

MORNING ROOM PANEL

Russia Through Western Eyes

Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild kept his most precious historic books in the Morning Room. Although the collection housed here contains predominantly French 17th- and 18th-century volumes, there are books with intriguing Russian connections. None of these works are written by Russian authors, but rather give European perspectives on Russia.



Jean-Baptiste le Prince, *Young Girl in Russian Dress*, c. 1773 – c. 1776; red chalk on paper; Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (The National Trust); acc. no. 1035. Photo: Mike Fear © The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor

One of the earliest accounts in the collection is that of Charles Whitworth (1675-1725), an English diplomat and ambassador to Russia. His *Account of Russia as it was in the Year 1710* (acc. no. 4510) was not published until 1758, but was the one of the most widely read and informative perspectives on Russian life to appear in England in the 18th century.

The French artist Jean-Baptiste le Prince (1734-1781) journeyed to Russia under the patronage of Catherine the Great in 1757 and stayed for five years, travelling extensively and making studies of Russian landscapes, customs and daily life. Back in Paris, le Prince used examples of Russian costume collected on his travels for dressing his models (acc. no. 1035). He published several series of prints showing Russian dress, a combined volume of which is housed here (acc. no. 4713).

Also featured is the 1867 *Voyage en Russie* (vols. 1-2; acc. no. 4371.1-2) by Théophile Gautier (1811-1872), the French writer, dramatist and critic best known for his scenario for the ballet *Giselle*. Gautier found much that was European about 19th-century Russia but, unlike Voltaire in the 18th century who saw Westernisation as ‘civilising’, Gautier complained that European influences had stifled the development of a ‘Russian School’ of art.

Voltaire and Russia

François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778), the famous French writer and philosopher, had a long connection with Russia. The association began with his *History of Russia under Peter the Great*, included in the complete works of Voltaire amongst Ferdinand’s books in the Tower Drawing Room (acc. no. 4300.1-70). The first volume of the *History* was published in 1759, under the reign of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, Peter’s daughter. Voltaire was greatly supported by Elizabeth and their relationship is reflected in his handwritten inscription on her 1741 copy of his epic poem *La Henriade*, later acquired by Ferdinand for his collection (acc. no. 5479).



Satire and Caricature



An Imperial Stride!, published by William Holland, 1791, London, British Museum, acc. no. 1868,0808.6035 © The Trustees of the British Museum



Print of Emigrating Royalty, 1792; etching and engraving on paper, hand-coloured in watercolour; Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (The National Trust), acc. no. 4232.2.9.13, Photo: Imaging Services Bodleian Library © The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor

Catherine the Great (reigned 1762-1796) is represented in two prints about the French Revolution, housed in one of four large volumes in the Morning Room. Both depictions of Catherine are inspired by a caricature first published in England in 1791. The caricature depicts Catherine, bare-breasted, striding from Russia to Turkey over the heads of European royalty and the Sultan of Turkey, mocking both Russia's Eastern imperial ambitions and Catherine's reputed sexual appetite.

Ferdinand visited Russia as part of the European tour he took after the death of his wife Evelina in 1866. In St Petersburg he purchased a painting after Frans Snyders, one of the first works of art he collected. The significance of this trip at a difficult point in Ferdinand's life may explain his interest in Russia, combined with the reflection of his passion for French 18th-century decorative arts in many major Russian collections.

MORNING ROOM CASE

Relation concerning the particulars of the Rebellion lately raised in Muscovy by Stenko Razin, London, 1672

This book is an account by an unknown English writer of the uprising in Southern Russia led by Cossack rebel Stepan (known as Sten'ka) Razin (1630-1671). This print is one of very few contemporary images of Razin and depicts him chained to the cart that led him into Moscow and to his death. His brother Frol'ka is tethered alongside.



Razin claimed to support the Tsar and the Orthodox Church, but rebelled against evil advisors, corrupt bishops and greedy landowners. When Razin was captured his trial and execution were brutal. He was read a long list of his crimes and publically executed by quartering, his limbs displayed on spikes and his body thrown to the dogs.

Razin was later mythologised as a Russian Robin Hood, inspiring many artists, writers and composers as well as folk tales and songs.

Accession number 4462



Fabergé paper-knife, Russian, c. 1907; nephrite, guilloché enamel and ruby

This paper-knife was purchased by Mrs Leopold de Rothschild in 1907 from Fabergé's London branch. After the Royal family, the Rothschilds were Fabergé's most important English customers. Following the Edwardian fashion for gift-giving, Mr and Mrs Leopold bought exquisite Fabergé objects as gifts for each other and for family members. The paper-knife was listed among Alice de Rothschild's possessions at Waddesdon Manor at her death in 1922 and it is possible that it was a gift to Alice from the couple.

The horse sculpture repeats a theme among Rothschild purchases and commissions from Fabergé. Both King Edward VII and Leopold de Rothschild commissioned silver studies of their horses, Persimmon and St Frusquin, to commemorate the famously close 1896 Derby. As a keen livestock breeder, it is apt that Alice also displayed an interest in Fabergé's animal sculptures.

Accession number 93.2014

RAZUMOVSKY ROOM



Sèvres Manufactory, The Razumovsky Service, French, 1767; soft-paste porcelain

This exquisite dessert service was probably commissioned at the Sèvres Manufactory, outside Paris, by Count Kyril Razumovsky (1728-1803) during a grand tour of Europe between 1765 and 1767.

Razumovsky was a Ukrainian Cossack who rose from obscurity to positions of great power and wealth, largely due to the status of his brother Alexei (1709-1771) as

favourite of the Russian Empress Elizabeth (reigned 1741-1762). Razumovsky was appointed President of the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg but was forced to resign under Catherine II (reigned 1762-1796) who distrusted his political and dynastic ambitions. Razumovsky was compensated with a generous pension, allowing him to indulge his luxurious tastes, building magnificent residences and placing extravagant commissions.

The Imperial Porcelain Factory had been established two decades before Razumovsky's commission from Sèvres, yet despite the availability of Russian porcelain, he still preferred to buy from France. Sèvres porcelain remained the favourite of the Russian elite until the French Revolution and Catherine the Great herself commissioned some of the manufactory's grandest services.

Accession number 2867

Russian Imperial Porcelain Factory, Plate; late 1750s; porcelain, overglaze decoration and gilding

This plate is from a private tea service produced for Empress Elizabeth Petrovna (reigned 1741-1762). This service was the first ever produced in Russia by the artist D. I. Vinogradov (c 1720-1758), the developer of the formula for Russian porcelain. Made at the Imperial Porcelain Factory, established in 1744 under the patronage of the Empress, this plate represents the very beginning of fine porcelain production in Russia.

The Sèvres dessert service made for Count Razumovsky, on display in this room, shows the continued fashion for French decorative arts amongst the Russian aristocracy in the 18th century. However, the establishment of the Imperial Porcelain Factory instigated the development of a domestic porcelain industry emulating, but in competition with, the exquisite porcelain from Western Europe.



Accession number 92.2014



GOODWOOD LANDING

Campana Urn, Russian, pre 1873; malachite

This monumental urn was given to Lionel de Rothschild (1808-1879) by Tsar Alexander II (reigned 1855-1881) in 1873. Lionel had helped to finance the extensive expansion of the Russian railways in the 1860s and 70s and it is likely that the gift was in recognition of his contribution. Successive Tsars made gifts of similar monumental urns to members of the British Royal family, including George IV and Queen Victoria, and British dignitaries such as the Duke of Wellington.

Russia's Ural Mountains provided the richest sources for malachite in the world in the 19th century and the Russian Empire established great factories for the working of its native precious stones.

Although the urn gives the impression of being carved from a single block of malachite, the effect was created through painstakingly slicing the stone into thin pieces and veneering over the body of the object, aligning the veins to make pleasing patterns.

Accession number 100.1995

FAMILY ROOM

Domenico Bossi, Alexander I, Tsar of Russia, Italian?, 1807; watercolour on ivory

Domenico Bossi (1767-1853) was an Italian miniaturist who worked for powerful patrons in Hamburg, Stockholm, Vienna and St. Petersburg, eventually settling in Munich.

This portrait of Alexander I (ruled 1801-1825) was repeated by Bossi and copied by other artists, often incorporated into jewellery or other decorative items. These objects probably functioned as gifts from the Tsar to court nobility and foreign dignitaries. This version, and a version mounted on a snuff-box now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, are the originals.



Alexander is shown in the uniform of a Russian field marshal wearing the cross of St. George, a decoration for military courage, and the Star of The Order of St. Andrew, the highest Russian order. The

order of St. Andrew was the first order of chivalry established in Russia by Peter the Great, inspired by the traditions of bestowing awards he witnessed during his Grand Embassy to Western Europe.

Accession number 2765



BAKST ROOM

Léon Bakst, *The Sleeping Beauty*, 1913-1922; oil on canvas

This series of panels is unique in the work of Léon Bakst (1866-1924). Best known for his spectacular designs for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, Bakst had never produced easel paintings on such a monumental scale.

The panels were commissioned by James and Dorothy de Rothschild at the time of their marriage in 1913 for the drawing room of their new London house. An apparent shortage of models because of the First World War led to James and Dorothy, their friends and family, modelling for all the characters in the paintings.

Bakst was allowed to choose the subject of the panels. In 1890, he had seen the dress rehearsal of Tchaikovsky's first production of the ballet *Sleeping Beauty* at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg and the experience had a profound effect on him. He wrote:

"I lived in a magic dream for three hours, intoxicated with fairies and princesses, splendid palaces flowing with gold, in the enchantment of the old tale of the Sleeping Beauty. My whole being was as if swayed in cadence to the rhythms, the radiant flow of refreshing and beautiful melodies which were already friends."

The panels were Bakst's most sustained exploration of the *Sleeping Beauty* fairy tale and took him nine years to complete. Their production ran parallel to both his set and costume designs for a shortened version of Tchaikovsky's ballet by Anna Pavlova's company in New York in 1916, and the Ballets Russes' lavish London production in 1921.

Accession number 89.1995.1-7

WHITE DRAWING ROOM



Yakov Vasilevich Kokovin, Pair of Vases, Russian, 1818; jasper and gilt-bronze

These jasper vases were given as a gift by Tsar Nicholas I to his second daughter Grand Duchess Olga, who later became Queen of Wuerttemberg. They are inscribed with the date of production, 1818, and 'Ekaterinberg' – the factory where they were produced. They are signed by Master Yakov Vasilevich Kokovin (1787-1840), the director of the Ekaterinburg Lapidary Factory.

After artistic training in St Petersburg, Kokovin took control of the factory following his father's death in 1818. As such, these vases are some of the earliest produced under his authority. The factory was situated outside of Ekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains, the source of many of Russia's most precious minerals. Kokovin later invented machines for cutting and sculpting stone which allowed the production of even more ambitious creations.

It is not known how the vases first came into the collection of the Russian imperial family. They did, however, make a particularly appropriate gift for Olga who was deeply interested in the natural world and was a keen collector of mineral specimens.

Accession number: 22.2002.1-2



BEDROOM CORRIDOR

Circle of Frans Snyders, *The Boar Hunt*, Belgian or Flemish, c 1660-1680; oil on canvas

Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild bought this painting on a trip to St Petersburg in 1867. He recounted the purchase in 'Bric-a-Brac', his memoir on collecting, describing how he had the pick of the collection of Princess

Golytsina through his friendship with the Secretary to the French Embassy, who was entrusted with the sale of the collection. Princess Praskovia Andreevna Golytsina (1767-1868) was a Russian noblewoman and last mistress of Grigory Potemkin (1739-1791), the famous lover of Catherine the Great. Overwhelmed and inexperienced as a collector, Ferdinand describes how he chose only this "very inferior picture of the school of Snyders".

Frans Snyders was a Flemish painter active in the late 16th and 17th centuries. He collaborated with many artists, including Rubens and Van Dyck, and had many pupils who often copied his characteristically dramatic hunting scenes.

Accession number 581.1

FOUNTAIN LOBBY

Abraham Storck, *An Incident in the mock-fight on the River Y, Amsterdam, in Honour of Peter the Great, 1st September 1697*, Dutch, 1697-1698; oil on canvas

In 1697 Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia, visited Amsterdam as part of his 'Grand Embassy'. Peter, with an entourage of 250, embarked on a mission to Western Europe in 1697-1698 to seek allies for the Russian war against the Ottoman Empire. Although the initial goal failed, the Embassy was the foundation of Peter's Westernising principles which would guide his political programme.

Peter aimed to build a powerful naval fleet for the war against Turkey. Learning skills and strategies from Western shipbuilders and naval leaders was a fundamental part of the mission. Although Peter had started the Embassy in disguise, by the time he reached Amsterdam he appeared in full regalia and was greeted with festivities, fireworks and the mock sea battle depicted in this painting. Peter enjoyed the performance so much that he boarded a vessel – shown to the right of the painting, flying his flag of the two-headed eagle – and asked for the whole spectacle to be repeated weeks later.



Accession number 8080

ARMOURY CORRIDOR



Knife and Case, Russian and French, late 16th century, 1800-1850 (alterations); malachite, silver, wood, fishskin

The blade of this knife originates in late 16th century France. However, the handle is much later and certain characteristics show its Russian origin. The incised decoration on the silver mounts filled with black metal alloys (known as *niello*) resembles the decoration used on

the *shaska*, a sabre originating in the tribes of the Caucasus and later adopted by Russian and Ukrainian Cossacks. This style of filled decoration is common on Russian metalwork from the 18th to the 20th centuries.

As in many areas of decorative arts, the design of Russian arms in the 18th and 19th centuries was strongly influenced by fashions in France. This, combined with an influx of French weapons into Russia after Napoleon's conquests in the early 19th century, may explain the market for a re-mounted French blade.

The use of malachite on the handle demonstrates the material's versatility and popularity in Russia at this time. In contrast to the massive malachite-veneered vase seen earlier in the trail, here the mineral is used on an intimate scale.

Accession number 5236

Priming Flask and Chain, Russian, 1650-1700?; silver, silver-gilt; accession number 5227

Priming Flask, Russian, 1650-1700?; cowrie shells, silver-gilt; accession number 5228

Powder flasks were used to carry and dispense gunpowder into firearms. Priming flasks like these were smaller and carried finer gunpowder that was used in the priming chamber of the firearm rather than the main charge. The flasks are fitted with nozzles which dispensed the correct amount of powder.

Both flasks feature nozzles with levers in the form of grotesque dragons, but differ in their decorative techniques, demonstrating the variation in priming flasks and their development into objects of display in the late 17th century.

The larger of the two flasks features distinctive 'wrigglework' decoration. The zigzag patterns were made by holding an engraving tool at an angle on the surface and moving the object up and down. The body of the flask is covered using the same *niello* technique on the later handle of the knife also featured here.

The smaller flask is constructed from two cowrie shells held together with a silver-gilt frame engraved with floral motifs. Other Russian priming flasks made of shells are known from this period, sometime inscribed with the names and ranks of their owners.

