

LILIIA GNATIUK

ORCID: 0000-0001-5853-9429

State University "Kyiv Aviation Institute", Ukraine

PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE: INTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL FORMS WITH INNOVATIVE MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGIES IN SACRED SPACE

OCHRONA DZIEDZICTWA KULTUROWEGO POPRZEZ WSPÓŁCZESNĄ ARCHITEKTURĘ: INTEGRACJA FORM TRADYCYJNYCH Z INNOWACYJNYMI MATERIAŁAMI I TECHNOLOGIAMI W PRZESTRZENI SAKRALNEJ

Abstract

This article discusses the important issue of combining historical architectural styles to create modern sacred spaces, which is crucial for preserving cultural heritage and spiritual identity. The author provides a thorough analysis of traditional architectural styles, including Ukrainian wooden architecture and Baroque, as well as European Gothic and Renaissance motifs. These styles not only serve as aesthetic models but also carry deep sacred symbolism and cultural codes¹. The paper also examines modern approaches to incorporating these historical forms into contemporary architectural projects, utilising innovative materials and technologies. Particular attention is paid to how combining tradition and modernity preserves the spiritual content of sacred spaces while ensuring they are functional, energy-efficient and compliant with modern socio-cultural requirements. The article substantiates the thesis that the shaping of modern sacred spaces is a dialogue between generations, in which historical architectural motifs are transformed and adapted to create living, multifunctional spaces that address the challenges of the present day. This approach contributes to the preservation of national identity and the development of cultural awareness and spirituality within society. This article is important both theoretically and practically for architects, cultural historians, restorers, and specialists in sacred construction, as it offers scientifically based recommendations for harmoniously integrating historical forms into modern architecture.

Keywords: sacred architecture, historical forms, modern form-making, cultural heritage, Gothic style, Ukrainian Baroque, wooden architecture, architectural symbolism, innovative materials, spiritual identity, architectural tradition, adaptation, sustainable development

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia ważną kwestię łączenia historycznych stylów architektonicznych w celu tworzenia nowoczesnych przestrzeni sakralnych, co ma kluczowe znaczenie dla zachowania dziedzictwa kulturowego i duchowej tożsamości. Przedstawia dogłębną analizę tradycyjnych stylów architektonicznych, w tym ukraińskiej architektury drewnianej i baroku, a także europejskich motywów gotyckich

¹ L.R. Gnatiuk, *Протириччя у формуванні художнього образу сакрального простору в архітектурі XX століття*, "Сучасні проблеми Архітектури та Містобудування" 2020, no. 56, pp. 17–31. DOI: 10.32347/2077-3455.2020.56.17-31.

i renesansowych. Style te służą nie tylko jako wzorce estetyczne, ale także niosą ze sobą głęboką, świętą symbolikę i kody kulturowe. W artykule zostały również przeanalizowane nowoczesne podejścia do włączania tych historycznych form do współczesnych projektów architektonicznych z wykorzystaniem innowacyjnych materiałów i technologii. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na to, w jaki sposób łączenie tradycji i nowoczesności zachowuje duchową treść przestrzeni sakralnych, zapewniając jednocześnie ich funkcjonalność, energooszczędność i zgodność ze współczesnymi wymogami społeczno-kulturowymi. Artykuł uzasadnia tezę, że kształtowanie nowoczesnych przestrzeni sakralnych jest dialogiem między-pokoleniowym, w którym historyczne motywy architektoniczne są przekształcane i dostosowywane do tworzenia żywych, wielofunkcyjnych przestrzeni, które odpowiadają na wyzwania współczesności. Takie podejście przyczynia się do zachowania tożsamości narodowej oraz rozwoju świadomości kulturowej i duchowości w społeczeństwie. Niniejszy tekst jest ważny zarówno z teoretycznego, jak i praktycznego punktu widzenia dla architektów, historyków kultury, konserwatorów i specjalistów w dziedzinie budownictwa sakralnego, ponieważ oferuje oparte na naukowych podstawach zalecenia dotyczące harmonijnej integracji form historycznych z nowoczesną architekturą.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura sakralna, formy historyczne, nowoczesne kształtowanie formy, dziedzictwo kulturowe, styl gotycki, ukraiński barok, architektura drewniana, symbolika architektoniczna, innowacyjne materiały, tożsamość duchowa, tradycja architektoniczna, adaptacja, zrównoważony rozwój

1. INTRODUCTION

The relevance of integrating historical forms into contemporary sacred architecture is driven by the complexity and multifaceted nature of the processes involved in transforming traditional architectural canons within the context of modern cultural, social, and technological challenges. Over the past decades, ecclesiastical construction has tended toward retrospection, often manifested in the replication of historical models, particularly medieval and Baroque architecture. This phenomenon reflects the faithful's desire to preserve spiritual identity² through the architectural imagery of the church. Concurrently, modernist approaches, which dominated the 20th century, did not always meet the expectations of religious communities, thus highlighting the necessity to reconsider both modernist experiences and traditional forms within new architectural paradigms³.

Sacred architecture, as a bearer of profound symbolism and cultural memory, demands a harmonious integration of historical stylistic elements with contemporary technologies and materials. This approach not only preserves but also modernises sacred space, adapting it to the needs of contemporary society. The preservation of national identity through architectural forms that reflect spiritual values and historical experience constitutes an essential component of cultural policy and urban development.

Therefore, the study of the integration of historical architectural forms into contemporary sacred buildings is not only a theoretical but also a practical task. It contributes to the formation of a holistic concept for the development of sacred architecture that is capable of responding to the challenges of the time while preserving spiritual heritage for future generations.

² L.R. Gnatiuk, *Створення духовної атмосфери сакрального простору [Creation of a spiritual atmosphere of a sacred space]*, "Сучасні проблеми Архітектури та Містобудуванн" 2021, no. 59, pp. 16–27. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32347/2077-3455.2021.59.16-27>.

³ L.R. Gnatiuk, *Авангардний модернізм в сакральній архітектурі Центральної Європи [Avant-garde modernism in the sacred architecture of Central Europe]*, "Теорія та практика дизайну" 2022, no. 25, pp. 39–48. DOI: [10.18372/2415-8151.25.16777](https://doi.org/10.18372/2415-8151.25.16777).

An analysis of the literature and recent publications on the integration of historical forms in contemporary sacred architecture indicates a growing scholarly interest in this issue, encompassing both theoretical and practical aspects. Primarily, a number of studies emphasize the importance of sacred architecture as a bearer of spiritual and national identity, historically shaped from antiquity to the present day. Notably, an article published in the journal *Philosophy and Management* (2025) provides a comparative analysis of architectural styles from different eras, highlighting the uniqueness of Ukrainian sacred buildings, particularly wooden architecture and Baroque, as well as the revival of sacred architecture after the 1990s⁴. This approach allows scholars to view historical forms not as archaic remnants but as living sources for contemporary creativity.

Research on the spatial structure of Ukraine's sacred heritage demonstrates patterns of territorial distribution of religious buildings, influenced by historical, natural, and cultural factors, and underlines the need to preserve and integrate these sites into the modern urban context. This is crucial for understanding the role of sacred architecture as part of the cultural landscape.

Oksana Dyachok⁵ examines the impact of socio-political processes on the formation of sacred complexes, which is especially relevant for regions with rich histories such as Ternopil Oblast. The author emphasises that contemporary sacred architecture results from a dialogue between tradition and emerging social challenges.

Publications in popular media and professional outlets, including interviews with architects, reflect diverse approaches to combining historical forms with modernity. Architects express views on the necessity of preserving the sacredness and spirituality of churches while recognising the importance of adapting forms to contemporary technologies and functional requirements. At the same time, there is criticism of the widespread use of standardised designs and decorative elements that do not always correspond to authenticity.

Special attention is given to studies of Ukrainian sacred wooden architecture (17th–21st centuries), where symbolic motifs and compositional solutions are analysed for potential application in contemporary projects aimed at preserving national identity.

Overall, recent publications indicate that the integration of historical forms in contemporary sacred architecture is a multifaceted process that includes:

- preservation and reinterpretation of traditional architectural styles and symbolism,
- use of modern materials and technologies to adapt sacred spaces to current needs,
- consideration of sociocultural context and territorial specificity,
- search for a balance between authenticity and innovation.

These aspects shape the current scholarly discourse and practical approaches to the development of sacred architecture, which is essential for preserving cultural heritage and spiritual space in the modern world.

⁴ R. Kosarevska, *Сакральна архітектура як відображення духовної та національної ідентичності в українській культурі [Sacred architecture as a reflection of spiritual and national identity in Ukrainian culture]*, "Філософія та управління" 2025, no. 1(5), pp. 59–65. DOI: 10.70651/3041-248X/2025.1.07.

⁵ O. Diachok, *The forming of the architecture of sacred complexes under the influence of social and political processes (on the example of Ternopil region)*, thesis for the degree of Doctor of Science (DSc). Specialization 18.00.01 – Theory of architecture, restoration of architectural monuments. Lviv Polytechnic National University 2021, p. 545.

2. INTEGRATION OF HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY ELEMENTS IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF SACRED CHURCH SPACES

The integration of historical and contemporary elements in the architecture of sacred church spaces reflects a profound connection between tradition and innovation, grounded in the philosophy of sacredness, symbolism of forms, and spatial organisation.

The historical aspect of sacred architecture is closely linked to the clear spatial organisation of the church, which symbolises the hierarchy of the sacred rite: the division into the narthex, nave, and altar corresponds to the differentiation among participants in the liturgy and spiritual forces. This spatial arrangement is not only functional but also symbolic, with the floor representing the earth, and the architecture unites earth and heaven, emphasising the equality of all before God⁶.

Contemporary sacred architecture strives to preserve this symbolism while simultaneously moving away from excessive ornamentation and stylistic quotations, favouring minimalism and simple geometric forms that carry sacred meaning and are easily understood. This approach aligns with the modern search for ecclesiastical architecture based on the philosophy of spiritual essence, aiming to avoid kitsch and eclecticism, focusing instead on inner content and spirituality.

Equally important is the synthesis of architecture with art and theology, which forms the sacred space as an integrated system where every element from the building's form to its interior decoration bears profound symbolic meaning, respects tradition, and remains open to innovation. This enables the creation of churches that are simultaneously modern and deeply national, harmoniously integrated into the contemporary environment.

The 19th-century⁷ historicism had clear distinguishing features that set it apart from previous historicisms. First of all, this was manifested in the awareness of the absence of eternal truths, the finitude, relativity and transience of all phenomena. However, the attitude towards history as an argument in ideological discussions remains significant, with some references to the past becoming ritualistic repetitions. In architecture, historicism took on the character of neo-styles, dominated by neo-Gothic. The German Romantics' vision of the Middle Ages as an era that effectively realised the ideal of a Christian society facilitated this. Augustus Pugin was spot on when he said that Gothic art⁸ is where you'll find the essence of the Christian faith⁹.

Thus, the combination of history and modernity in the architecture of sacred church spaces represents a balance between preserving canonical forms and symbolism and seeking new forms that respond to the spiritual and aesthetic demands of the contemporary era.

⁶ H.-R. Hitchcock., *Architecture: Nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1967, p. 45.

⁷ B. Bergdoll, *European architecture 1750–1890*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, p. 250.

⁸ W. Mischke, *Gotyk między trwaniem i odnową*, "Miscellanea Łódzkie" 1996, no. 1(15). Materiały Ogólnopolskiej Sesji Naukowej Łódzkiego Oddziału Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki i Zakładu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego Neogotyki w Muzeum Historii Miasta Łodzi w dniach 12–13 grudnia 1996 roku, p. 16.

⁹ Gnatiuk L.R., *Традиції трансформації готичних форм в сакральній архітектурі кінця XIX – початку XX століття [Traditions of transformation of Gothic forms in the sacred architecture of the end of the XIX – the beginning of the XX century]*, "Сучасні проблеми Архітектури та Містобудування" 2020, no. 57, pp. 26–42. DOI: 10.32347/2077-3455.2020.57.26-42.

In the second half of the 20th century, after a period of dominance of modernist formulas, there was a return to traditionalist principles. The forms that had long been rejected and had been used before the first half of the twentieth century were deliberately chosen again, including Gothic (Ill. 1), archaic, and folk values¹⁰. It was a time of respect for creative invention, beauty, and symbolic values¹¹.



Ill. 1. Grundtvig's Memorial Church (Danish: Grundtvigs Kirke), Bispebjerg district of Copenhagen, Denmark, source: Grundtvig's Church [in:] Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grundtvig%27s_Church (access: 15.06.2025)

Global trends shape a balance between traditional and innovative architectural approaches through the integration of cultural values with contemporary technologies and methods that respond to the challenges of our time¹².

Firstly, globalisation and digitalisation provide access to diverse cultural practices and technologies, stimulating the search for new forms of expression where traditions are reinterpreted within a modern context. This process allows for the preservation of national identity while making architecture more adaptable and appealing to contemporary audiences.

Secondly, innovative methodologies and technologies such as digital modelling, interactive elements, and eco-friendly materials contribute to the creation of architectural projects that maintain the symbolism and spirit of traditions, while meeting modern requirements for sustainability and functionality.

Moreover, social interaction and community participation in the creation of cultural spaces strengthen the connection between past and future, activating innovation by considering local particularities and needs, which is especially important in multicultural societies.

¹⁰ L.R. Gnatiuk, *Переосмислення ранньої парадигми у формуванні сучасного сакрального простору [Reconception of the early paradigm in the formation of modern sacred space]*, “Сучасні проблеми Архітектури та Містобудування” 2024, no. 70, pp. 46–54. DOI: 10.32347/2077-3455.2024.70.46-54.

¹¹ L.R. Gnatiuk, *Роль мистецтва та значення символу у формотворенні сакрального простору [The role of art and symbol in the formation of sacred space]*, “Сучасні проблеми Архітектури та Містобудування” 2020, no. 58, pp. 32–47. DOI: 10.32347/2077-3455.2020.58.32-47.

¹² S. Khasraghi, A. Mehan, *Glocalisation challenges and the contemporary architecture: systematic review of common global indicators in Aga Khan Award's winners*, “Journal of Architecture and Urbanism” 2023, no. 2, pp. 135–145. DOI: 10.3846/jau.2023.17176 (access: 15.06.2025).

Thus, global trends encourage architects to creatively combine traditional values with modern technologies and innovations, ensuring the harmonious development of culture and architecture amid rapid socio-technical changes.

The Holy Trinity Cathedral in Hajnówka stands as a prominent exemplar of contemporary ecclesiastical architecture in Poland and was built between 1974 and 1992 according to the design of Aleksander Grygorowicz; it was consecrated on 11 October 1992. The co-designer of the temple was Jerzy Nowosielski¹³. Distinguished by its innovative structural design, the cathedral features a roof composed of irregular, interpenetrating concrete shells, which create a dynamic and expressive silhouette. This architectural solution not only departs from traditional Orthodox forms but also demonstrates a sophisticated use of modern construction techniques and materials (Ill. 2).

The interior of the cathedral is notable for its distinctive polychrome scheme. Initially, the renowned artist Jerzy Nowosielski was commissioned by Metropolitan Bazyli (Doroszkievicz) to design the interior decoration. Despite the completion of his polychrome project, the proposal encountered opposition from the parish priest, leading to the abandonment of Nowosielski's vision for the church's interior. A striking feature of the central nave is a chandelier in the form of a Greek cross, adorned with stained glass depictions of the Mother of God and various Slavic saints. The extensive use of stained glass throughout the cathedral is particularly noteworthy, as such elements are uncommon in Orthodox church interiors, thereby underscoring the innovative character of the building. This synthesis highlights the cathedral's architectural innovation, artistic significance, and role as a major centre of Orthodox worship and cultural identity in the region.



Ill. 2. Church in Hajnówka, Poland, 1992, source: Sobór Świętej Trójcy w Hajnówce [in:] Wikipedia, https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sob%C3%B3r_%C5%9Awi%C4%99tej_Tr%C3%B3jcy_w_Hajn%C3%B3wce (access: 15.06.2025)

The Church of the Holy Trinity of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) in the Obolon district of Kyiv is a contemporary architectural project developed by Aranchii

¹³ Sobór Świętej Trójcy w Hajnówce [in:] Wikipedia, https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sob%C3%B3r_%C5%9Awi%C4%99tej_Tr%C3%B3jcy_w_Hajn%C3%B3wce (access: 15.06.2025).

Architects studio (2025), which combines traditional Ukrainian sacred forms with modern technologies and functionality (Ill. 3)¹⁴.

Contemporary projects, such as the church in Obolon, demonstrate examples of interpreting historical forms using modern materials and new architectural solutions that combine tradition with contemporary spatial expression and functionality. Key Features:

- *Form*: The church has a single-domed, cruciform layout that references traditional Ukrainian wooden churches. The structure consists of four “logs” of varying heights – a traditional element of wooden architecture interpreted through modern means.
- *Facades*: Transparent and semi-transparent facades allow natural daylight to penetrate the interior of the church, while in the evening, the building emits a soft internal glow. The central focus is a translucent cross that runs through the dome, serving as a symbolic compositional element.
- *Public Space*: The church is surrounded by a landscaped recreational area that serves as a place for relaxation during the summer and a site for a Christmas tree in winter. The site also includes a modern shelter, which is important for neighbourhoods with panel housing.
- *Recognition*: The project received a special award at the All-Ukrainian Architectural and Development Competition “Creator of the Year 2025.”



Ill. 3. The Church of the Holy Trinity of the UGCC in the Obolon district of Kyiv, Aranchii Architects, source: Рада Євангельських Церков провела саміт “Через добрі справи до трансформації суспільства” [in:] RISU, 5.12.20222, https://risu.ua/na-oboloni-zyavitsya-nezvichnoyi-formi-hram-zi-svitloproniknim-hrustom-gromadskim-prostorom-ta-ukrittyam_n134567 (access: 15.06.2025)

Thus, the Church of the Holy Trinity UGCC in Obolon exemplifies a harmonious integration of historical architectural traditions with modern technological and social requirements, creating not only a sacred space but also a socio-cultural environment for the local community.

¹⁴ Рада Євангельських Церков провела саміт “Через добрі справи до трансформації суспільства” [in:] RISU, 5.12.20222, https://risu.ua/na-oboloni-zyavitsya-nezvichnoyi-formi-hram-zi-svitloproniknim-hrustom-gromadskim-prostorom-ta-ukrittyam_n134567 (access: 15.06.2025).

3. NEW MATERIALS IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AS A MEANS OF PRESERVING CULTURAL IDENTITY

Contemporary architecture preserves cultural heritage through the use of new materials, which combine traditional forms and motifs with innovative technologies and environmentally friendly materials¹⁵. This approach enables the retention of authenticity and symbolic significance of sacred and historical structures while simultaneously enhancing their functionality and adaptability to modern conditions.

In particular, traditional constructions such as domes or pitched roofs can be fabricated using thermally efficient coatings or integrated with solar panels, thereby improving the energy efficiency and ecological sustainability of buildings without compromising their cultural value. Modern materials such as glass, metal, and concrete are employed to reinterpret national motifs and forms, maintaining the symbolism and aesthetics of traditional architecture while imparting new qualitative characteristics¹⁶. Equally important is the balance between the influence of globalization and the preservation of national architectural identity. Contemporary projects adapt traditional elements to contemporary requirements, allowing cultural heritage to remain vibrant and relevant within a global context.

Thus, new materials and technologies in contemporary architecture serve not as tools of destruction but as instruments for the preservation and development of cultural heritage, ensuring its harmonious integration with the modern world. New materials in contemporary architecture contribute to the preservation of cultural identity by combining traditional forms and symbolism with innovative technologies that ensure the durability, environmental sustainability, and adaptability of structures.

The application of modern materials such as high-quality concrete, metal, glass, and energy-efficient coatings enables the reproduction of traditional architectural elements with greater precision and resilience, while maintaining the authenticity and aesthetics of cultural heritage. Moreover, technologies like 3D scanning and digitization of monuments facilitate the creation of accurate digital replicas, which simplify restoration and repair processes in cases of damage, thereby preserving historical accuracy and cultural context. Equally important is the use of local natural materials in conjunction with modern methods, which supports traditional craftsmanship and promotes the preservation of national identity, while simultaneously enhancing the structural sustainability of buildings¹⁷.

Thus, new materials and technologies serve not only as tools for modernization but also as instruments for the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage to future generations, ensuring a balance between history and modernity.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The use of historical forms in the shaping of contemporary sacred space is a key factor in preserving cultural identity, spiritual heritage, and national uniqueness. Analysis of scholarly sources

¹⁵ S.J. Schloeder, *Architecture in communion. Implementing the Second Vatican Council through liturgy and architecture*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1998.

¹⁶ R.S. Lindstrom, *Creativity and contradiction. European churches since 1970*, American Institute of Architects Press, Washington D.C. 1988.

¹⁷ P. Tournikiotis, *The historiography of modern architecture*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 1999.

demonstrates that historical architectural styles – particularly Ukrainian traditions of wooden architecture, Baroque, as well as influences from European Gothic and Renaissance forms – serve not only as aesthetic models but also as carriers of profound symbolism and sacred meaning, which constitute the foundation for contemporary creators of sacred architecture.

Modern sacred design actively integrates these historical motifs, reinterpreting them with consideration for current technologies, materials, and functional requirements. This approach avoids stylistic retrospection, instead creating spaces that preserve the spirituality and symbolism of tradition, while also addressing contemporary issues such as energy efficiency, ergonomics, and sociocultural relevance.

The combination of historical forms with modern architectural solutions must foster the formation of sacred space as a living system that reflects intergenerational dialogue, preserves memory, and simultaneously opens prospects for creative development. This corresponds to the philosophy of contemporary sacred architecture, which strives for harmony between tradition and innovation, between spiritual content and technical excellence¹⁸.

Therefore, the use of historical forms in contemporary sacred design is not only an aesthetic but also a cultural and semantic necessity, ensuring the preservation of national identity, supporting spiritual values, and contributing to the sustainable development of sacred architecture in the context of the modern world.

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¹⁸ R.F. Mould, *The iron church: a short history of Everton, its mother church, and one of its mid-Victorian churchwardens, including notes on how to start tracing a family tree*, Everton ST Georges Press, Liverpool 1987.

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Author’s Note

Assoc. Prof. Liliia Gnatiuk, PhD in Architecture

Associate Professor at the Department of Computer Technologies of Design and Graphics; Faculty of Building, Architecture and Design, at the State University “Kyiv Aviation Institute” (KAI). Editor-in-chief of the scientific compilation *Theory and Practice of Design*. Author of numerous publications on architecture and design and the author and principal executor of several scientific and research-project proposals on reconstruction and regeneration of historical cities of Ukraine – ranging from scientific concepts and master plans to individual buildings in historical zones (development of projects on the management, protection, and use of historical and cultural heritage).

liliia.hnatiuk@npp.kai.edu.ua