

A FAREWELL TO THE WILANÓW CARPET FROM THE GALLERY OF PAINTINGS CALLED THE MUSEUM

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*Museum of King Jan III's Palace
at Wilanów*

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In the second half of the 1970s, the Gallery of Paintings called the Museum (known also as the Great Crimson Salon) in the Wilanów Palace was adorned with a huge carpet (1,800 × 512 cm) with a vegetable decoration (Fig. 1). On the initiative of the custodian Maria Żukowska,¹ the textile was designed based on a nineteenth-century rug held by the National Museum in Warsaw (Fig. 2). The author of the design of the Wilanów carpet was the visual artist Halina Korbik.² The design was a modified copy of an Empire rug. In order to adapt the carpet size to the area of the Crimson Salon, the original model was expanded with two additional medallions in the central field.

The design work was done in stages. In the first stage, a drawing of the model, sized 89.5 × 51 cm, was made on cardboard; it depicted one half of the full composition of the carpet in a 1:10 scale (Fig. 3). In the following stage, the composition of one half of the textile was drawn in ink on tracing paper, and one section of the model – the thyrsus – was sketched in pencil and tempera paint on tracing paper.³ In the last stage, 71 designs of sections of the model were made in tempera on graph paper.⁴ The supplementary element concluding all stages of designing this carpet was a sheet of colours formed by wool balls dyed in 23 colours that were to occur in the rug. The design was approved by the Board of Experts of the Studio of Plastic Arts in Łódź and by Maria Żukowska, a custodian of the Art Department of the Wilanów Museum in 1973. The entire design documentation is currently kept by the Central Museum of Textiles in Łódź.

The task of weaving the rug was undertaken by the Tomaszów Carpet Factory, in operation since 1846, when Edward Roland founded a carpet manufactory consisting of a spinning mill and a manual textile mill in Tomaszów Mazowiecki. After the Second World War, the carpet factory was nationalised under the name Weltom, but old traditions were maintained in the production process.

1 Maria Żukowska (1926–2005) – an art historian, expert in the field of the arrangement of textile decorations inside historic buildings, co-organiser of the first team of art historians responsible for the refurbishment of the Wilanów Palace after the Second World War, see: A. Kwiatkowska, ‘In memoriam. Wspomnienia o pracownikach Muzeum w Wilanowie’, “Muzealnictwo”, vol. 47, 2006, pp. 255–256.

2 Halina (Hanna) Korbik (1923–1989) – a painter, member of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers of the Łódź region.

3 Thyrsus (Greek: *thyrsos*, Latin: *thyrsus*) – a ceremonial wand covered in ivy and topped with pine cones or finished with a cone and wrapped in vines.

4 Graph paper – a special squared paper on which a workshop drawing of a textile pattern is made. It contains a drawing of the textile pattern with cross-sections, the method of threading the warp through harnesses and the reed and a harness control plan.





Fig. 1

The Crimson Room carpet,
Museum of King Jan III's
Palace at Wilanów



Fig. 2

A nineteenth-century rug that served as the model for the Wilanów carpet pattern, National Museum in Warsaw

The size of the Wilanów woollen rug has attracted justified attention and the fact that it was woven manually has aroused much admiration. It will therefore be particularly hard to accept the fact that because of its deteriorating condition, including much mechanical damage to the textile structure, the carpet will be removed from the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów.

I would like to express my gratitude to Ewa Orlińska-Mianowska and Monika Janisz, curators of the Collection of Textiles of the National Museum in Warsaw, for their invaluable help in finding in the Museum's collection the nineteenth-century rug that provided a basis for the preparation of the Wilanów carpet, and to Dr Marcin Gawryszczak, Head of the Textile Industry Department in the Central Museum of Textiles in Łódź, for his kindness and involvement in finding the design and information about it.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- p. 364 The Crimson Room carpet, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów, all rights reserved
- p. 365 A nineteenth-century rug that served as the model for the Wilanów carpet pattern, National Museum in Warsaw
- p. 367 The first stage of the Wilanów carpet project, Central Museum of Textiles in Łódź

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The study was conducted as part of the statutory work of the Museum.



Fig. 3

The first stage of the Wilanów carpet project, Central Museum of Textiles in Łódź