

RUSSIA

20th-Century Heritage at Risk in Moscow and the former Soviet Union

A first approach to the topic of 20th-century heritage at risk in Moscow and the former Soviet Union was the case study “Russia – 20th-Century Heritage” in *Heritage at Risk 2002/2003*, presented by Natalia Dushkina on behalf of the Russian ICOMOS Committee (*H@R 2002/2003*, pp. 177-181). The contributions to the international conference *Heritage at Risk – Preservation of 20th-Century Architecture and World Heritage*, organised by public and scientific institutions in Russia and by international partner organisations in cooperation with ICOMOS on the occasion of the International Day for Monuments and Sites (Moscow, 17-20 April 2006) were already published in the Special Edition 2006 of *Heritage at Risk*. The conference passed the general *Moscow Declaration on the Preservation of 20th-Century Cultural Heritage* as well as a special *Resolution on Konstantin Melnikov’s House and Collection*, thus highlighting the international significance of many famous monuments of Soviet avant-garde architecture and its architectural counterparts from the Stalinist years, but at the same time pointing at the huge dangers threatening the heritage of the 20th century in eastern Europe.

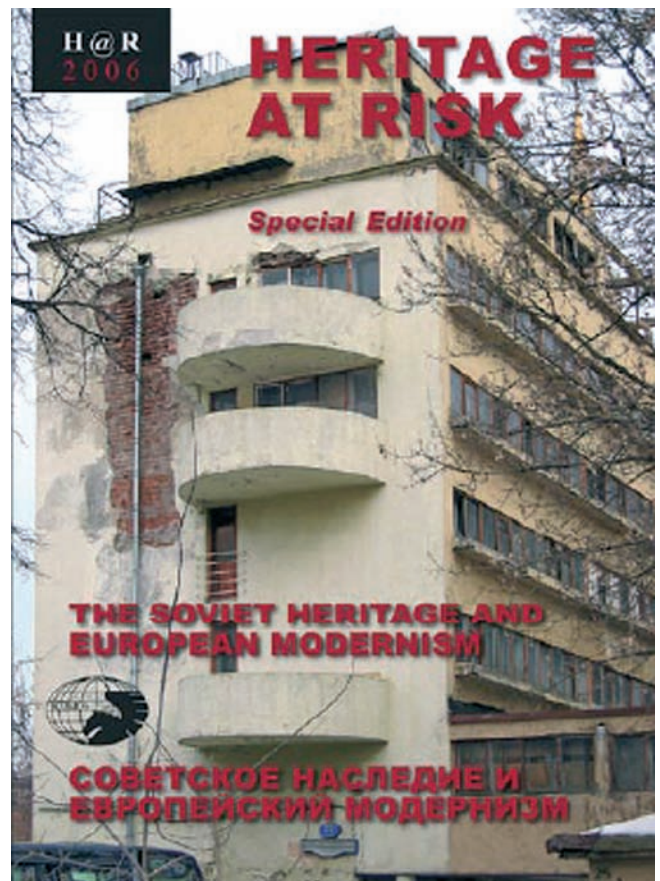
An important result of the conference in Moscow was also that during talks held with the Mayor of Moscow an extended co-operation with the City of Moscow was initiated. See also the following letter of 15 August 2006 to Mr Yury Luzhkov, Mayor of Moscow:

Mr. Mayor,

Further to the very fruitful meeting we had with you on 19th April at your office, we would like to report that your proposal of establishing a formal co-operation protocol and work programme between ICOMOS and the City of Moscow has been given due consideration and is very well received. We now look forward to more direct discussions with your representatives to finalise a draft text that can be presented to the ICOMOS Executive Committee at its January 2007 meeting in Paris.

Last June in Rome, the Officers of ICOMOS received with great interest the report our President Michael Petzet and I gave on the Heritage at Risk conference held in Moscow on the occasion of the International Monuments Day, 18th April. We reported on the working meeting we had the privilege of holding with you, and on your innovative proposal of formal co-operation between the City of Moscow and ICOMOS. This collaboration would enable sharing experiences to enhance the protection and condition your city’s remarkable heritage sites like the Kremlin or the world famous monuments of the 20th Century (e.g. Narkomfin Housing Complex; Melnikov House; Russakov and Kauchuk Club Houses; Shukhov Radio Tower or the outstanding Moscow Metro.) in a dynamic urban context which can be very challenging to their integrity, setting and use.

Next month in Edinburgh, we will expose your proposal to the whole Executive Committee of ICOMOS. We hope to be able to then work with your representatives on the detailed draft agreement which we will discuss with our International Committee on 20th Century Heritage, ICOMOS Russia, the Moscow Architectural Institute, and our international partners Docomomo and the International Union of Architects who attended our April meeting with you and your senior staff. We trust the co-operation agreement



Cover of the H@R Special “The Soviet Heritage and European Modernism”

can be finalised this autumn and submitted at the following meeting of the Executive Committee, next January in Paris. We look forward to meeting with you again and to work with your staff and representatives in the course of this process.

With best regards,

*Dinu Bumbaru
Secretary General of ICOMOS*

Visual Integrity of St Petersburg threatened by Gazprom Project

In a letter of 10 January 2007 to Ms Valentina Ivanovna Matvienko, Governor of St Petersburg, ICOMOS protested against the project of a 300-metre skyscraper designed by RMJM, winner of an international architectural competition for “Gazprom City” in which architects such as Daniel Libeskind, Herzog & De Meuron and Jean Nouvel had also taken part:

Dear Governor,

Gazprom is planning to erect an administration centre on the bank of the Neva river and at the mouth of the Ohta river, located exactly opposite the famous Smolny monastery. After the competition advertised by Gazprom the design by the British architecture firm RMJM, a pointed skyscraper of 300 metres, was declared the win-



Planned Gazprom skyscraper in St Petersburg (Photo: Gazprom)

ner on 1 December 2006. By 2016 the complex of buildings (office centre “Gazprom City”) is meant to be complete.

The “Gazprom” project in St. Petersburg is another example which shows that on the whole high-rise buildings are not acceptable in areas inside the historic urban landscape. The planned skyscraper would be situated inside the protection zones of the World Heritage site of St. Petersburg, for which the Government has already proposed its own parameters of protection concerning an area for which “the limiting height for buildings and facilities for intrablock development shall be equal to 48 m, if the expert examination comes to a positive result.”

ICOMOS endorses the already existing protests against this project. It will examine in detail the devastating consequences for the visual integrity of the Historic City of St. Petersburg (inscribed in the UNESCO List of World Heritage in 1990) and will inform the public about the dangers for the world-famous ensemble in its next Heritage at Risk publication.

I would like to ask you to take care of this matter and remain

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Michael Petzet
President of ICOMOS

Paintings of the Dwelling Houses in the Russian North (Archangel Region)

Paintings on wooden surfaces and interiors are one of the most important forms of folk art in Russia. In the Urals region, in Siberia and in the Russian north paintings on the façades and interiors of peasant houses were widespread. The question of when those paintings first appeared on the external walls of the peasant log houses is still open. In the 19th century only batten walls were decorated with paintings, but the use of battens in peasant constructions did not occur before the 19th century. That means decorating peasant log houses with drawings was apparently a novel phenomenon. The earliest paintings of peasant houses in the Archangel Region date from the 1840s, although painted buildings are mentioned in

sources from the 17th century. The façades and interiors of church buildings were also decorated with drawings.

Colourful paintings decorated the front gables of the houses, the so-called batted ‘hemming’ of pendent roofing and the balcony base, shutters and external architraves. Interiors were decorated with drawings on partitions, especially those forming the stove nook, movable pieces of furniture, cupboards, or in some cases doors and walls. Peasant artists decorated distaffs, birch-bark boxes, shaft-bows, sledges, and even cemetery crosses. Sometimes they produced utensils and tools and then covered them with paintings. That is why paintings in peasant homes in different parts of the northern regions form interrelated style complexes. The same artists often decorated interior elements of local wooden churches, such as the beams for the ceiling panels or the ‘heaven’, the iconostasis, lecterns and carved images, doors and portals. Paintings were done by professional or peasant artists. Sometimes they organised cooperatives of ‘dyers’, others worked as a family or did seasonal work far from home.

There are apparent parallels between peasant paintings from Russia and from Northern Europe, i.e. Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark. Similar geographical conditions, the history of cultural and trading contacts with the Archangel and Vologda regions produced common traits in that form of peasant art. Those interrelations could be proposed as the subject for an international research project, which could result in finding new data and comparisons.

From the artistic point of view, those paintings represent an independent and well elaborated part of folk art. One can discover

View of the chapel in the village of Glazovo in the Russian North (Kenozero)



several historic territories in the Archangel and the neighbouring Vologda regions where different types of painting existed in former times and are still observable. Those territories are the Poonezhye and Kargopolye, the area called Povazhye and the basins of the North Dvina, Pinega and Mezen' rivers.

Paintings of Kargopolye and Poonezhye (western parts of Archangel and Vologda regions)

The names of Poonezhye and Kargopolye have historically been used for the lands on the Onega river and around the Onega lake. They also border Karelia and in former times they were culturally and economically influenced by the town of Kargopol'. That town was first mentioned in chronicles from the 12th century and for a long period it was an important economic, political and trading centre in northwest Russia. Many interesting elements of construction techniques applied to wooden religious buildings and to dwelling houses are still applied together with particular customs and rituals that are practiced. They all bear witness to a distinctive folk culture preserved in the area.

Almost every village had its own chapel. The latter could be located in a place that seemed perfectly unusual – in woods, on riverbanks or lakeshores, in fields or at the village ends. The great number of chapels can be explained by the predominance of the old religious population from the 17th to the 19th centuries. The 'pogost' or a big churchyard including summer and winter churches, a bell tower and a graveyard put up in a village or a hamlet or nearby was also typical of the area.

From the architectural point of view, dwelling houses were very diverse in that territory. This can be explained by the variety of ethnic groups who lived there, namely Karels, Vepses, and Russians, all of whom had their own traditions and culture. Home paintings were very popular there, and a good number of buildings decorated both with façade and interior paintings are still preserved.

In northwest Russia a certain manner of folk painting emerged in the 18th century. Technically, it was based on a free brush touch and the application of white contour lines. Free and easy style of painting, bright colouring combined with technical virtuosity are



Painted gable on a dwelling house in Kargopolye and Poonezhye

the most distinctive features of that form of folk art. In addition, artistic workshops in the region producing illuminated manuscripts, icons, pictures, painted furniture and utensils influenced that manner a lot.

Some of those items preserved until today prove that the folk painting of houses of the later period followed in style this artistic school of the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries in many areas of the Russian north. In particular, that influence is apparent in floral patterns with rose motifs widely spread in the North. The bright polychrome palette of the Novgorod artists, the adherence to pure local tones, and the free manner of paintbrush movement developed in herbal patterns also deriving from Novgorod made up the source of that later artistic tradition.

That influence was often an immediate one. For instance, there is evidence that Mikhei Abramov dwelling in the Zaonezhye area acquired his skill in painting in the monastery and later taught his son Ivan Abramov who began to work with his father when he was 12 years old. Father and son painted churches, chapels and icons.

Peasant artists also decorated distaffs, birch bark articles, shaft-



Paintings on the balcony and gable of the house of Bechin in North Dvina; painter: Timofei Makarov

bows, sledges, as well as houses. Almost everywhere they worked not only at home but took to the road looking for commissions. For example, the Tarakanov brothers or artists of the Semyin family from the village of Maloye Konevo painted houses in the Kenozero villages and in other places.

The bush-shaped bouquet, the stretched or curved branch and complex floral compositions often in vases were the favourite pattern motifs of paintings. Bouquets were composed of lily-tulips, frontally-painted rosette-like flowers, apple-balls and roses. In between flowers and long, curved leaves, white, red, black and blue birds were painted. Rose-apples, rosettes and dog-rose flowers were veiled with pleached thin shoots, tendrils and curves. Frequently that type of composition included a picture of a lion. In gables of several preserved houses one can see the motifs of lion and grapevine side by side with rich floral patterns decorating a balcony. The vine symbolised prosperity and wealth of the house and a lion had protective functions.

However, it is important to underline that traditions of different ethnic groups are sometimes seen in peasant paintings. The interacting cultural and artistic traditions could serve as an explanation for the nearness in style and even the commonness of Russian, Karelian and Finnish peasant paintings on wood. From the 11th century the populations and folk art in these regions developed under similar historic and cultural circumstances and were under the influence of the same factors, traditions and phenomena.

Many houses (e.g. in Zadnyaya Dubrova village) are four-wall *izbas* and as a rule have four windows on their façades. The decorative paintings of those houses are combined with carved battens. The colour scheme of the gables harmonises with the ornamental paintings on the external architraves. The simplest type of decoration was colouring battens in stripes. The most widespread composition included a triple partition of the pendent roofing with flowers in the centre of each and blue gables with stars imitating a 'starry sky'.

The façade paintings of the house from Iglin Ruchei village show that the folk artist was influenced by the Art Nouveau style. The figures of the master and mistress were painted on the sides of the central gable window and the pendent roofing was decorated with pictures of 'exotic' fruits – pineapples, peaches, pears, and bunches of grapes painted on the white background. The floral pattern consists of roses amidst cornflowers, bluebells and other field flowers. Those paintings highlight the decorative character of the gable of that two-storey house.

There were also several pieces of painted furniture in the interior of the houses. Panelled partitions were often ornamented both with paintings and carving; a radiant rosette was the basic motif of the latter. The cupboard and drawer panels were decorated with paintings in dark blue and brown colours with white shades. Stylised flowers were symmetrically arranged and painted in rather a dry manner.

Paintings of North Dvina

In that territory, one can find several types of paintings related to three historic cultural areas. The first and most acknowledged artistic centre bears the name of the town of Verkhnyaya Tot'ma. Many famous artists worked there, but the most renowned and outstanding was Timofei Makarov. He was lame and received the related nickname Kalets. His father was also a painter who decorated distaffs, wickerwork boxes, shaft-bows, chests, etc, but also ful-

filled church commissions. Timofei worked with his father and most of the façades painted by him are still preserved in many villages. One of the most interesting examples is the house in the Keras village. Its colouring and picture of the 'paradise garden' perform wonders not only with floral patterns but also with pictures of animals, namely of an ox and a horse presented in heraldic manner.

The Chistyakov sisters, whose father was also a painter or '*malyar*', worked in that region, too. They acquired their mastery from him and decorated house interiors, cupboards, doors, partitions and façades. Their bright and colourful painting evenly covers the surface with a vivid and supple ornament. Their herbal and floral patterns are in an ornate style but composed harmoniously and symmetrically. In some cases, bushes symbolising 'a tree of life' and crowned with tulips are put into vases while hens walk about. There are also pictures of tulips found in ancient Russian books and northern manuscripts, on traditional Russian enamels of the 17th century and on the wall frescoes of Moscow stone churches, etc.

Paradise birds or the Sirin bird are depicted in those paintings in rather an ordinary manner, though the latter was a favourite figure always placed in the centre of the composition. The bird symbolised the joy of life and the idea of growing life force. Sirin was also a symbol of heaven and water and its cult survived the Christian epoch when it was linked to earthly happiness.

In the Upper North Dvina *izbas* interiors were decorated with another type of painting. For instance, paintings by the artists Yurkin, Orlov or the Zakochurin brothers dating from the end of the 19th century covered the fielded panels which partitioned off the stove. Interesting examples of doors leading to the cellar, of those closing the stove stairs and of others closing a wash-stand exist. All these were unique elements of fitted furniture in a peasant house. Paintings were in oils, their bright red or blue or rose background was covered with bunches of flowers of the most diverse and exotic types and shapes. The petals were outlined with white in a style which was not as graphic as in the previous area but very picturesque. Paintings were brightly spotted with roses and the entire living space of a house formed an ensemble, including the building elements and the furniture.

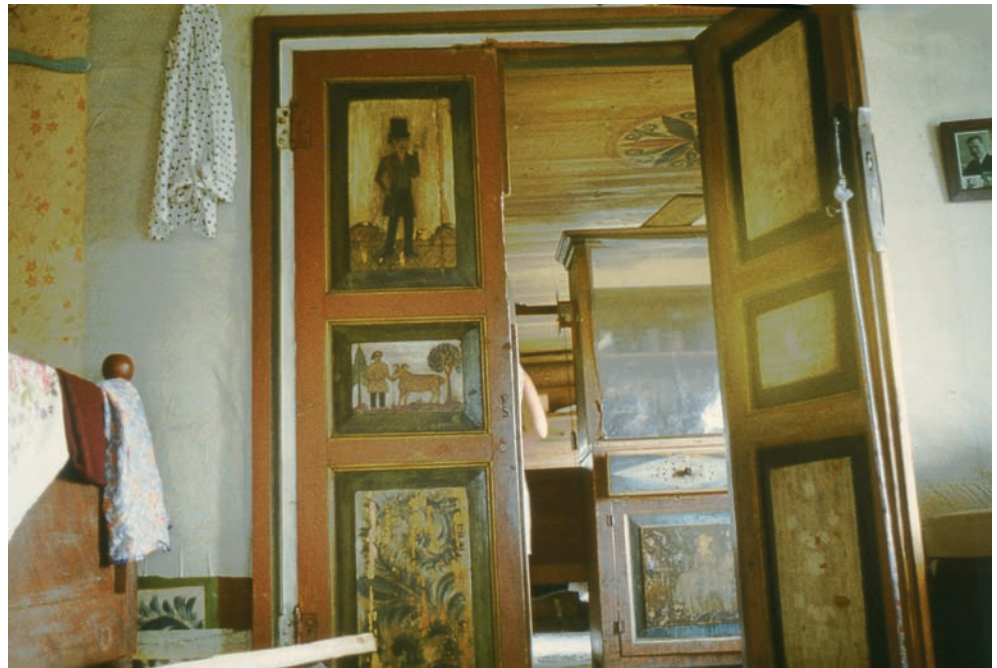
Paintings of the Lower North Dvina do not show birds or animals and are rather monotonous. The main ornament consists of floral rhombus patterns painted in bright sunny colours and on a light background.

Unfortunately all the houses mentioned above have not been put on the heritage preservation list at the federal or local level. They have not been studied yet by specialists from local or state museums, including the open-air museums.

Paintings of Povazhye

In some sense these monuments of folk art were luckier. Here peasant paintings resemble those of the Verkhnyaya Tot'ma area. The artists used the symmetrical composition of three flowers in the centre of a surface with stems and leaves stretching from it and with a white outline. Those paintings were made by foreign artists from the southern Kostroma region.

But that was the area where the Petrovsky family of artists, the most famous artistic family in the Archangel and Vologda regions, lived in the middle of the 19th century. Many houses here were painted by those artists who often showed the lion and



Painted door in the house of the Petrovsky family in Povazhye

unicorn motif, or a lion and a horse on the sides of a blossoming tree, or the pair of lions motif. A picture of a lion was typical for local monuments as the icon painters also used that exotic image. On an icon from the 17th century derived from the Vologda region in its composition and devoted to the Last Judgment the apocalyptic beast was presented as a lion with protruding tongue.

That heraldic type of composition was already used in ancient Russian art from the 16th century onwards. It is probable that an important role in the penetration of that motif into folk art was played by the emblem of the Moscow Printing Yard. Besides, a number of European utensils acquired at fairs, including crockery and dishes with pictures of heraldic character, were imitated.

The house of the Petrovsky family called 'Aleshkin' after the name of its master and the head of the family provides the most interesting examples of those paintings. The façade decorations were typical of those artists, but the interior ones were unique. Here the painted door panels showed particular pictures of peasant family life, e.g. a portrait of a master, a hunting scene, a peasant and a cow in the meadow, etc. The panels of the stove partition were also very picturesque and presented portraits of members of the tsar family and its retinue. Those paintings demonstrate both an urban and a European influence. It is known that artists from that family worked in St. Petersburg and theoretically could have had contact there with some foreigners from the Nordic countries.

Unfortunately that house is already demolished. At the beginning of the 1970s it was discovered by specialists, its paintings were renovated and after that it was put on the list of protected local heritage. It accommodated a branch of the local lore museum but neighbours in the village of Churkovskaya where the house was located gradually left it and the settlement was deserted. The threat that the house could be demolished emerged. In that situation workers from the Archangel open-air museum moved the main painted interior items to the museum. At the moment those paintings are included in the museum collection and presented on travelling exhibitions, but the museum has not succeeded in moving the house.

Another example of façade paintings by the Petrovskys used to be found in the village of Pakshen'ga. On the house gable portraits of its master smoking a pipe and his young mistress apparently dressed in urban vogue were painted. Under the balcony on the battened surface one could see protective pictures of lion and unicorn, flower bunches symbolising a tree of life and picturesque floral ornaments.

The fate of that house had much in common with that of the house mentioned above. The difference is that the deserted house was bought by an architect from Moscow in order to prevent its demolition and to renovate its paintings. Later on, the house was pulled down and the paintings were given to the Archangel Museum of Fine Arts where they were included in its collections. Peasant portrait paintings by the Petrovskys obviously belong to a rare phenomenon in the folk art of the Russian North and need further investigation. They demonstrate the mastery and individual artistic manner of the painter who may have been acquainted with European principles of interior decoration.

Paintings of the Mezen' and Pinega rivers region

In the 1880s a painter called Ivan Orlov worked in the Mezen' area. It seems that it was he who decorated the house of Vasily Klokotov which was one of the unique monuments of local wooden architecture. The house and farmstead, the social and cultural context of their formation and the history deserve particular investigation (this was undertaken by the author about 20 years ago and was linked to the project of moving the house to the open-air museum in Malye Korely). In practice the house was transferred only a year ago and recently its restoration began. Meanwhile it is still unclear whether the original façade paintings will be restored or if they will be replaced by a copy of the original preserved in the museum depository.

The battened pendent roof of the house was covered with a pattern consisting of flowers and grape bunches. The gable painting showed heraldic figures of lions with ducks and geese above them. In the same part of the gable one could see a picture of a man cross-



Semi-destroyed historic wooden house in Tomsk, Siberia (Photo: Jean-Luc Bruandet)

ing the river from one bank to another in the manner of a rope-walker (symbolising the transition to the other world). The external architraves, elements of the porch, the doors and other decorative details were painted red because that colour also has a protective function.

The interior of the dwelling space was quite traditional for that territory. It included the very interesting panelled partition separating the main room from the female space near the stove. Partition paintings represented flowers in vases which were executed in a graphic manner with white outlines together with sketches of diverse fenced foot-bridges.

Coloured paintings of the dwelling houses in sites near the Pinega' river are very simple and look like drawings of chess patterns with different colours of black, white and orange or others on the facades of the houses. Sometimes the red colour could also be found in the decoration of the windows.

On the whole the experience gained is explicit about all the difficulties of preserving peasant paintings and drawings in dwelling houses that are more than 150 years old and survive in a living rural environment. Modern constructions in the settlements on the one hand and the depopulation on the other result in losses to that very important and fascinating form of folk art. Of course, some of those painting can be preserved and shown in regional museums; some can be moved to open-air museums. However, local museums *in situ* could also be established on the base of such small architectural complexes in historical villages and hamlets, though that would need special decisions and organisational effort. The latter could only be successful with support from local and regional authorities, private business and the population.

Dr. Olga Sevan
Russian Institute for Cultural Research
Russian ICOMOS, ECOVAST

Wooden Historic Houses in Tomsk, Siberia

The pictures of decaying houses in Tomsk, provided to ICOMOS by the French documentary film maker Jean-Luc Bruandet, are just some examples of countless historic wooden buildings in Russian towns and villages threatened by decay. In 1980, there were about 2800 wooden houses in Tomsk which could be considered as monuments; by 2003, only about 1400 were left, 70 percent of which were in a very critical condition.