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Under pressure: the images of the Italian Renaissance in the higher architectural education in the USSR in the age of Stalinism

Rationale

The history of Soviet architectural education cannot be viewed without the ideological context which shaped the curriculum, courses content and syllabuses, literature, illustrations, etc. On the one hand, Italian Renaissance was a great source of the inspiration for the soviet architects in 1930s – 1940s, on the other – it should had been presented to the public with great caution to serve the goals of the Soviet state. One way of translation of the images of the Italian Renaissance to public were the schools of architecture, so the Soviet architects' representations of the Renaissance should had been established during the educational process, notably in courses on history of art and architecture.

The Soviet approach to higher education was (as in many other areas) highly centralized and standardized¹. So, the curriculum developed in Moscow and Leningrad were transferred to other educational institutions all over the country with minor changes. Thus, the curricula and syllabuses of art and architectural history used in the leading higher art education institutions in Moscow and Leningrad represent the Soviet approach to the Italian Renaissance in general.

Purpose of the study and research questions

The main purpose of this study is to reconstruct the image of the Italian Renaissance in the in the Soviet higher architectural education curriculum in the age of Stalinism (1922 – 1953) – through content of the courses on history of art and architecture, translations of the major Renaissance texts and illustrations used in the educational and publication process. The lower boundary refers to the period when Lenin lost his power and Stalin, on contrary, increased his influence on politics and culture. The upper boundary designates the death of Stalin on 5th of March 1953 and the beginning of the Khrustchev era, where soviet cultural and educational policies had significantly changed.

¹ Svidkovskij, D. O. (2003). Russian traditions in teaching the history of architecture. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians / Society of Architectural Historians*, 110-120.

The research questions are:

1. How Italian Renaissance was represented in Soviet architectural curriculum in the age of Stalinism?
2. Which texts on the Italian Renaissance were available for Soviet architectural students and architects?
3. What were the sources of images that were used in educational process and publications?

Thus, this work will have three parts. In the first one I will explore the image of the Italian Renaissance in the Soviet architectural curriculum, using the archival sources – study plans, lists of literature, reports from staff, etc. The second one will address the second research question and will be devoted to the texts – translations, commentaries and secondary literature that was available (and especially published) during the period of interest. The third one will address the third research question, correspondingly, and will be devoted to the transfer of images of the Italian Renaissance buildings from Italy and other countries to USSR.