

STONE, STUCCO, AND TERRACOTTA
SCULPTURAL WORKS FROM PRAGUE GARDENS

Prague City Gallery

Troja Chateau, U Trojského zámku 1, Prague 7

May 3 – October 29, 2017

Tue to Sun 10 AM – 6 PM, Fri 1 - 6 PM

Curator: Marie Foltýnová

Gardens were built around the seats of monarchs in all known cultures, as far as the records go. Green areas with water sources, rare trees and plants provided much-welcome shade and pleasure for all senses. Yet the medieval Europe rejected the luxury of palace terraces, and, in accordance with Christian modesty and humility, confined the urban natural landscape to utilitarian or monastic gardens, with paradise courts at the edges of the ramparts. With the arrival of renaissance, the approach to comfort and luxury changed, the fortified castles were replaced by airy palaces, and the gardens once again became part of the lifestyle of the nobility. In addition to the strict geometrical arrangement of green areas and flowerbeds, new small buildings started appearing in gardens and parks: gazebos and archways, small ponds, fountains and sculptures, often following up to the preserved heritage of ancient Greece and Rome. Then the Baroque era took over in the 17th and 18th century, introducing axial symmetry to the gardens, together with the references to the surrounding landscape, particular views, and also comprehensive themed concepts with clear iconography, interconnecting all garden, architectural and artistic details.

Prague, as a royal and imperial city, was quick to adopt European trends in garden architecture of that time. When founding gardens and parks around the newly built or reconstructed palaces, their owners hired well-known and renowned architects and artists who then used their art to improve the position and prestige of the noble sponsors. Many historical gardens in Prague have been preserved in the original state to this day, including their decorations and minor architectural works. Other gardens unfortunately disappeared for good during the city development, or are unkempt and wasted, lacking the necessary care.

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The sculptural works such as vases, busts, statues, stone benches or fountains, exposed to weather for decades or even centuries, can't resist the ravages of time forever. The original decorations gradually disappear from the gardens; either they were irrecoverably destroyed, or they must be replaced by copies. The sculptures and architectural works that have been rescued are stored in the depositories of Prague museums and galleries. Here, their deterioration slows down significantly, so the original works of important artists will be preserved for future generations. However, these worthy proofs of the high level of Prague sculptural work will be inaccessible to public; in many instances, even researchers and art historians are unaware of their current location.

Prague painfully lacks the areas for a new modern lapidarium, enabling to store the sculptural heritage created between the 11th and 20th century, currently scattered in the depositories of various city museums and galleries.

The Prague City Gallery manages the collection of the public sculptures of the capital, including the Troja Chateau. The gallery's depository is used to store many original items from the Prague gardens, inaccessible to public. The deposited items are stored "as is"; usually, they are not restored for exhibition purposes. The name of the exhibition refers to the most common materials used for garden decorations, and also to the fragmentation and overall conditions of the exhibits; some of them were only given the basic conservation care.

The collection of exhibits isn't comprehensive and purposefully built; nor is it a representative walk through the garden architecture history, or a full overview of decorations and sculptures, including iconographical themes of palace gardens and parks. Instead, the exhibition enables the visitors to see the original works, to admire the authentic imprint of the artistic style of a sculptor or modeler. In the pompous chateau halls with frescos, we may see details that are hardly visible outside in the garden, and realize the connection between the specific artworks and the ideas, themes or scenarios of the garden, the connections that used to be clear but now they are hard to grasp.

The exhibition consists of several parts focusing on different gardens, whose artworks are currently stored in the depositories of the Prague City Gallery.

Vrtbovská Garden – The Allegory of Success

The garden of John Joseph, Earl of Vrtba, is concealed behind the narrow façade of a city palace in the

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Lesser Town, near the Lesser Town (Malostranské) Square. During the renovation of his ancestral residence in 1712, the earl decided to turn a former vineyard into one of the most exquisite gardens in Prague. With this purpose in mind, he employed the most famous and most expensive architects and artists of that time. The garden was built by Christopher Dientzenhofer, using the brilliant project design by Francis Maxmillian Kaňka, making great use of the sloping vineyard. Wenceslas Lawrence Reiner took care of the painting, and Matthias Bernard Braun was commissioned to do the sculptural work. Out of the deposits from the Vrtbovská Garden, the exhibition presents the sculptures of Adonis and Aphrodite, several sandstone decorative vases, and the sculpture “The Fighting Boys”.

In the Light of the Sternberg Star – The Garden of the Troja Chateau

In the late 17th century, Earl Wenceslas Adalbert of Sternberg built his summer chateau with farm buildings, horse stalls, orangery, and the garden. The latter was divided along the main axis to three parts: the upper terrace with flowerbeds, the lower part with the alley and ornamentally shaped bushes, and the formal garden with the orchard. The main pathways lead to the wall with illusive prospects and embossed stucco decoration with ancient mythological themes. The fragments of the stone fountain, with figures of Nereids and dolphins, were found in the gardens in the 1980s. The shape of the fountain was reconstructed, and fitted with the copies of preserved sculptures. The large set of terracotta vases and emperors is rather unique. Of the deposited items, the exhibition will feature the fragments of the original vases, and the busts of the emperors from the walls, the gardener’s house, and the orangery. The lower corridor will present the results of the restoration survey, focusing on the sculptural decorations of the oval staircase and Tartaros, and the preparation of the difficult restoration process.

Summer Chateau Portheimka

Killian Ignatius Dientzenhofer, architect and master builder, started building the chateau in 1725 based on his own project design. The work was finished in 1728. The outdoor and indoor decorations were also provided by other important Baroque artists – fresco maker Wenceslas Lawrence Reiner and sculptor Anton Braun.

The structured front façade of the late Baroque villa faces the Vltava River; in front of the building, there was a garden styled as a French park. The last preserved sculptural works of the Baroque garden include the stone fountain with the embossment of Triton and his sea horses, and the allegoric busts of Day and Night from the front façade of the chateau.

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Cibulka – The Nostalgic Park

In 1817, the Passau bishop Leopold Leonhart Raymund Thun-Hohenstein bought a farmstead and the surrounding land in Košíře, and until 1826, he rebuilt it to a comfortable classicist chateau with a romantic natural park in English style, accessible for the public. Earl Thun built an idyllic landscape at Cibulka that should remind him of the episcopate garden in Passau. He planted various kinds of trees in the sloping ground and thus created an interesting arboretum, decorated by numerous small buildings and sculptures. These days, people regret the absence of four little statues of Chinamen at Cibulka, but their conditions don't enable us to return them to their original place. The Gardener's bust is now lent to the National Museum Lapidary, and will return there once the exhibition is finished.

Marie Foltýnová

In the beginning of the summer season, Prague City Gallery issues the new publication **“Troja Chateau”**. The art historian Marin Krummholz describes the building history and the circumstances of the construction of this Baroque compound, important in the European scope. For the first time here, the architecture, extraordinary decorations, and the social connections of the Troja developer, Earl Wenceslas Adalbert of Sternberg, have been linked to the wider context of the Central European art of the late 17th century. The publication, with its illustrations and graphic figures, can also be used as a hands-on guide through the area, meeting the requirements of common visitors and experts alike.

Curator: Marie Foltýnová

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Entrance fee: Czk 120 Kč (adults) / Czk 60 Kč (students) / Czk 30 (seniors)

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ADDITIONAL PROGRAM

Guided tours:

Thu, May 25, 2017, 4 PM

Marie Foltýnová (Prague City Gallery), curator

Sat, June 17, 2017, 10 AM

Lecture: Restoration of the Troja Chateau staircase

Kateřina Adamcová (Institute of Art History, Faculty of Arts, Charles University), art historian with professional focus on Baroque art, university teacher

Sun, October 8, 2017, 3 PM

Lecture: Troja Chateau garden in the context of the Czech Baroque gardens

Sylva Dobalová (Institute of Art History, Academy of Sciences), art historian with professional focus on paintings and historical gardens from 16th and 17th century

Saturday art workshops

Sat, July 8, 2017, 1 – 6 PM **Morphology of the matter**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Sat, August 26, 2017, 1 – 6 PM **A garden by all senses**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Sat, September 16, 2017, 1 – 6 PM **A plant as a decoration**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Art workshops for adults and seniors

Sun, July 2, 2017, 3 – 6 PM **Allegories in fresco art**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Sun, July 16, 2017, 3 – 6 PM **Ancient mythology and decorations**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Sun, July 23, 2017, 3 – 6 PM **A script of the garden in paintings**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Sun, Aug 6, 2017, 3 – 6 PM **Decorations and engravings**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Sun, Aug 20, 2017, 3 – 6 PM **Possibilities of lines**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Fri, Sep 1, 2017, 3 – 6 PM **Experiments with pigment I**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Fri, Sep 15, 2017, 3 – 6 PM **Experiments with pigment II**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Extra events

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Sat, Jun 10, and Sun, Jun 11, 2017, 10 AM – 7 PM **Open Gardens Weekend**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Sat, Sep 9, 2017, 10 AM – 6 PM **Vintage in Troja**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Sat, Jul 1, through Thu, Aug 31, 2017, 10 AM – 6 PM **Open Days**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Wed, Jul 12, 2017, 1 – 6 PM **A workshop as a part of the Creative Week**, Eco-studio in the Troja Chateau orangery

Interactive tours of the exhibition for all types of schools and other age and interest groups with possible responses in the form of individual artworks. The events are planned individually to suit the needs of every school in terms of time, themes and level.

Booking necessary.

Price: children under 10, art school students, teachers– 5 Kč; children over 10 – 20 Kč

The listed events will be supplemented with further educational activities for other target groups such as the underprivileged and parents on maternity leave with children.

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