

## THE NATIONAL GALLERY PRAGUE DISPLAYS A RESTORED GOTHIC TREASURE – THE PIETÀ FROM BÍLSKO

The National Gallery Prague presents an Artwork of the Spring Season in the Convent of St Agnes of Bohemia. After several years of demanding restoration work, the visitors can see the late-Gothic *Pietà from Bílsko*, which the restorers have managed to salvage in spite of its dilapidated condition. This special artwork from southern Bohemia can be seen for the first time on Wednesday April 10 until the extended closing time at 8 p.m.



*The Pietà of Bílsko, southern Bohemia, after 1508 – c. 1515, high relief, linden wood, hollow reverse, partly original polychromy, loaned by the Roman-Catholic Parish in Bílsko (after restoration)*

As is the case with many other mediaeval works of art, we have no direct evidence documenting the artist, date or original context of the *Pietà from Bílsko*. Nonetheless, we can learn a lot from by its carving style, rare good quality and original location in the Church of St James, Son of Zebedee, in Bílsko. Starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the artwork was installed there in a niche consecrated to Our Lady of Sorrows, as the early-20<sup>th</sup>-century records in the parish memorial book show. The lists of artworks described it as a Baroque carving. In 1993, the *Pietà* was loaned to the Aleš South Bohemian Gallery in

Hluboká nad Vltavou and, in 2008, to the National Gallery Prague, where it underwent a large restoration.

*“Bílsko is situated in the Strakonice region bordering southern and south-western Bohemia. Both regions played a special role in the history of late Gothic art in Bohemia and many remarkable artworks from there have survived attracting a special attention of visitors to our gallery. We believe that the Pietà from Bílsko will be one of them, too. Its style and quality closely resemble to those of the artworks by major anonymous artists active in the region – the Master of the Lamentation of Christ of Žebrák and the Master of the Lamentation of Christ of Zvíkov. The newly restored Pietà is now displayed for the first time. It is accompanied by other works of art, which help determine the Pietà’s original context and artist. The visitors will be able to see these artworks at the permanent exhibition side by side with carvings related to Bílsko on a short-term loan by the Aleš South Bohemian Gallery Hluboká,”* says the National Gallery Prague curator Štěpánka Chlumská.

The small exhibition shows the *Pietà*’s current condition as well as the restoration process carried out by the Restoration Studio of the National Gallery Prague, which took several years to complete.



*The Pietà from Bílsko, the face of Christ, detail (condition during the restoration)*

*“The entries in the parish memorial book corroborate the practise of reverence to the local Lady of Sorrows and the frequent repairs made to the sculpture, which was damaged by woodworm. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the carving was dilapidated and only the top layer of polychromy held together some parts of the pulverised, woodworm-eaten wood. If not for its comprehensive restoration, portions of the carving would fall apart,”* adds Štěpánka Chlumská.

The National Gallery Prague prepares a program accompanying the artwork on display, especially guided tours during the extended opening hours on Wednesdays.

**ARTWORK OF THE SEASON  
THE PIETÀ FROM BÍLSKO: A RESTORED LATE-GOTHIC TREASURE FROM  
SOUTHERN BOHEMIA**

April 10 – June 16, 2019

Venue: Convent of St Agnes of Bohemia

Author and curator: Štěpánka Chlumská,

Expert cooperation: Vera Dědičová

Loans: the Aleš South Bohemian Gallery in Hluboká nad Vltavou; the Convent of the Order of Discalced Augustinians in Lnáře; the City of Prague Museum; the Roman-Catholic Parish in Bílsko; the Roman-Catholic Parish in Kadov

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### Press material and photographs

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### Contact

Tereza Ježková  
Head of Marketing and PR Department  
+420 728 301 377  
[tereza.jezkova@ngprague.cz](mailto:tereza.jezkova@ngprague.cz)  
The National Gallery Prague  
Staroměstské nám. 12, 110 15 Praha 1

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### Opening hours

Open daily except Mondays 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Wednesdays until 8 p.m.

[info@ngprague.cz](mailto:info@ngprague.cz)

+420 224 301 122

[www.ngprague.cz](http://www.ngprague.cz)

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