

ICONOGRAPHIC AND ARCHIVAL BASIS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FIGURAL SCULPTURES IN WILANÓW PALACE

Wilanów Palace owes its unique place among Polish monuments not only to the interesting shape in which two trends - the European residential architecture and the traditional form of the Polish court architecture are combined together but also to the artistic decorations containing very clear and consistent contents. Unfortunately, the relentless influence of time, the periods of wars and neglect deprived the palace of some artistic elements, such as the statues in the attics of the side wings and at the top of the façade on the side of the garden.

During the post-war preservation and revalorization work the decision about completing these lacks was taken and the reconstruction of the statues in the side wings was the first step. It had to be found out, on the basis of the archival descriptive and iconographic materials, what persons were represented by the statues and what was their form. The main source of information was the drawing of the elevation of the southern wing by Jan Zygmunt Deybel /Fig. 17/, who worked in Wilanów in the years 1727-1733. The architect presented four statues and their attributes with such accuracy that it was easy to identify them as Eudaimonia-Eternal Happiness, Fortitudo-Power, Pax and Mercury. The photographs from the year 1915 and from the twenties also served as the source of information, although the statues they showed were not the originals but the copies.

The sculptures in the northern wing posed a bigger problem, as the only documentation concerning them were the photographs of the whole elevation from the years 1915, 1920 and 1922. The detailed analysis of the photos made it possible to describe the figures as the two couples of the mythological gods - Apollo and Diana and Hercules and Hebe.

Thus the group of statues on the side wings were the extension and development of the conception from king John III time, represented by the statues of Mars and Pax on the palace gate. The statues of the northern wing are connected with an idea of victorious fight and those on the southern wing - with an idea of peace and its beneficiary results.

After the thorough examination of the archive materials it was stated that the sculptures were made by Jan Jerzy Plersch.

The statues were first mentioned in the year 1725. The figures on the northern wing were the first. For the lack of stone they were carved in wood, hence their lability. Late baroque figures were taken off in the end of 18th century and substituted in the beginning of 19th century by the sculptures made in coating; those, in turn, were exchanged in the end of the century by plaster figures. After the First World War they were also taken off in order to be made over in stone but because of lack of means they were put in the palace manege, where they got destroyed in 1939.

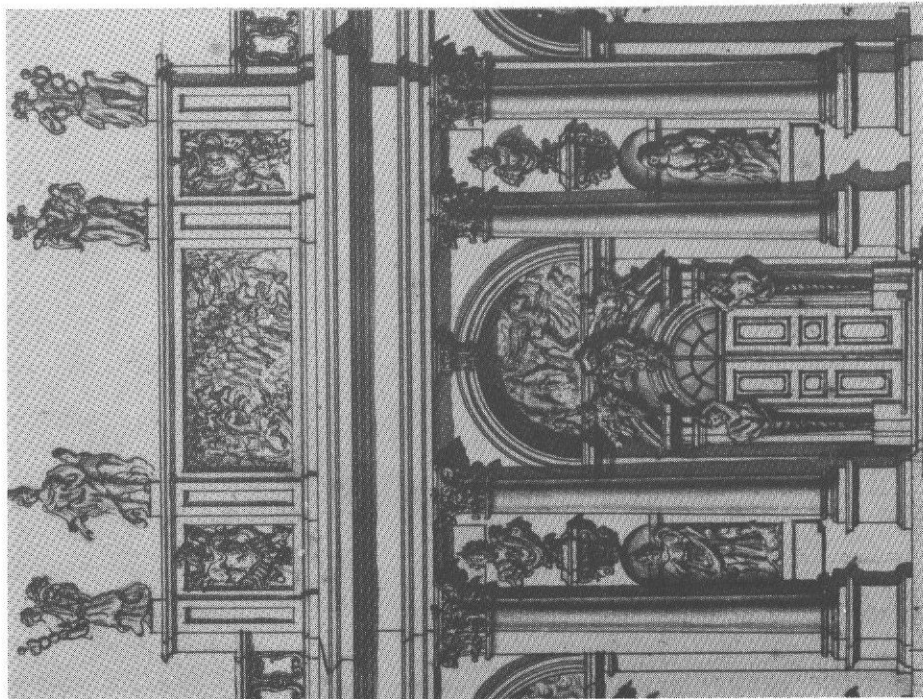
In 1965 two teams of sculptors from the Monument Preservation Studios started the restoration of the statues. They completed their work by the end of the following year /Fig. 18/.

In 1966 the sculptors also began the work on reconstructing the statues of four Muses at the top of the façade facing the garden side, analogical to those standing at the front.

Eight statues of the Muses were brought from Amsterdam around the year 1682. They were put on the top of the roof in the year 1686. The basis for the restoration of the four statues was the copy of J. Z. Deybel drawing, which enabled the scientists to identify Urania, Melpomene, Polihymnia and Terpsychora. Three of them /except for Urania/ were strikingly similar to the statues standing haphazardly on the palace roof. Experts' reports confirmed that those statues belonged to the whole series of the Muses. They were put in the present place in the year 1820, probably after the destruction of Urania statue.

The moulds of three existing statues and the project of Urania statue were made in the Monument Preservation Studios PKZ studio of Sculpture and next all four of them were made over in sandstone. In the year 1967 the statues were put back at the attic.

The restoration of the statues and putting them in their original places brought back full baroque decoration to the Wilanów residence.



17. The Palace of Wilanów. Front elevation of southern wing (detail).
Designed by J.Z. Deybel



18. The Palace of Wilanów. Front elevation of southern wing (detail)
showing reconstructed statues of attic