

Medievalism in Gdańsk: The Builder Bartel Ranisch (1648-1709?) and the Beginnings of Scientific Research on Gothic Architecture

This project will be devoted to the scientific and architectural activities of the builder Bartel Ranisch (1648-1709?) from Gdańsk (German *Danzig*), where he served as the chief builder of the city (*Ratsmauermeister*), from 1673 until his death. He was an exceptional figure in a pan-European perspective, and his two treatises on the predominantly medieval church and public buildings of Gdańsk, erected mostly in the Gothic style, are works without parallel in the literature of the time. Ranisch's professional interest in Gothic architecture, especially in the monumental churches of his native city and their decorative rib vaults, made him a pioneer of historical research on medieval architecture and the creator of a new attitude towards it, which may be called medievalism of a scientific-constructive nature.

The aim of the project is to provide a comprehensive analysis of Bartel Ranisch's activities in Gdańsk: architectural creations designed independently by him, undertakings supervised by him in function of a construction foreman, conservation work in his capacity as the city's chief builder, and above all his scientific and theoretical studies. The project aims to show that these spheres of Ranisch's activity were symptoms of important art-historical and architectural-engineering problems focused around the notion of early-modern medievalism, that is interest in the Middle Ages after the end of this epoch.. While medievalism itself, as implemented in building practice, is widely discussed in the scholarly literature, **the phenomenon of scientific-constructive, technological medievalism, whose exponents "posthumously" reconstructed the structural principles of Gothic construction, has not been recognized** in the research on architectural theory and history of the 17th–18th centuries to date. Filling this gap is the most important objective of the project.

Bartel Ranisch's work has not yet been comprehensively researched, although all (few) authors so far have stressed the uniqueness of his interests and the importance of his theoretical work beyond Gdańsk, Pomerelia, and the entire Baltic Lowlands. All the problems and research objectives presented above are of an original nature and have not been elaborated so far. The primary goal of the project is therefore a thorough and multifaceted study of the problems associated with Ranisch's architectural and scientific endeavours, resulting in the introduction of knowledge of this subject into the international art history, architectural history, and conservation history. The planned project is of substantial scientific importance, as the issues to be elaborated touch upon the fundamental problems of the general history of culture and art in the early-modern Europe. Moreover, these issues are all pertaining to the most important research trends in contemporary humanities: the problem of historical consciousness and its cultural manifestations; the beginnings of medievalism, and more generally of historicism; the birth of modern scientific disciplines and of the illustrated scientific book; the formation of doctrines of the conservation of monuments and methods of architectural documentation. This project will restore Bartel Ranisch to his rightful place in the European history of medievalism and architectural history.

The measurable results of the project will be: 1) a series of articles (in congress languages only) in international Open Access journals; 2) an English-language monograph containing a transcription of the text of the Ranisch's work entitled *Description of All Church Buildings of the City of Gdańsk* (1695) and analytical chapters on all aspects of Bartel Ranisch's work.

The project will involve queries and field research by four investigators in: Gdańsk (36 days in total; one of the investigators is expected to be based permanently in the city); Binghamton (USA; 7 days); Dresden (20 days); Munich (24 days); Einsiedeln (10 days); Amsterdam and Utrecht (24 days); Paris (12 days); London (12 days); Madrid (24 days). There are also plans to present research findings at conferences of The Renaissance Society of America (2024, 2025 – 2 investigators) and Forum Kunst des Mittelalters (2024, 2026 – 2 investigators).