

„The conservation and revitalization of the Benedek Manor House in the city of Gheorgheni”

– *Chronicles of the Facade* –



Building archeology has revealed that the facade of the Benedek Manor House from the city of Gheorgheni, listed as a B. cat. monument, presents not only five different layers of plaster and coat, but also valuable, in situ pieces of the original strata, dating almost two centuries back.¹

The test holes opened on different surfaces demonstrated that the facade of the manor house has five different coats from different periods of the construction. The original layer, dating back to 1840, was found between the main shoulder and the windows. The other

surfaces are coated with simple, polychrome dyestuff, according to the archeologic research.

Five coloured layers have been put on the first coat of plaster – the basic layer is white, while the stucco ornaments have been pointed out by colourful spots. The laureate-floral stucco ornaments of the facade are also original pieces of chrome oxid green and bright red. The fragmented capital of the only original column and the column itself have originally been painted with orange-ochre, having brownish-blackish cannelures in the middle.

The frontispiece presents ornaments similar to the ones in the lower parts of the facade.

¹ Restauro BT, Lazarea: Report – Archeological building research and recommendations for conservation, on the facade of the Benedek manor house from the city of Gheorgheni



In the middle, there is another laureate-ornament with the inscription of 1840 underneath, still legible, which probably refers to the year of construction.

On the two sides of the inscription, there are two cambered, false windows framed with „towed” profiles and greenish dye that imitates venetian blinds.

The plaster coat both on the lower parts of the wall and the frontispiece are two-coat works put on lath. The first coat is of coarse grained, 1-2 cm thick layer, then a thin, smooth, 0,5 cm thick, grey-ochre coat was laid on, ended up by a smooth whitewash layer.

Year by year the binder has lost its power, so that the walls have reached to a sorrowful state; moreover thick, hard whiting layers have been put on later, which make it hard to reveal the original techniques.

The frontispiece and the lower part present two very different states, which lead to the conclusion that they might tell the story of two different periods of construction. The



truth is, that the presence of the main shoulder was highly beneficial for the facade, since the upper part has strongly been affected by weather conditions, but the lower parts were kind-of protected, and as a result, several original pieces could have remained in quite a good state.

The continuous small movements of the studding, a fissure-net has formed on the whole surface of the facade, unfortunately highly intensified by the heavy traffic flowing in the immediate proximity of the manor house.

Recommendations for the rehabilitation

The most important and most urgent steps in the process of rehabilitation are the consolidation and conservation of the original pieces of plaster coat, in order to stop further erosion.

Because of the unstuck pieces of the plaster work and its disfunctional presence in many spots, the proper covering up and subinjection are an absolute necessity in the most damaged parts. When bracing and

stabilization is over on the whole surface, brushing and scouring can follow, then the filling of unevennesses. After the cleaning process, the plaster needs to be stabilized with silicic acid ester. The last step is aesthetic completion, using the so called *Trataggio* retouch technique. In this way, we can reach to the image that resulted from the construction techniques used two centuries ago.

The recovery takes up at about 30-40 days in warm, dry weather conditions, i. e. at about 2 months.

The estimated costs for the rehabilitation of the facade reach to 7.759,99 lei, with a set of recovery works among which obligatory must figure the following:

- exploration of the original layers of plaster and dying coats.

- stabilization of plaster coats and inadequate binder
- cleaning of the whole surface
- subinjection of the unstuck parts
- filling up of the uneven parts
- application of a new plaster coat, where the old one has totally come unstuck
- fixation of the colouring and dye layers
- conservation and aesthetic rehabilitation
- reconstructive painting of the walls

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