

INTRODUCTION

The history of Wilanów Palace, long and abundant in events significant for Polish culture, is what makes every passing year an opportunity for the Wilanów-based periodical to commemorate various momentous facts and persons associated with the residence and its owners.

The publication of volume XXVIII of *Wilanów Studies* marks the bicentenary of Stanisław Kostka Potocki's death. A major part of materials presented in this volume is therefore devoted to the count, his extraordinary activity, and the results of research focused on his person.

The bicentenary of Potocki's death falls in the autumn of 2021; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic all the celebratory events planned were either shifted to the cyberspace or postponed. The distinguished life and remarkable achievements of this politician, orator, aesthete, patron of science, scholar and collector were presented in the first biography of Stanisław Kostka Potocki by Mikołaj Getka-Kenig, a scholar who has for many years been studying the history of the political *démarches* and campaigns to resurrect the country that had been wiped off the map of Europe, as well as the social and political activity during the Partition era. Stanisław Kostka Potocki was among the activists whose deeds were of fundamental importance, bearing also on the establishment of the structures of the new State. His great merits as the minister responsible for elevating and developing the Polish educational system and science, and the universality of schooling for generations of Poles, are indisputable. He took active part in setting up the Warsaw *Wszecznica* (University), as well as the collections of that institution. It is only natural that the publication on this distinguished personage came to see the day of light owing to the endeavours of two institutions: the University of Warsaw Museum and the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów.

The author, commissioned by the Editorial Board of *Wilanów Studies*, further complemented his exhaustive publication, supported as it is by a broad search of source materials and studies, with a discussion of the history of studies on the activity and the reception of the legacy of Stanisław Kostka Potocki. In a text titled *Od Staszica do Grochulskiej – badania nad biografią Stanisława Kostki Potockiego / From Staszic to Grochulska – research on the biography of Stanisław Kostka Potocki*, Mikołaj Getka-Kenig characterised the views of a selection of scholars interested in the owner of Wilanów and indicated the key aspects of how Potocki was perceived, citing various assessments of Potocki's activity featured in the works by Franciszek Sobieszkański, Stanisław Krzemiński, Wincenty Gorzycki, Emil Kipa, and many others.

Since 2014, the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów has been developing a project titled 'Johann Joachim Winckelmann i/und Stanisław

Joanna Paprocka-Gajek
Museum of King Jan III's Palace
at Wilanów

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Kostka Potocki. *Nowe badania i dokumenty/Neue Forschungen und Dokumente* in collaboration with the Winckelmann-Society in Stendal. The aim of the project is to study the influence of the writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), a German art historian and an archaeologist, on the activity and oeuvre of Stanisław Kostka Potocki (1755–1821), the latter having been, together with his wife Aleksandra, the proprietor of the Wilanów estate, as well as the founder of the first museum of art history in the Polish lands, a prominent politician, reformer of public education, and a collector. This collaboration resulted, among others, in the subsequent volumes of the eponymous series. To commemorate the one hundred and ninety-fifth anniversary of the death of Stanisław Kostka Potocki, the state of research on his activity as a writer and collector was outlined during a conference on the literary legacy of Stanisław Kostka Potocki, organised by four academic institutions: the Faculty of Humanities at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (UKSW) in Warsaw, the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów, the Polish Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, and the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IBL PAN). Two years later, the proceedings of the conference were published in a book form. In this issue of *Wilanów Studies*, the reader may find the summary of research performed at the Museum during the last five years, compiled by Joanna Paprocka-Gajek.

The text by an Italian scholar Mario Cesarano pertains to Stanisław Kostka Potocki's journey to Nola. Mario Cesarano has already devoted a number of studies to the father of Polish archaeology, analysing the history of the works performed by Potocki in that region, as well as his opinions on the local art. Nola, an exceptionally frequent destination for travellers in the latter half of the eighteenth century, attracted visitors both with its history and with the promise of fruitful excavation works. They had an opportunity to purchase freshly unearthed ancient domestic pottery, alluring in its form and rich in its ornamentation. Direct participation in excavation works made the travellers hopeful of making occasional purchases. Those interested therein, like Potocki, were enticed to visit Nola to further their acquaintance with the ancient world through excavators efforts, driven by their passion for newly reinterpreted and reclassified art and culture. This very interesting paper confronts two beliefs expressed by the count in his notes with the knowledge passed on by the earlier chroniclers and travellers, a testimony to the greatness of the ancient city.

Reflecting the intensified research activity of the Museum and the need to provide the academic community with a ready access to the results of the studies carried out therein, the *Wilanów Studies* Editorial Board intends to broaden the range of thematic focus for the subsequent volumes. Thus far, the dominant features included various thematic complexes devoted

separately to the history and activity of the Sobieski, Sieniawski and Czartoryski families, as well as Princess Lubomirska and the Potocki family. Both in the current and in the subsequent volume, dedicated to the history of the gardens, we expect various sorts of summaries of the most recent research; we are waiting, among others, for a report evaluating the degree of authenticity of the painting *Salvator Mundi* attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, which was bought by Potocki.

In this volume, we publish the results of archive research by Michał Wardzyński, who presents thus far unknown archival materials of the years 1698/1699 and 1720. These significantly broaden our knowledge about the initiation and the course of the refurbishment and building works in the Wilanów residence and garden after the demise of King Jan III. The documents discovered provide sensational details regarding the works of the stuccoist Antonio Perti as the head of the ‘factory at Wilanów’. The identification and decipherment of a 1720 document are a contribution to the further research on the partition of the estate between Crown Princes Jakub and Konstanty Sobieski.

The following text in the volume describes the twentieth-century fate of the painting *Oplakiwanie* [The Lamentation] by a stipendiary of King Jan III, Jan Reisner. The painting, whose attribution was ascertained by Mariusz Karpowicz, is one of the most intriguing works by this painter; its dramatic history is reconstructed and presented by Konrad Pyzel. The exceptional artefact had been donated in 1698 to the church of Visitation Sisters by the artist’s wife, Cecylia Reisner. It constituted a major element of the temple’s decoration, as evidenced in numerous annotations in the sources. During the Second World War, during the Warsaw Uprising to be precise, it disappeared in unknown circumstances. Its loss, alongside many other works of arts belonging to that congregation, was signalled as early as in July 1945. This fascinating article outlines the history of the search for the painting and the efforts made to return this great achievement of Baroque art to Warsaw and its rightful owners in as good a state as possible.

The predilection for the art of the Far East in the Wilanów residence can be traced back to the times of King Jan III. The Chinese Room was established in the years 1730–1733, founded by King Augustus II, the lessee of the palace. The decorative paintings imitating Chinese lacquerware were created by the court lacquerer, who aligned his work with the European understanding of Oriental art, known mainly via works imported from the Middle Kingdom. Decorations alluding in their style to the art of the Far East and to *chinoiserie* objects were mentioned in the inventories of Wilanów; and numerous such items have been preserved. In particular, the advantageous features of ivory as a medium, its value and the outstanding skill in performing intricate work displayed by Chinese artisans resulted in precious ivory artefacts ending up as curios in

collections throughout Europe. For years they were housed in the Museum, although some in a severely damaged state. Irma Fuks-Rembisz, a specialist art conservator, took it upon herself to reconstruct a group of three damaged ivory baskets, associating their inclusion in the Wilanów collection with the times of Princess Lubomirska. Her paper demonstrates the research problems related to the reconstruction of the form, identification and dating of those works, partly made possible by the discovered synthetic pigment.

Besides its Baroque architecture and masterpieces of art, the Wilanów residence was adorned by its surroundings. The meticulously planned garden, well-groomed and abundant in unique plants, gave splendour to the palace already in King Jan III's lifetime, and no less so during the entire period when the estate belonged to Elżbieta Sieniawska, King Augustus II, and the Potocki family. The paper by Jacek Kuśmierski discusses the previously unknown inventories of greenhouse and orangery flora, compiled in 1856 and 1857 by the Wilanów gardens' inspectors. These inventories feature over 770 species, as well as 7,259 specimens, of greenhouse, orangery and ground-cover plants appearing in the gardens. The collection-oriented character of the gathered plants can be inferred from the great number of individual specimens brought from various overseas and tropical countries. In light of our meagre knowledge of the activity of Aleksandra Potocka née Potocka and her husband August Potocki, who intended to establish an exemplary garden at the residence, the transcriptions of documents cited in the annexes constitute a valuable contribution to the task of identifying the endeavours aimed at developing Polish horticulture. Countess Potocka was a particularly distinguished figure in that field, as on numerous occasions she received awards in horticultural exhibitions and contests. This text is a foretaste of the coming volume of *Wilanów Studies*, focusing on garden design and the surroundings of stately residences.

The issue is rounded off with two interesting messages regarding important current events at the Museum.

Guests frequenting Wilanów may have noticed that the large carpets, dating back to almost half a century ago, are missing from the floors in the two largest rooms of the Wilanów residence – the White Hall and the Painting Gallery known as the Museum. Barbara Czaja, a textile conservation specialist, recreated briefly the history of one of those carpets, designed especially for the Painting Gallery. After years of use, as decided by a team of several specialists, the worn out carpet, requiring numerous repairs, was removed, and the nineteenth-century look of the interior was restored with a decorative parquet flooring set in the pattern of a tricolour mosaic known from the 1877 print by Wojciech Gerson, reproduced in his outstanding *Willanów: album. Zbiór widoków*

i pamiątek. The carpet has currently been transferred to the Museum of Textiles in Łódź, where its design documentation has been preserved. Marta Gołąbek, the co-curator of the Wilanów edition of the Kraków-based exhibition titled 'Rośliny i zwierzęta. Atlasy historii naturalnej w epoce Linneusza/Plants and animals. Atlases of natural history in the age of Linnaeus', in a brief communication presents the basic assumptions of the exhibition, which has enjoyed much popular interest. The exhibition was open to the public from May to August 2021 and, in spite of the pandemic-related limitations, was attended by ca. 10,000 visitors. They had the unquestionable pleasure of seeing the illustrated botanical atlases and dozens of prints illustrating plants and animals of the world produced by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century researchers and nature-lovers. The display was further complemented by a presentation of works of handicraft, whose ornamentation drew from the patterns of graphic materials similar to those shown in the Wilanów Palace.

After years of absence, the commendable informative practice in the form of a notice section titled 'The chronicle 2021' returns to the pages of *Wilanów Studies*. It aims to outline the most important events, undertakings and projects carried out by the Museum during the previous year. We are convinced that its introduction to the volume, prepared by Marta Gołąbek and Jagoda Kruszewska, will contribute to making the image of the operation of the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów more complete.

Wishing you a pleasant read,
Joanna Paprocka-Gajek