

The Vicissitudes of Things. The Allegories of Herman Han



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7 February - 23 April 2023

Gallery of Masterpieces

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For the first time in history, museumgoers in Warsaw may admire works by one of the most famous Gdańsk painters of the modern era as part of an individual

exhibition. The Royal Castle in Warsaw exhibits Herman Han's early paintings and drawings, unusual both in their form and their content when compared with the artist's further creative path, guided by large-format sacral painting.

Active in Gdańsk in the early 17th century, Herman Han (1580–1628) is first and foremost known as the author of his masterpiece, *Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, adorning the altar of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Pelplin. No less impressive is Han's *Coronation of the Madonna* one may admire in the left side altar of the Oliwa Archcathedral (both temples moreover house other works by the very artist). Majestic and masterful sacral representations in the spirit of Counter-Reformation, however, are not the only pieces that came from under the brush of the Gdańsk master, who in addition enjoyed the title of a court painter.

The items put on display at the Royal Castle in Warsaw also exhibit the painter's lesser-known artistic accomplishments. Secular, allegorical paintings and drawings as well as portraits, coming both from Polish collections and from collections from abroad, highlight Herman Han's artistic and intellectual versatility, at the same time significantly adding to the image of the era he himself came to live and create in.

The presented pieces include new acquisitions of the Teresa Sahakian Foundation: *Allegory of the world order*, *Allegory of wealth* and *Allegory of humility*. Sophisticated in terms of their artistic skill and abounding in details, the paintings become a medium for allegories praising civil virtues. They teach that passion, if not controlled, leads to disappointment and that it is only humility that remains capable of breaking away from the eternal return of pride and war.

Another significant theme of the exhibition is the historic City of Gdańsk itself – at the time, the largest metropolis in Central and Eastern Europe and a cosmopolitan centre for trade, including trade in works of art, at the peak of its magnificence, culturally prominent throughout the country.

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