



# BRICK FROM THE MASONRY OF THE GRAND PALACE IN TSARITSYNO

About the project

<https://tsaritsyno-museum.ru/events/special/p/lyudi-i-fondy-eng/>

Russia

1775–1785

*Red clay, moulding, firing*





SELECTED BY

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I was lucky enough to work at the museum during a very challenging but very interesting and eventful period. This was the time when decisions were made about what the museum should be like, and most importantly, what would happen to the Grand Palace. By that time, buildings by architect V. Bazhenov, almost all of them, had been restored, with the exception of the Bread House, but the fate of the Grand Palace designed by architect M. Kazakov was not determined. I was fascinated (and I remain a supporter of this view to this day) by the idea of the then museum director Viktor Egorychev to preserve this grandiose ruin — the 'Moscow Colosseum', as he called it. Consequently, we had to develop a project not only for preserving the monument, but also for demonstrating its significance.

Reflecting on the future of the Grand Palace, employees of the Museum Pedagogy Department, which I headed at that time, often addressed visitors. Their opinion was important to us; we wanted to know if they understood its historical value. The older audience believed that the palace should be preserved and its restoration should be carefully approached. What did young people think about this?

We wanted to activate the thinking of high school students, to involve them in deciding the fate of our unique monument.

We have to find some kind of special approach. We came up with such an idea. We used a completely unique method of working with visitors at that time for the museum, namely, an auction. What do a museum and an auction have in common, one might ask? But it turned out that everything is possible. You just have to highlight key points. Our 'Projects Auction: the Future of the Grand Palace in Tsaritsyno' coped with the task perfectly.

The program consisted of two parts. The first part was a tour of the palace and park complex. It introduced the participants to the history of the construction of the Grand Palace. In the second part, there was a kind of auction. But instead of things, it presented ideas containing three possible options for using the palace:

1. Restoration according to the implemented project by M. Kazakov for it to host museum exhibitions.
2. Ruin conservation and museumification.
3. Reconstruction of the palace according to the unfinished project by M. Kazakov with its subsequent adaptation for a profitable hotel.

Participants had to choose one of the options and present the project on behalf of historical characters. The historical costume elements and the participation of the professional actors made the program interesting and memorable.

At the end of the program, the winners received prizes: pieces of modern bricks if the 'Restoration' project won; fragments of authentic 18th-century bricks from the Grand Palace if the 'Conservation' lot won; board games if the 'Hotel' lot won. Basically the participants fiercely competed to get 'Restoration' or 'Conservation' lots. The 'Hotel' lot won only once.

In a little over a year, we have held several such 'auctions'. In June 2003, a performance was held for the public, the media and museum people of Moscow. The Grand Palace was presented as a museum object entitled 'Ruins of the Grand Palace of Catherine the Great in Tsaritsyno: who is to blame and what to do?' The project was launched to draw attention to the future of the Grand Palace. The authors of the text and participants were Director V. Egorychev, Deputy Director O. Dokuchaeva and myself.

For all the time, 100 small fragments of authentic bricks dating from the 18th century were distributed to museum guests. One of these fragments is in my home collection as a reminder of the history of Tsaritsyno and the happy time of working at the museum.

In 2005, the fate of the palace was determined: the start of construction work was announced. The ruin was destined to remain only in photographs and memories.