

LIKENESSES OF FAMOUS POLES
AND SMALL REPLICAS OF POLISH MONUMENTS
FROM MINTER'S WORKSHOP
IN THE WILANÓW COLLECTION

The rich applied art collection in the Wilanów Museum also includes a group of casts from the Warsaw workshop of Minter. This group comprises eight models of monuments to Polish rulers, 21 busts of famous Poles and 34 framed medals representing kings, famous military commanders and national heroes. Together with the consoles of the busts, the group is composed of 86 items.

Karol Fryderyk Minter, the founder of the firm, studied in Berlin and Copenhagen and in 1822 settled in Warsaw where in 1828 he opened a plant producing bronze and metal casts. He employed a number of well-known sculptors, such as Wojciech Święcki (Fig. 63) and Jakub Tatarakiewicz, and later also foreign artists, David d'Angers and Antoine Bovy (Fig. 64). In 1835 his son Karol Juliusz took over as manager of the workshop. In this period his factory became the foremost producer of artistic and other metal objects, including church furnishings, in Russia and the Kingdom of Poland. Particularly popular among his customers were whole series of bronze and zinc medals, statuettes, busts of historical figures, works which were meant to extol the glory of old Poland and the glamour of its military successes.

In 1847 Karol Fryderyk died and his son transferred his workshop to different premises and enlisted cooperation of new artists, Władysław Oleszczyński, Henryk Stattler, Daniel Zalewski and Wojciech Kasproicz. The plant, that was developing dynamically, demonstrated its products during the industrial exhibition in 1857.

The tsarist reprisals following the collapse of the January insurrection of 1863-1864 resulted in a decline in artistic production, especially on patriotic subjects. In 1878 the plant again changed its premises and started producing kitchen utensils. In 1878 the firm was taken over by the "Wulkan" Warsaw Metal Factory S.A. and Minter withdrew from it altogether.

Information about the Minters' activity appeared almost from the beginning of the plant's existence, mostly in Warsaw journals.

The majority of medals in the Wilanów collection were designed by Wojciech Święcki. In 1833 David d'Angers produced a model of a medal with a likeness of Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz which was cast by the Minters in 1864-1867. A replica of this medal as well as the medal with a likeness of Tadeusz Kościuszko are to be seen in the Louvre, the Polish Library in Paris and the David Museum at Angers. Oleszczyński designed his own compositions or else modelled his work on David d'Angers. Twenty-one busts were designed by Jakub Tarkiewicz. The models designed by all those artists were purchased by Minter with the right to reproduce them.

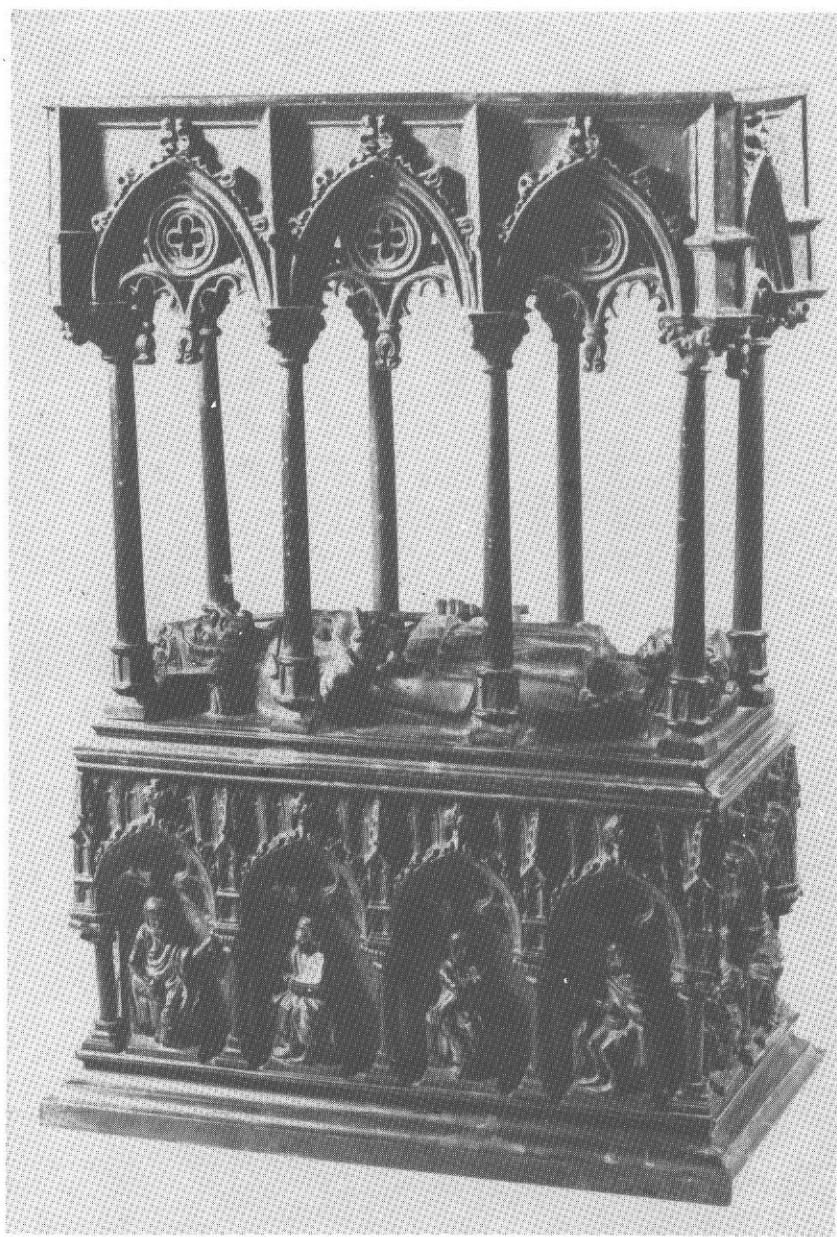
The owners of the Wilanów palace got in touch with the Minters' plant as early as 1844, making a downpayment for the entire first series of monuments to Polish kings and princes (Fig. 65). In 1847 Aleksandra Potocka made a downpayment for the second series of these monuments, and the ready products were put on display in the palace interiors. The owners of Wilanów also commissioned the Minters larger works, for example the doors to the palace chapel with bas-reliefs based on J. B. Lavastre. The Wilanów collection of the Minters' products demonstrates the Potockis' love of Polish history and tradition and their appreciation of national industry.



64. Portrait of Fryderyk Chopin. Medallion cast in Minter's manufactory according to the design of A. Bovy



63. Portrait of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski. Medallion cast in Minter's manufactory according to the design of M. Święcki



65. Miniature model of sarcophagus based upon the tomb of King Casimirus the Great from Wawel's Cathedral, Cracow (cast in Minter's manufacture)