

UDK 72.032(37)

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ANCIENT ROMAN TRADITIONS IN THE DECORATION OF ENVIRONMENT

The article describes the evolution of the existence of the Roman traditions in the decoration of environment. Inherited from the Greeks, the ideas of humanism are claimed to have contributed to awakening the personality, as well as to the creative development of the architectural thought. Due to this, the urban town-planning canons and traditions of the Roman decorative art were entrenched at such a high level that they are adhered to at the present stage either, while being creatively developed and improved.

Key words: ancient culture, Rome, Roman traditions, environment, persistence, decoration.

The traditions of ancient culture have always attracted the attention of experts in different fields, such as archaeologists, historians, art historians, literary scholars, lawyers and others. This interest is explained by the significant value of the ancient cultural heritage, because it is the cultural basis of modern Europe, the so-called «cradle» of European culture. Virtually all modern art – from selection of materials to color schemes, from spatial proportions to the aesthetic arrangement of engineering systems of the premises – is based on ancient traditions and continues to develop them today. In this connection, the research approach based on the peculiarities of the reasons of persistence of ancient Greek and Roman traditions in the decoration of environment and their aesthetic content seems legitimate.

Persistent (from Lat. *persistere* – to stay) – existing for a long time; staying almost unchanged through the evolution. The ancient city represented a clear harmonic structure of material objects with natural landscape in the background. Classical Greek house with patio covered from the outside formed plastic form and indicated a plastic dynamic space that Rome would later make huge and spectacular, expanding and improving it [4, p. 149].

Culturological literature has repeatedly raised the issue of considering the Roman achievements either a cultural or civilizational phenomenon. So, O. Spengler attributed all Roman-related phenomena to the «era of civilization»: they only appreciate material accomplishments; their ideas are only aimed at practical benefit, which represents a spiritual feature that is not typical for the mentality of the Greeks. «The Greek soul and the Roman mind – that's how different culture and civilization are. And it is not only true of antiquity. Again and again there is this kind of strong-minded but non-metaphysical people. They hold the spiritual and material destiny of each subsequent era» [10, c. 164]. Perceiving ancient culture in general as an integrated self-sufficient civilization, A. Toynbee, too, did not recognize the independent and original significance of Roman culture, considering it only a crisis stage of ancient civilization [9].

This view, going back to the concept of the «Greek miracle» and to the idea of ancient Greek culture as an inaccessible sample of the highest degree that is followed by a long

desolation period, is still prevalent. Therefore, those who share similar views regard Roman culture as the one mainly adopting Greek patterns and using other cultures' old ideas.

This perception of ancient Roman culture is unfair. In their development, both Greek and Roman cultures were based upon the ancient civil community, whose livelihoods were guided by certain values, lying in unbreakable unity of the Roman community and indissoluble connection between the welfare of the individual and that of the whole community. Under the conditions of democracy, selfless service to the community appears natural because this attitude of the ancient city residents contributes to its considerable rise, compared to the state which is ruled by the king with all the rest of its inhabitants being his slaves. Besides, the idea of freedom and independence for the city and its residents (notwithstanding different interpretations of freedom) was always contraposed by the Romans to slavery. Value symbol of the community's association was its gods and heroes who cared about it, its members, in particular, and who required to be treated with respect. These supernatural essences were not seen by the Romans as ferocious deities that once set up and would forever guard the established world order, as observed in other nations. This attitude to the gods in Greece and Rome created the opportunity to conduct free search in the field of artistic solutions of the internal space of the human dwelling, its aesthetic organization, and in sciences, such as philosophy, art and religion itself that would be free from dogmas and canons, although the living conditions of the ancient community eliminated the possibility of large temple household formations or priestly castes. Against this background, it should be noted that the architecture and art organization of Greek cities and of Rome itself played a significant role in the development of the art of decoration, ability to appropriately organize internal space of the premises, which largely determined the methods of modern design art and science and the ways of mutual influence between the two cultures, including the impact of the Greek cultural tradition over Roman culture [3, p. 8].

The article is to study the practical foundations of stability of Roman traditions in the decoration of environment and their socio-aesthetic content.

Culture of ancient Greece is the first of dynamic cultures of the ancient world. An important place among the samples of ancient arts and crafts belongs to proto-design of marble slabs and mosaic floors. In particular, in the gallery of the Hellenistic period in ancient Corinth, there was an exquisite marble mosaic decorating the floor - an athlete and a charming seated woman, who probably represented Corinth.

Rome, being a million-plus capital of a powerful world state that was politically and economically prosperous, significantly promoted, among other things, the development of architecture. The increasing complexity of social life and growth of social needs caused progress in all spheres of life in the state, particularly in the construction industry, facilitating activation of the process of technical invention, resulting in improving construction equipment and expanding the volumes of construction; spiritual sphere was marked with the qualitative evolution of compositional means, designer architectural forms, and enrichment of the arsenal of decorative tools.

Delian style was characterized by dismemberment of walls through architectural details: magnificent pilasters, columns, capitals, cornices and caryatids. The wall body sometimes included big pictures – multi-subject compositions representing mainly

mythological themes. Luxury of architectural design was mainly prevalent in the interior premises grouped around a courtyard - peristyle. In the houses of Roman aristocracy, the yard was surrounded with a marble colonnade and decorated with flowers, fountains and fine statues.

Decorative art of ancient Roman civilization developed from Etruscan design of monumental sarcophagi with sculpted lids for centuries. The latter, made of stone or terracotta, were decorated with pilasters, rosettes, cornices, and crowned with statues of the deceased, whose portraits were incredibly precise.

In general, contemporary culturologists and aestheticians see the Roman architectural ideal as decoratively cold, indifferent to the basic ideological model. Ancient Roman architecture sought to integrate art space through the constructions of arches and domes, thus satisfying the need for surface design using a variety of means to achieve artistic expression. Depending on the complexity of the task and environmental conditions, masters of the past would use rhythm and metric, symmetry and asymmetry, statics and dynamics, together with considerate aesthetic combination of natural and artificial materials.

Unlike the Greeks, the Romans were content with banal construction of the wall decorated with valuable materials, relief, paintings, etc. We see that the color palette of Roman building materials, as well as decorative and sculptural design of public buildings is richer than the Greek one. A striking example of polychromic decoration of Roman architectural objects is the colorful capitals in Herculaneum, which were largely preserved under a layer of volcanic tuff during the eruption of the volcano. In a local luxurious house with deer, they are made of pieces of colored stone and marble of different size, with a clear red rosette on the white abaca background, and pale pink spotted acanthus leaves placed over the blackness of the drum [8, p. 477].

The influence of Hellenistic culture can be traced back in ancient Roman history of the Republican period (the 3rd – 1st centuries BC), when religious buildings were built mostly according to the Ionic order, with decorative compositions (friezes) of architectural buildings arranged by ornamental motifs (predominantly garlands). During this cultural and historical period, walls of residential and public buildings were often decorated with bright, cheerful paintings of Pompeii decorative style.

Neat Corinthian buildings were occasionally decorated with friezes that were covered with reliefs (grand Temple of Antoninus and Faustina); the internal triangular pediments of frontons were also sometimes decorated with plastic (Pantheon building). Besides, public buildings were frequently decorated with relief compositions, such as the saturated with decorative plastic Colonnade of the Forum of Nerva (otherwise, The Transition Forum - Forum Transitorium: The Forum – «pass»), which connected Arhilet, the residential area of ancient Rome, with the Roman Forum, whose design was complemented with friezes and panels.

The end of the Republican period was marked with high taste of interior design of buildings. Geometric and floral patterns in decoration and narrative images covering huge floors impress with their inimitable beauty. These unique polychromic works of high performing technology were complemented with exquisite artistic images on the ceilings, where the square, seldom polygonal or round, deepening between the beams was decorated

with variously colored or bronze rosettes and stucco, in which the ornament was combined with shaped image and picturesque thematic panels.

Palaces of ancient Roman nobles were arranged with particular luxury and colorfulness. The wealth of gold-plated moldings in their interiors harmonized with the luster of bronze doors and column caps.

The Imperial period in the history of ancient Rome (the 1st century BC – the 5th century AD) was marked with monumental architectural construction. Using concrete, a strong building material, facilitated the construction of gigantic architectural structures that were seen as the decorative sculptural pieces of art.

Numerous triumphal arches and columns built to commemorate the victories of conquest by the Roman state appeared not only in Italy but also in the provinces: in Gaul, Dacia, Africa and Asia Minor. Quantitative and qualitative scale of the erected buildings required training of many professionals: carpenters (*fabritagnarii*), blacksmiths (*ferrarii*), brickmakers (*figularii*) and others [6, p. 121]. Attention is drawn to the establishment of certain formalism in the decoration of buildings, especially characteristic of this era. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for A. Losev to characterize the Roman ideal as «empty» in the sense of alienation from the visible body-eidos of its cosmological content [5, p. 20]. «The Roman classical ideal has a look of proud nobility, independence and some specific disinterest in the eternal..., inner impotence, spiritual doom, some sad hopes and fruitless memories» – said the scientist [5, p. 21]. Significantly, the direction of the Roman aesthetics of architectural space is limited to the design of the surface; this is why the overlapping of the artistic space in Roman buildings was considered by A. Losev empty, shapeless and inhuman [5].

On the other hand, wide-scale expansions (military, mythological and religious) were accompanied by supersensible public eroticism with faked aesthetics of spectacular sadism. In order to satisfy unbridled passions of the Roman plebs under the slogan «bread and circuses», in 75-80 AD Rome was built a huge amphitheater, Colosseum (48.5 meter high ellipsoid building with 190 and 156 meter axes) holding 50 thousand spectators. Another surviving amphitheater in the small town of Pompeii, with axes of 135 meters, could hold up to 200 thousand people. Bloody gladiatorial fights and besteriaries (killing animals) gathered crowds of spectators; that is why amphitheaters were of such impressive dimensions [2, p. 314–315].

During the reign of Octavian, Roman Senate built the Altar of Peace on the Champ de Mars in Rome in honor of the Roman goddess of Peace (19-9 BC), which was decorated with reliefs dedicated to the goddess. A unique monument of Roman architecture was the Pantheon – «The Temple of all the Roman Gods», which was being built for many centuries.

Sculptural art of Imperial Rome is represented primarily by images of the people in power and members of their families. Majestic, up to the level of pomposity, and somewhat allegorized are the sculptures of Octavian Augustus depicted mostly as an orator or Jupiter. The surviving statue of a young man, Antinous, from Bithynia, Asia Minor (during the reign of Emperor Hadrian – the 2nd century AD), is attributed to the origins of the realistic sculptural portrait by the contemporary fine art experts.

The postal and transport connection between Rome and other cities and provinces of the empire, such as ancient Greece, was carried out using day outrunners. In the interest of

regenerative physical and mental relaxation of the latter, the potential of wayside inns and hotels was involved. The above mentioned was especially intensified after Rome had conquered the lands of Greece. The new owners, in particular, used recreational potential of the hotel with its 160 rooms and sculpture galleries, a stadium and a theater holding 17 thousand viewers in the ancient Greek city of Epidaurus (the area related to the origin of the god of healing, Asclepius (Aesculapius)).

He became especially popular when, in 293 BC, Rome was embraced by terrible plague. According to the ancient narration, Romans deduced in the books of the Roman Sibyl that plague would only vanish when Aesculapius came to their city. Epidaurus was visited by the ambassadors to the sacred serpent god who, according to the legend, went voluntarily to the ship of the Romans and, on her arrival in Rome, chose Tiber island to be her dwelling [7, p. 41].

The travels of the Romans were increasingly becoming recreational and cognitive-entertaining, related to visiting remedial mineral springs, outstanding architectural monuments, theaters, etc. The above mentioned required building the hotel network allocating «shelters» for patricians and plebeians. Interestingly, the Roman law claimed these institutions responsible for damage or loss of the customer's possessions. For example, the hosts were held responsible to make sure each guest's possessions were safe, and all the residents went through compulsory registration, etc. [1].

Accumulation of luxury in everyday life of the Roman aristocracy at the end of the first century BC and especially in the first century AD put forward higher requirements for quality of the household items. In particular, pieces of furniture, kitchenware and toilet items found in the villas and houses of Pompeii are works of superb artistry of material and spiritual culture.

The above mentioned fully applies to items of household consumption of the first centuries AD discovered during archaeological excavations on the territory of the ancient cities of the northern Black Sea region, which experienced the rise of civilization in the era of the Roman Empire. Pottery of the Roman period was marked with its qualitative specificity in terms of technology and nature of the ornament. Hellenistic «black varnish» dishes were followed by «black varnish» bowls, pitchers and plates. They were skillfully produced and decorated with relief images. An elegant and yet simple pot of brick-red color was found in one of the graves in Kerch (ancient Panticapaeum). The pot was decorated with relief: a heron, arching his neck, is catching the worm with his beak [2, p. 358–360]. This modest motif of decorating ceramics complied in its style with the mentality of the Roman artist at the turn of the Roman Republic and Imperial eras.

Thus, the practical basis of Roman traditions in the decoration of environment was established back in the ancient Greek culture. The standard of beauty formed in antiquity allowed Greek and Roman traditions to exist for a long time, staying almost unchanged in their core in the evolution process. Inherited from the Greeks, ideas of humanism gave inspiration to the best Roman artists; the concept of human became more concrete. Due to this, urban canons and traditions of decorative art were entrenched at such a high level that they are adhered to at the present stage, while being creatively developed and improved. Discovered and developed methods of using both natural (stone, wood) and artificial (concrete) building and finishing materials helped reinforce the creative flight of architectural thought, as well as the awakening of the individual artist. Huge cities, engineering structures,

historic relief became an expression of this fracture. Therefore, the significance of Roman architecture in the history of human culture, its social and aesthetic content cannot be overemphasized. A promising area of research in this regard may be studying features of arts and crafts of ancient Rome.

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