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**BUILDINGS ON KOST LEVYTSKY STREET DESIGNED  
BY ARCHITECT IVAN LEVYNSKY**

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**Abstract:** The main object of the study is residential buildings of Lviv, built by the factory of Ivan Levinsky in the early twentieth century. The analysis was preceded by the archival search and full-scale house measurement surveys. The article gives historical and architectural characteristic for Lviv secession (modern) style in the late XIX – early XX centuries. The research reveals the originality of this phenomenon, its volume and spatial solutions, explores expressive means of the image-plastic system of secession.

**Key words:** residential buildings, ornamental secession, composition of facades, decor, interior

### **1. Staging of the problem**

The architectural environment of the central part of Lviv is the result of a long historical formation. Its modern appearance is determined by features of various stylistic eras, national cultures, schools of architectural and construction art.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, construction in Lviv concentrated along the roads that converged in the city centre, forming the radial orientation of the main thoroughfares, and this planning continued in the further development of the city. Dwelling houses are being built to provide housing for a large population. The evidence of rapid construction pace is the number of residential buildings, which in 1873 was 2594 mostly one or two-stored buildings, and in 1900 their number reached 4360 with a height of 3–4 floors (Bryk, 1986, p. 150, 155).

In the first years of XX century the style of the “new century” is spreading all over Lviv – modernism which is already experiencing its maturity in European architectural schools. Lviv Secession was formed on its own diverse artistic basis. The objective conditions of its appearance were significant acceleration of economic, social and political development of the city in the XIX–XX centuries, as well as some influence of national processes – strengthening of the democratic orientation of culture and art, awareness of the historical unity of the whole Ukrainian people, work of Polish and Czech architects in the Zakopane style, based on the studies of folk wooden architecture of the Slavs in the Tatras and Carpathians (Petryshyn & Petrovska, 2011, p. 155, 146).

An important factor influencing the formation of the style was the introduction into construction practice of such fundamentally new material as reinforced concrete, which created a new architectonics, reflecting the transition from heavy massive walls to lightweight frames and thin-walled structures.

Unfortunately, this independent architectural and artistic phenomenon, which occurred in Lviv at the end of XIX – beginning of XX centuries, in the XXI century for various reasons (non-observance of security laws, non-professional level of repair works, change of primary purpose, ignorance of residents) suffers losses of even well preserved authentic elements and sometimes complete destruction. That is why today, in order to understand historical circumstances of Ukrainian modernity, it is important to study this heritage thoroughly, promote it, and pose problems of its preservation, restoration and repair, which will contribute to the extension of the monument protection law in order to preserve the historical buildings of Lviv.

## **2. Analysis of recent research and publications**

Architectural heritage of I. Levinsky was described in the monographs of such researchers as O. Noga “Ivan Levinsky: architect, entrepreneur, philanthropist” (Noga, 2009), Yu. Biryulov “Art of Lviv Secession” (Biryulov, 2004), the collective monograph “Architecture of Lviv: Time and Styles. XIII–XXI centuries” (Biryulov, 2008), in separate scientific publications, encyclopedic, specialized editions, bibliographical reference book (Linda S. and others, 2019), abstracts of conferences devoted to the memory of the outstanding architect. Methodological bases for the preservation of entailed architectural complexes of historic cities were developed by Bevz M. (Bevz, 2007, pp. 105–119).

## **3. Purpose of the article**

This work aims to reveal the cultural, functional and planning significance of residential buildings of the late XIX – early XX century, built by the architectural-bureau of Ivan Levynsky on the example of the houses on Kostya Levytsky Street, which are monuments of Lviv architecture of local importance. The article presents their features of composition and decoration of facades, interiors, courtyards; demonstrate preserved authentic pieces and decorative elements; tell about parts of buildings that are not accessible to the public.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The attractiveness of the historic part of Lviv encourages residents and visitors of the city to take long walks, view the squares, streets, alleys and patios. Not only tourists but even citizens of Lviv themselves, often perceive buildings of the city only on its “front side”, though many interesting places are hidden behind the gates and in the courtyards of Lviv houses.

Kostya Levytsky Street lays in the Lychakiv district of Lviv, which extends to the south-east from Ivan Franko to Pogulanka Street. Most parts of the houses on this street are monuments of local architecture and hide behind the gates valuable historical facts and authentic elements, which, unfortunately, lose their original appearance every year because of the ignorance of the inhabitants.

However, our attention to this street was attracted by the houses built by Ivan Lavinsky in 1907, which have well-preserved elements of decoration on the main facades and interiors of the building (Fig. 1). These are semi-detached residential houses consisting of two buildings with the numbers 14 and 16, both of which are monuments of local architecture (No. 173, No. 990). The twin houses are located in a section with a slight turn near the branch of Semen Pali Street. They were built in the style of ornamental secession commissioned by brothers Joseph and Alexander Elster.

In the times of USSR, there was a Regional House of Sanitary Education in the house №14. While Polish times there was a clock workshop of Kruk in the house №16 and nowadays there is a Regional Health Center of the Ministry of Health.

The four-storey buildings with mezzanines in the attic level and a common courtyard were covered with tiles (not preserved). The facade of the house is a complex 15-axial composition with three unfastening, which are finished with gables. Balconies are placed in the unfastening; the doors of the balconies of the 3rd floor have

a horseshoe shape, surrounded by relief of stylized floral ornament, which effectively completes the vertical composition. Another row of balconies is located along the axis of symmetry of house No. 14.

The symmetry of each part of houses 14 and 16 is emphasized by the attics placed above the eaves of the buildings and decorated with stylized floral ornament reliefs. There is a partial dissymmetry of the facades, slight violation of clearly expressed mirror symmetry: between the framing in the house № 14 there are 7 windows, and in the house No. 16 – 5 windows. This dissymmetry is balanced with the slight rotation of the section, in this place the centre of the house is accentuated by the central unfastening.



**Fig. 1.** The facade of residential buildings No. 14 and No. 16 on Kost Levytsky street

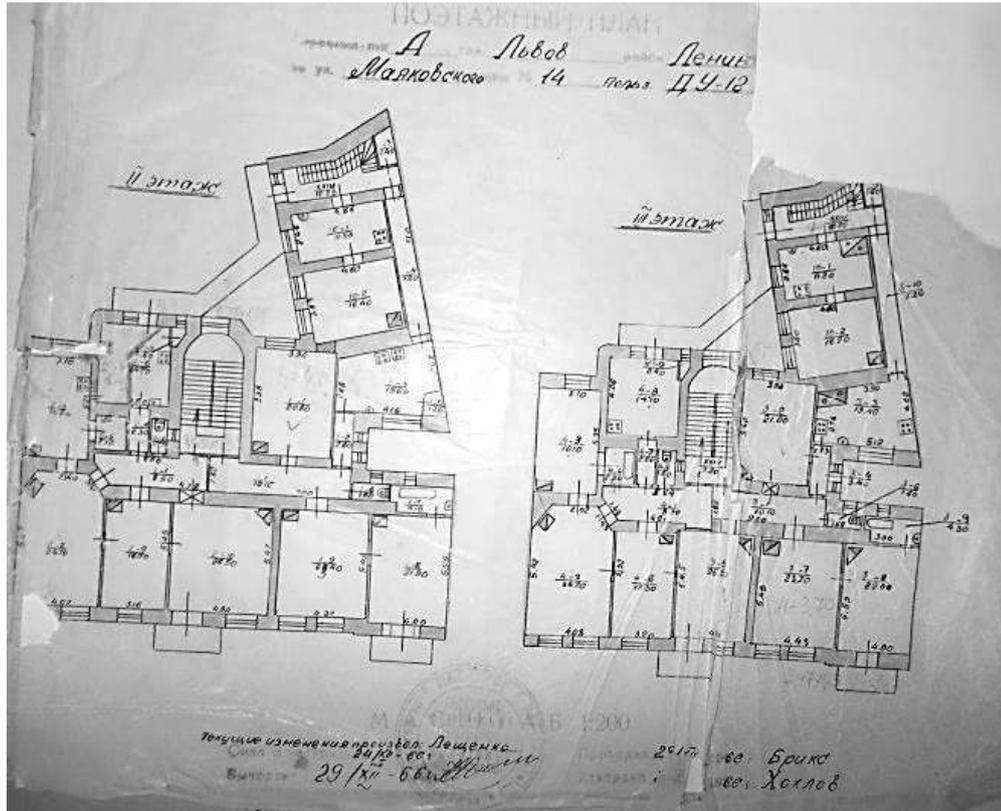
The typical early Lviv Secession decoration was used for the facades of the houses. The facade structure is facilitated upwards due to the size and type of the rustics and windows.

Inside the houses, one can get through identical, well-preserved, authentic portals; doors are metal with glazed parts, with the forged decoration of leaves and wreaths.

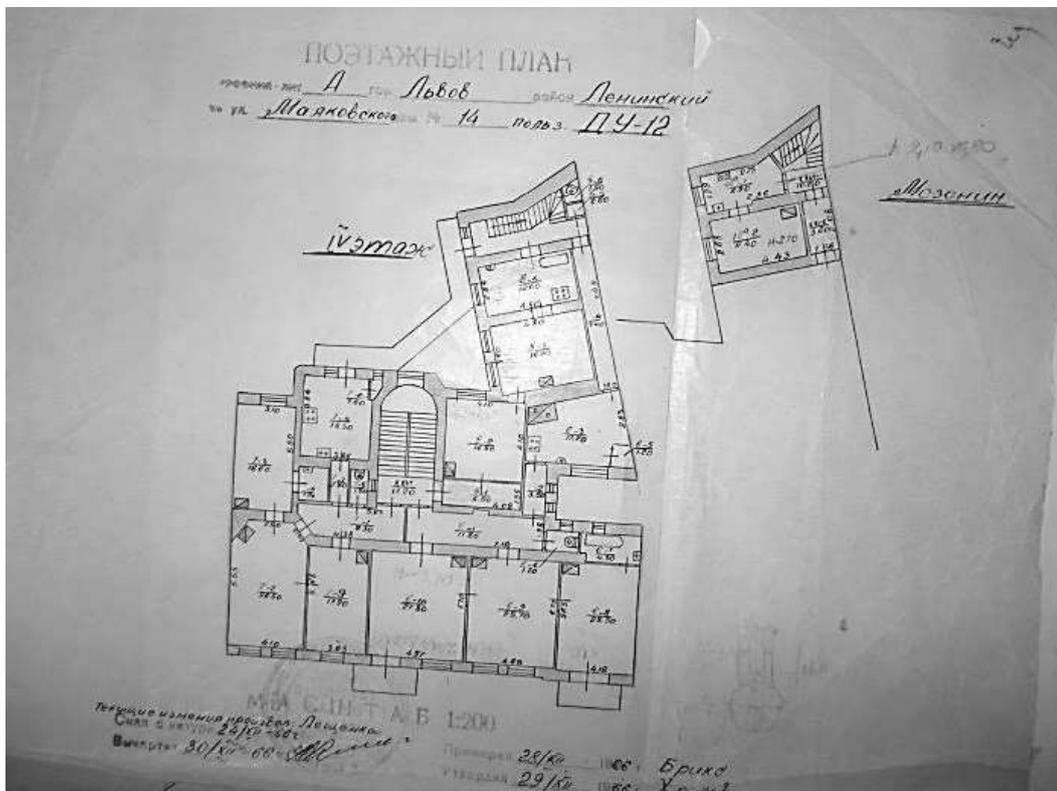
The ground floor of the houses is cut through with several storefront windows and is decorated with board rust, trimmed with torn stone. On the upper floors the character of rusting changes to smooth plank rust.

The first floor balconies are enclosed by a composition of concrete columns, draped with drapery relief and decorated with stylized floral ornament.

Composition of the balconies of the second floor is accomplished with metal handrails, which are supported by forged cast iron elements, and reliefs of stylized floral ornament placed above the balcony panel that encircles the balcony. The balconies of the 1st and 2nd floors are supported by concrete brackets decorated with reliefs, instead, the balconies of the 3rd floor are supported with light paired cast iron brackets, and the handrails of these balconies are fully made of cast iron with overhead forged elements – stylized as leaves. In 2017, the overhaul and restoration of the balconies in house No. 16 were completed.



a



b

Fig. 2. Plans of apartment building No. 14 on Kostya Levitsky street: a – first and second floors; b – 3 floor and mezzanine (stored in the archive of LKP No. 503 – 2 Academician Bogomolets St.)

The most richly decorated are windows on the 2nd floor. Above them there are rectangular sandracks filled with embossed stylized floral ornament; the upper part of the window framing is clutched with prismatic blocks; geometric decoration of the window sills come along with them. Window sills of the 4th floor in the centre are decorated with relief cartouches, on the sides of which are ceramic glazed tiles, also made at the enterprise of Ivan Levynsky. Such tiles one can also see under the windows of the 1st floor.

The frieze of the house is decorated with the relief with floral ornament, it is cut through by stylized triglyphs, which fall with fistons on the walls between the windows. Their composition is enriched with sockets and masks.

The facade of Elster's houses creates complete secession composition.

The interior continues the composition of the facades, all its decoration create a holistic impression. The lobby is illuminated by a glassed transom above the metal door (Fig. 3). The upper part of the porch wall is decorated with grey marble tables surrounded by stucco laurel branches. The panels of the lower part of the wall are made of black stone, on one of them from the left side one can read the signature: "B. Królik. Lwów". This mark was engraved by the manufacturer to report that these items were created in Lviv at the Marble Factory of B. Krulik (Pol.: Borodin, Iwanna Honak: Lwów po polsku. Imie dom oraz inne napisy; Lwów 2012) (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 3.** The entrance gate of house No. 14 on Kost Levitsky street



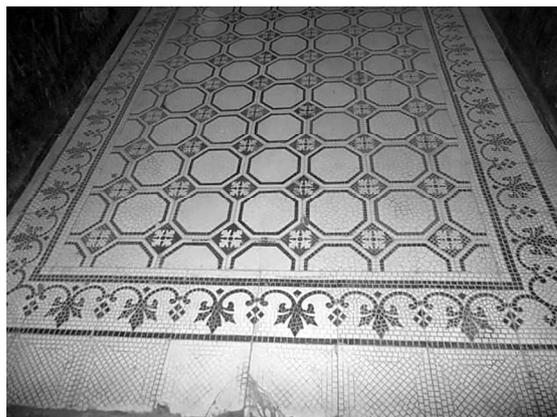
**Fig. 4.** Hall of the house № 14 on Kost Levitsky street, and the signature on the panel of the lower part of the wall

The floor of the hall and the staircase is paved with a concrete tile with a mosaic ornament by Ivan Levinsky. The hall is covered with a mirror-closed vault with a cut-off top plane of considerable size, decorated with stripes inherent for the secession style. Doors leading to the stairwell are authentic wooden, with glazed parts also characteristic of the secession style. The doors to the apartments are of a similar shape with transom to illuminate the corridor in the apartments, and the oval windows facing the stairwell were made for illumination of owners' bathrooms by the second light (from the stairwell).

Stairs are made of stone, enclosed by metal bent lattices with forged leaves, handrails are wooden. The staircase is light, its windows are wooden, glazed with false stained glass (the authentic glass painting is preserved in the upper part of the window on the 3rd floor) (Fig. 5), (Fig. 6)



**Fig. 5.** Forged elements of the staircase of the house No. 14 on Kostya Levitsky street



**Fig. 6.** Concrete tile with mosaic ornament in the house No. 14 on Kostya Levitsky street

Staircases are paved with concrete mosaic tiles. The central staircase leads to the upper floors and to the courtyard, which is common for both houses (Fig. 7, Fig. 8).

The front porch was used by the owners of the apartments, and servants could get to their rooms through the so-called "black stairs", which one can access from the courtyard of the houses.

The black staircase led to the basement of the building, to servant's premises in the mezzanine and the attic.



**Fig. 7.** The interior of the main staircase of apartment house No. 14 on Kost Levitsky street

The layout of the apartments was not convenient, the living rooms were large, spacious, yet passable. The owners' bathrooms were inside the apartments, and the servants had to use the toilets located on the black staircase (one on each floor).

From their rooms, the owners could access the balconies in the courtyard, the other part of the balcony could be reached from the black stairs. These parts of the balconies were connected by a balcony bridge – it did not touch the house, cut off the corner hanged in the air, connecting two parts of the balcony attached to the house and forming a complex shape of the balcony (Fig. 8), (Fig. 9).



**Fig. 8.** Entrance to the black staircase of house No. 14 from the common yard with house No. 16 on Kost Levitsky street and a fragment of its interior



**Fig. 9.** View of the courtyard facade of house No. 16 from the balcony of the third floor of house No. 14 on Kost Levitsky street



**Fig. 10.** The interior of apartment No. 5 in the house No. 14 on Kostya Levytsky street:  
 a – Emma Kopacheva near the Christmas tree in 2020 (the owner of the apartment); b – fragment of the stove of the bedroom;  
 c – credence in the new secession forms of arts and crafts;



**Fig. 10.** The interior of apartment No. 5 in the house No. 14 on Kostya Levytsky street:  
 ad), e – the mirror and its fragment; f – a table, workshop of Lviv Art-Industrial School, circa 1900;  
 g, h, i – the stove in the living room and its fragments.

The railings and handrails of the balconies were made of cast iron and had high decorative forged brackets on the corners, which served to hang the flowerpots.

The doors on the black staircase were wooden, several apartments still have an authentic one, with a curved strap, but more modest than on the central staircase. Door handles were copper, elongated olive-shaped. Door openings are rounded and decorated with glazed tiles of light green and beige colours (preserved in apartment No. 5, but painted with oil paint).

Mezzanine was used as a laundry room and a common attic for drying clothes. The floor in the attic was paved with a concrete mosaic tile with a rug ornament produced at Ivan Levynsky factory. Special wooden boxes were made for collecting rainwater, they were placed at a certain angle so that the water would later flow into the rain sewage.

The former unity of the secession style of the building as a whole with its residential interiors can be seen in the example of apartment No. 5 of Emma Kopacheva. Numerous early twentieth century unions of cooperative art shops offered Lviv residents their new products, which one can see in this apartment.

The secession forms of interior doors, windows, tile stoves continue in the carefully preserved furniture of apartment No. 5 (Fig.10).

Two tiled stoves were preserved in the interior of this apartment: light brown in the bedroom and ivory in the living room, both made at the factory of Ivan Levynsky.

## **5. Conclusions**

Historical and architectural characteristics of Lviv secession on the example of residential architecture of the early XX century allows one to present this phenomenon as an original: new building materials were used – concrete, metal, glass and structures of them; creation of expressive, unprecedented plastic forms of decoration of buildings and their ornamental decoration (window openings; completion of corners by attics, gables, domes; forged metal gratings; stained glass; ceramics).

The conducted research suggests that the understanding of historical, socio-economic, artistic, cultural, architectural and urban planning processes will be deprived of the warmth of human presence if one will not see in the phenomena of the role of an individual, who is an alive witness and participant in the formation of new aesthetic preferences of Lviv residents in late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries.

In this way one can conclude that Lviv modernity showed a logical pattern of architectural thinking, functional validity of structuring an architectural organism, understanding possibilities of new designs, plasticity, colourful decor, restrained by the rationalist's calculations, organically born by the new needs of society, which prepared the way.

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### БУДИНКИ НА ВУЛИЦІ КОСТЯ ЛЕВИЦЬКОГО АРХІТЕКТОРА ІВАНА ЛЕВИНСЬКОГО

**Анотація.** Основним предметом дослідження обрано житлові будинки Львова, збудовані фабрикою Івана Левинського на початку XX ст. Аналізу передували архівний пошук і натурні обстеження будинків. У статті подано історико-архітектурну характеристику львівської сецесії (модерну) – стилю кінця XIX – початку XX ст. Розкрито своєрідність цього явища, досліджено об'ємно-просторові рішення та виражальні засоби образно-пластичної системи сецесії. Ця робота покликана, на прикладі будинків на вулиці Костя Левицького, що є пам'ятками архітектури Львова місцевого значення, розкрити культурне, функціональне та розпланувальне значення житлових будинків кінця XIX – початку XX століття збудованих архітектурним-бюро Івана Левинського. Представити їхні особливості композиції та опорядження фасадів, інтер'єрів, внутрішніх дворів; продемонструвати збережені автентичні частини та декоративні елементи; розповісти про частини споруд, які не є доступними для загального огляду.

Історико-архітектурна характеристика львівської сецесії на прикладі житлової архітектури початку XX ст. дозволяє представити це явище як самобутнє: застосовувалися нові будівельні матеріали – бетон, метал, скло і конструкції з них; створювалися експресивні, небачено пластичні форми оздоблення будівель та їхнього орнаментального декору (віконних прорізів; завершень кутів аттиками, ципціями, куполами; кованих металевих решіток; вітражів; кераміки).

Проведене дослідження дозволяє припустити, що осмислення історичних, соціально-економічних, мистецько-культурних, архітектурно-містобудівних процесів буде позбавлене тепла людської присутності, якщо не побачити в контексті всіх явищ роль окремої особистості, яка є живим свідком і учасником формування нових естетичних уподобань львівської громадськості наприкінці XIX – початку XX ст.

**Ключові слова:** житлові будинки, орнаментальна сецесія, композиція фасадів, декор, інтер'єр.