

THE CLASSICAL CITY REPORT 2006

A St.Petersburg Architectural Crisis and a Push For Responsible Design



A study perspective showing 300-meters Gazprom Tower proposed for the historic center of St. Petersburg

Credits

Introduction: Anton Glikin

Main essay and research: Carmen Román

Preliminary research: Anatoly Pogodin

Editing: Jens F. Laurson

Photographs: Anatoly Pogodin, Dimitri Brazovsky (Relikvia Journal), Olga Smirnova, Anatoly Ailoshin, and Anton Glikin

Layout, design, and image editing: James Burger

The Classical City wishes to thank Genevieve Muinzer for her advisory assistance during the preparation of this report

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Foreword by Anton Glikin..... | 1 |
| The Classical City of St. Petersburg and a Push for Responsible Design..... | 2 |
| Case Studies..... | 6 |
| Photo Essays..... | 9 |
| -Remains of the St. Petersburg Charm | |
| -Restoration Needed | |
| -Enforced Destruction Begins | |
| -Intrusive Structures | |
| -Parody on Classicism | |
| -Improper Window Replacements | |
| -Misplaced Advertisements | |
| -Inappropriate Fountain Created In The Midst of River Neva | |
| Preserving St. Petersburg Architecture, A letter to <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> | 29 |
| About <i>The Classical City</i> | 30 |
| International Advisors to <i>The Classical City</i> | 31 |

Foreward

The rapid changes of Russian economy provoked some significant shifts in mentality, morality, social attitudes, culture and, consequently, urban planning philosophy. St. Petersburg -- a Unesco-listed World Monument, particularly known for its well preserved urban setting -- came under the abrupt developmental push. The local preservation laws are now influenced by commercial interests, while the pressure groups are still at the early stage of formation.

For its diversity of functions, including tourism, military, administration and industry, St. Petersburg was always more resembling the living and working patterns of Paris or London, rather than those of Venice or Rome. Nevertheless, the city managed to avoid the common Western problem of ruthless aesthetic modernization due to the poor Soviet-style funding, combined with the tough restrictions of the old preservation laws.

Today, however, St. Petersburg is facing a new difficult challenge: how to safeguard its historic context, while providing a flexible framework for the rapid infrastructure upgrade? The laws forbidding any development will lead to their disdain through bribe or criminal actions. In addition to some necessary restrictions, an attractive, historically-informed developmental strategy, respecting both history and business, is needed.

The main architectural value of St. Petersburg is its historic urban context, rather than a collection of separate monuments. The language of the context is classical. Therefore it seems logical that any new building in the historic center should be designed in the same language. Moreover, the practice of contemporary historicism in the historic center should be encouraged through the real estate taxation policy. Thus, the functional flexibility combined with artistic rigor would help to ensure a healthy compromise between the developmental needs and artistic heritage of St. Petersburg.

Anton Glikin, 2006

THE CLASSICAL CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG AND A PUSH FOR RESPONSIBLE DESIGN

Text by Carmen Román

St. Petersburg was conceived and built as a whole; adhering to one central theme from which each building derived its particularities. A monument to neoclassicism, it stands both as an architectural paradigm of what has been and as precedence for that which follows it, both in St. Petersburg and beyond. Moreover, the city stands as a tangible expression of European culture within the Euro-Asian dynamic of the Russian nation. A UNESCO world heritage site, it is a prestigious cultural, political and historical monument for Russia and the World. It is for these reasons that the direction in which the development is taking place is so lamentable.



The Monblane luxury apartment building violates existing height restrictions

The existing urban fabric of a city serves as a paradigm for future expansion and each new development looks upon the proceeding as design precedence. The gravity of these effects within an area depends upon the number and magnitude of developments in said area.

Real estate development in St. Petersburg has increased significantly in the past few years following the initial recession after the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to 2002 and 2004 U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service and other governmental organizations reports, as the economy began to strengthen, consumers possessing new wealth began to demand higher standards in their built environment. The rising demand for new and better apartments, offices, and even retail centers has led to investment in the real estate market. The following statistics are from the same reports:

Developmental Facts

The new construction or renovation of a building will, by the nature of the act and its product, effect the existing environment in which it takes place. In a physical and direct sense a dialogue is begun between the new or altered building and the existing urban and architectural fabric. Within any interlocution, words are arranged, exchanged, connected, added, altered, related or replaced, so too shall the new development with its surroundings and in doing so shall re-shaped the cityscape.

-Fiscal years of 2000 to 2003 saw a near 150% increase in real estate prices, whereas between the summers of 2005 and 2006 the prices increase was nearly 200% (from \$1000 to \$2000 per Square meter).

-During 2005-2006 real estate prices nearly doubled

-In the year 2001 alone, an estimated \$1 billion was invested in the St. Petersburg real estate market. The major portion of this investment, 55%, went into the commercial sector. 27% was invested in the residential sector.

The tourist industry has also spurred significant growth in hotel real estate investment:

- The amount of tourists visiting the city has steadily increased at a rate of approximately 10% annually.

- The historical district of St. Petersburg has become the location for new development.

- The number of foreign guests visiting the city is growing approximately 10 percent annually and exceeded 3 million in 2003.

- More than 3 million tourists visited St. Petersburg in the year 2003 alone.

- An estimated \$48 million has been invested in the market by foreign investors, as small-size hotels have eclipsed both office and retail as the most profitable commercial investment.

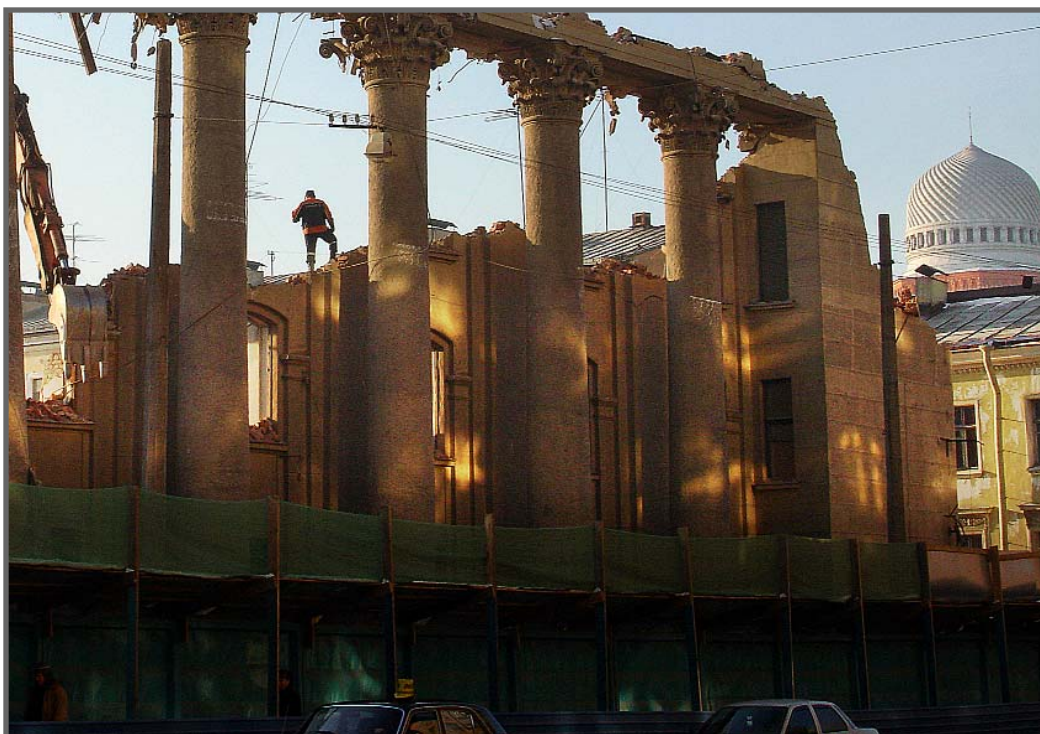
The industrial sector has not witnessed a similar boom because there is still a surplus of industrial space available. Another reason might be the current trend of relocating rather than demolishing and reconstructing industrial real estate. Much of St. Petersburg's industry was originally located in and around the city

center. As environmental concerns rise; however, a push to force industry out of the center has begun. This exodus leaves vacated space that in turn is rented or sold to developers.

Design Challenges

Given the above information, one can easily see that real estate development in St. Petersburg is by no means negligible in scope. As a city possessing unique historical and architectural significance, St. Petersburg is particularly vulnerable to the effects of such a development boom. It is therefore essential that such development be carried out in a responsible manner that both respects and connects to the city existent.

Today the notions of "real estate development" and "traditional architecture" seem diametrically opposed to each other; they are, however, not. Only when developers espouse a defunct architectural style is real estate development at odds with traditionalism / classicism. The inhabitants of a city renowned for its rich heritage architectural undergoing a development



The Theater of the First Five Year Plan during demolition to clear the site for the new Mariinsky Theater. The dome of the synagogue building appears in the background.

boom should take care to both preserve and protect their city. Legislation that simply inhibits development or dismissively relegates it to a certain area without accounting for it in any other way merely shifts the problem around, it does not solve it. Rather, what is needed is a form of local legislation which judiciously regulates real estate development in a manner promoting both economic

**"Old Town," located
at the mouth of the
Neva, has remained
relatively intact
throughout its
history.**

growth and architectural integrity. Unfortunately, this is not the case in St. Petersburg and the current design direction advocated by the new developers is that redoubtable zeitgeist which plagues the world over: most generically classifiable as modernism.

The historical center or "Old Town," located at the mouth of the Neva, has remained relatively intact throughout its history. The crippled economy following the revolution prevented any serious development in the early 20th century; thereby sparing St. Petersburg from the energetic explosion of the emerging modern style. Moscow, as the new capital, bared the brunt of the burgeoning movement. WWII brought considerable damage to the city, however much of the reconstruction was done in the style of Stalinist Classicism and was therefore somewhat commiserate with the 18th and 19th century aesthetic. Its streets and avenues divide the city today as they did 100 years ago. The Old Town skyline has also remained fairly unchanged: horizontal with wide panoramas pierced by the occasional steeple or dome.

Considering the above, it is not surprising that in 1990, historic center of St. Petersburg, a total area of 3068 hectares, was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites, and thereby designated as a protected zone. Within this zone only

construction of a restorative nature was allowed. The continued preservation of the site was a costly endeavor and the prohibition of development severely cut the amount of revenue available for such maintenance. Therefore, the restrictions were relaxed. "Lacunae," limited areas where development of no particular designation was to be permitted, began to appear. There are now an estimated 500 lacunae which blemish the city. In the spring of 2005 the St. Petersburg Committee of State Control, Utilization and Preservation of Historical and Cultural Landmarks (KGIOP) devised a new project of preserving the cultural heritage of St. Petersburg and in doing so will reduce the protected area to a mere 680 hectares. The plan has significant repercussions for the historical suburbs (Peterhof, Lomonosov, Strelna, Pushkin, Pavlovsk) where the zone will be curtailed by 70%. Under this new plan the UNESCO zoning has been replaced by a new zoning system by which the center is divided into three "preservation zones":

1. The Central Zone: Where housing development shall meet the existing requirements, in particular the prohibition of construction.
2. The Middle or Buffer Zone: Where construction shall require the approval of the Landmarks Committee.
3. The Outer Zone: Where construction of any sort is permissible given that it adheres to a pre-existing height limitation.



A typical construction scene in the historic center

The result of this plan is that only a fifth of the previous zone remains protected. Furthermore, the protection of this zone is no longer guaranteed. Development within the Central Zone may take place if supreme federal approval is granted, as is the case concerning the expansion of the Mariinsky Theater (which will be subject of a case study at the end of this report). In addition, the plan, in effect, opened a Pandora's Box: Developers, encouraged by the new boundaries, no longer regard the Central Zone as sacrosanct and continually encroach upon it. Indeed, since the annulment of the UNESCO outlines, there is no guarantee that a new plan which curtails the protected zone even further will be drafted. Meanwhile the new plan has done nothing to preserve the estimated 8,000 historical architectural monuments, buildings, gardens, parks, squares and waterways. According to estimates of independent experts, more than seven thousand monuments require immediate restoration; more than 1300 monuments are in 'a phase of decay.'

The little preservation which does take place is done in a most crude manner causing in many cases more harm than good. Also, it seems, no meditation is placed by this new plan, upon the tourist industry, which will undoubtedly diminish in direct proportion to historical St. Petersburg.

If this neoclassical monument to Russia is to be preserved, a call to the developers and citizens of St. Petersburg should be sounded. Their respect and appreciation of the historic city is a prerequisite to its salvation. However, such sentiments cannot be forced by means of laws or mercantilism, they must be honestly embraced and fostered by education. ■

Bibliography

Kansky, Alexander. "Update On Real Estate Development In St. Petersburg," U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service And U.S. Department Of State, 22 May 2004.
<<http://bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/bisdoc/0405NWRFRRealEstUpdt.htm>>

Yegorov, Igor. "Commercial Real Estate Market in St. Petersburg, Russia," Business Information Service for the Newly Independent States (BISNIS), US Department of Commerce International Trade Administration, 24 May 2002.
<<http://www.bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/bisdoc/020524StPeteRealEstate.htm>>

CASE STUDIES

The defilement and destruction stemming from this new plan has already begun

A luxury hotel disrupting Anichkov Palace and the Aleksandrinsky Theater masterpiece ensemble, by Carl Ivonovich Rossi



Designed by E.L.Gerasimov, construction on the high-end hotel began in 2004. It is located on the eastern side of the Ostrovsky where it neighbors Anichkov Palace and the Aleksandrinsky Theater.



Residential Complex at Rossi's Manezh Square



Designed by M.A.Reinberg & A.G. Sharov, this residential complex was constructed ca. 2000-2001. Located on Italiyanskaya str. 12a, it is situated between the Mikhailovskiy menagerie and the Mikhailovskiy Castle grounds. It disrupts the unity of Rossi's Manezh Square's symmetry. In addition, the glass roof being twice as high as that of the Manezh building, obscures the view of Malaya Sadovaya Str. as seen from the Nevsky prospect.

Private Hotels and Public Historic Sites



The hotel on Pochtamskaya street, 4 was constructed in between 2002-2003 by the Baltic Building Company. It is crowned by a 40m high glass trough roof which lends an unsightly view when seen from the Isaac Square. The hotel building violates the existing height limitations. Furthermore, an 18th century building was demolished to make room for this hotel; clearly violating the terms of the zoning regulations.



More Private Space Displacing Public Places

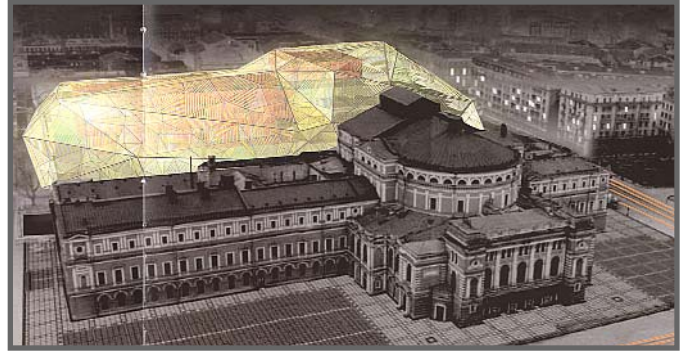
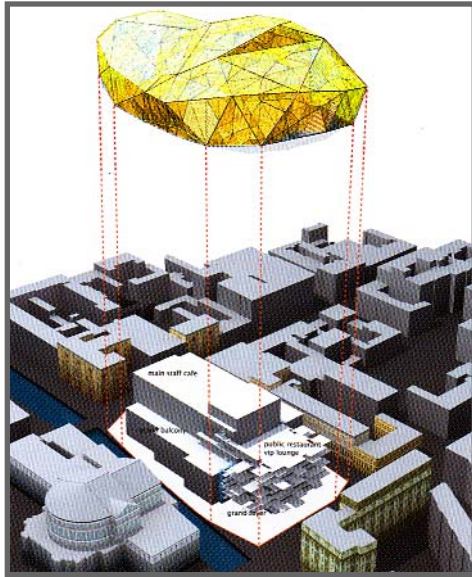
Designed by architect. M. Reynberg, this new apartment complex is located on ul. Tverskya 6 in the most expensive area of St. Petersburg between the park of Tavricheski Palace (the parliament of the Russian Empire - former home of Duma) and the Smolnyy Institute (which now houses the administration of St. Petersburg).



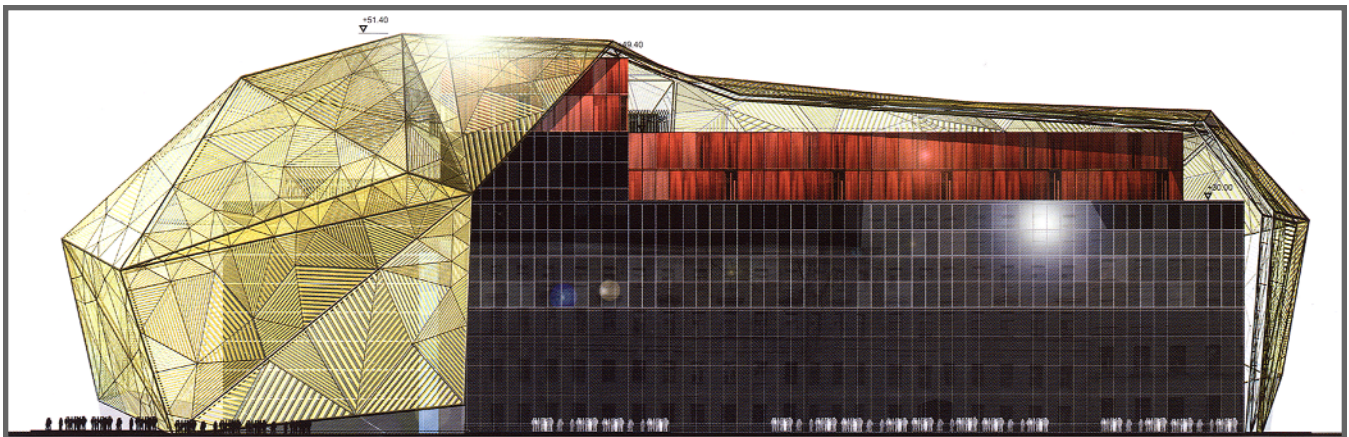
Two projects being built along or near Nevsky Prospect (the city's central avenue) are indicative of a new development trend, namely that of the multiplex. One, with an area of 30,000 sq. m., will be comprised of office, retail and entertainment space, including a bowling alley and a gym equipped with a swimming pool. The other, with an area of 80,000 sq. m., will consist of office, retail and hotel space.

Modernization of Mariinsky Theatre

Perhaps one of the most disastrous of new developments is the new addition to the Mariinsky Theatre.



At the behest of the director and chief conductor of the Mariinsky Theatre Valery Gergiev, a design competition was held for the addition of a second stage. This was, it is supposed, a closed competition as none of the well known neoclassical or traditional architects even participated in it. The winner was French architect Dominique Perrault.



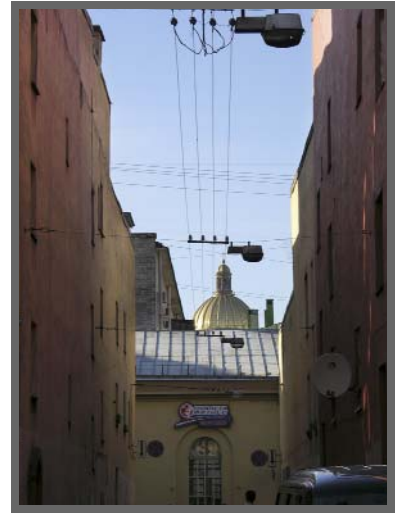
While this project is particularly poignant for its outright visual repugnance, it is also worth mentioning because it exemplifies one of the central issues at hand: The desires of the client's will, to a certain extent, be expressed in the design. It is therefore essential that the basic tenets of traditional design be disseminated and understood by financiers and developers.

An entire quarter in the center of Historic St. Petersburg was destroyed to make space for the modernized theatre.



**PHOTO ESSAYS: THE CURRENT STATE OF
ARCHITECTURE AND REAL ESTATE
DEVELOPMENT**

Remains of the St. Petersburg Charm

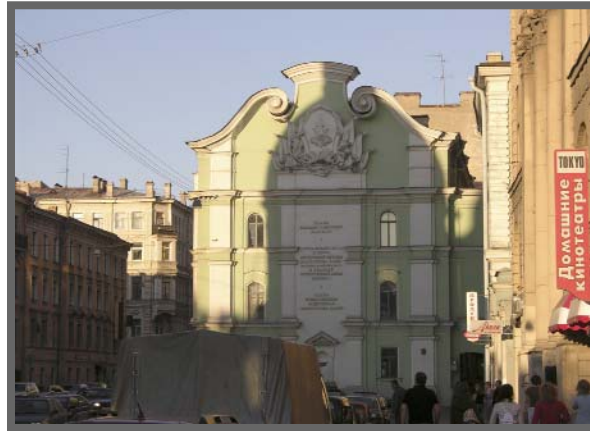


Remains of the St. Petersburg Charm

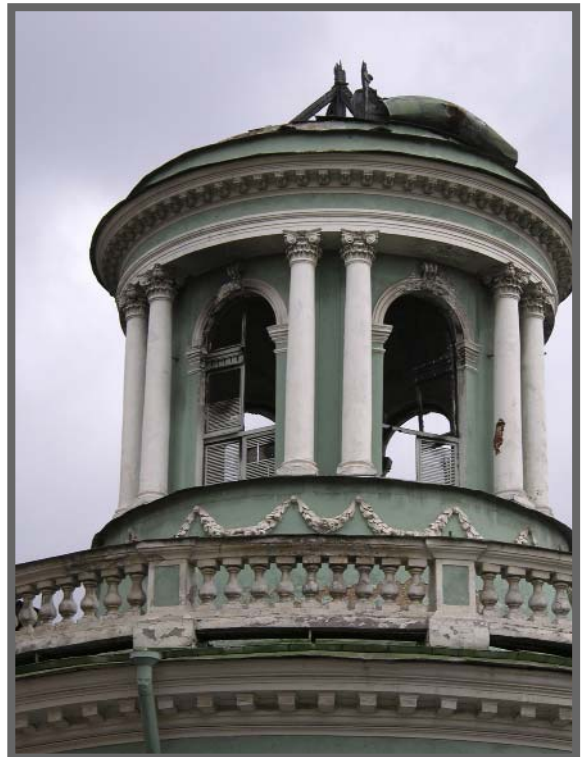
(Cont'd)



Remains of the St. Petersburg Charm (Cont'd)



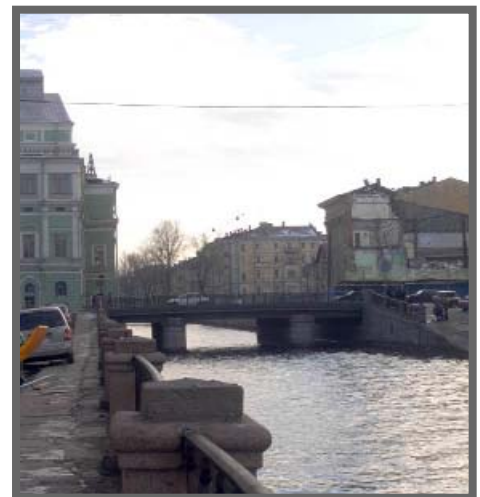
Restoration needed



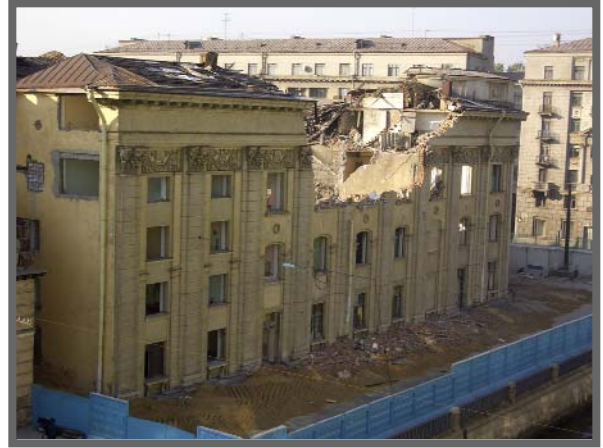
Enforced Destruction Begins



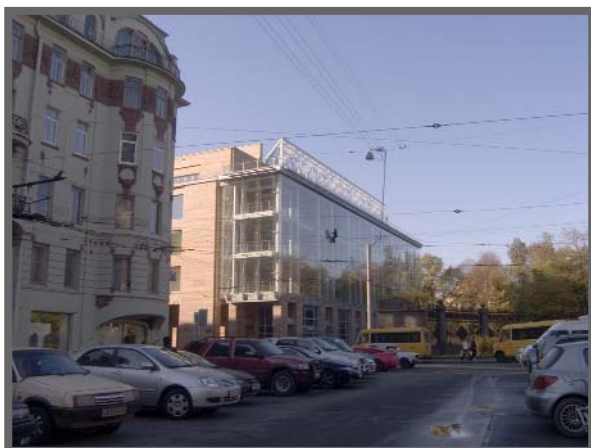
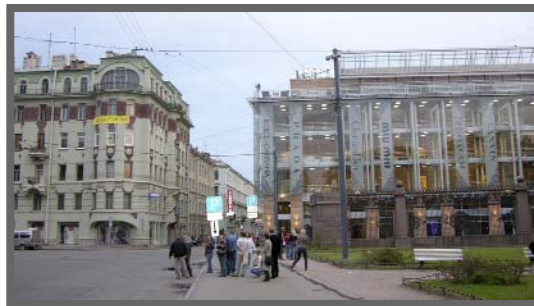
Enforced Destruction Begins



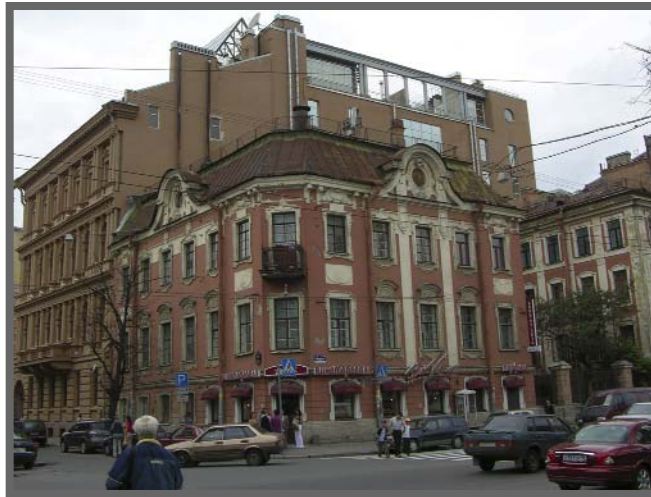
Intrusive Structures



Intrusive Structures



Intrusive Structures



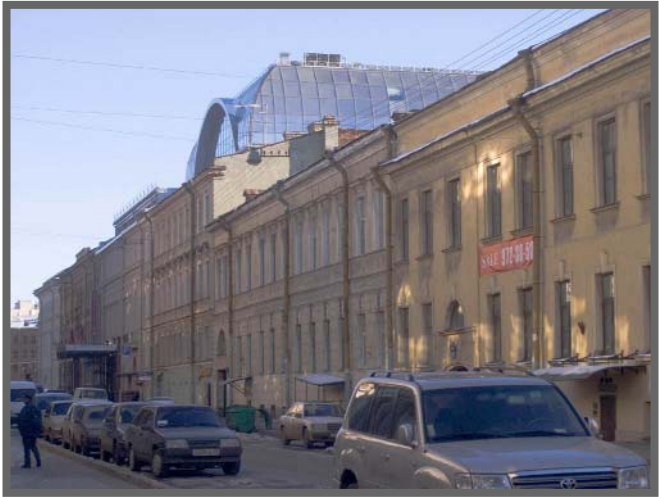
Intrusive Structures



Intrusive Structures



Intrusive Structures



Intrusive Structures



Parody on Classicism



Parody on Classicism



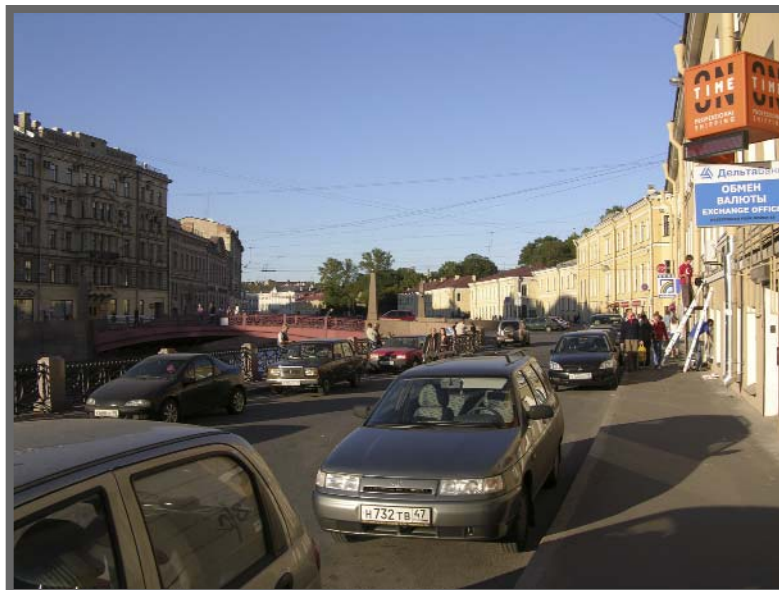
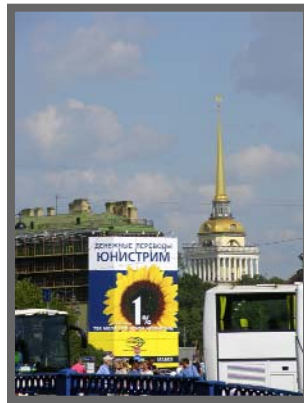
Parody on Classicism



Improper Window Replacements



Misplaced Advertisements



Inappropriate Fountain Created In The Midst of River Neva



April 15, 2006

The Daily Telegraph letters

Preserving St. Petersburg's Architecture

The selection of the modernist Foster Associates for the development of St Petersburg's "New Holland" island is alarming. St. Petersburg, a UNESCO listed world monument, is a historic classical entity without equal. Lord Foster's French colleague, Dominic Perrault, has already produced an intrusive "de-constructed" design for the new Mariinsky Theatre. Now another modernist theatre (doubtless again in last century's materials-of-choice, glass and steel) is proposed. Of all sites, New Holland might be thought least capable of digesting the disruptive assertions of international trophy modernism. It is a historically eloquent and stylistically vivid architectural and geographical unity - an 18th century island shipyard complex with an enclosed lake/harbour at its centre and fronted by a canal gateway that comprises a magnificent triumphal arch. The proposed structures of Perrault and Foster menace the present delightful counterpoise of a low-lying horizontal city landscape punctuated and animated by church spires and domes. New Holland is considered an exemplary classical ensemble. It would be a counsel of despair to accept its dilution or subversion by a modernism rooted in the 20th century as the only developmental option available in the 21st century. The 19th century permitted the classical to do battle with the gothic. Modernism should not now be allowed to claim both that it is not a style and that there is no stylistic alternative to itself. There is no reason for believing St Petersburg incapable of responding to the demands of a renascent economy while respecting and building upon its own classical traditions and achievements. There is every reason for holding pluralism to be self-evidently desirable and healthy. Why not allow classical proposals to be pitted against modernist ones on a classical site? What could possibly be lost in allowing both options to be developed, evaluated and priced?

Anton Glikin, Editor, *The Classical City Online*

Michael Daley, Director, *Art Watch UK*

Dr. Anatoly Alioshin, Professor of Restoration, *St Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts*

Dr. Alexey Kovalev, Deputy, *Legislative Assembly of Saint Petersburg*

Dr. David Watkin, Professor of Architecture History, *University of Cambridge*

About *The Classical City*

The Classical City is an international group seeking to contribute to the contemporary traditional revival in architecture, arts, literature and culture in general. We chose St. Petersburg as the prime focus of our interest, because it is one of the few places in the contemporary world where traditional European culture still remains under the ruthless pressure of commercial modernization.

The Classical City has a wide range of projects in St. Petersburg and world-wide, which are being carried out through the network of our advisors in Russia, US, Portugal, Germany, Italy, France and UK.

In 2004, Kolo Publishes (St. Petersburg) and Art Watch UK (London) co-founded *The Classical City* Journal, which can be viewed at **www.metropolian.org**

International Advisors

RUSSIA
St. Petersburg

Dr. Anatoly Alioshin, Professor of Art Conservation, St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts

Nadezhda Anichkova, Artist, Vice-president, The Old Petersburg

Dmitry Butyrin, Chairman, Architecture Heritage Council, St. Petersburg Division of the Russian Union of Architects

Sofia Gonobobleva, Editor-in-Chief, Relikvia Conservation Journal

Mikhail Druzhininsky, Independent Labor Union Chairman

Dr. Tatiana Ilyina, Chairman of the Art History Department, St. Petersburg State University

Dr. Alexey Kovalev, Deputy, The Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg

Olga Kovalyova, Coordinator, The Classical City

Dr. Vladimir Lisovsky, Professor of Architecture History, St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts

Youry Makoussinsky, Russian Orthodox writer, Art-designer

Suzanne Massie, Architecture Historian
Alexander Medvedev, Artist

Dr. Mikhail Medvedev, State Chancellor of the Russian Federation; Special Advisor, Heraldic Service to the President of Russian Federation

Dmitry Mikhalevsky, Deputy Editor, The St. Petersburg Diary (St. Petersburg Government Digest)

Xenia Novikova, Director of The New Academy of Fine Arts

Anatoly Pogodin, Deputy Editor, The Classical City

Konstantin Scherbin, Principal, Konstantin Scherbin Architectural Studio

Dr. Dmitry Shatilov, Professor of Architecture, St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts

Dr. Jean Verzhbitsky, Professor of Architecture, St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts

Anton Voznesensky, Director, Kolo Publishers
Moscow

Lara Kopylova, Architecture Editor, Interior+Design

Volgograd

Valery Bukhantsov, Designer

UNITED STATES
New York, NY

Countess Tatiana Bobrinsky, Grand Chancellor, The Sovereign Order of the Orthodox Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem

James Burger, Development Consultant, The Classical City

Anton Glikin, Editor, The Classical City Journal
George M. Kelly, Sculptor

Professor Frank Mason, Professor of Fine Art, Art Students League

Walter Scott Mason, Artist, Art Students League

International Advisors

(Cont'd)

UNITED STATES

New York, NY

Clark McLain, President, Vladimir Soloviev Foundation; Founding Director, Classical America

Dr. Arcadi Nebolsine, Professor of Art History, Drew University

Carmen Román, Architectural Designer

Princess Maria Romanoff

New Haven, CT

Dr. Vasily Rudich, Professor of History, Yale University

Buffalo, NY

Consul John Zavrel, Director, Museum of European Art

Richmond, VA

Calder Loth, Senior Architectural Historian, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

South Bend, IN

Dr. Thomas Gordon Smith, Professor of Architecture, University of Notre Dame; Chief Architect, General Services Administration

Washington, D.C.

Dr. Vasily Bessonov, Director of the Washington Chapter, The Royal Institute of Linguists under the patronage of H.R.H. Prince Michael of Kent

Kevin Goldberg, Attorney, Fletcher, Heald & Hidreth

Yens F. Larson, Editor, The International Affairs Forum

PORTUGAL

Sintra

H.R.H. Duarte Duke of Braganca

UNITED KINGDOM

London

Michael Daley, Director, Art Watch UK

Alan Dodd, Artist

Genevieve Muinzer, Director of The Alumni Organization, The Prince of Wales's Foundation; Chairman of The Nominations Committee, Princeton University

Alexander Titov, English Editor, The Classical City

ITALY

Rome

General Gianalfonso d'Avossa

GERMANY

Berlin

Genia Chef, Artist

FRANCE

Paris

Michel Michel Favre-Félix, Painter, President of the French Association for the Respect of Integrity of Artistic Heritage (ARIPA)

For additional information, please visit our website at www.metropolitan.org or contact Anton Glikin, The Classical City Editor: +1 (718) 373-4667; anton@ppapc.com; 2124 East 1st Street, Brooklyn, New York 11223, United States



Proposed reconstruction of The New Holland Island at the heart of St. Petersburg proposed by Sir Norman Foster

