

= House with Chimaeras =

House with Chimaeras or Horodecki House (Ukrainian : ??????? ? ??????? , Будинок з химерами) is an Art Nouveau building located in the historic Lypky neighborhood of Kiev , the capital of Ukraine . Situated across the street from the President of Ukraine 's office at No. 10 , Bankova Street , the building has been used as a presidential residence for official and diplomatic ceremonies since 2005 . The street in front of the building is closed off to all automobile traffic , and is now a patrolled pedestrian zone due to its near proximity to the Presidential Administration building .

Architect Vladislav Gorodetsky originally constructed the House with Chimaeras for use as his own upmarket apartment building during the period of 1901 ? 1902 . However , as the years went by , Gorodetsky eventually had to sell the building due to financial troubles , after which it changed ownership numerous times before finally being occupied by an official Communist Party polyclinic until the early 2000s . When the building was vacated , its interior and exterior decor were fully reconstructed and restored according to Gorodetsky 's original plans .

The building derives its popular name from the ornate decorations depicting exotic animals and hunting scenes , which were sculpted by Italian architect Emilio Sala since Gorodetsky was an avid hunter . The name does not refer to the chimaera of mythology , but to an architectural style known as chimaera decoration in which animal figures are applied as decorative elements to a building . Gorodetsky 's unique architectural style earned him praise as the Antoni Gaudí of Kiev .

= = History = =

= = = Construction and early history = = =

The House with Chimaeras was designed by the architect Vladislav Gorodetsky in 1901 ? 1902 . Gorodetsky was born in 1863 into a prosperous Polish szlachta family in the Podillia region . After finishing the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg in 1890 , he moved to Kiev , where he lived for almost 30 years . At the time of the building 's construction , Gorodetsky had already established himself as a prominent Kiev architect , having designed and constructed together with his close friend and partner engineer Anton Strauss many city buildings , from the St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Cathedral to the Karaim Kenesa and what today is the National Art Museum of Ukraine . Besides architecture , Gorodetsky was also interested in big @-@ game hunting , which explains why his building features many animals .

Gorodetsky financed the house 's construction with borrowed money , with the intent for it to be an apartment building . Each floor formed a single apartment , connected by an elevator and stairs . Gorodetsky himself occupied the fourth floor of the building , measuring at about 380 m2 (4 @,@ 100 sq ft) .

Gorodetsky bought the first lot of land on February 1 , 1901 , with construction work commencing on March 18 of that year . Construction of the exterior walls was finished by August 21 , and the roof installed and all masonry work was completed on September 13 . Due to the economic hardships within the Russian Empire , the completion of the building was delayed . In May 1903 , only one apartment on the lowest level and Gorodetsky 's own apartment were occupied . The total cost of the land and construction amounted to 133 @,@ 000 rubles . In total , 1 @,@ 550 m2 (16 @,@ 700 sq ft) of land were used for construction of the building and cost a total of 15 @,@ 640 rubles . The projected annual profit from the rentals was 7 @,@ 200 rubles . A cowshed was located on the premises due to Gorodetsky 's insistence on fresh in @-@ house milk , though it was specifically placed in a way that the smell of the cows would not disturb the tenants . On a lot adjacent to the building , a miniature alpine garden (approx . 320 m2 or 3 @,@ 400 sq ft) and a fountain were built .

Due to financial mismanagement which included his Safari hunting hobby , in July 1912 , Gorodetsky pledged the building as a collateral against a loan taken from Kiev Mutual Credit

Association . When Gorodetsky defaulted on the loan , the building was auctioned off in 1913 , and became the property of the engineer Daniel Balakhovsky , the son of a Kiev trader , who was also the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Blahodatinskoe sugar factory , and a French Consular agent in Kiev . In 1916 , the house belonged to the Blahodatinskoe sugar factory . In 1918 , the building 's ownership changed again , to Samuel Nemets . In 1921 , after the Bolsheviks gained control of Kiev , several of the departments of the Kiev Military District took offices in the House with Chimaeras .

== Ownership 1921 - 2002 ==

After the period of unrest following the Russian Revolution of 1917 , the building was nationalized and later converted for communal living . Each apartment was occupied by about nine to ten families . During the Second World War (1941 - 1943) , the building was abandoned . Due to exposure to the harsh elements during the war , the building suffered significant damage to its structure . After the war , the building was briefly used as a residence for evacuated actors from the Ivan Franko Theater ; however , the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic took ownership of the building and later transformed it into the Polyclinic (clinic) No. 1 for their elite . The polyclinic used the building up until the end of the 20th century . During that time , the building almost split in half . One part sagged 22 cm (9 in) , and a major vertical crack formed , having a width of about 40 cm (16 in) . Some of the building 's architectural details had either been chipped away , or had cracked .

The building 's restoration work was scheduled for 2002 , however the operators of the polyclinic were reluctant to leave , having occupied the building for over 40 years . In order to force the occupants out of the building , the workers boarded up all of the windows and threatened to do the same to the doors if the polyclinic did not vacate the premises . Only the president 's involvement in the matter forced the polyclinic to move out completely .

== Reconstruction and official use ==

During the time of the restoration , conducted by UkrNIIProektRestavratsiya and headed by Natalia Kosenko , the workers unearthed the whole lower floor , which had been filled in during Soviet times to strengthen the building 's foundation . Restoration of the elaborate decor of the interior had to be fully redone . In the courtyard , the restorers placed an artificial lake , fountains , and a miniature garden - all of which had been in Gorodetsky 's original plans .

The building was opened as a filial " Masterpieces of Ukrainian Art " of the National Museum of Arts in November 2004 . It was expected that the building would serve a dual purpose as a museum and as the presidential meeting place for state visitors . In April 2005 , the Kiev City Council submitted a bill for 104 million hryvnias (approx . US \$ 20 million) to the Ukrainian Government for reconstruction and restoration of the House with Chimaeras . The Council also allowed the Ukrainian government to construct a new square (closing off all automobile traffic) in front of the building for use in official ceremonies .

Since May 2005 , the building has been an official presidential residence , used for official and diplomatic ceremonies . The House with Chimaeras was used as a meeting place between Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin , when the latter visited Kiev on December 22 , 2006 . Included in the building are rooms for negotiations , tête-à-tête talks , the signing of official documents , as well as a special room for the press .

== Architecture ==

The building was designed in the Art Nouveau style , which was at that time a relatively new style and featured flowing , curvilinear designs often incorporating floral and other plant-inspired motifs . Gorodetsky featured such motifs in the building 's exterior decor in the forms of mythical creatures and big game animals . His work on the House with Chimaeras has earned him the

nickname of the Gaudí of Kiev .

Due to the steep slope on which the building is situated , it had to be specially designed out of concrete to fit into its foundations correctly . From the front , the building appears to have only three floors . However , from the rear , all of its six floors can be seen . One part of the building 's foundation was made of concrete piles , and the other as a continuous foundation . Usually , these two approaches do not mix well but Gorodetsky somehow succeeded in overcoming this technical problem .

The Italian sculptor Emilio Sala was responsible for both the internal and external sculptural decorations , such as mermaids , dolphins , and frogs on the roof of the building , sinking ships and hunting trophies on the exterior walls , and exuberant interior decorations , such as grand stairways and chandeliers depicting huge catfish strangled in the stems of lotus flowers . The exterior sculptures created by Sala were made out of cement . Production of the cement was by the « For » company of which Gorodetsky was the co @-@ director . Cement was used exclusively as the primary building material by the request of the company 's head director , Richter . At the time of the building 's construction , cement was not popular as a building material , so its use was employed as publicity for both the house and the building material .

= = = Floor plan = = =

The House with Chimaeras was designed in such a way that the tenants would occupy the whole floor , each floor had all the necessary household rooms ranging from private kitchens to small powder rooms . The open floor plan and extra rooms featured throughout the building are characteristic of the houses of the wealthy of the early 20th century . In total , the building has an area of 3 @,@ 309 @.@ 5 m2 (35 @,@ 623 @.@ 16 sq ft) .

On the lowest level of the building , which is located deep in the hill , were two stables , two rooms for coachmen , a shared laundry , and two separate apartments . Each of the two apartments consisted of a foyer , a kitchen , one bathroom , and a storage room . The first of these apartments had two residential rooms , and the second three rooms . Each floor above the lowest level was designed to house a single apartment only .

The apartment on the second floor consisted of six residential rooms in addition to a foyer , kitchen , buffet , three servant 's rooms , a bathroom , two toilets , and two storage rooms . There were also four wine cellars on the same level . The cellars belonged to the apartments on the upper levels . On the third floor , the apartment consisted of eight residential rooms , a foyer , a kitchen , dish washing room , two rooms for servants , a bathroom , and two toilets . This apartment was placed slightly lower than the level of Bankova Street , from the front entrance .

The grandest apartment , which belonged to Gorodetsky , consisted of a study , a great room and a living room , a dining room , a boudoir , a bedroom , a children 's room , a room for a governess , a guest room , three rooms for servants , a kitchen , dishwashing room , bathroom , two toilets , and two storage rooms . On the floor above was an apartment similar in size and design to Gorodetsky 's apartment . The apartment on the top floor had one less room ; to make up for this , there was a connecting terrace which provided a panoramic view of the city .

= = Legends = =

Throughout the years , the unusual nature of the House with Chimaeras has given rise to a number of stories occasionally repeated in guide @-@ books or newspapers , which are however either untrue or lacking any verifiable source .

According to the first legend , Vladislav Gorodetsky 's daughter had committed suicide jumping into Dnieper River either because of some unfortunate love affair or because of a family feud . As a result , Gorodetsky went slightly mad and built this gloomy house in his daughter 's memory .

A second legend has it that Gorodetsky made a bet with some other architects , including the architect Alexander Skobelev , who had tried to prove that was impossible to build a house on such terrain , because the site (near the Ivan Franko Theater) overhangs a swamp (Koz 'ye boloto) .

The Construction Committee of Kiev had prohibited construction of any structures on this particular lot , but eventually the construction of the building allowed Gorodetsky to win the bet .

According to the third legend , Gorodetsky had cursed the house when forced to leave it in 1913 (due to his inability to repay his creditors) ; all of the house 's tenants would be either unhappy or would meet some sort of financial misfortune . There is a story that all the businesses who rented a portion of the building either went bankrupt , had their funds stolen or were disbanded .