# Talking Stones (Prague, 17-18 Apr 26)

Academic Conference Center, Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Husova 4, Prague 1, Czech Republic, Apr 17–18, 2026
Deadline: Jan 7, 2026

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Talking Stones: Object and Materiality in Early Modern Central and Eastern Europe.

International Conference organised by Studia Rudolphina Center, Collecting Central Europe, and The Medici Archive Project.

Building on the workshop “The Medici and the Princely Courts of Central and Eastern Europe: Art, Diplomacy and Material Culture” (Florence, February 2025), this conference will further explore the dynamics of communication through objects and materiality in Central and Eastern Europe during the early modern period.
Contact and exchange between courts and cities was often carried out through objects, their makers, and the networks that enabled their circulation. Stones, jewels, pietra dura, and other forms of precious matter were not only treasured for their beauty but also for their symbolic, healing, and economic value. The multiple lives of objects — from quarry to workshop, from gift to inheritance — offer unique insights into the practices of collecting, diplomacy, use, knowledge transfer, and representation in early modern Europe.
Holding this conference in Prague, the seat of Emperor Rudolf II, highlights the pivotal role of Central Europe as a crossroads of communication, diplomacy, knowledge exchange, and collecting. The region was not only a recipient of influences from Italy, particularly from the Medici court, but also a source of objects and expertise — a powerful center of artistic and material exchange shaping connections across the continent.

We invite proposals for papers that address the role of gemstones, hardstones, and splendid materials in communication and exchange across Central and Eastern Europe.
We particularly welcome contributions that address the materiality of objects and their circulation in different contexts, from artistic workshops to princely collections, from the Italian states to the courts of Central and Eastern Europe. Papers that engage in transdisciplinary dialogues across art history, history of collecting, history of science, and/or gemmology, are especially encouraged.

Submission Guidelines:
To be considered, please send the following materials by 7 January 2025 to collectingcentraleurope@gmail.com, jezkova@udu.cas.cz, dobalova@udu.cas.cz, education@medici.org
• Full name, affiliation, and email address
• Paper title (15-word max)

• Abstract text (200 words max)
• Short curriculum vitae/bio including maximally top 5 publications

We welcome proposals from established scholars as well as work in progress from doctoral candidates. The conference language is English. Papers should not exceed 20 minutes.

Reference:
CFP: Talking Stones (Prague, 17-18 Apr 26). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 6, 2025 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51295>.