

Die Repräsentation Maria Theresias

Herrschaft und Bildpolitik im Zeitalter der Aufklärung

Herausgegeben von Werner Telesko, Sandra Hertel und Stefanie Linsboth

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Female Rulers of two Empires: Representation Strategies of Maria Theresa and Catherine the Great

The 18th century was marked by a unique situation of co-existence between the two empires. The new Russian Empire arose alongside the Holy Roman Empire which had existed already for 800 years. On 20 October 1721 Peter I of Russia received from Senate and Synod the titles 'Father of the Fatherland', 'Emperor of all the Russias' and 'Peter the Great'. It was a military success in the Great Northern War with Sweden (1700–1721), which provided Russia with the political basis for its proclamation of Empire. The ideological rationale behind the move was the inheritance of the Orthodox Empire of Byzantium. However, using the Latin title Peter 'dressed up his claim in western clothes'¹¹⁸ and this caused numerous difficulties in achieving European recognition of his ambition. Russia in its turn aspired to confirm its extraordinary status not only by diplomacy and war, but also through art, adopting the European artistic system, which was introduced to Russia on a large scale only in the reign of Peter the Great.

The uniqueness of the situation was increased by the fact that in the 18th century female rulers were at the head of both Empires for a long time. The lack of sons prompted Charles VI to promulgate the Pragmatic Sanction (1713) ensuring that the Habsburg hereditary possessions could be inherited by his daughters. Nonetheless, at the beginning of her rule Maria Theresa, was challenged by the War of Austrian Succession (1740–1748), as well as problems to do with the symbolic representation of female rule unprecedented in Habsburg tradition.¹¹⁹

Peter the Great had no male heir for the throne either. The conflict with Aleksei, his son from his first marriage, resulted in Aleksis' prosecution and ultimately his death (*Delo tsarevicha Alekseia*). Peter, his son from his marriage with his beloved Catherine, died in 1719 at the age of four. Peter the Great edited the *Ukaz o prestolonasledii* (Law of Succession, 1722) so that the Emperor could himself appoint an heir for the throne and thus potentially opened the door to power for his wife and daughters. Eventually, Peter

died without leaving a will. Ambiguity in the order of succession and many *coup-d'états* made all 18th-century Russian rulers highly concerned with establishing their legitimacy in the country.

Thus, the 18th-century strategies of representation of the monarch's power in art in the Holy Roman Empire and in the Russian Empire invite comparison. Maria Theresa was a contemporary of the two successive Russian Empresses – Elizabeth and Catherine. Whereas the first, who came to the throne as a result of a *coup-d'état*, was a daughter of Peter the Great thus strengthening her legitimacy, Catherine had no rights to the Russian throne at all: the princess of Anhalt-Zerbst was the wife of Peter the Great's grandson, Peter III, whom she dethroned.

Images of both Elizabeth and Catherine are worthy of comparison to those of Maria Theresa. This paper mainly examines parallels and differences between the representation strategies of Maria Theresa and Catherine the Great. It is based on two groups of interrelated images illustrating the double nature of the Empress, i.e. ruler and woman: on the one hand, portraits commemorating the succession to the throne and her function as a defender of the country, and, on the other, portraits symbolizing her functions connected with the family and the reproduction of the dynasty.

Coronation portraits are the first major statements in a visual discourse of a ruler. The Hungarian and Bohemian coronations led to the existence in Maria Theresa's iconography of two types of portraits linking her to the lands concerned.¹²⁰ Moreover, the Hungarian coronation in its turn was rendered in two kinds of images – equestrian portraits commemorating the coronation ceremony in Preßburg, and those in the coronation dress. By contrast, Catherine the Great was crowned only once. Instead of a diverse array of iconographic types her image was reflected in two portraits in her coronation costume – the large imperial crown (made especially for her by Jérémie Pauzié), a silver dress emblazoned with the coat-of-arms of the Russian Empire, and an ermine-trimmed cloak.

118 Madariaga 1998, 37.

119 See also: Hertel, Schicksalsjahre in this volume.

120 For example: Studio of Martin van Meytens, Maria Theresa in Bohemian coronation robes, after 1745 (see pl. 4), Yonan, 2011, 25 (fig.).



Fig. 158: Vigilius Eriksen, Catherine II, after 1762 (SPSG, F0015103)



Fig. 159: Stephano Torelli, Coronation portrait of Catherine the Great, between 1763 and 1766 (© St. Petersburg, The State Russian Museum, Ж-5808)

One of these portraits was painted by Vigilius Eriksen, a Danish artist active in Russia from 1757 to 1772. Catherine is standing elevated on a dais so that her figure almost touches the frame and dominates the picture (fig. 158). Her weighty presence and the powerful gestures with which she holds an orb and a sceptre make her image a paragon of supreme elegant confidence. Copies of the portrait were sent to London, Berlin and Copenhagen, which confirms that Catherine approved the image and wanted to be represented to European courts in such a guise.¹²¹

The other coronation portrait (fig. 159)¹²² is a work of the Italian painter Stephano Torelli who worked in Russia from 1762 onwards. Catherine's posture here is less formidable, but still majestic. Whereas in Eriksen's painting she appears in a restrained neoclassical interior, Torelli portrays her upon the background of sumptuous baroque curved columns entwined with gilded laurel garlands and crimson pilasters with rocaille adornments. This could be either the rendition of a real interior or a convention, as similar columns are depicted in Aleksei Antropov's sketch for his *Portrait of Peter III* painted in 1762.¹²³ On the whole, the emphasis of the portrait, as Erin McBurney argues, was not on Catherine as a person, but 'on the abstract embodiment of unlimited wealth and the sheer scope of imperial power'¹²⁴.

Of great importance is the motif of the three crowns lying on the table – *shapki* of Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberia –, though they are always mentioned in descriptions of the painting.¹²⁵ In Eriksen's painting the crowns are depicted at the far left. In Aleksei Antropov's copies¹²⁶ the table with them is moved towards the front edge of the canvas, is better visible and, therefore, accentuated. In her dissertation about the regalia of the Tsars as symbols of power in 18th-century Russian culture Marina Volkova observes that the three crowns appear here in a portrait of a Russian ruler for the first time, that they correspond to her title and that the depiction of old regalia fitted the Empress into the Russian tradition of power.¹²⁷ However, such an explanation seems insufficient. A more appropriate symbol of the Russian tradition of power would probably have been the crown of Monomakh. Presumably presented to Ivan Kalita by the Khan of the *Golden Horde* in the 15th century, it started to be associated with a gift of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus, which he, according to the legend, gave to his relative Kievan *kniaz* Vladimir Monomakh.¹²⁸ The *shapka* of Monomachus appears with this meaning later in Johann Baptist Lampi's sketch of a portrait of Catherine the Great.¹²⁹

121 It is rather difficult to date, but the artist probably started working on it in 1762/1763. One variant of the portrait is in Copenhagen, Davids Samling, 14/1967 (1778/1779). For other variants see: Renne 1999, 100, 102, 629; Il'ina 2011, 48, 49.

122 Goldovskii 1998, no. 448 (fig.).

123 Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, 62; Iovleva 2015, no. 21, fig.

124 McBurney 2014, 170. This fresh and convincing interpretation contradicts the opinion of Serge Ernst who said concerning this picture that Torelli was first of all realist, keen observer and attentive psychologist, Ernst 1970, 174.

125 Full bibliography see: Graziani 2005, 290–291.

126 1766 (St. Petersburg, The State Russian Museum, Ж-5489), Goldovskii 1998, no. 26; before 1766 (St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, ЭРЖ-570), AK Catherine 2005, 12–13; 1795 (St. Petersburg, Tsarskoe Selo State Museum, ЕД-756-X), Nekrasov 2012, 33, 96.

127 Volkova 2011, 60–61.

128 Bobrovnickaja 2013, 58.

129 No later than 1793 (St. Petersburg, The State Russian Museum, Ж-4554), Goldovskii 1998, no. 227.

The crowns of Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberia symbolize the absorption into the Russian state of three independent states in the time of Ivan the Terrible. *Kazanskoe* and *Astrakhanskoe khanstva* were remnants of the *Golden Horde*, the first was finally conquered in 1552 and the latter in 1556. In the 17th century, the crown of Kazan was called by the inventories of the Treasury ‘*shapka* of Kazan Tsar Simeon’ – the last ruler of Kazan who was brought to Moscow, baptized under the name Simeon and thus began his service to the Tsar of Muscovy. According to one 19th-century version, the *shapka* was made in Kazan and brought as a military trophy. According to the other, more likely story, it was crafted in Moscow on Ivan’s orders to commemorate victory over Kazan (it is now kept in the Moscow Kremlin museums as is the Monomachus crown)¹³⁰. The crown, since the 18th century known as Astrakhan one, was made in the workshop of the Moscow Kremlin in 1627.¹³¹ The crown, which since the 18th century started to be described as crown of Siberia was created in Moscow Kremlin in 1684.¹³²

In the 18th century, the annexation of Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberia was interpreted in imperial discourse and was associated with Tsar Ivan the Terrible’s procurement of the title of Tsar, although in fact he was crowned earlier in 1547.¹³³ Since Peter’s time the three old crowns together with the new imperial crown were used in the funerals of emperors.¹³⁴ The symbolism of the three crowns, which developed in the ceremonial culture of the 18th century, was used in portraiture for the first time in Torelli’s coronation portrait of Catherine the Great.¹³⁵

Tellingly, it is used in a way similar to Maria Theresa’s iconography: symbolizes numerous titles of the ruler stressing her extraordinary power. Depending on the purpose of the portrait either all the crowns are depicted (the Archducal hat, the Hungarian crown of St. Stephan, the Bohemian crown of St. Wenceslas, Otto I’s imperial crown or Rudolf II’s crown) or just some of them, emphasizing a particular aspect of Maria Theresa’s power. In the *Portrait of*

Maria Theresa in Bohemian Coronation dress (see pl. 4),¹³⁶ which was painted in the studio of Martin van Meytens, Maria Theresa wears the Bohemian crown, thus emphasizing her role as ruler of Bohemia, on the table is the Hungarian crown, while behind it are the Archducal hat and the imperial crown. Michael Yonan claims that some early portraits ‘privilege a single ethnic identity, but over time this type of image lost favor to those that represented the Empress as the bearer of multiple crowns’¹³⁷. This idea can be illustrated by Martin van Meytens’ portrait from the National Gallery of Ljubljana (see fig. 72); Maria Theresa is shown with her hand resting on three crowns – those of the Archduke of Austria, Queen of Bohemia and Queen of Hungary.¹³⁸ The combination of crowns of Bohemia, Hungary and Rudolf II can be seen in Versailles.¹³⁹ Finally, in Martin van Meytens’ portraits from the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin (see pl. 3) and his *Maria Theresa in a Pink Dress* (see pl. 10)¹⁴⁰ there are four crowns situated in front of Maria Theresa – the Archducal hat, the crowns of Bohemia and Hungary and Rudolf II’s crown. Tellingly, in case of Catherine the Great there is an imperial crown on her head, as was the case in portraits of her immediate predecessors Elizabeth and Anna, underlining the fact that she is actually the ruler of the Empire. Crowns of the lands annexed to Russia, which by analogy can loosely be referred to as states included in the Empire, are in front of her.

Without any textual proof it is impossible to claim that Catherine the Great wanted her coronation portraits to be made following the example of the Holy Roman Empire. Yet, given the fact that the portraits of Maria Theresa were replicated in engravings, we can assume that they were known in Russia or at least in Italy or at the Court of Augustus King of Poland and Elector of Saxony where Torelli previously worked. Although Catherine preferred to send copies of her coronation portrait by Eriksen abroad (presumably, as it was more neoclassical and thus demonstrated her advanced taste), Torelli’s portrait was also very successful as is shown by the existence of copies of it.

130 Samoilova 2007, 34.

131 State Regalia / Moscow Kremlin Museums. URL: <https://www.kreml.ru/exhibitions/virtual-exhibitions.drevnosti-gosudarstva-rossiyskogo-tvorchestve-fg-solntseva/gosudarstvennye-regalii/> [Access: 18.04.2018].

132 AK Russian Emperors 2006, 91.

133 Skvortcova 2018.

134 Logunova 2010, 98, 110–111, 140, 155.

135 For more details see: Skvortcova 2020.

136 Mraz / Mraz 1980, 81.

137 Yonan 2011, 33.

138 AK Maria Teresea 1982, 37–38.

139 Mraz / Mraz 1980, 299 (fig.).

140 AK Maria Theresia Schönbrunn 2017, 19 (fig.).

The Hungarian coronation of Maria Theresa in Preßburg provided grounds for two more types in her iconography, including one in a national costume. During the coronation ceremony, she wore an attire reminiscent of Hungarian noble female dress of the early modern period and was depicted in such a dress in a series of portraits (see pl. 5–6). Szabolcs Serfőző relates this rite to the symbolic legitimization of an alien Habsburg ruler as a king of Hungary, which goes back to the enthronement of Emperor Maximilian II in 1563. A similar tradition developed in Poland, where in the 17th century the Swedish Wasa dynasty established itself, and in the first half of the 18th century Polish kings were electors of Saxony.¹⁴¹

The Romanovs, who had ruled since 1613, were a Russian dynasty. However, with the westernization of Russia in the time of Peter the Great the costume of the upper layers of society changed to foreign European fashion, prompting misunderstanding and protest among the population.¹⁴² From Peter's time onwards, none of the Russian rulers before Catherine the Great had been portrayed in Russian national attire. Alien in Russia, she wanted to stress her commitment to Russian traditions. Contemporaries noted that she introduced elements of national costume in her dress: 'Her Majesty invented for herself a costume resembling the old Russian one, with a veil and open armhole. She wore a fur-coat with a waist and a multi-row mother-of-pearl necklace.'¹⁴³ One half-length portrait of Catherine in a national dress was painted by Vigilius Eriksen: She is depicted in a sleeveless jacket and a *kokoshnik* – stylized Russian dress. The portrait may have been painted to celebrate her official declaration as 'Mother of the Fatherland' by the deputies of the Legislative Commission in 1767.¹⁴⁴ The original pastel portrait by Eriksen seems not to have survived, but there is a replica and several copies are known. Not only was it reproduced in engravings, but it was also used as a model for Karl Leberecht's medal coined in 1779 with the inscription 'Mother of the Fatherland'.¹⁴⁵ The other portrait (1772?), now in a private collection in Paris, was painted by Torelli. Catherine is shown in a lavish elaborate dress with a flow-

ery pattern resembling the traditional Russian *sarafan* and with a mask in her hand. On her head is an ornate high *kokoshnik*. Despite the theatrical situation of a masquerade, this image also underlines the legitimacy of Catherine as a truly Russian ruler. Though both portraits are half-length and far less declamatory than a full-length state Hungarian coronation portrait of Maria Theresa, the ideological message behind them is the same.¹⁴⁶ In historical perspective, stylized Russian dresses would be first used at a Russian coronation ball during the coronation of Nicholas I and his son and successor Alexander II would first appear at the event in a uniform of an imperial rifle battalion in national style.¹⁴⁷

Another portrait type of Catherine the Great and Maria Theresa inviting comparison is the equestrian portrait, which was for centuries an embodiment of archetypical masculine qualities of a ruler as military leader. In European tradition there were a few examples of female portraits on horseback, such as Sébastien Bourdon's *Queen Christina of Sweden* (1653/1654),¹⁴⁸ or Rutger van Langerfeld's drawn Portrait of *Dorothea of Holstein-Glücksburg, Electress of Brandenburg as a Hunter* (c. 1680).¹⁴⁹ Maria Theresa was portrayed on horseback during her Hungarian coronation in Preßburg, when according to the old tradition after the church ceremony she had to ride up a hill consisting of land brought from all over Hungary with St. Stephen's sword in her hand pointing with it in four directions – thus symbolizing her promise to protect the country from enemies (see fig. 26). Such depictions were very widespread both in paintings and in engravings proving her legitimacy as a 'female king'. All the pictures were to be accompanied by a portrait of her husband, also on horseback, but without a sword. Most of the paintings were small cabinet-pictures, like the one by Martin van Meytens and Johann Georg de Hamilton.¹⁵⁰ The only large-format painting of this kind is the one by an unknown artist in Körmend Batthyány-Strattmann László Múzeum (c. 1745).¹⁵¹

There are a number of equestrian portraits of Catherine the Great. Such depictions of the Russian Empress were not

141 Serfőző 2017a, 109. See also: Serfőző, Ungarn, 312 in this volume.

142 Panchenko / Uspenskii 1983, 55–56.

143 Epatko 2017, 31.

144 Renne 2001, 16.

145 Renne 2005, 268.

146 See also the article of Johannes Pietsch in this volume.

147 Amelekhina 2013, 24–29.

148 Madrid, Museo del Prado, P001503.

149 SPSG, GK II (6) 52. Keller 2015, 31, 276 (fig.).

150 C. 1745 (MNM, TKCs 61).

151 Serfőző 2017a, 107–108.



Fig. 160: Martin Engelbrecht, Anna of Russia, 1730 (ÖNB, Bildarchiv, PORT_00033798_01)

new. They first appeared in the context of the iconography of Anna. In an engraving by Martin Engelbrecht, a work of rather mediocre quality, Anna in female dress is sitting on horseback in a lady's saddle (fig. 160). The imperative look is attained mostly by graceless muscular hands. The first Russian Empress to be portrayed in male costume astride a horse was Elizabeth. Her court painter Georg Christof Grooth depicted her in a uniform of a colonel of the Preobrazhenskii regiment.¹⁵² Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner making reference to this portrait in the context of Maria Theresa's iconography who was never depicted in a man's saddle explains this novelty by the fact that Elizabeth came

to power as a result of an armed *coup-d'état*.¹⁵³ Russian researchers usually emphasize the playful tone of this rococo portrait. The leading Grooth expert Liudmila Markina maintains that Elizabeth is depicted 'not as a warrior, but as a participant of a ride in the park.'¹⁵⁴ The figures of the Empress and the accompanying Arabic boy are perfectly poised; the colour-scheme is sophisticated suggesting peaceful rather than military associations. However, in the background there is an area of water with ships bearing the St. Andrew flag of the Russian Navy. In 1743, the year when the portrait in question was created, the Russian-Swedish War of 1741–1743 was finished after several naval battles with the successful Treaty of Åbo. This fact was especially precious to Elizabeth who tried to represent herself as a rightful successor of her father Peter the Great. It was he who won a victory over Sweden in the Great Northern War. Thus, it is rather succession from her father and military success than a *coup-d'état* which laid the foundations for the idea of such a portrait. Though under the guise of a masquerade, the portrait deals with important masculine issues of power.

Catherine was already portrayed on horseback in the time when she was Grand Duchess by Grooth who created a portrait of her¹⁵⁵ as a pendant to that of her husband Peter¹⁵⁶: Clad in a female dress, she is gracefully sitting side-saddle. In fact, by that time she rode astride, even though it was disapproved of by the Empress Elizabeth who argued that it was the reason for her not having children¹⁵⁷ and, presumably, because she disliked Catherine's independence.

Catherine succeeded to the throne as a result of the *coup-d'état* of 28 June 1762. Erin McBurney stresses that unlike her immediate predecessors Elizabeth and Anna whose seizures of power took place in the Winter Palace, she travelled from the suburban residence of Peterhof to the barracks in St. Petersburg and from there set off at the head of the troops to Oranienbaum, where her husband could be found at the time. Though there was finally no battle, her accession to the throne was indeed a conquest, which she represented as the act of salvation of the motherland from the insane Emperor.¹⁵⁸ Her triumph was depicted in the two portraits, again by Torelli and Eriksen. In this case Catherine's preference was obviously given to the latter. Torelli produced a painting in which Catherine, clad in an an-

152 1743 (Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, 4584).

153 AK Maria Theresa Schönbrunn 2017, 320; see also: Strunck 2017, 68.

154 Markina 2016, 15.

155 1744? (St. Petersburg, The State Russian Museum, Ж-4932), Goldovskii 1998, no. 130.

156 1742–1744 (St. Petersburg, The State Russian Museum, Ж-5337), Goldovskii, 1998, no. 131.

157 Katharina II. 1876, 160.

158 McBurney 2014, 121–122.

cient-looking dress, is sitting on horseback accompanied by the personifications of Peace, Justitia, Hardiness and Russia handing a crown to her (whereabouts unknown)¹⁵⁹. The posture of the Empress certainly lacks graceful ease. Catherine did not like the portrait and wrote to Étienne-Maurice Falconet: 'In my opinion there is a horse and a figure on the horse and I don't like either, nor is the rest very good.'¹⁶⁰ There is one more depiction of the Empress astride the horse, but still in female clothes – a drawing by Gavriil Kozlov and an engraving following it by Nikolai Kolpakov.¹⁶¹ Catherine is depicted in stylized ancient dress with a feathered helmet on her head and resolutely pointing with a marshal's baton. Around her are the figures of Faith, Justice, Hope and Russia leading her horse by its bridle and holding a flaming heart (symbol of fidelity) in her hand.

The most iconic equestrian image of the Empress was created by Eriksen, who depicted her in a Guard uniform of a colonel of the Preobrazheski regiment riding astride on the day of the *coup-d'état*.¹⁶² There is a cold noble air about this portrait. The strong restrained gesture of the Empress's hand holding a sword, determination and calmness in her eyes transmit the perfect self-assurance of the ruler.

The gender-challenging role of a ruler could not alter the fact that Empresses were women. Female nature was traditionally associated with being a wife and a mother bearing children to guarantee the succession of power. Here the difference between Maria Theresa and Catherine was most obvious. The fertility of Maria Theresa, who bore 16 children was especially important at a moment when the survival of the dynasty was at risk and was glorified in art in family portraits with her husband and children, such as Martin van Meytens' *Imperial Family with 11 children on the imagined terrace in Schönbrunn* (see pl. 13)¹⁶³ and engravings in which the family was depicted in a collection of portrait medallions.¹⁶⁴ Of major importance was her son Joseph, the

heir to the throne. This can be best exemplified by Martin Johann Schmidt's portrait of Maria Theresa seated on a throne with little Joseph elevated on a cushion. His hand is resting on the orb and multiple regalia are in front of the mother and child.¹⁶⁵ After the death of her beloved husband Maria Theresa was inconsolable and her personal sorrow as well as her new status was reflected in a series of images.¹⁶⁶

The relationship of Catherine with her husband was never truly hearty and worsened with the years, which, of course, did not prevent the emergence of conventional double portraits.¹⁶⁷ In his first accession manifestos, Peter did not mention either Catherine or their son Paul. After being dethroned he was kept under arrest and killed by his guards, participants in the *coup-d'état*, a week later. There is a miniature portrait of Catherine in mourning attire by Eriksen.¹⁶⁸ As she is represented with the Order of St. Andrew, it must have been finished after her accession to the throne. However, it is believed that it was in fact commissioned earlier to celebrate Catherine's mourning for Elizabeth. In contrast to her husband, she diligently attended the Empress's funeral bier, trying to demonstrate her adherence to the principles of the Russian Orthodox Church.¹⁶⁹ The mourning continued after her accession to the throne. In the portrait the order of St. Andrew marks Catherine's new status as Empress, but nothing specifically indicates her new position as a widow.

In the first years after the accession Catherine tried to establish her legitimacy as the mother of the heir to the throne. However, this concept was cultivated mostly in literature¹⁷⁰ and not in the fine arts where there are only three evidences of this idea being addressed. First of all is a painted portrait in which Catherine is holding the hand of her son, while from the clouds the Saviour is handing her a sceptre – importantly her and not her son which reveals that she was claiming power for herself through recogni-

159 Graziani 2005, 303.

160 Renne 2005, 150.

161 AK Katharina die Große 1997, 133–1344, no. 68.

162 After 1764 (St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, ГЭ 1312), Strunck 2017, 68–69, fig. 4.2, Renne 1999, 96, fig. 106.

163 AK Maria Theresia Schönbrunn 2017, 172. See also: Telesko, *Familia Augusta* in this volume.

164 Johann Martin Will, after 1756 (ÖNB, Bildarchiv, PORT_00047935_01); Johann Michael Probst, after 1756 (ÖNB, Bildarchiv, PORT_00067346_01); J. C. Müller, after 1756 (Wien Museum, 179439), Barta 2001, 74–76.

165 AK Joseph II. 1980, 324, no. 15, fig. 4.

166 Yonan 2003. See also: Linsboth, *Witwenporträts* in this volume.

167 Georg Christof Grooth, *Portrait of Grand Duke Petr Fedorovich and Grand Duchess Ekaterina Alexeevna, 1745?* (St. Petersburg, The State Russian Museum, Ж-5341), Goldovskii 1998, no. 138; Anna Dorothea Therbusch-Lisiewska, 1756 (Stockholm, National museum, NMGrh 1269).

168 1762 (Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, 4049), Iovleva 2015, 347, no. 348.

169 Renne 1999, 98.

170 Proskurina 2006, 57–105.

tion of her role as a regent for him.¹⁷¹ This composition also exists in the form of an engraving in which it is surrounded by portraits of Catherine's predecessors on the Russian throne.¹⁷² Finally, there is an engraving by Joseph Lante in which a portrait of Paul is standing on the table in front of Catherine the Great.¹⁷³ The idea of fertility and continuation of the dynasty would develop only with the arrival of grandchildren – Grand Duke Paul and his wife Maria (Sophie Dorothea of Württemberg) had ten of them – who would immediately be involved in visual political discourse.

Before this Catherine had found a brilliant way of justifying her uneasy position within the Russian ruling family in the ensemble of the Chesme palace (1774–1780, architect Iurii Veldten) – a stopping-off point on the road from St. Petersburg to the imperial summer residence of Tsarskoe Selo. It took its name from the Church of the Birth of St. John the Baptist constructed later (1777–1780, Veldten) to commemorate Russia's brilliant naval victory over Turkey in Chesme Bay (on 24 June 1770), during the first Russian-Turkish War. Built in Gothic style, the palace housed a collection of portraits of European monarchs as well as members of their families who were alive at that time, 59 portraits (all are ceremonial, full-length portraits) representing 14 states.¹⁷⁴ Above them were marble medallions with bas-relief life-size portraits of Russian grand princes, tsars and emperors (although only half- and not full-length) sculpted by Fedot Shubin, 58 altogether. While painting makes the portraits look animated due to the use of colours, the medium of marble bas-reliefs implies greater distance between the viewer and the image, thus separating retrospective and modern lines.

In Europe galleries of royal portraits had been created since the 16th century, although contemporaries suggested that such a full collection of ruler portraits as in the Chesme Palace could not have been found elsewhere. Such an ambitious type of collecting demonstrated Catherine's desire to outmatch Europe and this appeared strange to some European visitors. For instance, Polish King Stanislaus Augustus described the Chesme palace portrait gallery as 'odd'. The creation of a gallery of sculptural portraits of crowned ancestors is also evidence of her forceful aspirations. A rare parallel can be found in the arrangement by Maria Theresa in 1766 of the hall with 13 monumental full-length statues of her ancestors in the Viennese Upper Belvedere, but

they had been created earlier by the brothers Paul, Peter and Dominik Strudel.¹⁷⁵

While bas-relief portraits of the Rurikids and the Romanovs were to help Catherine II fit herself into a Russian line of succession, the collection of portraits of European sovereigns was designed to represent her as a member of the community of world rulers, which could also be called 'family', insofar as the most European ruling dynasties were closely linked by ties of kinship. An artful presentation of family ties is further developed in Catherine's literary piece entitled *Le Château de Tehesma: L'entretien des portraits et médaillons*. In it, Peter the Great calls Catherine II his 'granddaughter', but evidently not as wife of his grandson Peter III, but as a successor to his daughter Elizabeth, eventually stressing the legitimacy of her succession from him. However, actual kinship still does matter, and Catherine II seizes the chance to mention the kinship of the Rurikid ruling house with European dynasties.

Portraits of the Habsburgs were, of course, also presented in the palace. They were located in the central domed hall. Among them were portraits of Maria Theresa, Joseph II, his brothers Leopold (and his wife Maria Luisa of Spain), Ferdinand (and his wife Maria Beatrice of Modena), his sister Marie Antoinette and her husband French King Louis XVI, Marie Caroline and her husband Ferdinand IV, King of Sicily, Maria Amalia and her husband Ferdinand, Duke of Parma. There was also a portrait of Maximilian in a separate room as there was not enough space for it in the central hall. In other cases, portraits of couples were placed together with the family of the husband. The different approach in this case demonstrated the supremacy of the house of Austria in the traditional hierarchy of European states. This can also be regarded as a diplomatic gesture towards Austria. During late 1770s and early 1780s, Catherine II embarked on the so-called 'Greek Project', a plan to expel the Turks from Europe and the Balkans and to establish an independent Greek empire that would be ruled by her grandson, Grand Duke Constantine, under the auspices of Russia. As part of the 'Greek Project' Catherine II was seeking to forge an alliance with Austria. In 1780, the Austrian Emperor Joseph II arrived in St. Petersburg incognito under the name of Count Falkenstein, and the Chesme church was consecrated in his presence. After this the renowned guest was invited to the Chesme Palace.

171 AK Catherine 1997, 41 (fig.).

172 Rovinskii 1887, 789.

173 Barta 2001, 55 (fig.).

174 See: Skvortcova 2015.

175 Hohn 2017, 18–19.

The dining table was set in the central hall – exactly where the portraits of the Habsburgs were displayed. This was a gesture of hospitality to Joseph II who dined as if in the company of his relatives, to say nothing of the fact that the central location of the portraits clearly indicated the exceedingly high valuation of the position of his state. To flatter Joseph without hurting Catherine's own ambitions as the Empress of the Russian Empire, portraits of the Russian ruling family – Catherine, her son Paul and his two wives, the deceased Natalia (Wilhelmina Louisa of Hesse-Darm-

stadt) and Maria – were placed in the first room from the staircase so that they met guests as the masters of the house. Thus, the Chesme palace is an outstanding monument in which the two most important and most problematic issues for Russian rulers of the 18th century – legitimacy in their own country and their status in the international arena – found very ambitious and at the same time very diplomatic fulfilment.