

# Sculpture of Augustus III



- Performed by Edmé Samson et Cie
- Date of production late 19th century
- Place of creation France?
- Dimensions height: 69 cm, length: 47 cm
- Author's designation painted underglaze with cobalt, inside the pedestal there are two intertwined L letters with the letter A inside and an illegible mark underneath
- ID no. ZKWawel 1446
- Museum [Wawel Royal Castle – State Art Collection](#)
- Availability Saxon Room
- Subjects [authority](#), [sculpted](#), [famous people](#)
- Technique [extrusion in mould](#), [baking](#), [glazing](#), [overglaze painting](#)
- Material [porcelain](#)
- Acquired date donated in 1937
- Object copyright Wawel Royal Castle – State Art Collection
- Digital images copyright public domain
- Digitalisation RDW MIC, Małopolska's Virtual Museums Plus project

- Tags [władza](#), [ceramika](#), [rzeźba](#), [król](#), [pomnik](#), [3D](#), [WMM Plus](#), [domena publiczna](#)

The statue of Frederick Augustus II, the elector of Saxony also known as Augustus III, the King of Poland, depicts the royal figure on a rearing horse. The statue sits on an architectural pedestal decorated with volutes and cartouches. The statue shows the rider sitting back quite deeply on the horse. The king is shown in the clothing of a Roman leader with his hair styled according to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century fashion. There is no saddle on the horse and it is covered simply with a lion skin. The horse's forelegs rise up into the air, as it performs *the courbette* (that of the Spanish Riding School).

There are some inscriptions engraved on the pedestal: “FRID.AUGUSTUS/DUX SAXONIAE S.R.J. PRINCEPS/ELECTOR ARCHIMARESCHALCUS /IDEMQUE REX POLONIAE /AUGUSTUS II” and: “FRID.AUGUSTI II /DUCIS. SAXON. S.R.J. ELECTORIS /NEC NON REGIS POLONIAE CURAS /PATRI ET ANTECESSORI /POSITUM AD MDCCXXXVI.”

On the front of the pedestal, there is a cartouche in a wreath positioned under a crown carrying the coats of arms of Poland and Saxony. The same cartouche with the added monogram “AR” can be seen on the back.

This work is an example of the cabinet sculpture art of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similar portrayals of Louis XIV, Napoleon Bonaparte and Marcus Aurelius, often made in bronze, were popular in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the century. It is part of a collection of porcelain sculpture created by Johann Joachim Kändler and Johann Friedrich Eberlein in Meissen in 1745, currently part of the Dresden Porcelain Collection (Inv. PE 649). King Augustus III is presented, and, on the pedestal, a monument of King Augustus II cast in bronze by Ludwig Wiedemann in 1735. This was based on a model by Jean-Joseph Vinache. Originally, the monument was to be placed on the Augustus Bridge, but due to its weight, it was placed in Neustädter Markt in Dresden. The pedestal of this sculpture is a copy of an existing pedestal, a monument called the Golden Rider, which was made by Constantin Lipsius only in 1884. The inscription is inaccurate on both on the original pedestal in Dresden and on this porcelain sculpture – Frederick Augustus II, the Elector of Saxony, was crowned the King of Poland as Augustus III, not Augustus II, as the inscription states.

Elaborated by Dorota Gabryś (Royal Wawel Castle), editorial team of Małopolska’s Virtual Museums, © all rights reserved

## Who deserved an equestrian portrait?

The equestrian portrait, from the beginning of its existence, was supposed to emphasise the military virtues of the individual depicted and was reserved for victorious leaders. Alexander the Great was already shown as an equestrian figure, and Hellenic rulers followed his example by having statues depicting them on horseback erected. This form of commemoration was adopted from Greeks by Romans, and their monument of Emperor Marcus Aurelius became a model for all medieval and renaissance representations of the mounted victor. It is worth noting that this statue — despite being made of valuable bronze — was preserved due to the fact that, for a long time, it was thought not to be the image of a pagan emperor-philosopher, but rather the portrait of Constantine the Great, considered a Christian.

The revival of the monumental equestrian statue was brought about by the Renaissance (it was then that famous monuments, such as the Gattamelata in Padua and the statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni in Venice, were created), but it reached its heyday between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition to the very expensive monumental bronze statues, small statuettes, coloured paintings and engravings appeared, whose propagandistic meaning as the first mass medium can hardly be overstated. At the same time, depictions of members of the royal families on horseback began to appear.

Polish kings also had equestrian portraits made for them. Magnates, and most often — understandably — victorious hetmans, followed the example of their rulers. However, the equestrian portrait was not always created in honour of individuals who triumphed during war. It sometimes happened that an equestrian

depiction was the effect of its founder's megalomania. Hieronim Florian Radziwiłł — a cruel and foolish man, whose only military success was the bloody suppression of a peasants' revolt — intended to have a mounted statue of himself situated at the marketplace in Biała Podlaska, rebuilt especially for this purpose. The project assumed an impressive outcome, but, then again, Radziwiłł's ambitions were nothing to scoff at either: he was convinced that he would become the king, having been told so by a Gypsy fortune teller...

The targets of the equestrian portrait were the broad masses of noblemen, even though it was mostly associated with the elite. Even a moderately wealthy nobleman, although, in the light of the law, equal to the magnates, could not afford even the cheapest and humblest equestrian image of his person. Funding such a portrait would be considered a ridiculous attempt to compare oneself to senators and hetmans. Because, in the end, *quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi*, or, as some prefer, "Gods may do what cattle may not".

The place, where even the king walks on foot

Jan Długosz—describing the life and customs of King Władysław Jagiełło — stated that "depending on the circumstances, sometimes it was difficult to approach him, at other times, it was easy". He was most accessible and accommodating to petitioners while sitting on the toilet, when he "went from his bed to a secluded place and defecated for a long time there, handling many affairs. And, apparently, he was never more accessible and gentler. And the knights strove to find such moments to make it easier for them to get what they had asked for".

Sigismund I the Old, had a very different approach towards these matters and, as stated by [Marcin Kromer](#), "throughout his life he was characterized by a great, almost virgin-like shyness. He hated it when anyone apart from those who served him in the inner-bedroom saw him naked or taking care of his natural needs".

See:

[Painting "Equestrian portrait of Prince Władysław Sigismund Vasa"](#)

[Sculpture of Augustus III](#)

[Statuette "Napoleon on a Horse" by Piotr Michałowski](#)

[Ruben's innovations](#)

Elaborated by Adam Spodaryk (Editorial team of Małopolska's Virtual Museums),



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### **Bibliography:**

Mieczysław Morka, *Polski nowożytny portret konny i jego europejska geneza*, Warszawa 1986.