

„Conservation and Revitalization of the Benedek Manor House from the City of Gheorgheni” – House of Popular Creation – Reopened to the Public –



At noon, 27th June, 2016 the doors of the Benedek Manor House from the city of Gheorgheni flew open to the public. Built in 1840, it is one of the most representative wooden constructions of the area. Property of the municipality, the house is listed as a monument since 1955.



Starting from the '90s, the building hosts the House of Popular Creation, coordinated by ethnographer Irina Kis Portik, leader of the Ethnographia Gyergyoiensis Foundation.

Traces of a former fire could be identified on the house, but even more – the years have left their deep fingerprints. At the beginning of the '90s, small interventions



had been made, but it was high time for a thorough recovery.

Starting from March, 2015 thanks to a grant offered by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, a project was launched which aimed to conserve and revitalize the manor house. The baroque-rural building has now been reopened to the public.



„We have laid down two basic principles: to keep everything possible, so that old, authentic parts regain their former value, while all the other elements are to be rehabilitated with techniques and surfaces just like old times.” – said arh. Köllő Miklós at the opening ceremony, adding – „We have always discussed everything in detail, and then a sample was made – in this way there was no room for major errors.”

From cellar to attic, results are sightly. In the cellar the biggest problem was generated by the level of ground water table, which had negatively affected the



vaults. During the recovery, the brick vaults were repaired and a pump was installed in order to evacuate waters. The old areaways have been found and reopened - which means a better ventilation for the cellar.

On the roof, beams were doubled, the loamy sealer cleared away, improvised somkestacks demolished, and then each and every slat changed. The constructor



paid special attention to maintain the original, arched form of the roof. The attic is now clear and transparent, if needed, it can easily be transformed into an exhibition-room.

One of the biggest problems in the case of old wooden buildings – wet rot of the soles was present here as well. To get round the phenomenon, the soil has been cleaned away, and then a layer of thermal, and one of hidro-insulation was introduced. What is more, a drain-system has been worked up along the foundation.



In one of the rooms, beyond a suspended ceiling, the original ceiling was found: devastated, but saveable. This original piece is a real gain – its actual state praises the efforts of the constructor.

In the manor house, an *in situ* window-exhibition can be found. Next to the one and only original window, found in the exhibition-room we can monitor the loss in quality and know-how during collectivism.

The most valuable parts of the manor house are: the stradal facade and the original, decorative wall dyeings from the inside, found unexpectedly during cabling. The inscription – 1840 – can now be easily read on the frontispiece, just like all the ornamental elements. While, in the exhibition room, the restored decorative dyeings speak about three different periods of the house.

After one and a half year, the manor house is home for the activities and

exhibitions of the Ethnographia Gyergyoiensis Foundation – for events like Easter egg-painting, funeral of the carnival – again. The manor house hosts also traditional sewing and embroidery workshops of the Pomegranate Association and the Popular Art School of Harghita County.

“Let this manor house be home for the conservation and cultivation of popular know-how in a way that everything started and present here for quarter of a century can widen and enrich this community.” – said Irina Kis Portik when she took back the keys of the house.



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Project supported by a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, by programme nr. PA16/RO12 „Conservation and Revitalization of Cultural and Natural Heritage” Small grant scheme.