

# Not Only the Orient. Acquisitions of the Teresa Sahakian Foundation 2007–2017

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## The Tin-Roofed Palace

December 19th, 2017–November 30th, 2018

Thanks to the acquisitions of the last decade the collection of the Teresa Sahakian Foundation, known primarily for over 600 oriental carpets and textiles of international importance, has not only been supplemented with other historical oriental fabrics, but also enriched by a very interesting accumulation of European art works, including those of Polish origin.

Many pieces come from the Founder's collection – some of them were the furnishing of her Brussels apartment, the others were purchased on the antiquarian market and from private owners.

Among the paintings we should mention the *Portrait of Jan Potocki* by Anton Graff, purchased in 2011. It is an image of a traveler, scholar and writer. The painting, not yet included in Graff's output, represents all the features of this painter's style and it is certainly the product of his own hands. It probably belonged to Izabela née Czartoryska Lubomirska, mother-in-law of the portrayed and most likely came from the Potocki family collection in Łańcut.

The Foundation's collection was also enriched by purchases of three interesting allegorical paintings from the beginning of the 17th century related to Hermann Hahn: *An Allegory of the World*, *An Allegory of Wealth with the View of Gdańsk* and *An Allegory of Humility*. These works were once a part of a larger, probably seven-pieces cycle, executed after the graphics of an outstanding Flemish painter and drawer Maerten de Vos (1532-1603).

In Poland there are four more paintings which drew inspiration from the same cycle of graphics. These works are the property of the National Museum in Gdańsk and the National Museum in Poznań. The paintings from the Teresa Sahakian Foundation collection very accurately reproduce the Flemish prototypes, especially concerning figural compositions. As far as a depiction of landscape the *Allegory of Wealth with the view of Gdańsk* stands out among the series. By introducing the view of Gdańsk it constitutes a valuable complement to the iconography of the city.

The Foundation's collection of sculptures includes high-class examples of a polychrome wooden sculpture from the beginning of the 16th century: a scene of *Circumcision* made in Antwerp, probably in the studio of Jan de Molder, and a group of *The Crucifixion* from a Dutch or German workshop. The former work, part of a larger altarpiece, combining stylistic features of late Gothic and Renaissance, draws attention by individualizing the characters and an outstanding care in reconstructing details – distinctive for Dutch art. *The Crucifixion Group*, once most probably a part of a larger composition, is stylistically similar to the late-Gothic works of Nicolas Gerhard of Leiden.

The figure of Christ crucified *Christo vivo* is extremely interesting. It is made (except the arms)

from one piece of ivory. The very expressive sculpture with elongated proportions, non-classical facial features and an almost Gothic appearance was created in the 1st half of the 17th century in Germany or in Flanders. It owes its uniqueness to, among other features, the unusual scale (figure measures 75 cm). Such objects, made of valuable material and by an eminent creator, were usually foundations of prominent personalities destined for palace chapels or monastic oratories.

Over the last decade of the Foundation's activity its collection of textiles has also significantly expanded. From the collection of the Founder comes the set of oriental carpets, interesting *zilli* and *verni* textiles as well as embroidered *suzani* fabrics.

The collection was also enriched by a set of Polish fabrics and those connected with Poland. Among them a group of five silk noble sashes should be mentioned. Three of them come from the manufactory in Słuck (1767-1780), one was made in an unidentified workshop, another one in Lyon.

Particularly interesting is a fragment of a tent wall from the 1st half of the 18th century, originating from the Lvov collection of Władysław Łoziński. This piece was made in the so called cloth mosaic technique (a sort of an appliqué) and composed according to the architectural scheme used in eastern tents – a series of arcades supported by columns – but executed by the ornaments from the European repertoire. The tent was made in one of the manufactories operating in the Borderlands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (e.g. Brody or Lvov).

In a group of furniture in the Foundation's collection there are extremely valuable pieces, mostly 17th and 18th-century Dutch and Flemish. These include two Dutch cupboards (1630-1650): one of the *beeldenkast* type with a rich sculptural decoration of symbolic meaning, with allegorical figures and door panels presenting scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist, made according to the Dutch painting and graphic archetypes; the second, two-door, classicizing, with a uniform decoration in the form of panels. Very interesting as well is a linen press with a rich bas-relief decoration revealing the influence of the Genoa woodcarving, created perhaps in Antwerp circa 1650. This furniture group also includes Flamish and Dutch armchairs and a Dutch folding table in ebony veneer with ivory plaques.

The collection includes a work & writing table made in the 1770s by an *ébéniste* of Paris, Étienne Avril. Before 1939 this object belonged to the Potocki family collection in Łańcut.

The ceramics from the Foundation's collection consist of faience figurines from the series *Allegories of the Four Seasons* (Delft, 2nd half of the 18th century) and a homogeneous in form and decoration set of 32 Italian majolica plates from Montelupo, constituting a group well illustrating the evolution of the so-called *istoriato* style over the years 1600-1670. The depicted scenes can be divided into groups: military, everyday life, entertainment, and *commedia dell'arte*.

Among the silver pieces we should mention two Gdańsk (Danzig) silver tankards, one with the scene of *Jephthah's Return, at the head of the troops to Mispa after the victory over the Ammonites* by Benedict Clausen (late 17th century, and by Conrad Jacob Keseberg with the parable of the Good Samaritan (1695–1699). Both belong to the group of the most magnificent and technically finest Gdańsk tankards with continuous repoussé decoration.

The third mug in the collection is by Robertus Tapke from Königsberg (1706). It has a mantle decorated with 15 silver Königsberg ducats and half-ducats.

Interesting silver items also include a pair of double salt cellar from the 1770s (from an unknown silver service), signed by Antoni Schönmetzler, a goldsmith active in Warsaw, who also worked for King Stanisław August.

Among the bronze and brass products from the Foundation's collection, the exhibition presents two Dutch mortars, one made by Aelbert Hachman from Kleef (1550) and a mortar with the inscription *Soli Deo Gloria* (1587), as well as two candlesticks (15th–16th centuries).

Seventeen clocks were purchased for the collection of the Foundation. The mere fact of obtaining so many native timepieces for a Polish public collection is an unprecedented event. However, not their number, and even the quality testify to the value of the set, the most important is their representativeness for the cultural space, allowing for accurate reading of trends and technological changes.

Particularly noteworthy are two clocks combining a very high level of watchmaking craftsmanship with masterful decoration. The first of them, the oldest in the collection, a two-sided table clock in tower form, from the 3rd quarter of the 17th century, signed by the Wrocław (Breslau) watchmaker Johann Wüttkei, belongs probably to the oldest timepieces equipped with a balance with steel spring. Its value is even greater due to engraved genre scenes and ornamental filigree. The second is a six-sided tile clock from around 1720–1730, signed by the Gdańsk (Danzig) watchmaker George Moscau, his only preserved work and at the same time a top-class object, perfectly fitting into the achievements of the most prominent center of watchmaking art in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

A separate place in the collection is occupied by two six-sided tile clocks of the most famous Toruń watchmaker Abraham Will, presenting changes in design and form that took place since the end of the 17th century, when clocks with one hand (as the first of the objects) were still popular, till the 2nd quarter of the 18th century, when two-handed timepieces were gaining customers. Since the 3rd quarter of the 18th century the traditional form of hexagonal table clocks on prominent lion-formed legs, originating from Gdańsk and Toruń, is being accepted by a noble recipient and is imitated in other watchmaking centers of the Commonwealth.

There have been also acquired very rare six-sided clocks of Poznań craftsmen – Andreas Dittmar and Joachim Fridrich Huhn, as well as of a pioneer of Warsaw independent watchmaking, Franciszek Krantz, protoplast of one of the most famous watchmaking families.

Along with the purchase, we gained the opportunity to compile and compare seven four-sided table clocks with rococo corrugated cornices, apparently from different centers of the Commonwealth: from Gdańsk, Warsaw and Lvov, which share a common form, but differ in the details of decorative motifs and construction solutions.

The presented clocks were primarily travel clocks, for almost two centuries practically only they, due to their construction, could meet the difficult conditions of travel. Hence, the value of the collection is deepened by the preserved three original, wooden, leather-covered cases. As from the mid-18th century the role of traveler clocks had been partly taken over by the carriage clocks. This type is represented by two pieces: one from Wrocław, probably the work of Anton Adolph Höss, and another from Krakow, made by one of the finest watchmakers active there, priding himself with the title of royal servitor – Johann Gottfried Krosz.

The collection of the Teresa Sahakian Foundation's acquisitions from 2007–2017, interesting

and valuable, including many unique objects, enriches the collections of the Royal Castle in Warsaw but also Polish collections in general. The acquisitions not only complement the existing groups of pieces of art, but also create new collections and begin subsequent ones.

Opening hours until April 30, 2018

Opening hours from May 2, 2018