



PRESS RELEASE

"Open the Gates of Paradise" The Benedictines in the Heart of Europe 800–1300

Chief curator: Vít Vlnas

Curators: Jan Klípa, Alena Volrábová, Petra Zelenková

Concept and selection of exhibits: Milena Bravermanová, Dušan Foltýn, Jan Klípa, Jan Kremer, Viktor Kubík, Petr Kubín, Jiří Kuthan, Pavlína Mašková, Aleš Mudra, Michaela Ottová, Petra Oulíková, Michal Patrný, Petr Sommer, Vít Vlnas, Josef Žemlička

Graphic design: Jana Vahalíková

Architectural design: Architektonický atelier SGL Projekt

Open: November 7, 2014 – March 15, 2015

Venue: The Wallenstein Riding School Gallery, Valdštejnská 3, Prague 1

The exhibition is held by the National Gallery in Prague in cooperation with the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and Charles University in Prague and with the support of the Metropolitan Chapter of St Vitus in Prague, the National Museum and Prague Castle Administration.

The exhibition is held under the honorary auspices of the following personalities:

Dominik cardinal Duka O.P., Archbishop of Prague and Primate of the Czech Republic

Józef Kowalczyk, Archbishop Emeritus of Gniezno and Primate Emeritus of Poland

Daniel Herman, Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic

Grażyna Bernatowicz, Ambassador of the Polish Republic

Arndt Freytag Freiherr von Loringhoven, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

Ferdinand Trauttmansdorff, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria

Our part of Europe is situated on the continent that was called "Europe of the first millennium" or "Europe of the monks". The slogan "Ora et labora", "pray and work", helped give rise to these monasteries, which became a model for stone architecture and the construction of local towns and their infrastructure – a church, dwellings, a hotel, hospital, artists' workshops, craftsmen's workshops, a school. The schools, however, did not only teach reading and writing and the (impractical) humanities, but also taught crafts, new forms of agriculture and care for others. These monasteries have preserved classical culture side by side with the Bible and legends about Christian martyrs and, during the imperial tyranny, laid the foundations of Europe of the second millennium.

Cardinal Duka, Archbishop of Prague, in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue

The name "Open the Gates of Paradise" was adopted from a prayer of Suger, Abbot of the Saint Denis Monastery near Paris. The National Gallery in Prague uses it to invite the visitors to see a unique exhibition of early mediaeval art. It is the first time that so many and, especially, so good-quality artworks of the given epoch were assembled in the Czech Republic. Some 250 exhibits from the entire Czech Republic and six other countries document the material and spiritual culture of central Europe starting from the rule of Charlemagne and the Ottonian and Romanesque periods to the high Gothic era. The items on display include rare works of art as well as lavishly illuminated

manuscripts, monumental stone and wooden statues, coins, documents and uniquely preserved objects of daily use, such as writing instruments, vessels and garments. *"We hope that these physical imprints of life will show the visitors major traces of the ways of thinking and searching for orientation in the complex and confused world,"* says Petr Sommer from the Centre of Mediaveal Studies in Prague, one of the authors of the exhibition.

The authors see the dramatic period of the fall and transformation of the world of Classical antiquity, the struggle between paganism and Christianity and the birth of mediaeval states from the point of view of the Benedictine order. The Benedictines became a major social driving force in the early Middle Ages and organized missions and helped shape culture, which is seen as a common network of states forming Europe's past and present. These monks helped incorporate the major elements of classical and Jewish Europe into its foundations. That is why the exhibition is centred around a virtual complex of a mediaeval monastery, which the Middle Ages saw as a material reflection of the Paradise. The rarest exhibits are presented in its context, such as the oldest surviving copy of the Rule of St Benedict dating from the 9th century, which was loaned by the library of the Sankt Gallen Monastery in Switzerland. The mastery of anonymous mediaeval artists is documented, among others, by sets of objects linked with the cult of Sts Adalbert, Wolfgang and Ludmila. The most impressive exhibits include the lavishly decorated antependium from the Rupertsberg Monastery in the Rhineland (Brussels, Musées Royaux d'Art et Histoire) or gilded processional crosses and rare liturgical vessels. Some of the exhibits were taken out of the monastic treasuries for the first time to be shown at this exhibition in Prague: *"We managed to bring treasures to Prague, which are usually not loaned, such as the golden chalice from the Tyniec Monastery near Cracow, the oldest of its kind in Poland,"* recalls Vít Vlnas, the chief curator of the exhibition.

Due to conservation requirements, certain originals of the exhibits, especially the rarest illuminated manuscripts, will be displayed only for a limited period of time. The most famous Bohemian Romanesque manuscript of the Codex Vyssegradensis will be exhibited only for a single day in the premises of the National Library of the Czech Republic, the Klementinum. Its newly produced perfect technological copy will replace this unique manuscript at the exhibition at the Wallenstein Riding School Gallery.

The exhibition is accompanied by a 500-page catalogue in Czech and English with papers by Czech and foreign experts.

The Wallenstein Riding School Gallery
Valdštejnská 3
110 00 Prague 1

ADMISSION FEE

Basic fee	180 CZK
Reduced fee	90 CZK
Family fee	350 CZK
School group	20 CZK per student

General partner: Komerční banka

Main media partner: Česká televize

Media partners: Český rozhlas, Prague Events Calendar, Anopress IT, Classic FM, Hospodářské noviny, IHNED.cz, Ekonom

Partner: Skupina ČEZ

Technological partner: Samsung

Press release of Nov. 6, 2014

CONTACT FOR JOURNALISTS:

Eva Kotyzová, spokeswoman, tel.: 222 321 459, cell: 724 501 535

e-mail: kotyzova@ngprague.cz