



# RUSSIA!

A GUIDE TO THE EXHIBITION FOR TEACHERS





# RUSSIA!

A GUIDE TO THE EXHIBITION FOR TEACHERS

**Guggenheim**MUSEUM

This exhibition has been organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in collaboration with the Federal Agency for Culture and Cinematography of the Russian Federation, State Russian Museum, The State Tretyakov Gallery, State Hermitage Museum, and ROSIZO State Museum Exhibition Center.

This exhibition is made possible by



Major exhibition sponsorship provided by



This exhibition is further made possible by Lazare Kaplan International, Thaw Charitable Trust, International Foundation of Russian and Eastern European Art, Trust for Mutual Understanding, an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities, together with the generous support of the RUSSIA! Leadership Committee.

Transportation assistance provided by



Media partner Thirteen/WNET

Special thanks to the Hermitage-Guggenheim Foundation for its assistance with this exhibition.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 A NOTE TO TEACHERS

---

5 EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

---

8 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

---

10 SECTION 1. THE AGE OF THE ICON: 13TH – 17TH CENTURIES

---

14 SECTION 2. THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY: THE AGE OF PETER THE GREAT

---

18 SECTION 3. THE LATE 18TH CENTURY: THE REIGN OF CATHERINE THE GREAT

---

22 SECTION 4. THE COMING OF AGE OF RUSSIAN ART: FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

---

26 SECTION 5. ART AND SOCIETY: SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

---

30 SECTION 6. THE COLLECTIONS OF SERGEI SHCHUKIN AND IVAN MOROZOV

---

34 SECTION 7. THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

---

38 SECTION 8. ART AND IDEOLOGY: LATE 1920S – 1940S

---

42 SECTION 9. OPENING NEW SPACES: 1980 TO THE PRESENT

---

46 VOCABULARY

---

48 TIME LINE

---

50 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SUGGESTED READING LIST

---

51 CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

# A NOTE TO TEACHERS

The history of Russia is long and complicated. It twists and turns through more than a millennium of change, conflict and triumph. This guide for educators, which accompanies the exhibition *RUSSIA!* (September 16, 2005 – January 11, 2006) does not attempt to provide an inclusive guide to Russian art or history, but instead selects nine works of art that can provide glimpses into the changing character of Russia through the centuries. It also offers suggestions for how to integrate this rich history into the classroom.

Looking at and discussing these works with students can enhance student understanding of Russian art and history, and serve as points of comparison for the study of United States history. Both countries have vast natural resources and varied terrain and have been motivated by the idea of manifest destiny. They have each resorted to the subjugation of people through slavery or serfdom to reap economic benefits. They were allies in two World Wars and then spent several decades in the nose-to-nose confrontation known as the “Cold War.” There are also opportunities to contrast histories, forms of government, and ideological belief systems.

Designed to provide ideas, activities, and resources that explore some of the compelling issues raised by this exhibition, this guide focuses on the varied historical and cultural influences that have contributed to Russian art and its development as culturally rich, visually engaging, and emotionally compelling.

## **Each of the sections contains:**

- an overview of the historical period
- a reproduction of a representative work of art from that period
- background information on the work of art
- questions to facilitate open-ended discussion focusing of the work
- suggestions for further exploration

## **The content and design of these materials have a three-fold purpose:**

- To assist educators in developing a classroom unit focusing on Russian art and history
- To provide educators with the tools to conduct a self-guided museum visit
- To provide educators with the tools to expand upon themes and ideas generated during their museum visit.

This guide will be most useful in conjunction with a trip to the Guggenheim Museum, but can remain a valuable resource long after the exhibition has closed. So that educators can both prepare for and follow up on the exhibition themes, this guide will be posted on the museum’s Web site, [www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum](http://www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum), with images that can be downloaded or projected for classroom use. The images may be used for educational purposes only and are not licensed for commercial applications of any kind. Before bringing your class to the Guggenheim, we invite you to visit the exhibition, read the guide and decide what aspects of the exhibition are most relevant to your students. For more information on booking a tour and workshop experience for *RUSSIA!*, please call (212) 423-3637.

# RUSSIA! EXHIBITION OVERVIEW SEPTEMBER 16, 2005—JANUARY 11, 2006

RUSSIA! explores the vast and complex historical phenomenon embodied by the word “Russia” through the lens of the greatest masterworks of Russian art from the 13th century to today. The exhibition also includes works from the world-class collections amassed by Russian tsars and merchants. With more than 250 objects, including many that have never been seen abroad, the exhibition presents a unique opportunity to consider and study the breadth, depth, and complexity of Russian art.

The show is organized by a team of Russian and American specialists who have structured this presentation as a series of smaller exhibitions that when added together tell the remarkable and interconnected history of Russian art over the last eight centuries. The exhibition also demonstrates Russia’s outstanding achievements in and contributions to the history of world art that extend far beyond the already well-known and revered Russian icons and avant-garde. The spiral of the museum is filled with Russian art—including icons, portraiture in both painting and sculpture from the 18th through the 20th centuries, social and Socialist Realist works since the 19th century, landscapes through the centuries, pioneering abstraction, and experimental contemporary art. Two galleries house selections of European masterworks amassed by Peter and Catherine the Great during the 18th century and collected by the early-20th-century connoisseurs Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov. These collections

testify to the courage and foresight of Russian collectors and highlight the interesting relationship between Russia and the West since the 18th century. The broad historical scope coupled with works of the highest quality result in an exhibition that is one of the most representative in the whole history of Russian art exhibitions held abroad.

While the exhibition is organized in chronological order, specific themes and approaches are explored, which illuminate the greatest achievements of Russian art. These themes include:

**The Age of the Icon: 13th–17th Centuries** includes a partial reconstruction of a monastery through the inclusion of the Deesis Tier of the famous iconostasis of the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery, which has been dispersed among four Russian museums since nationalization. This impressive set of images is brought to life through a dramatic exhibition design that transports the viewer to another time and place. Within this section is also a small but outstanding selection of icons representing the most important subjects and schools including one work by each of the most famous Russian icon painters, Andrei Rublev and Dionysii, and a version of one the most revered icons, the Virgin of Vladimir, which was painted in 1514. These works demonstrate how Russian artists absorbed and relied upon the Byzantine model, even as they transformed it and created their own style and artistic language.

**The 18th Century (the reigns of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great).** During the 18th century Russian artists moved beyond icon painting and captured their times through portraits of the tsars and nobility and through representations of the changing landscape of the Russian nation. During this period, Russian artists were exposed to the European tradition through the outstanding collections of Western art made available to them at Catherine's Hermitage and through travels abroad made possible by the Academy of Art founded under her patronage. As was the case with their contemporaries in other countries, Russian artists' encounters with masterworks from the history of art provided them with a living textbook. But also like their colleagues abroad, they brought to bear their own context, talents, and interests on these models, thus producing unique works of the highest caliber. This section begins with Western works from imperial collections and then presents portraiture of the 18th century, which is intimately connected with the world of the Russian aristocracy, and neoclassical academic painting.

**The 19th Century (from Romanticism to critical realism).** The brilliance and diversity of Russian art in the first half of this century has contributed to its being dubbed "The Golden Age" of Russian art. In the second half of the century, Russian artists took a path that diverged from the West. The group of artists that formed in the 1860s and is known historically as the Wanderers emphasized the high social mission of art, using art as a tool for social commentary and criticism. Like many of their literary contemporaries, the Wanderers stressed the importance of man and his individuality. In their emphasis on the content of the artistic work, Russian artists departed drastically from the reigning Europe tendencies in that period, which focussed almost exclusively on formal quests. This section, which strongly reflects

the taste of the legendary collector Pavel Tretyakov, whose collection is in the State Tretyakov Gallery, will demonstrate that art collecting was by no means confined to the acquisition of Western art.

**Shchukin and Morozov.** Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov were Moscow merchants and art connoisseurs who amassed collections that included some of the most important examples of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Fauvist, and Cubist works, including paintings by Claude Monet, Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso. These collections exerted a strong influence on the generation of Russian artists that emerged in the early 20th century. However, the Russian artists fused the diverse Western influences with national traditions, such as the icon and folk art, creating a vision uniquely their own.

**The Early 20th Century (Avant-Garde)** was a time when many Russian artists returned to their national roots, to the ancient Russian icon and indigenous folk art, sources that allowed them to elaborate a new artistic language that was no less abstract and conventional than that of the prototypes. This generation merged Russian and European influences to pioneer a succession of radical movements in rapid succession including Cubo-Futurism, Rayonism, Suprematism, Constructivism, and others. While in the past a great deal of emphasis has been placed on abstraction in early-20th-century Russian art, this exhibition equally stresses the point that the tradition of figurative art continued to thrive at a time when Russian artists produced some of the most innovative artworks in the history of art. The pioneering work of these artists had a major influence on the development of 20th-century international art.



**The Soviet Era: ca. 1930–1957 (Socialist Realism through the Thaw)** is strongly associated with the official doctrine for art known as Socialist Realism, which was established in 1934. Long seen as merely propaganda or historical curiosity, this style nonetheless produced highly talented artists, both official and unofficial. The main turning point away from the propagandistic approach that characterized Soviet art of the 1930s was the Great Patriotic War (World War II), when artists began to move beyond absolute idealism in art.

**The Late- and Post-Soviet Era: 1957–present.** This section charts developments in Soviet art between Stalin’s death and the end of the Cold War and further documents attempts by artists to combat the standardization of Socialist Realism. In the wake of Stalin’s death in 1953, many artists began to explore more personal approaches and subjects. In 1957 the new leader of the Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, denounced the cult of Stalin’s personality and his abuses of power. This period, which lasted until the mid-1960s and became known as the Thaw, led to greater liberties in artistic style and inaugurated a new era in Soviet art and culture. Beginning in the 1960s a growing number of artists worked unofficially in styles that did not conform to the rules of Socialist Realism and often explicitly criticized Soviet ideology and the state. This section concludes with select works by contemporary Russian artists that highlight the ongoing presence and strength of Russian art on the international scene.

The works in the exhibition are on loan from Russia’s greatest museums—the State Russian Museum, the State Tretyakov Gallery, the State Hermitage Museum, and the Kremlin Museum—as well as regional museums, private collections, and a select number of museums and private collections outside of Russia. According to

Thomas Krens, Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, “This exhibition will serve as a unique opportunity to introduce the international public to the most valued artistic treasures culled from Russia’s greatest museums.”

Adapted from an essay by Valerie Hillings, Curatorial Assistant, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Russia is the largest country on earth, covering one-eighth of the world's land surface. It is nearly twice as large as the United States, and spans 11 time zones. Russia stretches east from the Baltic Sea across the northernmost stretches of Europe, through Central Asia, all the way to the western edge of the Pacific Ocean north of China. In the middle of the 20th century it was even larger. Then called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) or Soviet Union, it included a number of now independent nations, such as Estonia and Kazakhstan.

Russia, known today also as the Russian Federation, has played a huge role in the history of the 20th century as the center of two major political upheavals. The first came in 1917, when Vladimir Lenin and the Bolshevik Party established communism, and the second in 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed.

For hundreds of years before this, there were essentially two kinds of Russians. One group, the nobles, inherited and bequeathed fortunes and property. The other vastly larger group, the peasants, barely had enough to survive. The role of the poor was to perform services from which the rich would benefit, but the rich had little obligation in return. Contempt grew among the peasants throughout the 19th century, but few felt that they had the power to change things. While the poor lived in dirt-floored huts on a diet of thin soup and heavy bread, the wealthy had several homes, and a steady stream of parties, balls, and social visits. Life was very pleasant for the Russian elite. By the late 19th

century, however, several tsars had noticed growing discontent among the poor and began to realize that if they were going to stay in power they would have to be perceived as doing something for the people. In 1861 serfdom was abolished; peasants who had formerly been forced to stay on a particular piece of land could move to cities, hire themselves out as laborers on a noble's land, or become small, independent farmers. The number of schools for Russian children skyrocketed, as did the number and size of universities. Many poor children learned to read. With literacy and urbanization ordinary Russians began to form ideas about their place in Russian society. Along with the poor, a growing middle class and university-educated intellectuals increasingly resented the power of the rich. Rumors of revolution were in the air.

In 1917, the Russians ended the rule of the tsars whose luxurious lifestyle had robbed the people of a decent livelihood. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party established communism, a system where every business—including farms—was owned collectively by all the members of the society. From the Soviet perspective, collectivism allowed the fruits of society's labors to be fairly distributed. This new country, the Soviet Union, was the first world communist state. Sadly, however, the Russian people only ended up trading one set of uncaring masters for another. Life for the common people was one of oppression under both sets of rulers.

The USSR had a totalitarian political system in which Communist Party leaders held political and economic power. The state owned all companies and land, and the government controlled production of goods and other aspects of the economy. Years later, although the Russian people could be proud that the Soviet Union had put the first man into space and won many gold medals at the Olympics, they were still hungry, overtaxed, and unable to get decent housing.

In 1991, the USSR broke apart and Russia became an independent country. After the end of over 70 years of communist rule, today's Russians, finally liberated from the excesses of both the tsars and the Soviets, have taken the first steps toward freedom. Russia has begun to transform itself into a more democratic society with an economy based on market mechanisms and principles. There have been free elections at all levels of government; private ownership of property has been legalized; and large segments of the economy are now privately owned.

The new Russian Federation faces new challenges. Arms control, the safeguarding of nuclear materials, combating environmental pollution, and the development of legal and economic institutions to support Russia's reorganized society and economy are some of the important issues that will accompany this nation into the 21st century.

# THE AGE OF THE ICON: 13TH – 17TH CENTURIES

The history of Russian icon painting tells the story of the Russian people and their search for and adoption of religion. The story begins long ago under the reign of Vladimir, Prince of Kiev, in 988 A.D. Vladimir believed that Russia would become a unified nation if its people practiced one central religion and sent his emissaries to various countries to learn about their religions. One traveled to Constantinople and returned to Vladimir to report that the religion of the Byzantine Empire (395—1453 A.D.) was inspiring. As a result, the prince chose the Byzantine faith of Orthodox Christianity as the religion to bring his country out of turmoil and into harmony. With this choice came an artistic heritage of decorative style, the use of rich color, an emphasis on religious symbolism, and the depiction of holy images in the form of icons.

“Icon” is the Greek word for an image. In the Orthodox world it came to have a more specific meaning—the representation of a holy personage or event. Icons were painted on wood, using layers of tempera paint to create depth in colors. Icons were not to be idolized superstitiously, but to be venerated. Figures were represented, not in their natural form, but rather in their two-dimensional heavenly form with elongated proportions. The head was never painted in profile; the eyes were the most prominent features of the face.

In old Russia nearly every phase of life was influenced by religion. Every day in the calendar was dedicated to the observation of a particular saint. Every individual and every trade had their patron

saints and the depiction of these saints became the most distinctive art form. The faithful believed that these images could work miracles and bring victory on the battlefield.

Orthodox Christian culture had a strong visual orientation, and the image, accessible to the illiterate and literate alike, was a powerful cohesive force in society as well as the bearer of religious, social and historical messages. The icon painter had to be someone who was worthy of his craft, both humble and holy in his faith. Many icon painters were monks who took satisfaction in developing a theology of pictures rather than words as in Western Christendom.

Over time many icons became covered with soot from burning candles and incense used in worship. Some icons were also damaged because churches were cold and damp, causing the paint to peel and the wood to mold or decompose. Eras of anti-religious fervor also caused the destruction of many works. Russia is fortunate in the number, age, and artistic quality of the medieval icons that have survived. They have had a pervasive role in Russian life, standing not only in churches but also in private houses and wayside shrines. Today, Russian icons with their soulful eyes, flattened perspective, elongated features, and gold highlights, are appreciated both for their aesthetic appeal and their art-historical importance.



## ABOUT THIS WORK

### **Christ in Glory**

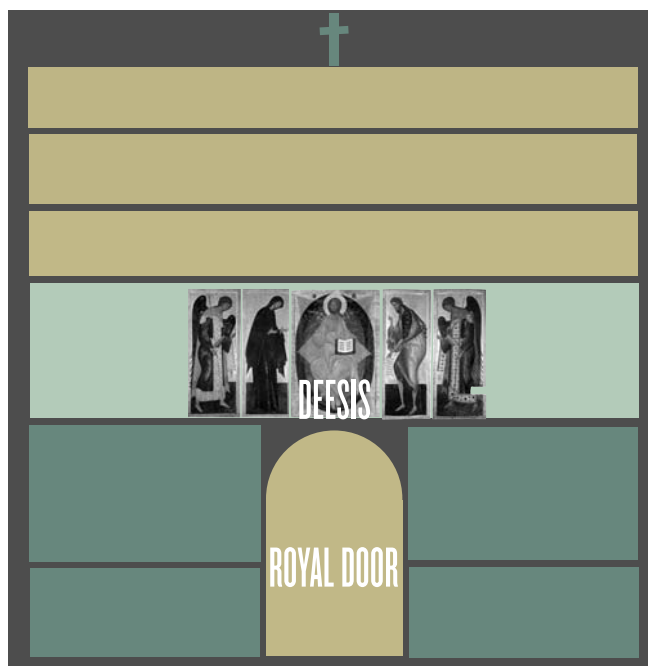
From the Deesis Tier of the Assumption Cathedral of the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery, ca. 1497

Tempera on panel, 75 $\frac{3}{16}$  x 52 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches (192 x 134 cm)

Museum of History, Architecture, and Art, Kirillo-Belozersk

© Museum of History, Architecture, and Art, Kirillo-Belozersk

During the early 15th century icon painting evolved to portray emotion and dynamism. The development of the multi-tiered iconostasis (icon-screen) in churches gave painters unprecedented creative opportunities. At first, an iconostasis was just a small symbolic wall used to mark the division between the altar, considered a particularly holy area within the church, and the area where the worshippers stood and prayed. This small wall stood as



a symbolic division between the heavens and the earth, the divine and the human. When, over years, the placement and removal of the icons from the top of this wall turned into an everyday chore, the icons were permanently installed. With time, the iconostasis wall consisting of several tiers (rows) of icons was developed. Around the 15th century, Russian iconostases reached as many as five or six rows of icons.

The iconostasis was arranged in a particular order with the Deesis tier often being the largest and most important. The Deesis row had to include at least three icons: Enthroned Christ in the middle, flanked on his left (the viewer's right) by John the Baptist, and on his right by the Virgin. If there was space to include more icons in the row, they were arranged in a particular order: Archangel Michael next to the Virgin and Archangel Gabriel next to John the Baptist, Peter next to Archangel Michael, and Paul next to Gabriel.

Medieval icons shined with metallic gold and bright colors. Each color was considered to have the same substance as words, as well as its own value and meaning. Gold symbolized the divine nature of God. Red became the symbol of the resurrection as well as the color of blood and torment. Sometimes icons were painted with a red background as a symbol of the celebration of eternal life. Blue indicated the infiniteness of the sky and was used to represent the divine world. White was the symbol of the heavenly realm and God's divine light signifying cleanliness, holiness, and simplicity. Saints and righteous people were depicted wearing white. Green was the color of natural, living things. Ancient iconographers often painted the earth green to denote where life began. Brown was the color of the earth, and all that is transient and perishable. Black was the color of mystery and the unknown as well as evil and death.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What clues can you find in this painting that suggest that these are spiritual figures rather than depictions of everyday people? How has the artist used these panels to indicate which figures are most important?
- Orthodox Christian culture had a strong visual orientation. Through images, religious stories and teachings were disseminated to the faithful. What stories and teachings seem to be conveyed in these panels? How has the artist transmitted this information?
- The symbols and colors that are included in these icons would have been familiar to the faithful. Which symbols can you recognize? Which symbols are puzzling to you?
- Although today we are bombarded with images everywhere we turn, for people in medieval Russia, life was quite different. Try to imagine life in medieval Russia, before electricity and all the modern conveniences of 21st-century life. Describe the impact that viewing this iconostasis might have had upon worshippers.
- During the early 20th century, some Russian artists (including Vasily Kandinsky, Marc Chagall, and Kazimir Malevich) looked to medieval icon painting for inspiration. As you view the 20th-century works in this exhibition, consider which aspects of these early paintings might have served as inspiration for Modern artists.

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- A medieval painting workshop would have resembled a science lab. Artists made all of their own tools and materials, including their paints. Master painters took on apprentices to do much of the work of preparing materials. In exchange for their labor in the workshop, the apprentices learned the techniques of painting from the master painter. Russian artists used egg yolk mixed with colored pigments to create egg tempera paint. Pigments were made from ground minerals and other elements, prepared and blended according to a specific recipe. Because egg tempera dries very quickly, artists had to paint small areas at one time. Students can experiment with this technique with readily available materials. A lesson plan with detailed instructions is online at: [http://www.renaissanceconnection.org/lesson\\_science\\_egg.html](http://www.renaissanceconnection.org/lesson_science_egg.html). This link will take you to the Web site of the Allentown Art Museum in Allentown, Pennsylvania. It includes step-by-step instructions for classroom explorations of egg tempera painting technique.
- Icon painters used color symbolically to impart meaning. Early-20th-century artists would also theorize on the power of color to communicate. The Russian artist Vasily Kandinsky (1866–1944) considered yellow disquieting and stimulating, green as peaceful and passive, and red as turbulent. What associations do you have with various colors? Through research of other historical periods and cultures, consider whether color associations are universal, cultural, and/or personal. Discuss your findings.

# THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY: THE AGE OF PETER THE GREAT

After decades of famine and political turbulence, in 1613 Michael Romanov was named Tsar of Russia. The Romanov dynasty would reign until a revolution in 1917 ended imperial rule.

When Peter I (Peter the Great) ascended to the throne at the end of the 17th century, Russia was a backward land that stood outside the political affairs of Europe. Superstition, distrust of foreigners, and conservatism characterized most of the society. The economy was based on primitive agriculture and the military organization was sorely out of date. The reign of Peter I (1682–1725) was a turning point in Russian history. He was determined that Russia become and remain a great European power and carried forward the Westernizing policies in a radical and uncompromising manner.

Early in his reign, Peter traveled across northern Europe to learn the skills that Russia needed to grow and prosper. He visited shipyards, workshops, and factories, gaining knowledge of shipbuilding, clock-making, copper engraving, and dentistry. Peter returned with 260 chests filled with weapons, scientific instruments, tools and a stuffed crocodile. He also recruited a large number of military and technical experts, who would teach their skills to Russians. He would also remodel the armed forces and bureaucracy along European lines and impose new taxes that dramatically increased the state's revenues.

The construction of St. Petersburg, Peter the Great's grand legacy, was begun in 1703 on marshy territory won from Sweden. Foreign architects directed the project, and thousands died from the toil of building a new capital city from scratch.

This cultural and economic transformation demanded both ingenuity from the tsar and even greater sacrifice and suffering from the population. In 1649 a code of laws effectively divided the society into ranks and occupational classes from which neither the individual nor his or her descendants could move. The laws imposed on peasants froze not only social status but also residency and imposed a harsh form of serfdom and despotic rule.

Peter I, who would come to be known as Peter the Great, set the foundation for a new culture conceived in imitation of Western Europe. Art forms that had been forbidden by the medieval Russian Orthodox Church—such as portraiture, instrumental music, and dramatic productions—entered the mainstream of the nation's cultural life. By the mid-18th century Russians were producing ballets, operas, chamber music, baroque architecture, and novels. Under Peter I's rule, artists were sent abroad to study, and painters from Western Europe were brought to work in Russia. When Peter died in 1725 Russia was more respected and feared in Europe than ever before.





## ABOUT THIS WORK

**Ivan Nikitin**

**Portrait of a Field Hetman, 1720s**

Oil on Canvas

29  $\frac{5}{16}$  x 23  $\frac{5}{8}$  inches (76 x 60 cm)

State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

© State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

One genre dominated painting throughout the 18th century and beyond: the portrait. Russian artists sought to make portraits more than simply representations of “likenesses.” In this time of new ideas and social change, symbolism in painting, especially in portraits, became an important means of defining oneself and one’s place in a society.

The artist Ivan Nikitin (1688–1741) began his career as a singer in the court choir. In 1716, Peter the Great sponsored a group of young Russian artists to be sent to Europe for training. Included in this group was Ivan Nikitin. Ivan traveled to Florence, Italy, where he studied at the Academy of Arts. The studies in Italy profoundly affected his development as an artist. When he returned to Russia in 1720 he received the title of court painter. While in St. Petersburg, Nikitin created several portraits of Peter I, his family, and court officials. One of the few surviving signed works by Nikitin is this *Portrait of the Field Hetman*.

Although very little is known about the person depicted, it is valued for way that the subject is painted. The painting demonstrates the lessons that Nikitin would have learned during studies in Europe in the way both dramatic light and rich color are used. The hetman’s (captain’s) clothes and uniform identify him as a high-ranking soldier. The painting also shows another influence brought about under Peter I’s reign. Traditionally Russian men had long, full beards. This style had been practiced for centuries as part of official church doctrine that linked the beard with a connection to Christ. Determined to introduce Western customs into Russia, in 1698 Peter I issued an edict that imposed a tax on beards and decreed that officials must wear Western clothes. This painting, therefore, not only signals a change in artistic style, but in culture and fashion as well. Nikitin is important as one of the first Russian artists educated abroad and as an example of Russian artists’ successful transition to the Western style of painting.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Although little is known about the subject of Nikitin's *Portrait of a Field Hetman* (captain), look carefully at this work and invent a short imagined biography, based solely on your careful observations of the painting. Include your ideas about his age, personality, class status, profession, family, and outlook on life. What "clues" in this portrait led you to these conclusions? Share your writing with your classmates. Did you reach similar or very different conclusions about the life and personality of the man portrayed?
- Compared to other portraits in this section of the exhibition, or other portraits you are familiar with, would you describe this portrait as realistic or idealized? What observations can you point to in support of your conclusion?
- The dichotomies between tradition and innovation persist in contemporary culture. Name some current issues where this debate continues, and discuss where you stand on the old vs. new continuum.

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- Some historians consider Peter I a hero who steered his country in the direction of progress. Others see him as a villain who damaged Russian society by cutting it adrift from its traditions. After researching Peter's reign, hold a class debate focusing on the seeming schism between holding on to traditions and embracing progress.
- From the powdered wigs of the 18th century to "afros" and Beatles haircuts in the 1960s, hairstyles have been important indicators of political and social affiliation. Research an era through its hairstyle and report on how it reflected the temper of the times.
- Peter I's attempts to bring Western ways to Russia affected not only the government and economy, but also details of everyday life from hairstyles to table manners. In 1717 he issued a book on etiquette which included the following rules:
  - First, clip your nails. Wash your hands and sit down in a refined manner, sit upright and do not be the first to grab the dish. Do not eat like pigs and do not blow into the bowl so that it splashes everywhere....When you drink, do not wipe your lips with your hand but use a napkin, and do not drink until you have swallowed your food. Do not lick your fingers, and do not gnaw at bones, but rather, take the meat off with a knife.

From *The Honorable Mirror of Youth*, 1717

Consider current codes of behavior that you are obliged to obey, including dress codes, buckling seat belts, wearing helmets when biking, and limits on cell phones use. Should government and institutions be able to impose rules on personal behavior? Explain your responses.

# THE LATE 18TH CENTURY: THE REIGN OF CATHERINE THE GREAT

Although she was a German by birth, Catherine II (ruled 1762–1796), known as Catherine the Great, regarded herself as the spiritual daughter of Peter the Great and continued his policies with striking success both militarily and culturally.

During her reign she carried out ambitious plans for Russian expansion, conquering territories to the south in order to acquire warm-water Black Sea ports necessary for Russian commerce, and in the west where she gained areas of land that had belonged to Poland.

Domestically she continued to encourage the spread of Western culture and values among the Russian elite. Schooled in the ideas of the Enlightenment, which espoused reason as the ruler of human life, she chose French culture as a guide and for a time appeared to be interested in the liberal theories espoused by such French writers as Voltaire. She even made French the official language of the court.

Catherine was an avid art collector patronizing both Russian artists and collecting foreign masterpieces including works by Van Dyke, Raphael, Rembrandt, and Rubens. Her collection grew to include 4000 works that were displayed in the Winter Palace, now home to the State Hermitage Museum.

Under her guidance, St. Petersburg became Russia’s “window on the West.” For the first time Russians were completely involved in the intellectual trends of Europe. Russians, not only aristocrats, but artists and architects as well, traveled the continent absorbing the culture of the period. Through travel, ideas, trends, and styles were spread. For instance, the architectural style of neoclassicism was so popular in the 18th century that it became the symbol of aristocratic romanticism in England, democratic republicanism in the United States, and authoritarian autocracy in Russia.

At the beginning of her reign Catherine favored religious tolerance, education for women, and civil rights within the bounds of class and rank. Although she disapproved of serfdom in theory, in practice she is frequently criticized for her inaction to reform it. Toward the end of her reign, as a result of the French Revolution (1789–99), which resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy in France, she became more suspicious of public opinion. She called Washington “a rebel” and imposed censorship on Voltaire’s writings and even on some laws she had written herself. This set the pattern for much of the 19th century, which would be marked by increasing conflict between the rulers and members of the educated classes, who demanded Western-style freedoms and rights.



## ABOUT THIS WORK

**Dmitrii Levitsky**

**Portrait of Agafia Dmitrievna (Agasha) Levitskaya,  
daughter of the artist, 1785**

Oil on canvas

46 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 35 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches (120 x 90 cm)

The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

© The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Dmitrii Levitsky (1735–1822) is considered the greatest portraitist of his time. His father, a priest and an experienced engraver, instilled in his son Dmitrii an appreciation of art and beauty. Levitsky became an accomplished icon painter and this background is evident in his work. Not only does he strive to show a physical likeness, but also the souls of his subjects, without glossing over any of their less attractive characteristics.

In 1760, Levitsky was invited to St. Petersburg to assist the painter Alexei Antropov (1716–1795) in the decoration of St. Andrew Cathedral. Two years later, both artists traveled to Moscow to work on a ceremonial portrait of Catherine II, commissioned on the occasion of her coronation. Levitsky eventually became a court painter who produced official portraits of the Empress and members of her court dressed in grand, formal attire. Through his paintings he both documented and characterized St. Petersburg society, creating the image of an aristocracy to be emulated. He succeeded in finding a proper type of portrait and style for each class and type of person.

Levitsky is known as an artist who conveys the vitality and personality of his subjects with great technical proficiency. He paints his daughter Agasha in traditional Russian dress wearing

a sarafan (a sleeveless jumper-like garment worn over a shirt) and a kokoshnik, a traditional headdress.

Despite his artistic success at the end of the 18th century, Levitsky's popularity steadily waned in the early 1800s when tastes in painting styles shifted to a more romanticized approach.

**Dmitrii Levitsky**

**Portrait of Alexander Lanskoï 1782**

Oil on canvas

59 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 46 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches (151 x 117 cm)

State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

© State Russian Museum



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- We know that this is a portrait of the artist's daughter. Do you feel that this intimate relationship is revealed in the way the subject is depicted? Explain your response.
- Agasha stares straight out at us, meeting our gaze, as though she is aware of our presence and could speak to us. If we could bring this work to life, what might she say?
- If you are visiting the museum, compare this work with a more formal work by Levitsky, *Portrait of A. D. Lanskoi* (1782), pictured on the opposite page. The subject of this portrait is Alexander Lanskoi, a young Guards officer who had a close relationship with Catherine II. In what ways are these two works similar; in what ways are they different from each other?
- Levitsky includes specific objects in this work. Based on Russian artistic tradition and knowing that Levitsky was also an accomplished icon painter, we may assume that these objects—the dark bread, goblet, and window—are not randomly chosen, but hold symbolic meaning. What meaning might these objects possess? If you were to make a portrait of a family member, what objects would you include to symbolize some important information about him or her? Explain.
- Levitsky was remarkable in his ability to render convincing textures and surfaces in paint. This was true both of his human characters and of the objects that surrounded them. How many different materials can you identify in this painting? Describe how it would feel to reach into the painting and touch the fabrics, objects, and surfaces.

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- Assemble a selection of various textured materials, including fabrics, ceramics, glass, and wood, among others. Choose one and write a detailed description of its attributes. Then draw the same object trying to capture all the qualities you described.
- Levitsky paints Agasha in traditional Russian costume. Where can we still see and learn about traditional native costumes? Are you aware of any traditional clothing styles or garments that are associated with your own heritage?
- Consider the reigns of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great. Why were these rulers dubbed “Great”? What qualities do you think a leader should possess to be considered “Great”? Research more about Peter I and Catherine II's reigns and decide whether or not you think the term “Great” is deserved.
- Even in the 18th century new philosophies and styles were spread across boundaries through travel. With today's global communications and abundant travel, consider what ideas and trends cross national and continental boundaries and how they impact the way we live today.

# THE COMING OF AGE OF RUSSIAN ART: FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

The beginning of the 19th century saw Russia take a leading role in the defeat of Napoleon, demonstrating her preeminence as a European power. Russian patriotism was boosted by the experience of Napoleon I's ruinous march to Moscow and his army's famous retreat, depicted by Leo Tolstoy in his epic novel *War and Peace*. For the next 40 years, Europeans regarded Russia as the continent's most formidable power.

But victory brought complacency and discontent. Russian leaders failed to recognize the need for technological development and left the country poorly prepared for the next great struggle. Although Russia was developing industrially, it was falling behind other powers at an alarming rate and lagged in weapons development, education, and industry—all the things that constitute the strength of a state. On the eve of the Crimean War, when railways had already spread across Western Europe, Russia was just completing its first major line between Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The growth of education, so necessary for the building of economic and military strength, also brought two developments that threatened the imperial state: nationalism and the desire for political participation. Both of these found powerful expression in the Decembrist rebellion of 1825, organized by a group of young military officers in an effort to overthrow the tsar. The rebellion was quickly suppressed and prompted further reactionary measures, including a new secret police to compel complete obedience to the emperor, and strict censorship of all

publications. Numerous writers were arrested; some were exiled, among them the novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and sentenced to hard labor.

This desire for political participation and its frustration through government repression drove a wedge between government and some members of educated society. The dissidents challenged a fundamental tenet of tsarist ideology: the notion that the ruler was a good father who cared for the people of Russia. The failure of the regime to enact reforms would eventually erupt and lead to its demise.

Although this was a period of harsh tyrannical rule and political stagnation, it also witnessed a great flowering of Russian culture. Russia's artistic community continued to share much in common with contemporary European art. With the advent of Romanticism, Russian artists took renewed interest in the world around them and explored ways to express their individualism and to intensify the emotional expressiveness of their art. The aim was to make the viewer feel the whole range of emotions.

Russian artists reworked Western cultural forms to create an original national image. The conquest of new territories required that they be depicted on canvas, and the academy began to stress the importance of landscape painting. In previous eras Russia's changing landscape had been recorded by foreigners, now talented Russian artists mastered the skills to paint their homeland with vision and authority.





## ABOUT THIS WORK

**Ivan Aivazovsky**

**The Ninth Wave, 1850**

Oil on canvas

87 x 130 ¾ inches (221 x 332 cm)

State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

© State Russian Museum

Ivan Aivazovsky was born in 1817 in the ancient Crimean town of Theodosia on the shores of the Black Sea. As a boy he loved to draw and attracted the attention of the town governor, who helped him gain admission to the high school and in 1833, the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. While at the academy, Aivazovsky absorbed the spirit of Romanticism, an outlook that he would maintain throughout his lifetime. The main theme of Aivazovsky's work is the struggle against the elements and love of nature. Aivazovsky was not just a professional marine painter, he knew the sea and loved it. He developed a unique way of capturing its changing moods. Instead of copying directly from nature, he limited himself to pencil sketches. Coupled with his most important gift, an amazing visual memory, this enabled him to reproduce particular states of nature.

One of his best-known works, *The Ninth Wave*, captures the struggle to survive against the force of the sea. The title refers to a common seaman's expression meaning a single wave larger than the others. In the image, the wave threatens to engulf the tiny people clinging to their makeshift vessel. Aivazovsky's use of

light creates a glistening yet foreboding seascape. The viewer is at once hopeful that the people will be saved yet aware of their dire straits. Despite the tragic nature of the image the artist clearly admires the beauty of the sea.

Throughout his long life Aivazovsky traveled much, spending time in Rome, Paris, and other European cities; working in the Caucasus; sailing to the shores of Asia; and spending time in Egypt. At the end of his life, in 1898, Aivazovsky even traveled to America. But no matter where he went he always returned to his native Black Sea shores.

Apart from his work as an artist, Aivazovsky was a tireless and versatile public figure: He took an eager interest in world events and sympathized deeply with small nations struggling for their independence. At the same time he worked selflessly for the good of his native town, Theodosia, and did much to assist young artists. To this day the principal sights of the town are his picture gallery and his grave.

Aivazovsky maintained his capacity for work, his energy, and lively creative intelligence until the end of his life. He painted more than 6,000 pictures and a multitude of skillfully executed drawings. Aivazovsky died on April 19, 1900, leaving an unfinished picture he had begun that same day.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Romanticism aimed to evoke strong emotions in the viewer. Subjects and experiences previously considered in bad taste became acceptable; violent and shocking scenes provided the opportunity for representing strong emotions. As you look at *The Ninth Wave* make a list of all the emotions you associate with this painting. Be specific about which elements of the painting seem to be evoking your reaction.

Imagine yourself among the people in the painting. What sounds and conversations would you hear? Have students work in groups to produce a soundtrack to accompany the image.

In true Romantic tradition, Aivazovsky provides a moment of intense drama, but does not tell us how this saga will be resolved. Will the people perish, or will they somehow be saved? Write an essay titled “The Day After the Ninth Wave” that tells the story of what happens next. Be sure that your narrative is grounded in information from the painting. Share your writing with your classmates. Did they reach a similar or different resolution to this story?

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

Aivazovsky’s *The Ninth Wave* is sometimes compared with Théodore Géricault’s painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819) because of their similarities in subject matter and approach. Géricault’s work was inspired by a newspaper account of the sinking of the ship *Medusa* off the coast of West Africa. After many days on a raft in the storm-tossed ocean, only a handful of survivors reached safety. Find a reproduction of *The Raft of the Medusa* either in a book or online, and compare it to *The Ninth Wave*, then answer the following questions:

- In what ways are these works similar? How are they different?
- Imagine yourself on each of these two rafts. How are the situations different? If you had to be included in one of these environments, which would you choose? Why?
- How does each artist include elements of hope in their work?

Romanticism was not only a movement in the visual arts, but also included architecture, music, and literature of the 19th century, in Russia, Western Europe, and the United States. Research an artist associated with the Romantic period and explain how that artist’s work expresses the aspirations of Romanticism.

After reviewing the attributes of Romanticism, create a work in a Romantic style. The work can be a piece of music, poem, story, or work of visual art and should include the hallmarks of Romanticism.

Because of water’s movement and reflections, rendering the effects of water and the sea is considered to be one of the most difficult subjects for a painter. Try drawing or painting a subject that includes water. If you are close to a body of water, try your hand at drawing or painting it. If this is not possible, try a puddle after a rainstorm, a swimming pool, or even a filled bathtub. When you are done consider what are the specific challenges of rendering water.

# ART AND SOCIETY: SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

As the 19th century progressed, instead of admiring distant European countries, Russian artists took renewed interest in Russia's unique character. As they moved away from Westernizing forces, Realism permeated Russian culture, as artists became interested in representing subjects from everyday life and from Russian history.

With the rise in national spirit, genre painting, which focused on scenes from everyday life, gained strength. What had been considered an inferior branch of the arts, now established itself as a valuable part of the Russian artistic heritage generating a new interest in peasant life, culture, and traditional costumes. Other painters examined the middle class. Their works provide early examples of social criticism, a trend that would increase in the second half of the century.

In 1861 Alexander II emancipated 22.5 million serfs from private ownership. Amid this new "liberal" atmosphere, artists of the period felt the need to go beyond art's aesthetic functions and to play a role in the moral and social education of the population at large. No longer was art supposed to be for the wealthy alone; now it should be available to all. Inherent in the new ideology was an assumption that art should function as an instrument of social criticism. Russia and its people became the new focus of attention.

Starting in the mid-18th century, the Russian school of painting and sculpture had been controlled by the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg. Amid the relatively liberal atmosphere of Alexander II's "Great Reforms," there was growing discontent among some artists with the academy's traditionally conservative attitudes. In 1863, 14 artists decided that they would resign from the academy in order to pursue independently their artistic visions. They wanted to have the right to choose their own subjects without having to conform to the outdated and artificial categories imposed by the academy. This group became known as the Wanderers.

The Wanderers believed that painting should tap into reality and depict real life situations. People should be shown not as types, but as individuals. Attention should focus not so much on their external appearance, but their inner life.

The Wanderers were progressive not only in the subjects they chose, but also in the way they reached their audience. Earlier, significant art exhibitions had been limited to Moscow and St. Petersburg, but the Wanderers founded the "Society for Traveling Art Exhibitions" and decided to take exhibitions to various cities and towns in order to introduce the latest artistic developments to a much wider audience. Their first exhibition made a successful tour of 48 Russian towns. This new movement not only shifted the subject and style of paintings but also how and where they were exhibited.



## ABOUT THIS WORK

**Ilya Repin**

***Barge Haulers on the Volga, 1870–73***

Oil on canvas

51 x 110 5/8 inches (131.5 x 281 cm)

State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

© State Russian Museum

Ilya Repin, who would later become a leader of the group known as the Wanderers, was born in Chuguev, in the Ukraine. His father was a soldier and Ilya's childhood was marked by poverty and hardship. His first lessons in drawing and painting came as he worked for an icon painter in his hometown. When he had saved enough money, he set off for St. Petersburg with the goal of entering the Academy of Arts. Within a year the young artist had developed his skills sufficiently to be accepted.

*Barge Haulers on the Volga* was the first painting completed by Repin after leaving the Academy. The idea for the painting came to him as he was walking along the riverbank and noticed a gang of barge haulers toiling as they passed a group of young people out on a picnic. To explore this theme further he took a boat trip down the Volga River. Although in his early sketches the haulers resemble exploited animals, as he studied their way of life, he began to see them as real people with individual personalities

rather than merely caricatures in service of an idea. He also experimented with how to place them on the canvas to achieve movement and monumentality.

Like many members of the Russian intelligentsia of the day, Repin valued the physical labor of the common man as a worthy subject. His cast of characters reflects his determination to create a picture of universal, not just local, significance. All 11 are reflections of Russia itself; and no 2 are alike. They are men of various ages, physiques, and ethnic backgrounds, all part of the Russian Empire's diverse mix of peoples. The depiction of the toil of peasants remained a popular and influential subject through the Soviet years, with special focus on realistic, socially concerned images of Russian life.

Repin is also known for his portraits. His subjects include peasants in his hometown, family members, and contemporary intellectuals. This exhibition features several Repin portraits including ones of his daughter Nadya, the art collector P. M. Tretyakov, founder of the Tretyakov Gallery, and the writer Vsevolod Mikhailovich Garshin, who authored many short stories with populist themes.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why might this subject have captivated Repin's attention? Do you think it is a worthy subject to devote three years of work to? If yes, why? If not, what would be a worthy subject? Explain.

The job these men are performing would have been instantly recognizable to 19th-century Russians. Describe what they are doing. Are there jobs in contemporary society that you think are comparable? What are they?

What do you think is the "message" of this painting?

How has Repin constructed this painting for maximum affect?

Consider:

- Format—the shape and size of the canvas
- Composition and balance—the arrangements of forms on the canvas
- Color
- Light
- Pose and gesture
- Point of view

Describe how each of these design elements is taken into account to intensify the impact of the work.

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- During the course of the 19th century what was deemed an appropriate subject for a painting changed from portraits of the ruling class to those of working people sometimes engaged in difficult physical tasks. Images of hard-working people came to be seen as noble and worthy. How do you think hard physical work is viewed by society today? Explain your answer and cite examples.
- In the spring of 1861 Tsar Alexander II published a long awaited decree: "The right of bondage over the peasants ... is forever abolished." On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which stated that "all persons held as slaves ... are, and henceforward shall be, free." These two events both ended terrible chapters in history and set in motion new sets of issues to be confronted. Through research, compare and contrast serfdom within Russia and slavery in the United States, including the origins, effects, and impact of their eventual dissolution.
- Repin is deliberate in including men of different physical attributes and ethnic backgrounds in this painting. Because Russia is so enormous in size, it includes people from wide geographic regions and many ethnic origins. Keep a sketch pad and pencil with you for at least a week and make your own record of the various people you encounter.

# THE COLLECTIONS OF SERGEI SHCHUKIN AND IVAN MOROZOV

Two Russian art collectors stood out at the beginning of the 20th century: the cloth merchant Sergei Shchukin (1854–1936) and the textile manufacturer Ivan Morozov (1871–1921). Both acquired modern French art, developed a sensibility for spotting new trends, and publicized them in Russia.

Shchukin was among the earliest to appreciate the work of French Impressionist artists. When the French were pronouncing them insane and worthless, Shchukin boldly search out the work of “rejected” artists. By 1904, he owned 14 Monets. Impressionist works adorned the music room of his villa in Moscow. He then turned his attention to the artists of the next generation. He wanted to introduce the latest art developments to Moscow and purchased Paul Gauguin’s South Sea pictures followed by works by Cézanne and Van Gogh.

In 1906 Sergei Shchukin met the young artist Henri Matisse, and became one of Matisse's main patrons, acquiring 37 of his best paintings over an 8-year period. Shchukin also commissioned several large-scale pictures from him that would later acquire worldwide fame. In order to come to terms with these huge canvases and their radical simplicity, Shchukin shut himself away alone with them in his palatial house for several weeks. Many of his visitors reacted with bafflement to these latest purchases. Shchukin jokingly remarked, “A madman painted it and a madman bought it.”

Shchukin and Matisse would develop more than just a commercial relationship. With Shchukin’s support and backing, Matisse was

free to strive toward even greater artistic challenges and it was through Matisse that Shchukin got to know Pablo Picasso, who became the final master in his collection. At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Shchukin owned the largest collection of Picassos in the world. 51 pictures covered the walls of an entire room, right up to the ceiling.

Ivan Morozov’s passion for art began at the same time as Shchukin’s. Initially he collected the works of the young Russian painters, but in 1907 began purchasing French art for his newly rebuilt villa. Morozov entered into fruitful competition with Shchukin. But whereas Shchukin was somewhat adventurous, Morozov collected more prudently. He focused on fewer, more select works of the highest quality.

Beginning in 1907 Shchukin opened his home to the public on Sundays and personally conducted tours of his collection for curious visitors. Although Morozov had planned to give his collection to the city of Moscow, following the October Revolution of 1917, both collections were confiscated by the state and turned into museums. Their owners fled abroad with their families. In the 1930s, the pictures were divided between the Pushkin Museum in Moscow and the Hermitage in Leningrad. However, they soon vanished into storage. Stalin’s cultural policy did not approve of them. Not until the 1960s did they gradually reappear. Thanks to the courage of these two private collectors, both museums now sparkle with the best works of the French transition into modern art.





## ABOUT THIS WORK

**Henri Matisse**

***Girl with Tulips, 1910***

Oil on canvas

36 ¼ x 28 ⅝ inches (92 x 73.5 cm)

State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

© The State Hermitage Museum

Henri Matisse's (1869–1954) early years were spent in northern France where his middle-class family owned a general store. Although he studied in Paris to be a lawyer, in 1890, while confined to his bed for nearly a year after an operation, he chose drawing as a pastime. When he recovered, he decided that painting would be his career.

At first Matisse followed in the footsteps of the Impressionists, but he soon abandoned their more delicate palette and established his characteristic style, with its flat, brilliant color and fluid line, a style that came to be known as Fauvism. Like many avant-garde artists in Paris, Matisse was receptive to a broad range of influences. He was one of the first painters to take an interest in non-European art, studying Persian miniatures, Japanese prints, and African sculptures, but a visit to Moscow where he saw early icon painting seemed to hold special importance to him. He once commented, "What interests me most is neither still life nor landscape but the human figure. It is through it that I best succeed in expressing the nearly religious feeling that I have toward life."

Matisse traveled widely in the early 1900s when tourism was still a new idea. Brought on by railroad, steamships, and other forms of transportation that appeared during the industrial revolution, travel became a popular pursuit. As a cultured tourist, he developed his art with regular doses of travel and in 1911 visited his patron Shchukin's collection in Moscow. During the trip Matisse encountered Russian icons. This would have a tremendous impact on his future work. Matisse is known to have said, "I spent 10 years searching for what your artists already discovered in the 14th century. It is not you who need to come to us to study, but it is we who need to learn from you."

As we can see from *Girl with Tulips*, which was completed a year before his visit to Moscow, by 1910 Matisse was already working with luminous color and simplified forms. The model for the painting is Jeanne Vaderin, or Jeannette, as Matisse called her. She was the subject of several of his paintings, drawings, and sculptures.

Matisse arrived in Moscow on October 23, 1911. The next day, he visited the Tretyakov Gallery and asked to be shown their collection of Russian icons. Matisse was delighted by the icons and declared that to see them was more than worth the arduous trip. Matisse spent much of his time in Moscow frantically visiting monasteries, churches, convents, and collections of sacred images. Excited by what he saw, he shared it with all who came to interview him during his stay in Moscow. "They are really great art," Matisse excitedly told an interviewer. "I am in love with their moving simplicity... In these icons the soul of the artist who painted them opens out like a mystical flower. And from them we ought to learn how to understand art."

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe this painting to a classmate as completely as possible. What new things did you discover that you had not noticed at first glance?
- Take the pose of the woman in the picture. How does it feel? Is your body relaxed or tense? What might she be thinking? What do you think she is looking at? What might she do next?
- Where is this woman standing? If you could look beyond the frame what might you see?
- Matisse was known for his brilliant and complex use of color. Describe how color is used in this work.
- Compare Matisse's *Girl with Tulips* (1910) to Levitsky's *Portrait of Agafia Dmitrievna (Agasha) Levitskaya* (1785), which is also pictured in this guide (p. 19). What similarities do you notice? What differences? If you could meet one of these women, who would you choose? Why? If you could meet one of the artists, who would you choose? Why? Which portrait do you prefer?

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- Why do you think Shchukin initially needed to be alone with his new paintings? Have you ever needed some time to get used to something completely new before you decide how you feel about it? Recall that experience and whether additional time helped you clarify your opinion.
- *Girl with Tulips* was painted a year before Matisse visited Moscow and its collections of icons. In looking at his work can you see any clues as to why he found them so inspirational to his own art?
- A collection can consist of objects a person finds interesting, beautiful, unusual, valuable, or fun. What do you collect? What is the most treasured object in your collection? How did you get it? Shchukin kept his collection on the walls of his palatial home and invited artists to study there. Where do you keep your collection? Is it in a place where others can see it, or stored in a box or plastic bag, safe from dirt and damage? What would you like to add to your collection?

# THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

From the mid-19th century until the Russian Revolution of 1917, the tsars had tried to remain popular by walking a tightrope between granting reforms and greater freedom and cracking down on dissent. The dramatic reforms of Alexander II were followed by the harshly conservative rule of Alexander III (1881–1894) which clamped down on the revolutionary movement, tightened censorship laws, and instigated a wave of anti-Semitism by blaming the problems of Russia on the Jews as a means to deflect attention from the real problem, the continued gap between the rich and the poor. In 1894 Nicholas II ascended the throne. Unfortunately, Nicholas II had little skill in governing.

The disarray and confusion in government and society worsened. Poor urban and rural workers looked for ways to better their lives. They were joined by a growing middle class who also resented the power of the rich. In 1905 unrest led to massive strikes and peasant demonstrations, and even rebellion in the armed forces. On government orders, over 100 workers who had gathered in front of the Winter Palace to ask for the tsar's help were shot and killed, setting the stage for further unrest and, finally, concessions by the tsar to create Russia's first democratically elected parliament: the Duma. Briefly, Russia became a limited constitutional monarchy, but it would collapse in 1917, when the Bolsheviks launched their successful coup.

For artists, this period in Russia was marked by frenzied artistic activity and creativity. Inspired by a close association with and increased exposure to current European artistic styles, the Russian avant-garde artists reinterpreted these styles by combining them

with their own unique innovations. No longer did the Russians simply follow Europe's lead; now they initiated new and exciting artistic experiments that would ultimately change the face and the direction of modern art.

Around 1906 Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, working in France, had developed an approach to painting known as Cubism. The Cubists fragmented objects and pictorial space in semitransparent, overlapping, faceted planes, merging various perspectives. The result was an incorporation of many views and many separate temporal moments on a single canvas.

Russian painters were introduced to Cubism through the works bought and displayed by wealthy patrons like Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov (see section 6). As they did with many other movements, the Russians interpreted and transformed Cubism in their own unique way. Some of the most outstanding Cubist works came from Kazimir Malevich.

A new style, Cubo-Futurism, developed in Russia around 1910. It was essentially a synthetic style, combining three approaches: French Cubism, Italian Futurism, and Neo-primitivism. Some of Cubo-Futurism's most characteristic features, include:

- fragmentation of forms derived from Cubism
- focus on movement, energy, and speed from Futurism
- bold colors and lines from Neo-primitivism

Although it lasted only a few years, Cubo-Futurism was unique to Russia and the last major artistic style before many artists moved on to completely non-objective art.



## ABOUT THIS WORK

**Kazimir Malevich**

***Morning in the Village after Snowstorm, 1912***

Oil on canvas

31 ¾ x 31 ⅞ inches (81 x 81 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum 52.1327

Kazimir Malevich is the most celebrated Russian artist of his generation, but there is little in his youth that would suggest this path. The future leading avant-garde artist grew up in southern Ukraine far from any sizable city. The home of his childhood was simple, without art books or works of art. In his autobiography, Malevich recalls a day when he and his mother visited a shop with many pictures in it. For the first time, he recognized that paint could be used to record the impressions stored in his visual memory. “I shall never forget this great day,” he wrote.

In 1904 Malevich moved to Moscow. There he had an opportunity to see in person the French Impressionist paintings that he so greatly admired. He was profoundly impressed by Monet and Cézanne in particular.

Over the next several years Malevich would explore various styles and in 1912 he reached a turning point by developing a new independent style known as Cubo-Futurism. As the term implies, Cubo-Futurism combined both Cubism’s fragmentation of form and Italian Futurism’s emphasis on technology and motion.

As one of the most creative and inspired artists of the Russian avant-garde, Malevich was well qualified to become one of the leaders of the Cubo-Futurist style. His painting *Morning in the Village after Snowstorm* (1912) expresses both his artistic temperament and the essence of Cubo-Futurism. In keeping with Cubism, the composition is fragmented. The painting gives an impression of movement, and forms of nature, including human figures, appear to be machine made; this is the influence of Futurism. *Morning in the Village after Snowstorm* is, in its mastery of complex colors and shapes, a good example of the newly created Russian style, Cubo-Futurism, which Malevich saw as a logical continuation of Cubism and Futurism. This phase in Malevich’s career has been seen as a stopover on his journey toward abstraction and the eventual development of still another style he would pioneer, Suprematism.

This work also contains political and social dimensions. Malevich came from humble circumstances and it is clear in autobiographical accounts that vivid memories of his country childhood compensated for his lack of a formal art education. Malevich mines his memories of age-old village life, but paints this scene in the most progressive, groundbreaking style. *Morning in the Village after Snowstorm* demonstrates that his hard-won skills as a sophisticated painter were rooted in Russian folk traditions of popular woodcuts, frescoes, and icon painting. If art can be said to predict the future, then Malevich’s choice, on the brink of the Russian Revolution, to depict peasants seems not to have been coincidental.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Before looking at the painting, close your eyes and imagine a painting entitled *Morning in the Village after Snowstorm*. Draw the image you imagined and/or write a paragraph describing the scene. What did you imagine this scene looked like? Share what you have created with your classmates. Now view Malevich's *Morning in the Village after Snowstorm*. How is your work similar or different from Malevich's vision?
- Is this a real or imaginary place, or a mixture of both? What leads you to your conclusion? Describe this village. It may take some careful looking to discern what is going on.
- The title of this work suggests that there are certain things that the artist wants us to look for. How does Malevich convey the time of day, the place, the weather conditions? Cite specific parts of the painting in your responses.
- Color can convey atmosphere and emotion. Think about the environment that Malevich has created in this picture. Describe how color is used to convey atmosphere. If the colors in this work were changed, how would the impact of the work change?
- This work has been classified by art historians as Cubo-Futurist, a style that synthesizes several other styles: Cubism, Futurism and Neo-primitivism. Which parts of it seem to define it as a Cubist work? In what ways does it show the influence of Futurist ideas? Can you see Neo-primitivist aspects as well? Explain.

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- Malevich has titled this work *Morning in the Village after Snowstorm*. The title provides the viewer with a time of day, place, and weather conditions. Draw or paint your own work that depicts a particular time of day, place, and weather conditions. For instance, *Evening in the Park before the Rain* or *Afternoon at the Beach when the Temperature Tops 90 Degrees*. Describe why you chose these conditions and share the work you have created with your classmates.
- In comparison to previous ages, the world was moving very quickly at the turn of the 20th century. In addition to the social and political changes that were occurring in Russia at this time, industrial and technological changes were making an impact as well. The revolution in manufacturing and transportation changed economies and expectations. In Russia the opening of the Trans-Siberian railway opened vast areas of land for development. Photography was widely employed to document events; film and cinematography were developing as a new art form. Research the impact that these inventions had on how artists chose to depict the world around them.
- The reign of Alexander III was a time of increased Anti-Semitism, which was sanctioned and encouraged by the government. Jews experienced waves of violent attacks, called pogroms, in which thousands were murdered. The pogroms drove many Jews away. Between 1880 and 1914 about one million fled Russia. Most settled in Western Europe and the United States. Discuss the many reasons that people decide to leave their homeland. Interview someone who has immigrated to the United States and find out how and why they left the land of their birth.

# ART AND IDEOLOGY: LATE 1920s–1940s

The Russian Revolution in 1917 ended more than 300 years of tsarist rule. It not only changed life in Russia, but also effectively divided the world into two hostile camps, communist and capitalist, a schism that would dominate much of the history of the 20th century.

Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik Party, formed a new country, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), commonly called the Soviet Union. Under Soviet rule the government controlled everything. All agricultural land was organized into large collective farms, where everyone worked for the state. Employment, food, housing, and education were made available to everyone, but political and civil rights were severely curtailed.

During the first five years of Soviet rule, Russia was plagued by civil war, famine, invasion, and rebellions by nationalities fighting for independence. In 1924, Lenin died, and a struggle for power raged at the highest levels. Starting in 1927, Josef Stalin initiated the first of the Soviet Union's five-year plans, which focused on harnessing all economic power to the state. Industrialization proceeded swiftly and peasants were brutally collectivized. Artists were next on his list.

In 1932, the Soviet state proclaimed that all artists must embrace the Socialist Realist philosophy and style. Its principles included loyalty to the Communist Party and correct ideological stance and content. Those who did not conform could be interrogated, imprisoned, or even executed.

From the start, the new Soviet state enlisted art to serve an educational and instructional function to reinforce cultural values. Communist Party leaders firmly enforced the doctrine that the arts must serve society by educating and inspiring the masses, and artists were instructed to look to art of the past. Works of art had to reveal the spirit of socialism and reflect the Communist Party viewpoint. Its purpose was to further the goals of communism and to glorify the proletariat's (the working classes) struggle toward socialist progress. This new Soviet art should be optimistic, heroic, and make visible the spirit of socialism for both national and international audiences. Its practice was marked by strict adherence to party doctrine and to conventional techniques of realism.

Under the Soviet regime the ancient religious ideals of Orthodox Russia were shunned and replaced by official atheism. The Communist Party and its leaders supplanted God as the focal point of Soviet life. Socialist Realism became synonymous with the state. Most importantly, it portrayed the Soviet Union's future as being filled with an unequaled prosperity that would forever shame capitalism and its proponents. Socialist Realism portrayed life only as the Bolsheviks wanted it seen, and in many ways created an idealistic world of fantasy that overlooked massive failures, such as the death and suffering that continued in labor camps throughout the country. The rise of Socialist Realism was rapid and dramatic and would heavily influence artistic life in the Soviet Union through the 1980s.





## ABOUT THIS WORK

**Alexander Deineka (1899–1969)**

***Collective Farm Worker on a Bicycle, 1935***

Oil on canvas

47 ¼ x 86 ⅝ inches (120 x 220 cm)

The State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

© State Russian Museum

Deineka's work, although figurative, is strikingly modernist in style with its large flattened areas of bright colors. Trained not as a painter but as a graphic artist, he also produced popular posters with collectivist themes, glorifying work and the future of the Soviet Union. Deineka's paintings introduced convincing depictions of the Soviet "New Person" dreamed of by Russian revolutionaries. To meet state-imposed guidelines, the heroes and heroines of Socialist Realist painting were required to be recognizable and appealing to the public and the embodiment of a social thesis. The New Person in the painting of the 1930s was inevitable healthy, typically smiling, and often engaged in vigorous activity.

*Collective Farm Worker on a Bicycle* is considered one of the key works of early Socialist Realism. Socialist Realism of the 1930s was a highly symbolic visual language filled with both romance and lyrical distortion of reality. Deineka and his colleagues strove to transmit the idea that a new and improved society would be achieved through the application of collectivism and technology. Nowhere was the basic premise of Socialist Realism—the promised bright future—more apparent than in paintings showing life on the collective farms. Here the sun shone, modern farm machinery was available (although in fact the proportions of collective farms provided with tractors in the 1930s was not

high), and the anguish of collectivization was nowhere to be seen. Deineka's painting put an idyllic gloss on country life, showing the land and its people transformed by technology and modern farming techniques. A truck visible in the background and the shiny bicycle, still rare commodities in the Soviet countryside, would have been easily read by contemporaries as desired symbols of modernity.

Since medieval times, color had been used symbolically. The bright red dress of the peasant woman and her elegant white shoes portray her as a prosperous and emancipated citizen. The color red, inserted into paintings in the form of banners, flags, scarves, and garments, was a symbol of communism and an affiliation with communist ideals. Red also referred to the blood shed by the working class in its struggle against capitalism. White also had several symbolic meanings. Stalin was regularly dressed by painters in white, a symbol of moral purity. The color also signified heaven.

Russian culture, strongly influenced by the Byzantine Empire, had traditionally curtailed the rights of women. The Bolsheviks viewed this bias against women, along with many other aspects of traditional Russia, as undesirable. Reforms in vocabulary went hand-in-hand with the introduction of new agricultural, industrial, and artistic measures designed to advance the society to a socialist utopia. In an effort to remove gender-biased language, everyone became not a man or a woman, but rather a "comrade." This change can be seen in the depiction of women. Deineka's full-blooded and full-bodied women were of crucial significance in establishing the sturdy, woman-type of Socialist Realism.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe this painting. Which elements seem realistic? Which elements seem idealized or utopian? What symbols and messages can you find?
- What characteristics of Socialist Realism can you find in this painting? Explain your answer by citing particular elements.
- Socialist Realist painting frequently suggests the passage through time toward a brighter future. How has the artist constructed this work to suggest movement and the passage of time?
- Describe the woman in this painting as fully as possible. Where does she live? Where do you think she is heading? What might she do in a typical day? If you met her along this road, what do you think she would say to you? Compare your answers with those of your classmates'.

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- In 1935, when Deineka painted this work, the bicycle and new white shoes would have been immediately understood as the fruits of hard labor. The message was that exemplary collective farmers could expect to enjoy material rewards. This type of message can be found in abundance in contemporary society. Look through magazines and find some examples. Then discuss whether or not you consider these images to be propaganda.
- The Soviet Union created a new art form: Socialist Realism. Why would the state want to become involved in the arts? What were some of the consequences of state regulation for artists?
- Women were depicted in highly specific ways in Socialist Realist art. They were usually young, strong, and active. What is the image of the ideal woman in contemporary American society? Find images that you think express contemporary ideals and discuss what characteristics you associate with them.
- Although Socialist Realism showed Soviet life as ever improving, the reality of life during Stalin's rule was actually harsh and brutal. Research this historical period and contrast the official image that was depicted in Socialist Realist work with actual realities and events.
- Socialist Realism portrayed images of what communists believed a perfect society would look like. It depicted certain ideas and ideals. How would you envision a perfect society? What ideals would it embrace? How would you articulate or envision that society? Create a work that communicates your vision for a more perfect way of life.

# OPENING NEW SPACES: 1980 TO THE PRESENT

Following World War II, the Soviets found themselves in another conflict called the Cold War. This time they were rivals with the United States for world leadership. Although the Soviet Union and the United States did not fight one another directly, they often supported opposing factions in wars in poor countries. The participation of the Soviet Union and the United States turned small, local conflicts into larger, more deadly, confrontations. By the 1960s the Soviet Union and the United States were the two most powerful countries in the world, each spending trillions of dollars on weapons and military expenses. During the Cold War millions of people—both soldiers and civilians—died in wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and other countries around the world. Millions more were left homeless or imprisoned because they spoke out against their governments. Another feature of the Cold War was the race to outdo one another in space exploration. The “space race” as it was called, was a competition to show which country had the best technology.

The communist revolution of 1917 had promised a “worker’s paradise.” All citizens would be equal and everyone would have the basic needs of life. While the Soviet government did provide most citizens’ most basic needs, such as housing, employment, education, and health care, it provided little else. And housing was a constant problem. Although rent was cheap, most ordinary citizens lived in cramped “communal apartments,” in which entire families lived within a single small room, sharing a kitchen, bathroom, and living room with other families. Citizens had little or no privacy.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Soviet economic growth slowed, and citizens became more and more disillusioned with the communist system. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union. He pushed a package of economic reforms and reduced the restrictions on individual liberties. Throughout the Soviet Union, regions that had once been independent countries demanded a return to independence. Then, in 1991, independence became a reality. By the end of the year, with surprisingly little bloodshed, the Soviet Union had dissolved. Once again, Russia became an independent country.



## ABOUT THIS WORK

**Ilya Kabakov**

***The Man Who Flew into Space, 1981–88***

Installation: six poster panels with collage; mixed media

Room dimensions 37 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 37 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 57 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches (96 x 95 x 147 cm)

Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée d' Art Moderne, Paris

Ilya Kabakov's work is today exhibited internationally, but this level of attention was achieved only after his relocation to the West in 1987. Before that, he lived in the Soviet Union, making art in difficult circumstances for more than three decades. Born in 1933 into a Jewish family, Kabakov is the son of a locksmith and a bookkeeper. After attending art school he worked as a book illustrator and contributed to more than 150 books for children. He also began to work on his own personal art.

Kabakov grew up in a climate where only officially approved art was endorsed. Artists who dared to make work that strayed from official doctrine were met with strong government disapproval, and it became increasingly difficult to publicly exhibit work that did not reflect Soviet government policy. One of the most important venues for the alternative art scene that developed under these restrictive conditions was the apartment. Around 1975, Kabakov began hosting artists' meetings at his Moscow apartment. His studio became the focus of an active exchange of ideas, a venue for lectures and discussions among artists.

After years of creating characters in albums that contained both text and drawings, Kabakov began to build full-blown habitats based on the characters he invented in his Moscow studio, which

was located on the rooftop of a communal apartment building. Starting in the mid-1980s, Kabakov's work began to move toward the planning and realization of a series of "total" installations, all-encompassing environments in which the elements of music, poetry, theater, painting, drawing, and sculpture united to produce a multisensory theatrical experience. The earliest complete project, installed initially in Kabakov's own studio, was *The Man Who Flew into Space*. This work presents a room with walls covered in posters and slogans celebrating the Communist Party, its leaders, and its technological achievements. The room's inhabitant, having built a makeshift slingshot, has launched himself through the ceiling of his shabby room and vanished into space. This humorous but complex work ridicules the gap between Soviet technological ambition and the impoverished material reality of everyday life in Russia. This almost impossible amalgam of biting satire and idealism is characteristic of Kabakov's mixed response to Soviet reality.

Kabakov explores the potential of spaces to tell stories. Much like literature, his work combines character, plot, setting, dialogue, and point of view. *The Man Who Flew into Space* is one installation from *Ten Characters*, Kabakov's first New York gallery show in 1988. In this exhibition, his central metaphor for Soviet life was the communal apartment, in which generations of a family crowded into a single room, and assorted family groups shared a kitchen and a bathroom facilities. These communal interiors and the characters who inhabit them have provided Kabakov with the raw material to invent a world of varied personalities, each with their own environment, idiosyncrasies, and unique commentaries.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Take a few minutes to describe this place and its individual components. Make a list of all the things you see. Which ones are familiar to you? Which ones are new?
- Where are we? How can you tell? Do you think this is a specific (“real”) place, an imagined one, or a combination of the two? Which elements seem to be observed; which elements are from the artist’s imagination?
- Describe the narrative (story) that this installation suggests. How would this scene be different if we had visited 24 hours earlier? What might we have seen?
- Describe the person who might have inhabited this room. Even though he is not present, what can we assume about him by looking at his possessions?
- Why might this person have wanted to “get out” so much? What clues to his discontent does the environment hold? Try to put yourself in his frame of mind before he left/launched. Write a farewell letter that discloses his state of mind and motivation.

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

- Some of the other characters in the exhibition *Ten Characters* included *The Man Who Flew into His Picture*, *The Man Who Collects the Opinion of Others*, and *The Person Who Describes His Life through Characters*. Create your own “Eleventh Character.”  
Write a character profile that includes:
  - Physical attributes—gender, height, age, weight, etc.
  - Social attributes—such as family life, occupation, hobbies.
  - Emotional attributes—what are his/her interests, fears, passions?
  - Environment—where does this person live, work, visit?Present this character through writing, drawing, and/or acting out a monologue. Before he began constructing installations, Ilya Kabakov created characters in the form of albums that included writing, drawings, and paintings.
- Create a model installation that would be an environment for your character to inhabit. This scale model should include as many specific details and manifestations of your character’s personality as you can imagine. Like Kabakov, who frequently includes a sound track for his installations, you may want to consider the addition of sound components to your total environment.
- In the former Soviet Union citizens were not free to speak out, to express their ideas or criticize the government. Newspapers, books, music, art, and movies were heavily censored. From the Soviet perspective, this enforcement was necessary to ensure that would-be capitalists did not exploit the working class. From the American perspective freedom of expression is at the core of a productive society. What are your feelings about censorship? Do you think there should be any limits on free expression? Explain your response.

# VOCABULARY

## SECTION 1

**Deesis:** The Greek word for a humble request or prayer. This tier of an iconostasis would include a representation of Christ Enthroned between the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist, who was thought to be able to intercede on behalf of humans.

**Egg tempera:** A painting medium that uses colored pigments, ground into powder and mixed with egg yolks, to create paint. Bright colors are derived from minerals including cinnabar (red), lapis lazuli (blue), and malachite (green).

**Icon:** Derived from the Greek, meaning any image or likeness, but commonly used to designate a panel representing Christ, the Virgin Mary, or a saint venerated by Orthodox (Eastern) Christianity.

**Iconostasis:** In Eastern Christian churches, a screen separating the main body of the church from the altar; it was usually decorated with icons whose subject matter and order were largely predetermined.

## SECTION 2

**Hetman:** Military captain

**Serfdom:** A system in which an agricultural worker is bound to the land and the landowner. Serfdom had gradually begun to take hold in Russia during the 16th century. It is distinguished from slavery, which indicates legal bondage to a person, but similar in its effects.

**Tsar:** Derived from the word “Caesar”; the Russian king or head of the Russian royal family. Tsars held absolute power and considered themselves appointed by God to rule the country.

## SECTION 3

**The Enlightenment:** A movement in the late 1700s that emphasized the value of experimentation and reason in learning. This was a dramatic shift from the previous emphasis on tradition and faith.

## SECTION 4

**Romanticism:** A style of art and literature that emerged in mid-18th century Europe and spread to Russia. It emphasized individual emotions expressed in a dramatic manner. Artists explored ways to express their individualism and to intensify the emotional expressiveness of their art.

## SECTION 5

**Genre:** A painting that depicts a scene from everyday life.

**Realism:** A mid-19th century style of art based on the belief that the subject matter should be shown true to life, without stylization or idealization.

**The Wanderers:** A group of talented artists who left the official academy and formed an artist’s commune. They believed that art should reflect the realities of Russian life. In 1863 they resigned from the Academy of Art in St. Petersburg and formed the Society for Traveling Exhibitions, designed to bring art to the people. They later joined with other Moscow-based artists and in 1870 mounted their first exhibition.



## SECTION 6

**Impressionists:** A group of 19th century painters who explored fleeting effects of nature and light with loose brushwork. Many of their works appeared to be rapidly executed to capture the impression of a subject rather than the subject itself.

**Fauvism:** In 1905 an exhibition was held in Paris with paintings that blazed with pure, highly contrasting colors. One critic dubbed the creators of these paintings “les fauves”—French for “wild beasts”—and the name stuck. Matisse is generally acknowledged to be the leader of the group.

## SECTION 7

**Avant-Garde:** Originally a military term for those at the front of the battle formation; now used to describe artists or groups of artists who are operating outside the mainstream cultural production and are striving to push the boundaries of acceptable art.

**Cubism:** An early-20th-century art movement developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque around 1907 in which objects have been abstracted by breaking and fragmenting them into geometric forms; objects from the visible world may still be recognizable.

**Cubo-Futurism:** An early-20th-century style in Russia in which Cubist and Futurist influences are mixed.

**Futurism:** Italian art movement described in the 1909 Futurist Manifesto that was anti-academic and looked to modern technology and the euphoria of speed for inspiration.

**Neo-Primitivism:** A style that draws upon the past and indigenous cultures for inspiration. It is characterized by the flatness seen in icons, lack of depth, and bold striking colors.

**Non-Objective Art:** Paintings or sculptures that do not depict a subject as it might look in real life, but use line, shape, and color to form an abstract composition.

**Suprematism:** Influential artistic movement founded by Russian painter Kazimir Malevich in 1915. An entirely abstract art, it insisted on the supremacy of geometric forms to transcend the natural world and express pure emotion.

## SECTION 8

**Capitalism:** An economic system characterized by private ownership of property and goods and competition on an open market.

**Communism:** A theory and system of social and political organization in which property is owned by the community as a whole rather than by individuals.

**Socialist Realist:** Art that is realistic in form and socialist in content; the official Soviet style of art.

## SECTION 9

**Installation:** An artwork designed for a specific gallery space; its components are often arranged within that space to be viewed as a single work of art.

# TIME LINE SOME IMPORTANT DATES IN RUSSIAN HISTORY

- 860 AD** AD Cyrillic alphabet, based on the Greek alphabet, is invented.
- 862** Rurik, a Scandinavian chief, assumes control of Eastern Slavic lands around Novgorod.
- 882** Kiev and Novgorod were united as the state of Kievan Rus.
- 988** Vladimir I converts to Orthodox Christianity and makes Eastern Orthodoxy the official religion.
- 1147** Moscow is founded as a defense outpost.
- 1223** Mongol (Tartar) armies invade Russia.
- 1480** Ivan III frees Russia from Tatar control. Moscow becomes the most powerful Russian city.
- 1547** Ivan IV (at age 17) known as Ivan the Terrible is crowned tsar and expands Russia's territory.
- 1613** Mikail Romanov becomes tsar, beginning more than 300 years of Romanov rule of Russia.
- 1649** Serfdom established.
- 1689** Peter I (Peter the Great) assumes full power as tsar and begins transforming Russia into a world power.
- 1703** Peter I founds the new capital city of Saint Petersburg and increases ties with Europe. He introduces many elements of Western culture into Russia in an attempt to modernize the country.
- 1762** Catherine II, (Catherine the Great) becomes tsarina and expands Russia's power.
- 1812** Napoleon I of France invades Russia and advances as far as Moscow, but is eventually forced to retreat.
- 1825** Nicholas I becomes tsar; Decembrist Revolt (an attempt to overthrow the government) fails.

- 1861** Alexander II abolishes serfdom in Russia.
- 1891** Building of the Trans-Siberian Railway begins.
- 1905** Nicholas II agrees to establish a popularly elected assembly, or Duma, following a massacre by government troops of peaceful protestors known as “Bloody Sunday.”
- 1914** Russia enters World War I against Germany and Austria-Hungary and suffers a series of crushing defeats.
- 1917** A popular revolution ousts Nicholas II from power ending Romanov dynasty. The Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, seize power.
- 1918** Nicholas II and his family are executed. Russia withdraws from World War I. The Bolsheviks win control of the country in the Russian Civil War.
- 1922** Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which includes Russia is formed and becomes the most powerful Communist country in the world.
- 1924** Lenin dies; Joseph Stalin becomes leader and begins purges of Communist party members.
- 1941** Germany invades Soviet Union; Soviet Union joins western Allies against Germany.
- 1945** World War II ends. Cold War begins.
- 1961** Berlin Wall built; first manned orbital space flight by Yuri Gagarin.
- 1989** Berlin Wall taken down; Cold War ends.
- 1991** The collapse of the USSR. Russia becomes an independent nation, under President Boris Yeltsin.
- 2000** Vladimir Putin elected president of the Russian Federation.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SUGGESTED READING LIST

In the interest of simplifying the text of this guide, footnotes have been eliminated. Grateful acknowledgment for short citations and quotations is made to the authors of the following works.

Bown, Matthew Cullerne, *Socialist Realist Painting*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998.

Sarabianov, Dmitri V., *Russian Art from Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde, 1800-1917: Painting – Sculpture – Architecture*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1990.

Warnes, David, *Chronicle of the Russian Tsars*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1999.

### RUSSIAN ART – ADULT

RUSSIA!, (exhibition catalogue) Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, 2005.

Bown, Matthew Cullerne, *Socialist Realist Painting*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998.

Froncek, Thomas, editor, *The Horizon Book of the Arts of Russia*, American Heritage Publishing Co. Inc., New York, 1970.

Hamilton, George Heard, *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, Second Edition, Penguin Books, England, 1975.

Lincoln, Bruce W. *Between Heaven and Hell: The Story of a Thousand Years of Artistic Life in Russia*, Viking Penguin Inc. New York, 1998.

Massie, Suzanne, *Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1980.

Sarabianov, Dmitri V. et al., *Russian and Soviet Painting*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977.

Sarabianov, Dmitri V., *Russian Art from Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde, 1800-1917: Painting – Sculpture – Architecture*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. New York, 1990.

Rice, Tamar Talbot, *A Concise History of Russian Art*, Fredrick A. Praeger, New York, 1963.

Warnes, David, *Chronicle of the Russian Tsars*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1999.

*Russia: Land of the Tsars*, The History Channel, A&E Television Networks, 2003.

### RUSSIAN HISTORY – ADULT

Billington, James, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretative History of Russian Culture*, Vintage Books, New York, 1970.

Buehr, Wendy, *The Horizon History of Russia*, American Heritage Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1970.

Freeze, Gregory L., *Russia, a History*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 2002.

Riasanovsky, Nicolas V., *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993.

*The Russian Chronicles: A Thousand Years that Changed the World*, Thunder Bay Press, California, 2001.

Steinberg, Mark, *A History of Russia, Parts 1, 2 and 3*, (CDrom), The Teaching Company Ltd., Chantilly, VA, 2003.

Vernadsky, George, *A History of Russia*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1986.

## RUSSIAN HISTORY – YOUTH

Corona, Laurel, *The Russian Federation*, Lucent Books, San Diego, CA, 2001.

Fader, Kim Brown, *Russia*, Lucent Books, Inc., San Diego, CA, 1998.

Murrell, Kathleen Berton, *Russia*, Dorling Kindersley Limited, London, 1998.

Rogers, Stillman D., *Russia*, Children's Press, a Division of Scholastic Inc., New York, 2002.

Strickler, Jim, *Russia of the Tsars*, Lucent Books, Inc. California, 1998.

Afanas'ev, Aleksandr, *Russian Fairy Tales*, Pantheon Books, Inc., New York, 1945.

## WEBSITES

*The Face of Russia*. Companion to the PBS series focusing on Russian culture. <http://www.pbs.org/weta/faceofrussia/timeline-index.html>

*Russian Painting*. A site designed by Dr. Alexander Boguslawski, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida  
[http://www.rollins.edu/Foreign\\_Lang/Russian/ruspaint.html](http://www.rollins.edu/Foreign_Lang/Russian/ruspaint.html)

*The State Hermitage Museum*, St. Petersburg, Includes information about their extensive collections and virtual tours.  
[http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/html\\_En/index.html](http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/html_En/index.html)

*The Society of Tempera Painters*. Technical and historical information on the use of egg tempera. <http://www.eggtempera.com>.

*The State Tretyakov Gallery* is the national treasury of Russian fine art. The collection consists of more than 130,000 works of Russian art.  
<http://www.tretyakovgallery.ru/english/>

*Index of Russian art*, with images of Russian paintings.  
[http://www.auburn.edu/academic/liberal\\_arts/foreign/russian/art/index.html](http://www.auburn.edu/academic/liberal_arts/foreign/russian/art/index.html)

## CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Sackler Center for Arts Education is an interactive-media facility dedicated to exploring the museum's collections and exhibitions and modern and contemporary art in general.

The Sackler Center for Arts Education is a gift of the Mortimer D. Sackler Family.

Educational activities are made possible by The Edith and Frances Mulhall Achilles Memorial Fund, The Rose M. Badgeley Residuary Charitable Trust, The Engelberg Foundation, William Randolph Hearst Foundation, The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation, and the Museum's Education Committee.

### *Project Management*

Written by Sharon Vatsky, Senior Education Manager

Edited by David Grosz

Designed by Diane Thibault

### *Special Thanks*

For curatorial insights and review:

Valerie Hillings, Curatorial Assistant

Masha Chlenova, Project Research Assistant

For educational insights and review:

Kim Kanatani, Gail Engelberg, Director of Education

Rebecca Herz, Education Manager

Jessica Wright, Education Manager

# THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM FOUNDATION

## *Honorary Trustees in Perpetuity*

Solomon R. Guggenheim  
Justin K. Thannhauser  
Peggy Guggenheim

## *Honorary Chairman*

Peter Lawson-Johnston

## *Chairman*

William L. Mack

## *President*

Jennifer Blei Stockman

## *Vice-Presidents*

Frederick B. Henry  
Wendy L-J. McNeil  
Stephen C. Swid  
Mark R. Walter

## *Director*

Thomas Krens

## *Treasurer*

Howard W. Lutnick

## *Secretary*

Edward F. Rover

## *Honorary Trustee*

Claude Pompidou

## *Trustees Ex Officio*

Tiqui Atencio  
Robert J. Tomei

## *Director Emeritus*

Thomas M. Messer

## *Trustees*

Jon Imanol Azua  
Robert Baker  
Peter M. Brant  
John Calicchio  
Mary Sharp Cronson  
Gail May Engelberg  
Frederick B. Henry  
Thomas Krens  
Peter Lawson-Johnston  
Peter Lawson-Johnston II  
Howard W. Lutnick  
Louise T. Blouin MacBain  
William L. Mack  
Wendy L-J. McNeil

Edward H. Meyer  
Vladimir O. Potanin  
Stephen M. Ross  
Mortimer D. A. Sackler  
Denise Saul  
Terry Semel  
James B. Sherwood  
Raja W. Sidawi  
Seymour Slive  
Jennifer Blei Stockman  
Stephen C. Swid  
John S. Wadsworth, Jr.  
Mark R. Walter  
John Wilmerding

# SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM EDUCATION COMMITTEE 2005

Gail May Engelberg, Chair

Elizabeth Bader

Maria Bell

Anna Deavere Smith

Sherry Endelson

Alan C. Greenberg

Allan Harris

Maureen Lee

Wynton Marsalis

Wendy L-J. McNeil

Elihu H. Modlin

Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz

Paloma Picasso

Suzanne Plotch

Kathe A. Sackler

Gabriela Serna

Vivian Serota

Beryl Snyder

Peter Yarrow

**Guggenheim**MUSEUM