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ICONOGRAPHY OF THE WILANÓW MUSEUM INTERIORS IN THE 19th CENTURY

In the second half of the 18th and throughout the 19th century we can observe an exuberant development of veduta painting. This was caused by the desire to learn about one's own country and the past of one's own nation, the need felt particularly strongly after Poland had lost her independence.

Wilanów, the former residence of John III, recalling the most glorious moments in the history of Poland, was regarded therefore as one of the most valuable monuments of the past and attracted the interest of many artists. Bernardo Bellotto called Canaletto devoted to Wilanów four paintings in his series of views of Warsaw painted for King Stanislaus Augustus (Poniatowski) for the Royal Castle in Warsaw.

In the late 18th and in the 19th centuries, the majority of such views were ordered by the owners of Wilanów. Zygmunt Vogel worked for Izabela Lubomirska in 1792 and for Stanisław Kostka Potocki in 1800. Views of Wilanów in the times of Aleksander Potocki were painted by Wincenty Kasprzycki in various techniques and different sizes. In the second half of the 19th century two series of views were produced for August Potocki and his wife by Willibald Richter.

The Wilanów palace was also depicted by Aleksander Gryglewski when he meant to produce a series of views of the finest monuments of Polish architecture. Individual views were painted in the studios of Józef Richter, Aleksander Majerski, Marcin Zaleski, Karol Alberti and Napoleon Orda. There were also numerous graphic representations of Wilanów.

The earliest views of the palace interiors were painted for Aleksander Potocki by Kasprzycki who worked for the owner of Wilanów in 1832-1843. Watercolours showing "one of the downstairs rooms" and "Library Interior" were displayed, together with his other

works, during the Fine Arts Exhibition in Warsaw in 1838; both views were burnt during the Second World War. Only a photograph and a copy of the "Library Interior" dating from 1933 have survived.

Chronologically speaking the second view of interiors is the King's Bed-chamber painted by Marcin Zaleski in 1839. This is the earliest preserved view of the palace interiors, and strictly speaking of its Baroque part.

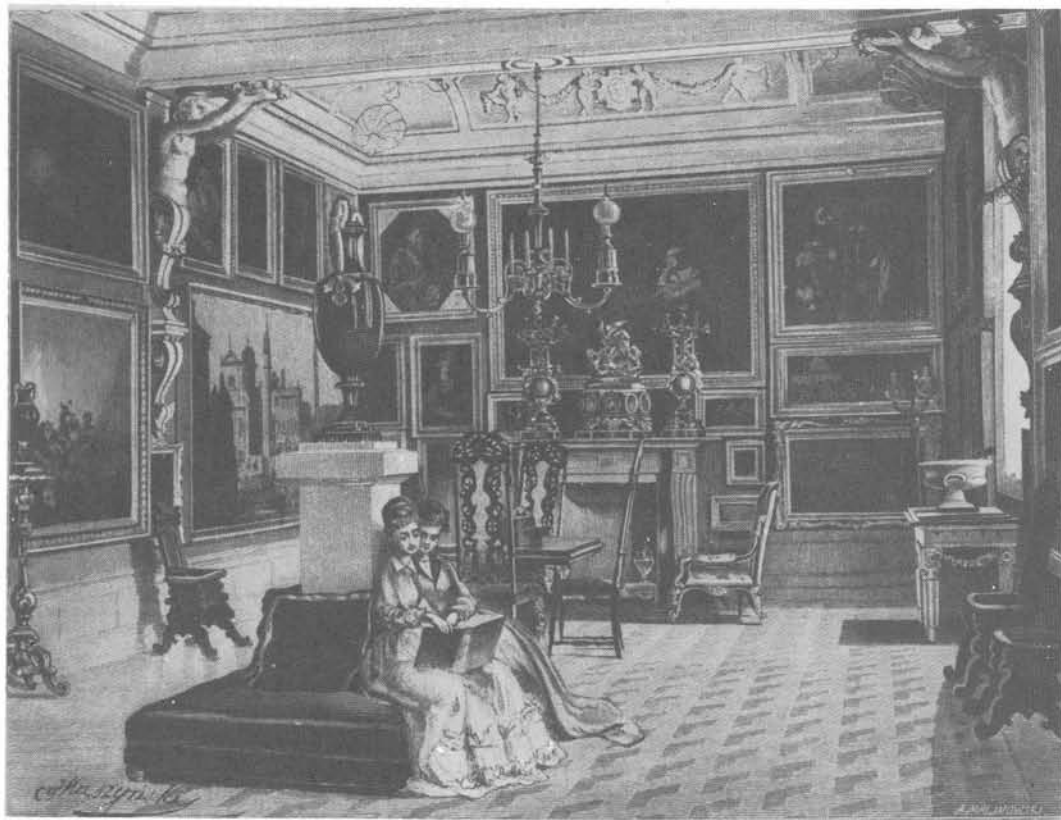
In the times of August Potocki, Willibald Richter painted his views in 1856-1858. The portfolio of 26 views of Wilanów and Marysin was kept in the palace until 1944 and was subsequently lost. From this series photographs of four of the six interior views have been preserved (the Mirror Cabinet, the King's Dressing-room, the White Hall (Fig. 27) and the Library Hall). Another set of views has survived in the Wilanów collection. It encompasses six items, including five views of interiors: the Queen's Bed-chamber, the Mirror Cabinet, the Dutch Cabinet, the White Hall and the Library Hall.

Then came the oil paintings, signed and dated, by Aleksander Gryglewski: the Queen's Bed-chamber from 1873 and 1874 and the Dutch Cabinet from 1874. Also preserved are Gryglewski's sketches of both these interiors and a small drawing of the King's Dressing-room. Gryglewski's works are the best artistic representations of the palace interiors.

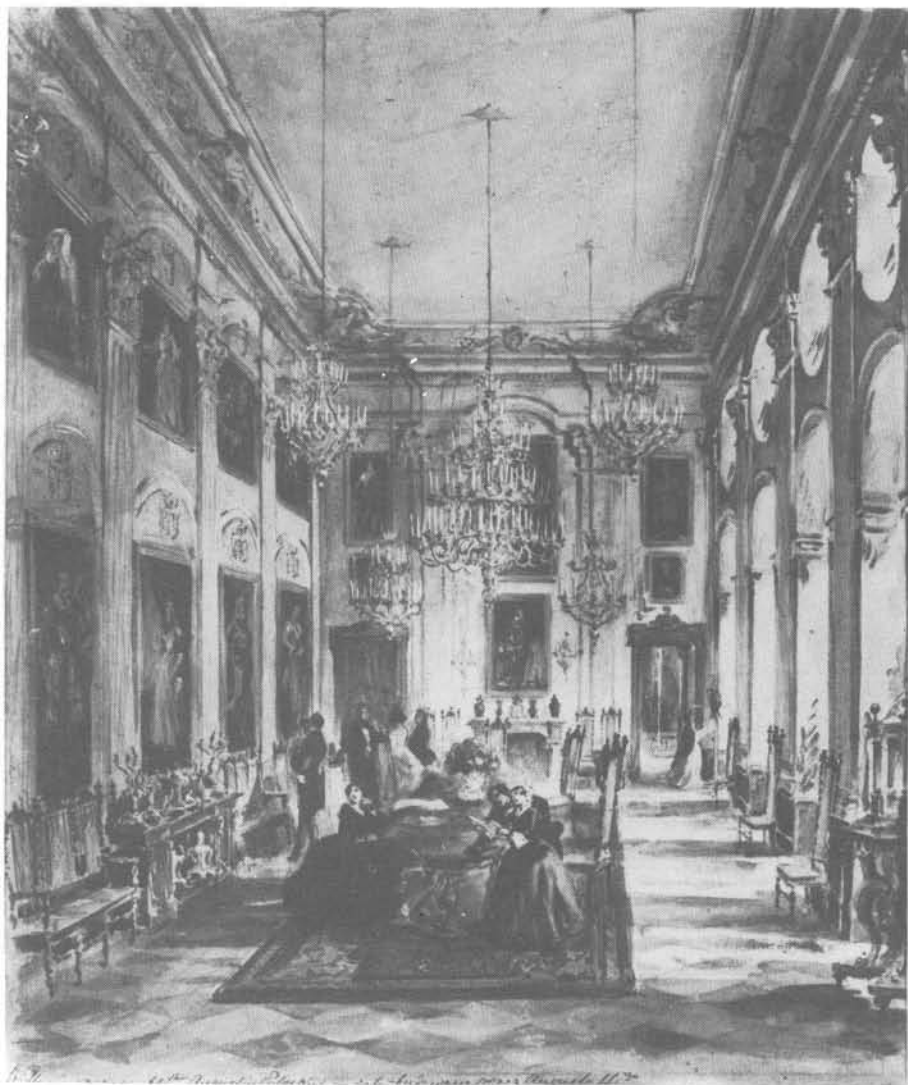
Gryglewski's drawings of the King's Dressing-room and the Mirror Cabinet served as patterns for prints in the volume "Wilanów" by Skimborowicz and Gerson published in 1877, which forms the largest collection of 19th century views of the palace and its interiors (Fig. 28). The prints produced in the Warsaw Woodcut Workshop by many artists active within it, represent differing levels, however they depict almost all museum interiors, the royal chambers and library rooms.

Towards the end of the 19th century documentary iconography became the task of photography which guaranteed greater accuracy.

The set of 19th century views constitutes a valuable source in reconstructing the furnishings of the palace interiors and in tracing changes of style in both the décor and furniture. They supplement old inventories and help in compiling the history of the Wilanów collection, especially since these views depict both objects that have survived and those that have been irretrievably lost.



28. Wilanów. The Palace's Gallery so called the 'Museum'. Engraving by A. Malinowski from J. Maszyński, 1877



27. Wilanów. Grand Dining Hall (so called 'White Hall') of King Augustus II. Watercolour by W. Richter from the middle of 19th century