



MUSEUM of King  
Jan III's PALACE  
at WILANÓW

# BETWEEN MNE MOSYNE AND TERPSICHORE

A Critical Guide  
to the Museum  
of King Jan III's  
Palace at Wilanów

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## “Between Mnemosyne and Terpsichore” Contemporary dance, heritage and augmented reality

The project “Between Mnemosyne and Terpsichore” has combined European heritage sites and contemporary dance with the education of young people. Six institutions from three European countries: Portugal, Poland and Spain were involved in its implementation.

With the support of **Mnemosyne**, the Greek goddess of memory and patron of heritage sites, and **Terpsichore**, the muse of dance, we used palaces as a space for the development of critical thinking. Contemporary dance as well as the AR application used in the project have opened a new field for the development of creativity. The project was addressed to students aged 14-18. It included dance workshops hosted at the Wilanów Palace and the Sintra Palace. They inspired young people from Poland and Portugal to reflect on cultural heritage and stimulated them to search for ways to express their opinions and to research the relationship between the past and present day. By use of digital tools it was possible to build a technological bridge among students, museologists and dancers.

### **Project activities**

- Workshops for students run by dance instructors and curators. Such issues as memory, power, body, senses inspired by museum exhibitions were interpreted through contemporary dance. The performances created during dance classes were shown by Polish and Portuguese young people at the end of the 2022 school year in their native palaces.
- Conferences devoted to building a narrative at the permanent exhibition in the palaces as well as to cultural mediation with the use of dance as a tool of interpretation.



## Project results

- Application using augmented reality. The tool uses visual elements from dance performances that support visits to both royal residences.
- Critical online guides to the Wilanów and Sintra Palaces.

The project was co-financed by the European Commission with the sum of almost 300,000 euros under the Erasmus+ programme that, at the European level, supports strategic partnerships for the creativity in the pandemic. Education and training projects promote the development of knowledge in Europe and enable the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy objectives, i.e. sustainable development and social inclusion.

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



**Project duration:** March 2021 – February 2023

**Project budget:** 298 112 euros

**Project leader:** Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua, Sintra

**Project partners:**

- Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów
- Dance school: Meet Share Dance, Madrid
- Technological partner: byAr, Lisbon
- Portuguese school: Agrupamento de Escolas de Monte da Lua, Sintra
- Polish school: LXXXVI LO im. Batalionu „Zośka”, Warsaw



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## How to use the *Critical Guide*?

The guide supports critical thinking, which is a competence particularly useful in the current world. It raises questions and is thought-provoking. We would like not only to tell the history of the palace, but to communicate with each other as well. We want to use the heritage to understand better the rapidly changing reality.

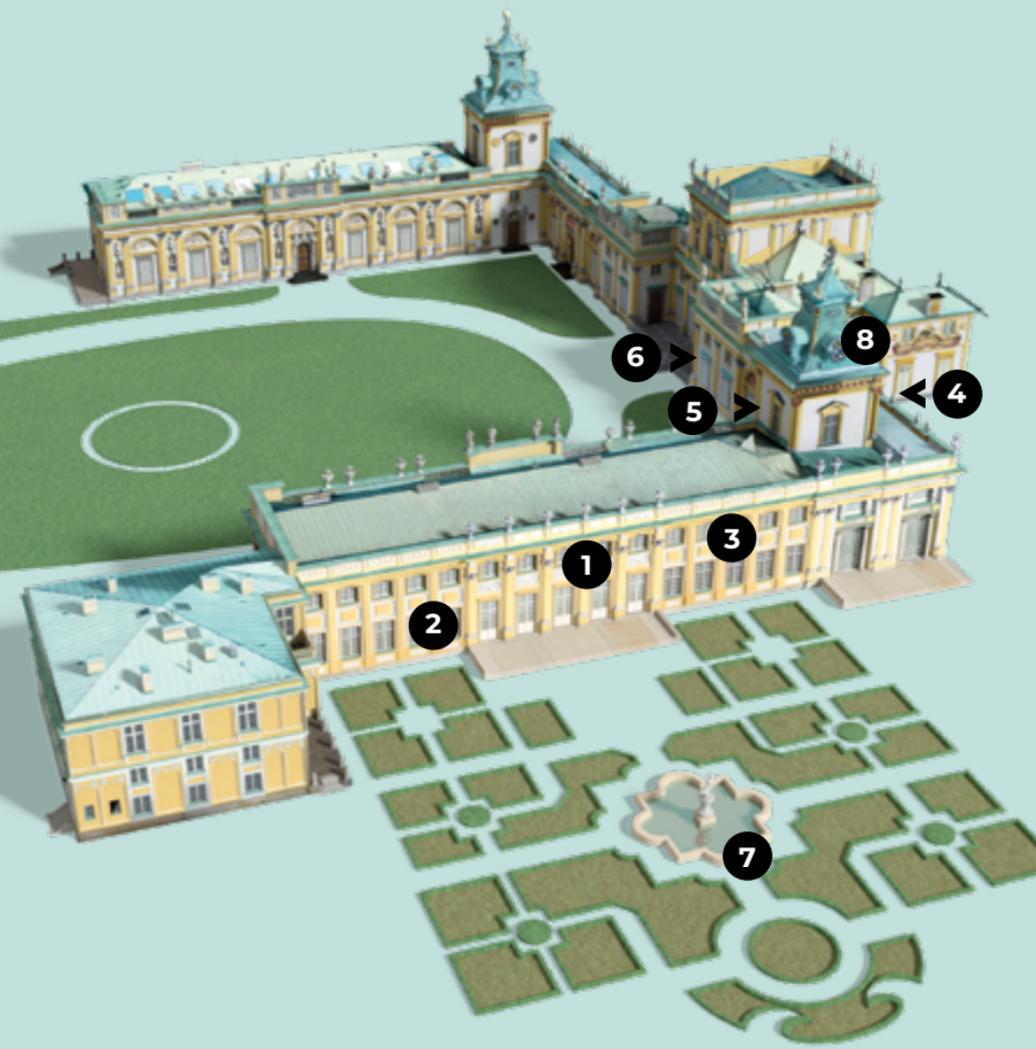
We would like to encourage you to talk to the people who accompany you during your visit and use the themes we suggest. If you have any other questions, that's even better! Critical thinking is also about asking questions. Don't worry if you don't always find an answer or there are too many of them. Thinking and considering alternatives is a good exercise for your brain!

Instead of telling stories about everything that can be seen in Jan III's residence, we have chosen a few themes, which, in our opinion, are still surprisingly relevant even though they regard the history from several centuries ago. We have given them the following names: **From far away, Body, Memory, Nature, Education, Power, Senses** and **Time**. The same themes have been covered by the guide to the Sintra Palace prepared by the Portuguese museologists (available in English). We would like to encourage you to have a look at it as well!

The guide will be a good companion for your visit to the palace – whether you come with your class, family, friends or alone.

You can plan your walking route arranging the themes in any order you wish or choosing those which might be of the greatest inspiration for you.

**We wish you a pleasant reading!**



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# # From far away

- Tea or coffee? Whichever you choose, you will get a drink that has come from far away. Some items or food products, currently obvious and ordinary, came to us from as far as Asia or America.
- Please take a moment to wonder: what items constitute now part of our culture, but, initially, used to be perceived as exotic?



The expeditions of Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama and Ferdinand Magellan gave rise to great geographic discoveries and led to economic and cultural exchange between Europe and the New World. Products from far away reached the European market mainly on Portuguese and Spanish merchant ships. In the 17th century the route to the Far East were successively made by the Dutch and the English. Although mainly spices were initially imported from afar, porcelain, fabrics and lacquer were also transported. The objects of artistic craftsmanship from the Far East were perceived in Europe as a kind of peculiarity because they were so different from the native aesthetics and their decorative motifs had a fairy-tale character. The unknown technique of making porcelain and lacquer decoration made people search for recipes and try to imitate oriental products. The admiration for Far Eastern art was an inexhaustible source of inspiration for European artists who copied not only the techniques but the decorative motifs as well. At the same time, the Chinese and Japanese artisans, while producing the items for export, copied the shape of furniture and dishes produced in Europe so as to better suit the tastes of their clients.

The fascination for the Far East was present at the time of King Jan III. The fashion was already so widespread that most European residences had interiors decorated with Chinese porcelain, fabrics or lacquer objects. In the Wilanów palace, at the King's order, a Chinese cabinet was created and after his death such items as "three Chinese gods of that kind, with wobbly heads" were listed in the inventory. Jan III's collection of Far Eastern art has not survived to our times, we only know it from descriptions. August II, the subsequent king living in the palace, also showed interest in Chinese and Japanese art. The Chinese Cabinet decorated with European lacquer as well as furniture have been preserved in the palace since the Saxon times.



Dancer with a frog, China, 18th c.



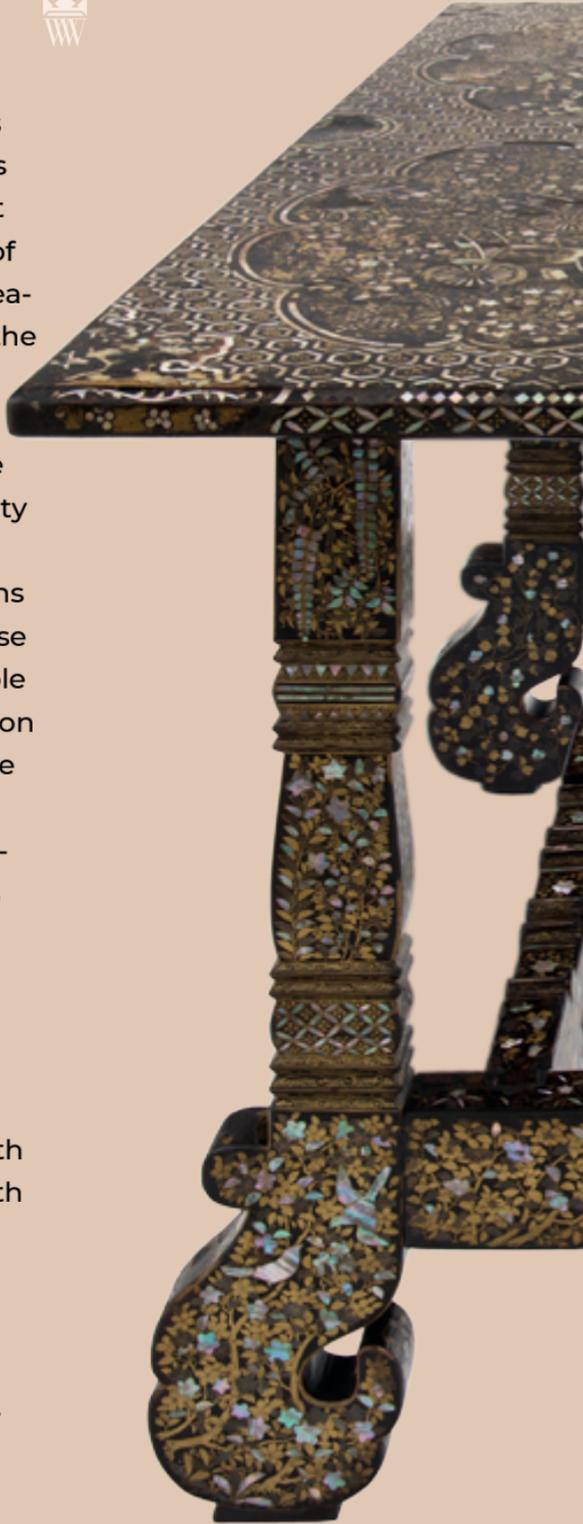
Along with the epoch, the attitude towards art imported from afar changed as well. The initial pure fascination for exoticism was replaced by a scientific approach. Stanisław Kostka Potocki, the founder of the Wilanów museum, created the Chinese Room at the beginning of the 19th century. A set of rooms situated on the first floor of the palace was used to present a rich collection of Far Eastern art. It consisted of chinaware, lacquerware, deity figures, woodcuts, fans, European furniture in Chinese style as well as an openwork ivory ball. Potocki devoted his entire study to Chinese, Indian and Persian art. Basing on his own collection, he made an attempt to systematically describe their aesthetic values and also organized the travel and scientific literature on this subject available at that time. The collection amassed by Stanisław Kostka Potocki has survived till our times largely in the collection of the museum.

The Chinese Rooms which we can visit today in the Wilanów Palace were commissioned by August and Aleksandra Potocki in the 2nd half of the 19th century and were private rooms of the owners of Wilanów. They are decorated with wallpapers with motifs inspired by oriental art made by local artisans. In the 19th-century collectors' rooms, the collections were amassed and presented in specially designed display cabinets, showcases and on shelves. They were mainly valued for their diversity, wealth and exoticism and the number of items in the collection was a proof of their owner's status as they were perceived as luxurious and difficult to get.

The current Chinese Rooms are mostly equipped with export products manufactured in the Far East especially for the European market, tailored to European tastes and expectations. One of the most interesting is the *nanban*-style table from the 17th century. *Nanban* means "the art of the Southern barbarians", the term used in Japan for the



Europeans. The name was used to describe the items of Japanese decorative art that were a combination of Japanese and European features. In the 17th century the trading relations between Europe and Japan were dominated by Portuguese merchants, therefore plenty of *nanban*-style items revealed strong inspirations and allusions to Portuguese products. The *nanban* table from the Wilanów collection combines the shape of late Renaissance Portuguese furniture with the technology and decorative motifs of the oriental tradition of decorating with lacquer, which has reached the highest level in Japan. This unique item of furniture is entirely covered with lacquer and decorated with mother of pearl and powdered gold and silver. It is one of the most valuable handicraft objects in the collection of the museum.

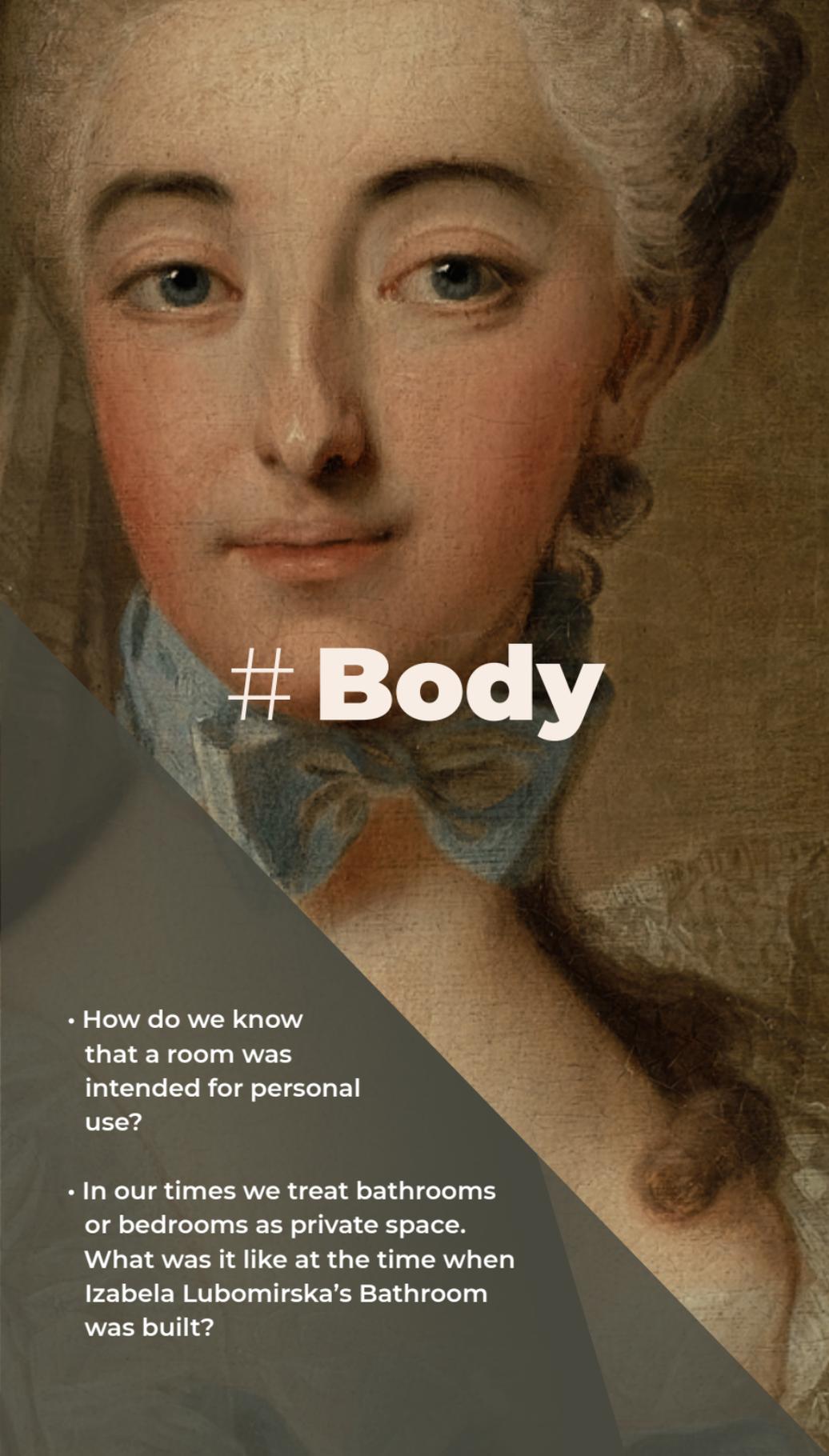


*Nanban*-style table, Japan, 17th c.



Chinese Rooms, 19th c.

- Why do you think we desire objects from afar?
- What do you think is a real luxury today: products from afar or items produced by native artisans?
- What do you mean by the terms *exotic* and *oriental*?
- Take a moment and think what items in your culture may seem to be exotic for people who live in China and Japan?



# # Body

- How do we know that a room was intended for personal use?
- In our times we treat bathrooms or bedrooms as private space. What was it like at the time when Izabela Lubomirska's Bathroom was built?



Izabela Lubomirska's Bathroom, 18th c.

Have a closer look at Lubomirska's Parlour and the Golden Bedroom and try to assess whether those rooms served public or private purposes. Which elements of the decor indicate the character of the interiors? To what extent were they two separate areas and to what extent did they fulfil two functions in the private residence of a king or a nobleman?



**Princess Izabela Lubomirska** (1736-1816) owned plenty of residences in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, including Wilanów. Her property was one of the largest in Europe at that time and included 14 towns and 365 villages. She invested a lot of financial resources to transform and expand her palaces in line with fashion of that time. She travelled a lot around Europe and brought with her both knowledge about the latest trends in art as well as works of art which constantly expanded her collection. Izabela Lubomirska commissioned the design of the Bath Pavilion in Wilanów to Szymon Bogumił Zug. Erected in the years 1775-1778, the building is modestly decorated with subtle architectonic details and has a style of French architecture of that time.



The Princess' private apartment included: a cabinet, a bedroom, a dressing room, three wardrobes, a toilet, a porch, a staircase and a room with two water cisterns in the basement. According to contemporary accounts – “no royal residence would be ashamed of having such a Bathroom” as the pavilion was “equipped with whatsoever sophisticated could be thought of”. In the cabinet there was a cypress piano brought from London and in the so-called *cacatorium*, a toilet with walls painted with palm trees, there was “a book-shaped stool”, i.e. the ancestor of today's toilet seat in the shape of a pile of books. Inside the proper Bathroom with white and green walls and black and white marble floor there was in a niche “a green marbled bathtub on six gilded lion's paws”, above which there was a lion's head and “two gilded circles to let water into the bathtub”<sup>1</sup>.

In the Bath Pavilion the owner underwent care and rejuvenation treatments and organized meeting with guests. The care activities done at the end of the 18th century focused more on covering the flaws of beauty rather than on removing dirt and unpleasant smells. Washing the whole body was perceived as harmful and care was taken to keep it to a minimum. Only fingertips were dipped in rose water every day. Izabela Lubomirska, however, was a great lover of bathing and she bathed not only in spas. During her numerous travels she often underwent such a treatment. If she stayed longer in one place which did not meet her sanitary expectations, the bathtub was rented. In the Wilanów Palace Izabela Lubomirska regularly underwent bathing treatments, immersing herself in the water with grape skins. Their properties were supposed to positively affect the smoothness of the skin and improve its elasticity. In addition to three buckets of grape skins, young wine and olive oil were added to the bath. The princess paid a lot of attention to her look, “she always wanted to be young and regardless of her age lived like a young”<sup>2</sup>.



Rotunda room at Izabela Lubomirska's Bathroom, 18th c.

During the Enlightenment period, the Polish noblewomen became more active in social life. They were fluent in foreign languages such as French, often also German, English and Italian. They developed their artistic talents by practising music, singing and painting. Their residences and palaces were visited by important representatives of the nobility, ambassadors, artists and scientists. It was in private rooms, such as the Bathroom in Wilanów, that people had fun playing cards and drinking chocolate which was in fashion at that time or exchanged news from the royal court and the world. In the private rooms the family business was done, and the court games and intrigues had an influence on the politics of the country and its role on the international arena.



Izabela Lubomirska's social status and her large fortune as well as "her personal charm, talents and close relationships with the king-cousin" built her position of the princess and determined the range of her influence. King Stanisław August emphasized that they had a similar view "on people, conduct, books, art, entertainment; we discussed everything together and we always agreed in our likings and judgments [...] I found that she had more common sense and feeling than all other women; she seemed to be superior to all the weaknesses of her sex and I felt happy whenever she deigned to speak to me"<sup>3</sup>. Such a flattering description may prove the extraordinary personality of Izabela Lubomirska as well as her influence that she might have exerted on the King in order to pursue family interests.

**Please take a moment and try to answer the questions:**

- **To what extent has the former division into public and private life changed so far?**
- **Do we now separate these two areas of life more than Princess Lubomirska did?**

It is worth taking a closer look at this issue from the perspective of our presence in the virtual world. After all, our social media profile often reveals our private life and at the same time creates our public image. Our social media image may help or interrupt our functioning, e.g. on the professional market. On the one hand, it provides popularity and gives an opportunity to have a lot of followers of our private life, but, on the other hand, how much is our life still really private?



# # Memory

- Who do we remember?
- What heroes of the past are important to us?
- What made them be positively remembered?



White Hall

The White Hall of the Wilanów palace is decorated with the portraits of Polish kings and queens as well as famous owners of the palace. The collection is a form of commemorating the history and recording the past for future generations.

The room was created around the year 1730 when King Augustus II the Strong of the Wettin dynasty took tenancy over the Wilanów property. The representative White Room is the largest and the most splendid interior in the whole Wilanów Palace. Although it was established in the 1st half of the 18th century, its current plan refers to the interior from the 19th century when there was an impressive portrait gallery. The choice of such a programme was influenced by the political situation of the country which had lost its independence



at the end of the 18th century and was looking for a way to regain it throughout the whole 19th century. Recalling significant figures from the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a patriotic activity of the palace owners of that time. In the Wilanów gallery there can be found portraits of former sovereigns as well as of famous residents of the Wilanów palace.

Two crucial figures for the Wilanów residence take a special place in the portrait gallery: the founder of this place, King Jan III and Stanisław Kostka Potocki who together with his wife Aleksandra in 1805 created a museum in it and opened the collected historical memorabilia and the collection of works of art to the public. The magnificent *Equestrian Portrait of Stanisław Kostka Potocki* by Jacques-Louis David is one of the most valuable pieces of art in the Polish collections. Both of them are accompanied by their families: Stanisław Kostka Potocki by his son Aleksander, his daughter Natalia Sanguszkowa, as well as by Aleksander's son August with his wife Aleksandra, known as Augustowa. Next to the portrait of Jan III there are his sons Aleksander and Konstanty, as well as his granddaughter Maria Klementyna Sobieska with her husband Jakub Stuart, pretender to the throne of England.

Most of the portrayed people are men: Kings Jan Kazimierz, Jan III, Augustus II (who commissioned the building of the White Hall), Augustus III as well as the founders of the Wilanów museum, Stanisław Kostka Potocki and August Potocki. The much less numerous female representatives are, however, also noticeable; in the gallery there are portraits of, among others, Ludwika Maria Gonzaga, Eleonora Wiśniowiecka, Maria Kazimiera and Aleksandra Potocka. Let's take a closer look at the figures commemorated in the portrait gallery.



**Jan III** 1629–1696) – came from the Sobieski gentry family and was elected king of Poland in 1674. His path to the royal throne was preceded by his brilliant military and political career which revealed his talents as a commander and strategist. Jan III went down to history as the victor from the battle of Vienna and a sovereign who, at the head of the allied forces of Europe, defeated the army of the Ottoman Empire. Jan III was a wise monarch: he received thorough education, was fluent in many languages and also genuinely interested in the development of science. He was a patron of scientists and artists. The preserved correspondence between Jan III and his wife, Maria Kazimiera, is a testimony to the fervent feeling he had for his wife and children. At King Jan III's order, the palace in Wilanów was built, which is a monument to his glory as an outstanding leader and wise ruler.



**Maria Kazimiera** (1641–1716) – French of origin, she came to Poland as a small girl with the court of Queen Ludwika Maria Gonzaga. Teenage Maria triumphed at the Polish court because of her immense beauty. She was married to extremely wealthy Jan Zamoyski. However, the marriage was not happy, and that is why Maria Zamoyska got emotionally closer to Jan Sobieski. The preserved correspondence is a testimony to the feelings which united the couple. After Zamoyski's unexpected death, the lovers got married. Maria Kazimiera got more than ten times pregnant, but only four royal children lived to adulthood. Her political activity was aimed at securing the future of the whole family. The strong commitment of the Queen was badly received by the nobility and assessed as harmful for Poland. The Queen was interested in theatre and became a protector of art and music.



**Augustus II the Strong** 1670-1733) – king of Poland. In order to win the Polish crown, he decided to convert to Catholicism. As he wrote in his governance programme, he wanted to transform Poland into a flourishing country enjoying the respect of its neighbours. However, the King's attempts to introduce reforms or to establish valuable alliances were efficiently stopped by neighbouring countries. Unhappy as a ruler and politician, Augustus II was an important figure in the area of culture. He was known for his love for art; the famous Meissen porcelain factory was established thanks to his initiative. Augustus II's strength was also legendary as he was known to be able to bend horseshoes with bare hands. At the end of his life, the King's dream of making the Wilanów palace his residence came true.



**Stanisław Kostka Potocki** (1755–1821) – politician, collector, archaeologist. He travelled to many countries in Europe (Italy, France, Great Britain), which aroused his collecting and even archaeological passion. He was an art lover, in particular of Greek art, and a researcher. He was knowledgeable about medals and coins, architecture and he collected paintings and graphics. In his private Wilanów residence, he opened to public the mementoes of King Jan III as well as the rich art collection he had amassed over many years. He was the director of education authorities, succeeded in organizing the education system both in the Duchy of Warsaw and in the Kingdom of Poland, consistently expanded schooling network with the aim of enabling all children of both sexes and all religions to learn at elementary schools.



**Aleksandra Potocka** (1818–1892) – called “good”, married August Potocki, the owner of the Wilanów palace. The spouses took great care in making the residence in Wilanów more beautiful by enriching art collections, financing the construction of the church in Wilanów and supporting the hospital in the neighbourhood. After her husband’s death, the countess entirely devoted herself to charity. She also promoted new forms of agriculture and received awards for growing rare plants in Wilanów gardens. Her excessive strictness of moral conduct became a source of many anecdotes.



*“The eternity of the dead lasts as long  
As you keep paying them with your memory  
It’s an uncertain currency, it’s every dawn  
That someone loses their eternity.”*

Wisława Szymborska,  
*Rehabilitation* from the collection  
*Calling out to Yeti*, translation S. Barańczak<sup>4</sup>

- Which features of heroines and heroes from the past make them worth telling about to future generations?
- Which of them are particularly important in times of peace and which in times of tumultuous events?
- Which characteristics do you find universal, regardless of the historical moment or events when the heroine or hero lives or takes part in?
- Do you now see these features in people?
- Do you think that thanks to these features they will remain in people’s memory?



# # Nature

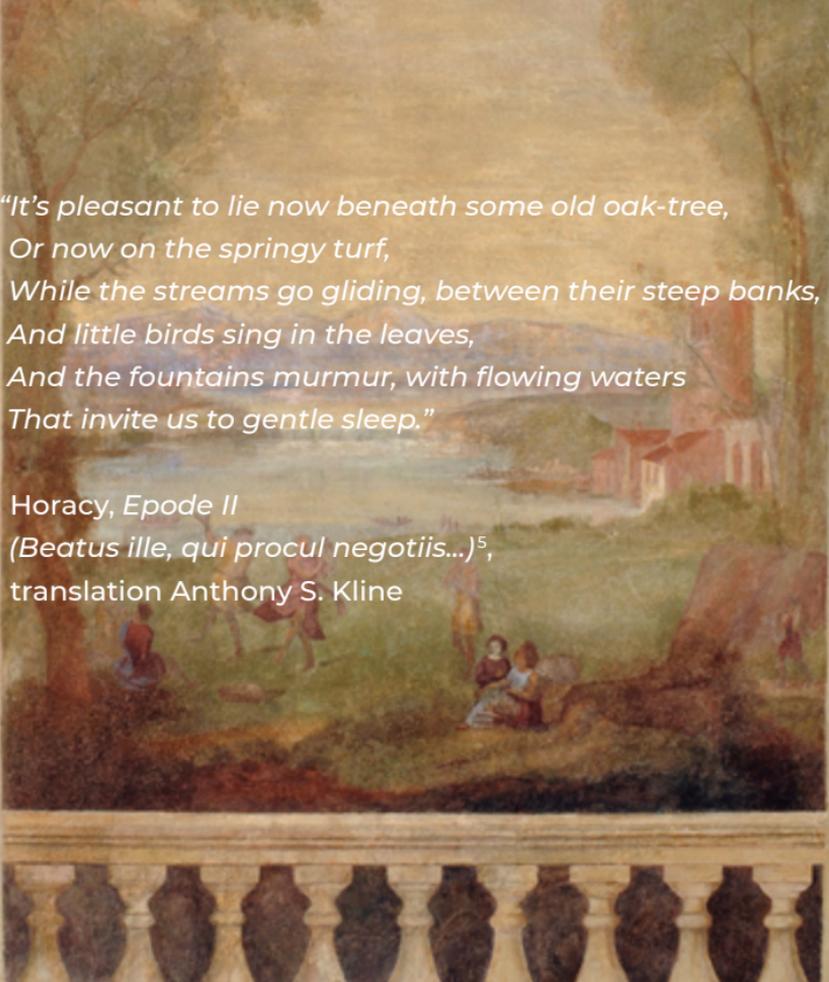
- How can you nowadays come into contact with nature?
- What is your favourite way of spending free time far away from the city?
- What drives us when looking for a place to rest far away from the city?



The need to be close to nature, which now can have a form of a walk in the forest or a trip to a nature reserve, for the inhabitant of Warsaw from the past meant something completely different. The myth of an idyllic life in the countryside was an important element that shaped the ideals of a nobleman in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Jan III, whose family estates were far away from Warsaw, decided to build a private residence very close to the capital city. In order to escape from the hustle and bustle and inconvenience of city life, as well as to take a break from the matters of state importance, he moved to the Wilanów palace. Horace's quotation decorating the entrance gate to Wilanów gardens still encourages the visitors to forget about everyday worries and to rest: *Ducite sollicitae quam iucunda oblivia vitae* (Consider what delight it is to forget about a life full of solicitude).

According to the recommendations known since the times of ancient Rome, you should carefully choose the site for a villa and take into account the conditions of the natural environment. Vitruvius, a Roman architectural theoretician, recommended choosing a place rich in water, with a moderate climate, far from marshes. Situating the palace on Lake Wilanów, with a stream flowing across it, meant that the suburban residence would have access to water necessary for its functioning, for garden works and a farm. Water served not only the function of meeting the basic needs of Wilanów inhabitants or making easier the transport of materials during the construction of the palace, but it was also used in an aesthetic sense as an element of the palace-park residence complex. Additionally, the proximity of the riparian forest separating Lake Wilanów from the Vistula River gave the owner of the palace free access to hunting areas.

King Jan III decided to have his summer house built far away from the capital city in order to enjoy the charms of rural life.



*"It's pleasant to lie now beneath some old oak-tree,  
Or now on the springy turf,  
While the streams go gliding, between their steep banks,  
And little birds sing in the leaves,  
And the fountains murmur, with flowing waters  
That invite us to gentle sleep."*

Horacy, *Epode II*

*(Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis...)*<sup>5</sup>,

translation Anthony S. Kline

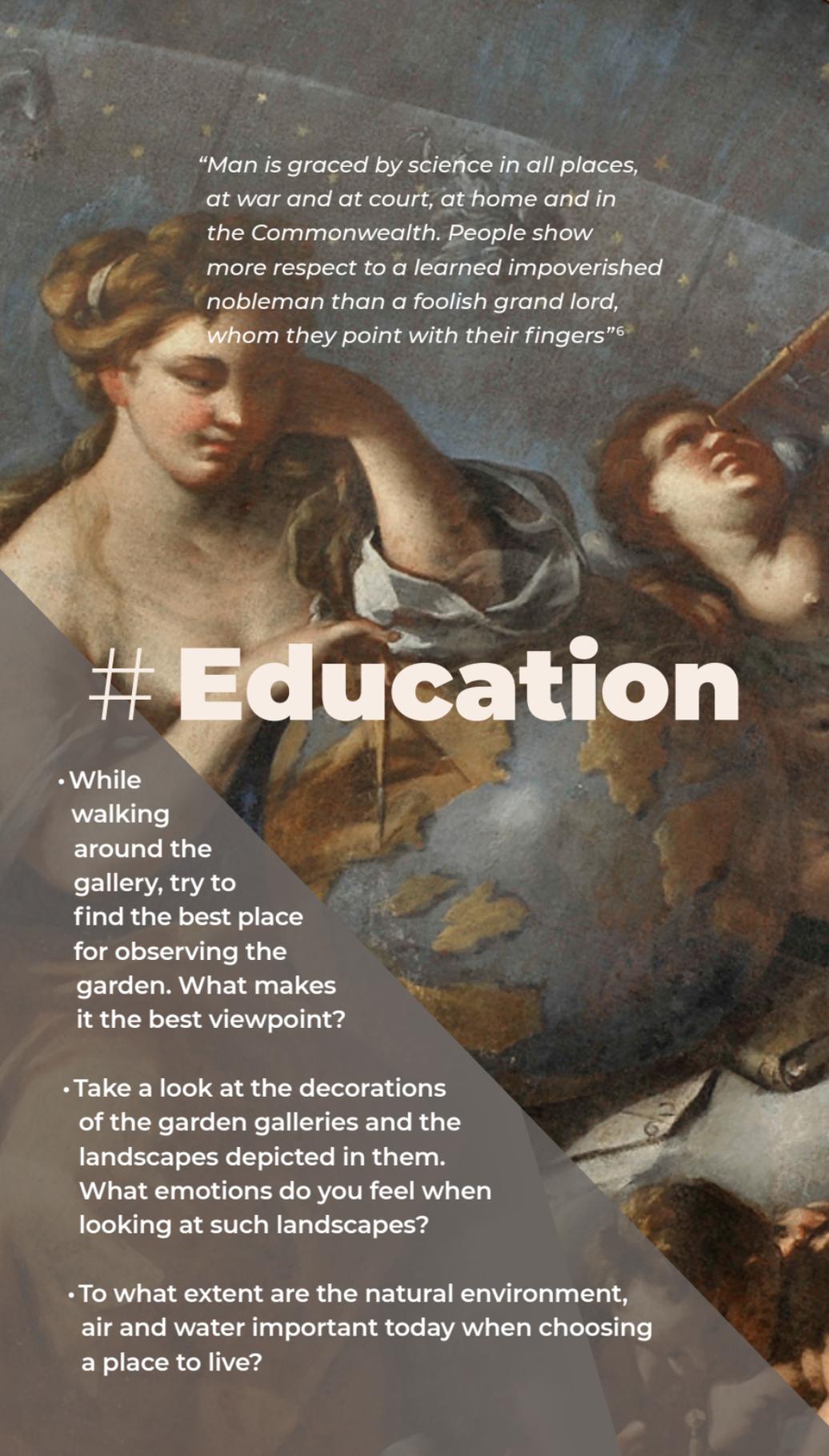
The palace garden was considered to be one of the most outstanding examples of Baroque foundations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Since the King loved gardening, he was remembered by posterity as a king-gardener who not only planted trees, but also imported new plants and looked after their cultivation on his property. Maintaining an Italian-style garden was enormously expensive and required a lot of work. Thus, it was necessary to hire skilled workers responsible for taking care of trees and hedges, seasonal exchange of plants that created intricate floral patterns, looking after citrus trees that were taken out into fresh air in summers and kept in the orangery in winters. Therefore, not only were the gardens the expression of their owners interests, but, most of all, they showed their wealth and the power to be able to subordinate nature to human laws.



Garden galleries create a special kind of connection between culture and nature and they embrace the main body of the Wilanów palace from two sides and connect the palace interiors with the garden. Originally, the galleries were open cloisters used for walking under the roof and admiring the gardens. The ceilings of the garden galleries are decorated with 17th-century frescoes painted by Michelangelo Palloni which depict the love affairs between Cupid and Psyche. In their interiors nature and art merge and intertwine with each other, which perfectly fits the idea of an Italian villa where nature is omnipresent.

The view on the garden from the gallery made it possible to open the perspective – the spectators could follow with their eyes the view from symmetrical plantings of the Baroque garden through the rows of trees on the lower terrace, and then towards the lake and further to the horizon. This form of landscape organization gave the impression that the almost endless landscape belonged to a powerful monarch residing in Wilanów.

- **While walking around the gallery, try to find the best place for observing the garden. What makes it the best viewpoint?**
- **Take a look at the decorations of the garden galleries and the landscapes depicted in them. What emotions do you feel when looking at such landscapes?**
- **To what extent are the natural environment, air and water important today when choosing a place to live?**



*“Man is graced by science in all places,  
at war and at court, at home and in  
the Commonwealth. People show  
more respect to a learned impoverished  
nobleman than a foolish grand lord,  
whom they point with their fingers”<sup>6</sup>*

# # Education

- While walking around the gallery, try to find the best place for observing the garden. What makes it the best viewpoint?
- Take a look at the decorations of the garden galleries and the landscapes depicted in them. What emotions do you feel when looking at such landscapes?
- To what extent are the natural environment, air and water important today when choosing a place to live?



The books from King Jan III's Library disappeared a long time ago. A rich collection of several thousand volumes was taken at the end of the sovereign's life to his family residence in Żółkiew. The catalogue painted on the ceiling of the room is the evidence of its presence and content. Round paintings, or tondi, depict pairs of poets, artists, philosophers and scientists, representing ancient and modern times. In the middle of the Library's vault there are two paintings showing allegories of Philosophy and Theology, the sciences that Jan Sobieski studied in Cracow. Apart from the paintings, the original interior design also includes stucco decorations and marble floor arranged in a pattern creating a three-dimensional illusion. The rich decorative programme of the room emphasises not only the importance of the interior, but also the King's qualities as an enlightened sovereign. Jan III was said not to part with his books and he did not stop reading even during his numerous military expeditions.

The future sovereign followed a quite typical path of education for a representative of a wealthy noble family in the 17th century. He took lessons from private teachers, then attended the Nowodworski College in Cracow and the Cracow Academy. Formal education was crowned with a trip around Europe, during which Jan Sobieski got to know numerous countries, their culture and customs, spoke foreign languages as well as observed technical innovations and solutions used in military art.

The Polish nobility who considered themselves heirs of the ancient Sarmatians, not only learned Latin and rhetoric from ancient texts, but also adopted the idea of education combining the development of intellect with building the character and the system of virtues such as prudence, justice, bravery and moderation which were mostly valued.



King Jan III's Library, Wilanów Palace, 17th c.

Stability, seriousness and dignity of the person who was predestined to perform public duties were equally important as well. Knowledge and skills were to enable them to carry out properly the obligations towards the country, both in times of peace and war.

Jakub Sobieski, the King's father, took great care in his sons' education, including the selection of teachers. Following ancient traditions, he prepared an educational manual that was supposed to support his son's education to make him



*Allegory of Philosophy, Claude Callot, 17th c.*

fulfil well the role of a good host, citizen and politician in the future. The King's father especially emphasised the need to strengthen the Catholic faith through prayers and the participation in services. The care for physical development and healthy, simple nutrition was another important element of the education. Exercising in the open air, such as running, playing with the ball or archery, were to prepare the young nobleman for his military life. Following the traditions of the ancient Greece, the ideal of educating young people consisted in combining the intellectual and spiritual development with physical one. The nickname of the famous philosopher Plato (whose real name was Aristocles) meant "broad-shouldered" and referred to the wrestling talents of the sage.



Under the supervision of school teachers, Jan Sobieski learned about literature, history and moral philosophy, which prepared him for future public speaking. In the college, the future sovereign acquired basic knowledge in the field of exact sciences: mathematics, geography and astronomy. According to his father's instructions, Jan Sobieski was to speak Latin with his teacher and write letters to his family home in this language. Latin, the language of diplomacy at that time, was indispensable in the education of citizens and politicians. Apart from Latin, a good command of the native language was equally important: "In Poland people correctly jeer those who are wise in Latin but fools in Polish."<sup>7</sup> The future King's father recommended "learning foreign languages", pointing to their usefulness on the court and for the Commonwealth itself. French, German and Turkish could be helpful for people holding important roles, going on diplomatic missions to foreign courts or during military operations. Jakub Sobieski also drew attention to the necessity of having good manners, which were learned through conversations, fun, dances, meetings and parties.

The education pattern for noblewomen in the Baroque era was quite different. They were usually sent to a school for girls called *pensja*. Apart from being brought up to be humble and modest, young noblewomen learned there skills which were important for women: reading and writing in Polish, the basic knowledge of French and Latin, handicrafts such as embroidery, lace-making and singing. The girls also learned the principles and values which should guide them in life: piety, modesty, respect for work and independence. They finished their education at the court of a magnate or a king. Maria Kazimiera, Jan III's wife, attended a convent school in France. However, staying at the court of Queen Maria Ludwika Gonzaga had the greatest impact on shaping her personality and social position. Maria Kazimiera, of French origin, learned to speak Polish fluently, yet she still



communicated in French in writing. She was a talented dancer, she sang and played the guitar. In the Library there is the lid of the clavichord which she played.

- **Have a look at the allegories of Philosophy and Theology and identify in the paintings the objects which characterise these fields of knowledge.**
- **Have a closer look at the characters from the painted catalogue and read their names. Decide which author would you like to meet.**

**Think for a moment:**

- **How different from the time of Jan III is the education of girls and boys today?**
- **Where is it worth going today to acquire further education?**
- **What virtues are worth instilling in today's youth? Are any of the ancient virtues still relevant today?**
- **How to raise a good citizen or politician today?**
- **What kind of educational activities would you recommend to a person who starts education in a secondary school?**



# # Power

- What should a good sovereign be like?
- After reading the story about the Wilanów palace, do you think that the attributes of the king are similar to what we expect nowadays from leaders? If so, to what extent?



*Allegory of Winter, plafond,*  
J. Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski, 17th c.

In the Baroque era the rulers competed in showing their power, and, at the same time, in strengthening their position among the subjects and the powerful of the world. Architecture and representational arts were eagerly used for this purpose by kings, princes as well as by church leaders. They gave them the opportunity to present the power of their authority and created a specific theatrical setting for showing the majesty and control over ordinary mortals. Mythology was their main source of inspirations. The residence rooms were decorated with the figures of ancient



gods and heroes. The ideological meaning of the decorative programmes emphasised the achievements and attributes of the rulers comparing their deeds to those described in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. The most powerful of the European 17th-century sovereign was Louis XIV, known as the Sun King, who was often depicted as Apollo, the patron of arts, sciences as well as Helios, the sun god whose life-giving power ruled the world, marked the beginning and the end of the day and had impact on changing the seasons. The residence in Versailles commissioned by the French sovereign became a perfect model for the crowned heads and representatives of nobility in the Baroque era because of its panache, impressive look and splendour. The architectural solutions and decorations were widely copied in other parts of Europe.

Jan III Sobieski was an elected king, chosen by the nobility, and that is why his power was largely limited in comparison to the absolutist sovereign. However, the need to build a story about the invincible King who brought peace to the country, the protector of agriculture, patron of arts and sciences, a wise sovereign who brought order to the country was equally strong. The King decided to build a private residence near the capital city in Milanów, later renamed as Wilanów, purchased in 1677. Initially, only a modest manor house was built in Wilanów. First among equals, *primus inter pares*, the sovereign chosen by the nobility, who did not have royal origins, commissioned the erection of a traditional court, such as the ones where his equals lived.

*“A larchwood manor stood upon the banks  
of a stream, dividing groves of birch, its stone  
foundation propping up the solid ranks  
of oak beams and whitewashed walls,  
which shone (...)”<sup>8</sup>*



The building served as a summer residence. Jan III spent time in the countryside with his family to have a break from the royal castle in Warsaw and political matters. However, it soon turned out that such a private residence was not adequate for the dignity of its inhabitants and did not meet the needs of the King's seat. Thus, the manor house started to be expanded: the expansion was inspired by Italian suburban *villas* and a French construction type of a palace between the courtyard and the garden. The palace was designed not so much as the building itself. The created piece of art was composed in equal parts of the elements of sculptural and pictorial decorations as well as gardens and paths leading to the sovereign's residence. The village, the farm and the park, alongside with the viewing axes and the water canal, provided a scenic setting for the Wilanów palace. The artistic tools for the Baroque *theatrum* were used to build the splendour of the seat of Lev Lechistan, the victorious King, slayer of the Turks from the battle of Chocim and Vienna.

Decorative elements were gradually added in the space of the palace in order to emphasise the importance of its rooms. In the centre of the palace there are Royal Apartments, equally divided into Queen's and King's parts. The King's and Queen's Bedrooms where Jan III and Maria Kazimiera could rest and the room for the chosen were particularly important. The rich decoration of the King's Bedroom creates an excellent setting for having an honour to meet the monarch. Its decor emphasised the King's virtues such as bravery, courage, prowess and shows Jan III as a good host who ensured prosperity in the country under his rule.

Situated next to the Bedrooms, the Antechambers were impressive waiting rooms for guests who wanted to see the King or the Queen. For this reason, they had great



Decoration from the King's Antechamber  
in the Wilanów Palace, 17th c.

importance. The ceiling of the King's Antechamber was decorated with the elements which referred to the power and tenacity of Jan III as a sovereign, which in the country known for its love of noble freedom, quarrels and rebellions was a direct warning against showing disobedience.

**Try to find the following motifs in King Jan III's apartments:**

- **Apollo on a chariot who symbolizes the King as the deity shining with the greatest light in heavens, defeating the darkness and ruling over the rhythm of each day.**



- **Tryptolemus, king of Eleusis, given by Demeter the skill to cultivate the land and the mission to spread this ability among humankind – a symbol of the King who is the best host.**
- **Hippocampi, or sea horses, a symbol of royal courage; as the legend has it, they were able to sleep on waves despite the most severe storms.**
- **Oak leaves, a symbol of strength and bravery, still present today, e.g. in the Polish saying: a guy as strong as an oak tree.**
- **Bay leaves, a symbol of glory, fame, triumph and victory, referring to King's military successes.**
- **King Aeolus, the ruler of the winds, who in the midst of the winter turmoil brings order and as the only one rules over wild elements which tear the earth.**
- **Fallen Titans, the gods of the giants who lost the war against the gods from the Olympus for the power of ruling over the world; they were cast down into Tartarus and clearly symbolized the defeats of those who opposed the legitimate ruler.**

**Finally, try to answer the following questions:**

- **What impression did such a narration about the sovereign make on you?**
- **Which attributes of the former King do current rulers still want to emphasise and pride themselves on?**



# Senses



Rose Garden in the Wilanów Park, 19th c.

The palace in Wilanów was built as Jan III's summer residence and situated near the capital city, which allowed the sovereign to rest from the hustle and bustle of the city. The construction of the palace and the surrounding gardens entailed building a farm, which provided the palace with the food for the royal table. In the Rose Garden there were patches of vegetables and fruit which created a royal "fructifying garden", whereas in the immediate vicinity there were farm buildings such as: a sheepfold, stables, a manor cowshed, an apiary, a brewery, a dovecote, a malt house, a windmill and a barn. From the Rose Garden you can also see the nearby hill – Mount of Bacchus. Once, it used to be covered with vines and housed wine cellars.



*Gardener Children, J. Kaendler, 18th c.*

*“don't ask what a rose is a Bird may  
[tell  
its scent kills thoughts, the face is wiped off  
with a light brush of  
colours of desire  
colours of weeping eyelids  
fraught spherical sweetness  
the red inside is torn”<sup>9</sup>*



How much have the smells, sounds and sensory impressions that we experience in this place changed? We can only imagine how the presence of animals in the vicinity of the palace influenced the walkers, how the rosemary, gooseberries and currants growing here appealed to their sense of smell and taste.

In the mid-nineteenth century, a garden in the Neo-Renaissance style was created on the site of the fruit and vegetable garden. The Rose garden designed by Bolesław Podczaszyński was separated from the rest of the park by a stone wall and a pergola. The plan of the garden consists of geometric plots grouped around the central fountain. Low boxwood surround the collections of historical rose varieties. Climbing plants grow from garden vases, Japanese grapevines climb a cast-iron pergola whereas clematis flowers bloom on the palace terrace. In the summer, numerous flowers of roses in pastel colours and impressively large lilies produce an intense fragrance. The fountain decorated with a figure of a boy with a swan offers refreshment on hot days. The sculptural decoration of the garden is a ceramic figure of Victoria as well as four allegoric sculptures personifying Harmony, Beekeeping, Farming and Fishing, which top the columns of the gate to the South Park.

The garden is rich in plants and you can find there shrubs of historical rose varieties such as *Rosa alba* 'Maxima', *Rosa centifolia* 'Rose de Meaux', *Rosa foetida* or *Rosa gallica*, as well as tree roses. The collection of Wilanów roses includes historical roses known in Europe since the end of the 17th century, such as the French rose 'Charles de Mills' as well as contemporary varieties such as apricot bedding rose 'Kalmar' and the yellow blooming 'Fresia'.



*Gardener, Meissen, 18th c.*



The intense fragrance of hundreds of flowers attracts insects. The essential oils which stimulate senses are aromatic substances that are a by-product of metabolism. Although their main function is to attract pollinating insects and to repel pests, it is the scent of the rose that decorates the garden. In Jan III's times there must have been plenty of beautiful roses in the Wilanów garden, which is evidenced by historical sources such as this description: "in the garden it is beautiful, the storm of beautiful roses whose odour is so strong that we recommend quick arrival to us in Warsaw."<sup>10</sup>

The colours of roses planted in the garden of Wilanów had a symbolic meaning. Yellow, golden roses meant wealth whereas red ones emphasised royal majesty. King Jan III called his wife Maria Kazimiera "Rose" or "Essence" in his love letters. The royal flower was an indispensable element in the gardens, but also a frequent motif in interior decorations, arts and crafts as well as costumes.

**Try to rediscover the Rose Garden with different senses:**

- **Have a closer look at the colours, textures and shapes.**
- **Check how your body reacts to this space, what do your senses of touch and hearing tell you?**
- **Close your eyes, focus on smells, sounds, observe the air movement and sun exposure!**



# # Time

- How do you check what time it is?
- Do the sun, the moon or the stars help you to identify the day, the month, the time of the day?
- While walking around the palace find the clock on the garden façade and try to read its indications.



Time had a cyclical nature for the ancient philosopher Plato. He wrote that “time has a structure of a circle, and the history of the world is the history of eternal returns: when heavenly bodies adopt exactly the same system of mutual references, in which they used to be, then the cycle of the universe will close and everything will start anew.”<sup>11</sup> Treating time in a linear way is different from this concept: the time has its beginning and its end. According to Heraclitus from Ephesus, another ancient philosopher, nothing happens twice and no man ever steps in the same river twice.

The 2nd half of the 17th century was the time of inventions in the area of clock construction. It is then that the first pendulum clock and the clock with a spiral spring were created. The development of astronomy, mathematics, gnomics (the science of calculating and making sundials) and mechanics contributed to the development of the ability to calculate time. The clocks were valued not only for technical solutions, but also for their decorative form. Time started to live for good in floor, fireplace, console and wardrobe clocks, as well as on walls, towers and façades of buildings. The wonders of mechanics were decorated with exotic types of wood, inlaid with mother of pearl, tortoiseshell and ivory.

The façade of the Wilanów palace is adorned with a decorative composition made of a sundial with a complex ideological message. Adam Kochański, the court mathematician of King Jan III, is believed to have been the author of this idea. He cooperated closely with the famous astronomer Jan Heweliusz from Danzig. The researcher of the sky believed that thanks to the contemplation of heavenly harmony, the thought goes to the Creator of the universe. Hence, astronomy was interpreted as the epitome of Christian wisdom. Placing a sundial on the façade that used the natural movement of the sun through the sky can



Mirror clock, Johann Gottfried Brandt, 18th c.



be understood as a thought going towards good, towards the improvement of the country in the moral conduct, which could ensure the duration of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The rhythm of sunrises and sunsets guides the cosmic harmony on the garden façade of the residence. The clock seen from the garden side has three charts which allow you to measure time. In the central part there is Chronos, the god of time. He is holding in one hand a pen which is also the hour pointer. Below you can see the symbols of the days of the week which are connected with the planets and their patron deities, as well as the zodiac signs for twelve months of the year. On the sides, there are two clocks: the Babylonian clock shows the number of hours since the sunrise, whereas the Italian one gives the number of hours since the last sunset.

**Choose one of the metaphors related to time which appeals to you:**

- **Time stopped for a moment.**
- **Time flies.**
- **Gnawed by the tooth of time.**
- **Waste a lot of time.**

**Find another idiomatic expression or metaphor describing time.**

- **How do you understand the common saying that time is moving faster today than ever before?**



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