

## The American Experience in Czech and European Culture (Pilsen, 6–7 Mar 25)

Pilsen, Czechia, Mar 6–07, 2025

Deadline: Sep 30, 2024

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The New World: The American Experience in Nineteenth-Century Czech and Central European Culture

(Pilsen, March 6–7, 2025)

Charles Sealsfield (1793–1864), Clara Gerstner (1813–1881), Miroslav Tyrš (1832–1884) are three Central European writers – an advocate, a wife of a railway engineer, and an aesthete – whose work was influenced by their stays in America (or their thinking/reading about it) from 1822 to 1829, 1838 to 1840 and in 1872, respectively. The 45th Annual Pilsen Conference aims to explore the experience of the New World as both a direct and/or mediated perception of the possibilities offered on the American continent and its culture, politics, and economy in comparison with the European tradition. Central questions include: In what way did the American experience represent challenges and inspiration in nineteenth-century Czech culture within the European context? How did the experiences gained by philosophers, businessmen, religious reformers, artists, and others shape the image of America as a wild continent and/or a land of unexpected technological progress and unlimited possibilities? How did information about the North American continent spread and change, and how did they differ from similar processes with regard to South and Central America (which were partially influenced also by Habsburg politics)? In what way did attitudes towards colonial politics differ across Central Europe, and how were they reflected in the arts, socio-politics, and everyday life?

The first contacts with the New World provoked curiosity throughout Europe. The encounter with new experiences, indigenous populations, and their local environment resulted in an image of America as a wild continent, but also in the notion of America as a land of unknown possibilities. These perceptions could be positively and negatively construed. Efforts to deal with these new experiences and information generated innovative views and approaches, but also a number of stereotypical images and attitudes. Alongside the enthusiasm and admiration for the newly discovered land, a more critical view of social realities, living conditions, and colonial relationships emerged.

The conference organisers invite proposals on the following topics:

- democratization, social and cultural issues of modern society vs. the South/Central/North American experience;
- idealized and critical views of the New World, its culture and society;

- the development of society as a philosophical, economic and cultural element;
- marketing of American artefacts, collecting, and migration of objects;
- ethnology, colonialism and the relationship to the indigenous and African American populations of the New World;
- images of America and its inhabitants in Central European culture.

The main language of the conference will be Czech, but contributions in German and English are welcome too! Please send the abstracts of your contribution proposals (of ca 250 words) to Pavla Machalíková (machalikova@udu.cas.cz) and Taťána Petrasová (petrasova@udu.cas.cz) by September 30, 2024 at the latest.

Reference:

CFP: The American Experience in Czech and European Culture (Pilsen, 6-7 Mar 25). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 17, 2024 (accessed Apr 2, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/42104>>.