

| Dorota Juszczak, Hanna Małachowicz: *The Stanisław August Collection of Paintings at the Royal Łazienki. Catalogue*¹

In 1932, the Ossolineum publishing house in Lviv issued *Galerja Stanisława Augusta* [The Gallery of Stanisław August]: a monumental, prestigious and presumably one of the most expensive Polish publications on art history of the interwar period. Its author, the Lviv art historian Tadeusz Mańkowski based his work on the four then-known historical inventories of the royal collection drawn up by the court painter Marcello Bacciarelli as well as on documents concerning its disintegration after 1795. He accepted the challenge of reconstructing the only Polish collection of painting on a European scale which amounted to more than 2,000 works and – if trusting the inventories – were stacked with names of Old Masters. The book was a result of more than a decade of research. The paintings were dispersed among numerous, often little known or inaccessible collections both in Poland and worldwide, while their existence and actual affiliation to the royal collection had to be verified on the basis of a small number of source documents available. Mańkowski conducted his investigation by correspondence: he sent hundreds of letters to museums and private collectors with a detailed description of the paintings from the former royal collection that might be in their possession, inquiring about their precise dimensions, history and whether the paintings were fitted with the characteristic red-paint inventory number. He also asked for a copy of a potential signature and a professional photograph. The book was intended as a verified edition of the four inventories complete with a facsimile of signatures and a brief information on the history of each painting and their present whereabouts. It included a comprehensive introduction – based on in-depth research of source data – with an analysis of Stanisław August's art collecting and the history of the disintegration of the collection. The book was complemented with full-page high-quality photographic reproductions of the 250 identified paintings considered the most valuable. The luxuriously edited volume was printed in the prestigious format of large quarto on high-quality paper and collotypes of the photographic reproductions were commissioned with a renowned company in Munich; the book could be ordered in a cheaper linen cover or in a more expensive leather one, modelled on the covers from the royal library.

This extended description of the first-ever study of the painting collection of the last king of Poland is necessary to permit understanding of *The Stanisław August Collection of Paintings*. First, Juszczak's and Małachowicz's book alludes to Mańkowski's work as an essential source text. Second, it provides the first extensive analysis since 1932 of Stanisław August's painting

¹ Dorota Juszczak, Hanna Małachowicz, *The Stanisław August Collection of Paintings at the Royal Łazienki. Catalogue*, transl. Anne-Marie Fabianowska (Warsaw, 2016), pp. 584, ill. See also the Polish version: *Galeria obrazów Stanisława Augusta w Łazienkach Królewskich. Katalog* (Warsaw, 2015), pp. 575, ill.

collection and of its complicated history. The title itself, not to mention the editorial layer of the book, refers to Mańkowski's master work. The format and volume are also similar, and the frontispiece, just like in *Galerja Stanisława Augusta*, features a photographic reproduction of Bacciarelli's coronation portrait. The catalogue, just like in Mańkowski's book, was preceded by an elaborate introduction with an outline of the collection's history. As with Mańkowski, illustrations are an important feature of the work. Each painting is reproduced on a full-page colour table, and photographs were taken specifically for this publication. Juszczak and Małachowicz, unlike Mańkowski, focused on a small portion of the royal collection only: the 137 paintings which once decorated the summer royal residence and which today belong to the Royal Łazienki Museum.

The title itself – the *Collection of Paintings* – is a reference not only to Mańkowski's work, but also to the central role that the private residence in Łazienki played in the royal art collecting. In the introduction, the authors comprehensively cite sources which indicate that the *Galerie en bas* ['gallery downstairs'] on the lower floor of the Łazienki Palace was dedicated to the display of the most exquisite paintings from the king's collection, including works attributed to Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian, Fragonard or Mengs and estimated as the most expensive. When the gallery was built in 1793, it became home to 65 works of art, creating an ideal showcase for the collection. What is more, several smaller interiors of the palace were covered with paintings forming an extension of the selection exhibited in the gallery: on the walls displayed were, i.a., Rembrandt's *The Polish Rider (Lisowczyk)* or Watteau's *Promenade in the Bois de Boulogne*. The authors include an earlier suggestion proposed by Andrzej Rottermund in his article concerning the formation and concept of the royal collection of sculpture, according to which the Łazienki complex was modelled after Roman villa-museums where local aristocracy exhibited their artistic collections. The most famous one was Villa Borghese, restructured by Prince Marcantonio IV Borghese, a contemporary of Stanisław August. Importantly, in 1781, the Roman agent Ignazio Brocchi provided the Polish king with a vast description of the Villa's new interior arrangement complete with detailed plans. In 1787, the king sent four watercolours with views of the Łazienki complex by Zygmunt Vogel to Prince Borghese. This gift was a tribute to the art collector and his work. In the accompanying letter, Stanisław August mentioned Roman villas, in particular the Pinciana, as a model for his own summer residence.

Juszczak and Małachowicz evoke the late and ultimately unrealized reconstruction plans of the Łazienki Palace which must have involved creating a new, spacious gallery. As they rightfully remark, we can only speculate as to whether the king had planned to open a modern gallery with public access in his private residence in Łazienki. After the abdication, his art collecting projects fundamentally changed – the king planned to spend his last years in a rented palace in Rome which he wanted to decorate with a selection of the best paintings from Łazienki.

In their analysis, Juszczak and Małachowicz not only bring order to the present state of knowledge on the Łazienki collection of paintings, but also point to many questions thus far omitted. For instance, they convincingly attribute the design of the identical picture frames of the royal collection to the court architect, Johann Christian Kamsetzer; they discuss the criteria of pricing and attribution of paintings as well as the manner of their display and arrangement and solutions that had inspired it. What may be even more important, in the introduction, equal attention is reserved to the later history of the Łazienki collection, in particular the Romanov period, so far omitted in the literature of the subject. As the authors rightly point out, the bulk of the royal collection intended for Łazienki still decorates its interiors. In 1817, the king's heirs sold the Łazienki complex to tsar Alexander I, which prevented further disintegration of the royal collection still in place. At that time, the Łazienki Palace was still home to approximately 200 works, i.e., two thirds of the original number of paintings. After the abdication, the remaining ones found their

way at the king's request to St Petersburg, into the hands of Russian art collectors as a donation or debt repayment, or were sold after his death by his heirs. As property of the tsar, the Łazienki paintings avoided being confiscated as a consequence of post-November Uprising (1863–64) repressions. Importantly, they were perceived by the Romanovs as a collection of its own. Juszczak and Małachowicz quote and discuss numerous inventories and studies on the Łazienki painting collection from the Romanov period. It appears that not only was the first printed catalogue of the collection issued (in 1856, in the pages of the French art history journal *Revue universelle des arts*), but extensive articles on the collection were written by such renowned authors as Dmitry Grigorovich or Andrei Somov. The Romanov period in the history of the collection is wrongfully associated by Polish researchers with the *Stolen Kiss* attributed back then to Fragonard, which tsar Nicholas II ordered to integrate, along with four other paintings, into the collection of the Hermitage. During the Romanov period, the Łazienki collection not only preserved its integral character, but was also worked on, inventoried and for the first time introduced into the international academic world (e.g., Somov's works or the periodical *Starye Gody* that lent space to studies on selected paintings from the collection; even though written in Russian, they made their way to library shelves of the key international scientific institutes and museums).

The authors also briefly outline the still poorly researched history of the collection's wartime evacuation to Moscow in 1914 and the revindication thereof under Article XI of the Treaty of Riga (1921). Then they proceed towards the third important period in the history of the Royal Łazienki as a gallery of paintings – the interwar period of the Second Polish Republic. The reconstruction of the Łazienki interiors complete with the paintings undoubtedly belonged to one of the most successful museum projects within the so-called *Gmachy Reprezentacyjne Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (Representational Buildings of the Polish Republic), which also comprised the royal castles in Warsaw and Krakow (Wawel), combining representational and museal functions (they provided the exhibition space for the collections reclaimed under the Treaty of Riga). The authors disclose the history of the collection's cataloguing process, the preserved manuscripted inventories as well as published studies devoted to the collection from that period. Finally, they discuss the history of the Łazienki paintings during the German occupation and the post-war revindication process and inform that as many as 37 paintings are still considered wartime losses. Understandably, only a shortened outline of post-war history is given. Despite the fact that in the aftermath of the war the Łazienki Palace was reconstructed and made accessible to the public as a museum, the most precious royal paintings were exhibited in the Gallery of Old Masters at the National Museum in Warsaw, whose division the Royal Łazienki had been until 1995. Today, the concept of the reconstruction of the gallery of painting at the Łazienki Palace has returned, inspired by the original idea of the king and the architects of his summer residence and collection.

The introduction is illustrated with close-up photography depicting various provenance signs, labels and inscriptions found on the paintings from the Łazienki collection: the royal collection's number applied in red paint on the paintings' fronts, the red inventory number of the Administration of Tsar's Palaces or the label of the State Collections on their reverse. Following Mańkowski, the authors examine the collection of Stanisław August through the lens of inventories and numerous historical sources, contributing not only a new, clearer analysis and interpretation and recommending new sources (for instance, the inscriptions and labels on the paintings), but primarily, writing new and important chapters that Mańkowski consciously omitted either because of historical resentments (the Romanov period) or because of the lack of a desirable temporal distance (the period of the Second Polish Republic, whose important co-creator and co-participant he was).

The crucial contribution in Juszczak's and Małachowicz's work can be determined as the in-depth historical, source-related and stylistic analysis of every painting discussed in the book.

Mańkowski restricted himself to the citation of the attribution and the title (in the original version) from king Stanisław August's inventory, leaving the paintings without a commentary or occasionally providing them with a facsimile of their signatures. The stylistic analysis of more than two thousand paintings, the majority of which had been dispersed between oftentimes rarely accessible collections was obviously an impossible task, however, as in the case of the group of paintings from various collections in Warsaw, and in particular the collection of the museum in Łazienki established at that time, Mańkowski did not challenge existing 18th-century information. Moreover, since his *Galerja* was also addressed to foreign readers, his construction of the authority of the unknown collection was based on the fundament of Bacciarelli's inventories – which were drawn up in French, one of the then universal languages of art history and guided by the rules of the then-emerging connoisseurship.

In the introduction, Juszcak and Małachowicz explain the rules of pricing and attribution observed at the Warsaw court and also comment on their credibility, the greatest in the case of contemporary masters. Their publication, described as a catalogue, constitutes the first serious discussion of the Royal Łazienki collection of paintings, including their detailed history, historical attributions and convincing, extensive stylistic analysis which provides basis to the new attribution proposed by the authors. Having at their disposal the large format of Mańkowski's book to include only 137 paintings, they were able to work on elaborate and richly illustrated entries. They have dedicated an equal amount of space to the most precious works as to the works of lesser-known artists, copies and anonymous pictures. The alphabetical organization of the catalogue – with a separate section of anonymous works – is guided by modern-day rules. This does not imply, however, that historical attributions and arrangements (especially from the period of Stanisław August) have been pushed to the background. The authors have prepared auxiliary tables with a concordance of the catalogue numbers with the inventory numbers from Stanisław August's collection, which facilitates comparisons with archival data and with Mańkowski's work. In addition, they have matched names under which the Łazienki Palace functioned between the years 1783–1922 including the related names of its interiors against the ones cited in the most important manuscript and printed inventories and catalogues of the Royal Łazienki collection of paintings: the inventory of 1795, the catalogue drawn up on the occasion of the sale of the Łazienki in 1817, the catalogue published in *Revue universelle des arts* in 1851 as well as Lech Niemojewski's catalogue issued in 1922 and prepared during the preliminary distribution of the collection newly revindicated from Soviet Russia. The table is exceptionally useful and assists not only with the catalogue itself but also facilitates further research on the history of the collection and of the Royal Łazienki. In the ultimate list, the authors provide a concordance of the catalogue numbers with inventory numbers of the collections of Stanisław August and the Romanovs and those given contemporarily: originally by the National Museum in Warsaw, then by the Royal Łazienki Museum.

The entries are individually preceded by detailed lists of all collection signs found within a given painting. The detailed history and list of sources (including a shortened critical discussion) and bibliography are presented in separate sections at the end of the book. The single entries extensively present circumstances of acquisition (often adventurous), historical attributions, details of pricing and later provenance and an overview of historical copies. Finally, the authors conduct an insightful stylistical and iconographic analysis of each painting, in many cases accurately questioning former attributions and suggesting new ones or providing arguments for the historical ones. In many cases, they consulted eminent scholars specializing in the work of a given artist or circle (like Christoph Vogtherr in the case of 18th-century French painters), but mostly they employ comparative analysis with other works of a given artist. The entries are richly illustrated – the authors not only placed full-page coloured reproductions

of each picture but also provided in-text enlarged photographs of signatures, pre-Stanisław August collection signs and reproductions of historical copies.

Together with the exquisite catalogue of paintings from the Royal Castle in Warsaw published by the authors in 2007, *The Stanisław August Collection of Paintings* is a fundamental work not only on the painting collection of the last king of Poland, but also on European art collecting as such (both publications also involve full English versions and will undoubtedly become one of the most often cited Polish art history texts in the next few years). The two catalogues combine stylistic analysis with in-depth source research, and the methodology of a researcher specializing in particular art schools and artists with the background of an historian of art collecting, and should be considered model works of this genre in Polish literature.

However, Juszczak and Małachowicz did not avoid one, rather serious inconsequence. Why have the authors, considering their sensitivity to the history of art collecting and their knowledge of sources, decide to only discuss those paintings from the former royal collection which can be found in Łazienki today, at the same time omitting not only wartime losses or lost works, but also masterpieces of such rank as Rembrandt's *Polish Rider (Lisowczyk)* which today decorates the interior of the Frick Collection in New York? One of the final annexes of a list of works omitted in the catalogue (lacking explanation of the omission), refers to the state of the collection in 1939, and consequently only encompasses works that are property of the National Museum in Warsaw today and the wartime losses, while excluding works sold before 1817 or transferred to the Hermitage under tsar Nicholas II. It appears that the decision to only include paintings belonging to the Royal Łazienki Museum was a determination to discuss a specific contemporary collection. It also provided the opportunity to display a new collecting construction created within the museum, established in 1995 as an independent institution, whose objective is a purist reconstruction of the former royal collection under the name of the "Stanisław August Collection of Paintings." Let us underline that since that time, the Museum has taken pride in having managed to find and acquire (as a result of deposit, revindication or purchase) several important paintings thus far considered lost, like the *Washerwoman* by Gabriel Metsu, *Prince de Nassau Hunting a Jaguar* by Jean-Baptiste Le Paon or the *Resting Venus with Cupid* by Girolamo Pesci (purchased at an auction in late 2014 and published in the reviewed catalogue for the first time). Juszczak's and Małachowicz's catalogue, while clarifying the complicated history of the royal painting collection, seems however to question the main idea of the fundamental concept not only of the Gallery of Paintings Royal Łazienki Museum, but also of the entire Museum, exclusively dedicated to the times of king Stanisław August. Recreating the Royal Łazienki of Stanisław August, the visionaries of the new museum have not only reconstructed the gallery of paintings, but also, referencing the full-colour designs preserved in the Print Room of the Warsaw University Library, have created modified unbuilt interiors and pavillions (the Chinese pagoda definitely could have not been shipped from China and was not constructed by the Chinese, and the gallery of sculptures in the Old Orangery, even if it had existed, was not adorned with the statue of Laocoön or the Apollo Belvedere). It is worth remembering though, as the authors point out: that the king would not have been able to enjoy the Łazienki longer than a couple of years, and the successive owners, the Romanovs, left their own influence on it, now erased. Moreover, the two previous museum arrangements in the Royal Łazienki (after the Treaty of Riga and after 1960) make an equally important and interesting episode in the history of both the Gallery of Paintings and the residence itself.

Translated by Karolina Koriat