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THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FOR THE CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION AND REVITALIZATION OF NEGLECTED ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE: THE CASE OF NOVO CELJE MANOR NEAR ŽALEC (SLOVENIA)

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the issue of neglected architectural heritage through the example of Novo Celje Manor near Žalec in Slovenia and highlights the importance of interdisciplinary scientific research for the effective contemporary interpretation and revitalization of this segment of cultural heritage. Interdisciplinary research allowed for a thorough critical evaluation, correction, and supplementation of past studies and to prove that the Baroque Novo Celje Manor has evolved through a thorough transformation and expansion of the former Renaissance Plumberk Manor. The case demonstrates that interdisciplinary scientific research of neglected architectural heritage is significantly more effective than research limited to a single scientific discipline and that only such research can contribute to high-quality research results, forming the basis for planning successful sustainable revitalization of neglected architectural heritage.

Keywords: heritage science, architectural heritage, cultural heritage interpretation, Novo Celje Manor, social changes, interdisciplinary cultural heritage research, 3D reconstruction

L'IMPORTANZA DELLA RICERCA SCIENTIFICA INTERDISCIPLINARE PER L'INTERPRETAZIONE CONTEMPORANEA E LA RIVITALIZZAZIONE DEL PATRIMONIO ARCHITETTONICO TRASCURATO: IL CASO DEL MANIERO DI NOVO CELJE VICINO A ŽALEC (SLOVENIA)

SINTESI

Questo articolo affronta il tema del patrimonio architettonico trascurato attraverso l'esempio del maniero di Novo Celje, vicino a Žalec, in Slovenia, e sottolinea l'importanza della ricerca scientifica interdisciplinare per un'interpretazione contemporanea efficace e una rivitalizzazione di questo segmento del patrimonio culturale. Grazie alla ricerca interdisciplinare è stato possibile valutare criticamente, correggere e integrare le ricerche condotte in precedenza e dimostrare che il maniero barocco di Novo Celje si è evoluto attraverso una profonda trasformazione e ampliamento dell'ex maniero rinascimentale di Plumberk. Il caso dimostra che la ricerca scientifica interdisciplinare sul patrimonio architettonico trascurato è significativamente più efficace della ricerca limitata a una singola disciplina scientifica e che solo tale ricerca può contribuire a risultati di ricerca di alta qualità, costituendo la base per la pianificazione di una rivitalizzazione sostenibile e di successo del patrimonio architettonico trascurato.

Parole chiave: scienza del patrimonio, patrimonio architettonico, interpretazione del patrimonio culturale, maniero di Novo Celje, cambiamenti sociali, ricerca interdisciplinare sul patrimonio culturale, ricostruzione 3D

INTRODUCTION

For several decades, a particular issue of protecting older secular architectural heritage has been present in Slovenia.¹ This pertains to buildings dating from the 12th century to the late 19th century, which, due to societal changes in the 20th century, lost their original purpose and have not found a suitable replacement function, thus threatening their existence and heritage value. Besides 19th-century industrial architecture, this issue particularly encompasses castles and manors, among which many are early modern period manors (cf. Šumi, 1983, 9). Currently, there are approximately 75 smaller and larger early modern period manors in Slovenia that are empty and lack appropriate alternative uses. All are listed in the Slovenian national register of immovable cultural heritage, and the vast majority have the status of cultural monuments. Since the establishment of the Slovenian state in 1991, the approach has gradually taken hold that this type of cultural heritage can only be preserved through comprehensive renovations, which, within the broader spatial development, enable new contemporary uses or revitalization as a quality identity and environmental component of the living environment (cf. Fister, 2001, 15–17). Following this approach, and with financial support from the Republic of Slovenia and the European Union, several

larger castle buildings were renovated after 2004, subjecting the authentic building substance to more or less radical construction interventions. After the renovation work was completed, it became apparent that extensive renovations could not guarantee the successful revitalization of previously long-neglected architectural heritage, but they do inevitably mean the destruction of part of the authentic historical building substance and the historical significance of the building. This realization led to the development of new methods and alternative concepts for the preservation of neglected architectural heritage (Sapač & Bezjak, 2024). The new methods and concepts are based on the orientation that deep and interdisciplinary scientific research of neglected architectural heritage and a sufficiently comprehensive interpretation of all its key meanings should be sought, regular care and minor restorative interventions should replace extensive destructive construction work, and the approval of the implemented interventions should be secured for the broadest possible spectrum of people. As emphasized by one of the prominent contemporary conservation theorists, Salvador Muñoz-Viñas: “Conservation should not be regretted, suffered or merely ‘tolerated’ by the affected people, but instead admired, enjoyed and respected by as many people as possible. Conservation should not be imposed, but agreed upon” (Muñoz Viñas, 2011, 194).



Figure 1: Main facade of the Novo Celje manor, 2020 (Photo: I. Sapač).

¹ The research for this paper was carried out within the framework of the research programme *Art in Slovenia at a Cultural Crossroads* (P6-0061) and research projects *AID HCH – Break through in humanities and cultural heritage with artificial intelligence* (J7-60128) and *Heritage science and climate change: new research through an interdisciplinary approach and the use of artificial intelligence (AI)*, funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.



Figure 2: Main facade of the Novo Celje manor, lithographie, around 1845 (private archive).

This paper, using the example of Novo Celje/ Neu Cilli Manor, presents and analyses the foundational approach to interdisciplinary scientific research as a basis for applying new methods and alternative concepts for the preservation of neglected architectural heritage. It is based on the thesis that only appropriately broad-conceived interdisciplinary scientific research allows for a heritage-appropriate interpretation and revitalization of neglected architectural heritage (Figure 1). The need for interdisciplinary scientific research of highly endangered cultural heritage of castles and manors in Slovenia was already pointed out by Nace Šumi in 1983, who called for the collaboration of historians, ethnologists, archaeologists, and art historians for conservation interventions on castle buildings and raising social awareness about

the importance of castle heritage (Šumi, 1983, 10–12). However, it began to gain widely used in scientific research practice only after 2000.²

NOVO CELJE MANOR AS A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF NEGLECTED AND PROBLEMATIC QUALITY OLDER SECULAR ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Novo Celje Manor on the outskirts of Žalec in the Savinja Valley in Slovenia, shaped in its current form 1756 by the architect Matthias Persky for Anton Count Gaisruck as a combination of the Novo Celje dominion's seat and a luxurious country noble residence, has been owned by the Municipality of Žalec since 1995 after decades of use for hospital purposes and unsuccessful renovation attempts for local business needs (Figure 2).³ Occasional events and exhibitions, which

² Since 2000, within the framework of the *Kronika* scientific journal, published by the Association of Historical Societies of Slovenia, individual thematic issues have been published with interdisciplinary scientific and professional reviews of individual prominent castle buildings in Slovenia. In 2011, the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Ljubljana organized the interdisciplinary scientific symposium *Understanding the Castle: The Role and Meaning of Castles in Slovenian History*, which for the first time included a broad interdisciplinary scientific treatment of the phenomenon of castles (Preinfalk, 2012). In 2015, the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Ljubljana conceived a new scientific book series, *Castellologica Slovenica*, dedicated to interdisciplinary studies of the most important castles and manors in Slovenia (cf. Lazarini & Preinfalk, 2018; Preinfalk et al., 2020a; 2020b).

³ About the owners, architecture and furnishing of the Novo Celje manor, cf. lastly Vidmar (2024), with relevant older literature.

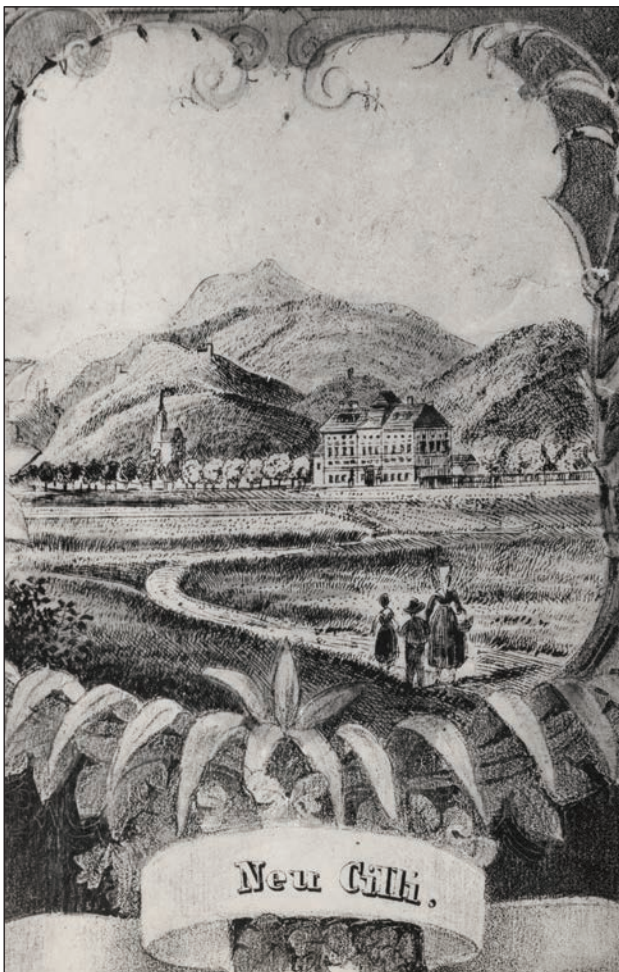


Figure 3: *Novo Celje Manor around 1840, lithographie published in the calender Erinnerung an die Steiermark für das Jahr 1841 (private archive).*

are diligently organized in the manor by employees of the Žalec Institute for Culture, Sports, and Tourism in collaboration with enthusiastic volunteers, strengthen awareness of the manor as an important historical and artistic value that transcends the local environment. Although the organizers sensitively adapt to the empty building and emphasize its spatial values and artistic qualities, they have not yet achieved the desired response that would contribute to answering the question of the long-term preservation and revitalization of the manor (Domjan, 2013, 36–37). The example of Novo Celje Manor clearly shows the need for the application of new methods and alternative concepts for the preservation of neglected and problematic older secular architectural heritage.

The choice of this manor for a case study is based not only on the expectation of renovation of the now empty building but also on the combination of circumstances that have contributed to the better preservation

of documentary written material on the history of the manor, visual sources, memoirs, and oral testimonies about life in the manor, as they have been preserved for other Slovenian castles and manors and are available to researchers from various disciplines. The current problems of Novo Celje Manor are mainly the result of two radical renovations in the 20th century. In 1930, Novo Celje was purchased from private ownership by the Drava Banovina, a province of the then Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and a psychiatric hospital was established in the manor and the outbuilding. Several additional buildings for hospital staff were constructed in the former gardens in the following years. The interventions continued during the time of the military hospital during World War II, when a radical reconstruction devastated and almost entirely erased the chapel. During the second renovation between 1983 and 1991, which envisioned “both the restoration or reconstruction of the most prominent architectural components, as well as the restoration of the manor park” (Stopar, 1992, 93) most of the hospital components were removed from the manor, including the kitchen and bathrooms, but after the ambitious demolition works were initiated, they were prematurely halted. The manor was then purchased by the Municipality of Žalec in 1995, but without the outbuilding and most of the associated lands, which passed into private ownership. On the municipal initiative, conservation documentation was prepared in the 1990s, stucco work was restored on the staircase and the hallway of the piano nobile, newer partition walls in the vestibule were demolished, and the chapel was partially reconstructed based on old photographs, and its ceiling painting was restored. The partially restored chapel, vestibule, staircase, and the hall, which survived the changes in function in the 20th century without significant alterations, are the



Figure 4: *Carl Reichert: Novo Celje Manor, lithographie, 1865 (private archive).*



Figure 5: Plumberk Manor around 1580, digital reconstruction attempt, view from the north-west side (made by Živa Kralj, Rok Rantaša and Katja Rihtarič based on the conceptual proposal by I. Sapač).



Figure 6: Plumberk Manor around 1685, digital reconstruction attempt, view from the north-west side (made by Živa Kralj, Rok Rantaša and Katja Rihtarič based on the conceptual proposal by I. Sapač).

only rooms in the manor that approach the image of the dominion's seat and country residence that were designed, built, and furnished after Anton Count Gaisruck purchased the Celje dominion in 1751 and the Plumberk/Brunnberg dominion in 1756 (Vidmar, 2024, 91–94). Gaisruck marked the transformation of the old Plumberk manor into the luxurious Novo Celje residence, where he transferred administrative, economic, and judicial functions from the old Celje castle, with an inscription in the chapel, declaring himself as the new Count of Celje/Cilli, and the splendour of the new dominion's seat followed the importance and glory of the Counts of Celje/Cilli.

The proclamation of the commissioner for the new Count of Celje/Cilli and the revival of the glory of the dynasty, which had been extinct for three hundred years, with its ruling and royal ambitions, are the basic premises for understanding the history and image of the manor after 1756 and the research on its predecessor, Plumberk manor. Unlike most castles and manors, research can rely on well-preserved documentation on the construction and furnishing of Novo Celje, visual sources, and older literature, as one of the first monographs on a Slovenian castle or manor was written about Novo Celje (Dunder, 1847). The monograph, titled *Styrian Paradise*, is a valuable source of information for the economic, administrative, and ecclesiastical history of the Plumberk and Novo Celje dominions, as well as the architecture and furnishings of the associated manors, but it requires critical reading, as the then-administrator of Novo Celje, Václav Jiří Dunder (1800–1872), did not write it from the standpoint of a neutral researcher but with the intent to sell the heavily indebted dominion as expensively as possible. The intentional exaggerations are not only evident in the listing of lands that were not owned by Hausmann but also in Dunder's descriptions, which present Novo Celje as the most magnificent noble building in the entire Savinja/Sann region,

one of the most beautiful manors in the monarchy, and the most beautiful building of all dominions in Inner Austria (Dunder, 1847, 97), and the romantic exaggeration about the age of the manor with its origins in the time of Lower Pannonian duke Pribina in the 9th century (Dunder, 1847, 35–37). Many of Dunder's exaggerations were only revealed upon the publication of the Slovenian translation and critical commentary (Zimmermann, 2016).

RESULTS OF HISTORICAL AND ART HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF NOVO CELJE MANOR

The art-historical research conducted over the past four decades (cf. Stopar, 1977, 18; 1998, 7) was based on the assumption that Novo Celje Manor was a completely new construction in the third quarter of the 18th century and that it did not undergo any particularly significant changes until after 1930. An uncritical reliance on older references from the 19th century (cf. Dunder, 1847, 75) and a superficial analysis of the built forms replaced a more methodologically appropriate interdisciplinary research approach, which could have included a more precise analysis of all available historical written sources, a more detailed structural analysis of the built parts, systematic comparative analysis of old depictions and photographs of the manor, the valorisation of the results of archaeological excavations and dendrochronological research of the wooden elements of the roof, a specific research method of architectural archaeology, geophysical research with the ground-penetrating radar method, and thermographic analysis of the walls and ceiling structures (Figures 3–4). As a result, the inadequate research method led to erroneous deduction and incorrect conclusions, which in turn resulted in problematic foundations for planning the revitalization of the manor.

The current research has attempted to correct this deficiency of older research at least to a certain extent and has highlighted the need for further interdisciplinary-conceived research. By analysing the previously uncovered remains of older wall structures (cf. Weigl, 2000, 34; 2003, 74, 81),⁴ historical depictions of the manor, archival sources on the owners and inventory of the manor, and the general characteristics of 16th and 17th-century castle architecture in Styria, it was possible to revise older hypotheses and prove that Novo Celje Manor was created in 1756 as a radical renovation and expansion of an older architectural design, with a skillful Baroque transformation of the older Plumberk Manor. The Baroque reconstruction thoroughly and comprehensively covered the older architectural design, which was created in at least two independent building phases in the 16th and 17th centuries, so thoroughly that at first glance nothing indicates its presence (Figures 5–6).

Initially, the rather modest 5 × 4-axial three-story building with a vaulted entrance hall, which was built around 1580 by Sigmund Lord Schratzenbach, did not differ from the manors that the lower Styrian nobility built on their estates (e.g., Frajštajn/Freistein, Zgornja Polskava/Oberpulsgau). The inventory of furnishings, compiled after the departure of the former owner and tenant Cyprian Qualandro in 1645, reveals that the ground floor had vaulted storage spaces, while the upper floors housed heated and unheated rooms equipped with at least 13 beds, furniture, numerous Turkish and embroidered fabrics, and the manor also contained pewter, majolica, copper, and brass vessels, a Venetian mirror, a clock, a musical instrument, and weapons (StLA, LR, K. 949, H. 1, Inventar). The inventory also mentions turkeys, wine vessels, fishing gear, and nets for catching hares and birds (StLA, LR, K. 949, H. 1, Inventar), which are relevant for further research into the history of the economy in the Savinja Valley. The second building phase, which was volumetrically defined after interdisciplinary research and then digitally visually reconstructed, was carried out around 1680 according to indirect archival sources and is associated with the previously almost unknown Miglio barons (Oman, 2023, 273–286; Vidmar, 2024, 27–77). The most important visual source for this phase is a depiction of the miraculous Virgin of Petrovče from the mid-18th century, which shows that brothers Tulio and Ferdinand Miglio added a seven-axial two-story building to the existing five-axial manor on the east, which extended only two window axes in width (Figure 7).

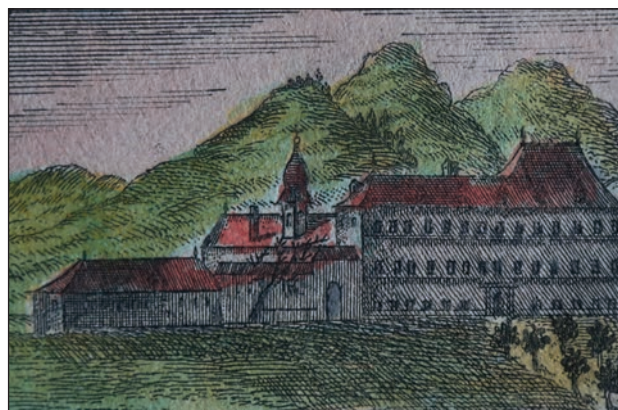


Figure 7: The Plumberk manor from the north side, pilgrimage image of the Virgin of Petrovče, first half of the eighteenth-century, detail (private archive).

The portal was moved to the west axis of the annex, and a new entrance to the inner courtyard was arranged at the extreme eastern part of this annex. The southern wing of the manor, which originally consisted only of an outbuilding on the west, still visible on the Franciscan cadastre, was extended eastward during Ferdinand Miglio's time, reaching the eastern wall, and the entire design had the shape of an almost perfect rectangle. Approximately in the middle of the southern wing, a chapel was arranged, as evidenced by the depiction of the bell tower on the depiction of the Virgin of Petrovče and the mention of a chapel with a small altar in the probate inventory after Ferdinand Miglio (StLA, LR, K. 723, H. 2, Nachlassinventar). With the reconstruction, they acquired a ceremonial hall, probably on the upper floor of the eastern extension of the original building. The furnishings of the reconstructed manor were more luxurious than decades earlier, since the inventory commissioners recorded 26 paintings in the baron's room, and the hall contained a sideboard of hardwood, old softwood tables, a map of Hungary, and twenty paintings (StLA, LR, K. 723, H. 2, Nachlassinventar). The most valuable items, especially silverware, Turkish items, and precious jewellery, were stored in the office of the provincial governor in Graz due to the mental health issues of Baron Ferdinand Miglio (StLA, LR, K. 723, H. 2, Spezifikation). Strictly confidential secret documents, handed over to nephews Tulio and Ferdinand Miglio by Giovanni Battista Casanova, who served as the permanent imperial envoy or resident in Constantinople from September 1665 to December 1672, were also

⁴ The documentation on the discoveries of older architectural elements in the current western wall of the entrance hall of the Novo Celje manor is kept by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Celje Regional Unit. We would like to thank Nataša Podkrižnik for the information and photos.

deposited there. A garden to the west of Plumberk Manor is confirmed by the mention of a gardener among Miglio's servants. Only through the examination of court files, which mentioned the theft of a large quantity of stone from a quarry belonging to the Žalec inhabitants (StLA, LR, K. 723, H. 2, Klage), was it possible to determine that around 1710, not only was the garden walled, but during the time of Karl Raimund Baron Miglio, a stable was built outside the walled area of the manor, depicted on the image of the Virgin of Petrovče and preserved in the western part of the current large outbuilding. The study of archival sources on the

last member of the Miglio family, the successful general and cuirassier regiment owner Franz Baron Miglio, did not bring new insights into the building history of the manor, but it was possible to ascertain that he was a significant donor to ecclesiastical institutions and that, in addition to epitaphs in the Church of the Virgin Mary in Petrovče, altars are also preserved in the Franciscan Church in Nazarje. It was also possible to supplement previous findings about the owners, as it was found that the Plumberk dominion was owned for four years by Franz's nephew Anton Baron Metzsch and his posthumously born daughter Maria Anna, before it

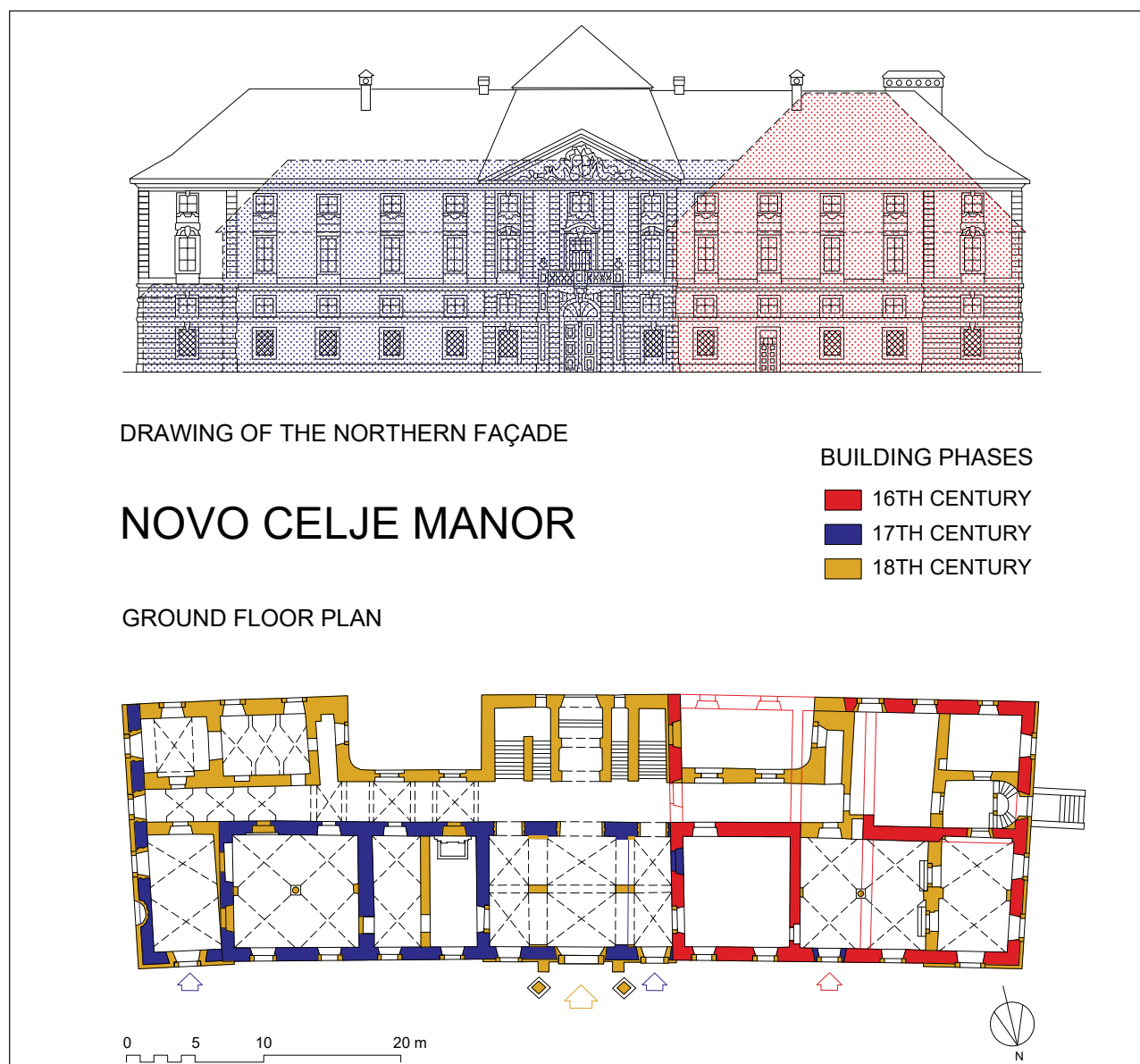


Figure 8: Drawing of the main facade and floor plan of the manor's ground floor with the three main phases of building development marked (drawn by I. Sapač).



Figure 9: *Novo Celje Manor around 1770, digital reconstruction attempt, view from the north-west side (made by Živa Kralj, Rok Rantaša and Katja Rihtarič based on the conceptual proposal by I. Sapač).*



Figure 10: *The main staircase in the Novo Celje manor, 2022 (Photo: I. Sapač).*

was sold by her guardian, Viennese lawyer Wolfgang Schrägl, to Anton Count Gaisruck on April 17, 1756 (Vidmar, 2024, 79).

With Count Gaisruck, who had already owned the Celje dominion for five years, a new period began, marked by extraordinary ambition, which is evident in Gaisruck's identification as the new Count of Celje and, in material terms, by the construction of a monumental building for which he employed the best architects, stucco artists, sculptors, painters, and other artists and craftsmen from the Inner Austrian lands. Their identification is made possible by extensive archival material, which was produced due to the indebtedness of Count Anton and his brother and heir Johann Karl Count Gaisruck, and has been thoroughly reviewed and analyzed several times (Weigl, 2000, 34–42; 2003, 74–80; Vidmar, 2016, 43–44; 2024, 107). The findings were supplemented by the latest research with the newly discovered probate inventories after Anton and Johann Karl Counts Gaisruck (KLA-BA-Verlässe- Sch. 16, Nr. 314; KLA-BA-Verlässe- Sch. 16, Nr. 315).

Igor Weigl (Weigl, 2000, 34; 2003, 74, 81) already doubted Dunder's claim that Gaisruck demolished the ancient Plumberk manor and that a park was planted in its place (Dunder, 1847, 75–76), followed by later researchers (cf. Stopar, 1998, 7), and during the current research, it was established that architect Matthias Persky (1716–1761) included the walls of the old manor in the plans for the luxurious Novo Celje Manor (Figure 8).

The older western five axes of the Plumberk Manor were preserved in their original form, except for the southern facade, the eastern part was expanded and extended by one axis, and the central part of the building was completely altered to create space for the vestibule, grand staircase, and hall (Figures 9–10).

The manor was also raised, and the layout of the rooms was changed. Due to the view mentioned by Dunder (1847, 76), the main building was not demolished, but rather the southern wing of the



Figure 11: *On one of the corners of the manor, older building elements processed by stonemasonry are used as a spoliation, 2022 (Photo: I. Sapač).*

Plumberk Manor, which housed the chapel. The stones from the demolished wing were used for the expansion and raising of the new manor, characterized by a distinctly mixed construction with stone and brick, visible on the peeled parts of the walls. A closer inspection also shows embedded fragments of older stone-carved elements that allegedly belonged to the Plumberk Manor (Figure 11).

Architect Matthias Persky succeeded in skilfully completely concealing the previous construction phases with the articulation of the exterior and creating the impression of a new construction. The choice of building type, with a monolithic central building with two mezzanines and without side wings, was more characteristic of manors for pleasure rather than dominion seats, and the design of the representative spaces in the central part followed Viennese architecture from around 1700, leading to unsystematic use of spaces by floors, further exacerbated by the financial difficulties of the Novo Celje owners. From the probate inventories after Anton and Johann Karl Counts Gaisruck,

it can be ascertained that instead of the usual count's and countess's apartments in the piano nobile, only the extreme ends of the piano nobile and five rooms in the western part of the upper mezzanine were furnished for family living, and the unsystematic use is also reflected in the rooms of the lower mezzanine and the ground floor (Vidmar, 2024, 129–131). The inventories also reveal the surprising fact that four of the most beautiful and largest rooms in the piano nobile remained only partially furnished for decades after construction and were used as storage (Vidmar, 2024, 130).

The excellently preserved documentation on construction and furnishing also reveals a discontinuity in construction and furnishing that is difficult to ascertain for other manors, conditioned by financial resources and the personal disposition of the client. The ambitious Anton Count Gaisruck, with the support of the efficient administrator Josef Daniel Novak, managed to nearly complete the construction, building furniture, and most of the stucco, stoves, sculptures, and paintings in only five years from the



Figure 12: Veit Königer: *Nymph from the staircase of the Novo Celje manor, around 1760, National Museum of Slovenia, Ljubljana* (© ZRC SAZU; Photo: Andrej Furlan).



Figure 13: Veit Königer: Herakles figures at the main portal of the Novo Celje manor, around 1760 (© ZRC SAZU; Photo: Andrej Furlan).

purchase of the manor until his death. In ten years of ownership, his less ambitious brother Johann Karl completed the large farm building according to Matthias Persky's plans, repaired damage caused to the ceilings and stuccos due to Anton's haste to complete the work as soon as possible, bought some furniture for the manor and decorated the hall with family portraits, all under financial supervision. In contrast, the contribution of Vinzenz Count Gaisruck (1754–ca. 1830) to furnishing the manor during his sixty years of ownership was negligible. The importance of understanding the ambitions, career, and life story of the commissioner for understanding architecture and furnishings is evident not only in quantity but also in quality, as Anton sought out the highest-quality artists available, while Johann Karl and especially Vinzenz settled for less skilled artists (e.g., painters Josef Cassian Gasser and Johann Vinzenz Lederwasch).

Knowledge of Anton Count Gaisruck's career and his few years living in Munich allows for a better understanding of his admiration for Bavarian Rococo and his employment of the Wessobrunn

stucco artist Josef Gebhard, who had already been residing in Ljubljana for several years (Resman, 2006, 472). With Anton's residence in Bavaria and supposed familiarity with the architectural and artistic commissions of German princes, it was possible to iconographically identify the female figures from the Novo Celje staircase, created around 1760 by sculptor Veit Königer and considered muses or Parcae since the publication of Dunder's monograph (1847, 104), as terrestrial and water nymphs (Vidmar, 2024, 154–155) (Figure 12). Anton Count Gaisruck used Königer's sculptural mastery to present him at the top of the grand staircase as a man enjoying the natural beauties of his rural residence in the company of nymphs, as a fervent devotee of the Immaculate in the chapel, and with two Hercules figures in front of the main portal as a hero who defeated the Nemean Lion and the Lernaean Hydra, and in a figurative sense, as a man who rose through his efforts and achievements in society (Figure 13). Anton Josef Lerchinger was entrusted with the ceiling painting of the grand hall, which was destroyed in the 19th century, and the

creation of painted wallpapers with motifs of the four elements for four rooms of the piano nobile, which are partially preserved in private and public collections (Badovinac, 1997, 40–42; Ratković, 1998, 79–90; Weigl, 2000, 40–42, 250; Vidmar, 2016, 53–66; 2024, 167–184).

The excellently preserved documentation also allows for the identification of artists and craftsmen who remained anonymous in other contemporary constructions, such as Celje locksmith Anton Zimmermann, carpenter Mihael Formacher, and glassmaker Mihael Stargeth, Graz potter Johann Thalhammer, painter and gilder Franz Josef Reich, and Wessobrunn stucco artists Josef Gebhard and Thomas Finsterwalder (StLA, LR, K. 241, H. 1, Spezifikation). Even more detailed are lists of Celje, Žalec, and local craftsmen who built the farm building on the orders of Johann Karl Count Gaisruck and under the supervision of Carniolan master builder Lorenz Prager (Vidmar, 2024, 243–245), as they are also important for the study of crafts in the Celje area.

After the bankruptcy of Vinzenz Count Gaisruck, the Novo Celje dominion was bought at auction in 1835 by the extremely enterprising citizen Josef Ludwig Hausmann (1794/1795–1856). (Figure 14). The dynamic period of his ownership, precisely described in the monograph by administrator Dunder (1847), raises numerous questions about Novo Celje as an economic centre, as Hausmann, following the model of his estate Landskron in Austrian Styria, opened several mines and coal mines on the Novo Celje dominion, planted numerous varieties of fruit trees as a member of the Pomological Society based in Frauenberg in Bavaria, established orchards, founded a distillery for brandy, fruit brandy, and vinegar, and was actively involved in the then-fashionable silkworm farming. Mulberry plantations, following the Italian model, which Hausmann also had depicted in lithographs, did not bring the expected profits but instead financial ruin. During this period, Novo Celje was also the home of the presumed first Slovenian poetess Fanny Hausmann (1818–1853). Although Hausmann's period is less interesting for architectural and art historians, he left his mark as an architectural patron with the construction of the nearby Plevna/Pliuna Manor, accessory buildings, and the then most modern greenhouse, and with the commission of lithographs for the monograph *Styrian Paradise* and writing paper, he is also significant for the history of graphics and graphic design. With the letterhead, he not only communicated to business partners the importance of the manor, factory, farm buildings, and garden, but with the coats of arms also proclaimed himself the successor of the Counts of Celje/Cilli and the Counts of Gaisruck (Vidmar, 2024, 274).

Dunder's monograph is also an example of successful market manipulation, as the author's exaggeration about the size of the estate, the profitability of the economy, and the grandeur of the buildings in 1849 led Konstantin Duke Salm-Reifferscheidt-Krautheim (1798–1856) and his family administrative council to decide to purchase Hausmann's estates (Vidmar, 2024, 292–293). The duke did not receive Novo Celje until around 1854 due to civil disputes between the buyer and seller, and Hausmann was accused of fraud (Stopar, 1992, 87; Zimmermann, 2016, 31; Vidmar, 2024, 293). Members of the Salm-Reifferscheidt-Krautheim (and Dyck) family, who owned Novo Celje until 1919, furnished the manor with furniture and artworks and also brought noble life into the previously empty rooms. Sources for studying their period in Novo Celje expand compared to earlier periods to newspaper sources, especially about the hop plantations introduced to the Savinja Valley by Leopold Duke Salm-Reifferscheidt-Krautheim and Dyck (1833–1893). Good cooperation with the descendant of the Salm dukes, Count Andreas Bardeau, also provided researchers with insight into privately preserved diary and memoir writings of Countess Eleonore Bardeau (1901–1976), who was born in Novo Celje, as well as the furniture that the Salm family took with them when selling the manor in 1919.

Sources for the period between 1919 and 1930, when Novo Celje was owned by Davorin Turković Baron of Kutjevo (1883–1944), which could be preserved in Croatian public archives and among the descendants of Baron Turković, have not yet been systematically researched. So far, the known purchase agreements with the Salms (1919) and Drava Banovina (1930), as well as extensive correspondence between Turković and the Banovina conservator Franc Stele, who endeavoured to have as many artworks as possible from Novo Celje, especially Königer's sculptures and painted wallpapers, purchased by Slovenian museums, are known (INDOK center, spisi Novo Celje). The National Museum in Ljubljana also received some applied art items, such as ceramic stoves, an overdoor wrought-iron grid, and candlesticks.

After 1930, the luxurious noble residence was transformed into a psychiatric hospital with extensive renovations, with the male ward in the manor and the female ward in the farm building. The tragic events of 1941, when the Nazis deported most of the inmates to be executed at Hartheim Manor near Linz, are currently the subject of historical research (Počivavšek, 2024, 8). Historical and ethnological research, with the participation of witnesses, is also being conducted for the period between 1945 and 1980, when Novo Celje housed

a hospital for lung diseases and a home for the elderly (Kreže, 2024, 10). The material remains of the hospital period in Novo Celje were almost entirely removed during the renovation in the 1980s, so the testimonies of employees and patients are extremely important for understanding the more recent history of Novo Celje.

ARCHITECTURAL INTERPRETATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF NOVO CELJE MANOR

Surprising new findings about the development of Novo Celje Manor between the 16th and 20th centuries, derived from an in-depth interdisciplinary research approach, are also of key importance for planning the revitalization of this cultural monument. In this process, it is crucial to go beyond the guidelines of individual scientific disciplines and achieve the most appropriate consensus within both the wider professional and lay public. Through scientifically grounded methods of architectural-historical

interpretation, the complex results of the analysis of the manor's construction genesis can be effectively verified and simultaneously made accessible to the general public through digital visualizations or virtual reconstructions, thereby contributing to the search for the most appropriate revitalization concept.

One of the co-authors of this contribution first attempted to interpret the Baroque design of the manor in 1992 using a three-dimensional analogous architectural method, in the form of a model that interprets the basic design characteristics of the manor's external structure and attempts to bring them closer to the general public (Figure 15).

This model proved to be a sufficiently useful basis for creating modern three-dimensional computer visualizations with simulation reconstructions of the main building development phases. The primary goal of these visualizations is to communicate the transformation of the summarized or condensed results of interdisciplinary research on the manor's building development to the general public as



Figure 14: Writing paper of Josef Ludwig Hausmann, 1848, Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv, Graz (© Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv).



Figure 15: *An attempt to interpret the baroque design of the Novo Celje manor with a model (made by I. Sapač, 1992).*

clearly and accessibly as possible.⁵ At the same time, it is, of course, necessary to ensure historical consistency and base the visualizations entirely on the results of scientific research, on professionally prepared monument documentation, and to allow for the verifiability of the final product. The most important indicators that influenced the architectural interpretation were analysis of architectural forms, analysis of materials and constructions, analysis of the functions of the whole and individual building parts in specific periods, and analysis of the position in a broader spatial context.

The process of architectural interpretation and the resulting computer visualization involved five consecutive phases: scientifically grounded evaluation of the results of previously conducted interdisciplinary research, qualitative selection of results derived from this evaluation, combining and creatively abstracting the selected results, creating the concept of the final interpretation, and finally, producing the digital visualization (Figures 16–18).

Each subsequent phase is necessarily more subjective than the previous one, with the depth and interdisciplinary orientation of the initial scientific research enhancing the legitimacy of the process and final result. Furthermore, architectural interpretation opens new additional research questions and questions related to choosing the most appropriate method for creating digital visualizations. For example, when interpreting the development phases from the 16th and 17th centuries, which are heavily obscured in the current building design, digital modelling had to rely on the plans of the existing state of the building, all recorded building fragments from before the mid-18th century, and historical depictions from before the mid-18th century, while also considering appropriate architectural analogies. In interpreting the late Baroque development phase from the third quarter of the 18th century, a particular interpretative challenge was the authentic colour scheme of the facades. The reconstruction attempt was based on analysing the

⁵ On the importance of computer visualizations of the past in modern times cf. Mlekuž Vrhovnik (2022, 63–69) and Zanier (2023, 30–32) with a comprehensive list of sources and literature.

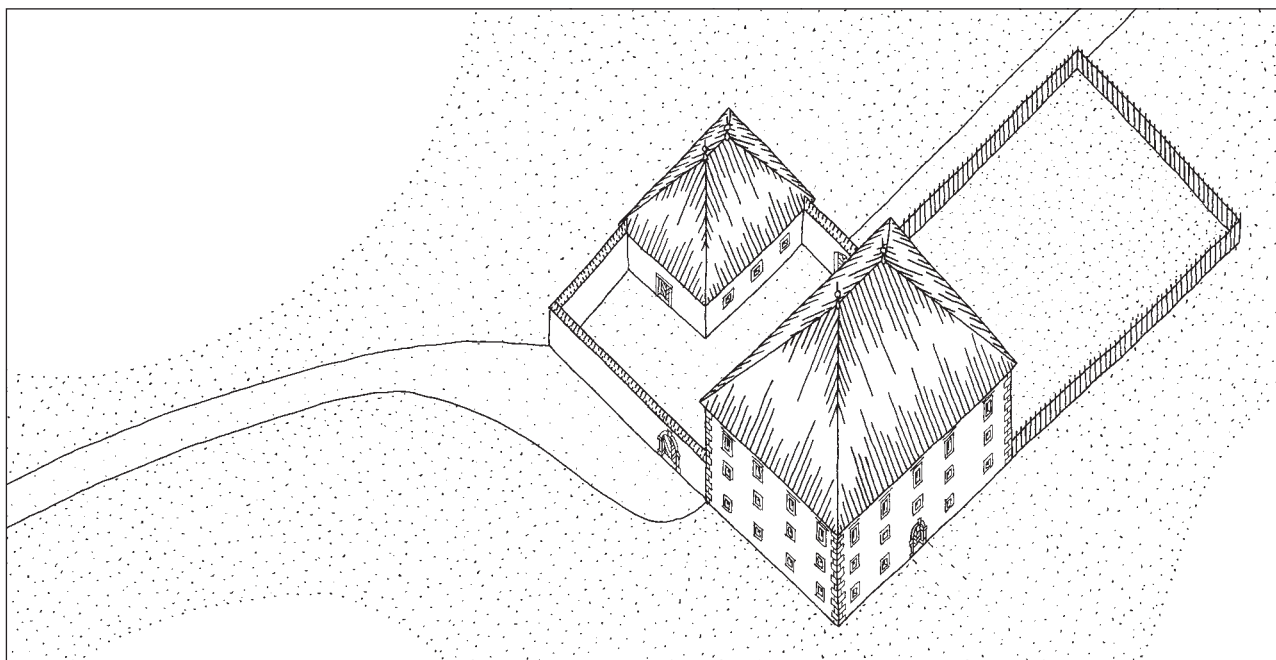


Figure 16: An attempt to reconstruct the image of the Plumberk manor in the second half of the sixteenth-century, an axonometric study as part of the working concept of the architectural interpretation of the building development of the manor (drawn by I. Sapač).

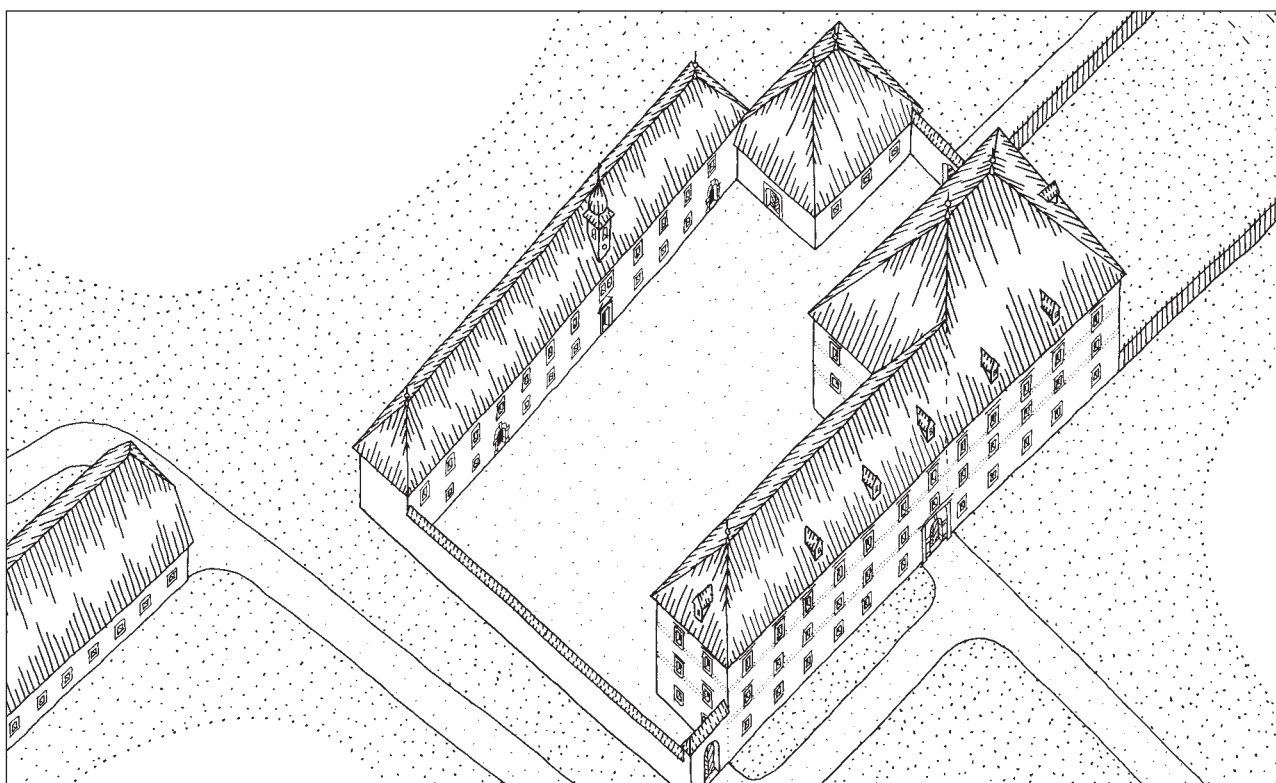


Figure 17: An attempt to reconstruct the image of the Plumberk manor in the first half of the eighteenth-century, an axonometric study as part of the working concept of the architectural interpretation of the building development of the manor (drawn by I. Sapač).

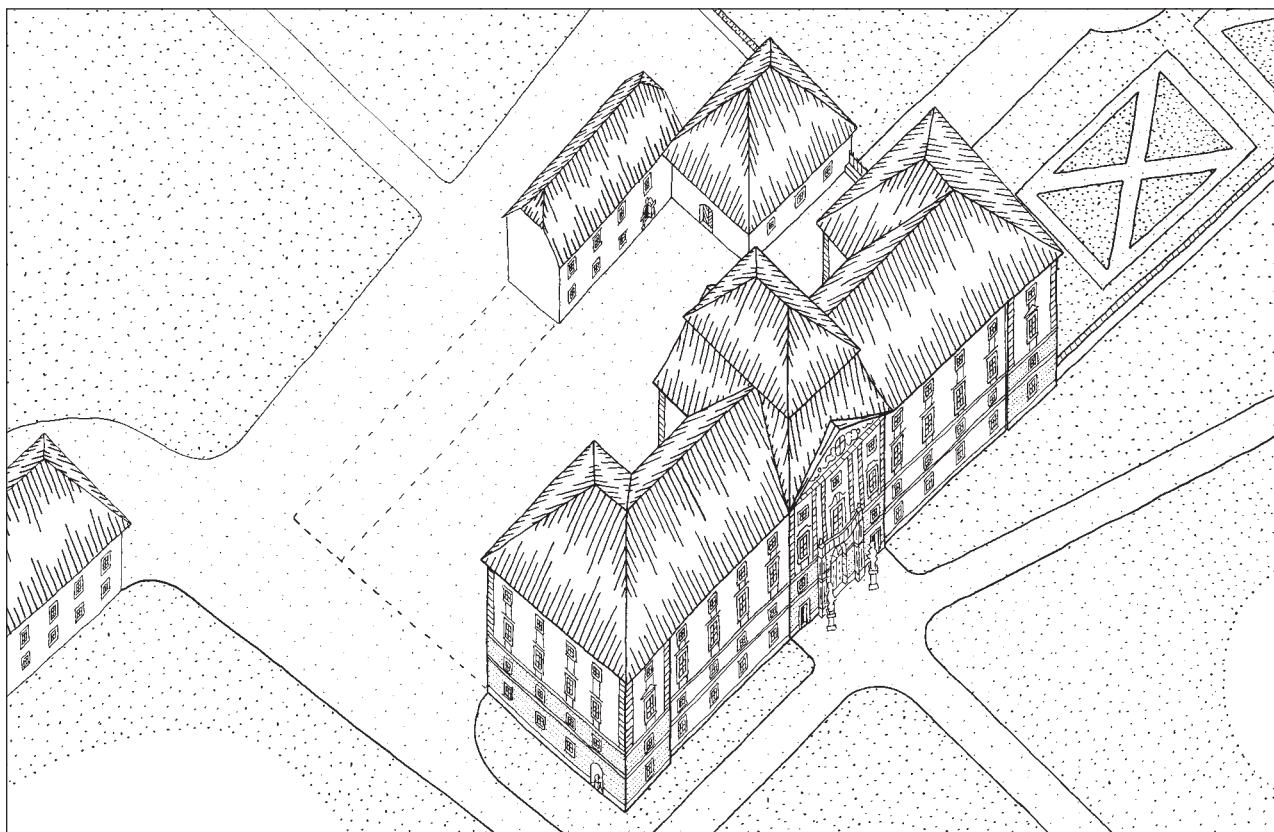


Figure 18: An attempt to reconstruct the image of the Novo Celje manor in the second half of the eighteenth-century, an axonometric study as part of the working concept of the architectural interpretation of the building development of the manor (drawn by I. Sapač).

remnants of colour layers visible on various parts of the building beneath the peeling latest facade colour layer.⁶ The existing model from 1992 served as a useful basic tool in defining the main elements that the digital visualization should convey; the main emphasis was on interpreting the built parts of the manor, with a higher degree of realistic depiction being appropriate due to the desire for usability and comprehensibility for the general public. Less documented historical garden areas and the surroundings of the manor were visualized in significantly more schematic forms, focused on presenting the main topographical, geomorphological, architectural, and landscape-architectural highlights.

As part of the creation of the final architectural interpretation concept and before producing the final digital visualization, the creation of traditional hand-drawn axonometric reconstruction drawings at a scale of 1:400 also proved to be a sensible part of the process in finding the most

appropriate form of visualization. These drawings made it possible to more objectively determine the architectural characteristics that should be particularly considered and highlighted in digital modelling (Figures 19–21).

Digital visualizations of the individual development phases of the manor, which are the final derivative of the architectural interpretation process, must, of course, be evaluated as more or less subjective and symbolic realistic constructs, marked by the context of contemporary times, the current stage of development of modern computer technologies, and the current stage of knowledge of the manor, regardless of the fact that they were created with full professional responsibility, taking into account a wide range of research results. As such, they emphasize that the original in real space is unique and irreplaceable, and that interpretation in a virtual environment, no matter how promising, visually attractive, and appealing it may seem, can

⁶ The analysis of the remains of the colour layers showed that in the second half of the 18th century, the manor had predominantly light yellow-toned facades, and in the 19th century, the original colour image was covered twice in a row with a dominant greenish colour, which changed the appearance and character of the late baroque architecture. After 1930, the facades were completely renovated and given their current dominant ochre colour image.



Figure 19: Plumberk Manor around 1580, digital reconstruction attempt, aerial view from the southwest side (made by Živa Kralj, Rok Rantaša and Katja Rihtarič based on the conceptual proposal by I. Sapač).

in no way replace it. Instead, it can only aid in its understanding and highlight the importance of its complete preservation and further interdisciplinary scientific research. In creating visualizations, it was crucial to recognize that modern interpretations of architectural heritage using digital visualizations are indispensable and that, despite their inherent partial subjectivity, they contribute to new scientific insights. Compared to analogous, hand-made architectural drawings, they allow for various arbitrarily determined views, verification, and changes in facade colour shades, more effective representation of material structures, as well as easy updating, supplementation, adaptation to different digital systems, printing of models for professional use, and miniature models for tourism purposes. As such, they can also serve as a means of communication with the broader public, contributing significantly to bridging the gap between scientific research and the resulting evaluation of architectural heritage and the lay public

by emphasizing the understanding of heritage and encouraging its preservation.

It seems that the visualizations produced may be further refined in the near future with the inclusion of new digital technologies and complemented with interpretations of individual interior spaces, where it may be possible to attempt the reconstruction of missing pieces of movable equipment based on data from archival sources, analogies, and the possibilities offered by the current development of artificial intelligence.

CONCLUSION

Interdisciplinary scientific research, which primarily relied on historical, art-historical, and architectural methods, made it possible to thoroughly critically evaluate, correct, and supplement previous research, which was based on individual scientific disciplines, and to prove that Novo Celje Manor in the 18th century, as a

Baroque *Gesamtkunstwerk* and one of the most representative noble residences in the Habsburg hereditary land of Styria, did not emerge as a new construction, as older research assumed, but as a creatively and comprehensively executed transformation of the older Renaissance manor Plumberk. Through historical and art-historical research methods, it was possible to deeply analyse and interpret the significance of the manor's owners between the 16th and 20th centuries, the development of the manor's construction genesis, and its artistic equipment, while architectural methods were used to verify the appropriateness of art-historical interpretation and to supplement it with architectural interpretation based on analogous and digital approaches. The research shows that in cases of addressing complex issues of neglected architectural heritage, it makes sense to involve a larger number of different scientific disciplines, which alone allows for a quality comprehensive contemporary interpretation of this heritage. The discussed case demonstrates that

only appropriately planned and conducted interdisciplinary scientific research can significantly enhance the cultural-historical significance of neglected architectural heritage, highlight numerous aspects of the material and immaterial that are overlooked without such an approach, draw attention to new meanings that are of great importance for the comprehensive contemporary interpretation and popularization of this heritage, and ultimately increase its contemporary utility value. This insight is especially important because interdisciplinary research of architectural heritage in conservation practice in Slovenia is still more of a hackneyed phrase than a self-evident way of working.

Based on interdisciplinary scientific research, the comprehensive interpretation of the discussed case of neglected architectural heritage presents it as an authentic and appealing synthesis of different layers of the monument, which do not necessarily have equivalent aesthetic value. It enables a scientifically accurate visualized representation of all



Figure 20: *Plumberk Manor around 1685, digital reconstruction attempt, aerial view from the southwest (made by Živa Kralj, Rok Rantaša and Katja Rihtarič based on the conceptual proposal by I. Sapač).*

the key phases of the manor's construction development, as well as a more competent conservation evaluation of individual architectural elements; for example, the possibility of deciding on the importance of younger components that may not have special heritage value at first glance due to their unattractive appearance, or more confidently defining necessary ongoing maintenance work to prevent the deterioration of the general condition and minor construction measures to enhance the monument's significance and functionality in the future.

Through the lens of the new comprehensive interpretation, which can thematically balance numerous very diverse aspects of the past, the issue of neglected and devastated architectural heritage can be more effectively brought closer to the general public and the argument can be made that even centuries-old masonry with traces of the passage of time or seemingly unattractive visible damage can form an interesting active platform

for contemporary life. Three-dimensional digital reconstruction models, created based on the interpretation of the findings of interdisciplinary research, can, for example, bring the former forms and meanings of the monument closer to the modern man without requiring the built reconstruction of missing or altered historical elements of the monument. An appropriately conducted comprehensive interpretation can prevent radical and necessarily destructive extensive modernization construction works and instead direct an alternative and more suitable method of revitalization, with minimal maintenance construction interventions and regular care, without erasing diverse historical layers, while consistently conveying messages that allow users of the monument to better understand and accept the current state of the historical building as a fragment of a former complex historical whole with material and immaterial elements.



Figure 21: Novo Celje manor around 1770, digital reconstruction attempt, aerial view from the southwest side (made by Živa Kralj, Rok Rantaša and Katja Rihtarič based on the conceptual proposal by I. Sapač).

The resulting concept for non-destructive revitalization, derived from in-depth interdisciplinary research and comprehensive interpretation, may also include the development guidelines of a regular maintenance and care program for the monument, which clearly defines and prioritizes measures to ensure the greatest possible preservation of the authentic monument substance of the building's constructed parts and its green areas. These development guidelines must clearly communicate the message that revitalizing neglected quality architectural heritage should not be conceived as a short-term, extensive, expensive, and

necessarily destructive construction site for the monument's substance, but rather as a continuous, never-ending process of maintenance, sensitive directed renovation, and living with historical buildings. In Slovenia, this advanced approach to addressing the issue of neglected architectural heritage is still only established on a very modest scale, and it is hoped that with the presented case study of Novo Celje Manor, it will become more firmly rooted as a standard in the efforts for balanced interdisciplinary scientific research, comprehensive protection, and effective revitalization of architectural heritage (Figure 22).



Figure 22: A view of the rear facade of the Novo Celje manor, 2020 (Photo: I. Sapač).

POMEN INTERDISCIPLINARNEGA ZNANSTVENEGA RAZISKOVANJA ZA SODOBNO INTERPRETACIJO IN REVITALIZACIJO ZAPOSTAVLJENE STAVBNE DEDIŠČINE: PRIMER DVORCA NOVO CELJE PRI ŽALCU (SLOVENIJA)

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POVZETEK

Članek na primeru baročnega dvorca Novo Celje pri Žalcu obravnava problematiko zapostavljene stavbne dediščine in izpostavlja pomen interdisciplinarnega znanstvenega raziskovanja za učinkovito sodobno interpretacijo in revitalizacijo tega segmenta kulturne dediščine. Z interdisciplinarnimi znanstvenimi raziskavami je bilo mogoče temeljito kritično ovrednotiti, korigirati in dopolniti v preteklosti izpeljane raziskave, ki so izhajale iz posamičnih znanstvenih disciplin, ter dokazati, da dvorec Novo Celje v 18. stoletju kot baročna celostna umetnina in ena od najbolj reprezentativnih plemiških rezidenc na ozemlju habsburške dedne dežele Štajerske ni nastal kot novogradnja, kakor so predpostavljale starejše raziskave, ampak z domiselno celovito izpeljano preobrazbo starejšega renesančnega dvorca Plumberk, ki je kot razmeroma majhna stavbna zasnova nastal v 16. stoletju in nato v 17. stoletju doživel prvo širitev. Z zgodovinskimi in umetnostnozgodovinskimi metodami raziskovanja je bilo mogoče poglobljeno analizirati in interpretirati pomen lastnikov dvorca med 16. in 20. stoletjem, razvoj gradbene geneze dvorca in njegove umetnostne opreme, z arhitekturnimi metodami pa preveriti ustreznost umetnostnozgodovinske interpretacije in jo dopolniti z arhitekturno interpretacijo na osnovi analognih in digitalnih grafičnih pristopov. V članku obravnavani in predstavljeni primer dokazuje, da je načrtno in uravnoteženo izpeljano interdisciplinarno znanstveno raziskovanje večplastnih in večpomenskih arhitekturnih dosežkov s statusom stavbne dediščine bistveno bolj učinkovito od raziskav, omejenih zgolj na posamično znanstveno disciplino, in da morejo samo tako izpeljane raziskave prispevati kakovostne raziskovalne rezultate, ki tvorijo neobhodno osnovo za načrtovanje uspešne trajnostne revitalizacije zapostavljene stavbne dediščine.

Ključne besede: dediščinska znanost, stavbna dediščina, interpretacija kulturne dediščine, dvorec Novo Celje, družbene spremembe, interdisciplinarne raziskave kulturne dediščine, 3D rekonstrukcije

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