

Centennial of the State Purchase of French Art (Prague, 2–3 Nov 23)

Convent of Saint Agnes of Bohemia, National Gallery in Prague, Prague, Nov 2–03,
2023

Deadline: May 10, 2023

Ruth Peterová

1923–2023 Centennial of the State Purchase of French Art.

International Conference, National Gallery in Prague.

This year marks one hundred years since the Czechoslovak government, under the auspices of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, made a substantial purchase of French art. It was the result of the long-standing interest of the Czech cultural scene in French fine art and was also meant to demonstrate the amicable relationship between the newly formed Central European nation and France at the level of official cultural and political diplomacy. In this way, the state's art collections acquired several dozen paintings and sculptures by artists such as Georges Braque, Paul Cézanne, Camille Corot, Gustave Courbet, Honoré Daumier, Eugène Delacroix, André Derain, Charles Despiau, Paul Gauguin, Aristide Maillol, Pablo Picasso, Camille Pissarro, Auguste Renoir, Henri Rousseau, Georges Seurat and many other world-famous artists.

This large purchase became the cornerstone for further acquisitions, which expanded the collection to include for example paintings by Pierre Bonnard, Marc Chagall, Maurice Utrillo, Suzanne Valadon, and Maurice Vlaminck. The Czechoslovak state's last pre-war acquisition was in 1937, when it purchased Paul Gauguin's *Bonjour, Monsieur Gauguin* (1889). The entire collection was soon one of the best compilations of French art outside France. This exceptional achievement shows how enlightened support on the part of the government plays a key role in relation to the acquisition policy of state cultural institutions.

This international conference, organised by the National Gallery in Prague in collaboration with the Institute for Art History at the Charles University Faculty of Arts, aims to explore this purchase from various angles. In addition to trying to place it within the international context of the acquisitions of contemporary art made in the 1920s and 1930s for state or public collections in other European countries, it will also critically evaluate the quality of the selected artworks, examine the influence that the presence of these artworks in Prague had on the Czech art scene, and trace their stories after they were purchased for the state collection.

Submitted papers may be comparative studies examining the purchase of works of French art in neighbouring countries or in France itself, critical evaluations either of the entire collection or focusing on the provenance of individual artworks, or economic analyses of the prices of the

purchased artworks. Any papers critically evaluating this purchase, its circumstances, or any of its aspects are welcome, and they may also focus on a single work. However, the conference is not aimed at engaging in a formal analysis of individual artworks.

The international conference is intended for Czech and international experts and students. The conference languages will be Czech and English. The presentations of the papers will be simultaneously interpreted.

After the conference, the National Gallery in Prague will produce a publication with a selection of the papers in Czech and English.

Timeline

10 May 2023: deadline for submitting an abstract of your paper

10 June 2023: date by which a decision on the acceptance of the paper will be sent

15 October 2023: deadline for submitting the final paper and accompanying visuals for the presentation in order to prepare the interpreting

Registration

Any interested party should send an abstract of their paper (maximum of 1,800 characters) and a brief CV in Czech or English to: anna.pravdova@ngprague.cz and ruth.peterova@ngprague.cz.

The conference is organised by the National Gallery in Prague in collaboration with the Institute for Art History of the Charles University Faculty of Arts.

Contact information

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Reference:

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