

## CULTURAL - BAROQUE TOURISM: VIENNESE INFLUENCES IN TIMISOARA

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**Abstract:** *Timișoara is a baroque city in its essence, although its baroque only rarely takes spectacular shapes. Besides the obvious external forms, it has more subtle aspects which can be highlighted with ease through a city tour. The baroque style suggests movement, energy, tension. Care for detail, intensity and the direct message are intensely experienced in the baroque art from Timișoara. This style is the oldest in the city, being implemented by the Habsburg domination. Timișoara has an abundance of baroque historical monuments, but just like the other localities in Romania, is facing an acute shortage of funds for the restoration and the valorization of its objectives. However, Timișoara recently has entered a long period of rehabilitation, which promises a final worthy of its prestige of the multicultural centre polarizing great values that once was holding.*

**Keywords:** *baroque, monuments, restoration, valorization.*

### INTRODUCTION

All the tourist guides mention that Timișoara has a historical centre with many monuments of baroque style, even declaring Timișoara as a baroque city. But when it comes to developing that, the Roman Catholic cathedral in Union Square, and possibly the nearby Statue of the Holy Trinity are the only examples offered. Unlike many Western European cities, where the baroque touristic attractions occupy often large spaces, we might think, in fact, that Timișoara is represented by only a few or very few examples.

In this study I intend to make a short incursion to see what truly means baroque in Timișoara. We will notice that, indeed the original substance of the city is baroque, just that for discovering it, we must go over a few layers that knock out the correct perception. Timișoara's baroque only rarely takes spectacular shapes. Besides the obvious external forms, it has more subtle aspects which, however, can be highlighted with ease through a city tour. Then, we will conclude that Timișoara was and still is exuberant and least rigorous. Timișoara is baroque in its essence.

### EXEMPLIFICATION AND DISCUSSIONS

Baroque style is characteristic of the counter-reformation era, a period of catholic proselytizing. The baroque style suggests movement, energy, tension. The monuments have curved lines and decorated surfaces. In the spiritual plane, baroque sculpture suggests themes such as martyrdom, revelations or even death. Care for detail, intensity and the direct message are intensely experienced in the baroque art from Timișoara. This style is the oldest in the city, being implemented by the Habsburg domination.

**The Serbian Former Episcopal Church of the Orthodox community from Timișoara** was destroyed by a fire in 1728, a new one has been built between 1745-1748

with the help of donations from the faithful. In a first phase this new church was erected without the two towers from the present, they being added in the year 1791, following a restoration. The two towers were equipped with five bells. Until the mid 19th century the building was used by the entire Orthodox community in the city, both Serb and Romanian ethnics, however, following the separation of the two churches, the Serbian Church in Unirii Square remained the Serb community. The iconostasis is carved in wood by Janic Mihailo and the icons are painted by Constantin Daniel. Since 1964 the church is declared an historical monument.

**Notre Dame Church** originally was built for students of girls school ' Sisters of Notre Dame' from Timișoara. The construction began and completed in 1895, being consecrated on 8 October 1895. The two towers of the church are structured on three levels ending with a short platen with windows and a spire. The entrance has a portal which describes a semicircle that ends in a triangular roof. Above the entrance there are three long and thin windows framed by a decorated arcade. The façade is marked by a triangular decoration sticking out outside that gives the impression of a two waters roof. The façade ends suddenly being preceded by a string of blind windows delimited by columns [1,3,7].

The current building of **Prince Eugene of Savoy house** is built on the place where once was Forforosa (Mehala) gate of the old Turkish fortress through which came in Prince Eugene of Savoy and liberated the fortress of Timișoara from the turks at 13 October 1716. After organizing the new Austrian defense system the gate was included within the fortress walls. For not subsiding the remembrance of these events the gate was bricked up in the building built on the site of the old Turkish ditches. The building was used by the Jewish community as a House of prayers. After an urban renewal, it was demolished in 1817 together with the Forforosa gate. Above the entrance of the new one-floor building built in that place was painted the old Forforosa gate through which came in Prince Eugen of Savoy [4,9].

The **Saint George's Cathedral** or The Dome's foundation stone was laid on 6 August 1736. It was designed by Joseph Emanuel Fischer von Erlach from Vienna, then Hans Lechner continued the building from 1750. It was finished by two architects from Timișoara, Johann Theodor Kostka and Carl Alexander Steinlein in 1774. The cathedral was built in Austrian baroque style and it was dedicated to Saint George, the diocese's patron saint. The picture located at the high altar was painted by Michelangelo Unterberger, director of the fine arts academy of Vienna, illustrating the Patron Saint. The side altars were painted by Johann Nepomuk Schöpf in 1772. The precious oil-lamps were produced by Josef Moser. The organ was made by Leopold Wegenstein, and it provides an impressive experience for the ears. The cathedral's bells were renewed in Germany in 1998 [2, 6, 12].

The **Baroque Palace** was built in 1754 and it is one of the most important historical monuments of Timișoara, being built after the Kinsky Palace in Vienna. This touristic site is impressive with its Viennese architecture from the XVIII century.

The Baroque Palace has only few decorative elements that attest its similarities with the baroque style (the inside portal, the mascheron on the eastern façade, the portals on the face of the south) due to restoration of the building between 1875-1890. The architecture of the Baroque Palace is a special one: located in the South of Unirii Square, U-shaped, the Baroque Palace has two interior courtyards, the second being smaller and attached to the first yard with the construction of a building on the west side of the palace. The Baroque Palace was used in 1754 as residence for the civil Governor of Banat. Known also as "the Palace of the old prefecture" and "the House Room", the palace receives transformations, becoming in 1954 the residence of the civil administration president. With

its arrangement as a count residence, the palace receives the name "Presidential Palace". For the XVIII, the Baroque Palace was a great construction for the city, being mentioned in the paper "History of Banat-Timișoara" published in 1926 in Bucharest [5]. At the end of the XIX century, the building supports change, eliminating all elements of Baroque decoration, especially in the façades. So far, the baroque palace has remained unchanged. Thanks to the palace's architecture, nowadays is used as an art museum, the spaces offered by the palace can be valorized by temporary exhibitions of contemporary curators. Due to its location in Unirii Square, and due to its great architecture, the Baroque Palace is one of the monuments of great interest for those who visit the city.

The building of the former Roman Catholic Episcopacy of Csanád still existed at the beginning of the 18th century and was used as a location for different statal authorities, being inhabited only for small intervals of time by the Roman Catholic bishops, from 1718-1780. In 1780 it passed in the definitive property of the church, becoming the residence of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Csanád, which during the Turkish occupation has activated at Szeged. In 1880 the actual **Roman-Catholic Episcopacy Palace** was renovated from the ground and received its current appearance. From the architectural point of view is a building with ground floor and upper floor whose façade is rhymed just by simple rectangular windows. Only the gate is provided with a rich decoration above it, with a mascarón on the keystone [5, 10].

The **Old City Hall**. After the Habsburg conquest of Timișoara, the German colonists, which obtained the exclusive right to live in the city, demanded authorities a city hall of their own. So, between 1731-1734, is built the City Hall residence where before 1716 has been a Turkish bath. Though, right on the right side of the new hall's entrance, will be preserved on a marble plate an inscription with Arabic characters, containing the following: "The year of erecting this bath, from the time of terror under Ibrahim Ehan, Hedsa 1053" [2]. On the frontispiece is represented the city seal and emblem. After the renovation from 1782, the renaissance style façade will be restored and at the same time changed the city emblem, whereas Timișoara becomes a royal free city. The building is structured on three levels: a ground floor and two floors. Above the gate there is a monumental balcony and four arched windows displayed on the two floors. Building surface is interrupted by numerous panels bounded by pilasters, each box containing two windows positioned vertically. Located in the Liberty Square, The Old City Hall building represents an important landmark in the city's baroque architectural itinerary.

**The statue of the Holy Trinity** ("the plague monument") is considered to be the most outstanding monument of Baroque art creation in Timișoara. Presumably (based on stylistic analogies with other works) it is a creation of the Viennese sculptor Georg Raphael Donner. It was commissioned by counselor Anton Deschan von Hansen and brought to Timișoara from Vienna in 1740. The motivation for the monument (which must have cost a large sum for a city that was still far from prosperity) was the commemoration of the capital problems that had hit Timișoara during the war with the Turks from 1737 to 1739. Such monuments are very common during the Baroque period in the Catholic areas of Austria and southern Germany. The monument's base is a pedestal with three sides; on each side there are figurative reliefs representing in baroque manner the plague, famine and war. On the pedestal's corners, namely on consoles supported on volutes, are statues of the saints Rochus, Sebastian (the one with the arrow) and Karl Borromeus. Following is a column in itself, at its base Saint John of Nepomuk is represented, and below it there is Saint Rozalia. At the same height as Saint Nepomuk, but on the other sides of the column, there are King David and Saint Barbara. The column ends with an ionic capital, on which the Holy Trinity thrones. This statue was placed somewhere else in the beginning, too, in

fact, it would not have been possible for it to be placed here while in 1740 Unirii Square was still a far from finished construction site. The commissioner Deschan Von Hansen ordered the statue to be installed in 1740 in close vicinity to his house – approximately where Bega store is today. But it soon had to be moved – that land had just been purchased in 1752 by Baroness Rosina von Metzrad; after measurement, she intended to build here a house for herself so the monument had to be moved. At that time, Unirii Square was still in the process of construction. Accordingly, an agreement was concluded between the city administration and Baroness von Metzrad: the statue was to be stored in pieces, in the Catholic Cathedral (which was also unfinished), following that at some point the Baroness had to reinstall the monument at her own expense in a place indicated by the administration. When finally the “primary square” (Unirii Square) was finished and an outstanding monument was needed in its center, the baroness did not condescend to meet her obligations; it seems that city administration was too weak in this fight. Thus, Empress Maria Theresa herself had to write the 1755 administration of Banat, saying “you will instruct in the most serious manner ... the above-named Baroness von Metzrad to install the column in the place indicated by you ... and you will obediently report the success”. And, as proof of success, lays evidence even today the statue in the middle of the square, in stylistic harmony with the surrounding buildings.

**Saint Mary Monument** or **Saint Nepomuk Monument** was replacing in 1756 the older and more modest statue representing Saint Nepomuk, patron saint of the Catholics from Banat. As the first statue was carved in low resistance sandstone, it was replaced with the valuable statue delighting us today. The old Nepomuk was over time moved in different places around the city, finally working its way in the Catholic parochial church yard in Iosefin district. The plague of 1738-1739 had cost the lives of around 1,000 of the 6,000 inhabitants of Timișoara. Ever since 1739, the city administration represented by Mayor Solderer filed a solemn oath to do various good deeds, as a sign of gratitude for the cessation of the epidemic. Also the “Nepomuk brothers”, a religious association in the city, wanted to commission an artwork to commemorate the epidemic. It seems that the Nepomuk brothers issued the execution command of the monument. The artist chosen was Raphael Donner, but he could not perform the work himself. The sculptors Wasserburger and Blim executed the work, and it took them three years to finish the monument (1753-1756). Scenes from the life of Saint Nepomuk are represented on the baroque pedestal – the scene of his death can even be seen on its façade: he was thrown into the Vltava River in Prague. On the pedestal corners stand the statues of the Saints Sebastian, Rochus and Karl Borromeus (the same as in the Holy Trinity monument in Unirii Square). On the column, below Saint Mary, Saint John of Nepomuk flanked by angels is represented. Saint Mary is wearing a crown and is holding in her hand a lily, a symbol of purity. But this monument also did not always stand here. After the defeat of the 1848-1849 revolution (Timișoara’s city garrison had an important role in the victory of the Imperial Army), the square’s aspect was also affected – in fact, it was ordinary for the appearance of important squares to be modified according to the political “orientation” (Ceaușescu took these trends to the extreme). Thus, precisely in this square – that is, exactly where the revolution in Timișoara took place – a monument “of fidelity” (officially, the “Victoria” – Victory monument) was unveiled in the presence of the young Emperor Franz Joseph. On the pedestal the inscription “[dedicated to...] the faithful defenders of the city of Timișoara” was inscribed. Therefore, the Mary-Nepomuk monument had to be moved. Although the “Victoria” monument became slightly embarrassing from a political point of view after the compromise (Ausgleich) arisen between Austria and Hungary in 1867, it was only removed in the interwar period (moved to the cemetery on Lipovei St.), and the Mary-

Nepomuk monument could only return to its original place in Libertății Square in the late 1960s. The Saint Mary monument was seriously damaged during the December 1989 Revolution. Images from that time show the statuary ensemble chipped by bullets; it was restored between 1992 and 1993.

**The statue of Saint John of Nepomuk.** Since 1727 Saint Nepomuk has been the patron saint of the Catholics from Banat. This fact explains his presence on the Blessed Trinity and Saint Mary statues. Recently, the old baroque statue of Saint John of Nepomuk, who stood, forgotten by time, and in an advanced stage of degradation, in the courtyard of the Roman Catholic Church in Iosefin, has been restored and moved in front of the Millenium Church from the Romans Square. Nobody knows who its sculptor was, but it surely is the oldest baroque statue of the town, almost 300 years old. Saint Nepomuk is depicted with a cross in his arms. The statue has been posted in several places of the town. Firstly, in 1720, it was placed in front of the Military Casino, but in 1752 it was moved in front of the Carmen Sylva high-school. Five years later it was placed to the Decebal Bridge, from where, in 1908, it was taken to the present Thermal Baths' area. It was moved in the yard of the Romano-Catholic church in 1932. Here was enclosed and protected, being strongly dilapidated.

## CONCLUSIONS

Timișoara has an abundance of Baroque historical monuments, but just like the other localities in Romania, is facing an acute shortage of funds for the restoration and the valorization of its objectives. The presence of foreign tourists, interested in the city's history and culture has caught the attention of investors from other countries, who are increasingly more willing to promote various actions and programs in order to maximize the touristic potential of this destination. Thus, currently, with the support of local authorities, Timișoara has entered a long period of rehabilitation, which promises a final worthy of the prestige of the multicultural centre polarizing great values that once this city was holding.

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