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## The Heritage of Tsarist Russia's Military Forts as an Object of Postcolonial Revision: Case of the Kaunas School of Art Building 1922–1923

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*The aim of the article is to rethink which objects in contemporary Lithuania are worth being European cultural heritage and which are not — as many of them are now being used by the neighboured aggressive country as examples (politicised arguments) for today's Russia's imperial historical narratives. Results of the research demonstrate that the discussion on mitigations of Tsarist Russia's military forts heritage is a new topic, as the recent decades in Lithuania have shown that the heritage of military forts' architecture in the post-soviet decades is being protected even more than in Soviet Russia's occupation period. So, this trend in Lithuanian cultural Heritage research emerges as an object worth deeper postcolonial revision. Significant is building the future from the past. Within this frame of thinking, the article invites us to remember the national history and select well-known cases from the country's past as most valuable for national and cultural identity. The example of the famous 100-year-old Art School building in Kaunas city (which in the interwar period 1918–1940 was the temporary capital of the Republic of Lithuania) was chosen as the article's main case study. After 100 years, there are no longer any doubts or debates as to how much the area of the 9<sup>th</sup> battery in Kaunas Oaks Hill (Ažuolų kalnas) has "suffered" due to the fact that the complex of buildings of the Lithuanian national Art School was built in a Tsarist Russia military fortress plot. This is evidenced by the other mentioned cases — today outstanding national cultural heritage objects were built a century ago replacing Tsarist Russia's military architecture, meanwhile, according to the laws in force today — these buildings should be protected. Conclusions. Russia's war against Ukraine, it's the right time to reassess countries' critical heritage: in which situations it is worth, how much it is worth, and in which it is no longer worth protecting the architectural heritage of military power formed by Tsarist Russia, especially when it is ruined and too difficult to adapt it to the needs of modern people.*

*Keywords:* European cultural heritage; Kaunas School of Art; Vladimiras Dubeneckis; postcolonial; retro-futurism; Kaunas Fortress; a military fort

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## Introduction

The idealistic pursuit of intellectual and architectural truth has encouraged designers at various times to look for inspiration ideas in the past. Let us recall Renaissance builders studied Roman ruins and Vitruvius' (1914) theoretical treatises, which, translated into English, influenced modernist architects. This was certainly not the first turn to ancient architecture, but the interest in time-tested values promoted humanism ideas in all cases. In contrast to the humanistic goals of architecture, which Vitruvius described more than 2.000 years ago, militaristic and dictatorial regimes despise humanistic architectural ideas and replace friendly solutions for local residents with war-friendly urbanism. To the latter architects and artists are not needed.

*Recent research and publications analysis.* It must be recognised that the artistic value of the residential, public, and church buildings (e. g. *Kauno Soboras* — now Catholic St. Michael the Archangel's church) of the Tsarist Russian period (the *Gubernia* period), which have already been renovated and improved, is not discussed. It must be acknowledged, that most of them are rich in historicism legacy and Art Nouveau style elements, which, after restoration, undoubtedly improves the image of Lithuanian cities. The object of the article's discussion is the abandoned, collapsing forts of the Kaunas Fortress, which in recent years are being protected even more strictly, thereby making their adaptation to the needs of modern Lithuanian residents more difficult.

The first successful case of military heritage conversion was the Lithuanian Sea Museum, which started in 1974 on the territory of the Prussian military heritage *Nerija* Fort (the museum opened in 1979). In it, the remains of defensive ditches and fort walls are aesthetically integrated into the exhibition spaces of the modern museum (*Lietuvos jūrų muziejus*, n.d.). The second case is the Kaunas 9<sup>th</sup> Fort Museum<sup>1</sup> building raised in 1984 (*Kauno IX forto muziejus*, n.d.). In 2009, the 7<sup>th</sup> fort of the Kaunas Fortress was privatised and since 2011 a museum and a non-formal education school started operating there (*Kauno tvirtovės VII fortas*, n.d.). The Vytautas the Great War Technique Museum will soon open its doors in the 4<sup>th</sup> fort. The question is what future awaits the remaining collapsing forts of the Kaunas Fortress: the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, etc. (*Kauno tvirtovės parkas*, n.d.), the renovations of which are complicated not only by today's economic factors but also by increasingly strict heritage protection requirements.

When reviewing chronologically the stages of the architectural evaluation of the Kaunas Fortress, was detected that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> volume of the *History of Lithuanian Architecture* (Jankevičienė, et. al., 2000), the topic of forts is not explored in depth. This could have coincided with the optimistic mood of the restoration of Lithuania's independence at the time, or — with the attitude of the authors of the book towards the objects of Russian military expansion, or — due to the opposition to the interference of the military generals of Tsarist Russia in the planning of the Kaunas city: the original plan of the Kaunas Fortress was prepared in 1879 by Adjutant General Obruchev

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<sup>1</sup> During the Soviet period, the museum was established in the 9<sup>th</sup> fort of the Kaunas Fortress primarily because in interwar Lithuania there was a prison for political prisoners imprisoned for pro-Russian communist Bolshevik views. The aspect of commemorating the history of the Holocaust became established after the restoration of Lithuanian Independence in 1990.

of the General Staff together with Generals Zverev and Volberg. The forts were built between 1883 and 1889, then they were renovated because quickly became obsolete from the point of view of military equipment. According to Nijolė Lukšionytė-Tolvaišienė (2001), the military design left more harm than good for the urbanisation of the city — it is no coincidence that the exterior, plan, construction, and equipment of all administrative buildings were similar, the architecture was strict, official, and “all permits had to be approved by the commandant of the fortress” (p. 21). One of the first texts that have gone deeper into the problems of heritage protection in the forts of the Kaunas Fortress were the works of architectural historians. Nijolė Steponaitytė’s articles (2001, 2003, 2006) about various aspects of Kaunas Fortress architecture filled the first gaps in historical knowledge. A complex book about the construction and modernisation of the fortress followed later. This was Vladimir Orlov’s (2007) *The history of Kaunas Fortress 1882–1915*. The book not only satisfied the appetite of military historians but also encouraged further research, such as Ingrida Veliūtė’s dissertation (2012) and Vita Valantikonytė’s master’s thesis (2022) in heritage studies, also popularised essays of fans of military heritage in social networks and various public forums (*KAUJ Kauno tvirtovė*, n.d.). Vaidas Petrulis (2009, p. 128), after examining architectural policy issues in the interwar periodicals, reminded us of the politically determined goal of the First Republic of Lithuania to distance itself from the influence of the tsarist period and to clearly choose a European orientation, he mentioned the discussions of the intelligentsia regarding the demolition of the Russian *Gubernia* period’s heritage — *Kauno Soboras*, as well as the general disorder of the city and other aesthetic ailments. In his latest publication, Petrulis (2023) once more emphasised the context of the time, that the temporary capital Kaunas was created using the architectural legacy of the fortress, which did not meet the growing needs of the capital of the newly created state. The knowledge gathered by architectural historians had to be synthesised with the works of cultural historians and the discussions of heritage conservation specialists about Lithuanian identity in the field of cultural heritage, that are Rasa Čepaitienė’s (2002) and Gintautas Zabiela’s (1995) publications. The latter publications are particularly valuable because of their critical approach to the “fashions” of heritage protection in independent Lithuania. Agnė Vaitkuvienė (2008) noticed two extremes of post-Soviet heritage protection: from the nationalist towards the social direction of heritage protection. After getting acquainted with the texts of culture analytics the question arose as to what “fashion” should be attributed the increasingly strong tendency of the last decade to even more strictly protect the objects of the military power of Tsarist Russia. Maybe these are signs of the reconstruction aspirations of the Tsarist Russian empire because the Kaunas forts were not protected even during the Soviet occupation of Russia (started to be protected only after 1970) and continued to lose the engineering and architectural value of a single object. Veliūtė (2012) wrote that back in 1940, a law was passed by the Soviet authorities (on the basis of the 1939 draft of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Monuments) obliging only castles to be protected from all fortification objects (p. 60). The preservation of the latter, as well as other objects adapted to civil needs, nowadays is understandable, if not for cultural, then at least for economic benefits, because buildings of this type, after being modernised, decorate the urban environment and are adapted to various civil needs. In contrast to civilian buildings, the issue of forts, water channels,

warehouses, and other abandoned facilities occupying large areas of the city's territory is becoming more and more relevant today, which had already lost their engineering and architectural integrity already in 1918. Today, it seems to be forgotten that in 1881, by order of the Russian Tsar, the Kaunas Fortress Engineering Board 1882–1884 expropriated 110 tithes [1,0925ha] of Kaunas city land for the purposes of the fortress. The expropriation of the territories belonging to the cities and their limitation undoubtedly influenced the development of the city (p. 59). Briefly mentioning the facts of the Soviet Union's repression of the Lithuanian population, it is obvious that Veliūtė is looking for scientific arguments to protect the military heritage of Tsarist Russia, disapproving of the new building of the Kaunas 9<sup>th</sup> Fort Museum, which appeared during the Soviet era, as until 1970, when the objects of the Kaunas Fortress were not included in the lists of protected objects (p. 73)<sup>2</sup>. Veliūtė (2012) declares her disapproval of the appearance of new structures or reconstructions in the fort territories of the Kaunas Fortress. Even admitting that the fortress built by Tsarist Russia became a great burden for Kaunas due to the territory it occupied after World War I, as it hindered the development of the city at that time in important areas (p. 59), the renovation of the fortress infrastructure, according to today's needs, she understands as a "condition for its destruction", comprehensively proves the heritage conservation value of the fortification structures, and even quotes the allegedly positive thoughts of the foreign author about the "psychological value of the architecture of forts" in the words (wrongly translated), that fortresses had an important psychological value, they helped concentration in the face of fear for both the attackers and the attacked, fortresses focused on unity and identity where there was nothing else (p. 46)<sup>3</sup>. However, correcting the translation of Kaunas forts researcher from Virilio's book (1994) and there quoted thoughts of Rene Gustave Nobecourt (1897–1989) — "The fortress had important psychological value for it tended to unite the occupier and occupied into the fair of being swept away; the fortress provided unity and identity where there was none" (p. 29) — Veliūtė seems to have "forgotten" the essence of the historical situation: were the forts built by the local residents in order to defend themselves from the occupiers, or was it the other way around — the occupiers, having occupied the territories of neighbouring states, took the most valuable urban lands from the local residents and built forts in the best strategic locations in order to preserve the occupied territories. Valantikonytė's (2022) master's thesis is no less positive for the monuments of Russia's militaristic heritage. After investigating the supposedly "positive" attitude of the public towards the forts of the Kaunas Fortress through a survey, the author compiles a list of valuable elements to be preserved, recommending that the

<sup>2</sup> In Veliūtė's (2012) dissertation manuscript: „Iki 1970 m. tvirtovės objektai nebuvo įtraukti į saugomų objektų sąrašus. Tik IX forte XX a. šeštame dešimtmetyje įkurtas muziejus. Šis didžiosios dalies tvirtovės komplekso atskyrimas nuo visuomenės galutinai pakenkė tvirtovės kompleksškumo išsaugojimui, nes daugybė komponentų buvo sunaikinti dėl intensyvių statybų, pateko į individualių namų teritorijas ir buvo kitaip pažeisti. Tik nuo XX a. aštunto dešimtmečio atskiri tvirtovės elementai įtraukiami į sąrašus kaip architektūros paminklai" (p. 73).

<sup>3</sup> „tvirtovės turėjo svarbią psichologinę vertę, ji padėdavo baimės akivaizdoje susikoncentruoti ir puolantiesiems, ir puolamiesiems, tvirtovės sutelkdavo vienybei ir identitetui ten, kur daugiau nieko nebebuvo" (Veliūtė's, 2012, p. 46).

manager of the facility hand it over to the Lithuanian Department of Cultural Heritage (p. 56, pp. 89–93). Resuming architecture historians' publications dedicated to the forts of the Kaunas Fortress, visible that most of the Lithuanian studies unilaterally advocate for stricter preservation of the monuments of the military power of Tsarist Russia, while the texts somehow keep silent (or do not emphasise) the repressions of Lithuanian population and statehood during Tsarist Russia's occupation. Therefore, it is unlikely that getting stricter heritage requirements would facilitate or speed up the repairs of the fortress buildings, let successful architectural reconstructions and adaptations for the needs of modern society. It is partly understandable why the forts of the Kaunas Fortress were included in the lists of protected objects during the Soviet era. However, in present independent Lithuania, having correct historical knowledge and recognising the heritage of Tsarist Russia as a "dissonant heritage", as difficult to integrate into the spaces of modern life and harmful to the development of the city's civic life, the struggle for the tightening of the rules for the preservation of Kaunas forts is not understandable.

Searching the international discourses on fortifications of the last decade we notice them significantly enriched by interdisciplinary research as Anatole Tchikine & John Dean Davis (2021): *Military Landscapes* is expanded with cultural, historical, and new architectural "values". Rachel Woodward's (2014) "Looking at Military Landscapes: Definitions and Approaches" inspires critical approaches and discussions about terminology. Finally in the foreign narratives of fortification appears a distinction between the resistance-national defensive heritage and the occupational heritage as in the materials of *International Conference Military Landscapes. A Future for Military Heritage* (Fiorino, 2017). The latest researches encourage looking for new insights into the fortification heritage from a much wider historical and cultural perspective.

## Aim of the article

The aim of the article is to discuss the heritage value of Tsarist Russia's militaristic power urbanism. We shall strive to remember the lessons of history and to assess critically valid heritage protection standards that have survived from the time of the Soviet occupation. It's time to rethink what is European cultural heritage, what is valuable, and what is not. This would allow revaluation of the so-called "non-negotiable places" that prevent the city from renewing itself with socially necessary, comfortable, aesthetically attractive buildings or multifunctional outdoor spaces. The problem is that for many years in the Second Republic of Lithuania, we have had a very ambiguous situation in the regulation of cultural heritage objects: equally protected those that tell the history of Lithuania's statehood and the same objects which ruined the history of the independent state. Some Russian military objects from the Soviet occupation period are starting to be removed from the Lithuanian Register of Cultural Property, meanwhile, the heritage of military architecture of Tsarist Russia in the previous decades is being protected even more. Besides many of them now are used by the neighboured aggressive country as arguments (useful objects) for today's Russia's historical narratives. The political situation of our days is a very important

stimulus for rethinking the approach to the values of protected objects — it is becoming more and more obvious that current Russia identifies itself with the territory of Tsarist Russia and its militaristic power, thus causing political tension, destabilising the borders of European states. Russia's war against Ukraine, it's the right time to rethink what objects are really worth being European cultural heritage and which of them are not.

*Research Methodology.* This critical discussion emerged within the frame of *post-colonial studies* understanding. It proves the theory that even though the colonisers have departed, not only their governance models remain but also “hybrid identities” (Buchanan, 2010, p. 237). The notion of “differences” by Edward W. Said (1978) in the uncertain geopolitical situation of today should be expanded — that in periods of peace, postcolonial inherited “differences” are sources of cultural creativity; but in periods of threats, they suddenly convert to aggressor's propaganda.

The Kaunas School of Art was chosen as a *case study* in a kit with other well-known cases, as it wasn't the only known object in the city. The study could be the beginning of a new approach and future discussions on the renewal of heritage protection laws not only in Lithuania but in countries of a similar historical fate. Today, one of the most outstanding monuments of modernist architecture in Kaunas — the Vytautas the Great Museum with an open garden space was created after the demolition of the orthodox church of Tsarist Russia with a military playpen, according to the “standards” of today's heritage protection acts these buildings had to be protected — even though they had no artistic or cultural value important to Lithuania (Fig. 1–2). Such a situation causes not only political debates, but problems for modern buildings — the relationships between architects, builders, and heritage protection institution representatives in Lithuania are often strained and stop already-started architectural renovations. The historical case of the construction of the School of Art encourages *analytical* rethinking, discussing how much it is worth to use the occupation's left military architectural heritage for modern cultural, sports, and educational purposes, to reflect on the possibilities of modern and aesthetic conversions of the fortifications of Russian military power. Being preserved as is now, they are too difficult to adapt to the needs of modern life. Even the times of the Second Republic of Lithuania often prevented the creation of new objects of public purpose in the city of Kaunas, for the renovation of modern military shelters also cannot be realised because of the “valuable features” described in the Lithuanian Register of Cultural Property.

Finally, an approach of *retro-futurism* we don't find in scientific dictionaries of architectural history or art terms. Meanwhile, contemporary scholars starting to use it, as Saud Amerrouf Sian & Terry Lucas explain it as “a trend that was created by writers, artists, and film directors in the past and is closely related to science fiction” (2018), but scholars strive to make it an exploratory method that can be used to analyse the architectural design of the past. The issue of building the future from the past has been traced during my thorough study of the creative work of the interwar architect Dubeneckis (Preišegalavičienė, 2018). According to Dubeneckis, the future of national architecture is created by contemporary ideas enriched with the most recognisable quotations from the past — reminding the historical nation's independence periods and European culture — that means, bringing up the aggressors neglected, rejected, and destroyed architectural styles and symbols of European culture. In the

Lithuania case — the European culture represented Baroque architecture together with the Catholic and Uniate churches and traditions. They all started to be destroyed by Tsarist Russia soon after the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth divisions (Buržinskas, 2022)<sup>4</sup>.

This article will review only the prevailing situation in architectural and cultural heritage research fields. The knowledge accumulated in the author's previous research synthesised with colleagues' works, and also the practical experience of architectural design invites to temper the inertly accelerating dangerous art history trends and cultural heritage "fashions" lacking a critical historical approach.

## Main research material

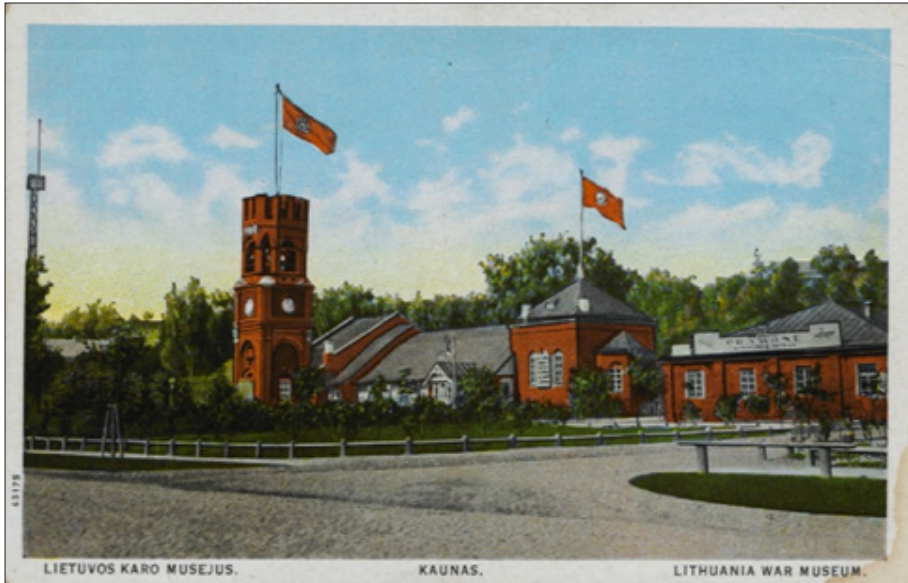
### **The context of the architectural design and construction situation after proclaiming Lithuania's Independence in 1918**

The building of the Art School was designed by famous architect Vladimiras Dubeneckis (1888–1932). The life and work of this famous artist and architecture were researched in a monograph (Preišegalavičienė 2018). This is just one of the many objects in which Dubeneckis had to work with the architecture inherited from Tsarist Russia's gubernatorial (*Gubernija*) period. Let's remember that he reconstructed the Palace of the Constituent Assembly (*Steigiamasis Seimas*), while designing the interior, he convinced the Lithuanian government about the inadequacy of the former boys' gymnasium building for the needs of a representative state institution (p. 136). The architect transformed the Kaunas Governor's Palace into the Presidency of the Republic of Lithuania (pp. 137–138), he redesigned the former orthodox church of Tsarist Russia with a military playpen into the War Museum (pp. 64–67) exhibiting the history of Lithuania's independence struggles (Fig. 1). These buildings were demolished (pp. 174–184) during the completion of the construction of the Vytautas the Great Museum (Fig. 2).

The former residence of the head of the Tsarist Russian Board of Engineers was completely reconstructed by the architect into the Lithuanian Cabinet of Ministers (Preišegalavičienė, pp. 139–140), redesigned the auditorium, lobbies, and main facade of the Kaunas State Theater (pp. 85–92), The 7<sup>th</sup> fort of the Kaunas Fortress in 1921 Dubeneckis transformed into the Central Archive of Lithuania (p. 141) and etc. Generally speaking, in order to save time and money, all the buildings of Tsarist Russia, which were at least minimally suitable for use, were re-planned, rebuilt, and modernised.

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<sup>4</sup> Žygimantas Buržinskas (2022) Doctoral thesis state, that the confessional struggle became one of the most significant political and cultural processes in the region. This was particularly evident in Lithuania and Poland 1830–1831 and 1863–1864 uprisings against the Tsarist Russian government. Baroque architecture was considered one of the Russianness and Orthodoxy alienities, and because of that the Catholic and Uniate sacred architecture Baroque building's occupants converted to Orthodox churches renovating-rebuilding them in Russian style. Meanwhile "Russian style had no obvious connections with the development of construction in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Such a state of aesthetic concepts was also ensured by the existence of the metropolis of Kyiv before it was annexed to the power of the Patriarch of Moscow" (p. 376).



*Figure 1.* Lithuanian War Museum in redesigned Tsarist Russia military buildings: former orthodox church and a military playpen.  
A postcard, 1920s, in Kaunas County Public Library



*Figure 2.* Vytautas the Great Museum with an open garden space was built in the same place of the demolished church of Tsarist Russia.  
A postcard, 1930s, in Kaunas County Public Library



Dubeneckis brought respect for classical Western European architecture and the use of local traditions in the creation of new ideas from his studies in St. Petersburg (was graduated in 2014). During his studies, he learned to draw and paint old historical buildings. His deep philosophical thoughts and questions testify to how deeply the architect contemplated the representation of the historical buildings of our region: What link between cultures? what spirit? Dubeneckis identified architecture with “the conscience of history”. He persuaded his colleagues in Lithuania “to build the footbridge of cultural architecture into our past” (Dubeneckis, 1925). Thinking retro-futuristically, the future of architecture is created in the past, so it is necessary to responsibly choose objects from the past that we bring into the future. Thinking in this way, he painted scenes with the old town of Vilnius, Lithuanian brick manor houses, and wooden rural huts. Fragments and sketches of individual Lithuanian historical buildings appeared in Dubeneckis’ drawing files alongside drawings of new architectural plans and facades, visibly helping to creatively compose decayed parts of different cultural layers, rebuild demolished ones, mix architectural stylistics, combining them with Lithuanian history, and cultural context, landscape, economic conditions or even problems arising with the builders during the design and building process.

### **School of Art construction in 1922–1923**

The advanced drawing courses for future drawing teachers in Lithuanian gymnasiums had been established by painter Justinas Vienožinskis (1886–1960) and began to operate in the autumn of 1920. In the first year, classes were held on the second floor of the People’s House building. The Art School Act was adopted and promulgated in 1922. Apolonija Valiuškevičiūtė (1971) was one of the first to describe the construction history of the School of Art as quite scandalous and controversial. Vienožinskis decided to build a separate building, not for courses, but for the School of Art. After receiving the approval of the Ministry of Education, a six-person cabinet was immediately formed to build the building of the School of Art. Vienožinskis was elected as the chairman, members: Dubeneckis, as the future author of the school building project and executor of construction works, Paulius Galaunė (1890–1988), as a representative of the Ministry of Education, one representative of the State Control, and two other committee members. The committee was obliged to find opportunities to build the new building of the School of Art. Not only during the preparation of the construction documentation but also later, after the construction work had already started, this project and its authors were accompanied by a whole series of obstacles and problems. The first legal inconsistency was that the territories that were within the boundaries of the Kaunas Fortress after the declaration of independence were transferred to the Ministry of National Defense of Lithuania, while the newly built School of Art was the object of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Lithuania.

At Vienožinskis’ request, Dubeneckis designed two modest, inexpensive wooden houses. Permission to build them has been obtained, the estimate has been approved. It is true that Dubeneckis, together with Vienožinskis, personally “selected” the site of the future construction — one of the higher “corners” of Kaunas — the 9<sup>th</sup> battery of the former Kaunas Fortress, and also obtained permission from the Cabinet of Ministers to occupy it. However, the Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence cancelled the permit, as “it was said that the battery will be needed to defend Kaunas in case of a war” (Galaunė, 1970, p. 294). Another protest regarding the construction of the School of

Art reached the Kaunas City Municipality, as it had planned to build the *Seimas* Palace (Parliament Palace) on the same site. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, 1922, the municipality quickly sent its representatives to stop the work that had started. In order to implement the planned project, the organisers had to resort to some not-so-fair tricks. For example, when writing about this plot, Vienožinskis argued that the ruins of the military 9<sup>th</sup> battery have neither historical-archeological, artistic nor military-strategic value (Valiuškevičiūtė, 1997, p. 20). The patriots of fostering Lithuanian art tried to debate in the press with their opponents from the Ministry of National Defence: “This place, as is already known, also turned out to be liked by some other persons, this time to build a War Museum; because one War Museum is not enough for such a ‘huge’ Lithuania, it will be necessary to build a second one soon. As it seems to some Excellencies, it is possible to live without the Art School as it will still be necessary only after 50 years” (Nerimuotis, 1922). It is possible to “read” between the lines that General Vladas Nagevičius’ unfavourable position regarding the construction of the Art School is mentioned here. The conflict mentioned here between the Lithuanian artists’ community and representatives of the national defence in the interwar period was not an episodic case. Painter Kajetonas Sklėrius and architect Mykolas Songaila were evicted from their homes simply because the Minister of National Defense Balys Sližys liked their apartments (Valiuškevičiūtė, 1997, pp. 29–30). Today, one can only imagine all the difficulties and obstacles that Dubeneckis had to overcome together with other members of the school building committee, creatively bypassing the then political-bureaucratic obstacles and solving the lack of construction funding. For example, the bricks of the collapsed suburban houses of Freda were used to build the walls of the new school, the foundations were made of a mixture of stones and concrete, and most simple wooden floors were made (Kančienė, 1991, p. 160). The construction of the School of Art was accompanied by constant financial shortages and conflicts with contractors and state institutions. Adding to all the other worries was the fact that state control while inspecting the construction progress of the Art School building, protested the contract between Dubeneckis and the school’s construction committee and did not agree to pay Dubeneckis’ salary. Many years later, in 1947, Vienožinskis admitted how the so-called “gentle” deception was used for the construction of the palace in order to fulfill the plan of the Lithuanian artists (Valiuškevičiūtė, 1997, p. 21).

Through the project of the School of Art, Dubeneckis had to create an image of the Lithuanian architecture style. The rural wooden churches and peasant architecture of the Lithuanian countryside were not the only landmarks of the past for the new Lithuanian stylistics. The architect was obviously very fascinated by the Lithuanian manor houses. For the first time, Dubeneckis embodied this admiration for Lithuanian manors in the project of the School of Art (Fig. 3).

The architect’s work and the implementation of the project faced many difficulties, in the beginning — due to the establishment of the school itself, and finally — due to the lack of funding. Despite all the obstacles, the building, like a spacious manor house, was luxuriously embedded in the territory of the so-called Oaks Hill (*Ažuolų Kalnas*). The axis of the central entrance (almost) coincides with the central axis of Benediktinių street as if bringing visitors from medieval Kaunas Castle and the old town directly to the sanctuary of Lithuanian art. As the main road to the territory, a wide gate (the width of the street) was planned, located on the same axis as Benediktinių street and the main

entrance to the school. To illuminate the area, the architect had designed authentic 6m high outdoor lamps, which he intended to manufacture in Lithuania. The wide selection of offered outdoor lights remained — the architect offered customers to choose one of seven options (*Meno mokyklos projektavimo dokumentai*, 1922).

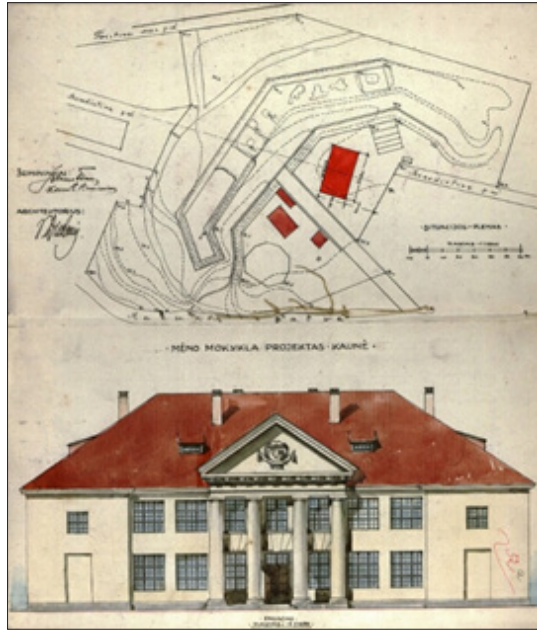


Figure 3. The School of Art in Kaunas project by Dubeneckis, paper, ink, watercolor, 1922.

In the plan, in front of the main facade of the School of Art, the bow of the 9<sup>th</sup> battery of the Kaunas Fortress, in KRVA. F. 218, ap .1, b. 79, l. 32

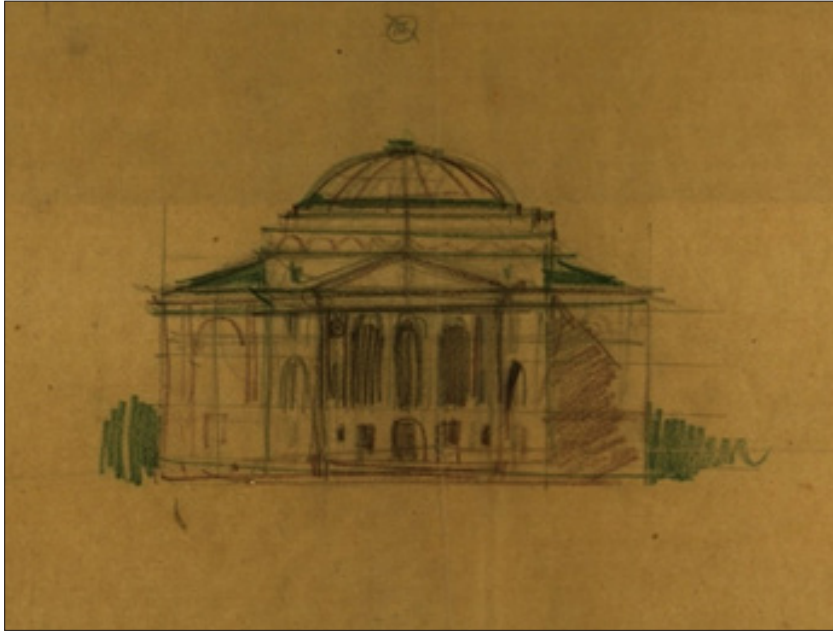
Knowing the historical context, it is obvious how difficult the task of designing and building the School of Art was for the architect. In his memories, Galaunė (1968) testified the same story as Vienožinskis: “The Ministry of Education cut funds mercilessly. There was no question about creative individuality, ambition” (p. 294). We find many more spacious plans and much more ornate facades in the design documentation that has survived to this day (*Meno mokyklos projektavimo dokumentai*, 1922–1923). It was evidently dreamed of as a building in the neoclassical manor-style house with a luxurious appearance (Fig. 4).

However, in the final version of the building, the only thing that pleased the author was that it had a Doric portico (Fig. 5). Dubeneckis then spoke: “However, there is still a bit of an architectural centre” (Galaunė, 1968, p. 2). A half-pitched roof (in the design was intended to be pitched) with a high mezzanine above the main entrance gives the main facade a sense of solemnity. A workshop-atelier has been designed in the attic, where natural lighting is modernly installed in skylights. In front of the entrance, a wide terraced staircase with balustrade railings is incorporated. They lead to a cosy little hall

on the second floor. The front part of the hall expands upwards centre, and the centre of the glass ceiling is accentuated by a carved wooden ornament. The top of the walls is framed with profiled wooden borders, which were made according to the original size templates drawn by Dubeneckis. The classrooms on the first floor are arranged symmetrically, and accordingly, large vertically divided windows are lined up symmetrically on the facades. The educational facilities are equipped with utilitarian. There are niches-shelves in the walls. The architecture, reminiscent of a solid, brick country manor house structure, in a way, continued the traditions of Lithuanian architecture. The historically established style of the manor's residential buildings used for the purpose of the School of Art demonstrated respect for the country's past traditions, combined with modern progress. Even after the contract for all the works had not been completed, the facades had not been painted and the park had not been greened, contemporaries were happy with the building in advance. According to contemporaries (P. J., 1923, p. 4), the place chosen for the palace is very convenient: from it, you can see magnificent and beautiful natural scenes, *Nemunas*, *Nėris*, and the whole city. There are 10 rooms on the first floor: 7 for lessons, 2 cloakrooms, one teacher's room, and one — office. There are also ten rooms on the second floor, including the Great Hall (14 x 6m), a reading room and library, three classrooms, and the director's apartment. On the third floor, there are 8 rooms for teachers' workshops, they meet all the requirements of the atelier: light falls both from above and from the side. The entire area of the school is 31 x 19m. All classrooms are equipped with special furniture. Most of the rooms are heated by wood stoves, and there is a heater to heat the corridors. A motor pump is installed for the water supply. Each classroom has a wash basin. Ventilation is also good. There are several downstairs apartments for the guards. One room is assigned to the Art School students' cooperative. Despite all the difficulties and obstacles, the National School of Art, built with state funds, was completed on time. The new building was consecrated on May 8, 1923. At the end of the festivities, donations were collected (to complete the construction of the school). According to the memories of Valiuškevičiūtė's (1997) contemporaries, the sacrifice was made without any regrets. During the opening, teachers and students were happy that all machines and equipment for graphic works were brought from abroad in time — even before the opening of the premises. The new bookshelves were immediately filled with 1.500 books and albums brought from Western Europe. Along with them, antique plaster sculptures were brought, for which Dubeneckis intended a double purpose: they were to serve as drawing models and as decorations for interior spaces. 500 reproductions of paintings and photographs, which Dubeneckis had previously planned to hang in school corridors, studios, and offices, had a similar purpose.

The art school building was included in the Lithuanian Register of Cultural Property in 2003 (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2003). Today, there are no longer any doubts or debates as to how much the area of the 9<sup>th</sup> battery of the Kaunas Fortress in Oaks Hill (*Ažuolų kalnas*), suffered due to the fact that the building complex of the Lithuanian School of Art appeared there.

Today's tightening approach to the objects of the occupiers' military heritage reconstruction undoubtedly hinders creative, modern integration into the city's cultural, social, and residential spaces or their adaptation to modern civil safety requirements. Besides, does not give freedom to the creativity of architects, and also testifies to the second century of Lithuania's breaking free from Russian military oppression.



*Figure 4.* One of the variants of the School of Art project by Dubeneckis, 1922. In KRVA. F.156, ap. 1, b. 1, l. 29



*Figure 5.* Kaunas School of Art, today Kaunas College Arts Academy. Photo by Lina Preisegalaviciene, 2018

## Conclusions

History teaches us that Dubeneckis' retro-futuristic approach to new architecture and past heritage is useful for solving the paradoxes of heritage protection. Thinking retro-futuristically, the future of architecture is created in the past: by choosing cultural heritage objects to be preserved as values, we create the future of our state. Therefore, it is worth remembering the debates started in interwar Lithuania regarding the value and necessity of the military forts from Tsarist Russia, their limited adaptation to modern needs, and most of all — the lack of connection with the statehood of independent Lithuania. These reflections lead directly to today's acknowledged mentality of building the future from the past.

The current political situation in Europe is the right time to reassess in which situations it is worth, how much it is worth, and in which it is no longer worth protecting the architectural heritage of military power formed by Tsarist Russia, especially when it is difficult to adapt to the needs of the modern people, thus giving space and creative freedom to the architectural talents of our days.

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## Abbreviations

KPD – Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania

KRVA – Kaunas Regional State Archives

LNM – National Museum of Lithuania

MIK – Meno istorija ir Kritika / Art History & Criticism

NČDM — M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art

VDA — Vilniaus dailės akademija / Vilnius Academy of Arts

VMU — Vytautas Magnus University

VG TU — Vilniaus Gedimino technikos universitetas / Vilnius TECH

VRVA — Vilniaus regioninis valstybės archyvas / Vilnius Regional State Archives

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## Спадщина військових фортів царської Росії як об'єкт постколоніальної ревізії: на прикладі будівлі Каунаської художньої школи 1922–1923 років

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*Мета статті* полягає у спробі переосмислити об'єкти сучасної Литви та визначити, які з них варті того, щоб вважатися європейською культурною спадщиною, а які — ні, адже багато з них зараз використовуються крайною-агресором як приклади (політизовані аргументи) імперських історичних наративів сьогодишньої Росії. *Результати дослідження* вказують на те, що дискусії щодо пом'якшення питання спадщини військових фортів періоду царської Росії нині є абсолютно новими, оскільки останні десятиліття в Литві показали, що ця спадщина у пострадянські часи охороняється навіть більше, ніж у період окупації радянською Росією. Отже, окреслена тенденція в дослідженні литовської культурної спадщини постає як об'єкт, який потребує глибокого постколоніального перегляду. Важливо будувати майбутнє на основі минулого. У рамках цього підходу стаття закликає згадати національну історію та обрати відомі приклади з минулого країни як найцінніші для національно-культурної ідентичності. Основну увагу приділено відомій 100-річній будівлі художньої школи в місті Каунас, яке у міжвоєнний період 1918–1940 рр. було тимчасовою столицею Литовської Республіки. Через 100 років вже немає жодних сумнівів чи дискусій щодо того, наскільки сильно «постраждала» територія 9-ї батареї на Каунаському Дубовому пагорбі (*Ažuolų kalnas*) через те, що комплекс будівель художньої школи був побудований на території військової фортеці царської Росії. Про це свідчать і інші згадані приклади — видатні об'єкти національної культурної спадщини були збудовані століття тому, замінивши військову архітектуру царської Росії. Згідно з чинним законодавством ці споруди мають бути під охороною. *Висновки.* Війна Росії проти України — це час переоцінити культурну спадщину країн: в яких ситуаціях варто, а в яких більше не доречно захищати архітектурну спадщину військової могутності, сформованої царською Росією, особливо коли її надто важко адаптувати до потреб суспільства.

*Ключові слова:* європейська культурна спадщина; Каунаська школа мистецтв; Володимир Дубенецький (Владас Дубенецькіс); постколоніалізм; ретрофутуризм; Каунаська фортеця; військовий форт



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