

COINS DEDICATED TO  
THE PALACE OF THE RULERS  
OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA



Denomination 500 litas  
Gold Au 999.9  
Quality proof  
Diameter of the circle circumscribed around the regular dodecagon coin 32.50 mm  
Weight 31.10 g  
Plain edge  
Mintage 1,000 pcs



Denomination 1 litas  
Alloy of copper and nickel (Cu 75, Ni 25)  
Diameter 22.30 mm  
Weight 6.25 g  
Edge reeded at intervals  
Mintage 1,000,000 pcs

Designed by Giedrius Paulauskis  
Issued 2005



The ensemble of Vilnius Castles and the Palace of the Rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the centre of the city represent the principal historical residence of the Grand Dukes of the ruling Jagiellonian, Gediminian and Vasa dynasties of Lithuania, and symbolises the sovereignty and prestige of the State. The restored Palace of the Rulers will maintain the continuity of the tradition of the State of Lithuania and support the status of Vilnius as a historical centuries-old capital and important political and cultural centre of Central and Eastern Europe.

Archaeological research and finds confirm that the site of Vilnius Castles, both the Upper and the Lower, was already settled in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium



BC. Up to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the buildings were mostly wooden, later replaced by stone ones. It is believed that the first and the only king of Lithuania Mindaugas might have had his residence in the castles of Vilnius in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. Officially, the capital of Lithuania was relocated to Vilnius by Grand Duke Gediminas in 1323. The earliest buildings, with their stone walls bound in Pre-gothic, or the so-called Baltic, way discovered on the site of the Lower Castle, primarily in the grounds of the Palace of the Rulers and the Cathedral, are normally attributed to the time when these two rulers were in power. Subsequent rulers of Lithuania – Algirdas and his son Jogaila, who later became King of Poland – also left their trace in the enlargement of Vilnius residency. Research finds in the recent decades imply that a stone-wall castle with towers was situated at the location of the Palace of the Rulers on the site of the Lower Castle as early as in the Pre-gothic and early Gothic period. Remaining stone foundations suggest that the castle was reconstructed and enlarged several times in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is still uncertain as to where the residence of Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania – who had a preference for Trakai – was, although a message of 1413 indicates that he certainly used to stay in the Lower Castle too. While at the peak of his power in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Vytautas sought for the royal crown and rebuilt the Vilnius Cathedral, which had been damaged by fire, for the coronation



celebrations. At this time the rulers' residence in Vilnius was presumably reconstructed, although it is not certain which one it was – the Upper or the Lower Castle. The chronology of masonry, stylistic elements and the impressive size of the grand hall on the first floor imply that this was exactly where Vytautas' residence in Vilnius could have been.

A number of hints in written sources and abundant finds related to the period in question confirm that Grand Duke Alexander of Lithuania (reigned from 1492, d. 1506), who became King of Poland in 1501, relocated his residence from the Upper Castle to the Lower Castle and on the site of the former castle built a sumptuous palace. After disastrous fires swept over Vilnius at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Gothic palace of Alexander was reconstructed and enlarged by Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland Sigismund the Old (1506–1548) and his wife Bona Sforca, who in turn contributed to the spreading of culture and art of Italian Renaissance in both Lithuania and Poland. Many think that the reconstruction plan was prepared by

the architect Bartolomeo Berrecci, who was then in charge of the reconstruction of Wawel Castle (Cracow) and the construction of the Sigismund Chapel in Cracow Cathedral the construction of the Renaissance residence was further continued by the son of Sigismund the Old and Bona Sforca – the last representative of the Gediminian–Jagiellonian dynasty on Lithuanian and Polish thrones – Sigismund Augustus (1548–1572). As early as in 1529 he was declared Grand Duke of Lithuania, while from 1544 he actually ruled over Lithuania by appointment of his father, for the most part residing in Vilnius together with his mother. In mid-16<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction works of the Palace of the Rulers were steered by Italian artists, mostly coming from Tuscany, the cradle of the Renaissance. These included Bernardino de Gianotis Zanobi, Giovanni Cini da Siena, Giovanni Maria Mosca Padovano, Filippo Bartolomeo da Fiesole, etc., who were assisted by local masters as well as those from other countries of Central Europe.

As the ruler of Lithuania, Poland and Transylvania Stephen Bathory came

over to Lithuania, he favoured Hrodna for his residence. After the fire of 1610, repairs and redecoration of the Palace of the Rulers was undertaken by Sigismund Vasa (1587–1632), King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, heir to the royal throne of Sweden. The renovation – this time in early Baroque style – of the Palace of the Rulers was carried out in parallel with the construction of the mausoleum chapel of Prince Casimir (d. 1484, canonised 1602) next to the Cathedral. This chapel also became a chapel of the renovated Palace of the Rulers, with which the chapel and the Cathedral were linked by a gallery. It is believed that in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the renovation of the Palace of the Rulers and the construction of the Chapel of St Casimir were guided by the King's architects Matteo Castello and Constante Tencalla, former apprentices of famous Italian architects Carlo Maderno and Domenico Fontana. At all times the Palace of the Rulers and the Cathedral, up to the demolition of the Palace at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, formed a harmonious architectural ensemble. Different architects, including Laurynas

Gucevičius, always combined shapes and sizes of the two buildings.

The splendour of the Palace of the Rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania stayed at its peak from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. during the Renaissance and early Baroque epoch. The Palace had an immense collection of works of art and jewellery famous all over Europe, as well as abundant collections of arms, armour, hunting trophies, and books. The Palace was a place for staging operas, hosting diplomatic receptions, and settling political and international issues urgent to Lithuania and Poland as well as to the entire Europe. The residence of the ruler became the centre of dissemination of the latest cultural and artistic initiatives, ideas and fashion trends all over the country.

The Palace of the Rulers was badly destroyed by the unsuccessful war of Poland and Lithuania with Moscow, rebel Cossacks of the Ukraine, and Sweden. In 1655, the Muscovite and Cossack army occupied Vilnius, the Castles and the Palace of the Rulers, where they stayed until 1661. All valuables still remaining in the Palace were plundered and taken away to Russia, and the Palace itself was left devastated and wrecked. The Palace stood in disrepair for about 150 years. In the second half of the



17<sup>th</sup> century and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of rebuilding the Palace – a symbol of the State and its sovereignty, and a residence of the Grand Duke of Lithuania – was repeatedly addressed, as did the obligation of the ruler of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania to reside in Vilnius every three years. Unfortunately, the empty treasury of the crumbling state, the domestic and international situation aggravated with objective complications, and unfavourable opinion of the rulers were the reasons why the Palace in Vilnius was never used again as a residence of Grand Dukes of Lithuania from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Vilnius citizens were allowed to settle in the ruins of the Palace, eventually it was planned to move public administration institutions into the place. At the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the incorporation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into Russia, tsarist authorities encouraged razing of the

residence of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania to the ground. After abandoning the Russian fortress in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the site of the Palace was levelled out, planted over and converted into a park. For a long time the magnificent palace, which had once stood there, was kept alive solely in the paintings of the past.

The grounds of the Palace of the Rulers waited for professional investigation and public attention for nearly two hundred years. Complex investigations that prompted deliberations about the restoration of the Palace started as late as in 1987. At that time, the idea of the restoration of the Palace received wide support, since many associated it with the re-established statehood, recovered justice and restoration of a historical symbol so important to national, civic and state awareness, and consolidation.

Professionals carrying out the Palace restoration project have been actively supported by the Palace of the Rulers Public Foundation. Apart from raising money for the restoration of the Palace among the Lithuanian public and the émigré community, the Foundation advocates the restoration policy, supports publications about the Palace and restoration of archaeological finds,



arranges exhibitions, and helps to acquire authentic works of art and other valuables for the interiors of the restored Palace. The Lithuanian Art Museum is in charge of the Palace of the Rulers interior and exposition programmes, it also arranges exhibitions dedicated to the Palace of the Rulers. The Vilnius Castle Directorate acts as the contractor for all restoration works.

The completion of the restoration and sumptuous furnishing, and the grand opening of the Palace of the Rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania have been scheduled for 6 July 2009, the State Day (Mindaugas' crowning day) of Lithuania. On that particular day the celebrations to commemorate a thousand-year anniversary when the name of Lithuania was mentioned for the first time, and the opening of the restored Palace of the Rulers are to become the core of both the commemorative celebrations and the "Vilnius – European Capital of Culture 2009" programme.

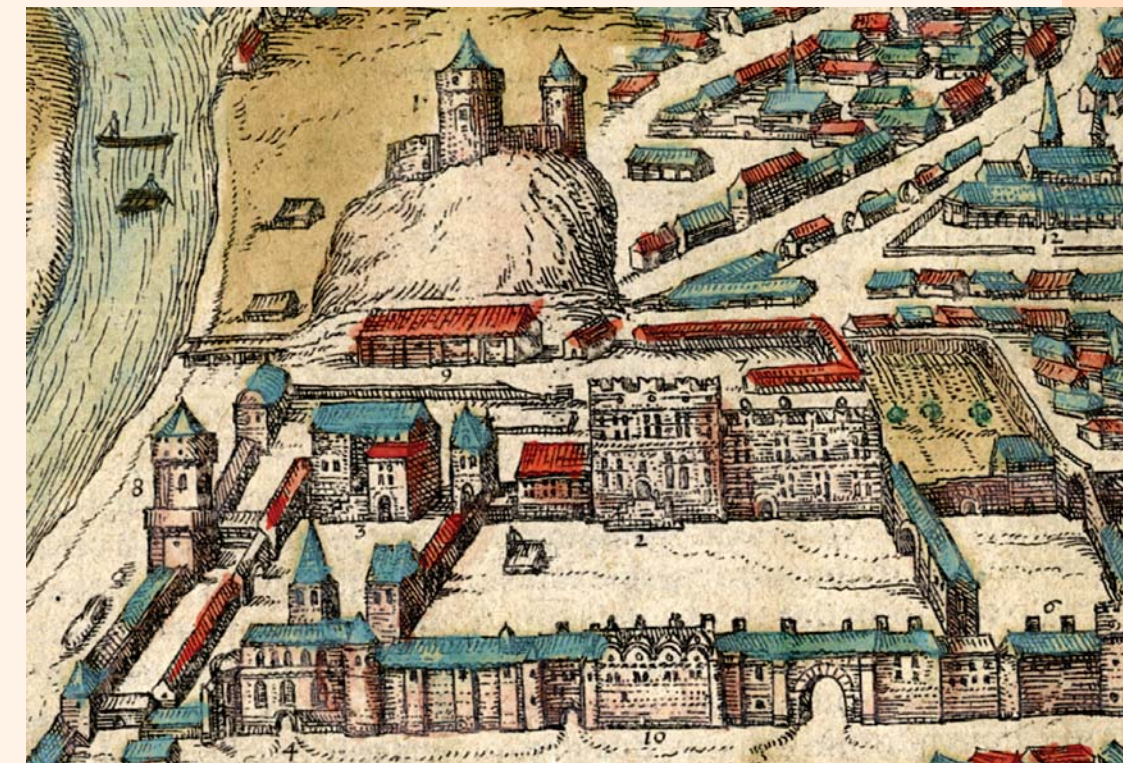
The restored Palace of the Rulers will become a multifunctional historical centre of culture and will engage in wide-ranging activities covering representation, museums, education, cultural and tourist information. This will be an independent and modern national institution fostering and promoting culture, applying traditional methods as well as those tested by international practice and advanced technologies that have been employed by institutions established in historical residences of Europe. The Palace is envisaged to become the gates of tourism to Lithuania and its capital Vilnius.

*Dr Vydas Dolinskas*



## LITHUANIAN COLLECTORS COINS

*The Palace of the Rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is a symbol of Lithuania's sovereignty, witness to the history of the nation and the state, centre of political, administrative and diplomatic relations, cultural and artistic exchange of the entire Central and East European region*



Information is available at the Bank of Lithuania  
Tel. +370 ~ 5 268 03 16, fax +370 ~ 5 268 03 14, www.lb.lt



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www.lithuanian-mint.lt

**Lithuanian Collectors Coins**

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