

The Magazine

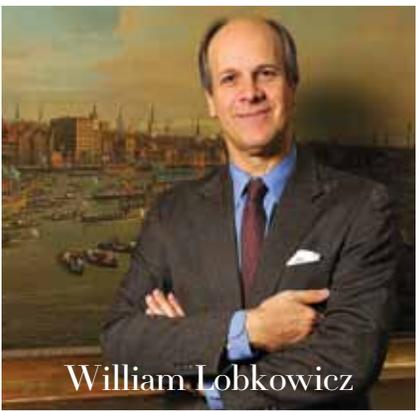
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# ANTIQUES



delivered by July 2  
David Estep

Lobkowitz Palace



William Lobkowitz

# Palaces • regained

*By Paula Deitz*



Střekov Castle

## Nelahozeves Castle



*Of the many Lobkowitz palaces occupied by the Nazis and seized by the Communists during the past century, four have now been restored and opened to the public*

Along the storied waterways of old Bohemia, where the Vlatava (Moldau) and Labe (Elbe) Rivers run their courses, the former princely and diplomatic Lobkowitz family, dating back to the fifteenth century, has returned to reestablish an all-encompassing cultural presence in what is now the Czech Republic. Twentieth-century history usually shows refugees from political strife in war-torn Europe following a one-way path to a new life and leaving their losses behind them. But in spite of years of Nazi occupation followed by decades of a Communist regime, during which the family migrated to America, a new Lobkowitz generation grasped the opportunity to return to Prague at a politically auspicious moment.

*All photographs are courtesy of the Lobkowitz Collection, Czech Republic.*



## Roudnice Castle

Imagine this young man, William Lobkowitz, five years out of Harvard as a European history major with a concentration in music, enjoying life as a Boston realtor while also performing song recitals and dating a charming schoolteacher. And then, over a series of evenings, following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, watching the evening news with his father in Dover, Massachusetts, he witnessed thousands of East Germans clamoring to enter the West German Embassy in Prague, a former Lobkowitz palace (from another branch of the family). “At that time,” he recalls, “I sensed the bells of change were ringing,” and soon the Czech Communist government was to fall as well. Both the father, Martin Lobkowitz, a stockbroker, and the son, drawn by a sense of history and duty to the family lineage, were

precious and rare as they are, lose their tangible identification with the original donors, each Lobkowitz objet d’art can be linked to a specific generation of the family: a humanist scholar and book lover from an early branch, for example; or a political exile and art collector in London; or a music entrepreneur and devotee of Mozart. In the end, the picture is of a deeply cultivated and engaged family over seven centuries. And today, William Lobkowitz and his wife Alexandra, the former schoolteacher, uphold an aristocratic devotion to maintaining and interpreting these collections as they struggle to obtain the means to do so. Rather than reside in the palace rooms, they live modestly with their three children in an apartment in Prague. “The whole project is a childhood dream come true,” he says.

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## Traveling to Prague *to witness the exquisite restoration of these palaces and their exhibition rooms, even as reconstruction continues, is an exhilarating experience*

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Fig. 1. *The Thames on Lord Mayor’s Day* by Antonio Canaletto (1697–1768), c.1748. Oil on canvas, 46 5/8 by 93 1/2 inches.

Fig. 2. Detail of *Anne, Archduchess of Austria* attributed to Alonso Sánchez Coello (c. 1531–1588), c. 1575–1580. Oil on canvas, 69 1/4 by 37 3/4 inches.

Fig. 3. *Margarita Teresa, Infanta of Spain* attributed to Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), c. 1655. Oil on canvas, 55 7/8 by 40 inches.

immediately alert to the possibility of regaining the family’s palaces and collections, if not its fortune.

In compliance with a series of restitution laws passed under the enlightened leadership of the new Czech president, Václav Havel, and following several court procedures, the Lobkowitz father and son reacquired ten of the family’s thirteen palaces, as well as its fine and decorative art collections, music manuscripts, and family archives, their whereabouts having been listed and cataloged by the Communist government following their confiscation and relocation into national museums and libraries. The family retained four of the palaces, either selling or donating the other individual properties, and made Lobkowitz Palace in Prague Castle its central headquarters.

Traveling to Prague to witness the exquisite restoration of these palaces and their exhibition rooms, even as reconstruction continues, is an exhilarating experience. Unlike public museums, where objects,

With its wealth of baroque architecture in mellowed stone, the city itself is an adventure, foremost into the agglomeration of castles, churches, monasteries, terraced gardens, and courtyards that together are known as Prague Castle. It overlooks the Lesser Town joined by the fifteenth-century arcaded Charles Bridge to the New Town on the opposite bank of the Vltava River, also called by its German name, the Moldau. As one crosses the bridge at night, the fairytale-like floodlit array of Prague Castle reflected in the deep blue river, one cannot help but hum *The Moldau*, the famous tone poem by Czech composer Bedřich Smetana that conveys the rippling effect of the waters passing through the city. And the bridge itself, a sacred pedestrian passageway, is lined with religious statues, including Saint Adalbert, the beloved patron saint of Bohemia. On the far side of the old town, the forests that were historically maintained as hunting grounds now provide ruggedly beautiful parkland for the city.



## Lobkowitz Palace

Located by the East Gate of Prague Castle, at the opposite end from Saint Vitus Cathedral and its multiple picturesque spires, Lobkowitz Palace is the only privately owned edifice within the complex. It is rendered in a buff color with prominent stone quoins and a traditional roof of terracotta tiles with copper dragon gargoyles at the corners. An upper terrace overlooks the Lesser Town below and the river beyond. Outside, the street is paved with intricate patterns of light and dark cobblestones, as is the rest of Prague. In a public garden on the approach to the castle, a poster announces daily concerts of the “pearls of Czech and world classical music,” only one indication of how the palace rooms come alive with the family’s astonishing treasures of centuries past.

While period stylization is never more evident than in portraiture, the portraits on view of Lobkowitz ancestors and personages from the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburg courts still convey individuality despite their

uniform, straitlaced composure, dressed in black and richly ornamented with lace and jewels. The sixteenth-century portrait attributed to Alonso Sánchez Coello of Anne, archduchess of Austria and sister to the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II (Fig. 2), possesses exactly this kind of somber beauty, as does an entrancing one of about 1655 with silvery highlights of Margarita Teresa, Infanta of Spain, attributed to Diego Velázquez (Fig. 3).

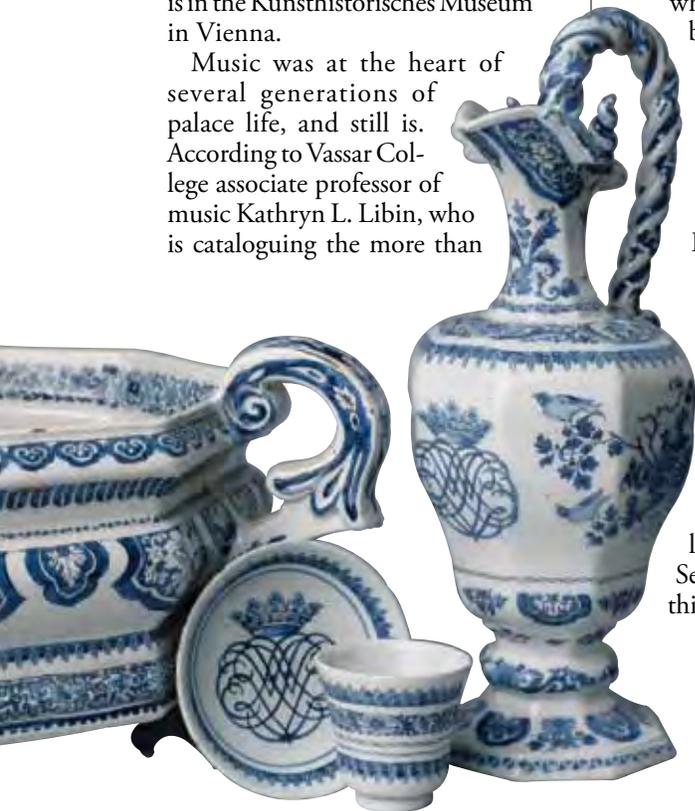
When the organizers of Queen Elizabeth II’s Diamond Jubilee in 2012 looked to the past to create a royal regatta pageant, Antonio Canaletto’s *The Thames on Lord Mayor’s Day* of about 1750 (Fig. 1), in the Lobkowitz Collection, served as the inspiration and was loaned to the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. Back in Prague, it is paired with Canaletto’s *The River Thames Looking towards Westminster from Lambeth* (c. 1746–1748), in which one can even identify a gardener clipping hedges at the Bishop’s





Palace. And the feast continues with Pieter Bruegel the Elder's famous *Haymaking* (Fig. 4), one of the remaining five in a series depicting the seasons, of which *Hunters in the Snow* is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

Music was at the heart of several generations of palace life, and still is. According to Vassar College associate professor of music Kathryn L. Libin, who is cataloguing the more than



five thousand music manuscripts and scores, the archive includes works performed in the small concert halls and opera houses built in the castles by the Princes Lobkowitz, some of whom performed in early operas by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart as musicians and singers along with resident ensembles. Among the remarkable works on view is Mozart's annotated reorchestration of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* (see Fig. 8).

When one Prince Lobkowitz met Ludwig van Beethoven in 1792, both were in their early twenties, and a lifelong friendship ensued, with the former also providing financial support to the composer, especially during the Napoleonic occupation of Vienna. Several works are dedicated to this prince, including Beethoven's





service acquired when her father was an imperial envoy to the Netherlands (see Fig. 5). With an impressive 150 pieces surviving, it is a perfect example of how Europeans adapted Chinese motifs to create the chinoiserie style so fashionable at the time. The palace's enfilade of rooms is elegantly furnished for today's dinners and concerts, and a private chapel recalls religious occasions. For the marriage of the first Prince Lobkowitz in 1603, Rudolf II presented the couple with a house altar of pietra dura (see Fig. 6), and a Romanesque cross of silver-gilt and rock crystal is among the family's possessions, both on view in the galleries.

Fig. 4. *Haymaking* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525–1569), 1565. Oil on wood panel, 46 by 63 ¼ inches.

Fig. 5. Tin-glazed earthenware objects from the so-called Delft service, Delft, Netherlands, c. 1685. With 150 pieces remaining, the Delft service came into the family through the wife of the fourth Prince Lobkowitz, whose father, the imperial envoy to the Netherlands, commissioned it.

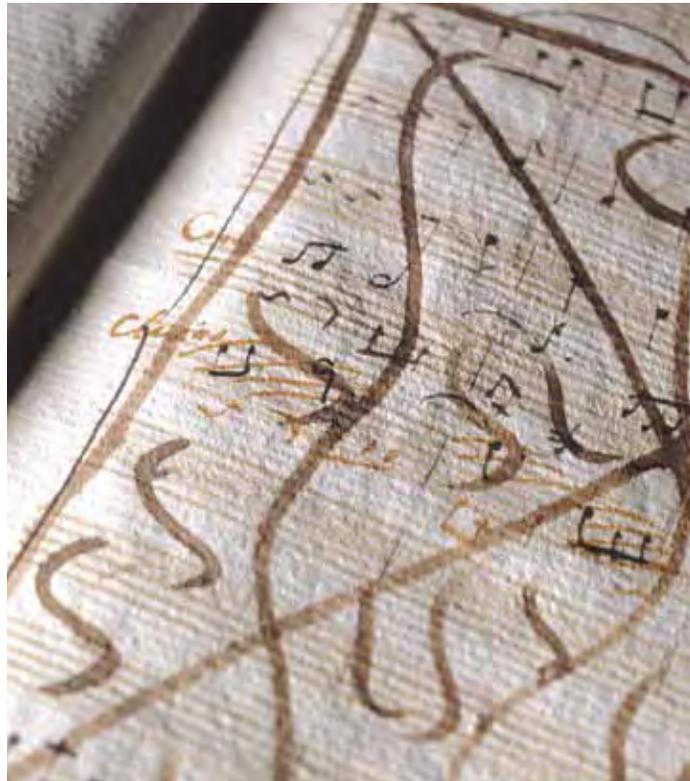
Fig. 6. Detail of the Lobkowitz-Pernštejn house altar, Castrucci workshop, Prague, 1603. The pietra dura altar was a gift of Rudolf II to the first Prince Lobkowitz upon his marriage to Polyxena Pernštejn in 1603.

Fig. 7. *Vratislav Pernštejn* by Jakob Seisenegger (1505–1567), 1558. Signed and dated “Vratislav of P 1558/IS” at center left. Oil on canvas, 33 ¼ by 41 ¼ inches.

Fig. 8. Detail of autograph manuscript by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) of his reorchestration of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* for a double-sized orchestra, 1789.

Symphony No. 3 (Eroica), first performed privately in a Lobkowitz castle a year before the first public performance in Vienna. Beethoven's original annotated scores for his Symphonies No. 4 and No. 5 are on view. With showcases filled with manuscripts and period instruments once played by in-house orchestras, the music gallery offers a rare glimpse of an archive containing both unpublished and out-of-print scores that will surface when cataloguing is complete.

Before the chain was broken by the Nazis in 1939, generations of Lobkowitzes lived supremely well in their castles, where the decorative arts reflected both the fashions of northern and southern Europe and the work of local craftsmen in Bohemia, where the taste for the baroque culture, particularly in furniture, survived the longest. In the seventeenth century one prince married a distant Lobkowitz cousin whose dowry included an early Delft





## Nelahozeves Castle

In a rural setting fifteen miles upriver on a hill overlooking the Vlatava, Nelahozeves Castle stands in sixteenth-century Renaissance splendor above a partially grassed-over moat. Along the road up to it, one passes the modest birthplace of the composer Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904). With four wings around a central courtyard and four corner pavilions, the castle's entire north facade is decorated in elaborate sgraffito, a technique in which a top layer of tinted plaster is scratched through to reveal the base color, here creating scenes from the Old Testament and ancient mythology. Nelahozeves was the first of the castles to be restored. Under the guidance of the Lobkovicz's principal advisor, the British curator John Somerville, a suite of period rooms

has been devised titled "Private Spaces: A Noble Family at Home," re-creating the time of William Lobkovicz's great-grandparents in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

With a *mélange* of family memorabilia and master paintings, Somerville has given these rooms a warmth that reflects the family's unique character. In the library (Fig. 9), with its coffered wood ceiling and marquetry furniture, one shelf of books houses a dendrologist's herbarium, each volume actually a small box for specimens from trees. The music room, provided with an array of instruments, including a harp, cello, and violin, and a music stand, is followed en suite by the princess's boudoir and bedroom, the latter in pale blue with a softly illuminated tray



ceiling and a four-poster bed draped in pale yellow (Fig. 11). On one wall hangs Pieter Brueghel the Younger's charming snow scene *A Village in Winter* (Fig. 10), one of his few known original compositions. Elsewhere are found Peter Paul Rubens's *Hygieia Nourishing the Sacred Serpent* (Fig. 12) and Paolo Veronese's *David with the Head of Goliath* (Fig. 14). And not to be missed, the dining room table's Venetian centerpiece in wire and glass, with three miniature gazebos entwined with vines, glittering glass fountains, and, alongside, sweetmeat dishes of Dresden porcelain.

Riches galore, and yet the cultural treasure of Nelahozeves is the sixty-five-thousand-volume library that has been painstakingly reacquired following its fifty-year dispersion. Encompassing each generation's intellectual and collecting interests, the library is the core of the family inheritance, with ancient classical, theological, and philosophical texts along with first editions in many



languages covering history, medicine, natural sciences, law, architecture, mathematics, poetry, and theater—even a seventeenth-century cookbook from the wife of the first Prince Lobkowitz. Only five copies exist of one rarity, *The Apocalypse of Saint John*, containing fifteen woodcuts by Albrecht Dürer (see Fig. 13). The tenth-century illuminated *Gospel Book (Evangelarium)* is one of 114 manuscripts from the Middle Ages. These books, and the stories of their acquisitions, bring the Lobkowitzes alive.

Among the library's architectural drawings is a detailed 1676 garden plan for the formal parterres and pavilions of Roudnice Castle, farther north overlooking the River Elbe.

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Fig. 9. The Prince's Library at Nelahozeves Castle with its coffered wood ceiling and marquetry furniture.

Fig. 10. *A Village in Winter* by Pieter Brueghel the Younger (1564/1565–1637/1638), c. 1600. Signed “Bruegel” at bottom center. Oil on panel, 6 ½ inches in diameter.

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Fig. 11. The Princess's Bedroom at Nelahozeves Castle featuring family portraits of several generations.

Fig. 12. *Hygieia Nourishing the Sacred Serpent* by Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), c. 1614. Oil on wood panel, 51¼ by 29 ⅞ inches.

Fig. 13. *St. John Devouring the Book*, a woodcut from *The Apocalypse of Saint John* by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), printed in 1498 by Anton Koberger. Only five complete copies of this book are known, including the one in Nelahozeves Castle.

Fig. 14. *David with the Head of Goliath* by Paolo Veronese (1528–1588), c. 1580. Oil on canvas, 51¼ by 38 ⅞ inches.





# Roudnice Castle



Fig. 15. Detail of *Roudnice Castle* by Carl Robert Croll (1800–1863), 1841. Signed and dated “18 C † C 41” at lower right. Oil on canvas, 25 ¼ by 37 inches overall.

By 1652 Roudnice Castle had been rebuilt in high baroque style over a medieval ruin. It stands in the center of town with its pink stucco clock tower silhouetted against the sky. As a military music school during the Communist period and thereafter until 2008, the 250-room palace is still undergoing restoration. The chapel, painted a pristine white with elaborate moldings and multiple ceiling frescoes by Giacomo Tencalla (Fig. 17), has already been completed and has become a popular place for local weddings with receptions outside on the lawn. Roudnice also houses the vast music archive being catalogued and, in the cellar, under the old Romanesque arches, the wine vats for the profitable Lobkowitz winery dating to 1603.



Fig. 16. *Roudnice Castle Seen From the North* by Jeremias Wolff (1663–1724), 1700–1715. Copperplate engraving, 13 ¼ by 17 ⅜.

Fig. 17. Ceiling of the Roudnice Castle chapel with frescoes by Giacomo Tencalla (1644–1692).





## Střekov Castle

Perched atop a steep cliff in northern Bohemia overlooking the River Elbe near Usti, the final property is a romantic ruin called Střekov Castle. Originally constructed in the fourteenth century, it was destroyed during seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European wars due to its strategic position on the river. Goethe was inspired by the ruin during his travels in Bohemia, as was Richard Wagner during his 1842 summer visit when he was composing *Tannhäuser*. With massive drum towers, Gothic windows, and open walkways above the bastions, it is set among grassy uphill paths burgeoning with wildflowers. One can imagine Tannhäuser's contest of love songs in its surviving Knight's Hall.

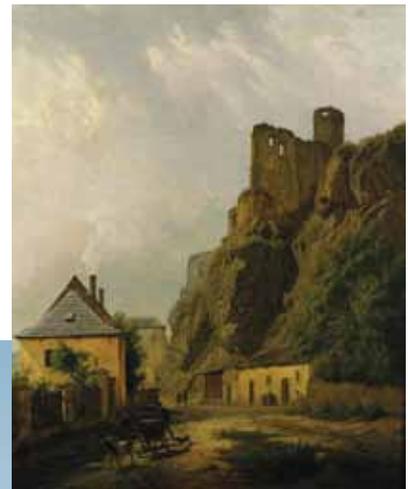
William Lobkowicz's goal is to ensure the survival of these castles and

their collections for the next seven hundred years and to make available to scholars what he calls "the intact, primary source material" that has surfaced with the restorations. While all four castles sit comfortably in their unique settings in old Bohemia, each one, carefully renovated with layers of sumptuous though never showy materials, radiates its own quiet splendor. Now, visitors can share in the joy of the Lobkowicz family's homecoming by experiencing the strong sense of place and culture.

Fig. 18. Ruins of Střekov Castle.

Fig. 19. Wildflower walk to Střekov Castle.

Fig. 20. *View of Střekov Castle* by Croll, 1845. Signed and dated "C † C 1845" at lower right. Oil on canvas, 21 5/8 by 16 3/4 inches.



PAULA DEITZ is the editor of *The Hudson Review* and the author of *Of Gardens: Selected Essays* (University of Pennsylvania Press).

The museum at Lobkowicz Palace is open daily from 10 to 6; Nelahozeves Castle is open from 9 to 5 every day except Monday from April 1 to October 31. For more, visit [lobkowicz.cz/en](http://lobkowicz.cz/en)