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**Abstract:** *Vasily Mirzoyan is an outstanding Armenian architect who worked in the Yerevan Governorate from 1897 to 1910 as a provincial architect and made a major contribution to the development of construction in the region. Churches, administrative, educational, cultural, and entertainment buildings, mansions, apartment houses, engineering facilities, roads, bridges, etc., were built according to the architect's designs. The article, based on archival materials, natural studies, and architectural analysis, reveals the architectural and artistic features of Vasily Mirzoyan's works: appeal to historical styles and Art Nouveau, an address to national structures and motifs, strict logic in the structure of composition systems, and a clear and rational organization of spaces. Innovative interpretations at all stages of design are of great interest. The aim and objectives of the article are to rehabilitate, through the figure of Vasily Mirzoyan, the professional achievements of Armenian architecture and engineering of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as to underscore the unquestionable value of information about this historical period that was lost during the Soviet era.*

**Keywords:** *architectural style, function, building typology, innovation, traditions.*

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## Introduction

Vasily Mirzoyan is one of the outstanding legislators of the new architectural school that emerged at the turn of the 20th century. This architectural movement developed a unique style, the definition of which is a combination of European and national Armenian architectural principles of construction, and which left a rich cultural heritage. Vasily Mirzoyan left his memory in the form of beautiful buildings that adorn the streets of Yerevan. All of them are included in the State List of Immovable Historical and Cultural Monuments of Yerevan.

The listed regalia of the architect, as well as the huge list of architectural and engineering projects implemented by him, both in Yerevan and throughout the former Yerevan Governorate, nevertheless leave the name of the architect in unworthy oblivion. In several scholarly works by H. Khalpakhchyan, V. Harutyunyan, and T. Hakobyan devoted to the history and architecture of Yerevan, the name of Vasily Mirzoyan is mentioned; in E. Tigranyan's book, the architect is the subject of an entire chapter. However, the context of these studies is relatively broad, which generally accounts for the concise nature of the information provided about the architect's creative personality [1-6]. More information about him comes from books published by the author of this article, scientific and popular speeches, and scientific and journalistic articles, often included in the theme of Yerevan of the 19th and early 20th centuries [7]. The novelty of this article, in memory of the 160th anniversary of his birth, is the chosen context, focused on the features of the creative style of Vasily Mirzoyan and his innovative methods in architecture. Taking into account his enormous role in the formation of the architecture of this period, this will allow us to trace the path of development of the region's architecture during the time of intensive innovations.

The need to study the work of architects of the 19th and early 20th centuries remains relevant due to filling gaps in the history of modern Armenian architecture and the desire to create a database for pre-design materials for the restoration, reconstruction, and adaptation of architectural monuments.

The purpose of the article is to affirm the professional accomplishments of Armenian architecture and engineering of the 19th and early 20th centuries and to emphasize the indisputable value of this historical period, the significance and documentation of which were largely lost in Soviet times. The objectives of the study include a typological and architectural-artistic characterization of functional groups with the identification of their distinctive features and stylistic priorities during the analyzed period, which will enable further research aimed at identifying continuity between two successive historical epochs.

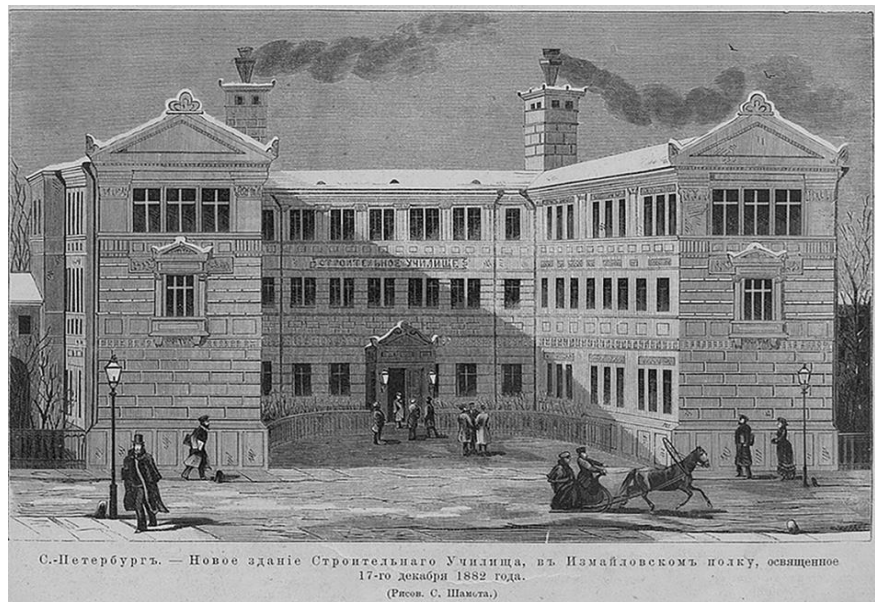
## Materials and Methods

The article is written based on field studies, analysis, and systematization of materials collected in archives, literary sources, periodicals of the 19th–early 20th centuries, and published author's books on the topic of history and architecture of the 19th and early 20th centuries, from which some of the author's own photographs were also borrowed. The main research method is architectural analysis, carried out by studying architectural monuments in nature, measurements, and photographic fixations.

The author investigated the funds of the National Archives of Armenia, the Yerevan History Museum, the State History Museum of Armenia, materials from the personal archive of Vasily Mirzoyan, etc.

## Results and Discussion

**History.** Vasily Mirzoyan (1863/1864, Tiflis – 1925, Yerevan) began his professional career in 1892, the year after graduating from the St. Petersburg Institute of Civil Engineers [1] (Fig.1). In the same year, after a short period of work in Courland, he came to Yerevan, where he began his official and creative work. In the Construction Department of the Yerevan Governorate Administration, he held the post of provincial architect from 1897 to 1910, when he retired from service.



**Fig. 1.** The building of the Construction School in St. Petersburg, consecrated in 1882. Photo from Wikipedia - Institute of Civil Engineers

A list of his works includes all types of public, residential, industrial, and engineering structures. He is the author of the administrative and religious buildings, schools, banks, mansions, apartment houses, factories, bridges, and roads in Yerevan, the towns, and the villages of the governorate [7,8].

He is the Knight of the Order of Saint Stanislav 3rd and 2nd degree, Saint Anna 3rd degree, and "Lion and Sun" 3rd degree.

**Buildings.** Strength, utility, and beauty (*firmitas, utilitas, and venustas*)—the basic laws of architecture—are combined in the form-building principles of all the works of Vasili Mirzoyan.

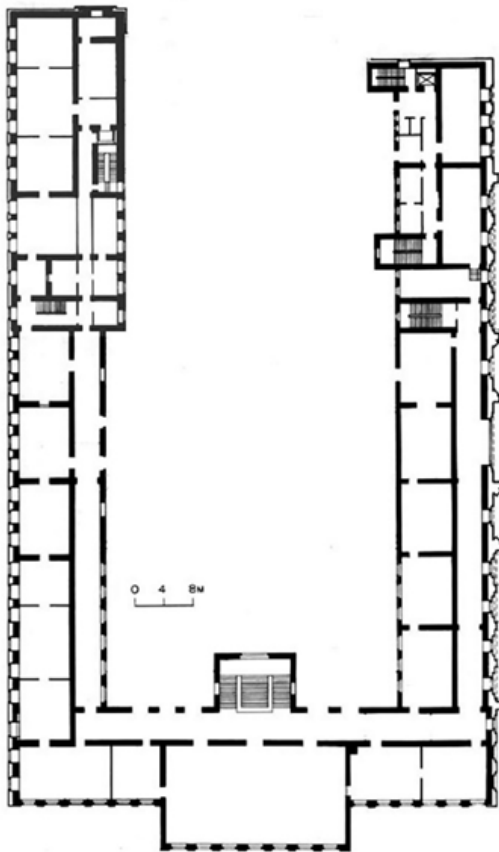
**Administrative and public buildings.** There are many interpretations, unique solutions, and innovations in their variations, especially for the Armenian architecture of that time. The Treasure House and Treasury Chamber (Fig.2), the Yerevan branch of the State Bank, the Governorate Administration, and the Buniatyan Theatre (co-author Boris Mehrabyan) buildings have been designed with a variety of architectural solutions, taking into account the functional composition, traffic schedule, and respectability of the building. The important position on the city's main streets, in turn, determined the hierarchy of façade forms and decorations that correspond to the urban environment.

**Schools.** The architect's archive of works contains projects of educational institutions. This is a large number of primary schools and colleges throughout the territory of the Yerevan Governorate. They are distinguished by a functionally expressed laconic layout and the same facades.

Grand educational institutions, such as the Boys' Gymnasium and Teachers' Seminary, are concentrated in Yerevan. For such large complexes with boarding houses, a typical planning scheme is a spacious inner courtyard, around which the buildings of all functional zones are concentrated. A central axis is also



**Fig. 2.** *Treasure house and Treasury Chamber on Nalbandyan street, Yerevan, 1901. Photo by author*



**Fig. 3.** *Plan of the second floor of the Boy's Classical Gymnasium on Abovyan street, Yerevan, 1916-1920. Geometrical survey*

present, along which the main entrance and school hall are located, and a gallery system is used to distribute educational classrooms. In the layout of the Boys' Gymnasium (Figs. 3,4), special attention is drawn to the one-sided, i.e., equal orientation in the placement of all classrooms in the academic buildings.

The second important feature of the layout, which different architects developed at different times, is that, unlike the versions of previous architects, the entrance to the school hall from the street is rationally arranged. This idea made it possible to create an autonomous entrance to the entertainment part of the complex, and a century later, this area of the gymnasium continues its function as Arno Babajanyan Concert Hall.

**Mansions and apartment houses.** Judging by the cultural heritage preserved in Yerevan, most of the mansions are the work of Mirzoyan. In all cases, it is obvious that homeowners wanted to ask him to design their own home. Of course, the entire range of functional qualities was always successfully solved and satisfied customers. In addition, each building in the layout was distinguished by an individual feature, and the same applies to the external image: not a single building, for example, the mansions of Afrikyan, Fotinov, and Eghiazaryan (Fig.5), repeats another in image, composition, decoration,

and stylistic interpretation, being a work of architecture. The same can be said about apartments and multifunctional houses. They retain the specific layout, functional zoning, and distribution of rooms typical of this type of Yerevan house. But each building, separately, is a beautiful and unique piece of art. Interesting associations are caused by the veranda of the apartment of the manager of the Treasury chamber, which connects two exceptionally different forms: the silhouette of the Palladian window and the material of the traditional wooden balcony of the Yerevan house (Fig.6).





**Fig. 4.** Portal of Boys' Classical Gymnasium on Abovyan street, Yerevan, 1917-1920. Photo by author



**Fig. 5.** Eghiazaryan mansion on Abovyan street, Yerevan, 1905. Photo by author

**Religious buildings.** The list of religious constructions includes not only a variety of shape modeling concepts of architectural solutions but also buildings of different religions: Apostolic, Orthodox (military churches), and Islamic (mosque in Nakhichevan).

The style-forming principles of all religious buildings preserved traditional architectural forms. But certain priorities of the architect are traced in the formation. First of all, the remark refers to the new organization of the entrance, as in the Churches of Surb Astvatsatsin in Gavar (Fig.7) and Vardenis. The bell tower placed in front of the portal leads to the church through a closed vestibule. The church, bell tower, and intermediate volume between them are horizontally longitudinal and vertically built along one axis. Such a functional and compositional solution has a very beneficial effect on the monumental expressiveness of buildings. In many churches, a new window shape was used: vertically elongated three-arched windows, with a central raised arch and three-lobed arcature at the top—a symbol of the Holy Trinity.

**Bridges, roads.** The National Archives of Armenia have preserved projects of bridges and roads designed by Vasili Mirzoyan. The construction and improvement of engineering structures included covering roads and building bridges across rivers, such as the route from Elenovka to Nor-Bayazet, with a road and a reinforced concrete bridge<sup>1,2</sup>. Bridge trusses were used in the bridge structures, often with a segmental configuration and a polygonal outline of the upper belt.

<sup>1</sup> National Archives of Armenia, fund 19, inventory 1, case 1683.

<sup>2</sup> National Archives of Armenia, fund 94, inventory 3, case 762.





**Fig. 6.** *Veranda of the apartment of the manager of the Treasury chamber, Yerevan. Photo by author*



**Fig. 7.** *Church of Surb Astvatsatsin in Gavar, 1900s. Photo from Wikipedia*

**Architectural styles.** The diversity of architectural and artistic interpretations of the architect's works is expressed in specific compositional techniques and stylistic solutions [8-10]. Thus, in the 1900s, such buildings with different stylistic characteristics were designed and built as the chapel over the tomb of St. Ananias in Yerevan in the national style and the Orthodox church in the village of Kanaker in the traditions of Russian architecture, and the mansions on Astafev Street in Yerevan–Barsegh Eghiazaryan with a neo-Renaissance façade and Vladimir Brazhnikov, in which Art Nouveau is combined with classical forms. An analysis of the buildings constructed by Mirzoyan reveals an impeccable professional mastery of the specifics of architectural forms, ideas, and attributes of style. All this allows for the development of a harmonious interweaving of artistic concepts, in which historical style and a reflection of modernity are undoubtedly simultaneously read (Fig.8).

#### **Neoclassical architecture motifs.**

The use of the classical order system in the composition reveals a wide range of creative techniques—from reliable citation to original interpretation of Greco-Roman orders. This is the reason for the development of bright individuality and the uniqueness of compositional solutions in the works. From the point of view of the professional skills of the architect, this is one of the testimonies of the virtuoso professional mastery of the architect, always expressed in the logic and harmony of the entire compositional system.

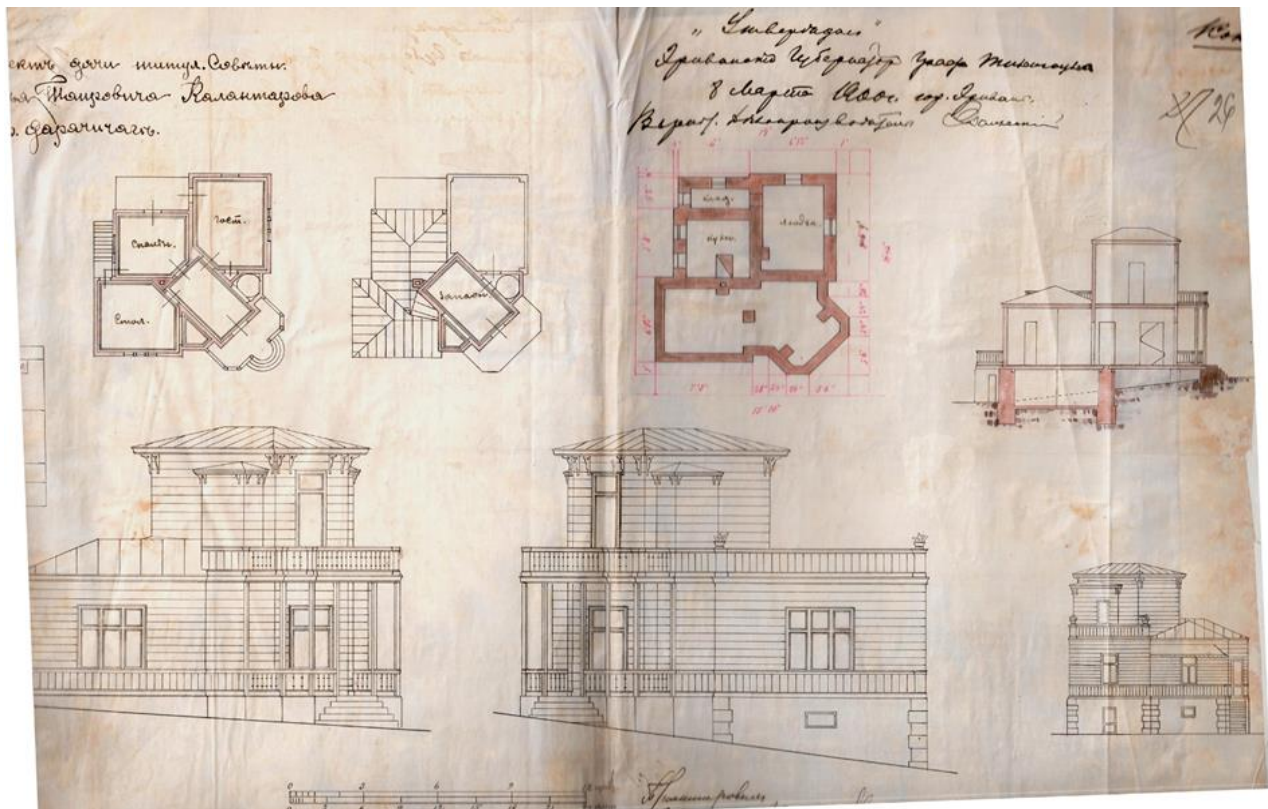


**Art Nouveau architecture motifs.** Art Nouveau in Mirzoyan's works includes the main directions of style and their combinations with the traditions of Armenian architecture. In Brazhnikov mansion, the author brought together the main composition principles of Art Nouveau and classicism. The building is located in a "relatively homogeneous space", so the entire volume of the building is inscribed in the surrounding environment. The plan is made in a free composition: rooms of different configurations, partly on different levels, are arranged around the central hall, which projects in a semicircular rotunda towards the courtyard. The diversity in the organization of internal spaces is carried out in the external volume of the building, in which straight and curved silhouettes form interesting exteriors viewed from different points. In the volumetric-spatial composition, the accents characteristic of the traditional Armenian home are changed. The usually activated main entrance on the northern wall, although it is solved architecturally significantly, in a certain sense, gives way to the dominance of the entire composition—the balcony-portico on the podium, its presence reinforcing the eastern facade.

**Rational architecture.** The ideology of rational architecture, in which the principle "form follows function", is most vividly represented by Kalantaryan country house in Darachichag (present-day Tsaghkadzor), where the landscape and the angular position of the site determined the angular axis of the composition and the angular entrance. The use of relief differences allowed the entrance to be arranged at ground level and the main rooms to be grouped around the hall on the second floor level. There are terraces on the roofs. The utility rooms are isolated from the main entrance and the main group of rooms, and communicate with the garden (Fig.9).



**Fig. 8.** Apartment building in neo-Gothic style on Abovyan street, project of the 1900s. Recreation and adaptive reuse on Pavstos Buzand street in 2025. Photo by author



**Fig. 9.** Kalantaryan country house, 1900. National Archive of Armenia

**Forms and decorations.** In many of Mirzoyan's works, the formulated role is given to decoration, the principle of which corresponds to the basic concepts of historical styles in which the facades of the buildings are made. At the same time, the influence of the medieval monumental architecture of Armenia is undoubted, starting with the local building art—carved ornament on stone. Two architectural concepts interact in the tectonic distribution of decorative compositions in the design of the plane of the walls. The main artistic motifs correspond to the priority architectural themes of the architect: neoclassicism, neo-Gothic, and neo-Baroque, to which Art Nouveau is added, which in total comes down to elegant modillions, rosettes, acanthus leaves, palmettes, and harmonious rhythms of denticles, ovals, and beads. In addition to the characteristic stylistic attributes, the author develops original elements and combinations, such as the sophisticated frieze of the upper part of the facade of Barsegh Eghiazaryan mansion or the mascarons on the portal of the boys' gymnasium. Armenian patterns are harmoniously woven into the compositions, such as a flexible vine with leaves and bunches of grapes between two Corinthian capitals and with a central acanthus leaf that decorates the frieze above the window of the Ruben Afrikyan mansion (Fig.10).



**Fig. 10.** *A fragment of the facade of Afrikyan mansion on Pushkin Street in Yerevan, early 20th century. Photo by author*

Exclusively national ornaments decorate the laconic planes of the walls of Armenian churches and chapels: various braids, interlacing ornaments, and sacred sculptural details. A similar special approach to religious construction is demonstrated by the architecture of the Orthodox military churches in the Kanaker district of Yerevan, where the First Poltava Regiment was located, and in Alexandrapol, which are interpreted in the idea of tent-roofed stone churches of the 16th century. The plasticity of the facades is extremely saturated with elements of Russian national architecture, and at the same time, the artistic language of the ornamental motifs is exceptionally lapidary. Presumably, the mosque in Nakhichevan, about which there is no visual data, was designed in the spirit of Islamic architecture.

## **Conclusion**

Usefulness, design, and beauty—the basic laws of architecture—are combined in the form-generating principles of all the works of Vasily Mirzoyan. The indisputable presence of traditional architectural forms, justified by regional factors and reflecting national artistic images, and their harmonious combination with modern methods of form creation, expressed in historical styles and Art Nouveau—this is how one can generally characterize the priorities of the architect's worldview. Brilliant knowledge of the foundations and specifics of historical architecture and unconditional professional competence in comprehending the strict logic of the structure of artistic systems of national and international architecture allowed the architect to retain creative potential and individuality in the creative rethinking of old and new forms. Therefore, in his buildings, the identification of generally accepted canons of architecture organically flows into his own harmony of proportional balance, using a wide range of creative techniques—from reliable citation to original interpretation of popular architectural motifs. The work of Vasily Mirzoyan is evidence of the high professional level of Armenian architects of the new era, who in the process of searching created an architectural school in which the professional position of the relationship between national architecture and the progressive ideological attitudes of the era is consistently revealed. In general, a detailed analysis of Mirzoyan's architectural and artistic solutions allows us to conclude that, in compliance with the “standards” in the reproduction of stylistic images, a certain tribute is paid to innovative fragments that give the buildings a modern look.

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## Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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