

„Renaissance“ sgraffito? Specific examples from the 16th century after general reconstruction and redesigning in the 19th and 20th century in the Czech Republic.

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ABSTRACT

The selected Renaissance historical monuments with sgraffito decorations (within the Czech Republic) that are intentionally unknown or extincted can serve as an example of specific approaches to sgraffito façades in the 19th and 20th century particularly. This study will also point out the examples of decorating town halls and Sokol gyms to show the phenomenon of the Czech Neo-Renaissance in the context of the sgraffito technique. In the 19th century, this kind of commission was a matter of prestige. In the façades of some of these buildings, the Czech art-history discourse seeks the characteristics of the so-called “Czech Strict Renaissance”, which uses step gables, sgraffito decoration and lunette cornices as its formal material. The text will also highlight interesting sights in the German speaking regions with similar formal characteristics. There were many changes in use of public buildings during the centuries. The exterior façades are also very sensitive to weather conditions, and they didn't survive in material authenticity. In the post-war architecture of social realism, sgraffito became the most preferred decorative technique again and found its use in urban housing complexes built as a residential background of the industrial enterprises of the first five-year plan (1949–1953) by branches of so-called Stavoprojekt. In special cases, the sgraffito of socialist realism complements the Renaissance decorations (e.g., the renewal of Velká Míčovna/Large Ball Game Hall of the Prague Castle – the allegory of Industry and Agriculture as symbols of the five-year plan). Another group of historical monuments – that is not very well known in expert literature dealing with sgraffito in the Czech Republic – consists of extincted sights, of which we know only from historical sources or are rarely photo-documented.

The following paragraphs cannot serve as an exhaustive description of the fate of the Renaissance sgraffito façades in the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, the selected sights, often less known or extincted, can serve as examples of specific approaches to the selected buildings in the 19th and 20th centuries specifically. These are public buildings that were mostly of various uses within the time; the exterior façades are extremely sensitive to weather and other conditions, and thus their material authenticity couldn't be kept in consistent state. To use a metaphor, we just read the lines and wrinkles that can help us glimpse the reflections of the older phases of the decoration process or its “memory,” that can be reflected in the inspiration for building new houses or urban complexes.¹

Max Dvořák, in his famous “didactic manual” on historic preservation *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege* (1916), used a structural concept of positive and negative examples as illustrating figures,² and in the following paragraphs we will briefly present the typological examples that often complement each other as an obverse and reverse side of a coin, branching out in various contexts.

The popularity of sgraffito in the early modern age in Bohemia gradually subsided during the first half of the 17th century; examples include deliberate historicisms in the Czech Republic, such as Rábl's house in Třebíč or the entry tower of the brewery of the manor in Litomyšl, where the sgraffito decoration was contextually added in the 1630s.³ In the new aesthetic that was brought about in the early Middle-European Baroque, some sgraffito façades of manors and palaces vanished or were “covered,”

1 This study is the output of the project Renaissance and Mannerist Stuccoworks in Bohemia and Moravia (2018–2022) supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic within the NAKI II program (project no. DG18P02OVV005)

2 See Dvořák 2016.

3 The swan song of the sgraffito technique in the early modern age also sounds in the legacy of the Spiš-Šariš Renaissance (regions in Slovakia). Quite a sum of sgraffito façades was created in the 17th century, in two cases even after the mid-17th century (Poprad, Bardějov). This timeless traditionalism can be seen in the phenomena of Spiš Renaissance bell towers that often still have sgraffito decoration, Janošiková 2018, 60–68, Haviarová – Haviar 2011, 24–25; Rare are the „overarching“figural sgraffiti from the Catalanian Barcelona from the 18th century (façades Masía Masferrer, Casal Núria in Sant Julià de Vilatorrada, the church of St Martin in San Celoni). See Ruiz Alonso 2015, p. 176–177, 179, 181–182, 191. fig. 170,172,186, 187.

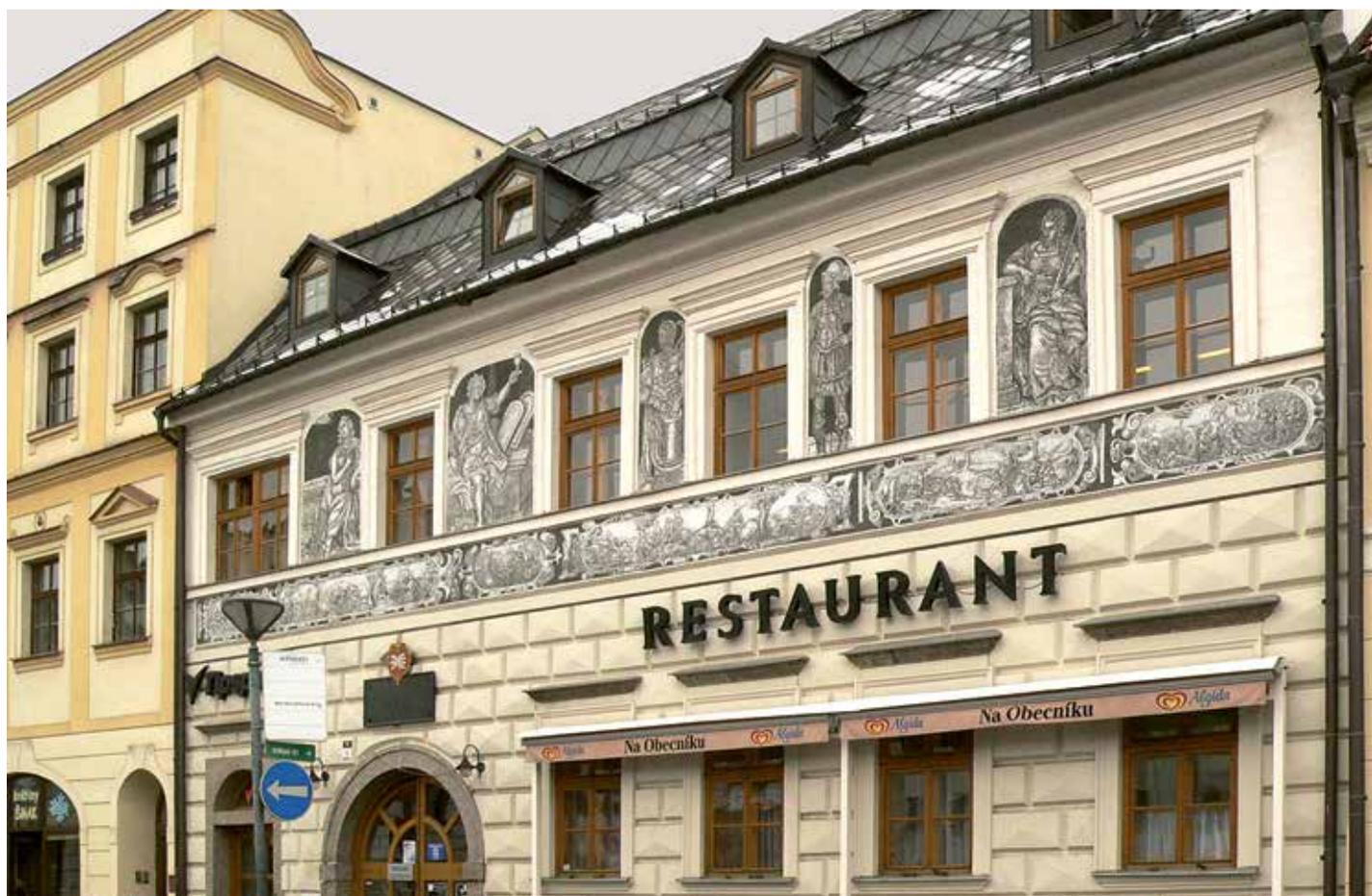


FIG.1 Façade of the house No. 69 at the Square in Velké Meziříčí (Photo: Pavel Waißer)

which was quite usual in the Bohemian countries due to the role of post-White Mountain confiscations and adaptations of manors and palaces by new owners. A similar fundamental phenomenon can be seen in town houses. In rare cases, some of the sgraffito façades with figural decoration survived till the beginning of the 19th century, e.g., the house U Slunce (At the Sun) in Kadaň or house No. 79 on the square in Velké Meziříčí (owned by the city).⁴ In the first case, the sgraffito decoration was covered by a Classicist façade, the date *terminus post quem* is 1811, when the house was destroyed in a fire.⁵ In Velké Meziříčí, the figural sgraffiti were integrated into the new Classicist façade in 1837 (FIG.1). The rise of bourgeoisie following the industrial revolution caused a lot of construction in the cities. This is still before the founding of the *K.K. Central-Commission*

4 Another example is the already mentioned façade of Rábl's house in Třebíč (attic from year 1637 – scratched into the sgraffito).

5 The sgraffito is newly conserved and documented (1990), but the presented surface is the Classicist façade (the sgraffito is covered by plaster overlay).

zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale, and therefore, we have no documentation of the work of conservators or correspondents of historic preservation. Formally, the sgraffiti are authentic (which is documented in the discovered graphic templates), but, according to the current accessible material analyses, these are only material copies of the original sgraffiti. This is proof of the symbolic meaning of the building and its sgraffiti for the town of Velké Meziříčí.

The individually adjusted sgraffito image of the Allegory of Faith (originally part of a complex decoration) on the unified modernist façade of Girschek's ironmongery on the Horní náměstí (Upper square) in Silesian Opava (Troppau) was presented in a similar way in the first half of the 20th century, but destroyed during the Second World War (FIG.2).⁶ Thus, sgraffito also acquires the function of a house sign, the additional metaphorical "sign" is the narrative of the decoration.

6 Šopák 2011, p. 274 and 287

In the Czech milieu, the iconic building is the Schwarzenberg palace (originally Lobkowitz palace on Hradčanské náměstí square in Prague) because it demonstrates the approach to the sgraffito façades of the 19th century. One of the prominent Czech architects of the 19th century, Josef Schulz (1840–1917), published an article in the magazine *Zprávy spolku architektů a inženýrů...* (News of the architects' and engineers' and society...) in 1873, wherein he summarized his experience with this technique on the basis of the palace reconstruction project (executed in 1871–1872).⁷ Just like the other theorising and practising architects of historicism in their texts on sgraffito (Ondřej Saturnin Heller,⁸

7 Schulz 1873, p. 90–91

8 Ondřej Saturnin Heller (1840–1884) was a graduate of the German polytechnic in Prague. As he died very young, his texts are better known than his architectonic projects (most famous was the town hall in Louny, finished after he died). He wrote one of the most extensive theoretical reflections on the technique of sgraffito in the 19th century Czech lands. See Heller 1883



FIG. 2 Allegory of Faith, sgraffito image on the front façade of the vanished Girschek ironmongery in Opava (Reprophotograph: Šopák, Pavel: *Výtvarná kultura a dějepis umění v Českém Slezsku a na Ostravsku do roku 1970*, Opava, 2011, p. 297)

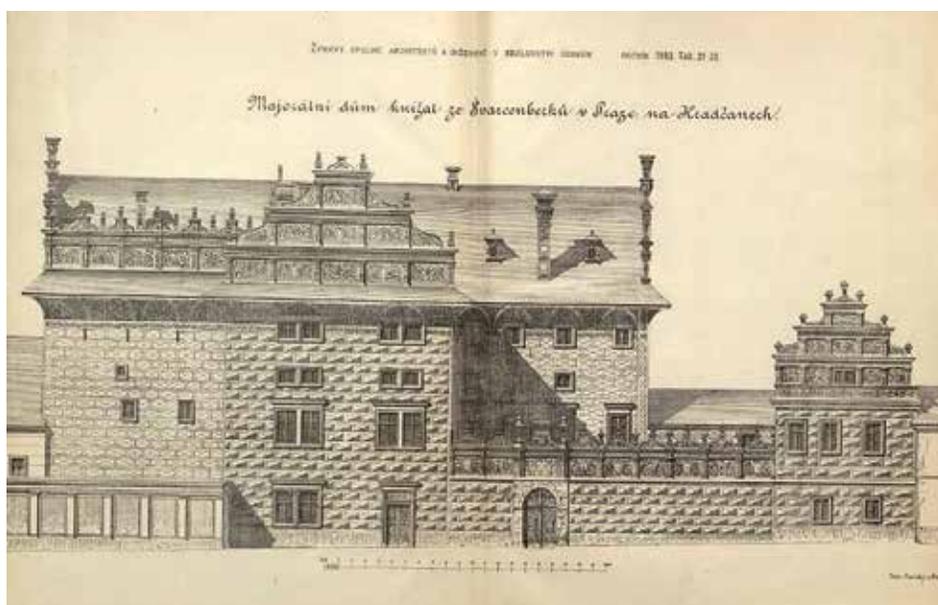


FIG. 3 Jan Koula, Majoritní dům knížat Švarcenberských v Praze na Hradčanech (entrance front façade), pen-and-ink drawing (Reprophotograph: Koula, Jan: *Majoritní dům knížat Schwarzenbergů na Hradčanech*. In: *Zprávy SAI* 18, 1883, No. 3–4, table 21–22)



FIG. 4 The front façade of the so-called Red House in Česká Lípa (Photo: Pavel Waisser)

Jan Koula,⁹ Jan Vejrych¹⁰), or the executors of the sgraffiti like Láďa Novák (1865–1944),¹¹ Schultz also starts the text with a general introduction postulating Italian bases. He also speaks about the reconstruction of sgraffiti in his notes: “*All the sgraffiti were designed by me and drawn at full proportion*”.¹² The renewal of the sgraffiti continues until 1890 with the cooperation of Jan Koula (part of the documentation) and construction counsellor Jan Sedláček.¹³ (FIG. 3)

The Czech “Neo-Renaissance” architects had been looking for the determinants of the Czech Renaissance in Italian architecture, but the historic monuments which started to increase in

amount in the 1880s and 1890s mingle with the Italian inspiration but also echo Viennese architecture (Theophil von Hansen, Heinrich Ferstel) and Semper’s “Bekleidungstheorie”.¹⁴ The Czech theoretic discourse has, until recently, seen the historicisms in architecture through the prism of “National Revivalists”, quite clearly under the influence of the “old tracks” of the educational system. Some projects, considered very remarkable and contextual in surrounding and origination today, have thus remained beyond the general awareness. These are usually buildings with sgraffito decorations, including examples of renewed buildings originally from the 16th century.

For instance, the current state of the sgraffito of a “hunting and entertaining” lodge close to the castle Lipý in Česká Lípa (built for Jetřich Jiří Berka of Dubé and Lipé in 1583) is determined by the reconstruction (1883) of the local German origin patriot of Česká Lípa (Bömisches/ Deutsch Leipa), the painter Eduard Steffen (1839–1893). Because of the destruction while uncovering the top plaster layers, most sgraffiti are reconstructed, but according to Steffen himself, mainly the “bust portraits” in spandrels of the arcade arches and in the left part of the hunting frieze on the parapet wall of the balustrade (hare-hunting and stag-hunting) come

9 Jan Koula (1855–1919) was an architect, a professor of the Czech polytechnic school in Prague. In theory, he also worked with decor in art and crafts and architecture. He responded to sgraffito in his texts about the Schwarzenberg palace in Prague, about large Ball Games Hall in the Prague Castle, and in his paper on his own reconstruction of the town hall in Pilsen. Koula 1883; Koula 1887; Koula 1911

10 Jan Vejrych (1856–1926), an architect coming from the East-Bohemian Jilemnice, a designer of the town halls in Pardubice and Kolín, which both have sgraffito façades. See more in Uhlík 2017; Láďa Novák said that: „Vejrych took down precisely many of his experiences in mixing the mortar for sgraffito, and I will later mark some of these for the reader [...] Novák 2011, 120. Unfortunately we don’t know the primary source of the text in which Jan Vejrych noted his experiences with sgraffito.

11 Novák 1911

12 Brožová 1953, p. 42

13 Kašička – Tomková 2000, p. 420

14 More at e.g. Horáček 2012a

out of the original forms.¹⁵ (FIG. 4) In Česká Lípa, this technique was used later in connection to local tradition for the reconstruction of the town hall (architect Gottlob Alber; 1846–1927).¹⁶

From the regions with a mostly German population, we can find sgraffito at the front façade of the town hall in Stříbro (Mies). The choice was obvious, as already in the 16th century the façade had figural sgraffito in which, in year 1839, Karl Luwig Watzka (1798–1886) recognized a figure of a man in ducal robe and a group of warriors with swords and lances in a turmoil of war. The renovation of the sgraffito decoration according to the project of Victor Schwerdtner (1846–1926) from 1882 was realized by the Viennese painter Carl Jobst (1835–1907). The new decoration is an allegory of the history of the town, the pictures of Soběslav I who built the town (1131), and the Crusader siege in 1427 and are hypothetically identical with the topics of the fragments of the original sgraffito. The concept was supplemented with other figural allegories (Mining, Trade, Agriculture, Justice, Education, Charity). At the end of the 19th century, the town of Stříbro was a German city, thus the choice of motifs shows the still existing atmosphere of consensus and tolerance.¹⁷ (FIG. 5)

The Renaissance front façade of the town hall in Most (Brüx), supposed to combine painting and sgraffito, failed to survive. Although the town hall was originally a part of the old town of Most, it was not a victim of mining but was demolished already in 1892. In the handbook *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege* (1916), Max Dvořák mentioned it among the negative examples in the second place.¹⁸ As to the content of the original decoration, the emperor Ferdinand I had objections to it and in 1557 asked for it to be removed.¹⁹ The engraving of Emil Höfer (1815 -after 1850), according to a pattern of Carl Würbs (1807–1876) from mid–19th century, can still be seen as a reflection of Renaissance phases that combine the sgraffito and fresco surfaces (the second is after a fire in 1579).²⁰ (FIG. 6)

15 Steffen 1885, p. 101

16 Part of the decoration in the final version were figural sgraffiti of allegories, crafts, trade and education). Laštovičková 2015, p. 234–238

17 Laštovičková 2015, p. 228–232

18 Dvořák 1916, there see illustrating figure 4

19 Fišera-Kibic 2009, p. 104–105

20 Anonymous 1883, p. 132, town hall in Most



FIG. 5 The front façade of the town hall in Stříbro (Photo: Jiří Stejskal, available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sr%C5%99%C3%ADbro_-_radnice.jpg)



FIG. 6 The town hall in Most, an engraving of Emil Höfer according to Carl Würbs, mid–19th century (Reprophotograph: Anonymous author, Rozmanitosti. In: Zprávy SAI 18, 1883. No. 2, p. 132)



FIG. 7 The front façade of the town hall in Pilsen (Photo: Filip Zajíc, available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Radnice_Pilsen.jpg)

An interesting mention about the townhall in Most can be found in the Miscellaneous column in the magazine *Zprávy spolku inženýrů a architektů...* (News of the engineers' and architects' society) in 1883. It is about the demolition of the Renaissance house with sgraffito decoration "U tří lip" (At three liden trees) in Louny, in which place, after winning in an architecture competition, Saturnin Heller projected a Neo-Renaissance town hall with a monumental front façade.²¹ In the postscript of the "notice," there is an allusion to the Czech-German relationship: *"Is there nobody in this city so progressive to be touched by the fact that the proof of our advance and education we had already in the 16th century? Is it not our obligation to keep these historic sights and preserve them, the more our dear neighbours reproach us for everything soulful in our country had found its origin from them. Thus comes to our mind that the near German town of Most had a beautiful old town hall (see the figure) which they had pulled down two years ago. – The citizens of the town committed a barbaric deed only because that building reminded them of this town being a Czech one three centuries ago – Will Louny follow this example?"*²²

21 The project was realized after Heller's death in years 1886–1887 by Rudolf Koukola. Horáček 2012a, p. 173

22 Anonym 1883, p. 133

Today, we know that at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, the city of Plzeň (Pilsen) wanted to demolish the city hall, whose core was built in 1554–1558 (a project by Lugano architect Giovanni de Statia). The demolition proposal was, fortunately, dismissed and a commission was created to assess the state of the building. Architects Jan Koula, Antonín Balšánek (1865–1921) and Jan Vejrych (who resigned from the competition) were called for the project competition, while the head of the committee of the competition became (at the proposal of the city council) Antonín Wiehl (1846–1910), who finally chose the project of Jan Koula.²³ The front façade only had a small proportion of the original sgraffito plaster, but Jan Koula found, after the detailed observation of the façade, these figural compositions: *"[...] on the main façade area from the Old Testament, on the sides in the gables some saints are added, in the 16th century most popular (in the first floor one can see the Creation of Man, Cain and Abel, in the second the Solomon's Judgement)"*²⁴ In Koula's authorial project of the façade, there were figures of Czech rulers with the city's coat of arms,²⁵ guild coat of arms, and motives of crafts

23 Mergl – Merglová Pánková 2009, p. 107–110

24 Mergl – Merglová Pánková 2019, p. 116

25 Václav II. (Wenceslaus II of Bohemia, Přemyslid), Jan Lucemburský (John of Bohemia, Luxembourg), Rudolf II. of Habsburg

with “putti” and allegoric figures linked to the city and administration.²⁶ He wanted to put a sundial and other figures into the gable parts.²⁷ This intention was disputed by the Viennese K.K. Zentral-Kommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und Historischen Denkmale, which preferred conserving the original material. The decoration was executed only after successful material tests in 1910, but the attic and the gables were to stay in the original, which we can see in the present-day façade.²⁸ (FIG. 7)

Town halls, as the main administrative buildings of cities, showed the most artistic decoration concentration (just after sacral buildings) not only in the 16th century²⁹ but also for the architects and artists in the 19th century. This kind of public contract was a matter of prestige.

On front façades, the Czech art historian discourse searches for the characteristics of the so-called “Czech Strict Renaissance,” which formally material consists mostly of stepped attic gables, sgraffito decoration and lunette cornices. We can add some interesting examples of new buildings or adaptations of the town halls in Hostinné,³⁰ Lázně Bělohrad,³¹ Milevsko,³²

Náchod,³³ Kolín,³⁴ Pardubice,³⁵ Poděbrady,³⁶ Sedlčany,³⁷ Strakonice,³⁸ and in Volyně.³⁹ (FIG. 8)

The iconic persona of the Sokol movement Miroslav Tyrš (1832–1884), its first chief and founder, was also an important art theoretician. In 1882 in the *Národní listy* (*National papers*), he wrote an article on stepped gables and sgraffito titled *Vě prospěch renesance české* (*In favour of Czech Renaissance*), in which he highlighted the role of the Schwarzenberg palace and new projects of the architect Antonín Wiehl (1846–1910), especially the house No. 1035/17

26 Law, Truth, Justice, War, Peace

27 The Holy Trinity Surrounded by Angels and the Creation of the World and the Expulsion from Paradise

28 The cartoons from Koula’s project were prepared by Jaroslav Honzík and Josef Mandl, the execution was done by Koula and František Xaver Ledvina. Mergl – Merglová Pánková 2019, p. 117

29 In Italian cities, we know of exclusive cases from the 14th century. Let’s mention at least the notoriously known town hall in Siena; The Renaissance town halls in the German speaking surrounding can be found in Susan Tipton’s monography *Res publica bene ordinata. Regentenspiegel und Bilder vom guten Regiment*. See Tipton 1996

30 The town hall has late Middle Age and Renaissance core. The original project of Carlo Valmadi (1591) probably included sgraffito decoration of the tower. In 1641, the façades were made baroque. The new uncovering of the sgraffito was done in the reconstruction in 1912. Wagner 1953, 242; Fišera 2010, p. 24

31 The building was constructed in 1893–1894 according to the project of Jan Vejrych. The ornamental sgraffito friezes run under the band course and crowning cornice. Bartošová 2016, p. 54–55

32 The new town hall in Milevsko was built according to the plans of the builder František Ješ from Tábora; the sgraffito decoration was added by Oldřich Pejša in 1936–1937. Fišera 2010, p. 24

33 The new town hall in Náchod was built in 1902–1904. The façade was decorated with sgraffito by Láďa Novák according to the cartoons by Mikoláš Aleš. Fišera 2010, p. 188

34 The projects of rebuilding of the old town hall in Kolín (1886, built in 1887–1889) and enlargement of the town hall (1898, constructed 1898–1899) by Jan Vejrych are about a decade apart, but still the façades are unified, interpreted with sgraffito rustication and in the gable part with floral decor. The façade of the old town hall is accented with monochrome figural images by Adolf Liebscher (1857–1894) in the upper part. Uhlík 2017, p. 6 and 18

35 The new town hall of Pardubice is the best known and most representative building by Jan Vejrych. It was built in the place of an old town hall and several other houses in 1892–1894. The free fields of the front façade are complexly interpreted in sgraffito in combination with frescoes (allegorical figures) and sculptural reliefs (tondi of Czech rulers, figures in niches in the upper part of the tower). The decorations were made by Karel Ladislav Klusáček, Antonín Popp and later Jano Köhler. The back façade is decorated by figural sgraffiti of Karel Rašek according to the designs of Mikoláš Aleš. Halbrštátová – Vorel 1994 (19 pages).

36 The project of the new town hall by Edmund Chaura from 1905–1906. The lunette cornice contains sgraffito decoration. Fišera 2010, p. 245

37 The building of a new town hall from the project of Jan Heindl was executed in 1902–1903. The author of the sgraffito decoration of the front façade is Láďa Novák. Fišera 2010, p. 301

38 The building from around 1820 was re-built in the Neo-Renaissance style in 1902–1903 according to the project of Antonín Albert, a builder from Strakonice. Recommended by Rudolf Štech, the sgraffito was realized on the front façade by Josef Bosáček following the cartoons of Mikoláš Aleš. Egermaier 2004, p. 55–56

39 The Volyně town hall was built in the 16th century, the original sgraffito decoration on the front and side façades were done around 1560. The building was damaged by fire in 1884 and the decision was to renew it (Max Boháč according to designs of Antonín Lhota). The present day sgraffito decoration is the result of a reconstruction of the architect and very gifted artist, František Průša, a patriot of Volyně. Braun 1958, p. 7–10.



FIG. 8 The front façade of the town hall in Volyně (Photo: Pavel Waisser)

in Karolina Světlá Street (formerly Poštovská Street; in cooperation with Jan Zeyer).⁴⁰

It is not surprising that these characteristic elements started to resonate in some projects of Sokol gyms that are supposed to be a multi-functional cultural background of the sports club, its palaces – castles. At the same time, they substitute the function of a “temple” in this modern, liberally oriented world, as was quite ostentatiously declared straight away in the sgraffito on the façade of the Sokol gym in Tábor: “*We built this house in the hope that it will be a temple for us and future generations*”

40 Tyrš 1882, unpagued; Similarly, in the spirit of Florentine palaces (Guadagni palace), he designed the façade of the house of Bohuslav Schnirch in Mikovcova Street No. 548/5 in Praha – Vinohrady (1872–1874). Other sgraffito projects were done in cooperation with painters František Ženíšek, Jakub Schikaneder, Mikoláš Aleš or Láďa Novák, e.g. House in Vinohrady in Sadová Street No 9/1 (1882), Old Town Waterworks (1883) or the presbyteries at St Peter’s in Bishop Street No.13 in Prague (1893). Wiehl’s role was evaluated in a brief monography by Zdeněk Wirth. See Wirth 1921

[...]”⁴¹ The typology is also seen in other projects of Sokol gyms originally incorporated with sgraffito decoration: Kutná Hora,⁴² Nymburk,⁴³ Plaňany,⁴⁴ and most distinctively in Vysoké Mýto, where the sgraffiti with legionary motives were added after the First World War (the original project of Josef Podhajský from 1900–1902).⁴⁵ (FIG. 9) There are more examples to be found, unfortunately mostly from archive photographs, as due to the high economic demands on the maintenance and little popularity of historicisms in the second half of the 20th century, the sgraffito decors of these Sokol gyms soon disappeared (this happened in Plaňany and Kutná Hora). It is little known that the sgraffito technique can be found in the interior and exterior of the Jan Koula’s Sokol gym in Český Brod (built 1884–1886), which was influenced by his Viennese training with Theophil Hansen,⁴⁶ most significantly in the monumental larger-than-life figure of a Sokol member with a standard on the side façade (North-West; FIG. 10),⁴⁷ which can be seen in the project from 1884 and also in some depictions of the building just after finishing the construction (FIG. 11). Another clear picture of this façade comes from 1945, where the decoration in tympanum is visible, but the Sokol member is not anymore. This is probably an interesting (though not unusual) case of national iconoclasm as the Sokol gyms were taken by German authorities and societies during the Second World War and removal of symbolic decoration was quite normal. It is no wonder that in the time of emotional exaltation of ethnic conflict, the monumental figure of a Sokol member did not fit in. It is well known that there was a tension between Sokol and Deutscher Turnverband (German turner sports clubs) since the 1880s.⁴⁸

41 These are verses of Dr. Jan Bláha. The sgraffito decoration is concentrated in the fields of gables and front façades, which to this day bring forth the portraits of Tyrš and Fügner. The Sokol gymnasium was built in 1904–1905 according to the project of Ludvík Čížek. Anonymous 1906, no. 1, 13, no.2, p. 39.

42 Project of Josef Kruliš (1884–1885). Švácha 2012a, p. 49

43 The building was constructed in 1898 according to the project of architect Josef Žák. The sgraffiti with figural motives were realized by Jaroslav and Karel Špilar. Šebek 1993, p. 17

44 Built in 1894–1895 according to the project of architect Čeněk Kříčka from Kolín. See more in: Vrána 1972.

45 Horáček 2012c, p. 80

46 Mergl – Merglová 2019, 14. Monographic medallion see Horáček 2012b

47 Sgraffito is probably work of Josef Poselt, just as the frieze with putti in the interior.

48 Švácha 2012a, p. 50



FIG.9 The façade of the Sokol gym in Vysoké Mýto
(Photo: Pavel Waisser)



FIG.10 Koula, Jan: Plan of the north-western façade of the Sokol gym in Český Brod, aquarelle, 1884
(Rephoto: Mergl, Jan; Merglová Pánková, Lenka; Jan Koula/novorenesančník a vlastimil. Užití umění v tvorbě architekta 19. století, Plzeň 2019, p. 14)



FIG.11 Sokol gymnasium in Český Brod in the 1880s
(Photo: Anonymous author)



FIG. 12 Sokol gymnasium in Uhersko
(Photo: Pavel Waisser)

Around 1910, the Sokol gyms in the Czech lands break free of the décor, and after the First World War and establishment of Czechoslovakia, they accept functionalism as the dominant style of the modern liberal tendencies. The form of a temple is thus abandoned in favor of function. The architectural historian Rostislav Švácha calls this phenomenon a “desacralization of the Sokol gyms.”⁴⁹ Late historicism resonates with the sgraffito decoration, and we can find it in the façades of Sokol gymnasiums in Bzenec,⁵⁰ Telč,⁵¹ or Uhersko by Chocẽ (FIG. 12).⁵² Still the connection to Renaissance sgraffito in these buildings is purely phenomenological.

49 See wider context in Švácha 2012b, p. 113–117 (Desacralization of Sokol gyms is also a title of a public lecture of Rostislav Švácha, presented a few times within 2014–2017).

50 The Sokol gymnasium in Bzenec came as a conversion of a manor brewery from the 17th century. The sgraffito decoration by Jano Köhler includes 17 mostly ornamental fields (with a few integrated figures) and a Sokol member with an inscription „Tužme se“ (Let’s try hard) in the gable. Malíková 2011, p. 125–128

51 The Sokol gym was built in 1922–1925 according to the project of Ludvík Srb, a builder from Telč. The monumental sgraffito picture of the Knights of Blaník with St Wenceslaus at the head is work of the painter Antonín Václav Slaviček, who lived in Telč. Goryczková (ed.) 2015, p. 188

52 The painter and printmaker Alois Mudruška decorated in his native Uhersko altogether five buildings with sgraffito within 1922–1927. The freshly built Sokol gym was decorated in 1926. More about Alois Mudruška briefly see Vostatek 2012.

The connection of the Sokol gymnasium in Kostelec nad Orlicí (Eastern Bohemia) from 1927 with Neo-Renaissance sgraffito is only purely accidental. The gymnasium was built on the premises of the manor with a farm called Dvoreček, built around 1610 under the leadership of the Italian Burian Gozzi, demolished in 1894 after windstorm damage (1893).⁵³ The southern and eastern façade was originally decorated with figural sgraffito (presumably a cycle of rulers/ kings, allegories and a “genre painting”). Two figures that were copied by Adolf Liebscher were published in 1883 by August Sedláček, so we at least have formal image of the decoration concept.⁵⁴ (FIG. 13)

An interesting example of the reconstruction of a Renaissance sgraffito decorated building from the beginning of late historicism (1908–1914) is the project of general renewal (after a fire in 1907) of the so-called Trčka’s Castle in the premises of the monastery in Želiv, elaborated by the architect Bóža Dvořák (1864–1954).⁵⁵ The castle was adapted gradually since the end of the 15th century (originally these were monastery premises) by the family of Trčka of Lípa. The Renaissance reconstruction

53 Baum 1869, 513–515; Sedláček 1883, p. 28; Slavík 2012; The group of Burian Gozzi worked also in Hradec Králové, Potštejn, Doudleby nad Orlicí and, as can be seen in the analogous and very specific sgraffito net pattern on the façade (similar to Doudleby) also at the manor in Stěžery and the castle of Pecka.

54 Sedláček 1883, p. 34 and 35 (figures)

55 Růžičková 2019, p. 13–14



FIG. 13 **Adolf Liebscher, schematically redrawn figure from the main sgraffito façade of the so-called Dvoreček in Kostelec nad Orlicí, ink drawing, 1883 (Rephotograph: Sedláček, August: Hrad, zámky a tvrze království českého II., Hradecko, Praha 1883, p. 34)**

was probably designed by Antonio Drizzan Ericer.⁵⁶ Within Dvořák's reconstruction, the sgraffito rustication was renewed on the exterior façades: the figures of landsknechts found before the reconstruction in the recessed niches in the mezzanine above the second floor were integrated into the façade. Their authentic matter definitely "disappeared" after the restoration in the 1960s,⁵⁷ the figures lost the character of sgraffito, but Zdeněk Wirth could still see the sgraffito plaster in 1910: *"The sgraffiti were found in two light and three single windows, only deep coarse scratched (light figures on dark background) and in quite a good state, depicting landsknechts from the mid-16th century (around 1550–1570) with various weapons, armor or common clothing, with helmets and hats, and this was done during the reign of the family of Trčka of Lipa and Lipnice."*⁵⁸

Bóža Dvořák often cooperated with Mikoláš Aleš (1852–1913), whose designs for sgraffito are a phenomenon on which stands and falls the up-to-date study of the 19th century and early 20th century sgraffito in the Czech Republic. There have been

56 Vlček 2004, p. 159

57 Růžičková 2019, p. 29

58 The restoration of the sgraffito was done in 1912 by Olga Runtová which was, in the report from 1914, evaluated by Wirth negatively due to her experience with sgraffito. Růžičková 2019, p. 27–29.

quite a few monographies on Mikoláš Aleš's sgraffiti;⁵⁹ he created designs for sgraffito in Bohemia and Moravia in cooperation with various artists, mostly painters (mainly Josef Bosáček, Antonín Häusler, Karel L. Klusáček, Láďa Novák, Karel Rašek, Janez Šubič, Jan Vysekal) who put the sgraffito or painting onto the façades, and in the 1890s Mikoláš Aleš catches a second breath through the decoration of façades. The greatest number of façades with drafts of Mikoláš Aleš can be found in Prague and Pilsen to this day. The Pilsen concepts were done in cooperation with the architect Rudolf Štech (1858–1908),⁶⁰ who moved his construction company to Pilsen in 1889 because of a contract to build a synagogue. Their abundant cooperation also spread into Southern Bohemia. One of their last common contracts is a total renewal of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Vodňany, which was destroyed in a fire in 1895. The building with a medieval core and Renaissance phase was adapted in cooperation with Josef Mocker (1835–1899), where they, in the sense of historicist reconstruction, gave it a completely new facelift. The interior decoration was new as well as the loose furniture. Mikoláš Aleš also added designs for the sgraffito decoration of the step gables.^{61 (FIG. 15)} The reconstruction of this church is one of the few examples where

59 Eisenreich – Svoboda 1932; Pergl 2000; Domanická et al. 2013; Still there is no monography or „corpus“ that would map all the realizations linked to Mikoláš Aleš.

60 And the painter Josef Bosáček with whom Mikoláš Aleš worked most intensely.

61 Egermaier 2014, p. 25–30



FIG. 14 **Detail of two sgraffito figures of landsknechts (present day state) in one of the niches of the so-called Trčka's Castle as a part of the complex of the Želiv monastery (Photo: Pavel Waisser)**



FIG. 15 Sgraffiti in the gables of the front façade of the Church of the Nativity of Virgin Mary in Vodňany (Photo: Pavel Waisser)

the work of Mikoláš Aleš influenced the historical building intensely, with the possible exception of the decoration in the adaptation of the town gates in Eastern Bohemia (Pardubice, Vysoké Mýto).⁶²

He refused the offer to participate in the renewal of the sgraffito “skin” of the manor in Prostějov, as he would have to conform to the requirements of the ordering organization (Úvěrní spolek záložna/ Credit union). Kamil Hilbert (1869–1933) recommended Jano Köhler (1873–1941) instead of Mikoláš Aleš. His motives from the “history of Haná region” (a region in central Moravia) were of interest to the author and cleric Karel Dostál Lutínov (1871–1923) and the Moravian Catholic intellectuals then became Jano Köhler’s main clients.^(FIG. 16) His work, including the interior sgraffito, found its use in the reconstruction of the archbishop’s palace in Olomouc, which used to have a sgraffito decoration in the second half of the 16th century. The remnants of the sgraffiti of the archbishop’s palace in Olomouc had been documented (fragments with scrollwork ornament),⁶³ but there is unfortunately

62 Malíková 2011, 10, 23, p. 41–47

63 The phase of the bishop’s residence of Stanislav Pavlovský (He was the bishop of Olomouc in 1579–1598) Burian 1967, p. 21–22

no photo of the Prostějov manor from the second Renaissance phase of building.

In 1911, Jano Köhler got another contract for sgraffito on the façades of the originally Renaissance manor in Kyjov, which was built before 1550 on the order of Jan Kuna of Kunštát and Jan Kropáč of Nevědomí.⁶⁴ Besides the ornamentally decorated gable and envelope sgraffito, rustication includes made-up portraits of both of the first owners as well as the signature of Jano Köhler with his self-portrait in a fool’s cap that shows that today Köhler’s sgraffito are just as rusticated (without Köhler’s touch, completely without the original matter), as many repeatedly restored Renaissance façades.^(FIG. 17)

Another example of a less known Renaissance sgraffito façade with a specific historical circumstances comes from North-Eastern Bohemia. We can find it on the courtyard façade of the southwestern wing of the manor Hrubá Skála by Turnov. The castle was originally owned by the House of Wallentein (or Valdštejn), but in the beginning of the 16th century it was bought by Zikmund Smiřický of Smiřice (+1548) Soon after the Battle of White

64 Malíková 2011, p. 103–106



FIG. 16 Prostějov Castle – a postcard from 1903
(Photo: Anonymous author)

Mountain, the manor comes back to the House of Wallenstein. In 1821, it is bought by Aehrenthal's family. Reconstructions and remodeling of the residence were under way mainly in the time of Jan Bedřich Lexa of Aehrenthal (1817–1898). Since 1859, the reconstruction in the Neo-Gothic style went according to the project of Bernhard Grueber (1807–1882). He also strongly affected the norther wing with two floors of arcades towards the courtyard: the lower one was bricked up, covered with plaster and the original posts in the upper one were exchanged.⁶⁵ Other reconstructions of interiors and exteriors were done during the 19th century by Heinrich Ferstel (1828/1883) or Josef Schulz.⁶⁶

The figural sgraffiti were found only in 1925 and they were saved thanks to the estate owner Jan Maria Lexa of Aehrenthal (1905–1972): *“While repairing the manor on Hrubá Skála, the owner Jan Aehrenthal looked out of the window to the courtyard from the first floor. Under the ledge he noticed a plaster flaking away and he took it off and under it he found pictures. The commission of the ‘Heritage institution’ found beautiful sgraffiti on the whole area under the windows which were carefully repaired by the owner. These are the pictures of the owners from the 16th century and various depictions of hunting and chase with dogs.”*⁶⁷ The sgraffiti were then restored in cooperation with Státní památkový úřad (National Heritage Institution) in 1925, which is documented by the

65 Vostřelová 2018, p. 209–219

66 Klimešová 2012, p. 45–48

67 Klimešová 2012, p. 49



FIG. 17 Castle/ museum in Kyjov – a collage with a detail of the self-portrait of Jano Köhler in the sgraffito
(Photo: archive of the author)

year on the façade. Originally, the area of the façade was compact, today it is destroyed by windows that were broken before the mid-17th century and the façade was adapted anew. The motives might have been politically and confessionally “harmful”. The sgraffito is of very good artistic quality, the style matches the late 16th century or the first decades of 17th century. The iconography has not been solved yet because the forms are not of those found easily in the graphics of that time. As we mentioned before, the decoration can have a confessional subtext – it can be a link to the Bohemian Crown or the House of Smiřický of Smiřice. One of the fields is filled by a big coat of arms of the House of Smiřický of Smiřice; a picture of Saint George fighting with a dragon is clear, and other figures and busts have portrait qualities. In one of the fields, two heraldic



FIG. 18 Hrubá Skála near Turnov – detail of the courtyard façade of the south-east wing of the Castle with the image of St. George (Photo: Pavel Waisser)

lions wrestle for a sphere (an apple?), which could have been an allusion to the confessional situation as Albrecht Jan Smiřický (1594–1618) was before his premature death on November 18th, 1618, the top candidate of the Bohemian and Moravian nobility to gain the throne of the Czech Lands. (FIG. 18)

Without any irony we can say that these sgraffiti were very lucky not to have been found in the second half of the 19th century, or in the time of the above-mentioned historicizing reconstructions, as the decoration would probably be “renewed”. In the renewal of 1925, the original segmentation of the façade was done, and the fragments of the motives filled in the context, while the preserved original plasters conserved.

The conservation concept after 1925 was well established in Czechoslovakia. The sculptor and restorer Jindřich Čapek Jr. (1876–1927), a pioneer of the conservating works within restoration of sgraffito plasters summed up his experience with sgraffito and stucco work restoration in his lecture, *Konservace štukových prací a sgraffit* (*Conservation of stucco work and sgraffito*) at the Historic conservation congress in 1913 (he worked on the sgraffito in the manors of Nelahozeves, Litomyšl, the large Ball Games Hall in the Prague Castle, Martinický Palace in Prague, The Slavata Palace in Prague, (původní slavatovský palác, palác Michnů z Vacínova, Tyršův dům), further the House at the Minute (Dům U Minuty) in Prague and the former house No. 16 in the Roosevelt Street in Chrudim).⁶⁸ It is clear today

68 Čapek 2015, p. 50–52; Nejedlý 2006



FIG. 19 Front façade of the house No. 17 at Masaryk square in Pelhřimov, present-day state (Photo: Pavel Waisser)

that the conservation with fluorosilicates was not really ideal, but later approaches were probably much more devastating for the sgraffiti.

It is more than probable that Jindřich Čapek Jr. took part in the conservation of the sgraffiti of a few historic buildings with Renaissance sgraffito decoration in Pelhřimov. It is documented at the house No. 20 (at Masaryk Square) after finding the sgraffiti in 1921, while during the reconstruction in 1948 the original plaster was only fragmentary, with an overlay of a new plaster.⁶⁹ The Pelhřimov patriot and historicist Jan Fried (also a manager of the “The Club for the Old Prague”/ Klub Za starou Prahu) wanted to invite Čapek to restore the sgraffiti of the house No. 17 (the so-called Burgrave’s house), which were found in fragments in 1922. This did not succeed in the end, as the preservationist Václav Wágner preferred the use of Empire style phase in the synthetizing concept. Already in 1927 during

69 Hrbek 2005, p. 21



FIG. 20 Front façade of the house No. 61 at Masaryk square in Pelhřimov, present-day state (Photo: Pavel Waisser)

the adaptation to Lidová záložna (People's Credit Union), Miroslav Böswart performed a reconstruction of the sgraffiti on all the façades, as neologisms he created busts of apostle figures in the attic part. Following from the statement of Jan Fried about the reconstruction from 1936 (Böswart again), more of the original matter was lost, and in the second half of the 20th century, the Renaissance authenticity disappeared completely. Today, a modern complex reconstruction of the façade is presented.⁷⁰ (FIG. 19) The histories of other important houses of Pelhřimov that used to have sgraffito decoration of the 16th century are also very specific. Sgraffiti of the house No. 61 with spectacular ornamental fields between the façade windows were found and later conserved in 1925. In 1939, the original plasters were completely destroyed due to a mistake in communication between the owner and stucco plasterer Böswart. Reconstruction was determined by old photos, a neologism was added – the motive of the sun (the house was called U slunce, House at the Sun),⁷¹ (FIG. 20) Another approach can be seen at the house No. 14 where in 1985 a figural sgraffito with the Virgin Mary of Assumption (on the crescent) was found, surrounded by the allegory of virtues. The sgraffito was transferred, and Jaroslav Benda created a compositional replica on the façade.⁷² This, however, is not suggesting

any similarity to early modern age sgraffito.⁷³ (FIG. 20) On the other hand, we can think of a well done reconstruction of the façade of the so-called Giordano's house in Slavonice which was put on separational inter-layer by the team of the restorer Václav Špale in 2006.⁷³ (FIG. 22) Authentic state of matter can not be found in the envelope sgraffiti on the façades of the St. Bartholomew parish church in Pelhřimov.⁷⁴ The three above mentioned distinct buildings with sgraffito decoration on the square in Pelhřimov are only reconstructions today. It is a paradox, as Pelhřimov is one of the first little towns in the Czech Republic that founded the "The Club for Old Prague" (with active Jan Fried, Karel Polesný, Josef Dobiáš), and its members had a close connection to Zdeněk Wirth (1978–1961), the key person of the conservatism of the 20th century Czechoslovakia, a promoter of modern analytic-preservative methods. Another important person of historic preservation in Czechoslovakia was Václav Wagner (1893–1962), who was born in the nearby Pacov, was interested in the historic sights of Pelhřimov and involved himself in local causes.⁷⁵ If the non-satisfying present-day

70 Hrbek 2005, p. 10–14

71 Hrbek 2005, p. 20–21

72 Hrbek 2005, p. 20

73 Špale 2009

74 These were found in 1924 and Zdeněk Wirth recommended their presentation. Hrbek 2005, p. 4

75 He worked in consensus with Wirth until the 1930s, then their views of methodical process separated. Wirth preferred the analytic-preservative process following Alois Riegl, though he took into consideration the individuality of each historical sight, Wagner, in theory, stood behind the synthetic process coming out of structuralist aesthetics that favors the unity against the analytical detail.



FIG. 21 Front façade of the house No. 14 at Masaryk square in Pelhřimov – a stripe of the façade with sgraffito decoration (Photo: Pavel Waisser)



FIG. 22 Front façade of the house No. 517 at Upper square in Slavonice (Photo: Pavel Waisser)

state of sgraffito façades in Pelhřimov is not a hap-
penstance of unhappy chances, it is possible that
this could be due to the “too much interest” put
into local historic sights.

The technique of sgraffito has a symbolic meaning
for the Renaissance Czech Lands. We can thus see
its use in the façades of buildings that did not have
it in the 16th century. One of the most interesting
sights of this kind is the so-called Schwanz Palace
(or the House of the Lords of Lipé) on the main
Liberty square in Brno (Náměstí Svobody), where
it is the last house with authentic Renaissance ele-
ments in the façade, which is the oriel with figural
reliefs from the workshop of Giorgio Gialdi, who
made a contract with Schwanz in 1589.⁷⁶ The front
façade did not have any sgraffito originally,⁷⁷ but
in the reconstruction of the house according to
the project of August Prokop (1838–1915) in 1882,
Franz Schönbrunner (1845–1903) created deco-
rative sgraffiti from the drafts of Emil Pirchan Sr.
(1844–1928). The reconstruction was criticized in
the 1930s – one of the reasons was the trimming of
the heads of Gialdi’s figures to enlarge the window
in the oriels, as the figures did not fit into the new
window ledges. The critique of the Prokop’s recon-
struction as a whole and the refusal to acknowledge
the artistic value of the historicizing decoration
led to the decision of a new concept of sgraffito in
the blank spaces of the façade during the recon-
struction for the institution of Brnosvaz in the
1930s. This was adapted following the design of the
architect Bohuslav Fuchs (1895–1972) in 1937–1938,

⁷⁶ Dřimal 1939, p. 22–23

⁷⁷ Sochor 1939, p. 38

and the sgraffiti were drafted and performed by Emanuel Hrbek (1897–1975).⁷⁸ (FIG. 23, 24) Bohuslav Fuchs is known mainly for his functionalist projects – this made him one of the most important architects in Czechoslovakia – and the project of the reconstruction of the façade of Schwanz Palace can be marked as one of the latest examples of historicizing pre-war traditionalism using the technique of sgraffito.⁷⁹ This is clearly given by the fact that the project had to integrate the approach of the importance of historical sight.

Pavel Janák (1882–1956) was another progressive architect whose name is known at the international level and whose traces of reconstructions can be found in historic preservation.⁸⁰ As the Head Architect of the Prague Castle (since 1936), he elaborated the project of reconstruction of Wohlmut's large Ball Games Hall in the Royal Gardens of the Prague Castle of Bonifác Wohlmut (+1579).⁸¹ This sight has a remarkable place in the history of the Renaissance architecture of the Czech Lands, and it gained a fresh popularity in the second half of the 19th century. One of the personas who pointed out its dire state was the above-mentioned Jan Koula, who lined out the decorations of two sgraffito rectangle panels in 1887. The first restoring touch was done as late as 1917 by Jindřich Čapek (he used fluorosilicates for the conservation). In the time before the Second World War, only detailed documentation was performed. In May 1945, the large Ball Games Hall was hit by a German projectile and only peripheral walls remained standing. After the war, there was a need of extensive reconstruction which fell into the hands of Pavel Janák. For the sgraffito reconstruction he chose Prof. Josef

78 Hrbek 1939

79 The most intensive persona of the architecture of late traditionalism in using the sgraffito technique was Ladislav Skřivánek (1877–1957), a student of Friedrich Ohmann in Vienna, who was a professor of descriptive geometry at the School of Applied Arts in Prague. He was designing buildings with sgraffito decoration from the 1910s to the beginning of the 1930s, mostly in the projects of school buildings (e.g. house of Dr. Čeněk Ježdík in Hlinsko, Hus's school in Krušovice, the School of T.G. Masaryk in Sušice, Masaryk's school in Klatovy, general and burgher school in Uherské Hradiště, grammar school in Duchcov, the house in Eliáš street in Prague – Dejvice, Matula's villa in Hlinsko, the villa of Eduard Šrot in Olomouc, the branch of National bank of Czechoslovakia in Banská Bystrica).

80 He also went through the functionalist period of work.

81 Janák 1952

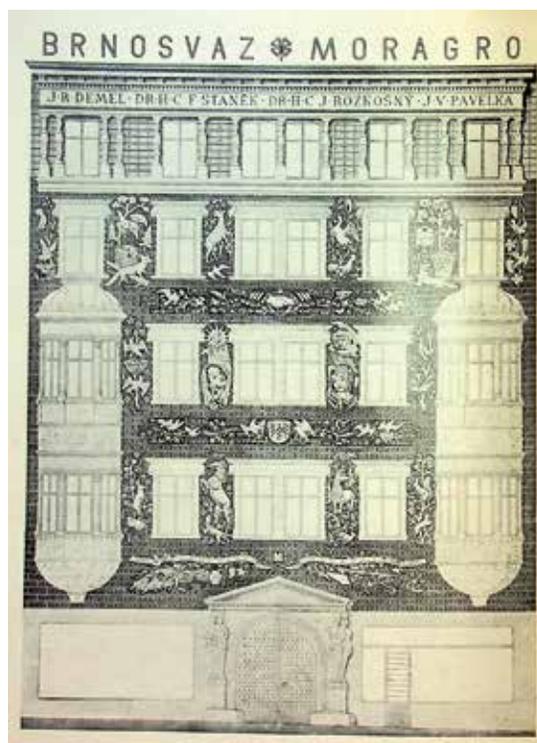


FIG. 23 Front façade of the Schwanz house at náměstí Svobody square in Brno – the state at the end of the 19th century. Reprograph: František Zapletal (ed.) Housing cooperative in Brno, the former Palace of the Lords of Lipé, Brno 1939, initial photograph (unpaginated)



FIG. 24 Draft of a façade of Schwanz house at Svoboda square in Brno – the draft is by Bohuslav Fuchs (sgraffiti Emanuel Hrbek), 1937 (Reprograph: Hrbek, Emanuel: Řešení nového sgrafita palace Brnosvazu. In: Zapletal, František (ed.): Družstevní dům v Brně, bývalý palác pánů z Lipé, Brno 1939)



FIG. 25 Allegory of Industry and Agriculture as symbols of the five-year-plan on the façade of the north front façade of the Large Ball Games Hall in the Royal Garden of the Prague Castle (Photo: Pavel Waisser)

Wagner (1901–1957). Josef Wagner worked with his students at the Ball Games Hall in the years of 1951–1954.⁸² The sixth panel (from the right) of the north/front façade was only in fragments and the restorers had to respect the political decisions of authorities and add some contextually important figures – the allegory of Industry and Agriculture as the symbols of the five-year-plan^(FIG. 24), as the then trends of aesthetics and ideology of the Socialist Realism dictated.

The post-war architecture of the Socialist Realism showed up mostly in the block house complexes built as the background for industrial companies in the five-year-plan (1949–1953), built by the branches of Stavoprojekt which were the newly established “factories for architecture.” Here, sgraffito becomes the most preferred technique again.⁸³ Here is a quote from the handbook of the Výzkumný ústav

výstavby a architektury (The Research Institute of Construction and Architecture) from 1956:

“Renaissance had a technique in sgraffito which could quite easily manage a wide building needs of many classes of the Czech nation, mainly the town citizens who wanted to demonstrate the growing power and might on the front façades of their houses [...].”⁸⁴

Except for the before mentioned large Ball Game Hall of the Prague Castle, the new Renaissance projects were inspired only by the buildings with the original Renaissance sgraffito decoration. Still, we can mention one specific case when the sgraffito of socialist realism integrates with the Neo-Renaissance building from the 19th century (1892–1893). Some of the windows framed with stucco in the town hall in Mnichovo Hradiště by architect František Dámeč were bricked up (adaptation for a theatre) and the inside areas were decorated with figures from the events of the history of the city in 1957.^{85 (FIG. 26)}

82 The concept of reconstruction of the surfaces was closer to a stucco work (Josef Wagner was a sculptor) and all the restoration work of sgraffiti was done in Czechoslovakia until the 1990s in this way. Špale 2007, 25–26. Among the cooperating students were e.g. Olbram Zoubek, who later used his gained knowledge as a restorer of sgraffiti in his free work (e.g., the sgraffito decoration at the Litomyšl manor in the 1970s and 1980s).

83 Synthetically to the sgraffito of the social realism in Czechoslovakia. Novotná 2009; Zeman 2009; Říhová – Machačko 2018.

84 Novotná 2009, 84; In English there is a book by Kimberly Elman Zanecor „Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia,” 1945–1960 from 2011, which describes housing estates of social realism in Czechoslovakia. There are also parts about sgraffito. See Zarecor 2011.

85 Since the founding of the city (1279) to the liberation by the Soviet Army in 1945.



FIG. 26 Town hall in Mnichovo Hradiště
(Photo: Pavel Waisser)

Within the “Renaissance inspiration,” we can present one example for all, one of the standard blocks of flats of the T20 type that in the gable part was inspired by the specific step arcuated gables of some houses in Tábor, city gates and towers of the city fortification. The Prague gate demolished in 1894 would belong here. The figural sgraffiti of its gable part are partly visible in historic photos. (FIG. 27)

Today, because we can work with digitalized historic photographs, there are new and wide possibilities to study the extincted or excessively rebuilt historic sites including those with sgraffito façades. Every site that is “brought into the open” and included into the usual synthetizing research context opens new points of view for us. Although this approach is a little bit kaleidoscopic as the extent of this work is limited, we tried to bring up some new information and contexts in the research of sgraffiti in Czech republic. The description is not complete: there are many more extincted sights with sgraffito decoration that were destroyed during the Prague clearance (ca. 1895–1914), in which the Jewish ghetto was destroyed along with a large part of the Old and New Town (FIG. 28).⁸⁶ Recently, there was presumably an accident in which a mistake of the bull-dozer staff caused demolition of a granary in Bakov by Zlonice (the district of Kladno) with

86 See Hrůza et al. 1993

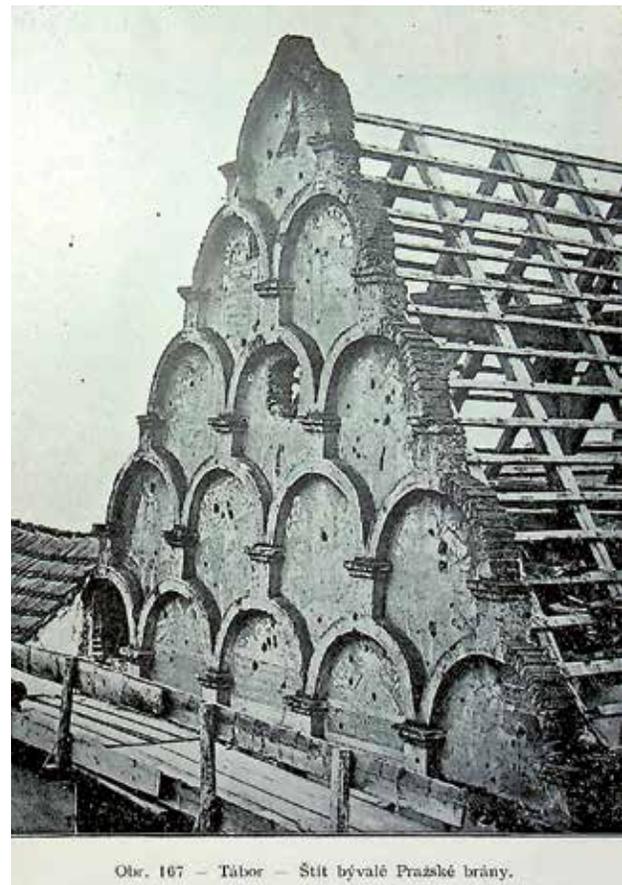


FIG. 27 The gable of the original Prague Gate in Tábor with sgraffito decoration, before 1884 (Reprophotograph: Balšánek, Antonín: Štíty a motivy atikové v české renesanci, Praha 1902, fig. 167)



FIG. 28 Destroyed sgraffito of a house under demolition, house No. 311-I in Bartolomějská street in Prague, 1890 (Photo: Jan Kříženecký, archive of the club “Za starou Prahu”)

remnants of unique figural sgraffito from the 1580s. Some of sgraffito from the past and present will never be known, as for the owner the discovery of a valuable decoration is a financial burden, and out of economic reasons, these are often not revealed. The recent owner of the so called House of the Baker Michal in Telč with the sgraffito façade from 1555, the engineer and architect Antonín Kudrnáč who took care of his historic house, told me that in the 1990s on the façade of the neighboring house (a residence of a well known multinational bank), they found a fragment of a sgraffito vase under secondary layers of plaster. The whole night one could hear the sound of a hammer and the next day the house had a smooth façade.

Whether with assistance, slow or fast, all animate and inanimate metamorphoses and perishes: “*Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas.*” (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (FIG. 29)



FIG. 29 Jano Köhler, Memento mori, a sgraffito image from 1911 (Photo: Radek Linner, available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zamek_Kyjov_02.jpg)

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