DOI 10.15826/qr.2016.3.186
УДК 725.1(470.5)(09)+72.038.11

THE HISTORY OF CONSTRUCTIVISM IN THE URALS: 21ST-CENTURY STUDIES*

Sergey Postnikov
Leonid Smirnov
Ural State University of Architecture and the Arts,
Yekaterinburg, Russia

The article features a comprehensive review of recent research on the history of Constructivism in the Urals. Various experimental urban solutions in Ural cities and towns, innovative models of quarter planning, and the typological diversity of public, residential, and industrial buildings built in Constructivist style makes Ural region distinct from other parts of the country. The introduction of contemporary building materials and designs and novel research into the usage of space can be seen in diverse buildings in Perm, Chelyabinsk, Magnitogorsk, Kurgan, Nizhny Tagil, Sverdlovsk, Zlatoust, Nadezhdinsk, and others. The social and artistic direction of Constructivism as an ultra-modern creative movement greatly influenced the new architectural look of cities in the Urals. It also transformed the language of architecture and the visual imagery of buildings: it allowed for the creation of new, unprecedented architectural types and changed people's ideas about convenience, style, and quality of life. From the mid-1930s until the early 1990s, many towns in the Urals were closed off to foreign researchers: the publication of books and articles about Constructivism was also prohibited. This is why the first serious publications about the Constructivist heritage of the Urals appeared only at the beginning of the 21st century. Thus began a rise in scholarship on this subject.

Keywords: history of architecture; Constructivism; Urals monuments of history and culture.

Статья посвящена научному обзору и анализу трудов современных исследователей по истории архитектуры конструктивизма на Урале. Наличие в крупных и малых городах Урала различных экспериментальных градостроительных решений и приемов квартальной застройки, типологического разнообразия общественных, жилых, производственных зданий и сооружений, реализованных в стилистических формах кон-

* *Citation*: Postnikov, S., Smirnov, L. (2016). The History of Constructivism in the Urals: 21st-Century Studies. In *Quaestio Rossica*. Vol. 4. № 3, p. 257–267. DOI 10.15826/qr.2016.3.186.
Цитирование: *Postnikov S., Smirnov L.* The History of Constructivism in the Urals: 21st-Century Studies // Quaestio Rossica. Vol. 4. 2016. № 3. P. 257–267. DOI 10.15826/qr.2016.3.186.

структивизма, существенно выделяет Уральский регион от других районов страны. По решению ЦИК СССР в 1923 г. была создана Уральская область с целью увеличения промышленно-хозяйственного потенциала страны, и попутно с целью решения основных проблем реконструкции «культуры и быта». Внедрение современных строительных материалов и конструкций, новаторские поиски в архитектуре объемно-пространственных решений, различных по типологии объектов в рациональной стилистике широко использовалось в застройке таких городов как Пермь, Челябинск, Магнитогорск, Курган, Нижний Тагил, Свердловск, Златоуст, Надеждинск и др. Социальная и художественная направленность современного по тем годам творческого течения повлияла на формирование новой структуры уральских городов, преобразовала архитектурный язык и облик построек, позволила создать новые, ранее не встречающиеся в архитектурной практике типы зданий, изменила представление людей об удобстве, стиле и качестве жизни. С середины 1930-х до начала 1990-х гг. многие уральские города решением правительства страны были закрыты для зарубежных исследователей советской авангардной архитектуры, а на публикации книг и статей об объектах конструктивизма в стране было наложено табу. Поэтому одни из первых серьезных публикаций конструктивистских объектов, сооруженных в уральских городах, появились только на рубеже XX–XXI вв. С начала нового века стала складываться научная школа истории уральской авангардной архитектуры, известными представителями которой являются А. А. Барабанов, Е. В. Конышева, Л. Н. Смирнов, А. А. Стариков, Л. И. Токменинова, Л. П. Холодова и другие ученые.

Ключевые слова: история архитектуры; конструктивизм; Урал; памятники истории и культуры.

The number of studies on Constructivism in the Urals increased considerably at the beginning of the 21st century. The two-volume *Svod pamyatnikov istorii i kul'tury Sverdlovskoy oblasti* (Collection of the Historical and Cultural Monuments of Sverdlovsk Region) deserves special mention. Volume 1 contains a review of the architectural heritage of Ekaterinburg, the biggest city in the Urals. This review includes a history of city planning and the experimental buildings in Sverdlovsk (the Soviet name for Ekaterinburg), the capital of the Ural region between 1923 and 1934. The first volume offers articles on more than 50 Constructivist sites that have been preserved until the present day and were designed by well-known Russian architects. Among them are large residential complexes, like the Gorsovet House (architect S. Dombrovsky, 1928–1929), the Uraloblsovet House (architects M. Ya. Ginzburg and A. L. Pasternak, 1930–1933), the so-called *Gorodok chekistov*, the residential quarters of the NKVD, (architects I. P. Antonov and V. D. Sokolov, 1929-1936), the Bolshoy Ural Hotel (architects S. E. Zakharov and V. I. Smirnov, 1928), the House for Ural Industry and Trade (architect D. F. Fridman, 1931–1937), the House

of Communications (architect K. I. Solomonov, 1932), the main building of the Ural Polytechnical Institute (architect S. E. Chernyshov, 1929–1940), and the Dinamo sports complex architect (V. D. Sokolov, 1932).

The second volume describes Constructivist sites located in various towns of the region, such as Nizhniy Tagil, Serov, Kamensk-Ural'skiy, and Nevyansk. Among some of the more famous buildings in the Urals, the book considers the Krasniy kamen' compound in Nizhniy Tagil (architect M. Ya. Ginzburg, 1924), the Metallurgists' Palace of Culture in Serov (architects I. P. Antonov and V. D. Sokolov, 1928), and the aluminium workers' compound in Kamensk-Ural'skiy (built by the Leningrad project bureau *Montazhproektaluminiy*, 1934). The text in both volumes is accompanied by schematics and historical photographs [Свод памятников истории и культуры].

The history of architecture does not consist merely of building schematics. Design and construction are creative processes, and the Urals had the good fortune that its construction sites saw a panoply of outstanding architects whose names have been forever inscribed onto the history of both Ural and Russian architecture. An encyclopaedic directory entitled *Architects of Ekaterinburg and the Sverdlovsk Region*, released in 2003 by the Sverdlovsk branch of the Union of Architects of Russia [Бандровская; Вилесова], aroused the interest of researchers working on the architecture of Ekaterinburg and the central Urals. The directory featured personal data on around 500 architects, including members of the Ural branch of the Society for Modern Architecture (founded in 1928). This list includes many famous Constructivists from Sverdlovsk, like M. V. Reysher, I. I. Robachevskiy, S. E. Zakharov, A. M. Tumbasov, E. S. Balakshina, and V. P. Paramonov. This edition undoubtedly has great social, cultural, and practical significance, especially since the biographies of these architects include lists of the sites that they designed.

The phenomenon of Soviet avant-garde architecture in the 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s has not yet been studied thoroughly, which makes I. A. Kazus' monograph, *Sovetskaya arkhitektura 1920-kh godov: organizatsiya proektirovaniya* (Soviet Architecture of the 1920s: The Organisation of Planning), a valuable source for historians of architecture. This is a reference encyclopaedia that fills a significant gap in our knowledge about the organisation of architectural and city-building projects, as well as the functioning and structure of major architectural, artistic, and construction bureaus in Moscow, Leningrad, and provincial centres, such as Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk, Nizhny Tagil, and Magnitogorsk.

The book contains a pioneering exploration of the formative years of specialised construction organisations in the Ural region, such as Uralgipromez, Uralpromstroy, Sverdlovskstroy, and Uralgiprogor. The research examines the creative personalities behind these organisations. Uralgipromez, for example, kick started the careers of such prominent Sverdlovsk architects as I. P. Antonov, V. D. Sokolov, and A. M. Tumbasov. In the mid-1920s, these architects designed the first avant-garde style

factories of the Magnitogorsk metallurgy plant, as well as manufacturing sites in Lys'va, Alapaevsk, and other locations. Later, the same bureau designed and built residential and public buildings. The monograph reveals the previously unknown fact that the Uralgiprogor institute was involved in designing projects in more than 30 towns in the Urals. The study finds that the institute employed famous architects like T. A. Golubev, V. I. Smirnov, P. I. Lantratov, and V. V. Emelyanov, who designed various sites during these years. Kazus provides a detailed list of their works. The same institute, under the direction of architect S. V. Dombrovsky, designed the general plan for the greater Sverdlovsk region. Some particularly significant Ural buildings in the architectural avant-garde style are displayed for the first time in the form of photos, plans, and drawings [Казусь].

The reference book *Arkhitektory i arkhitekturnye pamyatniki Permskogo Prikam'ya* (Architects and Architectural Monuments of the Perm-Kama Region), edited by N. V. Kazarinova and T. D. Kantorovich, attempts to compile short dossiers on the region's most significant historical and cultural monuments from the 19th and 20th centuries and their many talented architects. These monuments were created in typologically diverse styles, including the architectural avant-garde. In the 1920s and early 1930s, a large number of experimental residential, public, and industrial buildings were erected in Perm, Berezniki, Solikamsk, Krasnokamsk, and Lysva in a Constructivist style. One of the first buildings that conformed to the ascetic style of the new architecture was the so-called *Dom chekista* (the club for NKVD officers), which, according to specialists, was a threshold between 'Gubernia Perm' and 'Socialist Perm'. The selection and analysis of many Constructivist sites reflect the development of the avant-garde in Kama architecture, from the proto-Constructivism of the early 1920s to the Postconstructivism of the mid-1930s. The main virtue of this book that serves to distinguish it from similar offerings lies in its wide scope: it includes some avant-garde monuments and sites previously unknown to professionals, art critics, and the wider audience in the Perm region [Казаринова; Канторович].

Constructivism in architecture is a worldwide phenomenon. Thus, it is only natural that, at the beginning of the 21st century, Russian and German scholars established close links to study this style. In November 2007, a major academic seminar on the subject was held in Ekaterinburg. It covered a wide range of questions, including the study, preservation, use, and maintenance of the heritage of modernism in Germany and Russia in accordance with the example of the Urals. The seminar included a report on the experience of a joint conservation endeavour in Weimar, a cultural heritage site, between students from both Bauhaus University and the Ural State Academy of Architecture and the Arts. Discussions revolved around the theoretical problems of the modernist architectural heritage in Europe and the Urals and the practicalities of reconstructing the Commercial Chamber and the Uralmash factory-kitchen. The seminar served as a stimulus for in-depth studies of Ural architecture by specialists from

Russia and Germany, as well as for the preservation and restoration of avant-garde architectural monuments with the participation of German architects. The seminar materials were published in two volumes in 2008 and 2010 [Баухауз на Урале, 2008, 2010].

Soviet avant-garde architecture has attracted substantial interest from many foreign researchers. A good example is the fundamental work *Lost Avant-garde* by Richard Pair, first published in 2007 in the United States: a translation was published in Russia by the Tatlin Publishing House in the same year. Among the Constructivist sites found in the ten biggest Russian cities, examples from the Ekaterinburg avant-garde were not neglected. In this book, a major foreign researcher looks at some important Constructivist sites in the Ural capital, such as *Gorodok chekistov*, the Uraloblsovet complex, the House of Justice, a residential house in 'Justice town', and the famous *Belaya bashnya* (White Tower), for the first time. The book provides brief descriptions of the architectural sites, along with photographs [Пэр].

Among the more general works on the cultural history of the region, one should not ignore the book *Ural. Marshruty kul'tury* (The Urals. Cultural Itineraries) (2012), which presents a summary of the 'cultural landscape' of the Urals. One of the chapters in the book is dedicated to regional architecture. This study comprehensively represents the rich palette of Ural culture: it includes a novel section on Constructivism as represented by the Sverdlovsk architectural avant-garde. The work emphasises that a sizable part of the Constructivist heritage of the central Urals is concentrated in Sverdlovsk/Ekaterinburg, where many talented architects, educated in Leningrad, Tomsk, Kharkiv, and Kiev, designed sites in the 1920s and 30s. Constructivist buildings in Ekaterinburg represent the entire typology of the style; there are administrative and residential buildings, clubs, nurseries and residential complexes, factory-kitchens, bath and laundry factories, schools, sports facilities and other structures. Through these sites, the researchers trace the entire evolution of Constructivism in the Urals and the country as a whole. All of the buildings are characterised by simple architectural solutions and laconic geometrical forms. The most famous sites of Sverdlovsk Constructivism, such as *Dom svyazi* (the House of Communications), *Dom kontor* (the House of Offices), *Dom justitsii* (the House of Justice), and *Belaya bashnya*, are properly illustrated with photographs and short descriptions [Урал. Маршруты культуры].

A. I. Vilesov's book, *O vozniknovenii, stanovlenii i razvitii obshchestvennoy tvorcheskoy organizatsii sverdlovskih arhitektorov* (On the Rise, Establishment, and Development of the Public-Artistic Organisation of Sverdlovsk Architects), was published for the 75th anniversary of the Sverdlovsk branch of the Russian Union of Architects. The author bases the study on unique documentary evidence and his own private memoirs: at the end of the 1920s, he was one of the active members of the Ural branch of the Society of Modern Architects and repeatedly met the head of the Union, M. Ya. Ginzburg, in Moscow. The work provides valuable

historical data on early Constructivist sites from the 1920s and early 1930s. The research also provides invaluable information in the form of the names of the major construction companies and their teams involved in creating avant-garde sites in Sverdlovsk and the greater region. For the first time in the history of Ekaterinburg's architecture, the author briefly describes the artistic development of the Ural Union of Architects, whose meetings at the turn of the 1920s included discussions of the theoretical and practical issues of architectural design, as well as general problems of the development of modern architecture in the Ural region [Вилесов].

The monograph *Pamyatniki arhitektury Kamensk-Ural'skogo* (Architectural Monuments of Kamensk-Ural'skiy) (2008) explores the unique architectural ensembles of this town, as well as the story of the architects who created its distinctive look. The section entitled "Kamensk architecture between the 1930s and the 1950s" describes in depth the two major styles, late Constructivism and Postconstructivism, that are most typical of the town. The principles of avant-garde architecture were realised widely in Kamensk-Ural'skii in the first half of the 1930s, when planning was underway for a new settlement type: the 'social town', built according to the principles of 'new urban aesthetics'. These principles included the complex process of planning a 'plant town', where residential and public quarters were located around a major plant, and the organic introduction of housing into the environment. The authors dedicate much energy to examining the urban specificities of residential and industrial areas and their functional connections: they demonstrate the new experimental plans for communal housing, housing for specialists, and separate public and manufacturing buildings, all built in an avant-garde style. The descriptive section is amply supplied with the plans for these 'social towns', archival photographs, and the sketches made by Leningrad, Moscow, and Ural architects during the first half of the 1930s. Many of these drawings are published for the first time [Памятники архитектуры Каменска-Уральского].

The most significant study on the architecture of the Urals is the six-volume series *Stili v arhitekture Sverdlovskoy oblasti* (Styles in the Architecture of Sverdlovsk Region) (2008), which received high praise from academics and the general public, as well as the Governor of Sverdlovsk Region award. One of the volumes, authored by L. N. Smirnov, focuses on Constructivism in the central Urals. The value of this book not only derives from its unprecedently wide coverage and the extensive material and illustrations provided, but also the in-depth analysis of the avant-garde architectural style in its historical and socio-cultural dynamics. The history of Constructivism in Sverdlovsk region is represented by the author as a complex process, which he follows from the idea's origin to its creative embodiment in individual buildings and architectural ensembles that have intrinsic artistic value. Some Constructivist buildings and quarters today define and shape the architectural appearance of many streets and squares in Ural cities.

A true chronicler of Ekaterinburg and its architects is G. N. Elagin, an architect himself. His book *Zhizn' posvyashchayu gorodu* (I Dedicate My Life to the City) (2011) features 30 essays about famous Ural architects, including the Constructivists G. V. Valenkov, S. V. Dombrovsky, P. V. Oransky, and M. V. Reysher. The work presents an objective assessment of the creativity of architects and their contribution to the development of the city, as well as introducing new archival materials into circulation. The author devotes a separate section to the description of various important monuments of history, culture, and architecture in Ekaterinburg/Sverdlovsk. The Constructivist City Hall and Central Train Station generate especial interest. The book also features a selection of previously unpublished historical photographs of avant-garde architecture [Elagin].

L. N. Smirnov's research, *Ekaterinburg: nasledie konstruktivizma* (Ekaterinburg: A Heritage of Constructivism) (2009), presents this unique architectural style in all its variety and detail. The publication has pictures of more than 140 buildings that have become symbols of 1920s–1930s avant-garde architecture in Ekaterinburg. Numerous avant-garde architectural sites are systematised by author and divided into three sections representing the evolution of Constructivism in the Urals. The first section shows 'proto-Constructivist' buildings built between 1924 and 1927. These include the bus depot, the Commodity Exchange, the Tsentral'naya Hotel, the residential building of the Ural'skiy starozhil Company, and others. However, the author notes that most buildings erected in Sverdlovsk belong to the period of High Constructivism (1928–1933). The book ends with a description of buildings in urban areas that were constructed in the Postconstructivist style between 1934 and 1937: the Madrid Hotel, a residential house of a refinery, the residential house of the Vostokostal organisation, etc.). The texts are provided both in Russian and English [Смирнов, 2009].

E. V. Konysheva's book, *Gradostroitel'stvo i arhitektura Chelyabinska kontsa 1920–1950kh godov v kontekste razvitiya sovetskogo zodchestva* (City Construction and the Architecture of Chelyabinsk from the End of 1920s to the 1950s in the Context of the Development of Soviet Architecture) (2005), dedicates a whole section to the Constructivist and Post-Constructivist heritage within a big industrial city. The monograph provides a detailed analysis of the search for new urban planning principles (open-plan quarters, the compulsory introduction of public areas and green zones, etc.). It shows the many experimental mass housing projects and public buildings erected in Chelyabinsk during those years. The author also considers planning specifications and the development of working towns, reflecting a transitional period in the country's urban development. The book describes the process of designing the optimal solution for constructing the Chelyabinsk Tractor Plant, Russia's largest, and the creative trajectory behind an 'exemplary' *Sotsgorodok* (social town), a large-scale construction project with an experimental system of cultural and community service. Many leaders of the Constructivist movement took part in these projects: M. Ya. Ginzburg, A. K. Burov, and Ya. A. Kornfeld, among others [Конышева].

A substantial contribution to the study of historical and cultural monuments in Ekaterinburg is the book *Ekaterinburg: istoriya goroda v arhitekture* (Ekaterinburg: The History of the City in Architecture) (2008), edited by Professor A. A. Starikov. Based on comprehensive research by a large team of co-authors, the book presents the architectural designs of unique historical buildings from various periods. Several sections are devoted to avant-garde architecture erected in accordance with the 'Greater Sverdlovsk' plan: the *Vtuzgorodok* complex, the 'Medical Town', the residential quarters of GospromUral, the Bol'shoy Ural hotel, etc. In the sections describing various Constructivist buildings and complexes, the authors supply master plans, historical photos, and original drawings by the architects involved in designing experimental urban infrastructure.

Another interesting book, published in 2007, charts the cultural heritage of historic towns in the Urals: *Znamenitye pamyatniki arhitektury Sverdlovskoy oblasti* (Remarkable Monuments of Architecture in Sverdlovsk Region), by A. A. Starikov, V. I. Siminenko, and V. M. Pozdnikin, starts by briefly outlining the history of architecture in the central Urals. The section 'The Time of Constructivism' lists the most significant examples of the style in Ekaterinburg: the Defence House complex, the Builders' Club, the House of Printing, the NKVD town, the Dinamo sport complex, and the White Tower. The authors provide biographies of famous Ural architects and builders, as well as a glossary of architectural terms [Стариков, Симиненко].

Architectural heritage sites are often intrinsically interwoven with the profiles of the architects. Indeed, it is often through such biographies that it is possible to discover a particular epoch's characteristics. L. N. Smirnov's book, *Peterburgskiy sled v arhitekture konstruktivizma Ekaterinburga* (The Petersburg Footprint in the Constructivist Architecture of Ekaterinburg) (2015), offers insights into the lives of the most important Sverdlovsk architects, of whom some had received their education in Petersburg either before the Revolution or in the 1920s–1930s. Together they created in the capital of the Urals a number of experimental sites, some of which are now regarded as true masterpieces of Constructivism. These graduates of St Petersburg architectural schools made the greatest contribution to the establishment and development of avant-garde architecture in 'Greater Sverdlovsk', turning it from a provincial town with low-rises and dilapidated buildings into a major administrative, industrial, and cultural centre, with structurally sound high-rises and well-planned complexes. Between 1925 to 1934, numerous groups of architects arrived in Sverdlovsk from St Petersburg to sate their creative appetites during the construction boom in the Ural capital. Subsequently, some of them became famous architects: they won many All-Union and regional tenders for building Constructivist buildings and ensembles in major Ural cities. Apart from the biographies of these architects, the book familiarises the reader with their works via drawings, schematics, photos, and sketches. The author persuasively demonstrates that the artistic legacy of St Petersburg architects

continues to actively shape the appearance of individual streets, squares and neighbourhoods in the city [Смирнов, 2015].

A major contribution to the study of iconic objects in Ekaterinburg's Constructivist legacy was made by L. I. Tokmeninova, who prepared and published five albums of extraordinary avant-garde monuments in Sverdlovsk. She provides little-known background information about the design and construction of many unique sites, as well as extensive data on the project designers, all of them outstanding Sverdlovsk or Moscow architects. The albums contain generous selections of photos and unique archival drawings, and the author pays special attention to the novel solutions and materials used in avant-garde architecture [Токменинова].

In their monograph *Arhitektura konstruktivizma goroda Nizhnego Tagila* (The Constructivist Architecture of Nizhniy Tagil) (2008), L. N. Kozlova and L. P. Kholodova research the typology of avant-garde buildings in Nizhny Tagil. In three sections on residential buildings, public buildings, and manufacturing buildings, the book shows the most luminous examples of Constructivist and Postconstructivist architecture in the city and its industrial zones. The main goal of the authors is the identification and study of the architectural details of buildings constructed in the middle of the 1930s, the very end of the Constructivist period. Several buildings in the city are connected to the artistic legacy of M. Ya. Ginzburg, A. M. Mostakov, N. N. Smirnov, and other famous Moscow architects. The monograph is solidly based on field studies, photography, and a considerable number of drawings of building facades. The research includes many previously unknown avant-garde architectural sites. This is important because it is possible that, in the near future, a number of Constructivist and Postconstructivist buildings in various urban areas might be lost due to partial collapse or intentional demolition [Козлова, Холодова].

It can be said, therefore, that architects, historians, and art critics have recently spent a great deal of time and energy on documenting the architectural history of Constructivism in the Urals. However, the scope of the research needs to be extended territorially and chronologically; most importantly, scrupulous generalisation and systematisation is required in order to preserve and restore the many marvellous Constructivist monuments in the Urals.

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The article was submitted on 28.07.2016
Translated by Anna Dergacheva