

***(...)nie widzę dla siebie innego
miejsca niż Włochy***

curator: Anna Diduch

Documentation (excerpt) submitted for the competition
for the curatorial project for the exhibition
in the Polish Pavilion at the
59th International Art Exhibition in Venice in 2022

THE THEME AND IDEA OF THE PROJECT

The main inspiration for the project is never completed travel to Italy by the last Polish king Stanisław August Poniatowski. After the third partition of Poland, the king dreamed of visiting the motherland of the artists he admired his whole life. The traces of his fascination of Italian art (both ancient and contemporary) are visible through the elements of architecture in Łazienki Royal Park, interior décor of Royal Palace in Warsaw and inside many letters with Polish artist who were sent to Italy under king's scholarship. Due to the death of Catherine II, the final decision to allow the royal journey never came to fruition, and Paul I, unfavorable towards Poniatowski, "invited" the king to St. Petersburg, giving him the Marble Palace, which became a kind of luxurious prison.

The theme of the project comes down to the idea to symbolically lead Poniatowski's journey from Poland to Italy - specifically from Łazienki Królewskie in Warsaw to Venice and to the Polish Pavilion. On the one hand, it is about "making amends" to history and making the king's dream come true. By creating a fictional event based on a historical situation, the project aims to create the dialogue between the age of Enlightenment with the present times and the travel restrictions that have affected us since the pandemic. The common point is that both the king in the 18th century and the inhabitants of the year 2021, are faced with a situation beyond our control.

This similar situation and the actuality of the topic of traveling around today's Europe is one of the justifications of the topic. The second justification is the thesis that contemporary forms of digital imaging such as virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) - which are just entering the mainstream of entertainment and art - have their spiritual roots in the Age of Enlightenment, of which Stanisław August Poniatowski was the greatest ambassador in Poland. The "expansion" of his life story should take place in the form of a virtual experience, thus creating a clamp between the two epochs.

Last but not least there are personal and professional reasons for this proposal: I am an art historian who sees the Enlightenment as a portal to an understanding of the present day. I would like to invite to the project in the Pavilion a Polish artist whose personal and creative life is connected with Łazienki Park and a film crew who made a publicly recognized VR experience drawing on Polish history.

SCENARIO SUMMARY

In 2022, the last king of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski, sets off on a never realized journey to Italy, which he dreamed of all his life. A fictional situation derived from historical facts is told with the latest film technologies: in the form of a virtual experience. The starting point for the project is the thesis that contemporary forms of digital imaging such as virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) - which are just entering the mainstream of entertainment and art - have their spiritual roots in the era of the Enlightenment, which Stanisław August Poniatowski was the greatest ambassador in Poland. Thanks to them, the idea of "travel", "presence", "experience of space" gains a new dimension, additionally emphasized by the times of pandemic and restrictions in travel.

On the opening day of the Biennale, the Polish Pavilion is equipped with copies of antique furniture from the 18th century and a video ceiling referring to interior decorations, which can be found, for example, in the Salomon Hall at the Palace on the Isle in Łazienki Królewskie in Warsaw. On the same day, the film crew, together with the king impersonalized by a contemporary actor, set off from Łazienki Królewskie in Warsaw and begin their journey to the Polish Pavilion in Venice. The course of this event is partially reported inside the Pavilion (video projection), and partially in social media. After reaching Venice, the stage of post-production of the VR experience takes place, which visitors to the biennial can watch live - part of the Pavilion's space becomes an editing studio. At the end of the first month of the Biennale, the experience is finished and ready to be presented inside the pavilion. Viewers visiting the pavilion can sit in antique furniture from the Poniatowski's era with VR goggles on their heads and experience the journey to Venice with the king.