

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PALACE

With the announcement of applications for tender to design a national gallery building in Vilnius in 1983, one of the 24 projects submitted suggested the palace of the Lithuanian grand dukes be reconstructed (project authors: Augis Gučas, Julius Jurgelionis, Napoleonas Kitkauskas, Saulius Motieka). This project was received favourably by the public however the idea of reconstructing a *feudal* castle during the Soviet period was impossible. Earlier, Lithuanian heritage protectors had also received talking down from Moscow over the reconstruction of the Trakai Castle.

In 1984–1986, an idea was raised that instead of the Pioneers' Chamber in the so-called House of Abraham Schlossberg (part of the east wing, the only remainder of the grand ducal palace, albeit altered) a Museum of the Friendship of Nations be established. This served as a pretext for the commencement of archaeological and architectural investigations in the territory of the former palace of the grand dukes of Lithuania.

By 1986 the east wing of the Vilnius Lower Castle's Old Arsenal had been reconstructed and adapted to serve as a museum which was to house the Lithuanian Art Museum's branch – the Museum of Applied Arts. Later on the north and west wings of the Old Arsenal were reconstructed and became part of the National Museum of Lithuania.

The first submission of reconstruction projects of the palace of the grand dukes of Lithuania took place in 1994. This process revealed different visions for the reconstruction of the historic residence and different attitudes towards heritage protection. Some projects suggested the authentic remains be

covered with a glass globe, or the installation of an amphitheatre in the palace's inner courtyard, or to reconstruct the palace's facades. The winning submission was the project design from the Design and Restoration Institute (group leaders: Rimas Grigas and Ričardas Bitovtas), which suggested the palace's historical appearance from the 16th–17th century be reconstructed, with the possibility to display the most valuable part of the palace – the authentic remains (stone walls and archaeological finds).

Undergoing constant improvement and specification since 2002, this is the project which has been realized. The new structure serves as a casing for the authentic remains and rests on a constructed foundation made of modern materials. The Palace exterior has been reconstructed based on the iconographic material at hand, data gained from archaeological and historical research, as well as the archaeological finds (e.g., the portals, window surrounds, cornices, windowsills, etc.). Some of the palace rooms feature hypothetical historical interiors that illustrate how the residence of the grand dukes of Lithuania could have appeared during the Gothic, Renaissance and early Baroque epochs. This depiction is also based on archaeological finds, historical material and examples coming from other analogous surviving residences in Poland, the Czech Republic, other East European countries, and Italy. It was from these lands that artists and other master craftsmen reached Vilnius where from the 14th to the 17th century they worked on the creation of the residence of the Lithuanian grand dukes in Vilnius' Lower Castle.



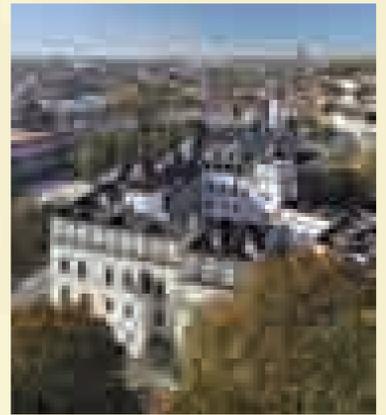
Diagram of the reconstruction and spatial layout of the Palace's southern wing, PRI



Authentic flooring on the first floor of the east wing, 2005 excavations, PTC



Remains of the Gothic cellar in the Palace's east wing, 1987 excavations, PRI



Progress of the Palace's reconstruction: 2001, 2002, 2011, LDKVR



Southern aspect of the Palace and Cathedral facade development, PRI



Computer visualisation of the project to reconstruct the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, 2002, PRI



One of the project designs submitted in 1994 for the Palace's reconstruction, Henrikas Šilgalis and Vytautas Abramauskas, PTC