



## **THE DELICATE BEAUTY OF PRAGUE EARTHENWARE**

**Prague City Gallery and the City of Prague Museum**

**Troja Château, U Trojského zámku 1, Prague 7**

**1 April – 30 October 2016**

**Tuesday – Sunday 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Friday 1:00 – 6:00 p.m.**

**Exhibition Curator: Helena Tůmová, City of Prague Museum**

**The exhibition presents a unique collection of Prague earthenware, a commodity which used to occupy a place of pride in every middle-class urban household as it imitated, both in appearance and certain material properties, porcelain used in aristocratic homes.**

The exhibited items were made in the Prague earthenware manufactory which was the first of its kind in this country. It was founded in 1791 by four Prague burghers, the brothers Karel and Václav Kunerl, Josef Ignác Lange and Josef Emanuel Hübel. The owners of this manufactory purchased in auction the premises of the former Bechyně Barracks at the corner of today's Na Poříčí and Havlíčkova Streets. In 1795, the compound was enlarged by the acquisition of a house adjacent to it, traditionally known as The Blind Squire's House. The manufactory's success was in no small part due to the work of foreign specialists from Ansbach, Meissen and Potsdam. Before long, however, domestic modelers and throwers followed in their footsteps with equal aplomb, as did the Heidrich father and son duo of painters who had previously been employed as glass painters in Jablonec. The manufactory's technological equipment consisted of 13 potter's wheels, four pug mills and glaze mixers, three kilns and an English finishing machine.

An important source of inspiration for the designs of certain vessels was the production of Leeds Pottery. The shapes of some items manufactured in Prague are virtually identical with the Leeds production, often down to minute details. The Prague company's earlier products were made with the use of the overglaze process (with painting on fired glazed body), typically in sepia, purple, or white and black hues. These

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products required three firings, which made the process more demanding and more costly. The period around 1760 witnessed the advent onto the local market of English earthenware featuring copperplate transfer printed decor. This technique required a co-operation between a good painter and a copper engraver who would engrave the painter's design in a copper plate. The Prague earthenware production dating from around 1800 typically consisted of painted figure designs produced in series, featuring romantic genre male and female figures in period costumes, table societies, players of various instruments and scenes with children and pets.

From the beginning of its existence the Prague manufactory also produced figural earthenware, but compared with its principal focus on mass-produced utility earthenware it was marginal. It was influenced by fashion trends of the time, nature or ancient mythology. Figural motifs were often used in utility pottery items. The Prague earthenware manufactory benefited from the talent of modeler and thrower Jan Votýpka. His individual style is clearly discernible in delicately modeled figurines of the bird-catcher Papageno and flautist Tamino, characters from a Mozart opera hugely popular in Prague. Votýpka probably also made the ancient mythological figures of Aesculap and Hygeia. All these figurines bear signs of the modeler's own creative invention, setting them apart from mere copies of items imitating the production of famous porcelain manufacturers. Jan Votýpka worked for the Prague manufactory for a period of five years, before taking up an offer of a job from the earthenware manufactory in Týnec nad Sázavou.

In 1836, towards the end of its existence, the Prague earthenware manufactory under its newly appointed director Karel Ludvík Kriegel relocated to the Prague district of Smíchov, where it launched the production of porcelain ware. However, for some time it continued to produce both earthenware and porcelain.

#### **Additional Information:**

Earthenware is a type of ceramic alloy which is fired and has various colors based on the clay used and on the firing atmosphere. The firing temperature is 1200–1280°C. Earthenware also comprises less compound pottery which exhibits other characteristics of earthenware.

The clay body is prepared from perfectly clean, washed fat and soft clays finely ground to powder. They are mixed with crushed and finely ground quartz and feldspar and, if necessary, also kaolin.

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**Organizer of the Exhibition:** Prague City Gallery and the City of Prague Museum

**Exhibition Curator:** Helena Tůmová, City of Prague Museum

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**Entrance Fee:** CZK 120 full (adults) / CZK 60 reduced (students) / CZK 30 (senior citizens)

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## ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM TO THE EXHIBITION

### **Guided tour with the Exhibition Curator Helena Tůmová:**

Sunday, 8 May 2016, 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, 19 June 2016, 3:00 p.m.

### **Art Studio for Adults and Senior Citizens:**

Sunday, 29 May 2016, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. **Earthenware and Genre Painting I**, Troja Château (eco-studio)

Sunday, 7 August 2016, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. **Earthenware and Genre Painting II**, Troja Château (eco-studio)

We will focus on the unique collection of Prague earthenware from the collections of the City of Prague Museum from a painter's point of view. Participants will do small-scale and delicate painting on objects of simple shapes made of plaster. They will find inspiration for finding their own themes in genre painting that adorns drinking and dining sets. The participants to the workshop can interpret romantic landscapes, figures of saints and other figurative scenes that appear on fine earthenware in their own painting as scenes from everyday life or they can illustrate the atmosphere of the interior and exterior of Troja Château.

### **Weekend Art Workshops:**

Saturday, 30 July 2016, 1:00 – 6:00 p.m. **A Sense of Things**, Troja Château (eco-studio)

Saturday, 27 August 2016, 1:00 – 6:00 p.m. **Transformations of Form and Material**, Troja Château (eco-studio)

During the interactive programs we will look at the issue of applied art and its specificity, namely the connection between a utilitarian and decorative function. We will find out to what extent contemporary design was practical or aesthetic, or whether it was a natural blend of these two aspects. We will focus on typical patterns and motifs (ancient mythology, nature), which correspond with the environment of Troja Château. We will examine the possibilities of the material from a technological point of view and compare visually and tactilely different samples of ceramic clay as well as production methods including the variations on the nature of the substance – the phase from the basic form of powder through the malleable body of clay and a dry unfired and fired piece to the final glazed artifact. Another aspect of the workshop will focus on artistic production, where we will imitate the period trends and decorate a given artifact by painting or by means of transfer of a print using a paper stencil.

Weekend programs are part of the popular series "Creative Dialogues with Art" and are intended for children, families with children and other interested parties of all ages, including the elderly and disadvantaged.

The arrival and departure is optional – i.e., whenever within the scheduled time.

Reservation by 4:00 p.m. on the day before the event (participation without reservation is possible)

**Interactive tours of the exhibition for all types of schools** and other age and interest groups with the possibility of subsequent creative response in the form of their own work. We adapt the events in terms of time, theme and performance levels according to the specific requirements of each school.

Reservation required

Price: Children under 10, students of art schools, teachers – CZK 5; children over 10 years CZK 20

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