

| The International Exhibition “Europa Jagellonica” – A Meeting of Old and New Europe (10 November 2012 – 27 January 2013)

“Europa Jagellonica 1386–1572. Art and Culture in Central Europe under the Jagiellonian Dynasty,” the first venue of the Czech-Polish-German exhibition opened in the Central Bohemian Gallery in Kutná Hora on 19 May 2012. Until the end of September, masterpieces of panel painting, sculpture, goldsmithing and textile, as well as works of applied art, illuminated manuscripts, early prints, armouries and historical documents could be admired. More than 300 precious works of art were brought together from the most important European collections to bring to life this forgotten era of flourishing arts and culture.

The exhibition was carefully prepared over the last two years by the Central Bohemian Gallery in Kutná Hora, the National Museum in Warsaw, the Royal Castle in Warsaw and the House of Brandenburg-Prussian History (HBPG) in Potsdam, under the guidance of the Centre for the History and Culture of East Central Europe (GWZO) at the University in Leipzig. It is a result of multinational and interdisciplinary research in history, musicology, history of art and architecture, economic history, ecclesiastical history and history of technology, which is now being made accessible to an international public. The goal of the transnational focus of the project is to confront the Europeans of today with the forgotten traditions of the cultural and artistic contacts throughout Central Europe at the dawn of the modern age. The realization of the project was inevitably bound up with transcending scholarly approaches defined by national borders, as was the intention to display European history and culture within its historical, international network of contacts and influences. The exhibition will be hosted at three venues: in Kutná Hora, Warsaw and Potsdam; each one will have a different thematic focus, combining local traditions with a historical European dimension. This scope was only possible with the generous support of many cultural institutions from Europe and the United States – museums, public and private collections, libraries, archives and many churches, which were willing to lend their precious works of art. “Europa Jagellonica” is being held under the auspices of the ministers of foreign affairs of the Czech Republic, Poland and Germany and supported, among others, by the Culture programme of the European Union.

At the onset of the Early Modern Age, Eastern and Central Europe formed the core of the realm of the Jagiellonians, the most powerful dynasty in this part of the continent. They ruled Lithuania, Poland, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Upper and Lower Lusatia, Hungary and Croatia – a vast area stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic and Black Seas. Their reign was distinguished by tolerance of cultural diversity. Spanning two centuries, the Jagiellonians witnessed the unfolding of a unique cultural diversity, encouraged by dynastic ties to other European rulers, which now confronts us with a rich artistic heritage. This part of Europe

was the setting for a fertile overlap of cultures, ethnic groups, languages and religions, which flourished next to one another in considerable tolerance, establishing a rich network of mutual influences and inspirations. Modern Europe can relate to these traditions of cultural transfer, artistic and social mobility in Central Europe.

The era around 1500 was a momentous one in European cultural history. Late mediaeval society underwent a process of increasing dynamism defined by innovative developments such as printing, the widening reception of Humanism and the growing impact of religious reform movements. The expansion of long-distance trade, driven by a monetary economy, was undertaken by internationally active trading and mining families. Rich silver deposits became more easily accessible through improvements in mining technology, and provided the basis for the growing affluence of cities and their burghers. Mining itself became the subject of art. This theme is addressed by the first venue of the exhibition at Kutná Hora, one of the most important centres of silver mining in Central Europe at the time. The town was rebuilt under the rule of Vladislaus II, king of Bohemia from 1471 and of Hungary from 1490, the eldest son of the Polish King Casimir IV Jagiellon and his wife Elisabeth of Habsburg. The historical monuments of this World Heritage Site form an authentic setting, complementing the essence of the exhibition.

Through a careful marriage policy, the Jagiellonians formed close links to the most important European dynasties. This encouraged intensive economic and cultural exchanges across territorial boundaries. Keeping in mind this wider significance of familial ties, the Potsdam exhibition will concentrate on this issue, using the intensive and at the time very close contacts between the Jagiellonians and the Hohenzollern electors of Brandenburg as its starting point.

The second venue of the exhibition, from November 2012 to February 2013, will be the National Museum in Warsaw and the Royal Castle in Warsaw. Here, the focus is the Jagiellonian dynasty as a whole, its individual members and their artistic patronage. Members of the royal family will be presented, starting with Władysław Jagiełło, the Grand Duke of Lithuania and founder of the dynasty, who in 1386 married the twelve-year old Polish monarch Jadwiga of Poland, daughter of the late Hungarian king Louis of Anjou. Her famous chalice made of rock crystal (**fig. 1**) will be one of the highlights of the exhibition in the Royal Castle, together with some of Władysław II Jagiełło's precious gifts to important churches in his Polish kingdom and the commissions of his sons and grandchildren up to Sigismund II Augustus, the last male Jagiellonian ruler.

The venue in the National Museum in Warsaw is devoted to the European dimension of the Jagiellonian dynasty: the regions and important cities and their artistic production, courtiers from the high aristocracy, clergy and wealthy patrician families. They were highly educated at universities in Krakow, Vienna, Leipzig or Padua, humanists with far-reaching connections to the most famous scholars across Europe. They were among the most powerful patrons of the arts spreading the ideas of Humanism and Renaissance in literature, science and the fine arts.

In 1508 a Moravian scholar commissioned a precious bowl (**fig. 2**), whose form adopted the antique *paterna*, decorated with 22 roman coins (some of them were replaced between 1703 and 1752). It was made of pure gold and weighed over 800 grams. The inscription on its central badge “AVG. OLOM. SIBI. ET. GRATIAE. POSTERITATI. MDVIII” (Aug[ustus] Olomoc[ensis] to himself and to his grateful posterity 1508) reveals the name of the commissioner and dedicates the bowl to “GENIO LIBEROQ. PATRI” (the Genius and to Pater Liber [= Bacchus]). The Moravian scholar was Augustinus Olomucensis (1467–1513), son of the furrier Ägidius Käsenbrot, a wealthy patrician in Olomouc. He studied – as was typical for a higher education in Central Europe at the time – philosophy in Krakow from 1484 to 1488, and in 1494 received

his doctorate in ecclesiastical law and in liberal arts in Padua, where he may have commissioned the plaque later embellished with Roman coins and attached to the gold bowl. After his return from Italy, he started to work as a scribe at the royal court of King Vladislaus II of Bohemia and Hungary in Buda; then, in 1496, he became the first secretary to the king. Many famous scholars from all over Europe, such as the Polish astronomer Marcin Bylica (1433–1493), the German poet and scholar Conrad Celtis (1459–1508), Bishop of Olomouc Stanislaus Thurzo (died 1540) and his brother Jan Thurzo, Bishop of Wrocław (1464 or 1466–1520) could be found at the court of Vladislaus and among his confidants. It was said that Augustinus had presented a similar bowl as a gift to Jan Thurzo. As canon of Brno and provost of Olomouc, Augustinus was a close friend of Conrad Celtis and dedicated some of his works to him. He was in close contact with several scholarly circles.

Augustinus's gold bowl may have been used in one of these circles for secret rituals deriving from the antique traditions of the Platonic Academy and the Dionysian mysteries revived by the humanists. These rituals were devoted to the cult of the ancient god Bacchus / Dionysus, who is represented on the central plaque of the bowl as a small winged boy holding grapes in his hand. He was the god of poetic inspiration and the patron of poets. His wine was said to lighten up and quicken the spirit of men like wings do to a bird.

Augustinus Olomucensis is a typical representative of the transnational network and the influential role of early Renaissance scholars in developing the arts and culture in Central Europe. His bowl (today in the collection of the Grünes Gewölbe in Dresden) is one of the most important works from this period and region, and will be one of the many highlights in the Warsaw venue of "Europa Jagellonica."