

*Strand 1. The Art Nouveau Movement and National Identities (Art, Society and Thought)*

***THE NATIONAL VARIANT OF ART NOUVEAU IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF BELGRADE AS A MANIFESTATION OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY***

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**Abstract**

While European countries at the turn of the 20th century are grabbing the path of modernity and new discoveries, a new enriched bourgeoisie with its wealth is supporting the emergence of an artistic revolution, the small kingdom of Serbia and its capital Belgrade are trying to make up for the lost centuries. The eternal struggle between the progressive and the traditional is evident in all segments of life and recreation of the national identity, but perhaps most of all in the architecture, as it was one of the main forms of expression of national aspirations in recent Serbian art. Using examples of the national variant of Art Nouveau in the architecture of Belgrade this paper will explore the attempts to create a national architectural style which would illustrate the Serbian national identity and its continuity from the Middle Ages to the regaining of the independence in 19th century and beyond.

**Key words:** Belgrade; national identity; art nouveau; architecture

*1. Historical circumstances in Serbia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the context of the search for the national architectural style*

To understand the attempts to create the national style in the architecture of Serbia at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is important to place them in the context of the historical circumstances of the birth of a new, modern and independent Serbian state at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The final fall of medieval Serbia under Ottoman rule in 1459 marked the end of the Serbian medieval state. More in: Радош ЉУШИЋ, Чедомир ПОПОВ, Дејан МЕДАКОВИЋ, Милош БЛАГОЈЕВИЋ. *Историја српске државности: Од настанка првих држава до почетка српске националне револуције*, Београд, Српска академија наука и уметности, 2000.

The First Serbian Uprising (1804-1813) "represents the beginning of the Serbian revolution"<sup>2</sup> and the introduction to the Second Serbian Uprising (1815) that will ultimately lead to the liberation and final independence of Serbia at the Congress of Berlin in 1878.<sup>3</sup>

The period from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the First World War is one of the most dynamic periods in the history of Serbia. From the first struggles for the abolition of Ottoman rule, gaining independence, declaration of a hereditary principality, and then a kingdom, through the assassination of the royal couple, two Balkan wars and finally the Great War.<sup>4</sup>

Social and cultural circumstances in Serbia at the time of the emergence of Art Nouveau were significantly different compared to the developed European countries. Serbia was still torn

between the determination for a progressive, industrial society or a traditional one, which resisted modernization.<sup>5</sup>

And while in European countries there is continuity in the development of economy, society and art, in Serbia it was interrupted in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. From the Second Serbian Uprising at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900, the small Balkan state had to make up for several hundred years. From: "At the beginning of Prince Miloš's government, there was no other art in Serbia except folk art, the heritage of our national artistic culture..."<sup>6</sup> to the invitation to participate in the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900, which was taken very seriously as an opportunity to show the progress of the young economy and international affirmation, which was necessary for a country with the specific geopolitical position between Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey.<sup>7</sup>

During the first reign of Prince Miloš (1815 – 1839) art slowly developed, primarily through the work of artists coming from abroad.<sup>8</sup> It was the same with architecture. There were no architects, instead master masons, who were more or less skilled, built. Over time, Prince Miloš and later

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.muzej.mod.gov.rs/prvi-srpski-ustanak>. Consulted on 27/03/2023.

<sup>3</sup> Velibor GLIGORIĆ (Ed.). *Enciklopedijski leksikon – Mozaik znanja, Istorija*, Beograd, Interpres, 1970, p. 73, 544-545.

<sup>4</sup> After the end of the First World War, on December 1, 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was created (which included Vojvodina, until then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). V. GLIGORIĆ, *Istorija...*, p. 293; Бранка ПРПА (Ed.). *Живети у Београду 1890-1940, документа Управе града Београда, књига 6*, Београд, Историјски архив Београда, 2008, p. 007.

<sup>5</sup> Dejan M. TUBIĆ. *Umetnost secesije kao srpska rana moderna*, Beograd, Filozofski fakultet, doctoral dissertation, 2013, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Тихомир Р. ЂОРЂЕВИЋ. *Из Србије кнеза Милоша – културне прилике од 1815. до 1839. године*, Београд, Просвета, 1983, p. 116.

<sup>7</sup> Весна ДУШКОВИЋ. *Србија на светској изложби у Паризу 1900*, Београд, Музеј примењене уметности, exhibition catalogue, 1995, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> More about Prince Miloš's government in: Радош ЈУШИЋ. *Кнез Милош државотворни владар*, Нови Сад, Православна реч, 2021.

his son Prince Mihailo (1823 – 1868) brought architects first from Italy, and then from Austria-Hungary.<sup>9</sup>

It was only in the forties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the first Engineering School was founded in Serbia, which in 1863 grew into the Technical Faculty. Until the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, students who wanted to study architecture, after graduating from the Technical Faculty, continued their studies of architecture in one of the European cities. The Department of Architecture at the University of Belgrade was finally established in 1897.<sup>10</sup>

By studying in European cities such as Vienna, Munich, Mittweida, future Serbian architects brought contemporary influences and predominant architectural styles to the new Serbian state, contributing to its modernization.<sup>11</sup>

The speed with which Belgrade, as the capital of Serbia (since 1841), developed over a century is perhaps best illustrated by Divna Đurić-Zamolo in her book *Belgrade Architects between 1815 and 1914*: "Belgrade experienced a complete transformation in the span of one century, from the Second Serbian Uprising to the First World War. From a half-destroyed settlement with all the features of oriental urbanism and architecture, it became a European city..."<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Serbian medieval architecture and Art Nouveau as an inspiration for the Serbian national architectural style

First Serbian states, under Byzantine rule, were established in 9<sup>th</sup> century, and gained their final independence under the rule of Stefan Nemanja in 13<sup>th</sup>.<sup>13</sup> With the fall of the city of Smederevo

<sup>9</sup> More about Prince Mihailo's government in: Радош ЉУШИЋ. *Србија 19. века*, Београд, Војноиздавачки завод, 1998, р. 1260; Т. ЂОРЂЕВИЋ. *Из Србије кнеза Милоша...*, р. 116-120.

<sup>10</sup> Дивна ЂУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛО. *Градитељи Београда 1815 – 1914*, Београд, Музеј града Београда, 2011, р. 9-14. Ангелина БАНКОВИЋ, Злата ВУКСАНОВИЋ-МАЦУРА. *Стварање модерног Београда од 1815. до 1964. из Збирке Музеја града Београда*, Београд, Музеј града Београда, exhibition catalogue, 2019, р. 11; Мирјана РОТЕР-БЛАГОЈЕВИЋ. „Настава архитектуре на вишим и високошколским установама у Београду током 19. и почетком 20. века“, *Годишњак града Београда*, No. XLIV, 1997, р. 125-168: 125.

<sup>11</sup> For more details in: Д. ЂУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛО. *Градитељи Београда...*, р. 9-14.

<sup>12</sup> Д. ЂУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛО. *Градитељи Београда...*, р. 5. More about urban development of Belgrade in: Злата ВУКСАНОВИЋ-МАЦУРА, Ангелина БАНКОВИЋ. *Мере града, карте и планови из Збирке за архитектуру и урбанизам Музеја града Београда*, Београд, Музеј града Београда, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> More details about Stefan Nemanja and the Serbian dynasties in: Андрија ВЕСЕЛИНОВИЋ, Радош ЉУШИЋ. *Српске династије*, Београд, Службени гласник, 2008 (Београд, 2001), р. 29-49; Александар ДЕРОКО. *Монуменална декоративна архитектура у средњовековној Србији*, Београд, Туристичка штампа, 1985, р. 8.

on June 20, 1459, Serbia completely fell under Ottoman rule, and from that moment the struggle of the Serbian people to preserve their national identity began.<sup>14</sup>

Monasteries and churches in medieval Serbia are the only preserved monumental buildings. Since they were built solidly and with the best materials, quite a number have been preserved to this day, while other buildings, such as residential houses, were made of perishable materials and have completely disappeared over time.<sup>15</sup>

With the disappearance of the feudal ruling class and the fall of the medieval Serbian state under Ottoman rule, the conditions for the construction of monumental monasteries and churches, and the further development of cities modelled on Western European ones, disappeared.<sup>16</sup> Then Serbia lost pace with the development and similarity with the countries of Western Europe.

At the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> a group of sacral buildings known as the Morava School (*Moravska škola*) was created. Although it relies in many ways on Serbian architectural examples from the previous centuries, the Morava School brought innovations primarily in the general appearance of the whole, internal harmony, conception of form and

façades surfaces treatment, and "relief and colour on façade surfaces in Morava architecture are new values."<sup>17</sup> It was one of the most original stylistic groups of Serbian medieval architecture.<sup>18</sup>

The polychromy of the church façades of this Serbian style was achieved by the alternating use of stone (one horizontal row) and red brick (three rows) in the lower parts of the façades, while the walls in the highest zone, which ends with decorative arches, are either bricked in a similar way or covered with chessboard decoration (the effect was achieved by a combination of red brick and light, almost white, plaster). In the third row, under the arches in the fields that marked the structure of the building, there were specific Morava school rosettes. Stone relief, as a special type of Morava decoration, covers all window and portal frames, rosettes, arch fronts and column capitals.<sup>19</sup>

The Ottoman conquests stopped the further development of the Morava School, and thus the impetus for the further development of architecture.<sup>20</sup> Five centuries after the creation of Morava

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<sup>14</sup> Милена ЖИКИЋ. „Положај хришћанске раје под османском влашћу“, *Religija i tolerancija*, Vol. 19, No. 35, 2021, p. 85-99: 86.

<sup>15</sup> А. ДЕРОКО. *Монуменална декоративна архитектура...*, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Morava School got its name from the area where it was developed, along the Morava River. Vojislav KORAC. „Arhitektura u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji“, *Istorija srpske kulture*, Gornji Milanovac, Beograd, Dečje novine, Udruženje izdavača i knjižara Jugoslavije, 1994, p. 39-62: 39, 47, 48.

<sup>18</sup> Слободан М. НЕНАДОВИЋ. *Архитектура у Југославији од IX – XVIII века и главни споменици народа Југославије изван њених граница*, Београд, Научна књига, 1980, p. 157.

<sup>19</sup> V. KORAC. „Arhitektura...“, p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem*, p. 48.

buildings, the Belgrade architect Branko Tanazević, in his text *Old Serbian architecture, its restoration and its application to church and profane buildings* from 1909, points out that the development of the Serbian style in architecture, based on the foundations of the Morava School<sup>21</sup> is the need of the time, emphasizing the demanding, long-term and complicated nature of such an undertaking.<sup>22</sup>

The moment when Tanazević published this text was the age of mature historicism in Serbian art.<sup>23</sup> The idea of searching for a national style in architecture in Serbia began at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a typical expression of the era of romantic historicism and as a reaction to the acceptance of Western European styles immediately after the centuries-old predominance of the oriental way of building. With the awakening of the national spirit in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, architects were faced with more distinct demands for a radical change of style in architecture, which would later fit into the Art Nouveau ideas concerning the search for new

models and returning to the time before the Renaissance.<sup>24</sup> As architecture is public and a kind of political form,<sup>25</sup> the Serbian style in architecture was one of the most visible ways of expressing national aspirations in Serbian art.<sup>26</sup>

In the exhibition catalogue *Serbian Architecture, 1900 - 1970*, Zoran Manević singles out the national style as one of the most significant, sacral pointing out its dependence on the dominant ideas of the time and its close connection with Art Nouveau and academism. According to Manević, Art Nouveau, although it appeared in Serbia at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, did not mean a complete break with academism in designing of the basic forms, "but it certainly broke the academic circuit of elevation"<sup>27</sup> and introduced a spirit of innovation.

In the text *Art Nouveau in Serbian Architecture* Željko Škalamera writes: "Art Nouveau did not enter Serbian architecture as a program and revolutionary call of young rebels dissatisfied with the previous state of architectural thought and practice, or as an appeal by opponents of persistent

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<sup>21</sup> At the time of B. Tanazević, the emerging national style was called "Serbian-Byzantine style". The name Morava School appears in literature from the seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a name for sacral architecture from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as in: С. М. НЕНАДОВИЋ. *Архитектура у Југославији ...*; А. ДЕРОКО. *Монуменална декоративна архитектура ...* The name Morava School will be used in this article.

<sup>22</sup> Бранко ТАНАЗЕВИЋ. „Стара српска архитектура, њено обнављање и њена примена на црквене и профане грађевине“, *Српски технички лист*, No. 7, 1909, p. 49-51: 50.

<sup>23</sup> According to the chronological framework of historicism in Serbian art established by Miodrag Jovanović: romantic historicism 1830—1880; mature historicism 1880—1914; late historicism 1920-1941 in: Миодраг ЈОВАНОВИЋ. „Историзам у уметности XIX века“, *Саопштења*, No. XX-XXI, 1988/89, p. 275-284: 278.

<sup>24</sup> Александар КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења националног стила у српској архитектури (средина XIX – средина XX века)*, Београд, Грађевинска књига 1997, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Philip BLOOM. *The Vertigo Years: Europe, 1900-1914*, New York, Basic Books, 2010, p. 65.

<sup>26</sup> А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења ...*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Zoran MANEVIĆ. *Srpska arhitektura, 1900 – 1970*, Београд, Музеј савремене уметности, exhibition catalogue, 1972, p. 7-39, 14-16, 19-21.

repetitions of outdated academic theses.”<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the architects in Serbia were not revolutionary, but still, at least some of them, thought about the country’s philosophy of architecture and architectural practice. Branko Tanazević was one of those who, in addition to practical work, was also involved in reflecting on the state of architecture. Through a review of the situation in the approach to architecture at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he discusses the problem of copying without spirit and artistry. "The outdated forms and style, so to speak, overmature, where the forms have gone through so many variations, to the point of almost exhaustion, inhibit the spirit of the artist and hinder his ideas and inventions.”<sup>29</sup>

Tanazević saw progress in the development of architecture in Serbia at the turn of the centuries in the paths that lead to folk art, considering that the development of the architecture of a nation is influenced by many things, such as temperament, climate, historical and social circumstances, etc.<sup>30</sup> In accordance with the influence of the environment and folk characteristics, Tanazević believes that the architecture of the city should be distinguished from that of the countryside, and advocates searching inspiration in folk architecture as a way to create its modern variation.<sup>31</sup>

It can be said that the emergence of the national style in construction in Serbia from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, among other things, was more seriously initiated by two reasons:

one is social arising from the need to separate from the Austrophile politics of the Obrenović,<sup>32</sup> and the other one – incentives of contemporary fine art to find new models, approaches and role models.<sup>33</sup>

Art Nouveau was and has remained an artistic movement hard to define, and it is not a singular style, but rather a movement with certain formal characteristics and ideologies. It was above all a response to the era in which it was created, an era of rapid changes, new worldviews and scientific achievements, and as such it united both the past and the future. Art Nouveau also emerged from the need for rebirth, flourishing together with the vision of national renewal which could become part of the spirit of modernity and relevance.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Željko ŠKALAMERA. „Secesija u srpskoj arhitekturi“, *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja*, No. 12/2, 1985, p. 7-13: 7.

<sup>29</sup> Branko TANAZEVIĆ. „Nešto o zadacima srpskih arhitekata“, *Srpski tehnički list*, No. 45, 1906, 361-363. p. 361.

<sup>30</sup> B. TANAZEVIĆ. „Nešto o zadacima...“, p. 362.

<sup>31</sup> Branko TANAZEVIĆ. „Nešto o građenju seoskih škola“, *Srpski tehnički list*, No. 1, 1908, p. 2-4: 2.

<sup>32</sup> In June 1903, King Aleksandar I Obrenović and Queen Draga were murdered. They were the last Serbian rulers from the Obrenović dynasty, who, since the Second Serbian Uprising and coming to power in 1815, were more oriented towards the cooperation with Austria-Hungary and considered it a good model for the future development of Serbia. The throne was taken over by the Karadorđević dynasty after the assassination. More in: Ana STOLIĆ. *Kraljica Draga Obrenović*, Beograd, Zavod za udžbenike Beograd, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Z. MANEVIĆ. *Srpska arhitektura...*, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Jeremy HOWARD. *Art Nouveau – International and national styles in Europe*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press and Room 400, 1996, p. 1, 2, 7.

In Serbia, Art Nouveau was expressed in two variants: international, as a way to express the cultural aspiration towards a civic-based Europe and national as an aspiration towards the independent artistic aesthetics of a sovereign nation.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. *The national variant of Art Nouveau in the architecture of Belgrade as an illustration of national identity and continuity*

Art Nouveau theses about freedom of creation and looking up to the oldest models were stimulating for young architects in Serbia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in their desire to create a national style in Serbian architecture. The creations relied primarily on the repertoire of the Morava school, as a symbol of the Serbian style, but also on folk art such as embroidery and kilim weaving.<sup>36</sup>

For the enriched European bourgeoisie, at the turn of the centuries, the Art Nouveau idea of looking up to the pre-Renaissance art coincided with the need to glorify the medieval state and dynasties for their own affirmation and proof of national identity and continuity. The emerging bourgeoisie in Serbia, at the same time, eagerly accepted such a model, and turned to the pre-Ottoman architecture as a confirmation of its own continuity.<sup>37</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the proponents of the Serbian national style in architecture relied more on Art Nouveau concerning theory, the composition and building decoration and over time their creations came closer to Art Nouveau concept.<sup>38</sup>

Branko Tanazević, was the prominent representative of the national style in Serbian, but above all, Belgrade architecture in the period up to 1914.<sup>39</sup> Through his work, he promoted the symbiosis of the Art Nouveau elements and Serbian motifs, thus creating, one might say, a variant of *Morava Art Nouveau*. Tanazević authenticated his practical design work in the national style and his understanding of it by publishing articles in professional periodicals, thus becoming a kind of ideologist of that type of Serbian architecture.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Aleksandar KADIJEVIĆ. „Two courses of the Serbian architectural Art Nouveau: International and National“, *Nasleđe*, No. V, 2004, p. 53-70: 53.

<sup>36</sup> А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења ...*, p. 85. А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. „Two courses...“, p. 65.

<sup>37</sup> It especially refers to the reign of the Nemanjić dynasty (end of the 12th to the seventies of the 14th century) and the Hrebeljanović family (end of the 14th and beginning of the 15th century). More about the Serbian dynasties in: А. ВЕСЕЛИНОВИЋ, Р. ЉУШИЋ. *Српске династије*; А. ДЕРОКО. *Монументална декоративна архитектура...*; Жељко ШКАЛАМЕРА. „Обнова српског стила у архитектури“, *ЗЛУМС*, No. 5, 1969, p. 191-240: 194.

<sup>38</sup> А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења...*, p. 87.

<sup>39</sup> В. Tanazević (1876-1945), studied in Belgrade and Munich. One of the main ideologues of the national architectural revival. He worked as an architect in the Ministry of Construction and as an assistant professor, and from 1921 as a full professor at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. In his spare time, he was engaged in painting and sculpture. Д. ЂУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛО. *Градитељи Београда...*, p. 313; А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења...*, p. 87.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, p. 87.

As an architect and a thinker, Tanazević advocated a modern transposition of the old heritage, as opposed to a direct continuation of the medieval tradition, thus articulating the position that it is necessary to upgrade the traditional building matrix with modern artistic means and adapt it to the needs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> To be able to adapt medieval models to modern needs, he studied Serbian medieval monasteries, as well as folklore architecture, which he also saw as an inspiration for the creation of a new national architectural style.<sup>42</sup>

The projects for the Telephone Exchange from 1908 at the corner of Kosovska and Palmotićeve Streets and the reconstructed façade of the Ministry of Education in Belgrade from 1912 in Kralja Milana Street, are two of Tanazević's greatest achievements in the period up to the First World War. Both buildings are considered to be the most significant examples of attempts to create the Serbian national style as part of the Art Nouveau's pursuit for rejection of academic models.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the fact that during the construction of the Telephone Exchange he faced a series of problems about which he wrote, somewhat indignantly, in his article in the Serbian Technical Magazine, Tanazević successfully achieved a synthesis of modern and traditional forms on this

building.<sup>44</sup> Thanks to his refined sense of decorative composition, although he used motifs from Morava endowments, he avoided making it look like a church building.<sup>45</sup>

The Telephone Exchange is a corner building and was designed as a two-story building. After the First World War, according to Tanazević's design, another floor was added to it. The corner is emphasized by a unique ribbed wooden dome, and the asymmetry of the façade is accentuated by a separate, prominent risalit which externally marks the key functional part of the building, that houses the main telephone exchange. The modernity of the project and its inspiration from Art Nouveau are underlined by the large window openings covering a large part of the wall canvas. Shallow decorative plastic, almost flush with the façade, was taken over both from Art Nouveau and from the decorative system on the monuments of the Morava School group. The polychromy of the façade, inspired by the Morava monuments, was achieved by stylization and the use of grout and red paint. Tanazović's skill in stylizing original templates is evident in the use of

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<sup>41</sup> А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења...*, p. 87-88.

<sup>42</sup> Д. БУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛО. *Градитељи Београда...*, p. 314.

<sup>43</sup> The current street names are listed in the paper. Д. БУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛО. *Градитељи Београда...*, p. 314.

<sup>44</sup> "Therefore, allow me to warn experts and interested parties that this power plant is not being erected as the designer imagined and as it should have been erected, but contrary to all the requirements and rules of the science of urban planning, contrary to the law itself, the building is being erected, as it should not be, it stretches and adjusts so that it can fill the surface for which it was not designed." Бранко ТАНАЗЕВИЋ. „Нова телефонска централа у Београду“, *Српски технички лист*, No. 30, 1908, p. 272-274: 273.

<sup>45</sup> А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења...*, p. 88.

Morava plastic such as interlacing, rosettes, checkerboards and arches. The large risalit on the right side of the façade ends with a trefoil semicircular gable, in the central part of which there is one of the rosettes. The decorative elements are primarily geometric, except for female mascarons with folklore motifs. In this building Art Nouveau is reflected not only in the decorative components, but above all in the architectural ones, such as the erupting of the roof cornice, the reduction and multiplication of openings from the ground floor to the top of the façade, and wide windows and pilasters. Modernity is also achieved by the rhythm of the façade canvas achieved by the repetition of decorative accents - strips, checkerboards and the regular arrangement of openings, as well as the contrasting alternation of a large number of window openings and large clean, undecorated, surfaces.<sup>46</sup>

Unlike the church buildings that had direct models in medieval Serbian architecture, the national separation of profane architecture from the general predominant architectural directions was not simple, considering that there were no preserved examples that would be an inspiration for a new style. Thus, some architects resorted to literal transmission of the form of the medieval sacral architecture of Serbia, which Branko Tanazević was not in favour of.<sup>47</sup>

Along with the new building of the Telephone Exchange, Tanazević's architectural philosophy of the national style is very clearly reflected on the façade of the Ministry of Education from 1912. The motifs of Morava plastic are here, too, his interpretation, and not a direct copy of the model. The Art Nouveau influence in the decoration of the façade of the Ministry is more accentuated – which is reflected in elements such as boutons as pilaster ends, verticality, realistic reliefs that depict the symbols of education and folk tradition. The composition of the façade is asymmetrical with the entrance on the left and the central risalit on the right. The entrance is made like a massive church portal closed with an oak door with wrought iron decorations. In the tympanum above the door there is the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Serbia just like the depictions of the saints to whom the church is dedicated are placed in the tympanum above the church doors. The central part is visually separated by pilasters that extend the entire height of the façade. The most striking association with Serbian medieval architecture is the trefoil tympanum of the central shallow risalit. The multi-colored façade, another element of the Morava School, but also Art Nouveau, was achieved by a combination of yellow flat and dark red relief decorations.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења...*, p. 88-89; А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. „Two courses...“, p. 65; Д. ЂУРИЋ-ЗАМОЈО. *Градитељи Београда...*, p. 314; Slobodan BOGUNOVIĆ. *Arhitektonska enciklopedija Beograda. Arhitektura*, vol. I, Beograd, Beogradska knjiga, 2005, p. 420-424; [KULTURNA DOBRA BEOGRADA \(beogradskonasledje.rs\)](http://KULTURNA DOBRA BEOGRADA (beogradskonasledje.rs)). Consulted, 12/04/2023; Ангелина БАНКОВИЋ, Мајда СИКОШЕК. *Искорак ка модерности – сецесија у архитектури Београда*, Београд, Музеј града Београда, exhibition catalogue, 2023, p. 92.

<sup>47</sup> Ж. ШКАЛАМЕРА. „Обнова српског стила ...“, p. 191 – 240: 207, 218.

<sup>48</sup> А. БАНКОВИЋ, М. СИКОШЕК. *Искорак ка модерности...*, p. 82; Ж. ШКАЛАМЕРА. „Обнова српског стила...“, p. 221-221; Д. ЂУРИЋ-ЗАМОЈО. *Градитељи Београда...*, p. 314; А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век*

Between 1912 and 1913, the private house of the brothers Jovan and Maksim Nikolić was built at 11 Njegoševa Street, according to the design of Branko Tanazević. The two-story residential building, with shops on the ground floor, was designed in Tanazović's distinctive Morava Art Nouveau style, a combination of medieval, national and Art Nouveau motifs. The composition of the façade is symmetrical with a simple design of the ground floor and an emphasis on the lavish floral decoration of the central part with the entrance. The owner's initials are hidden in freely applied interlacing on the pilasters on the left and right of the entrance, and in the middle of the decorative arch above the door is a female mascarón with elements of folk costume. The floors are more richly decorated, and the polychromy is achieved by pressing red and blue rectangles into the white plaster layer, together the colours representing the Serbian tricolour. Interlacing was applied freely as frames of rectangular window openings or stylized curls of women's mascaróns. The colours of the Serbian tricolour as a decorative element, women's mascaróns with elements of folk art and the representation of St. George in the gable are distinct features of the national style. Art Nouveau in the composition of this façade is reflected in the distinct verticalism, the unemphasized pediment narrowed between Art Nouveau buttons, polychromy and the way in which the coloured rectangles are pressed into the plaster.<sup>49</sup> On the façade of the

Nikolić brothers' house, Tanazević has created a composition of decorative features where the entire wall canvas acts as a kilim.<sup>50</sup>

The one-story family house of Radisav Jovanović from 1910, at 5 Stevana Sremca Street, represents a slightly different variant of the national style and shows Tanazević's incorporation of elements of folk art into his architectural creations. In this building, a combination of academic forms, common for that time in Belgrade, primarily in the internal organization of the space, and Art Nouveau in the decoration of the façade is evident. Thus, the base of the house is traditionally arranged with rooms along the street and in the centre of the house, while the economic rooms are located towards the back of the yard. The main façade, next to the street, is divided into three parts by pilasters ending with female mascaróns with floral interweaving and elements of folk costumes. The central risalit ends with an attic decorated with stylized floral decoration and a stylized lion's head at the top. On the side façade there is a richly decorated medallion with the initials of the owner and the year of construction. The hipped roof, common

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*тражења...*, p. 89; А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. „Two courses...“, p. 65; Милојко ГОРДИЋ. *Зграда Министарства просвете*, Београд, Вукова задужбина и ЗЗСКГБ, 1996; [Зграда Министарства просвете | Завод за заштиту споменика културе града Београда \(beogradskonasledje.rs\)](http://beogradskonasledje.rs). Consulted, 15/04/2023.

<sup>49</sup> Although the colours of these rectangles and plaster together form the Serbian tricolour and remind us of the alternation of stone and brick rows on medieval monuments, the way in which the rectangles were pressed into the plaster was actually taken from the Art Nouveau decoration with ceramic tiles. More in: Ж. ШКАЛАМЕРА.

„Обнова српског стила...“, p. 222.

<sup>50</sup> А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења...*, p. 90; А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. „Two courses...“, p. 65.

Д. БУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛЛО. *Градитељи Београда...*, p. 316; А. БАНКОВИЋ, М. СИКОШЕК. *Искорак ка модерности...*, p. 62. Ж. ШКАЛАМЕРА. „Обнова српског стила...“, p. 222; [Кућа браће Николић | Завод за заштиту споменика културе града Београда \(beogradskonasledje.rs\)](http://beogradskonasledje.rs). Consulted, 17/04/2023.

on the traditional houses, is decorated with a wrought iron fence on the top, another recognizable element of Art Nouveau.<sup>51</sup>

How important it was in the newly independent state to emphasize national identity through construction can be seen from the writings of contemporaries about the construction of that time. So, for example, Svetozar Stojanović in the book *The Serbian Builder from 1912, in the section New Movement in Construction*, points out: "The fact is that recently in the field of the development of our modern construction industry, a serious conclusion has been reached: our construction and our architecture, especially in the future construction of Belgrade, as well as other buildings in the country, should be given a purely Serbian mark, i.e. raise them in a purely Serbian style."<sup>52</sup>

At the moment when Stojanović was collecting data on the buildings that he would include in his *Serbian Builder*, Jovan Novaković was a young architect whose designs had been used, until 1912, for several buildings in Belgrade, following the Serbian national style. In his creations, in addition to elements inspired by Serbian medieval architecture, we can also see the elements from the folk architecture, kilim weaving, embroidery and folklore art. He applied the elements

of old Serbian architecture to residential buildings, enriching the dynamic elevations of multi-story family houses with a system of traditional openings.<sup>53</sup>

Mihailo Đurić's house from 1910, on the corner of Gospodar Jevremova and Kralja Petara Streets, is an example of the old heritage evocation. Although it has lost some of its original appearance due to a series of interventions and devastations (especially due to the removal of the corner lantern), it still represents a significant attempt to create a national style at the turn of the century. The building is angular with the basement, ground floor and first floor. On the ground floor on the side there are shops. The corner of the building was emphasized by a dome with a lantern and curved balconies on the first floor and in front of the dome. The former characteristic (fan) roof of the dome was supported by arches above architrave windows. National elements of decoration such as stylized folk and Morava motifs are a reflection of Novaković's consistency in the application of the Serbian national architectural style, while Art Nouveau is reflected in the

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<sup>51</sup> А. БАНКОВИЋ, М. СИКОШЕК. *Искорак ка модерности...*, p. 36-37, 132; Д. ЂУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛО. *Градитељи Београда...*, p. 316; Мирјана. РОТЕР-БЛАГОЈЕВИЋ. *Стамбена архитектура Београда у 19. и почетком 20. века*, Београд, ОрионАрт и Архитектонски факултет Универзитета у Београду, 2006, p. 339-341; Гордана ГОРДИЋ. *Архитектонско наслеђе Београда I*, Београд, ЗЗСКГБ, 1996, p. 77-78; [https://beogradskonasledje.rs/kd/zavod/stari\\_grad/kuca\\_radisava\\_jovanovica.html](https://beogradskonasledje.rs/kd/zavod/stari_grad/kuca_radisava_jovanovica.html). Consulted 17/04/2023.

<sup>52</sup> Светозар СТОЈАНОВИЋ. *Српски неимар – опис грађевинских радова и израда са сликама*, Београд, 1912, p. 26.

<sup>53</sup> J. Novaković (1883-1942), probably completed his studies in Mittweida, and at the beginning of the 20th century he had his own private bureau for designing and carrying out construction works. After returning from the First World War, he headed the Committee for the Reconstruction of Belgrade. Д. ЂУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛО. *Градитељи Београда...*, p. 365; А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења...*, p. 93; С. СТОЈАНОВИЋ. *Српски неимар...*, p. 26; С. СТОЈАНОВИЋ. *Српски неимар...*, p. 28.

verticality, playful rhythm of the façade and different sizes of openings, wrought iron decoration on the balcony railings and lantern on the corner.<sup>54</sup>

According to Kadrijević, Živojin Babić's villa from 1910, at 54 Kneza Miloša Street, can be considered Novaković's most successful attempt to achieve a national stylistic character on a private building.<sup>55</sup> The building is designed as a stand-alone building, and only the main, street façade, which is conceived as a three-part area with a central elevation, has plastic decoration. The playfulness of the rhythm of the façade canvas of this two-story house is underlined by a variety of ornaments. The emphasis is on the central elevation, which on the first floor has a bay window with access to the balconies. The windows of the ground and first floor were modelled after church double windows with arches, balustrades and decorative floral interweaving. On the second floor, there are three-part arched windows with a red cross ornament, in imitation of the embroidery, in the space between the end of the window openings of the previous floor and the lower part of the window. The left and right sides of the central risalit end with small domes in which the windows of the second floor are pressed, and the central part ends with a semicircular attic. On this building as well, floral ornaments, checkerboards and double windows represents

motifs of sacral medieval construction whereas playful façade canvas, open structures, polychromy, unusual elevation finishes and verticality are typical of Art Nouveau architecture.<sup>56</sup>

Around 1910, Novaković also designed Žika Bogdanović's villa on Topčidersko Brdo, which no longer exists today. The villa had a very free form, where the exterior did not reflect the internal division into levels. Freely interpreted elements of decoration, such as ornaments in the window arches and polychromy of red brick and white plaster are taken from medieval sacral buildings, while the hipped roofs on all elevations are an echo of folk architecture. The liveliness of the façade was achieved by the use of different materials that contributed to the polychromy, stone slabs, bricks, plaster, two-colored columns. Bogdanović's villa is also interesting as an example of a very modern understanding use of elements of national tradition, while Art Nouveau was first of all reflected in the free form of the building, playfulness and the use of different

#### 4. Conclusion

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<sup>54</sup> Since 2023, the house has been in the process of reconstruction. Today there is only a cube, without its characteristic roof and lantern. А. БАНКОВИЋ, М. СИКОШЕК. *Искорак ка модерности ...*, p. 114; А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења ...*, p. 93; Д. ЂУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛЮ. *Градитељи Београда ...*, p. 266; [https://beogradskonasledje.rs/kd/zavod/stari\\_grad/kuca\\_mihajla\\_djurica.html](https://beogradskonasledje.rs/kd/zavod/stari_grad/kuca_mihajla_djurica.html). Consulted 18/04/2023.

<sup>55</sup> А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења ...*, p.94.

<sup>56</sup> А. БАНКОВИЋ, М. СИКОШЕК. *Искорак ка модерности ...*, p. 116; Д. ЂУРИЋ-ЗАМОЛЮ. *Градитељи Београда ...*, p. 266; А. КАДИЈЕВИЋ. *Један век тражења ...*, p. 94; М. РОТЕР-БЛАГОЈЕВИЋ. *Стамбена архитектура ...*, 351; С. СТОЈАНОВИЋ. *Српски неимар ...*, p. 28; Ж. ШКАЛАМЕРА. „Обнова српског стила...“, p. 224.

The creation of the national identities and blooming of Art Nouveau at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century coincided with the birth of a new, modern Serbian state. After a period of almost five centuries, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Serbia liberated itself from Ottoman rule and began building a state modelled on the European ones.

The desire to confirm and prove the continuity of national identity was also expressed in attempts to create the Serbian national architectural style. By combining elements of medieval sacral architecture, folk art and freedom, modernity and innovation of Art Nouveau, the architects created diverse examples of the national style. In Belgrade, as the capital, first of the principality, and then of the kingdom, the most representative objects of these ideas have been preserved.

Just like in everyday social and political life, in architectural creativity of this period in Belgrade (and in Serbia), there was an eternal struggle between the commitment to the international, modern and national, traditional direction. Although such disunity and indecisiveness often caused trouble and slowed down the development of the new state, in architecture, with it being art that is visible and often political, through attempts to create a Serbian national style, it brought unique, non-dogmatic, and ambiguous examples recognizable in the architecture of Southeast Europe.<sup>57</sup>

## **Curriculum Vitae**

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<sup>57</sup> A. KADIJEVIĆ. „Two courses...“, p. 66.



the World Art Nouveau Day. Co-author of the exhibition on Art Nouveau architecture in Belgrade (to be held in 2023).