

Symbolism of a detail. Architectural masterpieces of the UNESCO Heritage Town of Zamość

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Abstract: The Town of Zamość is located in the south-eastern part of Poland and is the worldwide UNESCO Heritage fortress whose beginning dates back to the end of the 16th century. Built in *cruda radice*, the Zamość architectural value derives primarily from its unique, historical plan which remained the original compositional form envisioned by a brilliant, broad-minded, ambitious man of European Renaissance – Jan Zamoyski. Urban layout of the Town mimics the anthropomorphic distribution of key body parts encapsulated within the frame of the most up-to-date examples of ‘*architectura militaris*’ for those times. The smart spatial organization of space allowed not only for the flexible introduction of new functions in larger, urban scale but also the exposition of the intricate beauty of architectural ornamentation and detail of crucial representative buildings. Within the plethora of reverberating, classic examples of details there are also some which convey important, symbolic meaning which is very much connected to the history of the Town.

Key words: the architecture of Zamość, detail, heritage, conservation

The paper presents and analyses some of the most important architectural elements of iconic buildings and spaces of Zamość as well as evokes the historical data of some of their authors that played a crucial role either in the formation, modernization or restoration of the Old Town of Zamość.

One of the most emblematic masterpieces of architecture is an iconic Cathedral dedicated to the Resurrection and Saint Thomas the Apostle. The building itself has got a symbolic meaning because it reflects its founder’s – Jan Zamoyski’s outlook on religious as well as worldly matters, at the same time, being a visible glorification of Zamoyski’s power and victories. It was built between 1587–1598 to the project of the famous architect of Zamość – Bernardo Morando with the Jan Zamoyski’s instructions to its symbolic outcome (fig. 1). The interior of the Church stands as a sophisticated amalgamation of classical, ancient, rules-oriented elements the Renaissance times so much epitomized with a vibrant, luminous mannerism. Many architectural details of both the outer parts of the temple together with its interior recall historical events or members of the Zamoyski Family. The elements which attract the greatest attention are the details of the **ceiling**. The **ornaments-stuccos** there consist of figural, geometrical and floral shapes that do not accentuate the constructional divisions of the vault but form an aesthetical image pattern, as if it was a painting on canvas. Stucco ceiling geometrical ornamentation, which did not follow or accentuate construction elements forming the vault were also found in the ceilings of the chapels in Czemierniki and Turobin as well as in the nave of the church in Uchanie.

The basis for the architectural patterns were taken from the 16th century architectural templates. Another symbolic part of the interior of the Cathedral is a silver **tabernaculum/culptur** designed by the Zamość affiliated architect Jerzy de Kawe and Benjamin Hentschel¹ who also, together with Bem, worked on the conservation of some elements of fortifications, floats and bastions.

1 Artist: Jerzy de Kawe, Benjamin Hentschel | Fototeka Instytutu Historii Sztuki UJ, access: 18th Dec 2022, <https://zabytek.pl/pl/obiekty/zamosc-kamienica-mieszczanska-pod-aniolem-pod-lwami-pod-swie>; Access: 21st Dec 2022.

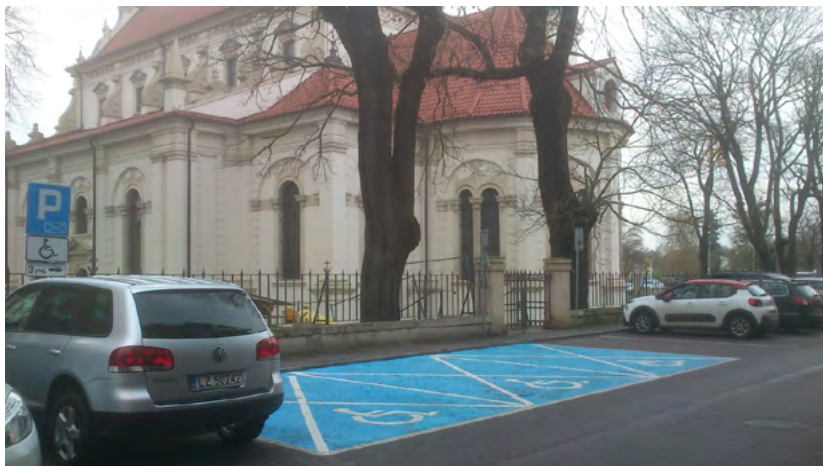


Fig. 1. The Cathedral of the Resurrection and St. Thomas the Apostle, the east side; author's photograph

The two terms “proportions” and “adequacy” reverberate as the classical notions of “analogy” and “symmetry”. The Pitagorean relation of the part to the whole is applicable to the interrelations between symbolic details and architectural objects. Such instance could be observed in the interior of the cathedral building.

The paper should devote some significant amount of attention to some masterful uniqueness of the Lublin Renaissance. Its features were popularized, among other, by a skillful craftsman – **Jan Wolff**. He came to the Zamoyski Family estates in 1620 and stayed in Turobin where he was administered, by Tomasz Zamoyski, a lifetime privilege of perpetual usufruct of the Turobin land under the condition of building a brickyard. The brick produced in Turobin was extensively used in a very dynamically developing town of Zamość.²

Jan Wolff – builder, architect, decorator. He was an accomplished skilled masonry craftsman, designer and decorator although his knowledge of craft was more of a practical one. He cooperated with the Zamoyski Family architect – Jan Jaroszewicz. He performed the function of the main builder to Jan Jaroszewicz but his work had some original, individual outlook. His masterpieces of craftsmanship include the ornamentation of the churches in Czemierniki, Turobin, Uchanie and Lublin. His authorship of decorations was connected with the Jaroszewicz rebuilding of the Town hall.³ Moreover, he participated in the works carried out on the St Nicolaus Othodox Church and, quite possibly, the Armenian Church. He was the citizen of two towns, Turobin and Zamość and was acclaimed “*famatus Joannes Wolff murarius civis zamoscensis et turobinensis*”. The attribution of the Orthodox church to Jan Wolff done by Alicja Kurzątkowska had some background in, as Kurzątkowska states, in the similarities of the top of the dome with the same top element present in the Turobin Church chapels.⁴ Additionally, Jan Wolff worked on the modernization of the Zamoyski palace (1641–1642) and some of the tenement houses (Great Market Square, Staszica 15, 19, 21, 25).⁵ His famous works on the Zamość Town Hall (carried out 1639/40-1651) included the attica wall.

The Renaissance detail had some direct correlation with the principles of spatial organization of public space, created as a unified, harmonious, regular and geometrical. Proportional elements of the whole formed predictable sequences, homogenic. The artism o void was more important than the form, structure.⁶ Harmony of details corresponded with the order of urban interiors and forms. Some details served as background type of ornamentation, the other formed the iconicity of the building. Portals performed that distinguishing function, making the house easily recognizable at the entrance (fig. 3, 4, 5). The Renaissance admiration for regular, “mathematical”, symmetrical forms was not only reflected in the urban outlook but also in ornamental details, sequencing, rhythm, repetitiveness. A special place for the perfect circular or star-shaped arrangements were observed in the ideal cities from the treaties as well as parts of detailing. Renaissance values stated that social

2 Kurzej M., *Jan Wolff. Monografia architekta w świetle analizy prefabrykowanych elementów dekoracji sztukatorskich*, DeArte, Dodo editor, Kraków 2009.

3 <https://www.zamosciopedia.pl/index.php/wl-wp/item/311-wolff-jan-1653-murator-i-dekorator>, Access: 20th Dec 2022.

4 Kurzej M., *Jan Wolff. Monografia architekta w świetle analizy prefabrykowanych elementów dekoracji sztukatorskich*, DeArte, Dodo editor, Kraków 2009.

5 <https://www.zamosciopedia.pl/index.php/wl-wp/item/311-wolff-jan-1653-murator-i-dekorator>, Access: 20th Dec 2022.

6 Szpakowska E., *Architektura miasta idealnego. Wprowadzenie*, Politechnika Krakowska.

reforming and advancement of the society could be achieved by the gradual perfection of their surroundings, therefore, orderly, foreseeable, static clusters of ornamentation were to soothe, make the citizen safe within the public spaces.

They altogether created a unique Polish variation of Renaissance with some characteristic architectural elements such as, for example, a Polish **attic wall**. Its first forms, as the top parts of the classical arrangements, were found in the Roman architecture as early as 25th year BC., in the Augustus Triumphal Arch.⁷ Its main function was to cover, hide the sloping inwards rooftop surfaces in order to prevent the accidental fire from spreading across/ towards the neighbouring buildings. Taking aesthetical aspects into considerations, attic walls are to balance the proportions of the wall, make it lighter and stress the vertical directions. Apart from performing formal function the attic wall level of the building was also another level within the building, another floor. It was characterized with a comparably lower height which resulted from conforming to the distribution of architectural ornaments and divisions on the facades. Therefore the windows within the attic wall level are usually smaller and take the form of a square. Such solution are, for example, applied in the Palladian Villa Rotonda, Palazzo Porto or Palazzo Valmarana. The gothic type attic wall diverted with its form especially owing to its integration with a highly pitched rooftop. The Renaissance type of attic wall evolved in a different way, resembling the Italian baroque type. The traditional Polish attic wall consists of three distinctive parts: the wall positioned right on top of the main top cornice. Its crown finishing had different form, from the plain full wall to various pinnacles, adorned with false arcades, pilasters, rhythmically placed volutes. The most well – known attic walls are located in Cracow, Kazimierz Dolny, Paczków and, of course, Zamość. Comparing the development of the form of Polish attic wall, the Zamość ones were far more original and unique which was exemplified by a more extensive usage of pinnacles, miniature obelisks, flowery stone arrangements (fig. 6). Another differentiated application in case of the Zamość attic wall was the inclusion of the brick material in the formation of pinnacle elements; alongside that typical stone pinnacle there were also the brick ones glazed in green emerald and golden yellow. It is obligatory to mention that the facades adorned with attic wall were not only positioned in the north side of the main Market Square, but circumscribed z market around it which added to the markets greater splendor and representational value. What is more, the attic wall served as a monumental finishing of the building on which there was an emblematic sentence favouring, glorifying the person to whom, the monument was dedicated. The overall form and outlook of the market interior changed throughout times. Interest in the Zamość Old Town flourished after the 2nd World War. One of the most well-remembered references to that unique town were made by a very much accomplished and gifted architect, whose career and private life were mingled with the town of Zamość. – **Wiktor Zin**, and, most importantly, who organized some students' workshop panels in Zamość and documented in drawings some pieces of architectural substance. His widely acclaimed television series entitled "Piórkiem i węglem", where he presented, among other themes, some architectural details from the Old Town Zamość, sparkled utmost attention and promoted Zamość as the town of unique beauty and timeless universality.

Another detail that has got a real place in the Zamość reservoir of symbols is the ornament of tenement houses. Geometrical, floral elements arranged in horizontal fashion stress the top parts of the arcades on the frontal parts of the houses facing the Great Market Square (fig. 6). There is especially one that focuses the attention. It is a tenement house commemorating **Jan Michał Link** who owned it at the end of 17th c. The ornamentation symbols represent some military elements (fig. 7). He built it with some references to the classicist baroque.

Decorations on the facades of the Armenian Tenement houses have got even more symbolic outlook.

The bright interiors of houses were achieved by bigger rectangular windows framed from the top by protruding cornices. They are not always positioned in a rhythmic fashion but they reflect the inside division into separate rooms. The Renaissance practice of accentuating the horizontal lines on the facades by means of lines of windows or protruding cornices that reflect the interior, constructional divisions or the long horizontal, groundfloor arcades, arranged in steady, repetitive and, therefore, calming the viewer, manner (fig. 2). The architecture of tenement houses, apart from the ones circumscribing the Great Market Square, their restrained, ornamental detailing were purposefully toned down to serve as some really graceful background architecture to enrich unique splendor of the iconic buildings of civil and religious function, such as the Cathedral, the Town hall, all the other churches standing out from the urban outline.

7 Mącznyński Z., *Elementy i detale architektoniczne w rozwoju historycznych*, Budownictwo i Architektura, Warszawa 1956.



Fig. 2. The arcades adjacent to the Great Market Square, author's photograph



Fig. 3. Portal in the The Birkowski tenement house, Rynek Wielki 6, author's photograph



Fig. 4. Portal, Staszica 31, author's photograph



Fig. 5. Portal, Staszica 29, author's photograph



Fig. 6. The tenement house, the Bartoszewicz Family – owned (till the end of 17th c.)¹, the so-called “under the Archangel Gabriel”, “under the Lions”, one of the Armenian houses, north façade of the Great Market Square, the headquarters of the Zamość Museum, author’s photograph

The concept of a portal has a symbolic value because this is a place which welcomes the visitors, serves as the moment of interaction of the outside with the inside, functions as a frame. The advancement and plethora of architectural accents and details were related to the status and wealth of the host to the tenement building. Another characteristic feature of the Zamość ornamentation elements are picturesque portals with some classical references as well as typical or the Lublin Renaissance. Portals are another realm of mastery, taking into account the relation of the part to the whole. The most representative ones are located at Staszica St. alongside the southern arcades adjacent to the Great Market Square.

The symbolism of a detail could be observed in some fragments of the Zamość Gates. All the gates used to have inscriptions and symbols dedicated to the patrons saints.⁸ Moreover, each of the first three gates included inscriptions referring to the idea of homeland (the Lubelska Gate), a city/ town (the Lwowska Gate), the Zamoyski family (the Szczepreska Gate). The gates were monumental types of structures which opened to some key objects within the structure of the town. They were accompanied location-wise by the Academy, the trade exchange building (the so-called Giełda).

It is very important to mention that the shape of the urban layout and aesthetical, architectural décor of the buildings was largely inspired and influenced by the Italian Renaissance style represented by the Florentin Santi Gucci and **Bernardo Morando**. Santi Gucci was born in Florence in 1530. He was an Italian architect and culture working in Poland. From 1558 he used to work for the Polish court in Cracow where he designed some tombstones for the Polish king Zygmunt August and Anna Jagiellonka located in the Zygmuntowska Chapel at the Wawel Castle.



Fig. 7. Military references in details on a frieze closing the arcades, Jan Michal Link tenement house, Zamość, author’s photograph

⁸ Zarębska T., *Prestżowe znaczenie fortyfikacji miejskich w czasach budowy Zamościa*, KTZ, 1987.

Conclusion

Contemporary outlook of the town is an amalgamation of consecutive, historical periods of architectural ideas/transformations implemented by different architects and craftsmen whose talent and vision of the town were successfully marked. The core urban layout, however, and Jan Zamoyski's vision of multicultural, open and entrepreneurial town rooted both in Polish and Italian/ classical symbolism of a detail, stayed throughout centuries and continues to be marveled at.

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Symbolika detalu. Arcydzieła architektury Zamościa wpisanego na listę Światowego Dziedzictwa UNESCO

Streszczenie: Miasto Zamość jest zlokalizowane w południowo-wschodniej części Polski, wpisane na listę Światowego Dziedzictwa UNESCO, a jego historia powstania sięga XVI w. Zbudowane na surowym korzeniu, jego wartość architektoniczna i urbanistyczna opiera się na unikatowości. Powstałe w wyniku starcia dwóch wizjonerskich umysłów Jana Zamoyskiego – ambitnego fundatora oraz znakomitego architekta Bernarda Moranda. Zarówno układ przestrzenny miasta jak i symbolika jego architektury nie przestają zadziwiać.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura Zamościa, detal architektoniczny, dziedzictwo, konserwacja zabytków