Collector coins

Treasures of Stanisław August

Sigismund-Augustus
(1529/1548–1572)
The unique series of gold and silver collector coins with the face values of 500 zloty and 50 zloty – “TREASURES OF STANISŁAW AUGUST” – replicates the famous 18th century medallic series with the images of the kings of Poland, which was struck on the order of Stanisław August Poniatowski.

The royal medals, designed by two outstanding medallists: Jan Filip Holzhaeusser and Jan Jakub Reichel, were struck at the Warsaw mint in the years 1791-1797/1798. The design of the medals was based on portraits painted between 1768 and 1771 by Marcello Bacciarelli for the Marble Room at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. The coins issued by Narodowy Bank Polski are faithful replicas of the medals, preserving the diameter and height of relief of the originals. This applies to the portraits of the kings on the reverses. The obverses of the coins feature the reverses of the medals with biographies of the monarchs. The reverses of the medals have been reduced in size because they are accompanied by the name of the state along the rim, the image of the state emblem, the face value and the year of issue of the coins. The biographies of the monarchs and the inscriptions on the obverses of the medals accompanying the royal portraits are in Latin. The final text editing was most likely done by King Stanisław August himself. The names of the monarchs in Polish are presented on the sides of the coins, along with the name of the series “Treasures of Stanisław August”.

The gallery of portraits of Polish kings, painted on the order of Stanisław August Poniatowski, consisted of images of 23 monarchs. It included one royal portrait more than Bacciarelli’s series of 22 paintings. The additional portrait of Stanisław Leszczyński – featured on the medal – was most probably modelled on a painting by Jan Bogumil Plersch. Both series, the paintings and the medals, begin with the image of Bolesław Chrobry and end with the portrait of August III. Since the 18th century, the principal place in the Marble Room has belonged to the portrait of the full-length figure of Stanisław August in his coronation robes. The painting is several times larger than other portraits. It is therefore probable that the medallic series would have finished with a medal presenting the image of the ruling monarch. However, these plans were thwarted by the king’s abdication, emigration and early death at the beginning of 1798.

The series of coins “Treasures of Stanisław August” consists of 24 portraits of monarchs – of which 23 have been modelled on the royal series plus a portrait of Stanisław August based on the medals from the period. The series will be struck in silver and gold, as was the practice in the 18th century.

Tomasz Bylicki
senior curator
Historical Museum of Warsaw
The only son of Sigismund the Elder and Bona Sforza, during his father’s life he was elected as king at the age of ten, after the death of his father he acquired Courland as a fief of the Commonwealth and he joined Lithuania and Poland in a lasting union, the last King of Poland from the Jagiellonian dynasty. He died childless in Knyszyn on the 18th of July Anno Domini 1572, at the age of 52, in the 24th year of his reign.
The thirteenth coin of the series depicts Sigismund-Augustus, the son of Sigismund the Elder and Bona Sforza d’Aragona, from 1529 the last independent Grand Duke of Lithuania, the King of Poland formally crowned in 1530 (vivente rege election of 1529) and reigning from 1548, following the death of his father. He was the last king from the male line of the Jagiellonian dynasty. He acquired Livonia as a fief and joined Poland and Lithuania in a union; he was distinguished by his tolerant attitude in matters of faith, he cared about the prestige of the state and was a patron of the arts.

The reverse of the coin presents the bust of the king transferred from a medal (based on a painting by Marcello Bacciarelli), in profile facing right, with a mustache and a split beard, in a Spanish costume – a small stiff hat with ostrich feathers, a ruff and a coat with an impressive sable fur collar, and a chain with the Order of the Golden Fleece on his neck.

The obverse of the coin carries a slightly shortened version of the text from the reverse of the medal (in translation):

*The only son of Sigismund the Elder and Bona Sforza, during his father’s life he was elected as king at the age of ten, after the death of his father he acquired Courland as a fief of the Commonwealth and he joined Lithuania and Poland in a lasting union, the last King of Poland from the Jagiellonian dynasty. He died childless in Knyszyn on the 18th of July Anno Domini 1572, at the age of 52, in the 24th year of his reign.*

Sigismund-Augustus was born in 1520. He was married three times. In 1543, he married Elizabeth of Austria (died in 1545). In 1547, he married Barbara Radziwiłł (crowned in 1550, died in 1551) against the will of his parents and of the Polish Sejm. In 1553, Sigismund-Augustus married Catherine of Austria (they separated in 1563, she died in 1572). As a result of wars with Russia, in 1561 he acquired Livonia as a fief of the Kingdom of Poland, along with the secular Duchy of Courland and Semigallia established there and ruled by Duke Gotthard Kettler, the last Master of the Livonian Order of Knights. He began the development of the Polish fleet. He carried out many economic and military reforms, and the survey and so-called recovery of property – estates previously given to magnates were restored to the state treasury. The most important political act during his reign was the Union of Lublin signed in 1569. It resulted in the establishment of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, also known as the Commonwealth of Both Nations – from that point on Poland and Lithuania had a single ruler, a common foreign policy, a common Sejm and a single currency, while retaining separate laws, treasuries, offices and armies. The King died childless in 1572 in Knyszyn and was buried in a solemn ceremony at Wawel Castle.

Marta Męclewska
SIGISMUND-AUGUSTUS Collector coins

Face value: 500 zł
metal: Au 999.9/1000
finish: standard
diameter: 45 mm
weight: 62.2 g
On the edge, the inscription:
SKARBY STANISŁAWA AUGUSTA *
ZYGMUNT AUGUST *
mintage: up to 600 pcs

Designer: reverse –
Anna Wątróbska-Wdowiarska
Obverse and inscriptions
on the reverse – Robert Kotowicz
Producer: Mennica Polska S.A.
commissioned by NBP
Date of issue: 7 December 2017

Face value: 50 zł
metal: Ag 999/1000
finish: standard
diameter: 45 mm
weight: 62.2 g
On the edge, the inscription:
SKARBY STANISŁAWA AUGUSTA *
ZYGMUNT AUGUST *
mintage: up to 6000 pcs

Designer: reverse –
Anna Wątróbska-Wdowiarska
Obverse and inscriptions
on the reverse – Robert Kotowicz
Producer: Mennica Polska S.A.
commissioned by NBP
Date of issue: 7 December 2017
Bolesław Chrobry
Boleslaus the Brave (992-1025)
Date of issue: 12 III 2013

Władysław Jagiełło
Ladislas Jagiello (1386-1434)
Date of issue: 3 III 2015

Wacław II Czeski
Vaclav II (1291-1305)
Date of issue: 22 V 2013

Władysław Warneńczyk
Ladislas of Varna (1434-1444)
Date of issue: 15 IX 2015

Władysław Łokietek
Ladislas the Elbow-high (1320-1333)
Date of issue: 13 IX 2013

Kazimierz Jagiellończyk
Casimir Jagiellon (1447-1492)
Date of issue: 3 XII 2015

Kazimierz Wielki
Casimir the Great (1333-1370)
Date of issue: 3 III 2014

Jan Olbracht
John Albert (1492-1501)
Date of issue: 14 VI 2016

Ludwik Węgierski
Louis I of Hungary (1370-1382)
Date of issue: 10 IX 2014

Aleksander Jagiellończyk
Alexander (1501-1506)
Date of issue: 7 XII 2016

Jadwiga Andegaweńska
Jadwiga of Anjou (1384-1399)
Date of issue: 4 XII 2014

Zygmunt I Stary
Sigismund the Elder (1506-1548)
Date of issue: 12 VII 2017
The series consists of 24 portraits of monarchs – of which 23 are modelled on the royal series plus a portrait of Stanisław August based on the medals from the period.
Issuing collector items is an occasion to commemorate important historic figures and anniversaries, as well as to develop interest of the public in Polish culture, science, and tradition.

Information on the issue schedule can be found at: www.nbp.pl/monety website. Collector coins issued by NBP are sold in the NBP regional branches and at the internet shop.

Should you have any questions, please contact our consultants at the following phone numbers: +48 22 185 45 96 and +48 22 185 13 03.

The next collector coin from the Treasures of King Stanisław August series – Henry Valois will be issued in July 2018.

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Narodowy Bank Polski is one of the most important research and analytical centres in the fields of economics and financial markets. For more information on NBP visit: www.nbp.pl

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