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**PLASTIC EXPRESSION OF MODERN AND NEO-CLASSICAL
ARCHITECTURE OF ODESSA. ON EXAMPLES OF ODESSA REVENUE
HOUSES BUILT BETWEEN 1910 AND 1914**

Abstract

The objective of the paper is to show the general formal principles in the Modern and Neoclassical architectural styles based on the examples of Odessa's architecture of the early 20th century. The article provides an analysis of the plastic expression of Revenue Houses built at the beginning of 20th century. Two Revenue Houses were the subject of detailed analysis – Chernigov and Shestopal's Revenue House built in 1912, designed by Leonid M. Chernigov; and the Karaim Society's Revenue House, by architect: A. S. Pampulov built in 1913. The parallel existence of two architectural styles, namely Modernism and Neoclassicism, at the beginning of the 20th century, allows to formulate certain formal principles. The analysis of exemplary Revenue Houses enabled to determine the formal principles belonging to the functional-constructive, the artistic-tectonic and the decorative-symbolic decoration. In addition, the impact of Modern style on neoclassical style was established. Despite formal stylistic contradictions and lack of homogeneity of forms and shapes in architecture of different stylistic schools the same formal principles are applied, which allows one to date a building to one epoch, a certain historical period of architecture's development.

Keywords: *Modernism, rational Modern, Neoclassicism, plastic expression of architecture*

Introduction

A revenue house is a multi-family residential house with specific layout and architecture. As a type it evolved in Europe in 18th and 19th century. It originated in France, as a investment estate, later it developed in tenements. It is characterized by the same design and constructional approach, resulting in similar façades and overall architectural expression.

At the end of the 19th century, Odessa was a full-fledged commercial and industrial hub of Russian Empire, enjoying close economic, trade and cultural relations with Europe. The first in terms of export turnover, the Port of Odessa was stimulating further growth in urban trading. Prominent merchants and manufacturers were becoming the primary customers of the construction business. Due to free port period in first half of 19th century it became very multicultural Russian (around 50% of inhabitants) city with large percentage of Jews (around 30%), Ukrainians (around 10%), Poles (4%), Germans, Greeks and Crimean Tatars. It's growth was interrupted by Crimean War (1853-1856). However increasing numbers of cooperative societies and groups of citizens started joining the customer base from the 1910 s. [Pilavskiy 2010: 104]. Revenue Houses' popularity peaked during that period [Timofeenko 1984: 40]. Stylistically, apart from the eclectic style adored by the Odessits, the Modern style, was also developing perceptibly and gaining popularity. Parallely with the development of the Modern style, starting from the 1910s, architectural objects were built in the Neoclassical style. Kirrilov classifies the Modern and Neoclassical periods as one stage – the late developmental stage of the *Art Nouveau* [Kirillov 1979: 24].

In order to specify the general formal principles, a method proposed by A. Tic [1986] has been chosen. It enables us to highlight the general features that elude the viewer upon at first superficial inspection of architecture piece. Analysis of architectural plastic expression enables to compare buildings that belong to drastically different stylistic schools. Architectural plastic expression according to A. Tic functions on three levels, in three dimensions: the functional-constructive, the artistic-tectonic and the decorative-symbolic dimension. The functional-constructive plasticity has to reflect the regularity of the internal space's structure, provide a realistic idea of the dimensional and structural solutions of the building. The artistic-tectonic plasticity represents the aesthetic comprehension of the constructive-dimensional structure, highlighting the carrying capacity of the main construction elements with stylistic means. The primary tasks of the decorative-symbolical plasticity are as follows: making an emotional impact on the observer, with effective use of shapes for the creation of powerful artistic impression [Tic 1986: 10-11].

Based on two examples of Odessa architecture from the early 20th century, it is possible to describe the way the formal principles of Modern styles were embodied in the Neoclassical architectural style. The first example – the Chernigov and Shestopal's Revenue house designed by L.M. Chernigov, was erected in 1912. It was built in the Neoclassical style by 35 Ekaterinenskaya St., Odessa (fig. 1, 2). The architects of this building, like majority of architects of that period, freely created in different styles which were in demand at the time: Eclecticism, Modernism and Neoclassicism. Thus, the A., B. and M. Rostovskis' double-pile house was built in the neoclassical style, according to the project of L. M. Chernigov in 1910, in Novoselskogo St. A. S. Pampulov's design was used to

build the Tellal's Revenue House in 1914, in L. Tolstoy St., 13, executed in Classicized Modern style. Despite ample work experience in different styles, architects chose the elements meticulously when forming the building arrangement and its plastic expression.



Fig. 1. Chernigov and Shestopal's Revenue House. Photo by O. Polonskaya, 2016.



Fig. 2. Chernigov and Shestopal's Revenue House, corner cupola. Photo from book *Odessa. Architectural-historical note*. V. Timofeenko, 1984.

It is known that *'in its formative period, the Neoclassical style represented one of the multitude of ways of the Modern's transformations'* [Kirichenko 1982: 312] and at the same time: *'Russian orientation of the Neoclassical style was contrasted with the internationalism of the Modern'* [Kirichenko 1982: 310]. The following analysis is going to demonstrate how this contrast was removed. Analysed buildings are both corner ones, located within the red line of the city's development. They successfully fit into the key central street blocks. Shaping the corner became the basic cityscape creating function of these architectural pieces. Therefore, their dimensions were predetermined. The functional-constructive plastic here accentuates the main trait of a corner building – a rounded corner that is flanked by pilaster sides, crowned by gables. This element is similar in both buildings. Such arrangement was formed in the Modern style. It is the shape of the gables that lets to refer the buildings to different stylistic schools. In Neoclassical-style – the gables have round 'neoclassical' shape. Both buildings' corners are topped with towers. The Chernigov and Shestopal's Revenue House (a late Modern style building) featured an elegant cupola (not preserved, shown in photo dated 1984. – fig. 2). The house of the Karaim society (fig. 3) is crowned with a massive tower, a genuine neoclassical element. Its shape was a result of basing upon the architectural pieces of the Petrine Baroque, Classical and Empire styles.



Fig. 3. The Karaim society's Revenue House. Photo by O. Polonskaya, 2016.

The tectonic plasticity, identical in the two analysed buildings, is presented by a rusticated base with the ragged stone texture – it is an element that is characteristic for the architecture of the early Northern Modern style. In both buildings, it goes up the wall to the second floor's window level. In this case, rustication loses its' primary tectonic application – it no longer emphasizes the sturdiness of the building. At the same time, while Chernigov and Shestopal's buildings use imitation of ragged stone, the Karaim society building does indeed incorporate the classical rusticated brickwork. It is important to note that the placement and the character of the texture of the brickwork gravitates toward the ragged stone, indicating a link to the Late Modern.

The primary visual elements dominating the decorative-symbolic plasticity of analysed buildings include the bas-reliefs with human figures. They are placed at the viewer's eye-level on the line marking the end of the texture rustication. Bas-reliefs, evoke a faint association between the analyzed buildings built in different styles. Bas-reliefs on the walls of Chernigov and Shestopal's buildings serve as an allegorical image standing for the industrial and landholding themes. Social-democratic trends in the society of that time could not have failed to appear in the 'progressive' architecture of the late Modern (fig. 4). The panel of the neoclassical building of the Karaim society's revenue house depicts people in Greek clothing, with relaxed poses. At first it seems that they are very distant from the social-democratic theme presented on Chernigov and Shestopal's Revenue House. However after more thorough analysis it is clear that these antique stylised figures holds modern tools (fig. 5).



Fig. 4. Chernigov and Shestopal's Revenue House, bas-reliefs. Photo by O. Polonskaya, 2016.



Fig. 5. The Karaim society's Revenue House, bas-reliefs. Photo by O. Polonskaya, 2016.

Conclusion

The analysis of the architectural plasticity has brought forward common formal principles applied by architects of the early 20th century, creating buildings in the Modern and Neoclassical styles. The analysis has resulted in discovering the degree to which the late Modern style influences the architecture of the Neoclassicism. Due to the elicited formal principles, it is possible to determine common features that formed during the historical period in utterly different stylistic schools: late Modern and Neoclassical styles. When uniformity of shapes is absent, formal principles come to the fore, enabling to date the buildings to one epoch, one historical period of architecture's development.

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