

The process of developing the exhibition concept and the conservation approach to interiors at the Polish Gentry Museum was guided by the idea of creating an exhibition that would refer to the tradition of presenting a collection of artworks in the house of the Counts Sierakowski at Waplewo Wielkie. The planned revitalisation of the Waplewo manor house necessitated the development of a project that included multi-disciplinary conservation and reconstruction works on remnants of the historic interior design as well as the restoration of valuable elements of the former furnishings. Information regarding the art collection once exhibited in the manor house, either already in our possession or obtained during the research process, constituted an important aspect shaping our notions of how the Waplewo interiors had been furnished.

The Counts Sierakowski created their art collection over several generations, starting at the end of the eighteenth century, when the interiors of the Waplewo manor house were filled with paintings inherited from the family's predecessors and works of art acquired at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Kajetan Sierakowski (1753–1841) from the former collection of King Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski, which was then being sold.¹ Kajetan's son Antoni Sierakowski (1783–1842) can be considered the first member of the family to be a conscious art collector; paintings he brought from Italy and works by contemporary German artists considerably enhanced the collection.² Membership in the Kunstverein of Gdańsk gave Antoni the opportunity to purchase works by painters associated with the city and other German artists who participated in exhibitions there.³ Also, being a deputy to the provincial assembly, he paid frequent visits to Gdańsk or Königsberg and travelled to Berlin on official business, and these journeys facilitated the acquisition of works of art.

Antoni Sierakowski's interest in art collecting was shared by his son Alfons (1816–1886) and above all by his daughter-in-law Maria Sierakowska née Sołtan (1818–1906); the latter, having inherited the property

THE ROLE OF THE COUNTS SIERAKOWSKI ART COLLECTION IN ARRANGING THE PERMANENT EXHIBITION AND DEVELOPING THE *GENIUS LOCI* OF THE POLISH GENTRY MUSEUM AT WAPLEWO WIELKIE, A BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN GDAŃSK

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The Polish Gentry Museum at Waplewo Wielkie

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1 K. Rodziewicz, *Katalog zbioru obrazów oraz innych przedmiotów sztuki znajdujących się w posiadaniu rodziny hrabiów Sierakowskich w Waplewie* (Poznań, 1897), A/66, A/67, A/73/ A/94, A/95; *Galeria Stanisława Augusta*, eds T. Mańkowski, Z. Batowski, K. Brokl, M. Morełowski (Lwów, 1932), part 1, p. 156; part 2, pp. 237, 344.

2 D. Rzyska-Laube, 'Początki waplewskich zbiorów artystycznych za czasów Antoniego Sierakowskiego (1783–1842)', in: *Ród Sierakowskich na ziemi malborskiej*, eds J. Hochleitner, P. Szwedowski (Malbork, 2014), passim.

3 H. Kowalska, 'Zbiory waplewskie w świetle korespondencji niemieckiej lat trzydziestych XX wieku', *Gdańskie Studia Muzealne*, vol. 8, 2015, p. 281.

of her relative, Princess Marianna Lubomirska née Granowska (1774–1846), added several valuable paintings to the collection and provided the funds needed to expand it further. Supported in her endeavours by her brother Adam Lew Sołtan (1825–1901), who maintained friendly relations with Józef Ignacy Kraszewski and sought his advice on works of art,⁴ Maria significantly enlarged the Waplewo collection. Paintings and valuable works of artistic craftsmanship were acquired both through purchases and gifts from friends and relatives.

The son of Maria and Alfons, Adam Sierakowski (1846–1912), acquired valuable Far Eastern objects during his travels in India, adding them to the family collection upon return. The last owner of Waplewo, Stanisław Sierakowski (1881–1939), probably contributed little to the collection. Giving priority to social and political issues, he was involved in the 1920 Plebiscite and the activities of the Polish émigré community in Germany. It seems that the task of cultivating the collecting tradition and preventing the dispersion of the Waplewo collection was taken over by his wife Helena, née Princess Lubomirska (1886–1939).⁵ Her involvement was all the more important since the collection had been at risk of being broken up since 1929, when, as a result of harassment by the German authorities, the Sierakowski couple had to leave their estate in Germany and move to Poland, to their estate in Osiek near Rypin.

The art collection remained in Waplewo (that is, within the borders of the German state); just before the outbreak of the Second World War, some of the works of art were moved either to Osiek or to the estate in Spusza,⁶ owned by Teresa and Eustachy Sapieha, the family's closest relatives. The seizure of the collection by the Germans during the war and later by the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland led to its further dispersion.⁷ After the war, the Waplewo estate was taken over by the State Agricultural Farm; an Animal Breeding Centre was established there in 1994. In 2006, the efforts

4 Letters of Adam Lew Sołtan to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski dated 1863–1886, in the Manuscripts Department of the Jagiellonian Library, vol. 73, 74, no. 6533/IV, 6534/IV, and on microfilm in the National Library, inv. no. Mf. 9724, Mf. 9718.

5 Kowalska, 'Zbiory waplewskie', pp. 276–280.

6 E. Sapieha, *Tak było. Niedemokratyczne wspomnienia Eustachego Sapiehy* (Warszawa, 2000), p. 95.

7 Library of the National Museum in Gdańsk, Archival documents (Akta archiwalne), inv. no. A/IV/8; State Archives in Gdańsk, City Museum (Stadtuseum) documents, museum collection, inv. no. 1384/18, Inventarzaiechniss der Sammlung Sierakowski in Schloss Neudorfchen krs. Marienwerder 1942–1943 (hereinafter APG 1384/18 Inventarzaiechniss); State Archives in Gdańsk, Provincial Bureau in Gdańsk documents, Department of Art and Culture, inv. no. 1164/1229: Referaty, protokoły, sprawozdania [Papers, minutes, reports], inv. no. 1164/1249 Muzea i ochrona zabytków [Museums and heritage protection].

of the last member of the family, Izabella Sierakowska-Tomaszewska⁸ resulted in the palace building and park being taken over by the National Museum in Gdańsk, which made the estate the seat of the Polish Gentry Museum and the Pomeranian Centre for Contacts with the Polish Diaspora.

The team from the National Museum in Gdańsk who supervised the preparation of the interiors of the Waplewo manor house⁹ adopted three fundamental objectives: to carry out conservation and reconstruction works on elements of the building and interiors of the palace in Waplewo Wielkie, to launch, in parallel with exhibiting the former collection, an educational programme concerning the functions and appearance of residences inhabited by landed gentry families, and to adapt the building for museum purposes. The conservation and reconstruction works were carried out in accordance with a conservation programme based on historical, architectural, archaeological and conservation research on the building,¹⁰ as well as an analysis of archival documentation. An important element in shaping the assumptions for the works to be conducted was a comparative analysis and a search for similar buildings in Poland related to the history of the Sierakowski family. Items that retained a sufficient amount of their original substance underwent conservation, while reconstruction was undertaken on those elements of interior design for which there existed some source documentation that explained the choice of form, material and, in some cases, colour scheme. An attempt to recreate the display of the former art collection must also be included among reconstruction procedures. The most important sources of knowledge inspiring the conservation and reconstruction activities were the conservation-related surface removals carried out within the palace (on the façades and in all rooms), archival photographs, extant technical and inventory documentation, and some data extracted from memoirs.

8 'Należy postępować jak należy. Z Izabellą Sierakowską-Tomaszewską rozmawia Magdalena Grzebałkowska', *Wysokie Obcasy*, no. 7, 16 Feb. 2008.

9 The National Museum in Gdańsk team overlooking the revitalisation of the Waplewo manor house: Maria Bigoś-Bojarska as coordinator, in cooperation with Maciej Kraiński as curator, Piotr Parol, Anna Kriegseisen and Dobromiła Rzyńska-Laube, with Anna Safianowicz as architectural supervision inspector and Monika Juszcak representing the Contractor of restoration works at the Waplewo Wielkie palace.

10 G. Szumska-Józefiak, *Dokumentacja badań konserwatorskich na elewacjach i we wnętrzach pałacu Sierakowskich w Waplewie Wielkim do adaptacji budynku pałacu na cele muzealne z wytycznymi do prac remontowych i konserwatorsko-restauratorskich*, vol. 1–2 (Gdańsk, 2011); G. Szumska-Józefiak, A. Świątkowska, M. Wojdyło, *Dokumentacja badań konserwatorskich dotyczących deformacji i zniszczeń dekoracyjnego stropu płycinowego w pałacu Sierakowskich w Waplewie Wielkim* (Gdańsk, 2010); K. Krawcewicz-Kotarak, *Dokumentacja badań zabytkowego stropu w sali gdańskiej w pałacu Sierakowskich w Waplewie Wielkim 1896 rok* (no location, undated).

The original architectural details of the façade underwent conservation, including the woodwork, that is windows on the ground floor and first floor and wooden flooring in some of the rooms; so did the cast-iron colonnettes discovered during conservation work in the Orangery, which, being relics of the original structure, are a valuable example of old structural and aesthetic solutions.

The absence of complete documentation presenting the condition of the interiors before the Second World War did not permit to conduct their complete reconstruction. Colour sampling provided guidelines for the choice of colours for the walls in several rooms and the restoration of polychrome decoration on the veranda. Conservation research carried out in the palace helped to reconstruct the Öland limestone flooring in the Vestibule and the Small Vestibule on the basis of stone tile relics found in the Vestibule; the latter, being originals, were moved to the Small Treasury, which is considered to be the oldest room of the Waplewo manor house.

Old photographs of some of the rooms were a very valuable source of information about the original interior design. Unfortunately, the surviving photographs referred almost exclusively to the ceremonial spaces, namely the White Hall, the Gdańsk Hall, the Vestibule and the Corner Room. The visual design of the other rooms was largely unknown. The photographs allowed for the reconstruction of important elements of the interior design with reference to the arrangement implemented in the second half of the nineteenth century by the Sierakowski family. Thanks to the photographs, the doors leading from the Gdańsk Hall to the Dining Room and Library, which had been fashioned from the remnants of historic Gdańsk wardrobes, were recreated. This was crucial in the context of restoring the former atmosphere of the interiors, which – as mentioned by Professor Stanisław Tarnowski and Andrzej Sierakowski, the son of the last owners of Waplewo Wielkie¹¹ – had been decorated in accordance with the Sierakowski family's desire to showcase Gdańsk's artistic craftsmanship. In addition, photographs and architectural research made it possible to reconstruct the fireplace in the White Hall,¹² the transom light in the Gdańsk Hall, the external stained glass windows in the Vestibule, and the stained glass partition between the Vestibule and the Small Vestibule.

The original layout of the rooms, and the proportions between the corridors and rooms, were mostly restored; the reference for the alterations

11 S. Tarnowski, *Z Prus Królewskich*, in: idem, *Z wakacyj*, vol. 2: *Prusy Królewskie* (Kraków, 1888), pp. 272–273; Gdańsk University Main Library (Biblioteka Główna Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego), Andrzej Bukowski Legacy, inv. no. RSII/260 A. Sierakowski, *Wspomnienia o rodzicach*, 10 March 1987, p. 27.

12 A. Sokoll, *Projekt rekonstrukcji kominka z Sali białej palacu w Waplewie Wielkim* (no location, 2015).

was the technical documentation in the form of ground floor and first floor plans with the former layout of the rooms and a vertical cross-section, drawn in 1948 by Andrzej Sierakowski.¹³ This original layout was disrupted and distorted as a result of post-war renovations carried out to cater to the needs of the State Agricultural Farm and a guesthouse. During the time when the Animal Breeding Centre in Waplewo Wielkie was in operation, toilets were installed in part of the former room of the mistress of the house; in view of this, it was decided not to restore the original layout in this area and to use the existing sanitary facilities to install toilets for visitors without further disturbing the historical substance.

Architectural plans were an important source of information, primarily about the functions of particular rooms. Another clue was the list of furniture and equipment located in these rooms, probably also compiled by Andrzej Sierakowski.¹⁴ The list did not explain how these pieces were arranged, however, even though it contained a suggestion that other rooms also featured antique furniture and art objects.

Some accounts relating to the character of the interior décor or even particular antique objects can be found in the memoirs of former residents and guests of the palace, as well as in the correspondence of its owners. Another valuable source are Andrzej Sierakowski's memoirs,¹⁵ which he handed over to Professor Andrzej Bukowski, author of a book about Waplewo.¹⁶ A few interesting comments on the interior design of the Sierakowski residence can be found in the memoirs of Professor Stanisław Tarnowski, who visited Waplewo in 1888.¹⁷ One more important source are Adam Lew Sołtan's letters to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski,¹⁸ in which the landowner time and again informed the addressee that some new purchase had enriched the Waplewo collection.

Photographs, architectural plans indicating the functions of individual rooms, and references in memoirs and correspondence, made it possible to at least endeavour to recreate the manner in which the Sierakowski art collection had been displayed. Most of former collection was

13 A. Sierakowski, *Dwór w Waplewie, powiat sztumski, woj. Gdańskie. Rzut parteru 1:100* (no location, 1948).

14 Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych, AAN), file: Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki [Ministry of Art and Culture], inv. no. 387/51/110-122 Spis obrazów w majątku Waplewo Sierakowskich [List of paintings in the Sierakowski estate in Waplewo] (hereinafter AAN 387/52/110-122 Spis obrazów).

15 Sierakowski, *Wspomnienia o rodzicach*.

16 A. Bukowski, *Waplewo. Zapomniana placówka kultury polskiej na Pomorzu Nadwiślańskim* (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków, 1989).

17 Tarnowski, *Z Prus Królewskich*.

18 Letters of Adam Lew Sołtan to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski dated 1863–1886.

dispersed after the war¹⁹ and only its negligible fraction was held by the National Museum in Gdańsk,²⁰ of which the Polish Gentry Museum is a branch, but an attempt was made to recreate the atmosphere of the interiors where the art collections had been presented. The most important spaces were three rooms in the ceremonial part of the manor house. As luck would have it, photographs documenting the arrangement two rooms, the White Hall and the Gdańsk Hall, in 1896 have survived. Regrettably, no photographs of the Billiard Room, also located in the enfilade of reception rooms and separating the White Hall from the Gdańsk Hall, seem to be in existence; but there is a reference in German documentation²¹ to a group of family portraits being displayed in this room. Yet, since Polish museums held only about 20 percent of the former Waplewo collection and only a half of those surviving pieces was in the collections of the National Museum in Gdańsk, recreating the atmosphere of interiors displaying a rich assemblage of artworks was by no means an easy task.

The priority was to restore, especially in the White Hall (Fig. 1), the 'wallpaper' manner of hanging paintings, as was the fashion in the second half of the nineteenth century. An archival photograph of this parlour, dating from 1896,²² shows the way in which the paintings were hung: not favouring any particular school or genre of painting, but with an eye to the practicality of the arrangement, that is, placing larger works in the upper reaches of the wall and smaller ones in lower rows. Painting genres and schools of painting were jumbled. When the White Hall was being arranged, this approach enabled the curators to position available paintings at their discretion, as long as the size criterion was upheld. Paintings originating from the former Waplewo

19 D. Rzyńska-Laube, *Zbiory artystyczne polskich ziemian na Pomorzu od końca XVIII wieku po czasy dzisiejsze* (Gdańsk, 2022), pp. 359–381.

20 A. Andrzejewska-Zajac, 'Kilka obrazów z kolekcji waplewskiej w zbiorach Muzeum Narodowego w Gdańsku', *Gdańskie Studia Muzealne*, vol. 8, 2015, pp. 166–178; D. Rzyńska-Laube, 'Zaginiona kolekcja. Nowe ustalenia na temat zawartości zbiorów Sierakowskich z Waplewa oraz ich wojennych i powojennych losów', *Gdańskie Studia Muzealne*, vol. 8, 2015, passim; B. Purc-Stepniak, 'W poszukiwaniu upodobań kolekcjonerskich hrabiów Sierakowskich z Waplewa. Dwa obrazy z kolekcji?', *Gdańskie Studia Muzealne*, vol. 8, 2015, pp. 180–197; idem, 'Szkic olejny do fresku Apoteoza Marii Martina Knollera (1725–1804). Przykład południowoniemieckiego malarstwa plafonowego XVIII wieku', *Gdańskie Studia Muzealne*, vol. 8, 2015, pp. 198–213; idem, 'Michelangelo Pace zwany del Campidoglio (ok. 1610–1670) Martwa natura z owocami z kolekcji hrabiów Sierakowskich z Waplewa', *Gdańskie Studia Muzealne*, vol. 8, 2015, pp. 214–224.

21 B. Schmid, *Wyciąg z katalogu zbiorów waplewskich Rodziewiczów obejmujący zestawienie w języku niemieckim wartościowszych pozycji malarstwa*, typescript, Marienburg 19 Sept. 1941, copied from manuscript drafts held at the City Museum (Stadtmuseum), Izabella Sierakowska-Tomaszewska files.

22 National Archives in Cracow, The Krzeszowice Potocki Archive, inv. no. AKPot 3410-42.



Fig. 1

The White Hall at Waplewo Wielkie, 1896, National Archives in Cracow, The Krzeszowice Potocki Archive

collection which had survived in the National Museum in Gdańsk or were donated by the last member of the family, Izabella Sierakowska-Tomaszewska, were placed mainly in the upper rows, because they were mostly large-size pieces. For the lower sections, the curators attempted to find works that matched the topics of paintings seen in the photographs. Thanks to that, it proved possible to restore the character of the display as a presentation of the collection and a reference to the rudiments of artistic culture, that is, an illustration of the leading schools and genres of painting. Matching the furniture presented quite a difficulty, however, as none of the pieces visible in the photograph are in existence any more. Original vitrine cabinets were replaced with very similar ones which, in line with the photographic record, are now filled primarily with a selection of antique porcelain and silverware. Unfortunately, the antique set of Napoleon III-style sofas and arm-chairs visible in the archival photograph proved impossible to locate. It was replaced with another beautiful set of inlaid Viennese furniture, which, being an exquisite example of ceremonial furniture in the style of Napoleon III,²³ perfectly matched the atmosphere of a living room decorated in accordance with the taste of the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Fig. 2). Another option was to refer to archival photographs from the 1920s; an arrangement recreating the appearance of those rooms in that period, however, would have been difficult to

23 The set came to the collection of the Polish Gentry Museum thanks to the donations by Przemysław and Małgorzata Wojtkiewicz and Radosław and Bogna Wojtkiewicz.



Fig. 2

The White Hall, Polish
Gentry Museum at Waplewo
Wielkie, 2020

implement, since the photographs clearly show that a certain change in the arrangement had occurred by then, owing to a considerable accumulation of fabrics and furniture referring to Far Eastern traditions and various small items of artistic craftsmanship.

The character of the Gdańsk Hall (Fig. 3) was restored, if only to a degree, by means of reconstructing the door wings reminiscent of old Gdańsk wardrobes, historic panelling and a transom light with its flanking pilasters, and subjecting the decorative ceiling and sixteenth-century stone fireplace, previously attributed to the van den Block workshop,²⁴ to a conservation procedure. The dark brown woodwork decorated with carvings referred to the famous Gdańsk furniture, which was an epitome of highest-quality craftsmanship. The room's décor is completed, as in old photographs, by Gdańsk furniture from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, mostly from the collections of the National Museum in Gdańsk.²⁵ The walls are hung with family portraits, also following photographic records. The portraits were obtained from the National Museum in Warsaw, the Royal Castle in Warsaw and the Museum of Warsaw. Unfortunately, four of the identified images of the Sierakowski family's ancestors, discernible in old photographs as hanging in the Gdańsk Hall, remain in museums in Kwidzyn, Białystok, Krośniewice and Gdańsk. Talks are currently

24 F. Skibiński, *Willem van den Blocke. Niderlandzki rzeźbiarz nad Bałtykiem w XVI i na początku XVII wieku* (Toruń, 2015), p. 434.

25 I am grateful to Mr. Lech Łopuski, custodian at the National Museum in Gdańsk, for his help in selecting the furniture.



Fig. 3

The Gdańsk Hall at Waplewo Wielkie, 1920s, National Museum in Gdańsk

underway as to the portraits' return to their original home. One of the portraits, currently undergoing conservation, has fortunately found its way into the collection of the Polish Gentry Museum.²⁶ Efforts to restore the Gdańsk Hall to its former glory as a ceremonial dining room (Fig. 4) are continuing. The ongoing provenance research will hopefully lead to the discovery of other family portraits that had vanished from Waplewo.

The third parlour is the Billiard Room, for which no photographic documentation has survived and the furnishings, including the billiard table, were lost. It holds pieces of furniture connected with various games: a chess table and a bridge table, while the reproductions of drawings by John Stoddart showing the citizens of Gdańsk playing billiards, chess and card games recall the room's entertainment purpose. Family portraits have been hung on the walls in accordance with the account of art historian Zygmunt Batowski, who visited Waplewo in 1912.²⁷ These portraits mostly come from the old Sierakowski collection; they were obtained from the National Museum in Gdańsk, Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw, and Izabella Sierakowska-Tomaszewska. One of the best family portraits, the likeness of Marshal Stanisław Sołtan by the eminent portraitist Jan Chrzyciel Lampi, returned to the Billiard Room after several decades' absence. Another piece on show in the room is an eclectic

²⁶ *Portrait of Aleksander Pociąg, copy by Maria Sierakowska née Sołtan.*

²⁷ Polish Academy of Sciences Archives (Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk), Zygmunt Batowski Legacy, inv. no. III-2, j.-9.



Fig. 4

The Gdańsk Hall, 2020,
Polish Gentry Museum
at Waplewo Wielkie

virtrine cupboard containing finds from excavations and Oriental objects which used to belong to the Waplewo collections in the times of the Sierakowskis.²⁸

Apart from the three parlours described above, the ceremonial part of the manor house included the Vestibule, the Dining Room, the Corner Room and the Boudoir. Archival photographs permitting to envision their décor and furnishings are extant for three of those spaces, namely the Vestibule, the Dining Room and the Corner Room.

The Vestibule (Fig. 5) served as the manor's showpiece. There, at the very threshold of the house, a display of hunting trophies both native and exotic informed the guest that he had just entered a gentry residence, one inhabited by men entitled to the exalted privilege of hunting. Trophies constituted evidence of an enthusiasm for hunting and of sensible management of game resources, but there was more to them: the display of exotic trophies testified to wealth, to panache associated with overseas travel, to worldliness and refinement. Furthermore, historical sources report that a statue of Minerva stood at the bottom of the stairs leading to the first floor.²⁹ The presence of the goddess of arts, crafts, wisdom, science and literature told the visitor that he would soon enter an interior furnished with artefacts related to the disciplines of which she was the protectress. This statue, as well as the valuable Gdańsk furniture displayed in the Vestibule: a beautiful eighteenth-century wardrobe and a carved table, recalled the ceremonial vestibules of Gdańsk, which typically contained elaborate pieces of artistic craftsmanship. Guided

²⁸ AAN 387/52/110-122 Spis obrazów.

²⁹ Vertical section of the palace building, drawn by Andrzej Sierakowski in 1948; AAN 387/52/110-122 Spis obrazów.



Fig. 5

The Vestibule at Waplewo
Wielkie, date unknown

by these considerations, the Vestibule has been arranged according to Gdańsk taste and furnished with Gdańsk-made pieces: an antique cupboard, tables, as well as armchairs and stools acquired from the National Museums in Gdańsk and in Warsaw. Luckily, the Vestibule stairs seen in archival photographs have survived. The National Museum in Gdańsk provided a statue of Minerva to decorate the stairs; but this statue did not originally come from Waplewo. A few years after the museum interior was arranged, it came to light that the statue of Minerva from Waplewo was in the collection of the Castle Museum in Malbork;³⁰ it will probably replace the present statue at some point in the future.

According to Andrzej Sierakowski's account and the surviving photograph, which only found its way into the collection of the Polish Gentry Museum after the permanent exhibition had been in place, the Dining Room was decorated with a cycle of portraits of Polish kings and an impressive painting *The Entry of an Envoy to Constantinople* (Fig. 3). Regrettably, these paintings were either lost or remain unidentified in some museum storeroom. The only work to have survived is the portrait of Stanislaus Augustus with the book of the Third of May Constitution – a work by the local artist Jan Gładysz alluding to the well-known image of the last king of Poland with an hourglass by Bacciarelli. Preserved in

30 I am grateful to Mr. Bartłomiej Butryn, custodian at the Castle Museum in Malbork, for the information that the Waplewo statue has been identified.

the collection of Izabella Sierakowska-Tomaszewska, it is probably the sole painting now extant that could have originally adorned the walls of the Dining Room at Waplewo.³¹ For this reason the walls of the Dining Room are now decorated with other ceremonial portraits of monarchs or courtiers. Following Sierakowski's inventory,³² furniture in the Dining Room is in the Gdańsk and Dutch styles. In keeping with the tradition of decorating dining rooms in gentry houses, elements of tableware are displayed and walls are hung with porcelain plates from the Meissen and Berlin manufactories. The Dining Room has been furnished to a large extent with pieces deposited by private owners.³³

Next to the Vestibule there was the Small Vestibule, connecting it to the Billiard Room and the corridor leading to the Dining Room. Even though located between two ceremonial rooms, this was more of a utility room. It was there that the paraffin lamps were cleaned, filled and equipped with wicks (as electricity had not yet been installed in the Sierakowski family's day); there was also a door that led to the cellar, which was probably where preserves and wines were stored, and to the corridor leading to the Dining Room. In keeping with its original function, today the Small Vestibule contains an array of paraffin lamps in various styles and with a variety of constructional solutions. There are also some hunting trophies there; together with the antlers displayed in the corridor leading to the Dining Room, they complement the hunting collection exhibited in the Vestibule, illustrating the centuries-old tradition of decorating gentry residences.

An important aspect of the arrangement of the interiors of the Waplewo palace was the educational premise, deliberately adopted for only those rooms where no clear sources indicating the character of their former arrangement had been preserved, especially when no archival photographs were available. In order to present the ways of interior decoration *en vogue* from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, two rooms acquired decorative wall upholsteries, the fabrics referring to the style of the Rococo and the Biedermeier, and corresponding furnishings. The educational role of the exhibition is also implemented in the interiors located at the junction of the ceremonial and private parts of the manor house and in the former bedrooms of the owners. The functions of particular rooms are highlighted, elucidating the types of everyday activities in gentry manors. In keeping with the

31 Additional research is required regarding the portrait of Stanislaus Augustus by an anonymous artist, inv. no. MNG/SD/26/M, currently on show at the Museum of the National Anthem in Będomin, branch of the National Museum in Gdańsk, which probably belonged to the Sierakowski collection and may have been displayed in the dining room.

32 AAN 387/52/110-122 Spis obrazów.

33 The Polish Gentry Museum is very grateful for pieces deposited and donated by the Bruszewski family, Aleksandra Jaśniewicz and Piotr Zygmunt Kowalski.

Museum's mission, objects on display serve to explain the symbolism representative of the gentry.

As to the Corner Room, one archival photograph confirming the presence of a *chaise longue*, a painting depicting Christ, and a chest of drawers in the style of Louis XVI has survived, but no clear indications of the overall character of the room's arrangement are in existence. The eighteenth-century chest of drawers provided an inspiration for furnishing the room in the style of the Enlightenment. The room was equipped with wall upholstery fabrics, furniture, paintings and Chinese ceramic pieces modelled on eighteenth-century ones, and a painting of Christ the Saviour, originally from Waplewo, was obtained from the Royal Castle in Warsaw and restored to its former place.³⁴ Thus arranged, the interior transports visitors back to the eighteenth century, in this way fulfilling its designated educational purpose. Since the works of art exhibited in the Corner Parlour include items from the collection of Princess Marianna Lubomirska née Granowska,³⁵ there are plans to commemorate her in this room, on the grounds that the princess's assets bequeathed to her niece, Maria Sierakowska née Sołtan, provided the funds permitting the subsequent expansion of the Waplewo collection. The Corner Room, located in the former chapel, during the Sierakowski era was a *sui generis* votive room, commemorating the generous donatrix, who had been born still in the eighteenth century.

The countess's sitting room, known as the Boudoir, has been arranged in the same way as the Corner Room, which illustrates the style of a specific era. The feminine little room has been decorated in the Biedermeier style, appropriate wall upholstery fabrics and furniture dating mostly from the 1820s and 30s having been selected for it. It should be noted that the presence of a beautiful inlaid wardrobe dating from an earlier era in the room is intended to reflect the estate owners' sensitivity to the quality of craftsmanship evidenced by certain pieces in their possession, and to aesthetic principle they followed, which advocated deviating from uniform interior design. Similarly to the Gdańsk Hall, the key aspect of this interior was superb craftsmanship, which by the second half of the nineteenth century had begun to be appreciated. Members of the Sierakowski family, whose expertise and sensitivity in this respect were noteworthy, attached particular importance to the quality of craftsmanship. The Boudoir is also a room with a specific function: a space intended for the ladies. For this reason, it displays items related to gentry women's activities, such as letter-writing, embroidery, singing, music-making, reading fashionable French romances, and having

34 Anonymous English painter, *The Head of Christ*, seventeenth century (?), Royal Castle in Warsaw, inv. no. ZKW/846.

35 Rodziewicz, *Katalog zbioru obrazów*, A/18, A/188, B/30.

afternoon tea with friends. One of those items is an exquisite Meissen coffee service with delicate flower decoration, eminently suitable for women's gatherings. There is also a sewing table, a small table designed specially for needlework, an indispensable attribute of women's activities. Another element on display are embroidery samplers; produced by girls during their painstaking education, such samplers were a common feature of women's spaces.

Next to the Boudoir is the Milady's Bedroom, the former room of the mistress of the house, which, as has already been mentioned, was considerably reduced to make space for sanitary facilities indispensable in the museum's infrastructure. To compensate for the loss of a significant part of the space, a large-format image was installed, suggesting that the room extends further into the background; it shows a bed and a screen, and continues the pattern of decorative floral wallpaper used on the actual walls. In addition, this image features archival photographs of paintings that once belonged to the Waplewo collection and are now lost. The room is furnished with an antique inlaid cabinet and a dainty secretary desk suitable for a woman's room. On the table, there is a porcelain toilet set consisting of a bowl, a jug and boxes for hygienic products used in the olden days.

Adjacent to the rooms once occupied by the mistress of the house are the master's rooms, namely the Study, the Master's Bedroom and the Armoury. The Study contains two secretary desks necessary for storing important documents, with a display of writing implements and seals. A vitrine cabinet contains silverware and hunting accessories, so close to the hearts of the former masters of the house. A glass bottle for alcohol, decorated with the Leliwa coat of arms and the name of the Łohojsk estate of the Tyszkiewicz family, testifies to the economic legacy and entrepreneurial spirit of the gentry. The next room, which is the Master's Bedroom, is furnished with an antique bed; the bed linen is embroidered with the initials J.S. under a count's crown in accordance with the title used by the Sierakowski family. The table is set with a small porcelain service intended for just one person; this refers to light meals consumed by the owner of the estate early in the morning, in solitude, before he went to his duties: making the dawn inspection of the estate and overseeing the condition of its resources, as taught by the Polish saying: *pańskie oko konia tuczy* (literally: 'the master's eye fattens the horse', which means that the owner's personal supervision is beneficial to any venture). The following room is the Armoury, which also served as the estate's office. Located at the end of the south wing, it had external doors to facilitate access for clients. This was where martial accoutrements used to be displayed as mementoes of the ancestors' achievements on the battlefield or as travel souvenirs. Military collections, known as trophies, were found in many aristocratic residences; they were displayed

in rooms with external doors, in order to immediately inform newcomers that they were entering a residence whose owners had belonged the noble class for generations. Unfortunately, in Waplewo this room cannot yet boast a collection of military items which, arranged in panoplies, would give the Armoury a suitably dignified décor, but there are plans to loan examples of bladed weapons and firearms, as well as pieces of exotic weaponry.

It must be emphasised that while the focus of the rooms' arrangement are their functions, as dictated by the educational concept of presenting the realities of everyday life of the gentry, these rooms are nevertheless decorated with paintings. Based on what is known about the art collection amassed by the Sierakowski family, it can be assumed that Waplewo held enough artworks to richly decorate the interiors: valuable pieces of artistic craftsmanship were as easily available as paintings for the adornment of the walls. In the absence of precise information about specific paintings displayed in particular rooms, the thematic selection of paintings for the museum exhibition was made in accordance with the function of the given room or the tasks of its users.

The furnishings of the Library were an important element of the décor highlighting the museum character of the Waplewo interiors during the Sierakowski era. Its existence was also in line with the concept of a palace-cum-library-cum-museum, which was fashionable among the aristocracy. Large bookcases that used to hold the valuable book collection were lost during Second World War, so a beautiful bookcase originating from the Radziwiłł family's Berlin palace has recently been provided for the library section.³⁶ It now serves to display a large collection of literature devoted to the subject of the gentry; the texts are mainly contemporary, so they only symbolise the former collection of ten thousand volumes. Also on show in the Library are memorabilia related to the cultivation of gentry family histories, the achievements of their members, and the symbolism associated with the privileged class. The walls are hung with facsimiles of drawings by members of the Sierakowski family: Józef Sierakowski of the Dołęga coat of arms and Sebastian Sierakowski of the Ogończyk coat of arms, both of whom were highly talented painters. Their artistic interests significantly influenced the development of the Waplewo art collection.

In accordance with the educational concept of the exhibition, the Museum presents objects related to the heritage of the gentry. On display is a likeness of a representative of a gentry family, General Henryk Dembiński, which is a copy of his well-known portrait by Henryk Rodakowski. Next to it is the family tree of the Dembiński family of the Nieczuja coat of arms drawn by the renowned genealogist Włodzimierz Dworzaczek.

36 The bookcase was submitted as a deposit to the Polish Gentry Museum at Waplewo Wielkie courtesy of the Polish Library in Paris.

Side by side with it, a collection of sealing-wax impressions of seals bearing Polish coats of arms is displayed in frames. The Treasury, probably the oldest part of the manor house, in which the surviving Öland limestone tiles have been collected, contains a seventeenth-century table-top chest (Polish: *sepet*). This piece of furniture came to the Sierakowski family in 1940 as a wedding gift to Andrzej Sierakowski and Zofia Herburt from the Branicki family of Wilanów.

At the current moment, the rooms on the first floor are being arranged and furnished as the Nursery, the Tutor's Room and the Bathroom. This section of the Museum will explicate the functions of another group of private rooms. The permanent exhibition, too, is being constantly expanded to include new objects that help to recreate the atmosphere of a gentry house. A subsequent stage of its development made it possible to bring window decorations back to the Museum's interiors. Window draperies and lace curtains correspond to the style and function of each room. The wallpapers, in turn, have been selected to reflect the fashion of the second half of the nineteenth century and the designs typical of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which most probably answered the Sierakowski family's aesthetic perception.

It must be emphasised that the exhibition owes its quality not only to exhibits loaned from museums, but also to donations and deposits from private owners who entrusted numerous valuable objects, often treasured family heirlooms, to the Museum.³⁷

The employees and friends the Polish Gentry Museum at Waplewo Wielkie persist in their efforts to replicate as closely as possible the atmosphere of a residence in which the owners' valuable art collection was on display. Plans are made to acquire for the exhibition other pieces with proven provenance from Waplewo, which are currently held in the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw, the Royal Castle in Warsaw, the Museum in Kwidzyn (a branch of the Castle Museum in Malbork), the Podlachia Museum in Białystok, the Jerzy Dunin-Borkowski Museum in Krośniewice, and the Alf Kowalski Museum of the Międzyrzecz Region. In addition, the Pilecki Institute in Berlin is working on project to search for missing works of art from the Sierakowski collection in Germany.

It is certain that the acquisition of more pieces originating from the Sierakowski family collection will greatly contribute to the preservation of the authenticity of interior furnishings at the Waplewo manor house, whose

37 The Polish Gentry Museum wishes to convey wholehearted thanks to all persons who donated or deposited a variety of pieces to grace the permanent exhibition at Waplewo. Special thanks are due to the donors: Jerzy Donimirski, the Fietkiewicz family, Elżbieta Grodzicka-Houwalt, Zbigniew Grzonka, Elżbieta and Wiesław Harackiewicz, Marek Komorowski, Piotr Zygmunt Kowalski, Elżbieta and Wojciech Krzyżanowski, Eleonora and Robert Kułtoniak, Małgorzata and Andrzej Sołtan, and Arkadiusz Woźniak, and the depositors: the Dembiński family, Elżbieta Lipiec-Delinikajtis and the Paczyński family.

presentation of its artistic collection is worthy of note, and the *genius loci* of the Polish Gentry Museum will thus continue to be maintained.

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