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# Cultural Exchange at Charles University in Prague

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The 25<sup>th</sup> of April marked the third annual Cultural Exchange event hosted by the Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles University. The event, a student conference officially called “ Cultural Transfer. Art Exchange between Italy and Central Europe ”, was held at the main faculty building and saw a series of lectures given by post-graduates from various European universities. The lectures aimed to discuss the ways in which Italian art has, and continues, to influence European art, especially that of Central European countries.

I was fortunate enough to speak with two of the organisers, Marie Opatrná and Magdalena Nová, who discussed how important it was for the students to have a chance to show case their research. They were also excited because although it was the third conference it was the first international event on this topic the faculty has held. Most of the students presenting lectures were from Charles University, but there was a mix of nationalities. From native Czech students to those who had come to Charles University from as far as Italy.

There were also many other universities taking part who had sent students including University of Tor Vergata in Rome, University of Leipzig, University of Vienna, Masaryk University in Brno, Palacký University in Olomouc, University of Hradec Králové, University of Warsaw, University of Gdansk, University of Wrocław, and Jagiellonian University in Cracow.

The lectures were divided into four themes (Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque, and Modern Art) which each had their own room. Each room had its own timetable of lectures which were delivered in the preferred language of the candidate, most being in Czech or English with a few excerpts given in German or Italian. Translations were provided in Czech throughout. Each student would come up to the front and give their presentation after an introduction from the professor responsible for that theme. Afterwards the students would receive questions regarding their full research or any aspect of their presentation which intrigued the audience. To sum up, a great opportunity for the post-graduate students to gain practical knowledge and hands-on experience when it comes to giving a presentation of their research.

During the lunch break I was able to speak with one of the participating post-graduates. Agata Dworzak of Jagiellonian University had just given her lecture entitled *'New aspects of the idea of Bel Composto in artistic realisations of Piotr and Maciej Polejowskis, the Lvivian artistic Family (1761-1786)'* when she was kind enough to grant me a short interview on her participation in the conference.

I asked her how the candidates were chosen to give conference lectures in her home university. To which she replied that post-graduates could submit an application to their PhD director, who would then select the best to be put forward. I then asked why she felt this particular conference was significant for her and why she decided to apply for it. She said the topic of the conference, the cultural transfer from Italy to Central Europe, was a very important aspect of art which is often over looked. She then went on to say how there were few conferences with this topic. Meaning it was a very good opportunity to share her research.

My next question about her presentation was about how she chose her topic. Due to time constraints and the nature of the lectures being quite short the students had had to choose one small aspect of their research to discuss. The small topic Agata was presenting was taken from the broader research she was doing for her doctorate programme.

The last thing I asked was how she felt about giving the lecture and taking part in the conference. Agata said how she had been nervous, particularly as English was not her first language but overall she had enjoyed it and had been curious to see the other lectures given by her peers.

As well as being a fun and unique opportunity for students and professors to share their research with the wider academic community, the students also were given a “reward”. The best presentations and research would be collected in a book to be published shortly.

We are glad that this year saw another successful student conference in the field of Art History which Charles University in Prague hopes will grow in years to come.



**Keziah Garratt-Smithson** is a second year student currently on an ERASMUS placement at Charles University in Prague. At home Keziah attends Aberystwyth University, where she studies medieval and early modern history. In her spare time she is a keen reader, loves films, and enjoys horse riding. She chose to write for the iForum because it was a great way to meet like minded individuals, whilst having fun and gaining useful work experience.