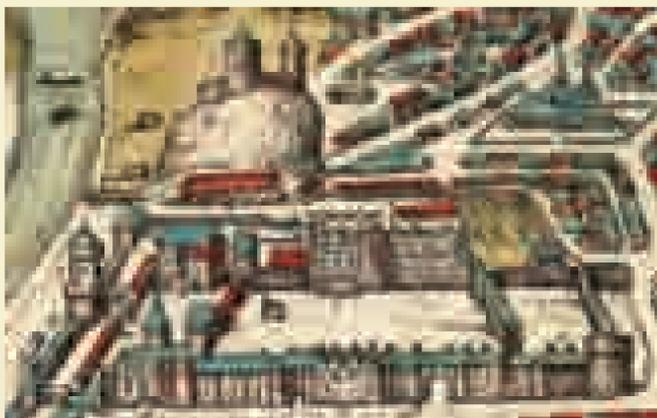


# THE RENAISSANCE PALACE OF SIGISMUND THE OLD

Sigismund the Old's construction efforts in the Lower Castle territory were set back by fires. A new wooden palace was destroyed by fire in 1513. Construction of a brick palace was finished in time for the investiture ceremony of the young Sigismund Augustus to Grand Duke of Lithuania in 1529. But another deadly fire broke out in 1530. Both Sigismund the Old and his wife Bona Sforza were involved in reconstructing the palace. Sigismund the Old purchased land from the magnates to extend the palace grounds. Bona Sforza, who was a noblewoman from the powerful and wealthy Italian Sforza dynasty in Milan, helped bring Renaissance architecture (sculptors and stonemasons) and culture (new foods and gardens) to Lithuania and Poland. The south and east wings of the opulent Italian Renaissance palace, which were built in the first quarter of the 16th century, cost 100,000 ducats and were called the *Aula Regia antiqua*.

The Florentine Renaissance architect, Bartolomeo Berrecci, who was one of the chief architects of the Renaissance Wawel Royal Castle, visited Vilnius in order to get approval from Sigismund the Old of the plans for the Sigismund's Chapel at the Wawel Cathedral. The stonemason Benedict from Sandomierz (or Benedykt Sandomierzanin), who had worked for Sigismund the Old in Krakow, also worked for him in Vilnius. Both Berrecci and Sandomierzanin could have contributed to the reconstruction of the Vilnius palace. Construction work was supervised by the German engineer and caretaker of the Lower Castle, Ulrich Hosius.

Following the fire of 1530, work on the Lower Castle and the palace of the grand dukes of Lithuania was done by architect and sculptor Bernardino Zanobi de Gianotis from Rome or Florence. Without a doubt, Bona Sforza was very influential in the future development of the residence, initiating construction near the east wing, commissioning a spacious residential tower, and ensuring the maintenance of the garden established near the palace. She aspired to transform the Vilnius residence into a representational symbol of the Gediminid-Jagiellonian dynasty. By this stage, Renaissance architectural features would have become more pronounced at the palace. Stone was used for the first time to frame the windows – a coarse textured conglomerate from Bystrica (40 km east of Vilnius).



View of Vilnius castles around 1545 from the atlas *Urbium praecipuarum totius mundi* by Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, Cologne, 1581, LDKVR



Stove tile with the monogram of Sigismund the Old and the coat of arms of Poland, 16th century, LDKVR



Stove tile with the Sforza family coat of arms, 16th century, LDKVR



Architectural detail with a foliate pattern in relief, sandstone, 16th century, LDKVR



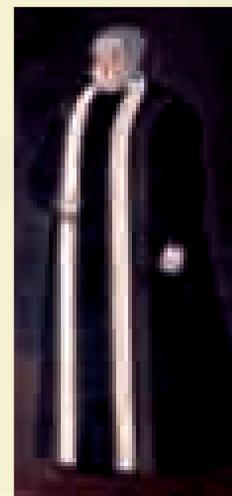
Treaty between the bishop of Vilnius Jan of the Lithuanian dukes and Italian artists Bernardino Zanobi de Gianotis, Giovanni Cini ir Filippo Bartolomeo da Fiesole regarding the Vilnius Cathedral repairs, 1534, LVIA



1/2 Groschen of Sigismund the Old, 1514. During the times of Sigismund the Old, coins started being produced with the year they were minted. LNM



Portrait of Sigismund the Old, the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, 16th century, ZKW-PHKN



Portrait of Bona Sforza, the Queen of Poland, Grand Duchess of Lithuania and Duchess of Bari, 16th century, ZKW-PHKN



The Three Kings and Sigismund the Old worship the infant Jesus, from the prayer book of Albertas Goštautas, Stanislaw Samoźrzelnik, the Mogilev Cistercian Abbey art workshops, Poland, 1528, UBM



Scene from the tapestry *Procession with Elephants*, workshop of Jean Grenier or Arnould Poissonier, Tournai, Flanders, 1515–1520, donated by the Royal Palace Restoration Foundation, LDKVR



Renaissance armchair, Lyon, France, early 16th century, LDKVR



Great monstrance of Albertas Goštautas, the Grand Chancellor of Lithuania, from the Vilnius Cathedral Treasury, Vilnius, Lithuania, 1535, BPM