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# Presentation of older layers and findings on historical architecture using the method of analytical presentation: Example of the Old Town Hall in Bratislava, Slovakia

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**Article information** Sent: Jul 13, 2023 Accepted: Nov 27, 2023 Abstract: Analytical presentation is one of the methods used in the process of monument restoration. The method displays certain valuable older layers in the form of a cutout in the dominant layer of the facade's surface. This article seeks to illustrate the method on the example of the facades of the Old Town Hall in Bratislava, Slovakia, and its restorations that were performed in several phases. The floor is presented in the Renaissance style – a part of the wall in medieval style over the arch of the underpass is exposed. The largest areas of analytical presentations are realized on the northern facade in the courtyard. The areas of arcades are restored in light beige colour, respecting the Renaissance colour palette. On the wall, research uncovered important medieval style findings and fragments of the chopped pillars of continuous balconies. A largescale analytical probe encompassing two floors was realized. A system of various medieval windows, richly decorated and formed by a curved arch or triangular gable, is preserved here with some more recent openings in the Renaissance style. The main facade facing the town square could also be classified as a system of analytical presentations. The tower shows plaster in an Early Baroque style with various windows (Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque) on both facades (Main Square and Kostolná Street). Interesting are Late Gothic double windows with wimpergs. The rest of the facade facing the Main Square is prevailingly designed in the Renaissance style. But in the middle, there is a part reconstructed in the Gothic style with a rich curved decoration. Next to the tower, there is a Gothic portal with an arc and oriel above it. In the part of the Kostolná Street, there is a Gothic plaster reconstructed by applying two methods. One contains a grained plaster in sandy colour, the second has a surface with networking. Various windows and niches (medieval, Renaissance, Baroque) are present here. The complicated analytical presentations contained in the facades of the Old Town Hall raise many questions in the expert discussion.

**Keywords:** analytical presentation, Old Town Hall, Bratislava, façade restoration

# INTRODUCTION

Caring for cultural-architectonical heritage is now anchored in the national legislation. The development of monument care both in the practical and theoretical field - has not been easy and was manifested more expressively mainly from the 19th century. Various aspects that have emphasized different actual understandings have gradually prevailed in its concept. Two competitive tendencies began to develop approximately from the end of the 18th and especially in the 19th century: acceptance of the primary substance with smallest interventions on the one side, and the tendency (mainly resulting from practice) to replace damaged matter on the other side. Not only relating to the static need, but also concerning the aesthetic integrity of the work (Kroupa, 2021, p. 115). At the beginning of the 20th century, the experience with purism and historicism led Alois Riegel, Austrian art historian, to a radical change of view on monument care. He preferred conservation to restoration (in the sense of the word at that time). In his opinion, not only the value of the past time, but also the value of the present time enters the discourse, meaning that it is necessary to be aware of the conditionality of the means of aesthetics during development and not to make visible one period over another (summarised by Štulc, 2021, p. 23). In the conceptual apparatus, he also established the value of "aging" (Alterswert) and a "will to art" (Kunstwillen). His ideas were further developed by his scholar Max Dvořák, Czech-born Austrian art historian (Scarrocchia, 2011). As a matter of principle, the theory of the "Vienna School" laid the foundation of the analytical method. In the most extreme cases, it caused (following the monument research and findings) a petrification of the resulting status (Štulc, 2001, p. 24). In reaction to this practice, a synthetical method was created by Václav Wagner, Czech art historian (Gregor, 2008, p. 29).

Nowadays, analytical presentation represents one of the renewal methods for monuments. After its origin in the first decades of the 20th century, it was often used mainly in the 1960s –1980s. Frequently, it has been used (sometimes stereotypically) to renew facades of the monument buildings containing findings of various style adjustments. The method consists of partly applying the methodology of monument renewal, when the older layers are not only preserved and overlaid, but selected parts are directly optically presented and interact in the visual perception of the work together with the dominant work phase. During the development of a work (its rebuilding, expansion, and surface treatments), in addition to removing older layers

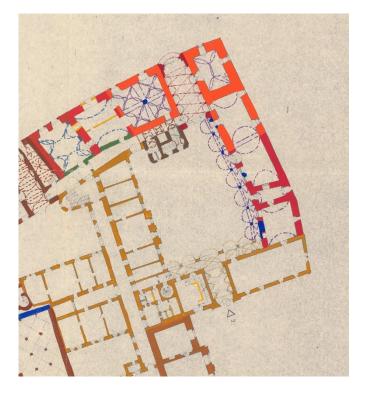
and artefacts, these remained largely walled of and covered by new surface adjustments. So, research of monuments often reveals older substances with important stylistic or artistic values. The value of a building increases with the level of its authenticity and grows in direct proportion to the research quality (Paulusová, 2000, p. 30). A specification of individual monument values subsequently conditions not only the need for its preservation and monument renewal (Kvasnicová, 2006, p. 268), but also their possible presentation in a new situation. The result of each research is not only a stylistic analysis of development, but the project of renewal and presentation represents another important part. It relates the definition of all types of values forming a monument content and their interpretation that means determination and justification of the hierarchy of importance of the types of values with a need for their objectivization (Gregor, 2000a, p. 50). This is reflected in the choice of a suitable renovation method. Scientific interpretation of research findings redefines monument values of works and delivers arguments for suitability and ability of their preservation (Kvasnicová, 2011, p. 14).

In the past, certain variability of opinions prevailed with respect to the solution of surface adjustments. The proposals ranged from a full respect for historical colouring of individual works through compromises accepting the surroundings, to proposals for new colouring (Urlandová, 2000, p. 49). For monument buildings, a new colour scheme is excluded. Specific analytical materials dealt with the questions of colouring in monument surrounding and took into account research results, global context of the line of street houses, prevailing stylistic composition and also psychological influences (Grígerová, Bauer, 1982). Such general approach, however, could not be devoted to the specification of analytical presentations, which is why its underlying documents consisted of partial probes into colour conditions of individual elements and failed to uncover preserved older artefacts. The decision lies in the question, which of the discovered historical colourings is dominant for the visuality of the work. Where the findings are absent, an analogical method taking into account known situations is applied. Even today, disagreements between monument owners and methodical experts occur occasionally, mainly where the owner assigns the facade solution to a designer, who only views the building from the artistic point of view. A similar situation can be observed in the material field, as many of the colours that are of synthetical character are not suitable for historical facades. Not only for their chemical properties, but also in terms of the natural patina (detailed: Kušnierová, 2000).

Critics legitimately criticize the analytical method for destroying younger layers and disturbing the visual unity of the architectonical concept and characteristics of elements. Already Václav Wágner categorically rejected it as "analytical vivisection" of his time (Štulc, 2001, p. 25). It has rarely been used recently. Despite genuine reservations, it is not right to generalize such criticism. When choosing the method, first of all it is necessary to start from the hierarchy of values of each historical layer. The removed adjustments must be documented in detail. In specific cases, this option is supported by a standard level of younger adjustments, or rather their artistic blandness (colour, absence of morphological articles and decorations, etc., Botek, 2021, p. 127). The resulting expression of the realized analytical method is always a question of the scope of the chosen analytics, its acting within the whole and the relationship to other valuable layers. Consequently, there are cases when its use is adequate, but also when it is a questionable solution. It is not possible to decide unequivocally for all cases. The degree and specific context are the decisive factors. In an attempt to evaluate their specific methods, I wish to demonstrate some realisations by presenting the following examples from Bratislava, Slovakia.

## OLD TOWN HALL

As an example, we can mention the Old Town Hall in Bratislava. As the first town hall in the region of Slovakia, the work was created by a gradual unification of several medieval buildings during the 14th and 15th century (Šášky, 1981, p. 78). The oldest part is the tower with a two–floor house in the yard, mentioned as early as 1330 (Kresánek, 2009, p. 40), but the oldest parts date back to the 13th century. Originally a house of magistrate Jacob's sons, the house was later bought by municipal council (Jankovič, Bauerová, Machová, 1984). Gradually, other houses were acquired, rebuilt, and modified several times (Fig. 1). The last unification of the facade was performed in the 19th century in the classicist style (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 1.** Floor plan of the Old Town Hall with development stages marked. Author: Peter Kresánek. (Source: Municipal Institute for the Protection of Monuments in Bratislava, Slovakia, Department of Documentation, Inv. Number 1719, Fig. 2.)

The Old Town Hall was an object of various researches (historical, archeologic, architectural, artistic, restorative, etc.) from the 19th century until the present (researches summarized by Musilová, Horanský, 2020, p. 114). The first great renovation was realized in the 1960s when new knowledge about its development was gathered and many important fragments of older layers and artefacts were uncovered (results of these researches were summarized by Fiala, 1987). During this renovation, the method of large analytical presentation of several older adjustments was adopted, partially by using reconstructions. The renovation performed in the 1990s was devoted mainly to the facades. Some interventions from previous actions were altered and new analytical presentations were realized. The last renovation was performed 2008-2011 and concentrated on the renovation and modernisation of the entire interior, but some parts of the facades were also covered.

The east facade in the area where the underpass opens into the courtyard is relatively narrow (Fig. 3). The floor is presented in the Renaissance style – over the arch of the underpass a part of the wall is showcased in the medieval style. Its area is receded from the younger facade above. It has a medieval-style plaster in grey shade and white networking. The underpass arch has a

white smooth passepartout. In the wall a stone label with chronology 1558 is displayed (Fig. 4). The junction of the medieval part over the arch and the Renaissance one is created by a cutout. The largest areas of analytical presentations are realized on the northern facade in the courtyard. In the front of the wall, there is a storey arcade built with gradation of matter typical for Renaissance, built in 1581 (Kresánek, 2009, p. 41). The columns of the ground floor are wider and their spacings are larger – they form eight axes including two in the corners.

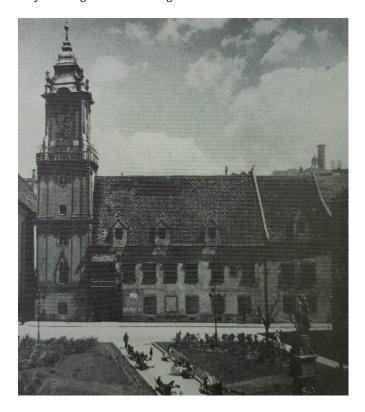


Fig. 2. The Old Town Hall in Bratislava before the restoration in the 1960s. Photo: Archives of City Museum. (Source: Šášky, Guldan, 1987)

The columns on the floor above are subtler and their rhythm is relating to the ground floor more rapidly. They form ten axes. The areas of arcades are restored in light beige colour, which respects the Renaissance colouring. The research on the wall uncovered significant medieval-style findings and fragments of the chopped pillars of the continuous balconies. A large-scale analytical probe comprising two floors was realized here. But it is not only restoration of the original layer and elements - from the wide perspective, it is a copy and reconstruction (Fig. 5, 6). Medieval plaster is imitated in the entire area - grey with white networking. In the 2nd and 3rd axe, latter portals – rectangular and round - can be found, both with black coating (Fig. 7). A more recent portal with a skylight is erected in the 5th axe. The 6th axe contains a niche with a segmentally terminated portal. Its original height is levelled below the yard. A similar subsided saddle - portal is situated in the 7th axe. The flat of the 4th axe is shown in a Renaissance form with two windows. Above them, a segment forms the wall in medieval style.

The whole wall is reconstructed in medieval style with network on the floor above. A system of various medieval windows, richly decorated and formed by a curved arch or triangular gable can be found here. Double windows, presented as walled-up niche, are formed by black stonework, richly profiled and with a triangular wimperg – gable – and situated in the 6th and 7th axe. They are formed by nun's stonework and tracery above. The windows are framed by white smooth plaster – passepartout. The window niche in the 8th axe has no stonework, but the niche in the 9th axe has a black one. The trio of niches (original-

ly windows) with curvy form is situated in the 4th and 5th axe (Fig. 8). The middle niche is taller than the lateral ones. The system is framed by a plastic plaster decoration with cutout circles. The lower niche with segment form and pointed stonework of black colour is situated on the interface of the 5th and 6th axe. A niche in segment form with a white passepartout stands in the 3th axe. A younger rectangular portal can be found in the 2nd axe. The pillars from the Middle Ages were destroyed by the Renaissance rebuilding. Found during the research in 1966–67 (Fiala, Plachá, Leixner, 1970, pp. 337–340), the pillars are now exposed as fragments in the flat of the wall and in the pavement in a form of an octagonal trace.



Fig. 3. The eastern facade in the courtyard. (Photo: Author, 2020)



Fig. 4. The stone label with chronology 1558. (Photo: Author, 2020)

The main facade in the town square could also be classified as a system of analytical presentations (Fig. 9). Unifying adjustments from the 19th century were removed during the renovation in the 1960s–1970s and aimed at visual presentation of the original houses. Next to the Gothic tower a portal with an oriel above

can be found. This does not fall within the new analytical presentation - this composition within the Renaissance facade is original (Fig. 10). Between the two Renaissance facades, a work with large-scale analytical medieval-style reconstruction comprising the complete house can be found - so called Pawer's house (Fig. 11). Research has found fragments of facade decorations in the "Venetian Palace" style dating back to the 1420s (Kresánek, 2009, p. 40). The facade was formerly rebuilt in the Renaissance style and the windows in the same form as in the neighbouring facades are preserved (Fig. 12). The grey plaster of the contemporary Gothic reconstruction has a white network on the ground floor wall. In the middle of the wall, a niche of an entrance can be seen. During the renovation in the '90s, a former glass entrance with interesting architectonical form (from the '60s) was removed in this situation. Two little windows with curvilinear form are positioned on its both sides, also as niches.



Fig. 5. The southern facade in the courtyard – western part. (Photo: Author, 2020)



Fig. 6. The southern facade in the courtyard – eastern part. (Photo: Author, 2020)

The facade of the floor above shows composition of four curvilinear Gothic windows with a rich plastic decoration – panellation, tracery, canopies, etc. From an exact point of view, it is not a correct analytical presentation. Research has uncovered only fragments of the mentioned system. The major part was supplemented and reconstructed. This whole part of the Town Hall is a large-scale analytical reconstruction by use of original elements. It is well seen by comparing the documentation from the restoration research and from the project of reconstruction (Fig. 13, 14).



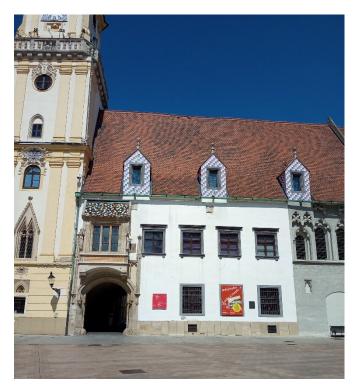
 $\pmb{\text{Fig. 7.}}$  The southern facade in the courtyard – middle part of the ground floor. (Photo: Author, 2020)



 $\textbf{Fig. 8.} \ \ \textbf{The southern facade in the courtyard-middle part of the first floor with medieval decorations. (Photo: Author, 2020)$ 



**Fig. 9.** The whole view of the Old Town Hall from the square, western façade. (Photo: Author, 2019)



 $\textbf{Fig. 10.} \ \ \textbf{Detail of the northern part - next to the tower is a part with the late Gothic portal and oriel above it. (Photo: Author, 2023)$ 



Fig. 11. The middle part with the reconstruction of medieval surface. (Photo: Author, 2023)

Another analytical presentation can be observed on the tower (Fig. 15). The extent is concentrated in a smaller part. According to research, the Renaissance window (with a stone frame with lattice) of the ground floor is reworked from a Gothic one. Over it was a pointed arch from a Gothic window. It is presented

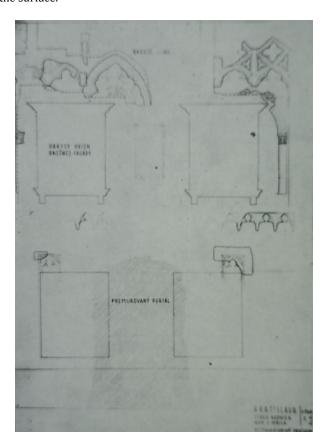
together with a medieval plaster with networking by a cutout (Fig. 16). Rich plastic bifora with a wimperg on the first floor constitutes an analytical presentation in a Baroque plaster without cutout. This window is of the same art as similar windows in the yard described above. Their coating is black, but it is sandy on the tower - a natural expression of the stone material. As a result, we can see the analytical presentation of a window on the 3rd floor above the cordon ledge. A more recent window was built into an older medieval one. The Gothic pointed frame with a nun is shown as a niche. The situation with the northern facade is similar (Fig. 17). The 1st floor has a Gothic double window same as on the main facade (Fig. 18). As opposed to it, it has a common wimperg but only two triangular gables. An older Gothic window with a pointed frame has been unwalled on the floor above. A similar window with a pointed arch can be seen on the 4th floor below the Renaissance balcony walkway. Its stone frame has not been preserved, only the original form of the opening.



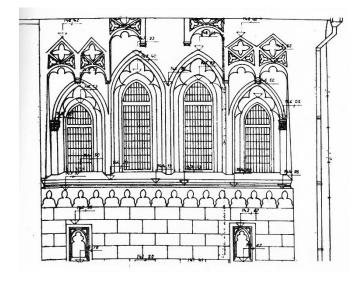
Fig. 12. Detail of the southern part, reconstructed in the prevailingly Renaissance style. (Photo: Author, 2023)

In the overall evaluation of the Old Town Hall facades facing the Main Square, we can perceive a set of smaller and larger analytic presentations – reconstructions. From the right-hand side, the Renaissance part of facade is followed by a Gothic one (mainly reconstructed) and then by another Renaissance part that ends at a late Gothic portal and an oriel above it. It has tripartite

windows with canopies on corners. Above it is a roof with glazed tile in the Art Nouveau style. On the roof of these three parts, there are four Gothic dormer windows with profiled frames. At the top they have purple stone and – with the exception of the right-hand window – their surfaces are decorated with checkerboard. The tower shows plasters with Renaissance and Baroque decorations on the corner and, in addition to Renaissance and Baroque windows, also local Gothic windows on the surface.



**Fig. 13.** The findings on the middle part during restoration research (Albert Leixner, Andrej Fiala). Reprophoto: Klement Šilinger. (Source: Šášky, Guldan, 1987)



**Fig. 14.** The project of the reconstruction of medieval decoration of the middle façade's part. Reprophoto: Klement Šilinger. (Source: Šášky, Guldan, 1987)

An earlier analytical presentation was also realized on the lateral facade in the Kostolná Street. The tract wraps and right next

to the tower the wall is increased. Within the framework of this increased section, a coarse – a sandy-coloured grained plaster is presented on the whole surface (Fig. 19). The plaster imitates a Gothic one. The wall ends at an ascending battlement over a retreated surface of the other less recent wall – surface. The ascending of the battlements proves that a counter roof was situated here formerly (Musilová, Horanský, 2019, p. 126). Various blocked-up medieval windows can be observed on the Gothic wall. Two little pointed windows with a nun decoration can be seen on the 1st floor. An opening with segmental arch and semicircular recess in the windowsill is situated below them (Fig. 20). Another medieval window with rectangular stone frame is presented approximately in the middle of the wall.



**Fig. 15.** The western facade of the tower with various presentations. The first floor – a late medieval double window, then a richly-decorated Baroque window, above the ledge a curvilinear medieval window and a Baroque elliptical window. (Photo: Author, 2023)

Following this part, a lower and broken one continues. The whole surface is reconstructed in the form of medieval plaster with networking and several windows from various times of origin as well. Two slanted niches - originally ventilation holes of the underground floor - are presented in the western part of this section. A similar slanted niche is situated above them on the upper floor. There is another little pointed window above it and a larger window in rectangular profiled frame with white plaster passepartout near the latter (Fig. 21), creating a system of three different windows - niches. Three Early-Baroque windows in rectangular stone frame with perimeter belt and grid are situated on the 1st floor of the next part of the wall with medieval networking. Next to the second one, an earlier Gothic window is presented (Fig. 22). Its rectangular stone frame is profiled and the niche is surrounded by a white plaster passepartout.

#### **Evaluation**

From the point of view of renovation of the facades of the Old Town Hall in Bratislava, Slovakia, we can observe different analytical presentations from different ages and in different scopes. They are not all purely analytical presentations - direct presentations of older artefacts. In many cases, there are reconstructions based on partial knowledge, analogies, or possibly known characteristics and logic of composition. It is necessary to recognise that reconstruction is eligible if it respects the authenticity of the monument. The original preserved substance of the work with the layers and other artefacts must be saved consistently (Pauliny, 2017, p. 9, Polomová, 2020, p. 27). This is how the part of the lateral street - facade and the northern yard facade can be judged. Regarding the square - façade - the result is a fragmentation of a house - row. Basically, this is a return to the medieval composition of volumes. But only the middle sector is renovated in a medieval expression. It is adjacent to Renaissance facades on both sides.

A greater degree of visual cooperation is represented by the facade of the tower, where the recent presentations are only local, not allocated significantly and they do not disturb the whole visual expression of the tower. Regarding the yard façade, two historical fronts are presented one after another. The Renaissance arcades stand in the front of the presented Gothic wall and their visual expression is independent. Thus, it does not interfere with the surface of the wall behind that is renovated in a Gothic expression. But this is a presentation of medieval findings from different medieval periods. As a result of the changed layout, naturally, functional more recent openings of this background had to remain. Due to a narrow space, the facade in the Kostolná Street has the least visual effect. It is a composition of two completely medieval reconstructing analytics of the surfaces. The medieval openings from various time periods are presented as niches. There are three functional Early-Baroque windows preserved in the eastern part. But they are situated on a surface that is modified with a Gothic network.



**Fig. 16.** Detail of the window on the ground floor – a curvilinear medieval form is presented analytically above a more recent window. (Photo: Author, 2023)



**Fig. 17.** The northern facade of the tower with various presentations. A Renaissance window on the ground floor, a late medieval double window on the first floor, then a curvilinear medieval window with stone framework, above the ledge a Baroque elliptical window and curvilinear medieval one. (Photo: Author, 2023)



**Fig. 18.** Detail of rich plastic bifora with wimperg on the first floor. (Photo: Author, 2020)

#### CONCLUSION

Architectural heritage is the continuity of conscious and subconscious integration of material and nonmaterial substance (Fifik, 2000, p. 193). Monument researches are an important part not only of knowledge about the development of specific monuments over centuries but also of the next analysis of values that appear in the methodical project of renovation. Researches involve something more than just phasing the building development and getting to know individual modifications. It is also about realizing the historical essence preserved in different layers and from different periods (Botek, 2000, p. 23). The primary condition for an architect's work in a monument area is a thorough knowledge of the resulting research materials. It should lead to the preservation of architectural and historical values with a purposeful approach to difficult development (Ševčíková, 2001, p. 52). The multi-layer structure of the determined values leads not only to the necessity of their documentation but also to efforts to make available at least part of these older artifacts, which otherwise remain under younger layers. This constitutes the essence of the analytical method in the field of the renovation of architectural monuments. Its application is time-dependent, alternately the principle of presenting only one dominant phase of adjustments is preferred. This is due to the exposure of originals to adverse climatic conditions (as long as the original and not its copy is presented), but also due to the violation of the integrity of the visual concept of the whole. Today, therefore, such interventions are approached rather rarely and only in the case of exceptional findings.



**Fig. 19.** The facade in the Kostolná Street – part with medieval windows, (niche), shooting range (embrasure) and battlements. Reconstructed medieval plaster. (Photo: Author, 2023)

In some situations, the results of archival-historical research can also help to know the unpreserved form (in general on the contribution of archival research in renovation Obuchová, 2000a, Obuchová, 2000b), possibly a logical shape addition or

analogy. In case of analogical addition, however, it cannot be a whole, but only a detailed part. Otherwise, such usage would be spurious and highly hypothetical in many respects. For a responsible solution to the issue of presentation, especially in the case of several valuable layers, it is extremely important to know them. Therefore, the question of the current state of knowledge of the cultural-historical values of the monument should be the basis of any methodological reasoning (Neubert, 2021, p. 75). When realizing a specific form of an analytically presented element, it does not always have to be a fully preserved form. Therefore, the analytical method is often combined with reconstruction or indication.



**Fig. 20.** Detail of two nun windows (niches) and a former shooting range (embrasure). (Source: Author, 2023)



**Fig. 21.** Detail of the middle part in Kostolná Street with older medieval pointed window, younger medieval rectangular window and ventilation hole. Presented as niches. The surface is decorated with medieval network. (Photo: Author, 2023)

A presentation of older layers and adjustments is not necessary. The older layers found were recorded in the research reports, possibly in published articles. However, as time progresses, knowledge about them is lost. Even experts may not have

knowledge about all findings after several decades, unless these have been sufficiently published. Thus, only the external visual state remains, and it does not say anything about the older values preserved beneath it. It is also a question of aesthetics whether it is necessary to preserve all that is valuable. What is more important? Knowledge of older forms at the cost of visual fragmentation, or a complete image of the whole, covering up older values? In the end, every analytical presentation is only partial. It is not possible to present all older findings in their whole extent. It is always a selective choice based on hierarchy of values (about values Gregor, 2000b). These questions are under constant discussion of experts. Many have a decidedly negative opinion, mainly due to the breaking of a coherent visualisation and presentation of a form that never actually existed in such context (Solař, 2019, Vácha, 2019). Questions of conservation, presentation, surface modification, painted and decorative layers are the most common issues in the restoration of historic facades, but in practice, there are also issues of modifying sculptural elements connected with architecture (balustrades, reliefs, amphoras, statues, ...). These introduce another range of methodological and practical questions into the issue (Botek, Pilný, 2022).



**Fig. 22.** Detail of the eastern part with two early Baroque windows and a medieval window (as niche). The surface is decorated with medieval network. (Photo: Author, 2023)

The historical point of view in the assessment of monuments, important especially in the 19th century, lost its meaning at the end of the 20th century. Therefore, we need new arguments to ensure the right of existence in our globalising culture to the material works of the past (Maldoner, 2021, p. 17). The protection of cultural heritage is not only a protection of artistic or historical value, but also a preservation of the identification function of a cultural symbol (Schlaus, 1993, p. 23). When considering the restoration of historical buildings, we must take into account the whole range of values, incentives and contexts. An important criterion for the outcome of this activity is also professional and craft readiness, as during monument restoration there is often a need of revive traditional construction and technological procedures, mainly in choosing materials or procedures (Schneider, 2021, p. 17). Of course, the supporting principle must be the preservation of all valuable layers. This does not mean, however, an automatic presentation of older layers at the expense of the more recent ones. The resulting form must also be considered in the local context and with final

point of view of the protection of all preserved artefacts. Again, this does not mean all older artefacts must be visualised. In today's conditions new technologies are also available, such as virtual realities, that – even better than selective chosen presentation – can convey older forms of development of individual works. Perhaps we are on the threshold of a period when the analytical presentation will not be necessary at all, and the relevant development forms will appear to interested parties in a digitized form.

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