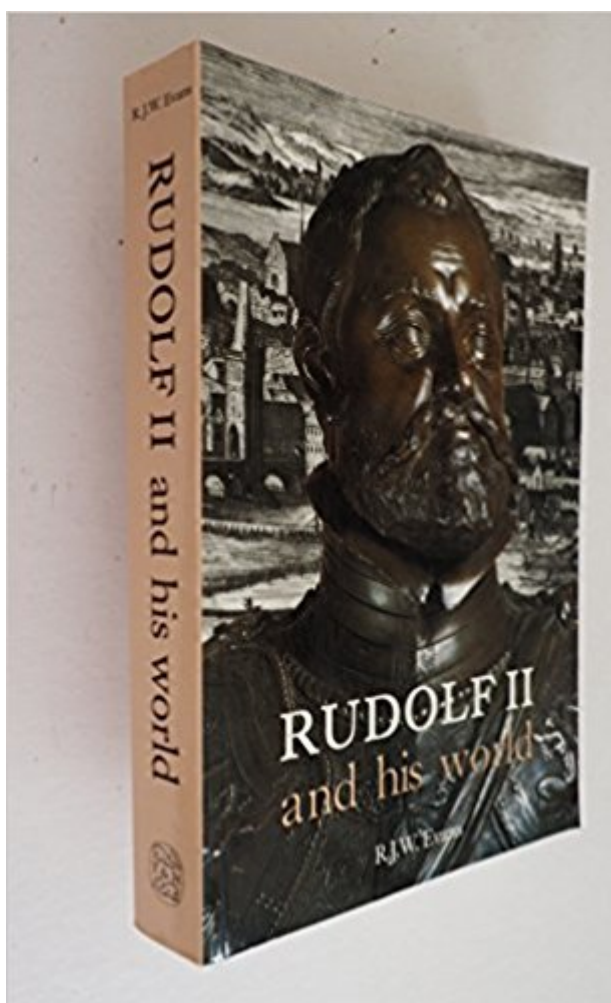


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Rudolf II And His World: A Study In Intellectual History 1576-1612 (with 20 Illustrations)



Synopsis

Rudolf II of Hapsburg, Holy Roman Emperor, King of Bohemia and Hungary, was an extraordinary ruler, a monarch whose court occupied a central position in 16th-century Europe - yet he remained a shadowy and fugitive figure. The decades around 1600 saw sweeping cultural changes in Europe, with the waning of an old-world view and the beginnings of the 17th-century intellectual revolution. The author argues that the conflict which played itself out in the Hapsburg lands during these years was a political manifestation of the intellectual confrontation between the old guard and their preoccupation with the mystical, spiritual and hermetic sciences, and the rise of a more rational and empirical view of the world. Rudolf, as the embodiment of the old philosophy, failed to grasp this profound shift in the prevailing climate of thought: Professor Evans argues that it was this failure which led to his eventual tragic downfall.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the standard historical work on Rudolph II and the intellectuals and curious characters he drew to Prague at the turn of the seventeenth century. This was a pioneering work in the history of thought, one of the first attempts to document the entire milieu of ideas surrounding a particular individual. It was so far ahead of the pack that it remains unsurpassed to this day. It is a bit dated. For example, none of Frances Yates's groundbreaking work on John Dee had yet been published, which inspired so much further research in the area, culminating in some senses in the Cesky Krumlov Conference of 1997, some of which can be read in "The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited," Lindisfarne Books, 1999, ISBN 978-0940262843. However, it is a gold mine of

information. Evans made a great effort to include everybody who was anybody in Prague in 1600, and it still contains information I have found nowhere else, and was the starting point for me to explore many people a bit more in-depth and in the light of newer discoveries. It is very dense and not an easy read. A lighter, more enjoyable read, if less informative and accurate, although more up-to-date, is "The Magic Circle of Rudolf II" by Peter Marshall, Walker, 2006, ISBN 0802715516.

This is a 1997 reprint of the classic work on Rudolf II first published by Oxford University Press in 1973. An essential book for understanding the interplay between Christianity, neoplatonism, politics and the occult at the close of the 16th century within the Habsburg empire. See the listing for the original hardcover for further reviews and information.

Evans's book on Rudolf II and his court revived interest in the period. Evans shows how Rudolf assembled a court of humanist artists, poets, scientists and alchemists interested in using the correspondences between the microcosm (the human being) and the macrocosm (the universe) to bring about a new age of peace. For Evans, this moment of Mannerist culture was the end of the Renaissance; it represents the dream of a generation dissatisfied with the religious strife of the Reformation, and hoping that a mixture of what we would call science and mysticism could provide a new culture based on hierarchical spiritual education. Instead of a new age, it saw its hopes dashed by increasing religious intolerance and the devastation of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Evans shows how Rudolf's court became a European center of learning; he attempts to illuminate the taciturn emperor's views on politics, religion, art, culture, science and magic by discussing the ideas of his associates. The book is extremely well written and includes an amazing amount of bibliographical information; it may prove a bit daunting for some readers, as some quotations from German, Italian, and Latin are not translated. There is a 1997 reprint with a short essay surveying more recent work in the field by Thames and Hudson

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