

Matejko Unknown. Works from Private Collections



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5 March - 26 May 2024

The Matejko Rooms (1st floor)

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Poles think about the history of their homeland in terms of images created by Jan Matejko, often without even realising it. Sometimes called the “bard of the brush”, the genius of Polish historical painting has his permanent gallery in the Royal Castle in Warsaw. Now, within the same space,

alongside iconic large-format works, lesser-known pieces are also on display, revealing a slightly different side of the artist.

Although he is remembered primarily as the creator of monumental canvases, bursting with dramatic expression and a wealth of symbolic and historiosophical content, Jan Matejko also found fulfilment in other forms of expression, including as a sensitive portraitist and illustrator.

The exhibition combines the opposite poles of the artist's work, allowing us to appreciate the full scope of his versatile artistry. It presents a rare opportunity to explore works from private collections, seldom showcased in public, gathered together in a single venue.

Portraits are particularly numerous among these works. Few people are aware that they constituted almost one third of all the paintings painted by Jan Matejko. The artist created a range of portraits, capturing both individuals and groups, immortalising family and friends. Additionally, he fulfilled requests to portray representatives of the contemporary social elites. Yet, he consistently adhered to a principle he articulated as follows: "For me to paint a portrait, the face must express something...".

The exhibition includes one of Matejko's most famous portrait representations, *Portrait of the Artist's Four Children*, from the Borys Woźnicki National Art Gallery in Lviv. Lesser-known historical paintings and drawings are also collected, some of which are sketches for painting representations.

An important context for the borrowed works is created by famous paintings that have a permanent place in the castle exhibition: *Batory at Pskov*, *Skarga's Sermon*, *Rejtan – the Fall of Poland*, *Constitution of 3 May 1791*, and the series *History of Civilisation in Poland*.

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