

# Hungarian Cultural Garden

## Art Nouveau and Art Deco Influences

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*Prepared 6/20/18 for the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Hungarian Cultural Garden held on 6/24/2018*

The first half of the twentieth century was a tumultuous time for Hungarians everywhere. Unfortunately, Hungary suffered greatly during this period, with its possibly most significant struggle coming with the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 after World War I. Through the treaty, Hungary lost two-thirds of its former land and half of its population. Among the lost land was Székelyföld – a region in eastern Transylvania. Whereas the rest of the Transylvanian population had become mostly Romanian over the decades before World War I, Székelyföld remained majority Hungarian and one of the areas of the most archaic Hungarian cultural traditions due to its long-time isolation from the main Hungarian population in the Carpathian Basin (modern Hungary). Among Székelyföld's unique cultural traditions, which can still be found in the well-preserved region today, are the large, hand-carved decorative wooden gates called Székely kapus. These gates traditionally guard the entrances to Hungarian homes and usually feature carved folk motifs and ancient Hungarian runic writing, which is today learned and used frequently by all Hungarian Scouts.

Possibly the most recognizable feature of the Hungarian Cultural Garden is the large wrought-iron archway-gate in the middle of the garden. This gate, improperly called a Székely kapu in reference to original garden plans and to express Hungarian political ideas, is properly named the Verhovay Díszkapu (or Verhovay decorative gate) after the Hungarian-founded insurance company that donated it. Original plans for the cultural garden do not indicate the wrought-iron gate found today – instead, a traditional, proper Székely kapu is illustrated. This plan was never brought to life in order to preserve peace with other nationalities in Cleveland due to the recent happenings in Europe and the Treaty of Trianon. The Verhovay Díszkapu is reminiscent of Hungary's connection with Austria and reflects more typical Western European architecture of the early twentieth century – specifically the Art Nouveau style, which sought to bring creativity, organicity, and beauty to an industrializing world.

The gate is wrought-iron and features metal floral designs and royal-looking motifs. Additionally, metal Hungarian folk figures are part of the design. This piece is distinctly Art Nouveau because of its curly, organic, floral designs and unique elements. Precisely, it falls under the Hungarian Secession category of Art Nouveau – the specific Hungarian variant of the style. Hungarian Secession has its origins in Vienna Secession, or Austrian Art Nouveau. This is because of Hungary's dual monarchy with Austria

during the Art Nouveau period. The gate can be concretely named Hungarian Secession not only because of its Hungarian origins, but also because of the use of Hungarian folk motifs (here, the folk figures) in its design. The rest of the Hungarian garden features similar, smaller wrought-iron gates, all part of the Hungarian Secession Art Nouveau style. In fact, the entire garden is laid out somewhat like a wealthy Hungarian estate with Austrian / Western influences.

Clearly, many elements of the Hungarian Cultural Garden fall under the banner of Art Nouveau. However, the time of the creation of the garden brings up an interesting question – can the Verhovay gate and its accompanying elements truly be considered Art Nouveau? The garden itself was brought into existence in the late 1930s – long after the Art Nouveau movement had lost its prominence around 1915-1920.

By the time the garden was being built, a new art movement – considered a child of Art Nouveau and even simply its continuation – had come: Art Deco. Art Deco had a similar goal to Art Nouveau, but was meant to bring beauty in an already industrialized age utilizing industrialization. Art Deco featured simpler, more geometrical styles and more of a factory-feel than Art Nouveau.

However, due to factors including political tensions in Hungary at the time Art Deco was prominent (c. 1920-1950), Hungarian Art Deco developed in a much less flamboyant way than in other places like America. Distinct among Art Deco styles, Hungarian Art Deco emerged as a very close continuation of Hungarian Art Nouveau. Many examples of Art Nouveau and Art Deco in Hungary are not explicitly or certainly organized into either category, sharing elements of both styles.

For this reason, the Verhovay gate and its accompanying elements can be considered Hungarian Art Deco. However, historical influence on the garden and the gate's own design do suggest a closer association with the Art Nouveau era. Due to the continuity of Art Nouveau and Art Deco all over the world and especially in Hungary, the gate can be referred to as both Art Nouveau and Art Deco, as it falls in the overarching family of both.