Architectural Design Propaedeutics in Russia: History and Prospects

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Abstract. Architectural design propaedeutics is the introductory course of the composition basics which largely determines the process of professional training of an architect and a designer and the result of their work in the form of artistically meaningful artificial human environment. The article gives a brief overview of the history of propaedeutics development in Russia, the experience of application and the prospects of development of the methods used to teach the basics of composition to future professionals. The article considered the main direction of the VKHUTEMAS development, Moscow Architectural Institute. Further, the paper identifies the connection of propaedeutics with the architectural and design practice of the corresponding period. The article addresses to the author’s personal experiences related to the composition basics learning at Moscow Architectural Institute in the 70-ies of the last century. Besides, it presents the examples of the works made by the students from South Ural State University at the Chair of Design and Fine Arts.

1. Introduction
The concept of "propaedeutics" appears in the national architectural school in the 20-ies of the last century almost simultaneously with the leading architectural schools of Europe. German Bauhaus and Soviet VKhUTEMAS are mentioned by the researchers of the history of architecture and design as the centers of a new style generally referred to as "modernism" and counterposing itself to academicism and retrospectivism which were dominant throughout the nineteenth century everywhere [1,2].

The connection of the new disciplines to the formal-analytical method in art history seems apparent. The method which was created by Heinrich Vellline in the late nineteenth century and which were representing the search for new forms characteristic of the all art of that time. The method generally referred to as "vanguard" [3,4].

2. The history of architectural design propaedeutics in Russia
In our study we will focus on the consideration of the only one branch of development of the methodology of basics of composition in architecture and design which is prior in our opinion and is associated with the Moscow architectural Institute. In particular this is due to the personal experience of the development of this discipline at the institute student group under the leadership of Ivan V. Lamtsov in the 70-ies, the one of the authors of the legendary edition of the 1934 year "The elements of architectural and spatial composition" which were admitted as a "manual for architectural technical colleges" [5-9] and the personal experience of the initial period of the teaching activity of
Dmitry L. Melodinskiy, the author of many books about the history and the development of propedeutics in our time [10-14].

The basics of the methodology which were laid down in 20–e years of the last century in the Workshops, and which culminated in the aforementioned book by V.F. Krinsky, I.V. Lamtsov, M.A. Turkus "The elements of the architectural-spatial composition", contained a system of "exercises and theoretical topics arranged in a logical sequence and didactic clarity"[9]. The influence of propedeutics of VHUTEMAS on the architectural practice of the 20-30 years of the Soviet Union is doubtless up to the drastic turn to the revival of the classics, later called “Stalin's Empire”.

Figure 1. The VHUTEMAS students and their work on "Mass and weight". 1927-1928 academic year.

Summing up the first stage of development of propedeutics it should be noted the absolute value of the techniques of mastering the basics of composition in architecture and design for training, which manifested itself in the second stage, which starts in 60–ies, in the period of the so-called "thaw".

The founders of the methodology V.F. Krinsky, I.V. Lamtsov, M.A. Turkus were teaching in the Moscow architectural Institute in those years. I remember the sense of wonder and frustration that were experienced by the students who has revealed the educational work of the 50–ies made in classical style and performed under the guidance of the founders of the architectural avant-garde in the methodological foundation. However, the process of performing a formal exercise was resumed. The process in which students have mastered these basic compositional concepts, like dynamics and statics, spatiality and solidity, contrast and nuance, metre and rhythm. It found the direct reflection in the new Soviet architecture and art construction, which were the name for design at that time. The
teachers’ attention was focused on bridging the gap between the formal search for the expression in exercises and the tasks of real design during this period [9,10].

Figure 2. The book cover published in 1975 under the joint release of A.V. Stepanov and M.A. Turkus.

The new trends in the methods of teaching the basics of composition has appeared by the end of the twentieth century, among which we can distinguish two main trends. The first trend is related to the appearance of the Department of "Design of architectural environment" at the Moscow architectural Institute. This trend is characterized by the desire to disclose an artistic image in the exercise firstly, the image which is based on the thorough study and analysis of works of world art and the ability to interpret it in accordance with the new tasks [6]. In our opinion such this slant is associated with the ideology of postmodernism to a certain extent, which emerged in architecture and design in the 70–ies of the last century. Unlike modernism the new style refers to the use of the classical heritage, but as a source of rethinking and paradoxical quotations [5, 11-20].

Figure 3. The student works done at the Institute, at the Department "Design of architectural environment" on the topic of "The development of the principles of morphogenesis of the architects – masters of the twentieth century."
The second trend in the teaching of propedeutics is connected with the advent of computer technology, which gives the new opportunities in composite search [7,8].

Advances in the methodology of teaching the basics of composition got the continuation and the development in many educational institutions, which appeared in Russia in the twenty-first century and prepare specialists in the field of architecture and design. It testifies the doubtless perspective of the propaedeutics as the method of the development of the composition for the future professionals in the field of formation of artistically full artificial environment.

As an example, I would like to refer to the experience of teaching of propedeutics at the Department of design and fine arts at the South Ural State University (national research university). Paper plastic, graphics and computer technology are actively used here.

Figure 4. The student work performed at the Department of design and fine arts at the South Ural State University in 2012.

The teachers of the Department are the graduates of the leading Russian institutions of higher education that ensures the transfer of methodological traditions, the conjunction of experience and the generation of the new ideas which provide an impetus for the further improvement and development of teaching the composition to the future designers.

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