Abstract (in English):

Only one of many Ancient Roman novels that were written during antiquity has survived to this day. Apuleius’ Metamorphoses could have easily been lost too as it was overlooked by the Carolingian renaissance and at one point existed only in a single copy. Luckily it was found and rediscovered for the Italian Renaissance by one of the so called bookhunters in the 14th century. After that it did not cease to inspire many works of art from literature to paintings. The story of Cupid and Psyche that comes from this book was used to decorate many representational rooms from the early Renaissance on, until at least the 19th century.

It seems to have been especially popular at the court of Rudolf II and it represents one of the typical mythological themes with a strong erotic potential. We can trace its roots to Italy where the novel was brought back to the literary scene. The most important visual sources, that played at least an equally important role in the dissemination of the motive through Europe as literature, also come from Italy. Especially Rome and Raphael’s frescos in villa the Farnesina influenced generations of Italian as well as foreign artists. Bartholomeus Spranger, Joseph Heintz and other future court artists of Rudolf II were no exception. The antique city and antique novel inspired their works but they also added their own unique approach to the Italian tradition. This work follows the reception of the famous *Golden Ass* in a time, when the possibilities of printing techniques radically changed rules of the game. It also opens the question of meaning in the art of the Rudolphine Period. To what extent were the secular works meant as objects of sensual pleasure and on the other hand how important were the allegorical explanations of the story of Cupid and Psyche.