

THE NEW MOSCOW BETWEEN NEO-CLASSICISM AND HIGH-TECH

Guest Editor: Diana Zhdanowa (Moscow)

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THE 'NEW' MOSCOW IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:
ANOTHER CITY AND ANOTHER LIFE

editorial

Architecture is the most tangible reflection of the social, political, economic and cultural changes that have taken place in Russia over the last twenty years. Post-soviet architecture has ceased to be simply art in the service of the state, a powerful weapon in the hands of the totalitarian ideology to shape public consciousness and the lives of the country's citizens. Significant now is architecture's social function, which seeks to build a new society by creating a new urban milieu. The fact that Russia has traditionally been strongly centralised can be seen most graphically in the life of Moscow, Russia's first city, where 9% of the population account for 72% of the money circulating in the country.

Today's Moscow is a battleground for the most diverse of ideas, interests and tastes. In construction and architecture, the city is witnessing a clash between a) traditional ideas of a social reordering of the world, b) the desire of academics and restorers to conserve the inviolability of the original city on the border between Europe and Asia, c) normal residents' struggle for the preservation of their accustomed way of life which they wish to pass down to their children, d) the impetus towards speculative profit on supposedly high-end architecture, e) the desire of those in power to buttress a new state, national and religious ideology, and f) the ambitions of architects working to meet modern fashions and prevailing tastes.

The contributions to this issue of *kultura* testify to these contradictory developments. The aim is to present the views of specialists with a professional interest in artistic creation, academic research, critical analysis or the preservation of the urban heritage. It was important to give those readers unfamiliar with the city an insight into the things which interests these people, what they feel is worthy of praise or censure and how their opinions emanate from their professional standpoint.

The acclaimed and highly successful architects

Dmitri and Andrei Barkhin comment on the positive side of the recent developments in Moscow – the creative space offered to neo-classical architects, whose style is winning increasing popularity among clients. Accordingly, they discuss works in this style in detail, but skirt around examples of other styles or pseudo-styles, the so-called high-tech, postmodernism or individualist designs. The journalist Natalya Alexeyeva also feels herself under the professional obligation to discuss positive examples of contemporary architecture in Moscow. She gives the reader an encouraging impression of life in the city today. Alexei Klimenko, a well known figure in the social movement for the preservation of historical Moscow, has won himself a reputation as an uncompromising opponent of the ruling elite's tyranny over architecture and town planning. He loves Moscow with a passion. By way of contrast, he counts the losses inflicted upon the city and argues vehemently that Moscow has changed for the worse in that it has been deprived of its historical memory, originality and unique architectural appearance and form of life. Irina Terekhova, a professional researcher at the Museum of Architecture, tries to present an objective account of the current situation and trends in the city's development without ignoring the negative impact on the life of Muscovites.

Undoubtedly, the radical reconstruction of Moscow taking place before our eyes has brought with it not only destruction, but also creation. The important thing is that our authors, as with the majority of the city's inhabitants, have recognised their role in this process and are trying to take an active and constructive part in it.

*Translated from the Russian
by Christopher Gilley*

editorial

ABOUT THE GUEST EDITOR:

Diana Zhdanova is an art historian and heads a section of the 20th-century wing of the Shchusev Museum of Architecture in Moscow, curates exhibits, leads excursions and conducts research

in archives. In her dissertation, she investigates the works with cult status by the Soviet architect Alexei V. Shchusev in the context of European Art Nouveau.

MOSCOW AND MUSCOVITES: A NEW 'PERESTROIKA'

Irina Terekhova

analysis

Moscow has undergone rapid change; the city and its inhabitants have become unrecognisable. The construction boom responsible for this transformation is the result of deep social and political changes taking place in Russia. Almost all levels of society now hope to improve their standard of life and the quality of their living space. Architects enjoy greater opportunities and freedoms to come up with creative designs. At the same time, sharp divisions in the distribution of wealth emerged in the 1990s and a millionaire class was created.

The changes of the last ten years have both fuelled the alteration of the city's appearance and caused the Muscovites' way of life to become increasingly dependent on their income. The very rich live in a level of comfort that equals or even surpasses that enjoyed by Europeans; their lifestyle can be said to resemble an ostentatious Asiatic extravagance. Through its ambitions and level of income, this class seeks to make a display of its wealth and its pursuit of – and desire to dictate – fashion.

The current changes in the urban milieu have in general been driven by the financial strength of the clients and the ultimate decision-making authority of Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. They shape the city's life to suit themselves; for example, the traffic in the centre is not organised for the convenience of public transport but rather for the processions of official vehicles with flashing blue lights. However, the 12 million ordinary people who make up the bedrock of the city's population live in commuter suburbs inherited from the Soviet period that possess a poorly developed infrastructure of essential facilities, for instance visible in the lack of or deficiency in schools, nursery schools, shops,

laundries, parks and a convenient system of public transport.

It is interesting that immediately after the revolution, one of the main tasks of Moscow architects was to transform a capitalist city into a socialist one: the destruction of the gulf between the rich, comfortable centre and the poor, run-down outskirts. They aimed to provide all inhabitants with equal access to the benefits of civilisation and to create urban zones based on function rather than the residents' income, leading to the foundation of residential, social and industrial areas. Now, such theories on the social reconstruction of the city have fallen out of favour. This society, which is currently experiencing the initial period of the appropriation of capital, recognises only the power of money.

THE GENERAL PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND REBUILDING OF MOSCOW BY 2025

Following the celebration of the 850th anniversary of Moscow in 1997, a General Plan for the redevelopment of the city – the fourth after the General Plans of 1924, 1935 and 1971 – was announced.

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The resolutions about the general direction of the development of the city look good on paper, but in practice their implementation has not brought about improvements in the urban life or the inhabitants' standard of living.

1) Transport

One of the highest-priority problems was declared to be transport: the rapid growth in the ownership of personal cars, which had been doubling in number every three years, threatened to bring the city's traffic to a standstill. One suggestion was finally to build the Fourth Orbital Motorway that had been conceived in the 1970s, extend the Third Ring (the ring road between the Garden Ring motorway and the MKAD) and modernise the radial roads running between the centre and the outskirts (for example, the Rublyov and Leningrad avenues).

Experts warned that the decision to develop the radial and ring roads rather than address the problem of the city's enormous size would not improve the situation because the traffic would continue to follow the same pattern, only spread out over a greater area; the new roads would therefore fail to redistribute the traffic among the network of medium-sized and small streets and connecting roads. Traffic jams have become the norm on all of the city's main roads; the average speed of traffic on the Moscow metro is 40 km/h at rush hour, and only 8 km/h for cars. Despite this, the plan for the construction of the Fourth Orbital Motorway is under serious discussion, as is the building of tunnels running radially from the centre up to the Garden Ring. For the time being, those in power are trying to solve the problem at the expense of public transport. In the centre, the number and length of routes (mainly of tram and trolley buses) have been cut, while in other regions suggestions have been made to abolish completely the only ecological form of transport, the tram, on account of the

fact that its depots and rails take up space which could be used by cars. Due to the fact that this is the only form of transport in the narrow streets of the old districts, such ideas have met with fierce resistance from the inhabitants.

2) Skyscrapers

On the initiative of Moscow's city council, the programme 'A New Ring for Moscow' was included in the General Plan, envisaging 50 high-rise buildings with various functions. The necessity of such building is grounded not only in its effective use of space, but also in tradition, recalling the 'Seven Sisters' skyscrapers built under Stalin in 1947–56. However, the construction of new skyscrapers is uncoordinated, and Moscow's distinctive spatial arrangement is ultimately being destroyed. The similarities in the Seven Sisters' structure and dimensions imparted the city with a cohesive panorama; however, Luzhkov's skyscrapers violate and destroy this unity through their enormous size and tasteless form. These gigantic constructions leave an impression of unreality, create the mere illusion of life and recall the architecture of the Exhibition of the Achievements of the National Economy 1940–1970.

3) The Historical Heritage

The General Plan proclaimed that the approach to existing buildings should be in keeping with the environment around them. This meant that the old buildings should be restored and their original characteristics preserved as far as possible. The construction of new buildings would take into account the basic parameters of the surrounding area, including height, material and the design of the façades. This does not prevent, for example, 'hidden reconstruction' – the expansion of historical buildings with modern-style extensions. Often, the restoration of monuments (i.e., the conservation of what is already there) is accompanied by insist-

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ent demands for their reconstruction (the recreation of that which has been lost). In practice, such reconstruction is transformed into blatant ‘innovation’ – that is, the construction of a new, imitative building which only resembles the lost building in

terms of its outer appearance. Apart from the ‘recreation of that which has been lost’ (the *Cathedral of Christ the Redeemer*, the *Iveron Chapel* and the *Church of Our Lady of Kazan* on Red Square), there has been widespread reconstruction of monuments

*MANEGE SQUARE*

The square in the very centre of the city offers an example of the way in which the historically complex urban environment is approached. From the left: the *Inturist Building* by the neo-classicist Ivan Zholtovsky (1932); the *National Hotel*, a reconstructed Art Nouveau building; the *State Duma*, an example of late constructivism by Arkadi Lagman (1931); the *Moscow Hotel* by Alexei Shchusev (1932–7) after its complete demolition and reconstruction, which only retained the external appearance (here hidden by the billboard). The panorama, which had grown up over time around the empty *Manege Square*, changed fundamentally following the construction of a subterranean shopping centre (with glass domes to provide light) and the transformation of the square into a pedestrian area by an order of Moscow’s city council in 1997. Opinions on this among residents and specialists are still divided. (photograph by A. Komlev)

which were deliberately torn down because they had supposedly fallen into decay. Examples include the *Voentorg* department store, the *Manege* exhibition hall (which was simply burned down) and the *Moscow Hotel*.

The idea of creating a pedestrian area was also founded on this approach. As early as the 1980s, the reconstruction of the Arbat Street and its transformation into a pedestrian area provoked arguments in professional circles and the strong disdain of local inhabitants. It infringed upon the natural dynamic of the city’s development and made the traditional residential areas almost impossible to live in. The small retailers and cultural and social facilities which used to serve the daily needs of residents have disappeared. These included grocery stores and bakeries, crèches and nursery schools, polyclinics, dry cleaners’ and laundrettes, small repair workshops, as well as the trolley bus. In 2000, the pedestrian area in the historical resi-

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dential districts was extended around the *Moscow Artistic Theatre* and the *Tretyakov Gallery*. The everyday life around them disappeared, and the area became window-dressing for the historical centre, visited only by foreigners and guests from other cities, who think that this is the 'real' Moscow.

4) Living Space

The social plan offers a solution to the severe housing problem still faced by Moscow: 189,000 families are still waiting to receive a place in public housing, but fewer than 10,000 families are granted a place to live each year. Undeveloped land in different regions of the city has been set aside for the construction of new housing blocks; elsewhere, high towers will be built in the courtyards of the existing residential areas. Plans have been drawn up to move all those on the waiting list to new houses, to pull down the *Krushchevsky* (five-storey buildings put up in the 1950s and 1960s) and replace them with new facilities providing locals with basic services, as well as retail, administrative and commercial buildings.

The programme is running into problems. The city lacks the necessary funds to realise the plan on its own, and the involvement of private investors means that their interests, namely achieving the greatest returns as fast as possible, have governed the building process. Rather than constructing dwellings affordable to ordinary Muscovites, developers have put up homes for the richer classes, with conservatories in every flat, security guards and underground garages. The rapid growth in the gap between housing costs, which have doubled every eighteen months, and the income of the majority of the city's residents is the major cause of the drastic reduction in Muscovites' ability to afford a home in the city. As Russia's capital, Moscow attracts more newcomers from other cities and countries who are ready to spend amounts incon-

ceivable to locals on their home. Today a normal two-room flat of 50 square metres in a respectable building built at the beginning of the 1980s near the Kiev railway station costs 750,000–800,000 dollars.

For their part, the locals are outraged that a certain type of newcomer is buying up and settling in the communal flats or new apartments in the prestigious houses in the central districts; indigenous Muscovites are being driven to the outskirts of the city. One of the most recent initiatives by Moscow's local government to address the issue has been the suggestion of housing those waiting for homes just beyond Moscow city's boundaries, on the territory of Moscow province. The rulers and inhabitants of the province, which surrounds the city, see this as an encroachment on their land; at the same time, those on the waiting list are angered by what they see as an attempt to deprive them of the privileges of living in the capital, such as higher pensions and lower costs for communal services, and drive them from the city in which they were born and raised (the majority of those waiting are the residents of communal flats in Art Nouveau residential blocks in Moscow's historical centre).

CLOSED SETTLEMENTS AND THE NEW WAY OF LIFE

Against the background of these problems, which ordinary Muscovites face daily, the so-called 'elites', with their high income and status, really do seem to come from another planet. This category of resident rarely comes into contact with other segments of the population; they only travel across the city by car and live in high-security houses either in the city centre or outside the capital. The use of the term 'resident of Rublyovka' refers to Rublyovka Avenue northwest of Moscow, along which many of these people have settled, and has become common parlance for Muscovites. The 'glamorous' lifestyle propagated by glossy mag-

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azines and television programmes is reflected in the creation of separate residential spheres – the closed settlements. The Spasan building consortium has spent the last 15 years specialising in this type of construction; it has so far built 14 closed settlements of cottages (Ilyin, Gorky 10, Opalikh, Zhukovka, Petrovo Dalnee and Prince's Lake). The comfort to be experienced there is impressive: Prince's Lake offers a beauty parlour, saunas, an enormous sports complex, a hotel with a conference hall, the services of maids and gardeners, minibuses travelling to and from Moscow, its own school and two nursery schools. 'Three helicopter pads have already been built, and business men living outside the city can fly to work by helicopter, as they do in Los Angeles', runs one advertisement for this settlement.

The closed settlement has deep roots in Moscow life. Immediately after the 1917 revolution and the transfer of the government from St Petersburg to Moscow, a system of state dachas was organised in the picturesque region near the Silver Forest, which at that time was on the outskirts of Moscow but has since been swallowed up by the city. The network of closed settlements continued to spread with the founding of the enclaves at Barvikha and Zavidovo. High-ranking state officials and their families lived in them. Closed settlements were also created for those cultural figures in favour with the country's rulers, for example at Nikolina Gora. The distinguishing feature of these settlements was their clannishness. Only those occupying a particular post or belonging to certain circles were admitted. During the Soviet period, membership of the higher party circles granted one the opportunity to live in such a settlement.

The principles of these settlements were also implemented in an urban setting, for example the well-known *House on the Embankment* opposite the Kremlin, built in 1928–32 according to a design

by Boris Iofan. This house contained a full range of facilities for its high-ranking residents, offering a level of comfort utterly beyond the reach of ordinary Muscovites living in communal flats. The very same idea was at the heart of the famous Stalinist skyscrapers of the 1950s. The new closed settlements of 2008 have taken up the baton, but have changed their personnel and principle of selection. All residents need an exceptionally high, albeit roughly equal income. Although the goal of transforming Moscow's outlying districts into a civilised, European-style suburb is commendable, it is wrong to implement it in this frankly cynical manner. Nevertheless, we are not getting Europe, but rather Las Vegas – a city built for people lacking a thousand-year tradition, raised in an *ersatz* culture. The projects have often been based simply on the client's pictures of foreign villas or from museums from various periods.

THE STRUGGLE FOR ONE'S CITY = THE STRUGGLE FOR ONE'S WAY OF LIFE

Intense construction work within a city often detracts from the quality of life for those whose houses are next to it: they are subjected to twenty-four hour building work before, during and after the construction of the house; later, the new complex blocks the view from the window, obstructs access to the car park and impedes pedestrians walking along the street. The historical centre (Ostozhenka, Prechistenka and Arbat) has become the home to very rich people, who reshape it according to their tastes by closing off courtyards providing access, stifling the life of the city and driving out from 'their' territory the small shops, community organisations, schools and the remaining original residents.

The latter are deeply offended by the destruction of the fabric of the city's historical architecture and the infringements on their living space. For them, the new city is an alien, often aggressive place where there is no room for ordinary people and for their

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way of life. For this reason, Muscovites see the fight for the preservation of the remaining buildings from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries as the struggle to defend their lifestyle, which is organically bound up with the existence of their district or quarter. The residents of Krasnoselo Street, for example, created the 'Society of Native Muscovites', whose main aim was to struggle for the conservation of architectural monuments in Moscow and

the traditions of Moscow life. Admittedly, the current phase of building work in the new regions of Moscow is creating an infrastructure and urban area suitable for inhabitation through the construction of buildings with a social function, for example schools, nursery schools, sports centres and shopping centres. However, these regions do not possess a historical memory and have a long way to go before they become 'Moscow'.

MOSCOW-CITY

Moscow-City, also known as the Moscow International Business Centre, is the most gigantic and ambitious of projects initiated by Moscow's local government. It is situated in a former industrial district on one of the particularly low sections of the River Moskva's banks. 2004 saw the intensification of the efforts to construct the 60-85 storey, high-tech skyscrapers, which were planned as early as the 1990s; these should be finished by 2009. Despite the slightly misleading name, 'elite' flats, hotels, congress centres, health resorts, casinos,

shops, cinemas and a skating rink have been planned alongside the offices. The centre of the district is the *Federation Tower*, which stands on a multi-storey podium and consists of two towers – the *East Tower* and the *West Tower*. It was designed by the Russian-German architect Segei Choban, Berlin, and Peter Schweger, Hamburg. The erection, still in its beginning stages, of the *Russia Tower* (beyond the area depicted, not visible on the photo) by the British architect Norman Foster has aroused particular interest. At 612 metres, it will be the highest skyscraper in Europe and should be finished in 2013 at the earliest. (photograph by A. Komlev)



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THE 'MOSCOW STYLE' OF ARCHITECTURE AND
THE 'MOSCOW' WAY OF LIFE

The official face of Moscow's architecture today is represented by the pompous buildings of reinforced concrete, clad in glass and marble, with marble columns and many gold sculptures and embellishments. Professionals are hard pressed to call this an 'architectural' style; when foreigners professionally involved in architecture come to Moscow, they often compare it with Dubai or Shanghai with regards to the size, pomposity and tastelessness of town planning; however, the 'court' architects and critics define it as the 'Moscow style'. This style does not possess any roots in Russian architectural tradition or any prospect for development. The buildings in this style – the complexes on *Manege Square* and *Poklonnaya Hill*, and the new buildings of the *Moscow State University* on *Lomonosov Prospekt* – look like lifeless theatrical props, animated only during the day by the dramatised mass public festivals with music, beer and games which Moscow's mayor so loves to hold.

These carnivals and these buildings are invoked in order to reinforce for the domestic and foreign public the official image of a rich, hospitable and joyous Moscow. However, one must not forget that it is only an illusion; real Moscow life is completely different and much more interesting.

*Translated from the Russian
by Christopher Gilley*

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URL:

<http://agency.archi.ru/eng/> (in English) – Russian Architectural News Agency: latest news of Russian architecture, buildings, projects, ideas, events.

MOSCOW THROUGH THE EYES OF TWO NEO-CLASSICISTS

An interview with Dmitri and Andrei Barkhin

interview

Dmitri Barkhin (D.B.) has designed and built numerous offices and banks in Moscow; he is also an architectural historian and an expert on the work of the eighteenth-century Russian architect Vasili Bazhenov. Andrei Barkhin (A.B.) is also an architect and is writing a doctoral thesis at The Research Institute of the Theory of Architecture and Town Planning on the architecture of the 1930s in the USSR, Europe and the USA (Art Deco).

Dmitri and Andrei Barkhin are representatives of the third and fourth generations of a famous family of Moscow architects. Before the October Revolution, Grigory Barkhin, the founder of the dynasty, worked in the spirit of neo-classicism; after the revolution, he became a famous representative of the 1920s Soviet avant-garde, erecting the constructivist-style building that housed the editorial staff and publisher of the newspaper 'Izvestiia' on Pushkin Square. His son, Boris Barkhin, the father of Dmitri, won fame as the designer of Moscow's Museum of the Armed Forces of the USSR and the Tsiolkovsky State Museum of the History of Cosmonautics in Kaluga, built in the 1970s.

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How do you rate the developments in architecture in Moscow over the past few years?

D.B.: The city needs to change its policy regarding the conservation of architectural monuments; it is essential to preserve and restore the originals, and not tear them down. In particular, it is necessary to act now to maintain those fragments of the eclectic nineteenth-century city and the most interesting Soviet buildings, which will soon also need restoration. I would like to separate the historical centre from gargantuan 'La Défense' districts, taking an approach similar to the one successfully applied in Paris.

However, the most important task is a new programme for rebuilding the city's lost churches (that is, those demolished under the Soviet regime), albeit not necessarily in their original location. It was right and proper to rebuild the *Cathedral of Christ the Redeemer* (reduced to its foundations in 1932), although the sculptures on the façades are somewhat modern. Nevertheless, the sumptuous interior astonishes the onlooker with the richness and complexity of the stone carvings, and the beauty of the murals.

New, post-modern constructions on the Garden Ring – the *House of Music* near the Paveletsky railway station and the *Atrium* shopping and entertainment centre in front of the Kursk railway station – are not good examples of modern architecture. I agree with the idea of creating a new ring of skyscrapers, providing the city space with new landmarks. This idea has, however, lost some of its steam; in Moscow the construction of tall buildings is only taking place in the City district, Moscow's Manhattan.¹ It is a pity that few are interested in the elegant skyscrapers of the American Art Deco movement – the high-rise buildings in Moscow-City are nothing but glass prisms. A recently built skyscraper, the *Triumph-Palace*, possesses neither beautiful details nor an attractive silhouette. It is strange that the builders ignored the experience of the Soviet architects, the creators of its predecessors, the seven famous skyscrapers of post-war Moscow.

A.B.: The main architectural event in Russia at the end of the twentieth century was the reconstruction of the *Cathedral of Christ the Redeemer*, which had been destroyed by the Bolshevik regime. However, in general, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, what set Moscow apart from Europe was the way we ruthlessly destroyed our cultural heritage on a massive scale; those in power simply ignored the opinions of those defending it. At the same time, Soviet modernist buildings from the 1960s and 1970s are also being pulled down, for example the *Rossiya*, *Inturist* and *Minsk* hotels. Since Moscow has some of the highest real estate prices in the world, the fate of the old houses in the centre is in question. The competition with the high-rise districts of European capitals and the cities of the USA, as well as the desire to live up to the seven Stalinist skyscrapers, has motivated the construction of the City district and tenement blocks in the style of a simplified historicism, as with the *Triumph-Palace* on Leningrad Prospekt.

After the collapse of the USSR, architectural historicism, or the retro style (that is, the imitation of European or Russian architectural styles – renaissance, baroque or classicist), was revived in various forms. The great majority of buildings were constructed with only an allusion to historicism in that the commercial buildings built on the city's streets used industrial methods. This was the post-Soviet answer of the 1990s to the Western post-modernism of the 1980s. Before 1991, architects still wanted to work with Western post-modernism, and when the opportunity actually presented itself, many emulated the implied historicism of Ricardo Bofill.

¹ Moscow's City, also known as the Moscow International Business Centre, is a commercial district in central Moscow currently undergoing intense development.

interview

A new and important stage in the development of Moscow's architecture was the repeated attempts to equal the architecture of so-called 'Stalinist classicism' (the numerous domestic and administrative buildings of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s) and Soviet Art Deco (Moscow State University, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other well-known skyscrapers), for example the Shuvalovsky district recently built on Lomonosov Prospekt.

A number of patrons, tiring of the laconic style of Soviet *Corbusierism*, started to order richly decorated buildings, the presence of which also distinguishes Moscow from other Western capitals; these include works by the consistent neo-classicists Dmitri Barkhin and Mikhail Filippov. For a number of reasons, the classical style, recalling the whole spectrum from Greco-Roman antiquity, through not only the Italian renaissance, but also the French classicism of the seventeenth century and the Russian classicism of 1760–1810, to the neo-classical direction in Art Nouveau and the brutal imperial 'Stalinist classicism', has become a part of the architectural market in Russia and Moscow. Initially, at the turn of the century, private patrons, who commissioned small buildings on the outskirts of the city, revived classicism. This was the private initiative of architects and patrons who felt nostalgia for the old city, which had been partially destroyed by the Soviet regime. Over the last few years, neo-classical buildings have started springing up on prestigious sites in the centre, for example the Marriot Hotel on Tver' Street. They are designed by post-modern architects striving after echoes and references; authentic detail is not important to them.

The most stupid and comical pseudo-historicism, which is full of post-modernist compromises, is to be found in the very centre of Moscow, for example the *Okhotnyi Riad* shopping centre on *Manege* Square or the *Tsar's Gardens* block of flats on the island in the Moskva River, and, on the outskirts near the Borisov ponds, the Church dedicated to the thousandth anniversary of the baptism of Rus. However, the reconstructions of the *Resurrection Gate*, the *Iveron Chapel* and the *Church of Our Lady of Kazan* on Red Square represent a more accurate version of historicism. In each specific case, everything depends on the architects' ability and attention to detail and on the wishes of the patron.

The buildings beyond the outskirts of Moscow were built in the style of simplistic historicism from the very beginning. Designs were circulated based on a client's photographs of foreign mansions and villas. Along the roads around Moscow, ugly and opulently decorated mansions sprang up that were often reminiscent of Hollywood film sets.

In general, what developments took place in Moscow in the second half of the twentieth century? And how are these reflected in your own work?

D.B.: After the change in regime in the mid-1950s – marked by the death of Stalin and the onset of the Thaw – there was an emphatic change in the official architectural style, from pompous imperial classicism to the Soviet version of modernism. For Moscow, this meant a second wave of the demolition of architectural monuments in the centre and the construction of New Arbat Street and the *Kremlin Palace of Congresses*. The idea of low-storey buildings from pre-fabricated concrete slabs was executed, without taking into account the fact that the low building density would stretch out the city's surface area and raise communication costs. At last, the communal flats were broken up, and also people who had been living in cellars and barracks from the revolutionary period to Krushchev's post-war reforms could find new homes.

Not all Soviet modernist buildings of the 1960s and 1970s were unsatisfactory; one exception was, for exam-

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ple, the *Pioneers' Palace* in the Sparrow Hills. A new stage in the development of the city and modernist architecture was the preparation for the 1980 Olympics. At this time, I was already involved in the construction of real buildings – the *International Trade Centre* in the Presnensky district, the *President Hotel* on Great Iakimanka Street and the *International Bank Complex* on Sakharov Prospekt. After the building and financial crisis during Perestroika, new, private money flowed into the construction industry, as well as private commissions, often for mansions in the classical style. The years of building in a semi-historicist manner arrived. It was a compromised style, restricted by a poor knowledge of the classical idiom.

The new customers were fixated on the retro style. This required architects to study in detail a far wider range of architectural monuments from past epochs and model their work on them. The desire to emulate the neo-classical work of my grandfather and father compelled me to immerse myself in a study of the classics. At that time, even restorers were not able to help with advice. The search for a solution forced one to turn to books and albums on classical architecture. An important moment in my professional development was the task of constructing additional floors for the block of flats built by my father for the Ministry of Defence on *Smolensk Embankment No. 5*. It was necessary to complete the design with a Venetian-style tower. My love for the classical antiquity and the renaissance was further displayed in this work.

I call constructions in the contemporary high-tech style, which one must sometimes build in spite of everything, barns, even when they are done perfectly professionally. The combination of the solid with the transparent, of glass with the solid, of the round with the quadratic or the crooked with the straight – this is still not architecture! I prefer the concept of uniting the classical and contemporary styles. The classical is more expensive in terms of manufacturing, but it is also more beautiful. A new piece of historic architecture, constructed to the highest quality and with taste, will reap rewards in the future. The professionalism of the architect gives the investor and the town a competitive advantage in the struggle for customers.

Developers are looking for new ideas, but do not find them in the miserly emotions of the high-tech; rather, it is antiquity that fires the imagination. Human beings must live in a space decorated like a museum, and architects have to learn from their great predecessors. We have to answer the work of the old masters fittingly with new buildings in the classical spirit. Our clients agree with me; they want to live in a historical city, invest in it and earn dividends on it. The duty of the architect is to organise space correctly and beautifully, to form façades and interiors with classical décor.

A.B.: The centre of Moscow, which in the eighteenth and nine-

Administrative building Vereiskaya-Plaza-I in the Ochakovo district: portico on the façade of the renovated building complex; private commission. Architects – D.B. Barkhin, N.A. Bassangova, A.D. Barkhin, 2005.

Photograph by D.B. Barkhin



interview

teenth centuries was not the empire's capital, was always characterised by a variety of styles. In the nineteenth century, huge tenement houses were built on impoverished noble estates from the eighteenth century in the streets of a city with a medieval arrangement. The destruction of old buildings, the laying of new streets and the construction of new, pompous buildings in the 1930s–1950s did not create a layout that can be read easily. It is Moscow's characteristic chaos of styles that distinguishes it from St. Petersburg or Paris. No action was taken in the 1990s to conserve the centre in order to develop tourism. The heterogeneity of the historic centre shaped the tastes of architects and their clients, inspiring them to undertake projects in various styles. Those in power in Moscow and the city's architects particularly liked the contrast of the classical with contemporary architecture, an example of which can be seen in the construction of the glass pyramid in the Louvre. With an eye to foreign trends, some architects even began to use the high-tech style (that is, an architecture based on the use of cutting-edge industrial technology, often in the form of glass-clad buildings), despite the fact that the climate in Moscow, and in Russia in general, makes the upkeep of such constructions expensive.

And how do you envisage the Moscow of the future?

D.B.: In order to make the city attractive to tourists, it is necessary to rebuild the lost treasures, above all the churches. In the past, Moscow boasted thousands of churches; given the eightfold increase in the size of the city over the last hundred years, it would be possible to clone the architectural monuments in order to recreate the original concentration and density of authentic architectural forms in the city space. One could begin with those churches that were measured and photographed before their destruction in the 1930s–1950s by architects and historians who were trying to preserve their forms for posterity.

The new constructions should be undertaken in the spirit of the Paris of Baron Haussmann or the Vienna of Carl Semper. However, it is clear that the economics of this will not be simple. Genuine classics are expensive when built over a whole city. We need a blend of residential, commercial and administrative buildings, covering the whole range from the simplified classicism of Ricardo Bofill to the authentic neo-classicism of Ivan Zholtovsky.² It is no secret that the majority of clients want to live in the centre of the city, in prestigious and comfortable houses with high ceilings and richly decorated façades. High-tech is a style for office buildings. For this reason, the mansions on Moscow's outskirts, as well as the new residential blocks, are more often than not built in one of the retro styles.

And what are the prospects for neo-classicism in Moscow?

D.B.: The rulers of Moscow have finally come to value the historical buildings that are intact. Recently, the pseudo-gothic palace in *Tsaritsino* was beautifully restored. I hold the restoration of this complex in high regard because I prefer to see this monument in use rather than destroyed through rain, snow or climbers using it for practice. It is just a pity that the new outbuildings in the area of the palace's park copy the style of the pavilions of *Tsaritsino*. This misleads the uninformed visitor with regards to the extent and layout of the original historical complex.

² He imitated, for example, a renaissance palace by Palladio in his design for the *Intourist* building in 1932.

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In general, it is our task to create a Moscow that attracts tourists who want to look at beauty, even if it is pseudo-historical. Only a few architects know how to work in the historical style in Moscow, and I am one of them. I have spent more than 40 years learning how to create historical beauty in Moscow, and in doing so, how to generate millions of additional dollars for Russia and the capital.

Classical architecture is eternal, universal, beautiful and more expressive than others. Its various forms have existed as long as contemporary European civilisation – two and a half thousand years. It is interesting that from the time of the Italian renaissance to our day, clients have preferred antique or modernised classicism for administrative or commercial buildings (there is a private bank in the famous *Palazzo Strozzi* in Florence). Companies and enterprises, dealing with large amounts of money, have historically preferred to invest in high-quality real estate that is independent of the vicissitudes of fashion. In 1955, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union under Krushchev announced the struggle against ‘architectural superfluities’ (in particular, ornamentation and details); they dissolved the Academy of Architecture and turned to industrial methods in order to make building cheaper and faster, flooding the city with street upon street of buildings made out of pre-fabricated concrete slabs. After forty years in which architecture has barely existed in Russia, it is necessary to revive it. Only classical forms can guarantee high returns for investors. Classical buildings in the city centre are attractive for investors, not so much because of the location as on account of the style. It is necessary to extend the historical centre of the city; in the place of the miserable concrete dwellings, we need new classical blocks of flats with rich embellishment.

How do you rate the work of foreign architects in Moscow?

D.B.: Their presence can barely be felt in contemporary architecture. This is because those who do come here seem to be those who have not found success in their own country and are now looking for it here. The one exception is, perhaps, Norman Foster; however, his invitation to work in Moscow had more to do with politics and international cooperation than with architecture. For this reason, his activity cannot and will not exhibit either influence or import for our situation. The fact that he was asked to design and build a tower in Moscow-City is in itself not bad because we had already long forgotten how to design and build such ambitious high-rise buildings; we lack the designers, experience and necessary industry. All the other architects have offered us is their version of a long out-of-date post-modernism, which on Russian soil and in Russian hands turns into an old-fashioned colonial or provincial architecture. This is really nothing to be proud of, and it would be strange to learn from it. Post-modernism came to an end a long time ago; only classical architecture remains eternal and unchanging.

Translated from the Russian by Chris Gilley

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- Baart Goldhoorn, Philipp Meuser. *New Revolution in Russian Architecture*, Singapore: Page One Publishing Private, 30th Nov. 2006

'THE BATTLE FOR MOSCOW.'

ON THE CONSERVATION OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE AND THE CITYSCAPE

Alexei Klimenko

inter-
vention

Even visitors and newcomers to Moscow cannot fail to observe that the city is undergoing a period of 'hyperdynamic development' owing to the influx of fast money and the absurd increase in real estate prices. In a country with an unstable economy, real estate represents the only safe method of investment offering incredible returns. For this reason, the 'hyperdynamic development' has only affected the building sector; the whole city is experiencing a building boom, and this reconstruction of the civic space is gaining pace. Everything possible is being built, everywhere and in great number – just not what is needed and not in the right place. And neither the people of Moscow nor the experts will put up with this. The old 'ugly' and the new 'beautiful' city is bringing passions to a boil. A real war is in progress.

The mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, and his team believe that their main task is to attract as much foreign investment to the city as possible. Everything must therefore be made more beautiful and the memorable architecture has to be 'improved' in order to sell oneself to the highest bidder: Moscow must do as the foreigners do. Their hunt for image, polish and splendour has struck at the city's historical heart in that they have torn down whole building complexes and city quarters. The development of unused land, particularly on the city outskirts, requires enormous sums to create the necessary infrastructure; in contrast, in the city centre, this is simple: one simply pulls down a historical, two-storey house, and builds 40 or 50 floors in its place. Just think of the profit that can be made from one city square!

The decisions by those in power in Moscow on the reconstruction of the cityscape are increasingly destroying the original face of the city. All the laws relating to listed buildings and historical districts, or to the conservation of the city's composition, have in practice been set aside because the city's

mayor has absolute power. Instead of preserving and restoring historical monuments and the culturally and historically significant quarters, they prefer to tear everything down and build anew as the garages, shops and offices, which did not exist before, earn profits for the investors. As a result, only a few miserable fragments of the historical Moscow have survived, and that is only because the necessary investors have not yet been found for the land on which they are located.

We are outraged at the investors' and political leaders' greed and shamelessness, which knows no bounds once they have set their sights on the next listed building or plot of land slated for another of their ridiculous projects. Here, historical monuments are set alight, as in the case of the *Manege* near the Kremlin, so that they can later be 'restored' in a way that creates additional space for a three-floor underground car park and showroom; there, eighteenth- or nineteenth-century buildings, often housing non-commercial facilities such as libraries or polyclinics from the Soviet period, find themselves up for auction because the organisations running them have been driven into bankruptcy; elsewhere, a falsified survey is arranged so that a supposedly endangered building can be pulled down and then 'renovated' with unsanctioned changes or extensions (for example, glass domes over courtyards, as in the case of the *Hotel Moscow*).

In practice, Luzhkov's projects to rebuild destroyed historical monuments turn into either farces or dramas. The former describes the reconstruction of the *Cathedral of Christ the Redeemer*, with its plastic reliefs, pimped out interiors and new foundations with four floors for underground car parks and reception areas. The latter was the case for the *Tsarsitsyno palace complex* on Moscow's present-day outskirts. This construction was originally built for Catherine the Great, but was never completed and fell into disrepair. In 2005, someone came up with

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the crackbrained idea of completing the bequest of the Russian master builders Vasili Bazhenov and Matvei Kazakov. The romantic brick ruins decorated with sandstone, which had been admired for the last two hundred years, were reconstructed with reinforced concrete and glass. At the same time, they were 'beautified' and 'completed', for example with a 30-metre-high fountain of sound and light, even though Catherine could not stand fountains. In this way, a unique trinket was turned into a kind of Muscovite Coliseum, a typical Soviet park of culture and leisure (that recalls the gilded 'Exhibition of the Achievement of the National Economy'); the park, too, was laid to waste. It is as if one would ruthlessly flatten the Acropolis and rebuild it 'more beautiful than before' – from reinforced concrete! One should not be surprised that I cannot walk through and look at this city, to which I have dedicated my whole life, without shudders and the desire to use nitro-glycerine.

Anyone can see that the conservation of historical monuments has a different meaning in our country, where undisputed masterpieces from different centuries are simply bulldozed down just because we can always rebuild them again. This irresponsible behaviour exhibited by Luzhkov and his people has angered architectural historians, specialists in cultural studies, experts on Moscow and, in particular, ordinary citizens. Since the official institutions for the preservation of historical monuments – including our own expert council at the municipal architects' office – have been deprived of any power to control or influence developments, the protest movement 'from below' for the preservation of the urban environment and the established residential areas is especially important. The residents of Moscow are not just fighting for the inviolability of the houses in which they live and the famous courtyards between them, but also against the conversion of essential facilities such as grocers' into, for example, jewellers' or car salesrooms.

The movement began seven years ago with individual demonstrations against property developers who wanted to force people out of their residential blocks in the city centre; it grew and organised itself into various bodies of activists that provided those in similar situations with legal and organisational advice. MAPS (the Moscow Architecture Preservation Society), which was founded by young British journalists connected to the international movement 'SAVE', works with astonishing effectiveness. They organise protests, seminars, lectures and city excursions. The project 'the Moscow that does not exist' (*Moskva, kotoroi net*) and 'Moskultprog' ('walks to historical and memorable places in Moscow') work in a similar way. The activists behind these projects are specialists in cultural studies, journalists, restorers, historians and writers who collect information and inform the inhabitants of Moscow about their historical and architectural heritage.

In a word: we will not give up Moscow without a fight!

*Translated from the Russian
by Christopher Gilley*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Alexei Klimenko helps run the expert council at the municipal architects' office in Moscow; he is an architect specialising in restoration as well as a cultural and architectural historian. He is active in the preservation of Moscow's architectural heritage and the culturally significant features of its urban environment.

URLs:

- MAPS = Moscow Architecture Preservation Society: http://www.maps-moscow.com/index.php?chapter_id=139 (see links there)
- 'Moscow that does not exist' (only in Russian): <http://moskva.kotoroy.net/>

KHODYNKA – A VISTA FOR GIANTS

Natalya Alexeyeva

portrait

The history of the Khodynka field to the north of Moscow is a complicated mixture of the tragic and the heroic, the martial and the pacific. It was the scene of a terrible accident in 1896 whereby over a thousand people celebrating Nicholas II's coronation were crushed to death, and later the site of a Soviet military aerodrome. After Perestroika, the derelict aerodrome was used for sporting competitions and motor races. Today, there are different, considerably more civic and creative reasons to write about this place.

The territory of Khodynka field is a clear example of current urban development in a form which is atypical for Moscow. Khodynka has become almost the only major region of the capital which was built 'from nothing' according to its own general plan. The open field offered an area on which a new environment could be created with its own infrastructure, schools, polyclinics, shops, restaurants and parks. It is already clear that this plan, drawn up by the architectural studio 'Mosproyekt-4', has been faithfully implemented and is turning out not at all badly. Even a layman can see that there is an idea here and an interesting approach to space; this is not the conventional arrangement of horizontally and vertically intersecting streets or the standard combination of prefabricated high-rise buildings.

The enormous district was conceived as a single, beautiful composition – the extended curve of the largest house 'embraces' a series of bracket-shaped buildings whose right-angles point in different directions. High, rounded towers are dotted along one side and a house in the shape of a sail continues the line of the great curve. The area is framed on two sides by the preserved landing runway; a third is bordered by a major road forming a steep arc. An extremely long multi-storey building runs along this arc.

If you approach the area from the city, the scale

is at first intimidating. This gigantism was one of the main criticisms levelled against it, even during its construction. Indeed, the arches over the entrances are five storeys high. Nevertheless, once you have entered the quarter through an arch, your impression changes. Inside, the buildings are lower and placed at right angles to the main house. From here, they gradually decline in the direction of the empty airfield, ending up with no more than five or six storeys. These are those 'brackets' that can be clearly seen on the general plan. Between the buildings there are cosily enclosed courtyards which divide the enormous space into individual cells and bring the scale back down to a human level. 'It is good that these houses were built a few years ago', say the project's architects. 'With today's housing prices, no client would be willing to sacrifice living space to create courtyards.'

The ensemble is completed by a series of four multi-coloured towers and the sail-shaped building, designed by the architect Boris Uborevich-Borovsky of 'Mosproyekt-4'. The latter building is curved like the back of a whale. Despite its external proportions (23 storeys), its scale is not smothering, but rather appears unified and simple. At a distance, the round drum of the Khodynka Arena is visible; its expressive form and clear colours blend ideally with the new Khodynka complex. Together, these buildings genuinely form a sculptural composition – except that the sculptures are scaled for giants.

Moreover, Khodynka is perhaps the only place in Moscow where the plan and principle of urban development can be apprehended not merely from the design, but also by looking at the three-dimensional structures themselves. Thanks to the retention of parts of the airfield, the common gigantic scale of the buildings and the enormous distance between them, the observer can take in the overall composition, enabling them both to grasp the

portrait

principle underlying the arrangement of the buildings and to appreciate the unusual perspectives offered from different angles by the curve of the sail-shaped building. The consistency and scale with which this unique idea was implemented represents a clear break with the practice of haphazard, closely packed construction and Russia's lack of a tradition of town planning.

It would also seem that this region is becoming increasingly attractive for Muscovites as a place to live. Admittedly, the streets in Khodynka are broad, the houses are generally multi-storey and have numerous entrances; none the less, this is one of the most comfortable new districts in Moscow. The traffic is still not too heavy and there are numerous car parks; the playgrounds are well equipped, and the courtyards have their own security. This district was from the beginning built for the upper-middle class, and there are even small one-room flats. Only five years ago, the extent of the development and the monstrous scale of the buildings being erected were intimidating. It

seemed that the winds rushing between the buildings and the lack of greenery would make life here impossible. However, the construction has now been completed and it would seem that the district is gradually coming alive. Schools and nursery schools are appearing, located directly in the courtyards. At the time being, there are still not enough shops or cafes. However, the lower storeys of the buildings are intended to house communal facilities, so this problem should soon be overcome. New greenery has been planted, and once this has grown, the district will become even more appealing.

Viewed from the inside, the district ends at the field, which is now in fact turning into more of a park with walkways and flowerbeds. This is an ideal place to ride a bicycle or do inline skating, activities for which contemporary Moscow is not suited. In commemoration of its proud history, the military aerodrome has been converted into a vast park with military and training aircraft and helicopters. Moscow's city council plans to build a

'Sail-shaped' or 'ear-shaped' building in the Khodynka development. Originally, an ordinary rectangular panel was planned, but this kept a huge area, including one of the schools, permanently overshadowed. The reductions to the height which resulted in the unusual shape were intended to provide greater exposure to the sun. Photograph by N. Alexeyeva



portrait

museum of aeronautic technology here. The museum will represent a worthy addition to this grandly scaled development.

*Translated from the Russian
by Christopher Gilley.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Natalya Alexeyeva is an art historian and architectural editor of the journal 'Interior and Design', which is devoted to contemporary architecture. Together with Aleksandr Zmeul, she set up the PR agency P-Arch, which organises and implements different projects connected to architecture and design, for example excursions, exhibitions and

round table discussions.

READING SUGGESTION:

ArchXchange. Berlin and Moscow: Cultural Identity through Architecture, Lara Eichwede, Bernd Ax, Martin Tamke, Sonja Zorembik (editors), Berlin: Jovis 2006 (Englisch/German).

URL:

Maps and photographs of the quarter (look for *Khodynskiy bul'var*): <http://maps.google.de/maps?near=Russia%2C+Moscow%2C+khodynskiy+bul%27var&q=&f=p&btnG=Maps-Suche&rl=1>

BREAKING NEWS: 'MOLES' IN DOWNTOWN MOSCOW

(report by the German news agency dpa in the newspaper 'Weser Kurier', Bremen, July 24, 2008)
A Russian construction firm has endangered several architectural monuments from the 17th and 18th centuries by making illegal excavations in the vicinity of Red Square. A cloister building has reportedly already suffered a dangerous structural misalignment from the work. According to official statements, the construction firm was merely under contract to renovate a pedestrian tunnel. Instead it commenced construction of a subterranean three-storey shopping centre covering approximately 7000 sqm. Critics blame the city government, claiming that with the help of bribe money, any project – no matter how absurd it may be – can always find supporters.

PREVIEW:

The next *kultura* will appear in September. Concentrating on the provinces, it will look at Russia's libraries as old/new information centres. The guest editor will be Valeriya Stelmakh, Moscow