Press release

**THE SOBIESKIS AND STUARTS**
**the Splendour and Spectre of the Crown**
temporary exhibition at the Museum of King Jan III’s Palace at Wilanów
open from 24 October 2025 to 31 May 2026

For the first time in Poland, we present an exhibition devoted to the extraordinary connections between the Sobieski family and the Stuart dynasty – one of the most important royal families of England, Scotland and Ireland. The exhibition at the Museum of King Jan III’s Palace at Wilanów will reveal the splendour of monarchy and the dramatic fates of royal descendants, including the remarkable story of Maria Clementina Sobieska, granddaughter of King Jan III.

The exhibition **“The Sobieskis and Stuarts – the Splendour and Spectre of the Crown”** is the first presentation of its kind, featuring masterpieces of painting gathered and arranged into a narrative about the family and political relationships between the Sobieskis and the Stuarts. The display combines exceptional works of art, personal memorabilia and documents, including items from private collections never before shown to the public.

Among the most important exhibits are portraits of Maria Clementina Sobieska and James III Stuart by Antonio David, portraits of their sons – Charles Edward Stuart and Henry Benedict, Maria Clementina’s watch, Queen Mary Stuart’s prayer book, engravings depicting the protagonists of the exhibition and the Roman palaces they lived in. Visitors will also see scenes of the couple’s wedding and their son’s baptism, a unique letter from Prince Konstanty Sobieski from 1720, and many other fascinating and valuable works of art and keepsakes.

Thanks to cooperation with institutions from Ukraine – the Borys Voznytsky Lviv National Art Gallery and the Lviv Historical Museum – the exhibition will, for the first time in Poland, present objects connected with the Sobieski family from Ukrainian collections. Complementing the exhibition will be objects from the Royal Castle in Warsaw, the National Library, the National Museum in Warsaw, and the Museum’s own collections at Wilanów. The display will be enriched by a musical path composed of selected pieces associated with the patronage of Maria Clementina and James III/VIII, chosen by Dr. Aneta Markuszewska, author of the book “W cieniu korony. Muzyka w polityce Jakuba III Stuarta i jego żony Marii Klementyny Sobieskiej w Rzymie (1719-1735)”*.*

As always at the Museum of King Jan III’s Palace at Wilanów, the exhibition will be accompanied by a rich educational programme for diverse audiences. On 25 October 2025, an international scholarly seminar will take place, featuring experts from Poland, the United Kingdom and Italy, including the distinguished Stuart specialist Prof. Edward Corp. The event will be devoted to the history of both royal families and research on their legacy.

**The Extraordinary Story of Maria Clementina Sobieska**

The central figure of the exhibition is Maria Clementina Sobieska – granddaughter of King Jan III and Maria Kazimiera, wife of James III Stuart, claimant to the thrones of England, Scotland and Ireland. At the age of 17, she became his fiancée and, after numerous ordeals – including imprisonment at the castle in Innsbruck by order of the emperor who opposed the marriage – and a dramatic escape across the Alps, she reached Italy to marry James in 1719.

The princess’s fate – from a promising marriage and a brief happy life in Italy, which brought two sons, through growing conflict with her husband over the upbringing of their children, to her seclusion in a convent and death – reflects the fate of many women of that era, whose lives were shaped by high politics.

**Curators**
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**Scholarly consultants**
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**Honorary patronage**
The British Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Warsaw

**Patronage**
The POLONIKA National Institute of Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad

**Media patronage**
Spotkania z Zabytkami

The exhibition was made possible thanks to the financial support of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.