Architecture of Independence: The Conversation Around *Ugliness* in Early 90's Lithuanian Home Design

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Figure 1. *House in Avižieniai, Lithuania*. Photograph by the author. January 2025.

Abstract

This thesis explores the evolvement of perception surrounding architectural ugliness in post-Soviet Lithuania, focusing on residential houses that emerged in the 1990s, also known as *Collective Farm Baroque*. Initially criticized for their stylistic eclecticism and out-of-scale size these homes have come to symbolize transition and independence. Through a combination of analysis methods, the research examines how regarded architecture has been depicted in various online media. The shift from formal critique to relaxed commentary has broadened the perspective and introduced a new narrative regarding the notion of ugliness. Drawing on theoretical framework of various philosophers and critics, this thesis argues that ugliness in architecture transcends fixed definitions and functions as a social construct within a constantly changing cultural context.

Keywords

Ugliness, Stigma, Private Architecture, Lithuania, Social Media

The restoration of independence in 1990s Lithuania brought a fundamental transformation in the economy – change in the form of ownership, which affected all areas of day-to-day life, including the practice of architecture.[1] A transition into private architectural trade for many residents meant that for the first time in their lives their homes could express their sense of individuality. After spending many years in tiny Soviet blocks many rushed to make their dreams come true, which resulted in a spur regarding the development of individual architecture.[2]

Postmodern private architecture in Lithuania manifested itself in an architectural style with an array of notable characteristics, often taking inspiration from influences that under occupation were perceived as symbols of freedom, such as Western media and TV shows.[3] The desire to let go and compensate for the Soviet restrictions resulted in an emergence of unregulated construction – disproportionally large houses commonly built without any architectural assistance.[4]

The legacy of the 1990s was succeeded by smaller houses built in a variety of different styles, the regional establishment of which began to change the societal perception of architecture. The castle-like structures of early independence eventually became a laughingstock on social media, where they acquired the term *Collective Farm Architecture*, or more commonly used – *Collective Farm Baroque* (*Kolūkinis Barokas*).[5]

Social media platforms such as Facebook, as well as other various forum websites, for over a decade now have been used to depict Lithuanian 1990s postmodern individual architecture. In dedicated local pages, users post images of definitive examples, while others engage by commenting and referring to pictured houses in a satirical, sarcastic manner, often implying their ugliness.[6]

The concept of architectural stigma regarding ugliness is not unique to Lithuania, however, locally it has not been compiled how this notion has been impacted by historical and economic circumstances, as well as the social media discourse. This thesis seeks to explore ugliness as a concept, contextualize the stigma within the local factors, and analyse the role of social media in controlling the narrative.

The Stigma of Architectural Ugliness

Ugliness is hard to confine to a single denotation. Throughout history, architects and critics have engaged with the concept of ugliness through a multitude of different lenses, often shaped by diverse historical, cultural, and economic circumstances. What once at a point in time was

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[1] Marija Drėmaitė, "1990–2000: The Architecture of Freedom," MO Museum, 2022, https://www.mmcentras.lt/cultural-history/cultural-history/architecture/19902000-the-architecture-of-freedom/19902000-the-architecture-of-freedom/79050.
[2] Marija Drėmaitė, Rūta Leitanaitė, and Julija Reklaitė, eds., Vilnius 1900–2016: An Architectural Guide (Vilnius: Lapas, 2016).
[3] Rūta Leitanaitė, "Socialist Postmodernism: The Case of the Late Soviet Lithuanian Architecture," Architecture and Urban Planning 13, no. 1 (2017): 1–8, https://doi.org/10.1515/aup-2017-0009.
[4] Archmuziejus, "Perversmo Architektūra: Postmodernistiniai Individualūs Gyvenamieji Namai Lietuvoje," Archmuziejus, accessed April 13, 2025, http://archmuziejus.lt/lt/perversmo-architektura-postmodernistiniai-individualus-gyvenamieji-namai-lietuvoje/.
[5] Austėja Kuskienė, "Girdėta, bet nepažinta: Kolūkinis barokas – didinga, vertinga ar gėdinga?" LRT Radioteka, December 12, 2023. https://www.lrt.lt/radioteka/irasas/2000289707/girdeta-bet-nepazinta-kolukinis-barokas-didinga-vertinga-ar-gedinga.
[6] Asta Kaušakienė, "Humoristinio 'Kolūkinio baroko' įkūrėjai: fiksuojame ir įdomius, ir klaikius architektų darbus," 15min.lt, July 26, 2019,https://www.15min.lt/gyvenimas/naujiena/namai/humoristinio-kolukinio-baroko-ikurejai-fiksuojame-ir-idomius-ir-klaikius-architektu-darbus10341109946.

deemed ugly can later be interpreted as expressive, challenging the traditional norms of beauty and aesthetics.[7]

Defining ugliness is a complex endeavor. Bart Verschaffel, a Belgian architectural theorist and critic, has engaged with this topic by examining historical theories from philosophers such as Kant or Valéry. Immanuel Kant perceived ugliness as the absence of beauty, a secondary or oppositional concept, rather than a singular positive aesthetic category. Paul Valery however, related ugliness to architecture, arguing that it often arises when a building fails to achieve coherence in form and function.[8] The ambiguity of these definitions can make an individual question - when discussing architectural practices, is ugliness a quality of the building itself, or more of a perception influenced by the historical and cultural context?

Verchaffel argues that ugliness is often judged within broader cultural and ideological frameworks, rather than aesthetic terms. Ugliness is a deviation from normality, which is not a natural given. Society needs to have constructed a meaning of normality that is familiar and reassuring, something to which most conform and feel threatened by the non-conforming.[9] Scholars Maria Novas and Dorina Pllumbi add to the topic by analyzing incidents in Albania and Galicia, where *ugliness* took the shape of self-building. Stigmatization of this practice was enforced by local institutions, scholars, and architects, who initiated the conversations where the adjective *ugliness* was used when talking down on citizens who build their own houses, sheds, and closures, something that was not normalized within the higher society. A highlight is put on the fact that there is no universal standard for ugliness, often it is socially assigned by local cultural norms and political narratives.[10]

Circumstantial influences on the perception of architectural ugliness are further explored as Timothy Hyde interprets it as both an aesthetic and a societal construct. Architecture can provoke irritation - annoyance and discomfort - rather than outright disgust. Unlike *nuisance*, which is a notion that can be framed within the legal framework, irritation is subjective, an individual psychological response. It arises when the form and function of the building do not align with the expectations of someone who perceives it.[11] However, when drawing on historical examples, one can notice that some buildings that were initially received with hostility came to be appreciated over time,[12] which, again, traces back to the ever-changing context within which the architecture exists.

As theorists demonstrate, ugliness is beyond an inherent trait of a building. It reflects timely social concerns, expectations, and ever-changing social norms. The importance of context regarding the stigma of architectural ugliness is evident, however, in many regions, there are cases yet to be analyzed, as it is in Lithuania. Various sources discuss the current state of public opinion while acknowledging the historical circumstances, however, a comprehensive analysis is absent regarding the role of social media discussions regarding the topic. This research aims

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[7] Timothy Hyde, Ugliness and Judgment: On Architecture in the Public Eye. 62-87, 112-133. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).
[8] Bart Verschaffel, "On Ugliness (in Architecture)," in Architecture and Ugliness: Anti-Aesthetics and the Ugly in Postmodern Architecture, ed. Wouter Van Acker and Thomas Mical. 39-56. (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).
[9] Verschaffel, "On Ugliness (in Architecture),".
[10] María Novas Ferradás and Dorina Pllumbi, "Observing the Architectural Stigma of the Ugliness: The Cases of Albania and Galicia," in The Observers Observed: Architectural Uses of Ethnography: Proceedings of the 8th Annual Conference of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre, ed. Dirk van den Heuvel, Femke Tanis, and Seung Hee Hwang (Delft: TU Delft and Het Nieuwe Instituut, 2021), 114–120.
[11] Hyde, *Ugliness and Judgment*.
[12] Stylianos Giamarelos, Resisting Postmodern Architecture (London: UCL Press, 2022).

to bridge this gap by investigating the connection to provide a better understanding of how public discourse is a part of controlling the narrative.

Methodology

This research is composed of a multifaceted qualitative methodology – contextual historical analysis, visual analysis, and discourse analysis, all of which explore the origins and circulation of the architectural stigma of ugliness surrounding early 1990s private home architecture in Lithuania. Contextual historical analysis examines various primary, as well as secondary historical sources to contextualize the setting for further research. Visual analysis consists of sourcing and reading architectural photographs while focusing on their stylistic elements: proportions, materiality, and cues that evoke certain emotional responses. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, examines the reactions to those photographs – comments, image captions, and further discourse, revealing the factors shaping the public perception. Together, these methods allow for a deeper understanding of how visual form, media and public sentiment impact the researched notion.

The paper consists of two main sections guiding the reader via a chronological storyline. The first section gives the historical context of private architectural development in soviet Lithuania to provide a base for understanding the public narrative. The second section is split into two segments studying the social media discourse – early instances and later cases – while distinguishing and analyzing the stakeholders, images, and subject matter within the discussions on each platform.

The Shift in Domestic Architecture

From Soviet Rule to Independence

On March 11, 1990, Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union, which was a pivotal moment for the country as it transitioned from Soviet rule towards sovereignty. Initial years were met with economic blockades and disruptions.[13] The switch from a centrally planned economy to a market-based system introduced privatization, which completely overhauled the residential development progress, especially regarding individual architecture.[14]

Throughout the occupation opportunities to construct a private house have differed, while the only constant was the lack of building materials. The early 1900s were relatively active regarding the construction of single-household homes; however, they were limited to only 60 square meters. A big change occurred in the 1960s, when due to Khrushchev's promise of every family receiving an assigned apartment in newly built complexes, select municipalities were ordered to ban the construction of individual houses. In areas that the ban did not affect constructed houses were of poor quality and exceptionally bare, notably lacking any decorative

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[13] Aistė Galaunytė, "The Evolution of Standard Single-Family Houses in Soviet Lithuania," Mokslas – Lietuvos Ateitis 8, no. 1 (2016): 80, https://doi.org/10.3846/mla.2016.858.
[14] Laura Tupėnaitė, "Residential Construction Development in Lithuania," Baltic Rim Economies, December 21, 2022, https://sites.utu.fi/bre/residential-construction-development-in-lithuania/.

elements and sufficient window area.[15] Circumstantially, there was no space for individuality in private architecture.

Nearing independence various bans were starting to get lifted. By 1988 houses were, again, allowed to be built in major cities, while their size was not restricted anymore. Individual architecture continued being modest in terms of styling, however, more opulent villas started appearing in select areas. As the state was freeing up opportunities arose for supplementary income, which is when economic circumstances stopped being the main factor and typical home architecture became more eclectic.[16]

Eventually Declaration of Independence brought along the Agrarian Reform, which was a turning point in liberated architecture.[17] Allocation of land plots along with low cost of building materials meant that the coveted dream of many Lithuanians was finally attainable. Initially, new buildings adhered to old traditions, remaining stylistically and size-wise reminiscent of the Soviet period.[18] However, construction materials becoming widely available signaled the start of a new era, where stylistic trends of the last decade started intertwining with new phenomena, while fantasies were only left restricted by the wishes of the owner and the depth of their pockets.[19]

Emergence of *Collective Farm Baroque*

Newly arising private architecture bureaus started shaping the time's definitive design becoming its local epicentre, while new challenges were arising along with the restoration of independence.[20] Architects and designers were just starting to examine international examples, as during occupation times the material they were able to study only went as far as Czechoslovakia and other communist regions.[21] Moreover, society was getting introduced to Western media – local networks started broadcasting TV shows such as 'Santa Barbara', which largely influenced the Lithuanian perception of the ideal life and gave stylistic references which soon started appearing on newly constructed homes. Historically volatile circumstances have led to citizens often losing their materialistic belongings, which prompted the concept of a home being symbolic of permanency and inseparability. It became a status symbol, which induced a show-off competition of who had more.[22]

Despite their attempts, not all architects succeeded in adapting to new circumstances. Although rushing to open their own studios, many recall no work being available. Consequently, monstrous houses designed at the time were the product of private commission - absurd owner wishes that architects felt pressure to fulfill. Alongside custom-designed homes, and products of architecture studios, the early 1990s were accompanied by a spur in the construction of new

[15] Galaunytė, "The Evolution of Standard Single-Family Houses," 80.
[16] Aistė Galaunytė, "Soviet Standardized Single-Family House: The Failed Hope of Non-Communal Living in Postwar Lithuanian Towns," Architecture and Urban Planning 13, no. 1 (2017): 32–37, https://doi.org/10.1515/aup-2017-0004.
[17] Laura Jankauskaitė-Jurevičienė, Aušra Mlinkauskienė, and Vilma Stanaitienė, "Lithuanian Rural Landscape Change Trends and Consequences after the Restoration of the Independence," Lucrări Ştiinţifice Seria Horticultură 59, no. 1 (2016): 177–182.
[18] Drėmaitė, "The Architecture of Freedom."
[19] Julija Leimonė, "Paaiškino, kodėl lietuviai po nepriklausomybės puolė statyti namus-pilis: įtakos turėjo net muilo operos," Delfi Būstas, May 11, 2024, https://www.delfi.lt/bustas/architektura/paaiskino-kodel-lietuviai-po-nepriklausomybes-puole-statyti-namus-pilis-itakos-turejo-net-muilo-operos-120010803
[20] Drėmaitė, "The Architecture of Freedom."
[21] Gintautas Natkevičius, "Pokalbis su Gintautu Natkevičiumi," MO Tinklaraštis, March 30, 2020, https://mo.lt/tinklarastis/irasai/menasnamo-pokalbis-su-gintautu-natkeviciumi/.
[22] Leimonė, "Paaiškino, kodėl lietuviai po nepriklausomybės puolė statyti namus-pilis."

houses designed and constructed by unknown authors, often the owners themselves. Such constructions notably lacked paved roads, sanitation utilities, and infrastructure solutions.[23]

Savavališkas V.Palšmito statinys rodo kelią iš reisų grįžtantiems jūreiviams.
I.Dambrausko nuotr.

Figure 2. *Private house in Klaipėda, Lithuania. Caption reads "V. Palšmitas's unauthorized building shows the way for sailors returning from their voyages.".* February 1999. *Lietuvos Rytas.*

Stylistic expression of the post-Soviet era began to be defined by unregulated, unauthorized 500-700 square meter private structures – unique symbols of liberated architecture and creative confusion. People who quickly acquired money but had no exposure to architectural examples abroad aspired to own houses reminiscent of castles, churches, and other monumental buildings present within their local regions.[24] The product of this era was gigantic houses where many different architectural styles intertwined and formed a kitschy post-modernistic expression (Fig. 2).

Nearing the end of the decade construction of oversized structures started to slow down. The public has been largely introduced to prevailing architecture abroad, which led to a revival of simpler design, manifesting itself in smaller, more stylistically coherent examples.[25] Soon after the structures 1990s began to be depicted in architectural online forums, being disregarded as failures of architectural design. Moreover, this topic was led to the mainstream in 2015, when the conversation was brought to Facebook in the form of a discussion page depicting such architecture, ironically named *Collective Farm Baroque*.[26]

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[23] Drėmaitė, "1990–2000: The Architecture of Freedom."
[24] Kaušakienė, "Humoristinio 'Kolūkinio baroko' įkūrėjai: fiksuojame ir įdomius, ir klaikius architektų darbus,"
[25] Drėmaitė, Leitanaitė, and Reklaitė, *Vilnius 1900–2016.*
[26] Kaušakienė, "Humoristinio 'Kolūkinio baroko' įkūrėjai: fiksuojame ir įdomius, ir klaikius architektų darbus,"

Collective Farm Baroque: Public Narratives

First Instances: 2006 – 2015

The earliest traces of discussions regarding the architectural value and public perception of post-Soviet individual architecture in Lithuania can be spotted on a local urbanist forum website, which originated in 2004. It appeared as a new medium that changed the way locals exchanged and processed urban-related information, which allowed them to do so quickly and on a broader scale. Canadian philosopher Marschall McLuhan has famously said 'The medium is the message', meaning that the platform carries more influence than the content itself, to the point where it can initiate movements shifting public opinion.[27] Here first posts explicitly concerning the subject date back to 2006, which marks the start of a digital footprint concerning the locally formed architectural stigma.[28]

Moreover, this forum website is not a mainstream source of media and is targeted toward people with an interest in urban and architectural discourse, therefore, users engaging with the posts are likely to have some sort of design background or previous knowledge of the topic. In the thread regarding the 1990s individual architecture users also shared stories, often coming from their neighbors or relatives, of who and why designed and built such structures.

Excess as Expression: Forum Post Analysis

Figure 3. *Private house in Lithuania.* June 2011. *miestai.net.*

Images of houses, often taken from users' personal archives or sourced from real estate listing sites, were being posted on the sub-forum initiating a discussion regarding their architectural details. A picture of a large villa on the outskirts of Vilnius (Fig. 3) was uploaded along with a

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[27] Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 7.

[28] "1990-ųjų pradžios architektūra (Pats sau architektas)," Miestai.net, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.miestai.net/forumas/forum/bendrosios-diskusijos/miestai-ir-architekt%C5%ABra/5740-1990-%C5%B3j%C5%B3-prad%C5%BEios-architekt%C5%ABra-pats-sau-architektas.

link to its sale listing, from which other users sourced more information about the structure – the house is 1100 m^2, has 3 floors, 2 garages, 2 pools, and a sauna. Moreover, there are 16 bedrooms, 3 kitchens and 8 bathrooms. The gigantic size of the house becomes even more apparent when considering the neighborhood where it is located, as it is mostly filled with moderately styled two-story family homes.

Depicted house takes inspiration from many different architectural eras – a definitive quality of Lithuanian individual postmodern structures. Facade materiality is reminiscent of modernist architecture, the arches and square columns are suggestive of the neoclassical era, while similar wrought iron railings can be noticed in Mediterranean-style structures. All these styles intertwine in a unique kitschy manner, forming an appearance distinct to *Collective Farm Baroque*.

Figure 4. *Unfinished building in Lithuania.* March 2012. *miestai.net.*

Another topic commonly discussed within the sub-forum is unfinished structures. Several images of an unfinished large building accompanied by a smaller sub-structure (Fig. 4) were uploaded and described as 'castles' while highlighting their pointy turrets and giant dimensions. Additionally, some users point out that only the smaller structures are inhabited, while the larger building consists of a brick structure skeleton and a transparent roof, lacking windows, insulation, and other finishings making it liveable.

Seemingly abandoned large structures were a common phenomenon in post-soviet Lithuania, as working-class residents who aspired to own and live in such properties would go as far as taking on life-long constructions. Consequently, the work would continuously pause for years at a time and resume when enough savings were acquired. These residences were usually accompanied by 'guest houses' – stylistically identical, but smaller structures that would eventually end up becoming primary home, since the main houses would never finish construction and eventually face demolition.[29]

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[29] Leimonė, "Paaiškino, kodėl lietuviai po nepriklausomybės puolė statyti namus-pilis."

Threaded Critique: Discussion

Discussions in the subforum reveal which architectural trends were a reoccurring concern among the users. The most critiqued architectural factor appears to be the gigantic size of houses. While imposing its ugliness and often drawing comparisons to a hotel building, users were characterizing it as unpractical and uneconomical.

Nevertheless, often constructions as such were started with positive intentions, as illustrated by an example provided by one of the subforum users. Due to housing shortages and cultural traditions in Soviet times, it was common to live in a multi-generational household, thus many houses of similar size were built while envisioning one's extended family living together. However, after the restoration of independence, many young individuals wished to move to larger cities, which split off the households and left many large homes partially vacant.[30]

Another commonly depicted architectural feature is the excessive use of decorative elements, such as pointy roofs, undue arches, etc., which within the subforum is commonly associated with an inferiority complex. Overall, the perception of these elements boils down to the local norms and social context. As long-term widespread Soviet corruption has shifted the public image of wealth, many residents perceived the accumulation of abundance as more so related to corrupt practices, rather than hard work and success.[31]

These opinions have emerged within an audience of people who cared about the topic enough to participate and be active in a niche online community, well-informed regarding the subject. Consequently, the discussions here are deliberate and informative, an aspect that blurs later down the line when other platforms get involved. The notion of ugliness in depicted examples is direct and well elaborated, while discussions of whether such structures have any sort of architectural value are not present. As it archives discussions, the forum serves as a focused space allowing a look into early public discussions regarding private 1990s architecture.

Current Discourse: 2015 – Now

The discourse started picking up on a larger scale and gathering a wider audience in 2015 when it was given a new platform on Facebook as a page under the name *Collective Farm Baroque*, a satirical term coined by the Lithuanian journalist Rimas Šapauskas.[32] The page was introduced, again, as a new medium allowing users with similar interests to interact and share opinions with each other. Moreover, as it was no longer subjected to a niche platform, the narrative was able to involve new demographics, as well as ones less informed regarding the subject.

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[30] Laima Žilinskienė and Melanie Ilic, Changing Family Values Across the Generations in Twentieth-Century Lithuania (Academia.edu, 2020), https://www.academia.edu/108338435/Changing_family_values_across_the_generations_in_twentieth_century_Lithuania.
[31] Nazim Habibov, Elvin Afandi, and Alex Cheung, "Sand or Grease? Corruption–Institutional Trust Nexus in Post-Soviet Countries," European Journal of Political Research 56, no. 3 (2017): 580-600, https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12201.
[32] Kaušakienė, "Humoristinio 'Kolūkinio baroko' įkūrėjai: fiksuojame ir įdomius, ir klaikius architektų darbus,"

Collective Farm Baroque was founded as the creators aimed to share examples from their own archives, yet soon it became a crowd-sourced effort involving the community, as followers started sending in images of examples that they have stumbled upon themselves. The creators of the page have imposed their close relation to the Lithuanian urbanistic and architectural field outside of the platform, while their initiative is non-profit, meaning it is not running any ads or promotions.[33] Consequently, the posts attract and engage with a diverse audience – people with a background in architecture and design, as well as regular Facebook users, discovering the posts via their friends' shares. The wide reach of the page meant that the discussion was able to be brought to the mainstream and start a bigger conversation – after 2015 the following years saw a surge in articles, podcasts, and public discussions regarding the subject, notion of ugliness and its importance in the Lithuanian architectural landscape.

Monumentality Out of Context: Facebook Post Analysis

Figure 5. *Private house in Avižieniai, Lithuania.* April 2017. *Facebook.*

The architectural landscape of the Soviet times was both a great influence and a constraint on the prevailing creations, as many individual projects were highly reminiscent of local monumental structures. This became a commonly depicted subject on the Facebook page, with houses posted being reminiscent of churches and palaces (Fig. 5) accompanied by ironic captions: "*In life, you need to do three things: build a house and two columns*", as well as user comments: "*Everyone must complete THEIR OWN Resurrection Church.*"

Although the angular geometry and lack of ornamentation in the facade are nods to modernist principles, the two oversized columns flanking the entrance are lifted directly from neoclassical architecture. Nevertheless, despite their size and dominance in design, the columns are most likely non-functional and awkward in proportion – giving the house a temple appearance in a residential setting.

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[33] Kaušakienė, "Humoristinio 'Kolūkinio baroko' įkūrėjai: fiksuojame ir įdomius, ir klaikius architektų darbus,"

Kaunas, Žaliakalnis, Kapsų g., mūrinis namas

Figure 6. *Listing of a private house in Lithuania.* April 2018. *Facebook.*

Another example of a similar case was sourced from a real estate listing website and posted on the Facebook page with the caption "*How are you living? Or maybe you'd prefer to live in luxury?*" (Fig. 6). The symmetrical facade layout and central staircase provide a sense of formality and grandeur, reminiscent of a public building, while irregular windows and unornamented facade planes reflect postmodern irregularity. The combination of these elements and the lack of certainty and cohesion among them captures yet another case of monumentality out of context. The same notion of uncertainty is captured in the comments, where users draw comparisons to a 'funeral hall' and 'the church of Scientology'.
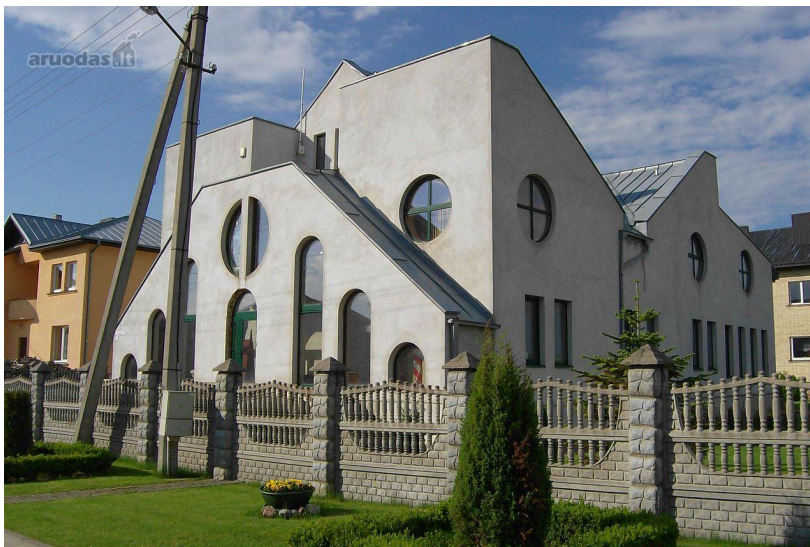

Figure 7. *Private house in Kaunas, Lithuania.* November 2015. *Facebook.*

Some cases were an overexaggerated representation of architectural styles common within their located regions (Fig. 7), such as a few examples in Kaunas, known for its Art Deco architecture. Strong and clean geometric shapes evoke a feeling of postmodern minimalism, yet the round windows, as well as their composition, are an obvious nod to the architecture of the city and its Art Deco elements. Like many other examples, the structure occupies an uncanny space

between a home and an institution, as different elements work against each other suggesting opposite notions. The facades are large, open and feel inviting to the public, yet the house is fully fenced off. The confusion was also apparent in the comment section, as many users were referring to the house as their neighborhood cathedral and sarcastically offering donations.

Discussion: Irony to Identity

As discussions regarding the subject kept progressing and involving a wider audience, they further revealed more architectural trends concerning the users, a common one being ambiguity regarding the suggested function. The topic of modern and postmodern architecture evoking the feeling of uncanny is not unique to *Collective Farm Baroque* and has been explored by the architectural historian Anthony Vidler, who claimed that spaces lacking function, scale, or familiar reference points may produce a sense of eeriness and dislocation. Buildings that defy legibility, the purpose of which is unclear, can be deeply unsettling since they subvert one's spatial expectations.[34]

Nevertheless, whereas the ambiguity in postmodernism is often caused by abstract design cues and lack of familiar ornamentality, in *Collective Farm Baroque* the common catalyst is the recognition of architectural elements typically seen in churches, chapels, and other temple structures – pediments, motifs reminiscent of crosses, heightened centralized entrances, etc. Details as such contrast with features signaling privacy, namely tall fences and closed-off facades, forming an overall confounding expression.

As these visual contradictions sparked interest, the tone of public engagement began to shift, especially as the conversation migrated to Facebook. Instead of strictly analytical commentary, users began to engage with the posts through playful remarks and creative captions that initiated an even broader participation. Consequently, the subject matter once confined to thoughtful criticism within niche social circles took upon a lighter, more socially driven form of exchange, allowing users to approach the topic with humor.

The change in tone significantly affected the way in which the discussed architecture was perceived, while examples that were once dismissed as total architectural failures began to be viewed with sort of a cultural curiosity. *Collective Farm Baroque* allowed the start of a bigger conversation around 'ugly' architecture since the pressure of proper vocabulary or deeper knowledge regarding the subject was removed. Therefore, people who might have not engaged with architectural content in the past began to comment, share, and participate in discussions adding historical context via their personal memories.

Through the Facebook page irony became a gateway to dialogue. Despite the mockery within posts, they helped articulate a shared memory tied to Lithuania's post-independency. Consequently, users began questioning whether these structures, once considered symbols of excess, should be perceived as artifacts of a specific era, even holding architectural and anthropological value, reconsidering the stigma of ugliness altogether. The change of perception is being reflected in today's conversations regarding the subject. Although the

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[34] Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

Facebook page has not been active since 2019, the dialogue is continued in articles, podcasts, and events hosted by various museums and exhibition spaces.

Conclusion

The architectural stigma of ugliness is everchanging. It is influenced by historical narratives, as well as current discourse, often platformed by various social media. Structures once deemed as total architectural failures, particularly homes built in the style of *Collective Farm Baroque*, can now appear in favorable discussions, as enabled by certain online spaces. On the other hand, the critiques for excess and social disarray remain relevant. The label of 'ugliness' has never been taken away, it has changed along with the expectations, values, and ideologies and depended on the given moment. As the cultural distance from the 1990s grows, so does the opportunity to reassess these structures for their appearance, as well as social representation.

Through the lens of online discourse, the conversation was able to broaden public engagement by using satirical language. As it opened space for revaluation, people shared personal memories, reinterpreted the primary intentions, and even challenged traditional aesthetic judgment. As the dialogue evolves so does the idea of ugliness, becoming less about the standards and more about cultural dissonance – social discomfort with the unfamiliar. The homes are being recontextualized within narratives of identity, memory, and transition. While carried stigma lessens, the homes are being placed in a more nuanced understanding within Lithuania's architectural and social history.

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List of Figures

Figure 1. *House in Avižieniai, Lithuania.* Photograph by the author. January 2025.

Figure 2. *Private house in Lithuania*. *Lietuvos Rytas*, February 22, 1999, no. 169, p. 2.

Figure 3. *Private house in Lithuania*. Posted on *Miestai.net*, January 6, 2011. https://www.miestai.net/forumas/forum/bendrosios-diskusijos/miestai-ir-architekt%C5%ABra/5740-1990-%C5%B3j%C5%B3-prad%C5%BEios-architekt%C5%ABra-pats-sau-architektas/page3

Figure 4. *Unfinished building in Lithuania*. Posted on *Miestai.net*, March 2012. https://www.miestai.net/forumas/forum/bendrosios-diskusijos/miestai-ir-architekt%C5%ABra/5740-1990-%C5%B3j%C5%B3-prad%C5%BEios-architekt%C5%ABra-pats-sau-architektas/page4

Figure 5. *Private house in Lithuania*. Posted on *Facebook*, April 2017. https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1896337167308214&set=a.1635021-350106465&locale=lt_LT

Figure 6. *Listing of a private house in Lithuania*. Posted on *Facebook*, April 2018. https://www.facebook.com/kolukinisbarokas/posts/pfbid0tczWFWkHWoSw-P3SgDdLvR8CxVugo8tQpofvAiqSM3P4YxyJBHj1iM3pPnh5Wd7NYl?locale=lt_LT

Figure 7. *Private house in Lithuania*. Posted on *Facebook*, October 2015. https://www.facebook.com/kolukinisbarokas/posts/pfbid0tczWFWkHWoSw-P3SgDdLvR8CxVugo8tQpofvAiqSM3P4YxyJBHj1iM3pPnh5Wd7NYl?locale=lt_LT