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## Tugendhat Villa features revitalised garden

The reconstruction of the functionalist Tugendhat Villa, listed as a UNESCO world heritage site, included complete revitalisation of the adjacent garden. The investor, the City of Brno, took over the completed external spaces of the Tugendhat Villa in the district of Černá Pole as early as November 2011.

*„The adjacent garden and the house with its residential space itself belong inherently together; the brilliant Mies van der Rohe created and underscored their perfect symbiosis in his design and this symbiosis has been successfully reinstated by the revitalisation,“* said Mayor of Brno, Mr. Roman Onderka.

### Renovation of the Tugendhat Villa garden

The monument restoration of the garden was completed in the first half of November 2011. It followed up on the excavation work carried out in relation to the sewer reconstruction. At the initial stage, unsuitable wood species planted in 1985, which failed to correspond to the original range of species from 1930, were removed. The renovation included the terrain profile adjustment, renewal of the original park pathways and installation of retaining walls of a two-tier rock garden. After that, the woody species were professionally treated. All the work was performed by top specialists and it was based on an accurately developed design of the garden renovation (complemented by necessary surveys and analyses).

The design was based on archive materials and photographs dating from the time when the Tugendhats lived in the house (1930–1938). All interior and exterior vegetation was precisely identified. Obsolete woody species were replaced by new pre-grown trees (5 trees). The project included mobile vegetation to be placed on the terraces and at the villa entrance. Attention was also paid to climbing plants, which will cover the eastern and southern house fronts in the future.

Specifically, two weeping willows, two chestnut trees were planted along with a sophora planted at the place where, as historical snapshots suggest, first discussions between ex-prime ministers Václav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar about the split-up of former Czechoslovakia took place. Observing the historical context, locust trees were planted on the green belt in front of the house. The revitalisation of the garden was then completed by the installation of an irrigation system and a lawn turf laying. The same method (analysis of the plants and replacement with identical assortment) was applied when renovating the conservatory.

### About the garden history

The garden design was based on the cooperation between Mies van der Rohe, architect of the Tugendhat Villa, and Brno architect Markéta Roderová-Müllerová. A major part of the garden is formed by a grassy meadow with several solitary trees and a basic pathway network set out on the lot as early as the 19th century. Mies preferred large grassy areas with scattered vegetation in the spirit of the so-called “emphasised emptiness”.

The latest garden surveys provide remarkable interpretation of the linkage between the house and its natural surroundings in three basic aspects. What is crucial is the relation between the house and the city skyline with specific views and openings providing views of the architectonic dominants. Another aspect is the use of vegetation on the house frontages, indicated by Mies’s drafts and family photographs made by Fritz Tugendhat. The optical “disappearance” of the building mass in the foliage accentuates the perfect interconnection of the interior with the exterior when looking from the outside. Finally, it is the lay-out of the garden itself with compositions linked to the main living room in the villa, which is, for example, apparent in the direct linkage of the dining room and the summer seating under the weeping willow.

Terraces with dry retaining walls, which are made up of loosely laid stones planted with perennial plants, form an optical base of the building important to accentuate the view of the house from the lower part of the garden. Plants in pots were installed at the entrance from Černopolská Street and on the garden terrace. A close linkage between the interior and vegetation is also provided by a conservatory with a pond with aquatic plants and potted plants.

The garden architect, Markéta Roderová-Müllerová (1898–1981), cooperated with the Brno architect Otto Eisler, brother of Artur and Mořic Eisler, whose company built the Tugendhat Villa. This is probably how she got in contact with Mies, who might be pleased about her German origin and her studies in Berlin.

She graduated from a gardening college in Lednice, Moravia (1919) and worked in the local chateau gardening company (1919–20); she studied externally at the prestigious University of Gardening at Berlin-Dahlem. Later, she worked in the gardening company of Schütz Bros in Olomučany, and being encouraged by them she became one of the first growers of perennial plants in Czechoslovakia. She is credited with helping establish the botanical garden and arboretum at the University of Agriculture, the present Mendel University in Brno, where she worked between 1967–71.

Source: Iveta Černá, Tugendhat Villa manager

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