MULTICULTURAL ART NOUVEAU DÉCOR AND POLYCHROMY IN THE INTERIOR OF THE CHAIM FRENKEL VILLA IN ŠIAULIAI

Summary. The Frenkel family was famous in Lithuania not only as major manufacturers but also as generous benefactors. They honourably fulfilled the duty of a wealthy Jew to provide charity and social assistance to those most in need. The Frenkel family was forced to leave Lithuania in 1939: during the Soviet and Nazi occupations, the family lost all their possessions. While some family members had Lithuanian citizenship, the property rights of the descendants of Chaim Frenkel (1857–1920) were not reinstated, and from 17 June 1993 the Chaim Frenkel Villa became a department of the Šiauliai “Aušros” Museum (ŠAM, established in 1923). After the building’s renovation (finished in 2008) the villa’s interior spaces reflect minimally survived aesthetics of high class everyday Lithuanian Jewish private life at the beginning of the 20th century. The aim of the article is to argue how the Art Nouveau style in (territory of nowadays) Lithuania was not pure, but intertwined with retro-styles and internationalism. The case of the Ch. Frenkel Villa enriches the history of Lithuanian Art Nouveau with rich combinations of colours, shapes and compositions typical of Lithuanian Jews. Noticeably in the case of the Ch. Frenkel Villa, the traditionalist way of life and the wisdom of Jewish daily life restrained fashionable European design innovations. This is proof that the living environment of Lithuanian Jews was perceived as an important space for spiritual life and the worship of God. Despite searches – fruitless so far – to discover the building’s architect, we can nonetheless recognise the connection of the Ch. Frenkel Villa with the art history of neighbouring Latvia, Riga in particular. It is known that the creator of the villa’s wall painting – famous Latvian painter Voldemārs Zeltiņš (1879–1909) – came to Šiauliai from Riga especially for this work. While the décor of the Ch. Frenkel family house-villa interior may look very magnificent to today’s generation, in comparison with wealthy European factory owners’ homes it was very modest, though yet of very high artistic value, unique and avoiding the repetition of straightforward cheap fashions of interior design.

Keywords: Art Nouveau, Chaim Frenkel, Jewish culture, Šiauliai “Aušros” Museum, Voldemārs Zeltiņš.

INTRODUCTION

The Frenkel family was famous in Lithuania not only as major manufacturers but also as generous benefactors. They honourably fulfilled the duty of a wealthy Jew to provide charity and social assistance to those most in need. During the Soviet and Nazi occupations the family lost all their possessions. While some family members had Lithuanian citizenship, the property rights of the descendants of Chaim Frenkel (1857–1920) were not reinstated – and from 1993 June 17 the Ch. Frenkel Villa became a department of the Šiauliai “Aušros” Museum (ŠAM, established in 1923). After the building’s renovation (completed in 2008) the villa’s interior spaces reflect for visitors minimally survived aesthetics of high-class everyday Lithuanian Jewish private life at the beginning of the 20th century. The aim of this article is to argue how the Art Nouveau style in the territory of (nowadays) Lithuania was not pure, but intertwined with retro-styles and internationalism. The main target is to expand the established history of Lithuanian architecture with new insights, to contribute to the reconstructions of the cultural life of Lithuanian Jews. It must be acknowledged that this type of research faces many problems, the first of which is that most of Lithuanian Jewish cultural heritage has been destroyed, not only in Lithuania but also in neighbouring countries. The reason for this – the Holocaust – is a
widely researched topic and is still being explored. Far fewer historical facts are known in the fields of Lithuanian Jewish culture and history of everyday life. The process is complicated because of the paucity of surviving authentic historical material which was destroyed or stolen; the material that did survive has become the property of modern collectors, hence difficult to access for scholarly researchers.

The second problem was that a large part of the Jewish children saved during World War II, while growing up in strangers’ families, acquired new mixed identities, associated with Christian culture. This emotionally complex process of cultural syncretism was convincingly revealed by Marian Marzyński in 2013 in the documentary “Never Forget to Lie”, as infants or very young Jewish children were taught to be so-called “non-Jewish children” in order to survive.2

The third problem was that buildings still standing in Lithuanian cities and towns and former public premises, such as hospitals, residential houses, where more than several generations of Lithuanian Jews were born and raised, today have new owners. The buildings’ purpose was changed, and they were renamed with Lithuanian names. Only in recent years separate facts are remembered that Lithuanian Jewish families for many years lived in one or another house.

The fourth problem was that statistics, as official historical memory, mismatched with the facts of collective memory.3 The scholars who delve deeper into the surviving documents of the First Republic of Lithuania stored in the archives of the Republic of Lithuania have been surprised by lots of the Jewish names in the Passport Fund of Lithuanian Citizens, interwar telephone directories, lists of taxpayers, company employees and so on. More attentive researchers wonder where a large percentage of Jews from Šiauliai (and other Lithuanian citizens) “disappeared” before WWII. Did such a large number of Jews emigrate from Lithuania, or did they move to other cities, or did so many Lithuanians move to live in the temporary capital Kaunas, or were there other reasons? For example, historical research of Lithuanian synagogues states that in 1864 60% of Jews lived in Šiauliai, in 1910 – 44%; and in 1923 – 25%.4 Meanwhile, statistics of the year 1938 state that only 4.6% of Jews lived in Šiauliai.5 Recent statistics from interwar Lithuania may have been inaccurate, as there are many cases where the Lithuanian citizens personal data card contains the nationality – Lithuanian – and the section on religion testifies the citizen’s affiliation to the Jewish religious community.6

Looking at the statistics of the First Republic of Lithuania, there are doubts about the reliability of interwar Lithuanian (1918–1940) statistics. It is possible that the statistics published between both World Wars were artificially Lithuanianised.

This hypothesis in historical research was further reinforced by Jacob Frenkel’s (1883–1967) recollections of his father Chaim Frenkel (1857–1920).7 Jakob Frenkel wrote in his memoirs about this falsification of statistics of independent Lithuania: “In 1925 I have opened a new mechanised, modernised leather factory in Šiauliai. Shortly – the situation of Jews in independent Lithuania has worsened. This was shown by the first months of Smetona’s reign, when I was immediately accused of having half a Jewish worker in a factory called “Batas”. The authorities had the courage to tell me that in Lithuania Jews make up only 7% of the entire population, and in the days of Smetona there were no more [than] 7% Jews, and only the same percentage of Jews must be employed in the factory.”8

There are hopes that Lithuanian historians of interwar politics will provide us with answers to the questions that arise during the research of art history. Meanwhile, the aspirations of art and architecture history are much more modest – encouraging Jan Assmann’s9 and Aleida Asmann’s concept of cultural memory,10 to be used not only in the research of architectural design, but in the reconstruction of historical spaces, and creating new interiors and museum expositions as well. Choosing the way of cultural memory required the reconstruction and providing readers with not only well-known official
aspects but also tacit, unofficial aspects of the history. Thus, all research on the homes of Jews living in Lithuania acquires an indisputable meaning in the reproduction of cultural memory. On the other hand, even without the argumentation of scientific methodology, delving into the history of Lithuanian Jewish culture is a logical choice, as Jews were the largest “ethnic minority” in the interwar Lithuania.11

I presented a first attempt to reconstruct the interiors of Jews living in Lithuania up to WWII in the monograph “Lithuanian Interwar Interiors 1918–1940”.12 Aiming to expand and clarify knowledge about Lithuanian Jewish interior traditions, I further conducted a case study on the Chaim Frenkel Villa in Šiauliai.13 The publication strove to find the links between architectural design and Jewish life traditions. Finally, this article concentrates exceptionally on the multiculturality of the Art Nouveau phenomenon. The history of a famous historical building is presented in the context of the destroyed Jewish culture and the principles of collective memory and analogy, compared with cases of architecture of the neighbouring countries of that time.

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ABOUT THE BUILDING

Chaim Frenkel’s Villa14 (a residential house, in some publications sometimes called “Palace”) was built in 1908. This information needs to be supplemented by the fact that during the construction of the residential house-villa the owners of the house at the same time had to take care of the continuous renovation and development of the family’s leather factory, with the design and construction of new production spaces. Chaim Frenkel with his family moved into the residential villa in 1908, but the family lived in the new house for a very short time – only until 1914. At the end of the First World War, Frenkel went to Russia and later to Germany. In the interwar period factory employees lived in the villa, and a Jewish gymnasium was housed in part of the building from 1920 until 194015 (Fig. 1). In 1940 the building was nationalised by the Soviet authorities.

Fig. 1. Postcard “Šiauliai. Jewish Gymnasium”. Ch. Frenkel villa before World War II. Before World War I, the Dora and Chaim Frenkel family lived in the villa. In the interwar years, the building housed the Jewish Gymnasium, the second floor was rented to a relative – the factory’s general director Eliyosh Mordel and his family. On the first floor of the building lived Chaim Frenkel’s widow Dora Frenkel with Jacob Frenkel’s mother-in-law Nina Sliosbergienė. They both were killed in the Šiauliai Ghetto at the end of 1941. SAM, IK-F 3419
The Red Army Hospital was located there at first, and in 1941 a German Wehrmacht hospital was established in the villa. The remote news reaches us about the historical period when the villa building was turned into a German military hospital during World War II, and this historical fact is evidenced and illustrated by the unpublished memories of Ulf Reinert, the son of the leather factory’s director, and historical photographs. After WWII, during the Soviet era, the building was occupied by Soviet military medics for the second time. On 17 June 1993, the Ch. Frenkel Villa officially became a branch of the Šiauliai “Aušros” Museum (ŠAM), established in 1923, and the building remains in the possession of ŠAM to this day.

Unpublished iconographic and documentary material for this research has been obtained from the files of ŠAM, historical information was collected in the Central State Archives of Lithuania (LCVA), Kaunas Regional State Archives (KRVA), exposition and files of the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History (VVGŻM). The symbols of Lithuanian Jewish traditional art and their meanings are explained on the basis of Aistė Niunkaitė-Račiūnienė’s research. The authorship of the interior paintings was recognised on the basis of Latvian researcher Kristiāna Ābele’s works.

The very first studies on the polychromy of the Ch. Frenkel Villa facades and interiors were conducted by art historian Stasys Latonas and architect Žilvinas Pronckus in 1994. In the conclusions of the research reports by Latonas was the very accurate observation: “The colour combinations of the interiors are bright and contrasting, I think they reflect the aesthetic taste of Lithuanian Jews, at the same time they are original 20th century. Colouring solutions for interiors that continue the traditions of early historicism with secession style.” The art historian stated an important fact that “the original polychromy of some rooms was destroyed during subsequent repairs, when the walls and even the ceiling were painted with oil paint, or the ceilings were replaced, destroying the ceiling, wall mouldings, other décor elements”. This quotation suggests a presumption that Jewish symbols have been destroyed during Nazi and Soviet repairs. Additional research on interior polychromy was performed in 1999–2001. Finally, all the rooms (Fig. 2) walls and ceiling mouldings and painting were examined. In the final stage of the research, the authors stated once again about the destroyed interior ornamentation: “During the replacement of the ceilings, in some places, the moulding of the ceiling and ceiling strips were destroyed.” Therefore, it is not surprising that during many renovations, the spirit of the Jewish interior was destroyed in its own way, so today we often hear saying that there is no Jewish aesthetic in this building because “it did not exist at all”. That is a very characteristic example of how interior design reconstruction can rewrite the history in its own way. Reconstruction of the building in 2000 was hampered not only by a lack of money, but also by a lack of historical knowledge.

Admittedly, the restoration of the villa’s architecture severely lacked authentic historical iconographic material and documentary. According to...

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Fig. 2. The plans of the first and second floors of the villa premises and numbering of the premises. A copy of the drawing. A manuscript. I. Bėciienė, E. Kazlauskaité, D. Skreibienė “Ch. Frenkel house (Šiauliai, Vilniaus St. 74)”. The project of colour solutions in interior. Vilnius: AB Institute of Monument Restoration, 2001, p. 3. ŠAM archive
research by architecture historian Nijola Lukšiūnytė (1954–2014) in 1994, “only a postcard issued in 1927 (ŠAM, IK-F 3419) is the only source of information about Ch. Frenkel Villa in Vilniaus St. 74.” She mentioned only one article in the interwar press – according to her, no projects or sketches were found in Lithuanian State archives (Lithuanian Central State Archive – LCVA, Kaunas State Archive – KRVA, Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History – VVGŽM). The authorship of this house was a mystery which still remains nowadays.

The surviving historical information is really very poor, because even after a decade of active research, Lukšiūnytė mentioned the case of Chaim Frenkel’s Villa very briefly in the History of Lithuanian Architecture, Vol. 3 subsection of “Secession and Other Trends in the Klaipėda Region”. This context was deliberately chosen by the architectural historian because she brought the style of Ch. Frenkel’s Villa closer to the architecture of Klaipeda and Riga.

It is interesting to note the scientist’s assumption that the builder’s commercial ties with Germany may have led him to invite an architect for his house from there. This villa with a garden reminded Lukšiūnė of Alexander’s residence in Klaipėda: “The facades are equally significant and different from each other, organised along the transverse axis of symmetry, as if collapsing two twin houses. However, the angular tower, the changing rhythm of the windows and the roof accented by chimneys, pediments and lights accentuate the dynamics of the composition.” Finally, from the memories of Jacob Frankel came new learning about Ch. Frenkel’s close ties, not only with Germany and Riga, but also with African and Latin American countries, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. Lukšiūnė’s original assumption about the search for the author of the building was geographically expanded, however, the author of the building’s architecture could not be found either.

Despite the fruitless searches for the building’s architect, the connection of Ch. Frenkel’s villa with the art history of Riga was discovered during the research phase of the interior design of the building. Latvian art historian Kristiāna Ābele, who studied the work of the Latvian painter Voldemārs Zeltiņš (1879–1909), in 2012 personally shared her discoveries with Šiauliai “Aušros” museologists, the unnoticed knowledge that Zeltiņš was the author and performer of the wall and ceiling paintings in the Ch. Frenkel Villa. She shared with Lithuanian art historians the book Latvijas māksla 1800–1914, vol. 2, as the first publication by Jānis Silins where the name of Frenkel was mentioned in association with Zeltiņš. Ābele has personally supplemented this fact with valuable information about references to sources on how “[...] one benefactor took him [Voldemārs Zeltiņš] to Šiauliai to paint a villa for Frenkel.” Presumably this Latvian painter realised some more decorative works in Šiauliai, as evidence of his Latvian contemporaries refers to the decoration of the apartment of a rich Jewish merchant of Šiauliai with the motifs of the Old Testament; plots from the Book of Psalms and images of the Bible are mentioned. Nevertheless, the latter apparently were implemented in some other Jewish houses in Šiauliai, but not in the interior of Frenkel’s villa. This is evident because the polychrome research did not reveal any biblical paintings.

**ANALYSIS OF DÉCOR FORMS AND MOTIFS IN THE VILLA’S INTERIOR**

According to the European context of interior fashion of that time, Bible stories in living apartments in Europe were not fashionable at all. In well-known architectural magazines we can see that at the end of the 19th century, “sweet” interiors crowded with details and patterns, enlivened by sentimental acts of young people, romantic figurative compositions, etc., were popular. Studying them, we can notice that the décor of the Ch. Frenkel Villa, although very ornate for the modern visitor, is clearly different from the restraint of European and Russian interiors of that time; figurative compositions, very fashionable at that time in Western European interiors, were not used in the Frenkel villa’s wall paintings. Various architectural details collected by renowned Russian architect and theorist Gavriil
suggest that the interior decoration of the Ch. Frenkel Villa is definitely exceptional. It is obvious that the architectural ideas of the building and Ch. Frenkel’s private spaces were formed under the influence of the Jewish mentality.

We shall look for secular manifestations of internationalism in this interior, understanding the Jewish nation’s tendency toward traditionalism. We start at the beginning of the 20th century, with a discussion of fashionable aesthetic combinations. The style of the Art Nouveau was the most direct way of naming the international artistic “diversities” of the very beginning of the 20th century. Thus, progressive twentieth-century representations were shown through the reformed architecture and interior decoration, social and political ideals in different lands by different nations. Across Europe and beyond, varieties of new art with different names and different external expressions have been created to suit different human characters and understandings. Despite the unlimited exclusivity, there was much in common between them. One of the clearest commonalities to be found is the combination of wooden wall panels with a wide ornamented ceiling strip. It was very fashionable in interior decoration in the beginning of 20th century. It spread all over the world from England along with the ideas of the Arts and Crafts movement. For comparison, we can recall the neo-Gothic interior of the Red House (London) designed by William Morris in the 1860s. The decoration of the embossed wood panels, the ceiling painted with floral motifs and wide ceiling strips can also be noticed in the interior of the Ch. Frenkel Villa. It is obvious that in these spaces we can discover many original architectural details characteristic of the Arts and Crafts Movement and Art Nouveau interiors, which at that time seemed beyond the traditions and were treated as the latest fashion trends in interior design. It should be noted that in the Scandinavian catalogue of Art Nouveau ornaments we will find none of the motifs we see in the Ch. Frenkel Villa’s wall paintings. Meanwhile the aesthetics and polychrome ornaments closer to the Ch. Frenkel Villa, were discovered in the early 20th century periodicals published in Riga (Latvia) and Germany (Fig. 3–4). It must be admitted that the unique décor of the Ch. Frenkel Villa expands the history of the Art Nouveau ornamentation with new shapes and colour combinations. During the construction of the Ch. Frenkel Villa, the architectural and interior styles in Volume III of the History of Lithuanian Architecture are called modern, modernised neoclassicism and other tendencies. Therefore, the case of Frenkel’s family residential house once again confirms the words expressed not only by foreign authors, but also by the Lithuanian architectural historian Lukšionytė, that the stylistics of the Art Nouveau in Lithuania

Fig. 3. Illustrations in: Alexander Koch. Innen-Decoration, Darmstadt, 1911, 149
was often not pure, but much more intertwined with retrospectivism, than in the regions of the big European countries. In Lukšionytė’s monograph “Historicism and Modernity in Vilnius Architecture”, the term historicism includes eclecticism and neo-Gothic, Neo-Renaissance and all other narrow tendencies, based on rational restorations and reworkings of the past styles – all tendencies based on the studies of historical forms. In this act of creativity, we see the origins of the fashionable new art process that took place all over the Europe and had been described in publications by different authors. Both phenomena took place in a partly overlapping chronological succession (Historicism: 1860–1900, Art Nouveau: 1890–about 1920).

The expressions of the so-called new art and design in Lithuania (which at that time was occupied by Tsarist Russia) are illustrated by several Russian publications: Architectural Encyclopaedia of the second part of the 19th century by Gavriil Baranovsky (orig.: Архитектурная энциклопедия второй половины XIX века), and Yearbook of the Imperial Society of Architects-Artists (orig.: Ежегодник императорского общества архитекторов-художников). However, after a careful study of the above-mentioned publications, we notice that the interior of the Ch. Frenkel Villa differs from the cases described in the Tsarist Russia press. It was internationality that allowed the same stylistic tendency to unfold into visually different images. It is no coincidence that contemporary architectural narratives present a wide range of Art Nouveau expressions and national contexts. The Ch. Frenkel Villa’s history is enriched by the aesthetics of Lithuanian Jews. Stylised floral ornaments characteristic of Jewish Art Nouveau interiors are first noticed in the room on the ground floor (room 106), where there was once a family dining room next to the kitchen (Fig. 5). Images of similar graphics could be found not only in other Lithuanian Jewish interiors (for example, in a photo with the interior of a hairdresser in Vilnius), but also in photo frames, book graphic design, etc.

The 117 room was decorated with rich gold patterns and subtle colour décor on the ceiling in the space on the ground floor lobby (Fig. 6). The completely restored ceiling décor today delights the visitors of the villa with a special originality. Nowadays, we can only imagine the whole interior view,
how this representative visitor’s space could look like when furnished with carved furniture, armchairs, consoles, and the floors covered with beautiful oriental carpets.

The office space 104 (ground floor) was modestly decorated with rectangles of different sizes. It was designed in visual contrast to the other ground floor representative spaces with ornate, dynamic ceilings.

Fig. 5. A fragment of frieze ornamentation in Room 106 on the first floor, where there was once a family dining room adjacent to the kitchen. Photograph by Edvardas Tamošiūnas, 2020. ŠAM archive

Fig. 6. The richly decorated ceiling on the first floor of the second lobby (Room 117). Photograph by Edvardas Tamošiūnas, 2020. ŠAM archive
of neo-baroque and Art Nouveau styles. All of them are formed from bas-relief moulding. The office space was painted in a “soft” colour combination of ivory, sand, reddish brown and dark brown creating the atmosphere of a quiet work environment, with one colour filling the rectangles and squares of the ceiling (Fig. 7). The design of the strictly geometric room reminds us of the characteristic compositions of combined rectangles of Charles Rennie Mackintosh’s Glasgow Style. This room did not have the plant motifs typical of other rooms, the gold-coloured décor or the decoration is typical of historicism, and the geometry we see in the cabinet space is very characteristic of the Art Nouveau.

In the hall 203 on the first floor the centre of the ceiling is filled in with floral motif strips, forming a rhombus with concave edges, the edges of which are connected by rectangular planes (Fig. 8). After conducting polychrome research, the architect-restorers found out that “the central plane of the ceiling was painted a light grey hue, and the spaces between the mouldings on the edge are purple with grey circles. The mouldings are painted light”. Room 206 is characterised by complex compositions and volume ornaments. A round rosette is formed in the centre of the ceiling around the chandelier. The inner edge of the angular plane is concave. From the middle of the concavity the rosette is of geometric composition by grooved circles and squares (Fig. 8). Fragments of decorative polychrome painting discovered by the restorers in the corners of the ceiling were simplified during the restoration; which is why the ceiling we see now is painted in light yellow-grey. The mouldings are light yellow and the diamond-shaped details are ochre. Several of the middle grooves of the corrugated circles are covered with bronze. The very first painting of the walls was light yellow, which was repeated during the restoration process.

The ceiling of room 207 (the current Yellow Living Room) is decorated with a symmetrical décor of a similar composition as the adjoining room, but the ornamentation of the two is visually different – the rosette in the centre with an octagon formed of two intersecting squares, the ceiling is framed by rectangular yellow ochre wreaths of floral flowers joined by garlands of green leaves, and framed by yellowish moulded strips. Due to the lack of funds...
for restoration, only a small fragment of the former flower garland was restored. That is why we cannot see the whole authentic image of the former delicate composition. However, while maintaining the symmetry, the corners of the ceiling were completely restored, accentuated by regular groups of three bas-relief squares, and the garlands of flower blossoms softening the corners of the ceiling are no longer visible today. The centre of the ceiling is yellow. The very first painting of the walls was in pink. There are surviving testimonies that this room was the lady's bedroom, and the pink walls at that time were very characteristic of women's bedrooms and boudoirs. It is no coincidence that an exposition of a female boudoir was formed in this room today. When visiting it, we must remember that during the life of the Frenkel family, this room was also dominated by a female spirit, as it was the bedroom of the wife. It was possible to enter from the corridor, and another separate private door connected the wife's bedroom with her husband's bedroom next door. A narrow wavy band is highlighted in the centre of the ceiling of the male bedroom, and one corrugated circle is composed in each wave, with several middle grooves painted in bronze. At the edge of the ceiling, the contour of the bronze "pearls" is covered with a wavy strip. The gap between the mouldings and the oval of the ceiling was completely filled with a stencil painting: a wavy green creeper with border-coloured berries. This creeper ornament could also symbolise the ornaments typical of Lithuanian Jewish art forms and décor – Plants and the Garden of Paradise (or Gan Eden) – vines, flowers, intertwined plant stems, leaves, fruits, etc. According to Niunkaitė-Raciūnienė's research of Lithuanian Jewish symbols, "intertwined vines with bunches of grapes – the most characteristic motif – is often mentioned in the Bible as a symbol of the nation of Israel." The contour of the central ceiling rosette is formed...
Fig. 10. The staircase in plastic shapes from the courtyard side. Photograph by Edvardas Tamošiūnas, 2020. ŠAM archive

Fig. 11. The ceiling decoration with floral motifs in Room 215 (now the room of the Art Department). Photograph by Edvardas Tamošiūnas, 2020. ŠAM archive
from border-coloured “bubbles”. The predominant colour of the ceiling is light green, and the mouldings are light yellow. The walls were painted in yellow for the very first interior design. It is clear that the combination of greenish-yellowish-bronze colours in the room also conveyed the symbolic idea of the Garden of Paradise. Manifestations of the Plant and Paradise Garden Symbol, which is very characteristic of Lithuanian Jewish traditional art. There were other rooms in the Ch. Frenkel Villa.

The winding plant lines in the wall paintings and stairwells were very characteristic of Art Nouveau. By the décor of these rooms, it becomes clear that due to the plasticity of the lines, the freedom and the dynamics of the drawing the Art Nouveau in Italy was called the *Stile Floreale* (Fig. 9–11).

In the room 209 (on the first floor in the former guest dining room) as many as nine colours are combined, in which the predominant purple, grey shades are enlivened by the warm brown-yellow ochre colour.\(^56\) Visible at first glance, the design of a very modest room is formed by a subtle (professional) rich combination of nine colours. The plane of the ceiling is geometrically divided by rectangles filled with several rhythmically repeating compositions: a motif of a torch with a palm tree and a wide garland of flowers surrounded by a ribbon (Fig. 12). The inserts of glazed tiles in the kitchens and utility rooms are decorated with modest palmette motifs and water lily patterns. Part of this early twentieth century authentic design we can see today in the Ch. Frenkel Villa interior today (Fig. 13).

The interior paintings artist came to Šiauliai from Riga especially for this work. It remains unknown whether Zeltiņš worked there alone or had any assistants. In any case the interior designer and the owners of the building were apparently working together to find a new, distinctive aesthetic that reflected not then official policy of the Russian province (not the Russian Style), but the emotion and ideology characteristic of the Jewish nation. After exploring fragments of the surviving interior, studying the design documentation and photographs in the museum’s collections and archives, is visible the architect’s and artist’s desire to join the innovations of progressive art and architecture in Europe of the time not contradicting the taste of the building’s owners. In this regard, the eclecticism...
of the Frenkel villa building is very unique in its range of forms. The Latvian artist created the wall painting with the help of stencils and rollers, polychrome division of the ceiling planes into rectangular planes, framing of ceiling strips with flower blossoms, plant strips, garlands, ribbons, intricate compositions with torches, palm leaves and other wavy lines in the home environment and undoubtedly promoted the observance of the tradition of worship of God in the family's private living environment.

CONCLUSIONS

The aesthetics of historicism that dominated during the Gubernia period were characteristic of Jewish public and residential spaces, but in the case of Ch. Frenkel’s Villa, in addition to traditionalism, we find also very strong international tendencies and aspiration for novelty. It represents the homeowner as a personality open to the whole world, with a keen interest in industrial, technical and architectural design innovations. At that time, the fashion of the so-called new art – Art Nouveau – seemed attractive to Ch. Frenkel not less than mass-dominated historicism.

Vice versa, the early 20th century Art Nouveau aesthetical universality and internationality were strongly influenced by historicism and traditionality. Despite the variety of ornaments and the abundance of drawings, the decorativeness of Jewish homes was fundamentally foreign to popular fashion ideas, and today we must remember the symbolic meanings of colours and ornaments dictated by the traditions of worship and the scriptures of the Old Testament. Attention should be paid to the symbolism of the colours in the interior décor. In all the polychromy of the Ch. Frenkel Villa we can notice that the biblical tekhelet colour, which is particularly bright – dazzling blue or blue – is dominating. It is traditionally used in the decoration of ritual objects. It is obvious that the embossed tekhelet colour had a symbolic, mystical meaning in the residential interior as well. Artistic aesthetics in the interior of the house undoubtedly promoted the adherence to the traditions of the worship of God in the Lithuanian Jewish family environment.
In the early 20th century interior of the Ch. Frenkel Villa, the surviving decoration of the walls and ceilings is a unique case where we can notice also the rapprochement of Lithuanian Jews with the living environment of Lithuanian nobility. Art Nouveau décor in the living rooms is represented by decorative wall paintings imitating wallpaper, monumental, minimally decorated wooden panels in lobbies and dining rooms characteristic of Lithuanian manor houses. Historicist traditions in that point are also fixed by very clear and logical symmetrical planning of the spaces and rich ornamentation especially in the ceiling décor. The original décor patterns were created for each room. It should be noted that there were no uniformly painted rooms. The author of the wall painting, who came to Šiauliai from Riga especially for this work, is today the very well-known Latvian painter Voldemārs Zeltiņš.

The case of the Ch. Frenkel Villa confirms for us the views of foreign authors, and of previous art critics, that in the territory of Lithuania the Art Nouveau was not pure, but intertwined with retrospectivism. The specific case of the Ch. Frenkel Villa enriches the history of Lithuanian architecture and art with the aesthetics typical of Lithuanian Jews. All premises in the villa are decorated with rich patterns and delicate polychromy. The eclecticism accumulated in the building of the Ch. Frenkel Villa is unique in the range of forms, its colourfulness and its worldview justification.

References


Notes


2 Marian Marzynski, "Never Forget to Lie" (documentary film, 2013) reveals this experience, which is typical not only of Poland but also for Lithuania. Internet access: https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/fronline/film/never-forget-to-lie/

3 Aleida Assmann, Cultural Memory and Western Civilization (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 121: Maurice Halbwachs was the first to identify the main contradictions between the notions: historical memory and collective memory. Assmann reminds us of these differences once again. A common mistake by Lithuanian authors is when the terms historical memory or historiography are presented as synonyms for collective memory. However, these two memories often contradict each other in the content of the information.


5 Šiaulių metraštis 1918–1938 (Šiauliai: Šiaulių krašto-tyros draugija, 1938), 4. In 1938, there were 4.6% Jews in Šiauliai, 7 synagogues with 1 rabbi and 1 assistant, in all towns of Šiauliai county – 1 synagogue with 1 rabbi and 1 assistant.

6 The interwar passport card fund is kept by the Kaunas Regional State Archives (KRVA), F. 66. However, the availability of private personal data is restricted by the laws of the Republic of Lithuania; not all documents are issued without restrictions. Nevertheless, the mentioned fact can be verified in a virtual exhibition: National Minorities in the Provisional Capital of Lithuania, org. Nijolė Ambraškienė, KRVA. [2012-10-12]. Internet access: http://www.archyvai.lt/lt/kaairtualios-parodos/tautines-mazumos-laikinojojo sostineje.html


8 Jacob Frenkel’s Memoirs of His Father Chaim Frenkel. ŠAM archive, F21-AP1-B 8, 22.


10 Aleida Assmann, op. cit.

11 According to statistics, 7.5% of them lived in Lithuania between the both WW, in the temporary capital of Lithuania Kaunas 30–40% of the entire city population, in Šiauliai 1923–1938 lived 2,5–4,6%. The question arises for such a large percentage reduction.

12 Lina Preišegalavičienė, Lietuvos tarpukario interjerai 1918–1940 (Kaunas: Vox Altera, 2016), 186–206.


15 Jakob Frenkel, who was known for his charitable activities, in the villa in Vilnius St. 74 established
a private Šiauliai Jewish gymnasium, which operated there from 24 October 1920 until the beginning of WWII (These data were used by Bronius Kviklys in the book Mūsų Lietuva, Vol. 3) and authors who published articles in Soviet period newspapers; Nijole Lukšionytė-Tolvašiienė, Architectural monument (Atv 818), former Frenkeliai house in Šiauliai, Vilniaus st. No. 74 – ŠAM historical outline Architektūros paminklo (Atv 818), buvusio Frenkelio namo Šiauliouose, Vilniaus g. Nr. 74 – „Aušros” muzieju muziejinis apybraiža (Vilnius: valstybinė įmonė „Paminklai”, 1994), 2. ŠAM archive.

Adolf Reinert’s Documents. Adolf Reinerdo dokumentai. ŠAM, F21-AP1-B2-L1–43. Adolf Reinert was appointed by the Nazi authorities to the nationalised so-called Šiauliai Unified Leather Factory as the director of the Ch. Frankel leather factory on December 4, 1942, he had previously worked at the Wickrather leather factory in Germany (originally a small leather factory that had become one of the largest leather factories in Germany, the factory had been run by Jews). He lived with his two sons (Ulf and Eberhard) and his wife Margarita Reinert in Šiauliai, Lukausko Str. ŠAM, F21-AP1-B2-L1–43, photographs V001–V057.


Ibid. See Conclusion 1.

Ibid. See Conclusion 2.


Ibid., 451–457.

Ibid., 454–455.

Both volumes of the monographs “Lithuania” or “Lite” contain a valuable collection of previously unpublished historical knowledge about the daily life of Lithuanian Jews. In the monograph Lithuania – Yiddish Lite – is presented not only as a geographical concept; Lite is a way of life; Lite is a way of being that has grown deeply and widely beyond the Jewish community. In the first volume, Jacob Frenkel’s memoirs about his father Chaim Frenkel are published in Yiddish (written by Urija Kaceneinbojen). In English translated by Tina Lunson. Internet access [2020-08-08]: https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/lita2/Lit013.html Memoirs of Jacob Frenkel about his father Chaim Frenkel and the Leather Factory he created in Šiauliai and his fate. ŠAM, F21-AP1-B 8.


Ibid.


Kristiāna Ābele (Letter ...) Laiškas ..., op. cit.

Apparently, Zeltiņš’ wall painting based on religious themes was realised in the homes of other wealthy people from Šiauliai who have not been identified so far, for example, a wall painting with figures is visible in an interwar photograph of an interior in Šiauliai, see Fig. Siau-76 (Eilat Gordin Levitan. Šiauliai) Internet access [February 16, 2018]: http://www.eilatgordinlevitan.com/shiauliai/shiauliai.html

Gavrily B. Baranovskiy Arhitekturnaya eniploedlca vtoroy poloviny XIX veka, T. 6–7. Chasti-Detiialy (C.-Petersburg: redakcija periodika „Строитель”, 1904). This publication presents the interior decoration, which was popular during the period, with all the existing diversity of historicism to even more diverse forms of Art Nouveau, details of architectural design from all over Europe and Russia. The range of examples of interior décor in the publication is very wide, but analogues of Ch. Frenkel’s villa could not be found, because the examples presented in the publication from various European countries and Russia seem much more ornate and mannered. Another publication recognised by architects at the time, reflecting popular architectural design trends at the time, was the Yearbook of the Imperial Society of Architects-Artists / Ежегодник императорского общества художников-художников. Вып. 2. (C.-Petersburg: 1907).


Jahrbuch für bildende Kunst in den Ostseeprovinzen (Riga: Architektenverein zu Riga, 1907), 135; Alexander Koch. Innen-Decoration (Darmstadt: 1911), 149.

Much has been written about the existence of modernity in Lithuanian architecture, using different
terms: Modern, Jugend, Secession, Styl Zakopianski – four different orientations (or names) of the same style. In the Soviet period and post-Soviet Lithuanian art history, they were all usually referred to by one common name – Modern Style, because this was used in Soviet art history literature of Russian origin. After 2000, the term Art Nouveau was adopted from art history texts in English language. History of Lithuanian Architecture / Lietuvos architektūros istorija. Nuo XIX a. II-do dešimtmečio iki 1918 m. Vol. 3, Nijolė Lukšionytė-Tolvaišienė et al., (Vilnius: 2000), 7–8.

42 Nijolė Lukšionytė, Istorizmas ir modernas Vilniaus architektūroje (Vilnius: 2000).

43 Ibid., 8.


This publication (барановский, оп. си) presents details of the architectural design of popular villas from all over Europe and Russia during the construction period. The range of examples of interior décor in the publication is very wide – from historicism, Art Nouveau décor to realised cases – examples of "Russian style". Various details gathered by the well-known Russian architect and theorist Gavriil Baranovsky (Гавриил Барановский) allow us to know that the interior design of the Frenkel villa was an exceptional case.


48 Yad Vashem Photo Archive, 4068/125. Credit: Central Historic Museum in Estonia.

49 Interior plan and spaces No in the Fig. 2. ŠAM, 4-VI-2001-Frenkelio vila.

50 Ibid.


52 Simplification of historical décor in this interior is not an exceptional case. Such bad trend happens in many other historical interiors because of poor financing not only in governmental, even much more often – in private spaces.

53 Interior plan and spaces look No 208 in Fig. 2.


56 Elena Kazlauskaitė, Ch. Frenkel Palace Vilniaus st., 72, Šiauliai. Room’s No 209 Proofreading of colour solution project. Ch. Frenkelio rūmai Vilniaus g., 72, Šiauliai. 2-o aukštų patalpos Nr. 209 spalvinio sprendimo projekto korektūra (Vilnius: UAB Paminklų restauravimo institutas, 2005), 2.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** art nouveau, Chaimas Frenkelis, žydiška kultūra, Šiauliai, Šiaulių „Aušros“ muziejus, Voldemārs Zeltiņšas.

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