

“SACRED CONVERSATIONS”

THE EXCHANGE OF OBJECTS BETWEEN MONASTIC AND SECULAR COURTS IN EARLY MODERN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

7–8 MAY 2027
THE ABBEY OF OTTOBEUREN
BAVARIA, GERMANY

CALL FOR PAPERS

APPLICATION DUE: 21 SEPTEMBER 2026

ORGANISED BY:
COLLECTING CENTRAL EUROPE
THE MEDICI ARCHIVE PROJECT (FLORENCE)
IAH CZECH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (PRAGUE)



In early modern Central and Eastern Europe, monasteries and courts communicated across confessional, political and social boundaries through the exchange of objects—carrying diplomatic weight, devotional meaning, and artistic prestige. Building on the workshops 'The Medici and the Princely Courts of Central and Eastern Europe: Art, Diplomacy and Material Culture' (Florence, February 2025) and 'Talking Stones: Objects and Materiality in Early Modern Central and Eastern Europe' (Prague, April 2026), this conference further explores the dynamics of communication through objects in Central and Eastern Europe during the early modern period. It broadens this inquiry to encompass the full communicative range of sacred material culture and materiality—from courtly gift-giving to liturgical practice, from monastic collecting to the contemporary mediation of ecclesiastical heritage.

Ottobeuren—seat of powerful prince abbots and home to the newly reconceived Klostermuseum—offers a site-specific setting to consider Central Europe as a crossroads of diplomacy and communication through the building of collections and knowledge, and to reflect on how monastic collections, architecture and museum practice shape the ongoing life of sacred objects.

TOPICS INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Sacred objects, courts and exchange, holy images, relics, and sacred gifts in diplomatic, courtly and monastic networks, ecclesiastical–secular relations, patronage, collecting and devotional exchange.
- Craft, materiality, and knowledge, book making, manuscripts, music, libraries, and artistic/scientific production for and within monasteries; sacred materiality, ritual communication, object agency and devotional practices.
- Heritage, museums and digital mediation, monastic collections and museums in contemporary contexts; reception, preservation and reconceptualization of sacred heritage; exhibition ethics, digital mediation, authenticity and communication of living sacred heritage.

We particularly welcome contributions addressing the sacrality of objects and their circulation between princes of the Church and secular courts—from the Italian states to the Holy Roman Empire and beyond—and from the early modern period to the present. Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches are encouraged (e.g., Art History, History of Collecting, History of Science, Ecclesiastical History, Museum/Heritage Studies, Digital Humanities).

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

Please email a single PDF including the following to collectingcentraleurope@gmail.com; jezkova@udu.cas.cz; dobalova@udu.cas.cz; education@medici.org by **21 September 2026**:

- Full name, institutional affiliation, and email address
- Paper title (max. 15 words)
- Abstract (max. 300 words)
- Short biographical note (max. 200 words) and up to five key publications

Proposals are welcome from established scholars and doctoral candidates; museum professionals, curators, theologians, anthropologists and heritage practitioners are also encouraged to submit.

Conference language: English.

Paper length: 20 minutes maximum.