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Specific features of Art Nouveau in large and medium-sized cities of Ukraine (using the example of Lviv and Chernihiv)

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Abstract

The study is devoted to identifying the features of the Art Nouveau style in different cities of Ukraine. Using the example of a comparison between the European-style Art Nouveau in Lviv and the regional "wooden Art Nouveau" in Chernihiv, it is shown how the style changes as it moves away from its centres of origin. The role and place of Lviv Art Nouveau in the formation of the Western Ukrainian Art Nouveau school is determined. The varieties of Art Nouveau in Lviv and the spread of certain varieties are characterized, the originality of the architecture of "wooden Art Nouveau" in Chernihiv is analysed. The importance of the "author's style" in the formation of Art Nouveau buildings is determined. Typical examples of Art Nouveau varieties in Lviv are determined, the characteristics of early and late Art Nouveau are given. The manifestations of Art Nouveau elements on the facades of wooden buildings in Chernihiv and the difference in the manifestations of Art Nouveau in the main and regional centers are determined.

Keywords: specific feature, modern, large/medium city, Ukraine, Lviv, Chernihiv

1. Introduction

In connection with the ongoing war in Ukraine, an international team of researchers in the field of architectural history and monument conservation is constantly striving to deepen their research, and thus supplement the current state of knowledge about Ukrainian historical buildings so that after the war, when the monuments destroyed during the war are revalued, the conservation authorities will have material for pre-project studies.

In Ukrainian cities, a large number of historical monuments date back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which represent the style Art Nouveau.

Art Nouveau in Ukraine was adopted in two main ways: territories under the rule of Austria-Hungary adopted the Western European version of Art Nouveau, primarily the Polish and Austrian versions, while territories under the rule of the Russian Empire adopted trends from Moscow, especially St. Petersburg. This is what led to the significant stylistic diversity of Art Nouveau in different territories.

There is a rule: the further away from the centres of origin of a style it is transferred, the more local layers it acquires. Ukraine has always been distinguished by significant cultural diversity, so local regional features were superimposed on the Art Nouveau traditions.

The main difference between Art Nouveau in Western Ukraine (primarily in Lviv and Chernivtsi) and Art Nouveau in Central (Kyiv), Left-Bank (Kharkiv, Poltava) and Southern (Odesa, Crimea) Ukraine is that Art Nouveau in Western Ukraine developed in accordance with European Art Nouveau trends into two main versions – decorative "planar" Art Nouveau with a large number of facade decorations in the form of stucco decorations and majolica inserts and rationalistic Art Nouveau of the late stage of the style's development. In general, such objects in Lviv are stylistically similar to each other and to similar objects in the cities of Poland, the Czech Republic and Austria.

However, the situation with the development of Art Nouveau movements in the territories belonging to the Russian Empire was different. First of all, Art Nouveau acquired layers of other styles, even forming a separate direction – neo-Gothic with Art Nouveau elements (an example is the "House with Cats" at 23 Hoholivska Street in Kyiv). At the late stage of Art Nouveau, the direction of the so-called "classicistic Art Nouveau" spread, which is a combination of features of Art Nouveau and neoclassicism.

Unlike Western Ukraine, the direction of the so-called "northern national romanticism" spread in the Russian-governed part of Ukraine, which in St. Petersburg was called "northern modernism". This style direction initially originated in Finland, was later borrowed in St. Petersburg, and from there – to the territories of Ukraine, primarily to Kharkiv. This spread was facilitated by the practice of inviting masters from St. Petersburg to design.

A separate trend was the so-called regional Art Nouveau of medium-sized and small cities. There, Art Nouveau was often embodied by local architects and civil engineers, and therefore had a large number of local stylistic layers.

Simultaneously with Art Nouveau, which had European origins, there was also a trend of Ukrainian national romanticism, which was not identical to Art Nouveau, since it was based exclusively on a folk style.

In the South of Ukraine, Art Nouveau did not become as widespread as in the West, Centre, or Left Bank of Ukraine, and most often turned into Eclecticism with individual signs of Art Nouveau (which is clearly seen in the example of the tenement development of Odesa at the beginning of the 20th century).

The purpose of the study was to show, by comparing the objects of Lviv Art Nouveau and Chernihiv's "wooden Art Nouveau", how heterogeneous the same style can be, the further it is moved from the centres of origin.

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The objectives of the study were as follows:

- to identify the characteristic features of Art Nouveau in the centres of the style's spread in Ukraine – at the level of stylistic imagery, volumetric and spatial characteristics, and morphology of forms;
- to characterize the regional version of "wooden Art Nouveau";
- to argue how regional versions of the Art Nouveau style were formed, which features of Art Nouveau disappeared at the same time, and which remained.

2. Objective, method, and state of research

The following research methods were used to solve the research problems. The methods of historical and cultural analysis made it possible to argue the spread of certain modernist tendencies in certain territories of Ukraine, borrowed either from Europe or from Europe through Russia. These processes were strengthened through the practice of teaching either in educational institutions of Western Europe or Moscow and St. Petersburg, and through invitations to design in Ukraine, either by European or Russian architects. The method of art historical analysis made it possible to identify common trends in the decoration of objects, to determine what is common and what is different between them. The method of comparative analysis made it possible to compare objects with each other, based on certain indicators (planning, composition, morphology of forms, decor, polychromy). The method of system-structural analysis made it possible to analyse an object as a certain integrity with a set of components, which made it possible to compare phenomena of the same hierarchical level with each other (scale with scale, roofs with roofs, windows with windows, etc.). This allowed us to identify certain manifestations of style at specific hierarchical levels (planning, composition, morphology of forms). The methods of field surveys, the graphical and analytical method, and the photo fixation method formed the evidentiary basis of the study.

The purpose and objectives of the study determined the processed source base:

- urban planning aspects of the development of Ukrainian cities in the modern era (Chernyshev et al., 2023: 16-23; Dyomin et al., 2021: 26-36);
- problems of monument protection and restoration (Molochko, Borowczyk, 2025: 555-566);
- architecture of Ukrainian cities of the Art Nouveau period and its stylistic characteristics (Belenkova, 2004; Biriulov, 2005; Dyomin, Ivashko, 2020: 79-84; Ivashko et al., 2020: 953-964; 2021a: 935-960; 2021b: 117-127; Polishchuk, 2003; Yasievich, 1988);
- aspects related to restoration activities (Molodid et al., 2025: 555-566; Orlenko, Ivashko, 2019: 171-190; Orlenko et al., 2025: 1321-1334);
- problems of historical sites' destruction in wartime (Kozłowski et al., 2022: 391-408).

3. Stylistic characteristics of Lviv Art Nouveau and its influence on the Western Ukrainian Art Nouveau school

The study of the Western Ukrainian school of modernism was carried out by S. Belenkova, Y. Biriulov, L. Polishchuk, V. Yasievich, and other scholars (Belenkova, 2004; Biriulov, 2005; Polishchuk, 2003; Yasievich, 1988). In their publications, they paid attention to modernism in the architecture of Lviv, Chernivtsi, and Stanislaviv (now – Ivano-Frankivsk). At the same time, despite the thoroughness of their research, there was a need to generalize information related to the Western Ukrainian Art Nouveau school. It is also necessary

to define the Lviv Art Nouveau school in more detail in comparison with Art Nouveau in other cities of Ukraine, to analyse the spread of certain varieties of Art Nouveau in Lviv, the features of urban development types, methods of decorating facades and interior spaces and thus create a generalizing picture of the specifics of the Western Ukrainian Art Nouveau school with a centre in Lviv.

First of all, we note that in Lviv we observe the emergence of the same varieties of Art Nouveau as in Kyiv and Kharkiv – early decorative Art Nouveau (decorative European) and late Art Nouveau (rationalistic and classicized). The total number of Art Nouveau objects in Lviv is more than a hundred, but any exact figure will be approximate, because the issue of including the so-called eclecticism with signs of Art Nouveau in the number of Art Nouveau objects is debatable. In addition, Ukrainian national romanticism is often also included in Art Nouveau, which V. Chepelyk called "Ukrainian architectural Art Nouveau".

In this study, we leave out of detailed attention the direction of Ukrainian national romanticism, which, in our opinion, is inappropriate to include in decorative or rationalist Art Nouveau due to its fundamentally different nature.

The largest number of objects that can be undoubtedly attributed to Art Nouveau in Lviv is about seventy objects of decorative European Art Nouveau, of which fifty are original and about twenty are outstanding. If we analyse the dating of this series of objects, then this is mainly the period of 1904–1907, although some objects were built later. Therefore, this confirms the thesis about the maximum surge of Art Nouveau in Europe and the Russian Empire in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The first aspect that was analysed is the stylistic characteristics of Lviv Art Nouveau in comparison with the Art Nouveau of other centres, primarily Kyiv and Kharkiv. The term "ornamental secession", which was given to Lviv Art Nouveau by researcher Y. Levytskyi, is considered identical to another, "Art Nouveau with planar low-relief decor". This is the first noticeable difference between Lviv Art Nouveau and Kyiv and Kharkiv – the presence of a complex pattern superimposed on the facade of a low-relief, barely protruding decor (it should be noted that in Kyiv Art Nouveau, volumetric decor protruding from the plane of the wall was widely used). The aspect of stylistic characteristics also includes established matrix methods of arranging the decor and combining its elements. Usually, this is a phytomorphic or anthropomorphic decor on

Fig. 1. Decor of the house at 11 Nechuia-Levytskoho Street. Photo by Y. Ivashko

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a three- or four-story facade with rectangular openings, where the decor with motifs of modern lines frames the openings, and a strip of majolica ornament is located under the cornice. The essentially planar facade is complemented by curvilinear tongs, attics and wrought-iron fences of an exquisite pattern. The spread of majolica inserts in Lviv (as well as in Chernivtsi) is a direct influence of the Austro-Hungarian Secession (Fig. 1).

The maximum surge of Art Nouveau in Lviv occurred in 1905–1906, when a unique ensemble of Secessionist buildings of entire streets was formed. As examples, we can cite the ensemble of buildings of Bohomoltsia, Akademika Pavlova, and Dontsova streets, built up with decorative Art Nouveau objects of a similar number of floors, scale, and stylistic imagery. Such stylistic unity was ensured by the design of the buildings of the entire street by one contractor, namely the design bureau of I. Levynskyi, where T. Obmiński also worked.

So, the main achievement of the Lviv Art Nouveau school is the emergence of an ensemble of street buildings with objects of a high European level. Within the framework of the Lviv Art Nouveau school, a specific compositional technique of a U-shaped residential complex of several buildings united by a landscaped courtyard-court of honour was formed ("Rondo" on Bohomoltsia Street, the complex at 8-8a-10-10a Dontsova Street, built in 1905–1907, and the "Rondo" complex served as a model for the complex on Dontsova Street).

There are also U-shaped complexes in Kharkiv, such traditions were borrowed from St. Petersburg (the Company House at 19 Rymarska Street (1912–1914) and the house of the cooperative "Chervonyi Bankovets" ("Red Banker") at 6 Alchevskykh Street (1918)). In addition to them, in Kharkiv, at the stage of late Art Nouveau, residential complexes of the Insurance Company "Russia" in the neo-Renaissance style and the Fire Insurance Company "Salamandra" in the neo-classical style were built.

At the same time, Lviv and Kharkiv residential complexes are not identical; Kharkiv ones are larger, built in a style of late Art Nouveau and neo-styles' spread, and were built later than Lviv ones.

The second aspect that was analysed was the number of architects in the Lviv, Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odesa centres who worked in the Art Nouveau style. It was proven that the Western Ukrainian centre (focused around Lviv) had the largest number of such architects, although the largest number of well--known architects worked in the central centre (focused around Kyiv), and some prominent architects of the Eastern centre (focused around Kharkiv) created unique examples of the so-called "author's Art Nouveau". The main difference between the Western centre and the Central and Eastern centres was that the established principles of European Art Nouveau were varied many times there, so the buildings are stylistically similar to each other. The least significant was the Southern Art Nouveau centre (focused around Odesa), where Art Nouveau essentially "dissolved" in eclecticism.

The third aspect of the study is the contribution of prominent architects of the Lviv school, primarily I. Levynskyi. He implemented nine projects in the style of decorative European Art Nouveau, four projects in Ukrainian national romanticism ("Hutsul" secession, related to the "Zakopane" style). His contribution consisted, among other things, in the widespread introduction of the latest building materials and structural schemes.

The main achievements of his architectural work are as follows:

- creation of ensembles of single-scale and stylistically similar street development;
- introduction of the design of an entire street's development by one architectural bureau;
- a combination of traditional development along red lines with a U-shaped complex with a landscaped courtyard-court of honour;
- spread of the Hutsul version of Ukrainian national romanticism;
- decoration of facades and interior spaces of buildings in the best traditions of European Secession;

- approach to design as to Gesamtkunstwerk – total space of art (coined by A. van de Velde), where all the constituent elements of the object are made in the Art Nouveau style.

The second famous master of Lviv decorative modernism was T. Obmiński, whose work was influenced by I. Levinskyi. The features of his work are as follows:

- original compositions of facades;
- techniques of facade plasticity, including planar facades;
- approach to design as a craft art with a combination of facade stylistics and interior spaces, including details.

W. Sadłowski was also a famous architect of Lviv Art Nouveau, whose creative style had such features as the originality of facade compositions and the solution of interior spaces, as well as not being limited in his creativity to one Art Nouveau style.

Lviv eclecticism with Art Nouveau elements is a distinct direction, stylistically close to decorative Art Nouveau. It is also divided into the early stage of pseudo--styles (1898–1900) and the neo-styles (1907–1910). The most common directions of eclecticism with Art Nouveau elements were neo-Gothic and

Fig. 2. Sculptures of the house at 6 Kniazya Romana Street. Photo by Y. Ivashko

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neo-Renaissance with Art Nouveau elements. Thus, Lviv Neo-Gothic with Art Nouveau elements includes nine objects. These buildings are distinguished by high plasticity of facades due to the use of bay windows, portals, towers, pincers, and sculptural decor (Fig. 2).

At the same time, the scale of these objects was similar to the scale of buildings of Historicism. The originality of the houses of the modernized Gothic style is given by rounded parts of the walls, pointed openings, stepped or triangular gables, biforas and triforums, crenelated parapets, lancet stripes under the cornice, sculpture, and reliefs of the corresponding content. In such objects, additional "Gothic" colour is provided by images of coats of arms, lions, knights in armour, eagles, that is, symbols of knightly valour.

It is also necessary to describe in a few words the Lviv modernized neo--Renaissance with Art Nouveau elements, which gained popularity thanks to the Renaissance architecture of Lviv in the historical centre. About ten objects were built in the modernized Renaissance, among which the most famous is the Railway Station. Quite a few Lviv architects worked in this direction, but it is difficult to single out a few names among them, as can be done in the case of the Art Nouveau style.

Lviv also had a late stage of Art Nouveau, in particular, rationalist and classicized Art Nouveau. The late stage lasted from 1910 to 1912, and the number of objects was significantly smaller compared to the early stage of decorative Art Nouveau. One of the reasons, in our opinion, was that the restrained nature of Late Art Nouveau did not correspond to the intimate historical buildings of old Lviv and, on the contrary, was organic for industrial Kharkiv. At the same time, there are about two dozen Late Art Nouveau objects in Lviv.

Here, it is necessary to note the role of the "author's handwriting" in the formation of both early and late Art Nouveau. Thus, early Art Nouveau is obliged to the "author's handwriting" of I. Levynskyi, T. Obmiński, W. Sadłowski, and late Art Nouveau – to the "author's handwriting" of A. Zacharevicz and R. Felinski. The decisive role was played by two design bureaus – in early Art Nouveau – the design bureau of I. Levynskyi, in late Art Nouveau – the firm "J. Sosnowski & A. Zacharevicz". which actively introduced the latest reinforced concrete structures according to the F. Ennebik system, the method of cladding with brick and stone of floors, lintels, and reinforced concrete supports, and an incomplete frame of the structural base. For the first time, Ennebik's system structures were used by them in 1903–1904. During 1902–1914, A. Zakharevich actively used reinforced concrete structures in engineering structures and in large public facilities (in particular, in the dome of the Railway Station). The spread of rationalist modernism in Lviv's construction with the discovery of an internal frame was facilitated by the fact that reinforced concrete structures were manufactured at the factory of the company "J. Sosnowski & A. Zacharewicz".

4. Regionalism of Chernihiv's "wooden Art Nouveau"

A phenomenon of the same level as Ukrainian national romanticism is the "wooden Art Nouveau" of Chernihiv (Ivashko et al., 2020: 953-964).

Although he did not directly use the technique of quoting architecture that personified Ukrainian national identity (as was clearly done in the building of the Poltava Provincial Zemstvo), such objects nevertheless synthesized individual forms of Art Nouveau and the traditional low-rise mansion development of Chernihiv.

There are three examples of such buildings: the buildings at 9 Troleibusna Street, 39 Kotsiubynskoho Street, and 54 Shevchenka Street, which until recently housed residential apartments and administrative institutions. These three buildings belong to the type of so-called "provincial" Art Nouveau, combining elements of Art Nouveau, eclecticism, and local architectural traditions. Unlike Art Nouveau in the main centres, provincial Art Nouveau has

always been characterized by a layering of different styles, with the exception of cases when such objects were designed by invited famous architects.

The house at 54 Shevchenka Street is a one-story building with a traditional symmetrical composition of the main facade and a stylistic combination of features of typical "wooden" eclecticism in the decoration of window moldings and the entrance canopy, and Ukrainian national romanticism in the decoration of the entrance part with a hipped roof. The outlines of the vertical and horizontal window openings near the door are also derived from Art Nouveau.

More original in terms of silhouette solution, overall volumetric and spatial composition, and detailing are the houses at 9 Troleibusna Street and at 39 Kotsiubynskoho Street. They are oriented with their main facades on the streets of secondary importance, and probably initially, there were front gardens in front of them with a fence on the street side. This method of arranging mansions with an indentation from the frontage lines of the streets is characteristic of small and medium-sized cities, since in large cities (this is visible in the examples of Lviv, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa), the development of plots in the Art Nouveau era becomes as dense as possible.

The houses at 9 Troleibusna Street, and at 39 Kotsiubynskoho Street, have such common features as an active expressive silhouette with the presence of turrets, different heights of individual volumes of the house, the presence of high roofs with dormer windows, as for the plasticity of the facade details, it is marked by small-scaleness and a combination of Art Nouveau and eclectic motifs. At the same time, in the general composition of the house, one accent volume-dominant can be clearly identified (as in the house at 39 Kotsiubynskoho Street) (Fig. 3) or a weakly identified accent with an entrance (the house at 54 Shevchenka Street). If the house has several different finishes at once, this reduces the effect of one dominant volume (the house on Troleibusna Street, 9, with three accent elements that claim the role of dominants).

Fig. 3. House at 39 Kotsiubynskoho Street. Photo by Y. Ivashko

5. Summary and conclusions

The features of Art Nouveau in Lviv were noted as follows. First of all, this is the predominance of objects from the early stage of Art Nouveau, that is, decorative Art Nouveau with little relief. A large number of background buildings with decorative Art Nouveau features along the street frontage were noted. In early Art Nouveau, we highlight the following notable objects:

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1. Decorative European Art Nouveau – the "Rondo" complex at 3–13 Bohomoltsia Street (1904–1906), the development of 4 Bohomoltsia Street (1905–1906) and 8 Bohomoltsia Street (1906–1907), the complex at 8-8a-10-10a Dontsova Street (1906–1907) (architect I. Levynskyi), the Musical Society of Galicia (1905) (architect W. Sadłowski), Segal's house at 6 Myroslava Skoryka Avenue (1904–1905) and the Hausmann house at 15 Doroshenka Street (1906–1907) (architect T. Obmiński);
2. Ukrainian national romanticism: the building of the Insurance Company «Dnister» at 20 Ruska Street (1906) (architect T. Obmiński);
3. Eclecticism wih Art Nouveau elements – the building at 6 Knyazya Romana Street (1912–1913) (architects R. Wolpel, A. Piller, S. Plichal), 6 Heroiv Maidanu Street, 11 Valoviy Street (1910) (architect A. Schleyen), the Railway Station (1899–1903) (architect W. Sadłowski), 6 Bohomoltsia Street (1905–1906) (architects T. Obmiński, K. Teodorowicz) (Fig. 4) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Lviv (1907–1910) (architects A. Zacharevicz, T. Obmiński) and the Mykolasz Passage (1899–1900) (architects I. Levynskyi, A. Zacharevicz).

Fig. 4. House at 6 Bohomoltsia Street. Photo by Y. Ivashko

In late Art Nouveau, we highlight the following notable objects:

1. Rationalistic Art Nouveau – the building of the insurance company of T. Balaban at 7 Valova Street (1908–1910) (architect A. Zacharevicz), the Prague Bank (1911–1912) (architect M. Blecha) (Fig. 5), and a residential building at 4 Dontsova Street (Fig. 6);
2. Classicized Art Nouveau – the Lviv Bank at 9 Valova Street (1910–1911) (architect A. Zacharevicz) and a building at 7 Ivana Franka Street (1911–1912).

The main features of the two stages of Art Nouveau in Lviv are as follows.

At the early stage:

- the predominance of decorative European Art Nouveau and modernized neostyles over rationalistic and classicized Art Nouveau;
- the appearance of residential complexes with a U-shaped plan and an internal landscaped courtyard-kurdoner;
- ensemble building of streets in the Art Nouveau style;
- the Austrian version of Secession with low-relief or planar decor, the application of the principle of «Gezamtkunstwerk», that is, manifestations of Art Nouveau both on facades and in interior spaces;

- a significant role of the «author's style» and the practice of building entire streets by one design bureau.

At a later stage:

- active use of the latest reinforced concrete structures and incomplete frame;
- significant role of "author's style".

Fig. 5. Prague Bank. Photo by Y. Ivashko

Unlike Lviv Art Nouveau, the regional "wooden Art Nouveau" of Chernihiv is not distinguished by stylistic consistency and combines elements of Art Nouveau, eclecticism, and local architecture of low-rise mansions. The features of Chernihiv Art Nouveau are as follows:

- borrowing individual features of modernism at the level of detail and stylizing them in wood;
- using features of Art Nouveau only on the main facades without manifestations in the interiors;
- placing mansions in accordance with local building regulations;
- houses have either a restrained silhouette or a developed, structured one due to one or several dominant volumes.

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Fig. 6. House at 4 Dontsova Street. Photo by Y. Ivashko

The main differences between Art Nouveau in its main centers (for example, Lviv) and in small and medium-sized cities (for example, the "wooden Art Nouveau" of Chernihiv) are as follows:

- as you move away from the centres, the number and perfection of Art Nouveau manifestations in architecture decreases; instead, local building traditions become more significant;
- in the centres of Art Nouveau in Ukraine, Art Nouveau manifestations covered not only the decor and elements of the main facades, but also the layout and internal spaces, while in the provinces, it was a purely "façade" rather eclectic option.

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