

NATIONAL TRADITIONS IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF UKRAINIAN MODERNISM OF THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT: The national identity of Ukrainian architecture in the early 20th century manifested itself in the formation and development of the style of Ukrainian Modernism. This style was formed and spread in different regions of Ukraine as an original national style based on modern European achievements. Today, the issues of preserving its independence and national authenticity in architecture have become very important for Ukraine. Understanding the architectural style based on national traditions can guide the future development of Ukrainian architecture. The article considers Ukrainian Modernism in the context of general cultural developments. It provides a general description of the style of Ukrainian Modernism in the early 20th century, with an indication of the geographical locations where it developed and the main features of Ukrainian culture in the studied period. Theoretical and empirical research methods are used in this article, including a graphical analysis of the overall composition of buildings and their architectural details. The influence of Ukrainian Art Nouveau on the further development of Ukrainian architecture is explored, highlighting the relevance of national identity in architecture. The novelty of the study is the focus on the generalization of morphological features for the formation of a national style. The research can contribute to the revival of the national identity of Ukrainian culture at the present stage. Today, the study and analysis of national features of historical architectural heritage are important for Ukrainian society, as the post-war reconstruction of Ukrainian cities might be based partly on national authenticity in the figurative design of buildings, squares, and ensembles.

KEYWORDS: Ukrainian Modernism, identity, national traditions, figurative solution.

INTRODUCTION: The annexation of Crimea and the Donbas conflict in 2014 and, in particular, the recent Russian attacks on Ukraine in 2022 raised the national self-consciousness of the Ukrainian people to a new level. Today, representatives of various spheres of culture promote the heritage values of Ukrainian art and architecture, their original character and authenticity. This issue is becoming more relevant today—during the active struggle of the Ukrainian people for independence and survival. Modern scientists emphasize the importance of understanding the concept of “nation” which is considered in the context of the development of national trends in architecture. This concept acts as a social contract and a way of conscious self-identification based on general cultural tradition, territory, historical memory, ethnicity, and language (Blinova, 2016).

Architectural history shows that in the early 20th century, the world of architectural practice developed different styles and trends. And this period is an important stage in the development of modern architecture. The era of Eclecticism and Historicism (Polystylistism) ended, and an active movement towards a new architecture began. This Modern Movement is based on advances in construction, the latest understanding of function, and the emergence of new designs and materials.

This article considers Ukrainian Modernism as a manifestation of national identity and nationality in the architecture of the first half of the 20th century. Ukrainian Modernism is one of the most expressive phases of Ukrainian architecture. The purpose of this study is to identify features of the formation and development of Ukrainian Modernism. Accordingly, the objects of study

are buildings that have specific stylistic features, such as the design of facades and their decoration. Methods such as morphological and compositional analysis and grapho-analytical methods were used in the study. Thus, architectural objects with bright features of Ukrainian identity form a multicultural urban identity and contribute to creating an aesthetically rich and comfortable environment. This is happening along with the legacy of other cultures (Vitchenko, 2019).

The loss of outstanding monuments of Ukrainian Modernism is a reality. These losses are often due to the negative attitude of the Soviet authorities to the legacy of Ukrainian Modernism. In his monograph, scientist Viktor Chepelyk noted that such losses are due to the underestimation of Ukrainian Modernism monuments at that time and the well-known negative attitude of the Soviet government towards Ukrainian culture.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF UKRAINIAN MODERNISM

MAIN STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL CENTERS

In the early 20th century, Ukraine was dominated by three architectural trends—Modernism, Rationalism and Neo-Classicism.¹ The development of ancient ideas about architecture ended, and the formation of new trends began. Among the three areas, Modernism is the most interesting, controversial and original. The style reflects the combination of the new with the old, the decorative with the rational, and the expressive with the restrained.

There are three types of Modernism in Ukrainian architecture. The first type continued the development of Art Nouveau. The second type was aimed at creating an original direction and was called the Ukrainian architectural style, Folk Style or Ukrainian National Romanticism. The third type is Rationalist Modernism. This article focuses on the second direction of Modernism, which is based on folk traditions. This type of Modernism is an original national trend that vividly reflects Ukrainian culture, architecture, and art.

The development of Ukrainian Modernism took place over forty years, from 1903 to 1941. Its bright representatives were figures of Ukrainian culture: artists Sergiy Vasylykivsky, Opanas Slastyon and Ivan Trush; Democrat writers Mukolay Kotsyubynsky and Olena Pchilka; architects Vasily Krychevsky, Eugene Serdyuk, Ivan Levinsky, Oleksandr Lushpynsky, Sergiy Tymoshenko, Victor Trotsenko and Jacob Ponomarenko among others. Scientists will identify three stages of the Ukrainian Modernism style development (Chepelyk, 2000):

- 1 1903–1917: There were two main directions of style: the first, National Style, was characterized by picturesque, and decorativeness; the second, Rationalist Modernism, was characterized by functionality, tectonics, restraint of composition, plane plasticity of facades, restraint of decorative solution. 273 projects were developed, and about 157 were realized.
- 2 1920s–1930s: Ukrainian Style was influenced by Rationalism and Constructivism; social requirements of thrift. The style acquired the features of Rationalism, characterized by more restrained decoration or its absence. The main focus was on function and tectonics.
- 3 1934–1941: a late stage in the development of Ukrainian Modernism. Features of Rationalism were complemented by outspoken decorative trends. There was a departure from several formal features of Modernism in the direction of Neoclassicism.

Thus, the 40-year-long development path of Ukrainian Modernism was not straightforward. During this period, more than 500 buildings and complexes were created. More than a hundred specialists took part in the design. In all its varieties, there was a common basis—the dignity of the Ukrainian folk theme, the desire to rethink and develop the national worldview of the people, and its identity. According to Chepelyk (2000), Ukrainian Art Nouveau existed for 38 years instead of 20, as was the case in other European countries.

Ukrainian Modernism developed in different regions of the country. We can distinguish Poltava, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Lviv and Southern centres. The Poltava center has special merits in the formation and development of Ukrainian Modernism. The initiator of this trend was the prominent Ukrainian architect, artist, scientist and teacher Vasyl Krychevsky. The construction of the Poltava Provincial Zemstvo building (1903-1908) by E. Shirshov and M. Nikolaev using Krychevsky's original projects became an important event in Ukrainian architecture and in Poltava [FIGURE 01]. It was Vasyl Krychevsky's greatest work, in which he invested all his energy, knowledge, health and love for native art (Aseev, 1989). This work made his name known far beyond Ukraine. The building became "evidence of a new stage in the development of our culture, which began to emerge from the closed, interior state, and to open its exterior" (Chepelyk, 2000).

Today, Poltava Provincial Zemstvo is the most significant work of architectural Ukrainian Modernism, a building that "made up the era" (Yasievich, 1988). It impresses with its monumentality, interior and exterior architectural richness, brand-new, extraordinary decoration, sense of proportion, liveliness and spaciousness. And it reflects the rich traditions of Ukrainian architecture and its attire (Novoselchuk, 2006).

№ 1 Полтава. Будинок Губернського Земства Передній Фасад



01 a+b Provincial Zemstvo building in Poltava by architect V. Krychevsky. a General view, b Side porch. © J. Khmelevsky, 1903-08.



02 Interior of the Poltava Provincial Zemstvo building by architect V. Krychevsky. © J. Khmelevsky, 1903-08.

The symmetrical main facade of the building was influenced by Ukrainian folk art. Its walls were richly decorated with majolica with stylized motifs of folk ornaments. The building's interior featured an original and interesting solution, with the main hall and lobby located on the second floor [FIGURE 02].

Another original monument of Ukrainian Modernism in Poltava was the school named after Ivan Kotlyarevsky (1903-05). The school building was designed by architects Evgen Serdyuk and Mukolay Stasiukov [FIGURE 03].

The Poltava Provincial Zemstvo building became the basis of the decorative-romantic trend, which later became

known as the Folk Style. The Kotlyarevsky School gave rise to Rationalist Modernism. The Church of the Intercession in the village Plishivtsi of Hadiach County by architect I. Kuznetsov (1902-06) is one of the first buildings in the style of Ukrainian Modernism. The ensemble of three buildings represents three different directions of Ukrainian Modernism. The Church of the Intercession gave rise to Neo-Baroque tendencies [FIGURE 04].

A typical building in the style of Ukrainian Art Nouveau can be found today in Poltava. It is a chapel that was built by architect I. Kalbus (1911-14) in honor of the meeting of Poltava Province representatives with the Russian Emperor Nicholas II during the celebrations on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Poltava. According to scientists Viktora Chepelyk and Volodimir Yasievich, the Poltava examples stimulated the search for national style in the architecture of different Ukrainian regions.

The Kharkiv region is another important center for the development of Ukrainian Modernism. In general, Kharkiv was characterized by works of decorative-romantic and rationalist directions. These buildings have made a significant contribution to the architectural practice of Ukrainian Art Nouveau. Among the famous buildings erected in the Kharkiv region in the early 20th century is the complex of the Kharkiv Breeding Agricultural Station by architect



03 I. Kotlyarevsky School in Poltava by architects E. Serdyuk and M. Stasiukov. © J. Khmelevsky, 1903-05.



05 The building of the Kharkiv Art School by architects K. Zhukov and M. Piskunov, 1911-13. © S. Taranushenko, 1911-1913.



04 I. Church of the Intercession in the village of Plishovtsy, Gadyachsky district, by architect I. Kuznetsov, 1902-06. © Drawing by P. Fetisov.



06 The Dniester Society building in Lviv by architect I. Levynsky. General view, 1906. © Unknown, photo of the early XX century.

Evgen Serdyuk (1909), the building of the Kharkiv Art School by architects Kostantin Zhukov and Ykhailo Piskunov (1911-13), residential buildings designed by Sergiy Tymoshenko (1912-15), a house of public meetings in Slovyansk by architect Evgen Serdyuk (1914), blocked houses for workers of the Kharkiv Tractor Plant by architect Victor Trotsenko (1920s) and residential apartment buildings for projects designed by architect Sergiy Tymoshenko and others.

The building of the Kharkiv Art School combined the achievements of the folk heritage of the Western regions of Ukraine and the achievements of Modernism [FIGURE 05]. The building belongs to the decorative-romantic trend of Ukrainian Modernism and has a low, active, expressive and original silhouette. The interior of the house was modest and had a well-thought-out organization of space, well-lit offices and halls.

The most interesting buildings of the Kyiv center of Folk Style architecture are the Hrushevsky house, the building of the city school named after S. Hrushevsky by architects

V. Krychevsky and E. Bradtman (1911), the building of the city sanitary cleaning station by architect M. Danilovsky (1910), the house of the T. Shevchenko Museum in Kaniv by architect V. Krychevsky and P. Kostyrko (1939), and the building of the railway station in Kyiv by architect O. Verbytsky (1932) among others. The Ukrainian style of the Kyiv center had creative discoveries that influenced the formation of the architectural appearance of Kyiv in the 20th century. The city was enriched with features of originality and folk art.

Notable buildings in the Ukrainian Modernism style belonging to the Lviv centre are the House of the Dniester Society in Lviv [FIGURE 06], headed by architect I. Levynsky (1906), the house of the Ukrainian Pedagogical Society in Lviv by architect I. Levynsky (1909), a multifunctional building in Stanislaviv by architects I. Levynsky and O. Lushpinsky (1914), the building of the club "Enlightenment" in Kamyanyets-Strumilova by architect O. Lushpinsky (1912), the house of the society "People's House. Native School" in Lviv by architect I. Levynsky (1906) and others.



07 Traditional private rural house in Ukraine from the middle of the 19th century.
© K. Burkut. 2016.

The facades of the Dniester Society building are complex and rich in decorative elements, they combine modern motifs and reviews of folk architecture.

Thus, the national-romantic line was the basis of Ukrainian Modernism. It is most pronounced and found the greatest application in the Kharkiv and Poltava centers of modern style formation. Ivashko (2013) highlights the special significance of Ukrainian Modernism and its fundamental difference from other, international varieties of Modernism in the architecture of Ukraine.

COMPOSITIONAL FEATURES OF UKRAINIAN ART NOUVEAU BUILDINGS

The functional purpose of the traditional Ukrainian rural house [FIGURE 07] had a significant impact on the features of Ukrainian Art Nouveau. The three-dimensional

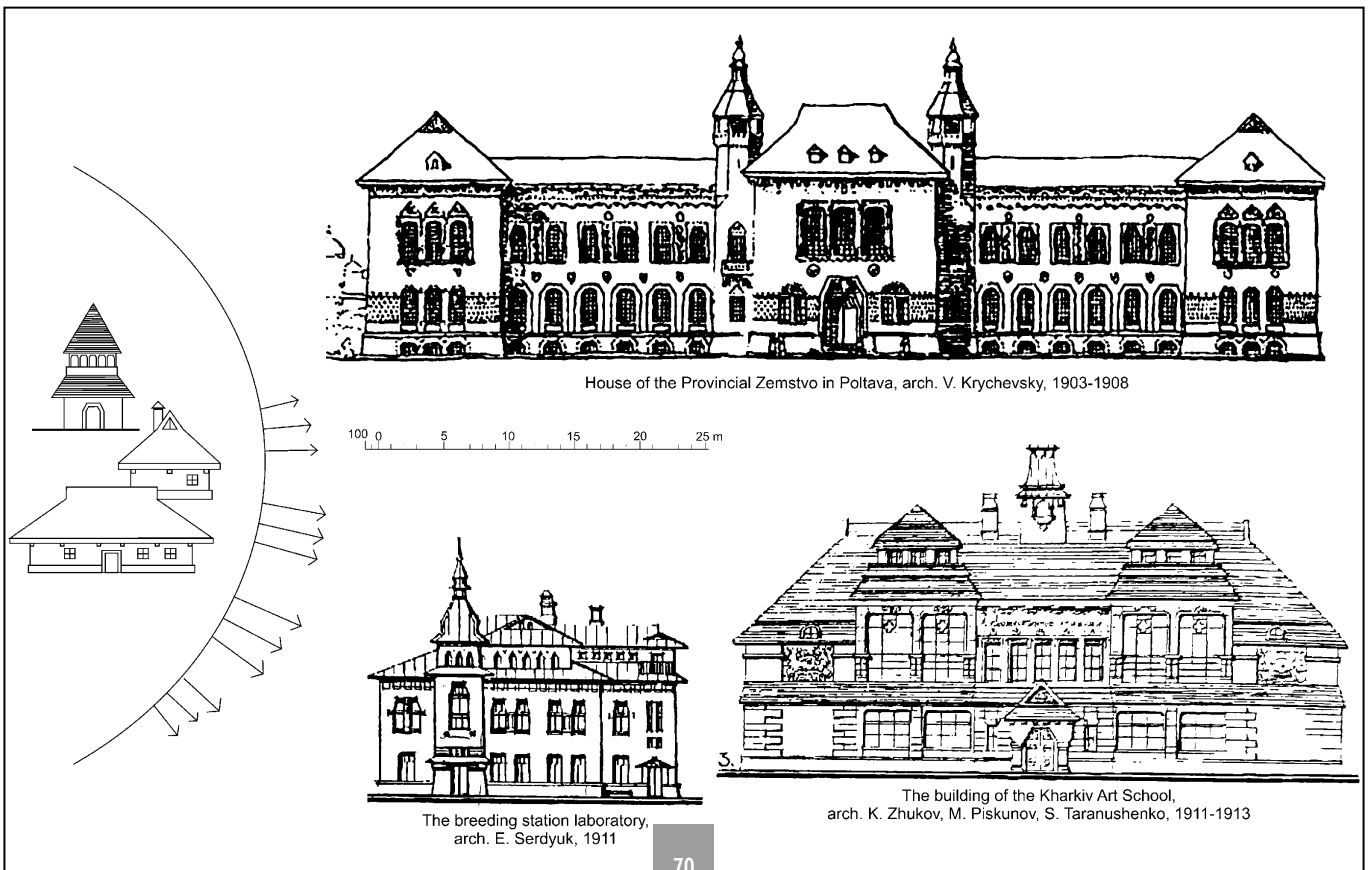
composition was determined by close ties with home and church-building folk traditions. The simple shape of the Ukrainian house became the original model: It is composed of a rectangular floor plan and has a hipped roof. This form was developed and improved in new homes, ranging from simple to complex. The morphology of the form differed in imagery and plasticity.

The silhouette has become very important in solving the three-dimensional composition of the house. The following types of silhouettes of buildings can be distinguished: passive silhouettes; partially developed silhouettes; developed silhouettes with an active roof; developed silhouettes with an active roof and tops of towers; actively developed, structural silhouettes with significant roof plasticity and active tops of towers (Chepelyk, 2000) [FIGURE 08].

The front composition was the most common type when deciding about the design of the facade of buildings. This composition is characterized by flatness, small protrusions of the facade plane, a gable roof, the use of gables or tongs, and the location of the compositional theme, mainly on the main facade. The shape of the roof also played a very important role in characterizing the image of the house. Roofs with four slopes were the most common. Buildings with complex plans had rich-shaped roofs. Attic windows, half-gables and tower finishes played an active role.

The composition of the wall had a developed character and was divided into a plinth and the main part,

08 Development of the facade, forms of buildings and roofs in the style of Ukrainian Modernism. © Drawing by V. Chepelyk, 2000.



separated by cornices and belts. Several techniques for evolving the wall have been developed. For example, the dismemberment of the wall with blades, which turned into arches or trapezoidal shapes, created a planar frame of the windows. Different options for solving the composition of the wall indicate the latest interpretation of compositional techniques. These techniques have developed based on Ukrainian national traditions.

The shapes of windows and doors varied: They could be a traditional rectangular shape, arched shape with semi-circular or arched elliptical jumpers, or trapezoidal shape. The trapezoidal, hexagonal windows had different sizes and shapes. Paired trapezoidal windows are common. Such solutions were new to Ukrainian architecture and in tune with European practice. The compositional design of the windows was of particular importance for the image of the facade in the style of Ukrainian Art Nouveau, based on powerful folk traditions. These traditions were not simply repeated, but developed, updated, and 'modernized'.

Portals were also of special importance. They often played the role of the main compositional element in the design of the facade. Their compositional solution acquired a symbolic character and gave the house a bright and purely national image. In his research, V. Chepelyk identifies the following types of portals: simple, where there is only a slot in the shape of a trapezoid; a slot with a roof or sandrik; a slot in the loggia; a slot on the forward vestibule; portals with pilasters or semi-columns and a pediment or sandrik; portal-portico; or portal with developed stairs (Chepelyk, 2000).

The wall was completed with cornices of various shapes. These were simple roof overhangs, intricate wooden cornices with brackets, or monumental cornices. Light cornices were used more often, as they corresponded to modern stylistic forms. Architects developed modern options for finishing the wall, with variants that had artistic plasticity and national originality.

CONCLUSIONS

Among the regions of Ukraine, the Poltava and Kharkiv regions have become the most powerful regional centers for creating an original, national style—Ukrainian Modernism in its national-romantic line. Ukrainian Modernism buildings are characterized by harmony, cheerfulness, national identity, a deep reflection of the traditions of folk architecture, and a synthesis of architecture with decorative art and monumental painting. These buildings occupy a significant place in the architecture of Ukraine as examples of this style. They demonstrate new three-dimensional, artistic and compositional solutions, the

latest technologies and advanced engineering achievements of their time. Awareness of the indisputable value of this historical and architectural heritage of the early 20th century and the artistic and aesthetic achievements of the modern era determine the steady interest of modern architects, designers and artists in the architectural treasury of Ukraine.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Modernism is a style in architecture at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, which manifested itself in clear geometric lines of buildings, dynamism of forms. Rationalism begins to take shape at the beginning of the 20th century. It is based on the priority of design, functionality, laconicism of facades. Neoclassicism is an architectural style created by the neoclassical movement in 1900-1914. It is characterized by an appeal to the traditions of the art of antiquity, the Renaissance and Classicism.