Finnland um 1900 – Kunst als Wegbereiter

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National Romanticism in Finnish Architecture*

RITVA WÄRE
Finnish National Museum, Helsinki

At the beginning of the 20th century, Finland was in the midst of a construction boom, with many new commercial buildings, multiple dwellings and schools, as well as a considerable number of churches going up all over the country. In and around Finland's main urban centres, the first villas and garden suburbs had been planned, and building was under way. Examples of the new *fin-de-siècle* style can still be found in Finnish cities and their outskirts – a style referred to variously as National Romanticism, *Jugendstil* or Art Nouveau.

The four defining elements of the new architectural style that flourished in the early years of the 20th century were already in evidence by about 1898: the "natural stone" trend, which meant façades made of Finnish granite and soapstone; the pursuit of a distinctly Finnish style of wooden architecture (a trend dating from well before the turn of the century); the German-inspired ideal of a romantic townscape; and, last but not least, stylistic borrowings from the broader architectural and applied arts movement internationally known as Art Nouveau, which abandoned historicism in favour of originality and imaginative design. All these trends came to the fore simultaneously in 1898; the years that followed were to see the four elements, disparate though they were, converge to form a synthesis.

The new architecture achieved widespread prominence, particularly in Helsinki, where whole residential districts featuring multiple dwellings – large houses with a number of apartments – were built in the early 1900s. These, and the new, more expressive styling of the commercial and public buildings also going up in Helsinki, were a signal departure from the historicist revival fashions to which the public was accustomed, and prompted a lively debate. The ideas that emerged about Finnish architecture in this period were to dominate architectural scholarship for the better part of the century. In recent decades, however, the architecture of the *fin-de-siècle* period has been researched systematically, yielding new and more precise insights on the theories of the time. Although Finnish turn-of-the-century architecture was sometimes claimed to have emerged spontaneously, out of the blue, as it were, recent scholars have shown that its aims, its forms and its symbols emerged and evolved in close association with what was going on in other contemporary European architectural movements.[1]

In 1902, the architect and art theorist Gustaf Strengell completed a comprehensive survey of contemporary Finnish architecture, *Suomen rakennustaide meidän päivinämme* (Finnish Architecture Today), which was published the following year in *Valvoja*, a Finnish-language cultural periodical.[2] The ideas presented by Strengell echo those already outlined by his colleague Bertel Jung in a lengthy article published in 1901,[3] except that Strengell made an interesting (and oft-cited) distinction between what he saw as two separate strands in contemporary Finnish architecture: "rationalism" and "romanticism." The rationalist strand was a straightforward approach that dispensed with revivalism, downplayed the façade, and showed a new respect for the texture of natural materials. The façade was not allowed to dictate the design of the interiors; on the contrary, the floor plan and interior layout were to be expressed in the external architecture. Rationalist architecture abandoned "period costume" in favour of forthright simplicity. The emphasis on the texture of the material endowed plain brick walls and

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natural stone with new aesthetic value. According to Strengell, the main international precursors of this style were the English architects Richard Norman Shaw and C.F.A. Voysey and, before them, John Ruskin and William Morris, who had instilled a new respect for the value of handicrafts. Another important precursor was the American architect H. H. Richardson, whose work had inspired the use of granite. Strengell additionally mentioned the Belgian architects Paul Hankar, Victor Horta and Henry van de Velde, whose technically intricate architecture he saw as verging on a feat of engineering. The examples of Finnish rationalism listed by Strengell did indeed reflect a variety of new aspirations, but the influence of historicism was still evident in many of these designs. Strengell considered the Lundqvist Building in Helsinki, designed by Selim A. Lindqvist, to be Finland's first *bona fide* commercial building of the international "department store" type, the textbook example of which was Wertheim's in Berlin. The Finnish National Theatre, designed by Onni Törnqvist and handed over in 1902, was cited by Strengell as an example of the use of Finnish granite in façades.

Strengell considered the rationalist strand to be "cosmopolitan," and the romantic strand as inherently "national." Romantic architecture assumed such a rich variety of forms in different countries that Strengell saw no point in attempting to list international samples of this style. For him, its main manifestations in Finland were the Karelianist movement of the 1890s (the idealisation of the "indigenous" culture of Karelia), the pursuit of a uniquely Finnish style of wooden architecture, and also the stone architecture of Herman Gesellius, Armas Lindgren and Eliel Saarinen. These three architects designed buildings that Strengell considered seminal in Finnish architectural history, notably the Tallberg apartment block in Helsinki (1897) and the Finnish pavilion (1898) at the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris. The trio also designed the Helsinki headquarters of the Pohjola Insurance Company (1901), which Strengell regarded as the prime exemplar of the romantic style.

Strengell analysed the work of Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen against the backdrop of romanticism, describing how the Pohjola building worked its magic "like Wagner's music, or like a symphonic poem, weaving its own strange and powerful leitmotifs."[4] He did, however, identify certain features that romanticism had in common with rationalism, such as the rejection of imitative revival styles, acceptance of the principle that designs should "start from inside," i.e. be guided by the floor-plan rather than the façade, and the judicious use of smooth plaster finishes. Compared with rationalism, however, he saw romanticism as characterised by the use of motifs freely adapted from medieval architecture, a preference for weighty, massive forms, and an individualist, unpredictable approach to design. According to Strengell, the romantic strand of Finnish architecture was lively and imaginative, "refusing to settle for what is merely practical and sturdy," but instead "creating its own fantasy-world somewhere between heaven and earth."[5]

The romantic features listed by Strengell were by no means unique to Finnish architecture. He did indeed acknowledge that Finnish romanticism was in line with the European trend in drawing inspiration from English architecture and from archaic styles, a trend common throughout Europe. He also identified allusions to medieval church architecture, but hastened to add that here the modern architects were merely rekindling the spirit of medieval architecture, not directly copying its forms. In Strengell's view, the most obviously "national" feature of Finnish romantic architecture was its ornamentation, in which indigenous plant and animal motifs figure prominently. Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen used such motifs abundantly in their early output, which linked their work with continental Art Nouveau, while also wooing the Finnish public – an inspired compromise first achieved in the design of the Finnish pavilion for the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900. The pavilion's nature-inspired decorative motifs and the clean, graceful lines of the light-coloured plaster walls linked the design to mainstream Art Nouveau; but all the plant and animal motifs were from the homeland, which meant that for anyone to whom it mattered, the design could be interpreted as specifically "Finnish" in character.

Strengell's article was the first attempt to define the concept of National Romanticism in Finnish architecture, and his arguments are still persuasive today.[6] In the 1890s, earlier theorists had

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spoken of a *Finnish national style*, mainly in the context either of wooden architecture or of handicrafts. Stone buildings were usually regarded as "modern" architecture, sometimes even "ultramodern." In later 20th-century scholarship and literature, the term "National Romanticism" has been used loosely and inclusively to refer to any turn-of-the-century building that is not an obvious offshoot of an existing international movement, and is characterised by non-classical, expressive treatment of form and materials. While the term *Jugendstil* does appear in Finnish texts around the turn of the century, occurrences are rare, and in all cases the reference is specifically to the German movement of that name. It was not until the 1950s that the term *Jugendstil* was widely adopted as an inclusive term for Finnish architecture and applied arts of the *fin-de-siècle* era. *Finnish Art Nouveau* would be an equally suitable defining term for the architecture of this epoch, Art Nouveau as such being understood as the generic international phenomenon.[7]

The quest for a new architecture of national self-expression

Turn-of-the-century architectural writing insisted that, up until the late 19th century, Finland had had no architecture that it could call indigenous: it had all been imported. The architects who worked in Finland prior to that period had either been foreigners or, at best, Finns trained in Sweden or Germany. The first architectural competitions, an innovation of the later 19th century, were international. A small number of Finnish architects were trained privately or by government building authorities, but the systematic training of Finnish architects did not begin until the 1870s with the founding of the Polytechnic School, soon to be renamed the Polytechnic Institute. By the turn of the century, over a hundred architects had graduated from the Institute, at a rate of between two and ten every year. These newly qualified architects found positions mainly in private architectural practices, not all of them in the capital. This created an entirely new basis for the subsequent evolution of Finnish architecture.

High hopes were being pinned on the rising generation of home-grown architects. For their part, the young architects were seeking to develop a distinctive Finnish architecture while remaining receptive to international influences. The pressure of expectation on them came from two directions, art circles and the general public. In the art world, Art Nouveau had already made an impact, while Finnish society was enjoying a surge of economic and intellectual self-confidence, which powerfully boosted the country's nascent cultural nationalism. Finnish turn-of-the-century architecture is full of antitheses, with a clear division emerging between the older generation, those who had dominated the profession in the 1880s, and the new graduates of the 1890s. There was also a degree of confrontation between private and government architects, the latter having previously enjoyed a monopoly in the design of public buildings. Which architect was chosen for a given project, indeed even the architectural form itself, might depend in part on such issues as linguistic and party political affiliation. These schisms sparked off one lively controversy after another in the notably abundant contributions on architecture which appeared in professional journals, arts magazines, and even the daily press. Architecture, as was noted at the time, had become the hot topic.[8]

The campaign to establish a Finnish cultural identity had gone on throughout the 19th century, eventually making its mark on Finnish literature, art, music and applied arts – but not on architecture, which was viewed as lagging behind the other arts. It was not until the early 1890s that the idea of a distinctively Finnish style of architecture emerged in public debate. This idea sprang partly from the Fennoman (pro-Finnish) movement. Patriotic activists singled out achievements in the applied arts for special praise. At the same time, there was no denying the significant role played in Finnish culture – including architecture – by foreign influences, for instance Swedish and German. It was therefore seen as imperative that Finns should replace foreigners in all significant national ventures, and that Finland should produce its own goods rather than rely on imports. The great paradox of this era was that Finland, even while striving to establish its own cultural autonomy, was also eager to keep abreast of the latest international developments in all fields of endeavour, from industry to the arts. As if this were not enough, Finnish architects had yet another aspiration: that of preserving the "instinctive artistic sensibility" of the unlettered masses. The campaign to save the authentic art produced by the

"spirit of the people," and the associated natural artistic sensibility, was one of the specific agendas of the Fennoman movement.

In Europe generally, national architectural traditions had evolved from an existing heritage of national monuments or styles which had played a significant role in the respective country's history. In the era of revivalism and period architecture, this use of motifs borrowed from the national past was the simplest and most direct route to creating a new national style. A second route was normally offered by selective borrowing of elements from vernacular architecture. For example, Finnish architects were familiar with Russian and Norwegian wooden architecture, which was partly based on the vernacular styles of those countries. But when discussion came to focus on the definition of the *status quo*, the premises on which a future national Finnish architecture should be predicated, the conclusion reached (from the perspective of the time) was that – for practical purposes - Finland lacked any genuinely ancient architectural heritage upon which to base its national style in the way that "all other European nations" could.[9]

The country's existing heritage was indeed modest compared even with that of its neighbours. Finland had a few medieval castles, but over the centuries they had been used for a wide variety of purposes, and some had fallen into ruin. Medieval religious architecture was represented only by plain, very modest village churches. Baroque and Rococo left no visible mark on Finnish architecture. Finland had been part of the Swedish Empire until 1809, but the resident nobility had never built any castles of note on Finnish soil. Patriotically-minded writers argued that buildings dating from the period of Swedish rule represented both an intrusive western influence and a time of political dependency. It was later conceded that Finland's medieval churches could be regarded as "legitimately Finnish" by virtue of their having stood on Finnish soil for centuries; and they had after all been put up by Finnish labourers. 19th century buildings, however, i.e. those erected in Finland during the period of Russian rule, were deemed "foreign," even though the nobility and artistic rank of C.L. Engel's neo-classical masterpieces were widely acknowledged. At the other extreme, the simple wooden buildings found in rural regions of Finland seemed to have been built virtually without aesthetic considerations in mind. A major problem was the sheer lack of information, as there was hardly any published material, scholarly or otherwise, on Finland's architectural heritage or its context.

Architectural expeditions to Karelia

In 1894, Yrjö Blomstedt, then studying at the Polytechnic, and Victor Sucksdorff, an architect employed by the National Board of Public Building, embarked on their famous expedition to research the architecture of Russian Karelia. Their findings were published some years later, in two volumes: a book of illustrations in 1900, and the accompanying text, in Finnish, in 1901. A German version, with some corrections, followed in 1902.[10] Although expedition and publications subsequently came to be regarded as all of a piece, and as constituting clear evidence of the new Karelianist trend in Finnish architecture, it can be seen on closer appraisal that they were two separate events, of widely differing importance and impact. That the report was eventually published at all was mainly due to Yrjö Blomstedt's commitment and perseverance. The volume of illustrations is of a conventional type, featuring photographs and detail drawings of Karelian buildings, without accompanying notes on their location and other circumstances. The other volume, with text written by Blomstedt, is at once a traveller's report with pictures (further embellished with quotes from the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*) and a study in cultural anthropology, although the academic folklorists of the time dismissed its scholarly value.

In contrast, the expedition itself had been an attempt to clear up a pressing problem: what, exactly, *was* the Finnish style? This issue was raised intermittently in architectural periodicals published in the year of the expedition, 1894 – at a time when the problem of national style was also being debated in relation to furniture and interior design, inspiring the Friends of Finnish Handicraft to organise competitions for "Finnish-style" designs. The basis for a truly Finnish style of architecture seemed a shaky one, however, as Finland's vernacular architecture was modest, very simple, and starkly lacking in ornament. Only the traditional two-storey veranda house type, with a projecting top section supported by decorative consoles, appealed to

contemporary taste, through its authentic feel and harmonious proportions. With such scant national traditions to build upon, architects looked to Karelia for inspiration. This new trend was part of the broader movement known as "Karelianism," which was linked with the romantic idealisation of Finland's national epic, the *Kalevala*. Finnish artists flocked to Russian Karelia in large numbers, and encouraged their architect friends to follow suit. It was there that Elias Lönnrot had collected most of the traditional poems forming the basis of the *Kalevala*, and romantic wishful thinking had it that other traces of Finland's ancient proto-culture might also be found there. For graphic artists, the main attraction was the possibility of finding a font of visual material for illustrating future editions of the national epic. Architects, for their part, were drawn by reports of the region's historic buildings and artefacts, and by the belief that Karelia might be the place where surviving traces of Finland's indigenous style of architecture and ornamentation could be found.

In the spring of 1894, Yrjö Blomstedt, Victor Sucksdorff and Lars Sonck (who later withdrew from the expedition) applied to the Finnish Antiquarian Society for a grant to fund their intended trip to Russian Karelia. In their application, they noted that the early architecture of the Finno-Ugric peoples had "such great originality and distinctive character" that by developing this approach and "adapting classical and modern architecture in the same spirit," Finland could create its own unique national architecture. This was typical of the architectural thinking of the time. The idea was not to collect old styles of ornamentation and then slavishly imitate them, but to make much more eclectic use of the whole body of material collected, stylising it and re-creating its "spirit" rather than its details. The expedition took place in the summer of 1894, but in fact failed to provide any clear answers as to the true nature of Finland's indigenous architecture. It did establish that the imposing two-storey Karelian house corresponded in its general proportions to the "Novgorod style" that was widespread throughout northern Russia. The element the travellers considered to be most interesting and perhaps most authentically "Finnish" was the ornamentation. Blomstedt planned to study the history of this aspect in detail by making further expeditions to regions inhabited by other Finno-Ugric peoples, but his plans never materialised. Uno Ullberg, Alarik Tavaststjerna and Jalmari Kekkonen, all Polytechnic students, embarked on a new architectural expedition to Russian Karelia in 1901, but their findings were not published until 1929.[11]

For some years after the 1894 expedition, Finnish architects introduced Karelian motifs – ornaments in particular – in experimental wooden buildings, though the practice tailed off after the turn of the century. These buildings were characterised by free stylisation of motifs and by decorative elements that were selectively adapted to "the general style of wooden architecture," as the architects claimed in an explanatory text. Lars Sonck designed numerous log villas using round debarked logs and small-paned windows, which can be attributed to Karelian inspiration. At the same time, however, these designs had points in common with Norwegian wooden architecture. Yrjö Blomstedt and Victor Sucksdorff designed a number of villas, pavilions and lookout towers featuring Karelian motifs. Blomstedt regarded Karelian architecture as the paradigm of "genuine wooden architecture," because its structure and ornamentation both reflected the actual properties of timber rather than emulating the style of stone buildings. He was also fond of Karelian geometrical ornamentation, feeling that its forthright, rectilinear character was well suited to the Finnish temperament; and, indeed, many Karelian textile motifs had already – in an adapted form - found their way into Finnish applied art designs.[12]

But at the dawn of the 20th century, numerous articles were declaring that Karelian architecture had faded out of the limelight. Although it was to become briefly topical again on the publication of Blomstedt's and Sucksdorff's book, its influence remained negligible, even in wooden architecture, which either evolved into a rather nondescript rustic character or along the lines of the English cottage style. No-one seriously contemplated applying the Karelian style to the design of stone buildings. In 1896, a lone voice did indeed suggest that geometrical Karelian textile patterns might be well suited to the design of brick façades, but the idea never caught on.[13] In the first few years of the 20th century, the whole concept of an essentially Finnish indigenous architecture degenerated into an ill-defined, shifting bundle of ideas. Often the terminology might connote nothing more than simplicity and austerity of design, sometimes

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even crudeness. Before long, however, the pursuit of the original concept no longer seemed so important, as Finland's new architecture was sufficiently innovative and individual in character, and could be labelled as "uniquely Finnish" if so desired.

Prestige projects – A monopoly of masters

Finnish architecture in the early 20th century was dominated by a trio of architects: Herman Gesellius (1874–1916), Eliel Saarinen (1873–1950) and Armas Lindgren (1874–1929). These three, who shared a practice, were awarded the lion's share of Finland's most prestigious architectural commissions, and their work was the primary focus of public debate on architecture. They had many imitators –so many, indeed, that they can be regarded as having founded their own style. Later research on the early 20th-century period likewise focuses principally on their work, although by that time Finnish architects were already numerous.

The Gesellius / Lindgren / Saarinen partnership, which practised from 1896 to 1904, enjoyed an extraordinary run of success in architectural competitions, including that held in 1898 for the design of the Finnish pavilion at the forthcoming World Exhibition in Paris (1900). With its imaginative exterior and American-style stone portals, the entry submitted by Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen attracted immediate interest. The Finnish pavilion was a project of national significance, and its design was expected to point the way ahead for Finnish architecture. According to the architect Ivar Aminoff, the winning design marked a historic decision: lacking an existing tradition upon which to base its representative national architecture, his view was that this "small Finnish nation" had no choice but to attach itself to the mainstream Germanic/Anglo-Saxon tradition, unless of course, it wished to consign itself to obscurity.[14] The Pohjola Insurance Company building (already mentioned above) was completed in 1901. The most notable feature of the design was the rich ornamentation of the soapstone and granite façades. It was the work of the sculptress Hilda Flodin, and featured Finnish plant and animal motifs and humorous subjects from myth and legend. Its expressive use of stone contrasted strikingly with the surrounding Neo-Renaissance architecture. The articulation of the façades has close affinities with the massive Romanesque style of Henry Hobson Richardson, which was familiar to Finnish architects through the work of his German and Swedish followers and international publications. Another Richardsonian element that later became typical of the Gesellius / Lindgren / Saarinen style is the dark entrance portal framing a deep-set, narrow but massive door, and the similarly styled inside doors leading to the staircase, which were decorated with prominent wrought-iron hinge and keyhole plates. The banisters too were specially designed for this building.

A competition was organised in 1902 for the design of Finland's National Museum. Gesellius and Lindgren submitted the winning entry, thereby definitively establishing their reputation in Finland. This was a particularly high-profile assignment, as the competition had been preceded by a major public controversy over the most fitting architectural style for the future museum. The debate in fact led to the rejection of the original proposal presented by the National Board of Building, which had been on conventional lines, envisaging traditional museum buildings in the classical style. The museum finally built – on the design submitted by Gesellius and Lindgren – is to some extent reminiscent of the new Swiss National Museum in Zurich, completed in 1898. The design of the castle-like building in Helsinki was asymmetrical and non-classical in character, representing something quite new in monumental architecture, while allusions to Finland's medieval castles and churches underlined the building's function as a national historical museum. Elegantly stylised plant motifs and other decorative touches were prominent details. Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen soon achieved international fame, and their work was featured alongside that of other internationally prominent architects in publications such as *Moderne Bauformen*, published in Stuttgart. Max Neuscheller, a Swiss-born industrialist based in St Petersburg, secured their services to design Suur-Merijoki Manor near Viipuri (Vyborg). Completed in 1903, this country house and its interiors were constructed under the supervision of the architects as a collaborative effort involving various artists and craft professionals. The result was a *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art, a rare phenomenon in Finland, and was widely held to show that the new modern style had reached full maturity. About the same time (1901−1903), the trio also designed Hvitträsk for their own use, a manor-

style country house at Kirkkonummi, outside Helsinki, large enough to provide the three architects with a flat each and a shared studio. Architecturally, the building's most prominent features are the log construction – perhaps intended to lend overtones of archaic structures – and the vaulted ceilings and stone walls of the ground floor. The upper storeys and the roof shape, by contrast, are unmistakably influenced by English architecture.

In 1904, Eliel Saarinen won the competition for the design of Helsinki's main railway station. Finished in natural stone and decorated with stylised castle motifs, Saarinen's proposal met with a barrage of criticism from his Finnish colleagues – a controversy now regarded as marking a key turning point in the history of Finnish architecture. Saarinen's most vocal critics were Gustaf Strengell, the same as quoted above, and Sigurd Frosterus, an architect, who had a special interest in the ideas and work of Henry van de Velde after having worked in his studio in Weimar. Strengell and Frosterus campaigned against Saarinen's National Romantic design proposal, calling for a contemporary design to reflect the modern function of the building.[15] Saarinen yielded, and made extensive revisions to his original drawings. He soon set about familiarising himself with the latest German architecture, and the modified plans and building itself (completed in 1914, but not opened until 1919) show the influence of German architects such as Joseph Maria Olbrich, Josef Hoffmann and Peter Behrens. Saarinen adhered to this new clean-lined style in his proposal for the new unicameral Parliament House (1908), which, however, was never realised.

Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen overshadowed many other gifted Finnish architects of their generation. One was Lars Sonck (1870−1956), who made a name for himself as a church architect and won competitions for the design of three important city churches: St Michael's in Turku (1894−1905), St John's in Tampere (1900−1907) and Kallio Church in Helsinki (1906−1912). Sonck also did well in many other competitions for monumental buildings, although he never came first. His other major works are the headquarters of the Helsinki Telephone Company (1903−1907), the offices of the Mortgage Society of Finland (1907−08) and the Stock Exchange (1901−1912), all situated in Helsinki. All three of these keynote buildings feature the use of natural stone, and show a progressive stylistic transition from the unrestrained expressionism of Sonck's early works towards more sophisticated articulation of form, characterised by smooth surfaces, symmetry of proportion, and even classical motifs. Other prominent contemporary architects included Valter Thomé (1879−1918) and Karl Lindahl (1874−1930), who won the design competition for the Polytechnical Students' Union building in Helsinki (1903). The building was originally to have been rendered, but at a late stage the client – under intense lobbying from the quarry-owners – decided to have the façades clad in Finnish granite. The result is a building that appears to be wrapped in an expressive granite shell. The design as a whole is robust and massive, again qualities some felt to be a reflection of the Finnish national character. Karl Lindahl also designed the similarly massive Helsinki Workers' Hall (1906−08).

Apartment houses and villas

Coinciding with the emergence of the new architectural style, Finland also imported the German concept of *Stadtbaukunst* – city planning on artistic principles – a domain for which Finnish architects were keen to assume responsibility. Until the end of the 1890s, urban planning had been delegated to engineers; and the predominant plan-type seen in Finnish towns was a simple chessboard grid. Some innovations began to emerge towards the end of the 19th century: the organic polycentric plan was adapted to harmonise with the natural terrain, and the medieval-inspired romantic town plan was imported from central Europe.

Finland's first "garden-city" districts were planned around this time, based on British and German models, but there was a lag of a few years before any were actually constructed. The pioneering modernisers of Finnish urban planning were two architects, Lars Sonck and his colleague Bertel Jung (1872–1946). The latter was Helsinki's, and indeed Finland's, first official City Architect, with planning responsibility (1908–1916). Both Sonck and Jung drew inspiration from the famous essay by the Viennese architect Camillo Sitte, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* (*City Planning according to Artistic Principles*) (1889), which was

made known to the Finnish public through an article published by Sonck in 1898, on urban planning for Helsinki. Another influential precursor was the German architect Karl Henrici. As Bertel Jung later wrote, Finnish urban planning at the turn of the century was characterised by "German *Städtebau* romanticism,"[16] in other words a fascination with medieval city structure. On their travels, Finnish architects admired the picturesque streetscapes of Rothenburg ob der Tauber and other idyllic old towns in central Europe. This medieval ideal, though without historical basis in the homeland, had a decisive impact on the design of Finnish townhouses at the turn of the century.

The new Finnish city apartment block was characterised by an elaborately articulated roof, often of red tiles; rendered façades enlivened with bay windows, turrets and oriels; non-classical, usually asymmetrical façade articulation; and windows of varying shapes and sizes. The window frames were usually English-style: painted in light colours, with a small-paned top section. Undressed natural stone was sometimes used round the lower walls and for gateway and doorway surrounds. The façade decorations included plant and animal motifs, medieval details, or even half-timbering effects. Some façades were decorated with stone mosaics. A fine example of this townhouse type is the "Doctors' House" at 17 Fabianinkatu (1901), designed by Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen. Oriels and balconies enliven the otherwise plain, cornice-less façades, which are finished in a creamy yellow shade of rough plaster. The steep-pitch orange-tiled roof is an integral element of the external design. The interior layout was planned for spacious rooms generously lit by bay windows and equipped with custom-designed fixtures. This building was designed to meet the contemporary demand for higher standards of comfort, hitherto a feature of villa design. One slogan of the day was that cities too needed *homes* – as opposed to tenements.[17]

The design of these new townhouses sometimes featured references to Finland's medieval architecture, for instance the towers of Olavinlinna Castle. The company names of the developers – often taken from the *Kalevala* – were prominently displayed in decorative stone lettering on the façades. On the whole, the exterior architecture is very similar to what one could see going up in many other European cities at the same time. The influence of English architecture is evident in the light-coloured plaster of the façades, and in the shapes of the windows. Virtually no brick buildings were constructed in Finland at the turn of the century; domestic brickworks lacked the technical capacity to produce bricks of adequate quality for façades, which meant that brick would have had to be imported. The quality of heaviness regarded as typically Finnish was there in the massive oak doors and their wrought-iron details; some door designs may even have been borrowed from Blomstedt's and Sucksdorff's book on Karelian architecture. Small stained-glass windows were added wherever possible, particularly in stairwells, which in the noblest houses were decorated with Art Nouveau frescos.

"Wilderness studios"

"Wilderness studio" translates the term used in Finland to denote any of a functionally and stylistically related group of buildings owned by artists and other prominent cultural figures at the turn of the century. These include Visavuori, the studio-villa belonging to the sculptor Emil Wikström (1864–1942); Kalela, residence of Axel Gallén (1965–1931); Halosenniemi, home of the painter Pekka Halonen (1865–1933); various other villas in the Tuusula artists' lakeside colony; and Hvitträsk, the studio-home of the architects Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen. Many of the villas were in fact designed by artists rather than architects, and the style of these tends to stand outside the architectural mainstream. At the turn of the century, these villas still existed in relative obscurity, brought to public attention only through brief mentions in newspaper features or by word of mouth. They have complex antecedents in the Finnish art scene of the 1890s, with Scandinavian and central European contacts involved in some cases. Interestingly, Gallén, Halonen and Wikström had all been active in Paris for many years before returning to Finland in the 1890s and settling into their rural retreats. Their Swedish colleagues Anders Zorn and Carl Larsson built themselves similar villas in the Swedish province of Dalarna around the same time. The villas built by Finnish artists are faintly reminiscent of the international *studio home* stereotype, and they also embodied the then-fashionable idea of the *künstlerisches Haus* (artistic house).

These wilderness studios were intended to provide a setting conducive to creative work, but also to satisfy the practical requirements of a family home. Indeed, the main reason why they were built was practical: there were no suitably spacious studios available in Helsinki, and to create a large studio in a downtown location would have been prohibitively expensive. A remote rural setting provided artists with better opportunities for outdoor painting, and also satisfied their desire to commune with unspoiled country folk and the untouched wilderness. In reality, this rural quest was a romanticised one, for it was of course a highly impractical notion to build one's studio out in the backwoods, where simple daily chores consumed much time and energy. As they grew richer, the occupants of these wilderness studios gradually increased the comfort level. Emil Wikström added both a conservatory and an observatory, and even built his own miniature foundry for casting small-scale bronzes. Both he and Axel Gallén had an organ installed for musical entertainment. The wilderness studios, which their owners liked to describe modestly as "shacks" or "bothies," were certainly not ordinary villas, country houses or farmhouses. They were in fact the expression of a particular lifestyle and artistic orientation: a conscious rejection of bourgeois values, city life, party political strife, and the Finnish art establishment.

The artists who took flight from the city fashionable were soon followed by many of their peer-group. The composer and conductor Robert Kajanus had a seaside villa built to his own design, which was akin to that of the villas owned by Wikström and Gallén. The composer Jean Sibelius had his villa, *Ainola,* designed by Lars Sonck. His chosen location was the artists' colony of Tuusula, which was already home to the author Juhani Aho and his artist wife Venny Soldan-Brofeldt, the painter Eero Järnefelt (Aino Sibelius' brother), and Pekka Halonen. All these wilderness studios occupy a similar setting: a rugged, wooded site, usually overlooking a lake. The location – ideally as far away as possible from agricultural land and other signs of civilisation – was extremely important, as can be inferred from the great amount of time and energy that Gallén spent scouting the lakes of north Häme province in search of a suitable spot. As far as "wilderness" goes, the rural district of Tuusula was a compromise. Surrounded by farmland in the southern Finnish province of Uusimaa, Tuusula was hardly "wild," but it offered convenient train connections to the capital. Pekka Halonen picked the only site on Lake Tuusula that might be described as "rugged:" a rocky cape dotted with pine and juniper. It was precisely this type of austere, rockbound lakeside scene, backed by forest, that later came to be regarded as the quintessential Finnish – and Swedish – landscape.

The villas built by Wikström, Gallén and Halonen all incorporate certain features from vernacular architecture, notably the walls of exposed logs jointed at the corners. In the interiors, the use of wallpaper was confined to the living quarters; the log walls of the studio were left bare. The villas were exceptionally large by Finnish standards, principally because the living quarters adjoin a spacious two-storey-high studio with north light. The steep saddleback roof gave the villas a monumental quality reminiscent of the two-storeyed Karelian log houses, but also of Alpine chalets. The designers' common source of inspiration was Karelia and, in a less direct way, the *Kalevala*; but their handling of Karelian motifs was extremely free, and these were mingled with elements borrowed from west Finnish vernacular architecture and the wooden buildings of other countries. With their open fireplaces, the studios and the adjoining cosy library nooks resemble the spacious manorial halls illustrated in contemporary English journals.[18] Now, over the past few decades, Visavuori, Kalela, Halosenniemi, Ainola and Hvitträsk have all been converted into museums. Each museum celebrates its creators, yet between them they also represent an element of architectural heritage that the Finns still cherish as their own, and proudly show off to their guests as uniquely Finnish.

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[*] The lecture *National traditions and modern trends in art and architecture. Aspects of cultural life at the turn of the century 1900 in Finland* hold by Ritva Wäre November 8th 2002 could not be published because of organization reasons. Therefore Ritva Wäre authorized us to put her article *National Romanticism in Finnish Architecture* online. The article covers the most of Wäre's thesis. It is published

in: *Now the Light comes from the North – Art Nouveau in Finland*, Bröhan-Museum, Berlin 2002, pp. 58-69.

[1] Compare Jac. Ahrenberg, Der Neue Stil in Finnland, *Moderne Bauformen, Monatshefte für Architektur 1904*, Heft 11, Stuttgart 1904, pp. 79-82. See Sixten Ringbom, *Stone, Style and Truth. The Vogue for Natural Stone in Nordic Architecture 1880-1910*, Finnish Association of Antiquities, publication no. 91, Helsinki 1987 and Ritva Wäre, *Rakennettu suomalaisuus. Nationalismi viime vuosisadan vaihteen arkkitehtuurissa ja sitä koskevissa kirjoituksissa*, Finnish Association of Antiquities, publication no.95, Helsinki, 1991.

[2] Gustaf Strengell, *Suomen rakennustaide meidän päivinämme*, Valvoja, Helsinki 1903, pp. 13–34, pp. 75–96. The essay was also published in 1903 in the Swedish journal *Ord och Bild*.

[3] Bertel Jung, Om nya rörelser på arkitekurens område hemma och I utlandet, *Tekniska föreningens I Finland förhandlingar*, 1901.

[4] Strengell 1903, p. 89.

[5] Strengell 1903, p. 91.

[6] Strengell 1903, p. 28; For further details see Wäre 1991, p. 120,121 f.

[7] See Ritva Wäre, Arkkitehtuuri vuosisadan vaihteessa, *Ars Suomen taide 3*, Helsinki, 1989, pp. 117-120; Ritva Wäre, Jugenstil in Finnland, in: *Jahrbuch für finnisch-deutsche Litzeraturbeziehungen*, Deutsche Bibliothek, vol. 32, Helsinki, 2000.

[8] The most influential architectural journals were (in Swedish) *Tekniska föreningens i Finland förhandlingar* (1880−) and its offshoots *Arkitekten* (1903−) and *Teknikern* (1891−), and (in Finnish) *Suomen Teollisuuslehti* (1890-) and its offshoots *Rakentaja* (1901–1905) and *Kotitaide (1902–1918)*. The leading art journals of the day included *Ateneum (1898–1903)* and *Euterpe (1901–1905)*, both published in Swedish. See Wäre 1991, for further analysis of these publications.

[9] Wäre 1991, pp. 22-36.

[10] Yrjö Blomstedt/Victor Sucksdorff, *Karjalaisia rakennuksia ja koristemuotoja*. Kuvasto, Helsinki 1900; Yrjö Blomstedt/Victor Sucksdorff, *Karjalaisia rakennuksia ja koristemuotoja*, Jälkimmäinen osa. Kuvakeräyksia keskisestä Venäjän Karjalasta, Helsinki 1901; Yrjö Blomstedt/Victor Sucksdorff, *Karelische Gebäude und ornamentale Formen aus Zentral-Russisch-Karelien*, published by Finnish Association of Antiquities, Helsinki 1902.

[11] Wäre 1991, pp. 154-163.

[12] Wäre 1991, pp. 163-175.

[13] Wäre 1991, p. 48. The architect Vilho Penttilä published an article on this topic in *Suomen Teollisuuslehti* after seeing a sample of richly decorative brick architecture at an industrial exposition in Berlin.

[14] Ivar Aminoff, Framtidens arkitektur i förhållande till kultur och dekorativ konst, *Tekniska föreningens i Finland förhandlingar*, Helsinki 1899, pp. 6-9.

[15] Gustaf Strengell/Sigurd Frosterus, *Arkitektur. En stridskrift våra motståndare tillägnad*, Helsingfors 1904.

[16] Riitta Nikula, Asemakaavoitus vuosisadan vaihteessa, *Ars Suomen taide 4*, Helsinki 1989, pp. 170-175; Wäre 1998, pp. 52-56.

[17] Marika Hausen et al., *Eliel Saarinen. Projects 1896-1923*, Museum of Finnish Architecture, Yearbook, Helsinki 1990; Wäre 1988, pp. 57-65.

[18] Timo Tuomi/Ritva Wäre, On the Search for a National Style, *Abacus*, Finnish Architecture Museum, Yearbook, Helsinki 1979, pp. 57-96; Wäre 1991, pp. 140-154.