

The National Gallery in Prague presents the collection of Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria, founder of the first modern museum

With more than 300 artefacts on display, the exhibition *Ferdinand II, Archduke of Austria: A Renaissance Ruler and Art Patron between Prague and Innsbruck* presents the life of the Renaissance chevalier, collector of art and curiosities, and person that was instrumental in the erection of the famous Hvězda Summer Palace in Prague. Beginning on 3 November, visitors may admire works of art in the Waldstein Riding School; most of them appear in the Czech Republic for the first time ever.

'This year, 470 years have elapsed since the arrival of Ferdinand II, Archduke of Austria (1529–1595), the son of Ferdinand I, King of Bohemia and Hungary, in Bohemia to represent the interests of the Habsburg dynasty. The same year also marks the 450th anniversary of the archduke's assumption of rule over Tyrol. The double jubilees provide the occasion for an international exhibition which, before coming to Prague, was introduced at Ambras Castle. Today, Ambras Castle is the earliest surviving museum in the world thanks to Ferdinand,' the exhibition curator Blanka Kubíková says.

Ferdinand's stay in the Bohemian lands lasted twenty years during which he reconstructed Prague Castle, built the Renaissance summer palace called Hvězda (Star), organised sumptuous feasts and tournaments, supported scholars and literates, and laid foundations for his famous collection of artworks, natural products, armour, and books. The ruler is also renowned for his courage to oppose the conventions by a morganatic marriage with a burgher daughter Philippine Welser. The exhibition presents all these aspects of Ferdinand's life.



'The exhibits from Ferdinand's *Kunstammer* will definitely be popular among visitors. Objects of precious metals, stone, glass, and rare natural products such as corals, shells, and rhinoceros horn will be displayed as well as various types of clocks and other devices, fossils, instruments of torture and other curiosities. Moreover, visitors will see precious paintings, books, and manuscripts,' Blanka Kubíková adds.

Rather unjustly, Archduke Ferdinand has been among the least popular and more neglected figures of European history. His interests inspired his nephew, future Emperor Rudolf II (1552–1612) during whose rule the Bohemian lands and Prague became the centre of

European politics and culture. The exhibition is a unique testimony about the life of Ferdinand II because this Renaissance chevalier was simultaneously one of the few historic figures to have left behind multiple and remarkable sources attesting to his work, pastimes, and private life.

A special tour has been prepared for children, introducing to the youngest visitors selected objects from the ruler's collection. An extensive catalogue and an exhibition guide with photos have been published; furthermore, a rich public programme will take place during the exhibition, among other things the historical studio at the balcony of the Waldstein Riding School.



Ferdinand II, Archduke of Austria. A Renaissance Ruler and Art Patron between Prague and Innsbruck

An exhibition of the National Gallery in Prague and Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien in cooperation with the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences

Duration: 3 November 2017 – 25 February 2018

Venue: Waldstein Riding School

The exhibition has been prepared by a Czech-Austrian team of historians and art historians led by Blanka Kubíková from the National Gallery in Prague, Sylva Dobalová from the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and Jaroslava Hausenblasová from the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University in Prague (for the Prague exhibition) along with Veronika Sandbichler, Director of Ambras Castle (for the Ambras exhibition which took place between 15 June and 8 October 2017).

Co-curators: Thomas Kuster (KHM), Paulus Rainer (KHM), Eliška Fučíková, Bekeť Bukovinská, Ivan Prokop Muchka, Ivo Purš (Institute of Art History of CAS), Stanislav Hrbatý (Hradec Králové Museum), Jan Baťa (Faculty of Arts of Charles University), Václav Bůžek (University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice).