

| Poland, Élites and the Spread of Pastel Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century Europe

By the start of the 18th century the Polish Commonwealth (which included Lithuania) encompassed the vast territories bounded by Prussia, Austria, Turkey, Russia and the Baltic Sea.¹ By the end, with the Third Partition of Poland in 1795, it had effectively disappeared, after a series of wars, invasions and political deals whose Byzantine complexity is beyond the scope of this essay. Power lay initially in the hands neither of the king, nor of the *szlachta* (the nobility generally), but of a dozen or two supremely wealthy families of magnates. Their cultural allegiances were however, in contrast to those of similar élites in other parts of Europe, firmly rooted in an inward- and backward-looking philosophy which appalled Voltaire, who referred to the country's "gouvernement gothico-sclavonico-romano-sarmatique":² its agrarian vision and Counter-Reformation thinking could not be more opposed to the Enlightenment ideals which flourished in the countries where pastel portraiture became popular from the 1720s on.³

Several factors accounted for the change that makes this essay possible. One was the reforms in education pioneered by the internationally minded priest Stanisław Konarski (a pastel portrait of him by Louis Marteau⁴ was in the collection of the last king of Poland, Stanisław August), the founder of the Collegium Nobilium in 1740. The second was the emergence among the magnates of families such as the Czartoryski whose orientation was more international, and whose power was allied with the various kings who held the throne in Poland during the 18th century. But the third was the successive individual monarchs themselves, and their personal interests and cultural mindsets. For it was clear to each of them that their grip on power was tenuous, and that cultural superiority – with the implications of intellectual dominance and international support – was a tool in their struggle with the *szlachta*.

While the Baroque era had seen royal élites across Europe use art as a form of cultural warfare – for example the programme of *Ansehen und Pracht* employed⁵ by the Wittelsbach

¹ This article is of course not a history of Poland or its culture in the 18th century, but merely an account of how the medium of pastel was received there.

² "Gothic-Slavonic-Roman-Sarmatian government". Letter to King Stanisław August, 6 December 1767. See *Ceuvres complètes de Voltaire* (Paris, 1821), vol. 58, p. 316. All translations here are the author's.

³ For the factors which led to this see *Prolegomena*, chapter IX in Neil Jeffares, *Pastels & pastellists* [online] [retrieved: 2 June 2017] at: <www.pastellists.com/Misc/Prolegomena.pdf>.

⁴ Full biographies, references and work lists for each of the pastellists mentioned in the essay will be found in Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800* (London, 2006); online edition: *Pastels & pastellists* [online] [retrieved: 2 June 2017] at: <www.pastellists.com>. Links to the articles for each of the pastellists discussed in this article are not repeated even when they contain material that is used here.

⁵ See Neil Jeffares, "Between France and Bavaria: Louis-Joseph d'Albert de Luynes, Prince de Grimberghen," *The Court Historian*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2012), pp. 61–85.

family in Bavaria, Cologne and Bonn – by the mid-18th century international princely taste had moved on, and sophisticated courts had embraced the subtlety and delicious refinement of what at first sight seemed to be the domestic medium of pastel. The dominance in courtly and intellectual circles of artists such as Maurice-Quentin de La Tour and Jean-Baptiste Perronneau in Paris put down a challenge to princes across Europe to show similar sophistication.

The depth of the response was strikingly personal. If Mme de Pompadour took care to have La Tour include her *porte-crayon* and other artistic credentials in her portrait, other countries' ruling families took up the crayons into their own hands, from Friedrich der Große (Frederick the Great) to Marie-Antoinette. Of these Caroline Luise von Baden was unquestionably the most talented: Liotard's pupil achieved a level of skill far exceeding that of many professional pastellists. But another accomplished royal was Stanisław Leszczyński (1677–1766), who held the crown of Poland from 1704 until 1709 and sought to reclaim it again between 1733 and 1738.⁶ Most of his pastels were however made after his translation to Lunéville as duc de Lorraine (under the guidance of Lundberg, the Swedish pastelist who spent some 47 years in France): it was also unsurprising, as Louis XV's father-in-law, that his work showed the direct influence of French pastellists – as for example his portrait of Charlotte de Bassompierre (sister of his mistress, the marquise de Boufflers), copied, with a new face superimposed, from a print after one of La Tour's pastels.

But it was his rivals, the electors of Saxony, who took interest in pastel to a new level. Friedrich August I (1670–1733), known as “August der Starke” (Augustus the Strong), who was king of Poland 1697–1704, started the famous collection of Rosalba Carriera pastels at Dresden; though it was his son, Friedrich August II (1696–1763), elected king of Poland in 1733 as August III, whose enthusiasm as a pastel collector knew no bounds. The gallery in Dresden at one stage housed some 157 of her pastels. The prince is thought to have visited her studio while on the Grand Tour in 1713. Such was August's enthusiasm that he persuaded Anton Raphael Mengs to work in pastel to produce an important series of portraits. The collection also has examples by La Tour and Jean-Étienne Liotard.

Looking after Saxony's interests in Poland was Heinrich Reichsgraf (imperial count) von Brühl (1700–63), the kursächsische Premierminister (prime minister of Electoral Saxony). While not himself a pastelist (although his granddaughter would be), he amassed a vast collection of pictures, sculpture, porcelain, natural history specimens and books. Visiting the Brühl palace in Dresden during his tour of Germany c. 1749, Thomas Nugent noted the “drawing-room, empannelled with looking-glasses, adorned with rich paintings” and the separate “cabinet furnished with enamels and crayons.”⁷ After his death Catherine the Great acquired his collection of works on paper – some 1,076 drawings and 31,569 prints – together with some 600 of his paintings.

Russia's ministers in Poland were also arguably influential in diffusing European cultural fashions. Known as a patron of Johann Sebastian Bach, Hermann Carl Reichsgraf von Keyserlingk (1696–1764) was Russian ambassador in Dresden and then in Warsaw. The amateur

⁶ As explained in n. 4 above, there is of course an article on him in the online *Dictionary of pastellists* [<http://www.pastellists.com/Articles/STANISLAW.pdf>], with full details of the monographic exhibition held on him in Nancy and Warsaw in 2004–5. It is however unclear if the king's interest in pastel led to any awareness of the medium in Poland itself (nor do we know when the first pastel crayon was made or used in the country), but as argued here the medium only received serious interest later in the century.

⁷ Thomas Nugent, *The Grand Tour; Or, A Journey through the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and France* (London, 1756), vol. 2, p. 265.

pastellist Charlotte Karoline Amalie Gräfin Truchsess zu Waldburg (1727–91) was married first to Keyserlingk's brother and secondly to his son. After Catherine's accession to the throne in Russia (1762), and the election to that of Poland (with her support) of Stanisław Poniatowski as Stanisław II August (1764), Russia's ambassador to Warsaw became Prince Nikolai Vasilevich Repnin (1734–1801).

Repnin was educated in Germany and had a thoroughly European culture; his daughter Alexandra (1756–1834) was an amateur pastellist. It is possible that the girl was encouraged in this pursuit by her father's mistress in Warsaw, Victoire Clavareau (Paris 1747–1815). The daughter of the French *comédien* Pierre Clavareau, Victoire was recorded as actress and singer ("jeune premier rôle, et chante"), with her father and younger sister Lucie, first in Vienna, then in Warsaw in the 1760s. In 1767 both sisters were the subject of scandals: Lucie eloped in Warsaw with prince Kasper Lubomirski (1724–80), who is said to have "married" her against his family's wishes (this did not prevent him marrying Barbara Lubomirska soon after); while Victoire married the composer Mattia Gerardi, Repnin's *maître de chapelle*, a camouflage for her affair with the prince. Clavareau's most important pastel was a portrait of Maria Theresia's personal physician (and Mozart's patron) Gottfried Freiherr van Swieten (1734–1803), who had been ambassador in Paris and Warsaw before 1764 but seems to have been in Vienna in 1765 when Clavareau's pastel was made. Such were the elements of the international élite cultural milieu of the day.

It was against this background that Stanisław August⁸ set about stamping his mark as king. Denied the military and political independence of a normal sovereign, he resorted instead to a cultural programme for the transformation of his country. He had developed his personal taste for art early, bowled over ("je me sentais enlevé") by the paintings of Rubens and Van Dyck he saw in the Netherlands when he was just sixteen, and starting his own collection with a purchase in Brussels.⁹ While in Paris in 1753, he was introduced to court circles by his cousin, the baron de Besenval, a connoisseur who had been portrayed by Liotard in pastel and would later be an honorary member of the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*. The young Poniatowski was also taken up by Mme Geoffrin, the famous *salonnière*, and surrounded by Enlightenment figures; but he took particular care also to visit the leading pastellist: "Le peintre en pastel, La Tour, tout difficile qu'il est, m'avait accordé l'entrée dans son atelier"¹⁰.

Once elected, Stanisław August moved rapidly to transform the royal castle in Warsaw with ambitious plans to rebuild it. He was unable to secure the services of François Boucher or Carle Van Loo for the decoration, but a number of significant painters were drawn to Warsaw to participate in his programme. Of these the most influential was Marcello Bacciarelli (1731–1818), who had worked in Rome and Dresden and had arrived in Warsaw before Stanisław's accession; he effectively became the king's director of arts. Bacciarelli himself was probably not a pastellist (although numerous pastel copies of his portraits are known); his wife, Johanna Juliana Friederike, née Richter (1733–1811), may have been (she was trained by Charles-François Hutin in Dresden). Plans for a royal academy of fine arts were drawn up,

⁸ English-speaking readers will find Adam Zamoyski's *The Last King of Poland* (London, 1997) a useful and readable account of his life.

⁹ *Mémoires du roi Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski* (St Petersburg, 1914), vol. 1, p. 14.

¹⁰ "The pastel painter La Tour, despite being so difficult to get on with, granted me access to his studio." Ibid, p. 101.

although never formalized; but the work on the royal castle and the development of the king's growing collections of medals, prints and books created a similar environment.

Of the foreign artists in Warsaw working in pastel, Jean Pillement (1728–1808) is today one of the best known, partly because his travels took him to so many European capitals, and his instantly identifiable decorative work and pastel landscapes are found in museums and private collections across the world. Recruited by Bacciarelli from Vienna, he remained in Warsaw for two years before returning to France.

But it is in portraiture that pastel has its natural voice, and Louis Marteau (c. 1710–1804) stands out as the most influential pastellist in Warsaw. His origins are obscure, but he seems to have been the son of Louis XIV's homonymous *menuisier ordinaire des bâtiments du roi* (carpenter-in-ordinary to the King's Buildings), responsible for the boiseries at Notre-Dame. This Louis Marteau, who died in Paris in 1746, married Marie-Anne Hérault (1685–1712; her sisters married Louis Silvestre, Jean Bérain, Joseph-Charles Roettiers and François Hutin), and had three children: Louis Marteau; Jean-Baptiste (?–1768), *entrepreneur des bâtiments du roi* (building contractor to the King's Buildings), and Marie-Catherine, who married, in 1745, Silvestre's son François-Charles, also *peintre du roi de Pologne* (painter to the King of Poland).

Thus the Louis Marteau who appeared in Poland about 1752, joining the household of hetman Jan Klemens Branicki in Białystok, was (as these apparently dry genealogical facts reveal) steeped in the French artistic milieu, embellished with close links to that of Dresden. He soon became court painter to Stanisław August, whose collection (according to the 1795 inventory) included no fewer than 63 of his works.¹¹ Although some of his portraits of the king are close to images by Bacciarelli, Giovanni Battista Lampi and others (as is not uncommon in royal portraiture), Marteau can fairly be said to have produced “une iconographie presque complète de la société polonaise.”¹² His portrait of the royal chamberlain Feliks Franciszek Łoyko (**fig. 1**) is an example of the best of his work.

Pierre-Marie Gault de Saint-Germain, who included Marteau among the French pastellists, says that the artist took up pastel to cope with the huge demand for his work: “Marteau a peint de très beaux portraits pour la Cour. Les ambassadeurs et les princes étrangers s'empressaient de se faire peindre par lui. La nécessité dans laquelle il se trouva de satisfaire tout le monde, lui fit adopter le pastel, plus expéditif que l'huile, qu'il traita avec autant de force et de vérité que notre fameux Latour.”¹³

This may have been so; but against this one has to set the difficulties facing pastellists of sourcing materials in new countries. While everyone today is aware of the difficulty in transporting finished pastels, even the sticks themselves were fragile, as we learn from the correspondence of Rosalba Carriera who depended on supplies from Paris: after one mishap, Crozat wrote that he would send the next box lined with cotton; he suggested that it might be easier to send her the recipe so that she could make her own: “je ne croy pas que cela soit

¹¹ See Tadeusz Mańkowski, *Galerja Stanisława Augusta* (Lviv, 1932).

¹² “An almost complete iconography of Polish society.” Louis Réau, *Histoire de l'expansion de l'art français moderne. Le monde slave et l'Orient* (Paris, 1924), p. 25.

¹³ “Marteau painted very fine portraits for the Court. Ambassadors and foreign princes hastened to have themselves painted by him. The need he found himself in to satisfy everyone made him adopt pastel, being faster than oil, which he handled with as much force and truth as our famous Latour.” Pierre-Marie Gault de Saint-Germain, *Les trois siècles de la peinture en France* (Paris, 1808), p. 290.

bien difficile”¹⁴ (Carriera evidently disagreed). The problem persisted: Pierre-Jean Mariette, much later, apologized for having sent her “des pastels tout brisés et nullement dignes d’être mis entre vos mains.”¹⁵ He took care to ensure the pastel sticks in the next consignment were each individually wrapped.

We have no information as to how Marteau sourced his materials, and scientific investigation is not yet up to determining the manufacturer of the crayons used in a specific portrait. But one other aspect of available supplies is more readily evident: the frames. One of the great delights of the French rococo are the magnificent ovals constructed with the greatest sophistication by a small group of *maîtres-menuisiers* (master carpenters) and other craftsmen in Paris. While foreign workers were often able to copy rectangular frames to varying levels of competence, ovals (which necessitate working with wood at continuously changing angles to the grain) were often just too difficult. The result is that, in many cases, portraits conceived as ovals were executed on octagonal strainers and housed within rectangular frames fitted either with spandrels or with clipped corners. The results are inevitably a little heavy compared with the inspiration.

Marteau was not the only victim of this: Bardou presents a similar issue. Until recently he has suffered the further indignity of having his oeuvre divided into two artists, by a confusion.¹⁶ The Warsaw pastellist known as Johann Bardou is, as my recent research has shown, the same as the Paul Joseph Bardou (1747–1814) who was born in Basel, brought up in the Huguenot community in Berlin, and active there and in Leipzig, Frankfurt and Wrocław until his arrival in Warsaw in 1775; later he moved on to Russia, returning to Berlin by 1794. What fuelled the theory of two Bardous (apart from the third, his nephew Carl Wilhelm) was the manifest difference in technique between the Warsaw pastels and those he made later in Berlin. But these differences reflect not only his personal development and response to the art around him, but also perhaps the availability of materials. The hardness and consistency of pastels not only positions them on the spectrum between graphic linearity and fluid painterliness, but also has a direct bearing on subtleties of lighting, density of colour and other features dependent on the microstructure defining the adherence and density of the reflective particles of pigment on the support.

Bardou’s clientèle included of course members of the leading influential families. Thus for example the pastel of Stanisław Poniatowski (1754–1833) (**fig. 2**), the king’s nephew, now in Krakow,¹⁷ until recently attributed to Marteau, but part of a large group of pastels which Bardou made of members of this family.¹⁸ One of the results of Stanisław’s reforms was the emergence of a wealthy middle class. The banker Peter Ferguson Tepper (1732–94) is an example of this, commissioning a series of pastels of his family recently attributed to Bardou. They were ex-

¹⁴ “I don’t believe that should be too difficult.” Letter of 28 October 1718.

¹⁵ “Pastels all broken and in no way worthy to be put in your hands.” Letter of 13 May 1745.

¹⁶ For a full discussion of how this arose and has now been unravelled, see the online *Dictionary of pastellists* article.

¹⁷ The National Museum in Krakow, inv. no. MNk III-r.a. 16297.

¹⁸ As well as those in Krakow, a dozen or so are in Nelahozeves Castle (they were formerly at Roudnice).

ecuted in Warsaw c. 1780 and descended in his family until 2013, when they were acquired by the Historical Museum of Warsaw (since 2014 Museum of Warsaw).¹⁹

Stanisław August also recognized the importance of training Polish talent to international standards, and he provided bursaries for native pastellists, the most talented being Aleksander Kucharski (1741–1819) and Anna Rajecka (c. 1760–1832), to study in Paris.²⁰ In this he was disappointed: both artists might be said to have gone native. Kucharski was sent to Paris, where he was a pupil at the Académie royale, studying with Vien and Carle Van Loo; he obtained the first *prix de quartier* in April 1760, and the *prix de Caylus* in 1763. Contrary to the wishes of Stanisław August, who wanted him to specialize in history painting, he became a portraitist, thus forfeiting his royal pension in 1767. This freed Kucharski to remain in Paris, where he was supported financially by Mme Geoffrin, and introduced into aristocratic circles. His portraits of the imprisoned French royal family have a significance rarely enjoyed by portraitists.

Anna Rajecka²¹ travelled as a *pensionnaire* of Stanisław August to Paris, where she had arrived by 1783, taking up residence in the Louvre galleries with the widow of Lorient, the inventor of the famous method of fixing pastels. The portrait of Ignacy Potocki is a good example of her work (fig. 3). Still in Paris in 1788, she had by then married the miniaturist Pierre-Marie Gault de Saint-Germain; she wrote to Bacciarelli on 14 May 1788 hoping that the king would continue supporting her despite this marriage: “J’espère, Monsieur, que vous voudrez bien continuer à vous intéresser pour moi auprès de Sa Majesté, le mari que j’ai pris est artiste comme moi [...] vous savez, Monsieur, que les talents n’ont de valeur qu’autant qu’ils sont protégés.”²²

On 12 November 1789, she wrote again, requesting permission to travel to Italy, which was rejected, as Stanisław August had other ideas for her. The full extent of his interest and support for her is clearer from his correspondence²³ with his representative, Filippo Mazzei; much of this deals with his attempt to form a collection of portraits of eminent persons. It was to Mazzei that he wrote on 16 December 1789 with instructions that instead of leaving Paris, she should work on the copies he wanted; he would rather have her than someone else earn the 500 livres the copies would cost. He wanted the copies in oil. Jacques-Louis David, also working on portraits for Stanisław, was however unhappy: he thought her an inferior artist, particularly in oil, at which she was less successful than in pastel, but grudgingly allowed her to copy four female portraits. The king was undeterred; what he had seen of Mme Gault’s brush was better than the copies he had been sent, “and it is natural that I should prefer having her get the small profit rather than other people unknown to me whose talent seems to me inferior to hers” (22 January 1791). Soon however (2 March 1791) his patience had

¹⁹ Inv. no. MHW 28743–46. See Jacek Bochiński, “Galeria portretów rodziny Fergussonów-Tepperów i ich twórca Johann Bardou”, *Almanach muzealny*, vol. 7 (2013), pp. 74–93.

²⁰ Zamoyski, op. cit., p. 126, states that just two days after his election the king approved bursaries for Aleksander Kucharski and Anna Rajecka, to study in Paris; but Rajecka was not there until some years later.

²¹ Her full names (as they appear on her son’s 1817 marriage entry, recently discovered) were Marie-Joseph-Frédéric-Anne Rajécka.

²² “I hope, Sir, that you will continue to concern yourself on my behalf with His Majesty, the husband whom I have chosen is an artist like me [...] you know, Sir, that talent is only valuable when it has patronage.”

²³ Philip Mazzei, *Selected Writings and Correspondence*, Margherita Marchione, S. Eugene Scalia, Stanley J. Idzerda, eds (Prato, 1983). Translations are taken from this edition.

been exhausted: “As for Mme Gault de St-Germain, it seems to me that she is a silly woman that must be ignored since she is so hard to please”, noting also that the pastel she sent was actually half effaced, perhaps explaining his preference for oil copies. While Stanisław August’s posthumous inventory included one of her pastels, one suspects that a number of her copies have survived under confused attributions. It is also interesting to note that among her commissions from French sitters was a pastel of the architect Victor Louis, signed and date 1789;²⁴ it is unlikely to be coincidence that he had worked in Warsaw c. 1765, on the recommendation of Mme Geoffrin.²⁵

Poland’s misfortunes – not only in the 18th century, but through the traumas of European wars and political conflicts ever since – have contributed to many losses of their heritage. Among lost pastels surely one of the most beautiful would have been the portrait of Stanisław August by Jean-Baptiste Perronneau (fig. 4), who arrived in Poland in 1781, staying until at least June the following year.

A later visitor was the Austrian portraitist Joseph Franz Johann Pitschmann (1758–1834). Born in Trieste, he studied with Heinrich Friedrich Füger at the Vienna Akademie, where he was awarded a gold medal in 1787 and admitted as a member soon after. In 1788 he was summoned to the Czartoryski estate at Korzec in Wołyń. The following year he moved to Warsaw where he remained until 1794, painting numerous portraits of Stanisław August and his courtiers. These include several pastel copies directly or indirectly from images of the king by Lampi and Bacciarelli, but some elements may have been taken from life. Royal accounts show that Pitschmann was paid 24 or 25 ducats for each pastel, and in addition a diamond ring (presumably for a portrait of the king): two payments are recorded in 1790, and a further one in 1791.²⁶

Stanisław August recorded one further encounter²⁷ with pastel after his abdication. In July 1797, he (who was staying at the nearby house, Kamienny Ostrów) joined the newly crowned Tsar Paul I at an inspection of the *communauté d’éducation des demoiselles* (school for young ladies) run by senators Zawadowski and Soymonov. This was the famous Smolny Institute (turned by Lenin into the Bolshevik headquarters) commissioned by the Society for Noble Maidens established by Catherine II in 1764. The pupils presented the imperial family with their works in embroidery, drawing and pastel – underlining the relevance of the medium in the progressive education of élites.

As something of a footnote to this story of Poland’s engagement with pastel through the personal enthusiasms of its leaders, I cannot refrain from mentioning Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746–1817), leader of the failed Polish insurrection of 1794. Later he would take up pastels, attempting a portrait of Thomas Jefferson, to which Dr William Thornton referred in a letter

²⁴ The pastel, which is J.34.1171 in the online *Dictionary of pastellists*, appeared at auction in Paris, Drouot, 31 January 2017, Lot 18; its date had previously been misread, and a pseudo-pendant of his wife, by Jean-Baptiste-Claude Robin, had erroneously been given to Rajecka.

²⁵ See Christian Taillard, *Victor Louis (1731–1800). Le triomphe du goût français à l’époque néo-classique* (Paris, 2009); for more on this complicated story, David Harris Cohen, “The ‘Chambre des Portraits’ Designed by Victor Louis for the King of Poland,” *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal*, vol. 19 (1991), pp. 75–98.

²⁶ See Dorota Juszczak, “Ikongrafia Stanisława Augusta. Portrety”, in Anita Chiron-Mrozowska, Angela Sołtys, eds, exh. cat., *Stanisław August, ostatni król polski. Polityk, mecenas, reformator 1764–1795*, Zamek Królewski, Warsaw, 2011–12 (Warsaw, 2011), pp. 148–49.

²⁷ “Journal privé du roi Stanislas Auguste pendant son voyage en Russie...,” in *Mémoires secrets et inédits de Stanislas Auguste comte Poniatowski...* (Leipzig, 1862), p. 168ff.

to the former US president: “Never was such injustice done to you except by sign painters and General Kosciusko [sic], than which last nothing could be so bad, and when I saw it I did not wonder that he lost Poland – not that it is necessary that a general should be a painter, but he should be a man of such sense as to discover he is not a painter.”²⁸

²⁸ Letter to Jefferson, 20 July 1816, cited in Allen C. Clark, “Doctor and Mrs. William Thornton”, *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, vol. 18 (1915), p. 175.