Wax relief - Stephen Báthory, King of Poland and Prince of Transylvania

Metalwork Collection

Accession Nr.:	13708
Artist/Maker:	Ricci, Giulio
Place of production:	Krakow
Materials:	wax
Techniques:	painted
Dimensions:	diameter: 8,9 cm thickness: 1,8 cm

This was one of the last portraits made of István Báthori in his life. It depicts the King in profile, wearing a robe of red ermine inside, and a green coat decorated with golden geometrical motifs, with a white collar. On his head is a dark brown cap. The decoration of the cap has been broken off or the inlay is missing. The relief is in bad condition, only the face and the cap are original, whereas the other parts have been painted over and decorated with gold. The round, gilt copper case is in relatively good condition, its engraved back shows a rosette between two laurel wreaths, encircled by flowery tendrils. The rosette is in the form of a rich bunch of fruits. The glass sheet that covers the case is fixed by a metal ring, it is engraved with the inscription: *STEPHANUS D. G. REX POLONIAE 1586*. (Stephen, King of Poland by the Almighty's wish, 1586).

Small wax relief portraits were very popular in 16th century royal courts, however not many have survived due to the fragility of the material. (Another wax relief portrait of István Báthori is preserved in the Esterházy Treasury in Forchtenstein.)

The Budapest wax relief portrait is supposed to have been made by Giulio Ricci, since he was at the Cracow court from 1580 onwards. According to a receipt of 1586, he was paid ten Hungarian golden coins for making a wax relief portrait of the King, the portrait was sent as a present to András Báthori, the brother of the King, and a cardinal in Rome at the time. The piece described above is probably identical with that one. Unfortunately there is no information about where it could have been around 1600, but it must have been far away from Transylvania. It was purchased from the Egger-collection but we do not know exactly how it came to be there.

Literature

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