

ART ACADEMY OF LATVIA

KARĪNA HORSTA

ARCHITECT ERNESTS ŠTĀLBERGS (1883–1958)

Doctoral Thesis Summary

For Ph. D. degree
in Music, Visual Art
and Architecture

Sub-field: Art History
and Theory



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Scientific supervisor
Dr. habil. art. Eduards Kļaviņš

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The doctoral thesis was written at the Art Academy of Latvia from 2016 to 2023.

The work contains an introduction, two chapters with several sub-chapters, epilogue, conclusions, a list of bibliography and sources as well as four appendixes.

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LSA, coll. 95, reg. 1, file 139, p. 16.

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INTRODUCTION

Topicality of the Subject

Architect Ernests Štālbergs (1883–1958) is an outstanding creative personality whose complex destiny is a rich source of information not just about his valuable legacy but also about the influence of the 20th century socio-political challenges affecting art and creative networks enabling the transfer of ideas and practices across the wider artistic and cultural scene in both Latvia and its neighbouring regions.

Štālbergs is a key figure in Latvia's 20th century architectural history, his status revealed not only by his creative legacy but also by the generations of young professionals he trained. They shaped the modernist architectural landscape in both Latvia and exile. His output demonstrates the development from academic Neo-Classicism cultivated at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts (below SPAA) in the 1910s to the Functionalist language of forms in the 1930s to which he remained faithful in his last years, despite Socialist Realism inculcated by the Soviet power. Štālbergs' years-long work at the University of Latvia (below UL) Faculty of Architecture was as significant as his architect's practice.

Štālbergs' life and work was directly influenced by the 20th century dramatic political history, starting with the First World War and the collapse of the Russian Empire and ending with the triple occupation of Latvia during the Second World War and the following Stalinist years. The wishes of various regimes to instrumentalise the architect for their ideological goals and

his attempts to protect his creative principles strongly reveal the problems of relationships between the state power and the artist.

The genre of an informatively rich monograph focused on a single personality has developed significantly in Latvia's art book publishing but architects are underrepresented in it. Although Štālbergs can be reasonably seen as an authority and one of the founders of Latvia's modernist architecture, no detailed monographic study has been dedicated to him. Architects' activities from the inter-war period are generally not much represented in the historiography of Latvia. The main reason is related to the fact that architects went into exile and their personal archives were also either moved or they perished. Štālbergs is an exception here, as his rich personal archive has come down to us. Therefore, the topicality of the thesis is based on the little-studied professional output and creative legacy of Štālbergs, analysed in the context of the period's socio-political processes and architectural phenomena of Latvia, the closest region and Western Europe.

The subject, aim and tasks of research

The subject of the thesis is Ernests Štālbergs' professional activity and stylistic development of architecture in the context of topical architectural trends and the 20th century political history.

The aim of the thesis – to prepare a detailed, archives-based, biographical monograph about the architect that would interpret his life and works as part of the epoch's architectural phenomena and socio-political situation. Several tasks were set to achieve this aim:

- 1) To study architectural life and leading stylistic tendencies during Štālbergs' lifetime (in line with the chronological boundaries of research from 1883 to 1958; in some cases, such as in the overview of Štālbergs' students, later years are examined too);

- 2) To collect, select and systematise information about Štālbergs' professional, pedagogical and creative activities, mainly based on archival materials;

3) To analyse and interpret the obtained materials in the context of the architect's biography, leading architectural trends and the period's socio-political situation;

4) To interpret Štālbergs' construction designs and implemented objects, considering their functional meaning, establishing social and political semantics, analysing forms in detail and revealing stylistic development of his architecture;

An additional task would be to create a full list of Štālbergs' construction designs with precise titles and dates, also accumulating the rich visual material for the needs of the monograph gathered in the architect's collection at the Latvian State Archives (below LSA).

Materials of research

The research is largely based on the study, analysis and interpretation of materials found in Ernests Štālbergs' collection at the LSA of the National Archives of Latvia. However, useful primary information was gathered also from other LSA collections as well as from the Latvian State Historical Archives (below LSHA) of the National Archives of Latvia, archives in Russia, Latvian museum collections and interviews with Štālbergs' students. To reveal the context, the author has found significant research materials in publications dated to the architect's lifetime as well as in later ones, especially by the architects in exile. Also useful were latest local and foreign scientific studies, especially recent monographs about modernist architects. To broaden the panorama of the epoch, content analysis of historical periodicals was important too. Therefore, information from diverse publications since 1906 to 2022 has been used and analysed in the thesis.

After the architect's death, his documentary legacy ended up in the property of the Architects' Society that handed it down to the Latvian SSR Central State Archive of October Revolution and Socialism Building (CSAOR) in 1966. Careless systematisation and registering of materials in the Štālbergs' collection created at CSAOR back then hindered comprehensive studies

and created significant problems for earlier researchers (Valentīna Valeskalne, Jānis Lejnieks, etc.). Only in the mid-1990s the collection was processed and systematised again, the content of files being precisely described and all materials divided in two registers in an orderly manner, thus giving researchers a comprehensive view of Štālbergs' legacy.

As a result, the LSA collection no. 95, register 1, contains 562 files with more than 22 000 documents by Štālbergs. These are mainly materials of the architect's creative work – documentation, correspondence, notes, sketches, drawings, technical drawings and photographs of both realised and unrealised designs, as well as his student works and materials, drawings, paintings and sketches of his student days. The collection also holds testimonies of Štālbergs' scholarly and pedagogical work, biographical documents, photographs, accumulated visual materials (especially about Italy) and materials about subjects interesting for him and his colleagues' output. Conversely, register 2 contains his collection of photo negatives and slides, about 7300 units in total. All files of register 1 have been examined during the research while register 2 has provided valuable testimonies of Štālbergs' travels and high-quality visual material for the image appendix of the thesis.

Methodology and scientific novelty of research

Several research methods established in art history were used in the doctoral thesis alongside the interdisciplinary biographical approach used by historians. Empirical examining of original materials was followed by interpretation, using formal, comparative and stylistic analysis and the typological method. Also, the method of social art history proved useful in some aspects, closely intertwined with formal analysis and biographical approach, the latter encompassing the method of oral history too.

The formal analysis of architecture has been carried out according to a unified scheme devised by the

author, thus getting to a more comprehensive view of the object and more original conclusions. This method was used already in the author's previous publications but was developed and adjusted to the specificity of this thesis. The scheme envisions the course from the general to the particular, describing large elements and factors of the object's shape at first and turning to details afterwards. Such an analysis of either the construction design or the implemented object allows to take up consecutively its construction history, situation, architectural volumes, façades, layout, interior and furnishings. Each section encompasses several issues adjustable to each case and extendable if necessary. The section of construction history traces the course of the project, outlines the context and gives the informative basis. The situation part describes the location of the object in the urban environment and the building plot. Architectural volumes refer to their composition and character as well as construction and materials. The section of façades establishes the hierarchy of façades and describes their composition. The layout part characterises the layout of each floor and general layout traits. Description of layout also involves the mutual relations of stairs, entrances and various connections and their logic. Interior and furnishings section typifies the function, form and spatial organisation of the analysed space, decorative finish and its materials as well as furnishings and individual pieces of furniture. Finally, the analysis is complemented with the overview of potential influences and analogies, placing the object in a wider context and creating well-grounded conclusions.

The methods used have allowed achieving the aim of the thesis – creation of a detailed monograph about the architect Ernests Štālbergs. The study presents new conclusions and factual specifications about Štālbergs' life and works as well as establishes concrete phases of stylistic development in his architecture, based on specific analysed examples. The research also stands out by its consistent methodology throughout the work (for example, regarding formal analysis), thus differing from earlier studies. The pre-

vious publications about the architect lacked an elaborated and comprehensive survey of his creative and other activities. Only some episodes or perspectives have been emphasised, creating a fragmented view. One-sidedness was also conditioned by ideological restrictions, as most of researches were done in the Soviet period.

Research conclusions based on previously unpublished original sources were used to reconstruct Štālbergs' biography as precisely as possible, revealing his personality, interests, creative and pedagogical principles, ideological tenets and the architectural mode of thought. Information obtained from original materials was enriched with the context of architectural phenomena and socio-political situation; Štālbergs' personality was a prism through which to study a certain epoch in Latvia's architectural history, thus enriching the historiography of the field and revealing connections with the leading 20th century centres of architectural ideas in Europe and in the nearest region.

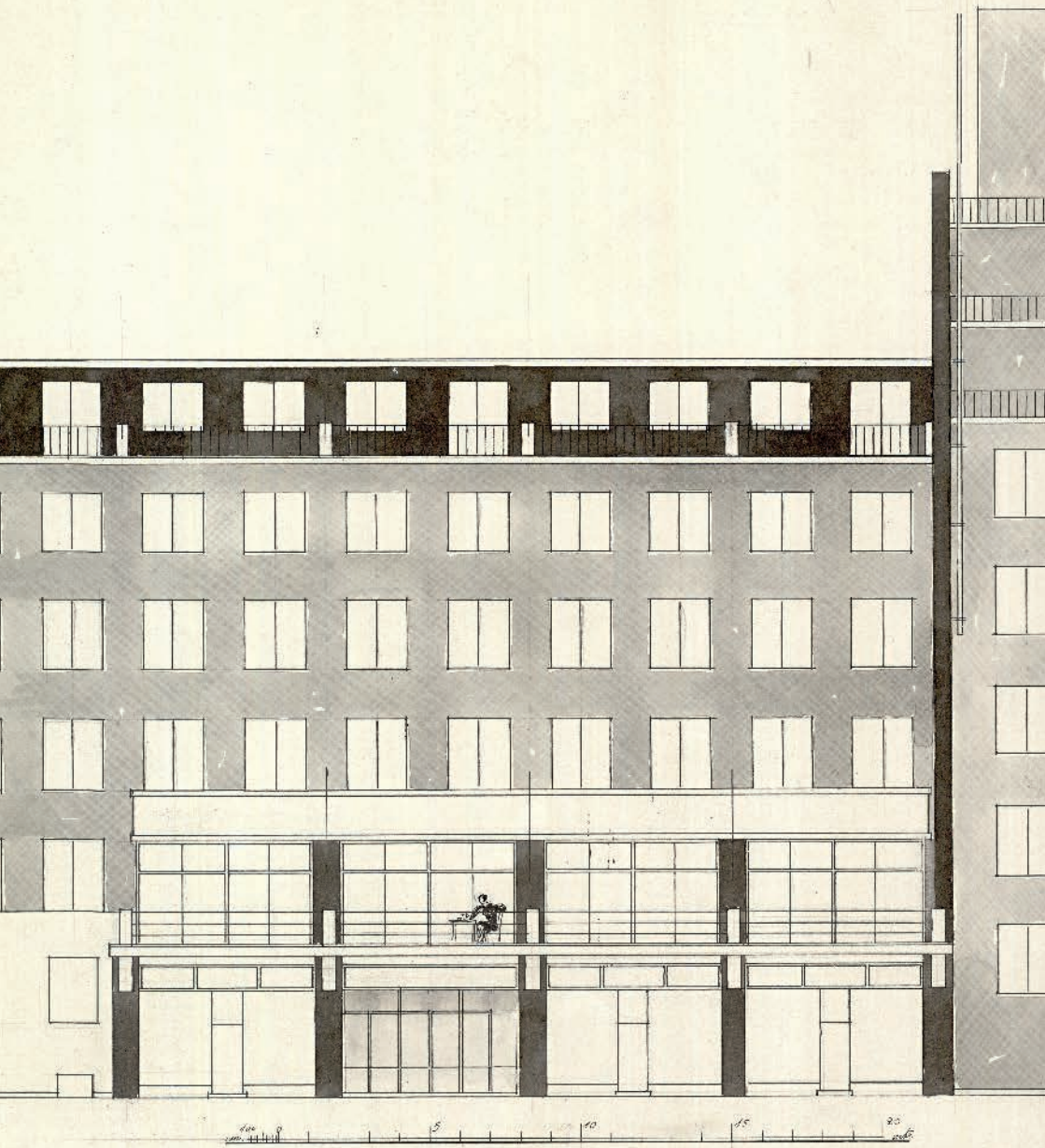
Structure of the doctoral thesis

The doctoral thesis contains an introduction, two chapters with several sub-chapters, epilogue, conclusions, a list of bibliography and sources as well as four appendixes. The main text of the study is divided in two chapters that deal with Ernests Štālbergs' life and works separately. The first chapter "Ernests Štālbergs' Biography" is devoted to the survey of the architect's biography and divided in six sub-chapters, marking certain periods of the architect's life and partly coinciding with the political history. The second chapter "Stylistic Development of Ernests Štālbergs' Architecture" presents a stylistic overview of his creativity. It is divided in five sub-chapters, consecutively tracing all stylistic phases of Štālbergs' architectural development. These phases are identified by detailed analyses of particular works.

The account is largely chronological but some deviations from this principle are introduced to achieve

a full-fledged view of Štālbergs' life and work as well as textual unity in both chapters. Examples are a unified analysis of some typological group (such as residential buildings) in a sub-chapter or some general thematic aspect unrelated to a concrete period, for instance, in the sub-chapter "Horizon of Interests and Theoretical Views".

The research is complemented with four appendixes. The first appendix is a concentrated list of the architect's biographical data, focused on the main reference points related to education, professional and public activities. The second appendix is a table of all known works by Štālbergs, providing information about the title of the project, its implementation, date, authors, location, state of preservation, etc. The third appendix contains data about the graduates of the UL Faculty of Architecture and their involvement with the three architectural workshops. The fourth appendix is that of images, divided in line with the chapters of the main text. The image appendix contains 489 images, giving a diverse impression about the analysed objects. Each image has a reference in the main text, an accurate caption and the source of the image.





TEXT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS



Ernestis Štālbergs. Ca. 1923. LSA, coll. 95, reg. 1, file 416, p. 24.

1. ERNESTS ŠTĀLBERGS' BIOGRAPHY

1. 1. Early Years and Studies at Kazan Art School

Ernests Štālbergs was born in Liepāja on 21 August (2 September) 1883. The rapid industrialisation and building boom in Liepāja during the second half of the 19th century directly influenced his professional career. The future architect's father was a carpenter and trained his son in this trade, thus inciting further interest in the art of building.

After attending Liepāja City *Realschule* (1895–1902) Ernests Štālbergs continued his education at the Architecture Department of Kazan Art School that was affiliated to the SPAA. This institution was probably chosen due to its democratic atmosphere, lack of entrance exams as well as the fact that certificate holders could become architects' assistants and easily enrol at the SPAA Higher Art School. During this period, a new school building designed by its former director Karl Mufke was constructed, and Štālbergs got involved as a building technician and also designed decorative metalwork of staircase railings. He graduated from the Kazan Art School with a second-degree diploma and went on to study at the Architecture Department of the SPAA.

1. 2. Studies at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts

The talented draughtsman and art lover Štālbergs was attracted by the close intertwinement of art and architecture typical of the SPAA Architecture Department. Štālbergs' studies at the academy were long,

lasting from 1904 to 1914. Causes ranged from the state's political tensions to the budding architect's financial problems and the academic leave for more than a year during which he and Vladimir Shchuko worked on the Russian Empire's pavilion in Rome.

The manifold and extended study programme was organised in two stages: students took general subjects for the first three years followed by two years at architectural master workshops. After successful completion of general courses, the SPAA granted Štālbergs building rights and he entered the master workshop of Leon Benois. This workshop mainly attracted the most able and talented students. Under Benois' guidance, Štālbergs developed a perfect sense of proportions and volume compositions as well as constructive logics. He also took over his instructor's approach to the studies of architecture, collecting books, visual materials and the broad horizon of cultural interests. Also, Štālbergs' pedagogical methods reveal a direct continuity with Benois' approach, especially regarding the use of tests favoured by both of them. Studies at Benois' workshop meant joining a kind of a closed intellectual club of the professor and his former students – leading St. Petersburg and Moscow architects of the time.

Interest in classical architecture was on the rise among young architects during Štālbergs' student years. Twelve young architects who studied at Benois' workshop and shared this enthusiasm founded the group *Duodecim*; its members considered 15th to 17th century Italian architects as their most important teachers, including Andrea Palladio, Vincenzo Scamozzi, Baldassare Peruzzi, Leon Battista Alberti and Sebastiano Serlio. This was a counter reaction against the eclectic tradition and especially the introduction of Russian Revival motifs that became strongly entrenched in St. Petersburg school of architecture due to in-depth stylistic studies. Besides Štālbergs, the *Duodecim* group included the Lithuanian architect Vladimiras Dubeneckis and architects of Soviet Russia Lev Rudnev and Vladimir Gelfreikh.

In May 1914, Štālbergs received the architect-artist's title for his diploma work "State Council Building on a Capital City Square"; he was given rights to design both secular and sacred buildings, carry out building activity of all types, hold any building positions, lecture in respective educational institutions, use the 10th rank holder's rights in civil service and bear the special academic silver badge. Having completed his education, the architect had career plans in St. Petersburg (Petrograd) but the First World War hampered his chances to launch his own practice.

1.3. Beginnings of Professional Career in St. Petersburg

Štālbergs worked as an assistant in architects' offices already since 1907. This was because of his strained financial situation but he ended up right away in the offices of leading St. Petersburg architects – former students of Benois. Firstly, Štālbergs got experience at the office of Fredrik Lidvall, the architect of Swedish origin, and then worked also with the leading St. Petersburg Neo-Classicist Ivan Fomin. However, the most lasting and successful cooperation developed between Štālbergs and the architect Vladimir Shchuko already since 1909. After their joint work on the Rome exhibition pavilion, they had become close associates holding the same views on artistic matters. As both architects shared a special interest in the architectural heritage of Italian Renaissance and Mannerism, their output is very similar in this period. Štālbergs' early professional career was strongly influenced by Shchuko's individual style.

About 1915–1916, Štālbergs attempted to start his independent architect's practice in Petrograd but it was not easy in wartime conditions. Therefore, immediately after graduation he found a more successful way of self-realisation in the given circumstances. Štālbergs began to work at Elena Bagaeva's Women's Higher Architectural Training Courses, invited by Shchuko who was the director of this institution.

Štālbergs worked in these courses as late as his departure from Russia.

1. 4. Involvement in Artistic Life after the Collapse of the Empire

Štālbergs' highly valued professional and pedagogical skills determined his involvement in the reorganisation of the Petrograd Academy of Arts that began during the Provisional Government shortly after the February Revolution and the Tsar's abdication in March 1917 and continued until the architect's moving to Latvia.

SPAA was prepared for reorganisation during the Provisional Government. To discuss the necessary reforms related to the new state system in Russia, the academy formed a special commission with true members of the academy and representatives of various creative associations as participants, including Štālbergs. Ideas of reforming the academy were often inconsistent during the Provisional Government; therefore, the study process went on largely unchanged up to the October Coup carried out by the Bolsheviks. The main reform ideas were taken over then but their implementation became much more radical.

The October Coup not just drastically shifted the power balance in the leading artworld circles but also introduced great changes in the management of artistic life and education. To receive commissions and work was only possible if one joined the Visual Arts Section of the People's Commissariat for Education. Therefore, most artists with moderate views were forced to join it in autumn 1918. By the end of this year, the Petrograd Collegium of the Visual Arts Section created the Architectural Section organised by Štālbergs and his closest colleagues and like-minded professionals – Vladimiras Dubeneckis, Lev Rudnev, Vladimir Shchuko and Lev Ilyin. Štālbergs' participation in the Soviet state system, like for many artists with moderate views, does not prove his enthusiasm for the leftist ideas upheld by minority; it was more of a survival strategy. His involvement with

various art processes increased since that time. The Architectural Section was tasked with the popularisation of the field, including by thematic publications. It had to deal with the topics of architectural history, research and technical aspects as well as with the creation of a new architecture, meaning both devising new building types and organising design competitions.

After the October Coup, the SPAA Higher Art School was abolished and replaced with Petrograd Free State Art Studios, where the study process was organised on an almost anarchist basis. This educational institution consisted of master studios and only instructors "elected" by students could open their studios. Although Štālbergs did not stand for election, he was given his studio in October 1918. However, the unstable socio-political and economic conditions as well as the new and ill-considered training system hindered the normal course of studies.

At the same time, Štālbergs came to Latvia in 1919, then under the Soviet Russian occupational regime. The Soviet power entrusted the architect with the project of Dole Power Plant and allowed him to participate in the organisation of the Faculty of Architecture at the newly founded UL. Štālbergs was invited by Eižens Laube and Pauls Kundziņš who later headed workshops A and B respectively. They wanted to introduce in the new Latvian architectural school the study model taken over from the SPAA. Štālbergs was offered to head his own workshop at the new faculty but he refused. He witnessed the regime's collapse in Latvia but still risked to cross the front and return to his wife in Petrograd. Štālbergs' career was on the rise after his return. This could have resulted both from the shortage of intelligentsia and specialists who had fled Petrograd due to dramatic survival conditions and his seeming loyalty to the regime proven by his return to Russia.

By 1 January 1920, Štālbergs started to head the architectural workshop at the Architectural Section of the Petrograd Collegium of Visual Arts Section. The workshop had to devise various sample designs. But in summer 1920, Štālbergs became the real head of the

State Free Art Studios. According to the new statute, this educational institution was now led by the Free Studio Council consisting of the teaching staff and student representatives, and Štālbergs was appointed chairman of the council. In November of the same year, the state commissar's post who supervised the Free Studios was liquidated; thus Štālbergs in fact became the head of the entire institution. He proposed a gradual return to order, offering a new management scheme restoring the academic positions of rector, dean, etc. The traditional name of Academy of Arts was brought back again too. The reform also included significant methodological innovations – individual workshops were abolished and the course of studies was implemented through a system of subjects. Štālbergs was among the most active initiators and implementers of these reforms, becoming the first rector of the renewed Academy of Arts. However, he soon resigned this post and became the dean of the Faculty of Architecture.

Here Štālbergs worked out a new programme of architectural studies, aiming to develop technical and artistic knowledge on equally high levels. The programme was based on architectural composition and drawing complemented with three series of theoretical subjects. Štālbergs particularly emphasised in-depth graphic studies of architectural monuments and suggested to his colleagues that these monuments should be selected not because of historical but of constructive principle. An original innovation in architectural training was division of compositional tasks in three groups – “general”, “programme” and “constructive”. Differently emphasised compositional aspects fostered the budding architects' diversity of creative thinking. The new methodological approach demonstrates a wish to break free of the academic tradition oriented towards historical styles, encouraging students to base the building's shapes on functional and constructive reasons. The shared courses for all academy students at the beginning of training suggest similarities with the interdisciplinary stance of the *Bauhaus* school.

Soviet Russia's repressive system and catastrophic daily life conditions in Petrograd urged Štālbergs to return to his homeland. He accepted the repeated offer to head the architectural workshop C at the UL Faculty of Architecture and was urgently elected docent in September 1921. Štālbergs' attempts to settle his optation and return to the native country were hindered by Latvia's over-burdened institutions of foreign affairs as well as obstacles created by the Soviet power. Thus his return was delayed as late as December 1922.

1. 5. Architect and Pedagogue in the Republic of Latvia

Štālbergs returned to his homeland aged 39, being an experienced specialist with 18 years in St. Petersburg behind him. Besides architectural practice, one should note his years-long pedagogical work at the UL along public activities revealing his outstanding reputation in Latvia's cultural circles.

Štālbergs was actively involved also with administrative and practical matters related to the UL and the Faculty of Architecture. For example, he was a long-time member of the library commission at the Faculty of Architecture and represented the faculty at the UL Central Library Commission. During the council meetings of the Faculty of Architecture, Štālbergs regularly suggested which books and journals should be purchased, examined book donations, donated scholarly publications and textbooks himself as well as bought valuable historical and latest scholarly publications for educational needs during his foreign travels. Also, since 1923 he worked out several minor repairs, reconstruction and new construction designs for several UL departments. The 1920s are largely typified by modest undertakings while the 1930s brought more ambitious tasks, including the UL inner yard block design and construction. More projects are related to Štālbergs' involvement with the Faculties of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, probably fostered by his clear ideas

about the needs of medical professionals, as his wife was a physician.

As a head of the Workshop C, Štālbergs was senior docent for the entire inter-war period but, unlike Laube and Kundziņš, he never became a professor, possibly explained by his rather limited interest in writing theoretical scholarly works. Štālbergs revealed his main principles and conclusions to students in the course of training. He had only formulated these in the form of notes not developed into publications, as he considered himself more of a practitioner than a theoretician.

Although the Faculty of Architecture combined the educational approaches of the Riga Polytechnic Institute and architectural training at the SPAA, its curriculum was nevertheless closer to the Polytechnic Institute, complemented with architectural and art workshops modelled after the SPAA. Štālbergs was sceptical about such a curriculum, as it created overload and likely caused long study periods with few graduates. Nevertheless, the education was quite diversified, equally developing technical and artistic skills.

The student ended up in one of the architectural workshops after completion of the preparatory course at the art workshop headed by Vilhelms Purvītis. Statistics of graduates of three workshops demonstrates that Štālbergs' workshop had most graduates measured against the total number of workshop students (Workshop A was larger by a third but student numbers in workshops B and C were similar). Architectural workshops worked according to the same curriculum: compositional tasks developed from simple surveys of buildings, studies of buildings and their details as well as compositions of small architectural forms during the first year to ambitious and complex design tasks in the diploma work. However the training approach in each workshop complied with the head's creative principles, not pertaining to just stylistic categories. Mastering of historical architectural styles typical of the Historicist epoch had become outdated in Western and Russian as well as in Riga's architectural schools during the inter-war period. Creative method



as such became more prominent, not a formal training in the features of one style. Therefore, thanks to the thorough academic education at the UL Faculty of Architecture, Latvia's architects were able to implement more diverse architectural solutions.

"Štālbergs' School" – Workshop C. The workshop's popularity was increased by its graduates' successes in architectural competitions and the prevailing status of Functionalism in the architectural scene (up to 1934) but Štālbergs' progressive approach to architectural training was also likely significant.

Bright representatives of Functionalism and post-war modernism were among Štālbergs' students, like Aleksandrs Klinklāvs, Alfrēds Laukirbe, Nikolajs Voits, Staņislavs Aloizs Borbals as well as Marta Staņa and Arturs Reinfelds. However, most of Štālbergs' students

Outing of the Workshop C.
Sitting in the centre:
Ernests Štālbergs,
Doroteja Feiertāga,
Kārlis Bikše.
Late 1920s.
LSA, coll. 95, reg. 1,
file 417, p. 15.

did not manage to fully realise their potential in the short independence period. Some perished during the war; part went into exile by the end of the war while another part continued working under the Soviet system. Students of Workshop C were more likely than others to be invited to work at the university; several like Voits, Laukirbe and Borbals, also worked with Štālbergs in his architect's practice. High professional skills of Štālbergs' students were also corroborated by their ability to gather most prizes at the 1930s architectural competitions. Klinklāvs deserves a special mention here but Moisejs Česno, Georgs Dauge and Valters Dambrāns earned recognition on a regular basis too. Their competition advantages most probably came from the strongly rational method taught by Štālbergs.

The essential architectural principle of Štālbergs envisioned a rational and logical solution of functional requirements, with each compositional solution rooted in the building's basic purpose and closely connected with its location. This approach was significantly strengthened when the architect took up Functionalism. Therefore, the training observed the principles of constructive logic and modernism – the spatial layout had to be revealed in the façade composition. An important aspect of studies was to teach the future architect to see one problem from different angles without a single right answer. Thus Štālbergs usually made to create at least three versions for the same task. He aimed to teach rational, analytical and critical thinking; therefore, he was very demanding of students' output and pointed out each small matter that upset many students. They also needed to focus on the analysis of the building's construction and inner logic, not stylistic traits and representation of décor. However, most noticed was his method to task all students of that year with one design, publicly analysing each work in a sort of lecture for the entire workshop. This was seen as a top-modern and effective approach.

As an heir of traditions cultivated at the SPAA, Štālbergs paid great attention to the development of good academic drawing skills but did not refute more

modern approaches too. Many benefitted from the academic and time-consuming technique of watercolour washes but, for daily practical needs, Štālbergs encouraged students to draw freely with a soft pencil. He aimed to prepare architects who mastered all graphic means necessary for their work, not just schooled in technical drawing. Štālbergs' best students like Klinklāvs, Staņa, Voits, Borbals, Laukirbe, were talented draughtsmen too. Many turned drawing and various print techniques into their hobbies but some became artists after completing their architectural education.

In line with his conception of architecture, Štālbergs saw it as an important task to familiarise students with the classical heritage and its constructive logic, especially with the buildings designed by Andrea Palladio and Italian Renaissance in general. He urged his students to travel around Europe, especially to Italy, pointing out unique highlights. Besides classical heritage, top architectural achievements of the time were equally worthy of study, as the Faculty of Architecture subscribed to foreign architectural journals, mainly German and Northern European publications. Štālbergs was well informed about the *Bauhaus* school's activities as well as about Le Corbusier but he was particularly attracted by the Nordic modernism.

Štālbergs' pedagogical method united the demanding academic requirements with a modern, pronouncedly analytical and rational attitude to architecture and a strong interest in latest phenomena, thus equipping his students with a more wide-ranging knowledge and the broadest possible experience that successfully prepared them for architects' careers.

Public activities. Ernests Štālbergs' high reputation in Latvia's intellectual circles and on the state level too is proved by his public duties in associations, participation in exhibitions, juries of architectural competitions and consultant's work in various commissions.

He was one of the founders of the Latvian Architects' Society (below LAS) and an active member in the early phase, being also its chairman in 1928–1929.

Štālbergs' period of chairing the society was mainly dedicated to the completion of the Swedish Gate. Štālbergs' participation in the LAS involved exhibiting at its shows, defending architects' interests in various commissions and institutions, submitting proposals and organising design competitions as well as working in competition juries. The architect's erudition and analytical mind earned him a very competent jury member's reputation. Important in this regard was the initiative and involvement of the LAS with the Freedom Monument. Štālbergs was first the LAS representative in the monument's jury but then became a co-author of the project, thus receiving the most important commission in his career.

During Kārlis Ulmanis' authoritarian regime, architectural processes were supervised by the National Building Committee. Štālbergs was re-elected as its council member each year from its founding in 1936 to liquidation in 1940. All this time he was the Riga National Building Committee member, Architectural Issues Commission and Urban Planning Commission member as well as the Chair of the Monuments and Monumental Buildings Commission. This commission was tasked with the issues of architecture and art, examining projects in this field and submitting proposals of new monuments.

This evidences that Štālbergs' range of public duties was related not only to architecture but to fine arts as well. Thanks to the diverse academic education obtained at the SPAA that paid great attention to synthesis of arts, Štālbergs not only had good artistic skills but a deep interest in art too. He willingly collaborated with artists in his projects and was a member of Riga Graphics' Society and the Artists' Society *Sadarbs*. A tradition inherited from St. Petersburg architects' circles and a sort of lifelong hobby for Štālbergs was masterful sketching of contemporaries' portraits in pencil – this way he captured his relatives, colleagues and acquaintances.

Horizon of interests and theoretical views. Ernests Štālbergs was a great authority for his colleagues

and students due to his intellectual's and encyclopaedist's reputation as well as contacts in Europe. Štālbergs not just had extensive and deep knowledge about architecture and other cultural fields but a cultivated taste too. Many of his pastimes, like portrait sketching, interest in art, accumulating his personal library and image collection and study travels around Europe, were taken over from the elitist circles of St. Petersburg architects. However, the architect's personality traits and beginnings of professional career under wartime circumstances fostered a stable, rational approach to architectural issues and a strong interest in latest architectural phenomena.

Štālbergs went on regular study trips to Europe with Italy and Sweden as main destinations. Motives of travelling to these countries reflect two equally fascinating but somewhat opposed directions in the architect's work. Italian architectural heritage gave Štālbergs not only professional but also emotional fulfilment while Sweden became a reference point for the introduction of modern architecture into practice. Travel routes and destinations reveal shifting accents in the architect's creative output – in the 1920s when classical motifs prevailed in his work, the architect visited Italy most often to study historical architecture but in the 1930s when he appropriated modernist means, studies of Sweden and other Nordic countries came to the fore. Štālbergs also went to Germany on a regular basis, visited Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands and Belgium several times and also travelled to Greece, Switzerland and Norway. His travels were often missions related to construction works he supervised or various institutions he consulted.

Already since the first study trip to Italy in 1910, Štālbergs was an enthusiastic researcher of Italian architectural heritage. This trip largely conditioned the entire character of his further work, as Italian architecture became a lifelong fascination. Every trip to Italy was mainly focused on visiting Rome. Štālbergs' knowledge about the ancient city was so comprehensive and wide-ranging that he deserved to be called

a specialist of Roman buildings. Interest in Ancient Rome was revealed in regular public lectures about its architecture but this material was systematised in the training course "Topography of Rome" that Štālbergs presented at the UL Faculty of Philology and Philosophy in the late 1930s and early 40s, preparing a scholarly manuscript under the same title.

Štālbergs' approach to Italian architectural heritage gradually changed – his sketches from the 1920s show liberation from the strict academic tradition typifying the drawings made during his first Italian trip. Štālbergs captured the structure of Roman buildings and the simple, cubic forms of anonymous Italian countryside buildings in a laconic manner. These drawings can be seen as free studies of tectonics, proportions, basic shapes and constructive details, revealing the architect's interest in the interaction between the building and landscape. This proves that Štālbergs had not just an academic interest in Italian architecture, focused on details, but also a subjective enthusiasm for the study of classical architectural archetypes and specific building practices of this country. Such a novel interpretation of Italian architecture is close to other modernists' attitudes, for instance, Le Corbusier's, Adolf Loos', Gunnar Asplund's and Alvar Aalto's who were inspired by the geometry and spatial solutions of traditional Italian buildings (the so-called *Architettura Minora*) for their modernist works.

Štālbergs' connection with Swedish architecture was much more pragmatic. The architect's individual style and Swedish architecture underwent similar phases of stylistic development in the first half of the 20th century. From the 1910s to 1930, a balanced and modest Neo-Classicism or Nordic Classicism prevailed in both instances, rapidly replaced by a moderate and regional Functionalism after the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition. Štālbergs highly appreciated the exhibition conception, aesthetics and the Swedish modernist approach, evidenced by his joining of the Swedish Society of Crafts and Design (*Svenska Slöjdföreningen*), the pronounced interest in Swedish architecture in the

1930s and regularly noted publications in the journal of Swedish modern architecture *Byggmästaren*. Therefore, the 1930s saw a shift in the architect's professional interests and ideological orientation from south to north, and his professional ties with Sweden became much stronger. Choosing the approach of the progressive Nordic country as an example, Štālbergs often visited Sweden hereafter, also encouraging his students to take interest in the architecture of this country. During trips to Sweden, he mainly studied recent buildings and established professional contacts. Nordic architecture was a close and useful model for Štālbergs in respect to climate, building materials, traditions, architecture's social role and mentality.

Štālbergs' personal library card index and image collection demonstrate his surprisingly broad and wide-ranging knowledge, including materials about topical architectural phenomena and latest scholarly publications not just about the history of architecture but also progressive building methods and modern architecture. He was also interested in the theory of architecture and art, interior and furniture design, studies of classical architectural styles (classical architecture, Italian Renaissance, English and French Classicism) and even in such exotic subjects as the buildings of the Maya, Aztec and Inca cultures or Japanese furnishings. Štālbergs had collected a large number of publications in specialist periodicals from almost the entire Europe as well as the USA. Besides articles about concrete, textbook examples of modernism his library featured theoretical works by some most famous Western modernists, like Le Corbusier, Richard Neutra, Bruno Taut, Alvar Aalto and Frank Lloyd Wright, as well as one edition from the *Bauhaus* series. Štālbergs used his collection as a knowledge basis for his own architectural practice and as a source of visual aids for students. He was fluent in Russian, German, French and Italian but was able to read professional texts in English too.

Štālbergs did not leave an extensive theoretical legacy. An idea of the architect's theoretical views can

be glimpsed from unpublished notes and outlines of various public lectures as well as from interviews or discussions published in the press or specialised publications. These sources demonstrate that he favoured modernist ideas already since 1927.

Štālbergs' theoretical stance was focused on the connection between the origins of architecture and its latest phenomena but the range of subjects also included the perception of architecture, assessment of modern architecture and opposition of Historicism and modernism. Theoretical views reveal Štālbergs' wide scope of knowledge, as he referenced art history, philosophy, most recent professional literature and renowned architects' theoretical works, also freely adapting terms from other fields, for example, psychology.

Similarly to most 20th century modernists, Štālbergs was critical of the Historicist method because its form did not reflect the modern age. Apartment buildings were seen as the worst manifestations of Historicist period due to their incompatible form and content. He was also sceptical about the national style prevailing during the Ulmanis' regime, consolidating positions of the bourgeois taste.

The basic modernist thesis "form follows function" was for Štālbergs not a surprising new discovery but an ancient wisdom that he had noticed in the Chinese philosopher Laozi's work *Tao Te Ching*. This approach was somewhat symptomatic, as the leading modernist architects Le Corbusier, Taut, Aalto and others found rationalism in ancient cultures and deliberately appropriated certain building methods and solutions, adapting them to the needs of the new epoch. The continuance of this idea – "exterior like interior" – can be seen as Štālbergs' fundamental, typically modernist architectural principle, meaning that a building should be designed from inside out. However, he did not support the most radical modernist extremes, like enthusiasm for technocratic ideas and formalism.

For Štālbergs' practice and theory alike, architecture was always a unified whole in which all components were mutually connected. He pointed towards

“an inseparable unity embracing the building’s architectural and artistic image, its practical usability and technical, constructive framework”. Štālbergs’ conclusions are close to Frank Lloyd Wright’s attempts to create a universal, timeless architecture and his definitions of organic architecture, envisioning a building that should “grow out” of its situation, must be a shelter from the elements and all of its parts from the tiniest detail to architectural volumes had to be mutually harmonised and natural.

Štālbergs saw the continuance of the classical architecture’s formal purposefulness and utility in the rationalist principles of modern architecture. Therefore, he used to explain contemporary architectural phenomena from a historical perspective, showing the universal nature of the concrete problem and looking for solutions in a broader cultural space.

Štālbergs’ theoretical statements characterise him as a moderate modernist – his views resembled those of Wright and Aalto who developed the modernist theoretical thought and searched for alternative ways. Probably Štālbergs’ most original idea was the search for architecture’s universal constructive logic, connecting historical and contemporary building examples that relates to Frank Lloyd Wright’s theory. Štālbergs was also interested in the problems of architectural perception little represented in Latvia’s architectural theory but linking him to Aalto’s theoretical stance. Some parallels can also be noticed with the directions of Le Corbusier’s interests.

1. 6. Second World War and the Sunset Years

The Second World War with the following occupations by Russian and German totalitarian regimes marks a tragic and complicated period in Ernests Štālbergs’ life.

During the first Soviet occupation, he became the dean of the State University of Latvia (below SUL) Faculty of Architecture, replacing the lawfully elected but dismissed Arturs Krūmiņš. As Štālbergs was the first

Soviet rector of the Petrograd Academy of Arts and well-known in Russian architects' circles, he seemed a trustworthy person for the Soviet authorities. Štālbergs took advantage of this situation – thanks to his diplomatic resourcefulness, the Faculty of Architecture was less affected by repressions and influx of instructors from Russia at that time.

The Nazi Germany occupation replaced the Soviet one and halted all rearrangements of the Communist regime. This period was particularly tragic for Štālbergs' family, as his wife Henriete was Jewish. He was able to keep his job at the university but avoided any public activities that could provoke the regime and even feared to leave his apartment, engaging in passive resistance to the occupation. Although Henriete was saved, the Holocaust affected her sister's family.

Most of Latvia's architects went into exile at the end of the war but Štālbergs chose to stay. He was motivated rather by caution than by the lack of decisiveness mentioned in other architects' memories. Official evacuation to Germany was organised by the Nazi authorities but boat trips to Sweden were dangerous and physically demanding, not allowing to take much of belongings.

The restored Soviet occupational regime used Štālbergs' authority and good reputation to the full, involving him in architectural life since 1945. He was appointed dean of the SUL Faculty of Architecture, received professor's and Honoured Scientist's titles, became an academician, director of the Institute of Architecture and Building at the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences and chaired the Latvian Soviet Architects' Union. Using these recognitions, the occupational power tried to turn Štālbergs into an instrument of its ideological aims but he did not abandon his principles in either architectural training or practice. Due to all these circumstances, Štālbergs was at the centre of the Latvian SSR architectural life from 1945 to 1950.

As the Chair of the Latvian Soviet Architects' Union, Štālbergs attempted to continue the previous traditions established in architects' circles – high

professional ethics, respectful relationships among colleagues and neutrality in public statements; that earned him criticism later.

Shortly after the war, he still held on to a free and optimistic idea about Socialist Realism and its ideological requirements. The comparatively liberal transitional period ended in August 1946 with Andrei Zhdanov's decree marking a period in the USSR cultural policy that tightened ideological control and banned all deviations from Socialist Realism. During the next years, there was a growing criticism of Štālbergs' activities at the Architects' Union and the Faculty of Architecture as well as of his architect's practice. He did not agree because he saw an architect's professionalism as based on objective qualities, not on one's ideological stance. His and regime's interpretations of "Socialist Realism" and "formalism" also did not match. The Soviet power purposely used this uncertainty and fear against the architect. Ideologue Lilija Birzīte was an especially harsh critic of Štālbergs and other architects of the older generation.

Repressions and psychological terror mostly happened at Štālbergs main workplace – the SUL Faculty of Architecture. Since the comeback of the Soviet power, he held the office of the dean as well as headed various departments. The Department of Architectural Design that comprised both preserved (C and D) architectural workshops was under his supervision for the longest period (since March 1945 to April 1950). Workshop C headed by Štālbergs and Workshop D headed by Sergejs Antonovs became a sort of opposites due to dissimilar creative methods of both pedagogues. The modern, progressive approach of the Workshop C became highly recognised among the post-war students with Štālbergs seen as a legendary figure. Architects of this generation perceived the banned following of Western modernist examples and refutation of the pompous Stalinist architecture as a passive resistance to the occupational regime.

Rector of the SUL of the time Matvejs Kadeks had a positive attitude towards Štālbergs and protected

him, although the press abounded with articles accusing the architect of teaching constructivism and formalism to his students. Since 1948, repressions against academic intelligentsia grew into a campaign and the rector could no more ignore the faults listed by ideologues. Students who were members of the Young Communist League became the harshest critics of their instructors – this tactic was chosen deliberately to achieve a greater psychological effect.

Campaign against Štālbergs was launched in late 1948 with a series of articles titled "How long is this to continue?" in the newspaper *Padomju Students* ("The Soviet Student"). The main arguments focused on deficiencies of ideological education and not following Socialist Realist principles but discords between Štālbergs and Antonovs also surfaced. Students informed that both heads of architectural workshops are at odds with each other regarding architectural theory. Workshop C tended towards a functional solution of the building and paid less attention to its exterior while at Workshop D accents were directly opposite. Antonovs' creative method was close to a decorative, artistically free imagination that Štālbergs could not accept. The conflict of both professors split the collective of the Faculty of Architecture, allowing Soviet authorities to carry out more successful repressions against the teaching staff.

When Jānis Jurgens took the rector's office, a "cleansing" campaign began at the university and the building engineer Rūdolfs Mergins was appointed dean of the Faculty of Architecture. He was a Communist hardliner who did not see architecture as art. Mergins resolutely stamped out the usual creative atmosphere at architectural workshops, thus starting to destroy the faculty. The new headship of the SUL and Mergins in particular now could affect the personnel of the Faculty of Architecture not only by criticism from the outside but also from the inside. Teaching staff was subjected to unprecedented institutional control and asked to publicly criticise colleagues, thus destroying the traditional collegial and respectful mutual rela-

tionships at the faculty. A harsh conflict developed between Mergins and Štālbergs who refused to obey the new dean's orders. The SUL headship expected Štālbergs to abandon rationalism as his basic professional principle, i. e., the idea that "a building's façade is (...) a sum of apartments expressed outwards" that "the Soviet architecture has completely abandoned". But the architect had taken a principled stance and refused to voice views that contradicted his opinion, causing outrage of authorities and severe criticism in the press.

The force of repressions is seen from the fact that Štālbergs moved to part-time job at the Faculty of Architecture since the 1949/1950 study year, choosing as his main occupation the comparatively quieter work at the Institute of Architecture and Building of the Academy of Sciences. However, this study year was his last at the university – in April 1950, the architect had to quit the job after 27 years at the Faculty of Architecture. This period coincided with a personal tragedy, as his wife Henriete died after a severe illness. Štālbergs explained his resignation with health problems but physician's statement also mentioned "extended psychological traumatisation".

During the worst period of repressions Štālbergs sharply felt the contradictions of Stalinism – three months before the opening of the Lenin Monument important for the Soviet regime, degrading criticism was directed against him in the press. Assessing the monument co-author's work in such a way, the Soviet authority discredited itself, revealing its hypocrisy and situational approach to art. Štālbergs likely did not perceive this repressive campaign as ordered from "the centre" but rather as excessive zeal of local authorities or personally motivated attacks.

The "cleansing" campaign at the Faculty of Architecture ended with its liquidation in December 1950. This caused student protests; to calm the situation, the Architecture Department as a sort of compromise was created at the Faculty of Civil Engineering in 1951. Reducing and marginalising of architectural education became typical of the next decades when builders

came to the fore in Soviet Latvia but architects lost their leading role.

As the architects' work was strongly controlled in the USSR and Štālbergs' creative credo conflicted with the doctrine of Socialist Realism, he gradually gave up the architect's practice in his late years. He took up only theoretical issues, especially related to the endangered architectural heritage of Latvia.

Štālbergs was among the first true members of the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences (below AS) founded in 1946 and took the director's office at the Institute of Architecture and Building. Initially Soviet authorities were lenient towards local scientists, thus in the first years of activity the AS stood out with enthusiastic research of such locally important subjects as Latvian language, history of Latvian literature or history of architecture in Latvia. The atmosphere was comparatively liberal, allowing for specialists considered unreliable by the regime to take refuge at the academy when they were banned from the SUL.

Štālbergs as a practicing architect lacked the experience of theoretical work, thus he encountered difficulties heading the institute, especially in the training of the new generation for scholarly careers. While selecting the institute's personnel, he attempted to bring together experts of the field and like-minded people but convinced Communists, including the aforementioned Mergins and Birzīte, worked at the institute as well. There were 12 researchers and 10 laboratory assistants at the institute while future plans were much more ambitious – 45 employees in nine sectors and several laboratories. Main directions of research were architecture, urban planning, civil engineering, building constructions and materials, history and theory of architecture but initially the institute also specialised in the research of furniture production, infrastructure problems of modern ports, organisation of public services and amenities.

In line with Stalin's 4th five-year period (1946–1950) tasks, Štālbergs directed the research project "Reconstruction and Development of Cities and Settlements

in the Latvian SSR" related to urban planning issues. Although the plan of research did not include the subject of collective farms (kolkhoz), since 1948 the Soviet regime tasked the institute with the scientific justification of collectivisation as well as the drafting of principles for planning and designing of collective farms in Latvia. Štālbergs had to take part in this process too.

Similarly to the SUL, the AS too was subjected to a broad "cleansing" campaign in 1949–1950. Štālbergs' work in the institute director's post and his chosen personnel were criticised at the AS meetings. In February 1951, a few months before the elections of the new AS presidium, he resigned from the director's post but continued to work at the institute.

In 1951, Štālbergs worked on the manuscript of a collective monograph "History of Architecture in the Latvian SSR from the 16th to the mid-19th Century" that had lost its authors due to repressions. It was to be submitted to the USSR Academy of Architecture for approval. History of architecture was an ideologically sensitive theme in Soviet Latvia because sharp contradictions existed between professionals of the field and Soviet ideologues in the interpretation of architectural heritage. The latter emphasised culture's utilitarian role and were pronouncedly selective in the assessment of architectural heritage, extolling the principle of class struggle. Anticipating obstacles to the manuscript approval from the SA headship at the meeting planned for December 1951, Štālbergs disregarded the institutional hierarchy. He himself submitted the completed study for approval at the USSR Academy of Architecture. Although the academy's reaction was positive, the architect was severely reprimanded by the institute's headship, excluded from the Scientific Council and the work on this publication was brought to a halt. This incident had a negative effect on Štālbergs' other, already approved manuscripts.

The position of ideologues was officially condemned at the scientific conference "On Architectural Issues in the Latvian SSR" in April 1954. This caused a short-lived optimism among professionals of the field

about changing attitudes towards architectural heritage. In the late 1950s, architects took up research of historical subjects in large numbers, earning criticism soon afterwards. During this period, Štālbergs too likely returned to his half-researched theme about the 16th to 19th century architecture of Latvia.

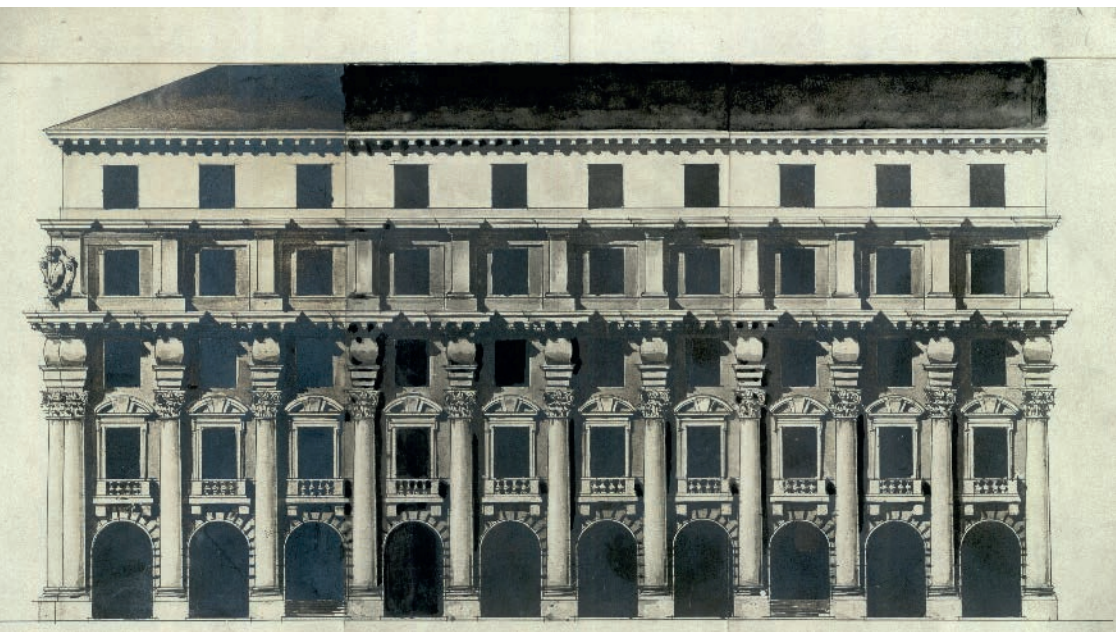
Regardless of that, in the early 1950s Štālbergs had lost his leading researcher's role in the field along with other older-generation scholars. He was entrusted with rather marginal tasks at the AS. However, the professor found an occupation for himself, working on the three-volume publication of the local researcher Johann Christoph Brotze's collection *Monumente*.

As the re-education campaign of intelligentsia concluded in 1951, Štālbergs had been pushed out of the centre of architectural life. Nevertheless, he remained an unofficial adviser and authority for colleagues, students, younger architects and individual officials. He spent his last years in active communication with his colleagues and former students. During this period, his faithful spouse was the long-time secretary of the UL Lilija Kosa who cared as best she could to preserve the architect's legacy for thirty years after his death in 1958.

2. STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF ERNESTS ŠTĀLBERGS' ARCHITECTURE

Ernests Štālbergs developed his architect's practice despite the ideological and economic challenges of the first half of the 20th century, proving himself as an outstanding, progress-oriented professional throughout his 40 years long career. The comprehensive academic education and experience at the regional cultural metropolis of St. Petersburg determined his creative potential and individual style, not always coinciding with local architectural traditions.

Contemporaries were right to point towards the comparatively small number of implemented architectural designs. Reasons were Štālbergs' working habits and high standards set not only for others but for himself too. However, his typological "specialisation" was a major factor as well because most of Štālbergs' projects were those of public buildings and their interiors, especially of healthcare and educational institutions. Most designs were created for the UL needs but not all were realised due to lack of financial resources. The specificity of public buildings – time-consuming, costly work, more complex building regulations and administratively complicated cooperation with the commissioner – led to a smaller number of implemented projects. The next larger typological group designed by Štālbergs is residential houses which could be constructed comparatively quickly if the collaboration with the commissioner went well. Also noteworthy and quite extensive is the architect's contribution to interior and furniture design as well as designing monuments and temporary objects in urban space. He was more rarely involved with industrial buildings and urban planning projects.



2. 1. St. Petersburg Neo-Classicism (1910–1922)

Due to St. Petersburg's rich Classicist architectural heritage and strong academic traditions of the SPAA, Neo-Classicism became a notable phenomenon in the city architecture during the first decades of the 20th century. Štālbergs' involvement with this style was logical because his professional development was directly influenced by St. Petersburg architectural school and his employers Vladimir Shchuko and Ivan Fomin.

Revival of classical architecture was fostered by the urban situation at the turn of the 20th century: because of rapid urbanisation, symmetrical Classicist architectural ensembles were undone and historical perspectival views blocked. As only Russian Revival architecture was considered a protectable value, St. Petersburg risked losing its image of a Classicist city. Architects related to the SPAA began to purposely take interest in Russia's Classicist heritage and urged to protect it.

Ernests Štālbergs.
Liepāja Latvian Society
House design.
1913. Main façade.
LSA, coll. 95, reg. 1,
file 201, p. 17.

Neo-Classicist architects had a unified approach to the classical heritage. They aimed to continue the classical tradition and study its essence intellectually and emotionally but ideologically they distanced from the creative method of Historicism as a free quoting and eclectic combination of various decorative motifs. This distinction is also revealed by the fact that the new generation divided Neo-Classicist architects in “innovators” continuing and revitalising the classical tradition, and “stylisers” using the outdated eclectic approach of Historicism. Therefore, the noted Neo-Classicist architects Vladimir Shchuko, Ivan Fomin and Ivan Zholtovsky became much respected instructors for future modernists. Seeing the classical tradition in the building’s overall disposition, inner logic, compositional scheme and harmony of all elements, not in individual details, was the lifelong conceptual basis for Štālbergs. In the late 1940s this stance caused the clash of views with Sergejs Antonovs, and this conflict can be also interpreted as one between an innovator and a styliser.

Because Neo-Classicism existed for a comparatively short period, no one stylistic trend prevailed but there was an evolution of chosen prototypes from Empire style and Classicism to Renaissance and Greco-Roman architecture, gradually turning to ever older examples.

The influence of *Mir Iskusstva* aesthetics meant that Russian Empire and Classicist examples predominated in the early period; Palladianism was also a significant tradition. Štālbergs’ architectural designs from the early 1910s corroborate this. He diligently studied Andrea Palladio’s compositional rules, reflected in Palladian traits often evident in the study works. Interpretation of Palladian architecture is seen in **apartment building in the residential district “New St. Petersburg”** designed by Ivan Fomin’s architectural office (with Ivan Fomin, Miron Roslavlev, 1911–1914) – part of an unrealised utopian urban project that inscribed Štālbergs as a co-author in the history of Russian architecture. Conversely, in the competition design for the **Officers’ Chapel** dedicated to the First World War victims (1915–1916) near the Cathedral of the Lord’s Transfiguration of

all the Guards in Petrograd Štālbergs freely interpreted Russian Classicism and geometrised chapel forms, revealing impulses from Renaissance architecture alongside gradual advance towards rationalism.

The topmost example of this period is the **pavilion of the Russian Empire at the International Fine Arts Exhibition in Rome** (with Vladimir Shchuko, 1910–1911). It is the single completely realised project of Štālbergs' St. Petersburg period. The pavilion marks the successful start of his architect's career, as this task of the SPAA allowed Štālbergs to prove his capacity for work and shared views with other leading masters of St. Petersburg Neo-Classicism, earning high reputation among professionals. Shchuko and Štālbergs aimed to emphasise the Western side of Russian Classicism; so they chose Charles Cameron's Cold Baths Pavilion (1780–1787) in Tsarskoye Selo Park as a prototype. This was a good model of regional specificity of Russian Classicism and observed the environmental context, demonstrating the development and localisation of Greco-Roman forms. The simple but exquisite pavilion of the Russian Empire united basic forms of Greco-Roman architecture, influences of Russian Classicism and Empire as well as the Palladian tradition alongside Italian Renaissance and Baroque elements. Geometrised volumes suggested the air of rationalist ideas. The building's architecture shows the tendency towards modernised Neo-Classicism that would typify Štālbergs' works for decades to come, especially the rather severe solution with smooth façades and massive, geometrical architectural volumes.

On the other hand, shortly before the First World War and revolution, Italian Early Renaissance and Mannerism became popular in wider professional circles, reflecting an interest in the classics without canon and the typically Neo-Romanticist individualism. During this time, Štālbergs was under direct influence of Shchuko and created richly decorated designs in Renaissance forms, differing from his typical individual style. Shchuko's impulses and little creative individuality show in the competition design for **the joint stock company**

Tehnogor apartment building in Petrograd (1916) made in a decorative, flat Neo-Renaissance style.

Conversely, **Liepāja Latvian Society House** (1913) design reveals Štālbergs as a budding rationalist with the building's layout strongly following the task and the architectural volume based on practical considerations. Functionally well-solved classical representation and spatial effects enhancing solemnity indoors discorded with the Historicist-style rich, lavish and monotonous façade inadequate for a public building and untypical for the architect. Štālbergs here quoted from two of Palladio's works – *Palazzo Chiericati* (1551) and *Loggia del Capitaniato* (1565) in Vicenza. The pronounced decorativeness of the façade demonstrates influences from Shchuko. The main spatial accent of the house (social gathering hall with a stage) was placed obliquely in the depth of the plot. Such an angled situation of the great hall in respect to other premises became Štālbergs' favourite means in designs of theatre buildings and society houses.

During the last phase of Neo-Classicism coinciding with the post-revolutionary period, laconic interpretations of Greco-Roman architecture became wide-spread, as clearly shown by Štālbergs' last works in Russia. An example was the **Trinity (then Equality) Bridge setting** (1918) prepared for the first anniversary of October Coup and modelled after Ancient Rome's triumphal parades, uniting ages-old classical representation and contemporary trends. Conversely, the heritage of Ancient Roman architecture was creatively interpreted by Štālbergs in his **Dole Power Plant design** (1919) where he modernised the semantically close forms of aqueducts and the **Victory and Fallen Soldiers Monument** competition design in Riga (1922) inspired by the Arch of Titus (ca. A.D. 89).

2. 2. Modernisation of Classical Tradition in Latvia (1923–1926)

The economic condition of the newly founded Republic of Latvia was dramatic in the first post-war years. Regardless of gradual stabilisation of the state

and enthusiastic new construction, the situation was not favourable to the field of architecture. Therefore, the priorities of the early 1920s were clearing the war damage, Agrarian Reform as well as the restoration of residential buildings, communications and traffic infrastructure. These problems affected Štālbergs' works in Latvia up to the mid-1920s where rather modest restorations of war-damaged buildings, interior reconstructions or repairs prevailed, complemented by some more notable examples of rebuilding, interiors and sets of furniture. Even more ambitious objects, like Ķēmeri Bathing Institution and actors' sanatorium *Taliņa*, included earlier buildings, also completely or partially destroyed ones.

Predominance of reconstructions along with the interruption in design and construction caused by the war determined the upholding of retrospective traits in Latvia's architecture of the 1920s. Especially well established were National Romanticism and Neo-Classicism. The latter was expressed in a Historicist version more typical of the previous epoch, as illustrated by Eižens Laube's works but a modernised, freely interpreted version was more attractive for Štālbergs. Stylistic features of his Neo-Classical works, professional interests and theoretical perspective allow to link his output with Nordic Classicism. This was a logical continuation of the modernised and geometrised classical tradition evident in Štālbergs' St. Petersburg period but now there was a more pronounced deviation from the academic approach.

A gradual liberation from the academic tradition and connection with Nordic Classicism is seen in **Ķēmeri Bathing Institution sketch and the mud-baths building** (1924–1925). Here Štālbergs freely interpreted the classical heritage, attempting to bring in this complex an Italian, southern element. He was influenced by the architecture of Roman *thermae* but did not try to imitate them, using *thermae* just as a conceptual guideline for the project. This is most evident in the principle of clerestory used to bring natural light into the modern bath cubicles. In this work, Štālbergs had a great interest in

light that he skilfully managed to let indoors, especially with highly raised windows, skylight windows and the principle of the light tube. A certain problem inherited from the St. Petersburg period and still to be solved in the creative work was some dissonance between the reserved façade and rich interiors.

An example of an extremely abstracted Neo-Classicism is **actors' recreation sanatorium Tališa** (1924–1927) in the place of the former Ilkene Manor. The façade has almost no classical details but the volume composition and symmetry suggest the presence of the classical tradition. The building demonstrates Palladian echoes that fascinated the architect in his student years. This is seen in the purity of forms, the tripartite composition and the emphasis on central symmetry as well as a freely interpreted quote from Palladio's *Villa Godi* (1537–1542). The sanatorium's image was approximated to stage design, oriented towards representation and contained some pompous elements like exterior staircase. Due to limited resources, décor was not available for this effect, thus Štālbergs tried to embody this idea of a stage spatially, choosing certain architectural volumes and spatial forms, and adding solemnity and stage-like impression with the stairs. In the interior, these motifs were direct references to the classical amphitheatre and the origins of theatre.

The second creative trend for Štālbergs in the first half of the 1920s was an interest in decorativeness and ornament untypical of later years. This can be interpreted as an episode of localised Art Deco and related to a successful cooperation with the artist Hermanis Grīnbergs (Smilģis' private house, hall of the Faculty of Agriculture, yacht-club *Adonija*, Meierovics couple's apartment, Meierovics' gravesite). Art Deco gained wide popularity back then, as it suited well the small temporary objects prevailing in construction and allowed to achieve low-cost modern effects. Štālbergs used to rely on classical tradition in permanent architectural objects while the eye-catching, fashionable Art Deco was more suited for temporary structures, like exhibition pavilions, interiors and furniture.

However, both stylistic trends in variable proportions appear in almost all works of this period.

A synthesis of Nordic Classicism and Art Deco is evident in theatre director **Eduards Smilģis' private house** (1923–1924) in Riga. Štālbergs purposely emphasised the Italian note in its exterior, the nearest surroundings and the main entrance gate while the interior combined classical artistic elements with Art Deco motifs and peculiar stage design details chosen by Smilģis himself. Štālbergs also designed a lavish, spacious, two-floor hall with a stage that the director used for the production of performances. Construction of the hall covering and division of paintings suggest that Smilģis possibly wanted it to be a small-scale interpretation of the Sistine Chapel (archit. Giovanni dei Dolci, 1473–1481) significant for Catholics. The decoratively saturated and expressive interior of Smilģis' house did not contradict the principles of Nordic Classicism, as lavish interior finish also appeared in such a model example of the style as Alvar Aalto's workers' club in Jyväskylä (1924).

A similar tendency is also seen in Štālbergs' other interior reconstruction and furniture projects as well as temporary objects from the first half of the 1920s. For instance, several projects related to the UL, as **interior design for the Workshop C** (1923) and sketch for the new **clinic of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine** (1926) featured Renaissance motifs, possibly related to the symbolic meaning of educational institutions in the new republic. Conversely, the **pavilion of the Society for the Restoration of Latvia "Lats"** (1924) complied with the nationally oriented Art Deco. A unique and decoratively expressive object was the **floating headquarters of Latvia's yacht-club** on the sailer *Adonija* (1925–1926). Its Art Deco interior contained echoes of the Palladian tradition alongside some modernist elements; the architect also designed rational furniture adorned with geometric motifs. Merge of Art Deco and the classical tradition is equally present in the **apartment interior for the Meierovics couple** (1924–1925) at 33 Krišjāņa Valdemāra Street in



Riga. It had a luxury finish – illusive paintings, Egyptian columns, decoratively painted beams and coffering, and furniture designed by Štālbergs. After Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics' tragic death Štālbergs was entrusted with the **finish of his gravesite** (1925) in Forest Cemetery, also uniting the aforementioned two trends in a similar manner.

Hall interior of the Faculty of Agriculture (1923–1924) can be singled out as artistically most valuable. Initially Štālbergs wanted the interior to repeat the main façade composition of a classical temple with a triangular pediment. As he abstracted and synthesised this conception, the classical tradition was fused with Art Deco and national motifs in the implemented version. The hall was decorated with triangular

Hall of the UL Faculty of Agriculture.
General view.
Photo: 1924.
LSA, coll. 95, reg. 2, part III,
neg. No. 115.

pilasters with star-shaped capitals, classical sculptural medallions with Greco-Roman goddesses and the Latvian herringbone pattern was also envisioned for wall paintings. Štālbergs invited such artists as Hermanis Grīnbergs, Jēkabs Legzdīņš and Jānis Roberts Tillbergs to contribute to the decorative finish, thus creating preconditions for the synthesis of arts.

2. 3. Advance towards Functionalism (1926–1929)

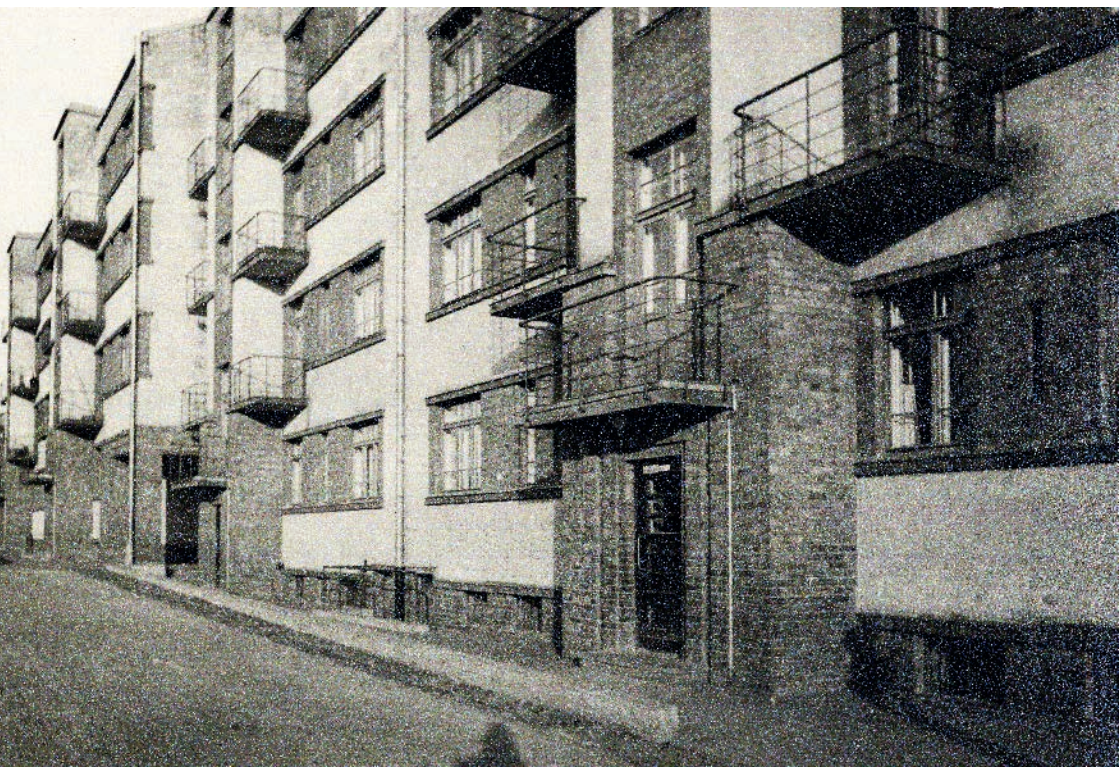
Ernests Štālbergs' cautious and gradual development towards Functionalism is dated to the second half of the 1920s. The architect's active interest in latest architectural phenomena certainly encouraged the adoption of Functionalist forms. Also, contacts with social democrats who became important commissioners of his work could promote this change. Possibly Štālbergs saw social democrats as his ideal commissioner, hoping that they would be more progressively oriented. Štālbergs was apolitical; therefore his motivation to cooperate with social democrats was purely professional. The chance of contacts probably opened with the architect's work in Riga's Commission for Overcoming the Housing Crisis that was related to social democrats. Involvement with this commission familiarised him with the living conditions of worse-off social groups, thus naturally shaping the typical wish of modernist architects to solve social problems by the means of architecture.

Some traits of Functionalism emerged in projects unrelated to social democrats, and this period in general can be described as a time of Štālbergs' creative experiments when he created stylistically very different works. Examples were the modernist finish of President **Jānis Čakste's gravesite** (1927) in Forest Cemetery and **extension of the lecture theatre of the UL Faculty of Medicine in the 2nd Riga City Hospital** (1926–1928). Here Štālbergs strongly followed the building style of Reinhold Schmaeling, introducing individual Art Deco and Functionalist elements. Štālbergs continued Schmaeling's tradition

of red-brick and white-plastered municipal buildings in his design of Riga municipal apartment building at 12 Lomonosova Street.

Stylistic searches typifying his transitional period are most clearly demonstrated by three designs of the ambitious **People's House** in Riga. The first design (1926) shows a Neo-Classical but simple and rational building with a peculiar geometrised corner tower. The volume composition in this and the following designs was borrowed from the aforementioned Liepāja Latvian Society House design. The free, individualised and geometrised interpretation of classical heritage in both exterior and interior allows to link this design with Nordic Classicism. Developing the idea further, Štālbergs created a building design (1927) without the corner-emphasising tower. Now the building reminded of a Renaissance palazzo – it was more symmetrical, unified and presentable, enhanced by rustication and Palladian details of façade finish, also featuring an illusory architectural finish of the stage portal, influenced by Andrea Palladio's *Teatro Olimpico* (1580–1585). Such a pronounced retrospective trend was more characteristic of Štālbergs' Neo-Classical works from his St. Petersburg period. After the project was halted, Štālbergs took part in the People's House design competition (1928–1929) but failed to win recognition once again. He submitted a radically different design to the competition – a markedly modernist building with expressive and dynamic arrangement of architectural masses and a rounded, glassed and tower-shaped corner volume. This is the architect's first consistently modernist design, revealing a rapid turn towards the formal means of the style. The expressive corner solution and some other traits of layout suggest strong influences from Erich Mendelsohn's design of the Schocken Brothers' Department Store (1926–1928) in Stuttgart.

Štālbergs' contribution to the architecture of dwelling houses is noteworthy in this period. In such buildings he could implement the tendency towards geometry, rationalism and even asceticism typical of the epoch as well as fascination with light, air and



cleanliness, all important Functionalist elements of the 1920s. However, the architect did not yet try to be consistently modernist, thus the examples of these years combine local, classical and modernist elements typical of a transitional period.

Physician **Augusts Pētersons' summer cottage** (1927–1929) in Jūrmala became the first example in a string of typologically close summer house and small dwelling house designs worked out by Štālbergs in the late 1920s. It has an asymmetrical arrangement of architectural masses with a rich composition of volumes. Façade finish, window placement and panes were typical of Functionalism but the building in general had a rather traditional image. An important sign of modernisation was the merge of the living and dining rooms into one large, irregular space. The building designed

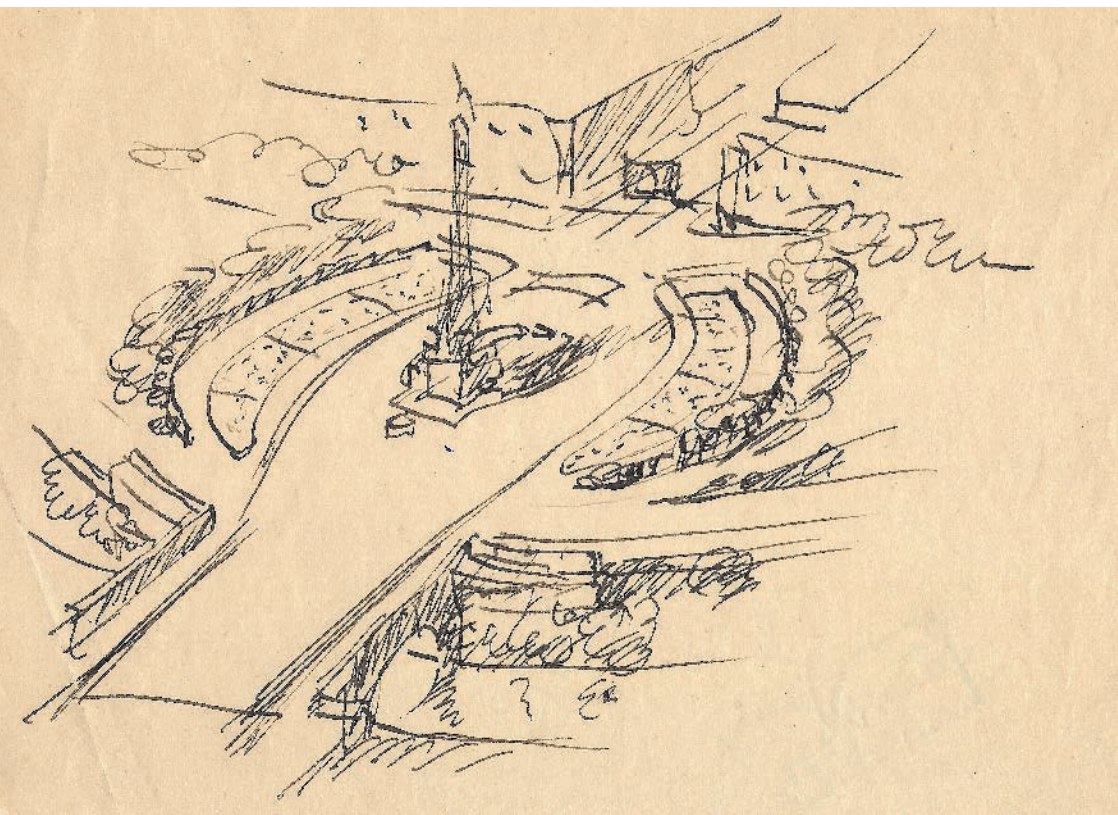
Municipal apartment building at 12 Lomonosova Street in Riga. Yard façade.
Photo: Ernests Štālbergs, 1930. LSA, coll. 95, reg. 1, file 169, p. 33.

by Štālbergs consistently emphasised the importance of light and air, fusion between interior and nature as well as secured hygienic and healthy conditions for users. This shows that the architect's modernist orientation was not only aesthetic but also programmatic.

Riga municipal apartment building (1929–1930)

at 12 Lomonosova Street was a quintessence of Štālbergs' stylistic development in the second half of the 1920s. This is a model of Latvia's Functionalism that aims to solve the housing crisis and create a new, progressive type of apartment in the inter-war period. The building emerges as a total, programmatic artwork based on a unified, socially oriented conception that determines the image as well as the layout, design solutions and architectural sculpture.

Apartment building designed by Štālbergs is among the rare inter-war houses with purposely exposed brick façades. The architect's chosen solution is a bright example of his grasp of the natural material's aesthetic potential. This shows the appreciation of material and continuance of a regional tradition, being an original, individual perspective within the prevailing international modernism. However, aesthetic considerations were not the only motivation. With such façade finish Štālbergs semantically strengthened the tradition established by Reinhold Schmaeling who built Riga's municipal architecture in red brick with white plastering, transferring this approach to residential buildings. Emphasising the aesthetic potential of brick that was used less in the inter-war façade finish, Štālbergs shaped a new tradition in Latvia's apartment housing and stressed his conceptual link with Northern European modern architecture. The longitudinal façades of the apartment building indicate transformations of Štālbergs' individual style in late 1920s – early 1930s when he actively adopted modernist expressive means while still reflecting on the classical architecture significant for his earlier period. Composition of the street façade is reserved, closed and conservative, oriented towards the environmental context while the



yard façade is pronouncedly modernist and, similarly to sanatoriums, emphasises the link with the green inner yard and actively uses the southern sunlight with a dense rhythm of balconies.

The municipal apartment building is the first implemented object in which Štālbergs clearly preferred Functionalism, relegating local and classical elements to the background. The architect's professional maturity is evidenced by the fact that he did not follow the modernist style uncritically but searched for a way to adapt the new, progressive architectural phenomena to Latvia's conditions. Although European architects who designed the top housing complexes were often followers of leftist and utopian ideas, Štālbergs stood apart from such concepts and was distinctly practical, economical

Ernests Štālbergs.
Freedom Monument
design. Sketch of
the surrounding area.
Ca. 1932.
LSA, coll. 95, reg. 1,
file 13, p. 36.

and rational in his apartment building design. Due to the ideological orientation of the housing programme, he attempted to change the people's daily habits with architectural means similarly to other modernists. For instance, the principle of the "Frankfurt kitchen" (archit. Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, 1926) aimed to rationalise the kitchen work and the southern-style row of balconies had to raise the sense of community. As Štālbergs was well-informed about current events in the field, his apartment house features borrowings from all most renowned housing complexes of Germany and Austria; however, Riga's much more modest building programme complicates comparisons.

2. 4. Between Functionalism and Neo-Classical Representation (1930–1939)

The 1930s was the period of professional maturity for Ernests Štālbergs when he excelled in designs of public buildings and monuments as well as residential houses and interiors. The period's main achievements were the Freedom Monument opened in 1935 and the Great Hall of the UL completed in 1936. However, these ambitious and time-consuming projects held back the implementation of other major objects.

In the first half of the 1930s, Štālbergs fully adopted Functionalism, knowingly exploring the style's potential and abandoning the earlier cautious approach. The change of attitude was fostered by the famous 1930 Stockholm Exhibition. It encouraged Latvia's architects to understand modern architecture not only as a fashionable trend but also as an important manifestation of social and economic ideas. The moderate Swedish Functionalism did not refute the classical architectural heritage, regional traditions and crafts that coincided well with the situation in Latvia. Ideas voiced by the Exhibition were directly compatible with Štālbergs' views, thus he purposely strengthened professional contacts with Sweden and was strongly influenced by this country's architecture.

The early 1930s became a “new beginning” in Štālbergs’ professional output, as he radically changed his approach to architecture, working manner and attitude towards the environmental context. Also, he became more relaxed in respect to layout and form, focusing on the idea during the work on architectural designs. The creative freedom resulting from the adaptation of Functionalism inspired the architect to be more ambitious, as he complemented building programmes regardless of costs. Still, there was continuance with the types of buildings established in his professional practice that were now knowingly modernised.

Several remarkable residential houses were built to Štālbergs’ design in the 1930s but his creatively impressive designs of public buildings largely remained on paper. In the early 1930s, works were halted by the economic crisis but later transformations of prevailing tastes also played a role. In the late 1930s, Štālbergs’ stylistic preferences began to contradict the aesthetic trend proposed by Kārlis Ulmanis and this factor did not help.

A bright example of pure Functionalism from the early 1930s is Štālbergs’ **reconstruction design for Hotel de Rome** (1929–1930). Here he submitted a daring solution, breaking the uniform rhythm of the Neo-Renaissance façade facing Aspazijas Boulevard with a remarkably modernist element – a narrow, vertical, fully glassed semicircular bay window for the staircase. Štālbergs turned the 19th century Historicist building into a shell for the modern content and lifestyle, manifested by the sharply contrasting glass slit of the façade. The architect’s clear shift towards modernism is seen in the concept of reconstruction, aimed at a deliberate contrast between the new structure and the historical architecture.

For expressive unrealised projects in Riga dated to the early 1930s, like **reconstruction of Daile Theatre** (1931) and **Goegginger’s Sweets and Preserves Factory shop interior** (1930–1931), Štālbergs had chosen ample glassing and skylight windows as well as free layouts and streamlining regularly used for interiors.

Conversely, in more practical projects, like those of the **Institute of Hygiene and Pathological Anatomy at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine** (1931) and the **turbine hall of Ķegums Power Plant** (1933), Štālbergs held on to rectangular aesthetics, used to expose brick on façades and abandoned various Functionalist effects.

A line of influence from Le Corbusier stands out in Štālbergs' works from the first half of the 1930s. An example is the architect's seemingly reserved but spatially very complex competition design for **Liepāja Latvian Society House** (1934) whose main façade composition features impulses from Le Corbusier's classic mansions, especially from Villa Savoye (1928–1931). Štālbergs repeated the composition of architectural volumes created for the same object in the 1913 competition but the image was radically changed, achieving a degree of asceticism closer to Štālbergs' post-war modernist approach.

Functionalist means were consolidated in Štālbergs' residential houses at first. In the early 1930s, these means reached a certain developmental level retained for the entire decade. Architectural volumes got more compact and geometrical, their prismatic roofs were flattened but layouts became more organic and functional. However, one should note that Štālbergs' most modern and unconventional ideas often remained unrealised, as commissioners likely found it hard to accept such aesthetic solutions. Štālbergs' main commissioners were personally known members of creative intelligentsia and the political elite – the best-off part of society that preferred rather conservative aesthetic ideas.

Several Functionalist residential houses and their designs were prepared for building plots in Mežaparks in the early 1930s. Among them is conductor **Artūrs Bobkovics' two-apartment house** (1931–1932) – a pronouncedly rational, modest and even traditional building in terms of architectural volumes. Its garden side is accentuated by a spatially expressive rounded form that harmonises the junction between two

volumes of different heights. The building's layout is particularly innovative for the time. Lawyer **Hermanis Apsītis' private house** (1931–1932; 1938) is more adapted to the commissioner's wish for representation and traditionalism, as Štālbergs gave up more expressive Functionalist elements already at the design phase. Still, the composition and layout is a masterful play upon the unique relief of the building plot; the architect also designed furniture for the house. Conversely, in engineer **Aleksandrs Siksna's two-apartment house** design (1931), Štālbergs ventured to use markedly modernist language of forms, obviously influenced by variations of Le Corbusier's Citrohan House as a prototype. This shows not only in the entrance part composition and shapes of balconies and terraces but also in the modern spatial image of the multi-functional, two-level living room with wide glassing towards the garden and stairs shifted to the side of the room, creating "an architectural promenade" in line with Le Corbusier's idea.

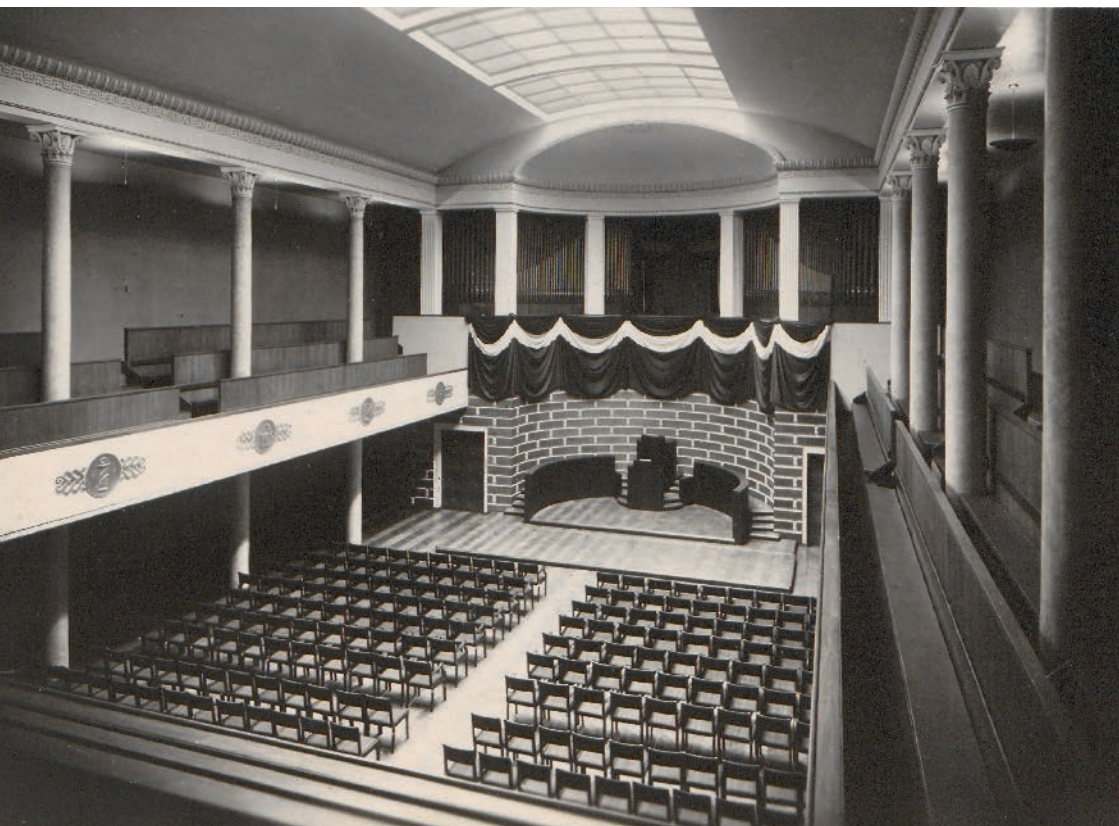
Štālbergs used modern means of creating spaces later too, for example, in sculptor **Kārlis Zāle's residential house** (1935–1937) in Riga. The three-storey building was attached to the previously designed **workshop** (together with Alfrēds Laukirbe, 1932) and the opposite side – to a neighbouring apartment building's fire wall, thus visually harmonising the yard. Similarly to earlier cases, the architect first created a modern, expressive design which later lost many typical Functionalist details through modifications of design and during construction works. For example, an impressive, rounded-glass partition wall on the ground floor, a topical streamlined motif, was discarded in the course of the project. The architect also cared for the sculptor's specific needs, creating a sunlit, lee-side terrace where Zāle could practice climato-therapy. This complied with the leading Functionalist ideas about healthy housing and was important for Zāle who had tuberculosis. The building's layout was untraditional but very simple and clear – one large room occupied most space on each floor, testifying

to Štālbergs' intention of creating a multi-functional space. He also designed spacious, "empty" interiors and modern furniture influenced by Western architecture, interior and furniture design of the 1930s.

Furniture designed by Štālbergs in the 1930s represented the less popular Functionalist style but he tried to retain the link with tradition in some cases. The architect's furniture design underwent the same modernisation as his architecture in the 1930s – he created furniture in simple, clear lines with pronounced tectonics, also showing the topical streamlining and solid heaviness. He also completely gave up ornament and decorative elements, emphasising the natural features of high-quality materials (mahogany, walnut). Štālbergs' furniture was markedly functional with individual details usually blended in the overall form. The architect retained his interest in multi-functionality or combined furniture and worked more in this direction. An example is Štālbergs' own **bedroom furniture set** (1933) where functions of a night table, chest of drawers and a mirror table were cleverly combined in one piece. Another trait of modernisation was his interest in modular furniture considered by Štālbergs as a promising direction for furniture industry. He planned to use this principle for **Zālamans Šefers' dining-room furniture set** (1934). Štālbergs, like other modernist architects, attempted to reconsider traditional principles of apartment furnishings, instead of free-standing furniture choosing built-ins, joint and combinable furniture. His sketches reveal an interest in Western tendencies and travel impressions alongside the measured rationalism and elegant laconism typical of the architect's signature style.

Yard block of the UL main building (1930–1936).

Ernests Štālbergs' major work that typifies the years of the architect's professional excellence and career peak is the inner yard block for the UL, containing the Great Hall, cloakroom and students' tearoom. This object is the quintessence of Štālbergs mastery and style, brightly revealing his clarity of form and spatial construction



as well as architectural logic. However, the moment of the project's implementation and the protracted building process determined the fusion of rather opposite styles – Neo-Classicism and Functionalism.

Students' tearoom was the most practical of three spaces; therefore it was dominated by Functionalism. The tearoom layout was asymmetrical and free but also very rationally organised. Its furnishings were quite ascetic but also informal, suggesting a relaxed atmosphere. The tearoom had several typically Functionalist motifs, like ceiling lights with round glass shades, a streamlined bar and a large, modern clock built in the wall. Reservedly geometrical paintings also decorated the ceiling of the room.

Great Hall of the UL.
1930-1936. General view.
Photo: 1937.
LSA, coll. 95, reg. 1,
file 109, p. 94.

Respectable symmetry and stronger axial order, already echoing the compositional solution of the hall, emerges in the formally efficient, rational students' cloakroom. Štālbergs here wished to achieve the effect of the spatial continuance and flow. In the cloakroom space, the Functionalist practicality fuses with the classical tendency. The latter is clearly exemplified by the standpoint fixed on a symmetrical axis, seemingly framing for the viewer the entrance door on the opposite side of the room and opening up the entire space in a rhythmical perspective.

Architectural expressiveness and harmony based on Greco-Roman art culminated in the Great Hall. It was built in the course of seven years; therefore, the project changed and developed. Still, the main idea of a two-level, skylit symmetrical hall, a semicircular apse, a balcony and giant order columns was preserved. The spatial structure of the hall was mainly based on Ancient Rome's typology of basilica. He placed the hall's compositional centre with presidium seats on a podium in a semicircular apse. The interior was enhanced with high-quality decorative finish, sculpture and furniture meticulously designed by Štālbergs in several versions. Therefore, the sketches of parterre seats referred to Alvar Aalto's bent plywood furniture, the typical modernist metal tube constructions as well as to the implemented version of a refined, modernised Biedermeier style. This project demonstrates a synthesis of architecture and sculpture; moreover, such an ample use of interior sculptural elements (including column capitals drawn by the architect himself) is rarely seen in the architect's output.

The Great Hall is an outstanding example of modernised Neo-Classicism in Latvia's architecture but several traits link it to the stylistic trend of Nordic Classicism. The hall interior features influences from the Swedish architect Ivar Tengbom's design of the great hall in his Stockholm Concert Hall (1924–1926). Both halls reveal a similar spatial solution with slender giant order columns running along the perimeter of the hall and continuing through the balcony while the stage

part features a rusticated, socle-type finish and a flat, amphitheatre-like podium. However, Štālbergs' design is considerably more balanced and reserved. Still, the hall manifests a Nordic interpretation of classical architecture – a localised classical tradition serves as a basis to achieve a Nordic spatial harmony and solemn, festive atmosphere, skilfully modernised and adapted to one's own time and conditions.

The Great Hall is the top achievement resulting from experiments with modernised classical heritage in Štālbergs' creative work. Similar traits, including emphasis on skylight, emerged already in his first work – the Russian Empire's pavilion in Rome. The architect used his favourite compositional approach in the hall, combining rectangular and circular forms, making the symmetrically placed semicircular apse the hall's compositional centre. This object is the best evidence of Štālbergs' professional maturity enabling a balance between Neo-Classicism and modernism, construction and interior finish as well as architecture and sculpture. The UL yard block shows the main features of the architect's individual style – efficiency, plasticity of forms, elegance and restraint. This object also testifies to Štālbergs' plan of creating a total artwork with unity of spaces on all three floors, individual continuous motifs and great attention towards details.

Further development of Functionalist forms in Štālbergs' works and consolidation of the Nordic line of influences in the second half of the 1930s is seen in the unrealised **Jelgava Hotel design** (1937) and **children's sanatorium Gaujaslīči** (1936–1939) in Cēsis.

The hotel's architectural volume is emphasised by a semicircular avant-corps, initially designed as a self-sufficient plastic form similar to Finnish examples of Functionalism. In a later version the avant-corps was glassed – this complies with the line of Erich Mendelsohn's influences that had taken root in Latvia's architecture. Jelgava Hotel design shows how classical elements of representation and the trend of Nordic comfort entered Štālbergs' Functionalist buildings in

the second half of the 1930s. It is particularly enhanced by the modern hotel restaurant hall with columns and a fully glassed outer wall, directly influenced by the Restaurant *Lasipalatsi* (archit. Niilo Kokko, Heimo Riihimäki and Viljo Revell, 1935) in Helsinki.

The sanatorium *Gaujaslīči* allows to predict a possible further evolution of Štālbergs' signature style if the Soviet occupation with its ideological restrictions could have been avoided. *Gaujaslīči* demonstrates a close link with conceptual architectural trends in the Nordic countries during the second half of the 1930s – a “humanised” Functionalism and interest in nature, naturalness and regionalism. As the building had simple and reserved architectural forms, its expressiveness came from natural and modest finish materials – vertical board cladding and plastering. Such an exterior finish can be related to Swedish impulses because board cladding was quite widespread in exemplary houses at the Stockholm Exhibition, thus modernising the archetype of the traditional Swedish farmstead. The sanatorium was possibly a synthesis of influences from several such houses, evidenced also by the use of the single-pitched roof, similar window proportions and rhythm. The sanatorium complex was created, purposely using the natural light, relief and pine forest conditions. The building conformed to rectangular aesthetics but it was more adapted to human needs and emphasised relation to nature, directly revealing the regional specificity of Northern European Functionalism.

The Freedom Monument (1930–1935). In monument projects, Štālbergs was willing to follow traditions, preferring Neo-Classicism as more graspable to a broader public. The Freedom Monument was the main work in his career; it is also the most significant public art object in the inter-war Latvia and a national symbol too. Štālbergs' contribution to the monument's architectural solution and urban situation alongside the supervision of works was rewarded with the Three Star Order.

Štālbergs encountered a number of obstacles as the monument supervisor – change of location, change of his role from the competition jury member to the monument's co-author, public opposition to the monument's idea, tactless criticism of Kārlis Zāle's project and a scandal around travertine as a finish material. Although the literature and periodicals of the time credited Štālbergs with the choice of travertine due to his admiration for Italy, the sculptor himself had indicated this material in the post-competition sketch dated to June 1931. Zāle's choice can be explained by the fact that travertine is similar to tufa but much less porous and more suited for sculptural works. Štālbergs certainly supported the sculptor's choice, as he was responsible in the monument committee for the ordering of travertine from Italy already in late 1931. The Freedom Monument Committee asked for first-class material and placed orders carefully; however, some of the ordered stones split in winter frost, causing a huge scandal in the press. As the delivered travertine was not suitable for high reliefs, blocks were cut up and successfully used for cladding of the obelisk, filling of background in the lower band and also for low reliefs. Pink and grey Finnish granite was used as a replacement.

The cooperation between the sculptor and the architect changed the monument's form a little but Zāle's main idea was retained, creating a rather traditional monument with a slender obelisk on a high pedestal, complemented with sculptural groups expressing a clear narrative. Zāle and Štālbergs most likely arrived at the final version in summer 1932 shortly before the launch of construction. The architect simplified the monument's socle and lower block, creating a clearly perceivable, cubic overall form. Such a geometrical base helped to emphasise the obelisk's verticality and lightness, particularly stressed by the slit added by Štālbergs to the obelisk's front view. The monument became clearer and more balanced due to the cooperation of the architect and sculptor. Zāle placed both main sculptural groups that were strongly frontal and closely attuned to architecture on the monument's axis of sym-

metry while the freer, more asymmetrical compositions were moved to the monument's sides. This demonstrates that both authors strived to achieve an excellent synthesis of architecture and sculpture. Štālbergs' duties also included a design for an eventual underground museum in the monument's terrace part. He envisioned its interior not as an informative museum room but as a sanctuary with columns and skylight windows.

Štālbergs' major contribution to the monument project that ensured its powerful message was the successful situation on Riga's main urban axis – Brīvības Boulevard. The architect was responsible for the arrangement of the square surrounding the monument. The situation was very complex from the perspective of urban planning, especially because of the busy traffic and tramway tracks in close proximity to the monument. Such conditions made it difficult to create a square suitable for reflection and accentuating the monument's symmetry and harmony. Therefore, the architect planned greater transformations that remained unrealised. Štālbergs' idea was to spatially consolidate the square with low walls in symmetrical semicircles from both sides. In the realised version, the street widens into a rounded area near the monument but symmetrical semicircles are made of greenery. Therefore, the entire square is a somewhat elliptical circle stretched along the longitudinal axis of Brīvības Boulevard, proportioned in line with the monument's forms. When the monument was completed, Štālbergs thought that some conclusion of the square and thus also symmetry is missing on the side of Old Riga, so he proposed to build a row of long single-storey shops with a colonnade and actively defended the idea of building propylaea on the bridge continuing as a colonnade or arcade, marking the semicircular boundaries of the square. Nothing was implemented of these plans.

Štālbergs' sketches and ideas show his interest in symmetry, harmony, creating of perspectival views and emphasising the main axes of urban planning. Contrary to modernism whose echoes are sensed in the

geometrised base of the monument and especially in the interior sketches of the museum space, Štālbergs followed classical tradition in urban planning. This approach was possibly determined by the architect's experience in St. Petersburg in the 1910s when preservation of classical urban ensembles came to the fore there.

Štālbergs and Zāle also collaborated on a small monument to the victims of the Latvian War of Independence – it was the **Monument to Riga 6th Infantry Regiment in Sudrabkalniņš** (1934–1937). Here too Štālbergs was firstly the competition jury member, then taking up the co-author's role. The monument embodies the idea of resistance and defence in a form of a defensive rampart, using laconic architectural means. This conception could arise from the material taken from the Daugavgrīva Fortress or from the student of architecture Staņislavs Aloizs Borbals' proposal. Developing this idea to achieve the monument's semantic message and spatial organisation, Štālbergs skilfully used the natural relief complemented with stairs and platforms on different levels. The monument in Sudrabkalniņš is a rare example in the inter-war Latvia where a memorial place is created as a spatial ensemble with architectural language of modernist forms without one sculptural work as a central element. This object demonstrates an approach already established in the architect's signature style – a masterful and precisely weighed geometrisation of the monument's basic forms. He had reached certain virtuosity in this aspect because his monuments were always precisely proportioned and well-adapted to their situation. In the Monument to Riga 6th Infantry Regiment the clear means of spatial organisation taken over from modernism create in this small location an appropriately simple, rather harsh mood and preconditions for remembrance of fallen soldiers. The sculptural component that was reduced because of limited resources made the monument's narrative more abstract and emotionally amplified.

Work at the National Building Committee allowed Štālbergs to get more involved with the issues of urban planning – to devise the **transformation proposal for the centre of Riga** (1936), including a sketch of the Victory Square, a complex of government, administrative and public buildings in Old Riga and the Citadel district. These projects were mutually related, as they envisioned zoning of new public buildings in certain quarters of the city. Also, the urban axis of Brīvības Street was envisaged to continue through Old Riga and across the Pontoon Bridge, concluding with the Victory Square in Pārdaugava. Štālbergs' designs of the city administration in Old Riga and the complex of ministerial buildings in the Citadel were united by massive and monumental forms of modernised Neo-Classicism. He professionally appreciated modernised Neo-Classical Italian architecture, therefore used to reference this style in ideological projects of the late 1930s. This is particularly evident in colonnades, gates and other elements of classical architecture. Štālbergs' sketch for the Victory Square was more natural, creating a star-shaped branching of the Brīvības Street urban axis into certain functional sectors in Pārdaugava. Ideologically significant objects were placed in the centre and other functions relegated to sides. In such a manner Štālbergs had managed to include the obligatory element of representation in a functionally well-considered complex. His proposal contained references to Greco-Roman culture that were semantically fitting into the context of Ulmanis' authoritarian rule and corresponded to the architect's own interests. At the same time, the project also features echoes from the Stockholm Exhibition, evidenced by the modest planetarium and restaurant buildings surrounded by the park greenery.

2. 5. Post-War Modernism and Contact with Socialist Realism (1945–1950)

The first post-war years in the totalitarian Soviet Union ruled by Joseph Stalin stand out with ruthless



repressions, strong centralisation and total control applied to arts as well. Since 1932, there was a unified aesthetic programme – dogmatic Socialist Realism, the official style that the Soviet authorities tried to impose on occupied countries too. With the incorporation of Latvia in the Soviet Union, architectural processes took place only within structures created and supervised by authorities.

During these years, architects' main task was the restoration of destroyed cities but a new aesthetics was also prescribed, although there was little information about what it actually meant. Confusion regarding the desirable style and examples led to architects being criticised by ideologues and this factor was purposely used as an instrument of repressions. The ideological control particularly intensified after the official decrees of 1946 and 1948.

Ernests Štālbergs,
Arvids Miezijs, Marta Staņa,
Jānis Ginters and
Georgijs Piseckis.
Design of Hotel *Rīga*.
1945-1947. Model.
View from the crossing
of Teātra Street and
Aspazijas Boulevard.
LSA, coll. 95, reg. 1,
file 163, p. 52.

Ernests Štālbergs had gradually ended his active architect's practice already in the late 1930s. However, forced by the occupational regime, he resumed work during the five-year period after the war. The Soviet power initially recognised his authority and experience, aiming to use these assets for their own aims. The architect was commissioned to design the first post-war objects in Riga – the central hotel and the Lenin Monument, envisioned as examples of Soviet Latvian architecture. The appreciation of Štālbergs' professionalism shows in the fact that he was entrusted with the main genres of Soviet artistic hierarchy – public building and monument projects. One should note that no other architect of Latvia at that time could boast of such authority, support and contacts in Russian architects' circles.

However, the Soviet regime's and Štālbergs' conceptions about good architecture could not be more different. As an academically trained and experienced master, he could have easily adapted to the new aesthetic requirements and returned to the classical tradition. Still, he did not do this because of professional conviction. Conceptually, Štālbergs retained close links to Western modernist ideas and latest tendencies. Although he tried to adapt his creative principles to the doctrine of Socialist Realism, attempts did not succeed.

These problems are clearly manifested by the complex and even dramatic designing process of the **Hotel Riga** (together with Arvīds Mieziš, Marta Staņa, Jānis Ginters, Georgijs Piseckis, 1945–1947). The architects' group led by Štālbergs proposed a high, ambitious and scaled-up building whose image echoed Western modern high-rise buildings and obligatory references to Hotel Moskva (archit. Alexey Shchusev, 1932–1935) in Moscow. The authors' chosen means created a massive impression: the building had a hypertrophied scale not harmonised with its surroundings and horizontally stretched architectural volumes. They featured simple, geometric forms taken over from high-rise buildings but lacked verticality; moreover, the plan was to accentuate only material qual-

ities of the modern façades, making them schematic. These traits reveal disregard for the context and a wish to dominate in the urban environment, reminding of the architecture during Ulmanis' authoritarian regime. Despite the grand proposal of building an entire quarter and the pronouncedly rational layout, the project was abandoned because of the building's twice-exceeded budget and aesthetics unacceptable to the Soviet power. The hotel design launched a repressive ideological campaign against Štālbergs, especially criticising his siding with modernism. The choice of this style for the hotel corresponded to both Štālbergs' and his colleagues' personal attitudes, also being a logical reaction to the ambitious programme of the building. The idea that the building's style is a matter of free choice could result from the output of Russian architects personally known by Štālbergs; they worked in a stylistically broad manner, including modernist elements too. Also, there were no examples of Socialist Realist architecture in Latvia back then and the hotel was among the first post-war designs of public buildings.

The last design of Štālbergs' long professional career was the **Lenin Monument** (sculpt. Vladimir Ingal, Venyamin Bogolyubov, together with Jānis Līcītis, 1947–1950) in Riga. Monument to the leader of the proletarian state was the top-rank commission in the Soviet artistic hierarchy entrusted only to recognised artists. The architect worked on it without much enthusiasm and even tried to delay the process by offering one of the possible locations. Štālbergs was appointed co-author of the monument, regardless of his close connections with modernist architectural principles. This can be explained by the lack of ideological coordination in Soviet Latvia and also by the fact that Štālbergs, despite criticism, remained the greatest authority and the only specialist able to do a high-quality work. Unlike in Štālbergs' cooperation with Kārlis Zāle, now the duties of architect and sculptor were separated and there was almost no synthesis of arts or an active interaction between them. Štālbergs' only task

was to create a pedestal of an appropriate form along with a front square; he also organised the building works. The pedestal ended up being rather modernist and ascetic, untypical for the Stalinist period because all intended decorative elements were discarded due to hurry. The pedestal's cubic forms and material (polished red granite) resembled Lenin's Mausoleum in Moscow (archit. Alexey Shchusev, 1925–1930).

Ernests Štālbergs' biographical turnabouts and creative output show the direct influence of Latvia's complex and dramatic 20th century history on the current artistic and architectural phenomena. During the architect's lifetime from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, the understanding of the art of building significantly changed many times; moreover, various political regimes often purposely constructed and used this understanding for their goals. Štālbergs' importance in Latvia's architectural history is marked by his ability to keep his creative credo in conditions of social and political changes. Although Štālbergs' talent, erudition, diplomatic resourcefulness, contacts and also luck allowed retaining high reputation in all times, political processes of the 20th century hampered the architect's self-realisation and brought undeniably tragic note into his professional and private life. His relatives, colleagues and students perished during the war, the Holocaust and Soviet repressions, and professional contacts with Western colleagues were cut off. Harsh ideological repressions were directed against him in the Stalinist period, involving ruthless criticism of his architectural conception and style, showing the Soviet occupational regime's absurd attitude towards creative personalities in general.

EPILOGUE

With Ernests Štālbergs' death on 12 June 1958, an important epoch came to an end in Latvia's history of architecture and architectural education. He had introduced the St. Petersburg's architectural ambition and the early 20th century Neo-Classicist conceptual intensity into Latvia's architecture. Although this background shaped his thought, Štālbergs saw further development of his ideas in the Nordic architecture during the inter-war period. He supported this modern approach to the interpretation of classical heritage, interest in the context of the surrounding environment and attempts to preserve regional traditions. Unlike most of Latvia's architects, Štālbergs wanted to emphasise not national but regional or Nordic identity, thus connecting Latvia's architecture to a wider cultural space and marking new points of contact in the Northern European region.

Parallel to his architect's practice, Štālbergs' architectural school had trained a talented new generation of architects – Štālbergs' students. He was an undeniable authority for them due to his principled stance and clear architectural ideals, thorough academic education and critical thinking, charismatic personality and pedagogical talent as well as the broad horizon of interests and knowledge, and the selfless care for the field of architecture. Štālbergs' students succeeded because of the mastered universal creative method that allowed for an intellectual synthesis of new forms, rationally considering all factors relevant from this perspective (the commissioner, the programme of the building, its function, restrictions etc.). Hence Štāl-

bergs refuted imitation and copying of forms in both training and his own practice, showed rather small interest in décor and tried to create a true architecture.

Similarly to Leon Benois, Štālbergs also turned his workshop into a group of like-minded people, imbuing young architects with certain professional principles and understanding of architecture. As a result, Štālbergs' students created their architectural trend together and became reliable colleagues of their pedagogue. His high reputation is evidenced by the fact that even those young architects whose contacts with Štālbergs were rather brief willingly described themselves as his followers. Belonging to Štālbergs' students meant adherence to certain architectural and artistic ideals that were especially in need of protection during the long years of Soviet occupation. Štālbergs' phenomenon in Latvian culture is also transcending the boundaries of architecture because sculptors, writers and artists were among his students too.

Štālbergs emerges as a Nordic Classicist and a searcher for modern architecture's alternative routes in the Western architectural context, representing rationalist, organic and regionalist approach. He was the localiser of these trends in Latvia. Political upheavals of the epoch were not favourable to the implementation of Štālbergs' rationalist and modernist ideas. More than a half of his designs remained unrealised but the realised ones rarely corresponded to the initial design. The architect was not understood and encountered restrictions due to various socio-political changes and oscillations of public taste. As he spent his sunset years in the occupied Latvia, not in democratic Western countries like most of Latvia's architects, Štālbergs did not live to see the universal recognition of modernist architectural principles which were exonerated here as late as the 1960s. However, Štālbergs' ideals and the creative method were continued by his disciples in his homeland, shaping the urban and architectural "face" of contemporary Latvia, and also in emigration, influencing the architectural environment in their countries of residence.

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of Ernests Štālbergs' professional output and creativity in the context of the period's architecture and socio-political conditions:

1. Ernests Štālbergs' professional maturity was shaped by the academic architectural school at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. It influenced his architecture, way of thinking, pedagogical approach and even the horizon of interests. Therefore, he developed into a recognised professional in his Russia period (1902–1922), especially regarding his pedagogical work, fully becoming part of St. Petersburg's artistic intelligentsia.
2. Štālbergs has made a lasting contribution to the development and modernisation of architectural education in both Russia and Latvia, enabled by his pedagogical talent, erudition, pronouncedly analytical approach to architectural issues, permanent interest in latest architectural phenomena and discoveries as well as the scholarly orientation of his activities and contacts with foreign colleagues. His strong and responsible adherence to professional principles has allowed to preserve the quality of architectural education despite repressions and ideological restrictions of totalitarian regimes, especially important for Latvia's architecture in the years of Soviet occupation.
3. Štālbergs' professional career advanced similarly to other Northern European architects of his generation, like Gunnar Asplund and Alvar Aalto. After academic training and early career typified by opposition to Historicism, Neo-Classicism became an

important form of creative expression, individually interpreted and modernised by the architect. Since the late 1920s, he gradually took up modernism that became the leading stylistic trend in the architect's output. A distinctive phase was Štālbergs' Art Deco episode (1923–1925) during which he skilfully merged Neo-Classical forms with modern decorative elements and interest in ornament untypical of other periods.

4. Although there is a deep-rooted idea in literature that Štālbergs was a radical modernist, his creativity unites both stylistic opposites – classical and modern architecture – in an unusual manner. The comprehensive academic education made it hard to give up traditions, and this was also the case of the Swedish architect Gunnar Asplund who experienced similar phases of creative work. Štālbergs' basic principles always were rationalism, organic unity and harmony of all elements of the object. As his architectural style developed, only the form of expression changed. Initially these principles had stronger roots in classical architecture while later they shifted towards modernism. Interest in organic architecture links Štālbergs with the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright whose theoretical views he shared.
5. During the St. Petersburg period (1910–1922), Štālbergs developed from a diligent student into a renowned and self-confident professional. The early part of his career was complicated due to severe competition and war that held back commissions. He also encountered difficulties in finding his creative signature style but his attempts at overcoming the imbued method of academic Historicism often resulted in a dissonance between the building's rational layout and its Historicised façade composition. However, he almost immediately emerged as a representative of Neo-Classicism interested in Palladianism. The compositional means learned and approbated during these years became a sort of practical basis for his further activ-

ities. Štālbergs' early designs feature not only temporary motifs typical of some period, like semicircular arcades in the first half of the 1920s, but also favoured compositional solutions and traits typical of his overall style. Examples are clear forms, geometrisation and plasticity, pronounced rationalism, circular and semicircular forms in both architectural volumes and layouts, the use of skylight windows and smooth façades without décor.

6. In Latvia during the first half of the 1920s, Štālbergs cultivated his creative individuality and rapidly abandoned the influences of St. Petersburg Neo-Classicism in favour of abstracted and modernised version of Neo-Classicism – the Nordic Classicism. Indications are freely interpreted classical heritage alongside his strong interest in naturally lit indoors. Palladian influences were retained in a stylised manner during this period. Interiors of refined and reserved buildings in line with Nordic Classicism were often decoratively rich and expressive. Štālbergs' lavish episode of Art Deco interior finish can be explained by his established creative tandem with Hermanis Grīnbergs. The architect's orientation towards decorativeness was conditioned by the harsh economic conditions of the time when colourful and most often illusory effects compensated for the deficit of high-quality building and finish materials. A bright example is Eduards Smiļģis' house interior.

Designs of this period made Štālbergs to stand out in the local architectural milieu because his sense of architecture, typified by strong rationalism, prioritising of layout, spatiality and plasticity of volumes without much interest in façades, developed in St. Petersburg. Hence he offered different creative accents from the architects trained in Riga. The spatial ambitions and creative freedom attracted the social elite, as evidenced by the two most important commissioners of Štālbergs' works – Eduards Smiļģis and Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics. Therefore, Štālbergs strengthened his positions, serving the best-off part of society and creative intelligentsia.

7. The second half of the 1920s was a transitional period in Štālbergs' creative output – he distanced from Neo-Classicism, abandoned the decorativeness of Art Deco and gradually approached Functionalism. Influences of German modern architectural ideas and direct examples, especially of Erich Mendelsohn's and Bruno Taut's works, is felt in these years. Still, designs of this period reveal stylistic experimentation and uneven, oscillating attitude towards modernism. Best examples are versions of Riga People's House sketches, ranging from a marked retrospect to St. Petersburg Neo-Classicism to a surprisingly radical, modern version of the building inspired by Mendelsohn. Also other examples testify to the architect's searches for a balance between new trends, the classical tradition and the environmental context. The architect retained his interest in natural light indoors, using skylight windows and glass partition walls even more often. Inspirations possibly came from his work on the reconstruction design of the 2nd Riga City Hospital and collaboration with health-care professionals, including Augusts Pētersons. It is noteworthy that Štālbergs searched for a connection with Riga's local architectural traditions during this period. He possibly saw the lack of knowledge about the local context as a certain problem to solve due to his education in St. Petersburg and non-existing experience of designing in Riga. Studying the specificity of Riga's urban environment is seen, for example, in corner towers for the People's House and his interest in red brick in apartment buildings, thus referencing Reinhold Schmaeling's architectural heritage, not much studied by local architects at the time. The architect gradually tended towards Functionalism, fostered in the field of apartment buildings by social democrats as the main commissioner of the period. In these projects, Štālbergs could introduce into practice the foreign ideas about contemporary, modern housing and give up representation replaced with rationalism.

8. The 1930s were the mature period of Štālbergs' creativity and the top of his architect's career. At the beginning of the decade, Štālbergs rapidly and enthusiastically absorbed Functionalist forms, inspired by Le Corbusier's works and impressions from the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition that remained powerful later too. Functionalism released the architect's creative potential; therefore, this period emerges as very productive, even if unrealised designs prevailed. A clear turn towards modernism changed his attitude towards historical architecture, well exemplified by Hotel de Rome reconstruction design. Several recurrent motifs are established in Štālbergs' works in this period, such as the classical rotunda transformed into the streamlined form seen in architectural volumes alongside layouts, interiors and even furniture. Also, the tendency towards large, roomy and multi-functional spaces in layouts became stronger. After the classical Functionalist approach in the early 1930s, the architect became interested in the Nordic countries by the second half of the decade, captivated by their natural, cosy version of Functionalism. This is evidenced by the use of wood in building finish and interiors (Jelgava Hotel, sanatorium *Gaujaslīči*) as well as by the connection to nature and emphasis on natural relief (sanatorium *Gaujaslīči*, monument in Sudrabkalniņš).

Functionalism took root in Štālbergs' designs of residential houses, their interiors and furniture early on. His buildings were markedly rational; the architect possibly tried to implement the idea of "a house as a machine for living in", adding innovations to its layout. Artūrs Bobkovics' and Kārlis Zāle's house layouts are especially noteworthy from this perspective. Architectural volumes, layouts and interiors built to Štālbergs' designs in the 1930s reveal influences of Le Corbusier. Štālbergs likely studied and interpreted Le Corbusier's works to master the modernist language of forms. The aforementioned Stockholm Exhibition also contributed to his process, indirect-

ly introducing Le Corbusier's ideas and presenting useful examples of furniture design. The architect's furniture designs of the 1930s feature typical stylistic traits, like clear construction, convenient lines, elegance, pronounced functionality, rounded and heavy forms as well as saturated tones.

The period's main works – the UL yard block and the Freedom Monument – do not comply well with the dominant stylistic trend because these projects also contained a Neo-Classical element of representation. Reasons were the prolonged periods of construction alongside orientation towards the more popular aesthetics. However, the Great Hall stands out as an excellent model of modernised Neo-Classicism, crowning the architect's creative aspirations. When encountering commissions from the authoritarian government, Štālbergs could find an acceptable and modern version of the classical tradition in the modernised Italian Neo-Classicism, seen in the Riga centre reconstruction sketch. But such projects were probably not that interesting for him, resulting in lifeless and schematic output.

9. The late 1940s were the concluding period of Štālbergs' career typified by the repressive and ideological regime of Soviet occupation. The architect was less active and enthusiastic in creating designs, delegating more work to his assistants; however, he still decided what the general conception had to be and carefully supervised the works. Štālbergs' design of Hotel *Riga* emerges as an ambitious example of post-war modernism, referencing Western high-rise buildings alongside the obligatory model from Soviet Russia – Hotel *Moskva* in Moscow. This work encountered severe criticism from authorities and launched a repressive campaign against the architect. Conversely, the Lenin Monument in Riga was a conventional monument in line with Socialist Realism, realised in ascetic, modern forms due to hurry. Štālbergs tried to adapt his creative principles to the doctrine of Socialist Realism, for instance, referencing the exaggerated monumentality of

Kārlis Ulmanis' authoritarian regime, but the bureaucratic Soviet system and shifting requirements did not allow this to happen.

10. Štālbergs' creative legacy demonstrates that consistent modernism and creative ambitions are better revealed precisely in his unrealised projects or the so-called paper architecture. During construction, the architect had to observe the commissioner's wishes alongside financial and technical resources. Thus modest compromised versions prevailed with dominant traditional volumes and greatly reduced Functionalist details.
11. When Štālbergs adopted Functionalist forms, he retained a critical attitude towards this style and tried to localise it right away, creating an acceptable regional version. For example, he did not abandon sloping roofs or brick façades; he also avoided the typical modernist white façades, replaced with coloured plastering or natural finish materials, such as ceramics or wood. These aspects link his output with the architectural principles of Nordic countries.
12. Socio-political and economic conditions of the 20th century were not favourable for the architect's creative self-realisation. His progressive ideas most often were not understood by the public and authorities, therefore his implemented works show a more conservative and somewhat modest side of his creativity. However, Ernests Štālbergs' lifelong creative conviction was that the essence of architecture is to serve its function in a rational manner.

APPROBATION

Papers Presented at Conferences

Ten papers about the subject of the thesis were presented at scholarly conferences, including four international scholarly conferences:

- 1) **LU mācībspēka, arhitekta Ernesta Štālberga projektētās sanatoriju ēkas [Sanatorium buildings designed by the UL pedagogue, architect Ernests Štālbergs]**

30 January 2017, Riga, Latvia

Latvijas Universitātes 75. konference: Zinātņu vēstures un muzejniecības sekcija

- 2) **Mutvārdu vēsture kā izziņas metode: Ernests Štālbergs studentu atmiņās [Oral history as a research method: Ernests Štālbergs in his students' memories]**

23 March 2017, Riga, Latvia

Latvijas Mākslas akadēmijas doktora studiju programmas ikgadējā zinātniskā konference "Pētījumi un atklājumi. Pētījumu metodes"

- 3) **Architect Ernests Štālbergs (1883–1958) and Latvian School of Architecture**

28 April 2017. Humboldt University Berlin, Germany
IV International Forum for Doctoral Candidates in East European Art History.

Organised by the Chair of Art History of Eastern and East Central Europe, Humboldt University Berlin

- 4) **No pilīm līdz kolhozu ciematiem: Ernesta Štālberga Latvijas arhitektūras vēstures attēlu kolekcija Latvijas Valsts arhīvā [From palaces to collective farm villages: Ernests Štālbergs' collection of images in Latvian State Archive]**

27 October 2017. Rīga, Latvia

Letonikas VII kongresa sekcija "Gaisma ēnu galerijā: Latvijas mākslas vēstures zaudējumi un atradumi topošos pētījumos"

- 5) **Architect and Politics: Life and Work of Ernests Štālbergs (1883–1958)**

11 June 2018. Aalto University Helsinki, Finland

AHRA Annual Research Student Symposium "Using History"

Organized by Architectural Humanities Research Association (AHRA)

- 6) **Palace of Health: The Influence of the Manorial Architecture on Modernist Sanatoriums in Latvia**

12 September 2018. Kaunas, Lithuania

International Conference "Modernism for the Future"

Organized by Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022; Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO

- 7) **Liepājas latviešu biedrības nams – Ernesta Štālberga priekšlikumi 1913. un 1934. gadā [Liepāja Latvian Society House – Ernests Štālbergs' proposals of 1913 and 1934]**

25 April 2019. Rīga, Latvia

Latvijas Mākslas akadēmijas doktora studiju programmas zinātniskā konference "Jaunatklājumi pētniecībā. Pētniecības metodes"

- 8) **Vidusjūras reģiona arhitektūra kā modernistu inspirācijas avots: Itālijas pilsētvides materiāli arhitekta Ernesta Štālberga fondā Latvijas Valsts arhīvā [Mediterranean Regional Architecture as Modernists' Source of Inspiration: Materials about Italian Urban design in Collection]**

of Architect Ernests Štālbergs in Latvian State Archives]

25 September 2019. Riga, Latvia

LNA Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīva starptautiskie zinātniskie lasījumi "Dokumentārā mantojuma bagātības Latvijas arhīvos" = International Scientific Readings of the Latvian State Historical Archives Treasures of Documentary Heritage at Latvian Archives

- 9) **Kāpēc ir jāpēta vēsture? Vizuālā māksla un arhitektūra. Monogrāfiski par Jēkabu Bīni un Ernestu Štālbergu – Radoša personība kā sociālpolitisku un mākslas dzīves kontekstu atklāja. Jēkabs Bīne (1895–1955) un Ernests Štālbergs (1883–1958) [Why we need to study history? Visual art and architecture. Monographs about Jēkabs Bīne and Ernests Štālbergs – creative personalities revealing socio-political and artistic contexts. Jēkabs Bīne (1895–1955) and Ernests Štālbergs (1883–1958)]**

1 November 2021. Riga, Latvia. Together with Agita Gritāne

Konference "Valsts Pētījumu programmas projekta "Kultūras kapitāls kā resurss Latvijas ilgtspējīgai attīstībai" / CARD: Ieceres un rezultāti" (Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas konferenču sērijas "Kultūras Krustpunkti XV" ietvaros)

- 10) **"Sekotājs bez redzamām īpatnībām"? Ernesta Štālberga modernisma piemēri Rietumu arhitektūras kontekstā [Just "A Follower with No Visible Characteristics"? Examples of Ernests Štālbergs' Modernism in the Context of Western Architecture]**

28 September 2022. Riga, Latvia

Valsts Pētījumu programmas projekta "Kultūras kapitāls kā resurss Latvijas ilgtspējīgai attīstībai" / CARD" noslēguma konference "Meklējot un paplašinot robežas: Mākslinieciskās jaunrades pētniecība tuvplānā"

Publications

Seven scholarly publications were written about the subject of the thesis, including one international publication and one monograph:

- 1) **LU mācībspēka, arhitekta Ernesta Štālberga (1883–1958) projektētās sanatoriju ēkas** [Sanatorium buildings designed by the UL pedagogue, architect Ernests Štālbergs] // Latvijas Universitātes Raksti. – 2017. – 815. sēj.: Zinātņu vēsture un muzejniecība. – 106.–116. lpp. (English summary)
Available: https://www.apgads.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/lu_portal/apgads/izdevumi/LU_Raksti/815/08_Horsta_labots.pdf
- 2) **Sanatoriju arhitektūra Latvijā: 1918–1940** [Sanatorium architecture in Latvia: 1918–1940]. – Rīga: Latvijas Mākslas akadēmijas Mākslas vēstures institūts; Mākslas vēstures pētījumu atbalsta fonds, 2018. – 256 lpp. ISBN 9789934872129. (English summary)
About Štālbergs' contribution to sanatorium architecture see: 79.–85., 130.–135., 209. lpp.
- 3) **Arhitekts un politika: Ernesta Štālberga dzīve un darbs** [The architect and politics. The life and work of Ernests Štālbergs] // Mākslas Vēsture un Teorija. – 2019. – Nr. 22. – 23.–39. lpp. (English summary)
- 4) **Palace of Health: The Influence of the Manorial Architecture on Modernist Sanatoriums in Latvia** // Modernism for the Future: An International Conference Proceedings / Ed. by V. Petrulis. – Kaunas: Kaunas 2022, 2019. – P. 42–51. Available: <https://modernizmasateiciai.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Modernism-For-The-Future-Proceedings-PREVIEW.pdf>

- 5) **Vidusjūras reģiona arhitektūra kā modernistu inspirācijas avots: Itālijas pilsētvides materiāli arhitekta Ernesta Štālberga fondā Latvijas Valsts arhīvā** [Mediterranean Regional Architecture as Modernists' Source of Inspiration: Materials about Italian Urban design in Collection of Architect Ernests Štālbergs in Latvian State Archives] // Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīva starptautiskie zinātniskie lasījumi. – VI sēj.: Dokumentārā mantojuma bagātības Latvijas arhīvos / Galv. red. V. Pētersone. – Rīga: Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs, 2020. – 131.–148. lpp. (English summary)
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