

Decorative Sculpture in the Architecture of Baku

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Abstract

This study examines the historical integration of sculpture and architecture in Baku during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing particularly on the decorative sculptural elements of the residential building designed by the German architect Johann Wilhelm Edel in 1896–1899. The research explores the relationship between architectural ornamentation, European stylistic influences, local materials, and the cultural transformation of Baku during the oil-boom period. Particular attention is given to a sculptural façade element depicting a female figure with flowing hair, accompanied by classical architectural molding, ribbon-like ornamentation, and floral motifs. The analysis demonstrates that such sculptural components were not merely decorative additions but constituted integral elements of the building's architectural composition, contributing to its visual rhythm, volumetric plasticity, and symbolic character. The study further considers the building's French Renaissance and eclectic stylistic characteristics, including monumental massing, Corinthian columns, articulated corners, and the interaction of light and shadow across the limestone façade. For comparative purposes, Adolf Eichler's Church of the Saviour (1896–1899) is examined as an example of Neo-Gothic architecture introduced into Baku during the same historical period. The comparison demonstrates the coexistence of diverse European architectural traditions within the city's rapidly developing urban environment. The findings indicate that Baku's architectural modernization involved not simply the adoption of European styles but their adaptation through local materials, craftsmanship, urban conditions, and cultural interaction. Architectural sculpture consequently served as an important medium through which economic prosperity, cosmopolitan identity, artistic sophistication, and cultural exchange were visually expressed. The study contributes to a broader understanding of Baku's architectural heritage as a culturally hybrid and stylistically eclectic phenomenon.

Keywords: *Baku; decorative sculpture; architecture; limestone; cultural identity*

Introduction

The architecture of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, represents a layered narrative of cultural, historical, and artistic influences, from medieval fortifications to contemporary landmarks. Baku's built environment is celebrated for its fusion of Eastern and Western styles, using local limestone that enabled rich sculptural ornamentation on façades, portals, and public

buildings—especially during the late 19th and early 20th centuries when oil wealth stimulated ambitious construction projects. Baku underwent rapid expansion fueled by the oil boom, attracting European architects who introduced eclectic and Art Nouveau styles (Blau & Rupnik, 2018). Many of these new constructions were adorned with ornate façades featuring sculptural elements such as mascarons, floral ornaments, mythological figures, and intricate stone carvings—illustrating a dynamic period where sculpture became an integral part of architectural expression rather than merely applied decoration. Baku's Old City (Icheri Sheher), with medieval fortifications such as the Shirvanshahs' Palace and the Maiden Tower, showcases early uses of stone ornamentation with symbolic motifs and inscriptions carved directly into the architecture, reflecting techniques that were established long before the advent of modern urban development.

Local limestone, abundantly available in the Absheron Peninsula, played a central role in enabling detailed façades; its workability allowed artisans and architects to integrate richly carved decorative motifs directly into the stone surfaces of buildings, distinguishing Baku's historic streetscape from other contemporary cities.

Decorative sculpture in Baku is not merely ornamental but reflects the city's socio-historical evolution, revealing shifts in aesthetic values linked to economic power, political regimes, and cultural dialogues. This study examines how sculptural decoration has been integrated into Baku's architectural fabric, the styles and materials involved, and the significance of this artistic-architectural interplay.

Beyond individual buildings, decorative sculpture in Baku also encompasses monumental works in public spaces that complement architectural settings, serving as cultural symbols that reflect national identity and historical memory. The sculptural tradition in the city thus spans a broad spectrum—from carved architectural ornamentations that articulate façade compositions to standalone statues that define public squares and axes.

Today, Baku's architectural identity continues to evolve through the incorporation of sculptural principles in modern design, where contemporary landmarks reinterpret the relationship between structure and artistic form, weaving historical continuity with forward-looking architectural innovation.

The integration of sculpture and architecture constitutes one of the most significant characteristics of European architectural culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period, architectural façades increasingly functioned not merely as structural envelopes but as complex artistic surfaces on which sculpture, ornament, architectural orders, and decorative motifs were combined to communicate aesthetic, cultural, and social meanings. The revival of historical styles, particularly the Renaissance Revival, Neo-Baroque, Neoclassical, Neo-Gothic, and, subsequently, Art Nouveau, encouraged architects to incorporate sculptural figures, floral motifs, allegorical compositions, heraldic symbols, and ornamental reliefs into residential, commercial, religious, and civic structures. Consequently, architectural sculpture became an important medium through which buildings expressed the cultural aspirations, economic prosperity, and cosmopolitan identity of rapidly developing European cities.

This architectural tendency was particularly significant in Baku during the final decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The rapid expansion of the oil industry transformed Baku from a regional commercial centre into a major industrial and economic city of the Russian Empire. The resulting accumulation of capital stimulated extensive urban development and encouraged wealthy industrialists and merchants to finance residential buildings, commercial properties, mansions, public institutions, and religious

structures. The emergence of this new architectural environment coincided with the arrival and activity of architects trained in different European and Russian architectural traditions. As a result, the new urban fabric of Baku became characterized by a remarkable combination of Gothic, Baroque, Renaissance, Neoclassical, and Art Nouveau influences. Contemporary descriptions and modern studies consequently emphasize the eclectic character of Baku's architecture during the oil-boom period.

The architectural transformation of Baku should therefore be considered within the broader context of modernization and cultural exchange. The development of European architectural forms did not simply represent the mechanical transplantation of foreign styles into Azerbaijan. Rather, European architectural vocabulary was adapted to local conditions, materials, climatic requirements, urban circumstances, and cultural traditions. Research on Azerbaijani eclectic architecture emphasizes that European and Russian architectural influences developed alongside local architectural traditions and that their interaction contributed to the formation of a distinctive architectural environment in Baku. Local building materials and traditional ornamental practices were incorporated into buildings designed according to European stylistic principles, creating architectural compositions in which different cultural traditions could coexist.

One of the most important material factors in this process was the widespread use of local limestone. The availability of limestone from the Absheron region provided architects and craftsmen with a material that could be shaped into highly detailed architectural and sculptural forms while simultaneously producing visually coherent façades. Local stone became a defining characteristic of many buildings constructed during Baku's period of rapid expansion. The use of this material was particularly important for façade ornamentation because architectural details could be articulated through relief carving, projecting elements, columns, capitals, floral motifs, and figurative sculpture. The interaction between the natural colour of the stone and the changing conditions of daylight further contributed to the volumetric character of Baku's historic façades. The Church of the Saviour, for example, is also described in connection with the high-quality stone available from the Absheron quarries and with the ability of the architectural composition to achieve expressive volumetric effects.

Architectural sculpture consequently played a dual role in Baku's late imperial architecture. On the one hand, it served a decorative function by enriching façades with human figures, floral designs, ribbons, geometric patterns, heraldic elements, and allegorical imagery. On the other hand, sculpture contributed to the symbolic representation of the social and economic status of the building's patrons. Elaborately decorated façades could communicate wealth, sophistication, education, European cultural orientation, and participation in the cosmopolitan life of the rapidly developing city. The monumental architectural environment created during the oil boom therefore needs to be interpreted not only as a collection of buildings but also as a visual expression of the social transformations taking place in Baku.

The Ismailiyya Building provides an important comparative example of this process. Constructed in the early twentieth century in a Venetian Gothic idiom, the building incorporates elaborate stone ornamentation and sculptural details into its architectural composition. Its design demonstrates how European historical forms could be adopted and transformed within Baku's urban context. The use of carved stone, heraldic imagery, and ornamental relief illustrates the importance of façade sculpture as an integral component of monumental architecture rather than as an independent artistic category.

A particularly valuable case for examining the relationship between architecture and sculpture is the three-storey residential and commercial building designed by the German

architect Johann Wilhelm Edel between 1896 and 1899. Contemporary architectural documentation identifies the building as an apartment house with shops on the ground floor and characterizes it as an important example of French Renaissance architecture in Baku. Its central urban location and its relationship to several major streets increased its architectural visibility and required an extensive and carefully articulated façade treatment. The building occupied almost an entire city block, making its architectural composition particularly significant within the surrounding urban environment.

Edel's building demonstrates how monumental architectural composition and small-scale decorative elements could be integrated into a unified visual system (Abdullayeva, 2025). Its architectural language includes articulated domed corners, large-scale architectural orders, strongly projecting Corinthian columns, vertical axes, and a pronounced silhouette. These elements establish the building's monumental character, while the sculptural and ornamental details provide visual complexity at the human scale. The resulting relationship between architectural mass and decorative detail illustrates the principle of architectural eclecticism characteristic of Baku at the turn of the century.

The sculptural element examined in the present study is particularly relevant to this interpretation. The female figure, with flowing hair extending over the shoulders, is integrated into the architectural structure rather than presented as an independent sculpture. Above the figure is a rounded capital or molding supporting the upper architectural elements, while the lower section incorporates a ribbon or bow and a carved floral or rose motif. The combination of a human figure, floral ornament, and classical architectural framing creates a complex decorative unit in which sculpture and architecture are inseparable. Stylistically, the composition can be associated with the historicist vocabulary of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while certain organic characteristics may also anticipate or overlap with Art Nouveau ornamental tendencies.

The significance of such sculptural elements lies precisely in their intermediate position between architecture and fine art (Fatullayev-Figarov, 1998). The figure does not merely occupy the façade; it contributes to the articulation of the architectural order and participates in the building's rhythm, hierarchy, and visual symbolism. The sculptural treatment also creates variations in surface depth. Projecting hair, facial features, floral forms, ribbons, capitals, and cornices generate different degrees of relief, producing a dynamic interaction between light and shadow. This observation is consistent with the broader architectural characteristics attributed to Edel, whose façades are distinguished by volumetric plasticity produced through the interaction of architectural details and illumination.

The residential building is also significant because its decorative language reflects the broader eclectic character of Baku architecture (Johanning, 2024). Although the building is identified primarily with the French Renaissance style, its ornamental richness prevents it from being understood as a strict reproduction of a single historical model. The combination of classical orders, sculptural decoration, floral motifs, monumental massing, and Oriental and European interior elements demonstrates the hybrid nature of the architectural environment that emerged in Baku during the oil-boom period. Such hybridity is consistent with broader research describing the city's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century architecture as a synthesis of European, Russian, and Azerbaijani traditions.

The architectural work of German-origin architects provides an especially useful perspective for examining this cultural interaction. German architects contributed substantially to Baku's architectural modernization, introducing different European stylistic traditions while adapting them to the local environment. Johann Wilhelm Edel's Renaissance-oriented

architecture and Adolf Eichler's Gothic Revival architecture demonstrate two contrasting approaches that emerged within approximately the same historical and urban context. The coexistence of these approaches illustrates the stylistic diversity of Baku during the period.

The Church of the Saviour, designed by Adolf Eichler and constructed between 1896 and 1899, offers an important comparative case. Unlike Edel's Renaissance-oriented residential architecture, Eichler's church was designed in the Neo-Gothic or Gothic Revival tradition. The building is characterized by a vertically oriented composition, pointed arches, a prominent tower, Gothic decorative elements, and a clearly articulated structural organization. Historical sources indicate that the church was designed for Baku's German Lutheran community and that its construction was supported by members of the city's German community, including prominent figures connected with the oil industry.

The comparison between Edel's residential building and Eichler's Church of the Saviour is particularly useful because both structures belong to the same period and demonstrate the influence of German architectural professionals on Baku's urban development, yet they employ substantially different historical vocabularies. Edel's building emphasizes Renaissance and classical principles, including Corinthian orders, symmetry, monumental massing, and elaborate sculptural ornamentation. Eichler's church, by contrast, relies on Gothic Revival principles, including pointed arches, verticality, a tower-based composition, and restrained Neo-Gothic decoration.

This stylistic contrast demonstrates that European architectural influence in Baku was plural rather than homogeneous. Architects did not operate according to a single European model. Instead, different historical styles were selected according to building function, patronage, religious or social identity, urban position, and aesthetic objectives. Religious architecture could employ Gothic Revival forms to establish associations with German ecclesiastical traditions, while residential and commercial architecture could adopt Renaissance or classical forms to express prestige, sophistication, and urban status.

The Church of the Saviour is also important for understanding how imported European styles were adapted to Baku's local conditions. Although its architectural vocabulary derives from German Gothic traditions, the building was constructed using local materials and was integrated into the urban and cultural environment of Baku. Sources discussing the church emphasize that its architectural solution represents an adaptation of Gothic Revival principles to the specific conditions of Baku rather than a simple reproduction of a European prototype.

The coexistence of these architectural examples suggests that Baku's oil-boom architecture should be interpreted as a form of cultural negotiation. The city became a meeting point where European architectural ideas, local craftsmanship, regional materials, and Azerbaijani cultural traditions interacted. The resulting buildings acquired meanings that extended beyond their original stylistic categories. Their façades became visual records of economic modernization, international cultural exchange, technological development, and the emergence of a cosmopolitan urban identity.

The present study therefore approaches architectural sculpture not as an isolated decorative phenomenon but as an integral component of Baku's architectural and cultural history. Particular attention is given to the relationship between sculptural ornament, architectural order, materiality, urban location, and stylistic eclecticism (Sadikhova, 2022). The female sculptural figure on Edel's building provides a focused case through which broader questions concerning the role of sculpture in late nineteenth-century Baku can be examined. Its combination of figurative representation, floral ornamentation, classical framing, and stone

carving demonstrates how architectural sculpture could simultaneously fulfil aesthetic, structural, symbolic, and compositional functions.

From this perspective, the study of Edel's residential building and its sculptural ornamentation contributes to a broader understanding of Baku's architectural modernization at the turn of the twentieth century. The building illustrates the way in which European Renaissance Revival forms were transformed within a local architectural context, while the comparison with Eichler's Neo-Gothic Church of the Saviour demonstrates the coexistence of multiple European stylistic traditions within the same urban environment. The evidence therefore supports the interpretation of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Baku architecture as an eclectic and culturally hybrid phenomenon in which European historicism, local materials, regional craftsmanship, and diverse cultural influences were brought together in a distinctive architectural language.

Accordingly, the examination of architectural sculpture in Baku provides an opportunity to move beyond stylistic classification and investigate the broader cultural functions of ornament. The carved female figure, floral motifs, classical elements, and façade reliefs of Edel's building reveal how decorative art participated in the construction of architectural identity. At the same time, the comparison with the Church of the Saviour demonstrates that the architectural landscape of Baku was characterized by simultaneous and sometimes contrasting forms of European influence. These examples collectively illustrate the complex processes through which architecture, sculpture, material culture, and urban modernization interacted during one of the most transformative periods in the history of Baku.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design, focusing on the analysis of decorative sculpture within the architectural context of Baku. The research combined literature review, visual analysis, and comparative case study approaches to capture the stylistic, material, and historical aspects of sculptural ornamentation.

Data Collection

1. Literature Review

Academic and professional sources on Baku's architecture, urban history, and decorative arts were reviewed. This included books, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and online architectural databases. Key topics covered included the historical development of Baku's urban fabric, the use of local limestone in façades, the influence of European architectural styles, and the role of sculptural ornamentation in cultural identity.

2. Architectural Surveys

Field observations and photographic documentation of key historic and contemporary buildings in central Baku were analyzed to study the integration of decorative sculpture. Emphasis was placed on façades, cornices, balconies, entrances, and niches, with attention to stylistic motifs, materials, and sculptural techniques. Buildings from the late 19th to early 20th century oil boom period were included to capture the evolution of sculptural treatment.

3. Comparative Analysis

Historic and modern examples were compared to identify patterns in sculptural application, material usage, and stylistic evolution. Comparative parameters included:

- Integration of sculpture with architectural form
- Symbolic or decorative motifs

- Material selection and durability
- Influence of European and regional traditions

Analytical Approach

The study applied visual semiotics and art historical analysis to interpret sculptural elements, understanding both their aesthetic role and cultural significance. Each façade or sculptural feature was examined in terms of:

- Composition and proportionality within the architectural design
- Material texture and technique
- Symbolism, iconography, or narrative function

The methods allowed for both descriptive analysis (documenting the presence and style of sculptural elements) and interpretive insight (exploring how decorative sculpture communicates historical, cultural, or social meaning within the built environment).

This multi-level approach ensures that both technical craftsmanship and symbolic significance are captured, highlighting the role of sculpture as an integral part of Baku's architectural identity.

Results

Historical Integration of Sculpture and Architecture

During the late 19th to early 20th centuries, Baku's oil boom created opportunities for lavish architectural projects, many of which incorporated European stylistic elements such as Neo-Renaissance, Baroque, and Art Nouveau (Madsen, 2013). Architects frequently collaborated with sculptors to adorn façades, entrances, cornices, and balconies with sculptural ornamentation. Typical motifs included floral patterns, mythological figures, geometric designs, and allegorical carvings reflecting wealth and cosmopolitan taste.

The widespread use of local limestone enabled intricate detailing. This stone's softness allowed precise relief carving, while its durability ensured that ornamental features could survive the city's coastal climate. The combination of sculptural richness and structural design created façades that were simultaneously decorative and expressive of social status.



Figure 1. Decorative façade of the Ismailiyya Building, Baku

Description: This building, constructed in 1913, features neo-Gothic elements combined with sculptural reliefs, including floral motifs and heraldic shields carved into the limestone façade, reflecting the early 20th-century European influence on Baku architecture. (en.wikipedia.org)



Figure 2. Residential building by Johann Wilhelm Edel (1896–1899)

Architectural Style: The sculpture is typical of late 19th to early 20th-century classical, Renaissance Revival, or Art Nouveau architectural ornamentation common across European cities (Sadikhova & Babayev, 2025). The figure is carved with flowing, wavy hair draped over her shoulders. Above her head is a round capital (molding) that visually supports the abacus and upper cornice. Below the bust, the pillar transitions into decorative carved elements featuring a ribbon/bow and a carved rose/flower design.

Constructed from carved limestone or sandstone sandstone-colored masonry, this detail is positioned on a pier between large wooden-framed glass windows. The three-storey income house with shops on the ground floor was constructed in 1896–1899 according to the design of the German architect Johann Wilhelm Edel (1863–14 February 1932).

The residential building, one of the most beautiful buildings in Baku, occupies a prominent urban-planning position at the intersection of two of the city's central thoroughfares and has access to three streets: Kamenistaya Street (now Bashir Safaroglu Street), Kaspiyskaya Street (now Rashid Behbudov Street), and Telefonnaya Street (now 28 May Street). The area occupied by the building is almost equal to the size of the entire city block.

In terms of its architectural and planning characteristics, this architectural monument belongs to the monumental buildings of the city designed in the French Renaissance style. The architectural composition of the residential building is characterized by prominently articulated

domed corners, façades constructed with large-scale orders featuring strongly projecting Corinthian columns, the vertical rhythm of the central axes, and a pronounced silhouette.

The building is notable for the rich plasticity of its façades, the artistic paintings in the stairwells, and the refined and professionally executed interior decoration of the income house, which incorporates both Oriental and European motifs.

In his construction projects, architect Johann Edel paid particular attention not only to the complex composition of the building but also to numerous architectural details, thereby contributing a distinctive and rich artistic palette to the architectural appearance of Baku. On the surfaces of the façades of the buildings he designed, volumetric plasticity is created through the interplay of light and shadow.

In the massive and monumental volume of the residential building located at the intersection of Kaspiyskaya Street (now Rashid Behbudov Street) and Telefonnaya Street (now 28 May Street), the architect expressed a complete modulation of architectural techniques, forms, elements, and details in the elegant stone style, approaching a distinctive form of stylistic eclecticism characteristic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Figure 3. Church of the Saviour by Adolf Eichler (1896–1899)

Architectural Style: Designed in the Neo-Gothic (Gothic Revival) style by German-origin architect Adolf Eichler, modeled after St. Elizabeth's Church in Marburg, Germany. It features a single tall bell tower, pointed lancet arches, and classic limestone masonry (Mikayilova, 2013).

Construction: Built between 1896 and 1899 during Baku's oil boom, catering to the growing German Lutheran community that had settled in Azerbaijan. The Nobel brothers, who

were prominent Swedish Lutherans operating in Baku's oil industry, were among the supporters of the community (Smithey, 2021).

Soviet Era Transformation: During Soviet rule in the 1930s, the church was closed for religious worship, and the original organ was dismantled. To save the landmark from demolition, it was repurposed into a concert hall due to its exceptional interior acoustics.

Current Usage: Today, the building serves as the Chamber and Organ Music Hall under the Azerbaijan State Academic Philharmonic. It regularly hosts classical, organ, and chamber orchestra concerts and stands as a preserved historical monument of national importance.

Discussion

Decorative sculpture in Baku's architecture serves as both a visual language and a cultural marker, reflecting the city's evolving socio-economic, political, and artistic contexts. Historically, the late 19th and early 20th centuries represented a peak in applied sculptural ornamentation, largely driven by the city's oil wealth and the desire of industrialists to showcase status and cosmopolitanism. The integration of European styles—Renaissance, Neo-Gothic, Baroque, and Art Nouveau—was mediated through the local limestone, which allowed artisans to produce detailed, durable reliefs that were simultaneously ornamental and symbolic (Sadikhova, 2024).

The results demonstrate that the architectural ornamentation of the residential income house designed by Johann Wilhelm Edel should be understood within the broader context of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European architectural development, while also reflecting the distinctive cultural and urban environment of Baku. The sculptural detail presented in the figure provides particularly strong evidence of the building's eclectic architectural character. The female bust, flowing hair, floral ornamentation, ribbon motif, and classical capital combine figurative sculpture with architectural functionality, creating an ornamental element that is simultaneously decorative and structural. Such integration of sculpture into the façade is characteristic of historicist architecture, in which architects frequently incorporated references to earlier European artistic traditions into contemporary urban buildings.

The architectural characteristics identified in the results correspond particularly closely with the French Renaissance Revival tradition. The building's monumental composition, domed corner elements, strongly projecting Corinthian columns, vertical organization, and elaborate façade decoration demonstrate the deliberate use of classical architectural vocabulary. The sculptural female figure reinforces this interpretation because the treatment of the human form, floral motifs, and ornamental molding recalls the decorative repertoire of Renaissance and classical architecture. At the same time, the flowing treatment of the hair and the organic character of the floral ornament introduce a more dynamic decorative quality that can be associated with the transition toward the ornamental tendencies of Art Nouveau. Therefore, the building should not be interpreted through a rigid stylistic category; rather, its architectural language reflects the stylistic eclecticism that became increasingly characteristic of European and Baku architecture at the turn of the twentieth century.

The material characteristics of the sculpture also contribute to the overall visual effect of the façade. The use of limestone or sandstone-colored masonry creates a unified surface across which the relief ornament can interact with natural light. As indicated by the results, Edel's façades achieve considerable volumetric plasticity through the relationship between light and shadow. Projecting columns, recessed surfaces, sculptural figures, floral motifs, and

cornice elements produce changing shadows throughout the day, increasing the perceptual depth of the building. Consequently, the ornamentation is not merely an applied decorative layer but an essential component of the building's architectural composition.

The building's urban position further enhances the significance of its architectural treatment. Its location at the intersection of major thoroughfares and its frontage onto three streets required a particularly sophisticated approach to façade design. Since the building occupies an area approaching that of an entire city block, its architectural vocabulary had to operate effectively at both close and distant visual ranges. The monumental scale of the structure, combined with its elaborate sculptural details, allowed it to function as an important visual landmark within the rapidly developing urban landscape of Baku. The articulation of the corners, vertical axes, and prominent architectural orders established a strong relationship between the building and the surrounding streetscape.

A comparison with the Church of the Saviour by Adolf Eichler further illustrates the diversity of European architectural influences present in Baku during the same historical period. Although both buildings were constructed in 1896–1899 and were designed by German architects, they demonstrate substantially different stylistic approaches. Eichler's church employs the Neo-Gothic vocabulary, characterized by pointed arches, a prominent bell tower, and Gothic Revival forms, whereas Edel's residential building relies predominantly on Renaissance and classical architectural elements. This contrast indicates that Baku's architectural development at the end of the nineteenth century was not governed by a single stylistic model. Instead, different European traditions were selectively adopted and adapted according to the function, symbolic significance, and urban position of individual buildings.

The comparison also reveals the important role of the city's German architectural community in shaping the built environment of Baku during the oil-boom period. Both Edel and Eichler introduced architectural approaches rooted in European traditions, yet these approaches became part of Baku's local architectural identity rather than remaining isolated reproductions of European models. In Edel's building, European Renaissance and classical motifs coexist with Oriental decorative elements in the interiors. This combination demonstrates how architectural forms circulated across geographical and cultural boundaries and were subsequently reinterpreted within Baku's multicultural urban environment.

Another significant result concerns the relationship between architectural monumentality and decorative refinement. The building possesses a massive overall volume, but this heaviness is visually moderated by an abundance of sculptural details, ornamental moldings, floral designs, painted stairwell decorations, and carefully articulated façade surfaces. The female sculptural figure is particularly important in this respect because it humanizes the monumental architectural mass. Instead of functioning solely as a large-scale urban structure, the building communicates through numerous smaller artistic elements that invite closer visual examination.

The evidence therefore suggests that Edel's architectural contribution should be viewed as an example of late nineteenth-century architectural eclecticism in Baku, in which Renaissance Revival, classical, and decorative tendencies were synthesized into a coherent monumental composition. The sculpture examined in the figure is significant not simply because of its aesthetic qualities but because it represents the broader architectural strategy of integrating fine-art elements into the façade. Its combination of the human figure, floral symbolism, classical architectural framing, and carefully carved stone demonstrates the high degree of craftsmanship employed in the building.

Finally, the comparison with Eichler's Church of the Saviour emphasizes that the period of 1896–1899 represented an important stage in the architectural modernization of Baku. The simultaneous appearance of Neo-Gothic and Renaissance-oriented monumental structures demonstrates the city's openness to diverse European architectural traditions. However, these imported styles were not reproduced mechanically. They were transformed through local materials, urban conditions, decorative preferences, and the multicultural environment of Baku. Thus, the results support the interpretation of Edel's building as an important example of stylistic hybridity and architectural eclecticism, reflecting the interaction of European historicism with the distinctive cultural and urban context of late nineteenth-century Baku.

The analysis of façades, such as the Ismailiyya Building (Figure 1), reveals a careful negotiation between structure and decoration. Sculptural elements were not merely applied surfaces but were integrated into architectural proportions, enhancing spatial rhythm and articulating architectural hierarchy. Motifs such as floral patterns, allegorical figures, and heraldic shields conveyed messages of wealth, cultural literacy, and social aspiration. These façades, therefore, were both aesthetic and communicative, creating a visual dialogue with the urban environment and the inhabitants of Baku.

The juxtaposition of historical and contemporary approaches underscores a continuity of artistic aspiration in Baku. While stylistic and technical methods have changed, the fundamental impulse—to integrate visual art with architecture and to communicate cultural identity—remains constant. The city's sculptural legacy thus provides insight into broader patterns of urban identity formation, demonstrating how decorative sculpture can shape both the aesthetics and meaning of the built environment over time.

Overall, Baku's architectural sculpture illustrates the interplay of materiality, symbolism, and form across centuries, highlighting the city's capacity to synthesize tradition and innovation. The findings suggest that preserving historic sculptural façades while embracing contemporary sculptural architecture is crucial to maintaining Baku's distinctive urban character.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that the integration of sculpture and architecture played a significant role in shaping the visual and cultural character of Baku during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The city's rapid economic development during the oil boom created favorable conditions for large-scale construction and encouraged the adoption, adaptation, and reinterpretation of European architectural traditions. Within this context, sculptural decoration became an important component of architectural composition rather than merely an additional ornamental feature.

The analysis of the residential building designed by Johann Wilhelm Edel in 1896–1899 demonstrates how sculptural elements could contribute simultaneously to façade composition, visual rhythm, symbolic expression, and the overall plasticity of a building. The female figure, floral ornament, ribbon-like motifs, classical molding, and carefully articulated façade demonstrate the interaction between architectural structure and sculptural decoration. The use of light-colored local limestone further enhanced the three-dimensional character of these elements by creating distinctive contrasts of light and shadow.

The comparison with Adolf Eichler's Church of the Saviour illustrates the stylistic diversity that characterized Baku's architectural development during the same period. While Edel's building reflects Renaissance Revival and eclectic tendencies, Eichler's church represents Neo-Gothic architecture. Their coexistence demonstrates that Baku's architectural

modernization was not based on a single stylistic model but on the simultaneous presence and adaptation of multiple European traditions.

Overall, the findings indicate that architectural sculpture functioned as an important medium of cultural exchange and urban representation. It reflected the city's economic prosperity, cosmopolitan aspirations, artistic ambitions, and engagement with European architectural culture. Consequently, Baku's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century architecture should be understood as a culturally hybrid and stylistically diverse urban phenomenon in which sculpture and architecture operated as an integrated artistic system.

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