

Architectural Theory in Russia: Holding on the Past or Looking to the Future?

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Abstract. This paper is devoted to issues in the development of modern-day Russian architectural theory. It considers a number of significant theoretical concepts put forward by representatives of the Russian architectural school. The paper consists of three essays: «From Avant-Garde to Rearguard. Historical lessons from 20th century Russian architecture», «Image and Morphology. From the Perceiving Individual to the Interpreting Individual», «From Architecture of Static Volumes to Variable Multilayered Environments» - which present the author's view of the sources of and possible prospects for theory of architecture in Russia.

Keywords: architectural theory; image and morphology; architectural object; processuality and dynamism; environment.

Introduction

One of the most important problems that Russian architecture faces today is loss of self-identity and development benchmarks. This may be generally explained by the long time of cultural isolation during the Soviet period, as a result of which Russian architecture fell out of the international architectural process, both conceptually and technologically. Currently, Russian architecture is trying to find a way back into mainstream architecture, struggling against a dilemma: to become an imitator of international achievements or create something original.

However, the creative potential of Russian architecture as a successor to the avant-garde's spirit of transformation is stifled with ideological constraints that keep plaguing Russian architectural theory, rendering it conceptually backward and unable to accept the tendencies that shape international achievements. The theoretical stupor has brought about stagnation in architectural creativity, which is mainly oriented to foreign «re-makes» or historical *a la Russe* stylizations. A glance at official Russian architectural theory and research reveals a range of important problems:

- 1) substitution of architectural theoretical research by direct transfer and borrowing of ideas and concepts from the humanities, which has determined overall technological backwardness in architecture;
- 2) methodological backwardness and a negative attitude to methodological issues, with all the

analytical instruments of official Russian architectural theory dating back to the mid-19th century; it is obvious that the contemporary logical and analytical body of knowledge cannot coexist with the postulates formulated within the centuries-old methodological framework;

- 3) indiscriminate borrowing of terms from foreign languages in incorrect translations leading to multiplication of notions;
- 4) orientation to ideal issues, vague cultural values and global generalizations, and reduction to averaged assumptions and anonymous customer;
- 5) orientation to traditional historical and theoretical research themes as priorities in architectural science.
- 6) There is a crying need for a critique of Russian theory of architecture, which has been acutely felt for the last two decades. A way out of the crisis in Russian architectural theory might be the development of a subject-oriented theory of architectural activity pursuing:
 - 7) methodological renovation;
 - 8) orientation of theoretical thought to the needs of architectural practice;
 - 9) focus on new forms of practice, with theory paving the way instead of fixing the present and the past.

What follows is the author's concept and view of the evolution of Russian architectural theory in postindustrial society.

From Avant-Garde to Rearguard. Historical lessons from 20th-century Russian architecture

The evolution of contemporary architecture is closely associated with breakthroughs in form that took place in the 1920s. The emergence of new architectural concepts in Russia is usually linked to the names of N.Ladovsky, K.Melnikov, I.Leonidov, M.Ginzburg, I.Golosov, the brothers Vesnin;

V.Tatlin, V.Kandinsky, and K.Malevich. And we owe it to S.Khan-Magomedov [2], well-known Russian architectural theoretician and historian, that the ideas of Russian avant garde have become popular internationally. The new developments in Russian architectural theory were mainly concerned



Fig. 1. From Avant-Garde to Rearguard [Source: from author private archive]

with compositional ideas of form building in architecture, and for nearly half a century the theory of composition held firm positions as one of the invariable obligatory research subjects in Russian architectural science. The creative concepts of the above-named architects present a series of premier achievements that have deservedly occupied a significant place in the universal heritage (Fig. 1). However, we should not overlook the fact that a lot theoretical ideas relating to form from that period fell into oblivion for decades.

Russian architectural avant garde experienced an extensive ideological influence of the formal method in art studies and, later, «left-wing» movements in fine arts. The formal school created Art Studies as a scholarly discipline equipped with formal analysis techniques to study visual elements that make up the artistic whole and the rules and principles of their combination. An important role in the development of these ideas belonged to A.Hildebrand and H. Wölfflin, who had a profound influence on Russian scholars as well. Thus, A.Gabrichovsky and V.Favorsky studied in Germany. V.Favorsky translated into Russian «Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst» by A. von Hildebrand. The development of the formal method and its critical analysis lasted in Russia till the end of the 1920s.

The ideas of the formal school received different interpretations in the Russian context. Thus, A.Gabrichovsky connected volume/mass and space into an indivisible pair as the foundation of form generation and as an embodiment of static and dynamic principles. N.Ladovsky and his school of thought (V. Krinsky, I. Lamtsov, M. Turkus) considered spatial relations as a basis for form generation. They believed that everything else was subordinated to the resolution of spatial problems, and architectural composition techniques served to reveal the geometric and other characteristics of an internal and external architectural space. I.Golosov gave the primary place to architectural mass (a large spatial form), giving preference to volume in issues of form generation. K. Melnikov assigned primary importance to such concepts as internal tension and external ease of the architectural form. I.Leonidov considered

interaction between simple geometric forms. A.Vesnin emphasized the aesthetic capabilities of materials and constructions, Ya.Chernikov conducted research into graphic combinatorics of regular geometric shapes and lines and had a considerable influence on the development of propaedeutic courses of composition, which are still taught at a number of architectural schools.

Theoretical findings and innovative breakthroughs of Russian architectural avant-garde in the 1920s had broad international repercussions, but it was banned in the 1930s among a whole variety of concepts and movements that were rejected by the Soviet state as contradicting Marxism.

Thus, the rise of the Russian school of composition in the 1920s connected with Russian architectural avantgarde was followed by its formalisation in the 1940s, when the main objective of architectural science was proclaimed to be the creation of Soviet theory of architectural composition. Subsequently, in the 1960s, avant garde's form-generation concepts formed the basis of the propaedeutic courses of composition at Russian architectural schools. Composition, a major concept of the early 20th century theory of architecture, lost its leadership in the theory but maintained its positions in architectural propaedeutics and education. In the later interpretations of architectural propaedeutics, the originality and creativity of the avant-garde's compositional ideas were largely lost. In its massive turn to compositional propedeutic courses, architectural education overlooked one of the main principles – focus on design and composition challenges aiming to develop creative thinking and independent search for original spatial solutions.

Although Russian architectural theoretical thought is commonly associated with research into relationships between composition and form in architecture, there were other movements along with the main stream. The most significant of them was the phenomenological movement, which falls outside the framework of the established «academic» notions of composition so much traditional for Russian architectural theoretical thought.

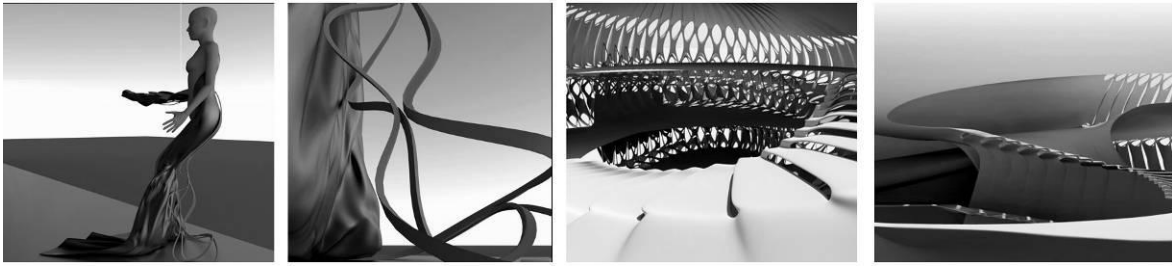


Fig. 2. Elements of «plastic art experience» [Source: from author private archive]

Today the phenomenological tradition in architectural theory, both internationally and in Russia, is associated with the names of western scholars. However, as early as in the 1920s Alexander G. Gabrichevsky, a Russian art theoretician and historian, formulated a fundamental concept that anticipated the later western and contemporary philosophical and theoretical interpretations of architectural form generation along the phenomenological lines. Unfortunately, it was impossible to get acquainted with A.Gabrichevsky's ideas until very recently. He published most of his works on theory of art and architecture in the 1920s, which were not republished for a long time. Some of his works on art and philosophy of art were not published at all and existed in manuscripts. In the 1930-1960s, A.Gabrichevsky published mainly comments on theoretical works of architectural classics and on history of art. In the 2000s, a full collection of A. Gabrichevsky's work was published and caused a sensation in Russian art studies.

For A.Gabrichevsky, the fundamental issue was that of primary elements in «plastic art experience» [1]: space and mass, thing and life, nucleus and shell. Leaving aside the pair «space-mass», which has been given a lot of attention in architectural theory, both Russian and international (in its «solid-void» interpretation), we will try to identify issues that are more relevant to the origin of the phenomenological movement in Russian architectural studies in the 1920s (Fig. 2):

- 1) *the bodily character of spatial experience.* The body is a carrier of primary contents: it is the main criterion for the set of values within which things are arranged depending on proximity to the individual, and a symbol of the three vital instincts (self-preservation, assimilation, reproduction),
- 2) *thing as the fixing of a useful human gesture.* The thing manifests its use through the form, the form captures and immortalizes the human gesture and makes a sign of it. The matter acquires the character of a gesture as a result of resistance to the space that presses against the shell. There are two distinct types of gesture : *plastic* – a gesture creating a plastic value, and *dynamic* – a gesture enveloping the nucleus;
- 3) *form as a trace of the living on the dead,* a kind of shell/boundary between Self and non-Self,

a fence protecting the individual from the elements. The individual is surrounded with a system of expressive shells arranged around his body, from the clothing to the building and the city. Types of shell may be distinguished depending on the field and character of activity and on the degree of its impenetrability, both tactile and visual. The morphology of an architectural object is two-tiered: the nucleus and the shell, the nucleus/shell and the environment (as the force field of a building, its projection into space);

- 4) *image as a hieroglyph.* The image (*Gestalt*) is some creative potential realized directly in the art object's form. The form as such is an act; it is immanent to the process; it is secondary, variable, evanescent. The synthetic reality of the *Gestalt* is composed of relationships between *the component being assimilated (Inhalt* – the canon, ready-made forms and materialized elements) and *the assimilating component (Gehalt* - the creative principle) where the image is an interpenetration of the element of becoming (*Werden*) and the element of being (*geworden*).

During the period of its development, the Russian phenomenological school had no actively practicing architects/followers capable of linking this theory with advanced design practice, materials and constructions. The phenomenological concepts were untimely in the 1920s, when there were no today's shell forms, «nonlinear» materialisations of gesture or vanishing, changeable, fully transparent multilayered barriers.

Gabrichevsky's complex theoretical concept had like minds such as V.Kandinsky, P.Florensky, V.Favorsky, and followers such as D.Arkin, V.Markuzon, etc. But the political and ideological situation in Russia in the 1920s was not conducive to its development, and Gabrichevsky himself had predilection for history of architecture and neoclassical architecture rather than latest architectural forms. As a result, the Russian phenomenological school did not happen, but its ideas anticipated a number of tendencies that were later developed by western theorists of architecture such as J.Itten, C. Norberg-Schultz [5], Ch. Day and that came to Russia much later, including through the interpretations of foreign authors such as M.Heidegger, M.Merleau-Ponty [4], P.Riccoeur, etc.

In spite of all the dissimilarity between the essentially positivist «academic» theory of composition and the phenomenological interpretation of form by Gabrichesvky they had a common root, which was the formal method. They influenced each other, particularly at the initial stages, but these two approaches are different philosophically:

- 1) in the theory of composition, the basis is the position of the individual who stands opposed to the architectural object, and the character of his perception (mainly visual) determines approaches and suggests techniques and rules for creating new objects;
- 2) in the phenomenological concept, the basis is the position of the individual experiencing his bodily presence in the world of things where the vitality of his gesture leaves a trace on the dead matter and generates an object (or a system of objects) as a shell/boundary between Self and non-Self.

The phenomenological approach may be regarded as conceptually primary, as all postulates

of the compositional school may be derived from it, but not vice versa. It looks to the origins – the bodily character of spatial experience and, accordingly, the «barrier-ness» of form; whereas the school of composition is concerned with regulation of form-building creative activity. Gabrichevsky's phenomenological concept sought to unravel human values and meanings in the vital form-building gesture and its fixing as a «trace» in material form.

The Russian phenomenological ideas in theory of architecture formulated by Gabrichevsky are in line with the contemporary humanistic views of the role and place of the subject in the world. It is to be hoped that they will not remain just history and find their way into modern-day architecture. Today's reflective, transparent, ghostly, nonlinear architectural forms may benefit a lot from form-generation concepts such as nucleus-shell, shell-boundary, spatial volume, and gesture and trace, which seem to be more in line with the material and philosophical context of contemporary architecture.

Image and Morphology. From the Perceiving Individual to the Interpreting Individual

In the context of consumer society, architectural activity should allow for a variety of values maintained by both the consumer and the architect, the engineer, the developer, the contractor, etc. Thus, it is important to understand the new role and place of the subject in the modern world and manage interactions between the architect and other participants of the design process.

In Russia, the evolution to this understanding has been connected with the development of ideas of form under the influence of various philosophical and psychological concepts relating to the «perceiving individual», the main ones being behaviourism, Gestalt psychology, the functional and formal schools, the activity approach, the cognitive approach, and the phenomenological approach, with their different interpretations of the concept of «image». These interpretations range from full denial as in behaviourism and holistic perception as in Gestalt psychology to those associated with the activity of the subject in the material world such as reflection and conceptualisation (the activity approach); image as a semiotic tool (cognitive approach); image as a form of attitude to the world and interaction with Dasein including a number of ontologic layers and sensory attributes (the phenomenological position reinstating the objective status of image in its rights). Generally, the concepts of image and form have been progressing (Fig. 3):

- 1) from concepts of visual perception by some abstract individual to those of the 'Interpreting Individual' who humanizes architectural space with his presence;

- 2) from the idea of socio-cultural determination of perception to the issue of «meaning», with a corresponding shift in emphasis from form building to meaning expression by means of architectural form;
- 3) from emphasis on the role of the languaged subject/interpreter who assigns meanings to material object to the priority of the subject/customer in architecture and inter-subject interactions in the design process.

In this context, there are two modern-day Russian architectural concepts, by Ilya G. Lezhava and Alexander G. Rappaport, that are worth considering. Both concepts are not alien to the phenomenological ideas but they interpret differently the role and place of theoretical research in architecture.

Ilya Lezhava - a futurist of the 1960s and ideologist of the Soviet «paper architecture» movement of the 1980s. According to him, to deconstruct the traditional theoretical views we need to [3]:

- 1) overcome the functional determination of architecture and place emphasis on the essential poly-functionality of architectural form;
- 2) emphasize the subjectivity of interpretations in semiotic concepts of architecture on the one hand and demonstrate the limitation, descriptive character and lack of practical output from such concepts on the other hand;
- 3) demonstrate the limitations of traditional object-oriented architecture and art criticism terminology and its failure to meet contemporary requirements;
- 4) demonstrate the ineffectiveness of traditional architectural-psychological research into form



Fig. 3. From the Perceiving Individual to the Interpreting Individual [Source: from author private archive]

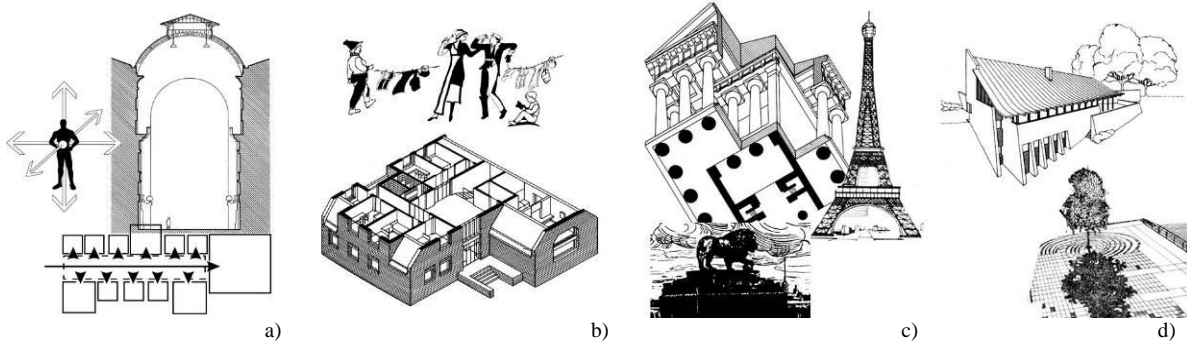


Fig. 4. Structural components of the image (a) – orientation; b) – recognition; c) – interpretation; d) - intuition
[Source: from author private archive]

and promote transition to the «barrier» concept of architectural form and search for the «foundations / principles of architectural geometry» that can help understand the essential narrow-mindedness of architectural theory as a theory of architectural form.

Alexander Rappaport's concept is less revolutionary, following the humanitarian interpretation of architectural theory. At its forefront is the problem of architectural myth as a carrier of form and meaning. Myth in architecture manifests itself in the problematics of the local and the global. Myth as an idea becomes the mainstay of architecture that lost faith in the firmness of its rationales. Spatial concepts of architecture are interpreted as carriers of rational ideas as opposed to the bodily tectonic aspect of architecture, which is revealed through the Dionysian, spontaneous world outlook. The rationalistic spatial architectural concept enters into conflict with the utter processuality of the current, rapidly changing world. The destiny of architecture in humanitarian culture unfolds itself through the construction of contemporary mythology of architecture [6].

The reference points of architectural theory shift from the object to the subject and, thus, from the Perceiving Individual to the Interpreting Individual. Therefore, the author of this paper sees the link between the image as carrier of meanings and the morphology of architectural object as the most significant direction of development for contemporary architectural theory.

Inter-subject relationships in architectural design may be described with the help of a concept of «semiotic mechanisms in architecture», i.e. communication mechanisms that determine the image of an architectural object and regulate the behaviour of the individual.

The semiotic mechanisms of image formation feature certain conditions and specificity. The conditions are the duality of the textual and activity functions, subjectivity of perception, relevance and momentariness of experiences. The specificity of the semiotic mechanisms in architecture consists in dialogue between the individual and the architectural object whereby the architectural object plays a twofold role - it defines the scene of action and acts as a communication tool that:

- 1) produces meanings in the process of interpretation;
- 2) is a condition for entering into social relationships with others, where the meaning is a result of social interaction;
- 3) prepares and defines the place of a possible event, generating essentially new unpredictable meanings.

Image is the basic concept for describing inter-subject interactions in architecture and introducing a value component into design activity, which is essential for meeting various human needs in architecture. The image of an architectural object as the basis of the communication process may be structured based on a certain model. One such model is suggested below. The specific feature of this model is the processuality and layered structure of the image and the operation of semiotic mechanisms that control the formation of layers. These structural layers/components of the image represent various value manifestations (Fig. 4):

- 1) *the orientation component* forms a psychological action space that determines the character of movement and emotional states of mind; it is dominated by the bodily sensory component; the semiotic mechanism of the orientation component establishes relationship between the

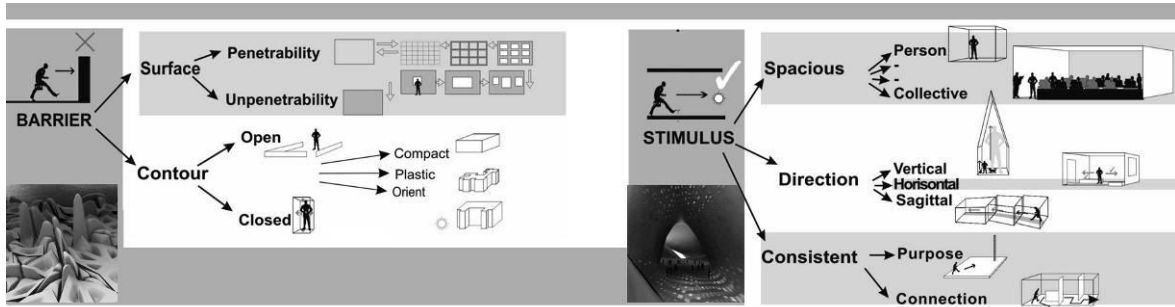


Fig. 5. The bodily spatial aspect is described by the system «barrier – stimulus» [Source: from author private archive]

material characteristics of architectural object and perception stereotypes;

- 2) *the recognition component* restricts the field of meanings by functional attribute and is characterized by the priority of the cognitive component; the semiotic mechanism of the recognition image establishes relationship between the model idea of architectural object and culturally determined speech equivalent; generates secondary meanings attached to the designation and performs the function of communication of information about the use of the object;
- 3) *the interpretation component* generates a range of socially predetermined meanings and subjective connotations; it is characterized by the priority of the cognitive component; the semiotic mechanism of the interpretation component performs the functions of translation of pictorial iconic representations, sensations and states of mind in the architectural environment into a natural language and generation of meanings during translation, and the function of semantic memory;
- 4) *the intuition component* represents the Dasein aspect of an architectural space, being determined by the priority of the bodily, sensory component; the semiotic mechanism of the intuition component accounts for self-reflection and existential experiencing of oneself in the world created by architectural design means.

The formation of the orientation and intuition components is predetermined by human corporeity and congenital stereotypes relating to the creation and perception of form, whereas the recognition and interpretation components are based on the natural language and socially predetermined mental schemas.

The need to allow for the changing needs of the subjects/participants of the architectural design process leads to a change in the basic reference points of the architectural object's consumer as a representative of postindustrial society. Given this, the primary role shifts to the specificity of interaction between the images that exist in the minds of various subjects/participants of the design process with regard to the future architectural object.

These images reflect, to a varying degree of divergence, the set of ideas about the functions, structure, comfort, identity and socio-cultural importance of the architectural object. It then becomes increasingly important to secure the preferred images in the morphological structure of the object.

It is obvious that the sensorily perceived morphological basis of architectural object cannot be reduced to compositional, typological or other characteristics, which is the traditional way of describing morphology in architectural studies. We need to identify fundamental components that underlie the «encounter» between the individual and the material-spatial world and mark its location. Such basic component is given by «barrier», which limits movement and defines space for possible action. It is supplemented with a «stimulus», coordinating and stimulating possible movements of the individual. We deal here with an essentially dual approach to describing the morphology of an architectural object: bodily spatial description introducing the position of the subject, and geometric description which does not include the position of the subject.

The bodily spatial aspect is described by the system «barrier – stimulus». It implies the bodily presence of the individual in the spatial object. Bodily spatial description rests on biologically inherited stereotypes determined by human corporeity, a special formation that determines the horizon of human experience before any thinking and, thus, anonymity, synthetic spatial experience without rational mediation or subordination to any function (Fig. 5).

The geometry is described by means of well-known geometric systems: shapes, their superposition, modification, transformation, association with certain planes and surfaces and location, types of space and ways of their arrangement including linearity (unidirectionality) and nonlinearity (poly-variant type). This form of description presents an object as something «ideal» and abstract, existing independently from the subject. The fundamental principles of geometric description are represented by geometric archetypes. Archetype is a mental 'residue' of numerous

ancestors' experiences, being quintessentially a form of inheriting the social, i.e. apriori comprehension and perception schemas that make the thinking possible. The fundamental principles, including the geometric ones, are present in the majority of historical, religious and philosophical works interpreting the issue of origin of the universe. The fundamental principles are manifestations of ideal Being in the form of living Being, which then becomes consciousness. The further existence of the fundamental principles appears as ideal realities, or geometric archetypes in our case, replicated in human creativity as a reflection of natural and cosmic laws. The emergence of ideal realities and the development of the process of alienation of the «ideal» from the «real» happen due to an operating system, natural language, which is a basis

for the development of other artificial language-like formations.

The morphological structure of an architectural object understood through the system of barriers and stimuli is characterized by the introduction of the individual with his corporeity into space, where the body (not the geometry) determines a series of possible interactions with the object. This approach to constructing the morphological structure proceeds from the priority of the needs of various subjects and provides broader opportunities for architectural form generation without being limited to geometric shapes and their combinations, orthogonal systems of spatial combinatorics and systems of individual spaces and their relationships.

From Architecture of Static Volumes to Variable Multilayered Environments

The classical concepts of architectural objects as architecture of buildings are becoming the past. Nevertheless, the contemporary architectural process in Russia is still demonstrating orientation to the mass consumer playing postmodernist games of citation and rephrasing or even direct reproduction of historical forms. Even the projects of renowned architects such as N.Foster, D.Perro, J.Nouvel, D.Liebeskind, etc. cannot overcome the conservatism of the customer, potential consumer or authorities. It is therefore that for more than several decades the original creative line of architectural development in Russia has been moving from the building to the design project and then on to a theoretical concept. Experimental projects and theoretical concepts open up broader opportunities for realizing ideas in the rather conservative and bureaucratic state.

The distinctive feature of the latest architecture is *processuality and dynamism in the unfolding of the architectural object*, realized in concepts of neutral and processual architecture of barriers, shells, and veils. Architectural form generation is revealed through the poetics of the barrier's contours as the art of creating "boundary-ness" by means of which the individual enters into relationships with the Other: environment, culture, society.

An architectural object may be considered as a material entity *experienced by the individual from the position of his subjectivity*, the material entity being a unity of various semiotic realities, a communication tool in social activity and environmental processes. This structural approach exposes the essence of *an architectural object* as the result and condition of human activity and cognition – both as a place of being / action / possible event based on the corporeal experiencing of a defined / delineated space of action and as an

attitude to the world / environment / culture based on the plastic characteristics of the barrier plane / surface of the enclosure.

The dialogic nature of architectural object manifests itself in two aspects: as a space of action or being, and as an identity or 'face' of the object in the environment / culture. This is determined by the duality of sensory perception of the architectural object as a *corporeal/tactile field* with fixed boundaries of action, relationships between spaces and some degree of isolation, and as a *visual field* underlying the visual perception of these boundaries. The visual field of the object determines its perception as a system of barriers described by a varying degree of visual and light permeability, visual focusing or defocusing of the object's contours as a space of action, and structurality. The nature of the barrier determines dynamics in the relationship 'individual-object-environment' that unfolds through:

- 1) the fixing / demolition (and re-creation) of the spatial level of orientation;
- 2) identification of the degree of inclusion or isolation of the object's internal space in the spatial/temporal context of the environment (simultaneity in the experiencing of the external and the internal);
- 3) determination of plastic attitude towards the environment as a basis underlying the values and environmental qualities of the object, through:
 - a) traditional plastic techniques of treatment of the impenetrable enveloping plane;
 - b) disorganization, duplication, distortion in the mirror reflection of the enclosure surface;
 - c) disappearance and illusoriness of the visually transparent barrier;
 - d) stage-by-stage distancing of the multilevel barrier;

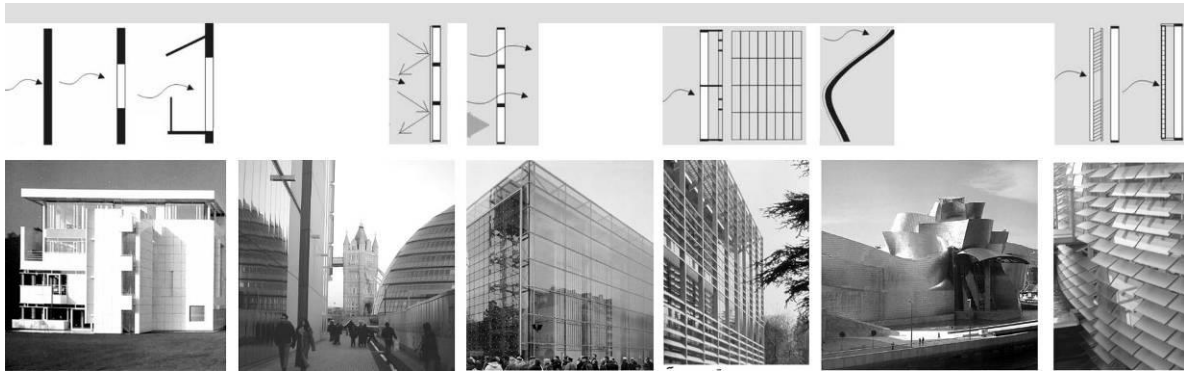


Fig. 6. Determination of plastic attitude towards the environment [Source: from author private archive]

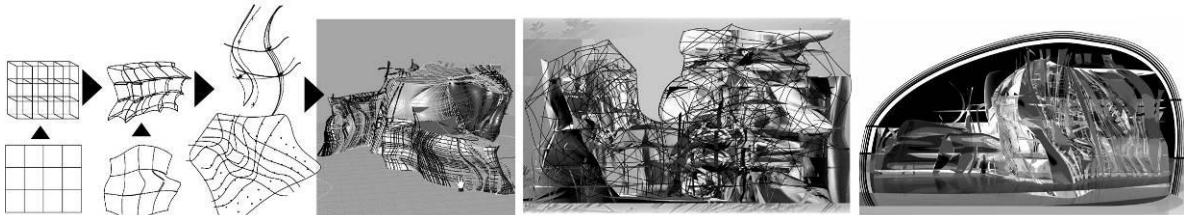


Fig. 7. From architecture of static volumes to enclosed systems and variable multilayered environments [Source: from author private archive]

- e) unstable geometry of the contour dissolving the form of the object in the environment and setting itself against the traditional orthogonal;
- f) mobility, variability, transformability of the barrier.

The relationship between the architectural object and the culture and history shows itself also through the characteristics of the enclosure surface:

- 1) traditionality, stability of routine forms of visually impenetrable barriers;
- 2) the eventful character of unstable visual fields creating new orientation sets of objects with transparent, reflecting and contour-variable enclosures;
- 3) the paradoxicality of geometrical shifts in enclosure planes.

This way of morphological description suggests an idea of a developing typological system. Its principal difference from the traditional understanding of typology (in architecture) is its non-reducibility to classification as an extensive way of organizing scientific knowledge.

The basis of the proposed architectural typological method is *constructing* as an intensive and heuristic way of organizing scientific knowledge, i.e. creation of a synthetic cognitive construct, a system of genetic and typical relationships of both existing and potential architectural objects. These relationships underlie the values (consumer characteristics) and cultural significance of architectural objects. The architectural typological method is based on a concept of a developing typological system. According to this concept, the typological system is enabled to derive supplementary interrelated concepts from a common model to ensure the elaboration of specific aspects in the formation of an

architectural object. It also determines heuristic orientation of the typological system to a search for and construction of structurally new architectural objects and generation of new derivative types.

The greatest potential for the generation of derivatives is to be found in the development of enclosed systems and emergence of various derivatives of the basic types. The variability of an architectural object's structure and its adaptation to various rapidly changing human needs is ensured by the use of multiply nested systems and different degrees of penetrability of the barriers (both material and optical) set on chaotic (arbitrary) spatial grids. A nested system implies the presence of some multilevel spaces permeating the building and making it possible to achieve certain variability in vertical circulation. In a nested system, we parametrically set the character and quantity of nestings, the capacity and orientation of ultimate nested elements, and the construction of the barrier. It also enables transition from orthogonal planning grids to chaotic ones, implying the introduction of another variable – the degree of surface curvature and maximum allowable range of its variation (from the standpoint of convenience of use and maintenance). The character of the barrier may vary over a broad range (Fig. 7):

- 1) from a multilayered barrier to a nested system of spatial volumes (both principal and buffer ones) and relationships between them;
- 2) in the degree of penetrability and optical characteristics of the material barrier;
- 3) in the visual permeability and stability / instability of the optical barrier;
- 4) the degree of inclusion of natural components as barriers (plants, water, etc.).



Fig. 8. Design experience. Student's master degree work: «Shell in the architecture of the futures» with project of multifunctional complex by O. Orzunova [supervisors – prof. Y. Yankovskaya, arch. V. Gromada]

The processuality of an architectural object emphasizes both its adaptability and its social essence organizing a series of interactions between subjects and providing conditions for meeting their needs (including potential ones). The main pre-requisite to the creative process in postindustrial society is essential orientation to the establishment of certain relationships between the psychological continuity and cohesion of the architect's personality rather than to the rigid personal identity of author/Demiurge with an ever-recognizable master's idiom. The emphasis on the priority of the perceiving subject/consumer does not at all deny the presence of author's personality and does not impair the creative process; rather, it reveals new, yet unknown facets through a mechanism of identification of the architect's personality with the Other (the consumer), which allows one to come to know the Other and oneself through the Other.

Conclusion. Stagnation or Development?

What is the way forward for Russian architecture? Are theoretical architectural concepts capable of outlining a development strategy for the future, or do they just fix the store of experience and generalize historical experiments? The traditional theory of architecture in Russia looks to the past. Dynamic concepts of architectural activity, progressive and open to development, may point to

In modern-day Russia, traditional architectural activities are being reviewed, largely under the influence of leading western architects who have matured in market-driven consumer society, towards more varied interaction between architect and society. Architectural design is gradually drifting away from a rigid administrative system, with a growing understanding of its polylogue character where each and every actor should have an opportunity to satisfy their needs without prejudicing the needs of another. An important role in this belongs to the basic neutrality of architectural object, its openness to change, multiple use and polysemy of interpretations (Fig. 8). The conceptuality and spatial-temporal variability of a modern-day building (and environment) is a basis for architectural design in the post-industrial context.

a way forward to the future, with distinctively original Russian architecture. Development along this line is oriented to optimization, provision of methodological support to architectural practice in modern-day consumer culture and emergence of professional marketing thinking and architectural management which are adequate to the new economic context in Russian architecture.

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