

# Rzeszow Castle: History and Contemporaneity - proposal for a new interior adaptation

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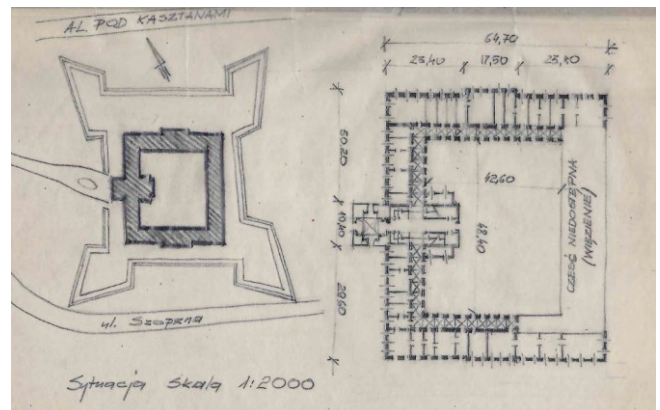
**Abstract:** This paper discusses the adaptation of Rzeszow Castle in Rzeszow, Poland (also called the Castle of the House of Lubomirski in Rzeszow), which is a key building on the Subcarpathia's map of monuments. The objective of the project was to identify the latest trends in conservation art, and, subsequently, to create a proposal for a contemporary interior arrangement for the castle and its site development. The aforementioned design work focused on creating new, innovative concepts for the revalorization of historical buildings, oriented towards development and modernity. The work presents bold, novel – and most importantly – workable solutions for a new functional programme for Rzeszow Castle. The main premise of the future modification of the monument was a complete change of use of the building: from administrative and office space (the current court) to a cultural facility with complementary functions. The proposals presented in the paper are aligned with new principles of cultural environment preservation, and primarily emphasize ideas that facilitate the development of culture and art, social engagement, and support new initiatives. The aforementioned new functional programme complements cultural facilities and events offered by the city of Rzeszow - the capital of the Subcarpathia Voivodeship (one of Poland's sixteen provinces). The article is based on thorough scientific and historical research. The characteristics of the building are presented, with focus on its architectural value, and the current state of preservation of the monument is described. The analysis of the functional-utility program became the basis for creating a contemporary and modern interior design. The final version of the interior plan was developed based on field studies and source research.

**Keywords:** castle, architecture, heritage conservation, revalorization, culture

## INTRODUCTION

There can be no doubt that Rzeszow Castle in Poland is one of the most significant monuments in the city. The building stands out because of much more than just its colourful history – its current form is especially telling, as it is an uncommon testament to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century conservation trends. The building is also a key monument of defensive architecture and an architectural landmark of Rzeszow's historical district, as mentioned by Joanna Malczewska (Malczewska, 2015). Due to the importance and societal value of the building, which was extensively analysed by Jolanta Sroczyńska based on selected documents (Sroczyńska, 2021), this paper presents an attempt to prepare a proposal of contemporary interior arrangement aimed at establishing an innovative centre of culture and art in Rzeszow in combination with plans to transfer the castle under the administration of the City Hall and make its space available mainly for cultural purposes, as currently the castle is the seat of the District Court, and access to the interior of the institution is restricted. In order to create a new concept for the adaptation, a building survey and field research were conducted, along with a review of the available sources and publications, and an analysis of register files and survey docu-

mentation, archival queries and an iconographic analysis with a historical outline and a photographic survey (Fig. 1). The survey was summarized with conclusions concerning the building's existing state.



**Fig. 1.** Rzeszow Castle in Rzeszow, Poland: Site plan and floor plan; register file card from 1950. (Source: Office of the Municipal Conservator of Monuments in Rzeszow, Poland)

## OUTLINE OF THE CASTLE'S HISTORY

The history of Rzeszow Castle dates back to the turn of the seventeenth century, when Rzeszow was under the rule of Mikołaj Spytko Ligęza, who commissioned the construction of a castle and its fortifications (Pęckowski, 1913). The structure was given a form perceived as modern at the time – a *palazzo in fortezza*. In 1638, after the end of the rule of the House of Ligęza, Rzeszow became the property of the House of Lubomirski. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, after the rebellion of Jerzy Sebastian Lubomirski, the castle was modernized by Hieronim August Lubomirski (Janczykowski, 2015). He commissioned Tylman of Gameren (also called Tielman van Gameren) to remodel the castle. The implementation of van Gameren's design, and thus supervision of the construction, was first assigned to architect Pietro Martire Belotti, and later to his son – Giovanni Battista Belotti (Gosztyła, Mikrut, 2017). The castle was extended into a quadrangle and a second floor was added, while the fortifications consisted of four pentagonal bastions and a gate protected by a ravelin (Żurawska, 1959). Afterwards, in 1733, Prince Jerzy Ignacy Lubomirski ordered his court architect, Karol Henryk Wiedemann, to reinforce the castle's fortifications and to remodel the castle itself (Nabywaniec, Zych, 2002, 2003). Due to a fire in 1735, the castle had to be remodelled (Gosztyła, Mikrut, 2017). Initially, the castle was mostly used for residential and defensive purposes, but in the early nineteenth century it was taken over by the Austrian government and converted into a prison and courthouse. The castle did not suffer major damage during the Second World War (Żurawska, 1959).

## SITE OVERVIEW AND STATE OF PRESERVATION

The current form of the castle is from 1906 (Fig. 2). The structure consists of the castle massing and Dutch-school bastion fortifications with a dry moat and four corner bastions with irregular faces, extended from the west and east. The lower parts of the bastions are lined with stone. The corners of their faces feature four guard towers with cartouches (Kuś, 2021). The state of the bastions has been determined to be good. At present, one of the bastions serves as a car park; another has been redeveloped, while two remain undeveloped. The castle massing has a rectangular floor plan with four wings and a quadrangular courtyard (Fig. 3). A six-storey, square-based tower topped with a dome and spire abuts the west wing. Cornices divide the tower's facades into three parts gradually narrowing towards the top. Above the cornices, there are narrow galleries with balustrades and at their level there are wide and glazed arched doors. The tower's corners are accentuated with pilasters. The uppermost storey is topped with triangular gables with clock faces. The tower's windows are square-shaped.



Fig. 2. Rzeszow Castle: Aerial photo. (Photo: Marcin Ziobro, 2021; Source: Gołąbek, Gosztyła, Mikrut-Kusy – authors)



Fig. 3. Rzeszow Castle: Photo of the courtyard. (Photo: Wojciech Woś, 2021; Source: Gołąbek, Gosztyła, Mikrut-Kusy – authors)

The castle's wings have two storeys each, and feature basements and attics with potential for adaptive reuse as modern exhibition spaces (due to the lack of partitioning into smaller rooms). The west wing has a doubled, pronounced avant-corps which houses the main stairwell. The central parts of the north, east and south wings have slightly extended avant-corps from the internal side. The wings are covered with gable roofs covered with ceramic tiles. The building was built with a masonry structural system made of brick. The rooms in the tower on the first floor, the hallways of the ground floor and the first floor feature groin vaults and Klein's ceilings, while above the basements there are segmental ceilings. The castle's facades feature rustication on the ground floor, and are horizontally divided by cornices with simple profiles. They also end with a pronounced cornice in the form of an entablature. The inter-window strips feature pilasters. On the side facing the courtyard, at the ground floor level, there is a rusticated arcade decoration. The windows in the wing facades are wooden, double casement windows with rectangular outlines, transom cornices and sills. In the centre of the layout there is a courtyard with low greenery: grass and flowerbeds. A square-shaped courtyard with rounded corners is situated in the centre. It is paved with paving stone in two colours. At present, most of the castle's interiors serve as a courthouse. On the second floor of the north and south wings there is a formal meeting hall and a chapel that serves as a courtroom (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Rzeszow Castle: Photo of the formal meeting hall. (Photo: Wojciech Woś, 2021; Source: Gołąbek, Gosztyła, Mikrut-Kusy – authors)

Some of the rooms are unused. In the centre of the west wing there is the main, formal stairwell with a stone balustrade. The doors inside are wooden, the walls are plastered and painted, while sanitary spaces feature tiles up to the height of around 200 cm, above which the walls are painted as well. The flooring in most rooms is made of parquet, which requires repair in many places. The hall and stairwells feature terrazzo or ceramic tile flooring (Fig. 5). The state of the castle can be described as good. The facades were covered with smooth plaster and painted using bright, cream-coloured paint. In some places there are patches of dirt of varying size, as well as signs of slight damp, yet they are not significant and have no impact on the castle's positive visual perception. The interiors require more extensive work, as many were unused and suffered damage (delaminated plaster, discoloration, weathered paint, damp, dirt, damaged flooring), and should undergo general renovation.



Fig. 5. Rzeszow Castle: Photos of the formal stairwell, 2021. (Photos: Agata Mikrut-Kusy; Source: Gołabek, Gosztyła, Mikrut-Kusy – authors)

## PROPOSALS FOR ADAPTATION AND MODERNIZATION OF THE CASTLE

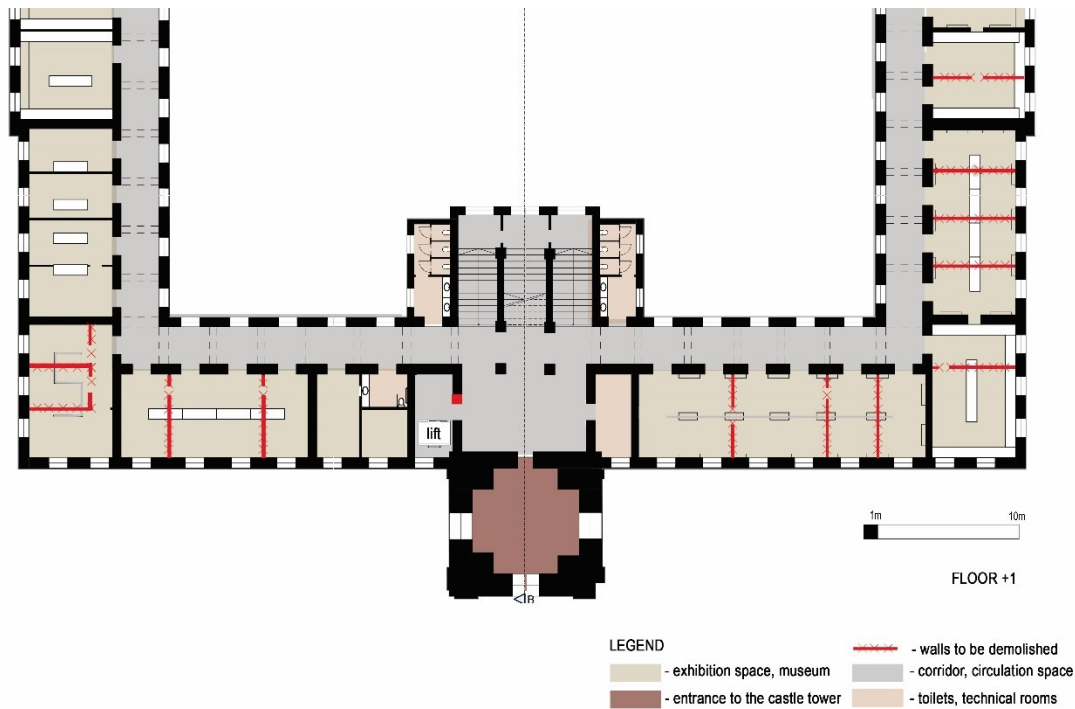
Placing a courthouse in the castle resulted in the building becoming inaccessible to the public, as, despite its undeniable value both in terms of architecture and culture, it is neither an often-visited place, nor is it open to tourists. Due to the site's significant value, no effort should be spared to restore the castle to a state of greatness and increase its popularity both locally and nationally. A new, innovative proposal for the site's revalorization should be designed, one that would reflect current global trends in contemporary conservation thought. Based on extensive analyses, a contemporary vision of a use plan for the castle has been created, one that casts a new light on the opportunities that the Rzeszow palace complex can offer. This idea presupposes a complete relocation of the District Court to a new building, followed by the adaptive reuse of the castle to feature contemporary functions, specifically those associated with culture, art and the promotion of local heritage. In the administrative parts of the court, there will be places with cultural heritage expositions. The value of the castle's historic interiors will be restored.

Starting from the castle's main entrance: the formal hall is supposed to invite people to enter the interiors of the residential complex, guide visitors, and concisely present the content of all museum exhibitions and their layout. The proposal suggests equipping it with multimedia screens that would present each storey. Box offices should be located nearby, as they could also serve as information desks, as well as cloakrooms for visitors. On the ground floor, as it is the part of the castle that is most

accessible to visitors, the proposal presupposes a restaurant and a coffee shop, which could act as gastronomic establishments for the entire castle complex and for visitors. Such a place could attract the interest of a wide range of customers attracted by its services, who, by increasing traffic at the castle, would further enhance its attractiveness and popularity. Furthermore, a museum, which would be the main function of the space based on the newly designed arrangement of the entire castle, could be situated at this level. Thus, the ground floor's spaces could be used by beginning artists, e.g. from the visual arts high school in Rzeszow, as well as by individual artists. The proposed exhibitions should be temporary and follow a 'talent show' model, giving beginning artists an opportunity to present their work and for talented individuals to gain recognition. As one of the castle's main uses would be a museum, the ground floor should feature a space for a store that would offer original, handcrafted souvenirs associated with the themes of presented exhibitions. It would also be a way for promoting local artisans who produce various handmade products. Besides the aforementioned ideas, level 0 would also feature a space for seminars and conferences (with infrastructure that enables projecting presentations), a part of which could serve as lecture halls for universities of the third age.

In addition, the proposal presupposes that the building will be adapted in line with current modern utility standards and international conservation principles, with specific needs in terms of physical, cognitive, and social accessibility taken into consideration (Walter, 2022; Pietroni, Pagano, Biocca, Frassinetti, 2021). This includes adapting the building to meet the needs of the disabled by: adding an elevator (situated to the right of the main entrance) and redesigning hygiene and sanitary facilities - toilets for the disabled on each floor. In accordance with the idea of universal design (Filová, Rollová, Čerešňová, 2022) the building will be made accessible to a wide public of different ages and with different types of physical or disability-related limitations, and utilize contemporary design and technological solutions, including interactive solutions. Ideas discussed in international publications, such as the adaptation of the interiors of historic buildings that allow for showcasing cultural heritage and modern functional programs (Gaczoł, 2015; Janowski Z., Janowski M., 2009) need to be taken into account. The priority is to propose such a new functional program that, first of all, would give both residents and tourists the opportunity to use the historical building, while respecting its cultural and historical value.

It should be noted that the problem of adapting historical buildings to new functions (Szymgin, 2009) may involve a varying degree of interference in the historic structure. In addition to new interior divisions or rearrangements of existing functional-utilitarian plans, interference also involves the replacement of damaged building elements, or even entire structural systems, as well as technical equipment of the object (Szymgin, 2009). In accordance with international trends, each action should be based on knowledge of the monument, assessment of its historical value, conservation value, and ultimately only necessary interventions in the historic structure of the object should be conducted (Janowski Z., Janowski M., 2009). The former function of the court caused changes in the original layout of the castle's rooms. Majority of the halls have been divided into much smaller office spaces. The proposal to adapt the castle's space mainly for museum purposes involves opening up the space and restoring the former structure. With regard to the aforesaid, the plan includes, among other things, the demolition of secondary division walls (Fig. 6). The new functional program has been proposed in such a way as to interfere with the original historic substance as little as possible, and rather to restore its former cultural and historical values.



**Fig. 6.** Fragment (west) of the floor plan of level 1+ with marked intervention in the historic substance, i.e. walls to be demolished. (Prepared by: Kamila Gołąbek, Karolina Kowal, Aleksandra Kośla, supervised by Agata Mikrut-Kusy; Source: Gołąbek, Gosztyła, Mikrut-Kusy - authors)

Rzeszow Castle's formal courtyard is its undoubted asset which, despite its potential, is not used for public or commercial purposes. Therefore, the creation of a small, seasonal amphitheatre there, which could host spectacles or concerts, can be proposed. Such an arrangement would also allow for the use of the space and walls of the courtyard as a background for light shows (Fig. 7). People attending a light show could experience unique visual sensations that could transport them into an unconventional world of light effects that appear to be three-dimensional. This idea could attract a new group of visitors, not only from Rzeszow itself, but from all over Poland. It is a solution that is widely used in large metropolises – European cities – yet it is still not very popular in Poland, especially in relation to using spaces of historical structures, which is why, due to its uniqueness, such an attraction could become a major symbol of the city. A scheme showing a plan of level 0 along with arrangement proposals is presented in Fig. 8.



**Fig. 7.** Proposed arrangement for light shows in the castle courtyard. (Drawing: Kamila Gołąbek; Source: Gołąbek, Gosztyła, Mikrut-Kusy – authors)

As to the main massing of the castle, a continuation of the first-floor level for museum use can be proposed, with a uniform theme of artistic exhibitions, including works associated with

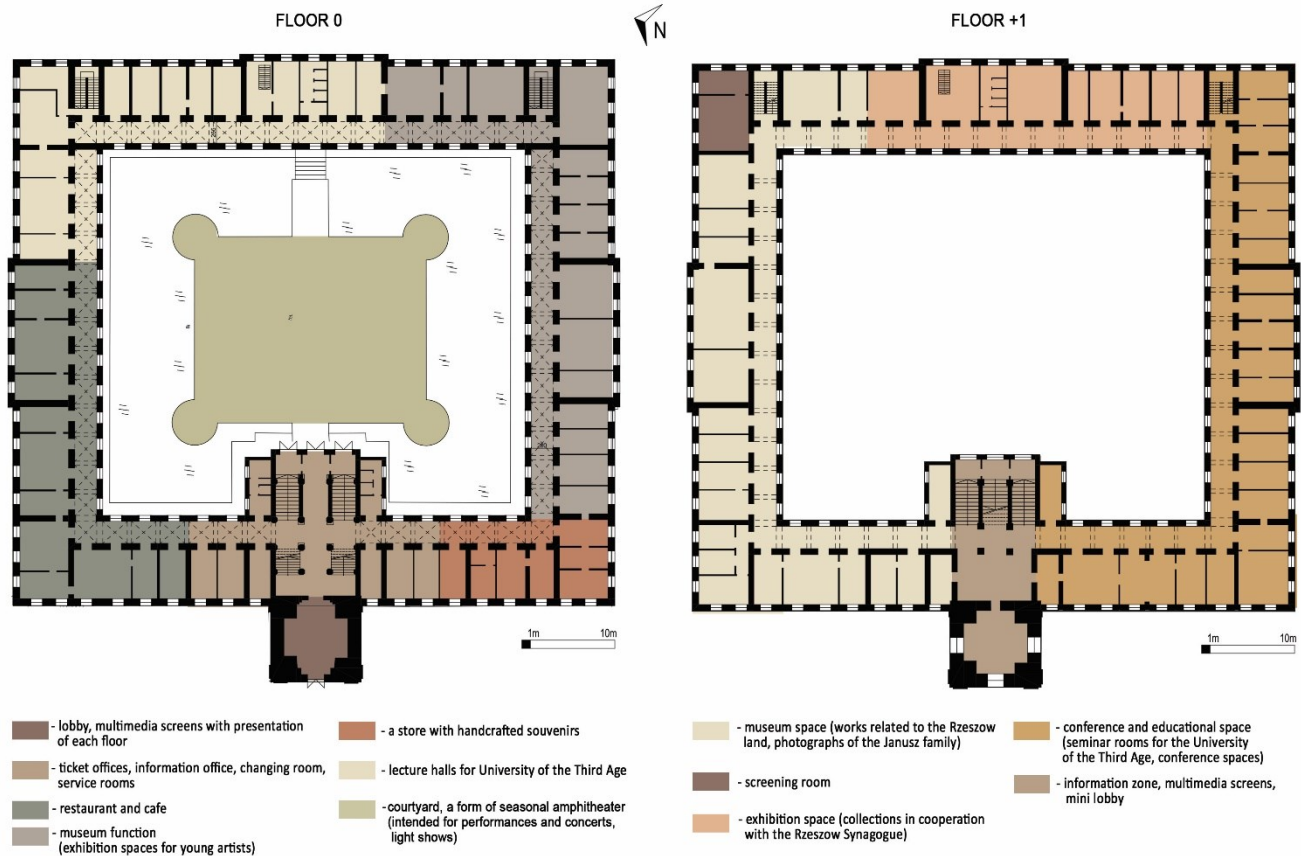
the Rzeszow region. The museum could also exhibit, among others, artistic photos by the Janusz family – Leopoldyna Januszowa and Edward Janusz, who left a sizeable photographic legacy – around 30 thousand artefacts (including glass plates and photo copies). This collection is one of the largest and best preserved photo collections in Poland (Rzeszow Foundation, no date). A selection of the photos depicting the development of the city of Rzeszow could be exhibited alongside contemporary frames, thus showing the clash between the past and the present, illustrating the striking contrast of the changes that have taken place in the region around Rzeszow.

Temporary screenings of the film *Rzeszowskie Janusze. Rodzina* could also be included, as the film, to quote the authors, 'is a documentary about First-World-War Rzeszow and about regaining independence described using old photographs based on the history of the Janusz family' (Rzeszow Foundation, 2018). Such screenings could complement the photos on display. Furthermore, the proposal includes exhibitions organized in cooperation with Rzeszow's New Town Synagogue, which houses the Offices of Artistic Exhibitions and the creative house of the Association of Polish Visual Artists and the Association of Polish Artists, Painters and Graphical Artists. The collections shared by the courtesy of the Associations could be arranged into interesting and unconventional exhibitions of the works of local artists, thus promoting their work. There should be a continuation of use of other spaces of the first floor for conference and educational purposes, where seminars for the university of the third age could be held; they should be adaptable to alternatively serve as rentable conference spaces.

Moving on to the second floor, due to the assumption that the new use programme would focus especially on museum use, a new, high-potential subject matter needed to be found so that subsequent exhibitions could be dedicated to it. Therefore, a review of relevant publications and other available sources was performed. The research led to the conclusion that Rzeszow features a large number of smaller museum branches, each

specializing in a different main theme, which led to the idea for suitable use for the castle's second floor in line with the museum theme as presented above - to integrate several branches of Rzeszow's museums into a single, larger museum institution, which could potentially be much more popular due to the single location. Out of the existing branches, the Museum of the History of Rzeszow was selected, as it depicts the life of the city's residents from the medieval period to the end of the First World War (this subject matter is also partially related to Rzeszow

Castle that has always played a significant role in the city's history) (Subcarpathian Cultural Guide, no date). Furthermore, the authors proposed to create an exhibition entitled 'Rzeszow's Architecture and Urban Layout' that would show the development of the city's urban layout over the years and present Rzeszow's architectural works. In addition, the space could be extended to host workshops and educational activities (museum lessons) for schools and other institutions interested in engaging in such events in cooperation with the museum.



**Fig. 8.** Floor plans of levels 0 and +1 with the use programme marked. (Drawings: Kamila Gołębek, students Karolina Kowal, Aleksandra Kośla, supervised by Agata Mikrut-Kusy; Source: Gołębek, Gosztyła, Mikrut-Kusy – authors)

The uppermost floor of the castle – the attic – is a place that is currently undeveloped. It is thus the only part of the castle that is not partitioned into smaller spaces and has a lot of potential for exhibitions, allowing for the creation of stories leading the visitors through an entire sequence of events (Fig. 9). This is why it is worth to dedicate this level to creating an exhibition on the castle's history and the history of two noble houses that had strong ties to it – the Ligezas and the Lubomirskis. In this context, one could use not only traditional exhibition forms, but also all types of animations, illumination, the play of light and shadow, utilize multimedia potential offered by the contemporary technology to create a unique mood and atmosphere. While surveying the building, we learnt that Rzeszow Castle has a basement – in the early nineteenth century the building was taken over by the Austrian government and a jail was set up there. During the German occupation, the castle – especially its underground section – was the site of executions of thousands of Poles at the hands of the Nazis. Due to the location's tragic history, we recommend that the place be turned into a memorial to those times.

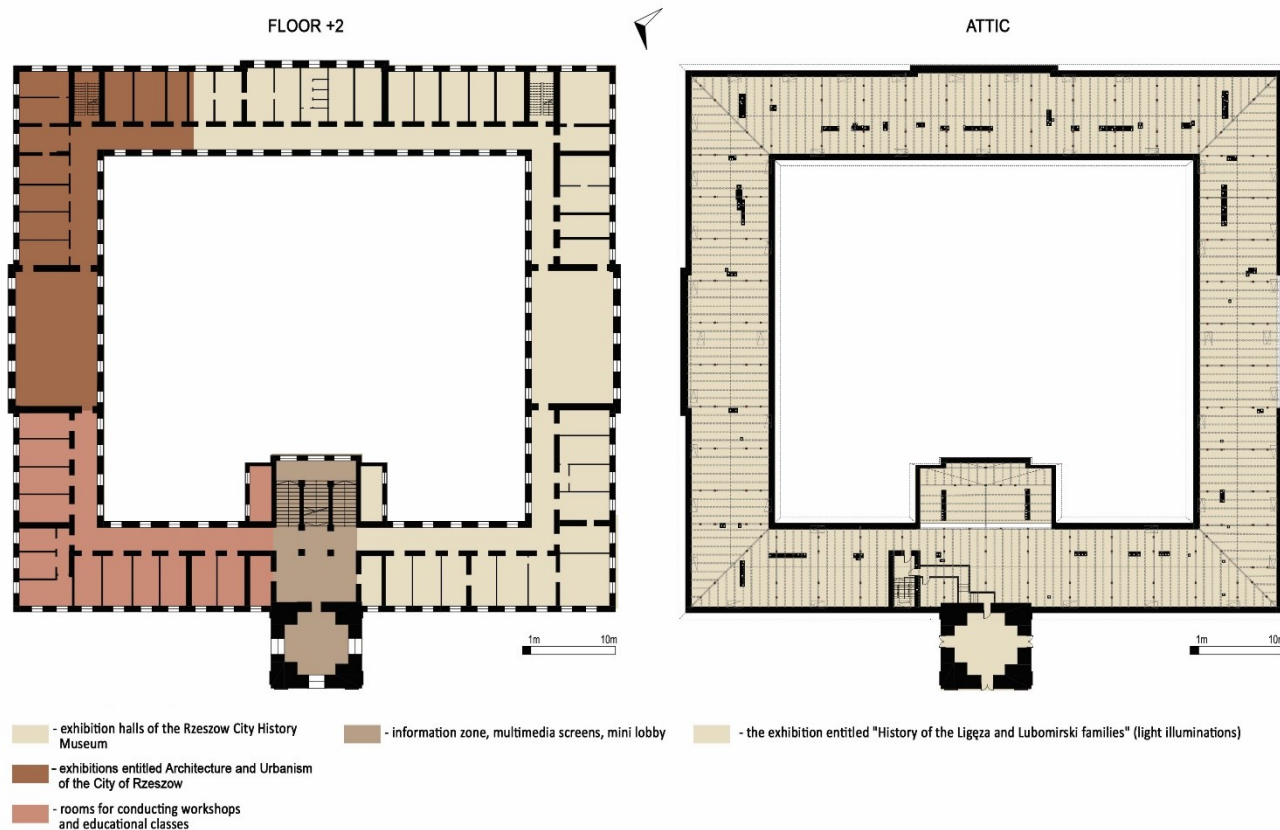
Apart from the massing itself, the castle's surroundings in the form of four bastions and the dry moat should also be men-

tioned. The area of the bastions could be used for a variety of open-air attractions. The uniqueness and originality of proposed solutions should play a significant role here. Hot-air balloon rides are an interesting attraction, offered in many cities, but, so far, not in Rzeszow (this concerns only the take-off site). Such an option could allow people not only to look at the castle itself, but also to see all of Rzeszow from a completely different perspective, which would undoubtedly enhance the castle's popularity. A conceptual presentation of this idea is shown in Fig. 10. The remaining bastions should feature an arboretum facility with interestingly arranged flowers, flowerbeds, bushes, flowery meadows, and a network of paths near which numerous seats should be planned so that visitors could use both the space in the castle and around it (sensory visualizations).

The dry moat is an area of varying height, which offers a wide range of opportunities as to its arrangement and utilization of its potential. This is why it has been suggested to locate a proscenium there, in the form of modern, light foldable structures with rounded shapes and numerous curves and domes, designed to create a modern and interesting architectural form. This space could be used for seasonal public events and shows of both local and national significance. It should be noted that

the concept of the article and the presented new proposal for the adaptation of the castle space into a cultural and art centre does not take into account the issues and energy needs of the

facility. However, this issue should be addressed in the next stage of the project that involves developing the presented concept.



**Fig. 9.** Floor plans of level 3+ and the attic with the use program marked. (Drawings: Kamila Gołąbek, students Karolina Kowal, Aleksandra Kośla, supervised by Agata Mikrut-Kusy; Source: Gołąbek, Gosztyła, Mikrut-Kusy – authors)



**Fig. 10.** Vision of hot-air balloon rides starting at the castle bastion. (Drawing: Kamila Gołąbek; Source: Gołąbek, Gosztyła, Mikrut-Kusy – authors)

## CONCLUSIONS

The study of available sources and an analysis of collected empirical material allowed for highlighting just how great and undeniable the potential offered by the castle is, not only in relation to the city itself, but also nationally. Rzeszow lacks such a clear culture-forming point that could define new, innovative directions for its development. Thus far, numerous more-or-less bold proposals have been put forward as to the adaptive reuse of Rzeszow Castle. Some of those less grounded in reality include establishing an opera house and a theatre, whose very

nature would clash with the historical and heavily partitioned interior of the castle (Rzeszow News, 2021). The idea of using the castle primarily as a museum and for promoting culture and art appears to be the best proposal for this valuable and unique heritage site. It is undoubtedly necessary to allow a wider range of visitors to access the monument – both Rzeszow's residents and tourists who visit the city.

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