

New Exhibition Celebrates Bohemia's „Beautiful Style“ and the Legacy of King Wenceslas IV

„Between Two Ages“ is the subtitle of a new exhibition which has recently opened at Charles University. It marks the reign of the Czech King Wenceslas IV, a monarch who bridged the period of prosperity under his father, Charles IV, and the religious and social upheaval which followed, on the 600th anniversary of his death.

Wenceslas IV's legacy has often been judged harshly when compared to the achievements of his father: one aim of the exhibition is thus to show him in a more favourable light as a king and supporter of the arts, who ruled for more than 40 years at a time when others' hold on regal power was relatively short-lived.

At the opening, Vice-Rector Jan Royt (Department of Art History, CUFA) reminded the audience that:

“Wenceslas IV was often criticised by historians as a drunkard and a monarch overshadowed by his father, but we should treat him a little more fairly. He was born into – and ruled over – a ‘different’ Europe, a period of uncertainty when Europe was hit by the plague, which saw the sudden death of Charles V of France (whose son and successor would be known as ‘The Mad’), a period of murderous competition among dukes.

“After 1400, you had three popes, there was the demise of King Richard II of England (the husband of Anne of Bohemia)... We have a lot to remember Wenceslas IV for, he was a significant patron of the arts who supported architecture and religious artworks in International Gothic style (known in the context

of Bohemia as Beautiful Style). For these contributions alone, his legacy should be assured.”

It is therefore not surprising that the International Gothic style features richly in the exhibition: there is a copy of the Wenceslas IV Bible, a medieval codex with more than 650 illustrations. There are technical copies of glorious period paintings by the **Master of the Třeboň Altarpiece** and other artists. Sculptural works are also featured, alongside technical copies of the monarch's crown.

The exhibition „King Wenceslas IV – Between Two Ages“ is open daily at the Carolinum between 10 am and 6 pm. The exhibition lasts until November 16, 2019. Admission free.

Adapted from an article by iForum, Charles University official journal.