

## KING'S ANTECHAMBER

- Historical names: King's Antechamber (17th century),  
First Room in green flowers/First Velvet Room (18th century), Green  
Velvet Room/Velvet Green Room (19th century), King's Antechamber  
(20th century)
- Years of origin: 1677-1679
- Architect: Agostino Locci, 17th century.
- Artists: Jerzy Eleuter Siemiginowski – plafond "Winter", 17th century,  
Unknown artist - illusionistic decoration surrounding a plafond and a  
painted frieze circling the walls below the ceiling, 17th century.
- Description:

The King's Antechamber is one of the four most prominent royal chambers. It is similar in size to a bedroom and is linked by an artistic programme to the other chambers. Antechamber's walls were originally covered with gold velvet with crimson flowers and crowns. The room was heated by a tiled stove. The rich decoration of the ceiling and upper parts of the walls has been preserved from the 17th century decoration of the chamber. The ceiling is decorated with "Winter" plafond painted by the royal painter Jerzy Eleuter Siemiginowski. It is decorated with strips of paintings imitating stucco decorations around the plafond and frieze. These paintings are compositionally similar to covings in the royal bedrooms.

In the first third of the 18th century new fabrics were purchased for chambers in the main body of the palace. Around 1729, the door leading to the King's Bedroom was moved from the outer wall of the body to the middle, the stove was removed and replaced by a corner fireplace. Mirrors in gilded frames and white wainscoting with late Baroque ornamentation were also fitted at that time.

Patterned velvet fabrics of the Genoese type currently adorning the walls are replicas of 18th century upholstery and were made during the last restoration. Flooring was made of two types of marble composed in a large checkered pattern.

Plafond is a dominant feature of the room, to which the rest of the decoration is subordinated. The central part of the plafond depicting the allegory of 'Winter' depicts Aeolus as a naked man with the head of an old man, at the moment of releasing the winds: Boreas, Zephyr, Eurus and Notus. In the sky there is a symbol of the winter sign of the zodiac: Aquarius and the helper of the north wind Boreas spreading snow. The scene is set on a rocky seashore with discarded shells - symbols of nymphs, tritons and nereids. A youth drawing water with a shell is a symbol of Neptune. The scene is completed by a whale (symbol of winter months) and Odysseus with his back turned in his attempt to escape, who also reached the kingdom of Aeolus on his journey.

The painterly setting of the plafond depicts eight relief shells with figural scenes against a blue background. In the corners, figures of giants are depicted, while in the centre the symbols of the zodiac signs are represented: Aquarius, Pisces, Capricornus and Gemini. Below, the wall is decorated with an *en grisaille* frieze painted on canvas with representations of putti playing, hunting, handling agricultural

and weaving tools. In illusionistically rendered architectural frames there are multi-coloured compositions with scenes from Virgil's *Georgics*. They are accompanied by Latin quotations from this work:

Eastern wall - Rural dances

*Oraque corticibus sumunt horrenda cavatis  
et te, Bacche, vocant per carmina laeta.*  
(G. II, 387-388)

put on hideous masks of hollow cork,  
and call on you, Bacchus,

South wall - Hunting

*Et canibus leporem, canibus venebere dammas.  
Ingentem clamore premes ad retia cervum.*  
(G. III, 412, 415)

With hounds, too, hunt the hare, with hounds the doe;  
Oft from his woodland wallowing-den uprouse

Northern scene, from the east - Shepherds prepare winter shelter for sheep

*Sternere subter humum, glacies ne frigida laedat  
Molle pecus scabiemque ferat turpesque podagras.*  
(G. III, 298-299)

And handfuls of the fern be littered deep,  
Lest chill of ice such tender cattle harm  
With scab and loathly foot-rot.

Northern scene, from the west - Preparation of agricultural tools

*Tum variae venere artes: labor omnia vincit  
Improbis et duris urgens in rebus egestas.*  
(G. I, 145-146)

Then divers arts arose; toil conquered all,  
Remorseless toil, and poverty's shrewd push  
In times of hardship.

West wall - Weaving women

*Interea longum cantu solata laborem  
Arguto coniunx percurrit pectine telas.*  
(G. I, 293-294)

[previous lines: And one will sit the long late watches out  
By winter fire-light,  
Shaping with keen blade The torches to a point;]  
his wife the while, Her tedious labour soothing with a song,  
Speeds the shrill comb along the warp

Selected literature:

Fijałkowski Wojciech, *Vademecum Wilanowa*, Warsaw 2011.

Fijałkowski Wojciech, *Wnętrza pałacu w Wilanowie*, Warsaw 1986, p. 91.  
Karpowicz Mariusz, *Jerzy Eleuter Siemiginowski, malarz polskiego baroku*, Wrocław – Warsaw – Cracow – Gdańsk, 1974, pp. 100-105.  
Karpowicz Mariusz, *Sztuka Warszawy czasów Jana III*, Warsaw 1987, p. 77.  
Strycharczyk Barbara, *Georgiki Wergiliusza - źródło cytatów w Wilanowie*  
[http://www.wilanow-palac.pl/georgiki\\_wergiliusza\\_zrodlo\\_cytatow\\_w\\_wilanowie.html](http://www.wilanow-palac.pl/georgiki_wergiliusza_zrodlo_cytatow_w_wilanowie.html).