

*Strand 1: Art Nouveau Cities: between cosmopolitanism and local tradition*

Jānis Krastiņš

**Cosmopolitan Atmosphere and Latvian Jugendstil in Liepāja**

Art Nouveau buildings have a special place in the architecture of Latvia. Art Nouveau heritage of the Latvian capital city Riga has been highly acclaimed and recognised; Riga is world wide known metropolis of this style. However, the harbour city Liepāja located on the western coast of Kurzeme region of Latvia also has a number of wonderful Art Nouveau buildings which comply with the highest standards of European architecture. In respect of the number, concentration and artistic and stylistic qualities of these Art Nouveau buildings, Liepāja definitely outmatches many European cities that are proud of their Art Nouveau architecture. Due to the lack of documents and archival materials, the Art Nouveau of Liepāja has not received much attention yet and has not been adequately presented in scientific circles. The archives of construction designs have been extinguished during Soviet era in the 1970s as old, useless papers, thus erasing the city's awareness of its cultural heritage values, which then were seen as the unwanted legacy of the detestable capitalism. Consequently, no precise dates of construction can be ascribed to many buildings and not all masterpieces of architecture can be preciously attributed to certain architects. Anyhow, the heritage values of Liepāja deserve to be recognised and properly appreciated.

The building stock of Liepāja contains more than 70 excellent big-scale Art Nouveau apartment buildings and villas, the school, the theatre, the market hall etc. In some places of Liepāja, Art Nouveau buildings completely determine the atmosphere of the streetscape. Unique concentration of Art Nouveau can be seen, for example, in Graudu iela (street). Some new data concerning the architects of buildings of Liepāja are discovered recently. Architects and builders having been active in Liepāja during Art Nouveau period constituted rather colourful public: they were of German, French, English, Swedish and Latvian origin.

Until recent past, the most well-known Art Nouveau architect of Liepāja was Max Theodor Bertschy (1871–1935), the son of Paul Max Bertschy (1840–1911), who came from Germany and in 1871–1902 was the Liepāja City architect. Max Theodor has born in Liepāja. He studied architecture in Riga Polytechnical Institute in 1892–1895 and continued his studies in St Petersburg in 1898–1899,<sup>1</sup> where in 1899 he obtained also the construction license necessary for architectural practice.<sup>2</sup> First he worked as assistant of Liepāja City architect. He opened his own architect's office in 1903, continuing common practice with his father. Architects' Bertschy family archive retained in Liepāja Museum contains a number of architectural projects and is the most valuable source of information concerning Liepāja's early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings.

Most of the buildings designed by M. T. Bertschy are pretty restrained but elegant apartment blocks, for example, at Kuršu iela 1 (1910), 17 (1908–1909) and 23 (1910), Graudu iela 36/38 (1912–1913), and Raiņa iela 1 (1910). They are characteristic with dynamic massing of facades having different bay windows, gables, variations of materials of architectural finish etc. In the courtyard of the K. Fischer's apartment block with shops at Graudu iela 36/38, a movie theatre was located. The street façade is decorated with several reliefs. Succession of three vertical grooves, the middle one having been longer, stands out among them. This motif is some kind of hallmark of Art Nouveau ornamental language. The A. Milules's apartment block at Kuršu iela 23 is famous for its unique finish of staircase. Authentic Art Nouveau ornamental and figural murals are retained there. Typical female figures and geometric ornaments cover all walls and ceilings. Supposedly, author of these decorations is well known in Liepāja painter Adolf Kuntscher.

Ground floor level of the façade of F. Hемpele's apartment block with shop at Raiņa iela 1 is coated in artificial stone rusts distantly resembling image of National Romanticist buildings especially typical for Riga Art Nouveau. Different textures of plastered surfaces combined with red brick coating are characteristic of P. Mamonow's apartment block at Kuršu iela 17. This building differs with its expressive concave-

---

<sup>1</sup> *Album Academicum des Polytechnicums zu Riga 1862–1912*. Riga, Jonck & Poliewsky, 1912, S. 420.

<sup>2</sup> Russian State Historical Archives in St Petersburg, fund 1293, description 95, case 57, page 7.

convex silhouette of imposing gable (Fig. 1). Idea of this shape arose simultaneously with the creation of the building of Hotel “Metropole” at Baznīcas iela 11 in Kuldīga (1908), what is one of the most picturesque historic towns in the middle of Kurzeme. There is also another Art Nouveau building in this town designed by M. T. Bertschy – apartment block with shop at Liepājas iela 9 (1910). Massing of the façade of this structure directly resembles that of the F. Hempele’s apartment block with shop at Raiņa iela 1 in Liepāja.



Fig. 1. P. Mamonow’s apartment block at Kuršu iela 17. M. T. Bertschy. 1908–1909. Draft of the elevation, draft of the fragment of the elevation of Hotel “Metropole” in Kuldīga (Liepāja Museum, Project archives of Bertschy), and photograph of the building (J. Krastiņš, 2012).

Well known architect in Liepāja was Ludwig Melville, having been also Municipal councilor and Head of the City Construction Board.<sup>3</sup> Melville family, apparently of French origin, immigrated in Liepāja from British islands in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many creations by L. Melville are lavishly adorned with tangles of undulated lines, motifs of stylized exotic flowers and plants, masks, geometric figures and much more different details shaped in fashionable Art Nouveau ornamental language, but they are rather eclectic in terms of architectural composition of the façades. Project of commercial building at Lielā iela 5 designed by L. Melville in 1905 is kept in Bertschy family archive in Liepāja Museum. Different documents indicate that L. Melville together with Liepāja city engineer Georg von Malm designed the Market hall at Kuršu iela 5 (1910). The project of the former Girl's school at Ausekļa iela 9 worked out by L. Melville in 1907 is recently found in the archive of the school (now Liepāja 1<sup>st</sup> State High School). Elements and details of architectural finish directly resembling these

---

<sup>3</sup> Adolf RICHTER, *Baltische Verkehrs- und Adressbücher : Band 2. Kurland*. Riga: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers Adolf Richter, 1912. S. 209.

buildings can be seen also on the façades of apartment blocks at Elkoņu iela 4 (1902), Dzintaru iela 18 (1903), Rīgas iela 3 (1903), Andreja Pumpura iela 7, Bāriņu iela 21a, and of Oscar Thal's shop of fancy goods and gentlemen's accessories at Graudu iela 46. Especially conspicuous sample of architectural language of this peculiar local version of decorative Art Nouveau is building of the Russian-Asian Steamer Shipping Company offices at Kūrmājas prospekts 2/4/6, facing the school at Ausekļa iela 9. The corner part of the building is constructed in 1908 followed by left-side wing extension in 1911. As far as L. Melville designed also the so called Emigrants houses at Flotes iela 3 and 5 used as dormitories of emigrants leaving Russia for America with steamers operated by this shipping company, office building at Kūrmājas prospekts 2/4/6 with high level of credibility can be attributed to the same architect. The building (Fig. 2) stands out both with its extraordinary rich façade and fine details of interior finishes. Interiors of the building are several times transformed, but still everyone can admire Art Nouveau stoves, fine smith works and smart wood carved stairs, entrance lobby walls, and doors.



Fig. 2. Russian-Asian Steamer Shipping Company offices at Kūrmājas prospekts 2/4/6. Attributed to L. Melville. 1908–1911. Postcard of 1908, photograph of the building (J. Krastins, 2011) and vestibule (photograph by J. Krastiņš, 2012)

Another group among the buildings that can be attributed to L. Melville, present more restrained and consummate in terms of clear Art Nouveau language architecture. Balcony on the corner of the façade of the apartment block with shop at Rīgas iela 37/39 is an icon of Art Nouveau expression. Especially characteristic is dynamic shape of cantilevers. Similarly shaped cantilevers support the balcony at Ausekļa iela 9, bay windows at Avotu iela 4 and Šaurā iela 1, and as sculptural decorations flank gable at Dīķa iela 11.

Active architectural practice in Liepāja had civil engineer of English origin Charles Carr. After learning in grammar school in Saratow (Russia), in 1894–1901 he studied civil engineering in Riga Polytechnical Institute. From 1902 his official position was junior engineer at Executive Committee for Road Construction of Kurzeme Government.<sup>4</sup> His architectural creations are a number of apartment houses in a way resembling “Perpendicular Art Nouveau” of Riga. Until recent past, only one executed project worked out by him was known – project of the multipurpose building at Graudu iela 45 (1913).<sup>5</sup> Shops and casino were located on two lower floors of that impressive building having widely glazed façades, and apartments on two upper floors.

According to previous publications, imposing Art Nouveau building – apartment block with shops at Graudu iela 44 constructed in 1908–1909 – was designed by Swedish architect Karl Eduard Strandmann<sup>6</sup>, who during this period was active in Liepāja. A copy of the project of the building was received recently from Mr Heinz Raeder – the grandson of the former owner of the building Wilhelm Raeder. The Project was signed by Charles Carr. Executed and well-kept façades of the building precisely correspond to the elevation drawings. Flowers, straps, crones, festoons and stylised palmettos arranged among dominating geometrical shapes constitute a great collection of different ornamental reliefs displayed on the façades. Figures of fantastic birds flank entrance. Different rough or corrugated textures interplay with smooth plastered surfaces. All that can be perceived only from near, but from the distance, first speaks the impressive silhouette formed by several gables and corner turret, and dynamic massing of bay windows, recessions, balconies etc. (Fig. 3).

---

<sup>4</sup> *Album Academicum...*, S. 236.

<sup>5</sup> Liepāja Museum, Bertschy family project archive.

<sup>6</sup> Gerhard von MICKWITZ, „Deutschbaltisches Unternehmertum : 7. Die Firma Wilhelm Raeder aus Libau und ihre Fortführung in Posen und Wiesbaden”, *Jahrbuch des baltischen Deutschtums 2010*. Lüneburg, Carl-Schirren-Gesellschaft e. V., 2009, S. 78.

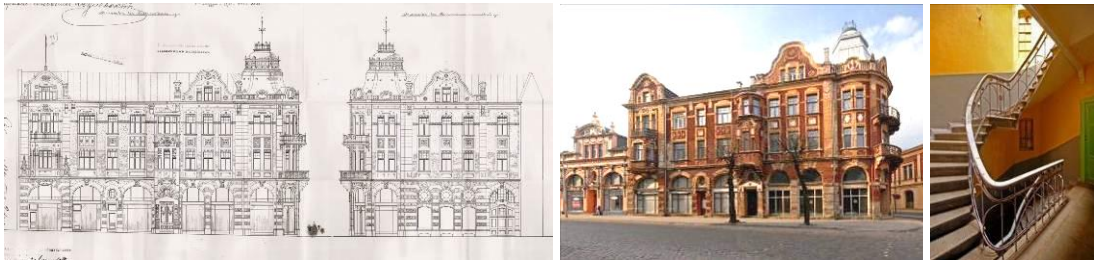


Fig. 3. W. Raeder's apartment block with shops at Graudu iela 44. Ch. Carr. 1908–1909. Project of the elevations (private collection H. Raeder), and photographs of the building and the staircase (J. Krastiņš, 2012).

Other works by Ch. Carr supposedly are apartment block with shops and movie theatre “Palace” at Graudu iela 27/29 (1912–1913), apartment blocks at Toma iela 43, Uliha iela 66 (after 1912) and apartment house with shops at Tirgoņu iela 22 (1911–1912). Years of the construction of some of these buildings are depicted as ornamental reliefs on the façades.

At least 11 buildings in Liepāja were constructed by the projects of Latvian architect Pauls Kampe. This recent discovery is consequence of exploring of the previously unknown project of the apartment block at Peldu iela 33. Construction design project on two pages, signed by the architect P. Kampe in 1911, was kept by one of the current owners of the building, a retired pharmacist Mrs Kaija Liepiņa. This finding turned out to be a surprising one since Kampe was basically known as a scientist – architectural historian and teacher and not so much as a practicing architect.<sup>7</sup>

Pauls Kampe (1885–1960) was born near Alūksne, a little town on the very north of Vidzeme, the central region of Latvia, “where his ancestors had been farming the land ... for 250 years, going through hard and difficult times.”<sup>8</sup> He went to school in Riga. In 1905, he began to study architecture at Riga Polytechnic Institute (RPI). Between 1906 and 1908, Kampe continued his studies in Germany, at Darmstadt Technical University, afterwards he returned to Riga where in 1910 he obtained a diploma in architecture from RPI. While he was still a student, he worked in the construction office of architects Aleksandrs Vanags and Alexander Schmaeling. After

<sup>7</sup> *Māksla un arhitektūra biogrāfijās* [2. sēj.]. Rīga, Latvijas Enciklopēdija, 1996, 8. un 9. lpp.

<sup>8</sup> Pauls KUNDZIŅŠ, “Latvijas celtniecības pētnieks aizsaulē”, *Arhitekts* (Latvijas arhitektu biedrības – LAB – izdevums), 1960, Nr. 10, 24. lpp.

graduation Kampe was drafted into the army. The statement made in 1912 reveals that his place of residence was in Liepāja, in the house of H. Katterfeld at Šķūņu (now Leona Paegles) iela 14.<sup>9</sup> In the same year, Kampe became an assistant at RPI and later also an associate professor. In 1937, Kampe already was a professor at the Latvian University. After World War II, he emigrated and lived in Bonn, Germany. He is the author of at least 70 publications,<sup>10</sup> most of them being of quite a large volume. Kampe's theoretical research was devoted to a broad range of themes, though he was particularly interested in construction history and architecture of individual buildings and creative achievements of certain architects, builders and artists.

Until now it was known that Kampe had taken part in the projects for restoration and designing of several buildings in the 1920s.<sup>11</sup> There are references in literature, where Kampe was named as a co-author of apartment houses in Riga, Aleksandra Čaka iela 70 and Krišjāņa Valdemāra iela 71 and 73, for which the construction designs were approved in 1910, and works were completed a year later.<sup>12</sup> These buildings are icons of National Romanticism. Their designs were developed in the office of architect Vanags. Historical records have not yet revealed any other specific information about the Art Nouveau buildings designed by Kampe. However, according to contemporaries, "... Kampe was actively realising his creative potential in architecture"<sup>13</sup> and "as a student and young architect, he worked in the office of architect Alexander Schmaeling in Riga where he had single-handedly completed a number of design tasks."<sup>14</sup> Apparently, these "tasks" could have been the designs for the apartment houses in Riga, at Ģertūdes iela 38 (1907) and at Ģertūdes iela 63 (1910). Both buildings are designed in a manner of

---

<sup>9</sup> *Album Academicum...*, S. 231.

<sup>10</sup> Jēkabs OZOLS, "Bibliographie Paul Campe", *Commentationes Balticae*, VIII/IX, 1960/61 (Jahrbuch des Baltisches Forschungsinstituts), Bonn, 1962, S. 26(442)–30(446).

<sup>11</sup> Vaidelotis APSĪTIS, "Pauls Kampe 1885–1960", *Latvijas arhitektūras meistari*, Rīga, Zvaigzne ABC, 1995, 133. lpp.

<sup>12</sup> *Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst in den Ostseeprovinzen* (Herausgegeben vom Architektenverein zu Riga), 1911, S. 108, 109.

<sup>13</sup> Pauls KUNDZIŅŠ, "Paul Campe 10.4.1885–23.2.1960", *Commentationes Balticae*, VIII/IX, 1960/61 (Jahrbuch des Baltisches Forschungsinstituts), Bonn, 1962, S. 20(436).

<sup>14</sup> Pauls KUNDZIŅŠ, "Profesors Dr. arch. un Dr. ing. Pauls Kampe", *Arhitekts* (Latvijas arhitektu biedrības – LAB – izdevums), 1960, Nr. 10, 25. lpp.

National Romanticism and bear the features not characteristic of any other works by A. Schmaeling. The visual image of the first building resembles the images of the buildings designed by Vanags and Kampe.

The owner of the apartment house in Liepāja at Peldu iela 33 was a local cultural activist and merchant Mr K. Sleinis. The design (Fig. 4) was approved at the Liepāja Construction Board on 10 October 1911. The works may have been completed in 1913. On each floor there are two five-room apartments with all amenities and “the black staircase” leading directly to the kitchen. A well-planned layout of the apartment resembles a layout pattern prevailing in apartment houses in Riga at that time: the entrance hall leads to several rooms and to the second corridor, which then leads to another room, the kitchen, the bathroom and the toilet. A maid’s room with a window facing the courtyard can be accessed directly from the kitchen. The bathroom is located between the maid’s room and the second corridor, its upper part includes a window to the maid’s room bringing the second light into it. Anyhow, the layout of the building reflects also the tradition characteristic of Liepāja: small interior windows are arranged next to the entrance doors to the apartments in the staircase. Usually those are windows to maid’s rooms, but in this case they provide natural light to toilets.

The façade of the building at Peldu iela 33 at first sight seems symmetrical, and it corresponds to the symmetrical layout of the building; however, on the second floor between the left-side bay window and staircase windows there is a small projection topped with a balcony on the third floor. Only horizontal sections of the façade show these differences in the layout plans of each floor without repeating the drawing of the entire floor plan. In Shinto (“Way of the Gods”), Japan’s oldest religion, a slight asymmetry implies that there is no absolute truth, there is no right or wrong, and nothing is perfect, and symmetry is not perfect either. For that reason, in ancient Shinto temples a certain element was always deliberately placed so as to break up the strict symmetry.



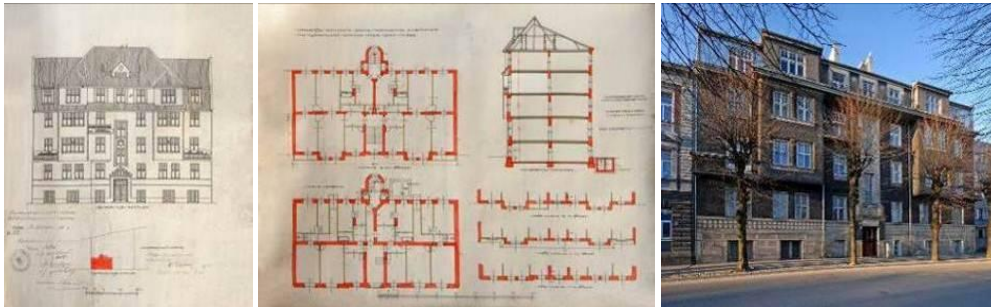


Fig. 4. K. Sleinis's apartment house at Peldu iela 33. P. Kampe. 1911. Project elevation, layouts and section (private collection K. Liepiņa), and and photograph of the building (J. Krastiņš, 2012).

The comparison of façade composition, finish details and peculiar features of layouts may reveal other buildings that Kampe may have designed in Liepāja. Certain repeating forms as such cannot serve as proof that they have been created by the same architect; however, the characteristic approach to shaping, the general image of the building and certain architectural language used still reflect an individual artistic style of each creative personality.

Considering the aforementioned, the apartment houses at Republikas iela 19, Uliha iela 15/17 and Uliha iela 25 attract special attention. All these buildings have the same principle of the layout as the building at Peldu iela 33. The small differences are related to the configuration of the plot: unlike the building at Peldu iela 33, these houses are located on the street corners. The houses at Republikas iela 19 and Uliha iela 15/17 are higher, they even include elevators.

The apartment house at Republikas iela 19, overlooking the corner of Toma iela and Republikas iela, is one of the most impressive Art Nouveau buildings in Liepāja. It has been nicknamed “the blue wonder”. As once the building was painted in a bluish tone, the nickname was suggested by its colour, though to a certain extent, the building, indeed, is a wonder of architecture considering its impressive size and artistic qualities. The building reflects the latest trends in the architecture of its period “taken over by the inhabitants of Liepāja without fail and confidently adapted to their city.”<sup>15</sup> The building abounds in expressive vocabulary of forms and shapes without any attached ornaments

<sup>15</sup> Gunta ŠNIPKE, “12 jūgendstila mirkļi”, *Liepājas Vēstules*, 2012, Nr. 1(9), 24. lpp.

apart from two friezes with geometric patterns. One of them encircles both façades at the level of the lintels of the ground-floor apertures rising high above the semi-basement, while the other runs in the same way between the top-floor apertures. Both façades are crowned with two large, low-pitched and vertically corrugated gables. They are noticeably similar to the portal pediment in the elevation drawing of the building at Peldu iela 33. The apertures on the right wing of the façade facing Republikas iela have tapered upper corners. Such a shape of apertures was a characteristic formal feature of National Romanticism. Like in the building at Peldu iela 33, staircase windows also form large vertical bands of glass. An old photo shows that the building used to have a massive cornice and its corner tower was a bit higher than today.

The buildings at Uliha iela 15/17 and 25 also are huge multi-storey apartment houses. The number “1914” on the façade over the entrance at Uliha iela 25 indicates that they were built just before World War I. Like “the blue wonder”, the street-corner part of both buildings form a cylinder topped with a tower. Since the late 19th century, corner towers have become widespread in Riga, while in Liepāja there are just a few examples more. Both buildings have also strongly protruding and distinctive cornices that are strikingly similar to the one, which used to adorn the building at Republikas iela 19. Façades of both buildings almost have no ornamental decorations apart from a simple relief with stylised ethnographic patterns, which fills the spandrels in the corner part of the building at Uliha iela 15/17. Metal grating of the flower boxes that are attached to balcony banisters and windowsills includes small squares amid strictly arranged rectangular lines resembling the same type of details as in the building at Aleksandra Čaka iela 70, in Riga. Only close scrutiny of the façade reveals those decorative forms. Architectural elements, i.e., bay windows, balconies and loggias create the artistic expressiveness of the building. Balconies are arranged on both sides of the bay windows. This is a method of shaping that became widespread only more than ten years later in the late 1920s with the Modern Movement or Functionalism. Some more buildings apparently designed by Kampe are apartment blocks at Liepu iela 23 (1912; number of the year is depicted on the blind fanlight over the upper window of

the staircase), Krišjāņa Valdemāra iela 18 (1913; number also indicated on the top of the central tower of the façade), Alejas iela 6, and Ferdinanda Grīniņa iela 3.

All the buildings that were designed or may have been designed by Kampe include either direct or indirect references to National Romanticism. Apartment house with shops at Lielā iela 4 is the most typical example. Another address of this building is at Pasta iela 2, where the year “1909” is chiselled in granite on right side of the gate portal, while the letters ‘MJG’ appear on the left side, standing for the name of the construction company Morduch Jossel Gordin that belonged to the owner of the house Mr M. Gordin. The number “1909” most likely stands for the foundation year of the company. The building was obviously built a year or two latter when several icons of National Romanticism appeared in Riga, among them also the apartment houses at Aleksandra Čaka iela 70 and Krišjāņa Valdemāra iela 71. The building also has all characteristic features of the formal variety of this stylistic favoured by A. Vanags who was the main author of these icons. However, this building cannot be attributed to Vanags because there is a complete list of all the buildings designed by this architect, and this list is compiled by Kampe himself.<sup>16</sup> It allows assume that the building may have been built in accordance with one of the first designs elaborated by Pauls Kampe in Liepāja, as it is less likely that at exactly this time some other architect would have repeated all architectural details, which characterised the buildings co-designed by Vanags and Kampe in Riga. Among other things these buildings had vigorous massing, combinations of different building materials, e.g., bands of natural stone on plastered walls, apertures with tapered upper corners, serrations under slight façade projections which sooner resembled fringes of Latvian blankets than dentils of classical cornices, bay windows whose configuration changed from segment-shaped to trapezium-shaped on different floors, and many other characteristic details. Particularly notable are rusticated granite portals. The portal in the façade towards Lielā iela is strikingly similar to the portals of the buildings designed by Vanags in Riga, especially the one at

---

<sup>16</sup> Pauls KAMPE, “Aleksanders Vanags 1873–1919 kā cilvēks un kā celtnieks”, *Izglītības Ministrijas Mēnešraksts*, 1929, Nr. 5/6, 18.–19. lpp.

Aleksandra Čaka iela 55 (1910). Like other buildings designed by Kampe, the one in Liepāja, at Lielā iela 4, also has a simple, rational and logical layout.

It is quite likely that Pauls Kampe may have designed some other buildings constituting the Art Nouveau heritage of Liepāja. One of them is apartment block at Republikas iela 26/28, which also has a visually pleasing and dynamic façade composition characteristic of National Romanticism, although it's architectural finish does not include direct references or clichés of this stylistic variety. The basic principle employed in designing the clearly asymmetrical façade is exactly the same as used for the apartment house at Ģertrūdes iela 63 in Riga designed probably by Kampe in A. Schmaeling's office. Layout of the building almost directly repeats the one at Peldu iela 33. Other buildings eventually designed by Kampe and reflecting features of National Romanticism are apartment blocks at Graudu iela 28 and 34, at Krišjāņa Barona iela 8, Liepu iela 23, and Dzintaru iela 9. Pauls Kampe has firmly written his name in the history of the city of Liepāja even if he designed only one building at Peldu iela 33.

One of the most imposing Art Nouveau structures in Liepāja – the Lutheran church at Jelgavas iela 62 (1909–1931) was designed by K. E. Strandmann, who was active not only in Liepāja and elsewhere in Latvia and Lithuania. Russian orthodox Cathedral at Studentu rotas iela 5/7 was designed by the civil engineer from St Petersburg Wassilij Kosjakow. This edifice has unique structure consisting of two crossing pairs of reinforced concrete arches supporting the central cupola. Further on, the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Liepāja Art Nouveau architecture were enriched with the Swedish consul Ekblom's villa at Dzintaru iela 23 designed in 1912 by famous Finnish architect Lars Sonck, and Edward Smit's villa at Liepu iela 27 designed in 1914 by the architect from Berlin Gustav Jänicke. The Liepāja City Theatre shaped in Neo-Classical trend of Art Nouveau and located at Teātra iela 4 is designed in 1909 by well-known architects from Dresden William Lossow and Max Hans Kühne.

The Art Nouveau in Liepāja reflects mostly Latvian – German and partly also Russian as well as other interchanges. In general, the Art nouveau of Liepāja is noticeable contribution to the Art Nouveau heritage of the whole humankind.