



The first work by Raphael in Poland since the disappearance of *Portrait of a Young Man*, acquired for the collection of the Royal Castle in Warsaw

The drawing depicting a knight dressed in the *all'antica* costume of a warrior is the first work by Raphael in a Polish museum collection since the disappearance of *Portrait of a Young Man* during the Second World War. This unusual sketch by the hand of one of the greatest masters of the Italian Renaissance has enriched the collection of the Royal Castle in Warsaw. Such a unique, world-class work of art in a Polish collection is a real sensation. It is also a compelling reason to organize the first exhibition in Poland and in the Royal Castle dedicated to Raphael and artists who collaborated with him, in cooperation with prestigious foreign museum institutions.

The Royal Castle's acquisition of Raphael's drawing not only enhances its collection with a unique exhibit, but is also confirmation of the institution's position as one of the leading museums in Europe, said Prof. Wojciech Fałkowski, director of the Royal Castle in Warsaw.

Raphael (Italian: Raffaello Sanzio), alongside Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, is one of the so-called three great master artists of the Renaissance. Raphael's drawing, purchased for the castle's collection, shows the figure of a soldier in profile, in *all'antica* armour. It is highly plausible that it is the legendary Roman hero – Gaius Mucius Scaevola, who thrust his hand into the fire to show that he was not afraid of torture or death. The story of the brave warrior was described by Livy (Titus Livius) in his famous *History of Rome*, book 2, chapter 12. Another hypothesis sees the iconographic model for the drawing in the statue of Mars, coming from a temple dedicated to him, which was built on the Roman Capitol in the 2nd century AD.

The drawing is made in pen and brown ink on laid paper. The composition is static – it does not depict a warrior in action. What attracts our attention is the free, spontaneous yet flawless line. The sketch demonstrates the excellent draughtsmanship of the Renaissance master, who was already hailed a genius in his lifetime.

The drawing of the warrior does not bear the hallmarks of a detailed design or careful study. It is more a spontaneous sketch, a first creative thought transferred to paper, that is, a *primo pensiero*.

The artist sketched a man in profile, with his right hand stretched out and holding a sword. He wears an attic helmet. Under his left arm he holds a round *rotella* type shield.

The warrior's chest is covered by an *all'antica* breastplate. A cloak draped over the right shoulder, and revealing the left one, falls downwards in a casual manner. What also attracts



attention in the drawing is the excellent depiction of perspective foreshortening, particularly visible in the feet – these are undeniably the work’s main artistic qualities. Its appeal lies in its great simplicity, which clearly showcases the author’s indisputable talent.

The composition was most likely conceived during the second stage of the artist’s stay in Florence or at the very beginning of his work in Rome (around 1506–1509). This was a time when Raphael’s style was evolving rapidly. At that time he used a stylus less and less often in favour of a pen, thanks to which his line became lighter and freer.

The drawing by the Renaissance master was purchased for the collection of the Royal Castle on the antiquarian market in Great Britain in December 2023. In the nineteenth century, the sketch was found in the Giuseppe Vallardi collection in Milan. In 2019, it was acquired by a private collector at a Sotheby’s auction in New York.

In the autumn, the Royal Castle in Warsaw will be hosting the first exhibition of works by Raphael, as well as artists collaborating with the master, such as Pietro Perugino and Giulio Romano. Before this takes place, however, viewers will be able to admire Raphael’s drawing at an exhibition in the Gallery of Masterpieces on the ground floor of the Castle on 12–17 March. Since works of art on paper are some of the most delicate museum objects, and extremely vulnerable to the harmful effects of light, the drawing will currently be shown only for one week to allow for longer and safer exposure at the autumn exhibition.

Raphael exhibitions always generate great excitement, but the exhibition at the Castle will be an unprecedented event in Poland. For the first time in history, you will be able to see many works by this artist – both oil paintings and drawings, on loan from the world’s most prominent museums. The objects on display will also include the drawing by Raphael, recently purchased for the castle collection, the only such drawing in Polish collections –concludes Wojciech Fałkowski, director of the Royal Castle in Warsaw.

The purchase of Raphael’s drawing for the collections of the Royal Castle in Warsaw was made possible thanks to a grant from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

Media contact: Paulina Szwed-Piesterziewicz, tel.: 22 35 55 346, 664 118 303,
Anna Buczyńska, tel.: 22 35 55 221, 735 982 330, media@zamek-krolewski.waw.pl



Materiały prasowe Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie
www.zamek-krolewski.pl/
media@zamek-krolewski.waw.pl