

LUXEMBOURG PRAGUE AS EXPORT CENTER CA. 1400  
ART TRANSFER TO THE CITIES OF HANSEATIC LEAGUE  
ABSTRACT

The project takes up one of the most prominent themes in the study of art around 1400: the question of the so-called Bohemian Beautiful Style, which here will be embedded in the modern strand of research on networks in medieval Europe. Although the planned study will focus on sculptures (mainly the so-called Beautiful Madonnas and Pietàs) and on panel paintings called *Imagines de Praga*, their identification as imported works and in-depth analysis in terms of interdependence is not an end in itself. It will be a path to the overarching goal: the characterisation of Prague as a centre of production, art trade and long-distance export of luxury goods (“capital brand”) at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. An international Polish-Czech research team, whose members have been working on the Beautiful Style for many years, will attempt to describe the organisation of artistic production and the relationship between patrons and contractors in the light of the sources, and also to answer the question of how artistic imports took place and for what reasons.

Works of the Bohemian Beautiful Style are scattered throughout Europe and, together with the export of English alabasters and Antwerp retabula, represent one of the most important examples of the late medieval transfer of finished works of art to distant centres. The question of the migration of Bohemian patterns has been the subject of international research for many years, but it is only recently that this study has focused on the migration of objects themselves. In the case of sculptures, a new and already accepted method of basic verification is the identification of their material as Golden opuka; in the case of paintings, workshop distinctions indicating Prague ateliers have also been studied. Conservation and research projects (especially those affiliated with museum institutions) are increasingly conducting research on individual Bohemian artworks or their entire assemblages, but the general problem of Prague exports, as a relatively new issue, has yet to be synthesized or answered in detail.

The project will place particular emphasis on the northern direction – exports from Prague to the Hanseatic cities, which were in some cases the places of first reception, assimilation of forms, and also mediation of the further spread of Bohemian models in local networks. A particular density of Bohemian sculptural imports can be noted in Gdańsk and Toruń (their material and provenance has recently been confirmed in a separate research project), several examples in Cologne and its environs; both sculptural and painted works from Prague are preserved in Wrocław and Silesia. For the other Hanseatic centres, we are dealing with individual objects whose local impact has not been captured.

The project will attempt, on the one hand, a modern characterization of the Bohemian Beautiful Style in the context of the organization of production in Prague and, on the other hand, to answer the question of the popularity of these objects (economic, social and religious circumstances) in the Hanseatic centres in Germany, Silesia and Teutonic Prussia. The primary tool will be the identification of the stock of Bohemian imports through a thorough formal and structural analysis of dozens of works (supported in selected cases by non-destructive investigation, and petrographic research for sculpture) scattered in Polish, German and Czech sites and their analysis in a comparative context. It will be combined with the interpretation of the historical context of their appearance outside the Bohemian Kingdom through archival and contextual research in terms of economic and political life and their function in worship and lay religious practice (theological content, pastoral strategies).