

# BOOKS, REVIEWS, RESEARCH AND EXHIBITIONS

## REVIEW



### BEING A UKRAINIAN ARCHITECT DURING WARTIME ESSAYS, ARTICLES, INTERVIEWS, AND MANIFESTOS

2024  
IEVGENIIA GUBKINA

Ukraine has become the headlines in news media since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. The headlines raise questions about grain ships, the Wagner terror organisation, about Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin meeting, the uranium shells, and about thousands of children abducted from Ukraine and forcibly taken to Russia. The news continues: tens of thousands of people have been killed, historic buildings are being destroyed or added to endangered heritage lists. It is an entire world changing: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) says that over six million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded as being globally displaced (as at September 2023). In the midst of brutal war, how to make sense of a collapsing work? How to move from the headlines into the stories of the people?

Architect Ievgeniia Gubkina does so in her powerful and insightful book *Being a Ukrainian Architect During Wartime: Essays, Articles, Interviews, and Manifestos*. Gubkina humanises the suffering of the Ukrainian people by

writing a different kind of history. It is a history unseen in the big news headlines and the tragic numbers of millions of people; it is a history narrated with a great sense of respect and dignity.

*Being a Ukrainian Architect During Wartime* is a deeply moving account about the horrors of war in Ukraine from an architect, writer and educator whose life has been transformed by these harsh realities both in Ukraine and abroad. These realities are often muted and untold when we hear about refugees and displaced communities when they arrive to new home countries. Gubkina urges us to look harder and to enable a new infrastructure of solidarity where history is written by those whose lives have been impacted by war so that we are closer to the realities of other people. In a section titled *Unseen Realities: Let History Be Told by the Victims*, Gubkina writes:

My reality is my substantially destroyed home city of Kharkiv. For many years I acted as a guide for hundreds and thousands of people to this city..... My world, my reality, is being destroyed, bombed, exterminated,

erased, exploded, demolished, deconstructed, and killed, along with my home city of Kharkiv.

I arrived to Gubkina's writing earlier this year when Michal Murawski (University College London) invited Gubkina and me, as someone who has been forcibly displaced from Syria for twelve years, to have a conversation about our books. Gubkina read my book *Domicide: Architecture, War and the Destruction of Home in Syria*, and I have read hers. I was impressed by the words of Gubkina whose pain has been transformed to me throughout her writing. Our conversation has been poignant as we both write and grieve our beloved cities. Yet, a dialogue like this has allowed me to get closer to the human suffering in Ukraine.

Gubkina humanizes and individualizes the suffering in Ukraine with her eloquent and fierce voice that allows readers to rethink research of cities and war. She does so by asking the right questions at the right moments of history, and by keeping her emotions and realities at the heart of her writing even at times when some academic and architectural circles would expect contributions that are not 'too personal'. As Gubkina strongly says:

Emotions are part of my work. I'm not trying to manipulate them, just to be responsible towards reality. We censor ourselves far too often. There was recently a discussion at one of



Maslovsky apartment building (1911; architect: Moisey Meletinsky, Kharkiv). This building was destroyed by a Russian missile strike on 14 March 2022. © Pavlo Dorohoi, 2022.

the German universities about inviting Ukrainian academics to a panel, and someone said, 'Maybe we'll wait another two or three years because Ukrainians are far too emotional now.'

As we live in a world where many cities are in ruins due to human-made destruction, as in Iraq and Yemen, and also due to natural catastrophes, as what we have just seen in Morocco and Libya, how much do we need to open up dialogues across geographies? How urgent it is to unpack this word that has turned into a word of our times: 'reconstruction'?

Being a Ukrainian Architect During Wartime is an essential book for anyone interested in the question of reconstruction. It offers a painful account about the loss of cities, and Russia's destruction of Ukrainian heritage and Putin's efforts to erase peoples' material culture, their achievements, their everyday life, and above all, their presence in their own country. This is a timely and a must-read book.

Ammar Azzouz

## RESEARCH

### DIPROMISTO: THE FIRST AND POSSIBLY THE LAST PROJECT INSTITUTE IN UKRAINE

DIPROMISTO is the first project institute in Ukraine, established in Kharkiv in 1930. At the beginning of its existence, DIPROMISTO developed the technical and economic foundations of urban planning and the first set of standards for the development of Ukrainian cities. Until 1950, it was the only institute in Ukraine that was engaged in scientific research. DIPROMISTO also holds a special place in the history of Ukrainian architecture due to comprising the largest number of branches across all of Ukraine (Kherson, Sumy, Lutsk, Lviv etc.). Nowadays, DIPROMISTO is going through very hard times. At the same time, Ukraine is facing enormous challenges regarding future reconstruction after the war. Will the previous experience of one of the most prominent project institutes be useful in the future, or will it also be liquidated, and, like 100 years ago,

will the entire state's architectural and construction system have to be recreated from the ground up? This paper will outline the history of DIPROMISTO from 1930 to the present day and raise a series of relevant questions about its place in Ukrainian history and its potential future.



Perspective image of the residential district in Gorlivka (Donbas), 1930s. © Image courtesy of Alex Bykov, 2024.

Alex Bykov

## RESEARCH



### POST-WAR URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF LARGE-SCALE MASS HOUSING ESTATES (LHE) OF THE 1980s

The research aims to analyze transformational strategies for the regeneration of LHE in Ukraine and East Germany and to propose ideas for the redefinition of mass housing estates in post-war Ukraine as resilient and sustainable urban areas. This research is proposed based on a detailed study of selected LHE in East Germany—in Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden—and Ukraine—in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, and Lviv. The main tasks are to compare the conditions of LHE development in Ukraine and Germany, to identify the morphological, programmatic, and spatial changes, and to propose a list of changes in urban planning activities for effective post-war regeneration in Ukraine.

Nadiia Antonenko

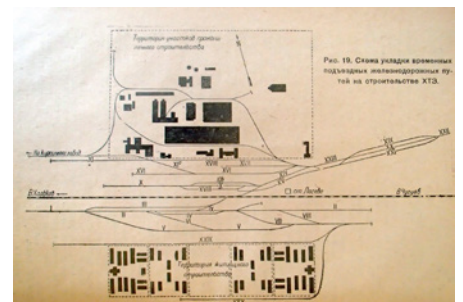
## BOOK CHAPTER

### THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF FOREIGN SPECIALISTS IN THE SOVIET INDUSTRY IN THE 1920 AND 1930S: THE CASE OF EASTERN UKRAINE

This chapter of the book *Detroit-Moscow-Detroit: An Architecture for Industrialization, 1917-1945*, co-edited by Jean-Louis Cohen, Christina E. Crawford, and Claire Zimmerman, MIT Press, 2023, unfolds the participation of foreign specialists in the development of industrial plants in Eastern Ukraine during the 1920s-1930s and focuses specifically on Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia. A significant gap was left in Eastern Ukraine's documented history concerning the contribution of foreign specialists to its industrialization during the first five-year plans. The chapter is based on the archival documents preserved in the collections of American and Ukrainian Libraries and investigates the accurate history of early Soviet industrialization.



DniproHES, a hydropower station on the Dnipro River in Zaporizhzhia, 1927-1932. © Chabanyuk, 2017.



Plan of Kharkiv Tractor Plant. © Baltuzevich, Opyt i uroki stroitel'stva KhTZ (Moscow: Gosstroizdat, 1932), p. 34.

Oksana Chabanyuk

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## EXHIBITION

### FEMALE ARCHITECTS WHO BUILT THE CITY OF RIVNE (UKRAINE)

The exhibition (June 2023) was dedicated to female architects' contribution to Rivne's environment formation in the 1960s-1980s. As in other cities of Ukraine, under the conditions of total typification, the work on the spatial planning composition of new urban districts remained the only tool for creating expressive urban landscapes. Criticized for their



Main hall of the exhibition. © Olga Mykhaylyshyn, 2023.

monotony and vagueness of image, building complexes and architectural ensembles of that time attract attention today due to the integrity of the formed space and purity of the modernist forms, illustrating the view of architects on the image of contemporary cities.

Olga Mykhaylyshyn

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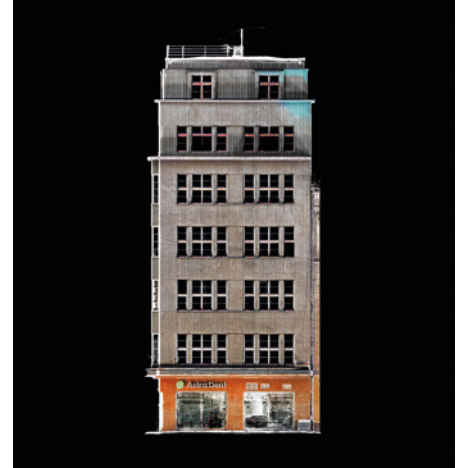
## RESEARCH

### LVIV MODERNISM PROJECT

#### DIGITAL PRESERVATION OF ARCHITECTURE AND MEMORY

"Lviv. Architecture of Modernism" is a project which documents interwar modernist architecture and investigates the epoch through its materiality. Modernist buildings and artefacts are the only records of the 1920s and 1930s in Lviv, as the city lost 90% of its population after WWII. Based on this project, the initiative "Saving Objects and Stories of the Modernist Period in Ukraine" was established in 2023 at ETH Zurich to document modernist heritage, which

is now under the combined threats of disrepair and war, using 3D scanning and building research. Within the initiative, Ukrainian architecture students were trained in scanning and research and scanned five buildings in Lviv.



Cover: a screenshot of the 3D model of the Trade Unions' Building (Lviv, Ukraine) made by Skeiron and Kharkiv School of Architecture. © Myroslava Liakhovych, 2023.

Myroslava Liakhovych