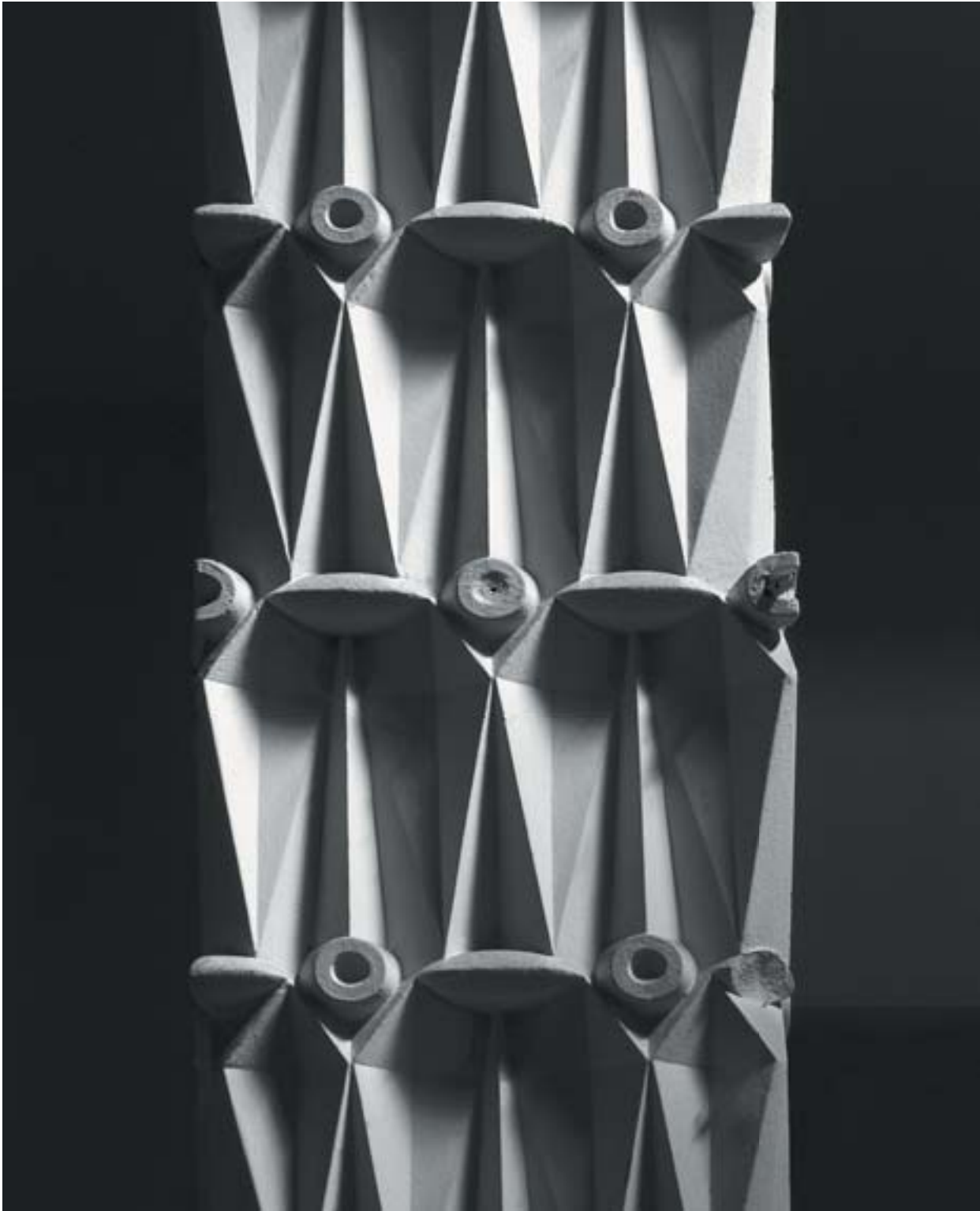
08



**Emil Králíček:  
The Diamant House  
in Prague's New Town,  
1912–1913**

The building on the corner of Spálená St and Lazarská St features a series of elements in the style of late geometric Secession and Cubism. In the space between Diamant and the adjoining Church of the Holy Trinity he also designed a Cubist arch framing a sculpture of St John of Nepomuk.

09



**Emil Králíček:**  
**Benies Villa**  
**in Lysá nad Labem – Litol,**  
**1912–1913**

A remarkable building with a flat roof on which there used to be a garden, this villa stands on the outskirts of a town in central Bohemia. A series of motifs on the façade and in the spacious entrance hall inside features Cubist elements with motifs of sugar crystals, since the investor was the owner of a local sugar refinery.

10



**Otakar Novotný:  
Cooperative houses  
in Prague's Old Town,  
1919–1921**

Otakar Novotný (1880–1959) was a pupil of Jan Kotěra at the Prague College of Applied Arts. He also ranked among the promoters of Cubism, although it was only after the First World War that he realised his first building in this style. Nowadays his houses enclose one side of a piazzetta behind Hotel Intercontinental at a location where the Jewish Ghetto was situated until it was replaced by a new building development following extensive demolition at the turn of the 20th century.

11



**Rudolf Stockar:  
Materna Factory  
in Prague – Holešovice,  
1919–1920**

A graduate of the Prague Technical College, Rudolf Stockar (1886–1957) was the director of the Artěl art workshops that manufactured Cubist furniture and a series of items of applied art, often after Stockar's own designs. During the second period of architectural Cubism (from about 1918 to 1921) Stockar also designed the façade of a small factory in Dělnická St.

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