



Matejko Unknown. Pieces from private collections

Jan Matejko is unquestionably the most outstanding representative of historicism in Polish painting. The exhibition with the perverse title *Matejko unknown*, presented from March 5 this year at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, sheds light on the lesser-known and obvious areas of the master's artistic interests. The works on display come mainly from private collections and, as such, are extremely rarely presented to the public. This is an unusual opportunity to look at Matejko's work from a completely new perspective.

The exhibition features lesser-known works by Jan Matejko - oil paintings, watercolors and drawings. The public will be able to encounter paintings with surprising themes or drawings that are sketches for well-known or lesser-known painting compositions. The point of reference for the works lent to the exhibition will be the master's monumental historical works, included in the permanent exhibition at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. The exhibition will also include *The History of Civilization in Poland*, a series of 12 paintings from the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw.

The need to reach for Matejko's works does not diminish, despite the passage of years and the changes that are taking place in society and in art. We return to them because of the artistry, the mastery of execution, the psychological depth, the accurate representation of the realities of past eras, but above all because of the content they contain - says Prof. Wojciech Fałkowski, director of the Royal Castle in Warsaw.

Arranged in three spacious rooms with thematically arranged works by Jan Matejko, the exhibition will introduce us to important stages in developing the master's artistic path. Among other things, it will introduce us to his portrait work, with which the artist began his great adventure with painting. The artist painted both individual and group portraits as part of large historical compositions. Of the 323 paintings painted by the master, as many as 120 are portraits. At the exhibition *Matejko Unknown*, we will present those carefully selected, unusual, and sometimes surprising.

Among the exhibits will be the *Portrait of the Artist's Fur Children*, considered a true masterpiece, one of the paintings closest to the painter's own heart, as well as earlier, extremely valuable works such as *the Portrait of the last hermit of Mount St. Bronislawa*, depicting the less than 19-year-old Matejko, the recently discovered portrait of his beloved sister Maria, or the painter's portrait sketch of Adam Sapieha, which the artist later used as the face of Prince Vytautas for the monumental painting *The Battle of Grunwald*. The expressiveness of Matejko's portraits and their importance for understanding the master's work make them extremely valuable material for researchers



Materiały prasowe Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie

www.zamek-krolewski.pl/

media@zamek-krolewski.waw.pl

of his art. Through exceptional finesse of detail and skillful use of light and shadow, Matejko was able to give his portraits unique expression and drama.

Jan Matejko's interests, as illustrated by the works in the exhibition, went beyond creating portraits characterized only by realism in rendering the physical appearance of the figure. The artist was also passionate about psychological analysis. In turn, delving into the history of Poland, he wanted to guess the direction of the development of civilization, which is perfectly illustrated by the series *History of Civilization in Poland* presented at the exhibition: in 1888-1889, on 12 oil canvases, the master presented his view of the most important, groundbreaking events in Polish history. The small painterly sketches were made with the idea of creating a series of monumental compositions, of which he eventually managed to realize only a few.

The exhibition will also feature large-scale historical compositions, which are the most representative part of Matejko's oeuvre. Imaginatively created visions based on historical events, such as Skarga's Sermon and Rejtan - The Fall of Poland, which are part of the Royal Castle's permanent exhibition, will also become part of the exhibition. It is worth noting that Matejko's paintings not only delight, but are also intended to instruct and warn. When creating the works, the artist assigned himself the role of narrator and on his canvases, told in his own way the key events of Polish history, presenting both victories and defeats. For the exhibition's duration, the collection of historical works was expanded to include paintings such as The Nuptials of Svyatopolk Rurykovich with the daughter of Boleslaw the Brave and The Queen of Poland. From Krasinski's psalms.

Jan Matejko's works still harbor secrets and undiscovered areas of his genius. At the exhibition, we try to unveil at least a little of them, to inspire visitors to the exhibition to look at the master through the prism of lesser-known, but equally interesting and workshop-quality works from different areas of his interest," says exhibition curator Dr Mariusz Klarecki.

The exhibition *Matejko Unknown. Works from private collections* organized at the Royal Castle in Warsaw is not only a tribute to the master's work, but also an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of his artistic potential. By exploring new aspects of the artist's legacy, the exhibition gives the public a unique opportunity to look at Matejko from a different perspective.

The exhibition will accompany an educational program, including lectures on selected issues from Jan Matejko's work. We have also prepared a publication accompanying the exhibition and an audio guide read by the curator.

Curator of the exhibition: Dr Mariusz Klarecki, Royal Castle in Warsaw

Media contact: Paulina Szwed-Piesterziewicz, tel.: +48 22 35 55 346, +48 664 118 303,
Anna Buczyńska, tel.: +48 22 35 55 221, +48 735 982 330, media@zamek-krolewski.waw.pl



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media@zamek-krolewski.waw.pl