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NEO-BAROQUE ARCHITECTURE IN HUNGARY  
IN THE TIME OF THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN MONARCHY,  
ESPECIALLY THE WORK OF ARTHUR MEINIG

PHD DISSERTATION

THESIS

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## 1. The Architecture of Historicism and Neo-baroque in Hungary

The research of Hungarian architectural historicism played a marginal role in the art history writing up until the 1970's. Yet, by this decade thanks to the work of Ervin Ybl, the first publications had already been born on the great masters of the neorenaissance, such as Miklós Ybl, Antal Weber and Gusztáv Petschacher. Since the 1980's the impulsively growing research on Historicism have spread to the other neo-styles as well, beside neorenaissance mainly to the neogothic style. By now numerous publications report not only the most significant architects and their buildings, but lesser known masters and many of their works got in the focus of the researches. Yet, because of the vast amount of architectural products, the time of dualism – including also Art Nouveau – is a greatly unexplored age. The lack of the monographs of numerous talented and productive architects of the capital, and the country makes it difficult to see clearly in the field of the age's architecture. Comparing the researches of the to main period of the architecture of the Historicism, the high or strict and the later period on the previous we can see a greater emphasis. We can find the reasons in the general acknowledgement of the person of Miklós Ybl, whose masterworks fall in the period between the 1870's and 1880's. The architecture of the period between the death of Ybl and the years around 1900, the beginning of the wider spread of Art Nouveau, so the 1890's architecture was presented nearly only in the form of not published monographs. Recent times the interests of some art history students turned to this age, which resulted several monographs of architects and buildings. Most of these however are also unpublished.

The dominant architectural style of the 1890's in Hungary is Neo-baroque. This decade produced Neo-baroque masterworks, beside the works of Alajos Hauszmann, Flóris Korb and Kálmán Giergl, Zsigmond Quittner, Rezső Lajos Ray and Ernő Schannen, we have to emphasize the works of Arthur Meinig, which were designed in maybe the most refined taste in neobaroque and neorococo style that time. The Neo-baroque in the time of the dualism was not confined to the 1890's, only its quantitative, and in a sense qualitative golden age fell on this decade. The first works of Hungarian Neo-baroque were built in the first half of the 1880's, and the first masterpieces in the second half of this decade. Among the former we have to emphasize Count István Károlyi's town palace in Budapest (Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer) and the rebuilding of the country house in Keszthely (Viktor Rumpelmayer). Among the latter we have to mention Wenckheim Palace in Budapest (Arthur Meinig) and Dreher House in Budapest (József Hubert and Károly Móry). After the productive 1890's, several important neobaroque designs were made in the turn of the century and in the first two decades of the 20th century, even in a much lesser degree than earlier. Many of the representatives of the 1890's neobaroque turned to Art Nouveau around 1900. The transition seems to be well-balanced. Thus Neo-baroque played a not insignificant role in the initiation of Art Nouveau. While the new forms of Art Nouveau were mixed with the solution of Neo-baroque architecture, so the surviving Neo-baroque got Art Nouveau character. The most important architect of the first two decades of the 20th century was Dezső Hüllt, and the key figure of the time between the two world wars, Gyula Wälder made his first designs that time.

The decades of Neo-baroque architecture in Hungary was shaped by outstandingly important commissioners, as the royal family, the aristocracy and the leaders and rich citizens of the big towns. There were hardly any architects between the 1880's and the 1910's, who didn't design at least one Neo-baroque building, Miklós Ybl and Ödön Lechner also designed some significant buildings in this style. On central points of the capital and other towns, so on the main square, avenues and boulevards we can find the most significant examples of the style. Beside Budapest, the country towns of Pozsony (today Bratislava), Győr, Pécs, Szeged and Kolozsvár (today Cluj Napoca) also has Neo-baroque character. Thus Neo-baroque

plays an important role in Hungarian architecture, and therefore it is hardly understandable that Hungarian art history hasn't done comprehensive researches on this style so far.

## 2. The Aims of the Research

The first greater summary of the Hungarian Neo-baroque architecture therefore is a great debt of our art history writing. This is what the dissertation undertook in the hope of raising the interest of the new art-history generations for a rich research area. The primary and most important task was the setting up of a most comprehensive structural system of the Hungarian Neo-baroque architecture, which naturally had been formed by the gradually emerging information. The structure of the dissertation of course cannot be considered definitive; further researches will modify it over and over. According to the conviction of the dissertation's author nevertheless, the existence of such a system can greatly facilitate further disquisitions.

The research therefore wishes to be comprehensive, but obviously it could not deal with all areas in similar depth. The chief aim of the dissertation is to place the particular Neo-baroque and neo-rococo art works into the system of the Hungarian Neo-baroque architecture, based on written, drawn and pictorial sources, or on building materials, building constructions, layout and frontal structures, and other considerations. The inquiry of the facade system got the primary role, since historicism, thus also Neo-baroque architecture primarily demonstrate their character on the frontages. Among the interiors of several apartment houses which are covered by our researches, barely a few got an evaluable architecture which can be evaluate from the point of style historical aspect, mainly the doorways, the stairwells and perhaps the courtyard's facades can be evaluated. The more significant buildings, so primarily town palaces and public buildings have representative interiors, the analyses of which the dissertation tries to expand in more cases. The dissertation tries to place the particular buildings primarily in the periods of the architect's oeuvre, and the particular oeuvres into larger systems, taking into consideration the creative character and the type of the commissions. Thus the significant architects and works got place in a classification by building types within the chronology.

The dissertation accordingly to its subtitle strives to bring into relief the significance of the German born and to Budapest from Vienna arrived Arthur Meinig in the history of Neo-baroque architecture. The dissertation refers to the main works of the architect in the introductory chapters. After the chapters which discuss the three main periods, separate chapters are about the main creative periods, the rising career of the 1880's, the successful architect of the 1890's, and the short period around 1900, bringing the later masterworks. The monographic research of the architect's oeuvre was undertaken in the author's thesis in 2001. The data gathered here were completed by the dissertation mainly with style relations and the designation of the style models. The dissertation is not or is only in a subdued extent speaks about Meinig's works that were designed in other neo-styles, as it is not the task of the present research.

It belonged to the chief purposes of the study to denominate as many stylistic models as possible from the works of the Hungarian Neo-baroque architecture, for the purpose of the most accurate delineation of the relations of the style. For this reason the dissertation examines the model role of foreign and Hungarian baroque and rococo, and the Neo-baroque and neo-rococo art works. It became clear that 17-18 century architecture and the contemporary foreign and Hungarian architecture were effective parallelly. First of all the Austrian baroque and Neo-baroque, and the German baroque and Neo-baroque attracted the attention of the Hungarian architects of the era, with which assuredly in most cases they got acquainted from up to par journals. Among these latter we can mention the Viennese

Allgemeine Bauzeitung, the Wiener Bauindustrie Zeitung, the Neubauten und Concurrenzen and Der Architekt, or the German Architektonische Rundschau journals. In these journals it was possible to find photos and drawings of such buildings, which showed a close style relation to the Hungarian Neo-baroque works.

It was an important goal of the research to give a brief, at the same time comprehensive demonstration of the international Neo-baroque architecture, in favour of drawing the source areas of the Hungarian Neo-baroque architecture's style forms into the research. For this latter reason the demonstration of the German and Viennese Neo-baroque got emphasized role. This latter enterprise also can be considered as pioneering, as there has not been made any similar summary in the German language area. In favour of getting the most complete picture, the fatherland of the baroquesque historicism, France also got a short demonstration, as the baroquesque and rococo-esque architectural historicism of other countries which are important from the point of Neo-baroque view.

The analysis of the interiors and particularly the mobile furniture were not the aim of the dissertation, as its more inaugurated researchers extensively dealt with this question. In the case of the most significant interiors nevertheless these works will be analysed as well, especially in those, where Neo-baroque and neo-rococo interiors were evolved in buildings which were built in a non Neo-baroque style. The dissertation tried to discuss extensively the interiors of Arthur Meinig's buildings.

### 3. The sources and methods of the research

One of the main objective of the research was to use not only secondary but where possible primary sources. The starting-points of the research were the buildings themselves among which most still stands even today, not few of them in a reasonably good condition, numerous Neo-baroque buildings however in a very run-down state or in a very weakly converted form. As the result of the the most coherent survey and photography of the districts of Budapest and the bigger provincial towns, several ten thousand photos served the research. These were completed by the archive photos. The foremost information were supplied by the archives, primarily the Budapest City Archives, as most of the best of our Neo-baroque architecture is concentrated here, thus the research examined mainly this. On the pages of the revised and photographed few hundred building plans we can read the data which made it possible to set up a highly accurate chronology of the start of the constructions. Beyond the license number and date, the name of the commissioner, and in most cases the name of architect and the master builder is written. These are the most important informations which determine the style of the buildings. The permissions for usage and to reside are missing in numerous cases, so the completion of the constructions are unsure in many cases.

The research strove to include also as many secondary sources as possible into the system of the dissertation. We must think less of books, but rather of articles of journals. These latter, among which the mostly short reviews of the Építő Ipar (Building Industry), the Vállalkozók Lapja (Journal of Contractors) or the foreign journals, often concentrate to the practical side of the construction, and deals less with the architectural style.

Among the sources of the research we have to mention internet as well. The author is aware of the uncertainty of the information which can be found on internet, also as a tutor he forewarn his students from the use of internet sources, even so he included the database of the world wide web. Among these today there are very reliable architectural, museum and library databases.

## Publications

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