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THE HISTORY OF THE PAINTING COLLECTION OF ROŚ IN THE WILANÓW GALLERY IN THE LIGHT OF ARCHIVAL SOURCES

The following is an initial summary of investigations and studies of archiwal sources carried out so far in connection with the painting collection of Roś.

Beginning in the 16th century, the estate of Roś in north-eastern Poland was associated with illustrious Polish families. Between the 18th and the early 19th centuries it belonged to the Potocki family. Stefan Potocki inherited Roś in 1853 and the Roś estate that he established was confirmed by the Tsar Nicholas II in 1906. The majority of archival records concern the activity of Stefan Potocki. A number of letters, bills and contracts pertaining to the conservation of paintings made it easier to ascertain the names of the authors of the works in the gallery as well as the names of the people portrayed.

Following a stormy period in the history of the painting gallery during the First World War, in June 1924, 176 pictures reached Wilanów and enriched its collection of European and Polish painting that had undoubtedly existed there. At present Wilanów boasts some 130 paintings from the Roś collection; most of them carry on their backs special labels, inventory numbers and inscriptions (Fig. 36).

The subjects dealt with in the paintings from the Roś collection are varied, as was the case with similar other collections. Next to portraits of the owners of Roś and their families, there are a number of paintings on religious and mythological themes and still-lifes.

Today it is hard to judge the artistic merit of the entire collection, especially since the majority of them need still to be studied carefully and described. Nevertheless it is clear that it contains a number of masterpieces by fine and well-known painters (for example, J. Pitschman, P. Szyndler, L. Gasser, and among fore-

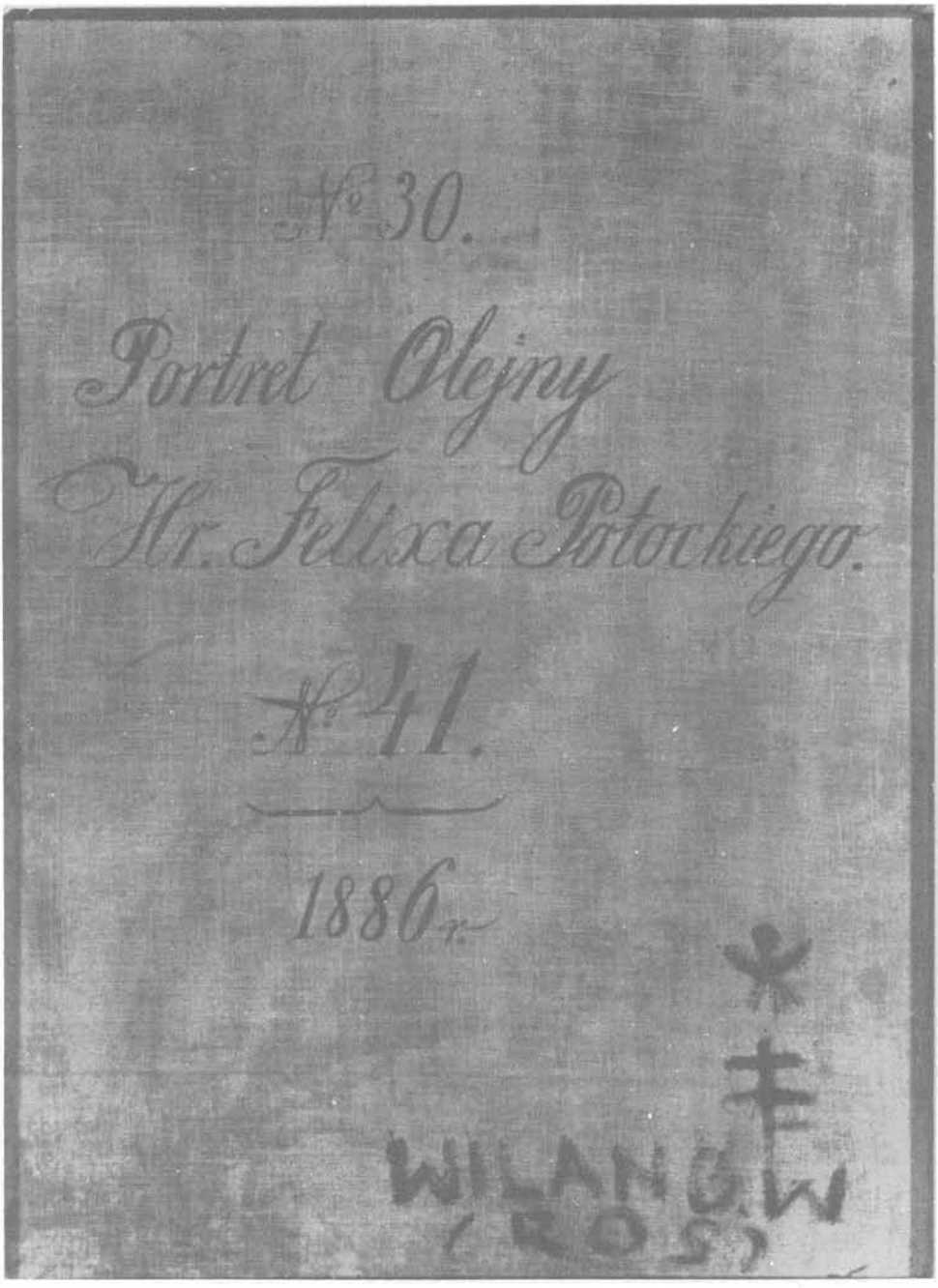
ign artists, M. Contes (Fig. 37), A. Stom and G. Dou (Fig. 38). It is these paintings that, by enriching the historical Wilanów collection, enhanced its value and raised it to the rank of an important gallery in Poland and Europe at large.



37. Pots and Flowers. Painting by M. Contes



38. An old woman watering flowers at a window. Painting by G. Dou



36. Portrait of Feliks Potocki — inscription at the back side of the canvas. Painting by A. Brodowski