

## THE “NEW” COMMERCIAL CLOTH HALL

For centuries, the Cloth Hall had been the most important commercial building in Kraków. The prestige of this place began to decline in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the best companies in Kraków were moved to large and attractive premises in townhouses around the Main Square. Year by year, the dilapidation of the building progressed. The need to renovate the building was noticed by the authorities of the Free City of Kraków. However, it took several dozen years for bold restoration works, and in some places also reconstruction, to be carried out.

Tadeusz Pryliński presented the most interesting idea for restoring the splendour of the Cloth Hall and its proper place in the heart of the city. Thanks to him, the adjacent ruined Rich Stalls and the accompanying Iron Stalls and Fish Stalls were dismantled. As part of the adaptation works, commercial premises inside and the entrance to

the Cloth Hall were rearranged, and the entire building was surrounded by arcades. Jan Matejko himself designed the wooden stalls inside the hall, intended for small trade. Heating and gas lighting were installed for the comfort of both sellers and customers.

The official opening of the Cloth Hall took place in 1879. The traditional commercial functions of the building were maintained, but it gained a new, refined architectural form. It became the main urban focus of the Main Square and the city's showcase. Stalls inside the building and shops under the arcades were used as an elegant passageway invoking the then fashionable forms of galleries in Europe, while also constituting the most important late 19<sup>th</sup>-century commercial complex in Kraków. The Cloth Hall became a kind of luxury department store, set in a building with medieval roots.