

# VELENJE

A WALK THROUGH  
A TOWN OF MODERNISM



ROK POLES





I am surprised at all I have seen so far of the creative achievements of our working people. Such feats can be a source of pride not only for our miners and engineers but all our peoples!

TITO on his 1958 visit to Velenje

You only need to take a glance at what Velenje looks like today. Where there used to be shanties and run-down houses, where the workers lived in the worst conditions, a beautiful town has grown, not to speak of how the people's state of mind has changed and how they seem different in every way.

TITO on his 1969 visit to Velenje

Welcome to a tour  
of a socialist miracle,  
a town in a park,  
an ideal town  
of the ideal social order!

Such and similar slogans were used in the late 1950s and 1960s to prompt people to visit Velenje







Coats of arms of the former and present Municipality of Velenje.

# To the Builders of Velenje

**The anthem of Velenje, 1959**

Ivan Marin, Sr.

Where only yesterday  
farmers ploughed the fields,  
where the land was  
plagued by bogs and floods,  
a miracle appeared overnight;  
now all that's old is past  
and the Paka tamely murmurs  
the song of the future.

Filling each of us with pride  
the town glows in the sun,  
working side by side  
for our community we burn.  
Velenje, now so beautiful,  
is like a garden bountiful  
to be emulated by our sons,  
may this be our song of joy!



1938



1963

# A town that grew overnight.



# VELENJE

A WALK THROUGH  
**A TOWN OF MODERNISM**  
an architectural guide



ROK POLES







Velenje lignite coal,  
the foundation of the  
town's development



# DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN

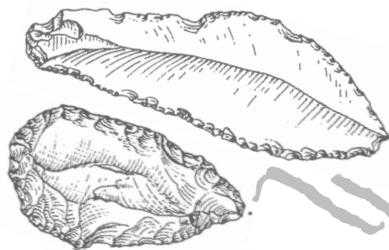
## The story of Velenje

begins two and a half million years ago, when a marshy valley was wooded by a lush forest. It gradually turned into **lignite coal** which gave rise to a town – one of Slovenia's two youngest towns.

We are going to see a portion of Velenje's architectural heritage: its section in time and space. **A section in time** because the monuments included are not from all artistic periods but only from the end of World War II to 1970, which overlaps with the period of "international style" or "modernism". **A section in space** because only the central part of Velenje is dealt with: the town centre, the area of the children's playground and Sončni park, and the housing developments between the Old Mine Shaft and the Church of St Martin. We are going to see the most representative and stylistically purest part of the town which was considered a »socialist miracle«: **"a town in a park"**.

This town was not created in empty no-man's land but in a rich, multifaceted **Central European cultural landscape** which had been shaped by people for thousands of years, in both its physical and spiritual form. In **physical form** by its arrangement of villages, castles and churches, fields, vineyards, meadows and paths, and the boundaries between them. In **intangible/spiritual** form, firstly by naming the natural features, e.g. hills and water bodies, and with a host of mythical creatures who shared this area with humans: fairies, dwarfs, giants, water men and similar characters ruled over by the lake dragon – pozoj. These beings were usually associated with special places: natural bridges (Vilinja/Veluja peč), pot-holes (Huda luknja), rocks above springs (Velerjev izvir), islands amid a lake (Škale), etc.





Archaeological finds show that the caves at the edge of the Šalek Valley were first used by people in the **Ice Age**. An artefact from the **Roman period** is Speratinus' headstone, found beneath the church which was called »St Martin in the Suburb« in the 19th century, even though no town had so far existed in the valley – the name may hark back to the Roman "town" or alleged post-station of Uppellae which would have stood in the valley. In the Middle Ages, a **parish** with the church of "St George on the Lake" was established in Škale – St George was the saint who slew the dragon. "Petrified dragon's blood" (the old name for coal) outcrops in some places in the valley, the coal deposit poking out from the ground at its edges. Originally such dragon's blood was only used in medicine. The first records of **Velenje** date from the 13th century. The rural landscape of the valley's east edge was dominated by **Velenje Castle**, both symbolically and visually. With reportedly the largest concentration of **castles** in Styria, the Šalek Valley was regarded as a "valley of castles", and in the second half of the 19th century as one of the loveliest, most enchanting valleys of Styria, a **tourist destination** in fact, which was visited by guests from the nearby spa in Dobrna. Many noble families settled here, restored old castles and built new villas. In spiritual form, the mythical creatures were joined by a multitude of saints who guided people's daily life and helped them in their trials and tribulations.





All the key maps (shown on the following pages) include the same detail to illustrate how this area changed over time.

c. 1775

**Military map of Joseph II:** the east end of the Šalek Valley. The town will be placed amid old elements of the area: Stara vas and St Martin.

Staro Velenje village (now "Stara vas")

the **path** to mark off the northern edge of the town

sv. Martin

The location of the future town of modernism

the originally **winding** route from Velenje to Salek

market town of Velenje

Velenje Castle

the Paka stream

Šalek village



The coats of arms of the last aristocratic owners of Velenje Castle: the counts von Harnoncour, the barons von Adamovich, the counts Coronini-Cronberg



c. 1825

**Cadastre of Francis I,**  
districts of Velenje and  
Šalek, detail. New transport  
elements appear in the area:  
a straight road and railway.  
The requirements for the  
valley's industrial develop-  
ment are in place.

The location  
of the future  
town of modernism

railway line

The railway line  
to Celje was built  
in 1891 and  
extended to  
Dravograd in 1899.

Velenje – Šalek road

rural

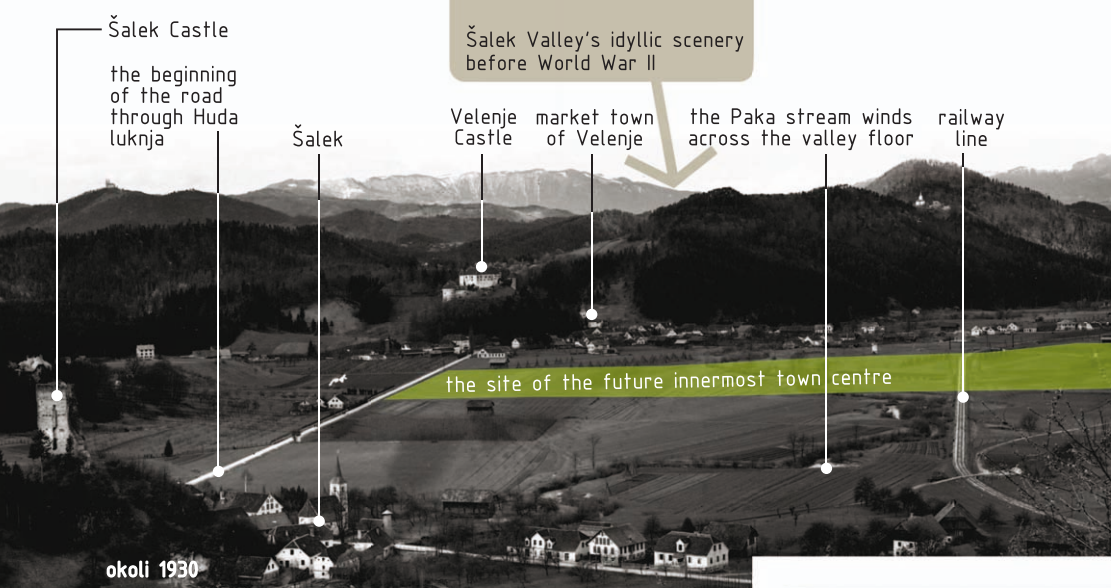
In 1825, a **straight road** was built  
**from Velenje to Šalek** as a sight-  
line between the two castles.  
125 years later the initial road  
section through Huda luknja  
defined the geometrical grid of  
the town centre of new Velenje.

I was responsible  
for this straight  
road which gives  
the centre of  
Velenje its  
orientation!

**Archduke John,**  
responsible for  
building the road  
through Huda luknja.







**Industrialization**, which characterized the valley's development, was only just emerging in the 19th century: the road through Huda luknja was built (1825), Woschnag's tannery sprang up in Šoštanj, a 100-metre thick coal deposit was discovered (1875), giving rise to a coal mine, and a railway line was built at the turn of the century. The founder of the coal mine, Daniel von Lapp, built a **mining colony** with "hauses" for the colliers: with minimalistic flats (room + kitchen), communal bathrooms and communal bread ovens. During World War II, the Germans studied the reserves of Velenje lignite and rapaciously pushed production to its extreme limits. **Depressions** due to subsidence started appearing on the surface and filled with water.

Coal mining was one of the most promising industries!



Daniel von Lapp



The mining colony in Pesje started to be built in 1902.

In 1931, the rural **market town** of Velenje had only 79 houses and 648 inhabitants.

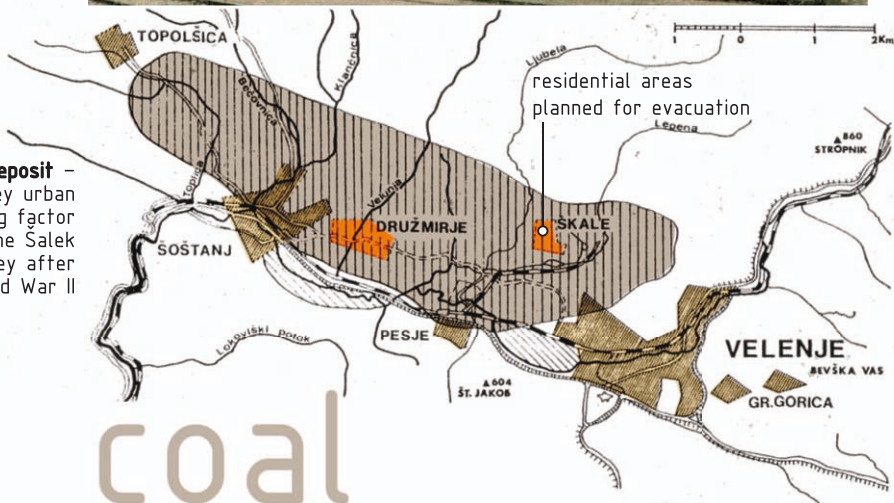
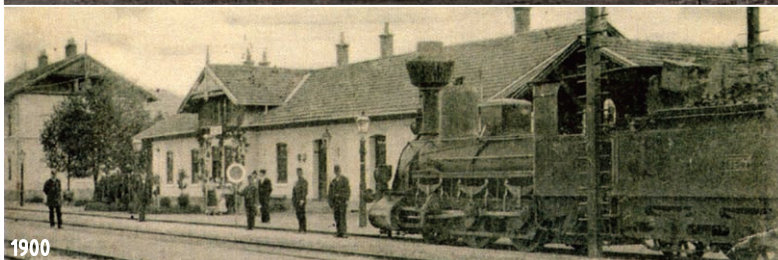
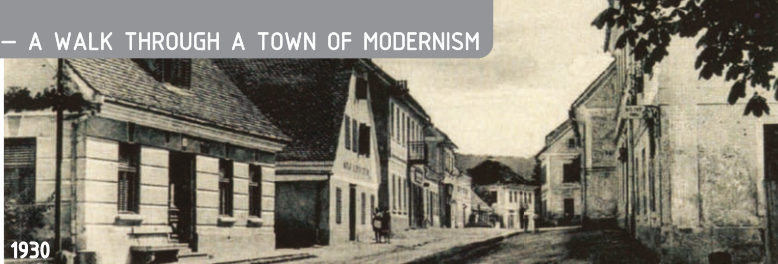
The **Velenje mine** was considered a »country mine«. About 70,000 tons of coal were excavated yearly. The Francis Joseph shaft (today the Old Mine Shaft).

The **Velenje power plant** was designed in Sarajevo, hence the Cyrillic sign on it, removed in 1941. Its monumental facade made it the new symbolic and visual landmark of the valley.

## Railway station in Velenje.

The plans for the railway station as well as its colour scheme were standardized.

**Lignite deposit** – the key urban planning factor in the Salek Valley after World War II



# coal



1948

## Viljem Strmecki, Urban design for the Šalek Valley,

Project Engineering  
Institute of Ljubljana,  
detail. Similarities can be  
seen with the "radiant  
city" of Le Corbusier, the  
pioneer of modernism.

realised parts of the design —

the location of  
the future town  
of modernism



The lignite deposit was rich and maximum output was expected from the Velenje coal mine right after World War II to supply Slovenian industry with electricity. **Coal became the key urban planning factor in the Šalek Valley:** residential areas which lay on top of the coal deposit were doomed to destruction and the east end of the valley, which has no coal, was set aside for a new mining town. In 1948, the architect **Viljem Strmecki** of the Project Engineering Institute of Ljubljana made a plan for urbanizing the entire southern part of the Šalek Valley with new housing developments and new



transport connections (the old roads in the middle of the valley being submerged). He sited Velenje in the area between Stara vas and St Martin, on a flood-proof riverside terrace. The town was laid out along a **grid** oriented to give the buildings **maximum sun exposure**. Most residents would live in long, narrow, four-storey blocks of flats, some straight and others curved. There were also plans for a carpet of two-storey semi-detached houses, blocks of flats for singles, play and work centres, a few rows of terraced houses and a handful of single-family houses within plots. The emphasis was on living in a community. The town would have a railway and bus station, restaurant, post office, hotel, cultural centre, hall, club, cinema, warehouse, hospital, primary and secondary schools, coal mine headquarters, a stadium and a cooperative building. Bathing areas and playgrounds were envisioned by the Paka stream (with no plans for its regulation as yet). But Strmecki's vision of a collectivist town dissolved in cold reality: the mine built **wooden shanties** and **single-family houses**. As these failed to match the ideal of a "socialist commune" and provide housing for the multitude of mining families, **"provisional buildings"** were built: multiple-family single-storey terraced houses with pitched roofs and **low blocks** of 4, 6, 10 or 18 flats. They resembled the pre-war working colonies. During the first post-war five-year plan, all funds were channelled into the reconstruction and development of basic industry and there was hardly any money for housing. **The centralist government hampered the town's development through reallocation of money which left little funds for investment despite Velenje's great economic power.** Velenje was at risk of becoming nothing but a dormitory mining colony.

## A town or a working colony?

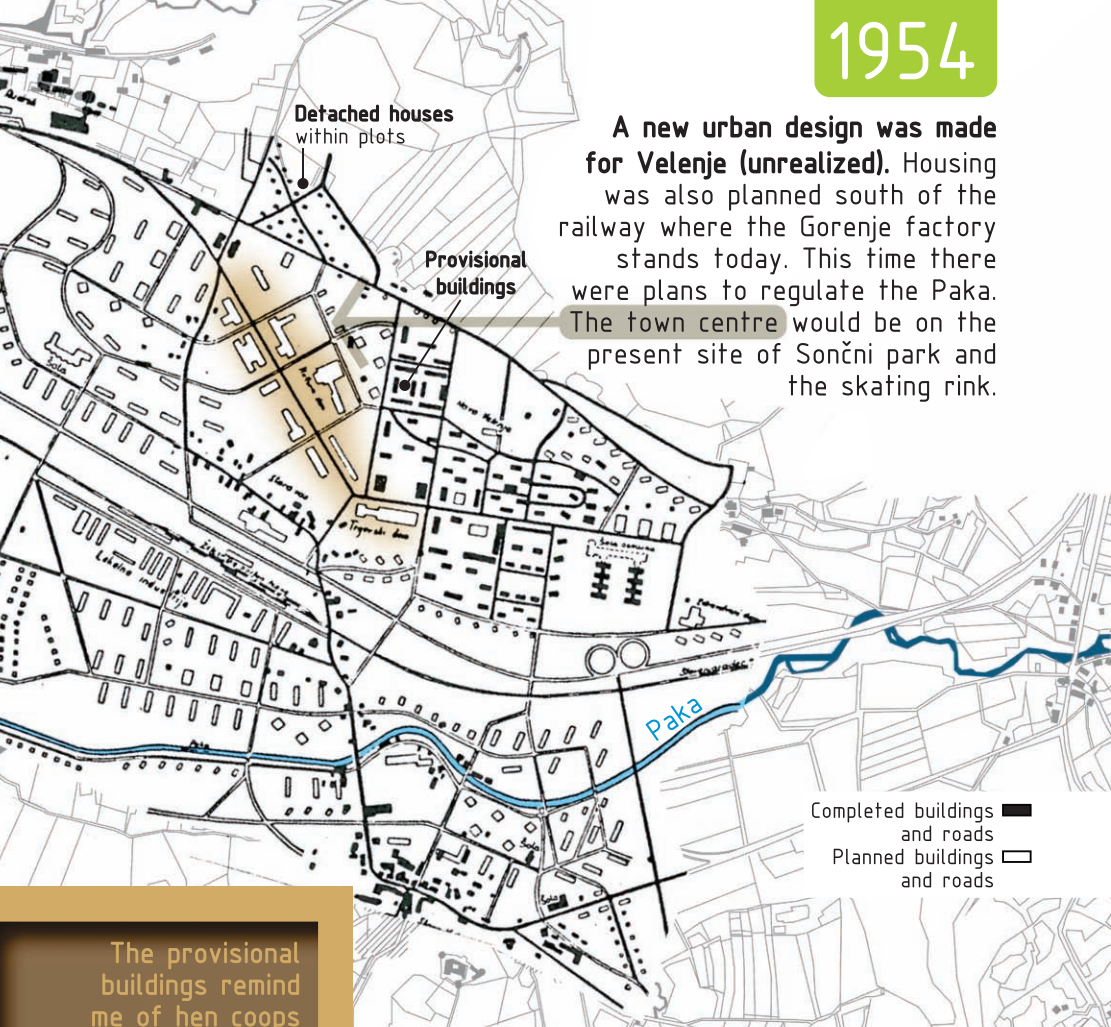
Miners' **provisional buildings**. New blocks of flats were built in their place in the 1980s (E-block by the park).



In 1950, **Nestl Žgank** became Director of the mine. He stepped up production and outlined a vision for **developing the mine** and **building an ambitious, modern, sunny and airy town for miners with families**. Following examples from Western Europe, daring schemes were dreamed up for "a town in a park" which should be functional as well as attractive and provide quality and comfortable housing amid sunlight and greenery as a contrast to the dark stuffy pits worked by the miners.



1954



A new urban design was made for Velenje (unrealized). Housing was also planned south of the railway where the Gorenje factory stands today. This time there were plans to regulate the Paka. The town centre would be on the present site of Sončni park and the skating rink.

Completed buildings and roads  
Planned buildings and roads

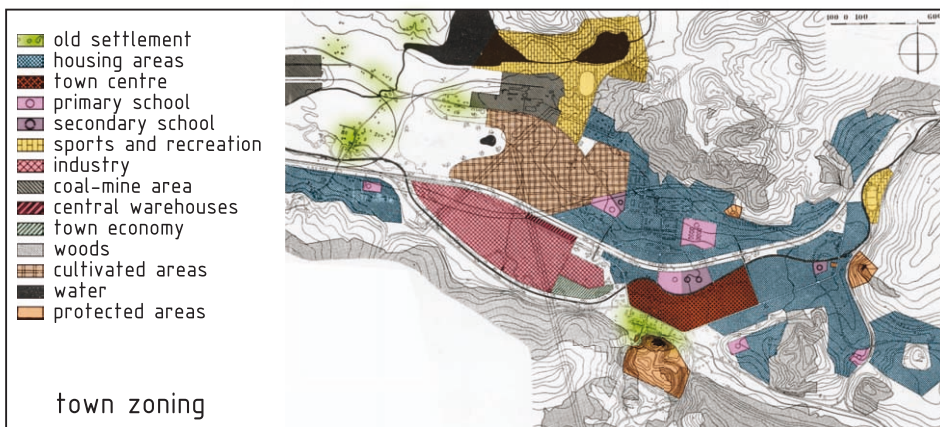
The provisional buildings remind me of hen coops and aren't suitable for people!



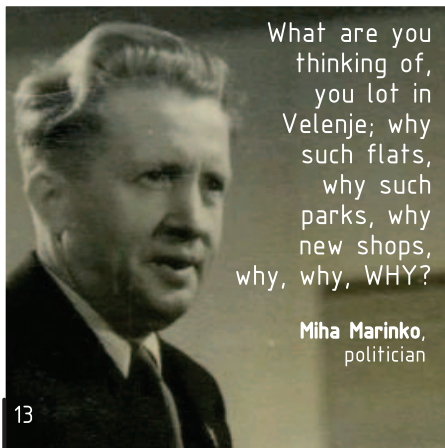
Nestl Žgank, the Velenje coal mine director from 1950.



In the spirit of “factories to the workers”, the new system of **economic self-management** of public property, legislated in 1950, changed and invigorated economic development. It was decided in 1950 to make **Velenje the economic and cultural centre of the Šalek Valley**. Based on the planned coal extraction (3.5 m tons in 1963) it was calculated the town would have a population of 14,000. The lignite mine and the National Committee of the Velenje municipality commissioned Slovenijaprojekt to draw up **a new town plan**. The head architect was **Ciril Pogačnik** and the urban planner was **Janez Trenz**. Previous town plans mingled public functions with residential areas but the new plan provided for a **separate town centre** between the Paka and the Velenje–Šalek road. This stemmed from the theory of **zoning**; separating individual town functions. The roads and the Paka split Velenje into numerous sections: housing, primary school, secondary school, the centre, sports and recreation, industry, etc.

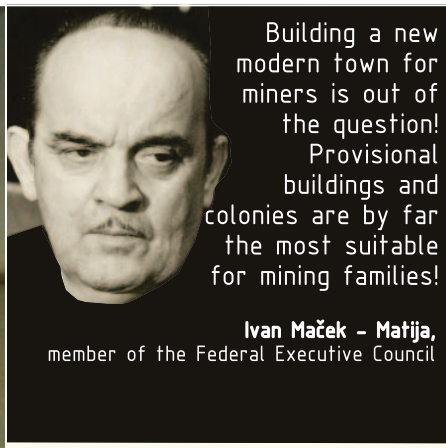


Building Velenje (it achieved town status in 1952) was never a Slovenian or Yugoslav project but the dogged work of Velenje miners and it also aroused considerable envy and opposition.



What are you thinking of, you lot in Velenje; why such flats, why such parks, why new shops, why, why, WHY?

**Miha Marinko**,  
politician



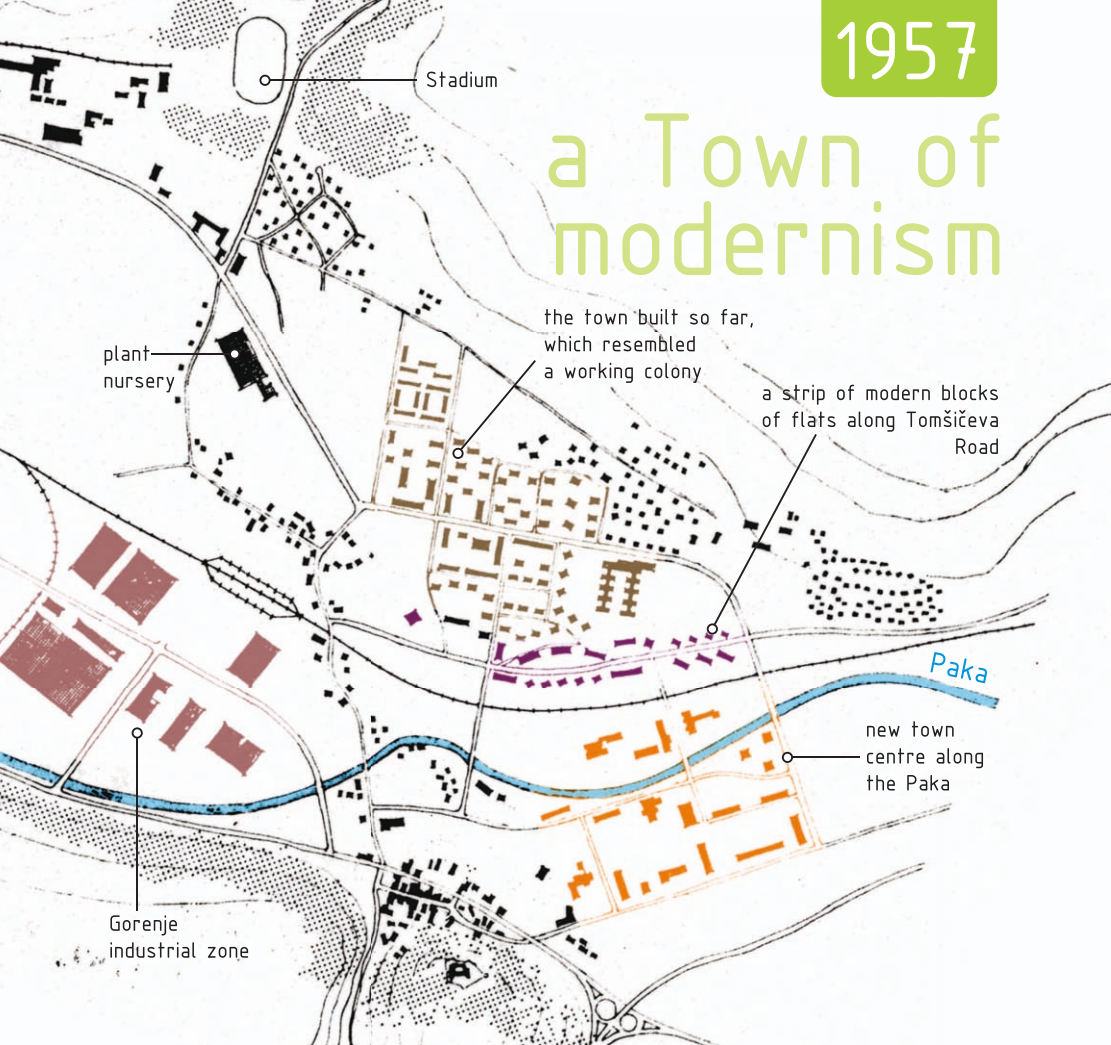
Building a new modern town for miners is out of the question! Provisional buildings and colonies are by far the most suitable for mining families!

**Ivan Maček - Matija**,  
member of the Federal Executive Council

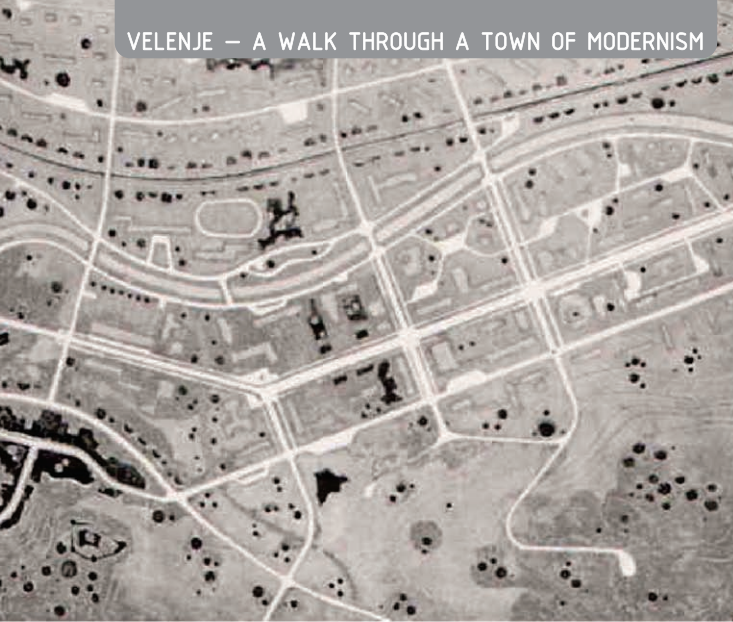


1957

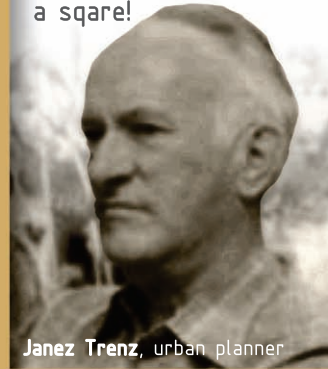
# a Town of modernism



The **second stage of town building** began and there was no longer to be even the slightest resemblance to the low working colonies with simple pitched roofs. The town planning and architecture relied on the modern principles of the **"international style" – modernism**. Buildings were conceived ambitiously, daringly, stamped with the author's originality, aesthetically and functionally: the town seemed like a cluster of smooth, colourful boxes scattered across the valley. Rather than planting parks in the town, **the town was placed within a park**, within nature. The town was provided with elevated landmarks – tower blocks/skyscrapers, the water supply and remote district heating. However, the town was not an end in itself: the high quality of urban life was supposed to transform its residents into exemplary members of the socialist community who would take responsible care of their environment, be socially active and regularly participate in cultural and sporting events.



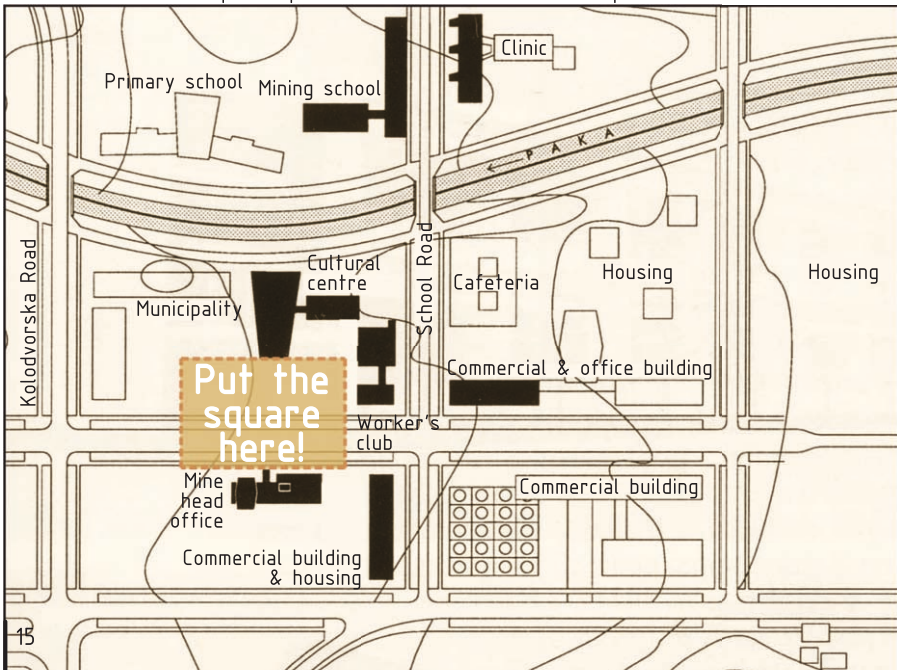
In the middle of the town there should be a road not a square!



Janez Trenz, urban planner

Zoning **favoured road transport**: the architects wished to drive a rectangular network of four-lane roads through the centre, slicing the town into blocks, and have the railways run below road level. The mine's director Žgank, however, preferred the example of the town built by Siemens with **a spacious pedestrian square** in the middle of the town: it was designed by the »garden architect« **Paul Filipsky** from Graz and the urban planner **Janez Trenz** had to include it in the town concept.

Town centre model (top) and plan (bottom) – both without a square so far.







## Volunteer labour

As the town was built, the Paka was promoted to a river – so far considered only a stream.

Before building the town centre, the **River Paka had to be regulated** to drain the boggy valley floor. The job was done through zealous volunteer labour: a certain number of volunteer working hours were a basic requirement to secure a flat. In 1959, in honour of the 40th anniversary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Franc Leskošek Luka ceremoniously **opened the new town centre** in front of a twenty-thousand strong crowd, although not all of the buildings were quite finished. It took ten years to make this new, modern urban centre of the Šalek Valley. With its greenery, pathways, airiness, tidiness and service infrastructure, Velenje was acknowledged as an outstanding town-planning achievement and now received universal praise and recognition.

V PROSLAVO ŠTIRIDESETLETNICE  
KPJ JE BILO SLOVESNO ODPRTO  
SREDIŠČE NOVEGA VELENJA  
20. SEPTEMBRA 1959



## Spectacle

## Velenje was visited by ...

**Nikita Khrushchev,**  
President of the  
Soviet Union

**Edward Gierek,**  
First Secretary  
of the CC  
PUWP, Poland

**Modibo Keita,**  
President of Mali,  
Africa

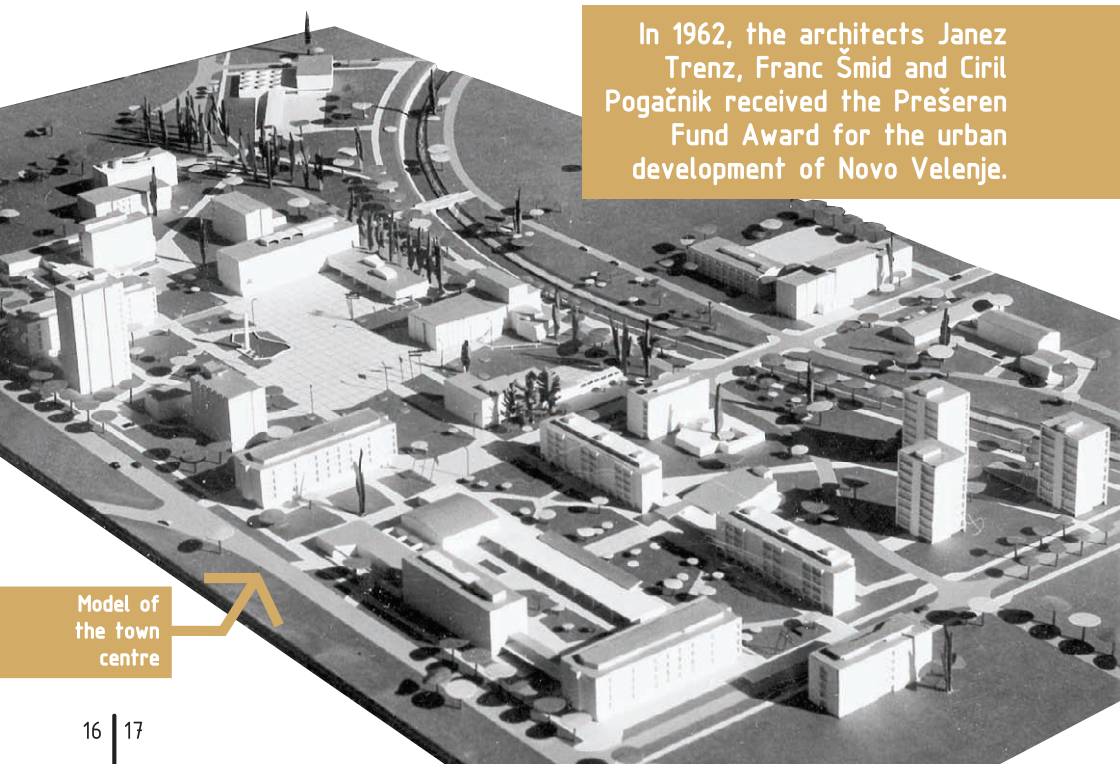
Cosmonaut  
**German Titov**

**Norodom  
Sihanouk,**  
King of  
Cambodia



The town was far from finished but its finely designed buildings and consistent town-planning concept already gave the eastern part of the Šalek Valley an entirely new identity: **the identity of an urban area.** The construction of “an ideal town of an ideal social order” was in line with the principles of modern visual composition and modern technology in the service of man (transport, illumination, airiness, public service supply).

In 1962, the architects Janez Trezn, Franc Šmid and Ciril Pogačnik received the Prešeren Fund Award for the urban development of Novo Velenje.



Model of  
the town  
centre



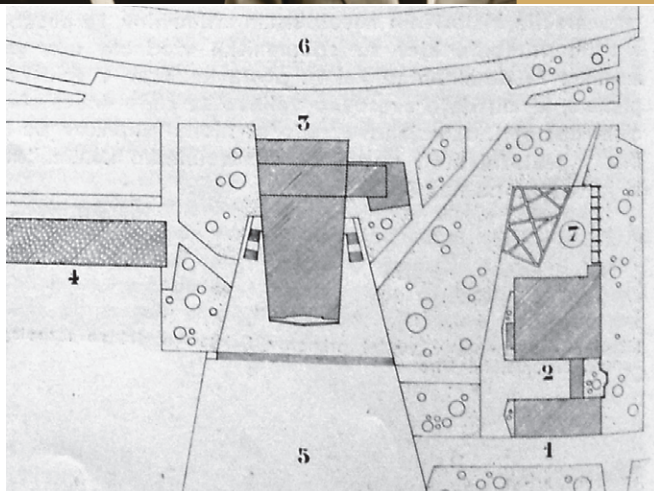
**Leonid Brezhnev**,  
Chairman of the  
Presidium of the  
Supreme Soviet  
of the USSR

**Nicolae  
Ceausescu**,  
President  
of Romania

**Josip Broz – Tito**,  
President of the  
SFR of Yugoslavia,  
four times



Even during construction, Velenje, the **»socialist miracle«**, had become the showpiece of modern architecture and town planning in socialist Yugoslavia, visited and admired by curious crowds of sightseers from near and far: students on school trips, tourists, high-ranking political guests, public figures and delegations which were conscientiously catalogued by the local newspaper.

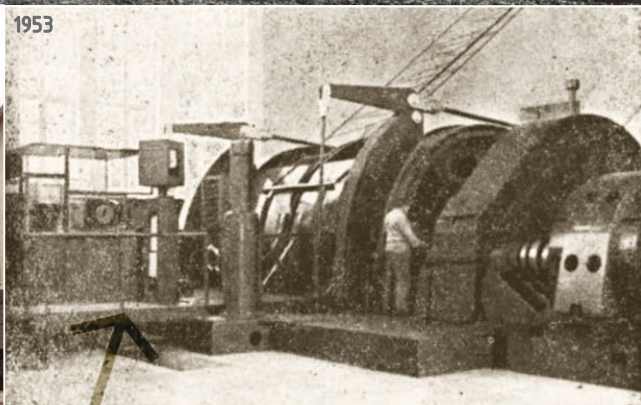


#### The new social centre of Velenje (1961):

- 1 Workers' University
- 2 Workers' Club
- 3 Cultural Centre
- 4 a future "facility  
for social organisations"
- 5 square
- 6 the Paka stream
- 7 outdoor cafe

The architect Oton Gaspari wrote that subject to material resources the new social centre of Velenje is not designed as a single structure with monumental tendencies but is being built step by step and will consist of a Workers' Club, Workers' University, Cultural Centre and a future "facility for social organisations". The residential and administrative part of the town was developed alongside the **industrial zone of Gorenje factory** with its production halls and the **area around the Preloge colliery**.

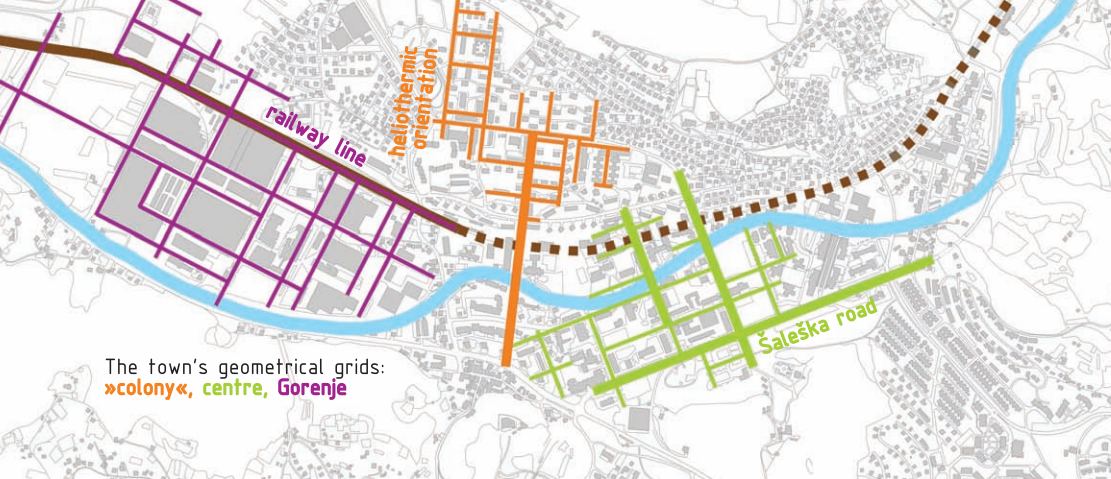




The **Dominion hoisting machine**, which was used to lift lignite from the pits, is regarded by the miners as **the machine that built Velenje**. Since the Preloge mine shaft was set in the middle of the coal deposit, all the structures were destroyed by further mining; the reinforced concrete headframe sunk into the ground in one piece and is sealed with power plant fly ash – creating an **architectural fossil**. Some of the sunken areas were **redeveloped** into **recreational grounds** around the lake (1953), an **athletic stadium** (1955) and a **town park** (1960) with a **roller skating rink** (1962). Several **car park buildings** (Triplex A by Savin Sever) were erected in town to deal with the increasing traffic.

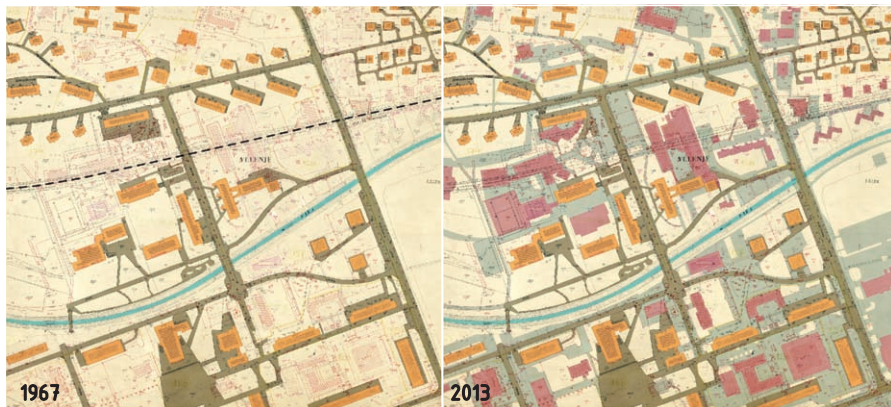






As the town spread down into the valley, the orientation of its underlying **geometrical grid changed**. The first residential buildings had a heliothermic orientation, while the town centre lined up with Šaleška Road and the area of Gorenje's industrial halls with the railway line. Intensive town construction continued until 1965, when a **crisis in mining** caused mass redundancies. In the seventies, there was a change of view on how the town should develop and what makes good architecture. From then on, the town developed through **random** construction of single-family houses and **giant blocks of flats** and **neighbourhoods** which outgrew the scale of the original town and departed from the urbanistic outlines of its ground-plan and vertical dimensions. Instead of the simple stereometric volumes of modernism, the new trend in designing buildings was to fragment (structure) their mass and make concrete-slab origami, just as volunteer labour was replaced by voluntary taxation. In the **post-modern era** (after 1989) the original town design was recognized and protected as a special quality.

Increasing density of structural fabric and traffic areas in the town centre to the expense of green areas: left, the sixties; right, the present state.



## CATALOGUE

After this historical introduction it is now time to see the town!

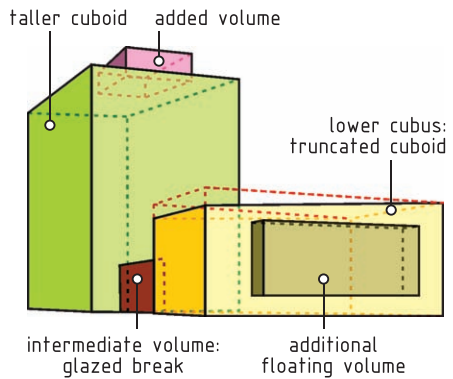
→ **What is included in the catalogue of buildings/areas seen on our walk through the town?** The name of each building is followed by its architect, year of construction and, where needed, its purpose and finally a note on how the building fared or changed to date. Over fifty years of usage, the town and buildings lost many of their original architectural features: rebuilding changed the proportions of the buildings, replaced glazing changed the division of windows and doors and the colour and width of frames, facade renovation more often than not involved replacing original materials and paintwork, the window coverings were changed and air-conditioners were mounted on exteriors. All this affects the visual expression of a building. In addition, the greenery has grown a lot in fifty years, in some places to the point of almost hiding the buildings from sight. The architecture is illustrated with a short description of the key characteristics and the earliest possible photographs which offer a comparison with the present state.

→ **What should you look out for on your walk? How to spot a building from the modernist period?** Look out for three things: the building's position in town, its volume design and details. The public buildings can also be viewed from the inside. In terms of position, you will notice that modernist buildings are free-standing, not joined in complexes or continuous rows of roadside fronts like in historic towns. They are joined into groups, however; blocks of flats are arranged in rows or clusters, sometimes skewed and sometimes facing the same way. A special case is Tito Square which functions as a square even though the surrounding buildings and greenery around do not form a closed ring. **The volumes** are easy to grasp, straightforward, composed of simple geometrical solids: rectangular cuboids which are sometimes truncated. The cuboids may be overlapping, placed on top of/next to each other, spaced with visual breaks between them (glazed segments) or raised on pillars. The roof is usually flat. We can often see from the ground that it is a deck – the access to the roof is visible (Gimnazija before a storey was added, Workers' University). It was emphasized deliberately because a roof that was utilized was felt to add quality to a building. Pitched roofs have a small pitch, no deep overhangs and are asymmetrical (Health Care Centre). The buildings often aim to give the impression of weightlessly hanging above earth, of space flowing freely beneath them – they had transparent ground floors so that people could walk through/under the building (Mine Head Office) or at least see through





A study of the municipality building's volumes: the complex shape consists of many cuboids.



it (Kristl's Block, Municipality's lobby). The roofs of glazed pavilions on roof terraces also appeared to float in air (Gimnazija, Tower Block). **The details** are functional, with no added decoration. The decoration lies in the material: the natural beauty of stone, concrete, wood and metal is highlighted. The pillars are smooth, without an emphasized base or capital, sometimes finely hatched with cast impressions in the concrete (Kristl's Block), others finely polished to a terrazzo (Health Care Centre), still others clad with stone mosaic (Municipality). Sometimes, the architects showcased the potential of a new material – concrete – and made V-shaped supports instead of vertical pillars (MPT Primary School, Cultural Centre). The buildings are mostly plastered, and some of the plasters, mixed with mica, glint in the sun (Workers' University). The buildings can be white or painted in strong, energetic colours: red, orange, purple, fuchsia, green... The fronts are level and geometrically dynamic. The impression of graphic designs on the facade is achieved by window arrangement: these may be lined up or scattered in a free composition. The frames dividing large windows into smaller squares also created abstract patterns; sometimes the squares that opened were additionally emphasized with a different colour. Special architectural elements include transennas and brise-soleils. Transennas are decoratively finished window screens (Cultural Centre, Workers' University, Health Care Centre), which cover several windows with one graphic element. They can be made of concrete, metal, brick, etc. Brise-soleils are exterior fixed window coverings. On the Gimnazija, they are finished as »a facade upon a facade«, as a separate graphic plane. **Interior** pavings are often made in polished concrete – terrazzo, either as paving with large flagstones or as abstract geometric patterns (Gimnazija, Municipality). Geometrical patterns also appear on staircase railings (Gimnazija, Cultural Centre), and the Municipality's lobby has a hatched ceiling and its hall an undulating one. The richest interior finish is found in the Cultural Centre (stone, metal, wooden cladding, mosaic).



Paka Hotel: staircase grilles (destroyed)



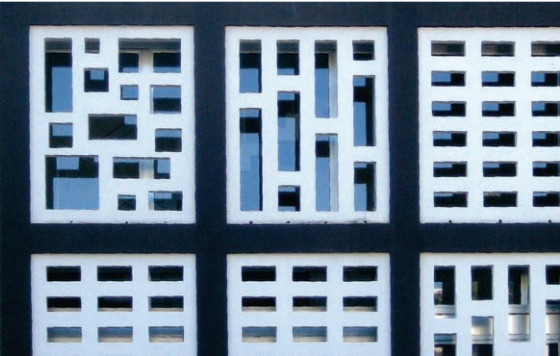
Cultural Centre: paving towards Tito Square



Cultural Centre: facade (reconstructed)



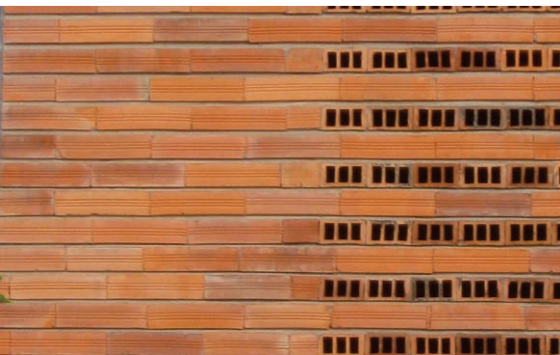
Miners' Tower Block: concrete exterior



Cultural Centre: transennas (restored)



Cultural Centre: bronze architectural sculpture



22 | 23 Kristl's Block: brick face



Health Care Centre: terrazzo paving at the entrance





Health Care Centre: terrazzo paving



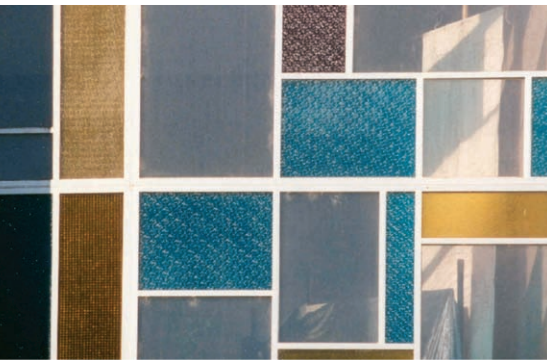
Health Care Centre: brick pipe transenna



Health Care Centre: cladding and transenna



Health Care Centre: exterior



Cultural Centre: glass wall (replaced)



Municipality: mosaic pillar cladding



Cultural Centre: stone exterior cladding



Municipality: facade (replaced glazing)





Paka Hotel: travertine cladding (replaced)



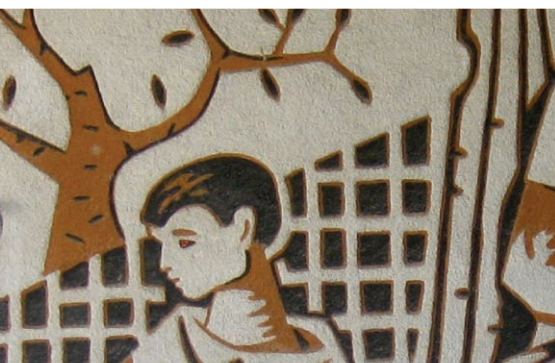
Kristl's Block: pillar hatching (painted concrete)



Cultural Centre: railing at the side exits



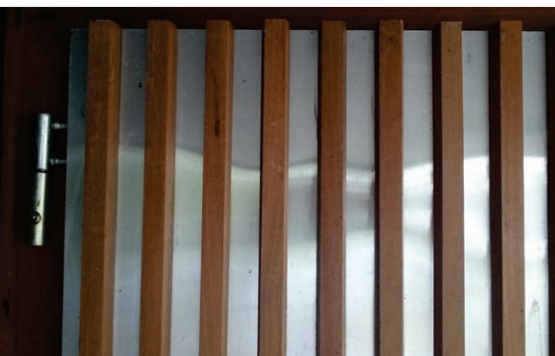
Workers' University: architectural sculpture



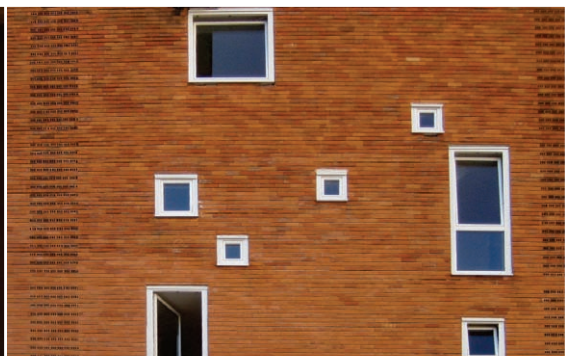
MPT PS: sgraffito painting (restored)



Cultural Centre: windows arranged in a pattern



Cultural Centre: door covering



Kristl's Block: free composition of windows





Workers' University: plaster glinting in the sun



Gimnazija: colourful geometrical terrazzo paving



Gimnazija: brise-soleils (changed paintwork)



Sončni park: aluminium obelisk, detail



Workers' University: transennas/brise-soleils



Municipality: hatched ceiling



Sončni park: concrete paved pathway



Sončni park: the Atlantis pool mosaic

# SONČNI PARK (»Sun Park«), Paul Filipisky, 1960 & ROLLER SKATING RINK, Ciril Pogačnik, 1962

Changes to date: pavilion and mast removed, concrete paving replaced with asphalt and paving stones, lake drained.

**The park** was designed by Paul Filipisky, planted by gardener Alojz Jakič and most of the park arrangements were carried out voluntarily by the women of Velenje. The triangular area between the provisional buildings (a), the road leading to the lake (b) and the cinema was developed into Sončni park with a pond (c), a patio (d), a music pavilion (e), a fountain, a walkway under a green pergola (f), a tall mast, an aluminium sculptural obelisk, a mosaicked pool and a maze (g). Sections of the park were designed in line with the principles of an informal English landscape park while others were strictly geometrized. With its 60 x 30 m Olympic dimensions, tribunes and flood-lighting, the voluntarily built »most beautiful **skating rink (h)** in Yugoslavia« could host top skating competitions as well as cultural and sporting events. An 800-metre-long speed skating track looped around the rink along level and sloped ground.

Geometrized, decoratively designed **pergola**



**Pool** with »Atlantis« mosaic by sculptor Ciril Cesar. After many years of being filled, it is now clean once again.

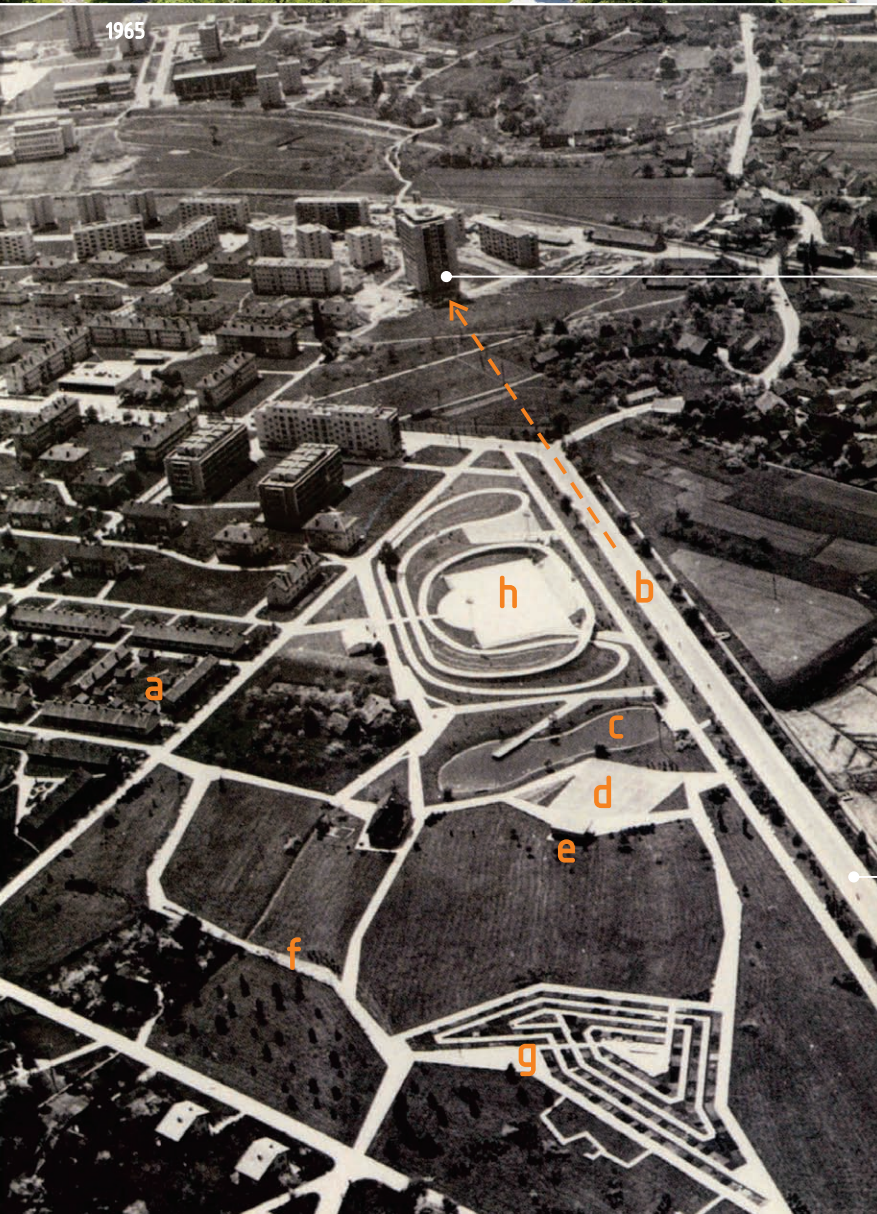
A brass band performing in the **music pavilion**.







2013



1965

Over 170 plant varieties were bedded in the park.

The town in a park now had an extra special park.

The **RSC tower block** was situated on the Velenje – Old Mine Shaft road axis as a skyline landmark.

The **road** was paved with granite cobbles.

# MIHA PINTAR TOLEDO PRIMARY SCHOOL

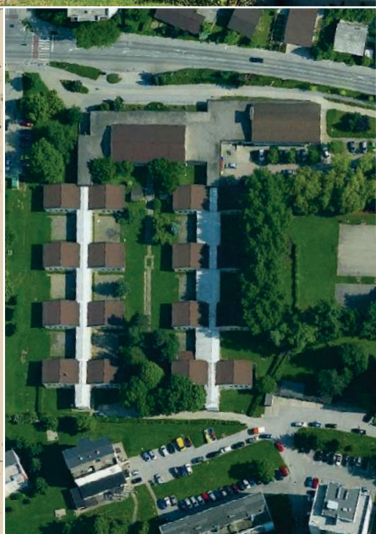
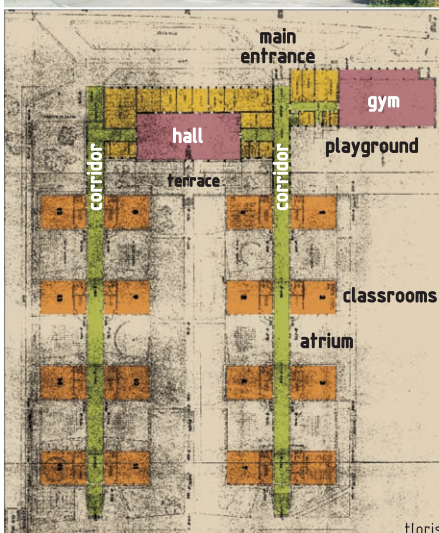
Miloš Hohnjec, Drago Umek, Mitja Milovanović, 1955

The school is a single-storey building of **the pavilion («Swedish»)** type: two large volumes face the road, the school hall with administrative offices and a gym, with two long parallel corridors leading from them down a slope. Four classrooms are strung to the left and right of each corridor. They are well-lit from the south and the side, all with doors leading out for outdoor lessons in the private atriums in between. The innovative design, which is based on modern teaching principles, was intended to reflect the progressive views of the new regime. The inhabitants of Velenje helped build the school through volunteer work and funding in the form of loans.

The **canopy** at the entrance has a V-shaped supporting post, considered modern at the time.



The school **corridor** is more than 100 metres long.



floris



The old school, former stables of "lower castle" (Villa Bianca).

Gustav Šilih  
Primary School

Miha Pintar  
Toledo Primary  
School



1965

1972



This was **the first primary school** in the new Velenje, and was desperately needed. To the great displeasure of the socialist authorities, not least because the old school had been set up in former "feudal" stables, classes were held in the old school and several makeshift locations. The 5 classrooms of the old school were crammed with 500 children. The number of schoolchildren had increased by 355% in 8 years and was set to rise to 1000-2000 students over the following three school years.



A moralistic **sgraffito painting** by Maks Kavčič at the entrance: miners are working hard underground for the bright and carefree future of their children, who are playing and learning in the sun and greenery.

## »THE STABLES«

**1947**, »desetorček« (»a tensome«) = a terrace of 10 houses

Changes to date: vibrant colour scheme, joinery replaced.

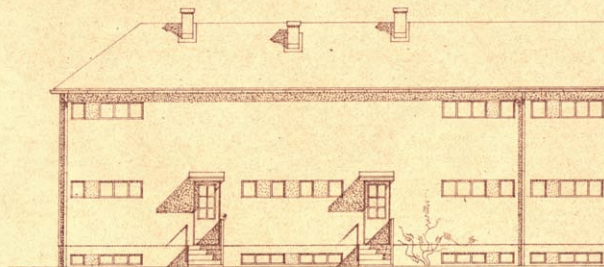
**Ten identical houses** are joined into a block with a hip roof, each with a basement, ground floor and first floor. They strictly adhere to the functionalist principle that **a facade should faithfully reflect the interior**: the small windows on the north, roadside face indicate the service areas behind them, whereas the larger windows on the south face admit light to the living areas. The **north, public** face is uniform and the units are individually characterized only by their differing colours. The **south face is private** and looks on to a fruit garden (in the middle of a town!) where every family fixed up their plot as they saw fit. The partitioning into semi-private shallow "front gardens" and deep private gardens/backyards at the rear, which was planned in the blueprint (as a remnant of urban ideas from the capitalist age of private property) was not carried out – the outdoor area remained communal and the split into narrow plots did not take place. A row of linden trees was planted between the block and road. It was the first block of flats built in a new housing development by the mine for its workers – it was mostly settled by the miners' families who had moved from France. A model for this type of construction (in terms of town planning and architecture) can be found in the plans of Ivan Vurnik for a working colony in Maribor (1928). The overriding principle is **economy**: to meet the **subsistence level** at minimum cost. The flats are humble and functionally laid out. The construction is classic: brick walls, a pitched wooden roof and wooden ceiling structures. This kind of design, which is strongly reminiscent of **working colonies**, was no longer desirable in the town's second growth stage.



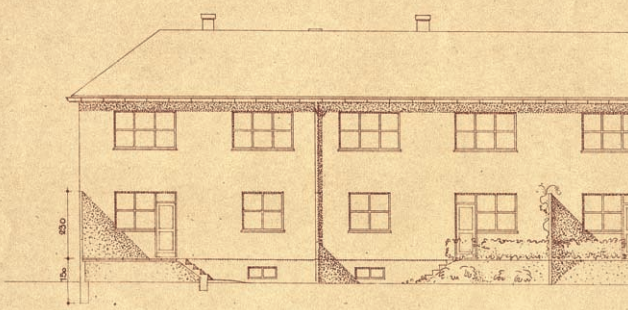




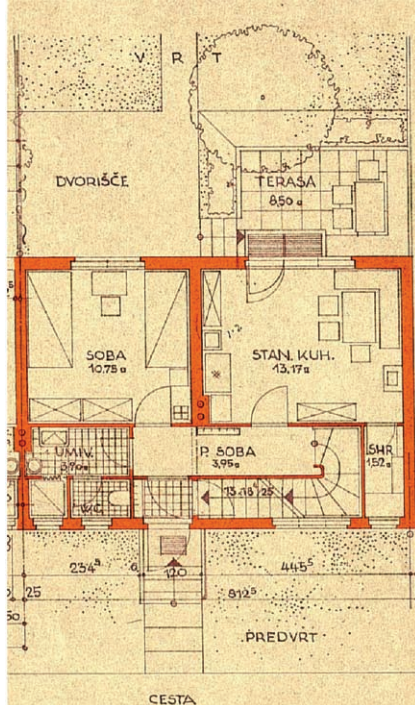
Roadside face



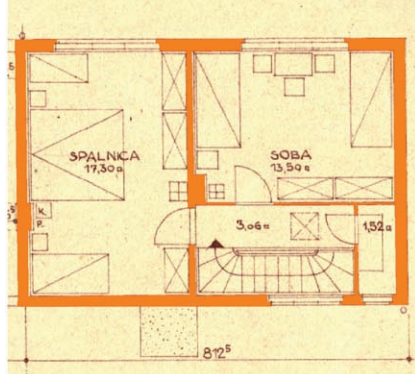
Garden face



Ground floor



First floor



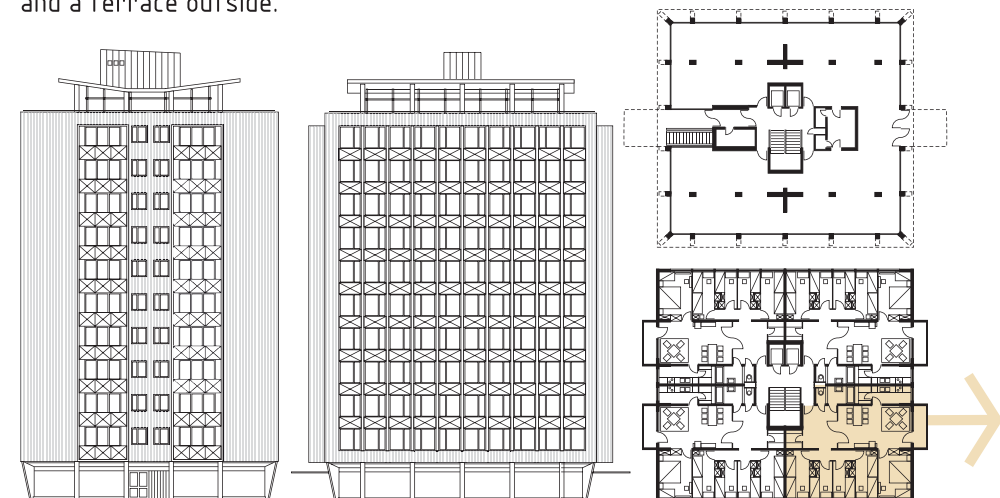
The window size was reduced during construction.

# RŠC TOWER BLOCK

**Drago Umek, 1963**

Changes to date: largely new joinery, bricked-up roof pavilion walls, huge writing on the face removed, loss of ground floor transparency, new floor and wall coverings of communications.

The tower block was conceived as **a hall of residence for mining school students** from all over Slovenia and Yugoslavia. They lived with families who looked after them and “urbanized” them – taught them about town life, given that many were used to much humbler circumstances at home. There were several rooms for the boarders in each flat (these are now »ordinary« flats). The tower block is situated on the axis of the road passing the park as **a skyline landmark** (new blocks of flats later blocked it from view from this road). Its face is designed in the **brutalist manner** (Fr. *béton brut* = raw concrete), i.e. in exposed reinforced concrete. The concrete was poured into profiled forms to create stripes on the exterior surface and coffered parapet divisions by way of modern facade decoration. The structure is fully visible on the ground floor; the piers expand upwards to support the overhanging residential storeys. The tower is thus tapered at the bottom or “stuck into the ground”. Its shape seems to contradict the “logic” of making the building wider at the bottom for better stability – as a “statement” or demonstration of the static possibilities in modern architecture offered by reinforced concrete. The body of the building is divided according to the principles of classic architecture into a transparent public ground floor (base) which supports a residential core (body), and a roof pavilion with a floating roof slab crowning the building. There was a common room for the residents, an office inside the pavilion and a terrace outside.



A flat with rooms for boarders.



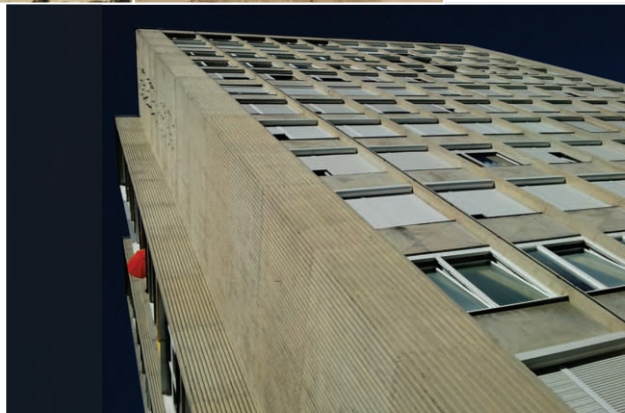
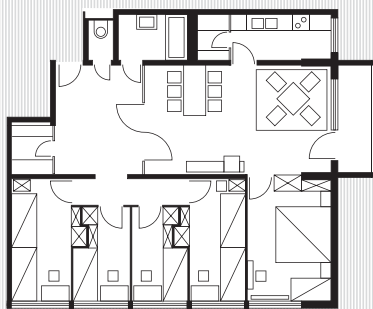
Originally, the **transparent glazing** made the pavilion's roof appear to be floating above the tower.

**Lamps** were fitted into a groove for outdoor lighting to underline the building.



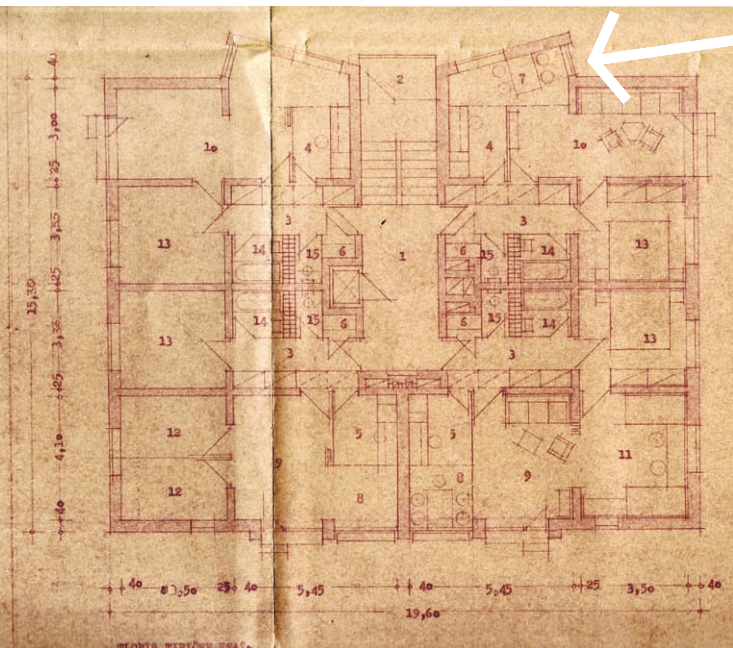
The parapets are **coffered**.

**Hatched** facade planes.



# RESIDENTIAL SKYSCRAPER T10

Ivan Kocmut, 1961



Window niches were made on the north side to provide additional, lateral light.



Ivan Kocmut, the author.

The skyscraper is a prominent feature of the **junction**; this is where the route to the town centre intersects with Tomšičeva Road. The building has a symmetrical axis design. The middle part of its main face is colour-emphasized and protrudes slightly, and the concrete transennas of the balcony niches thereon create decorative hatched planes.

As part of their **education for urban living** in a modern town, people were told they should not dry their laundry on the balcony (especially on Saturdays and Sundays when the town is full of tourists) or walk on the grass. A fragment of the original panel.





10 storeys.

The dynamic  
north face.



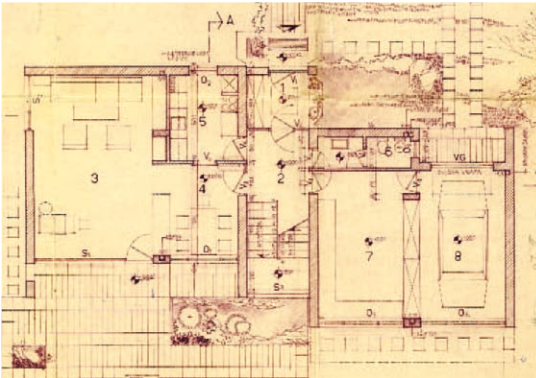
Several rows of **fine modernist blocks of flats** are situated next to the skyscraper along Tomšičeva Road (clear volume concept, level roofs, geometrized smooth faces).

# CESAR VILLA

Concept by **Ciril Cesar**, architectural development by Rade Popovič, **1967**

For a period of time, the villa was home to Gorenje's design bureau run by C. Cesar  
Changes to date: new jutting roof, new facade colour, change of glazing.

In the sixties, two **modernist villas** were built in Velenje: the villa of sculptor and designer Ciril Cesar and the villa of mayor Nestl Žgank. Unlike other single-family houses built at the time in Velenje, both villas had a **flat roof**. Cesar Villa has two aspects: the north facade facing the road (public space) is rather closed (**a**), whereas the south facade facing the Paka (private) is open along its full width with terraces or balconies and glass walls behind them (**b**). The windows are aligned into vertical bands, notches in the white facade which were additionally emphasized by the brown parapet paintwork. The house ground plan consists of two staggered cubes with a roofed transparent stairwell and hall between them.

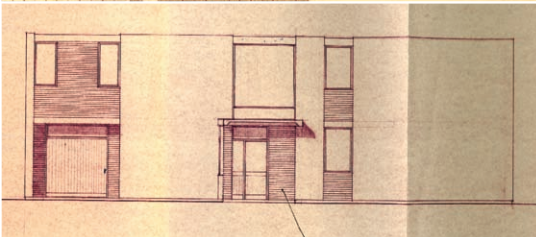


I applied knowledge gained from the Ulm school, the successor of Bauhaus, in Velenje.

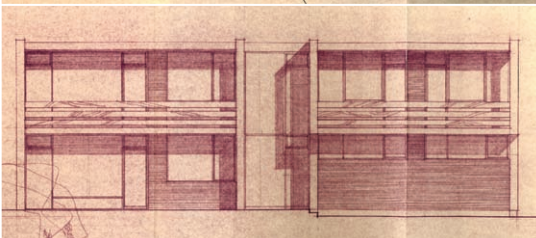


Ciril Cesar, the author.

**a**



**b**







1995



1970

a

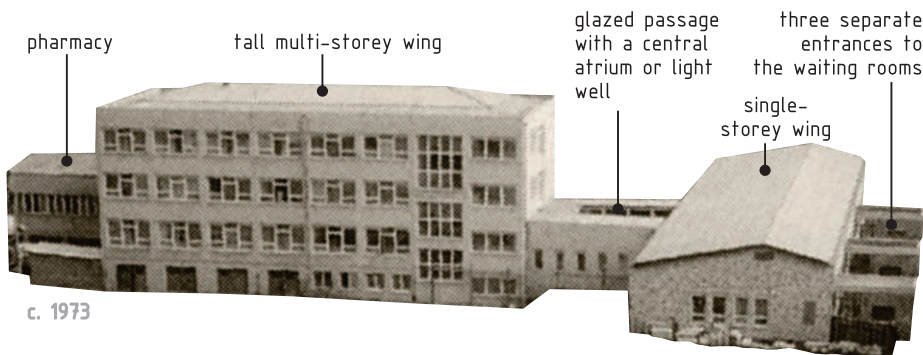


b

# COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE CENTRE

(old part), Ivan Kocmut, 1963

Changes to date: largely changed glazing and window coverings, brick cladding replaced with bright colours, air conditioners on the face, new pharmacy access, additional wings.



The old part of the health centre has a **single-storey** and **multi-storey wing** with a pillared passage on the ground floor which houses clinics as well as administrative premises. Two **glazed corridors** between the wings function as a spatial pause: they both separate (push apart) and link the wings. The gabled faces of the lower wing are clad with cut volcanic rock and the ground floor of the tall wing with polished limestone. The building's special features are its metal, stone and brick **transennas** over the windows and **terrazzo** paving.

The architect paid special attention to the **staircase**, which has a representative character. The metal grip is mounted on a massive, low terrazzo parapet.

The building falsely appears to have a **flat roof**. The roof slope cannot be seen because its pitch is small and there is no overhang.

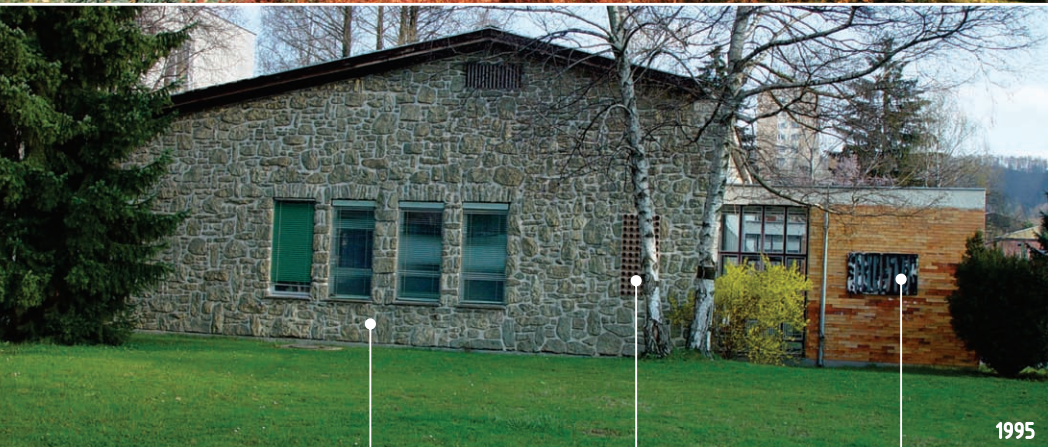


Replacing the windows meant losing the graphic division, as well as the special rhythm of the face (see top picture).

The stairwell has wide and tall windows.



Care for the people and a desire for functionality dictated »humane« solutions: the connective corridors are light, brightened up with elements of nature, slightly out of line with the rectangular grid.

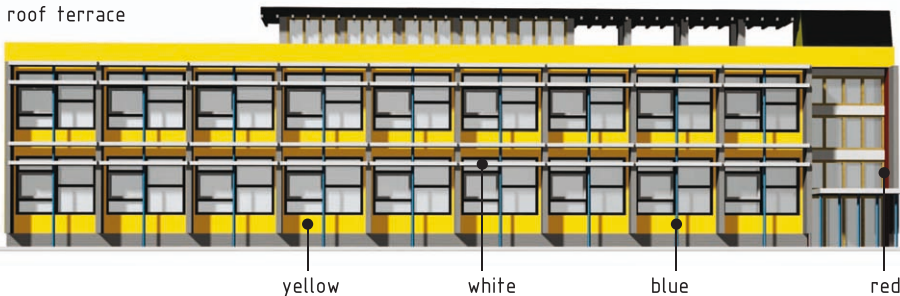


# GIMNAZIJA (GENERAL SECONDARY SCHOOL)

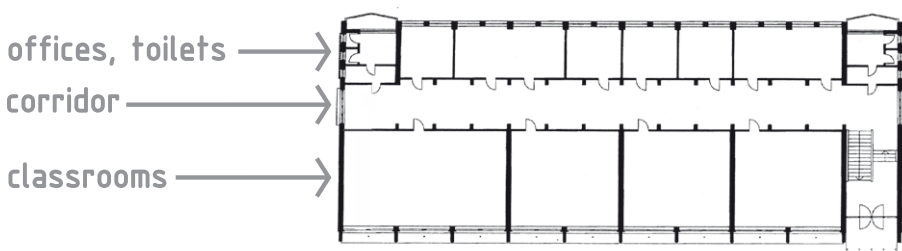
**Oton Gaspari, 1958**, originally IRŠ – Industrijska rudarska šola (Industrial Mining School)

Changes to date: floor added in 1994 (roof pavilion removed), joinery replaced, facade colours toned down, interpolated interiors.

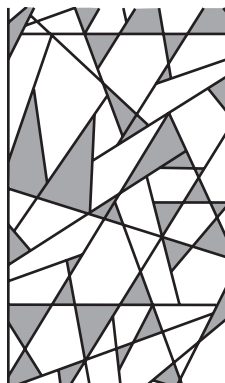
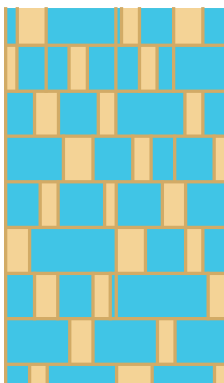
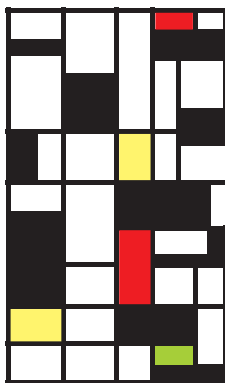
roof terrace



The building has a functional concept: large classrooms are situated on the light south side, offices and toilets to the north and a wide side-lit corridor down the middle. Any overheating of the building through the large south-facing windows is prevented by vertical and horizontal concrete **brise-soleils**. As grids of variably wide lines of concrete and metal elements which create a play of light and shadow, the brise-soleils also serve to decorate the entrance facade which faces the town. The toilet windows are covered with concrete **transennas**. The building was brightened up with **abstract patterns** and **vivid colours** (yellow, red, blue).



**The concrete flooring** (terrazzo) in the corridors with large multi-coloured rectangles in a black grid is a paraphrase of Mondrian's abstract geometrical paintings. On the right, **the ceiling and flooring of the roof pavilion**.





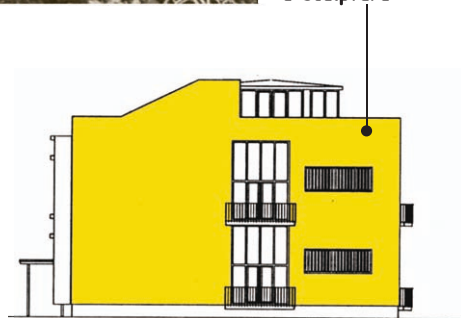


Wide, prominent access to the roof – a canopy linked the terrace with the glazed pavilion.

The *gimnazija* is sited in a park stretching all the way to the Paka.

The roof access made the lateral face appear almost like a sculpture.

c. 1964



Miners finishing their schooling.



The architecture is set in a natural environment but, as a product of culture, it also contrasts with nature. The building appears to be set in a wood.

2013

# GUSTAV ŠILIH PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Emil Navinšek, 1963**

Changes to date: part of the joinery replaced, lift added.

Even with the Miha Pintar Toledo Primary School built in Velenje, there were so many children that another school was needed right away. This time, its design followed an entirely different concept: a highly compact structure in several floors, each with a central hall instead of corridors (i.e. a **corridor-free system**). Despite this functionalist approach, there is also ornamentation including meanders on the stairs and partitioned series of windows on the uniform main face.

1999



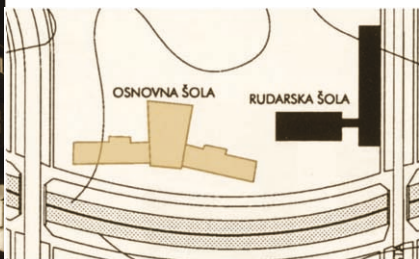
Instead of long narrow corridors, there is a single large, light, useful area at the centre of each storey.



Emil Navinšek, the author.

Structurally and architecturally, the **staircase** was ambitious in design: jutting landings hang in the air without touching the facade.

The architects also considered a different shape for this school, with plans for a westbound road leading off it.



The school was decorated with windmills at its **opening**, as well as on its 50th anniversary.





1963



# GLASS HEAD OFFICE

**Aljoša Aljančič, 1959**, originally the headquarters of the Velenje coal mine  
Changes to date: new glazing on the first floor, added rooms on the ground floor.

The blinds created an **abstract pattern** of empty and full spaces on the face which changed all the time as the window coverings rose and fell.

Originally **wooden, brown frames**, roller blind shading, now white PVC windows with screens



ORIGINALLY: **a view through the building**; it touched the ground only with a pavilion containing a staircase.  
NOW: a largely glazed ground floor, used as business premises, no view through the building.

ORIGINALLY: a house on a green.  
NOW: a house on a car park.

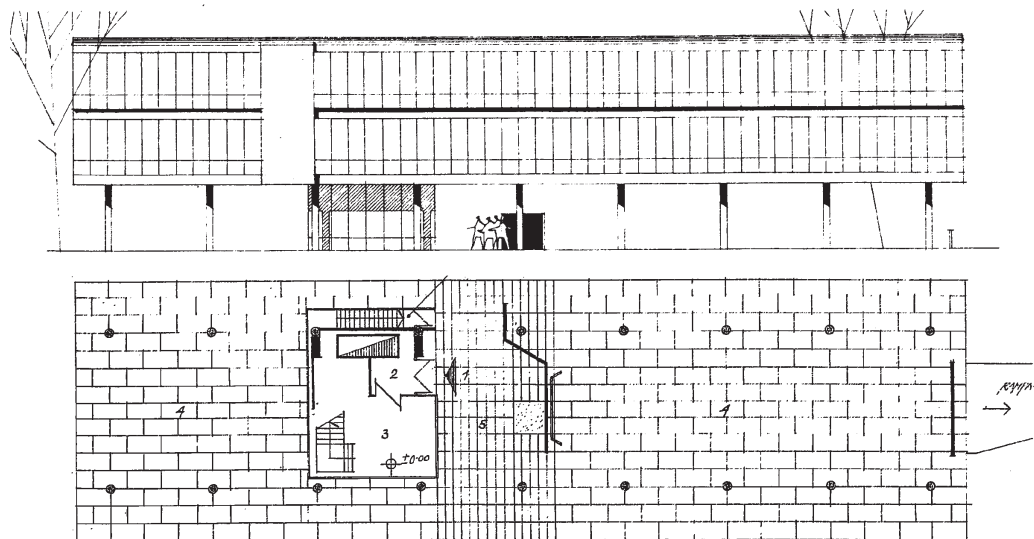
This building was designed in strict adherence to all **five principles of modernist architecture**/the international style, which were laid down by its pioneer Le Corbusier:

1. A level roof (to allow for use as a terrace or garden)
2. A horizontal window band
3. Construction on piles (pillars), floating structural mass
4. A free floor plan (allowing many ways to divide the interior),
5. A free facade composition.

1995







The entrance was originally planned at the central part rather than at the frontage of the building.

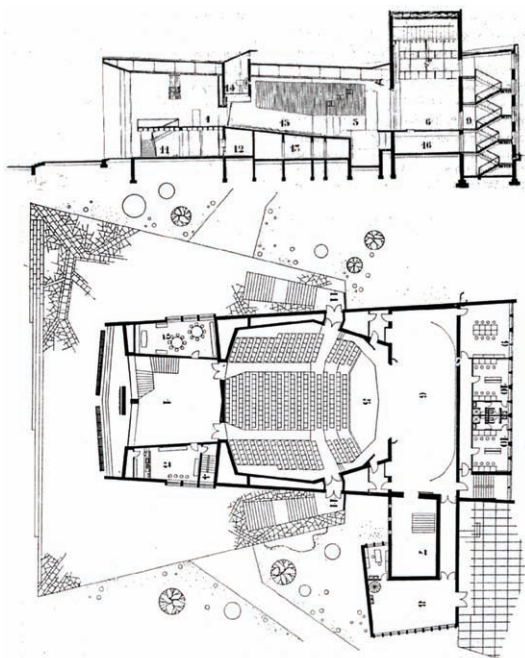
52 x 15 m

# CULTURAL CENTRE

**Oton Gaspari, 1959**

Changes to date: fully renovated, new coloured glass wall & balcony, hall seating replaced.

The Cultural Centre is a building of outstanding architectural excellence. Its concept is about graduating and overlapping volumes of different heights. The visual finish of the facade planes is varied: geometrical concrete transennas screen the windows of the indoor staircase, cladding of green stone with different finishes creates a rich exterior, strips of white stone intertwine, varicoloured panes are pieced together into a glass wall mosaic; a glossy sheet metal-clad canopy draws on the classic motif of a triangular temple front. The entrance facade, a backdrop to the "town stage", is adorned by openwork architectural art. Two independent staircases are added to the basic body. The Velenje Cultural Centre was considered one of the loveliest buildings in Yugoslavia owing to the quality of its design and usefulness.

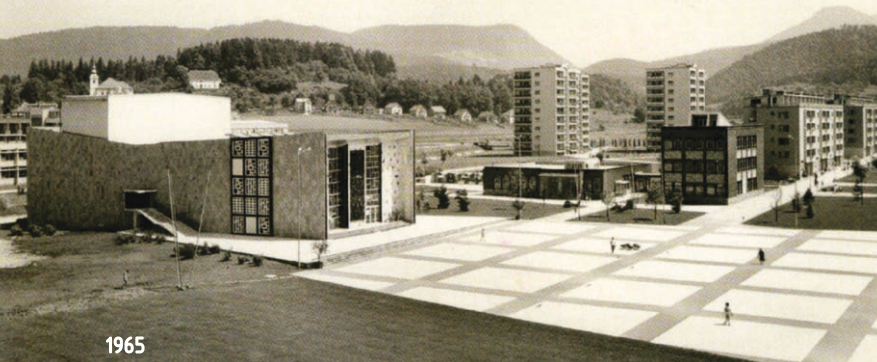


**The interior hall** was considered one of the three most acoustic halls in Yugoslavia, with an adjustable proscenium and state-of-the-art stage technology.

**The mosaic** by Riko Debenjak in the upper lobby was made by the same Italian mosaic manufacturers as for Atlantis in Sončni park.







The Cultural Centre opens onto Tito **Square** and the square flows into the Centre. The slanted contour of the exterior staircases echoes the contour of the square's edges.

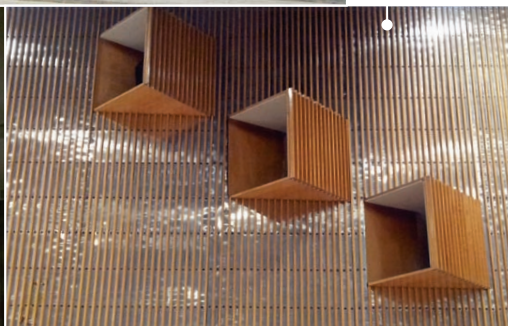


By means of skilful perspectival illusions, **the entrance facade** creates an impression of a large, raised town stage, opening widely on a several-thousand-strong crowd which can be admitted by the square.

**Acoustic cladding** of wooden slats on sheet metal.



**A V-shaped support** holds up the upper lobby.

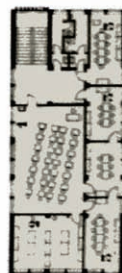
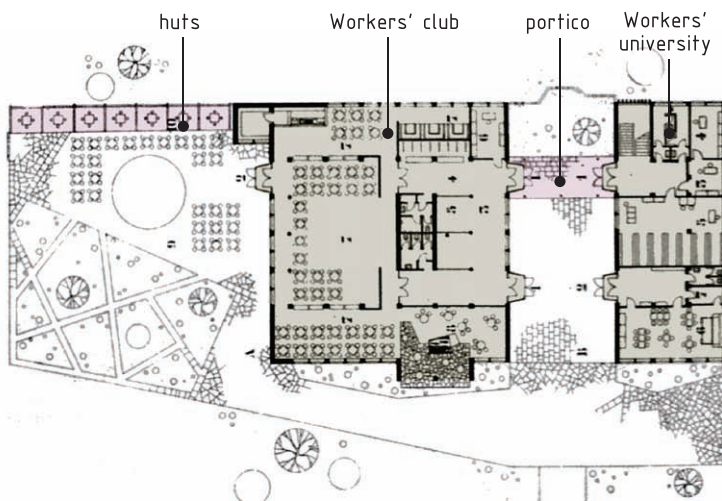


# WORKERS' UNIVERSITY WORKERS' CLUB

Oton Gaspari, 1959

Changes to date: huts removed, new glazing follows original colouring, club interior converted. Originally, the buildings were not linked to the walkway as they are today

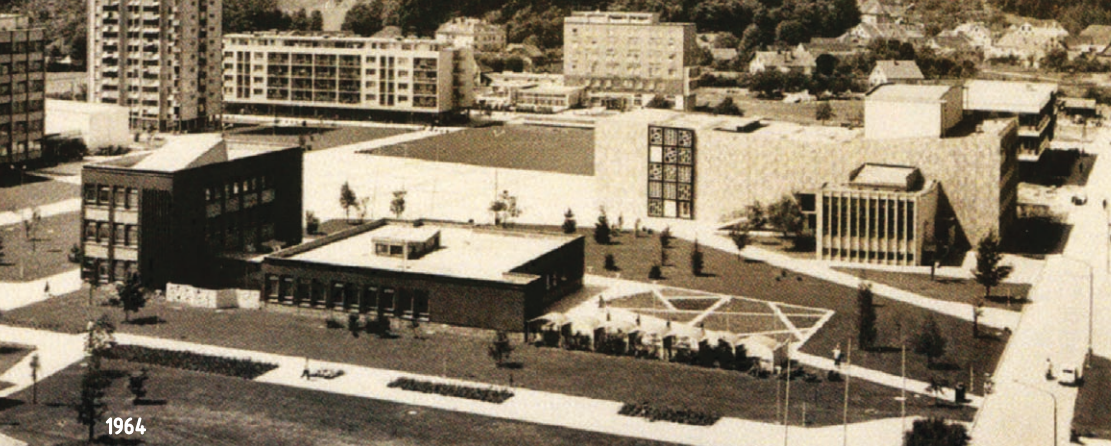
The three-storey university and single-storey club mark out the east edge of Tito Square. Both buildings share a uniform visual finish of red plastering and planes of brick tiles and the same black cornice underlining the top of the building. They are also linked with a canopy. The university has a prominently designed access to the roof and staircase windows screened by transennas. There used to be a "flower mosaic" next to the workers' club – a flower bed divided into an abstract pattern with diagonal paths – and a row of huts for guests with a view of the town centre. These huts had thin concrete walls and vaults. The club provided miners and workers with »artistically animated« areas where they could "get together after hard and arduous work, talk in peace, read the daily papers and magazines and divert themselves with games". The club had a snack bar and a "red corner" for small parties of people, a winter botanical garden with a fish pond and a small lounge for visual art exhibitions. The interior was decorated with black and white ornamental imagery of the sculptor Batič.



Ground floor

Upper floors





1964



1995



1965



1961



1965

The exterior was marked by **large letters**: DELAVSKI KLUB.

The **flower bed** has been abandoned and the **lamp-posts** are one of the rare pieces of the original urban equipment still preserved in the town.

# KRISTL'S BLOCK

**Stanko Kristl, 1963**, commercial and residential block  
The author received the 1964 Prešeren Fund Award for the block.

Changes to date: New glazing and window coverings, brise-soleil on the south side removed, ground floor is no longer transparent, the originally raw concrete is painted.

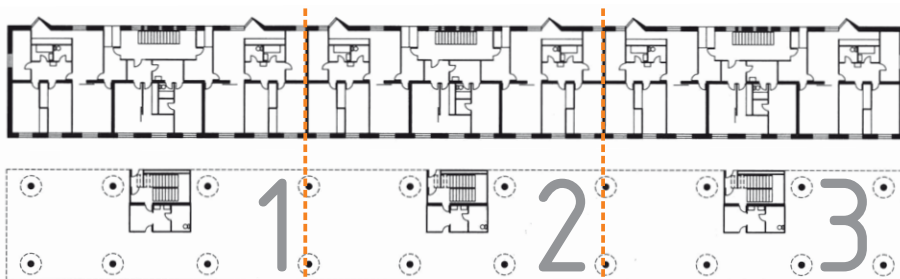
Probably the only block in Velenje which is still known/named after its architect. The structure has completely **different facades**: the roadside face is evenly divided by strips of windows while the back is distinctly graphic in tone with its scattered window openings and slanted window bays. There is a marked **divide** between the **concrete base** and **brick body** with a cornice of ventilation slits. A relatively narrow slat enables good room lighting from both sides.

Three versions of the structure were built in Velenje, two of them shorter and finished in plaster.

I was not interested in repetition and mass-produced architecture.



Stanko Kristl, the author.



The block by Šaleška Road consists of three identical parts, each with its own staircase.





**Prime location** on the threshold of the newly built town. Distinctly elongated design.



The vents at the top of the face form a **decorative pattern**.

The massive four-storey structural body is **brick-clad**.

The windows are combined into **bands**; the parapets are made of glass.

The massive **dividing slab** allows the static system to change from pillars to walls. **The beams peep out from the facade.**

A **metal brise-soleil** protects the ground-floor facade from overheating.

The ground-floor facade is **fully transparent** owing to the public character of a furniture shop, deliberately selected for this purpose. The concrete colonnade is visible.



An **abstract graphic pattern** of windows and bands of inverted brick.

1963

# CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND

**M. Cerar, 1963**

Changes to date: playing equipment replaced, size reduced.

Along with an ideal town for adults, volunteer workers also built **an ideal town for children**: a playground. The adult town lay north of Šaleška Road and the children's town to its south. Tarmac tracks for walking, skating and bicycle and scooter riding ran across the green surface amid trees and shrubs. A real aeroplane, a cargo and personal vehicle and a narrow-gauge train engine stood along the track for the children to play in. **The passion for transport and speed**, characteristic of modernist times, was passed from parent to child through play. An Indian village with a circle of stone seats and a children's bathing pool were built and swings and roundabouts were set up. Like the town of adults, the town of children saw many »stylistic transformations« over time as aesthetic ideals and notions of what makes a »good play structure« changed.



Indian  
village

train engine car





mast

pool

lorry

aeroplane

# MINERS' TOWER BLOCK

Ilija Arnautović and Miran Mihelič, 1961

Changes to date: busines premises added on the ground floor, changed lettering and sign on top of the tower block.

Savsko naselje  
Ljubljana

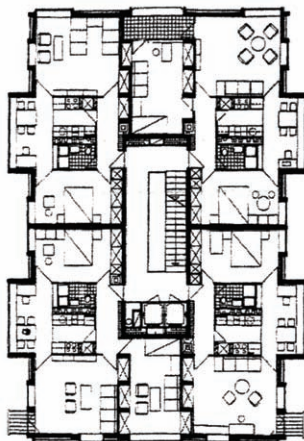


With fourteen residential floors, the tower block was the tallest building in Velenje for a long time.

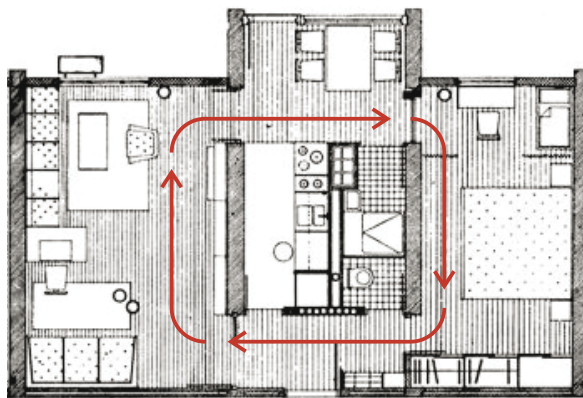
In 1962, the first five residential tower blocks were built in Ljubljana as part of the Savsko naselje housing development. The same plan was used to build the tower block in Velenje, **the high-altitude landmark of Tito Square**. It was Velenje's first example of **skeletal construction** with a facade assembled entirely of **prefabricated concrete, aluminium and glazing elements**. The stairs and lifts are in the middle of the storey and four flats are symmetrically arranged around them, each with an **installation core** at its centre. The installation core can be situated in the middle of a flat and have no natural ventilation owing to a technical innovation: shafts with ventilation ducts which enabled artificial ventilation. A uniquely designed capriccio rises from the roof/terrace: a composition surrounding the lift engine room.



1995

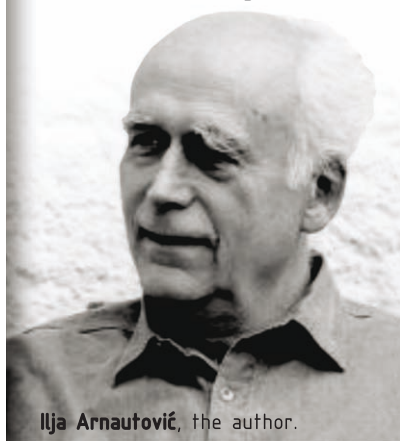






The industrially manufactured "sanitary box" in the middle of the flat comprises a bathroom and kitchenette. The circular route around the "box" links the living spaces.

This was a new, revolutionary floor plan! It allows circulation around the sanitary core which makes the flat seem larger.



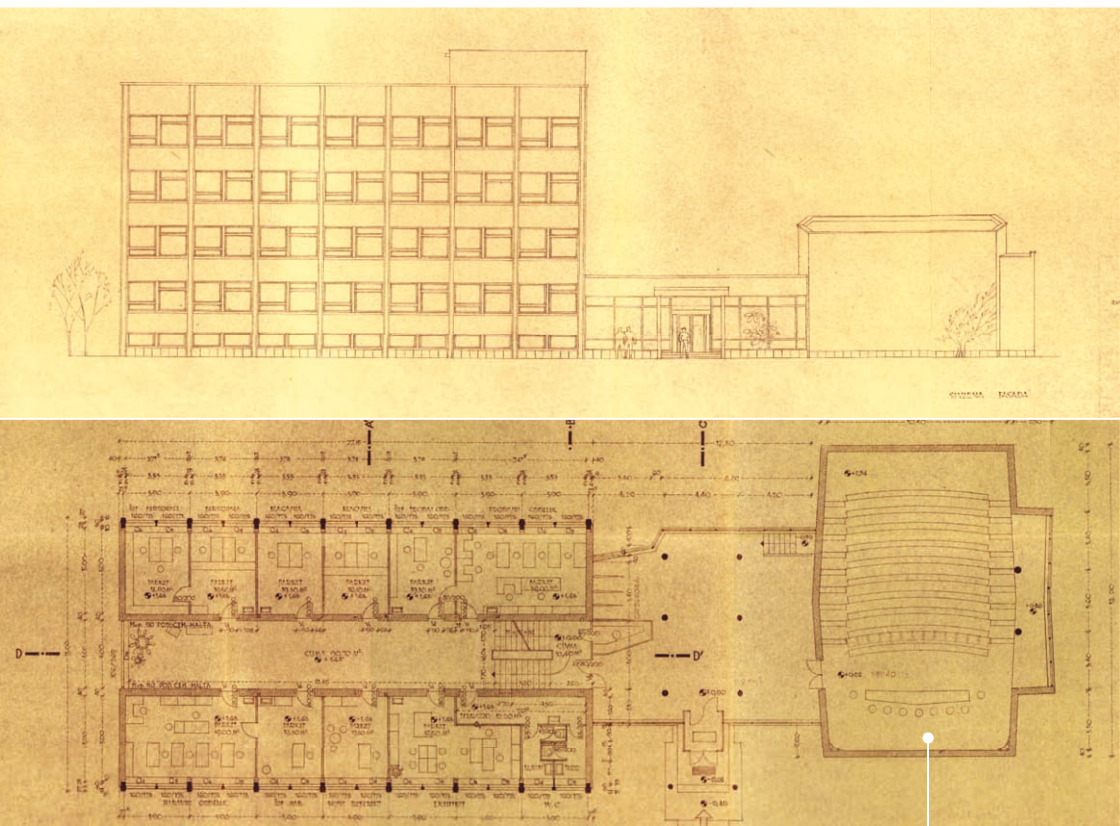
Ilja Arnautović, the author.

# MUNICIPALITY BUILDING

Janez Trenz, Karlo Hus, 1959

Changes to date: replaced facade joinery, interpolation of interior areas, reconstructed entrance.

As the new Velenje outgrew the current Šoštanj administrative centre, the municipality was renamed from Šoštanj Municipality to Velenje Municipality in 1963, and moved its headquarters to the "Velenje Lignite Mine Head Office" in Tito Square which had been donated by the coal mine. The coal mine management relocated to the "Glass Head Office". The front and back **facades** of the municipality are strictly **uniform** with a regular disciplined window rhythm, narrow black vertical lines between them and green stone cladding. A clearly visible canopy leads into the ground-floor lobby which links the administrative building with a hall. Glazing on both sides gives the lobby transparency, providing a view through the building. Special hall features include **an undulating ceiling** and **a floating cube** with **a concave glass wall**.



The **hall** was initially a meeting place for the coal mine workers' council.



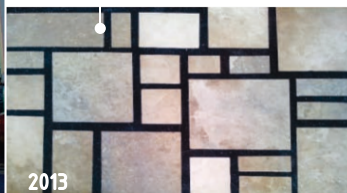


Tito Square is oriented towards the Cultural Centre while the **municipal offices** (originally the coal miners' offices) stand behind/above the people, **symbolically controlling the square** and its goings on.



The **municipal hall** is characterized by red seats and red strips on the undulating ceiling.

The **lobby flooring** is finished in geometrized terrazzo with black concrete.



The **staircase railing** features floor discs which form a decorative line of dots at its edge.

The **concave wall** floats in the air.

# TITO SQUARE

**Paul Filipisky, 1959**

Changes to date: tarmacked, west edge of the square cropped.

The visual pinnacle of the intensively developed town centre was a monumental **paved patio** with **public buildings** placed amidst greenery around it in an asymmetrical balance: the cultural centre, workers' university and workers' club, municipality, hotel and the mine's head office. The square was conceived as a town space par excellence – as a space for political and cultural **spectacles**. The parade access along Cankarjeva Street leads to the middle of the square which tapers towards the cultural centre and the municipality on respective sides. Allegedly the **green** in front of the municipal building is **L-shaped** in honour of Franc Leskošek Luka who often put in a good word for the Velenje mine.

Velenje should be built as a modern industrial town in line with the latest principles.



**Franc Leskošek Luka**,  
member of the Federal  
Executive Council  
of the SFRY

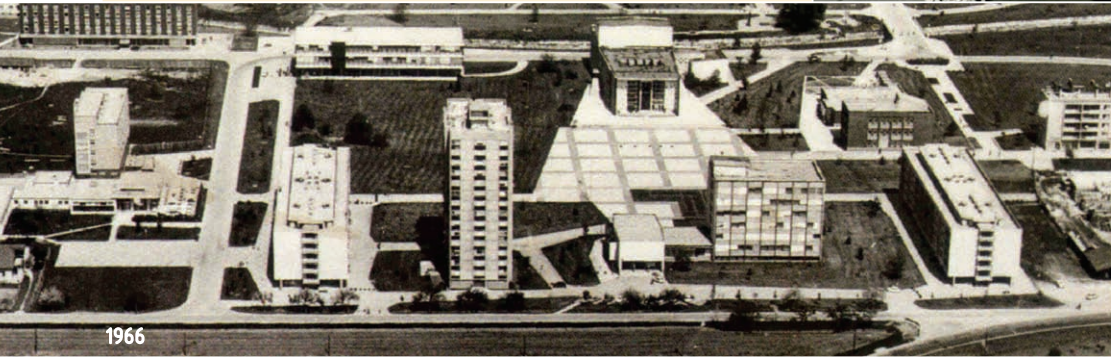
2013

**Tito Square**  
today and  
in a 1957  
model.

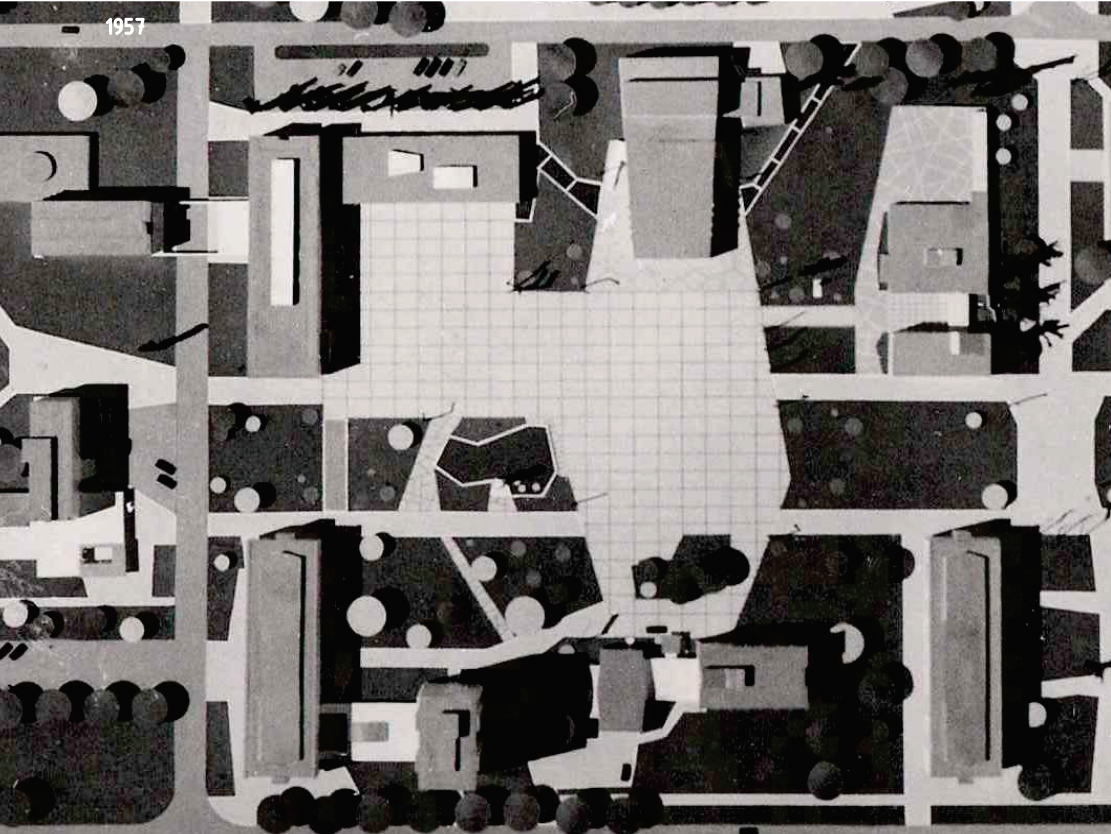


**About the square's construction:** Hard feelings or not, Trenz set to work on Filipšky's plan, which was then used by engineer Pogačnik to prepare the project and soon we were able to start construction work. I was sure the square would raise eyebrows so I told the executives at Gradis to go as fast as they could. Literally overnight we planned the site, set up the drainage, tipped huge amounts of gravel (lorries transported it day and night from the banks of the Paka, in places where it had been regulated) and made the concrete slab which is able to bear great pressures and accommodate several tens of thousands of people. We incorporated large amounts of reinforcement iron and concrete into the slab for the square, and stonemasons from Ljubljana covered the square with flagstones they had made. Tito Square quickly took shape and became the central Velenje square...

**Nestl Žgank: Memoirs of the "Red King", 1999**



1966



1957

# PAKA HOTEL

**Stanko Rohrman, 1961**

Changes to date: reconstruction, new interior, glazed garden canopies, replaced lateral grilles, changed colour scheme and the sign on the face, fire escape added.



The hotel receives its guest under **a portico** of overlapping concrete slabs. Its two dining parlours behind glass walls open onto a garden patio with three hundred seats. The travertine stone panelling on the ground floor emphasizes firmness and weight. Volumes are dematerialized by glass walls which run around the corners. **A strict cubic body** rises from the dynamic ground floor. The first floor is tiled and used to contain two luxury suites with a television set, a formal banquet hall and the hotel restaurant. The top four storeys with rooms were smoothly plastered, greyish blue in colour, and the attic terminated in a strip of lights. On top of the hotel there was **a terrace** "furnished with a tasteful arrangement of garden tables and chairs which are suitable for lounging in the summer days. The terrace also gives a fine view of the newly developed town and its surroundings," as they wrote at the opening along with an invitation to "dancing, an international bar programme, comic gigs, oriental dancing and striptease every day except Mondays."



1963

VELENJE





1963



**Stanko Rohrman,**  
the author.



1995

The garden had a **canopy with a hole**  
– a popular architectural gag, perhaps  
drawn from Le Corbusier's pavilion  
in Paris, 1925.

# PUBLIC MONUMENTS

Only the monuments seen on our "walk through the town of modernism" are included. Except for the Cultural Centre bas-relief, Miner sculpture and park obelisks, all the monuments were set up after 1970 – most of them in the seventies, in the belief that a town should be »decorated«.

Stojan Batič

**Muses of Art**, 1960

The bas-relief mesh-like architectural piece on the Cultural centre depicts three areas of artistic activity. Within Batič's characteristic ornamental imagery, the human figure remains the vehicle of content/meaning.

628 cm



— military uniform

— heavy coat

1

Antun Augustinčić  
**Marshal Tito**, 1977  
Magnification of the original from Kumrovec, Tito's place of birth.

Josip Broz Tito was the president of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the president of its Communist Party. Funds to erect the statue were contributed by labour and socio-political organisations and by the townspeople through voluntary taxation.

Visual art

Dramatic art

Musical art





16

Bernard Sešel

**Otter**, 2002

A symbol of pure water, a reminder to protect the environment, from which endangered animal species are disappearing.

17

**The linden of independence**,

planted in 1991, a memorial plaque set up on the 20th anniversary of Slovenia's independence.

8

Kidričeva Road

10

Tomšičeva Road

11

Kidričeva Road

4

14

13

6

17

15

3

1

5

9

2

12

16

Šaleška Road

**3** Stojan Batič  
**Speechless Rifles**  
1971, base added  
1975–76

The monument is dedicated to the 668 fallen combatants and victims of Fascist aggression in the Velenje area. Their names are written on a black cenotaph. The sculpture symbolizes peace: the upside-down rifles merge into a composition of people.



**4**  
Stojan Batič  
**Poring over  
a Book**, 1977  
In front of  
the ŠCV (Velenje  
School Centre)

**5**  
Stojan Batič  
**Mother with child**, 1981–82  
Originally set up by the  
open-air swimming  
pool, now in front  
of the Velenje  
Gallery.



**6**  
Ciril Cesar  
**Anton Aškerc**, 1956–57  
Crossing arms symbolize  
Aškerc's dilemma: who to  
serve, the heavens (God)  
or the earth (man)? The  
poet was a curate in  
Škale (1894–1898); his  
liberal ideas brought him  
into conflict with the  
Church



**7**  
Ciril Cesar  
**Miners' Manifesto**  
1958, height 8 m  
A futuristic aluminium  
obelisk, a centaur: the  
machine-man, a monu-  
ment to industrialization  
and human will. A stylized  
miner stands at the  
bottom, his arms muta-  
ting into a steel vice;  
higher up there is  
a mining shaft, lift  
piston, torch and wreath  
of victory, and chimneys  
at the top.



**8** Vasilije Četković  
**Symbol of the Mine**, 1976  
The spheres represent  
lumps of coal which  
were used to build the  
new town. Apparently  
around 30,000 pieces  
of steel were welded.

We had the  
opportunity to  
build a town,  
and we seized  
it!



**9**  
Boštjan  
Drinovec  
**Nestl Žgank**  
2009  
"The father  
of Velenje"  
by the town  
model.





10

Anton Herman  
**Miha Pintar Toledo**  
1976. The model was a fighter in the Spanish civil war, a partisan (Pohorje Company commander) and a national hero. The sculptor shaped it by using a drawing and with the help of people who knew the subject.



11

Alojz Jerčič  
**Alfonz Šarh Izток**, 1978  
National hero and member of the Pohorje Battalion; fell along with his three sons. He was meant to be holding a plough.



12

Alojz Kogovšek  
**Miner**, 1948–1952  
The first public monument to be erected in Velenje after World War II. It initially stood in front of the old cinema next to Sončni park.



13

Gabrijel Kolbič  
**Gustav Šilih**, 1978  
Šilih was an eminent teacher and educator, born in Velenje. Two of his books are set in the Šalek Valley: *Once There Was a Lake* and *The White Court*.



15

Valerio Miroglio  
**Partisans**, 1977  
Perspectival play; the individual as part of the whole. A monument to the joint fight of Slovenian and Italian partisans.

14

Ivan Meštrović  
**Woman by the Sea**  
1926, unveiled in 1981, as Velenje was renamed Titovo Velenje.



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## ABBREVIATIONS:

**AS** Archives of Slovenia, **ATRIUM** ATRIUM project material, Nina Tešanović and Rok Poles, kept by MOV, **MOV** Municipality of Velenje, **VM** Velenje Museum.

## SOURCES OF GRAPHIC ELEMENTS AND NOTES

Elements with no source indicated are from the author's archives. **Front endpaper: Centre of Velenje:** photo Mally, held by VM. **Front endpaper, inside: Old coat of arms of Velenje:** badge. **New coat of arms of Velenje:** decal from *Monografija Velenja* 2002, MOV, Velenje 2002. **Velenje 1938:** held by VM. **Velenje ca 1963:** photo Volbenk Pajk, held by VM. **Page 2: prospectus of Velenje 1964,** Turistično društvo Velenje, details, held by VM. **Pool in the children's playground,** held by Frank Spiler, from Mihelak, Velenje, p. 178, detail. **Miniature golf,** held by Frank Spiler, from Mihelak, Velenje, p. 179, detail. **Page 4: Stone and bone tools from Špehovka cave:** from Mitja Brodar: *Ledenodobni ljudje v Saleški dolini, in Velenje, razprave o zgodovini mesta in okolice*, MOV, Velenje 1999, Table 2, p. 45. **Lettering »Welns«:** from a document between Henrik, the Abbot of Gornji Grad, and Egelof Saleški, 13 January 1264, held by the Archdiocesan Archives in Ljubljana. 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Shaft headframe: held by VM. **Dominion machine:** Velenjski rudar, 31. 12. 1953, p. 6. **Page 19: Cartographic basis** for illustration below: cadastral district of Velenje, map sheet No. 27, Celje Geodetic Institute, 1967 and updated, scan held by MOV. **Page 21: Municipality building:** held by VM. **Page 26: Pergola in the park:** from Zgank: *Spomini*, p. 118. **Miners' brass band at the pavilion:** held by VM. **Page 25: Sončni park,** orthophoto: photo D. Rendulič, held by VM. **Page 28: MPT PS floor plan:** ATRIUM. MPT PS orthophoto: held by MOV. **Page 29: Velenje, aerial photo:** photo D. Rendulič, held by VM. **MPT PS from Smartno:** held by VM. **Page 30:** the "Stables", orthophoto: held by MOV. **Page 31: the "Stables" from the south:** from Zgank: *Spomini*, p. 51. **The "Stables", plans:** ATRIUM. **Page 32: Tower block plans,** copy: from ATRIUM and Bernarda Lenko: 40 let Solskega centra Velenje, Velenje School Centre, Velenje 1998, p. 404. **Page 34: Skyscraper plan:** ATRIUM. **Ivan Kocmut:** <http://web.vecer.com/portali/vecer/vi/default.aspx?kaj=3&id=2009101205476506>, 13. 8. 2013. **Page 35: Blocks of flats in Tomšičeva Rd:** held by VM. **Page 36: Cesar Villa,** plans: Cesar family archives. **Čiril Cesar:** Cesar family archives. **Page 37: Cesar Villa (b&w):** from Rok Poles: Kipar C. 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Mrdanov, held by VM. **Page 48: Workers' Club and Workers' University, floor plan** from Gaspari, Družbeni, p. 43. **Page 49: Workers' Club and Workers' University:** photo M. Mrdanov, held by Frank Spiler. From Mihelak: *Velenje*, p. 169. **Workers' Club:** held by VM. **Huts at the Workers' Club,** photo Kotoša, held by VM. **Interior** from Gaspari, Družbeni, p. 43. **Page 50: Stanko Kristl:** <http://www.sazu.si/o-sazu/clani/stanko-kristl.html>, 13. 8. 2013. **Kristl's Block, floor plans:** from Slovenija, 9 arhitektov, Piranesi 1996, p. 78. **Page 51: Velenje:** held by VM. **Kristl's Block:** from Slovenija, *ibid.*, p. 79. **Page 53: Children's playground,** aerial photo: photo D. Rendulič, held by VM. **Plane in the children's playground:** held by VM. **Children's playground,** aerial photo Bojan Playčak. **Page 54: Savsko naselje:** Vesna Teržan: *Socialistična stanovanjska arhitektura*, Mladina, 24. 2. 2011. 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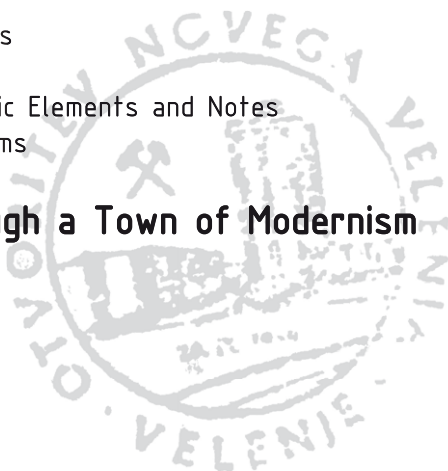
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rear  
endpaper

## A Walk through a Town of Modernism

map  
description





## Expansion of the town

c. 1935

c. 1965

2013

## IMPRINT

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## LESS COMMON TERMS

**Attic:** a low wall at the top of the facade that reaches above the roof. **Atrium:** a central exterior space open to the sky. **Brise-soleil:** (Fr. "sun breaker") large slats fitted on the facade that shade the windows to keep the building from overheating. **Break/pause:** a notch, controlled deliberate spacing between two parts of a building. **Coffer:** a box-shaped panel, rectangular part of a partitioned plane. **Cubus:** (Lat. »cube«) a geometrical solid with six square faces. In broader terms, a smooth, simple cuboid. **The international style** emerged in the 1920s and 1930s when modern architecture was taking shape. Its characteristics are extreme simplification of shape, rejection of ornament, transparency of buildings, frank exposure of structure, assymetry, machine aesthetics. Its slogans: ornament is crime, the truth is in the material, shape follows function, a house is a dwelling machine. **Obelisk:** (Gr. obeliskos = a spit or skewer) a tall tapered pillar topped with a pyramid, in broader terms a prominent free-standing vertical element in an open space. **Parapet:** a low wall at the edge of a ceiling structure or flat roof, on a terrace or a balcony. A wall from the floor to the bottom edge of a window or opening. **Pavilion:** an independent small building or part of a building, usually fully or partly open or glazed. **Portico:** a canopy supported by columns at the entrance to a building. **Prefabrication:** construction by means of ready-made structure or facade elements manufactured industrially in large series. **Skeletal construction:** a building system where the framework follows a repetitive grid. The skeleton has a weight-bearing function. It may be outwardly visible or hidden with a facade. **Pier:** a vertical supporting member of a building. Unlike the usually round pillar a pier is rectangular in cross-section and one side is often much longer than the other. **Hatching:** a series of lines creating a distinctive pattern. **Terrazzo:** polished concrete paving, usually poured and finished at the site. **Transenna:** a decoratively finished panel which covers a window.

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## VELENJE

- ..... direction of the walk  
 → visual axes  
 (X) architecture described  
 ■ areas described

To shorten your walk through the town, you can use the free town bus or town bicycles.

### When can the building interiors be accessed?

The entrance areas can be seen during working hours:

7 Health Care Centre, 16 Municipality, 12 Workers' Club and Workers' University, 18 Paka Hotel. The interiors can be seen during public events:

5 MPT PS, 8 Gimnazija, 9 GS PS, 12 Cultural Centre. The children's playground (14) is locked at night.

The rest of the buildings are privately owned and cannot be viewed from inside. Group tours should be announced to TIC Velenje in advance.

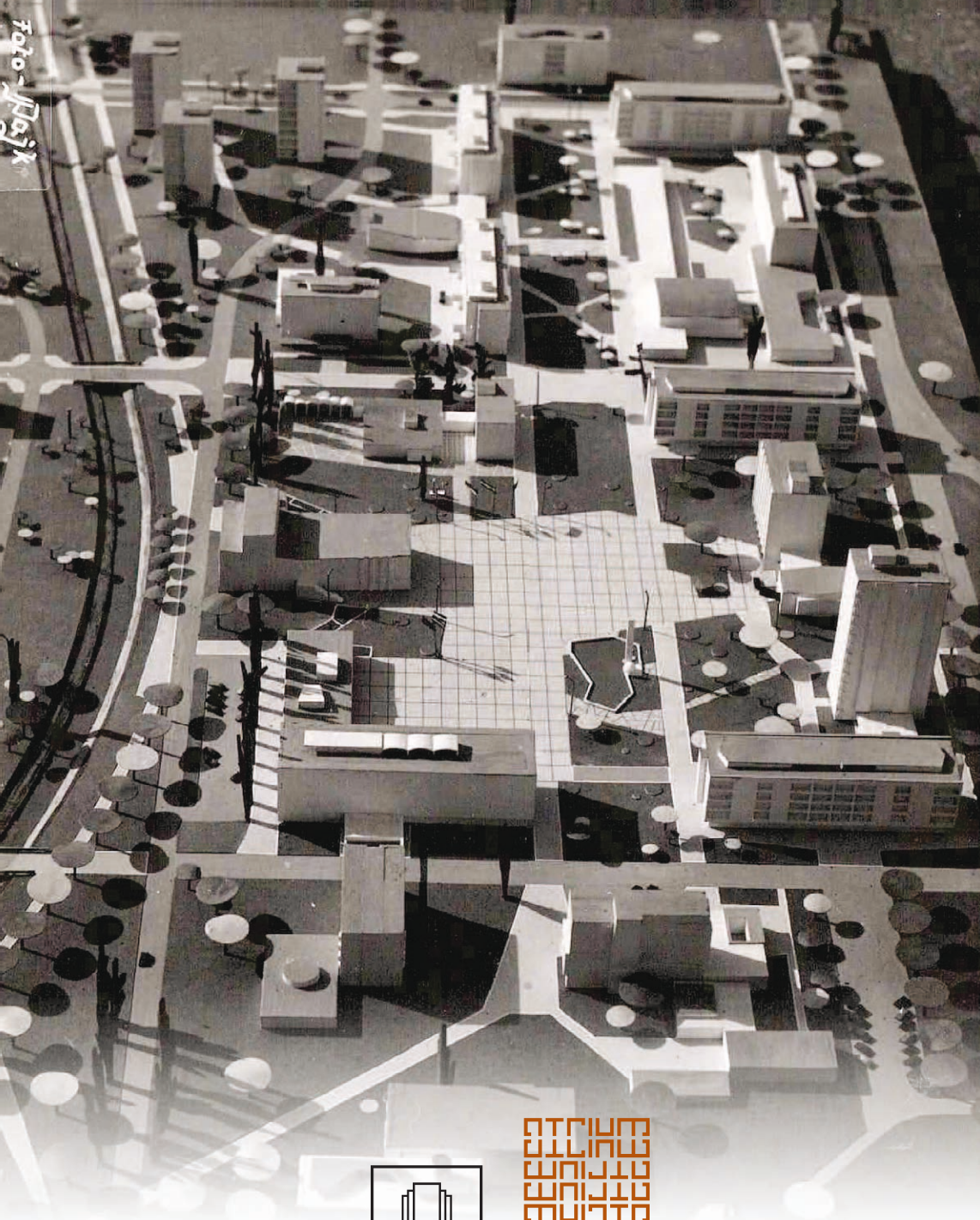
Useful information: TIC at Villa Bianca.

The information centre for architecture is at the Gallery.

## A Walk through a Town of Modernism

Our walk through the part of Velenje most prominently characterized by modernist architecture begins in **Sončni park = Sun park (1)**. The park's northern part almost touches the site of the old coal-mining shaft and power plant – the centre of industrialization in the east end of the Šalek Valley. If time allows, visit the Coal Mining Museum of Slovenia to see the Dominion machine which was used to hoist coal at the Preloge mine shaft and is regarded as »the machine that built Velenje«. Otherwise walk past the skating rink and through the residential area of villa-blocks, made during the earliest town building stage, to the **Miha Pinter Toledo Primary School (2)** and past the »stables« (3) to Jenkova Road. Jenkova is at right angle to Kidričeva Road and has what is called a heliothermic orientation (small shift from the North-South orientation), which provides ideal sun exposure for residential buildings. As a visual axis, Jenkova points to Velenje Castle in accordance with the urban-planning principles of Camillo Sitte. Jenkova Road brings us down the slightly raised flood-proof riverside terrace, where the town started to emerge, into the valley floor. After the Paka was regulated, the town likewise moved down the valley floor which was no longer a flood plain. While the buildings on the slope still have visibly steep roofs, the later houses in the valley floor were built with flat roofs. Note the **RŠC tower block (4)**. Follow Tomšičeva Road past the blocks of flats and **skyscraper (5)** to Kidričeva Road. Tomšičeva is parallel to the former railway line through the valley. Kidričeva forms the eastern boundary of the modernist town, later crossed by the neighbourhoods built in the seventies and eighties. Walk down Kidričeva to the Paka and along the river past the **Cesar family villa (6)**, the old part of the **Health Care Centre (7)**, **Gimnazija (8)** and **Gustav Šilih Primary School (9)**. All these buildings on the Paka are located on the geometrical grid of the town centre which is no longer heliocentric but aligned with Šaleška Road. Cross the bridge across the Paka to reach the town centre: pass the south side of the **Mine Head Office (10)** to the **Cultural Centre (11)**. Take the passage between the **Workers' University** and the **Workers' Club (12)**, along Cankarjeva Street to **Kristl's Block (13)**. Walk around Kristl's Block, through the underpass under Šaleška Road and take a turn around the **children's playground (14)**. Continue to the intersection along Šaleška Road, which is marked at each end by a castle (Velenje and Šalek), then past the **Miners' Tower Block (15)** and **Municipality Building (16)** into **Tito Square (17)** and to **Paka Hotel (18)**.





1957-1958

Model of  
the Velenje  
town centre,  
1957



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