

BUILDING PLANS / HERITAGE

"The renovation of the Archiepiscopal Palace in Veszprém"

10/04/2023 07:57

The gently winding Castle Street (Vár utca) with its closed row of buildings opens up into a spacious square as it approaches the dominant mass of the Cathedral, creating a central position. Not only physically, but also in a spiritual sense. On its eastern side lies the palace complex, with the Archiepiscopal Palace itself as the central element, flanked from the north by the building of the Grand Provost's House, and from the south by the St. Joseph's House (formerly the Employee House). This is a relationship spanning several centuries, whose primary goal is the harmonious integration of the chief pastor's personal and official life. The latest presentation will introduce the concept of the renovation of the Archiepiscopal Palace.

The episcopal palace built by Ádám Acsády as a historical precedent.

Since the Turkish occupation of Veszprém in 1552, the bishops of Veszprém generally resided in Sümeg, while their residence in Veszprém was occupied by the castle captains. In 1704, the castle burned down, resulting in the destruction of many buildings. It is presumed that the medieval palace did not perish at this time. Although the palace burned down several times, its walls were always provided with new roofs due to their strength. The cellar of the bishopric was continuously used for storing wine. At the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, when the bishops returned, they requested the return of the palace from the Chamber. The chapter demonstrated that the façade of the residence had the coat of arms of several bishops carved into the stone. According to some sources, Bishop Ottó Volkra regained possession of the building in 1713, but it was demolished by Castle Commander Rittschau in 1719. Luksics and Pfeiffer suggest that the data indicating the demolition of the palace by Castle Commander Rittschau in 1719 may refer to the central part or entrance of the building. The former "palace" (or certain parts of it) can already be seen in a 16th-century castle plan. Bishop Ádám Acsády had a new palace built after 1733 by demolishing and utilizing the remains of the medieval palace's southern part. These earlier building parts can also be found in the building of the former episcopal employee house connected to the southern side of the Archiepiscopal Palace.

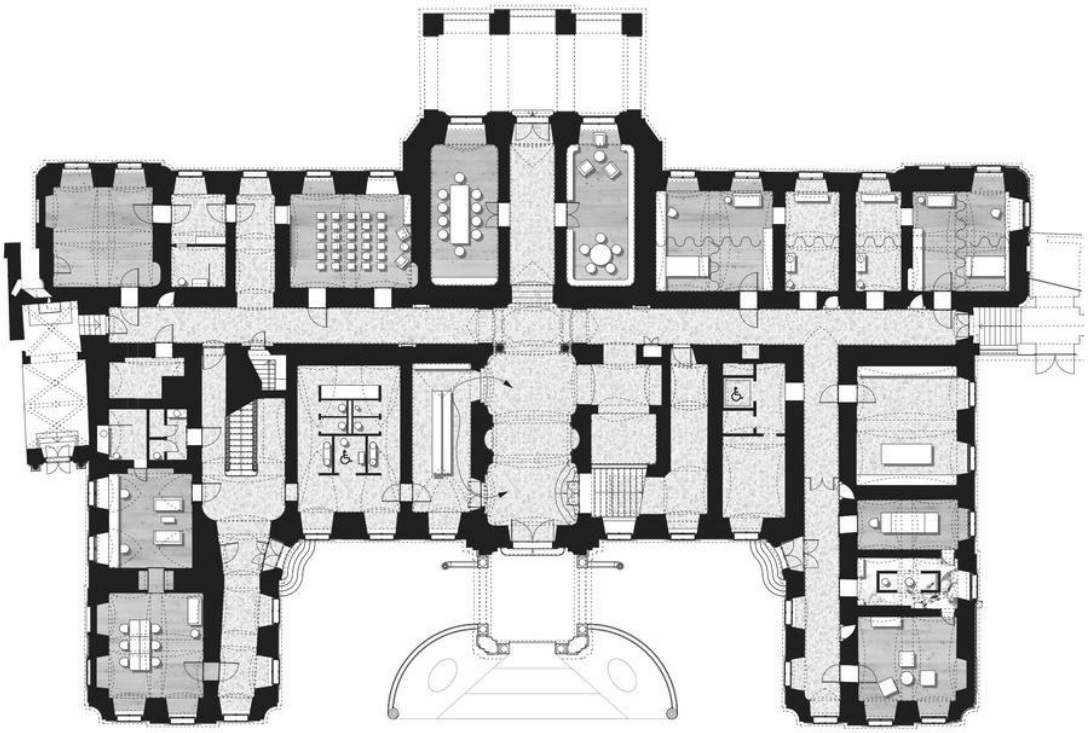
Grand Provost's House

The Grand Provost's House was built around 1740-41 by Márton Padányi Biró (provost, later bishop) after the elimination of smaller residential buildings and the merging of plots. With the development of a two-story layout, the upper part of the southern wall of the house, shared with the Gisela Chapel, became a gable at that time. Towards the second half of the 18th century, traces of stylistic adjustments can be observed on the facade and in some internal details, perhaps indicating the period of construction of the Episcopal Palace (now the Archiepiscopal Palace). The building's construction history is extremely complex, its present form was shaped by the early 20th century and can be characterized by many earlier periods. The remnants of medieval buildings enclosed within the current walls, the Gisela Chapel itself, and the fragments of Árpádian-era buildings and castle walls beneath the building all belong to the earliest periods. The Grand Provost's House continues to function with ecclesiastical governance functions similar to before. The offices of the archbishopric leaders are housed in the building, along with associated support functions, supplemented with various levels of meeting spaces and a conference room. The architectural concept was developed with respect to the monument building, taking into account the functional and technical requirements of the present day.

St. Joseph's House

During the construction of the current palace, the kitchen, employee residences, and dining room were excluded from the main building, necessitating the creation of a separate structure next to the palace for this purpose. The previous building sections

were reused and incorporated into this new structure, which became the house for the bishop's employees. In 1773, after Bishop Koller's death, an inventory was made of the bishopric properties, providing detailed information about the condition and furnishings of the rooms. According to this contemporary description, the house for the bishop's employees, including the present dining room and surrounding rooms, was already completed and in use by 1773. After the bishop's death, construction continued, and the single-story wing extending towards the street of the employee house was likely built between 1775 and 1778. References in literature, attributed to Jakab Fellner and dated between 1775 and 1778, likely pertain to the northern wing and corridor of the employee building, although these references lack specific citations. The reconstruction preserves the historical function of the building, which will include modern amenities such as a functional kitchen, everyday dining area, and both permanent and temporary apartments on the upper floor to accommodate the various needs of the archiepiscopal representation.



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Ground floor plan, The renovation of the Archbishop's Palace in Veszprém, Designed by M Architectural Office (M építész Iroda)

Archiepiscopal Palace

The building erected by Acsády was already considered narrow and in poor condition in the mid-century, and urgent reconstruction was needed even during the time of Márton Padányi Biró (1745-1762). However, since he resided and built in Sümeg, he did not pay much attention to the building in Veszprém. His successor, Ignác Koller of Nagymánya, was a clergyman active in the spirit of the Council of Trent, who attached great importance to architecture in spreading Catholic culture in the second half of the 18th century. Koller's secular roles as the county's chief magistrate, as well as chancellor and crowner of the queen, also prompted him to build the new

headquarters. Koller Ignác maintained a good relationship with Károly Esterházy, the bishop of Vác, later Eger.

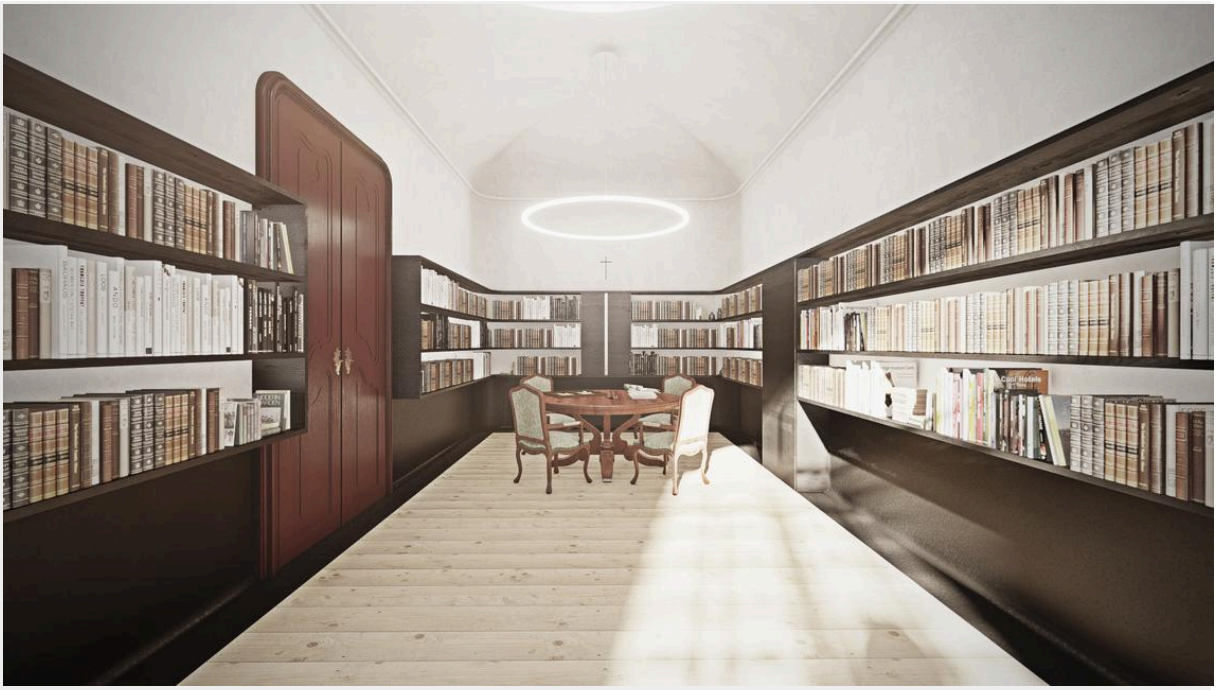
The construction of the palace between 1765 and 1776 allowed the bishop to reside in a dignified and representative building befitting his rank. The bishop entrusted the design and construction of the palace to one of the most prominent Hungarian architects of his time, Jakab Fellner, who was also employed by Károly Esterházy. Although the work was completed with a smaller footprint compared to the initial, larger plans (fortunately, preserving the Grand Provost's House and the Gisela Chapel), it can still be classified among the most valuable examples of Baroque architecture in Hungary, with its French style, delicate details, and interior richness.



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Ground floor plan, renovation of the Archbishop's Palace in Veszprém, Designed by M Architectural Office (M építész Iroda)

Apart from the cathedral and churches located in the castle, this may be the only building where the original ecclesiastical function has remained unchanged over the centuries. As the residence of the bishop (later archbishop), the palace has been able to preserve its original character, structure, and layout. Furthermore, perhaps the greatest benefit of continuity is that the architectural treasure - sometimes covered, sometimes in its original form - still retains Baroque style elements and most of the structural systems. Through research supporting the design process, the building has become easily readable, but of course, there were and are unreconstructable surfaces and structural elements that have been overridden by subsequent stylistic periods. The condition of the interior spaces bore the absence of overdue periodic renovations, the traces of unprofessional interventions, but mostly these steps covered reversible processes.



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Library, renovation of the Archbishop's Palace in Veszprém, Designed by M Architectural Office (M építész Iroda)

The knowledge accumulated during the research has created the possibility to evoke the original atmosphere of the building at a given moment. The relatively well-preserved and reconstructible representative spaces (great dining room, main staircase, drawing rooms, picture gallery, Koller library, and archiepiscopal chapel, upper enfilade) carry the atmosphere that can be authentically outlined with the help of surviving inventories. However, the pursuit of authenticity does not override everything. In cases where there was not complete certainty about the Baroque period condition, room was given to classical or historical style elements - if they have authentically survived. In their absence, the language of contemporary architecture establishes a connection with historical details.

OBJET TROUVE

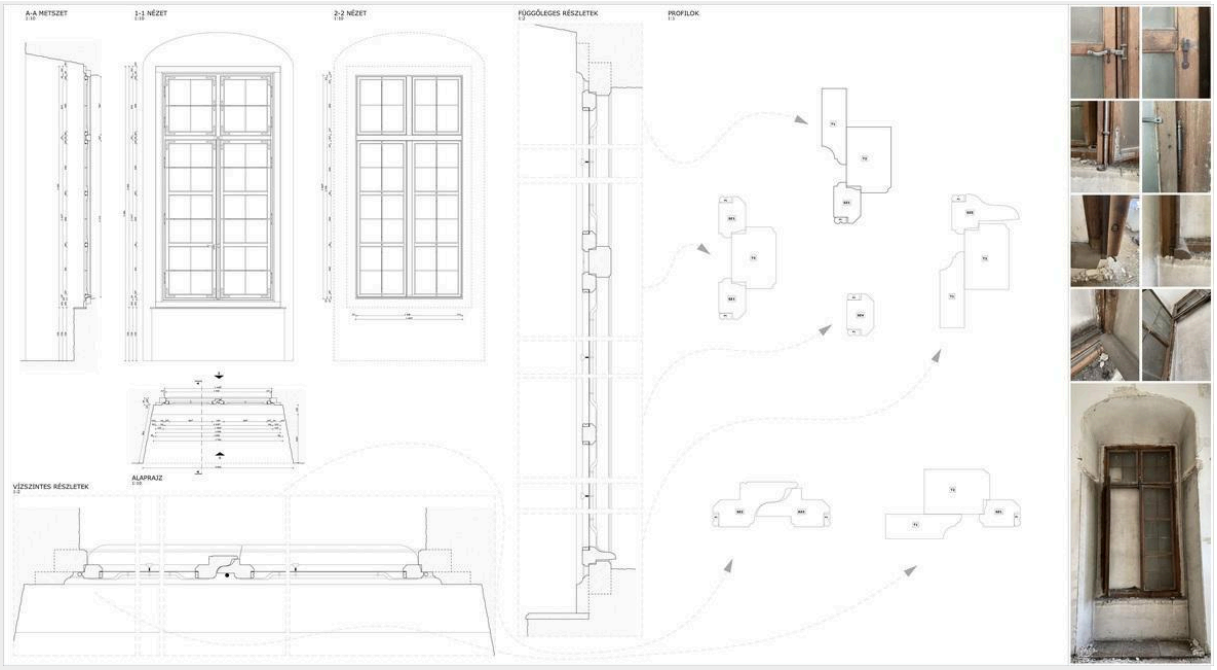
It is worth mentioning two moments when hidden, centuries-old structures and surfaces became visible. During the exploration of the archiepiscopal chapel, the original, completely intact, fresco-painted, baroque decorative painting emerged from under a 19th-century overpainting, presumably from Rudolf Steiner. It is a rare and exceptional moment when two eras (baroque-historicist) with radically different aesthetic and stylistic thinking can be experienced simultaneously in the same liturgical space.



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The historicist and baroque decorations, renovation of the Archbishop's Palace in Veszprém, Designed by M Architectural Office (M építész Iroda)

We experienced no less exciting moment when unexpectedly, from behind a piece of furniture built into a blind window niche on the exterior, an original Baroque-era window emerged in its entirety. It featured leaded glass inserts, flawless functioning hardware, and woodwork. This certainty easily allowed us to deduce the originality of the facade windows and the timing of their presumed alteration.



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The discovered Baroque window.

The future

The basic function of the building will remain unchanged. It will continue to serve as a residential building for the current archbishop leading the archdiocese and the ecclesiastical leaders designated by him. In recent decades, the archival and collection functions that have been moved in will cease on the ground floor, and their place will be taken by residential units and spaces for archiepiscopal representation (such as the archbishop's private library, meeting room, screening room). The palace will be periodically open to visitors, and additional spaces connected to the entrance hall will facilitate this service.

On the upper floor, significant interventions are not planned; typically, the historical spaces will undergo reconstruction. The enfilade in the eastern wing will continue to serve as space for archiepiscopal representation and events. The central dining hall will serve as a venue for chamber music concerts, featuring a baroque-tuned portable organ made by the Pécs Organ Manufactory (Pécsi Orgonaépítő Manufaktúra). The residential suite planned for the southern cross-wing will be a high-standard apartment complex, with a functionally connected archiepiscopal dining room. The Koller Library in the northern cross-wing and the archiepiscopal private chapel await restoration interventions while preserving their original functions.



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The row of salons, renovation of the Archbishop's Palace in Veszprém, Designed by M Architectural Office (M építész Iroda)

On the basement level, considered as a separate part of the building, a catering unit is being established, characterized by services such as wine tastings, wine dinners, and hosting cultural events related to wine culture. The linear spatial structure will be preserved in its original state, with the planned premises arranged like islands within this structured space.

On all three levels, contemporary architectural interventions are carried out that respect the original spatial structure, they do not "adhere", and they create the possibility of deciphering for future generations.

László Pethő

The presentations of the renovation projects on the Veszprém Castle Hill will be collected in this dossier in the near future.

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Project Information
Location:
Veszprém
Architects, creators:
M Építész Iroda Kft. (M Architectural Office Ltd.)
The renovation of the Archbishop's Palace in Veszprém
URL:
M Építész Iroda (M Architectural Office)

Year of design:
2021-2022
Year of construction:
2022-2025

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