

GOSPROM ENSEMBLE IN KHARKIV AND THE CONCEPT OF MODERN STYLE

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ABSTRACT: The ideologists of Constructivism and “production art” of the 1920s put forward the slogan “not style, but method!”. However, the Constructivists-“productionists” movement carried a stylistic charge of great power. The intentions of the Constructivists-“productionists”, their manifestos and slogans are polemically pointed evidence of their awareness of their own place in the Soviet culture of the 1920s. Creative practice continued the development of a certain artistic tradition. It is necessary to reconstruct the development of the problem of style in the concept of “productionists” as a natural and historically determined stage of the movement. The manifestation of the rejection of the idea of style in artistic creativity in the concept of “production art” paradoxically corresponds to its specific conditions in setting the task of creating and identifying the mechanism for the development of modern style. They are analyzed in the article. The “anti-stylistic” orientation of “production art” was paradoxically opposed to the orientation towards a “Constructivist style”. In the late 1920s, it covered a wide range of architects and artists who did not belong to the Constructivist movement and who opposed them. In this regard, the fate of several outstanding monuments of the Modern Movement in the architecture of Kharkiv is indicative — the House of State Industry (Gosprom), the House of Projects and the House of Cooperation. They were the largest and most integral ensemble in their architectural and compositional solution, which embodied the ideas of the Modern Movement in Soviet architecture. The reconstruction of the ensemble after the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) showed the contradictions that were embedded in the Constructivist concept of the modern style. The duality of understanding the art form in it was revealed. On the one hand, it acted as an independent stylistic entity. On the other hand, it could also be considered as a framework, a “draft” of some further work with the form. The concept of modern style defended by the “productionists” was problematized by the practice of “Constructivist stylizations”.

KEY WORDS: “production art”; modern style; “Constructivist stylizations”; the architectural ensemble of the House of State Industry (Gosprom), the House of Projects and the House of Cooperation in Kharkiv; mechanism for the development of modern style.

INTRODUCTION: Theory and practice of Constructivism and “production art” in the 1920s covered a wide range of plastic arts - from architecture and design to fine and decorative arts. It created and implemented the concept of modern style (see: Ginzburg, 1975).

Many publications are devoted to the comprehension of practical experience and theoretical ideas of Constructivists and “productionists”, their place in Soviet culture (see: Zhadova, 1966; Constructivism in Ukraine, 2005; Kreyzer, 2005; Sidorina, 1978; Sidorina, 2012; Khan-Magomedov, 1981; Khan-Magomedov, 1982; Chekhunov, Dubovis, 2004; Shilo, 2014). In them, issues related to the problems of style among the Constructivists

received their coverage mainly in two directions. On the one hand, this is a stylistic analysis of individual works in order to identify common patterns that allow us to state a certain unified style of time (see: Adaskina, 1980). On the other hand, there is a discussion of the problems of shaping (see: Sidorina, 1980; Sidorina, 1984).

This second direction of research is developing in line with the slogan “not style, but method!”, put forward by the ideologists of Constructivism and “production art”: “We regard the triumph of the Constructivism method as the main feature of modernity,” wrote L.M. Lisitsky (Lisitsky, 1975, p. 138). However, it is also generally recognized that this movement carried a powerful stylistic charge. This

allows us to speak of the Constructivist style of the 1920s (see: Sidorina, 1978). This fixes a certain contradiction between the theoretical views and the artistic practice of the Constructivists.

STUDY

The pathos of the revolutionary transformation of the world was perceived by the masters, who formed the core of the Constructivists, as an orientation towards a production attitude towards art (see: Sidorina, 1978; Sidorina, 1980), on the design of a new way of life by artistic means, which was based on the ideas of usefulness and rationality (see: Arvatov, 1925, p. 41). V.E. Tatlin put forward the thesis about art "neither right nor left, but necessary" (cit. by: Punin, 1980, p. 26). It was this kind of art that was supposed to form the modern style (see: Ginzburg, 1975, p. 284; Goldzamt, 1973; Khan-Magomedov, 1980).

One of the starting points of the concept of modern style was the judgment about the principle of correspondence between the processes of social and artistic development. The goal of this latter was understood as the creation of "social harmony, the limits and nature of which are determined by the historical development of social relations," as B.I. Arvatov wrote (Arvatov, 1922, p. 69). Proceeding from this principle, the orientation towards development was formulated as the target orientation of the artistic consciousness. Within its framework, the product of the artist's activity is understood only as a stage, a step in his creative development. It strives for harmonic conformity with the "development of social relations": "... a work is another stop on the path of creation, and not a goal," L.M. Lisitsky wrote (Lisitsky, 1975, p. 139).

The creation of the modern style was a long-term and large-scale creative program. As B.I. Arvatov wrote, "the path to the organic style" consisted "not in the dead perfection of established patterns once and for all, but in continuous evolutionary dynamics. From achievement to achievement, constantly changing and improving forms, hand in hand with the successes of technology and the development of social life, this fluid, living, *never-ending style* will be created" (Arvatov, 1922, p. 74, text selection by me. — A.Sh.).

The master, a participant in the movement of Constructivists-"productionists", faced a number of non-traditional tasks:

- 1 Programming the trajectory of social development;
- 2 Correlation of own artistic development with the program of social development;
- 3 Organization of the creative process and management of one's own artistic development.

The prototype for solving these problems was the experience of an engineer. "The organic, 'engineering' entry of artists into production is ... a necessary condition for the economic system of socialism," the theorist of "production art" B.I. Arvatov noted (cit. by: Sidorina, 1984, p. 26).

Engineering experience is projected onto artistic experience, and work with form is interpreted as "the invention of form" (B.I. Arvatov) (see: Blumenfeld, 1925). It takes place in the "laboratory" conditions of art workshops (see: Ginzburg, 1927) and is introduced into practice by the methods of artistic design. They are provided with the same type of tools as scientifically developed in engineering culture - standards, regulations, technical specifications, etc.

B.I. Arvatov in 1925 wrote about the need to involve artists in the development of "normals and standards for products", to demonstrate "inventions of masters, formal and technical achievements, normalized utilitarian forms", to organize art production laboratories "associated with the relevant laboratories of scientific and industrial institutes", "draw the latest and best inventions as standards ... for their popularization and propaganda for utilitarian art" (Arvatov, 1925, p. 4).

The function of organizing and managing art practice provides work with art form. It turns out to be purposeful and dynamic, changing in various sociocultural situations. In this circumstance, it was natural to look for a mechanism for the development of modern style. Its model was described by M.Ya. Ginzburg (see: Ginzburg, 1975).

He argues that two components stand out when the style is folded. Firstly, these are the formal elements that appear as a result of working with the form. Secondly, these are the methods of their organization, as a result of which a composition appears (see: Ginzburg, 1975, p. 282) The compositional system determines the style. It manifests itself in the correspondence of composition techniques to the elements of form (see: Ginzburg, 1975, p. 280).

Each of the processes - work with form and organization of composition - has its own development intentions. The mechanism for changing styles is the uneven development of shaping and organization of the composition. As a rule, the emergence of new form elements is often associated with the emergence of new materials or designs. It happens faster than compositional techniques change. This discrepancy stimulates the search for new compositional techniques. Ultimately, there is a change in the existing compositional system, and the style changes with it (see: Ginzburg, 1975, p. 282).

The attitude towards the invention of form adopted by the Constructivists-"productionists" becomes a stimulus for the renewal of compositional techniques and the development of modern style [see: Ginzburg, 1975, p. 282].

This process is reconstructed as follows:

1st phase — style development programming:

- creation of the concept of social development. "We do not imagine new forms in art outside the transformation of social forms ..." — L.M. Lisitsky wrote (Lisitsky, 1975, p. 138);
- setting an artistic task corresponding to the created "image of the future". It is solved, as noted by M.Ya. Ginzburg, "in connection with a certain goal, a certain material, a certain situation of action" (Ginzburg, 1927, p. 164).

2nd phase — style development step:

- the invention of formal elements corresponding to the task;
- bringing compositional techniques in line with the newly obtained elements of form. "The question was: what are the initial impulses of shaping, on the basis of which then, in the course of the formation of a particular style, the artistic and compositional system of techniques and means of expression 'grows'," S.O. Khan-Magomedov notes (Khan-Magomedov, 1982, p. 30).

3rd phase — the formation and dissemination of style:

- approbation of the solution in the "laboratory" conditions of an art workshop;
- wide distribution of the obtained solution with the help of a system of standards, regulations, standard projects, etc.;

4th phase — criticism of the established style and the prerequisites for its development:

- determination of the compliance of the realized solution of the artistic task with the actual level of social development;
- creation of a new concept of social development; etc.

The development of the modern style is constantly carried out by "throwing into the future" its goals "one step forward", taking this "step", reflecting the correspondence of its results to the set goal, adjusting it, "throwing into the future" the corrected goal, etc. (see: Shilo, 2014).

At the same time, the artistic development of style in the traditional sense turns out to be a secondary task in comparison with the implementation of the new function of the artist, who has mastered the method of development: "... we see it in the new economy, and in the development of industry, and in the psychology of contemporaries, and in art" L.M. Lisitsky wrote (Lisitsky, 1975, p. 138). The consequence of mastering this method was a fundamental rejection of the certainty of the object of artistic creativity: "It's not about the thing ..., but about working with it," A.M. Gan noted (cit. by: Sidorina, 1980, p. 10).

Accordingly, architectural and artistic creativity itself began to be interpreted as the possession of a method (and a potential opportunity) for solving unique problems. The artist, on the other hand, was understood as the bearer of mastery — mastery of the method "in its purest form": "... one can be an artist in anything — in politics and science, in shoemaking and engineering, in a turning shop and in a statue maker's studio, in a textile workshop and in the attic of a nature morte specialist"; "an artist is no more, no less than a qualified organizer," B.I. Arvatov emphasized (cit. by: Sidorina, 1984, p. 25).

Thus, the concept of style was on the periphery of architectural and artistic consciousness. This was understood as a compromise of the very idea of style. It was perceived as a rejection of stylistic ideology in general. Subsequently, it was reinforced by the winged formulas of Ch. Le Corbusier: "Styles are lies," and W. Gropius: "Method, not style" (cit. by: Kaplun, 1985, p. 12).

The Constructivists-"productionists" becomes an enterprising creator of models and ways of life of the future. The implementation of such a program is seen on the scale of the processes associated with the social reorganization of society. It is carried out in the conditions of a social upheaval, oriented towards planned and predictable social development. Therefore, Constructivists-"productionists" constantly appeal to the development of social life by means of art, because in their concept it was the development of social life that acted as a means of developing art in general and, in particular, working with the art form: "We approach the form by deploying a social goal," M.Ya. Ginzburg argued (cit. by: Goldzamt, 1973, p. 141).

The "anti-stylistic" orientation of "production art" was paradoxically opposed to the orientation towards "Constructivist style" (see: Khan-Magomedov, 1980).

In this regard, the fate of several outstanding monuments of the modern movement in the architecture of Kharkiv is indicative (see: Constructivism in Ukraine, 2005).

Kharkiv at the turn of the 1920-30s. was the capital of Ukraine. During this period, there is a rapid construction. A new administrative center is being created, which was supposed to give the former provincial city a look corresponding to its new capital status. A grandiose complex of the House of State Industry (Gosprom), the House of Projects and the House of Cooperation (now the buildings of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University) is being designed and built. These huge structures, as they were designed and built, formed an ensemble of one of the largest squares in Europe [FIGURE 01].

Briefly, the history of the creation of this ensemble is as follows. In May 1925, the Council of People's Commissars of Ukraine announced an open competition for the design

of the House of State Industry (Gosprom). The first prize was given to the project under the motto "The Uninvited Guest" [FIGURE 02]. It was made by Leningrad architects S.S. Serafimov, S.M. Kravets and M.D. Felger. In 1928, the House of State Industry (Gosprom) was fully commissioned [FIGURE 03] (see: Zvonitsky, Leibfreud, 1992).

In 1930-32, from the south, the round part of the square was closed by the House of Projects (now the main building of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University), built according to the competition project of S.S. Serafimov and M.A. Zandberg-Serafimova [FIGURE 04]. In 1929-34, on the northern side of the square, the construction of the House of Cooperation began (project by A.I. Dmitriev and O.R. Munts). This complex (now the northern building of Kharkiv University) was completed after the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) [FIGURE 05].

Both complexes continue the development of the compositional theme set by Gosprom. Radially oriented volumes are placed in the plan along the arc of the rounded border of the area. They create a stepped distribution of the masses united among themselves and with Gosprom as the center of the composition.

The ensemble organizes into a single whole the vast space of the square — its round and rectangular parts. On the north side of the rectangular part in 1933-36 designed by Kharkiv architect G.A. Yanovitsky, the "International" Hotel (now the "Kharkiv" Hotel) was built [FIGURE 06, FIGURE 07].



01 Ensemble of Freedom Square. Kharkiv, Ukraine. © Photo by V. Bysov, 2003. <http://www.kharkov.ua/about/svobody.htm>.

In the late 1920s - early 1930s the square was the largest and most integral ensemble in its architectural and compositional solution, which embodied the ideas of the Modern Movement in Soviet architecture.

These are the general pieces of information that usually precedes the analysis of the style and artistic form of the ensemble. However, one should pay attention to the fact that even before the start of the competition, work was carried out, which allows us to say that the formation of the art form carried out in the projects was preceded by the procedures for folding the style of the ensemble.

The terms of the all-Union competition for *the best project of the House of State Industry* were developed in 1924-25 by the famous Kharkiv architect-teacher Professor A.G. Molokin and civil engineer Ya.I. Kensky and approved collectively by the leading architects and builders of the country.



02 S.S. Serafimov, S.M. Kravets, M.D. Felger. Gosprom. Project. Kharkiv. Ukraine. © Kharkiv, Gosprom Museum, 1925. <https://sfw.so/1148783049-gosprom.html>.



03 S.S. Serafimov, S.M. Kravets, M.D. Felger. Gosprom building. Kharkiv. Ukraine. © Kharkiv, Gosprom Museum, early 1930s. <https://kharkov-future.com.ua/ru/pervyj-sovetskij-neboskreb-istoriya-gosproma>.



06 G.A. Yanovitsky. Hotel "International". Perspective. Kharkiv, Ukraine. Grand Prix of the World Exhibition of Arts and Technology 1937 in Paris. © Kharkiv, Gosprom Museum, 1933—36. <https://sfw.so/1148783049-gosprom.html>.

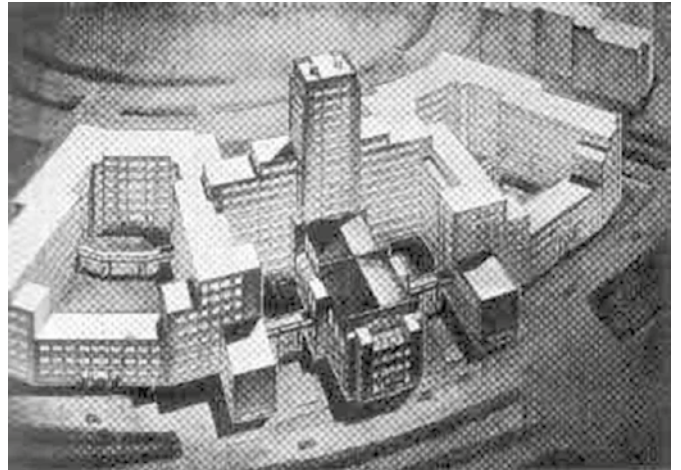
The conditions of the competition set out not only technical, but also artistic requirements for the composition of the future building. In particular, they say:

... The view of the building will be open from all sides, and, in addition, its silhouette will be dominant for the viewer from the side ... of the lower part of the city due to the steep drop in terrain to the west of the plots allocated for development.

... The building must be of a reinforced concrete frame system, partial use of natural stone is



04 S.S. Serafimov, M.A. Zandberg-Serafimova. House of design organizations. Kharkiv. Ukraine. © Kharkiv, Gosprom Museum, 1932. <https://sfw.so/1148783049-gosprom.html>.



05 A.I. Dmitriev, O.R. Muntz. Project of the House of Cooperation. Kharkiv. Ukraine. Axonometry. © Kharkiv, Gosprom Museum, 1927—30. <https://sfw.so/1148783049-gosprom.html>.



07 G.A. Yanovitsky. Hotel "International". Kharkiv, Ukraine. © Kharkiv, Gosprom Museum, 1936. <https://sfw.so/1148783049-gosprom.html>.

allowed on the facades. ... If possible, narrow, well-shaped courtyards should be avoided.

... When designing, it should be possible to expand the building by adding or building additional buildings ...

(Knowing how the entire ensemble of the square subsequently developed, the creation of which was not yet envisaged by this competition, we can say that at this point in the conditions the idea of continuous development of the modern style was consolidated in technical and technological formulations. — A.Sh.)

... The nature of the facades of buildings is left to the discretion of the drafter of the project, but, reflecting the idea of Soviet industry, it should be distinguished by clear lines, a logical distribution of simple architectural masses with an abundance of light and air. The building can end with a glass chamber with a radio, a clock, a spotlight for illuminated advertisements, etc.

... In addition to indents in the plan from the red line, partial indentations of the facades into the depth of the site and in the vertical direction at the level of various floors with the arrangement of open terraces are also allowed, if their rational use is possible, and flat roofs are also allowed. Provision should be made on the main facades for arrangement of balconies for speakers to speak and for the installation of radiotelephone loudspeakers, as well as places for light screens.

... it is necessary to provide for the correct movement of the public ...

(cit. by: Chekhunov, Dubovis, 2004, p. 114-119).

One involuntarily suggests a comparison of the competition conditions with the legendary five principles of Le Corbusier, formulated in 1932-35 (see: Le Corbusier, 1970, p. 121-133, 300). They became a formula forming, according to A.A. Tits, the plastic "molecule of style" of modern architecture of the 20th century. (see: Tits, Vorobyeva, 1986, p. 209).

The principles of the artistic solution of the Gosprom complex were outlined in the conditions of the competition in a generalized form. It opened up opportunities for the manifestation of various artistic intuitions and author's ideas directly in the process of designing a building. This is evidenced by the artistic diversity of the presented projects.

In the competition projects (see: Chekhunov, Dubovis, 2004, p. 14-21) motifs of Ukrainian folk architecture (architect D.M. Dyachenko), and elements of the "skyscraper

style" (architect N.V. Vasiliev) were used. There were reminiscences, although very veiled, of modernity (architects A.M. Ginzburg, A.V. Linetsky) and neoclassicism popular before the First World War (Y.A. Steinberg, A.E. Belograd, A.I. Dmitriev). I.A. Fomin developed in his project the ideas of "proletarian", "new" or "reconstructed" (see: Ilyin, 1946, p. 27) classics. V.A. Shchuko, V.G. Golfreich, A.N. Beketov, N.A. Trotsky, A.V. Shchusev, S.S. Serafimov created solutions that demonstrated the various possibilities of working with form in the style of modern architecture.

This variety of artistic moves was proposed by outstanding masters, many of whom created wonderful works in previous years, marked by the dominance of ideas and techniques of modernity, neoclassicism, eclecticism. Their participation in the competition showed that professional architectural thinking easily assimilated new stylistic principles and adapted the plastic language corresponding to them.

Thus, at the level of direct implementation of the design, it was found that the Constructivism method declared by the theorists of the new architecture to a greater extent determined the competition program and partly linked its principles and norms with the creation of basic compositional schemes. The development of the artistic form was carried out relatively autonomously at the design stage.

During the competitions, it was found that Constructivist artistic vocabulary can be used in those traditional ways of working with form, which were mastered in the practice of stylizations back in the eclecticism of the mid-19th century. This contradiction was clearly manifested in the course of the post-war reconstruction of the buildings of modernist architecture that made up the Kharkiv ensemble. During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 it was destroyed. Only the reinforced concrete skeletons of the buildings and the enclosing structures of Gosprom survived.

The restoration and reconstruction of the ensemble took place at a time when the tendencies of historicism,



08 S.S. Serafimov, S.M. Kravets, M.D. Felger. Gosprom. Kharkiv. Ukraine.
© Designed by A. Lipinsky. Postcard. Kharkiv, PP "Folio Plus", 2003. <https://www.ebay.com/itm/255434628780>.



09 V.P. Kostenko, V.I. Lifshits and others. The main building of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (KhNU) (Reconstruction of the former House of Projects). Kharkiv. Ukraine. 1953—63.
© Ryzen, 2008. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Place_de_la_libert%C3%A9.jpg.



10 P.E. Shpara, N.P. Evtushenko and others. Northern building of KhNU (Reconstruction of the former House of Cooperation). Kharkiv. Ukraine. 1954. © K. Brizhnychenko, 2020. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Будинок_кооперації,_Харків_DJI_0050.jpg.



11 G.A. Yanovitsky. Hotel "Kharkiv". Kharkiv. Ukraine. 1974. © by R. Yakimenko, Postcard, 1977. Kyiv, Radianska Ukraina, <https://oldpostcards.biz/product/gostinica-harkov-harkov-1977-god/>.

eclecticism and the development of the classical heritage, which were clearly embodied in the richness of traditional decor, dominated in Soviet architecture.

The original design was returned only to Gosprom. In the late 1950s, a television antenna was placed above one of its central buildings. Some researchers argue that it distorted the original intention of the authors of the project (see: Novikov, 2003, p. 36). It is difficult to agree with this. The antenna completed the structure's silhouette so successfully and became so organic in its composition that today the Gosprom complex is unthinkable without it [FIGURE 08]. In addition, we can recall those fragments of the competition program, which talk about the possibility of using various technical devices in its composition.

The buildings of the House of Projects and the House of Cooperation, where Kharkiv University is now located, were completely rebuilt. Only the general compositional scheme of high-rise stepped volumes has been preserved. The reconstruction of the former House of Projects was carried out in 1953–63 according to the design of a team of architects led by V.P. Kostenko and V.I. Lifshitz [FIGURE 09]. The former House of Cooperation was completed already in 1954 according to the project of a team of architects led by P.E. Shpara and N.P. Yevtushenko, who were advised by the original architect A.I. Dmitriev [FIGURE 10]. Both complexes were decorated using the forms of traditional order architecture and adapted for higher education institutions.

The hotel "Kharkiv" was reconstructed by the original architect, G.A. Yanovitsky (completed in 1974). He also used the Classical Orders in his reconstruction [FIGURE 11].

At the same time, it is difficult to resist the temptation to interpret the metamorphosis that has taken place as a consistent, albeit paradoxical, implementation of the concept of modern style formulated by the theory of Constructivism.

In fact, the ensemble was created in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It was a period of modernization and industrialization of the country. In accordance with these priorities, the "invention" of Constructivist elements of the artistic form was carried out and the compositional techniques

corresponding to them were created. Reconstruction was carried out in different historical conditions, in the post-war period. During this period, completely different values were actualized in the culture of the USSR. In architecture, an orientation towards the development of the classical heritage was proclaimed. Accordingly, other methods of organizing the art form were also updated. The compositional system that was originally created turned out to be receptive to this new understanding of the artistic form.

The loss of the formal unity of the individual elements of the ensemble did not cancel the compositional subordination of its parts. Subsequently, new elements appeared. A square was arranged on the round part of the square. Today, a huge fountain has appeared on its territory. With the help of various landscape architecture and design solutions, a more complex compositional structure was created. A sophisticated combination of different scales of form was realized in it. They work differently at different distances of perception. And today the ensemble actively lives and develops in the environment of the city center [FIGURE 12].

CONCLUSIONS

The practice of creating and subsequent reconstruction of the ensemble of Svobody Square in Kharkov revealed the duality of the Constructivist understanding of form. On the one hand, lapidarity brought to the level of schematism acted as an independent, self-sufficient, "stylish", "pure" Constructivist form. The possibilities to vary it, as it turned out, are quite limited. On the other hand, it could also be considered as a framework, a "draft" of some further work with the form. In this case, the lapidary Constructivist form became the same subject of decorative stylizations, like any other stylistically characterized form.

Thus, the concept of modern style, defended by the Constructivists-"productionists", turned out to be problematized by the practice of "Constructivist stylizations".



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