

EXHIBITING MODERNISM IN UKRAINE

Robert K. Huber, Ben Buschfeld

The Triennial of Modernism originated in 2013 from a cooperation between Berlin, Dessau and Weimar in Germany. Since then, the cultural, architectural and intellectual heritage of the epoch has been brought into the focus of the general public every three years, so far in 2013, 2016, 2019, and in 2022. The festival grew as a *bottom-up* and cross-sectoral network, with rising partnerships in Germany and abroad—projected to become a European Triennial of Modernism. A cross-city motto is determined in advance, which can also take into account special anniversaries or theme years. In 2022, a special focus takes a closer look at the roots and the heritage of Modernism in Ukraine, for a trans-European consideration of historical references and protagonists.

Main feature of the program incorporates a five-part exhibition series at the *BHROX bauhaus reuse* in Berlin, presenting modern buildings and contexts of Lviv, Kharkiv, Kyiv and several regional towns. The five chapters embrace the interwar blossom of classical Modernism to Postmodernism based on art historian and architectural research, historical images, and especially current photographs. In line with this, the Triennial opening conference “Diverse Modernism | Modern Diversity” in October 2022 in Berlin, highlighted the incredible Avant-garde, variety, and number of modern architecture in Ukraine. The war imposed on the country and its population catapulted Ukraine into the center of international media coverage and interest, including the threats to its cultural heritage. But likewise—and this is a persisting phenomenon—it reveals the lack of awareness for the cultural richness among the commonly “western”

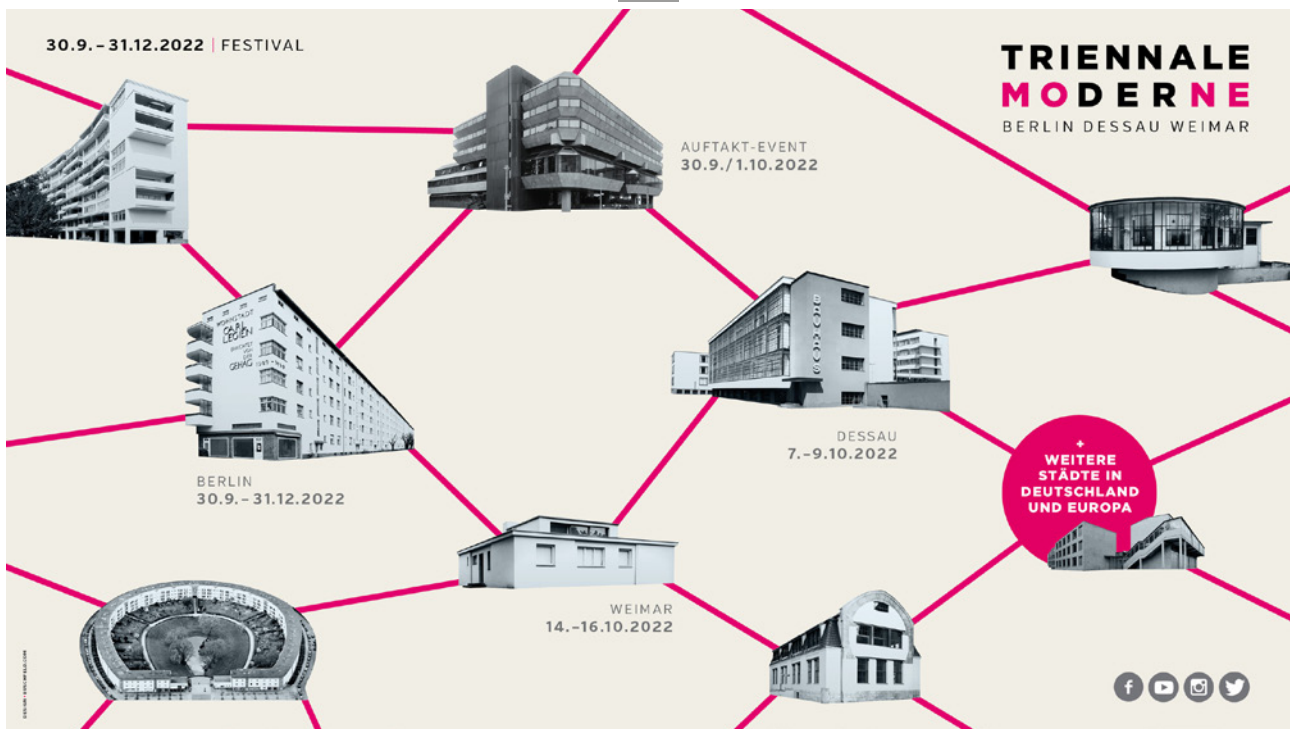
perception of the Central- and Eastern European region, especially in the field of Modernism. This lack discloses three atrocious gaps: knowledge, its transfer and public communication, and appreciation. More than 30 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, this continuous neglect testifies to a European east-west divide still present in the acknowledgment of transnational roots of Modernism. The outstanding built heritage and legacy of contemporary protagonists, from industrial to residential projects, are now even more endangered by martial devastations.

It was therefore an essential concern for the curation of the Triennial of Modernism in 2022 to realize a special focus on “Modernism in Ukraine” at the core of the program in Berlin that was presented as cooperation between the Triennial of Modernism, Docomomo International and ICOMOS. The five exhibitions were created in close collaboration with dedicated partners, in authorship of scholars, activists, and photographers from Ukraine as well as from Poland, with supporting actors from the Czech Republic and Berlin. The current state of modern heritage in Ukraine reflects the situation of Modernism in general and the threatened values of modern societies and the fate of Europe. Furthermore, it points to the opportunities and challenges in prospective trans-European cooperation. To this effect projecting a future “European Triennial of Modernism” will certainly enable a most vivid environment to foster and anchor joint awareness more broadly within politics and society.

In this respect, the concept of “Diverse Modernism | Modern Diversity” outlines an understanding of a plural, iterative and transnational development of Modernism. This particularly includes the plurality of its protagonists and the emphasis on today’s heterogeneous variety of actors, engaged in the heritage field and working on the future perspectives of Modernism—its communication, preservation, sustainable development and the resilience of its values. In this regard, the conference for a first time (2022) conceived a future network of sites and cities, including six world heritage sites of Modernism in Germany, and numerous partners from different backgrounds and countries in Central Europe. The curatorial concept stresses the value of diversity and the significance of vital encounters between actors across borders.

01 Exhibition chapter #04 by Svitlana Smolenska, shown at BHROX bauhaus reuse in Berlin, 2022.
© Michael Setzpfandt for zukunftsgerauesche GbR, 2022.





02 Key Visual of the festival "Triennale der Moderne 2022", showing iconic buildings in the three core cities Berlin, Dessau and Weimar. © Design and graphics: Ben Buschfeld.

Thus, the approach interlinks the relevance of Modernism for today's challenges to *Baukultur* of the societal and architectural realm, nationally and transnationally. The schematic triad of the cross-city motto "Housing.Working.Living" ("Wohnen.Arbeiten.Leben") of the current Triennial edition refers to the early stages of emerging Modernism. It assigned the *being* and *consciousness* to a pressure to act generated at the time by the structural change to industrialization and urbanization—and has lost nothing of its topicality. On the contrary, in the course of these challenges, a social, stylistic and methodological plurality of Modernism developed, which constantly branched out. To the present day, this corresponds to the magnitude of answers once brought to life with the ideas of Modernism and remains highly current. The severe relevance is distinguishable in relation to today's further structural changes: the impression of the corona pandemic, the digital changes in the world of work, the still unfulfilled social and gender equality as well as housing shortage or climate change. Last not least, the war against Ukraine proves the importance and topicality for European cultural and cultural-political cooperation and cohesion—above all for the region of Central Europe. Finally, the special feature concludes in the release event for this special issue of Docomomo Journal at *BHROX bauhaus reuse* in Berlin which is also the finissage for the exhibition series on Ukraine.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The "Special Focus – Modernism in Ukraine" is sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (BMWSB) in the framework of the Triennial of Modernism 2022 in Berlin, funded by the LOTTO-Foundation (Foundation of the German Class Lottery Berlin) and the Berlin Heritage Authority.

CURATION AND COORDINATION

The Special Focus and the exhibition series were curated and coordinated by Robert K. Huber (Production: Peter Winter) —BHROX bauhaus reuse / zukunftsgerauesche GbR, in cooperation with Ben Buschfeld—buschfeld.com.

Robert K. Huber, CEO of *zukunftsgerauesche GbR* and director of the *BHROX bauhaus reuse*, is a curating and researching architect, cultural manager, and curator for the Triennial of Modernism in Berlin. He studied in Munich, Berlin, and Shanghai. His transdisciplinary and transnational expertise is on sustainable urban and societal development, experimental architecture, circular societies and *Baukultur*, especially on Modernism. Long-term cooperation with TU Berlin, teaching at UdK et al. International focus on Central and Eastern Europe, Israel, and China. Member of German Werkbund, Journalist Association, board of Competence Center for Large Housing Estates.

Ben Buschfeld, is a multidisciplinary awarded creative, project author and owner of *buschfeld.com*—graphic and interface design. Together with his wife, he runs a rentable museum dedicated to the work of Bruno Taut. 2013 he was one of the founders of the Triennale, developed the design and helped to establish the format. Buschfeld is a member of various networks like the German Werkbund, Docomomo Germany, *IconicHouses.org* or *KulturerbeNetz.Berlin*. He has initiated and published several heritage projects—including a Preservation Database for the *Hufeisensiedlung* and a Red List of Endangered Buildings in Berlin, and a website about the UNESCO-World Heritage "Berlin Modernism Housing Estates".

CHAPTER #01

LVIV MODERNISM: LET BUILDINGS SPEAK. VISUAL STORY OF LVIV MODERN HOUSING ARCHITECTURE

Chapter #01 shows the history of modern residential architecture in Lviv, from villas and individual buildings to ensembles and larger housing estates. The focus is on buildings and complexes from the 1930s. The exhibition includes research, oral history and photos from the project "Lviv. Architecture of Modernism" and materials from the Center of Urban History (CUH) and the State Archive of Lviv Region. All sites are portrayed with photographs and texts by the Ukrainian architectural theorist and journalist Myroslava Liakhovych. Partner is the Centre for Urban History (CUH), Lviv, in Ukraine.

"Architectural historians argue that modern architecture started with technical progresses. First modern buildings were factories, then public buildings and housing. Industrial design also penetrated through the aesthetics of huge glass vitrines of department stores, according to Robin Schuldenfrei. The city of Lviv, which during the 1939s was part of the Second Polish Republic, did not have any huge industrial enterprises or commercial centers. Lviv was not part of the Central Industrial District, where most of the investments were made. Therefore, the architects mostly relied on private funding and concentrated their efforts on residential housing structures. If we take a closer look at the unfolding of modern style in Lviv, we see that the first modern projects started in residential architecture.

The exhibition shows the most eloquent examples of single-family villas, apartment buildings, and complexes as well as streets and housing colonies, which were mainly built by graduates of the Lviv Polytechnic University. Lviv architects also studied at the Technical Universities in Warsaw, Vienna, Munich, and Rome. As Jakub Lewicki wrote in his research about Lviv modernist school, Lviv modernist architects were influenced by protagonists in Germany and the Netherlands. Talking about style, Art Déco prevailed in the 1920s. But from 1929 onwards architects began to build in a more pure and functionalist manner.

The peculiarity of Lviv is, that due to the events of World War II, the city lost almost 90 percent of its population. New actors took over the material structures of the city. The only witness who remembered and saw everything was the city's materiality. Architecture and design survived all the events. Each photographed building is not only showing the form, cubature and aesthetics—simultaneously it is an investigation of who had lived within these walls and what had happened to those people. Through the persisting material substructures, the erased history and identity of the city can be examined. The architecture encourages us to ask questions."

Myroslava Liakhovych

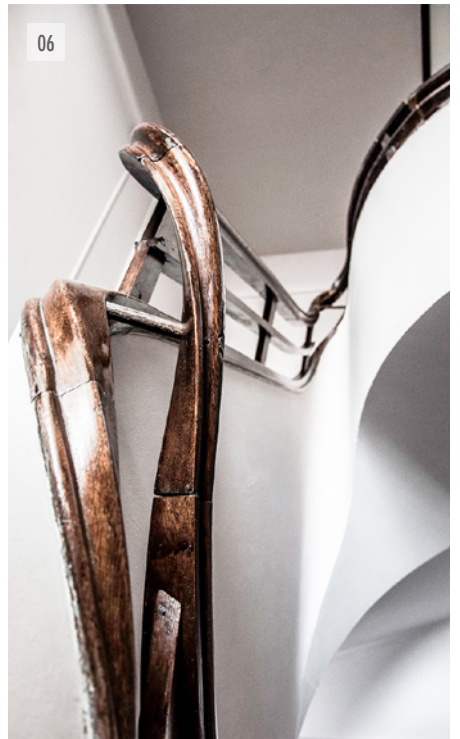
- 01 Adolf Finkelstein's Villa, Hlinky Street 12, Lviv, Architect: Artur Stahl, 1930s.
© Myroslava Liakhovych.
- 02 Residential Building, Tyutyunnykiv Street 74, Architects: Daniel Kalmus, Kazimierz Janiczek, Józef Buchsbaum, Artur Stahl, Dominik Wuchowicz, Karol Kocimski, Władysław Seweryn Blaim, Aleksander Peżarński, Alfred Rubenbauer, Wawrzyniec Dayczak, Bronisław Wiktor, 1935 – 1939.
© Myroslava Liakhovych.
- 03 Bruno Szymansky's Villa, Gypsova 20B, Profesorska Colony, Architects: Tadeusz Wróbel, Leopold Karasiński, Maksymilian Koczur, 1935 – 1939.
© Myroslava Liakhovych.
- 04 Interiors of Apartment Building in Kostya Levytskoho Street 27, Architect: Ferdynand Kassler, 1939.
© Myroslava Liakhovych.
- 05 Interiors of Apartment Building in Ak. Pavlova Street 6, Architect: Ferdynand Kassler, 1930s.
© Myroslava Liakhovych.



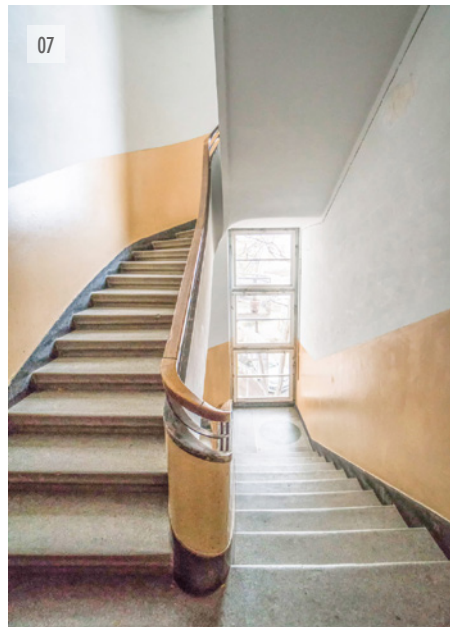
02



06



07



03



07



Chapter #02 focuses on public buildings of the interwar period in Lviv, the typologies are ranging from university and administrative buildings to churches, and cultural institutions. The displayed buildings represent a selection and a revival from the exhibition "Lviv, 24 June 1937. City, Architecture, Modernism" curated by Żanna Komar and Andrzej Szczerski and presented by the International Cultural Centre in Krakow in partnership with the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, Poland, in 2017. The exhibition in Berlin displays photographs of Paweł Mazur combined with archival images of the interwar period in Lviv from the National Digital Archive in Poland and presents selected building models.

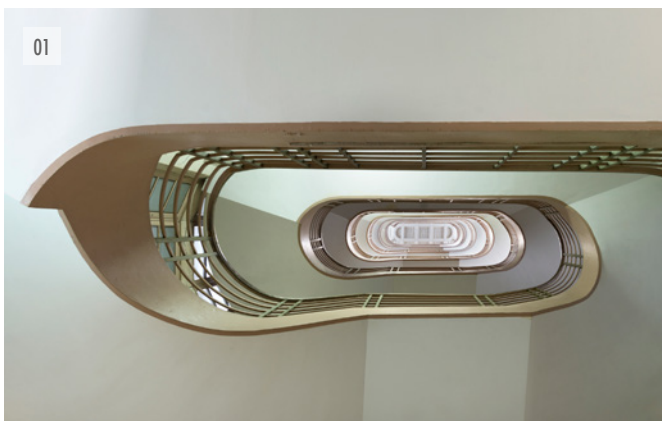
"In the times of the Second Republic of Poland, Lviv was among the leading centers of Modernism both nationally and in the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe. It was the formative period for Lviv's modern identity, which is key to an understanding of the 20th-century history of Poland, Ukraine, and Europe, and to the understanding of the present-day myth of the city and its role for the city's former and present dwellers. The Lviv Polytechnic University— one of the leading technical schools in Central Europe— played an important role in this phenomenon."

In 1918, with the decline of the Habsburg Monarchy, Galicia and Lviv became part of the Second Republic of Poland. Being the third largest city of the interwar period and the capital of one of the Polish regions, the Lviv voivodship, the city kept much of its vivid spirit and strength for development. Until 1939 Lviv continued to grow and reached a population of 330,000 inhabitants consisting of a diverse and multiethnic society of Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians. The urban plan of the so-called Greater Lviv proposed in 1920 formed the new framework for the development of the former suburbs. Within a short period of only 20 years, the city became a center of high-class modern residential architecture.

Further highlights of Lviv's Modernism are the public buildings constructed to fulfill the needs of the new state institutions as part of the municipal infrastructure. The architecture of the interwar period in Lviv was based on the principles of the Modern Movement proposing simplicity in design, function-oriented planning, and new solutions in construction. Despite its modern ambitions, the local architects kept their sensitivity for decorative elements of this time, representing modern, geometry-based patterns."

Michał Wiśniewski

- 01 Staircase of Jonasz Sprecher's Second Skyscraper in Lviv, Architect: Ferdynand Kassler, 1928 – 1929. © Paweł Mazur, ICC Krakow, 2017.
- 02 Staircase of ZUS Social Insurance Building in Lviv, Architect: Jan Bagiński, 1937–1939. © Paweł Mazur, ICC Krakow, 2017.
- 03 The Jonasz Sprecher Office Building, in Lviv, Architect: Ferdynand Kassler, 1928 – 1929. © Paweł Mazur, ICC Krakow, 2017.
- 04 The Municipal Power Plant, Architect: Tadeusz Wróbel, 1935–1936, Leopold Karasiński & Otton Fedak. © Paweł Mazur, ICC Krakow, 2017.
- 05 The Ursuline Sisters' School in Lviv, Architect: Tadeusz Wróbel, Leopold Karasiński, 1932 – 1934. © Paweł Mazur, ICC Krakow, 2017.



04



05



CHAPTER #03

MODERNISM IN LVIV AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF JEWISH ARCHITECTS. FERDYNAND KASSLER: INVENTOR OF GALICIAN MODERNISM

Chapter #03 focuses on the contribution of Jewish architects to the development of Modernism in Lviv. Special attention is given to the "Founder of Galician Modernism", the architect Ferdynand Kassler, who was murdered in the open street as a victim of the Holocaust in 1942. The exhibition was authored by Bohdan Cherkes, Professor of Architecture at Lviv Polytechnic National University, in collaboration with Yulia Bohdanova and Igor Kopyliak. Partner: Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine.

"A significant part of Ukraine's cultural heritage of the 20th century is made up of modern buildings and complexes, among others in Lviv, where more than 3,000 buildings were constructed in the interwar period, according to the most modern theories of the era of classical Modernism. It is no coincidence that Kharkiv in the east of the country and Lviv in the west are considered to be the most characteristic expressions of modern architecture in Ukraine.

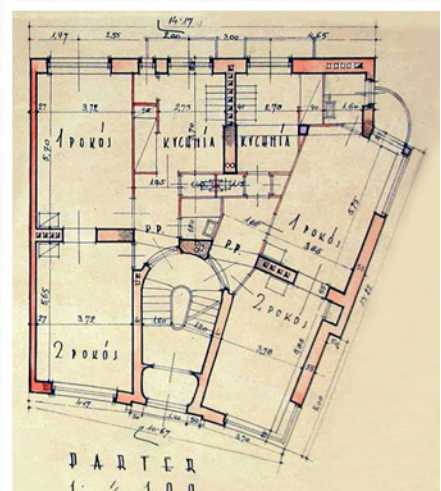
The exhibition reveals the peculiarities of the architecture of modern Lviv, and the significant contribution to its development made by architects of Jewish origin, the most prominent of whom was Ferdynand Kassler. The main part of the exhibition is devoted to highlighting his creative heritage. The research and presentation consists of two sections.

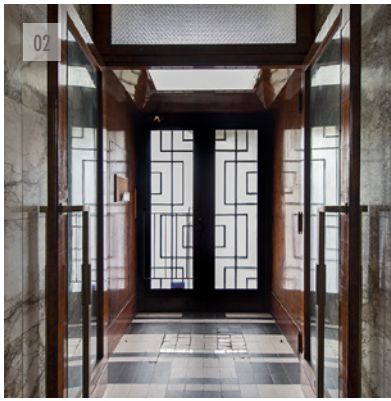
The first section examines the economic and social prerequisites of urban development and architecture in Lviv. In the second section, the exposition focuses on the creative path and legacy of one of the brightest representatives of Lviv architectural school of the first half of the 20th century, Ferdynand Kassler, a native from the city of Kraków (Podgurze), born into a Jewish family. Against the background of other famous Jewish architects who were designing projects in Lviv at that time, such as Joseph Avin, Solomon Keil, Ryszard Hermelin, Jakub Menker and Henryk Sandig, he was noted for the largest number of realizations. The creative legacy of the architect Ferdynand Kassler includes dozens of buildings, some of which still need to be identified.

Shot dead by the Nazis during the Holocaust in 1942 on the doorstep of his own house, unjustly silenced in Soviet times, this architect, who created iconic objects of the modern era in Lviv, deserves to be rescued from oblivion 80 years after his tragic death, presented to the general public, and included in the circle of the most outstanding representatives of the era of classical Modernism in Europe."

Bohdan Cherkes

- 01 Residential Building Complex of Dr Heisz Badner & the Union in Lviv, I. Pavlova Street 6a-c, Architect: Ferdynand Kassler, 1938 – 1939. © Bohdan Cherkes.
- 02 Interiors of Ferdynand Kassler's Tenement-House, K. Levytskoho Street 27, 1938 – 1939. © Bohdan Cherkes
- 03 Maurycy Altenberg's Tenement House, I. Kotliarevskoho Street 40 in Lviv, Architect: Ferdynand Kassler, 1936 – 1937. © Bohdan Cherkes.
- 04 Building for Insurance and Medical Institutions in Lviv, Architect: Jan Bogenski, 1937 – 1939. © Bohdan Cherkes.





SVOBODA (FREEDOM) SQUARE ENSEMBLE IN KHARKIV

Chapter #04 considers the ensemble of Svoboda—formerly Dzerzhinsky—Square in Kharkiv. In the 1920s the giant square was built as the new administrative center for the then-capital of Ukraine. After severe damage during World War II, most of the buildings were redesigned in the neoclassical style of the Stalin era. During the war with Russia, many buildings on the square have been damaged. The exhibition shows the research work of Svitlana Smolenska based on historical illustrations and current photographs. Svitlana Smolenska is Professor of architecture and urban planning from Kharkiv, member of ICOMOS Ukraine and currently a guest researcher in Germany at TU Berlin and TH OWL (funded by the Volkswagen Foundation).

"After WW I political revolutionary passions were seething in Ukraine, which led to the formation of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic with Kharkiv as its capital in 1919. In 1922 it became part of the USSR as an independent republic. Ukraine was part of Russia before and western Ukraine belonged to Poland until 1939 and partly to Romania and Czechoslovakia until 1940. The newly born republic was in ruins at that time. But it had a huge potential: the availability of labor and natural resources, transport capabilities, a good geographical location, and most importantly, hopes for a revolutionary transformation of society, gaining national independence.

It seems incredible that [classical] Modernism in the USSR and Ukraine lasted a very short period—less than a decade. That is why its achievements are so impressive. Its time frame

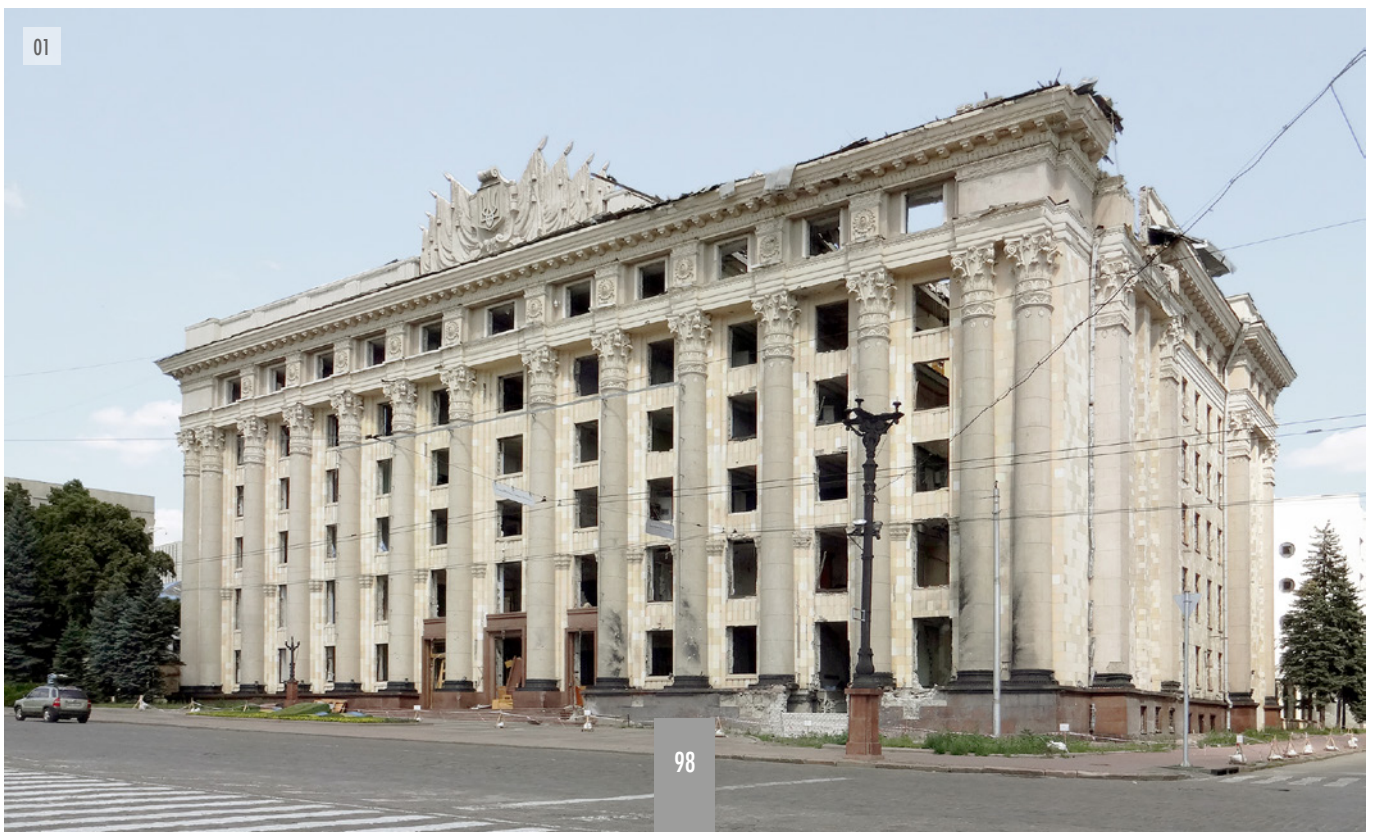
falls into the mid-1920s and early 1930s. On the one hand, it was limited by the wars and devastations at the beginning of the century, and on the other hand, by the political shift: in the early 1930s, the authorities forcibly changed the style of architecture to pompous neoclassical (socialist) realism and began to persecute Modernism and its supporters.

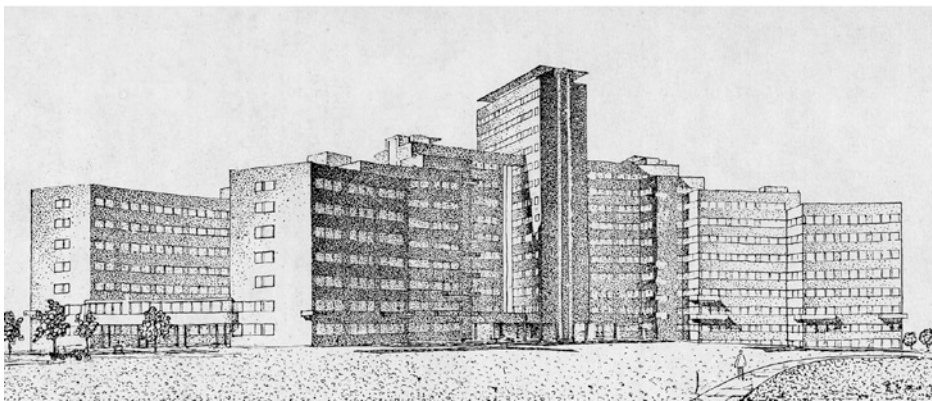
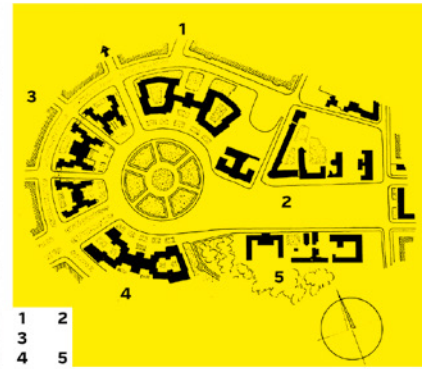
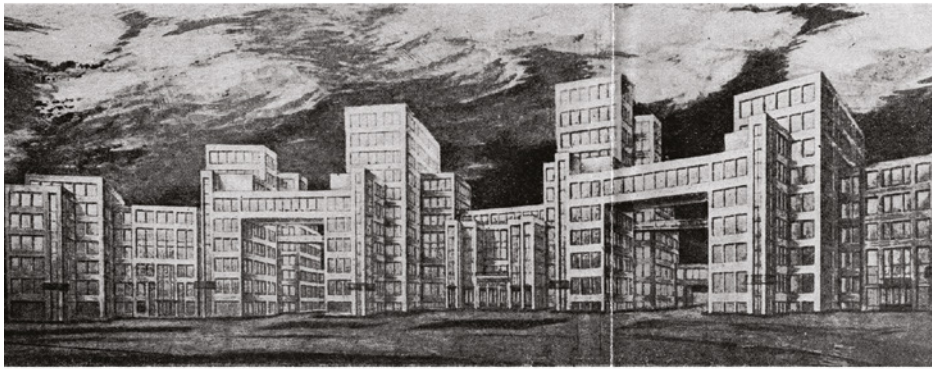
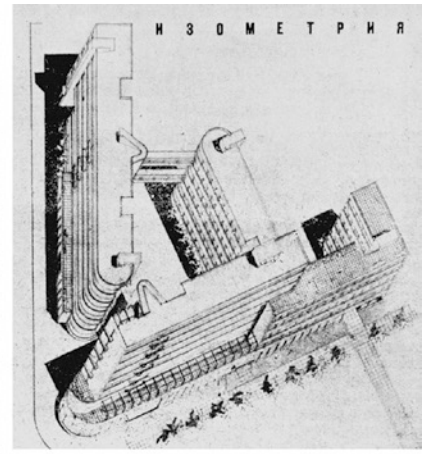
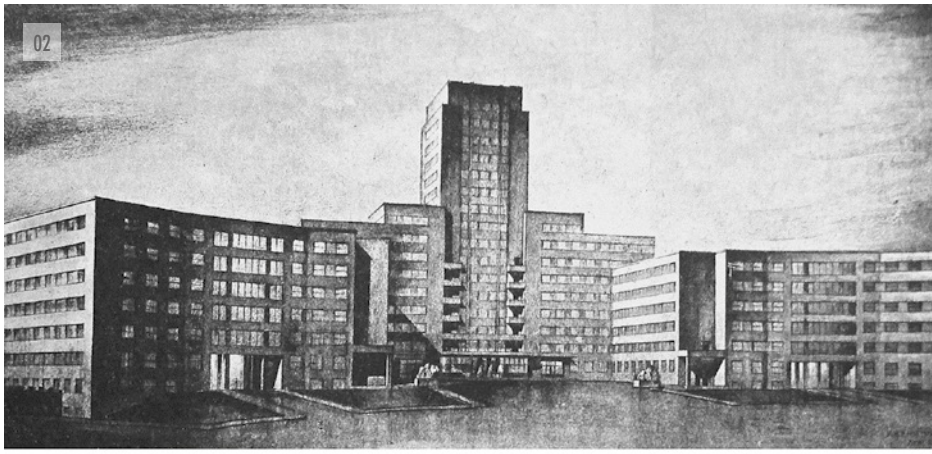
The grandiose modern administrative ensemble of Dzerzhinsky Square—today's Svoboda or Freedom Square—was created in those years. The ensemble had a complex history and several stages during its development. It is one of the largest city-center squares in Europe: 11.9 hectares in size, 750 meters in length, with a diameter of 350 meters in the circular part and a width between 96 and 125 meters in the rectangular part.

War intensifies our sense of loss of what we had before but did not appreciate enough. The unique Kharkiv ensemble and other outstanding modern objects of the southeast of Ukraine—which is currently in the middle of the war—are in danger. The real hope is that this situation will change the attitude of the Ukrainian government, Ukrainian society, and the European community toward the modern heritage of Ukraine. It needs to be restored and preserved. In the face of imminent loss, we must all become aware of its value—as a pan-European heritage, as part of world culture and in its importance for Ukrainian identity."

Svitlana Smolenska

- 01 The Kharkiv Regional State Administration, war damages 2022.
© Svitlana Smolenska, 2022.
- 02 In the late 1920s Svoboda Square was framed by five huge buildings:
1: House of the State Industry (Derzhprom), 1st prize, Architects: S. Serafimov, M. Felger, S. Kravets, 1925
2: House of Cooperation Project, Architects: A. Dmitriev, O. Munts
3: Hotel "International", Architect: G. Janovitsky
4: House of Projects, perspective, Architects: S. Serafimov, M. Zandberg-Serafimova
5: Building of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Ukraine, Architect: J. Shteinberg.
- 03 The green space between Kharkiv Hotel and Military Academy (now V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University).
© Voroshilov.





Chapter #05 examines the late or postmodern socialist period in Ukraine and its significance for the development of Ukrainian architecture. The exhibition comprises current photographic works, especially of buildings in Kiev and the region of Kharkiv after their reconquest by the Ukrainian army. The current state and the war damages are documented. The exhibition was conceived by architectural historian Ievgeniia Gubkina, co-founder of Urban Forms Center, Kharkiv, in collaboration with photographer Pavlo Dorogoy and relates to the exhibition "Architecture of Late Socialism in Ukraine and the Czech Republic" shown in the House of Arts in Brno.

"Based on long-term research and fieldwork, the authors thoroughly found and documented some of the most significant architectural objects of postmodern architecture of the late Soviet period in Ukraine in the 1980s and 1990s. Through his work Pavlo Dorogoy interprets cultural heritage to encourage the discussion and to share thoughts and individual experiences.

The exhibition displays both, photographs taken shortly before the start of the war in February 2022, as well as photographs taken during the war, including objects in liberated territories. Today, the process has gained a new meaning because this architecture—no less than medieval churches, baroque and classicist buildings and modern residential complexes—is under threat of destruction due

to the Russian invasion, shelling, and missile attacks on Ukrainian cities. Many of the objects photographed by Pavlo Dorogoy are close to a frontline, in a war zone, were in the occupied territories, or have already been partially destroyed. Meanwhile, Pavlo became the "eyes" of thousands of people around the world who have been watching the life of his home Kharkiv, the largest city in eastern Ukraine, located only 40 km from the border with Russia.

For socialist postmodern architecture, its initial critical component is unchanged in relation to both Modernism and the historical period behind Modernism—Totalitarianism. Ukrainian late Soviet architecture is a postmodern reaction caused by historical and political events associated with revolutions, protests, and the reaction of Ukrainian society to Moscow's long-term suppression of the freedom and rights of Ukrainians. These postmodern ideas breathe hope for another future for Ukraine and faith in a possibility of socialist and, at the same time, democratic development of society and Ukrainian architecture embedded in the Western European context.

Regardless of the war, this exhibition is a statement not only about the already historical architecture of the period of the fall of the Soviet empire but also about the ongoing decolonization of Ukraine and gaining the subjectivity of a young independent state."

Ievgeniia Gubkina

- 01 Main facade with balconies of Hotel "Express" by architect Vadym Zhezherin, Kyiv, 1978 – 1985.
© Pavlo Dorogoy, 2022.
- 02 Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine by architects Vadym Hopkalo, Vadym Grechyna, Valeriy Peskovsky, Kyiv, 1975 – 1989.
© Pavlo Dorogoy, 2021.
- 03 Cherkasy Regional Museum of Local Lore by architects Leonid Kondratsky, Mykola Sobchuk, Sergiy Fursenko, Cherkasy, 1983 – 1985.
© Pavlo Dorogoy, 2021.
- 04 Passage at Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine by architects Vadym Hopkalo, Vadym Grechyna, Valeriy Peskovsky, Kyiv, 1975 – 1989.
© Pavlo Dorogoy, 2022.
- 05 Kindergarten No. 119, 1986 – 1991, Vitaliy Menzheleev, Ivan Zhezhera, Kharkiv.
© Pavlo Dorogoy, 2021.
- 06 Entrance area with main facade of the residential 9-story building for actors by architect Oleksiy Strutynsky, Kyiv, 1981 – 1984.
© Pavlo Dorogoy, 2022.



