

Sergey NIKONENKO\* (Saint Petersburg State University, Russia)

## Representations Of Antique Arms and Armour in the Architectural décor of St. Petersburg

**Keywords:** Architectural décor, Helmets, Armour, Saint Petersburg, Classicism

Saint Petersburg has been the capital of Russian empire in 1703 – 1917. It is one of the most beautiful cities all over the world with majestic architectural ensembles. This article is devoted to the representations of antique arms in St.Petersburg's architectural décor. I want to add that this décor has not been studied completely. But I think that it is very useful to look at St.Petersburg's military architectural décor as the kind of retrospective and academic style in new European arts.

There are two historical periods in St.Petersburg's architecture when architects and sculptors used ancient military décor. First of them is *Classicism style* (1770-1840). This is the time of constructing the main architectural ensembles and squares in the centre of St.Petersburg in so called "empire style". Second of them is *New Classicism style* (1904-1916). It was the time of private buildings, especially of banks and dwelling houses.

This article has two parts. In First part I propose the typology of buildings and architectural décor. Then I give the full list of St.Petersburg's buildings with ancient military décor (compiled and published for the first time). In Second Part I will try to comment some main examples of ancient military décor.

### I.

There are several kinds of images in ancient military décor:

- Gods (Athena, Ares, Apollo, Hermes)
- Heroes (Achilles, Ajax, etc.)
- Emperors (Alexander the Great, Caesar, etc.)
- Simple soldiers and horsemen.

Elements of arms in architectural décor:

- Helmets
- Shields
- Swords
- Spears
- Arrows
- Chariots
- Armour.

There are three origins of military architectural décor:

- Ancient art
- Renaissance images of ancient art
- Architects' and sculptors' images.

There are three kinds of arms in military architectural décor:

- Archaic arms
- Hellenistic arms
- Roman arms.

---

\* serg\_nikonenko@rambler.ru

And at last, to finish the typology, there are five kinds of buildings with ancient military architectural décor:

- Main state buildings
- Triumphal arches
  - Palaces
  - Banks
  - Dwelling houses.

Now I would like to present the full list of St.Petersburg's buildings with ancient military décor:

*Classicism style:*

- The Academy of Arts. J-B. Vallin de la Mothe (a.), A. von Bock (sc.) (1764-1788)
- Saltykov's House. K. Rossi (rebuilt 1818) (the oven)
- The Admiralty. A. Zakharov (a.), V. Demut-Malinowski (sc.) (1806-1823)
- The Anichkov Palace Pavilion. K. Rossi (a), S. Pimenov (sc.) (1828)
- The Emperor Public Library. K. Rossi (a.), V. Demut-Malinowski (sc.) (1828)
- General Staff Building Arch. K. Rossi (a.), V. Demut-Malinowski (sc.) (1820-1828)
- Gatchina, Ingerburg Triumphal Arch. V. Glinka (1831-1832)
- Alexander Column. A. Montferrand (1829-1834)
- Narva Triumphal Arch. V. Stasov (a.), V. Demut-Malinowski (sc.) (1827-1834)
- Moscow Triumphal Arch. V. Stasov (1834-1838)
- The New Michael Palace. A. Stackenschneider (1857-1858) (the mosaic floor).

*New classicism style:*

- A Dwelling House of Nikolsky. Bolshoy av. P.S., 80. S. Barankeev (1904) (hall)
- A Dwelling House of Musin-Pushkin. Zagorodny av., 45. I. Moshinsky (1905)
- The House of Chaev. Rentgen st., 9. V. Apishkov (1906)
- A Dwelling House of Alexandrov. Cinema building. Kamennooostrovsky av., 10-12 (in the yard). P. Mulkhanov (1908)
- A Dwelling House of Shorokhov. Gatchinskaya st., 6. V. Shorokhov (1908)
- A Dwelling House of Kolyishko. Chkalov av., 16. P. Mulkhanov (1908)
- A Dwelling House of Baranov. Sadovaya st., 111-113. S. Ginger (1909)
- The House of Vvedenskaya Church. Vvedenskaya st., 9. A. Aplaksin (1909)
- A Dwelling House. Zhukovsky st., 45. I. Pretro (1909) (hall)
- A Dwelling House of Sachar. Bolshaya Konusennaya st., 17. M. Songailo (1910) (hall)
- The Museum of Ethnography. Inszhenernaya st., 4/1. V. Svinyin (a.), M. Kharlamov (sc.) (1910-1911)
- A Dwelling House. V. Ivanov (1911)
- A Dwelling House of Voyeikova. Kamennooostrovsky av., 19. S. Minash (1911) (hall)
- A Dwelling House of Ioffa. Liteyny av., 47. A. Lishnevsky (1911)
- A Dwelling House of Zaitzev. Bolshaya Posadskaya st., 18. V. Shorochov (1911)
- A Dwelling House of Baranov. Egorov st., 18. S. Ginger (1911-1912)
- Russian Trade and Industry Bank. Bolshaya Morskaya st., 15. M. Peretyatkovich (1912)
- A Dwelling House of Gusakova. Liteyny av., 46 (in the yard). A. Khrenov (1912)
- Schtifter's House. Mokhovaya st., 45. L. Khoinovski (1913).
- A Dwelling House of von Grabbe. Mokhovaya st., 26 (in the yard). S. Ginger (1913).
- A Dwelling House of von Grabbe. Soldatsky line, 3. S. Ginger (1913).
- A Dwelling House. Talalikhin line, 5. G. Kotenkov (1913)
- The House of Stenbok-Fermor. Dinamo av., 24. V. Apishkov, V. Baumgarten (1913)
- A Dwelling House of Kolobov. Bolshoy av. P.S., 16-18. P. Mulkhanov, D. Krzizanowski (1908, 1912-1914)
- St.Petersburg Region Credit Society. Karavannaya st., 12. K. Bobrovsky, B. Botkin (1914-1916) (interior)
- A Dwelling House of Kurdumov. Lenin st., 37. G. Kurdumov (1915).

## II.

What are the reasons of using ancient military décor in the architecture in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century? I think that there are two different kinds of reasons.

First reason lays in the ideology of Russian empire. Ancient arms, armour, soldiers, chariots, etc, were the allegory of contemporary army's victories. It was a mode of the state propaganda. It was a symbolical comparing of Russian empire with Rome because of the state ideology principle: "Moscow is Third Rome".



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

Second reason lays in the tendency in art. One of the main characteristic features of the Classicism style is the copying of the ancient art samples. But Saint Petersburg's architects and sculptures have not imitated

ancient arms and soldiers. They have tried to make original compositions, not copies. They have been the artists who gave contemporary spirit for archaic art language. So I can suppose that we can look at the “new classical examples” of ancient military décor.

It is impossible to depict all the Saint Petersburg monuments with ancient military décor in this article. Let me depict only several monuments.



Fig. 3.

The Palace Square is the central square of Saint Petersburg (fig. 1). The Winter Palace (the main residence of Russian emperors) is situated at this square. The second main building here is General Staff Building with a big triumphal arch in the middle of the building<sup>1</sup> Alexander Column is standing in the middle of the square. The pedestal of the column is decorated by ancient military décor (fig. 2). A lot of trophy arms are between two allegorical female figures (Glory and Victory). There are several kinds of armour, shields, swords and axes. There is also one Roman helmet above the armour and there are several archaic helmets below. The triumphal arch of General Staff Building is decorated by the ancient trophy arms (fig. 3) made by sculptor V. Demut-Malinowski.<sup>2</sup> You can see the trophy composition of Roman and medieval arms. There are eight shields and one big helmet above. It is very difficult to identify the prototype of this helmet. But I may suppose that it is the ceremony emperor’s helmet decorated by sultan. Then let us look at the fragment of the chariot at the up of the arch (fig. 4). It is a figure of a soldier catching the bridles. The figure is made in lively and expressive manner. The soldier has the typical Roman helmet with a comb sultan. There is no any resemblance of this soldier with the 19<sup>th</sup> century soldiers. So we can see the classical ancient composition with indirect allegorical sense.

There are some other state buildings with ancient military décor. The Admiralty Building is decorated by many allegorical and historical sculptures. There are four figures of ancient heroes sitting on the corners

<sup>1</sup> See the List in the Part I for all the buildings, architects and sculptors that are mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> His family has Polish and Ukrainian roots.

of the tower. Pyrrhus is one of them (fig. 5). He is sad and thoughtful after the defeat of his army. He is wearing archaic helmet (supposedly Spartan design). The Goddess Athena is sitting at the top of attic of The Emperor Public Library Building (fig. 6). She is made in traditional ancient manner. She is wearing the archaic helmet.



Fig. 4.

The New Classicism buildings' ancient military décor does not have any ideological or symbolical roles. It is the result of the free choice and the retrospect manner of the artists. I may suppose that archaic helmets are frequently represented in the architecture in 1900-1910. The episode of one of the eastern military expedition is represented in the interior of Russian Trade and Industry Bank<sup>3</sup> (fig. 7). I may suppose that this is Anthony's army. The camel is represented here; so it is an Egyptian scene. The noble woman is sitting in the stretcher. I may suppose that she is Cleopatra. There are several soldiers wearing archaic helmets here. Several horsemen are represented in Pheidias manner in the hall of Dwelling House of Kolobov (fig.8). They are wearing archaic helmets with big sultans. A façade of a Dwelling House of Musin-Pushkin is decorated with two big helmets made in archaic manner (fig. 9). These are very rich and ceremony helmets that maybe made of gold. There is a figure of Pegasus is represented on the helmets. Architect S. Ginger makes a trophy arms composition on the façade of a Dwelling House of Baranov (fig. 10). You can see many kinds of arms: swords, spears, axes, arrows, shields with Gorgon, etc. There is the helmet with two wings here (supposedly Hermes's helmet). At the last I want to mention two chariots: on the façade of a Dwelling House of Kurdumov (fig. 11) and in the hall of a Dwelling House of Voyeikova (fig. 12). The charioteer is wearing an archaic helmet. It is impossible to identify the historical prototype of the charioteer's image. The charioteer may be Apollo or Helios. It is interesting that the charioteer at the fig. 12 is holding another helmet in his right hand.

I say in conclusion that I have tried to show that the architecture of Classicism and New Classicism style turns to ancient images of helmets and other kinds of arms. The inhabitants of Saint Petersburg do not live in ancient city. But they live *among* buildings with ancient military décor. I think that we should not look at the mentioned military sculptures and décor as only a copies. It is original style of the new time art using classical ancient prototypes.

<sup>3</sup> Built by Polish architect Marian Peretyatkowich, 1912.



Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

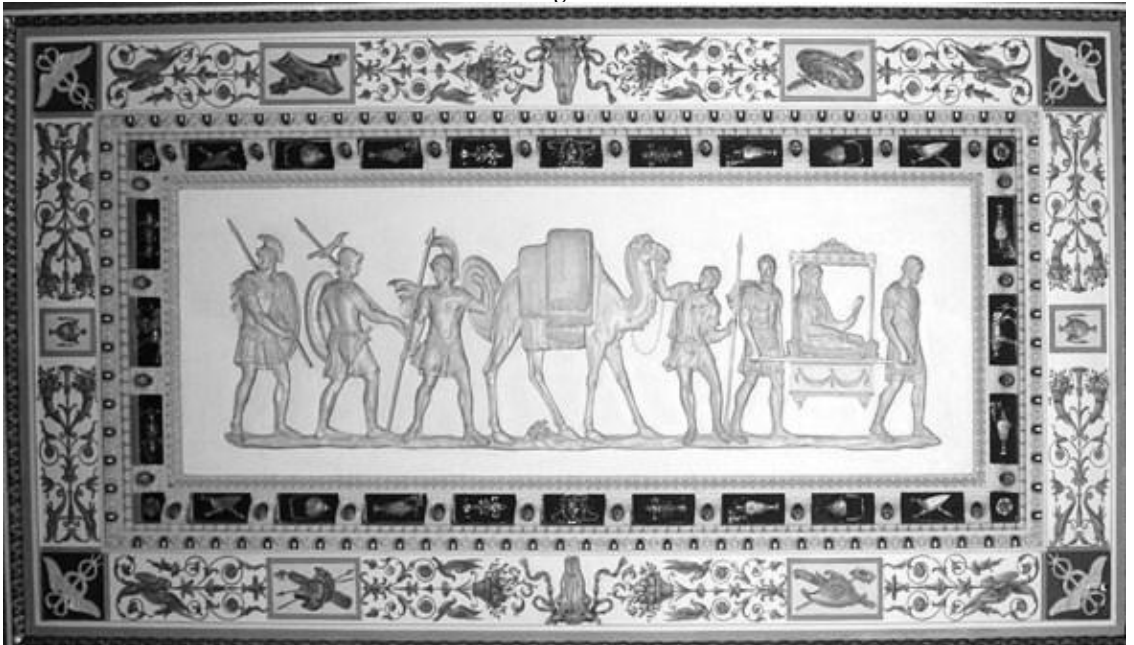


Fig. 7.

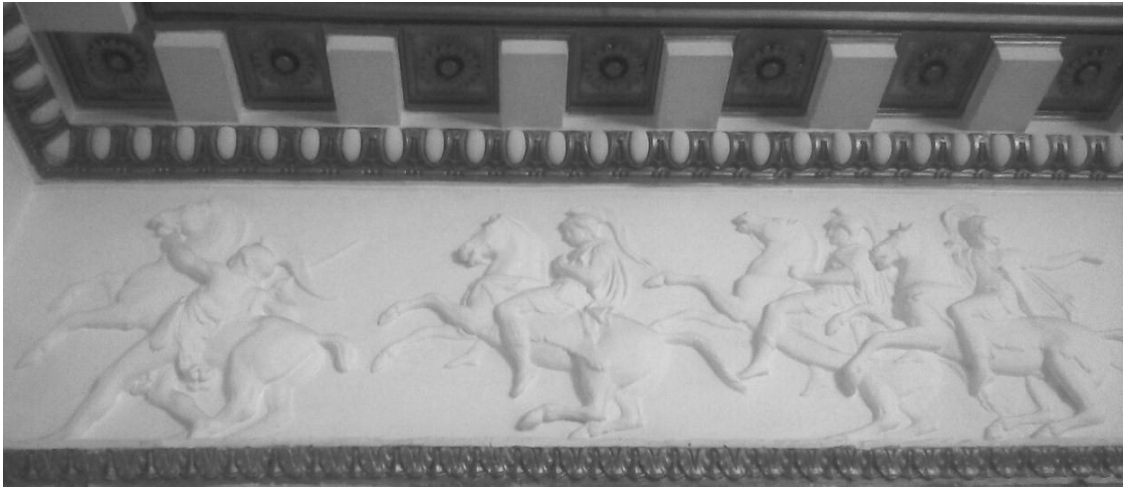


Fig. 8,



Fig. 9,



Fig. 10.



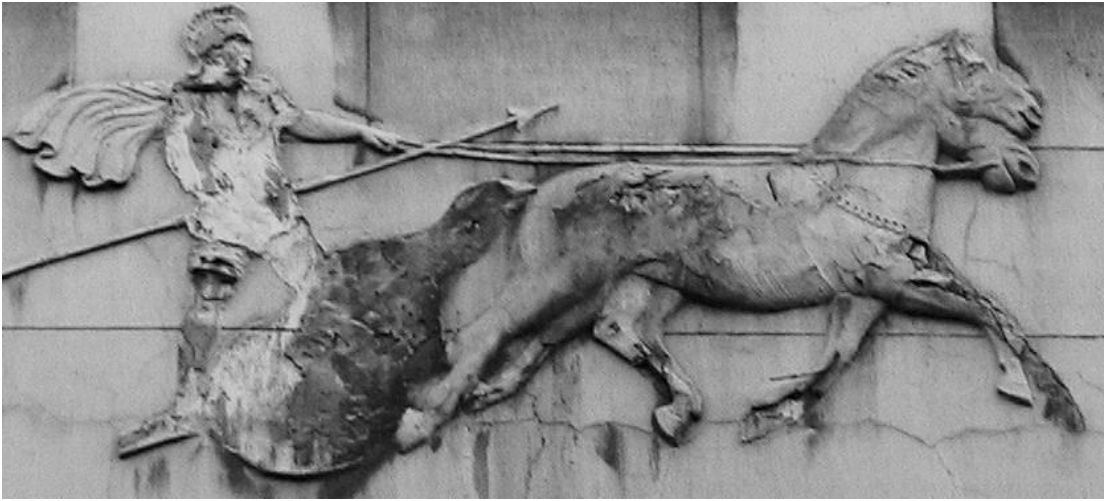


Fig. 11.



Fig. 12.

## Bibliography

ALEKSASNDROVA L. B. (1980), *Vasily Ivanovich Demut-Malinowski. 1779-1846*, Leningrad.

ARTEMIEVA Y. V., PROKHVATILOVA S. A. (eds.) (2000), *Zodchie Sankt-Peterburga. XIX – nachalo XX veka*, Sankt-Peterburg.

BUZINOV B. M. (2010), *Dvortzovaya ploschad'. Neformal'nyi putevoditel'*. Sankt-Peterburg.

KIRIKOV B. (2003), *Arkhitektura Peterburgskogo Moderna. Osobnyaki I dokhodhyie doma*, Sankt-Peterburg.

KIRIKOV B. (2006), *Arkhitektura Peterburga kontza XIX – nachala XX veka. Eklektika. Modern. Neoklassitsizm*, Sankt-Peterburg.

LUKOMSKI G. K. (2002), *Sovremenniy Peterburg: Ocherk istorii vozniknoveniya i razvitiya klassicheskogo stroitel'stva (1900 – 1915)*, Sankt-Peterburg.

ROTACH A. L., CHEKANOVA O. A. (1990), *Oguyst Monferran*, Leningrad.

## Summary

### Representations of Antique Arms and Armour in the Architectural decor of St. Petersburg

The matter of the article is the representation of ancient arms and armour in Saint Petetrburg's architecture. Classicism style (1770-1840) and New Classicism style (1905-1915) are studied. The main point of the article is the representation of helmets in military décor. The article contains: 1. Typology of ancient military décor; 2. The full list of buildings with ancient military décor of Saint Petersburg; 3. Examples of ancient helmets in military décor of Saint Petersburg; 4. Aesthetical Analysis of the art, symbolic and ideological reasons for using ancient military décor in Saint Petersburg's buildings; 5. The attempt to prove that archaic helmets are the most frequent kind of Saint Petersburg's military décor; 6. The attempt to prove that Russian architects and sculptors did not copy ancient helmets and other arms but they created new samples according to the canons of Classicism art.

**Keywords:** Architectural décor, Helmets, Armour, Saint Petersburg, Classicism