

STYLE MODERNE IN ARCHITECTURE OF OLD BATUMI

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Abstract. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Art Nouveau style spread throughout the cities and towns of Georgia. The architecture of old Batumi (at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries) features public buildings and residential houses designed in the Art Nouveau style. Owing to their location, scale, dynamic composition, and artistically expressive decorative forms, some of these buildings acquired the significance of prominent urban accents.

Certain buildings are distinguished by their kameral scale, restrained façade decoration based on linear forms, and less plastic ornamentation. In Batumi's Art Nouveau architecture, one may observe the local tradition of opening courtyard façades with glazed galleries. Buildings designed in the Art Nouveau style constitute an integral part of Batumi's historic urban ensemble.

Key words: Batumi; Architecture; Style Moderne.

Introduction: From the early twentieth century onward, the architecture of Georgian cities witnessed the emergence and establishment of Art Nouveau, an artistic style that had already gained widespread popularity across Western Europe.¹ The new movement, based on creative freedom and diversity, found expression in remarkable residential and public architectural examples created in various cities of Georgia through the efforts of Western-oriented patrons and professional architects. Influenced by Western urban planning, functional and technical innovations, as well as the principles of classical architecture, the eclectic architecture of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Georgia proved receptive to contemporary developments. Despite attempts to establish national tendencies, these developments contributed to the cosmopolitan character of architecture. Within a relatively short period, from the early 1900s until almost the 1920s, numerous noteworthy residential and public buildings in the Art Nouveau style were constructed in the cities and towns of Georgia, including Tbilisi, Batumi, Poti, Kutaisi, Dusheti, Borjomi, Kobuleti, Chakvi, Makhinjauri, Sukhumi, and New Athos. The popularity of Art Nouveau in Georgia reached its peak during the 1910s. As with other pseudo-artistic stylistic trends that spread throughout Georgia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this style contained nothing specifically Georgian. The visual language of Art Nouveau was based primarily on the imitation of models developed abroad and relied on a distinctive repertoire in the treatment of overall façade composition, doors and windows, cornices, parapets, balcony railings, and wall surfaces (Beridze, 1963, pp. 82–83). However, it was characterized by a pronounced search for novelty, creative freedom, individualism, diversity of artistic expression, a striving for rich decorative ornamentation,

¹ This artistic style, expressed in architecture and design, is known by different names in various countries: “Jugendstil” in Germany, “Sezessionsstil” in Austria, “Stile Liberty” in Italy, “Art Nouveau” in France and Belgium, “Modernismo” in Spain, and the “Glasgow Style” in Scotland. In Russia it is referred to as “Modern,” while in Georgia it is known by two names: “Moderni” and “Art Nouveau.”

the dynamism of curvilinear forms, and the synthesis of architecture, sculpture, and painterly forms. Against the background of the stylistic diversity of the nineteenth century, Art Nouveau buildings became an expression of the individual abilities of architects, the tastes of patrons, and, to a certain extent, their social status. The distinctive character of the style was defined by aestheticism, the stylization of artistic forms based on plasticity and decoration, motifs inspired by Eastern cultures (particularly Japanese art), humorous, symbolic, and folkloric-allegorical elements, their integration through a unified compositional principle, and, at the same time, consideration of traditions characteristic of different geographical and cultural regions. Attempts to preserve national features, integrate them with contemporary requirements, synthesize the building and its environment, and respond to climatic conditions distinguish Georgian Art Nouveau architecture, particularly residential buildings, which reveal a tendency to combine the artistic principles of Art Nouveau with the courtyard-and-balcony structure characteristic of Tbilisi houses. At the same time, artistic transformations corresponding to both the early and the later phases of the style can be observed in the architecture of Tbilisi (Gengiuri, 2013–2014).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, architects working in Georgia commonly practiced in a variety of architectural styles. Among them were architects whose work incorporated elements of the Art Nouveau movement to varying degrees. The establishment of Art Nouveau artistic tendencies in Georgia is associated with such architects as S. Kldiashvili, S. Krichinsky, A. Rogoisky, M. Neprintsev, N. Obolonsky, A. Ozerov, M. Ohanjanov, G. Sargsyan, G. Kurdiani, A. Shimkevich, J. Ditsmann, E. Frick, K. Tsaar, and others (Gengiuri, 2013, pp. 214–226). In Batumi, as in other cities of Georgia, residential and public buildings in the Art Nouveau style began to be constructed in the early 1900s. However, historical and archival information concerning architects who practiced in the Art Nouveau style remains extremely limited, and this issue requires further in-depth research.

Methodology: The research methodology includes the study of archival and scholarly data, art-historical analysis of artistic form, and critical analysis of written and visual sources. It is important to conduct a comparative analysis of each source preserved in the scientific literature, photographic materials, and the current condition of the monuments. The methodology also involves visual assessment, description, and documentation of buildings, the differentiation between authentic and reconstructed building phases, and the presentation of the artistic and historical contexts of urban development and individual structures.

Discussion/Results: The architecture of Old Batumi includes public buildings constructed in the Art Nouveau style (such as cinemas, shops, banks, and others) as well as residential houses. The majority of Art Nouveau buildings, from an architectural point of view, are preserved along the architecturally distinguished Memed Abashidze Avenue, formerly known as Maria Avenue. The development of Memed Abashidze Avenue was formed at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At that time, it was named Maria Avenue in honor of the wife of the Russian Emperor Alexander III, who visited Batumi in 1888. The street connected the port area with Lake Nuri, located deeper within the city. Distinguished by its ornamental character, the avenue represented the commercial center of the city. It was home to banks, consulates of various countries, cinemas, the post office, the residence of the military governor, and was inhabited by representatives of the city's elite social classes.

A project of a house belonging to Nikifor Nikiforidis, located on “Marinsky” (Maria) Street (Memed Abashidze Street No. 16), preserved in the State Archive of Ajara, is dated to 1904. The façade of the two-storey building, designed for both commercial and residential functions, is decorated with Art Nouveau elements alongside classical features. Curvilinear window forms, ribbon-decorated keystones and garland motifs, openwork grilles of shop windows, balcony railings, oriel windows, shell-shaped bases of brackets, and the alternation of brickwork, stone masonry, and smoothly plastered surfaces all reveal the characteristic

features of Art Nouveau (State Archive of Ajara, Fond 6, Inventory 2, File 498). The current appearance of the building confirms that the project was only partially and somewhat reduced in its implementation. Instead of the four wide shopfront windows developed between the central and corner risalits according to the principle of symmetry, and the elongated balcony façade of the second floor, a two-storey commercial-residential building with short wings between the orielled risalits was constructed. Originally, an elongated metal balcony was placed between the oriels, which has now been demolished. The façade of the building, as well as the parapets of the risalits, were decorated with classical and Baroque elements different from the original design concept, while moderately used plastic forms of the Art Nouveau style (such as window surrounds, stucco ornamentation, etc.) are mainly preserved in the decoration of the oriels and the arched openings of the second floor. The ornamentation of attic windows added in the modern period also repeats older motifs, emphasizing the eclectic character of the façade. At present, the façade represents an interesting combination of classical and Art Nouveau elements. A traditional feature of this house is the arrangement of wide shop units with display windows on the ground floor facing the street, and residential rooms on the upper floor.

An example of the Art Nouveau style is also the two-storey house located at 12–14 Memed Abashidze Street, adjacent to the same building, constructed in the early 1900s, which currently functions as a hotel.² The composition of the building's façade is defined by decoration arranged around rectangular windows. The Art Nouveau repertoire is reflected in low-relief rough and smooth surface planes, panels articulated with corrugated, diagonal, and linear grooves, and motifs of triple vertical lines. The expressiveness of the façade is created through light-and-shadow effects produced by the alternation of surfaces with different textures. The dominance of geometric forms and the overall simplicity of the façade do not diminish the stylistic features of Art Nouveau, while also ensuring the building's organic integration into the contemporary urban ensemble.

A noteworthy example of Old Batumi's urban fabric is the two-storey residential building constructed in 1912 at the corner of **M. Abashidze Street (No. 10)** and **G. Mazniashvili Street (No. 1)**. The corner section of the building is emphasized by a prominent upper volume, ornamental decoration, a metal balcony, and the inscription of the construction date, "1912." The ground floor is articulated by a series of wide openings, while the upper floor is lined with rectangular windows. The façade is decorated with pilasters adorned with vertical bands, horizontal grooves, and circular motifs; ornamental panels placed beneath and above the windows; arched pediments crowning the vertical sections; and metal parapet railings. The stylized ornamental motifs of the façade and the interplay of geometric surfaces with different textures reveal the characteristics of Late Art Nouveau. This section of **Memed Abashidze Street** is distinguished by a strong sense of urban unity, created in part by the consistent design of the Art Nouveau buildings located along it. Rectangular openings, restrained ornamental decoration, and the expressive treatment of wall surfaces through contrasting textures are the dominant features of the streetscape. Similar artistic principles can also be found in the Art Nouveau architecture of **Tbilisi** from the 1910s (Gengiuri, 2015, pp. 11–12).

Art Nouveau and cinema emerged during the same period in both Europe and Georgia. These two closely associated innovations gave rise to a new type of public building—the cinema. Movie theatres were predominantly designed in the Art Nouveau style. Since 1905, cinemas constructed in the Georgian cities of Tbilisi (*Apollo, Palace*), Kutaisi (*Mon-Plaisir*), and Batumi (*Apollo, Illusion*) have also been based on the architectural principles of the Art Nouveau style. These buildings are notable both for their spatial organization and for the artistic and individual character of their façades. Archival documents indicate that a plot of

² The ground floor façades, originally articulated with openings and clad with marble slabs, have been significantly altered, while the building's authenticity is largely preserved on the second floor. The attic level was added in the 2010s.

land on Maria (Mariinsky) Avenue was allocated in 1909 for the construction of the *Electro-Theatre Apollo* following a petition submitted by **Nikolai Broval** to the mayor of Batumi, **Ivane Andronikashvili**. The project was subsequently approved by the municipal authorities. The cinema was built between 1909 and 1910, as confirmed by a photograph taken in 1911 by the Batumi photographer **Mikheil Glaudan**, which shows the completed building already integrated into the streetscape (Tavadze, 2015, pp. 223–229). The façade of the cinema was opened by wide semicircular glazed openings characteristic of the Art Nouveau style. The curved wall surfaces between the entrance columns accommodated decorative elements and the owner's inscription, “Кинотеатръ Н. Броваль и Ко” (“Cinema of N. Broval & Co.”). Above, the name “APOLLO” was displayed in relief letters. Rusticated pilasters, broad horseshoe-shaped openings, curved surfaces, polychrome details, and motifs of circles and intertwining plants reflect the artistic language of Art Nouveau. Alongside the traditional rectangular openings commonly found in Georgian Art Nouveau architecture, architects also employed circular, horseshoe-shaped, and elliptical openings framed by ornamental surrounds and transoms. Columns serving both structural and decorative purposes were likewise a frequent feature. The façade composition of the Apollo Cinema, distinguished by its broad curved openings intersecting the columns, occupies a special place among Batumi's Art Nouveau buildings, which are otherwise characterized mainly by rectangular openings.

Another cinema distinguished by its Art Nouveau façade decoration was the Illusion Cinema, owned by Rudolf Weidemann and located on Dondukov-Korsakov Street (present-day K. Gamsakhurdia Street) in Batumi. Its construction began in 1908 (Tavadze, 2015, p. 225). The building was constructed of stone, roofed with tiles, and decorated with painted Art Nouveau ornamentation on its façade. At the centre of the façade was a double-leaf entrance door with ornamental glazing, framed by a horseshoe-shaped arch resembling the form of a film camera lens. Above it, on a curved dark panel enclosed within a frame, was the inscription “Theatre Illusion” (“Театръ „Иллюзіонъ”). On either side of the entrance, the façade was adorned with freely flowing ornamental stems terminating in blooming roses, dragonfly figures, and inscriptions bearing the cinema's name. Decorative and stylized representations of natural motifs—plants and insects, particularly the symbolic image of the female-headed dragonfly—were among the favourite themes of Art Nouveau masters such as René Lalique, Louis Comfort Tiffany, and Émile Gallé. Their presence in the decoration of the cinema reflects the strong interest in contemporary artistic trends that characterized Batumi at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The historic streetscape of Memed Abashidze Street preserves several buildings incorporating Art Nouveau elements that exhibit characteristics of the style's late phase, including a symmetrical and rigorously ordered façade composition, a preference for linear and geometric forms, and the restrained use of decorative ornament. The two-storey building at No. 4 Memed Abashidze Street, which currently houses one of the buildings of Ajara Television, was constructed in the early twentieth century. Its ground floor accommodated commercial premises, while the upper floor contained the photographic studio of the German photographer Michael Glaudan, distinguished by a glass ceiling, luxurious furnishings, and black sculptures. The decorative treatment of the façade—including the projecting risalit accentuated by an arched pediment, the ornamentation of the portal, parapet, and cornice, as well as the vegetal relief panels and other decorative details—draws upon the Art Nouveau repertoire. A particularly expressive feature is the frieze on the second storey, composed of vertical fluting incorporating flat half-pilasters. As in the façades of the neighbouring residential buildings at Nos. 10 and 12 Memed Abashidze Street, geometric and linear decorative forms predominate. With its refined proportions and sophisticated façade decoration, the building represents a noteworthy example of the urban architectural heritage of Old Batumi.

A building that reflects the characteristic tendencies of late Art Nouveau is the Puppet Theatre at No. 49 Memed Abashidze Street, constructed in the early twentieth century. Distinguished by its modest proportions, the building features a façade clad in reddish stone, embellished by an arcade-like balcony extending along the perimeter of the structure. The oval opening of the balcony, the ornamentation of its openwork balustrade, the juxtaposition of rough-textured and smooth rendered wall surfaces on the left façade, executed in plasters of varying textures and patterns, as well as the transom lights of the enclosed veranda composed of geometric triangular and rectangular forms, all display characteristic features of the Art Nouveau style.³

The exterior of the two-storey house at No. 16 Iakob Gogebashvili Street, constructed in the early twentieth century, exhibits the artistic characteristics of late Art Nouveau. The façade, articulated into asymmetrical sections, is distinguished by the rhythmic arrangement of rectangular windows, pilasters decorated with vertical bands and sculptural lion-head motifs, a vegetal ornamental frieze, and other decorative elements, constituting an individual artistic interpretation of the Art Nouveau style. The pilasters incorporate a motif characteristic of Art Nouveau architecture and widely represented in Georgian examples: slender vertical lines terminating in discs or lozenges. Popular in Art Nouveau architecture, this decorative device appears in various interpretations in the architecture of Austria, Italy, Spain, Russia, and Lithuania. In Georgia, compositions based on this motif occur not only in façade decoration but also in wall painting and examples of wooden architecture.

The three-storey residence of the tobacco industrialist Lazare Biniat-Oghli, situated at the intersection of General Giorgi Mazniashvili and King Parnavaz Streets and constructed in the early twentieth century, is one of the most outstanding examples of Art Nouveau architecture in Batumi. Set within the dense historic urban fabric of the old quarter, the building is distinguished by its remarkable artistic expressiveness. Its architectural character is defined by an asymmetrical plan, the use of building materials of varying colours and textures—including stone, brick, ceramic tiles, and concrete—the combination of curvilinear and rectilinear window openings, the vegetal and figural stucco decoration of the interior, and the broken silhouette of the fence enclosing the courtyard. The building ranks among the finest examples of the Art Nouveau style in Georgia. The architectural design of the residence exhibits close affinities with the buildings designed in Poti and Kutaisi by the Lithuanian architect Edmund Frick, whose works—including the so-called “Chinese House” in Kutaisi, the Khilkovsky House, the School of Fine Arts, and the Kolkhian Culture Museum in Poti—are characterised by a synthesis of Art Nouveau and Neo-Romantic elements. It is known that Edmund Frick arrived in Georgia in 1904, following his graduation from the Nicholas I Institute of Civil Engineering. In 1906, he was appointed technician to the Batumi City Administration, while simultaneously pursuing architectural work in Poti and Kutaisi. Among the surviving historic buildings in Batumi and its environs, the design of Vikenty Skarzhinsky’s country house “Castello Mare,” the “Lao Jin Jao House” in Chakvi, and the Biniat-Oghli House on Mazniashvili Street in Batumi may all be attributed to Edmund Frick (Ghvineria, 2023).

The two-storey building at No. 20 Merab Kostava Street (formerly Oglobzhinsky Street) was purpose-built as a retail establishment and belonged to the Georgian entrepreneur Nikoloz Sabaev (Sabashvili). The design was reviewed and approved by the Batumi City Administration, together with the city architect and civil engineer, in 1908. The surviving copy of the design, however, does not bear the architect's initials (State

³ In 2011–2012, the building underwent reconstruction as part of its adaptation for use as a theatre. As a result of damage to the balcony, its original decorative elements were lost, the building’s volumetric composition was altered, and a mansard storey was added. During the same intervention, the interior was completely renovated, while the courtyard façade was demolished

Archive of Ajara, Fond 6, Inventory 505).⁴ The shop was a two-storey structure with wide openings, featuring interior staircases and mezzanines supported by Tuscan columns and fitted with metal balustrades. It was constructed in accordance with the approved design. Rectangular, circular, and curvilinear openings, a broken-profile cornice, a wavy parapet, interior metal railings, and other architectural details were executed in the Art Nouveau style. The building was reconstructed in the 2010s. It remains an interesting example of Art Nouveau architecture and significantly contributes to the scale and artistic character of the street.

The imposing three-storey residence of P. Shpolyansky, situated at the intersection of Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava Streets and constructed in the early twentieth century, is one of the most distinguished examples of Art Nouveau architecture in Georgia (Всеобщий Адресь ежегодник..., 1902:80; Kldiashvili, 1984, p. 53).⁵ The building combined commercial, public, and residential functions. The ground floor accommodated shops and storage facilities, while the upper floor housed the offices of the Mutual Credit Bank. Among the Art Nouveau buildings of Old Batumi, the structure on Merab Kostava Street is distinguished by its fluid silhouette and the rich use of plastic and decorative architectural elements. The projecting risalits of the façades are accentuated by high, curvilinear raised parapets. Wide openings, an abundance of sculptural decoration, the rich articulation of architectural elements, panels with vegetal motifs, a mosaic panel, and other decorative details emphasise the individuality of the façade composition. The artistic culmination of the design is the chamfered corner of the building, adorned with sculptural ornament in the form of mascarons and relief busts of long-haired women. It is well established that the flourishing of façade sculpture in Georgia began in the early twentieth century and was closely associated with the emergence of Art Nouveau architecture from the beginning of the 1900s (Khoshtaria, 2008, pp. 16–18). In the architecture of Tbilisi, a number of remarkable examples demonstrate the synthesis of different art forms, including architecture, sculpture, painting, stained glass, and mosaic. The façade sculpture of Art Nouveau buildings fulfilled a variety of artistic and symbolic functions. In some cases, it served to emphasise the social role of the building through figural compositions and allegorical figures that highlighted its intended function, as exemplified by the Zubalashvili People's House (now the Kote Marjanishvili Theatre) and the Theatre of the Georgian Nobility, also known as the Bank Theatre (reconstructed between 1902 and 1908). Rich sculptural decoration is likewise a characteristic feature of Tbilisi's Art Nouveau public buildings and large residential houses. The sculptural decoration of Tbilisi's Art Nouveau buildings predominantly reflects the principles of academic art; however, some examples reveal the stylistic influence of Art Nouveau in their manner of execution. These include generalized and geometrized figures, faces distinguished by a naïve expressiveness, and female representations embodying the mystery, poetic sensibility, and emotional refinement characteristic of the style. The figures of long-haired women depicted on the pilasters of the chamfered corner of the Batumi building belong to this latter group. Their fluid, dynamic, and angular linear forms and silhouettes merge seamlessly with the decorative arabesques, becoming an integral part of the overall ornamental composition. Mascarons constitute another characteristic motif of Art Nouveau architectural decoration and frequently serve as important expressive elements of the façade. They range from naturalistic representations to highly stylized and abstracted forms. The mascarons incorporated into the balcony decoration of the Batumi building is distinguished by its expressive and grotesque character, achieved through the sharply modelled and deliberately exaggerated facial features. The building's elegant

⁴ The project bears an annotation indicating that it was reviewed by the Batumi city architect and civil engineer, certifying the conformity of the copy with the original design, and confirming the approval and consent of the Batumi City Administration.

⁵ At the beginning of the twentieth century, P. Shpolyansky served as the treasurer of the Batumi Jewish prayer house. He also headed the Batumi branch of the Mutual Credit Bank, located at the intersection of Mariinskaya Street (now Memed Abashidze Street) and Eristavi Street (now General Mazniashvili Street).

proportions, dynamic forms, and rich decorative treatment establish it as one of the principal architectural landmarks within the historic urban fabric. In recent years, however, prolonged reconstruction works and the building's continued disuse have resulted in the complete loss of its historic interior and the destruction of the courtyard façade with its glazed galleries.

The building of the Khariton Akhvlediani Museum, formerly owned by the first-guild merchant Ashot Mdoiants, represents an example of an Art Nouveau reconstruction in the architecture of Old Batumi (Душкина 2010; Месхи, 1914).⁶ The façade of the building, originally constructed in the 1880s, was later enriched with Art Nouveau decorative ornament. Its principal decorative features include a three-part entrance composition with wide and narrow door openings, accentuated by an arch and rusticated stonework. The façade create a restrained yet expressive Art Nouveau composition. A second storey was added to the building in 1957. Consequently, its present architectural appearance reflects a combination of the Art Nouveau style of the 1910s and the Soviet Neoclassical architecture of the 1950s.

The residential building at No. 30 Petre Melikishvili Street is one of the outstanding examples of Art Nouveau architecture in Batumi. Its façade decoration—including carved roses entwined around the window surrounds, floral panels with lily motifs, decorative elements adorning the risalit and the portal, the balcony railings, and the transom lights above the entrance door—demonstrates an individual compositional approach.⁷

Individual Art Nouveau motifs can also be found on a number of buildings of different architectural styles in Old Batumi, including the former bank building (now the Constitutional Court), the former Post and Telegraph Building, the concrete fence on Demetre Tavadzebuli Street and other examples. The popularity of the Art Nouveau style is further evidenced by the façade decoration of the observation post of the lifeguard station on Batumi's seafront, as depicted in an early twentieth-century photograph.

The popularity of the Art Nouveau style is further confirmed by a design project dated 1911, preserved in the Ajara State Archive, which reflects an attempt to modernise a building located at the intersection of Niko Baratashvili and Memed Abashidze Streets (formerly Tbilisi and Marine Streets, in the area adjacent to present-day Europe Square) by introducing Art Nouveau forms into its originally simple and austere design (State Archive of Ajara, Fond 6, Inventory 502). The façade of the building is enlivened by Art Nouveau elements, including the textural contrast of the wall surfaces, the curved arches of the balcony, a wavy parapet, metal railings, and decorative treatment of doors and windows. The same formal features are also present in the concrete fence, examples of which have been preserved to this day in the historic districts of Batumi. The project was designed by Panteleevich (Panteleyevich) (Chichileishvili, 2009, pp. 266–275).

At the same time, Old Batumi also includes buildings whose decorative treatment employs established forms—such as mixed wall textures, motifs of vertical lines, and minimalistic window decoration—yet these do not achieve the individuality and plastic expressiveness characteristic of Art Nouveau. This may be attributed to the persistence of eclectic traditions.

In the architecture of Old Batumi, elements of the Art Nouveau style can be traced up to the 1920s. One such example is the decorative treatment of the façade of a two-storey residential building located at No. 39 Zubalashvili Street, associated with the Soviet period and constructed for employees of the transport

⁶ Originally from Akhaltsikhe, the first-guild merchant Ashot Mdoiants owned several trading companies, a shipping enterprise, craft workshops, and a number of residential properties in Batumi. In 1922, all of Mdoiants's property was confiscated, and the building formerly belonging to him was converted into the State Treasury. From 1930 onwards, it housed the Adjara Museum of Local Lore, which continues to occupy the building today.

⁷ According to some opinions (based on a former inscription on the building), the structure is believed to have been constructed in the 1840s (Uzunadze, 1997, p. 36), while the Art Nouveau decoration of the façade was most likely added in the early twentieth century.

administration and the maritime-railway centre (1921–1925). The façade, characterised by a clearly articulated structure balanced through vertical and horizontal accents, incorporates both eclectic and Art Nouveau elements. From a stylistic perspective, the building represents a transitional stage from eclecticism to Constructivist architecture.

Conclusion: The Art Nouveau style became established in the architecture of Old Batumi from the early twentieth century onwards. Buildings with individually articulated artistic solutions, preserved to varying degrees in their original form, as well as contemporaneous reconstructions, renovations, architectural projects, and photographic materials, all attest to the popularity of the style in Batumi architecture.

Information on Batumi's Art Nouveau examples remains extremely scarce. At the current stage of research, with few exceptions, the identities of architects and designers working in the Art Nouveau style in Batumi are almost entirely unknown. Likewise, there is little evidence regarding the workshops responsible for executing decorative work on façades and interiors.

Art Nouveau buildings constitute an integral part of the urban ensemble of Old Batumi. Functional diversity and the tendency to combine commercial and residential compartments are characteristic features of Batumi's Art Nouveau architecture. Owing to their location, scale, and fluid, dynamically composed and expressively articulated decorative forms, some of these buildings acquire the significance of prominent urban design accents. However, in the architecture of Old Batumi, priority is given to those examples of Art Nouveau integrated into the urban fabric that are distinguished by their modest scale, restrained façade articulation based on linear forms, and a less “fantasmagorical” use of plastic decoration. A notable characteristic of international Art Nouveau in Georgia, particularly in Tbilisi, is the preservation of traditional courtyard façade structures and the use of ornamented balconies; however, this tendency is only weakly expressed in Batumi architecture, which is largely due to the disruption of the original urban fabric and extensive, often insensitive reconstructions of buildings. Based on a limited number of surviving examples, it can be inferred that the courtyard façades of Batumi's Art Nouveau houses would have been characterised by glazed galleries, adapted to local climatic conditions.

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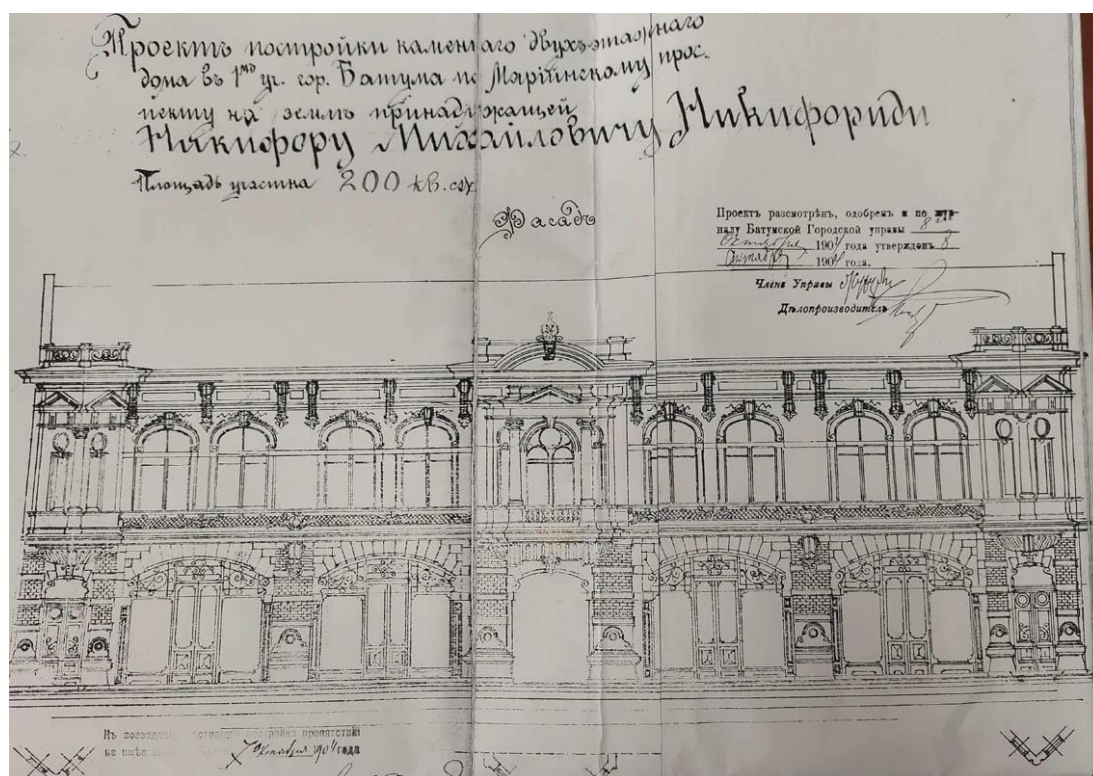
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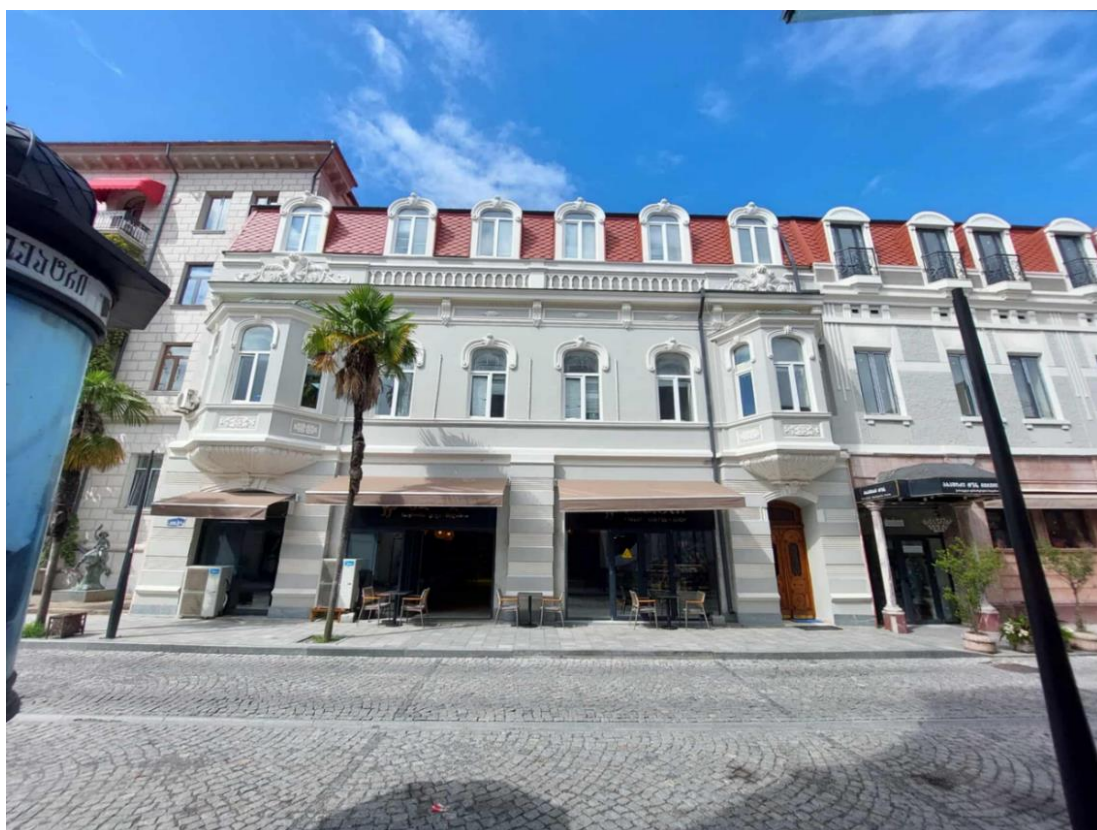
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Illustrations



Architectural Design of N. Nikiforidis's House



House at 16 Memed Abashidze Street



House at 14–12 Memed Abashidze Street, Batumi



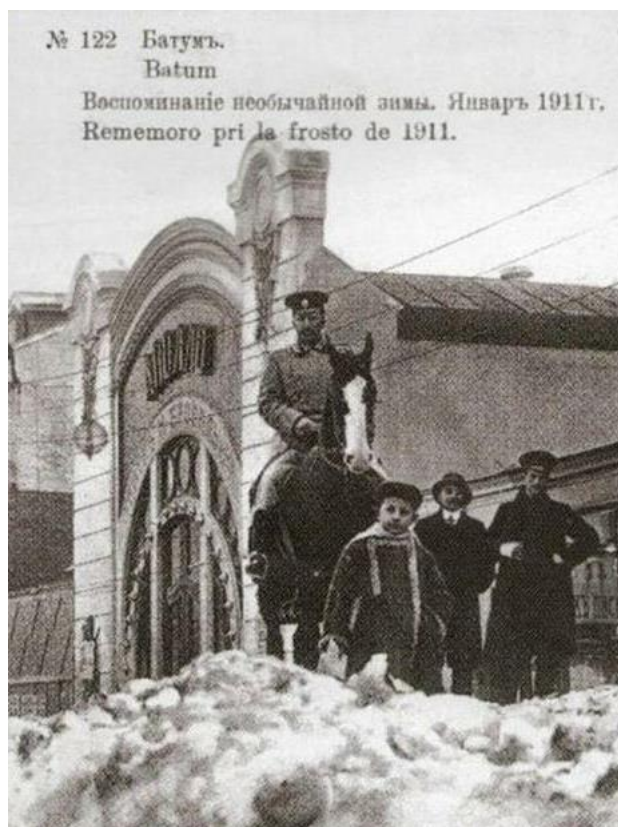
House at 10 Memed Abashidze Street



„Apollo“ Cinema



“Illusion” Cinema, former Dondukhov-Korsakov (K. Gamsakhurdia) Street, Batumi



Apollo Cinema (1911). Photograph by M. Glaudan



Building at 41 Memed Abashidze Street



Building at 49 Memed Abashidze Street



Building at 16 Iakob Gogebashvili Street



Building at 36 Giorgi Mazniashvili Street, Batumi



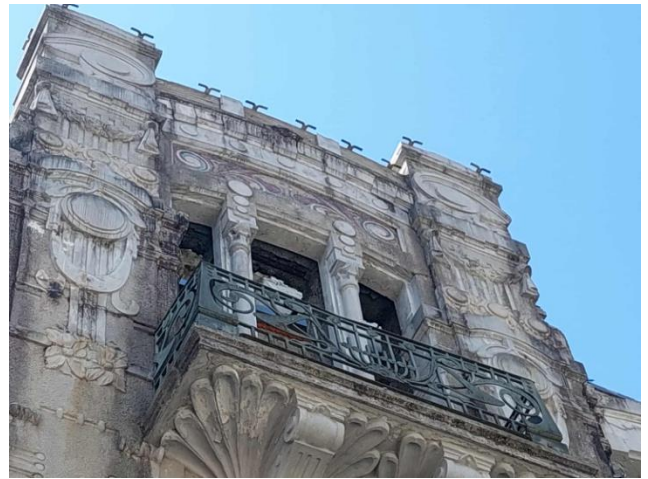
Facade Design of Nikoloz Sabashvili's Shop
(20 M. Kostava Street) Photo taken in 2004



Building of N. Sabashvili's Shop after Reconstruction. Photograph from 2015



Building at 14 Zviad Gamsakhurdia Street, Batumi



Building at 14 Zviad Gamsakhurdia Street, Batumi



Building of the K. Akhvlediani Museum, 4 K. Akhvlediani Street, Batumi



House at 30 Petre Melikishvili Street, Batumi



Building at 65 Farnavaz Mefe Street, Batumi Lookout Post of the Rescue Station, Batumi



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