

Cabinet of European Art. Masterpieces from the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Art in Kyiv



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Cabinet of European Art

Masterpieces from the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Art in Kyiv

6 December 2024 – 30 March 2025

In the 17th and 18th centuries, art rooms used to be rooms where aristocrats and wealthy townsmen displayed their private collections of paintings, sculptures or handicrafts. Only a select few had access to them. Nevertheless, this practice did contribute greatly to the development of the culture of art reception in Europe and, eventually – with the change in social relations and the popularisation of the idea of making the collections public – gave rise to museums. That is also why a reference to this very tradition is the main idea behind an exhibition that presents 37 works of European art from the largest and most valuable art collection in Ukraine. A collection the lion's share of which is constituted by items from an exceptional private collection.

An unprecedented situation

The Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Art in Kyiv is one of the most important museum institutions in Eastern Europe, comprising collections of European, Asian and ancient art. Due to the significant damage this institution suffered during Russia's attacks on Kyiv in the autumn of 2022, the director's board decided to deposit part of its collection at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, in order to secure it for the duration of the war and subject it to conservation treatments. This decision created a unique opportunity to present works of art regarded as Ukrainian national collection to the general public in Poland. It is the first such extensive presentation of the Khanenkos' collection outside Ukraine.

Richness and diversity

The exhibition displays works of Italian, Dutch, Flemish, French and Spanish art, including ones signed by such masters as Peter Paul Rubens, Bernardo Bellotto and Juan de Zurbarán. The themes presented are diverse as well, ranging from portraits to still lifes and landscapes to scenes of antiquity.

Valuable Polonica

A separate section is devoted to Polonica. Particularly noteworthy here is the Portrait of Stanislaus Augustus in the attire of Henry IV of France, painted in 1797 by Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun. The painting is one of the king's last portraits, made soon before his death. For the first time in two hundred years, the Castle is also housing two paintings from the collection of the last King of Poland, taken deep into Russia in the early 19th century and long considered lost.

Collection creators

Bohdan Khanenko (1849-1917) was a lawyer, sugar industrialist and a great art enthusiast. Over the course of several decades, together with his wife Varvara, he amassed paintings, sculptures and handicrafts, which were to form the largest and most valuable collection of art in Ukraine. That is precisely why it may be compared with the most acclaimed private collections of art gathered at the time in Paris or Vienna.

A unique exhibition site

The exhibition is held in the space of the Royal Library, the only original interiors of the Royal Castle that survived World War II. Its very space provides an important context for the exhibition as a tangible symbol of the survival of cultural treasures in the face of the ravages of war.

Opening hours:

Tuesday – Friday: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday – Sunday: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Last entry to the exhibition one hour before closing

Ticket prices:

Exhibition tour:

Standard ticket – PLN 30

Concessionary ticket – PLN 20

Curator guided tour and educational walk:

Standard ticket – PLN 50

Concessionary ticket – PLN 40

Exhibition admission for holders of tickets to the Royal Route or the Lanckoroński Gallery:

Special standard ticket – PLN 15

Special concessionary ticket – PLN 10

Quiet tours:

Tuesdays from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and selected Saturdays from 15:00 to 18:00 (14 and 28 December 2024, 11 and 25 January 2025, 8 and 22 February 2025, and 8 and 22 March 2025) during silent tours, guided tours not possible.

Notice: Due to the unique nature of the historic architectural space of the Royal Library and the associated conservation restrictions – such as the inability to install devices facilitating stair access – we regret to inform you of the limited accessibility of the exhibition for individuals with mobility impairments and visitors with strollers.



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