

CHALLENGES OF ARCHITECTURAL ARCHIVING IN UKRAINE

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To all the people who are saving and evacuating archives, museum exhibits, archaeological artefacts and other cultural attributions in Ukraine during the total Russian invasion after February 24, 2022

To Tatiana Belyaeva,
who passed away on November 1, 2022

INTRODUCTION: The history of the Ukrainian state, as well as the history of Ukrainian architecture in the 20th century, was more than turbulent. Wars, revolutions and changes in architectural development according to the course of the political establishment had a negative impact on archiving and preserving the memory of previous periods. Unfortunately, since the full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, numerous monuments, buildings and heritage sites have been exposed to danger again or have already been destroyed. By November 7, 2022, UNESCO confirmed the destruction or war damage of 213 cultural heritage sites in Ukraine: 92 religious

buildings, 77 historical buildings and cultural institutions, 18 monuments, 16 museums and ten libraries.

But despite all the difficulties, Ukraine's main symbol and outpost of architectural archiving still remains safe—the State Scientific Research Library of Architecture and Construction, named after Volodymyr Zabolotny. In Ukraine, there is still no museum of architecture or research center, but there is the *Library*.¹ It is considered not only a library but also a museum and a scientific architectural center hosting conferences, exhibitions and preserving architectural memory in Ukraine [FIGURE 01].

01 ^a The State Scientific Research Library of Architecture and Construction in Kyiv, the Library. © Oleksandr Burlaka, 2015.

^b Exhibition 'Wooden monumental architecture of the Left Bank of Ukraine' curated by Alex Bykov in the Library. © Alex Bykov, 2015.





02 a First location of the Library (until 1985) in the Metropolitan House of St. Sofia National Conservation Area in Kyiv. © Oleksandr Ranchukov, 1980's.
 b Exhibition in the Library at the Metropolitan House on the occasion of the 1500th anniversary of Kyiv. © From the funds of the Library, 1982.

THE LIBRARY

The main asset of the Library is its book collection. During the Library's existence, about 400.000 copies of unique national and world literature on architecture, construction, urban planning, and fine, decorative and applied arts have been collected. The Library's collections include books and pamphlets, magazines, normative documents, dissertations and illustrations. In addition, in its depository, you can also find original architectural drawings, blueprints, a unique photo fund and much more. The history of the Library began 78 years ago in 1945, simultaneously with the creation of the Academy of Architecture of the Ukrainian SSR. For seven decades, the Library has evolved from scientific academy to scientific state library. During its history, its name has changed, but the main tasks, directions and the essence of its activity have remained unchanged.

From the very beginning, the Library was managed with care by the staff of the whole academy, from the president to the employees of the academic bindery. These were highly professional specialists and persons who were passionate about their work, culture, arts and books. One of these personalities was the first president of the Academy of Architecture, a scientist and public figure, and the founder of the Library, Volodymyr Zabolotny. He was personally involved in all matters related to the organization of the Library. Zabolotny was a legendary figure, not only in the history of architecture but in Ukraine's history in general. He was on an equal footing with all the leaders of the country.

The love and support for the Library have been passed down through the generations. For example, another legendary person is architect Nikolay Dyomin, who, in 2012, managed to save and give to the Library a unique collection of graphic materials and photo documents² from the looted Research Scientific Institute of the

Theory and History of Architecture and Urban Planning in Kyiv [FIGURE 02]. This institute was oriented towards the development of a wide range of historical and theoretical problems and studies in architecture and urban planning. It has been the main scientific center of Ukrainian architectural historiography and, consequently, has always collaborated and worked side by side with the Library. Now everything that was saved is stored and processed in the Library. The younger generation of researchers is also trying to give the Library all the personal and private archives that have been rescued and preserved. These are mainly post-war architectural materials, which are rapidly disappearing or being thrown away due to little knowledge and missing appreciation of their value [FIGURE 02].

Speaking of the heritage of this period in Ukrainian architecture, archiving can be divided into two groups: Archives of former state scientific project institutes and personal archives of the architects.

INSTITUTE ARCHIVES

After the collapse of the USSR, each scientific institute went through its own dramatic phase of transition from a planned system to a market economic entity. Private studios were opened on the basis of the former state-owned studios subordinated to the institute. The urge to open up a new world of new possibilities—quickly forgetting the past—was also reflected in the legacy of the architecture of Soviet times. According to the new attitudes and approaches, the architecture of the 1960s-1980s and its heritage was repressed and discredited. The past was thrown in the dump of history, both literally and figuratively.

Perhaps the most telltale example in this respect is the Main State Project and Research Institute 'Kyivproekt', founded in 1951 in Kyiv. After World War II, almost the entire city of Kyiv was designed by this institute. After the fall of the



03 a & b Archival spaces in 'Kyivproekt'. © Alex Bykov, 2019.



Soviet Union, the institute was reformatted several times and divided between several owners. The building of the institute was rented out and a few years ago—in 2018—it was sold and is now partly rebuilt, partly demolished, even though Ukraine is at war and Kyiv, in particular, is regularly bombed.

But the history of the archive of this institute, which is, in fact, the archive of the construction history of modern postwar Kyiv, is a very complicated story. The archive was sold, mortgaged to a bank, and again divided among different stakeholders. Its current history after the beginning of dismantling is unknown. Before that, many young researchers had been trying to get into the building to study the archives for more than ten years, but it turned out to be impossible. However, one researcher managed to get in once, just before the demolition of the institute building began. What he saw was deeply disappointing. The unique, infinitely important and interesting study material was in terrifying conditions; it can be said that all that remained was a pile of junk. All attempts to negotiate for this archive to be handed over to the Library were unsuccessful—even with the help of lawyers. Therefore, this archive's current state is unknown and incomprehensible. We can only hope it has not been physically erased after the demolition of the institute building had started [FIGURE 03].

Another scientific project giant, the Kyiv Zonal Scientific Research Institute of Standard and Experimental Projecting (KyivZDNIIEP), was established in 1963. But after the fall of the USSR, it had a similar history as Kyivproekt. In 2010, people of defected president Yanukovich privatized the institute building. Soon afterwards, they removed the

archive to an undisclosed location. Some eyewitnesses claim it is in the wet basement of a warehouse, but there is no access to it either.

However, during the 1970s-1980s, famous Ukrainian photographer Viktor Marushchenko worked for the magazine Soviet Culture and documented various actual events. Among others, he took photos for the 20th anniversary of the KyivZDNIIEP. These are now some of the few witnesses of the institute's rich, lively and productive work. The photos show, for instance, legendary director Oleksiy Zavarov who ran the institution for more than 20 years, digital archives or the famous project team led by Valentin Shtolko, who projected high-span buildings, and the department of the first computer design office—a unique phenomenon for those years [FIGURE 04].

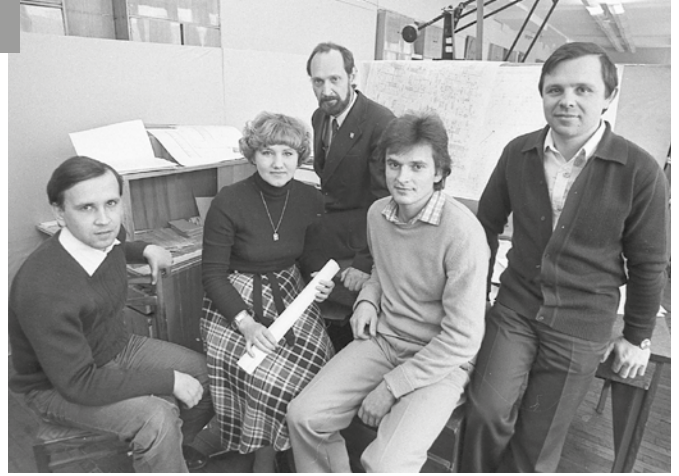
The first architectural project institute of the USSR, Giprograd (nowadays Dipromisto), still formally exists, and its archive is in decent condition. However, access to it is also denied. Nevertheless, thanks to diplomacy, delicious chocolates and charming archivists, young researchers achieved permission to work there. One of the most important things they managed to do was to scan many materials on their own. The institute is practically bankrupt, so its fate is not stable either. It is possible that these scans may remain its only evidence [FIGURE 05].

PRIVATE ARCHIVES

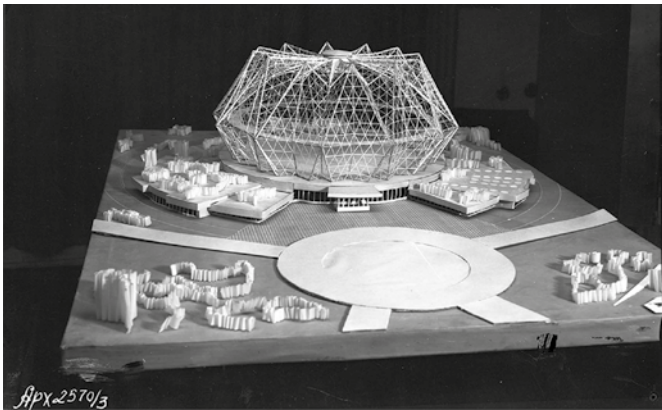
Another group of archives can be classified as architects' private archives. It is essentially everything they have managed to get out of their institutes' offices or, for some other reason, had left at their home offices. As for the difficulties



04 a KyivZDNIIEP, computers, architectural engineers.
© Viktor Maruschenko, courtesy of Alex Bykov, 1983.



b KyivZDNIIEP. (from left to right) Viktor Vaslyayev, Katerina Mushta, Kozynchuk Viktor, Sergey Nesenenko and Vasily Golubievsky. © Viktor Maruschenko, courtesy of Alex Bykov, 1983.



05 a Archival materials in Giprograd (nowadays Dipromisto). Project of sanatorium complex near Kyiv, 1980s. © Alex Bykov, 2020.

b Archival materials in Giprograd (nowadays Dipromisto). Unbuilt flowers pavilion in the Expocenter of Ukraine, 1970s-1980s © Alex Bykov, 2020.



of working in this field of independent archiving, the main challenge is to gain the trust of the older generation and former professionals: To explain to them the importance of archiving and scanning and, of course, the possibility of transferring materials to the Library. To persuade them not to leave materials lying around indiscriminately and that the history of architecture of the 1960s-1980s is important and interesting. To make clear that the main task of an archive is that it can be worked with—an archive is alive when it is at work.

And there is another downside to private archives: a black market in architectural archives. During the 1990s

and 2000s, many antiques dealers, already imagining the future value of architectural archives, bought them up from architects or stole them from institutes. Nowadays, when architects die, their families very often do not recognize the importance and value of the archives left behind. They sell them on antique markets at a very low price, only to have the sellers put a high price tag on them later. The sad thing is that the completeness of the archive is lost. One can buy a few individual photos and drawings. But buying a whole archive is only possible with funds and grants [FIGURE 06].

06 a Archival material in one of the antique market shops.
© Alex Bykov, 2020.



b Archival photo from one of the antique market shops: Palace of Culture in the city of Kramatorsk.
© Unknown, courtesy of Alex Bykov, 1930s.





07 a Site of the Seagull Pioneer Camp in the Alushta, Crimea. © Tatiana Belyaeva, 1970s.



b Seagull Pioneer Camp in the Alushta, Crimea. Main entrance to the camp. © Tatiana Belyaeva, 1970s.

However, there are a few success stories of private archives remaining intact. Among the private archives that have been preserved and used in numerous exhibitions and publications are the archives of Edward Bilsky, Vadym Gopkalo, Dmytry Yablonski, Sergiy Zakharchenko, Anatoly Konsulov and others.

Another private archive that stands out is that of Tatiana Belyaeva. With great passion and professionalism, she organized the archive herself. It is also important to note that Tatiana Belyaeva has prepared its transportation to the Library's collection. In 1980, she was awarded the USSR State Prize for her design project of the *Seagull* Pioneer Camp in Crimea. The project was special and unexpected for a female architect at that time. During the construction of the *Seagull*, Belyaeva personally photographed and documented the entire construction process. When the project was finished, she made a photo album of the entire history of the project. Furthermore, she travelled extensively around the world as head of the *Komsomol* organization to see and study international projects. After each trip, she created a scrapbook of all the tickets, postcards, photos and sketches she had made [FIGURE 07].

Another major example is the archive of the creative couple of artists Ada Rybachuk and Volodymyr Melnychenko, who worked extensively with architects

during the 1960s-1980s. Their most important work is the Memory Park (Krematorium) in Kyiv (together with architect Ava Miletsky). The most expressive and significant element of this complex was the Memory Wall—a bare relief and sculpture telling the short history of humanity. They worked on this project for 12 years, from 1969 to 1981, and then one day in 1982, state officials decided to concrete it over. For the rest of their lives, they fought to open it up again and to free it from its concrete sarcophagus. This finally happened after 2015. Encouraged by this event, many people have reached out to them and offered to create a foundation for their heritage—the ARVM foundation. Their workshop in the Kyiv city center is now a living museum of their work, where their legacy has been processed, described and digitized. It also hosts exhibitions and other events, not only related to their work but also to other art disciplines [FIGURE 08].

CONCLUSIONS

In recent years, the architectural legacy of the former Soviet republics, particularly Ukraine, has become very popular in social media. It is worth noting that most of these platforms purely concentrate on visual aspects. But apart from expressive and attractive shapes and forms, these sites all have their own unique stories of creation

08 a Excursionists and ARVM foundation members in front of the Memory Wall. © ARVM foundation, 2022



b Volodymyr Melnitchenko in his studio. © Alex Bykov, 2021.





09 Architectural drawing from the competition of the new administrative center on the left bank of Kyiv. © Archive of St. Sofia Reserve, 1960s.

and exploitation. And in order to know and study them with a critical mindset—the archives are the main study base. The archives of those times are as precious as the buildings and require protection like the architecture itself [FIGURE 09].

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Further in the text the full name «the State Scientific Research Library of Architecture and Construction named after Volodymyr Zabolotny» is abbreviated simply to the Library.
- 2 There might be photos from this section of the Library's archive in this special issue visualizing and documenting interwar and postwar modern architecture.

Alex Bykov (1985) is a professional architect studying the legacy of Soviet Urban Planning, Ukrainian architecture of independence times, and sacred Ukrainian architecture. He holds a master's degree from the Kyiv University of Construction and Architecture and runs his own studio in Kyiv. He is co-founder and member of activists group "Savekyivmodernism" that is struggling against demolishing of modern buildings in Kyiv which is also focus of his own radio show 'Supervision'. In his works he tries to link architecture with economics, sociology, politics, science which is documented in several book publications and in many exhibitions.