

## New life in the old village huts.

### *The abandoned threshing barn was turned into a ballroom.*

#### Type of intervention

Restoration  Rehabilitation / Renovation

#### Concerned elements on the intervention project

- 1. Foundations and underground structures
- 2. Vertical structures
- 3. Horizontal structures and vertical connections
- 4. Roof and terraces
- 5. Façade and building envelope
- 6. Finishes and completion elements
- 7. Integrate services
- 8. General strategies for building recovery

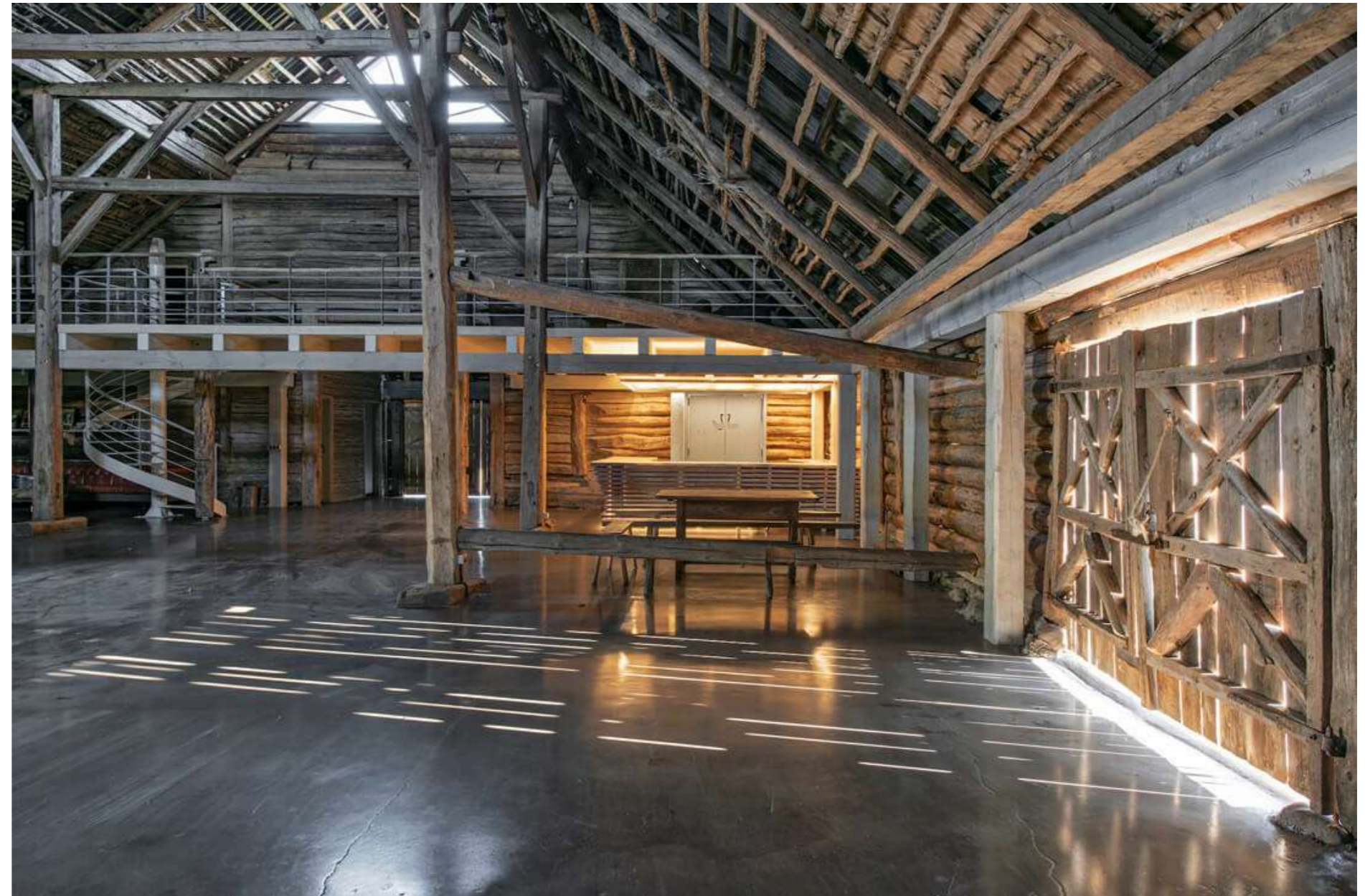
**Site** Pagulbis village, Molėtai municipality, Lithuania

**Objectives** Rehabilitation and reuse of Pagulbis threshing barn.

**Property** Private

**Designer** Arch. M. Maziliauskas

**Date** 2011 - 2014



## Background to the intervention

The architecture of Lithuanian rural homesteads has developed over the centuries according to the natural conditions and farming models of the country. The traditional ways of space formation and construction of buildings were determined by the relatively rainy and wooded environment, the way of life and the way of farming. Specialized buildings were built for individual farm functions. The terrain was taken into account in the formation of the spaces, so the free-planning homesteads formed ensembles of individual composition. Nonetheless, they had a clear structure: the dwelling building and the granary formed a so-called good yard, and a farmyard with buildings for livestock was further developed. Large threshing barn for undigested grain were built still further, and efforts were made to install a sauna by the water. There were also other necessary structures, fences. A prominent attribute of the Lithuanian homestead is greenery: large trees, fruit trees, green lawn. The intricate pictorial ensemble of various scales harmonizes with the surrounding landscape – this is a characteristic feature of traditional architecture and a very important value that is worth preserving.

The Pagulbis village is located in the eastern part of Lithuania. This homeostat is one of the many traditional homesteads that are still in existence but are already disappearing. In the twentieth century the way of farming changed, many buildings were destroyed after the second war.

The fragility of wooden constructions, the new aesthetic tastes, the depopulation of villages are disastrous conditions for the fostering of ethnic architecture. The choice between the old and the new is often determined by the desire to live more comfortably, simpler, without worrying about the preservation of antiquity.

However, there are also those for whom the legacy of the

traditional village is important and dear, who are determined to invest, live or at least relax in such an environment. For such reasons, K.J. acquired a homestead of traditional Lithuanian rural architecture. Infrastructure of this farm was adapted to the farming method of the beginning of the 20th century. Such model of a homestead was characteristic of both peasants and petty nobles who lived from agriculture. Sometimes only a little bigger, more diverse and more ornate premises of a residential house testify to the presence of a noble homestead here. Farming was based on the technologies of that time, so the main farm buildings, including the threshing barn, were needed. However, the changes that took place after the war destroyed the homesteads and their parts, and it was this farm that was left without a threshing barn, a sauna. At the beginning, the new owner thought that he would do without them, but in time he realized that the homestead must be full and bought a clone of the adjacent homestead, standing in just the right place for the threshing barn - away from other buildings, but not very far. He also gathered a smoky sauna near the stream from the logs of the old building. Finally, (on the old foundations?) A new barn was built - the homestead spaces were filled with buildings, and the fences created at the boundaries of the plot defined the boundaries of the homestead and testified to the integrity of the space.

After purchasing an abandoned homestead, the new owner K.J. overcame it: concerts, parties and weddings are held here. Guests are accommodated in a residential house, and events take place in the largest building of the homestead - the clubhouse. It was these two buildings that underwent extensive restoration and adaptation to new needs. There is less change in the house: plank floors instead of donkeys, an attic adapted for accommodation, sanitary facilities - this is basically the same residential purpose. Meanwhile, the powerful volume of the threshing barn, although it retained its dimensions and did not change much on the outside, became

a place for banquets on the inside. There was a stage, a kitchen and a bar, a corner reading room, a toilet, a mezzanine with an observation deck and even small rooms. The powerful integral space has been perfect for that since the end of the 19th century. Performances were held in similar threshing barn. But it's not just the change in function that's important here, it's how the new design and trim details blend into the old body.



Fig.1: Threshing barn.

## Description of the building

The clone is always the largest building in a traditional homestead. Cereals were stored, dried and threshed in it, the main food source for peasants. It was necessary to protect the cut grain from moisture - a large sloping roof was designed for that. The tree was the main building material in this wooded area, and it was also used to build a large threshing barn. In Eastern Lithuania, an archaic foot structure system has

survived, when the main weight of the roof is supported by vertical pillars. In a simple foot structure, a row of poles simply supported the ridge, but the threshing barn needed space in the middle to enter the building for transportation and threshing grain. Therefore, an intricate complex system has been invented where the weight of the roof is taken over by pairs of feet. Because the width of the building is very large (in this case X m), more diagonal struts are used, and the roof is supported by log walls. There was more than one gate to the threshing barn: in the rear and side facades. The roofing used to be straw or shingles, the easiest materials available at the time. The foundations of stones - sometimes laid, sometimes not. It was a powerful structure serving an extremely clear economic function, with decorations sparse and minimal. The complex system has done its job, but, like many harmonious, natural material constructions, it is also aesthetically appealing. The clan of Pagulbis homestead was a typical representative of the economic activity of its time and region.



Fig.2: House.



Fig.3: View of the homestead from a bird's eye view before reconstruction.

## The Diagnosis of the building (values and state)

When the current owner acquired this farmstead, the clone belonging to it was no longer left. And that was exactly the kind of building that stood in the neighbourhood, and it was decided to buy and renovate it. The condition of the building was poor: the roof on the north side had already collapsed and the wall had already collapsed, so it was worth taking work immediately. However, the main structures were still supported by a powerful roof plane. Poles and walls made of quality forest materials, wooden door details, some roof battens and rafters have survived. The most valuable parts of a building are the roof structure, the roof shape, the wall structure, the gate.



Fig.4: Granary.



Fig.5: View of the homestead from a bird's eye view before reconstruction.



Fig.6: Threshing barn image before reconstruction.



Fig.7: Foundation and rent of threshing barn.



Fig.8: Threshing barn façade.



Fig.9: Threshing barn interior after reconstruction.



Fig.10: A fragment of the threshing barn rent.



Fig.11: Rent cracks filled with glass.



Fig.12: Threshing barn wall.



Fig.13: Threshing barn gate from the inside.

## Rehabilitation works



Fig.14: Threshing barn gate from the outside.

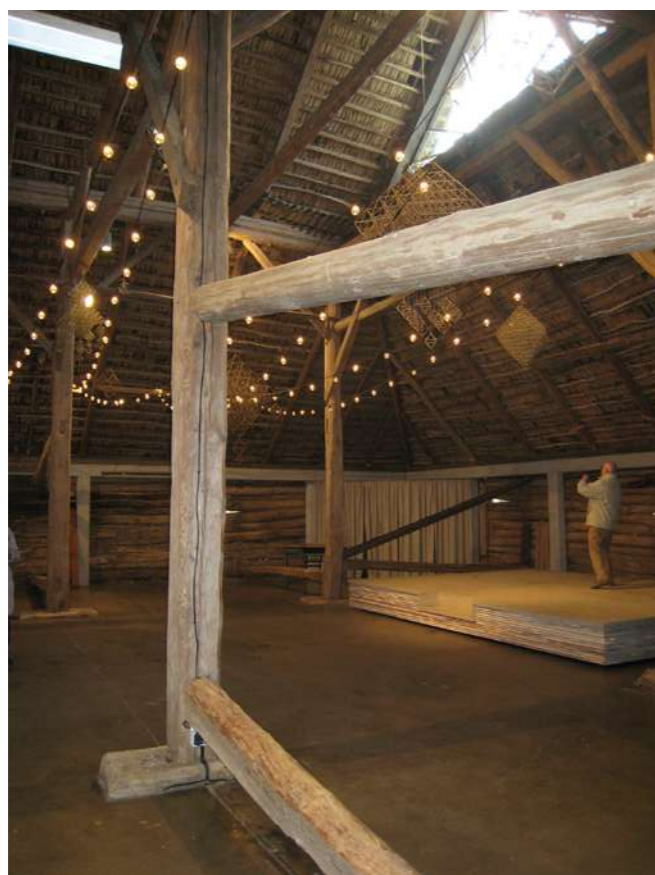


Fig.15: Threshing barn pillar.

The renovated homestead did not intend to farm as in ancient times, but it was decided to engage in cultural and recreational activities, to organize parties and concerts here. The designer of the homestead and the threshing barn had to solve a double task: on the one hand, to restore, strengthen and make reliable structures, on the other - to adapt a new function to the space. Author architect M. M. decided to follow the path of nuance, gentle touch, soft change. Where possible, former load-bearing structures have been reinforced, where new elements had to be introduced. It is no longer a farm building, it has smaller, more sensitive textured details, combined with coarser old forms. The aim is to hang not only a string from the peasant heritage, but also a string reminiscent of even older times: the symbolism typical of the archaic ethnographic tradition was used to decorate the roof.

Some of the new structural details have been adapted from other parts of the old wooden buildings, such as the poles supporting the mezzanine. To use the locks of the new doors for the product of the old blacksmith. The new concrete floor is similar to the traditional - compacted clay. Old chips are left under the new roof covering, they can be seen in the interior, the colour of the new beams has been applied to them. Masonry foundations are reminiscent of outdoor stones supporting the installed columns.

The new purpose needs more light: a glazed opening in one gate, triangles at the roof, even cracks between the walls. Equipped with a cooking room, stage, bathrooms, accommodation and even a reading area. Above the entrance space there is a mezzanine with a spiral staircase leading to it. Where possible, wood is used: for the walls of new premises, for the wall of the bar. Partitions made of small wooden strips do not dissonize, but assist the composition. Such is the bar furniture, the stage.

Some parts are made of new materials: glass, metal stairs and handrails. The glow of the white roof is the least typical expression of traditional architecture. He and the motif of rays in the roof openings are not so much an ethnographic, but an interpretation of the archaic, spiritual layer, the "glow of the ages", as the architect says.



Fig.16: Visualization of the reconstructed threshing barn.

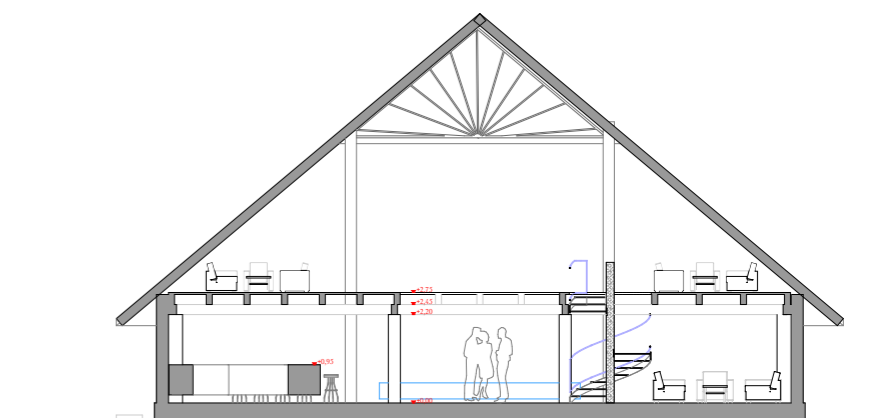


Fig.17: Section of the reconstructed threshing barn.

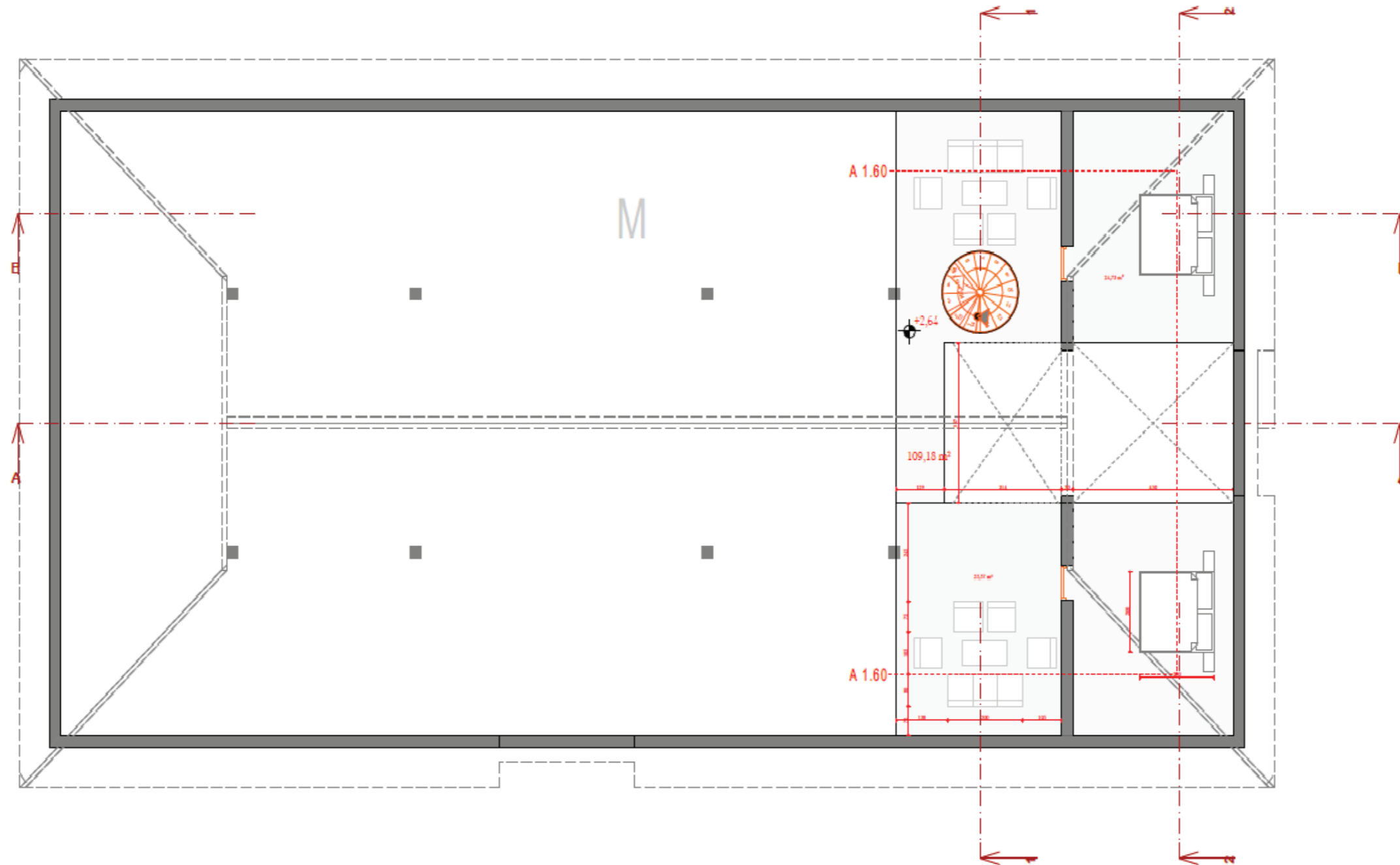


Fig.18: Plan of the reconstructed threshing barn.





Fig.19: Entrance to the reconstructed threshing barn.



Fig.20: Hallway of threshing barn.



Fig.21: Sanitary unit.



Fig.22: An old door handle is used.



Fig.23: Connections of old and new parts.



Fig.24: Hallway and gate.

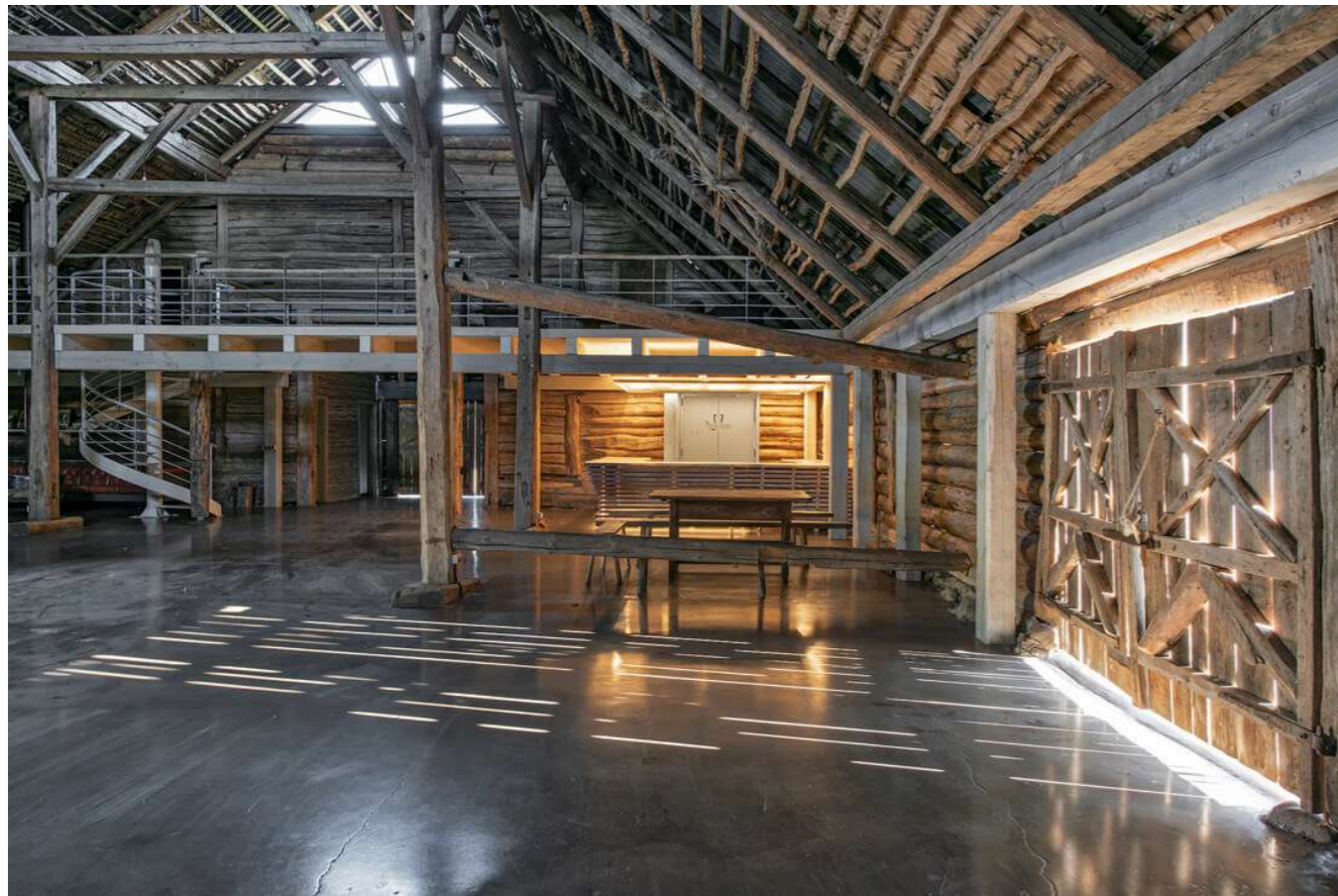


Fig.25: Renovated central hall and roof.



Fig.26: New bar area.



Fig.27-28: Connections of old and new parts.

Fig.29: View of the old roof from the inside.

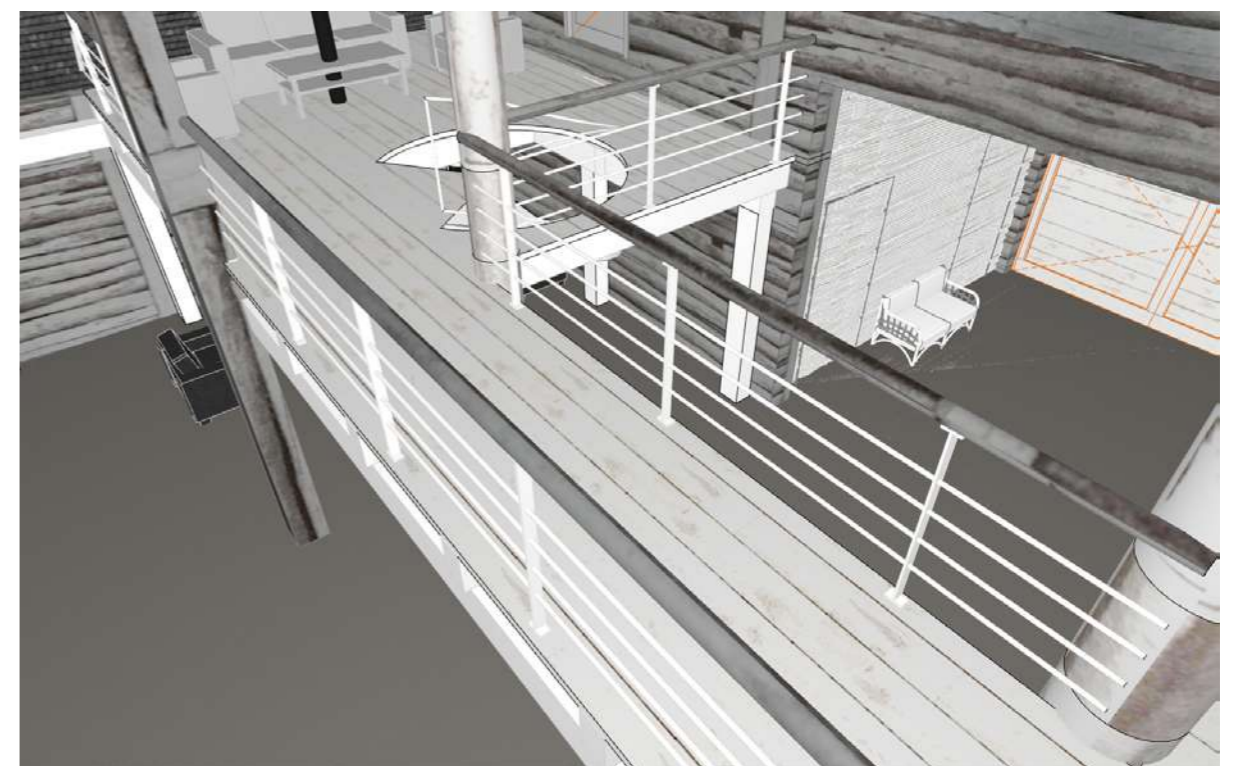
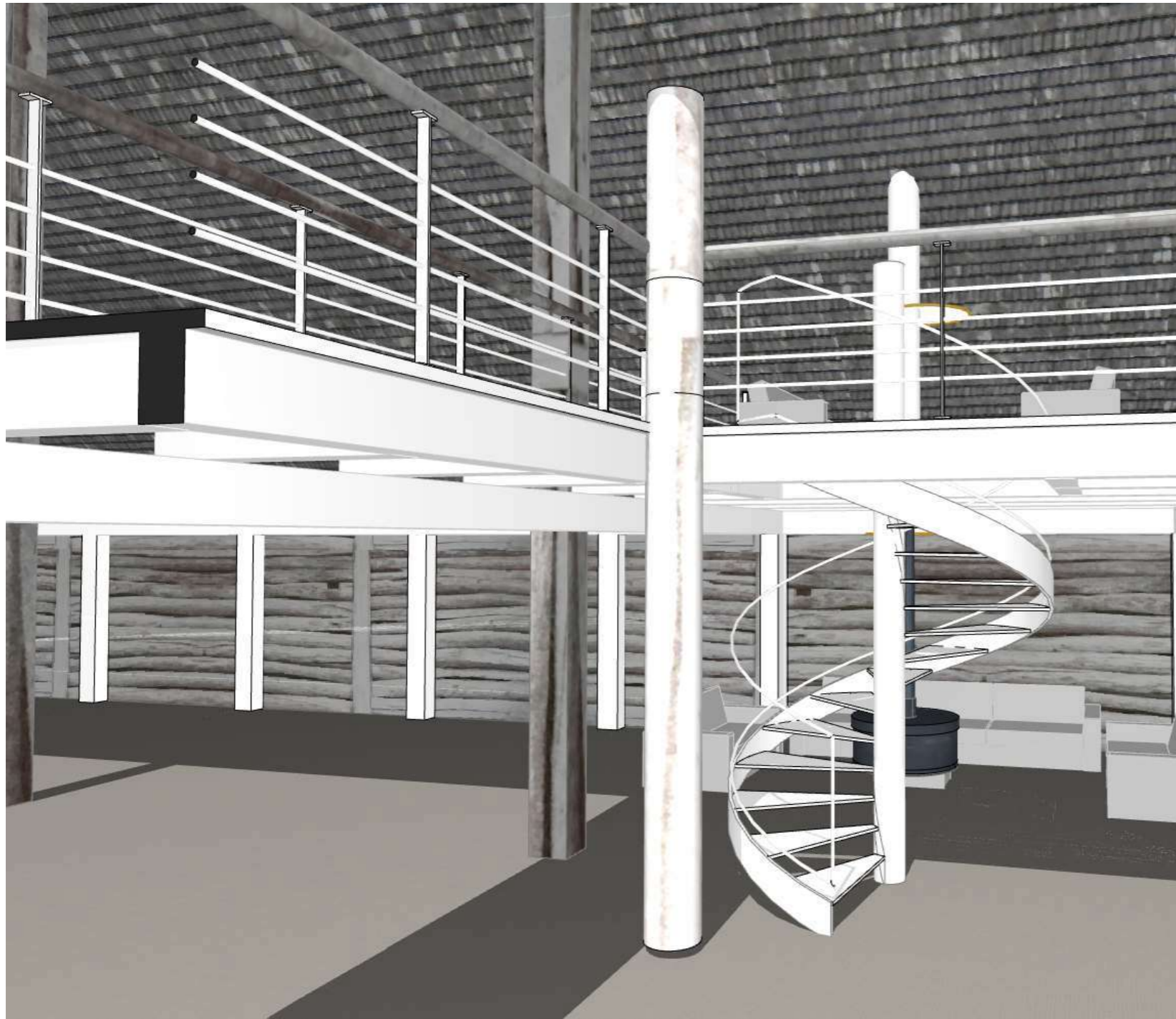


Fig.30-32: Visualizations of reconstruction.



Fig.33: Old roof construction.



Fig.34: The new bar.



Fig.35: Connections of old and new parts.



Fig.36: Opening at the ridge of the roof.



## Assessment of the results

The traditional farmstead with its characteristic elements and structure has been preserved and adapted to new needs. At the same time, this unit of rural urban structure and an integral part of the traditional landscape has been preserved. With special attention to the threshing barn - a large-scale building - the three-dimensional frame of the homestead and the variety of scales have been preserved

By adapting such buildings to public needs, the message of the value and potential viability of traditional rural homesteads in new conditions is announced.

Many authentic details and materials have been preserved. Innovations were combined on the principle of nuance rather than contrast, fostered continuity of wooden rhythms and structures.

Innovative equipment allows you to perform modern functions. Modern aesthetic solutions emphasize the natural attractiveness of old parts and structures, the natural beauty of natural materials.

This homestead "Pagulbis" has received the awards for the best ethnocultural homestead.

## References

<https://sa.lt/baltiskosios-tradicijos-testinumo-pavyzdys-pagulbio-sodyba/> (Photos by L. Garbačiauskas: Fig. 2, 6, 7, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 33)

<https://m.atostogoskaime.lt/apgyvendinimas/sodyba-pagulbis/> (Fig. 4)