



74

SAINT STANISLAUS RAISES THE KNIGHT
PIOTR FROM THE DEAD

SZYMON CZECHOWICZ (1689–1775)

OIL ON CANVAS

90.5 × 46.2 CM (35 5/8 × 18 1/8 IN.)

WAWEL ROYAL CASTLE, CRACOW,
INV. 665, FROM THE BEQUEST OF
COUNT JERZY MYCIELSKI, 1929

LITERATURE

Orańska 1948, 77–79, 145; *Malarstwo polskie* 1971,
414–15; Ostrowski 1998, 343–51.

The painting depicts an episode in the life of Saint Stanislaus, bishop of Cracow (d. 1079). Szymon Czechowicz took up this subject several times, beginning with his youthful design for an engraving made during his stay in Rome, probably around 1725. The picture in the collection of the Wawel Royal Castle is undoubtedly a *modello* for an altarpiece. Using this composition, Czechowicz executed at least two large paintings: one in the former Jesuit church in Poznań, dated c. 1756, and the other in the parish church at Olesko, lost during World War II. Furthermore, there existed two almost identical *modelli*, one at the presbytery of the Corpus Christi Church in Poznań (lost during World War II) and the other in the palace gallery at Podhorce (lost during World War I). Besides, pencil sketches of individual figures are known that were once in the Przędziecki Library in Warsaw and in the Wróblewski Library in Vilnius.

The painting is one of the iconographically and artistically most developed examples of the depiction of Saint Stanislaus. In terms of composition and style it grows out of the tradition of classicizing Roman painting. Czechowicz became familiar with it during his long stay in Rome, employing its solutions to the end of his long life. The general composition is based on Domenichino's *Communion of Saint Jerome*, while the kneeling priest in the foreground has been borrowed from Lazzaro Baldi (Orańska 1948). The painter sought an interesting mode of rendering the remoteness of the depicted event. The lay participants in the scene were stylized to look like "Sarmatians," this reference to the eleventh century being an obvious anachronism. Nevertheless, their costumes and hair were evidently archaized in relation to eighteenth-century fashion. A similar allusion to the loosely treated historical tradition is played by fragments of classical architecture, especially by the Roman temple of Vesta in the middle distance.

The loss of most of the paintings from Czechowicz's series, of which the present picture once formed a part, precludes any closer analysis of the function of this painting or a precise hypothesis about its dating. It is not clear why Czechowicz painted several virtually identical *modelli* for one composition. It is, however, worth indicating that the palace at Podhorce housed a set numbering scores of such sketches forming a specific gallery in the so-called Green Room of the residence (Ostrowski 1998). The historical context of the creation of the set (the artist's stay in Poznań in 1756 and at Podhorce from around 1762 to 1767) would point to a rather late date of execution of the Cracow *modello*, in the 1750s or 1760s.

JKO