



**Typology and Stylistics of the Russian Empire Estates**

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**ABSTRACT**

The article considers Russian estate as a unique cultural phenomenon. Its main feature is a structural coherence of all the elements connected in a single ensemble. Its utilitarian and spiritual functions are seamlessly combined in the estate. The whole architectonics of the estate is a materialized model of a holistic, harmonious spiritual world that embodies the ideas of the enlightened world and saturated with symbols, allegories and metaphors. The typology of Russian estate is examined in accordance with the shape and size of ownership. Structural parts of the estate complex are considered from the perspective of the general ideological plan. The specific features of Russian country estate Empire are revealed. The defining features of the artistic image of Empire estates are harmony and consistency. The connection of the architectural ensemble of the estate with the environment is specially pointed. The interior of the Russian Empire estates is distinguished by stylistic unity of all its elements, and its orderliness. The objects of applied art, as a part of the interior, are a unique combination of European style with elements of national identity. One of the examples of such uniqueness is a good paraphrase of the texture of Karelian birch with French ash-tree cap. The decor of floor and painting of ceilings, lighting, stoves and fireplaces are harmonized to each other and to the overall architecture of the estate.

**Key words.** Typology of estates, Classicism, Empire, Russian Empire estate, Empire interior style, Empire furniture style.



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The existence and development of the estate in Russia was always determined by many factors: natural conditions and resources, the development of the region, a practical grasp of the owner, his interests and spiritual needs, traditions that existed in the province and others - a whole set of conditions determined the uniqueness of each estate. The estate formed a new vision of the residential environment and its relationship with the surrounding nature. The owners sought to embody their vision of an ideal world in the atmosphere, rituals, and norms of behavior, pastimes and occupations, the type of management. There was nothing accidental in the estate, all the details of the arrangement were thought about, submitted to the plan, which often rose to allegories, metaphors, a specific reading of an ancient source (Darya et al, 2015 ). The main feature of the Russian way of life, spirituality, mentality, is the connection, almost syncretic unity in the consciousness of nature, surrounding a human, social values and religious beliefs, and a Russian estate can be considered as material form of this association. In Russia, especially in the provinces, the estates of XVIII century haven't almost been preserved. Basically, the estates, built after the War with Napoleon of 1812 -1814 have been saved up to now. In the Russian province of the XIX century European style principles in conjunction with the regional architectural traditions and peculiarities caused the peculiar features of the Russian estate architectural Empire . Harmony and consistency are the key traits of the solution of Empire-style interior.

## **2. METHODS**

Analysis of the current typology of estates in Russia and principles of their arrangement and connection with the environment, unity of the exterior with the interior style, allowed us to determine the specificity of the national identity of the Empire estates in Russia. Historical, stylistic, comparative analysis of documents, events and facts of the era, architectural buildings, pieces of furniture are used in the study.

## **3. RESULTS**

According to the existing typology, Russian estates are divided according to the financial situation of the owners, to small-landed, medium-landed and large-landed. Social status of the owner has largely determined the view of the estate, and its typical



life. Large-landed estates are of a Palace type, belonging to the Imperial court and members of the higher aristocracy. The Palace-type estates were the examples of European culture in Russia. They were built by architects who used the latest stylistic innovations of Europe. Their interiors were decorated with furniture of the best masters of France in the eighteenth century and later - of England and Germany (Morley, 1999; Miller, 2005; Pradère, 1989; Aurélia, 2006; Lily, 2015). Medium and small estates were built, on the one hand with an eye on the estates of aristocrats, and, on the other hand, they often manifested the traits, taken from life of the peasantry.

The estates could have a different purpose, for example, if the purpose of the estate was a pleasure, it was the place of stay during receptions and parties, fulfilling a representative function. In rich estates the wings with theatre halls were equipped, where operas, ballets or pantomime were staged, and in the parks "air" or "green" theater under the open sky were created, there could be choirs and orchestras (Ivlev, 2001). However, a large proportion of the estates was residential and was intended to be there for a long, and sometimes a seasonal stay. There were also economic or "out-of-eyes" estates, which served to their owners only as a source of funds to the city or capital city life.

A specific feature of Russian culture was the establishment of estate culture, not of a Palace type, but of a noble middle-class type (Deputatova Anastasiya, 2016). There were the estates of merchants, peasants, and belonged to middle class estates, but in the minds of Russians, an estate is associated with nobility. The estates were both urban and rural (country-side), but just a rural estate of a noble family acquired a symbolic meaning – the distance from the state of the Royal eye and the ability to live their unique, family-friendly world – a little universe. However, the country estate of the XVIII - XIX centuries, were not only a place to live, but also the spiritual world, which gave Russian culture the characters of Ivan Turgenev and Leo Tolstoy – an estate was a "perfect reality" (Ivlev, 2001).

The city estates of nobles, typical for Moscow, to a lesser extent for St. Petersburg and provincial towns, as a rule, included the master's house, "services", a small garden. The classical (rural) estate has always been an ensemble building, primarily its architectural design has been focused on the harmony with the surrounding landscape. Within a few



miles the rural estate was visible to the approaching traveler, being the dominant architecture of the area. Often, it performed in the ensemble with a bell tower or Church. The estate usually consisted of the master's house with the outhouses (wings), buildings for servants, utility rooms for tools storage, stables, kennels. There were greenhouses and conservatories, kitchen outbuilding, a barn, a cellar and a glacier, at the back yard could be a smithy, as well as production casing if some production was established in the estate. There was a court d'honneur (cour d'honneur FR.) before the master's house – a front yard with flower gardens and lilac bushes, and behind the house the park was planted, overlooking the river or the lake, with alleys, pavilions, grottoes with flower gardens, parterres, etc. In accordance with the tastes of time, the park was divided into two parts – the regular “French Park” and irregular, landscaped "English". When the layout of the gardens and parks, features of the terrain were taken into account, presence of water bodies and sources - creeks, dams, swamps, mills and cemeteries, ravines and hills that have been lovingly involved in the overall ensemble of the estate. This transformed landscape became a holistic, unique view of the world. The border of this world was fenced off by plantings, hedges, ditches, etc. All of these elements in the best ensembles were given in strict conformity with each other and the surrounding landscape. Social ambitions and taste preferences of the owners, reflected in the estate gardens and parks, are revealed in the work of D. S. Likhachev, "The Poetry of the gardens: semantics in the garden styles". Each plant in this "Paradise" estate garden, like a flower in ikebana, had its symbolic value. All created the scenery, told the story and gave the hope that it will be always and everywhere (Likhachev,1998). The ideas about the structure of the estates of a new type, representing not only an economic unit, but developed in an aesthetically organized living space was carried out under the influence of works of Russian writer, philosopher and moralist and botanist Andrei Timofeevich Bolotov (1738 – 1833): the gardens and estate museums were created, which brought to the everyday life of the estate the "element of beauty".

The leading estate style was classicism, which existed in the Russian province until the mid-nineteenth century and happily gone with the Great reform (on abolishing serfdom) by Alexander II in the sixties of the XIX century. A distinctive feature of classicism is



the adoption of the rational element as the main aesthetic and moral values of life. This was consistent with the semantic representations of the era – the age of Enlightenment (Uzbekova et al, 2016; Tatiana Vakhrameeva et al, 2016; Morozova and Gabdrakhmanova , 2015 ). In Russia of XVIII century, the term "classicism" was established without the prefix "neo", as in pre-Peter times no Western classicism could be in the country (Turchin,1994). The last period of classicism – Empire style has left the most ambitious mark in Russian art. "Chronologically, this style, which lasted no more than ten years from 1804 to 1815, is associated with Napoleon I. The Empire style is the style of the Empire, and it largely defines its character. All its uniqueness can be reduced to three words, expressing the essence: War, Antique, Ambition. Justice and legitimacy of militaristic aspirations demanded historical confirmation, it was discovered in antiquity. The Empire style is the first style in art with a vivid ideological character. It claims not abstract aesthetic principles, but the idea of a consolidated society, united with the Imperial crown. Like the Empire itself, the Empire style was designed to combine all the former aesthetic value and give them a high public response. Never before the specimens of ancient art did not occur as a straight line, as it was done in the Empire style. However, the Empire style itself is quite an eclectic, contradictory phenomenon" (The art of furniture,2015).

These ideas increasingly possessed the mind of the educated part of the nobility, and through it penetrated into the art and architecture. The architecture has materialized the ideals of the Enlightenment with their tendency to order, moderation, clarity, reasonableness and ambitious scale of the Empire. Many Russian estates were built for the original projects of famous designers and at the same time, a considerable part of them were built for "typical" projects. The changes were almost always made in the original architectural project by the owner of the estate, often well familiar with the architecture through albums, popular at the time, and then by the contractor who was more focused on his skills, than on the tastes of the architect and the owner. The result was, oddly enough, not a mixture of "maneuvers and mazurkas", but their own organic interpretation of European style (John ,2005; Pile ,2013).

The strict style of Empire prescribed the forms and decoration both of large items and small ones (Bartenev,1968). Typically, the interior of the master's house was built on



the principle of the enfilade of walk-through rooms lined up in a straight line. Only the space upstairs, if the building was two-storey, or mezzanine were of more intimate, cozy nature, being organized around the stairs, leading to the top. In the rich estates there were the portraits of the Imperial family, or patrons of a family in the place of honor. The interiors of the estates of small and middle-landed nobles painting was presented with the touching, a pair- of portraits of the owners, the so-called "friends". These portraits hung in the piers between the three windows of the central room of the estate. In richer estates the ceiling could be decorated with inscriptions in Latin in grisaille, imitating sculpture, paintings are characterized with silhouette and graphics. Ornamentation is determined by the ancient motifs (meander, attributes of the muses, figures), by the order details with the involvement of triumphal symbols – military fittings, Laurel wreaths, garlands, palmettes. In more modest estates the door leafs have usually been white or the panels of the doors and pilasters were covered with Arabesque paintings, and in the palaces they were decorated with precious woods, decorated with details from chasing gilt bronze. Just in the middle-landed estates inlaid parquet floors were rare because of the high cost of exotic wood. Most of the set was a pretty simple ornamental motifs made in the combination of light and stained wood. In the Palace buildings the parquet floors were laid in the front rooms according to individual drawings, a wide variety of textures and shades of precious wood was used.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

Russian interior of XVIII - XIX centuries was largely focused on the furniture of Europe in general, and of France in particular (Nicole de Reuniés.1992). Even in the times of Catherine II the shortage of furniture in Russia forced court service to transport it from one Palace to the other, where the court was. Purchasing expensive furniture abroad was available only to the Imperial court and a small circle of very wealthy aristocrats. Since the second half of the XVIII century, and in a larger scale only in the XIX century, the Russian manufacturers of furniture appear. The demand for their products was often more than production capabilities. In addition, the furniture was made by serf craftsmen. It was not intended for the market and was made at the request of owners of these masters for their estates. The main source for the creation of furniture forms and their styling was imported furniture (14). Russian officers from the nobility,



who saw in the campaign of 1812-1814 impressive interiors of Paris (15-16), imbued with the spirit of the Napoleonic Empire, in many respects, have become agents of the Empire style in Russia. However, its forms and decorative elements have largely undergone conversion in accordance with the identity of a Russian nobleman-customer of furniture. This awareness organically combined both warrior spirit of the winner and the perceived involvement of classical antiquity in their life, in which they saw not so much a militaristic spirit, but lofty mission of ancient culture. Distinctive, iconic items of the Russian furniture became pieces of furniture made of Karelian birch. Their appearance is connected with the search for local material to replace the ash cap, which became fashionable in France during the Empire and especially Restoration time. Furniture, veneered in burl ash, became popular in France, was very highly valued, but the volume of production was insufficient. A good substitute for this type of wood was knotty with a curved trunk low birch, growing in the North of Russia in Karelia. The furniture of Karelian birch has quickly gained not only domestic market, but was exported to Europe, and even to France. There it perfectly suited to the interiors of Charles X and Louis-Philippe(14). The furniture of Russian Empire style, which survived in Russia much longer than in France, until the mid-nineteenth century, has distinctive features. We can say that this is the first style of furniture, which has acquired its own national characteristics. The conductor of this identity can be considered George Gambs (1764-1831) and his sons.

In Empire interior, to replace Dutch blue and white glazed tiles of stoves and fireplaces comes a white tiled floor, partially of curved shape. However the fireplaces were rare in the estates due to their low efficiencies, in contrast to the furnace, which was the main source of heat. In addition to the tiles, in the decoration of stoves and fireplaces white marble was used, sometimes embossed bronze or faience. The furnaces could have been handled as architectural structures of rectangular or round shapes with such order elements as cornices, columns or pilasters. If the furnace was located usually in corners, so the fireplaces were at axis walls. Lighting – chandeliers, sconces, candlesticks (candlesticks) in Russia had its own distinctive features of composite and decorative order, although in general were similar to Western models. The peculiarity of Russian



lighting objects at the times of the Empire is fairly widespread use of the samples of the previous time - the eighteenth century.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

One of the characteristic features of the Empire style, like any other big style, is the harmony of appearance and inner decoration. Russian estate is a typical example of such a compound. Analyzing the specifics of the Russian Empire style, architectural historian Igor Bartenev described this time as the heyday of the art interior, which was in full accordance with the style and plastic characteristics of the external appearance of buildings. The main feature of the Empire style was the strict subordination of all elements of the estate, either before or after such integrity will be gone.

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