Proceedings of the Faculty of Technical Sciences, Novi Sad

UDK: 72.012
DOI: https://doi.org/10.24867/36FA19Micik

Reinterpretation of Russian Architectural Archetypes in Contemporary Architecture of Central Russia

Реинтерпретација руских архитектонских архетипова у савременој архитектури Централне Русије

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Study Programme – ARHITEKTURA

Кратак садржај – *Рад анализира реинтерпретацију руских архитектонских архетипова у савременој архитектури Централне Русије и приказује како трансформација традиционалних архитектонских принципа доприноси очувању националног идентитета.*

Кључне речи: *архитектонски архетипови, национални идентитет, савремена архитектура, Централна Русија*

Abstract – *This paper analyzes the reinterpretation of Russian architectural archetypes in the contemporary architecture of Central Russia and demonstrates how the transformation of traditional architectural principles contributes to the preservation of national identity.*

Keywords: *architectural archetypes, national identity, contemporary architecture, Central Russia*

NOTE: This paper is derived from the master's thesis supervised by Dr Jelena Atanacković Jeličić, Full Professor.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has significantly influenced contemporary architectural practice, contributing to the gradual loss of regional identity and cultural specificity. As a result, contemporary architects increasingly seek ways to preserve local traditions without directly reproducing historical architecture. One of the most effective approaches is the reinterpretation of architectural archetypes, which allows traditional spatial, material, and symbolic principles to be adapted to contemporary architectural practice [1].

This paper examines the reinterpretation of Russian architectural archetypes in the contemporary architecture of Central Russia. Four archetypes-the fortress, the wooden izba, the arch and vault, and decorative ornament-are analyzed through selected architectural projects completed between 2010 and 2025. The objective is to identify common reinterpretation strategies and evaluate their contribution to the expression of national identity in contemporary architecture.

2. METHODOLOGY

Four representative contemporary architectural projects completed between 2010 and 2025 were selected to examine the reinterpretation of traditional Russian architectural archetypes. The projects correspond to four archetypes-the fortress, the wooden izba, the arch and vault, and decorative ornament-and were analyzed using a common framework including spatial organization, material expression, symbolic meaning, and functional transformation. The comparative analysis focused on identifying recurring reinterpretation strategies and evaluating their contribution to the expression of national identity in contemporary architecture.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Reinterpretation of the Fortress Archetype

The fortress is one of the most significant architectural archetypes in Russian architecture, traditionally associated with protection, territorial organization, and collective identity [1]. In contemporary architecture, its spatial and symbolic principles are reinterpreted rather than historically reproduced.

The Hospitality Center at Kudykina Gora Park [4] illustrates this approach. The project preserves key characteristics of fortress architecture, including clearly defined boundaries, a dominant vertical element, and an enclosed spatial composition. Instead of serving defensive purposes, these elements organize public space and create a recognizable landmark within the surrounding landscape. The comparative analysis demonstrates that the transformation is achieved primarily through changes in function while preserving the symbolic qualities of enclosure, monumentality, and territorial identity. This example shows that the fortress archetype remains relevant as a flexible framework for expressing regional identity in contemporary architecture

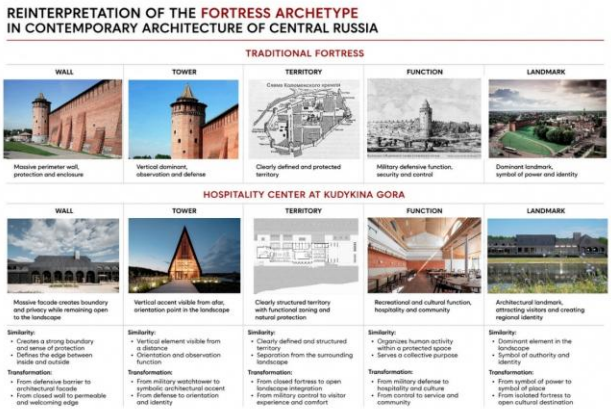


Figure 1. Comparative analysis of the fortress archetype Hospitality Center at Kudykina Gora Park [4]

3.2. Reinterpretation of the Wooden Izba Archetype

Unlike monumental public architecture, the wooden izba reflects everyday life and remains one of the most recognizable archetypes of Russian residential architecture [1]. Contemporary architects reinterpret its essential principles while adapting them to present-day residential needs.



The House in Buzaevo [2] and the New Russian Town [3]

Figure 2. Comparative analysis of the wooden izba archetype House in Buzaevo [2]

concept demonstrate two approaches to this reinterpretation. Timber remains the dominant material, while the traditional pitched roof and relationship with the landscape are preserved through simplified geometric forms and contemporary architectural language.

The comparative analysis shows that continuity is maintained through material expression, spatial organization, and the relationship between architecture and nature rather than stylistic imitation. By adapting these principles instead of reproducing historical forms, contemporary architecture preserves the cultural identity of the wooden izba.

3.3. Reinterpretation of the Arch and Vault Archetype

Among the selected archetypes, the arch and vault primarily influence the spatial organization of architecture rather than its material expression. Historically associated with Russian religious architecture, these elements shaped enclosure, rhythm, natural lighting, and the perception of monumental interior space. In contemporary architecture, they remain relevant through the reinterpretation of these spatial principles instead of the reproduction of historical forms [1].

The BRODSKY office building, the New Russian Town concept, and the Hospitality Center at Kudykina Gora Park demonstrate that arches and vaults are transformed into compositional elements that organize movement, define spatial hierarchy, and enhance the perception of interior space [3-5]. Repetitive arches establish architectural rhythm, while vaulted forms contribute to spatial continuity and the distribution of natural light. Rather than functioning as traditional structural systems, these elements become expressive components of contemporary architectural language.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that the essential spatial qualities of the archetype are preserved despite significant technological and functional changes. By adapting historical principles to contemporary architectural practice, the selected projects maintain continuity with Russian architectural tradition while responding to present-day functional requirements.



Figure 3. Comparative analysis of the arch and vault archetype (BRODSKY [5], New Russian Town [3], and the Hospitality Center at Kudykina Gora Park [4])

3.4. Reinterpretation of the Decorative Ornament Archetype

Unlike structural architectural elements, decorative ornament expresses cultural identity primarily through visual language rather than spatial organization. Traditionally associated with craftsmanship, symbolism, and regional traditions, ornament has long served as a recognizable feature of Russian architectural heritage. In contemporary architecture, however, historical decorative motifs are rarely reproduced directly, reflecting a shift from literal decoration toward more abstract forms of architectural expression.

The selected projects demonstrate that ornament is reinterpreted through façade composition, geometric rhythm, material articulation, and carefully designed architectural details. Rather than functioning as applied decoration, ornamental principles become integrated into the overall architectural concept, contributing to the visual identity and character of the building. As a result, traditional decorative motifs are transformed into contemporary design elements that reinforce the relationship between architecture and cultural memory.

The comparative analysis indicates that abstraction is the principal strategy in the reinterpretation of traditional ornament. Historical patterns are simplified into contemporary geometric compositions that preserve symbolic references without literal imitation. This approach enables architects to retain recognizable cultural associations while responding to present-day aesthetic, functional, and technological requirements. Consequently, ornament continues to function not merely as decoration but as an effective means of expressing regional identity within contemporary architectural practice.



Figure 4. Comparative analysis of the decorative ornament archetype (House in Buzaevo [2] and the Hospitality Center at Kudykina Gora Park [4])

4. CONCLUSION

The research demonstrates that traditional Russian architectural archetypes continue to influence contemporary architecture through reinterpretation rather than direct historical reproduction. The analyzed projects preserve cultural continuity by transforming spatial organization, material expression, symbolic meaning, and

functional principles while responding to present-day architectural requirements.

The comparative analysis identified four distinct reinterpretation strategies. The fortress evolves into a public and cultural landmark, the wooden izba is adapted through contemporary timber architecture and landscape integration, the arch and vault remain relevant as spatial and compositional principles, while decorative ornament is transformed into abstract architectural expression. Although each archetype follows a different approach, all preserve a recognizable connection with Russian architectural tradition.

The findings confirm that reinterpretation provides an effective alternative to historical imitation, allowing contemporary architecture to express national identity while remaining responsive to current social, functional, and technological conditions.

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Short Biography:



Micik Valerija Andrejevna was born in Russia Krasnodar krai in 1999. She defended her Master's thesis at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, in the field of Architecture – Architectural Design, in 2026.

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