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**„Konstantin Melnikov, architect “. An Evolutionary Path to the Soviet Architecture (1917-1937)**

In my dissertation, I study the work of the prominent Russian architect Konstantin Melnikov (1890-1974). Although a museum, dedicated to the architect, was inaugurated in his house in 2014, the most significant part of his artistic legacy remains inaccessible to researchers. The start of his career coincided with the events of the October Revolution. Melnikov's Soviet pavilion, built at the Paris *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in 1925, gained him international recognition and became a landmark of a new Soviet architecture. In Stalin's era, the architect was slandered as a "formalist" and confronted with an occupational ban.

My research examines the genesis and development of Melnikov's creative conception. It aims to reveal the essential features of Melnikov's formal language and to define his contribution to the development of „the modern language of architecture“ (Bruno Zevi). Moreover, it is relevant to answer further questions: How does Melnikov's compositional method differ from the method of constructivist architects? How did his creative principles transform themselves in the light of changes in the Soviet Union's cultural policy? How could it have happened that an internationally recognized architect and a leading government contractor was eliminated from the Soviet architecture?

My dissertation focuses on the analysis of Melnikov's works and their design principles. This analysis rests on the concept of visual polyphonicism, coined by Vyacheslav Loktev. In the book *„Baroque from Michelangelo to Guarini. The problem of style“*, published in Moscow in 2004, Loktev studied a particular compositional approach, rooted in Michelangelo's use of contrapposto, which had been further developed in the Mannerist and Baroque architecture.

Like musical polyphony, visual polyphonicism is based on the principle of imitation. A form or a figure, which can be designated as the main theme, is imitated in the other parts of the composition. Essential in this imitation is a contrast (opposition) between compositional elements, which together do not lose their independence. As a result, there emerges not a hierarchy, but a dialogue of forms. An example of this can also be found in Melnikov's executed works (Makhorka tobacco pavilion in Moscow, 1923; the Soviet pavilion in Paris, 1925; Workers' clubs in Moscow, 1927-1929) and in his unrealized plans. Such compositional approach reveals a connection of Melnikov's formal language with the architecture of the past and at the same time underlines its distinction from the dogmas of academic classicism as well as the International Style.

Melnikov's entire oeuvre could be interpreted, on the one hand, as a transitional stage between the classical and the new anti-classical tradition and, on the other hand, as an experiment, meant to synthesize both traditions and find a way for developing the modern architectural formal language. In this respect, there emerges a question whether Melnikov's work can be deemed as an example of Mannerism Revival in the Modern architecture.

Although Melnikov's numerous projects were not implemented, his distinctive motives can be found in the realized buildings of such architects as Norman Foster, James Stirling, and Renzo Piano.