

# Kaunas Interwar Cafes and Restaurants: Feasibility Study and Proposals Regarding Restoration and Revival

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——— In the research, the case study deals with the interiors of catering establishments reflecting different models of the décor styles of the time. Government institutions have preserved the public interiors of buildings characterized by recurrent academic and historical motifs complemented by elements of the National style. On the contrary, the interiors of privately owned buildings of this period have been altered to fit new trends, with the dominance of the modernist style perceived to be part of Western culture. Furthermore, newly built structures were furnished following the modern trends of pure functionalism, hygiene, and light, with fragmented elements of the National style. The research assesses the importance of café culture in the formation of the Kaunas Phenomenon and proposes a project for revitalization and possible uses for the café and restaurant.

*Keywords:* Kaunas, interwar, interiors of restaurants and cafés, National style, Modern Movement, Art Deco.

**Instead of an Introduction: “A café is a place where time and space are used, but only coffee is included in the receipt”**

The 2015 European Cultural Heritage Label was awarded to the architectural heritage of 1919–1940 Kaunas, confirming the uniqueness of the region which has stimulated the historical and art history research of interwar Kaunas by submitting nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris entitled “Modern Kaunas: The Architecture of Optimism, 1919–1939.” “Kaunas Modernism is an exceptional example of rethinking architecture as a social, political and cultural modernisation process in the last century.”<sup>1</sup> Kaunas’s status as a temporary capital became the most important element of these changes, which led to a radical transformation of the city. Kaunas, the temporary capital of the Republic of Lithuania between 1919–1939, became an example of rapid urbanization and modernization and expressed the values and aspirations characteristic of many interwar cities in Central and Eastern Europe, encouraged by an optimistic trust in an independent future.

The city was given a unique opportunity to grow, and the state created an identity that responded to the aspirations and ideals of the young country. The changed status of the city inspired grandiose construction and development. The territory of Kaunas grew by seven times, and 4,141 buildings, including 58 for public purposes, were constructed from 1919 to 1930.<sup>2</sup> As the population grew, the need for certain spaces increased as state-owned institutions responded to the various needs of the new society. The concept of modern leisure emerged with the changing living and working conditions, the improvement of working hours, and the increase in income and purchasing power.<sup>3</sup> It was a sign of a modernizing society, and entertainment became an integral part of the urban image. The researchers conclude that “the entertainment infrastructure in Kaunas has reached an impressive level, and no one has matched it.”<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to identify the elements that

1 Nomination for Inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, Modernist Kaunas: architecture of optimism 1919–1939, (Kaunas, 2021), <https://modernizmasateiciai.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Modernist-Kaunas.-Nomination-Dossier-2021.pdf>.

2 *Kauno architektūra* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1991), 22; translated from: *Kaunas architecture* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1991).

3 Giedrė Polkaitė-Petkevičienė, Norbertas Černiauskas, “Urbanizacija 1918–1940 metais: modernaus miesto ženklai Lietuvoje” [Urbanization (1918–1940): the signs of modern city in Lithuania], *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, vol. 39 (2017), 65.

4 *Lietuvos tarpukario architektūrinis palikimas: materialumo ir nematerialumo dermė* [Architectural heritage of the interwar period in Lithuania: the combination of tangibility and intangibility], (Kaunas: KTU leidykla, 2015), 108.

shape urbanity. However, urban life is inseparable from the establishment of catering associated with street culture and nightlife.

Laisvės alėja (Freedom Avenue) became the main cultural space of the city where the most visited catering establishments were located. The cafés were primarily places for meetings and spending time, rather than catering establishments. Such a global phenomenon reveals the spread of period-specific tendencies. Indeed, the relationship between the rapid growth of Kaunas and the spread of urban culture “... is the core of the modern European experience.”<sup>5</sup> Assessing the importance of café culture in the formation of the Kaunas phenomenon, it should be noted that none of the hundreds of former pubs, bistros, cafés, or restaurants functions as material or intangible heritage to date. After World War II, the Konrado cukrainė, the Versalis, and the Metropolis restaurants continued to operate. With the political climate change, their interior was altered several times, but their place and spirit were preserved. After the economic system transition in the 1990s, even cafés and restaurants that had been operating for almost a century went bankrupt, and businesses and institutions that did not have the same function were set up in their places.

This article aims to present a study of the possibility of restoring the interiors of the most important interwar cafés and restaurants in Kaunas and project proposals for their revival. First, the stylistic trends common in the interiors of interwar Kaunas public catering establishments are explained. Then, the cases of a typical café and restaurant are analyzed, and the feasibility of reviving the establishments is discussed.

The article analyzes the interiors of selected catering establishments, which radically differed in terms of their contracting authorities: the private company Pienocentras (Milk Centre, Headquarters of the Central Union of Lithuanian Dairy Processing Companies) and the public Karininkų ramovė (Garrison Officers’ Club Building). This altered the architectural features of the interiors, the services provided, the hygiene requirements, and the visiting public. The cafés and restaurant selected for the case study have the most surviving historical and iconographic information for restoration of their former interiors and the realization of

their potential. The café operating in the headquarters of the Pienocentras and the building of the Karininkų ramovė with the restaurant Trys Milžinai (Three Giants) have been submitted for nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. They have been declared cultural heritage sites protected by the state (official name: Lietuvos karininkų ramovės pastatų kompleksas, unique object code 25982; official name: Pienocentro rūmai, unique object code: 15968).

Although the cafés that operated in interwar Kaunas were described in an extensive analysis of cultural life,<sup>6</sup> the analysis rarely mentions the spaces and former interiors or objects in them. Documents from various institutions help to reconstruct the former spaces. The Kaunas Regional State Archives preserves documents of the Kaunas City Municipality Construction Division Fund (f. 218) containing the plans of institutions, descriptions of planned changes, complaints and disagreements with neighbors, and acts drawn up by the police regarding the current condition. Documents for the construction of the Karininkų ramovė in the Central State Archives of Lithuania (LCVA) (f. 6) provide information on the equipment and ordering of furniture for the restaurant Trys Milžinai. In addition, the Ministry of State Audit Office Fund (f. R-763) in the LCVA keeps the first nationalization files of cafés and restaurants from during the first Soviet occupation, which describe in detail the equipment and inventory of cafés. The file of architect Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis (f. 81) in the Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art (LLMA) includes sketches with the design stages of the Pienocentras building and the furnishing of the café. Investigations that convey various aspects of political and cultural life, art, and architecture of the First Independent Republic of Lithuania were also used in the study. Systematized information about the interwar architecture in Kaunas is presented in the publication of the exhibition book *Architecture of Optimism: The Kaunas Phenomenon, 1918–1940* compiled by Marija Drėmaitė.<sup>7</sup> The book examines the changes in cultural life in the interwar city and discusses the most significant individual buildings. The development of interwar interiors is presented in the monograph *Lithuanian Interwar Interiors:*

<sup>6</sup> Justina Minelgaitė, “Tarpukario Kauno bohemos ypatumai” [Characteristic of bohemia in interwar], *Kauno istorijos metraštis*, (Kaunas: VDU, 2012); Aurelija Savickienė, *Nekuklioji Lietuva* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> *Optimizmo architektūra: Kauno fenomenas, 1918–1940* [Architecture of optimism: the Kaunas phenomenon, 1918–1940], ed. Marija Drėmaitė (Vilnius: Lapas, 2018).

1918–1940 by Lina Preišegalavičienė.<sup>8</sup> It is one of the first publications to analyze the development of interior objects. A series of articles by Lijana Šatavičiūtė<sup>9</sup> dedicated to the furnishing of residential spaces reveals the Modernist tendencies that prevailed during the interwar period. Aspects of the politicization of the “National style” are analyzed in articles by Vaidas Petrulis.<sup>10</sup> The exhibition catalogue *Art Deco in Lithuania*,<sup>11</sup> compiled by Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, reveals the Art Deco trends in Lithuania. Based on the surviving photographs, iconographic and comparative research is carried out which allows the interiors of the selected catering establishments to be reconstructed.

### Interwar Café and Restaurant Interiors: Between the National Style and Modernism

Interior spaces which reflect a period are a multidimensional phenomenon, adapting to social and economic changes. They are shaped to meet particular needs, revealing cultural ideas specific to the environment. Moreover, they are affected by and dependent on political and societal changes. The interiors of cafés are classed as public spaces, where both the personal owner and the collective memory are reflected. Art historian Lina Preišegalavičienė noted that interior items of the prewar period come to life as a part of society: the furniture, ornaments, paintings, dishes and utensils, and small art pieces move between groups; they were valued and compared to

<sup>8</sup> Lina Preišegalavičienė, *Lietuvos tarpukario interjerai (1918–1940)* [Lithuanian interwar interiors, 1918–1940], (Kaunas: Vox Altera, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Lijana Šatavičiūtė, “Tautinio stiliaus stereotipai tarpukario Lietuvos interjeruose” [Stereotypes of national style in the interiors of the interwar period], *Menotyra*, no. 3 (2002); Idem, “Patriotiškumo ženklai XX a. pirmosios pusės kasdienybės kultūroje” [Signs of patriotism in the culture of daily life of the first half of the 20th century], *Menotyra*, no. 3–4 (2009); Idem, “Modernaus būsto idėja tarpukario Lietuvoje: tarp funkcionalizmo ir romantizmo” [Idea of a modern home in interwar Lithuania: between functionalism and national romanticism], *Menotyra*, no. 4 (2011); Idem, “Dailininkas ar amatininkas: menininkai ir dailių amatų sąjūdis Lietuvoje” [Artists or artisans? Artists and the artisan guild movement in interwar Lithuania], *Kultūrologija*, vol. 15 (2007).

<sup>10</sup> Vaidas Petrulis, “Erdvinės lietuvių tautinio stiliaus politikos projekcijos 1918–1939 m.” [National style: spatial projections of the national policy in Lithuania (1918–1939)], *Meno istorija ir kritika 4: Menas ir tapatumas* (2008); Idem, “Konkursai tarpukario (1918–1940) Lietuvoje: bendrosios tendencijos” [Architectural competitions in interwar (1918–1940) Lithuania: general tendencies], *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 37 (2013); Idem, “Architektūros politikos apraiškos Lietuvos tarpukario (1918–1940) periodikoje: tarp reprezentacijos ir socialinio teisingumo” [Manifestations of architectural policy in the Lithuanian press during interwar period (1918–1940): between representation and social justice], *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 33 (2002).

<sup>11</sup> *Art Deco Lietuvoje: parodos katalogas* [Art Deco in Lithuania: exhibition catalog], ed. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė (Kaunas: Nacionalinis M. K. Čiurlionio dailės muziejus, 1998).

each other. Preišegalavičienė states that “the interior items help us discern new trends in fashion and taste and remind us of older customs or social differences.”<sup>12</sup> This is especially evident in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In the interwar period, the companies located in the buildings constructed during the governorate time were in no hurry to change the existing interiors, which were dominated by the Historical style. With increasing competition, economic opportunities, and needs, innovative solutions for the interior were sought. The construction and renovation of spaces boomed significantly in the 1930s. Most cafés renovated only a few rooms, repainting the walls and adding new furniture to the interior. In order to evaluate the artistic expression of the interior, it is most expedient to evaluate newly constructed objects in which the function of the spaces is clearly defined and innovative engineering solutions are applied.

The National and Modernist styles have been identified. The search for pure Lithuanian architecture was based on the past of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and folk art research, which became the central element of the National style. The comprehensive control inherent in the authoritarian regime also affected the design of spaces. Since then, architecture and interiors have become an instrument of political power to represent the aspirations of the young state in the new capital. We can see this in the interior of the restaurant *Trys Milžinai*.

When the new capital infrastructure development started in Kaunas, the architects focused on the innovations offered by Modernism. The design of the buildings and their interiors, characterized by the latest construction solutions, was started, such as the headquarters of the *Pienocentras*. The interior aesthetics changed with the increasing use of new construction and communication and equipment technologies. Applying new artistic ideas from various art trends in interiors also intensified. The interwar society did not see much contradiction between the harmony of Modernism and National motifs. Hence, these were new styles that interacted organically. The priorities of tradition, society, and the new bourgeoisie overshadowed avant-garde experiments in Kaunas.<sup>13</sup> Modernism was slowly gaining popularity in society because “it was influenced by the conservative taste of

<sup>12</sup> Lina Preišegalavičienė, *Lietuvos tarpukario interjerai (1918–1940)*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Optimizmo architektūra*, 18.



1.

Office building of the Piencentras company, 1934, architect Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis.  
In <http://www.autc.lt/lt/architekturos-objektai/1027>

the population.”<sup>14</sup> As a result, the prevalence of mixed-style furniture and interior furnishings increased. Furthermore, the Art Deco style was rooted, whose classic forms were associated with reliability and solidity. For the public, this style was identified with “an innovative European way of life.”<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly, the attitude developed in society that a progressive public interior had to be created based on Art Deco ideas, thus reflecting Western culture in Kaunas.

#### First Case Study: The Modernism of the Piencentras Café

The headquarters of Piencentras became an indisputable legacy of Kaunas’s interwar architecture and a symbol of the city. It was built at the intersection of two main streets and dominated among the low-rise surroundings of Laisvės alėja. Therefore, we could call it one of the first skyscrapers in Kaunas [fig. 1]. The concept of the project was based on global trends. In Europe and the USA, the relocation of administrative buildings of large

<sup>14</sup> Lina Preišegalavičienė, *Lietuvos tarpukario interjerai (1918–1940)*, 118.

<sup>15</sup> Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, “Art deco ir Lietuva” [Art deco and Lithuania], *Krantai*, no. 6 (1991), 55.



2.

Restaurant Presto, designed by Otto Bauer in Paris. In *Moderne Bauformen*, 1930, no. 9

companies or corporations to the city center's main street, next to banks and shops, became widespread in the first half of the last century as a modern representation of capitalism and companies.<sup>16</sup> Pienocentras contended with the global market not only in its representation of capitalism but also in terms of operations. As a result, a network of Pienocentras's cafés was created in Lithuania, which emphasized healthy products.

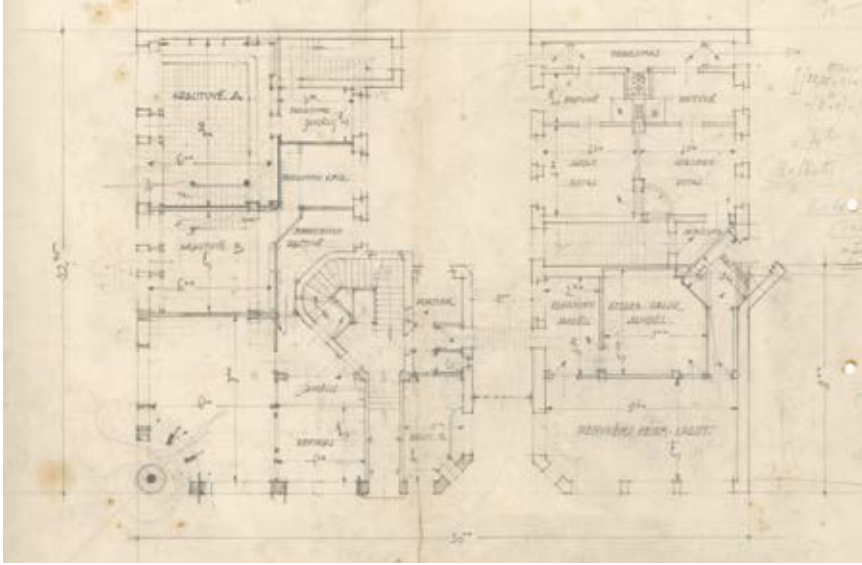
In 1931, architect Landsbergis-Žemkalnis won the design competition for the headquarters building of the Pienocentras. Following his design, the house was completed in 1934. It is one of the few buildings whose development can be observed from the architect's sketches. The first plans for the building were characterized by eclecticism and some Art Deco details.<sup>17</sup> Later the décor disappeared, leaving only the rhythm of vertical and horizontal lines, which creates ideal proportions complemented by curved shapes.

It was an unprecedented building in Lithuania, reflecting the principles implemented by widespread functionalism, and was associated by contemporaries with Western culture. It is no coincidence that the Pienocentras cafés were known as American-style cafés. The supply of fast food

<sup>16</sup> Marija Drėmaitė, *Progreso meteoras. Modernizacija ir pramonės architektūra Lietuvoje 1920–1940* [Meteor of progress: modernisation and industrial architecture in Lithuania, 1918–1940], (Vilnius: Lapas, 2016), 126.

<sup>17</sup> Jolita Kančienė, Jonas Minkevičius, *Architektas Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis* [Architect Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis], (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1993), 28.





3.  
Office building of the Pienocentras company, sketches by architect Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis.  
In Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art

and the modern interior of the cafés were associated with progress. We find many similarities with the Presto restaurant in Paris, designed by architect Otto Bauer in 1930 [fig. 2]. Photos of Presto were printed in the magazine *Modern Bauformen* No. 9 and other publications immediately after the restaurant opened in 1930. These buildings are connected not only by their functional purpose but also by the elements used in the exterior and interior. Rounded, rising, and split luminous exterior roofs are an important décor element. They testify to the spread of the Modernist style and the emergence of the popularity of lighting effects. The two buildings in Kaunas and Paris both had similar large shop windows with dark frames, rounded interior walls and curved buffets with metal details.

The design envisaged that a catering establishment would be set up on the ground floor, initially marked as a store. Landsbergis-Žemkalnis started designing the café from a small room in the corner of the building.<sup>18</sup> The café's interior design harmoniously responded to the elements used in the exterior. High tables are arranged in the shop next to the large show

<sup>18</sup> Building of the Pienocentras, Lithuanian Archive of Literature and Art (LLMA), f. 81, ap. 1, b. 610, l. 59.

windows, and a curved buffet is drawn along the perimeter of the walls, which is connected to the partition separating the shop from the café. The main entrance and access to utility rooms were located on the same axis [fig. 3]. The utility rooms were modest; there was a built-in serving table and an elevator to the basement. Three round tables with chairs were designed for the café space. Another architect's sketch captures the interior visions of the adjoining room, in which he designed high, slender one-legged chairs and decorated the walls of the bar and partitions with square glass planes.<sup>19</sup> Whether these ideas were implemented can be seen from later layouts of the finished building and archival data. The architect allocated small spaces for the shop and café in the first sketches. Later, the spaces were expanded parallel to S. Daukantas Street. However, a detailed layout is not presented.<sup>20</sup> When the building was completed in 1932, the opened café gained high popularity, and consequently, the spaces were expanded.

The 1940–1941 inventory mentions Viennese chairs, tables made of oak with black edgings, and a combination of natural wood with black details that was very popular among modernists. The rooms were painted white and without stencil décor elements, which did not satisfy contemporaries because they felt they lacked color and ornaments.<sup>21</sup> The tulip-decorated cornered six-door buffet was unique in this interior because all other buffets were painted white.<sup>22</sup> The tulip is a characteristic element of the Lithuanian National style. According to Preišegalavičienė, “the origin of the tulip ornament in America is associated with German emigrants.”<sup>23</sup> Although the origin of the ornament is not clear, the stylization of interwar Functionalist furniture with interpretations of folk art has been popular in the synthesis of Modernist and National style interiors.

Like most buildings of the time, the newly built Pienocentras headquarters was equipped with central heating. The café's inventory mentions an “electric heater.”<sup>24</sup> However, it is doubtful that the new building would have needed additional heating. Perhaps the heater was designed to extend

19 Corporation Valgis nationalization case (30 09 1940), Lithuanian Central State Archive (LCVA), f. R-763, ap. 2, b. 358, l. 14.

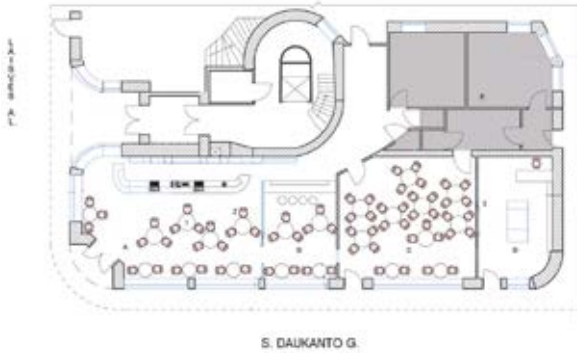
20 Building of the *Pienocentras*, LLMA, f. 81, ap. 1, b. 610, p. 59.

21 I. Ž. Pienocentras cafe and refit, *Lietuvos Aidas*, no. 437 (1936), 3.

22 Corporation Valgis nationalization case (30 09 1940), LCVA, f. R-763, ap. 2, b. 358, l. 15.

23 Lina Preišegalavičienė, *Lietuvos tarpukario interjerai (1918–1940)*, 123.

24 Corporation Valgis nationalization case (30 09 1940), 16.



4.  
Office building of the  
Pienocentras company,  
restoration concession scheme,  
author Rugilė Bružaitė, 2020

the opening hours of the outdoor café. Such heaters were commonly used in major European cities because they made it possible for outdoor terraces to operate all year round. The interior of Pienocentras's café as well as its materials and shapes could claim to be the most modern interior of a catering establishment in interwar Kaunas.

From its first days of operation, the building received particular interest. The exterior photos spread in the press and publications survive to this day, unlike the images of the original interior. Unfortunately, the catering establishments installed in this building have not survived. Therefore, when reconstructing the former café's interior, we are faced with the problem that historical photos of the interior have not survived. Various sources are used in restoring the interior to its former glory, which only reinforce the uniqueness of this building and of the work of architect Landsbergis-Žemkalnis. The ideas for restoration consider the contextuality of the building, the historical narrative, and the current situation.

Design work should begin with the removal of unnecessary partitions, drop ceilings, and other inserts of later periods to restore the original layout of the café without compromising the valuable features [fig. 4]. For example, the surviving windows and doors are valuable fittings. Maintaining the architect's original vision, they should be preserved and restored, and the wooden elements decorated in dark colors. Pienocentras's café had a purely Modernist interior with light colors; white and natural wood were combined with black details. Based on this, when designing a shop/café

space, it is necessary to harmonize with the façade and choose a white buffet with rounded corners and metal elements and a glass top as recorded in the photo. The interior should be upholstered with tables made of oak with black edgings (dimensions not mentioned in the inventory) and Thonet No. 18 chairs, reflecting the type of single chairs that was especially popular in interwar catering establishments. Other rooms should be designed variable, where catering can be provided by placing tables or conferences using the same inventory. It is proposed to install an exposition dedicated to Landsbergis-Žemkalnis and the building in a room with a separate entrance from S. Daukantas Street.

During Soviet times and after the restoration of independence, the traditions of the milk bar were continued in adjacent buildings but not in the former ones. This clearly shows society's need for the continuity of tradition in buildings that have retained their authentic architectural form and shaped an immaterial heritage.

### Second Case Study: A Combination of Modernism and the National Style in the Trys Milžinai Restaurant

Kaunas has had the status of a fortress city since the period of the Russian Empire, and officers have always been an essential part of the city's social life. This has not changed since the restoration of statehood, particularly since the coup d'état in 1926. As military power grew between the wars, so did the authority of the officers.

Like most European countries at the time, they gathered at clubs. In Lithuania, these clubs were called *ramovės*.<sup>25</sup> In 1930, there was an idea to build a new building for the officers' club, and an international competition was launched for the design work. In terms of the competition, the main criterion was the visualization of national ideals. The furnishing and fitting-out of the premises had to be representative of the State.

From the beginning of the concept development, the design of the building called for a restaurant on the ground floor.<sup>26</sup> Several interior modification decisions were adopted during the years of construction and design (1931–1937) [fig. 5]. The main hall size, which was chosen as rectangular,

<sup>25</sup> *Optimizmo architektūra*, 113.

<sup>26</sup> Naujoji Ramovė – nauja gadynė karių šeimoje [New Garrison Officers' Club Building, a new happy life in the community of soldiers], *Kardas*, no. 9 (1937), 204.



5.  
Kaunas Garrison Officers' Club Building,  
1939. From the Historical Presidential Palace,  
Kaunas

non-dispersible, open, was the topic of long discussions. The image of a round hall with supporting columns was abandoned. More attention was paid to technological equipment. Elevators for food supply were installed, which allowed moving the food from the basement where it was prepared.<sup>27</sup> The elevator shaft running through all floors allowed provision of food for the restaurant and other reception facilities. As mentioned above, the kitchen was in the basement, and accordingly the connection between the kitchen and the restaurant was made using the “local phone.” This building was distinguished by its unique ventilation system which let in heated, cleaned, and humidified air five times per hour; at the time, this type of ventilation had not been applied in any other building.<sup>28</sup> The air supply system was installed in the basement, with ducts installed in each room. In the restaurant hall, they were in the lower part of the window niches.

<sup>27</sup> Lithuania Garrison Officers' Club Building central heating, plumbing, sewerage and ventilation, project, LCVA, f. 6, ap. 1, b. 33, l. 26.

<sup>28</sup> “Ramovės rūmai” [Garrison Officers' Club Building], *Kardas*, no. 5 (1936), 130.



6.  
Restaurant Trys Milžinai  
interior in 1937.  
In <https://www.limis.lt/>

The restaurant Trys Milžinai was one of the few restaurants built in a new building where the premises were pre-planned rather than adapted. The restaurant's plan resembles a T-shape, with an elongated hall, to which two offices and auxiliary rooms were connected from the sides. The restaurant was accessed through the main entrance. In the interwar period, it was conventional to have a concierge open the doors in restaurants, a particular service person to serve the guests in the cloakroom, and a *maître d'hôtel* meet them at the entrance hall; these were the mandatory attributes of the restaurant.

The Karininkų ramovė (Garrison Officers' Club Building) was supposed to represent the state. Therefore, special attention was paid to creating an interior in the National [fig. 6]. The décor of the restaurant hall was modest, free of Historical interior styling, and wooden walls or ceilings. A repeated pattern of windows, decorated with forged metal, tulip motifs, and grilles, resembled lead stained-glass seams.

Decoration of the center part of the white ceiling imitated caissons. Square caissons were formed with plastered beams decorated with oak leaves and acorns, present in the squares of six lamps with opal glass covers and other equipment.<sup>29</sup> They were illuminated with light combinations of different colors. Ceiling decoration became the hall's main feature.

<sup>29</sup> Lithuania Garrison Officers' Club Building restaurant-cafe and hotel rental, contract with Ona Pėžiene-Urbanavičiūtė, LCVA, f. 6, ap. 1, b. 53, l. 8.

Works decorated with the symbols of beams, oak leaves, and acorns with reinforced concrete attracted fans of the National style, who appreciated the pursuit of more more interesting symbols. Opal glass luminaires suppressed abundant lighting.<sup>30</sup> A strong accent of the interior was the variety of light bulbs used, an aspect that was fashionable in the West. These were displayed on a calm, bright wall background, without obscuring the decorative ceiling works. At first sight, the relatively simple decoration of the interior reflected the ideals of the National style and Modernist principles.

The restaurant's interior was modern: "an orchestra stage, 56 tables, 69 armchairs, 164 chairs, a bar, a buffet," opal glass *bra* luminaires installed in between the windows.<sup>31</sup> According to the remaining furniture drawings, the tables were manufactured without broken or wavy shapes, incrustation, or exceptional veneering subtleties. Oak wood was used for furniture, and unspliced ash wood was used for bent armrests. Furniture wood was polychromed with black paint. The building was equipped predominantly with locally constructed and finished materials, except for the rich green leather in the restaurant hall used for chairs and armchairs, which came from England.<sup>32</sup>

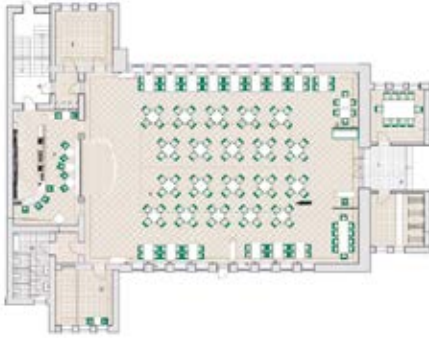
In the restaurant's functional area, the simplicity, ease, and mobility of furniture forms were emphasized through the ceiling caissons as the main decorative element, with national symbols, which did not overload a relatively low-ceiling room. The restaurant Trys Milžinai combined ideas of Modernism: brightness, muted colors of finishing, attention to the function of objects and the room, and the expression of nationality using decoration.

The Karininkų ramovė was built at the end of the interwar period using the most advanced technologies and spatial planning solutions, and trendy décor elements. After the officers' club was established during the Soviet period, the layout of the building did not change. The restaurant spaces have also remained. It is one of the few spaces of this kind that has preserved its original-purpose restaurant. It provides an excellent opportunity to restore the restaurant, which has preserved authentic details to this day. In addition, it allows the display of the interior as an example of a synthesis of National and Modernist styles.

30 Inž. B., "Ramovės rūmai" [Garrison Officers' Club Building], *Kardas*, no. 8 (1937), 192.

31 Lithuania Garrison Officers Club Building restaurant-cafe and hotel rental, l. 1.

32 Lithuania Garrison Officers Club Building restaurant furniture contract with Vincas Kliokys, LCVA, f. 6, ap. 1 b. 44, l. 5.



7.  
Restaurant Trys Milžinai interior restoration  
concession scheme, by Rugilė Bružaitė, 2020

The main task for the revival of the interior is to conserve and restore the authentic elements based on historical material and to re-create the those that have disappeared. First, detailed research of polychrome and floor covering in the restaurant hall should be performed, which will help determine the rooms' original design. If the original plans cannot be ascertained, it will be necessary to rely on the interior elements of the main hall on the ground floor. When removing the partitions, it is advised to use mobile furniture constructed according to the surviving drawings [fig. 7]. Surviving authentic elements, such as doors and windows, should be preserved and restored. In addition, the decorative bars covering the windows need to be restored according to the existing examples. When decorating the space, it is proposed to highlight the lighting of the hall and the coffer ceilings with relief molding [fig. 8]. Restoration of the former stage is vital for the continuation of the cultural traditions of the café. Furthermore, it is advised to construct an open stage from a part of the hall and bar because a restaurant with an interwar spirit is unimaginable without an orchestra and a dance space.

## Conclusions

1. In Kaunas, the interwar temporary capital of the Republic of Lithuania, spending time in cafés was emblematic of Western life. The most crucial factor in cafés and their material environment was society, which set higher and higher demands on aesthetic environmental standards and





8.  
Restaurant Trys Milžinai interior retrospect visualization, by Rugilė Bružaitė, 2020



9.  
Restaurant Trys Milžinai interior retrospect visualization, by Rugilė Bružaitė, 2020

encouraged competition between institutions. During the interwar period, the young, ambitious state was eager to establish new public spaces to emphasize independence. In the 1930s, these spaces still had a close relationship with academism, with marked repetitions of Historical and Classical styles. In shaping the values of the young nation and state, it was essential to promote the National style, which correlated with Modernism, bright spaces, and elimination of unnecessary furniture.

2. Pienocentras's café could claim to be the most modern interior of a catering establishment in interwar Kaunas. The aspiration of a better and higher quality Westernized life and the application of innovations rapidly changed the outlook of society and the need for innovation. Pienocentras's café has become a unique example of architectural heritage and an intangible reflection of the former culture, revealing the existence of the Kaunas interwar phenomenon. The history of the building's design, construction, and interior respond to the principles of Modernism and Functionalism. The café stands out in Kaunas and work should be done to revive the restaurant and restore its original significance.

3. The restaurant Trys Milžinai, which met the representative needs of the state, is the least damaged by later reconstructions. It is possible to construct a restoration model from remaining original elements and precise and detailed drawings of the former furniture. The restaurant's interior, which clearly showed the spirit of the National style, is one of the few examples that organically combines Modernism and National style. Synthesis of these styles reveals the uniqueness of Kaunas interwar Modernist architecture as compared to other European cities.

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Santrauka

## Kauno tarpukario kavinės ir restoranai: restauravimo galimybių studija ir atgaivinimo pasiūlymai

Rugilė Bružaitė

*Reikšminiai žodžiai:* Kaunas, tarpukaris, restoranų ir kavinių interjerai, tautinis stilius, modernizmo judėjimas, *art deco*.

Pasikeitusios politinės aplinkybės formavo tarpukario Kauno maitinimo įstaigų interjerus: išsivadavimas iš Rusijos imperijos, nepriklausomos valstybės kūrimas su nauju politiniu centru, visuomeninės struktūros kaita bei miesto kultūros augimas lėmė sparčiai besikeičiančius poreikius. Skirtingai nuo architektūros, visuomeniniai interjerai, kurie buvo susiję su juose veikiančių žmonių poreikiais ir finansinėmis galimybėmis, buvo nuolatinių ir spontaniškų pokyčių vietas. Miestas tapo šalies centru, kurio misija – atstovauti valstybei. Tautinis stilius visuomeniniuose interjeruose pasirinktas siekiant pabrėžti politinės galios statusą. Privačiuose interjeruose kosmopolitiškų idėjų elementai buvo dažniau plėtojami interpretuojant *art deco* ir modernizmą.

Straipsnyje interjero atvejo studijoje nagrinėjamos maitinimo įstaigos, atspindinčios skirtingus nagrinėjamu laikotarpiu vyravusius interjero stiliaus modelius. Rusijos imperijos laikotarpiu statytuose pastatuose tarpukariu buvo įsikūrusios valstybės institucijos. Šių pastatų interjerams būdingi pasikartojantys akademiniai ir istoriniai motyvai, papildyti tautinio stiliaus elementais. Privatūs interjerai pasižymėjo naujomis tendencijomis, vyravo *art deco* stilius, suvokiamas kaip vakarietiškos kultūros dalis. Be to, naujai statomi pastatai buvo įrengiami vadovaujantis moderniomis grynojo funkcionalizmo, higienos ir šviesos tendencijomis, su fragmentiškais tautinio stiliaus elementais.