The exhibition "The Sultan's World" at BOZAR, the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels looks at depictions of the Ottomans in Renaissance Art (c. 1540-1600). From Brussels the show will move to the Muzeum Narodowe in Krakow; it forms the focal point of the project »Ottomans & Europeans, Reflecting on Five Centuries of Cultural Relations« (2013-2016), which is sponsored by the European Union and focuses on five centuries of relations between these two great powers.

As a partner in this project the Kunsthistorisches Museum is sending important loans to both Brussels and Krakow, and has also put together a specially conceived itinerary entitled »Occident and Crescent Moon. The Ottomans in Renaissance Art«. From May 5th until October 26th, 2015 visitors are invited to explore our permanent collections to discover the manifold ways in which Western Renaissance artists
responded to subject matters, motifs and stylistic influences from the Ottoman Empire, and the different evaluations of this great power expressed in these artworks.

A selection of around forty exemplary paintings, medals, Kunstkammer objets d'art and suits-of-armour reflect relations and exchanges between Central and Eastern Europe and the Islamic Orient, which were marked both by drawn-out wars and the West's infatuation with all things oriental.

In the Kunsthistorisches Museum the itinerary takes visitors to the Kunstkammer, the Picture Gallery and the Coin Collection, the Collection of Historical Arms and Armour in Hofburg Palace as well as to Ambras Castle in Tyrol. For the first time we offer visitors both an exhibition catalogue and an Audioguide not only in German and English but also in Turkish.

A SHARED HISTORY

Austria and Turkey are two relatively young republics; today they do not share a border, but each is the successor state of a great power that played a seminal role in European history, and for many centuries they were more or less neighbours. When at the end of the First World War both the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire crumbled, the two countries could look back on a common, though chequered and multi-facetted, history that stretched back several centuries. Only rarely – for example, in 1918 – were they allies; it was much more common for them to face each other as enemies. So it is not surprising that Austrians still recall the two Ottoman Sieges of Vienna, in 1529 and 1683 respectively. Less well known, however, is that in addition to these long and – at least for the West frequently life-threatening – conflicts the two countries were connected through numerous cultural contacts and exchanges. A major factor was trade, first between Venice and the countries of Central and East-central Europe and the Ottoman East; but from the 16th century Europe and Turkey also intensified diplomatic relations. European artists frequently accompanied these embassies to the Sublime Porte, and for them these encounters functioned as an important platform for inter-cultural exchanges between East and West. Not only Western diplomats but also travellers played a pivotal role in transmitting both information and stereotypes about the Ottoman Empire to Europe.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND EXCHANGES

Among the most remarkable phenomena are Oriental or Orientalizing costumes and arms that took European courts by storm in the early 16th century. Today the Kunsthistorisches Museum holds the largest and probably also the most impressive collection of such arms in the world – which, considering the extensive contact between the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire, is not really surprising. Archduke Ferdinand II of
Tyrol (1529-1595) is the prince who first comes to mind in connection with the Habsburgs’ early interest in the military prowess and refined court culture of this great Islamic power; the younger son of Emperor Ferdinand I, he developed a strong interest in Orientalizing militaria and costumes and is regarded as one of the earliest Western collectors of Ottoman artworks and every-day objects. Today many of them are still at Ambras Castle in Tyrol, his former residence. In the course of their rivalry over dominance in the Balkans, both sides repeatedly played the religious card, and the Habsburgs employed art and images as a propaganda medium; we find powerful examples in the œuvre of artists such as Adriaen de Vries, who worked for Emperor Rudolf II at Prague. In 1606 the Emperor was able to end the so-called »Long Turkish War« by signing the Treaty of Tzitzavorok. Thanks to his – and other family members’ – connoisseurship and love of collecting countless Italian, German and Netherlandish masterpieces found a new home in Vienna. Their motifs and subject matters reflect the influence of Ottoman culture and the prominent role this rising power played in the minds of Europeans at the time. That the Ottoman Empire was regarded both as a threat and as an object of fascination is documented by the different contemporary evaluations, or the instrumentalisation inherent in the following examples: in his »Martyrdom of the Ten-Thousand Christians«, Albrecht Dürer used Ottoman (as well as Mameluke) costumes to identify the enemies of steadfast Christians, but in countless other Christian images these costumes function as a reference to their wearers’ venerability and exotic origins – see, for example, depictions of the Three Magi paying homage to the Christ Child. Many Western artists also liked to include costly Ottoman export articles in their compositions, especially carpets: in Hans Memling’s paintings of Mary they emphasise her dignity and status; in portraits by Lotto, Holbein, or Tintoretto they document the sitter’s prosperity and cosmopolitanism.
PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

These images may be used free of charge when writing about the exhibition; to download them go to press.khm.at.

Cover of the catalogue »Occident and Crescent Moon«
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Francesco Mazzola called Parmigianino (Parma 1503–1540 Casalmaggiore)
**Portrait of a Young Lady**
c. 1530, panel, 50 x 46,4 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Picture Gallery
© KHM-Museumsverband

Tiziano Vecellio, called Titian (Pieve di Cadore 1488/90 – 1576 Venice)
**Ecce Homo**
1543, canvas, 242 x 361 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Picture Gallery
© KHM-Museumsverband

Hans Memling (Seligenstadt/Main c. 1435 – 1494 Bruges)
**St. John’s Altarpiece**
1485/90, panel; central panel: 69,3 x 47,2 cm; each inside wing: 69,5 x 24,3 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Picture Gallery
© KHM-Museumsverband
Oriental Morion
Archduke Ferdinand II (1529-1595)
Augsburg (?) 1549, iron, leather, silk
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Collection of Arms and Armour
© KHM-Museumsverband

Adriaen de Vries (1545 – 1626)
Allegory of the Turkish War in Hungary
c. 1603, Bronze, h. 71 cm
w. 88,5 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer
© KHM-Museumsverband

Automaton Clock with Mounted Pasha
Southern Germany, c. 1580/90
copper, gilt brass, iron
h. 47,5 cm, l. 42 cm, w. 34 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer
© KHM-Museumsverband
Figurative Automaton Clock
Augsburg, late 16th century
gilt copper, iron, glass
h. 42 cm, w. 23.5 cm, l. 37.5 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer
© KHM-Museumsverband

Medal depicting Ferdinand as King of Hungary and Bohemia, known as the „Turkish Rapprochement“
Joachimsthal/Jáchymov
medallist Hieronymus Magdeburger (active 1507/08 – 1540)
and his workshop (attributed)
1529
Silver (struck), 43.38 g, 47.1 mm
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Coin Collection
© KHM-Museumsverband

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**CATALOGUE**

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