

ROYAL COAT

It is trimmed with ermine fur. Legend has it that the ermine, snow white in the winter, would rather perish than soil its sumptuous coat. Thus, the animal's fur came to be a symbol of the moral immaculacy expected of a ruler and a material fit for the majesty of a king.

CROWN

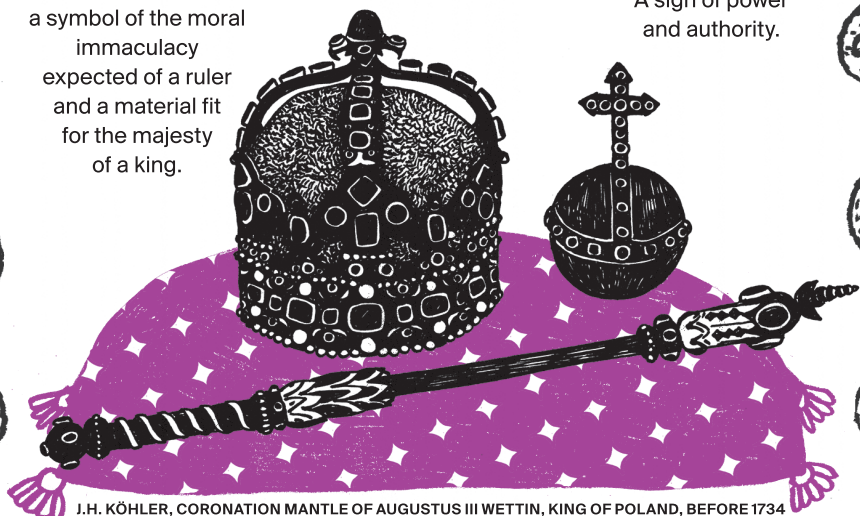
The crown symbolises the ruler's chosen and elevated nature. Its earliest form was as a band of leaves or flowers adorning the head of a distinguished individual: a conqueror, poet, ruler or priest.

ROYAL ORB

The sphere topped with a cross symbolises the ruler's dominion over the world.

SCEPTRE

A sign of power and authority.



J.H. KÖHLER, CORONATION MANTLE OF AUGUSTUS III WETTIN, KING OF POLAND, BEFORE 1734

The coronation of a Christian ruler was a sacral event, with a liturgical form, evident in the style of the proceedings and in the fact that the coronation suit was inspired by the ceremonial robes of a bishop.

The only surviving complete set of regalia (although stripped of its original gems) from the era of the Commonwealth of Two Nations is the insignia of Augustus III and his wife Maria Josepha of Austria.

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Being an indication of the wealth and high social standing of their owner, the works of art adorning the walls of a residence also provided amusement and moral guidance.

In the gallery's section dedicated to court life, find some beautiful and luxurious objects which would have occupied the interiors of palaces and villas. Below are some clues:

1 MAIOLICA WARE DECORATED WITH BIBLICAL AND ANCIENT MYTHOLOGICAL SCENES

This was an important element in the furnishings of a wealthy home. Put out on china hutchs and tables during feasts, it at once delighted the eye and provided inspiration for erudite discourse.

2 CASSONE

A carved chest used to store clothing, jewellery and other precious belongings. They were evidence of the household's wealth and the intricate scenes decorating their walls provided diversion as well as lessons on marital virtue.

3 PAINTINGS WITH MYTHOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL THEMES

These images helped transport the viewer's imagination to idyllic places such as Arcadia, a mythical land of eternal happiness. Admiring such painting stimulated discussion on love and beauty.



1. FOOTED PLATE WITH VENUS AND CUPID RIDING DOLPHINS, 2ND HALF 16TH c.
2. LORENZO DI NICCOLO DI MARTINO? (ACTIVE IN FLORENCE IN 1392-1411/12), SCENES FROM THE MYTH OF DIANA, MELEAGER AND ACTAEON, CASSONE DETAIL
3. PARIS BORDONE (1500-1571), VENUS AND CUPID

CASTRUM DOLORIS



The deceased was always shown with their eyes open in order to underscore the fact that, despite having crossed the threshold of earthly life, they are actively involved and centrally important in their transition into eternity.

The *castrum doloris* was constructed in a such a way that the head of the coffin, and thus the portrait, would be visible from anywhere in the church. The allegorical figures and other decorative elements were intended to direct the eyes of a casket portrait of the deceased, was displayed centrally.

The foremost decorative element in a 17th century funeral was the catafalque, placed in a prominent location inside the church. They were referred to using the Latin term *castrum doloris*, meaning "castle of sorrow," inside which a casket portrait of the deceased was displayed centrally.

The funeral ceremony for nobles and magnates was an extremely elaborate process. Burial preparations stretched on for long periods of time, often months. It was not unusual for set designers and masters of ceremony to be employed to ensure maximum impact.

A Noble's Death

Polish coffin portraits were images of the deceased painted on six- or eight-sided metal sheets which were affixed to the head of the coffin for the duration of the funeral proceedings. The practice of making such portraits was a unique contribution of Old Polish culture to the artistic legacy of Baroque Europe.

Take up
a perspective,
ye of blind eyes
And see the
glorious Triones
of the skies
Then ye will agree
that much is
unfound
For he who with
earth and not
heaven be bound.
ZBIGNIEW MORCZYSTY

**JUSTUS VAN EGMONT
MARIE LOUISE GONZAGA,
FUTURE QUEEN OF POLAND, 1645**

Marie Louise Gonzaga (1611–1667), princess of Mantua and Nevers, was the wife of two consecutive Polish kings, Władysław IV Vasa and John II Casimir Vasa. This portrait was most likely painted to mark the betrothal of Marie Louise to Władysław IV in 1645. As per court art convention, the princess is depicted as a graceful nymph strolling amid Arcadian woods.



**ORANGE TREE
(IN BLOOM
AND BEARING FRUIT)**

This is a symbol associated with love, fertility and success.

**THE ORDER OF
THE GOLDEN FLEECE**

The Order of the Golden Fleece was founded by the Duke of Burgundy Philip the Good to commemorate his marriage to Isabella of Portugal on 10 January 1430 in Bruges.

The chivalrous order and its member knights enjoyed considerable political and religious privileges. The order's name bears reference to the ancient story of Jason and the Argonauts' quest for the golden fleece, the hide of a golden ram, and to Gideon's Fleece from the Book of Judges (Old Testament), which became a miraculous sign of God's support when covered in dew.



**DANIEL SCHULTZ
PORTRAIT OF KING JOHN II
CASIMIR VASA, c. 1660**

John II Casimir Vasa (1609–1672) poses in the attire of a ruler: clad in armour, in a royal sash, and wearing a peruke on his head. The official nature of this portrait is further emphasised by the royal crown visible in the background.



**FLEUR-DE-LIS, FLEUR-DE-LYS
(FR. "FLOWER OF THE LILY")**

A heraldic element associated with the French monarchy.



**JEAN-MARC NATTIER, WORKSHOP
MARIE LESZCZYŃSKA, QUEEN OF FRANCE
REPLICA, c. 1770**

Marie Leszczyńska (1703–1768), daughter of Stanisław Leszczyński, married Louis XV and became the queen consort of France. Known for her great piety and modesty, the queen elected to be portrayed in everyday attire with one hand resting on an open bible.

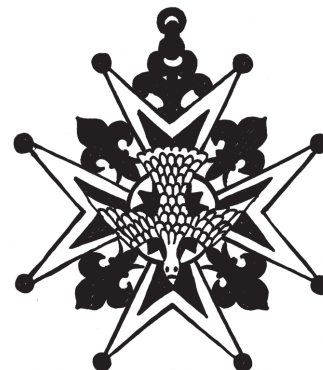
Official portraits

There were numerous ways in which rulers were glorified and elevated above the level of their subjects. The most common way was through portraiture.

Find the paintings discussed here and notice the elements which emphasise the position and significance of the sitter.

**PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAIGNE
CARDINAL RICHELIEU
c. 1635–1640**

During the reign of Louis XIII, Cardinal Richelieu (Armand Jean du Plessis, 1585–1642) was France's most influential statesman, a patron of the arts and the founder of the French Academy. Portrayed in full length against a massive column and curtains, the clergyman personifies the majesty of France and the fortitude of the church.



**THE ORDER OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Order of the Holy Spirit was founded on 31 December 1578 by King Henry III of France. The ruler chose this designation because three important events in his life – his birth, his ascent to the Polish throne, and his eventual ascent to the French throne – took place on the day of Pentecost.

