

## JOHN III SOBIESKI

### A Polish King in Vienna

Winterpalais  
7 July 2017 to 1 November 2017



Roman Painter (?)  
Portrait of John III on horseback, around 1704  
Oil on canvas  
© Warsaw, Royal Castle - Museum

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The Polish king John III Sobieski (1629–1696) is inextricably linked to the history of Vienna. As the commander-in-chief of united armed forces, he liberated the city from the Ottoman siege that lasted several weeks in 1683. With this victory, he secured a place in world history and in the collective Austrian memory. Developed in cooperation with four major Polish residences, the exhibition at Prince Eugene's Winter Palace offers the first opportunity in the German-speaking realm for visitors to become acquainted with the monarch as a private individual and to learn about his work as a statesman, an army general, and a patron of the arts and sciences.

Curators Maike Hohn (Belvedere) and Konrad Pyzel (Wilanów Palace) have traced Jan III. Sobieski's life and work. With the help of almost one hundred paintings, precious objects, art objects, militaria, and memorabilia, visitors are given a comprehensive and lively picture of the Polish king and his time.

Belvedere General Director Stella Rollig emphasizes, *'the exhibition **John III Sobieski. A Polish King in Vienna** offers the opportunity to get to know this important figure of European Baroque as a sovereign, a war hero, and as an individual. The wide-ranging presentation is owed to a comprehensive cooperation between Austria and Poland.'*

Sobieski's **origins and his journey to the throne** as an elected Polish king will be addressed in the first section of the exhibition. His abilities and successes as a military general were, above all, what earned him the Polish crown. By the age of twenty, Sobieski had already stood his first time on the battlefield. The 1673 triumph of the Polish-Lithuanian army at Chocim (Khotyn) over Ottoman troops and the simultaneous death of the reigning king galvanized his election to monarchic rule by the Polish aristocracy in 1674.

Sobieski's cultural background was characterized by **Sarmatism** – an all-encompassing worldview held by the Polish noble class, the origin of which was genealogically derived from the ancient Sarmatian people. This frame of mind found its most striking expression in clothing, which was based on oriental dress and which can be observed in certain portraits within the exhibition.

A further section of the show is devoted to Sobieski's role as a **patron of the arts**. *'The monarch commissioned talented artists, who would later be employed under various European rulers. Among [these artists] was **Martino Altomonte**, who, after his time as a battlefield painter*

and portraitist for Sobieski, came to Vienna to create the frescoes for Prince Eugene in the Lower Belvedere. Austrian painting of the High Baroque would be unthinkable without *Altomonte*,’ according to Maïke Hohn. Other important artist personalities who were also commissioned with furnishing the royal residence of Wilanów Palace were Jerzy Eleuter Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski and Jan Reisner, whose works are also on display in the exhibition.

Situated at the gates of Warsaw, **Wilanów Palace** can be described as the heart of Sobieski’s artistic patronage. Vincenzo Agostino Locci was entrusted with the architectural transformation of a simple country house into a Baroque regal estate. The exhibition presents important views of the palace captured in paintings by Bernardo Bellotto, which are works that have left their permanent home in the Canaletto Hall of the kingly residence in Warsaw specifically for this occasion.

Not only did he promote the visual arts, Sobieski also showed interest in **science and research**. He supported scholars such as the Gdańsk astronomer Johannes Hevelius, an impression of whose character and scientific works is conveyed by exhibition. *“Hevelius received an annual salary from Sobieski. For his work in breweries, the Polish king granted him a tax exemption. Sobieski also provided adequate funds for the reconstruction and re-equipping of the [astronomer’s] burned-out workshop,”* says Konrad Pyzel.

Yet another portion of the exhibition focuses on Sobieski’s role as a **husband and father**. Letters kept to this day that were addressed to his wife, Marie Casimire, a French *courtière* in the Polish court, are testament to his deep affection and appreciation for his spouse and the political cooperation between the royal pair. A small selection of these letters can be viewed digitally, some of them for the first time in their English and German translations. Family portraits show the ruling couple and their children, who grew up in close contact with their parents at the court.

A dedicated chapter of the exhibition deals with the **Battle of Vienna**. After securing an alliance with Emperor Leopold I., Sobieski went on to lead a battalion of allied troops as the supreme commander in the victory against the Ottomans. The forces under his charge consisted of imperial contingents, auxiliary troops from the Holy Roman Empire, and the Polish Crown Army. The contract illustrating this alliance with the emperor is of great importance to Austrian-Polish history. The exhibit shows central protagonists from both imperial and Polish sides of the joint enforcement. The closing point of this section of the exhibit is represented by objects associated with the Holy League and the 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz.

The penultimate section of the exhibition illuminates Sobieski's return from Vienna, which was commemorated by royal trophies and precious textiles that he donated in part as votive gifts to churches and monasteries throughout Poland.

The conclusion of the exhibition explores the **glory** afforded to the Polish king that immediately followed his successful liberation of Vienna. The **memorial project for the Cathedral of Le Puy-en-Velay** is one example of this gesture of recognition, away from European royal courts. At the behest of the bishop, monuments for Sobieski were erected in several churches around the French region of Auvergne. The sculptures in the exhibition make up part of a monument, which was ultimately never fully realized.

According to the director of the Wilanów Palace Museum, Paweł Jaskanis, *'the exhibition brings together central works on a person, who can also be referred to as Momentum Sobescianum. The exhibition and its venue congenially complement one other. Prince Eugene of Savoy, the mastermind of the Winter Palace, would likely have met King Sobieski during the 1683 siege and liberation of Vienna.'*

In cooperation with the Wilanów museum, an extensive **catalogue (Hirmer Publishers)** will be published in German and Polish.

A **database** of scientific and popular science articles on the history, culture, and customs of Poland-Lithuania, as well as on exploring, remarkable personalities, offers a comprehensive body of reading material for all those interested in deepening their understanding of the personage and time of John III Sobieski. It can be found under the following link:

<http://www.wilanow-palac.pl/pasaz?m=n>

*The exhibition is a collaboration between the Belvedere and four major residences of Poland – the Wilanów Palace Museum, the Royal Palace, and the Royal Łazienki Museum in Warsaw, and the Wawel Royal Castle in Krakow.*



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## BIOGRAPHY of JOHN III SOBIESKI

- 1629 John Sobieski is born on August 17 in Olesko on territory of present-day Ukraine. His parents are Jakub Sobieski and Teofila Sobieska, nee Daniłowicz.
- 1646 John and his elder brother Marek set off on a two-year educational journey across Europe; they visit German cities, the Netherlands, France and England.
- 1648 Due to the uprising led by Bohdan Chmielnicki, John and Marek return to their home country to enlist in the army.
- 1649 Two days before his twentieth birthday, on August 15, John Sobieski receives his baptism by fire at the Battle of Zborow (Zboriv).
- 1655 In Warsaw John meets Marie Casimire, lady-in-waiting to the Polish Queen Marie Louise Gonzaga. The Polish-Swedish War breaks out. Like many other representatives of the nobility, Sobieski refuses obedience to the Polish King John II Casimir, pledging loyalty instead to the Swedish King Charles X Gustav. For several months, he fights in the ranks of the Swedish army, collecting valuable military experience in one of the most modern armies of its time.
- 1656 Sobieski receives his first military rank from King John II Casimir, Standard-Bearer of the Crown. It is a symbolic act of forgiveness on the part of the monarch for Sobieski's temporary disloyalty.
- 1659 Sobieski takes part for the first time in a meeting of the Sejm (Parliament) as a delegate.
- 1665 John Sobieski becomes Grand Marshal of the Crown. He succeeds Jerzy Sebastian Lubomirski, whom he holds in high regard. The latter had made himself the leader of the opposition in a domestic conflict. On May 14 John and Marie Casimire marry secretly during her period of mourning. Marie Casimire's first husband Jan (Sobiepan) Zamoyski had died on April 7. The official wedding takes place in Warsaw on July 5. The sacrament of marriage is given to them by the papal nuncio Antonio Pignatelli, who later becomes Pope Innocent XII.
- 1666 Sobieski becomes Field Hetman of the Crown. At the Battle of Matwy against the rebels led by Jerzy Sebastian Lubomirski, he nearly dies.

- 1667 Jakub, the Sobieskis' eldest son, is born in Paris. His godparents are the King of France Louis XIV and the queen consort of England, Henrietta Maria.
- 1668 John Sobieski becomes Grand Hetman of the Crown and thus bearer of the highest military rank in the Commonwealth. Never before had the ministerial office of Grand Marshal of the Crown and the function of Grand Hetman of the Crown been occupied by one person.
- 1673 John Sobieski conquers the Ottoman troops at the Battle of Chocim (Khotyn).  
At the same time the reigning Polish king Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki dies.
- 1674 John Sobieski is elected king. Due to the fighting taking place against the Ottomans, he postpones the coronation ceremony. It takes place on February 2, 1676 in Wawel Cathedral in Krakow.
- 1676 Teresa Kunegunda, the Sobieskis' daughter, is born shortly after the coronation.
- 1677 John III Sobieski acquires the Milanow estate and has it converted over the following years by the architect and master builder Agostino Vincenzo Locci from a modest country house into a baroque summer residence. The *Villa Nova* is given the Polish name of Wilanow.
- 1683 John III Sobieski enters into an alliance with Emperor Leopold I against the Ottomans. On July 18, he sets off from Wilanow in the direction of Vienna. Troops are then gathered in Krakow. His eldest son, 15-year old Jakub, accompanies him. The Relief of Vienna takes place on September 12. After further campaign fighting, John III and Marie Casimire meet up again in Stary Sącz on December 15.
- 1684 John III Sobieski enters into an alliance with the Holy League. He receives the honorary title of "Defensor Fidei" (Defender of the Faith) from Pope Innocent XI.
- 1696 John III Sobieski dies on June 17 in Wilanow aged 66.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

<b>Exhibition title</b>	<b>JOHN III SOBIESKI</b> <b>A Polish King in Vienna</b>
<b>Exhibition duration</b>	7 July 2017 to 1 November 2017
<b>Venue</b>	Winterpalais (Himmelpfortgasse 8, 1010 Vienna)
<b>Exhibits</b>	Ca. 100
<b>Catalogue</b>	<i>John III Sobieski. A Polish King in Vienna</i> Editors: Paweł Jaskanis, Stella Rollig 280 p., 23.5 x 28.5 cm ISBN 978-3-903114-34-0 (German), ISBN 978-3-903114-35-7 (Polish), € 38
<b>Contact</b>	Himmelpfortgasse 8, 1010 Vienna T +43 1 795 57-0 www.belvedere.at
<b>Opening hours</b>	Daily 10 am to 6 pm, Friday from 10 am to 9 pm
<b>Regular Entry</b>	€ 9,- (Winterpalais)
<b>Guided Tours</b>	Belvedere & Winterpalais Visitor Services & Art Education T +43 1 795 57-134, M public@belvedere.at
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