



Wilanów Palace Museum
 ul. Stanisława Kostki Potockiego 10/16
 02-958 Warszawa
 phone: [+48-22] 842 81 01, 842 48 09
 fax: [+48-22] 842 31 16
 e-mail: muzeum@muzeum-wilanow.pl,
 konserwacja@muzeum-wilanow.pl
www.wilanow-palac.pl
www.sklep.wilanow-palac.pl

Text: A. Guzowska
 Reconstruction drawing of the carriage: W. Żurawski
 Photos: A. Indyk, W. Holnicki
 Drawing: E. Modzelewska
 Translation: A.J. Gotåbek-Asikainen



Royal Carriages





→ Royal Carriages

Carriages are magnificent, lavishly decorated horse-drawn vehicles. Known in Italy from the 12th century, they were introduced in Poland in 1350–1400. The most valuable of all were parade carriages used for stately purposes, owned by rulers and aristocrats.

Shortly after Jan III Sobieski's death, the Wilanów coach house contained eight royal carriages and two coaches. Along other property, the vehicles passed on to the king's heirs. Some of them were transported to Oława, where in 1741 they were requisitioned as Prussian spoils of war. The coaches were dismantled and their material used for constructing a pulpit for a protestant chapel in Radacz near Szczecinek. When properly cut, selected parts of the coaches were adjusted to the pulpit form. The door panel installed in front was almost entirely covered with a painted coat of arms of Prussian general von Kleist, the pulpit's "donor". Fortunately, other initials and the Sobieskis' "Janina" coat of arms were not repainted. In the 19th century, when the symbols and inscriptions on the pulpit regained attention of scholars, a legend had it that

the pulpit had been made of Jan Sobieski's triumphal coach from 1683. In 1950–2000, following an in-depth analysis, the pulpit components were finally attributed to three parade carriages. Their decoration was designed in line with a well-defined ideological and artistic programme, related to the king and his triumph at Vienna in 1683 (preserved are 24 fragments of the "Triumphal" carriage, 25 fragments of "Jan Sobieski's Personal" carriage and 22 fragments of "Marie Casimire's Personal" carriage). The original construction of the bodies, the interior furnishings, the window glazing, the chassis and the wheels have not been preserved.

Manufactured in the 1690s, the carriages and coaches had a perch running gear, a swanlike neck, a box in the front and a footboard. Their elaborately carved wooden constructions were made to the king's order probably in French and Polish workshops. The lavish iconography of the painted decoration is attributed to the royal painters atelier, headed by Jerzy Eleuter Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski.

The task of restoring the carriages' former state proved challenging. It was preceded by meticulous historical, archival and comparative research, resulting in the creation of models on a scale of 1:1. These activities made it possible for conservators to fill in the missing painted and sculpted decoration, thus rendering it similar to the original.



Since the original elements were fragmentary, the objective of restoring the carriages' former state required the project to be divided into stages. They consisted in a complete conservation and restoration



of the original parts, a reconstruction of the missing parts and an assembly of the original and the reconstructed parts onto new skeletons (bodies).

The primary activity was the conservation of wooden elements. Following pest control, disinfection and preliminary cleaning, all the extant fragments were straightened out, profiled and seasoned. Cracks on panels coated with painted decoration were glued. Missing wood substance was filled in with an identical wood type. In one of the carriages missing fragments were reconstructed. All the gilding was conserved. Blisters, peels and laminations were glued back to the surface. The surfaces were cleaned of dirt and blackened bronzes. Minor missing bits of woodcarving and primer were filled in with glue-and-chalk substance. Major gilding loss was filled in with leaf gold, while minor worn out patches with mineral gold. The surfaces were secured and matched in colour with the extant original.



Simultaneously restored were paintings decorating the carriages. It was necessary to consolidate the peeling coat of paint and primer and to remove surface dirt, varnishes, old bronzes and retouches from the painted surface. After dotting in minor primer and gilding loss, retouches were made and the painted coat was recreated.



The reconstruction of the coach bodies, including the missing fragments of the sculpted decoration, was carried out by "Art-Reno" conservation workshop located in Zabrze. The newly wood carved elements were gilded with 22-carat leaf gold. The Wilanów conservation workshops in turn gilded the appropriately prepared flat surfaces of the coach bodies and finally assembled all the original and the reconstructed parts in the right order onto the reconstructed skeleton in a way enabling their easy dismantling.



Thanks to Dr Teresa Żurawska, Wrzesław Żurawski as well as art historians and conservators employed at the Wilanów Palace Museum, it became possible to recover three invaluable historic vehicles, unique memorabilia related to King Jan III Sobieski and his family. The extent of their reconstruction differs, with "Jan Sobieski's Personal" carriage being the most advanced. The current display in the Wilanów Palace helps to visualize the shape and splendour of these beautiful vehicles. In the future it will certainly



be possible to complete their renovation, including the reconstruction of the chassis, the wheels and the lavish interior furnishings.