Collector coins

Treasures of Stanisław August

Sigismund Vasa
(1587–1632)
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 Stanislaw 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 Stanislaw 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 Bogumił 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 Stanislaw 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 Stanislaw 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.
The son of the Swedish King John, the grandson of Sigismund the Elder by his mother Catherine, elected on the 19th day of August Anno Domini 1587, having captured Maximilian of Austria, his rival to the throne, and crowned on the 27th day of December, he forfeited the Swedish kingdom because of his adherence to the Catholic faith. During his reign, Poland's neighbouring enemies were vanquished many a time, Smolensk was seized by the king's army, a commendable peace treaty was signed with the Turks and civil wars were suppressed. He died in Warsaw, at the castle he had renovated, on the 30th day of April Anno Domini 1632, at the age of 66, in the 45th year of his reign.
The sixteenth coin in the series depicts Sigismund III of the Vasa dynasty, the son of the Swedish King John III and Catherine Jagiellon, a daughter of Sigismund the Elder. He competed for the Polish throne with Maximilian III, Archduke of Austria. He was elected Polish king and crowned in 1587. Following his father's death in 1592, he also took over the Swedish throne. In 1599, the Swedish parliament announced his dethronement. Sigismund Vasa waged numerous wars and enlarged Poland’s territory to its biggest size in history. While this period in the Commonwealth of Poland was marked by great economic prosperity, the king himself did not gain much praise from either his contemporaries or posterity.

The reverse of the coin features the bust of the king transferred from a medal (according to a painting by Marcello Bacciarelli) with the profile facing right, with a mustache and a small beard, in a high hat with a jewelled feather brooch, in a large lace collar, wearing a caftan with studs and an embroidered coat, and with the Order of the Golden Fleece on a chain.

The obverse of the coin carries a slightly shortened version of the text from the reverse of the medal (in translation): The son of the Swedish King John, the grandson of Sigismund the Elder by his mother Catherine, elected on the 19th day of August Anno Domini 1587, having captured Maximilian of Austria, his rival to the throne, and crowned on the 27th day of December, he forfeited the Swedish kingdom because of his adherence to the Catholic faith. During his reign, Poland's neighbouring enemies were vanquished many a time, Smoleńsk was seized by the king's army, a commendable peace treaty was signed with the Turks and civil wars were suppressed. He died in Warsaw, at the castle he had renovated, on the 30th day of April Anno Domini 1632, at the age of 66, in the 45th year of his reign.

Sigismund Vasa was born in 1566 in Sweden, at the castle in Gripsholm, where his parents were imprisoned until 1567. Brought up by the Jesuits, the young prince became a devout Catholic, averse to the heretics. His opponents included Jan Zamoyski, a great humanist of the epoch. Sigismund’s claim to the Swedish crown after losing it in 1599 led to long-lasting wars. Equally unpopular in the Commonwealth of Poland, his pro-Habsburg policy led to conflicts with Turkey, while the armed intervention in Moscow (the so-called Dymitriads and the brief enthronement of his son Ladislas on the Tsars' throne) ended in failure. Sigismund was married twice – to Anna Habsburg and Constantia Habsburg, and fathered six children, among whom were the subsequent Polish kings, Ladislas and John Casimir. The king moved his residence to Warsaw and earned a reputation for being an outstanding patron and protector of the arts in the time of Mannerism and Early Baroque. He died in Warsaw in 1632, and was buried in Wawel Cathedral.

Marta Męclewska
SIGISMUND VASA 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 III WAZA *
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: 23 January 2020

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 III WAZA *
mintage: up to 5,000 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: 23 January 2020
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 91 59 and +48 22 185 13 03.

The next collector coin from the Treasures of King Stanislaw August series – Ladislas Vasa.

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