

UDC 72.01

DOI: 10.56318/as/2.2025.36

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## **Architectural and artistic solution of the town hall in Buchach**

**Abstract.** The town hall was not only the building of the city self-government body, which housed the city government but also a very important public architectural structure of the city, which performed an administrative function. Square in plan, but diverse in the form of completion and dimensions, building material, compositional, constructive, and plastic solutions, town halls were the main architectural and artistic accents of the market squares of Ukrainian cities. The article was devoted to the study of the construction history and artistic and compositional features of the unique town hall in Buchach, dated 1750-1751, which had survived to 2025 in its authentic form. The study of the architectural and artistic solution of the town hall in Buchach was a source of the aesthetic perception of the society of artistic values of a specific historical era. The history of the construction of the baroque town hall built according to the project of the outstanding architect Bernard Meretyn and the sculptor Johann Georg Pinzel, with the funds of the patron Mykolai Pototsky, was revealed. This highly artistic architectural building reflects the high level of skill and talent of the architect and sculptor of the Baroque era. The peculiarities of the use of decorative stone carvings and sculptural compositions on mythological subjects in the decoration of buildings in the late Baroque period were considered. The plastic treatment of mythological sculptural compositions on the parapet and on the pediment of the main facade of the town hall was analysed. As a result of atmospheric effects, the decor, and individual sculptures had suffered significant losses and require restoration work. Due to a lack of funds, restoration work had been stopped. The researched unique architectural object had a high artistic and artistic value and belongs not only to the artistic heritage of Ukraine but also to the world's cultural heritage

**Keywords:** architect B. Meretyn; sculptor I. Pinzel; planning; composition; decor

### **INTRODUCTION**

The rich historical, architectural and artistic heritage of the city of Buchach (Ternopil region) was a significant part of the cultural heritage of Ukraine. Among the numerous

architectural monuments of the small town of Buchach, which were organically inscribed in a unique landscape environment, the town hall stands out for its architectural

**Suggested Citation:**

Chen, L., & Ratushynskij, N. (2025). Architectural and artistic solution of the town hall in Buchach. *Architectural Studies*, 11(2), 36-44. doi: 10.56318/as/2.2025.36.

Journal homepage: <https://arch-studies.com.ua/en>

*Architectural Studies*, 11(2), 36-44

Received: 02.10.2024 Revised: 19.04.2025 Accepted: 01.07.2025

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and artistic solution, artistic qualities, which made a great aesthetic impression on the viewer. A town hall was a public building that was used in the Middle Ages to administer a city or municipality. It was a meeting place for local government representatives and community members. The town hall not only functioned as a centre of administration, but also played an important role in the social and public life of the community, reflecting the architectural style and civic pride of the Middle Ages. The study of the public administrative building in Buchach, which did not function according to its purpose, but was in the final stage of restoration, was relevant.

The unique monument, dated 1751 and preserved in an authentic state, was a true witness of the historical past, had a high historical and cultural value and was of scientific interest to researchers, art historians and scientists. The basis for the theoretical study of the town hall in Buchach was the analysis of research and scientific works of Ukrainian and worldwide architects, art critics, and scientists. Particular attention should be paid to the work of O. Popova (2021), who considered the history of the emergence and development of town hall architecture. L. Chen (2022), researching the stylistic features of Pinzel's sacred stone sculptures in Buchach, found common features with the plastic sculpture on the parapet of the town hall. The development of 20<sup>th</sup>-century town halls in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Norway, Italy, Finland, Japan, Canada, the United States, Iceland, Spain, and Switzerland was explored in book by J. Stewart (2019). Basic research of the town hall was carried out by P. Arkarapotiwong (2021). The adaptive reuse of city halls in Australia was explored in a dissertation by S. Yazdani Mehr & S. Wilkinson (2018). M. Folin & E. Svalduz (2024), studying the architecture of Italian town halls of the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, noted that town halls were considered an expression of local civic identity and had great cultural and original significance.

The purpose of the article was to reveal the history of the construction of a unique town hall in the city of Buchach, Ternopil region, to analyse the peculiarities of its compositional, artistic and plastic solution and to determine its place in the cultural heritage of Ukraine.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The town hall in the city of Buchach, Ternopil region, was the best example of civil late baroque architecture not only in the Western region but in the whole of Ukraine. Its unique architectural and artistic solution aroused the interest of architects-researchers, art critics and scientists. In the process of scientific research of the architectural and artistic solution of the town hall in Buchach, general scientific (empirical – observation, description, theoretical – analysis, systematisation, comparison, generalisation) and special professional research methods (morphological (stylistic) analysis, field survey method, photo fixation method) were used). The visual inspection of the unique architectural monument carried out at the first stage of the study made it possible to determine the range of

current problems of the phased study. The analysis of literary sources made it possible to determine the level of study of the object. The analysis of iconographic images from the Archive of V.G. Zabolotnyi State Scientific Library of Architecture and Construction (n.d.) made it possible to trace the general appearance and sculptural decor of the town hall as of 1927-1954, which changed, in particular, the form of the completion of the town hall altered after the restorations in 1988 and 2000. The artistic features of the architecture and decorative decoration of the investigated town hall were revealed by the method of art analysis. Based on the analysis of the artistic and plastic solutions of the town hall, it can be stated that its architecture was characteristic of the late Baroque style. The compositional analysis made it possible to reveal the three-dimensional architectural and structural structure of the town hall and reveal the regularities of its compositional solution. The stylistic analysis made it possible to study the individual features of the artistic solution of sculptural mythological scenes, the visual language of the facial expressions and body postures of the characters on the parapet and pediment of the building, and to establish the architectural and artistic value of the architectural work. On the basis of the conducted stylistic and compositional analysis, the theoretical part of the study of the sculptural compositions of the town hall was formed, which can become the basis for further practical restoration.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The town hall was an important city administrative building designed to house the body of local self-government (local government) in the European countries of the Middle Ages (Tymofiienko, 2003). Usually, the town hall was built in the form of a compact square multi-story structure with a meeting hall, a balcony from which to address the people, and a high-tiered tower. It was located separately on the market square of the city. In Ukrainian cities, the town hall appeared in the 14<sup>th</sup> century mainly in Western Ukraine (Smoliy, 2012), while in Europe, town halls began to be built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (the city of Rome in Italy (1144), the city of Cologne (1135) in Germany (1135)) (Popova, 2021).

Among the numerous architectural monuments of Ukraine, it was worth highlighting the building of the town hall in the city of Buchach, Ternopil region, which was unique in terms of its architectural, artistic and constructive solution. The city was located in a picturesque area above the banks of the Strypa River canyon. It was famous for a large number of architectural monuments, among which the filigree town hall stands out with its silhouette, dimensions and perfect proportions. Buchach Town Hall was located in the lower central part of the city on a small market square. It stands out among low-rise buildings with its dimensions, clear delineation of volumes, and plastic late-baroque expressiveness (Fig. 1). The town hall symbolises civic identity, acting as the third element of the triad that characterises the urban landscape. Town halls often became centres of urban sociability, reflecting the customs,



inclinations, and characteristics of the local ruling authorities, and therefore the prestigious decoration of the building was important (Folin & Svalduz, 2024).

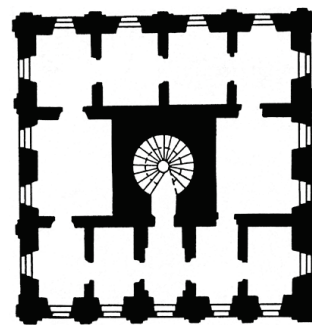


**Figure 1.** Town hall in the urban planning environment of Buchach

Source: authors' photo (2019)

The town hall was built at the expense of the funder M. Pototsky in 1750-1751 (Voznytskyi, 2005) with a height of 53 metres, designed by the Lviv architect Bernard Meretyn in the late baroque style (Syrotiuk, 2014). The height of the town hall without the baroque dome was 35 metres. The structure, built from local sandstone, had a pronounced vertical-centric composition, ending with a tower. A two-story tower rests on a powerful two-story cubic volume, which originally ended with an eighteen-metre-high spire, and now with a baroque dome. The square plan of the town hall was divided into 12 halls covered by cross vaults (Fig. 2). In the middle room there was a spiral stairwell, which led to the flat roof of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, which served as a viewing platform, from where incredible views of the city opened. The central room, in which the stairs were arranged, carried a tall two-story tower. In order for the tower to be proportional to the main volume, the architect made it more massive, expanding under the roof in the attic with the help of huge stone consoles. The corners of the tower were rounded, and the walls between them were concave inward and pierced with large arched windows to lighten the massif. The third tier of the clock tower, compared to the second, narrows to the size of a stairwell. In this way, the architect managed to create a tower-like volume of the town hall and harmoniously combine all three tiers into a single whole.

The building had deep branched basements, which housed trade and warehouse premises. The city administration (magistrate) was located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the town hall, and shops and warehouses were located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. On the south side, the self-government rooms were located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, which was 2 m lower due to the sloping relief (Logvin, 1959). The building had deep ramified basements. The entrances to the basement rooms were decorated modestly and simply without decorative elements.



**Figure 2.** Plan of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the town hall in Buchach  
Source: V. Vecherskyi (2021)

The desire of the city elite to lavishly decorate architectural buildings in the Baroque era led to the flourishing of monumental sculpture. Stone sculpture and ornamental decorative carvings in architectural details were the most common in the decoration of buildings in Ukrainian lands. Ornamental carvings were especially widely used in the decoration of window and door openings. (Yablonsky, 1995). Windows and doors were decorated with carved stone frames similar in composition, which were impressive with the richness of plastic ornamentation.

The town hall in Buchach was decorated with exquisite late-baroque plastic that enriches the main western facade (Figs. 3-4). The architect Meretyn, educated on the best European models, created an original compositionally perfect solution of the main facade, using an arsenal of artistic tools to create a unique work that had no analogues in the architecture of Ukraine. The decoration uses a synthesis of arts, where architecture and sculptural decor in the form of high-relief and round sculpture were organically combined (Tymofienko, 2003). The facade was energetically divided in height by pilasters, ten caryatids in pairs support five balconies. Windows and doors were decorated with baroque stone frames. On its pediment there was a cartouche with the family coat of arms of the founder "Pylyava". Allegorical sculptures were placed on the parapet and pediment along the axis of the pilasters of the main facade: David kills Goliath, nearby – Themis, the goddess of justice, further – a Zaporozhian sitting and smoking a pipe, further – a peasant in chains and on the outermost pillar of the parapet – Hercules teared the lion's mouth open (Logvin, 1959). On the opposite side, Hercules slaying the Lernaean hydra and Neptune calming the raging sea were placed (Fig. 5).



**Figure 3.** General view of the town hall in Buchach from the west (1954)

**Source:** Archive of V.G. Zabolotnyi State Scientific Library of Architecture and Construction (n.d.)



**Figure 4.** The modern view of the town hall in Buchach from the southeast

**Source:** authors' photo (2019)



**Figure 5.** Pediment of the main western facade of the town hall in Buchach (archive photo)

**Source:** Archive of V.G. Zabolotnyi State Scientific Library of Architecture and Construction (n.d.)

The decorative and sculptural decoration of the town hall in Rococo style was performed by the brilliant sculptor Johann Georg Pinzel, who lived in Buchach at that time. Initially, the town hall was decorated with 14 narrative sculptural compositions on biblical and ancient mythological themes. In 1859, during a fire in the city, the town hall was also damaged (Sulimierski & Walewski, 1880), in particular, the eighteen-metre spire of the tower burned down. During the fire on July 29, 1865, part of the sculptures were destroyed by fire, and only 9 sculptural compositions survived. In 1870, the town hall was rebuilt (Voznytskyi, 2005).

Analysing the allegorical sculptural compositions with which J. Pinzel decorated the Buchach town hall, it can be stated that the figures of ancient heroes emphasise strength, courage and faith in the victory of good over dark

forces. In an extremely dynamic pose, the sculptor depicted the young shepherd David killing the mighty Goliath for his people (Figs. 6-7). The sculptor depicted the body of David in a strong movement, swinging with both hands, which were clutching a staff. The folds of David's clothes that fit the body were treated in a general way. David's head was especially clearly carved. In his expressive face with an open mouth and clearly defined nose and chin, an expression of energy and strength was reflected. The hair of the head was modelled with large strands. The fallen giant Goliath, lying prostrate, his arms and head thrown back and hanging over the parapet. Thrown hands, open mouth, expressive face, depressions in the eyes testify to Goliath's powerlessness (Logvin, 1959). The plastic of this composition vividly conveys the triumphant victory of David over the fallen giant.



**Figure 6.** Allegorical sculptures on the pediment of the town hall in Buchach

**Source:** Archive of V.G. Zabolotnyi State Scientific Library of Architecture and Construction (n.d.)



**Figure 7.** David kills Goliath

**Source:** Archive of V.G. Zabolotnyi State Scientific Library of Architecture and Construction (n.d.)

In contrast to David's dynamic composition, the figure of Themis standing next to him was depicted in a calm pose. Folds of draperies picturesquely hug the body of a slender goddess. The bent left arm in a graceful gesture emphasises the easy movement and slenderness of the character, while the slight bend of the left leg and the turn of the shoulders demonstrate the calm, easy movement of Themis (Fig. 6). On the volute of the parapet, a naked figure of a Zaporozhian was seated in majestic repose (Logvin, 1959). In the sitting figure, the sculptor embodied peace and rest. The correct anatomical proportions were given in the torso, muscles of the shoulder girdle and biceps of the Zaporizhia. His left-hand rests on his side, and his right hand, holding a cradle, rests on his knee. The head calmly confidently looks ahead towards the castle.

On the opposite side, an allegorical sculptural composition of Hercules tearing the lion's mouth was symmetrically placed (Fig. 8). In the sculpture of Hercules, J. Pinzel energetically conveyed the strength in the tense muscles of the character and extraordinary dynamics, depicting him naked with a bandage on his hips, firmly holding the lion's mouth. The figure of Hercules was depicted in an inclined movement towards the pediment. With the knee of his right leg, he rests on the lion's back and tears his mouth open with his hands. Beautiful anatomical structure of a slender body of a young man, clearly carved legs and thigh muscles, powerful biceps, shoulder girdle and neck. The head was energetically turned, and the eyes looked forward. The sculpture was full of energetic movement. In terms of emotional expression and plasticity, the sculpture can be compared to the sculpture of St. Onuphrius in Rukomysh (Chen, 2022).



**Figure 8.** Hercules tears the lion's mouth open

**Source:** Archive of V.G. Zabolotnyi State Scientific Library of Architecture and Construction (n.d.)

The figure of the captive was depicted on the volute in a bent position (Fig. 9). The prisoner's hands tied behind his back were trying to break the shackles, and his face, swollen from muscle tension and grimacing, was full of anger and hatred, emphasising the difficulty of the struggle and the bitter defeat. His face was turned downward and he looked at the city and the market with hatred. The sculptor conveyed his insubordination, although he was defeated but not broken.

On the eastern corner of the town hall was an allegorical figure of Hercules killing the Lernaean hydra, in the form of a snake with 9 heads (Fig. 10). In the sculptural composition Hercules killing the Lernaean hydra, Pinzel depicted the tense muscular physique of the hero, who kills the nine-headed monster (hydra) with a massive stick in his right hand, and strangles it with his left hand. The jagged tail of the hydra coiling around Heracles' legs, the drapery of the cloak fluttering in the wind, enhance the dynamics of the sculpture and give it grandeur and solemnity. A head



with a mane of curly hair rests on powerful shoulders. The sculptural composition was emphasised by the dynamism of movements, energy, and expression.



**Figure 9.** The figure of a captive

**Source:** Archive of V.G. Zabolotnyi State Scientific Library of Architecture and Construction (n.d.)



**Figure 10.** Hercules kills the Lernaean hydra

**Source:** Archive of V.G. Zabolotnyi State Scientific Library of Architecture and Construction (n.d.)

On the north-eastern corner, there was a figure of Neptune in unrestrained motion. A vivid allegorical sculpture of Neptune taming the raging waves of the sea with a wave of his rod. His left leg, which was sharply brought forward, and his right hand, holding a trident, which was brought back, emphasised the movement of the allegorical sculpture. The folds of Neptune's muscles and his menacing face were anatomically correctly treated. Expressive plasticity of figures, realistic interpretation, facial gestures, tense muscles of arms and legs of allegorical sculptures impress with extraordinary dynamic movements and high artistic qualities. The sculptures of J. Pinzel at the town hall were close in terms of emotional resolution to Michelangelo's "Battle of the Centaurs". All sculptural compositions on the parapet and pediment of the facade of the town hall were so arranged that they organically merged with the rocaille decoration of the building.

The clear architectural forms of the Buchach Town Hall were organically connected by sculptural works of monumental and decorative art, giving it lightness and elegance. In the architecture of the facades of the town hall, the desire for aesthetic, artistic, unique monumental and decorative decoration inherent in the Ukrainian national character of the time was conveyed. The high skill of execution, the expressive plasticity of the building, the richness of the decor and dynamic allegorical sculptures with penetrating emotional gestures were a means of expressing the worldview of the society at that time. Ukrainian architectural thinking of the Baroque era was manifested by a fascination with luxurious decor, a desire for multi-meaning mythological decorations and high poetics. The expressiveness and integrity of the composition of the Buchach building were achieved not only by artistic means, but also by the balance, and proportionality of all its elements and the proportionality of the ratios of its parameters. The vertical lines of numerous elegant pilasters with Corinthian capitals, shaped window frames, and niches enhance the slenderness and dynamism of the building. The complex contours of the pediment with a rocaille asymmetric cartouche, decorated with the family coat of arms of the founder M. Pototsky, which was the main accent of the central part of the main western facade of the town hall, reinforced the aesthetics of the architecture of the late Baroque building. A feature of B. Meretin's creativity was the impeccable choice of location for the town hall, organic combination with the urban planning environment and landscape environment. This gave the architect the opportunity to create a unique, integral, highly artistic, aesthetically expressive building.

The study of the late Baroque municipal monument in Buchach, Ternopil region, dated 1751 with exquisite proportions and an original artistic solution, which was the architectural and artistic accent of the market square of Buchach, was a source of knowledge of cultural values and scientific knowledge of the Baroque era. The well-known Ukrainian architect H. Logvin, thoroughly researching the town hall in Buchach, measured the monument and concluded that the town hall was built before 1751. Also, in his research, he highlighted the historical facts of the construction of the town hall and the stylistic features of the decor and sculptural plot compositions, emphasising the inseparable unity of sculptural decor with architecture. However, he questioned I. Pinzel's authorship of the sculptural compositions (Logvin, 1959). This statement can only be partially agreed upon. Analysing Pinzel's Buchach works (roadside sculptures of the Mother of God and Jan Nepomuk) with exquisite late-baroque plastic, it can be asserted that the sculptural works of the town hall in Buchach were made by I. Pinzel and partly by his students. The dynamic poses of the allegorical sculptural compositions of the Buchach Town Hall with the vividly conveyed emotional nature of the faces, and the energetic movement of the characters' bodies, testify to the masterful manner of performing works by I. Pinzel. In his writings, G. Logvin (2002) compared Ukrainian baroque sculpture, including Pinzel's





works, with world examples of this style, emphasising the variety of artistic means and aesthetic expressiveness in Pinzel's sculptural works.

Pinzel's work was thoroughly studied by B. Voznytskyi (2005), collecting his works during the creation of the museum of the same name in Lviv. Exploring the town hall in Buchach, he noted the original design, bold solution, and elegance of the building's proportions. J.K. Ostrowski (1996), studying and analysing the works of Pinzel in the European context, expressed their hypotheses regarding the origin of the artist, his education, and creativity. T. Mankowski (1937), a Polish researcher of J. Pinzel's work, emphasised that Pinzel was an exponent of a peculiar direction of expressive dynamics, which was achieved by bold processing of material and interpretation of clothing draperies. The Polish art critic A. Bochnak (1931), studying the plasticity of Pinzel's late baroque sculptures, compared them with South German sculptural works. Unlike previous researchers, Z. Hornung (1976) sees in Pinzel's sculptures the influence of the Prague Baroque. This testifies to the sculptor's unique talent and high familiarity with the art of European countries.

In the process of researching the unique building of local self-government bodies – the town hall in Buchach, Ternopil region, dated 1750-1751, it was found that the architectural and spatial arrangement of the monument combines the constructive logic of the architect B. Meretin and the rich decorative sculptural decoration of the sculptor IG Pinzel. Refined proportions and high architectural and artistic qualities of the town hall demonstrated the high professionalism of the architects. The architectural design of the building embodies the synthesis of arts, where architecture, decor, and sculpture were organically combined, which was the ideal of beauty and emotional delight (Denysenko *et al.*, 2022). Based on the analysis of allegorical sculptures of the late baroque works of the town hall in Buchach, the individual manner of I. Pinzel's performance of high-art works had been proven. The high architectural and artistic value of the town hall with its unique decoration, which reflects the outlook and cultural values of the society of the late Baroque era, was revealed.

## CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the outstanding architect B. Meretyyn and the talented sculptor J. Pinzel enriched Ukrainian architecture with their real masterpiece – the town hall in Buchach, which was distinguished by its originality, exquisite proportions, and high architectural and artistic qualities. Behind the magnificent decorative and sculptural baroque decoration of the town hall, the strict constructive logic of the building can be felt. A high two-story tower rests on the base of the square two-story volume of the building. The build-

ing, which was square in plan, had a centrally symmetrical composition, to which all the elements of the building were subordinated.

The artistic principles of the late baroque in the town hall were carried out consistently and highly talented. Wall masses were energetically dissected both vertically and horizontally. The game of numerous vertical lines of pilasters with capitals of the Corinthian order, cornices, and belts, a tall two-story tower with finely decorated pilasters, balustrades, sculptures on the parapet, caryatids supporting the balconies, a cartouche with the family coat of arms of the founder on the pediment create a cartouche with the founder's family coat of arms on the pediment created a unique highly artistic image of the building, designed to be viewed from all sides. The sculptural decoration not only organically enriched the architecture of the facades of the town hall, but also emphasised the professionalism of the architects, who managed to convey the worldview of the ruling city elite and the founder.

Expressive plasticity, dynamism of movements, internal tension, drama, exquisite poses, and silhouettes of the monumental sculptures of the Buchach Town Hall emphasised the struggle against the dark forces of evil, the victory of reason, and the light nature. The architectural solution of the town hall was an example of the synthesis of arts, where architecture and sculpture were so organically merged that the building was perceived as one large sculptural work, designed to be viewed both from a close distance and when viewing it from elevated areas adjacent to the city. The Town Hall was a vivid work of architecture and art of the late Baroque era, when noble elegance, grandeur and artistic sophistication were intertwined, demonstrating the ideal of unique beauty that evokes emotional admiration in the viewer.

The article analysed the architectural and artistic solution of the town hall in Buchach, Ternopil region, determining its main architectural, planning, compositional, and plastic features. It demonstrated the Ukrainian identity of the mythological sculptural works used in the decoration of the town hall and determined their prominent place in Ukraine's cultural heritage. The results of the research add knowledge of the history of architecture and art and can be used for further research on the town hall.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None.

## FUNDING

None.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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## **Архітектурно-художнє вирішення ратуші в м. Бучачі**

**Анотація.** Ратуша була не лише будівлею органу міського самоврядування, в якій розміщувався міський уряд, але й дуже важливою громадською архітектурною спорудою міста, що виконувала адміністративну функцію. Квадратні в плані, але різноманітні за формою завершення та розмірами, будівельним матеріалом, композиційним, конструктивним і пластичним вирішенням, ратуші були головними архітектурно-художніми акцентами ринкових площ українських міст. Стаття присвячена дослідженню історії будівництва та художньо-композиційних особливостей унікальної ратуші в м. Бучачі 1750-1751 рр., яка збереглася до 2025 р. в автентичному вигляді. Дослідження архітектурно-художнього вирішення ратуші в м. Бучачі стало джерелом естетичного сприйняття суспільством мистецьких цінностей конкретної історичної епохи. Розкрито історію будівництва барокової ратуші, зведеної за проектом видатного архітектора Бернарда Меретина та скульптора Йогана Георга Пінзеля на кошти мецената Миколи Потоцького. Ця високохудожня архітектурна споруда відображає високий рівень майстерності і таланту архітектора і скульптора епохи бароко. Розглянуто особливості використання декоративного різьблення по каменю та скульптурних композицій на міфологічні сюжети в оздобленні будівель доби пізнього бароко. Проаналізовано пластичне вирішення міфологічних скульптурних композицій на парапеті та фронтоні головного фасаду ратуші. Внаслідок атмосферних впливів декор та окремі скульптури зазнали значних втрат і потребують реставраційних робіт. Через брак коштів реставраційні роботи були зупинені. Досліджуваний унікальний архітектурний об'єкт має високу художню та мистецьку цінність і належить не лише до мистецького надбання України, а й до світової культурної спадщини

**Ключові слова:** архітектор Б. Меретин; скульптор І. Пінзель; планування; композиція; декор