



# Lady with an Ermine back home in Poland

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**Leonardo da Vinci's painting Lady with an Ermine has returned to Kraków from London, where it was one of the highlights of the artist's major exhibition at the National Gallery.**



The precious painting was brought back on a board a chartered plane, the details of the journey having been kept secret for security reasons.

On Friday, the painting will be examined by conservators, after which it will be subjected to a series of tests using highly sophisticated, state-of-the-art equipment.

The management of the National Museum in Krakow is to announce tomorrow the details of where and when Lady with an Ermine will be put on display.

The Czartoryski Museum, where it had been exhibited so far, is currently closed for a through refurbishment project. The work is the property of the Czartoryski Foundation.

Prior to London, the Leonardo masterpiece had been shown in Berlin, Madrid and Budapest. Berlin.

Over the past two decades, it also travelled to major exhibitions in the United States, Sweden, Italy and Japan.

In the wake of protests from many art conservators, who argue that with paintings on panel any movement is bound to have a detrimental effect on the condition of the painting, an agreement has been concluded with the Czartoryski Foundation that the painting will not be moved from Krakow for at least 10 years.

Lady with an Ermine is one of Leonardo da Vinci's twenty extant works and one of his four female portraits. It depicts Cecilia Gallerani, a young lady who entered the Milanese court around 1490 and became a mistress of the Duke Lodovico Sforza and the mother of his son. The painting was the Duke who commissioned Leonardo to paint the portrait. The painting found its way into the Czartoryski Museum in Krakow after some very turbulent events.

Having initially remained in the hands of Cecilia Gallerani and her family, it later disappeared from view for a long period.

It was purchased by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski in Italy at the beginning of the 19th century and sent to Poland, where his mother just opened Poland's first public museum in the town of Puławy.

During the national uprising against Russia in 1830, the portrait was sent to Paris where it was housed at the Hotel Lambert, the centre of Polish émigré circles, for thirty years. During the war between France and Prussia in 1870 it was sent to Poland again.

In 1876 the Prince Czartoryski Museum opened in Krakow, where the painting was installed in the 1880s.

In 1939, after the German attack of Poland, it was seized by the Nazis and sent to Berlin. In 1940 Hans Frank, the Governor General of Poland, requested that it be returned to Kraków, where it hung in his office.

At the end of the war it was discovered by Allied troops in Frank's country home in Bavaria and was returned to Poland. **(mk)**

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