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THE WILANÓW COLLECTION OF EUROPEAN POTTERY AND GLASS

The collection we are going to discuss contains over six hundred pottery objects and more than two hundred glass objects.

It was collected in Wilanów, mainly in the first half of 19th century. It contains the collection of Potocki family - Stanisław Kostka and Aleksandra (maiden name Lubomirska), the things bought by their son and grandson and the objects given by Anetka (maiden name Tyszkiewicz) Potocka and Aleksandra (maiden name Potocka, a great grandmother of minister Brühl; that explains why she was the owner of some marvelous objects such as, for instance, the porcelain statue of August III). In the end of 19th century the Wilanów collection was enriched by the objects belonging to Ksawery Branicki.

The Polish objects, mainly the glassware and the faience from 18th century make only ten per cent of the collection. The most numerous is Saxon group of pottery and glass (about thirty per cent). It includes, among others, 36 Bottger stoneware pieces, nine vases signed AR, several objects with early Johanneum numbers. There is also a group of ninety biscuits from Marcolini period. The large number of Saxon objects in Poland would seem quite obvious, especially in Wilanów where king August II resided for some time. And yet, all that is left of his furnishings of the palace as far as Saxon glass goes are two crystal clocks and as far as pottery there are probably only two stoves. The rest was taken by Izabela Lubomirska to Łańcut before the year 1799.

The most typical and the largest group of the collection consists of the objects from 18th century. Among the earlier ones there are several majolica objects, faience from Nevers, individual pieces of Venetian, Czechoslovakian and Saxon glass and Habana, Spanish and Dutch faience as well as some stoneware objects. Nineteenth century is represented mostly by objects from the first half of the century.

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Ceramic and glass objects were bought mainly for practical reasons, e.g. decorating apartments and museum interiors (both, as beautiful objects and "curiosities" (Fig. 40). The purposeful collectorship is in most cases derivative, although the objects bought by Stanisław Kostka Potocki suggest the tendency to complete a versatile collection (Saxon porcelaine, Italian majolica, ruby glass, French faïence, stoneware).

The inventories of the palace enable us to recall the history of this group of objects. While comparing the inventory from the year 1793 with those from 1832 and 1837 and with letters, we see that Potocki family faced the necessity of the full restoration of the palace decoration as far as porcelaine objects are concerned.

The analysis of the inventory from the year 1867 (including also the evaluation of objects) allows us to define the objects given to the collection by Aleksandra Potocka and their value at that time.

The publications and the guidebooks of the palace do not give much information.

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At the beginning of the Second World War the German scientists who prepared the removal of the art objects from Poland worked out a catalogue "Sichergestellte Kunstwerke im Generalgouvernement" in which they included numerous museum objects of Wilanów collection, among others the ceramic and glass objects (nota bene, of 23 points concerning ceramic objects there were at least eleven false attributions).

Part of the collection never came back from Germany. We work on what is left. Some objects have been already published in the catalogues of the exhibitions, others were described in articles. I described about thirty per cent of the collection of European ceramic and glass objects (some of them for the first time and some others with new attributions) in the catalogue and guidebook of the exhibition "Artistic workmanship and paintings in Wilanów collection", Warsaw, 1980.

The catalogue includes only the objects displayed in the old Orangery building, therefore it does not mention the valuable art pieces decorating the interiors of the palace and those left in the storerooms. Being a source of information for the visitors to the exhibition the catalogue gives only brief data. Thus, this article is a kind of gloss to that catalogue.



40. The Palace of Wilanów. 'Cabinet of Saxon Porcelain', as seen on the photography by B. Mieszkowski, c. 1911