

Russian Architecture: A Brief Guide

By Jack Gallegos, WLC 310, Spring 2020

Russia's architectural style has changed throughout its entire history, from the period of Slavic paganism to the present. Fortunately, many of these old buildings and ways of life are still standing (either through intentional preservation or by existing in rural areas where old-style buildings are still the norm). This poster shows some of the different styles present throughout Russian history.

Pre-Christian and Kievan Rus periods

The Pre-Christian era was dominated by Slavic paganism, consisting of wooden temples and wooden structures ("grody"). Many settlements had walls to keep out invaders. This reconstruction of Novgorod shows the types of structures constructed in this era. In the Kievan Rus period we start to see more cathedrals.



Plan of Novgorod village



Saint Sophia Cathedral in Veliky Novgorod



Dormition Cathedral in Vladimir

Muscovite and Imperial periods

The Muscovite periods saw ornate construction being applied not only to religious buildings, but imperial and residential buildings as well. Onion domes (like those seen on the Kremlin) and Italian Renaissance motifs can be seen on many structures. Tented roofs reduced snow piling up on roofs. The Imperial periods brought the country's capital to St. Petersburg, which was designed in a unique, European style.



Spasskaya tower, Moscow Kremlin (1491)



Terem Palace, Moscow Kremlin (1560)



Saint Basil's Cathedral, Moscow (1482)



Peterhof Palace, St. Petersburg (1714)



Bolshoi Theatre, St. Petersburg (1821-1825)



Singer House, St. Petersburg (1902-1904)

Post-Revolution period (1917-1932)

When the Soviet Union came into being, the ideas of revolution and creating a model society helped create new buildings that brought Russians' perception of modernity and the future to their public and living spaces. Public housing and buildings were designed to bring up feelings of industrial productivity, as the workers were considered key to the state's success.



Izvestia building, Moscow



Tsentrosoyuz Building, Moscow



Hotel Iset, Ekaterinburg



Field of Mars, public park in St. Petersburg



House on the Embankment, Moscow



Maxim Gorky Theatre, Rostov-na-Donu

Postwar Soviet Union period (1930s - 2000s)

Stalin pushed rapid urbanization, such as blocks of flats, high-rise buildings, and prefabricated buildings. This caused the "character" of the buildings to reflect the bleakness of everyday life. Eventually, Brezhnev allowed more freedom and variety in building construction.



State Kremlin Palace, Moscow



Moscow State University main building



Round house (plattenbau), Moscow



A Khrushchyovka, Nizhny Novgorod



Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre