

SUMMARY

Special place in the architectural stylistic development in Klaipeda is occupied by the modernism period and Bauhaus, which marks its inception stage. The architectural movement, which originated in Germany after the First World War, was named Bauhaus, literally meaning "to build a house". Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus School (1919-1933) in Weimar, Germany, in 1919. It was a higher building and industrial design school, which made an immense impact upon formation of the new architectural style of Europe. The Bauhaus ideas in fine arts were realized by Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinski, now worldwide known artists.

In 1923, following Klaipeda Region's annexation by the Republic of Lithuania, highly favourable conditions emerged for evolvement of new architectural trends. Lithuania invested huge amounts into this region in order to link it to the motherland irrevocably. Funding was allotted for construction of new industrial facilities, public buildings and housing projects.

Herbert Reissmann, the overground building engineer who graduated from Dresden Higher Technical School, was the first to foster Bauhaus ideas in Klaipeda. He arrived at Klaipeda in 1923. At that time two chief architects were working here – A. Nixdorfas and P. Giesingas.

H. Reissmann started as a very creative person, he participated in many competitions, published his articles in local press. To his designs were built the printing house "Rytas" (1926–1932), the Gymnasium of Vytautas Magnus (1934), the building of Klaipeda power plant administration (1938), the printing house "Memeler Dampfboot" (1939). Over 140 buildings, in total, were built to his designs in the Klaipeda Region.

The chief architect of the city of Klaipeda, Paul Giesing, is another distinguished person who served the city. He came to Klaipeda in 1916 after winning the competition for building a small residential quarter in Klaipeda. In short time he was appointed to the position of building adviser in the Magistrate and in 1926 was elected to office of the chief city architect for 12 year term. A number of buildings still representing Klaipeda were designed and erected by him, including the school of I. Kant (the present Higher Marine School), the school in Smeltė, the City hospital (now the Children hospital), the Cemetery chapel (now the Orthodox church in Liepų street). His most famous building is the City's Savings Bank (now the office of TEO, Herkaus Manto g. 2).

The prominent Lithuanian architects of that period, who created in modernism style, also left an imprint on Klaipeda. V. Landsbergis-Žemkalnis designed the buildings of Teachers Training Institute, and Sports and Gymnastics, as well as residential blocks in Smeltė. An architect from Kaunas J. Steikūnas designed the Red Cross hospital in Bauhaus style, O. E. Koralus – the Klaipeda Building School, M. Songaila – the Lithuanian Bank Storage facilities in the New Winter harbour, and K. Duž-Dušauskas – the Klaipeda radio station in Jakai.

It was modernism that influenced the Klaipeda interwar architecture to the largest extent laying foundation to the development of the contemporary architecture.

Most public buildings erected in the period of modernism have survived to this day. They embellish and lend a special flavour to the city. The surviving private buildings and villas lacking the attention of owners and heritage authorities have found themselves in a more difficult situation.