**EXHIBITION**

**"Long Live the King! Coronations of Saxon Wettins at Wawel"**

**20 September 2024 – 9 February 2025**



* After the Porcelain Cabinet and the temporary exhibition "The Splendour of Rococo. Meissen porcelain figurines by Johann Joachim Kaendler” the time has come for: “Long Live the King! Coronations of Saxon Wettins at Wawel" All three exhibitions are linked by the 18th-century history of the Wettin monarchy.
* "Long Live the King! Coronations of Saxon Wettins at Wawel" is an unprecedented presentation of almost all the memorabilia related to the last two coronations of the Polish kings of the Saxon dynasty, Augustus II in 1697 and Augustus III in 1734, which are held in significant museum collections, among others: The Dresden State Art Collections (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden) and the National Museum in Warsaw, as well as in the treasury of Wawel Cathedral. The curators of the exhibition are: Marta Golik-Gryglas, dr Rafał Ochęduszko and dr Stefano Rinaldi.
* It is a partnership project, the result of significant international cooperation between the National Museum in Warsaw, Wawel Royal Castle and the Dresden State Art Collections. These three institutions are co-organisers of the exhibition.
* The exhibition is held under the patronage of: The Minister of Culture and National Heritage Hanna Wróblewska and the Saxon Minister of Culture and Tourism Barbara Klepsch.

Some 130 objects – on loan primarily from the Dresden State Art Collections and the National Museum in Warsaw – are on display in two spaces of the Wawel residence that are significant in the historical context for the exhibition's theme, including the Senator's Room, the most representative in the castle. The exhibition consists of seven parts corresponding to the stages of the coronation: the election, the elector's entry into the city, the predecessor's funeral, the pilgrimage to Skałka, the royal sacra, the feast, the citizens' homage in the Market Square. Exhibits relating to August II and August III, whose coronations were the last to take place in Krakow, will be preesented.

*"It is difficult to* *find a similar example of cooperation between museums today, when one of the most important museum institutions in the world (the Dresden State Art Collections) moves a significant part of the museum's permanent exhibition to a residence in another country – the Wawel Royal Castle. The shared, centuries-long history linking Poland and Germany would not have resonated so strongly without the participation and commitment of the National Museum in Warsaw, which donated, among other things, the coronation insignia of August III and Maria Josefa for the exhibition. We are in no doubt. The exhibition 'Long Live the King! Coronations of Saxon Wettins at Wawel' is a joint work of Krakow, Dresden and Warsaw",* says **prof. Andrzej Betlej***,* Director of the Wawel Royal Castle.

Souvenirs related to the coronations of the Polish kings of the Saxon dynasty, August II in 1697 and August III in 1734, including a selection of silver from the royal buffet displayed daily in the Grünes Gewölbe treasury, have been borrowed from the Dresden State Art Collections.

"*Our exhibition is the story of the Polish coronation ceremony, which crystallised back in the late Middle Ages. Indeed, both rulers of the Wettin dynasty tried to respect the age-old ritual, while allowing for certain deviations due to the political context of the time on the one hand, and their desire to accentuate certain propaganda content on the other. The collected works of art will allow visitors to experience the unique Baroque spectacle unfolding for several days, both at Wawel and in the streets of the city. It is composed of the individual stages of the coronation, from the moment of the election of the new king, through the ceremonial entry to Krakow, the funeral of the predecessor, the pilgrimage to Skałka, the actual ceremony of the sacrament in the Krakow cathedral, the following banquet at the castle, to the crowning tribute of the inhabitants of Krakow*", says **dr Rafał Ochęduszko, curator of the exhibition**, custodian of the Wawel Royal Castle.

*“I’m excited at the unique opportunity to display some of the most significant pieces from the Dresden Armoury and Green Vault together with their pendants from Warsaw and Krakow. Moreover, those objects are exhibited at the very place where they left their indelible mark on the history of Saxony and Poland. The intensive and generous cooperation between Polish and German colleagues was of great help in developing a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of this fascinating chapter of our shared history”*, says dr Stefano Rinaldi, **curator of the exhibition**, custodian of the Rüstkammer.

Visitors will see, among other things, a life-size statue of August II in coronation attire on display in the Rüstkammer, the armoury located in the halls of the Dresden Residence Castle, as well as a set of coronation insignia: crowns, berets and apples of August III and Maria Josefa, from the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw.

It is noteworthy that the Senatorial Hall, which houses the main part of the exhibition under preparation, witnessed banquets that took place both after the coronation in 1697 and in 1734. To add splendour to the feast and dazzle his guests, August II brought with him, among other things, part of the Dresden silver collection, from which selected masterpieces, still the pride of the Grünes Gewölbe [The Green Vault], can be seen again in this Wawel interior after more than 300 years.

"*After the coronation ceremony in the cathedral, the king went to his private rooms in the north wing of the palace to prepare for the banquet planned for the evening. It is worth mentioning that in 1697 August II brought furniture and textiles from Dresden to furnish the castle – in addition to a silver buffet",* says **Marta Golik-Gryglas, curator of the exhibition**, a specialist from the Gold Collection Department of the Wawel Royal Castle.

"For example, August II, who had been crowned king, presented himself at a banquet at Wawel Castle in a golden dress and hat." In Stefan Truchim's Koronacja polskich królów elekcyjnych [The Coronation of Polish Elective Kings], we read that witnesses to the event described the banquet as particularly sumptuous:

*As for the sollen banquet, it is necessary to describe its strength, but suffice to say that it was a convivium magnum, with an abundance of delicious dishes and costly sugar pyramids, of which there were various drinks and liquors as the finest, etc., the splendour and magnificence of which cannot be adequately expressed, with exquisite music that added to the merriment.*

The Wettin coronations were the last to be held at Wawel. The curators of the exhibition, Marta Golik-Gryglas and dr Rafał Ochęduszko, point out that they have thus become part of a centuries-old tradition dating back to the beginning of the 14th century, and at the same time – as time has shown – have closed it. Both of them essentially repeated the scenario of coronation ceremonies codified in the late Middle Ages, while at the same time establishing a new entity on the political map of Europe, the Polish-Saxon Union, which for more than half a century significantly influenced the history and culture of this part of the continent.

Compiled by: Urszula Wolak-Dudek

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