

## | The Royal Painting Collection at Łazienki and Its New Layout. A Curator's Dilemmas

Among all of Poland's museum residences, there are only two – the Royal Castle in Warsaw and the Palace on the Isle in Royal Łazienki Park – whose interiors require a very special arrangement of paintings, filling the walls densely in a typical 18<sup>th</sup>-century decorative manner.<sup>1</sup> Both residences were the property of the same monarch – Stanisław August – and both acquired their final appearance in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> History allowed neither the Royal Castle nor the Palace on the Isle to reach the present in their former historic shape – their interiors, now museums, had to be reconstructed by their caretakers.

In the extensive reconstruction of the Royal Castle, the official seat of the King and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth destroyed during the Second World War, it was possible to faithfully recreate the state apartments decorated with Bacciarelli's and Bellotto's series of *panneaux*-paintings (incorporated into the walls and constituting a permanent element of the decoration), which were salvaged during a fire that broke out in 1939. The restored Yellow and Green Rooms, however, as well as the King's Study and Dressing Room, which in King Stanisław's time were filled with moveable easel paintings, are the creation of curators, as neither the original paintings that used to hang there (all of them were sold off after the monarch's death) nor any visual record of these apartments' appearance has survived. The creators of the first arrangement of paintings in the reconstructed castle, opened to the public in 1983, were the castle's curators – outstanding experts on the subject: Bożenna Majewska-Maszkowska, Andrzej Rottermund and Ryszard Kielczewski (fig. 1). Displayed then in the rooms were mainly paintings on loan from the National Museum in Warsaw. After three decades of the castle's operations as a museum, in 2017, this excellent arrangement was changed.<sup>3</sup> This occurred because the castle had built up its own collection of paintings through donations and purchases, and it became possible to return the loans and to “crowd” the paintings more closely together in the interiors in a manner that brought it even nearer to its 18<sup>th</sup>-century form. At the time, thanks to the number and variety of paintings that the curators had at their disposal, it was possible to create a layout that was almost “ideal,” one that conformed with the 18<sup>th</sup>-century rigours of symmetry and harmony. The arrangement's chief creator was Hanna Małachowicz, assisted

<sup>1</sup> In western terminology, more or less from the time of Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun, author of *Réflexions sur le Muséum national* (1792–93), such an arrangement was known as the “flower-bed principle” (see Krzysztof Pomian's and Antoni Ziemia's article in this issue of the *Journal* – p. 176).

<sup>2</sup> Dorota Juszczak, Hanna Małachowicz, *The Stanisław August Collection of Paintings at the Royal Łazienki. Catalogue* (Warsaw, 2016); Dorota Juszczak, *Malarski zbiór króla Stanisława Augusta* [forthcoming; publication planned for 2025].

<sup>3</sup> Unchanged was the Study wall on either side of the door to the Throne Room.

by the author of the present paper. We also benefited from the knowledge provided by Maciej Chojnowski, an expert on 18<sup>th</sup>-century furnishings and decorative art.

The recreation of the painting layout in the Palace on the Isle (in the 1960s, after the renovation work undertaken to repair the damage caused by the Second World War) – the private villa of the king – presented a set of entirely different challenges for the curator. Thanks to the sale of Łazienki to Tsar Alexander I in 1817, a large part of the collection remained in the Palace on the Isle (such is the irony of history) and is today the property of the National Museum and the Royal Łazienki Museum (hereinafter NMW and RŁM, respectively). This could be at once an advantage and, paradoxically, an additional encumbrance, as it fuels a desire, one that is logical and justified, to fill the Palace on the Isle exclusively with paintings from the former royal collection. The creator of the layout must thus confine themselves to a specific and closed collection without the luxury of being able to fill in missing formats and subjects so as to compose the entirety in a way that as faithfully as possible reflects the palace's historic décor. Yet, this is just one reason why the job is a complicated one.

In this paper, I wish to share a handful of reflections and dilemmas that came my way during the work on the design of the new painting arrangement in the apartments of the Palace on the Isle, which I undertook upon becoming the painting curator at Łazienki toward the end of 2018. The various processes connected with this – research, conceptual and technical preparations – lasted until December 2022. The dream scenario, that is, the total elimination of paintings that did not belong to the king's collection in the palace, proved unachievable. Through teamwork between Łazienki's registrars, restorers and curators, it was possible, however, to create an arrangement that is more organised and closer in character to the one in King Stanisław's time with the addition of other royal paintings on loan from the National Museum in Warsaw. Our endeavours, it must be noted, were a continuation of the tireless work of the former Łazienki museum staff in their efforts to restore the palace interiors to their former glory during King Stanisław August's reign.

### Paintings in the Palace on the Isle in the years 1792–1939

The Palace on the Isle held a special place within the realm of King Stanisław August's artistic ambitions and accomplishments. The king's beloved summer residence, continuously extended and beautified during his reign, was to be an incarnation of his dreams of a perfect abode, a villa-museum,<sup>4</sup> and a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (or perhaps more accurately, a *bel composto*, to borrow Bernini's term). The Łazienki painting collection was the *crème de la crème* of the royal holdings, which by the end of the monarch's reign numbered nearly 2500 paintings but because of its size varied highly in the artistic quality of its components. Stanisław August made up his mind to gather the royal collection's most prized paintings at Łazienki in the 1780s, after having completed rebuilding and refurbishing the state apartments at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. The extension of the ground floor of the Palace on the Isle, initiated in 1788, created an elongated interior with walls clad in green fabric, envisioned strictly as a gallery space – the Picture Gallery<sup>5</sup> (fig. 2). The paintings were hung there in 1792. When the French

<sup>4</sup> Andrzej Rottermund, "Nowy Rzym – o roli Rzymu w formowaniu zbiorów rzeźby Stanisława Augusta," in *Thorvaldsen w Polsce*, exh. cat., Royal Castle in Warsaw (Warsaw, 1994), pp. 19–20.

<sup>5</sup> The names of the rooms are translated from the French – after a catalogue of Stanisław August's gallery from 1795, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (The Central Archives of Historical Records), Warsaw, Józef Poniąkowski and Maria Teresa Tyszkiewicz Archive (henceforth: AGAD, AJP), ref. no. 200, folios 307–309v; Tadeusz

travellers Alphonse-Toussaint de Fortia de Piles and Louis de Boisgelin de Kerdu visited the palace in the spring of that year, the gallery contained 46 paintings;<sup>6</sup> in January 1794 a further three were added – believed at the time to be portraits by Leonardo, Giorgione and Annibale Carracci, acquired in December 1793 from Stanisław Kostka Potocki.<sup>7</sup>

The choice and arrangement of the works filling the gallery was highly deliberate, in all certainty dictated by the king himself and Marcello Bacciarelli,<sup>8</sup> the collection's custodian and court painter, who in this instance also would have served as *tapissier*, the French title for an individual who attended to the arrangement of paintings in *cabinets de tableaux* in Paris and the annual Salons at the Louvre.<sup>9</sup> The Łazienki Picture Gallery (also called the *Gallery en bas*) was furnished in the fashion prevailing in Paris from the middle of the century and quickly spreading throughout the rest of Europe: walls packed tightly with works of different schools and genres by old and contemporary masters, arranged edge-to-edge in symmetric groupings.<sup>10</sup> Hung in a similar manner were paintings in the small Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon, which was also envisioned as a display space for the collection.

The original arrangements of paintings in the Picture Gallery, the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon and other palace interiors, where, according to my calculations, more than 270 paintings<sup>11</sup> hung in the early 1790s, persisted no longer than until the end of December 1795. That was when, on Stanisław August's instruction, Bacciarelli removed from the Palace on the Isle 110 paintings (and packed them into crates to be hidden from the Prussians occupying Warsaw at the time) which were meant to be shipped to Grodno and then to accompany the dethroned monarch in his exile further afield.<sup>12</sup> The planned shipment never came to pass and it was only two years later, in 1797, that 29 of Stanisław August's most prized Łazienki paintings were delivered to him in St Petersburg, where he spent the final year of his life. Among those works were four large-format canvases that had served as the centrepieces of the Picture Gallery.<sup>13</sup> Thus, as the remaining paintings, unpacked from their crates in 1797, returned to the walls of the palace, Bacciarelli was obviously unable to reconstruct the

Mańkowski, *Galerja Stanisława Augusta* (Lviv, 1932), pp. 487–89, and occasionally after Polish-language inventories of the Łazienki palace from 1788 and 1795, AGAD, AJP, ref. nos. 162, 165. This nomenclature has been accepted in the latest literature on the Łazienki palace (guides, catalogues).

<sup>6</sup> Alphonse-Toussaint de Fortia de Piles, *Voyage de deux Français en Allemagne, Danemark, Suède, Russie et Pologne fait en 1790–1792*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1796), p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Juszczak, *Malarski zbiór...*, op. cit., pp. 130–31.

<sup>8</sup> I have been unable to find any source information on who created the painting layout in the royal residences.

<sup>9</sup> See Isabelle Pichet, *Le Tapissier et les dispositifs discursifs au Salon (1750–1789)* (Paris, 2012). I thank Konrad Niemira for bringing this important publication to my attention.

<sup>10</sup> Ewa Manikowska, "Paryskie modele kolekcjonerstwa obrazów w Rzeczypospolitej czasów saskich i stanisławowskich," in *Le siècle français. Francuskie malarstwo i rysunek XVIII wieku ze zbiorów polskich*, Iwona Danielewicz, ed., exh. cat., The National Museum in Warsaw (Warsaw, 2009), p. 110.

<sup>11</sup> I do not include here the plafonds and large-format canvases by Bacciarelli in the Salle de Salomon – this applies to all of the Łazienki painting numbers cited in the article.

<sup>12</sup> This number of Łazienki paintings appears in the list of paintings packed into crates at the time; there were 250 paintings in total: *Inventaire des 13 Caisses où on a emballé, Les Miniatures, Portraits en pastel, Portraits à l'huile, Tableaux et dessins [...] le 11 Mars 1796*, AGAD, Correspondence of Stanisław August, ref. no. 5b, pp. 42–58v.

<sup>13</sup> List of paintings taken to Grodno and St Petersburg (there were 34 in all) see AGAD, AJP, ref. no. 508, p. 49; Mańkowski, *Galerja...*, op. cit., p. 189.

original arrangement. It was then that the Picture Gallery on the ground floor of the palace welcomed Rembrandt's *The Polish Rider* (Frick Collection, New York) and Fragonard's *The Stolen Kiss* (Hermitage, St Petersburg), which had previously been on display in the king's private chambers on the first floor of the palace. Providing information on the location of individual works at that time is an inventory drafted in 1799,<sup>14</sup> as well as accounts of people visiting the palace. Let us cite an excerpt from the journal of Waleria Tarnowska, who, during a visit to the kingless royal residence, noticed in the monarch's Study: "That armchair, that desk, that inkwell, those quills, those scattered sheets of paper, that calendar open to the year 1794, all of it pains me [...]," while also taking note of the gallery: "[...] among several other fine Rembrandts [there was] the Jew with his daughter and the rider [...]. Oh, how glad I would be to buy them had I the money, because in that beautiful and resplendent Łazienki everything is for sale."<sup>15</sup>

This was no small matter: the sell-off was initiated in 1806 by Prince Józef Poniatowski and continued after the prince's death in 1813 by his sister Maria Teresa Tyszkiewiczowa. By the time Tsar Alexander I acquired Łazienki, many of the Palace on the Isle's major works of art had departed, including, for example, the three Rembrandts so admired by Waleria Tarnowska – sold in 1814 was *The Polish Rider*, which, incidentally, would later become the property of Tarnowska and reside in her castle in Dzików, while the "Jew with his daughter," meaning *The Girl in a Picture Frame* and *The Scholar at the Lectern*, were purchased by Kazimierz Rzewuski in 1815 (Royal Castle Museum in Warsaw). In 1817, the palace being taken over by the Russian tsar contained 219 paintings; two years later that number fell when Tyszkiewiczowa took twelve oval Poniatowski family portraits from the Dining Room to France, having secured them via a contract of sale at an earlier date.<sup>16</sup>

In the period of the Congress Kingdom of Poland (1815–1917), the paintings were relocated in connection with the rebuilding and repurposing of some of the rooms of the Łazienki palace undertaken by its Russian owners.<sup>17</sup> We know the arrangements of the paintings in the particular interiors from a hand-written catalogue compiled in 1851 by Ksawery Kaniewski, a professor at the Warsaw School of Fine Arts and member of the St Petersburg Academy, who included detailed drawings showing the walls<sup>18</sup> (**fig. 3**). The paintings were arranged in keeping with the 18<sup>th</sup>-century convention: densely packed, with strict observance of symmetry

<sup>14</sup> AGAD, AJP, ref. no. 118, folios 397ff.

<sup>15</sup> "Cet appartement de Stanislas Auguste resté absolument dans le même état depuis son départ de sa Capitale pour Grodno, ce fauteuil, ce secrétaire, cet encrier, ces plumes, ces papiers épars, ce Calendrier ouvert de l'année 1794 tout cela fait mal, et l'on échappa avec plaisir à ces tristes souvenirs," cited after Xavier F. Salomon, "Jeździec polski Rembrandta," in Dorota Juszczyk, Xavier F. Salomon, *Jeździec polski – królewski Rembrandt* (Warsaw, 2022), p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> Dorota Juszczyk, Hanna Małachowicz, "Nieznany Bacciarelli – portrety rodzinne Poniatowskich z Pokoju Jadalnego pałacu w Łazienkach," *Rocznik Warszawski*, 31 (2003), pp. 114–33.

<sup>17</sup> This included: the elimination of the chapel in 1846 and the reconstruction of the Small Gallery – split into three rooms; see Lech Niemojewski, *Łazienki Królewskie* (Warsaw, 1923), pp. 25–26; Marek Kwiatkowski, *Wielka Księga Łazienek* (Warsaw, 2000), p. 185.

<sup>18</sup> Jan Ksawery Kaniewski, *Catalogue des Tableaux qui se trouvent dans les appartements du Palais de Łazienki. 1851. rédigé par X. Kaniewski Membre de l'Académie [sic] Impériale des beaux arts de Saint Petersburg / Spis Obrazów znajdujących się w salonach Pałacu Łazienkowskiego. 1851 r. Ułożony przez Ks. Kaniewskiego członka Cesarskiej Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Petersburgu*, National Museum in Warsaw, Inventory Department. I thank Michał Przygoda for pointing out to me this copy of the catalogue, the only copy hitherto known to me being the one in the Polish Academy of Sciences Special Collections, which does not include diagrams of the walls.

and total adherence to the decoration scheme, though with less care devoted to exhibiting the best works than was the case in Stanisław August's display. And so, hanging on the long wall opposite the windows, in the spot where a door to the Antechamber used to be before the Russians bricked it up, the very central point of the Gallery, was the canvas *Diana and Nymphs*, quite poor artistically but befitting of its placement due to its large format, attributed today to Felice Torelli (NMW).

In the tsarist period, the Łazienki painting collection did not incur many losses (fig. 4). Going missing were only three paintings that were removed from the chapel being demolished around 1846,<sup>19</sup> while of the five artworks taken to the Hermitage in St Petersburg in 1895 at the behest of Nicholas II, three were successfully recovered after the Treaty of Riga (1921). Additionally, stolen during the First World War were two small tondi with portraits of the king's nieces that were embedded in the wood panelling of the king's Study<sup>20</sup> and two oval paintings (*St Cecilia* and *St Mary Magdalene*) integrated into the panelling of the Bedchamber,<sup>21</sup> which Bacciarelli had installed to replace the earlier portraits of Catherine the Great as Minerva and as Diana, sent to the king in St Petersburg in 1797 (both lost).<sup>22</sup>

As a result of the Treaty of Riga, the Łazienki collection – depleted through sales made at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the king's relatives yet still impressive – became the property of the young state of Poland. The paintings taken to Russia in 1914 by the Russian army evacuating from Warsaw were returned in 1921, while three paintings on display at the Hermitage – Jan Steen's *The Choice Between Richness and Youth* (fig. 5), Bartholomeus van der Helst's *Self-Portrait* and Rembrandt and workshop's *Portrait of Marten Soolmans* – came back to Poland only in 1929 (all currently at NMW).<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately it was not possible to recover Fragonard's *The Stolen Kiss* or Aert de Gelder's self-portrait.<sup>24</sup>

The Royal Łazienki complex became part of the institutional entity known as the Official Buildings of the Republic of Poland, their furnishings and artwork were allocated to the State Collections of the Republic of Poland (in 1932 renamed as the State Art Collections). Open to the public, the Palace on the Isle was essentially a museum. Photographs from the 1920s and 30s, as well as other visual records, show that its painting display closely reflected the display from the Russian period. Printed in 1931 was a catalogue of the Łazienki collection prepared by Stanisław Iskierski.<sup>25</sup> The concise, academic catalogue settled a number of attribution

<sup>19</sup> In the Łazienki inventory from 1832 (AGAD, Łazienki and Belweder Inspector, ref. no. 89), noted in the chapel are three religious paintings, numbers in the Stanisław August collection: 503, 1588, 1662 (see Mańkowski, *Galeria...*, op. cit.); all lost.

<sup>20</sup> Niemojewski, *Łazienki Królewskie...*, op. cit., fig. [n.n.] pp. 134, 135.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., cat. nos. 124, 125.

<sup>22</sup> Sold in 1798 in St Petersburg to Alexander Bezborodko; see Juszcak, *Malarski zbiór króla...*, op. cit., p. 171.

<sup>23</sup> Niemojewski, *Łazienki Królewskie...*, op. cit., pp. 27–28, 63–64; Stanisław Iskierski, *Katalog galerii obrazów Pałacu w Łazienkach w Warszawie* (Warsaw, 1931), cat. nos. 50, 102.

<sup>24</sup> In 1895, the Russians brought five paintings from the Hermitage to Łazienki to replace the five removed, see L. Niemojewski, *Łazienki Królewskie...*, op. cit., cat. no. 66 (P.P. Rubens, *Portrait of a Man*), cat. no. 77 (C. Procaccini, *St Cecilia*), cat. no. 78 (Flemish painter, *The Apostle Paul*), cat. no. 133 (J.-P. Bouquet, *Landscape*), cat. no. 178 (Italian painter, *The Holy Family*). After negotiations with the Polish side and the return of three royal paintings in 1929, in lieu of the unreturned works by Fragonard and Aert de Gelder they offered in kind Antoine Watteau's *Polish Woman* (NMW; actually a copy from an engraving by Boucher based on a drawing by Watteau) and a portrait of three members of the Parisian parliament attributed to Frans Pourbus (RŁM); Iskierski, *Katalog galerii obrazów...*, op. cit., cat. nos. 99, 135.

<sup>25</sup> See Iskierski, *Katalog galerii obrazów...*, op. cit.



issues and provided detailed information on the number of paintings from the collection of King Stanisław August that at the time resided in the Palace on the Isle (citing the numbers from the royal inventory); there were 185 of them.

The Second World War and the first post-war years mark a turning point in the history of the Łazienki painting collection with regard to its contents and cohesiveness. Having been evacuated to the National Museum in the early days of the war, the paintings were removed from the country in 1940. Though most of the collection was later successfully recovered, 36 of its paintings were looted and lost. Luckily, those works were not particularly valuable, one exception being a kitchen scene by Hubert Robert, one of a pair of paintings with this subject.<sup>26</sup> However, irretrievably lost to fire in 1944 were the huge canvases by Bacciarelli from the Salle de Salomon. The paintings recovered after the war were incorporated into the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw in 1946 as the Palace on the Isle required extensive reconstruction due to the damage it suffered during the war.

### Gallery of Foreign Painting or the Stanisław August Gallery? The Palace on the Isle in 1946–2023

The intention of the collection's first post-war caretaker and later long-time Łazienki director, Marek Kwiatkowski, who was responsible for recreating the Palace on the Isle's interiors after the war, was, as he wrote, to reflect as faithfully as possible the décor from the time of Stanisław August on the basis of historical sources and to "bring back all of the surviving original objects."<sup>27</sup> The reinstatement of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century appearance of the interiors – at least with respect to the artwork – was obviously unrealistic. What was possible was to return to the 1939 state. Standing in the way, however, were the interests of the Gallery of Foreign Painting that was being built at the time at the National Museum, of which the Łazienki complex was an institutional and legal division after the war. In the early 1960s, the royal collection returned to the Palace on the Isle, which was gradually opening to the public, highly trimmed-down: not only due to wartime losses but also because of a decision to leave about one-third of the collection's pre-war contents at the museum. Looking at the royal paintings which went up in Łazienki (113 pieces), it is hard to dispel the feeling that it was mostly second-rate works that appeared there; second-rate for works by Old Masters at least. Among the exceptions were *Silenus Playing the Flute* by Jacob Jordaens and a pair of portraits by Anthony van Dyck (all at RŁM). Interestingly, the latter two works were believed at the time to be 18<sup>th</sup>-century copies, only to be confirmed as originals upon technological analysis and conservation performed in 2015<sup>28</sup> (figs. 6, 7).

<sup>26</sup> See Maria Romanowska-Zadrozna, Tomasz Zadrozny, *Malarstwo obce: straty wojenne. Obrazy olejne, pastele, akwarele utracone w latach 1939–1945 w granicach Polski po 1945 bez ziem zachodnich i północnych*, vol. 1 (Poznań, 2000). The second painting in the pair has survived and is the property of the NMW. For a list of Łazienki paintings lost in the war, see the English version of the Łazienki catalogue: Juszczak, Małachowicz, *The Stanisław August Collection...*, op. cit., pp. 556–58.

<sup>27</sup> Marek Kwiatkowski, "Muzeum w Łazienkach," *Muzealnictwo*, 12 (1964), p. 33.

<sup>28</sup> Dorota Juszczak, Hanna Małachowicz, *Galeria obrazów Stanisława Augusta w Łazienkach Królewskich. Katalog*, Royal Łazienki Museum (Warsaw, 2015), nos. 42, 43 (workshop of); Joost Vander Auwera, "The Rubens studio and the De Cordes-De Caestre portraits in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels: a multidisciplinary approach," *Jordaens Van Dyck Journal*, 3 (2024) [forthcoming]. See <<http://jordaensvandyck.org/journal>>.

The last thing I wish to do is judge the great museum curators of the time, with my mentor Jan Białostocki at the forefront, and their decision to devote the most precious Łazienki paintings to the story of Early Modern painting being presented in the Gallery of Foreign Painting at the National Museum and not leave them at Łazienki, where they would help tell the story of King Stanisław August's patronage and the history of his residence. Quite understandable is the tendency to forget the royal provenance of the paintings prevailing in the 1940s and 50s, in the Stalinist era and even into the somewhat "loosened" but still ideologically hard-headed communism of the 1960s. Yet, the National Museum's intransigence in its reluctance to hand over part of Stanisław August's collection to Łazienki in the following decades seems excessive. Shoulder to shoulder with Wilanów (the historic residence of King Jan III Sobieski and of the Sieniawski, Lubomirski and Potocki families), Łazienki at the time was thus forced to go to battle to recover its original collection.

Bluntly put, to return all of the Łazienki paintings would have been to deprive the museum's Gallery of Foreign Painting of its most crucial artefacts – like Hubert Robert's *Kitchen*, the *Portrait of Marten Soolmans* attributed to Rembrandt's workshop and recently argued to be a work of the master himself;<sup>29</sup> Gerard ter Borch's *Officer Writing a Letter*, or Jan Steen's *The Choice Between Richness and Youth*. Perhaps, however, it would have been sensible to try and find a middle ground and consider returning at least the royal paintings that were being kept in storage and not on display.

The lengthy correspondence kept in the archives of the two institutions gives a glimpse into the arguments presented by both sides. The National Museum's reasoning is summed up well in a document drafted by a committee of curators and restorers assembled in 1989 by the museum's management to issue an opinion on the possible separation of the Łazienki and Wilanów divisions from the museum: "By a resolution of the Sejm in 1946, the National Museum in Warsaw became the central museum institution of the State of Poland and was thus imposed with the responsibility to present the history of art (national and foreign) in Poland according to an agreed-upon concept. Housed in the National Museum's Main Building are exhibitions of a synthetic nature illustrating the history of art from antiquity to the present."<sup>30</sup> The other side pointed to the original sin that was the decision on the National Museum taking such a form and not another, issued by the communist authorities in an era of "bureaucratic centralism" and falsified history, a result of which was the incorporation into the museum's holdings of all royal court assets and two royal art collections – those of Łazienki and Wilanów.<sup>31</sup> The Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences – an organisation unaffiliated with either of the institutions involved in the dispute – issued the following opinion: "Historic collections ought to return to their historic locations, as it had been in the 1920s."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See Jeroen Giltaij, "The Painting by Rembrandt and Studio. *Portrait of Marten Soolmans*, of 1634, in the National Museum in Warsaw, Reconsidered," *Ingenium et labor. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Antoniemu Ziembie z okazji 60. urodzin*, Piotr Borusowski, ed. (Warsaw, 2020).

<sup>30</sup> Decree no. 19, of 17 October 1946; copy of committee opinion, Royal Łazienki Museum Archive (henceforth: AMLK).

<sup>31</sup> *Memoriał w sprawie usamodzielnienia zespołów pałacowo-ogrodowych w Łazienkach i Wilanowie*, submitted to the Ministry of Culture and Art by Wojciech Fijałkowski and Marek Kwiatkowski on 9 May 1989; copy at AMLK, papers of Maciej Chojnowski. See also the position of the founding organisation of NSZZ "Solidarność" at the National Museum concerning the memo dated 23 June 1989, AMLK.

<sup>32</sup> Stanisław Mossakowski, Polish Academy of Sciences Institute of Art, to Andrzej Rottermund, Chairman of the Museum Board at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, 17 February 2000, AMLK.

Ultimately, in March 1995, Łazienki achieved institutional independence. The newly established Royal Łazienki Museum was allotted the majority of the 113 royal paintings which at the time were housed in the Palace on the Isle. This particular division of the paintings between the National Museum and the Royal Łazienki complex was set in stone for well into the future by a handover report signed by both parties two years later, on 30 April 1997. And so, any further negotiations were dead in the water. Certainly, doing them no favours was the temperament – not only academic – and outsize personality of Łazienki's director at the time, Marek Kwiatkowski.

Wishing to preserve the historic character of the apartments, which would need an 18<sup>th</sup>-century arrangement, the walls filled with paintings from the wood panelling to the cornices, the creators of the post-war décor had to rely in part on loans of non-Stanisławian provenance from the National Museum. This is visible in photographs of the Palace from the 1970s and 80s, and “audible” in the somewhat laborious descriptions in the successive guides authored by Kwiatkowski, in which the scholar tends to bend the truth. Hoping to promptly recover a larger portion of King Stanisław August's painting collection from the National Museum, Kwiatkowski “appropriated” them prematurely in his publications so that the guides would remain current when the paintings finally did make their way back to Łazienki. To that end, he engaged in a balancing act, writing, for example, in 1978 that only works from the monarch's collection were on display in the Picture Gallery while mentioning a number of pieces whose provenance was entirely different.<sup>33</sup> In the guides' photographs we see that hanging in the Picture Gallery, in the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon and in the Antechamber on the first floor, were indeed paintings from the king's collection, though supplemented to a considerable extent with paintings never belonging to Stanisław August.

In the 1970s, 80s and 90s, the arrangement of the paintings in the palace changed a number of times; paintings jumped between floors and even between the National Museum and Łazienki, with that migration generally occurring in a single direction up until the first decade of the current century. Leaving the palace were several valuable monarchic paintings like, for example, Jan Steen's *The Choice Between Richness and Youth* and Simon de Vos' *Acts of Mercy*, both of which were on display for a time in the palace in the 1960s and 70s, as well as Pietro della Vecchia's *Apollo Playing the Violin* (fig. 8), brazenly “abducted” in 2003 by National Museum curators after an exhibition. In fact, Della Vecchia's painting, despite hanging in the palace from the year 1962 and having formally become the property of Łazienki in 2003, has yet to be returned and is part of a new NMW permanent exhibition – the Gallery of Early Modern European Art.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Marek Kwiatkowski, *Łazienki warszawskie* (Warsaw, 1978), pp. 27–29; id., *Łazienki Królewskie. Nowy przewodnik* (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 40–41.

<sup>34</sup> The painting was brought in from Łazienki for the exhibition *Konfrontacje. Inspiracje. Spotkania... Artyści malarstwa europejskiego z muzeów amerykańskich i polskich*, at the NMW from 28 February to 4 May 2003. At the time, it was believed by the NMW to be the legal property of the NMW permanently on display in the Łazienki complex. The NMW deemed that it had the right to its use and to include it in its own exhibition in the Gallery of European Painting. At the same time, it was included on the list of historical Łazienki paintings whose ownership was formally transferred in 2003 to the RŁM by a decision of the Ministry of Culture and Art, to be removed from the NMW inventory. As to the “brazen abduction”: the loan of the work for the exhibition in question, and its subsequent removal from Łazienki and incorporation into the NMW permanent gallery, transpired as a result of negotiation games between the RŁM deputy-director for loans, Andrzej Stoga, and the NMW chief curator Antoni Ziemia, with the latter's certain intention to annex the *Apollo* for the new Gallery of European Painting at the NMW.



In the *Great Book of Łazienki*, envisioned as a compendium of historical knowledge on the Łazienki complex and as a summary of Marek Kwiatkowski's many years of work toward its restoration, the author has this to say about the museum's post-war situation: "Much of the moveable property, including the works of art residing in Łazienki from the time of King Stanisław August up to the year 1939, [...] was entered into the inventory of the National Museum in Warsaw. Łazienki was stripped of what made it so valuable – one hundred and forty-five easel paintings being the sole remnants of the gallery of Stanisław August."<sup>35</sup> Though the dramatic final sentence did reflect the legal state at the time (only in 2003 did the museum formally strike from its inventory books the paintings returned to Łazienki in 1995 with the separation of the two institutions) it did not fully reflect the actual state, since a large part of the monarchic collection was in fact on display in Łazienki – albeit, as I wrote earlier, minus the most important works.

After the Second World War, the Stanisław August gallery as a distinct entity disappeared from scholarly discourse for a long time. Provenance and archival research was not a subject of Polish scholars' interest. Unsurprisingly, their attention at the time was focussed mainly on the issues of the attribution, dating and iconography of particular works, the fruits of which were numerous new conclusions published in articles and exhibition and collection catalogues by National Museum scholars. The awareness of the monarchic roots of many of the centrepiece works in the various collections of European painting in Poland was nearly erased from public consciousness despite Marek Kwiatkowski's regular reminders of the fact in the guidebooks and publications concerning Łazienki and despite National Museum curators' indication of such a provenance in their academic publications.

Ushering in a new open-mindedness in the thinking on the Łazienki collection – and on the exhibition of paintings in the Palace on the Isle – was the *Rembrandt and Others* exhibition organised by the Royal Łazienki Museum in 2011. Shown in it was a total of 162 royal paintings. These were works that had resided in the palace up until 1939 and were the property of Royal Łazienki or loaned from the National Museum, as well as 14 paintings that had left the palace much earlier, in 1815, sold by Maria Teresa Tyszkiewiczowa to Kazimierz Rzewuski, inherited by Rzewuski's daughter Ludwika Lanckorońska, and ultimately donated to the Royal Castle in Warsaw in 1994 by the last member of the bloodline, Karolina Lanckorońska.

The exhibition's organisation was possible thanks to a "reset" in relations between Łazienki and the National Museum resulting from the efforts of a new, highly committed generation of Łazienki curators and restorers as well as from the open and fresh mindset of the chief curator of the National Museum's Collection of Early Modern European Art, Antoni Ziemba. Contributing to the success of the undertaking was Royal Castle in Warsaw director Andrzej Rottermund's bold decision to loan two masterpieces by Rembrandt for the exhibition. The public that flocked to Łazienki enjoyed the rare occasion to view *The Girl in a Picture Frame* and *The Scholar at His Writing Table* in the paintings' historic setting, where they returned – for the duration of the exhibition – nearly two hundred years after leaving the Palace on the Isle. For the first time since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Picture Gallery and the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon were filled with royal paintings in a typical 18<sup>th</sup>-century "gallery" arrangement, densely covering the walls. The exhibition curator and designer of the layout was Izabela Zychowicz, the then head of the Department of Art and later the Łazienki deputy

<sup>35</sup> Kwiatkowski, *Wielka Księga...*, op. cit., p. 194.

director for museum matters. The exhibition showed the character of the Łazienki interiors at the time of King Stanisław August, with the full extent of its artistic décor. To the public and scholars alike, it also ingrained the fact that within the large – and highly varied – royal painting collection, there existed a distinct gallery, one that had been deliberately built and thoughtfully organised. Moreover, the exhibition made clear that this gallery was the jewel of King Stanisław August's collection, consisting of its most precious pieces. Accompanying the exhibition was a catalogue, which, though succinct and imperfectly edited, was the first publication after the Second World War to cover the entirety of the collection of royal paintings that survived in the Palace on the Isle up to 1939 (minus the wartime losses).<sup>36</sup> The second of the catalogue's two volumes contained scholarly analyses of the 14 paintings belonging to the later Lanckoroński collection that were loaned from the Royal Castle.<sup>37</sup>

With continued momentum, in 2015 the Royal Łazienki Museum published an academic catalogue of the paintings from the collection of King Stanisław August on display in the Palace on the Isle – there were 136 of them at the time (including 21 on long-term loan from the National Museum and one from the Polish Army Museum).<sup>38</sup> Preceded by a lengthy foreword on the history of the Łazienki collection, it contained detailed glosses with in-depth provenances (including prior to the works' acquisition by King Stanisław August), as well as a list of manuscript sources and literature on the subject. One obvious flaw of the publication is that it does not include the Łazienki paintings that were not on display in the palace but in storage at the National Museum. It would be worthwhile to consider them in a second volume.

The aforementioned “reset” in the relations between the museum and Łazienki, along with talks between Antoni Ziemia and Izabela Zychowicz, bore fruit in 2011 and 2013 with the handover of ownership to Łazienki of eleven paintings that had resided in the Palace on the Isle until 1939 (and which had been on display there as loans from the museum after the war, from the 1960s) as well as in the long-term loan of seventeen paintings of the same provenance, which arrived in the palace in 2011 in connection with the *Rembrandt and Others* exhibition.

This made it possible to rearrange the Picture Gallery and the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon in such a way that only works previously belonging to the monarch now hung there. Reinstated at the time was the historical name of Cabinet, until then known as the Portrait Room on account of the fact that it was mainly portraits that hung there from the time of Russian rule (and after the Second World War, ones that likewise had not been from the king's collection). The creator of the arrangement of paintings in the Cabinet, which had regained its historic appearance from King Stanisław's era, and of the new, post-exhibition arrangement in the Gallery was Izabela Zychowicz. It was also Zychowicz who was behind the decision to return a series of portraits of personages from King Augustus II's (of the Wettin dynasty) time to the walls of the Bacchus Room, where they had resided, as we know from inventories, in King Stanisław August's lifetime.

<sup>36</sup> See *Rembrandt i inni. Królewska kolekcja obrazów Stanisława Augusta*, vol. 1, Dorota Juszcak, Hanna Małachowicz, eds, exh. cat, Royal Łazienki Museum, 2011 (Warsaw, 2011). It erroneously omitted Martin Quadal's *Woman with a Candle* (NMW).

<sup>37</sup> See *Rembrandt i inni. Królewska kolekcja obrazów Stanisława Augusta. Obrazy z kolekcji Lanckorońskich*, vol. 2, exh. cat, Dorota Juszcak, Hanna Małachowicz, eds, Royal Łazienki Museum, 2011 (Warsaw, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> See Juszcak, Małachowicz, *Galeria obrazów Stanisława Augusta...*, op. cit., see also eadem, *The Stanisław August Collection...*, op. cit.

When I took over as the Łazienki curator of paintings in 2018, I hoped to continue the work of my predecessors and fully reinstate the painting gallery's original monarchic appearance, regaining from the National Museum enough paintings from King Stanisław August's collection so as to replace all those not from the king's collection that were hanging in the Palace on the Isle.<sup>39</sup> This occurred to be harder than expected. Besides other factors that could be called political or content-related, standing in the way were numerous non-art-related obstacles: a tangle of administrative and legal problems connected mainly with the financing of restoration and possible reconstruction of the frames of the pictures on loan from the National Museum, as well as with the atmospheric conditions on the palace's first floor during the summer months, when it becomes extremely hot.

The problem of heat is one faced by curators of many museums housed in historic residences. I myself do not feel qualified to suggest possible solutions here but, as a museum worker with much experience, I can pose some questions. Namely, is it even possible for residence museums to meet the atmospheric parameters accepted in conservatorial guidelines dictated by owners lending their artworks for exhibitions or putting them on long-term loan? And, are the lending institutions themselves capable of guaranteeing such lofty conditions within their own walls? In other words, do we have the same standards for our works when we loan them out versus when they reside with us? This is something I myself am not immune to. The open secret is that most residence museums, and not only those in Poland for that matter, are not able to meet the ideal conservatorial standards despite employing any number of makeshift solutions. Frequently, historic residence restorers and curators refuse to accept any ad hoc remedial measures, red-lighting any, even the slightest, interference in the site's historical substance and often even in non-historical, reconstructed features or décor elements. The situation was a stalemate. Would it make sense thus to remove the paintings from display and replace them with copies, as I have recently heard it suggested in one heated discussion? This is certainly taking the matter to the point of absurdity. It seems that the subject is ripe for serious discussion among industry people and for agreement on modified, somewhat less utopian standards.

Ultimately, despite the difficulties I describe here, thanks to the courtesy of the curators and full commitment of the restorers at the National Museum in Warsaw, in 2019–22, it was possible to regain for Łazienki – on the basis of long-term loan – four paintings from the king's collection that resided in the Palace on the Isle until 1939,<sup>40</sup> one originally from the palace that had been sold earlier by the king's heirs,<sup>41</sup> and four others belonging to the king but not hanging in Łazienki.<sup>42</sup> As the loan of a higher number of historical Łazienki paintings was not possible, the Palace's décor was supplemented with works from other royal residences; after all, paintings would come and go in the king's time just as they do now. Following the

<sup>39</sup> With the exception of the apartment of Franciszek Ryx, located in the palace attic, in which no paintings of the king's resided.

<sup>40</sup> *Break of the Dikes at Coevorden* attributed to Dirk Maas, *A Cook* by Hendrik Martensz. Sorgh, *Bacchanalia* by Nicolas Bertin and *Forest Landscape* by Frederik de Moucheron.

<sup>41</sup> Bust of Catherine the Great, possibly by Fyodor Rokotov, from the palace in Nieborów. In the king's time, the painting hung in the Dressing Room on the first floor of the palace in Łazienki; in 1817 it was bought by Michał Hieronim Radziwiłł.

<sup>42</sup> *Leda* by Giambettino Cignaroli, two portraits of Jewish women by Krzysztof Radziłowski and a bust of King Jan III by an unknown late-17<sup>th</sup>-century painter.

same line of thinking, I made the decision to place in the king's Study on the palace's first floor two excellent marine views from the workshop of Claude-Joseph Vernet, which themselves never belonged to Stanisław August but were copied from originals once in the monarch's possession.<sup>43</sup> After all, it is better to show works having this kind of indirect connection with the royal collection than ones with no connection whatsoever.

This small group of paintings loaned by the National Museum made it possible to eliminate all non-monarchic works from the Picture Gallery and the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon – the two rooms in the Palace on the Isle that are most important from our point of view – on account of their serving strictly as gallery spaces in the king's time. Hung in the king's private apartment on the first floor – in the Antechamber, the room leading to the king's Study, also known as the Small Gallery, as well as in the Bedchamber – were paintings from the king's collection supplemented with five works of other provenance. Meanwhile, the wardrobe adjacent to the Bedchamber (i.e., the Dressing Room) welcomed pieces on long-term loan from the National Museum that are not from Stanisław August's gallery and two recently acquired 19<sup>th</sup>-century copies of the aforementioned kitchen scenes by Hubert Robert.<sup>44</sup> In the king's time, the small interior of the Dressing Room was adorned with works that were particularly valuable: hung here in 1792 were Guido Reni's *A Sleeping Cupid* (Irbit State Museum of Fine Art, Russia),<sup>45</sup> appraised at a record 1200 ducats, and David Teniers the Younger's *Interior of a Tavern with Card Players* (or *Le Jambon*) (in the Stroganov collection in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), worth 500 ducats.<sup>46</sup>

### “Arranged Artistically and Hung Gracefully.” The Palace on the Isle in 1792-1795

To create painting arrangements in historic residence interiors in a manner compliant with historical accounts, and at the same time meeting the standards governing museum spaces, is certainly a challenge. To restate the obvious: in a non-historic gallery space, we hang paintings according to an agreed-upon, content-based narrative; their visual cohesiveness with neighbouring works is not of crucial importance (though it is of course taken into consideration) and we need not worry much if they are adequately visible as they usually hang in one or, at most, two rows. In designing the new display of paintings in the Palace on the Isle, it was obviously necessary to follow the guidelines governing the presentation of paintings in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with at least a degree of observance of the archival knowledge on the arrangement of paintings in specific rooms inside the Łazienki residence. Finally, it was also desired to exhibit the most precious pieces in a manner that would put them in the best possible sightlines for visitors.

Of course, the starting point was the décor of the Palace on the Isle after the expansion of the ground floor around 1790-95. Seeing as no archival visual documentation of the décor

<sup>43</sup> The originals – *In the Morning* (NMW) and *By the Moonlight* (lost during the Second World War) – hung in the Green Room in the Royal Castle in Stanisław August's time. The copies today on display in Łazienki are from the collection of Jakub Potocki and are the property of the NMW.

<sup>44</sup> By Amelia Lepige, signed and dated 1836.

<sup>45</sup> Dorota Juszczyk, “Dwanaście Rembrandtów? Łazienkowska galeria króla Stanisława Augusta,” in Juszczyk, Salomon, *Jeździec polski...*, op. cit., p. 88.

<sup>46</sup> Fortia de Piles, *Voyage de deux Français...*, op. cit., p. 44; Juszczyk, *Malarski zbiór króla...*, op. cit., pp. 122-23.

exists today, it was first necessary to create a hypothetical reconstruction,<sup>47</sup> though it was perfectly clear that an exact reconstruction was not possible as too many of the original paintings had been sold by the king's heirs.

Relying on the hand-written catalogue for Stanisław August's gallery from 1795, I determined the precise locations and dimensions of the paintings<sup>48</sup> and then attempted, on paper, to recreate their arrangement on the walls of the individual rooms (figs. 9–11). It turned out that the formats of the paintings in a given room make it possible to almost automatically combine them in pairs, and the "blocks" thus formed are themselves arranged in decorative *panneaux* on either side of single canvases, distinguished by scale or character. The dimensions of the walls dictated the whole layout, leaving few riddles. In pairing works that did not originally form pendants, I took into consideration – in keeping with the 18<sup>th</sup>-century principles on creating such second-hand "sets" – not only their formats but also their subjects and genres (landscape–landscape, portrait–portrait, figural scene–figural scene, etc.), colour palettes and composition (similar, complementary), school and attribution (like or contrasting: Italian–Flemish, Old Master–contemporary painter).<sup>49</sup>

The painting layout in the Picture Gallery and Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon designed in the early 1790s by (most likely) Bacciarelli and Stanisław August fully reflected the premises recommended by Parisian theoreticians and critics for the arrangement of *cabinets des tableaux* (spaces dedicated to the display of collections inside a residence) and for the presentation of paintings at Salons and all kinds of exhibition interiors.<sup>50</sup>

The walls of the Gallery and Cabinet in the Palace on the Isle were thus governed by symmetry, harmony and balance: the paintings, placed close to each other, were "arranged artistically and hung gracefully" on a uniform background (in this case green), as recommended by the architect Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières (1721–93) in his 1780 treatise.<sup>51</sup> Large formats – chiefly narrative *storie* – were hung high, above the viewer's head, and smaller paintings lower, with the lowest level occupied by the smallest works, sometimes placed in a row forming "*un cordon de petits tableaux*" – as recommended by Barthélémy-Augustin Blondel d'Azincourt (1719–94), a collector and author of the manuscript *La première idée de la curiosité* – thanks to which their delicately rendered details could be admired from up close.<sup>52</sup> In the Picture Gal-

<sup>47</sup> I published the preliminary results of this research in 2017; Dorota Juszczak, "Malarski zbiór Stanisława Augusta. Kolekcja, galeria, czy gabinet?" in *Oświeceniowa republika władców*, pt. 2, Andrzej Pieńkos, ed., King Stanisław Period Research Centre, Royal Łazienki Museum (Warsaw, 2017), pp. 201–27.

<sup>48</sup> The 1795 Łazienki inventory does not list the paintings in the Łazienki Palace interiors, referring the reader to the catalogue of paintings, where the place of residence was indicated (at times very illegibly) next to the individual paintings (which residence, and which room; in alphanumeric code).

<sup>49</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup>-century pendants see Colin B. Bailey, "Conventions of the Eighteenth-Century *Cabinet des Tableaux*: Blondel d'Azincourt's *La première idée de la curiosité*," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 69, no. 3 (1987), pp. 441–43; Patric Michel, *Peinture et plaisir. Les goûts picturaux des collectionneurs parisiens au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rennes, 2010), pp. 402–06.

<sup>50</sup> Bailey, "Conventions of the Eighteenth-Century *Cabinet des Tableaux*...", op. cit., pp. 431–47; Michel, *Peinture et Plaisir*..., op. cit., pp. 389–402; see also Salon arrangement: Pichet, *Le Tapissier*..., op. cit. These principles may also have been known to designers from descriptions of famous Parisian collections and from the rare visual records.

<sup>51</sup> Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, *Le génie de l'architecture ou l'analogie de cet art avec nos sensations* (Paris, 1780), pp. 113, 158; Bailey, "Conventions of the Eighteenth-Century *Cabinet des Tableaux*...", op. cit., p. 434.

<sup>52</sup> Barthélémy-Augustin Blondel d'Azincourt, *La première idée de la curiosité*, MS, Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie, Université de Paris IV, Ms 34, fol. 7; Bailey, "Conventions of the Eighteenth-Century *Cabinet des Tableaux*...", op. cit., pp. 437, 446.



lery, the lowest-hanging paintings were Rembrandtesque portraits and *tronies* supplemented with genre scenes, arranged in a row above the wainscoting on either side of the door to the Antechamber (figs. 12, 13), while in the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon it was miniature portraits of French personages from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in a row above the panelling on the east or west wall, with a beautiful likeness of Antoine de Bourbon by Corneille de Lyon among them.

Also employed in both of the interiors was a solution known from the most famous Parisian *cabinets des tableaux*, like that of Augustin Blondel de Gagny (1695–1776) – a decorative scheme of paintings hanging on one wall was repeated on an adjacent or opposite wall.<sup>53</sup> And so, in the Picture Gallery, on either side of the door to the Antechamber hung two large vertical canvases: Luca Giordano's *The Entombment* (private collection) and Rembrandt's *Ecce Homo* (Hermitage, St Petersburg),<sup>54</sup> each of which I believe was flanked by two large horizontal compositions placed above smaller horizontal or squarish paintings. One of the upper “flanking pairs” consisted of two works of literary subjects, by contemporary masters: Benjamin West's *Romeo and Juliet* (New Orleans Museum of Art) and Angelica Kauffmann's *Virgil Reading the “Aeneid” to Augustus and Octavia* (Hermitage, St Petersburg).<sup>55</sup> The other pair was formed by religious scenes: Jan Victors' *Esau Selling His Birthright to Jacob* (RŁM) alongside Christian Wilhelm Ernst Dietrich's *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (private collection, New York). The bottom flanking pairs consisted, as I presume, of the pair of *tronies* by Rembrandt (*The Girl* and *The Scholar*) in the former, and a pair of landscapes by Frederik de Moucheron (NMW), in the latter. The shorter opposing walls in the Gallery were also arranged according to a single scheme. Hanging on them were large-format square paintings: *Andromeda* by Titian (actually a copy; Hermitage, St Petersburg) and *The Apostle Peter Finds a Coin in the Mouth of a Fish* by the workshop of Peter Paul Rubens (lost),<sup>56</sup> each flanked by several pairs of smaller vertical paintings.

Meanwhile, in the Cabinet next to the Salomon Room, the central points in the compositions of the two facing walls were occupied by roughly square religious scenes: David Teniers the Younger's *The Temptation of St Anthony* (Hermitage, St Petersburg) and Jan Victors' *Joseph's Bloodied Coat is Shown to Jacob* (RŁM), surrounded by smaller paintings (figs. 14, 15). Decorating the wall opposite the windows were pairs of still lifes on either side of the mirror: birds by Melchior de Hondecoeter (both at RŁM), and below them – flowers in stone vases by Jan van Huysum (lost), with smaller works at the bottom – shells on sapphire and violet fabric by Abraham van Calraet (NMW and wartime loss).

The way of presenting the collection at Łazienki, based on a deliberate mixing of different schools, genres and eras in decorative arrangements, as was done in Parisian collections from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, was not very modern anymore by the 1790s, when the Picture Gallery

<sup>53</sup> See the description of the Study in the journal of Hester Thrale, cited by Bailey (“Conventions of the Eighteenth-Century Cabinet des Tableaux...,” op. cit., p. 438).

<sup>54</sup> Juszczyk, *Malarski zbiór Stanisława...*, op. cit., p. 210. This work – in the Stanisław August collection inventories and catalogues and in Bacciarelli's correspondence referred to as *Ecce Homo* or the “painting of the Lord Jesus at rest” by Rembrandt – in fact shows *The Mocking of Christ* and is currently attributed to Leendert van Beijeren, believed to have been a student of Rembrandt – Jeroen Giltaij, “Leendert van Beijeren (1619–1648): ‘discipel’ van Rembrandt,” *Oud Holland*, 133 (2020), pp. 98–100.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 208–09.

and the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon were devised, but it was still common throughout Europe.<sup>57</sup> The concept had been formulated by Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville (1680–1765) in his article “Lettre sur le choix et l'arrangement d'un cabinet curieux,” published in the magazine *Mercur de France* in 1727. In it, the scholar and collector recommended embracing a variety of schools and a combination of manners when creating and presenting a collection.<sup>58</sup> More than a decade later, the famous *marchand-expert* Pierre Rémy (1715–97), praising the “aesthetics of variety,” warned art lovers against singling out any one particular painting school and collecting exclusively works by Old Masters. He argued that a well-composed collection ought to engender a confrontation of schools and a comparison of works of various subject matter that differed in their stylistics and exhibited various artistic qualities.<sup>59</sup> These criteria were met splendidly by the painting displays in Łazienki.

### How to Hang Paintings: High or Low? Arranged Historically or by Artistic Class? 2018–23

In working out the arrangement of paintings in the Gallery and the Cabinet, in addition to obvious factors like symmetry and the mixing of schools and genres, I also tried to take into consideration the specific decorative schemes according to which the walls of the individual rooms had been composed during Stanisław August's time. The recreation of their original appearance, even approximately, was of course not possible due to the reasons explained above. To restate: several dozen Łazienki paintings, sold off after the king's death, had been scattered throughout the world; more than thirty were robbed during the Second World War; and more than twenty are preserved at the National Museum in Warsaw.

The current layout in the Gallery consists of 60 paintings,<sup>60</sup> and in the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon – 32.<sup>61</sup> It was, however, possible to fill the walls rather densely, and to compose them in such a way as to place works corresponding to each other in format and subject on the axis of each wall, as well as to repeat a single compositional scheme on opposite walls of each interior. And so, in the Picture Gallery, to the left of the door to the Antechamber, the axis of symmetry is demarcated by a large vertical image of *St Augustine* by a follower of Giovanni Gioseffo dal Sole, while to the right – by a beautiful painting of *Judith with the Head of Holophernes* after Cristofano Allori (both NMW) of very similar dimensions. In this, we relate back to the Stanislavian arrangement of the Gallery, where, as described earlier, these very

<sup>57</sup> In modern galleries, mainly in German-speaking countries, paintings were being organised in a systematic manner according to school and chronologically starting in the middle of the century. See Thomas Weddigen, “The Picture Galleries of Dresden, Düsseldorf and Kassel. Princely Collections in Eighteenth-Century Germany,” in *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18<sup>th</sup>- and Early-19<sup>th</sup>-Centuries*, Caroline Paul, ed. (Los Angeles, 2012), pp. 145–67.

<sup>58</sup> Michel, *Peinture et plaisir...*, op. cit., p. 391.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.; Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics and the Origin of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 13–48; Carole Paul, “The Grand Tour and Princely Collections in Rome,” in *The First Modern Museums of Art...*, op. cit., pp. 4–8.

<sup>60</sup> The fact that their number is greater than in Stanisław August's time results from the fact that today we have fewer of the large paintings at our disposal.

<sup>61</sup> Some parts of the existing arrangement of paintings I left unchanged, keeping the design of Izabela Zychowicz.

spots were occupied by two religious paintings of vertical composition. Above *St Augustine*, large religious images – *St Jerome* attributed to Leonello Spada (NMW) and a *Madonna and Child* by an anonymous 17<sup>th</sup>-century painter (RŁM) – flank a landscape with the *Break of the Dikes at Coevorden* attributed to Dirk Maas (NMW).<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, above *Judith*, the large mythological scenes *Juno Asking Aeolus to Release the Winds* and *Hercules Fighting Achelous* attributed to Samuel Massé appear on either side of the small Italianesque *Wanderers Resting Amidst Ruins* (all NMW). The balance of these two elements of the installation is far from satisfactory for me: on one side of the door to the Antechamber two large vertical canvasses flank a long horizontal one, while on the other are two large horizontal canvasses with a narrow and small vertical canvas (one that is too short, to boot). With the present availability of royal paintings, a better solution was not to be found. Yet, maintained on every wall is strict discipline when it comes to symmetry and pairing of paintings or matching formats and genres. There is one exception: *St Augustine* is flanked on the left by a *Portrait of the Earl of Pembroke* after Van Dyck, but on the right by a picture of the repentant Mary Magdalene, which nonetheless shows the subject in the same length (high head-and-shoulders) and has identical dimensions (both RŁM). However, at the bottom of the wall it was possible to put together rows of small paintings in the manner described by Blondel d’Azincourt. They extend out in two directions, from the bottom edge of the large canvas in the centre (*St Augustine*), in complementary pairs: oval ladies’ busts (Mme Geoffrin and her daughter), square landscapes, portraits (in three quarters length and *en pied*), and ending in vertical religious scenes.

The centre of the composition on the shorter, east and west, walls in the Gallery, are occupied by portraits by celebrity painters of the era: on the west Angelica Kauffmann’s *Princess Santacroce as Lucretia*, on the east Anton Raphael Mengs’ *Charles Hanbury Williams* (both RŁM), both shown in identical knee-length format. It was not possible to replace the large-format canvasses that hung here in the 1790s – *Andromeda*, still at the Hermitage, and the lost *The Apostle Peter Finding a Coin in the Mouth of a Fish* – with works of a similar size.

The arrangement of the Picture Gallery is far from ideal; it was not possible, on account of the large dimensions of some of the canvasses, to maintain the horizontal central positions and the symmetric balance between the *panneaux* on the south wall on either side of the door to the Antechamber. Neither was it possible, this time due to purely technical reasons (the archaic mounting system) to perfectly nuance the distances between the paintings.

In the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon, meanwhile, the arrangement of the painting mosaic proved an utmost success, with its components coming together into a full and truly 18<sup>th</sup>-century decorative array. The main focal points of the arrangement on the opposite walls are two biblical paintings by Jan Victors, both of a similar format and in a similar dark colour palette, above which are two still lifes with birds by Melchior de Hondecoeter (all mentioned above), “framed” by portraits and genre scenes. Fittingly, on either side of the mirror on the wall opposite the windows are the paintings *Heraclitus* and *Democritus* by Johann Carl Loth (RŁM) beneath a pair of landscapes by Frederik Moucheron that in the 1790s adorned the

<sup>62</sup> The full title is the *Opening of the Dams and the Breaking of the Levies near Coevorden on 1 October 1673 during the invasion of Frisia and Groningen by the army of the Prince-Bishop of Münster, Christian Bernhard von Galen*. See Hanna Benesz, Maria Kluk, *Early Netherlandish, Dutch, Flemish and Belgian Paintings 1494–1983 in the Collections of the National Museum in Warsaw and the Palace at Nieborów. Complete Illustrated Summary Catalogue*, Hanna Benesz, Piotr Borusowski, eds, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 2016), pp. 362–63, cat. no. 393.

Picture Gallery (NMW), separated by beautiful small portraits of an elderly man and woman by Gerrit Dou (RŁM).<sup>63</sup> The latter are hung too high and I hope to find a better place for them in the future. In this instance, the need to fill in the wall's composition overrode the aim of showing high quality artworks at the appropriate height.

In designing the painting layout in the Łazienki palace, I tried not to let go of the fact that this is a museum and to remember that the best paintings – even at the cost of disturbing the decorative scheme dictated by the fashion of the historical era – ought to be easily seen and admired by visitors. For that reason, hanging low in the Picture Gallery are Jacob Jordaens' *Satyr Playing a Flute* and its visual counterpart on the other side of the room, *Apollo and Daphne* by Benedetto Luti (both: RŁM), even though, from the point of view of decoration, the composition as a whole would benefit if they were higher. The same applies to the two portraits of the spouses Jean-Charles de Cordes and Jacqueline de Caestre by Van Dyck in the same space (figs. 6, 7). A *panneau* composed of paintings covering the wall would look better and would more accurately reflect the 18<sup>th</sup>-century convention of placing large format works at the top, though the visitor would not have the possibility to admire the painting mastery of the famed Flemish painter up close. This dilemma – a wall composition governed by established principles versus the possibility to delight in particularly splendid works – was not unknown to 18<sup>th</sup>-century experts. Voices of criticism against the rigours of the hanging scheme being placed above the artistic quality of individual paintings emerged already at the time of the development of the fashion described here, i.e., in around the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>64</sup>

Another of the numerous quandaries that I struggled with when working on the new arrangement of paintings in the Gallery and the Cabinet involved the inclusion of paintings that come from the collection of King Stanisław August but did not hang and never would have hung in the Palace on the Isle among the jewels of the royal collection because they failed to meet the rules of decorum, be it on account of their subject or their artistic quality. Hence the dilemma: do I hang works not from the king's collection that correspond to the character of the king's residence or do I opt for paintings purchased by the monarch with a destination other than the royal apartments in mind? I chose the latter. This was the case with the portraits of the Jewish women Chaya and Ella by Krzysztof Radziłowski (NMW), which, however interesting, do not fit the palatial interiors. Placed beneath the cornice in the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon on either side of one of the still lifes with birds by De Hondcoeter, they not only match the colours and character of the painting between them but also (as pendants) filled in a gap in the mosaic of paintings covering the east wall of the room, where we had nothing else to put.

Changes introduced after 2018 in the Picture Gallery and the Cabinet next to the Salle de Salomon were in fact only modifications – though significant – to the earlier installation devised by Izabela Zychowicz. This involved the reconfiguration of some pieces of the puzzle, the removal of ill-fitting components (i.e., paintings not belonging to the king's estate) and their replacement with new pieces – all of it on the basis of archival research and new findings on the location of particular paintings during Stanisław August's time.

<sup>63</sup> In the Łazienki collection catalogue (Juszczak, Małachowicz, *Galeria obrazów Stanisława Augusta...*, op. cit., cat. nos. 37, 38), the attribution to Gerrit Dou was wrongly, as I believe today, followed by a question mark.

<sup>64</sup> Bailey, "Conventions of the Eighteenth-Century Cabinet des Tableaux...", op. cit., pp. 443–45.

In the king's private rooms on the first floor of the palace, however, I introduced changes that may even be deemed radical; this mainly applies to the Small Gallery. This interior had hitherto been arranged in an entirely ahistorical manner, as a Dutch (or more precisely Dutch-Flemish) picture cabinet, with a configuration of small genre paintings, landscapes and portraits in dark, 17<sup>th</sup>-century-style frames. I say ahistorical because, as we know from the sources, none of the palace's rooms had such a décor in the time of King Stanisław August. It was not without reason that the room leading into the king's office was called the Small Gallery in Polish-language inventories; its walls were densely filled with paintings (by my calculation there were 42 of them at around 1795), though not in as sophisticated or decorative an arrangement as in the stately Gallery or Cabinet on the ground floor – which boast much higher ceilings than the first floor.

Among the paintings hanging in the Small Gallery were Abraham Govaerts' *Feast of the Gods* (NMW), Lodovico Carracci's *Madonna and Child with Saints* (RŁM), a pair of *tronies* attributed to Rembrandt: *Old Woman Counting Money* (actually a work of Herman Verelst; private collection<sup>65</sup>) and *Old Man with a Sword* (lost), and *Fête in a Wood*, then believed to be a work by Antoine Watteau (in fact by Nicolas Lancret; Wallace Collection, London) – an assortment of various schools, genres and periods. On display with those works were also eight portraits, six of which showed members of the Czartoryski family – uncles, cousins and other relatives of Stanisław August.

Today's layout in the Small Gallery harkens back, at least to a degree, to the historical arrangement, as shown here now are ladies' portraits by Bacciarelli: of Dorothea von Biron, Magdalena Sapieha, Teofila Potocka and Caterina Thomatis; likenesses of Teresa Ossolińska and Izabela Lubomirska by Per Krafft (all RŁM); and three men's portraits, including a recently acquired *Portrait of Andrzej Poniatowski* by Bacciarelli originally from the Łazienki palace dining room; as well as a number of landscapes and mythological scenes (all from the king's collection). The room has thus regained its 18<sup>th</sup>-century character. Unfortunately, it has not been possible – and this relates to the aforementioned problems with the atmospheric conditions on the first floor of the palace – to loan from the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw the beautiful *Portrait of Izabela Czartoryska* by Per Krafft, one of the six portraits of Czartoryski family members that hung in the Small Gallery in King Stanisław's time. This painting remains in the depot of the Museum of Literature. For the same reason, we cannot count on being granted the long-term loan of one other painting from that group – Bacciarelli's *Portrait of Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski*, kept in the depot of the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris.<sup>66</sup>

Changing entirely was the King's Cabinet. The aforementioned pair of beautiful marine paintings by the workshop of Vernet made it possible to completely fill one of the room's walls (the only one not clad in panelling and mirrors), replacing the earlier inferior-quality set of Venetian landscapes and views of Wiśniowiec, not from the king's collection, outfitted with utterly ill-matched frames (two of them very modern).

<sup>65</sup> The likeness of the old woman counting coins appeared in 2019 at a Bonhams auction in London as *Allegory of Avarice*, see Juszczyk, "Dwanaście Rembrandtów?...", op. cit., p. 101–03.

<sup>66</sup> In the case of these two paintings, we speak of their loan and not their possible recovery, as both had been sold after the king's death and came into the possession of their current owners via later sales; the portrait of Czartoryska in 1821 to Antonio Fusi, and the portrait of Adam Czartoryski in 1819 to the Mnischevs.



### Frames: “Gilded Carving” or “17<sup>th</sup>-Century” Black? C. 1775–2023

The matter of the paintings’ frames is another curatorial quandary that must be mentioned. In an ideal world, all of the paintings adorning the walls of the Palace on the Isle would be in Stanisławian-style carved and gilded frames – either original or reconstructed. There exist two main types of carved and gilded frame specially designed for the king: ones produced in the 1770s by Samuel Contesse, decorated with cartouches bearing the royal number, and ones from the early 1790s,<sup>67</sup> of more classicistic ornamentation and without cartouches, produced by the woodcarver Johann Hawemann. Surviving to this day is a total of more than 30 of these frames (including those for the oval paintings).<sup>68</sup> Many of the non-surviving ones perished during Russian rule: the frames bearing the Polish king’s monogram were presumably replaced at that time (though clearly not all of them) with smooth, broad and gilded ones with ornamentation in the corners. Today, eight paintings at Łazienki are framed this way.

After the Second World War, the National Museum in Warsaw replaced the genuine Stanisławian frames that were still on a few of the Netherlandish paintings with dark ones imitating the 17<sup>th</sup>-century style in line with the trend then prevailing in the entire museum world. At the same time, Marek Kwiatkowski commissioned reconstructions of the royal frames for the paintings on display in the Palace on the Isle. As this happened, the original frames languished in various depots of the National Museum, Łazienki and Royal Castle in Warsaw.

Thus, after the war, the paintings at Łazienki were framed in five different ways: in the original Stanisławian gilded frames and ones reconstructed as such; in gilded 19<sup>th</sup>-century frames from the Tsarist era; in contemporary black ones in the Dutch style (with and without knurling); in brown frames similar to the contemporary black ones; and finally – in non-stylised ones, with profiles of varying aesthetic quality. This cacophony of forms and shades was taken even further by a (fortunately small) number of Neo-Rococo frames with plaster ornamentation, utterly modern frames of a straight profile painted gold, and, in just a couple of cases, frames made of ordinary slats.

Hinging on symmetry and harmony, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century painting installation obviously required matching frames.<sup>69</sup> To make replicas of the original frames would have been exceptionally costly and time-consuming, and so, in creating the current arrangement, we had to be satisfied with half-measures. Though not without difficulties (financial, legal), the process of replacing the frames has been initiated. First in line were the frames for the large-format canvasses serving as the centrepieces of the wall decoration in the Picture Gallery (*St Augustine* and *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*), reconstructed on the basis of the 1790s frames. Their identical classicist profiles have brought a sense of harmony to the room as a whole. At the same time, undergoing renovation were the original Stanisławian frames that had been recovered from the Łazienki depots. Two of these are from paintings that are today the property

<sup>67</sup> For the bills for the frames from the 1990s, see Ewa Manikowska, *Sztuka – ceremonia! – informacja. Studium wokół królewskich kolekcji Stanisława Augusta* (Warsaw, 2007), pp. 178–79. The 1788 Łazienki inventory (see fn. 3) indicates that the vast majority of the frames was “gilded, carved,” with a few exceptions being black with gilded slats.

<sup>68</sup> Michał Przygoda, *Ramy Stanisława Augusta*, 2019, Royal Łazienki Museum, Department of Paintings, TS.

<sup>69</sup> Richard R. Brettell, Steven Starling, *The Art of the Edge: European Frames 1300–1900* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 15–17; Virginie Spénlé, “Paintings and Sculpture Galleries in German State Apartments at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century,” in *Collecting and the Princely Apartment*, Susan Bracken, Andrea M. Gáldy, Adriana Turpin, eds (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2011), pp. 159–60.

of Łazienki, while others are from works lost during the war or on display in different frames in the National Museum's Gallery of Early Modern European Art. We aimed to fit them, as far as it was possible, onto the paintings on display in Łazienki – obviously without compromising their historic substance – in doing so also marking their original uses on the reverse. In this, I unburdened myself of the “provenance-related” quandary of whether it is acceptable to reuse a historical frame on a different historical work of art. Neither was I affected by the dilemma troubling the restorers who feed into the hyper-rigorous cult of “original substance” of whether it is indeed out of the question to ever and in any way interfere with the material of an old frame. I decided that it is sometimes allowed (e.g., when filling in the rabbet with extra slats to adjust it to a painting or when reconstructing damaged parts of a cartouche, etc.) and even necessary, even though it may not fully conform with museum guidelines. In this manner, we can restore a forgotten artefact's former appearance and give it new life as a museum piece. The frames' carvings themselves – especially the magnificent cartouches by the chisel of Samuel Contesse – are nothing short of a true delight.

We also unified the shade of the non-gilded frames, darkening them to an across-the-board black and, in several cases – i.e., frames in Dutch metal (schlagmetal) and even gilded – regilding them or touching up the colour. In many instances, this “facelift” brought truly excellent results (e.g., the frames in the Bacchus Room, the frames for Girolamo Pesci's *Venus* and Étienne Liotard's *Lady in Turkish Dress*).<sup>70</sup>

The frames' colour had to be taken into consideration in designing the arrangement of paintings especially when combining works into pairs: paintings composing pendants obviously ought to be framed in the same way. Hence, for example, the separation of the landscape pendants of Joseph Roos (RŁM) between two different rooms: the Small Gallery and the Picture Gallery. One of the landscapes is outfitted with a broad, gilded “Russian” frame and the other with a black lacquered one. The former painting was thus replaced in the picture Gallery with another Roos landscape, of slightly smaller dimensions but in a matching dark frame.

I am well aware that many of the dilemmas, doubts and practical actions are perfectly familiar to most curators, registrars and restorers working in museums. Despite our shared experiences and difficulties, cooperation between museum workers, though at times great, can also be far from ideal. The same goes for cooperation between different departments within a single institution. Also, presumably oblivious to the headaches and difficulties faced by museum workers are many of those who write the rules and those broadly understood as the decision-makers. As understandable as it is, this is also why it is important to show the perspective of the lower rungs of the museum ladder and to try to overcome the institutional-legal obstacles standing in the way. After all, despite one's position or title, in our hearts we should all have the welfare of the artefacts in our care, or to put it more generally – the welfare of our shared cultural heritage. Had the word “national” not become a little too deep in recent times (or perhaps not deep enough?), we might be wont to call it our historic, shared national heritage.

<sup>70</sup> Here, I wish to thank Wojciech Richter, renovator of furniture at Royal Łazienki, who provided me with tremendous support in a variety of actions connected with the project discussed in this text, and not solely in the replacement and conservation of the frames. Thanks is also owed to Kasper Jędrysik, restoration specialist at the Royal Łazienki Museum.

I hope that some of the issues discussed here will soon be a thing of the past and that the arrangement of paintings on the walls of the Palace on the Isle will continue to make new strides forward. I believe we have closed but one stage on the road to creating the desired final painting décor in the Palace on the Isle and that by the time we get there, all of the paintings that never belonged to King Stanisław August will have disappeared from the royal apartments.

Translated by Szymon Włoch