

THE COLLECTION OF DRAWINGS  
FROM THE OLD WILANÓW COLLECTION  
IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY IN WARSAW

In the year 1932 Adam Branicki handed the state authorities the contents of Wilanów palace library together with the equipment which contained, besides the book collection, old prints, manuscripts, maps and music notes as well as the collection of drawings and engravings and the archive materials. Thus, those valuable exhibits became the property of the National Library in Warsaw and they shared its tragic fate during the Second World War, when some of them got lost or destroyed.

The subject to our analysis, the collection of drawings from Wilanów collection was the one to suffer the least losses as only forty three works got lost. After the war the inventory work was carried and in result of it we know the number of exhibits in that collection. It contains 2106 drawings (including 1404 bound in 19th century into 122 factices albums and three sketchbooks). The collection is interesting not only because of its great documentary and iconographic value but, most of all, because of the works of outstanding painters, illustrators and architects such as: S. B. Zug, Ch. P. Aigner, V. Brenna, F. B. Rastrelli. The founder of this collection was Stanisław Kostka Potocki (1755-1821), the owner of Wilanów, the patron of art, art critic, writer, archeologist and architecture admirer. His scientific and artistic activity was the subject of many publications.

The first stage of work on the catalogue of those drawings undertaken by the author of this article was the detailed analysis of the source materials existing in the Archive of Wilanów Library (The Section of Old Prints of the National Library). They are mainly the inventories, also called catalogues or portfolios and notes.

The earliest documents are the notes and inventories from Stanisław Kostka Potocki's time, but they do not comprise the whole collection. The first inventory which seems to comprise the whole

collection of drawings is dated 1834, when Wilanów belonged to Potocki's son Aleksander. It is entitled "The General Inventory of Drawings Divided into Schools and belonging to the Study of Fine Arts in the Wilanów Palace..." and there is signature and the date: Willanów, 22nd January 1834 Kokular. There also exists the copy of this inventory made by Wilanów librarian Piotr Kustowski. Both documents give more detailed description of the collection and they contain some pencil remarks mentioning the schools to which the artists belonged. A few years later (probably in 1838) another catalogue was prepared. It was written in French and entitled "Catalogue Des Dessins des Maitres des differentes ecoles anciennes et Modernes qui se trouvent dans le Cabinet des Beaux Arts a Villanów". The fullest and the most detailed catalogue of the collection was made by Aleksander Potocki himself in the years 1840-1845. It is a sort of draft (with no title) and has the sign of many corrections made by Potocki as well as notes concerning the drawings. Those notes tell us about the content of the drawings, sometimes give quotations of writings and signatures and they give the precise description of the techniques applied by the artists. All these source materials are very valuable in identifying the authors and the origin of the drawings from the old Wilanów Palace Library.