

Happy Holidays from the TMORA Staff!

Viktor Popkov Painting is Most Recent Donation to The Museum of Russian Art

A major painting by one of the Soviet period's most important artists has been donated to The Museum of Russian Art. "A Family in July," by Victor Efimovich Popkov, is the most recent addition to the collection. Executed in 1969, the painting of a husband, wife and son at leisure represents the Severe Style of Socialist Realism, when paintings reflected the artist's disillusionment with the Communist system.

Donated by an anonymous American collector, the work is included in the current "Windows to the Russian Soul" exhibition. Measuring 59 x 74 inches, "A Family in July" is the dominant painting in the East Gallery. Viktor Popkov was one of the most influential artists who spearheaded the art movement toward a style that emphasized contour and simplification of form.



"The donation of this significant painting represents a strong endorsement of the museum's mission, and it is greatly appreciated by all of us," commented Raymond E. Johnson, founder.

Academic Open House Draws Attendance from Five-State Area

University professors and other academicians were introduced to Russian Impressionist art Oct. 11 at The Museum of Russian Art. "We want our museum to become a teaching and learning center where students and the general public can acquire perspectives on historical and cultural developments in Russia between 1917 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991," commented Bradford Shinkle IV, TMORA president. "One of the museum's goals is to educate, as well as to preserve, research and exhibit these paintings. TMORA is a resource that can be accessed by academics at the post-secondary level," he added. The educators were encouraged to include the Museum in their curriculum as a teaching aid for students in literature, culture, language and art.



Bradford Shinkle and Raymond E. Johnson discussed educational opportunities offered by TMORA to colleges and universities with Denis Crnkovic (right). Mr. Crnkovic teaches Russian Studies at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota.

Weekly Guided Tours, Extended Hours will Continue

Guided tours at 6:00 p.m. each Thursday will continue until further notice. The summer tours drew visitors who could not attend the exhibitions during regular museum hours of 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Thanks to our loyal volunteers who assist in hosting these events, the museum hours will be extended on Thursdays to 8 p.m. We hope to add weekend hours in the future, but currently the Museum is closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

Saturday Seminar Series will Resume

The Saturday Seminar Series, presented in conjunction with the exhibition, "Benchmarks of Soviet Society," was very well attended, and plans are currently progressing for a similar educational program in the Spring.

University of Minnesota Associate Professor Irina Corten, who lived with her Russian mother and American father in Moscow in the 1940s, discussed Stalin's impact on Soviet youth and education at the final seminar in the Spring 2003 series. Ms. Corten's family immigrated to the United States in the 1950s.



Professor Irina Corten

'Art on the Town' Attracts New Visitors to TMORA

More than 100 new visitors and countless current members responded to an invitation to participate in a tour of "Windows to the Russian Soul," conducted by Museum President Bradford Shinkle and volunteers Liya Uskolovskaya and Judith Winsor. The Oct. 11 tour marked the first time the Museum of Russian Art has participated in the citywide art event, "Art on the Town," that involved 75 galleries and museums. Its purpose is to introduce Minnesotans to art venues in Minneapolis and surrounding suburbs. Pictured with Mr. Shinkle are event volunteers (from left) Lois Torvik, Ms. Winsor, Bill Berg and Ms. Uskolovskaya.



"From Russian Easels" Exhibition Extends into January 2004

An exhibition of 74 paintings arranged by The Museum of Russian Art opened in late August at the Brunner Art Museum at Iowa State University in Ames. More than 200 people attended the opening night event. TMORA Founder Raymond E. Johnson welcomed the guests and recounted how he and his wife, Susan, brought Russian Impressionism to the United States. The public is invited to view the exhibition through Jan. 4, 2004. Additional information is available from the Brunner Museum, 515-294-3342.



ALEKSANDR F. BURAK
THE YOUNG SKIER
1953 31 3/8 x 23 1/8 inches
Oil on canvas

Paintings on Tour --

The Museum of Russian Art is lending paintings for an exhibition at St. Mary's University of Minnesota, Winona. The exhibition, entitled "People, Places and Utopian Promise: Russian Impressionism 1930-1980," extends from Jan. 12 through Feb. 13, 2004.

In 2005, The Lakeview Museum, Peoria, Illinois, will host an event with 60 paintings arranged by TMORA from Aug. 27 through Nov. 6. The title of the exhibition and more information will be furnished in our next VIEW.

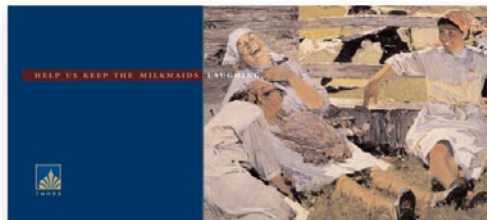


"Cloudy Day," by Yuri I. Kugach, is among the selection of paintings on exhibit at St. Mary's University of Minnesota in January and February 2004.

Help Us Keep the Milkmaids Laughing!

2003 has been an ambitious first year for The Museum of Russian Art.

- The three exhibitions, weekly guided tours and the Saturday Seminars have attracted thousands of visitors interested in Russian Impressionist paintings of the Soviet period.
- Arranging for the loan of paintings to other American and international museums has introduced the art to tens of thousands of museum guests.
- Sponsoring an Academic Open House presented the paintings in "Windows to the Russian Soul" to educators from a five-state area.



Memberships at a variety of levels have helped defray some of the costs associated with these programs, as well as the publication of "Masters of Russian Impressionism: Sergei P. & Aleksei P. Tkachev," the first art reference book published by TMORA. In order to maintain this level of activity, the museum asks you to consider making a tax-deductible donation during our First Annual Fund Drive.

Share the Vision, Support the Mission.

The Membership Application on page six describes the five levels of membership, and the credit card option makes your tax-deductible gift convenient to give. We value your comments, as well as your contribution, as we move into our second year of sharing this art with visitors from around the city and the world.

Thank you for assisting us to maintain the momentum of a very successful first year!

The 'Russian Soul' and the Visual Arts

by Jane Friedman

Editor's note: Our guest essayist explores the meaning of the term, the "Russian soul." Further, she delves into its relationship to art in general and, in particular, some of the paintings in the current exhibition, "Windows to the Russian Soul." Essays by Ms. Friedman and other scholars in Russian art and letters will be included in future issues as part of the museum's educational outreach.

The "Russian soul" (*Russkaia dusha*) has been both a national obsession and a national ideal. Since the late eighteenth century, it has evoked a mythic Russianness, a set of inherent traits said to define the Russian character and distinguish it from other national (particularly European) identities. Although the concept was made famous by Russia's greatest writers, they were not the only ones to grapple with it: Russian artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also sought to come to terms with the Russian soul in paintings of peasants, religious scenes, still lifes and landscapes.

Russian writers throughout the eighteenth century sought to capture Russianness, prompted by the effects of Peter the Great's Westernization campaign and the recently formed European-oriented culture at St. Petersburg. Satires of the period reflected the gentry's resentment of this culture, personifying the city as an effete, materialistic dandy bereft of spiritual values. In striking contrast to the image of Westernized St. Petersburg was that of "pure," uncorrupted Russia, characterized by innocence and spontaneity and residing in either the provinces or in Moscow, the historic center of the Russian Orthodox faith.

This opposition appeared in Petr Plavil'shchikov's essay "On the Innate Qualities of the Russian Soul" (1792), which featured the first use of the term "Russian soul." Focusing on the Russian peasantry, Plavil'shchikov singled out specific individuals—"the bone setter of the village Alekseevo," "the mechanic Sobakin from Tver"—to illustrate Russian creativity and intuitiveness and its superiority to Western reason and science.

Apparently absent from Russian writings of the next several decades, the Russian soul reappeared around 1840. This was due largely (and perhaps ironically) to the influence of contemporary European thought; in particular, the writings of

the German philosopher Friedrich Schelling, whose theories on a defining national spirit and the soul had considerable resonance in Russia at that time. Schelling's most influential Russian follower, Prince Vladimir Odoevsky, took up his theories to develop the idea of a dying, soulless West whose salvation depended on recapturing the freshness and spontaneity it had lost as a result of industrialization—traits, according to Odoevsky, best embodied by Russia.

Odoevsky's conclusions implied that Russia was to play a redemptive role in world history, a theme that would recur in subsequent discussions of the Russian soul. Gogol envisioned the Russian soul as a spiritual force that would save and unite the Christian world. The Slavophile writers of the 1830s and 1840s, who regarded Russia's indigenous cultural roots as the source of her future greatness and attacked the West for its materialism and rationalism, also saw it in religious terms, identifying it with the Orthodox faith, Christian sacrifice, and humility. For them, national consciousness was embodied in the religiously centered culture of medieval Muscovy and the Russian peasantry's belief in Christianity and adherence to other traditions and shared customs.



VLADIMIR F. STOZHAROV NOVGOROD YAROSLAV MONASTERY
1972 39¼ x 55 inches Oil on canvas

The Russian soul is of course central to literary masterpieces such as *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). Dostoevsky, like the Slavophiles, perceived it in terms of Christian sacrifice and suffering, the Russian peasantry, and the spiritual salvation of the West. The Russian landscape also figured in his vision; the writer was a member of the small intellectual circle known as the *pochvenniki*

(enthusiasts of the soil), whose members explored the soul's relation to the land. Dostoevsky even planned a series of novels devoted to a Western-educated Russian who led a sinful life but ultimately discovered "both Christ and the Russian land, the Russian Christ and the Russian God."

The Russian landscape's role in shaping and mirroring the national character was taken up by other writers as well including Gogol and Chekhov, who saw its vastness as engendering boldness, freedom and generosity of spirit. The Russian soul continues to be a central theme in Russian literature even up

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Just as Russian writers sought to grasp the Russian soul, so, too, did Russian artists. The very first Russian art movement devoted solely to Russian subject matter was the Society for Traveling Arts Exhibitions. Formed in 1870 by a group of realist painters who opposed the strictures of the Academy and who became known as the *Peredvizhniki* (Wanderers or Itinerants), the Society sought to promote art as both a vehicle of social reform as well as a means of developing a national consciousness. In pursuit of these goals, the *Peredvizhniki* created naturalistic images of the Russian peasantry, Russian religious life, and Russian landscape.

Even artists working in the city of St. Petersburg—the center of Westernization—wrestled with the concept of Russianness. The members of the *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art) group of the 1890s and early 1900s turned to many of the same themes as the *Peredvizhniki* but achieved much different results; they presented them in a graphic, decorative style that reflected their interest in fantasy and idiosyncrasy.

Of course, the creation of such imagery was abruptly halted in the Soviet era (as were other types of work such as the

"formalist" abstractions produced by Kazimir Malevich and his followers). The state expected artists to portray the subjects described above in accordance with the new Soviet project: religious figures were to be presented as the object of ridicule, peasant images were to embody the forward-looking Soviet "new person," and landscapes were to reflect the positive effects of the collectivization campaign.

This changed dramatically as a result of World War II. The German invasion of 1941, the mobilization of the Red Army, and the incredible suffering the nation endured throughout the course of the war all led to the return of traditional Russian values in the nation's culture. Beginning in the 1940s and continuing through the 1970s, Soviet artists created works that evoke Russia's past along with its future: lyrical, often wistful, images of the Russian people and Russian landscape that often contain a mere perfunctory nod to Soviet ideals or even, in some cases, omit references to them altogether. In short, the highly sought-after ideal of the Russian soul re-emerged in Russian art (at times to the chagrin of the state authorities). At this point, let us turn to some of the works featured in the current TMORA exhibition, "Windows to the Russian Soul."



VLADIMIR F. STOZHAROV WELL IN THE CARPATHIANS
1962-64 38¼ x 72¼ inches Oil on board

In the visual arts, the revival of interest in the peasantry and country life was led by Arkady Plastov, a respected figure who was himself of peasant origins, and closely associated with the work of his younger colleague, Vladimir Stozharov. In paintings such as *Well in the Carpathians* (1962-64), Stozharov created quiet, beautifully executed portrayals of provincial Russia that reflect its preindustrial, pre-Communist past. In this image, as in others by the artist, the modern era is barely present, suggested only by a low-flying plane that could easily be missed by the viewer. Rendered in earth tones and inhabited by

slow-moving peasants, who appear on foot or on horseback before traditional wooden buildings, images like *Well in the Carpathians* are the visual counterparts of the literature of the contemporary Village Prose movement, whose writers expressed nostalgia for Russia's past and sought to preserve its artistic traditions.



VASILY K. NECHITAILO ON KUBAN VIRGIN LAND
1958 31½ x 59½ inches Oil on canvas

In contrast to the quiet stillness of *Well in the Carpathians* is the optimistic mood of the many works created to record the Virgin Lands program of the Khrushchev era, which promoted agricultural development in Kazakhstan, Siberia, and the Urals. These works include Vasily Nechitailo's sunlight-infused *On Kuban Virgin Land* (1958). Set in the artist's native Kuban region, Nechitailo's painting captures the genuine enthusiasm of the many young people who left their homes in the 1950s and 1960s to establish collective farms in these remote regions. In spite of its topical subject matter, this work reflects the embrace of traditional Russian values through its composition: the artist positioned the oxen-drawn wagon in the foreground while relegating the modern farm machinery to the background behind the stacks of threshed wheat. In addition, the very nature of the Virgin Lands campaign evokes the ideal of sacrifice in favor of the collective good, an important aspect of the Russian soul ideal.

Sacrifice, endurance, and motherhood have long been intertwined in another aspect of the Russian national myth—that of Mother Russia. They come together in Valerian Formozov's *A Mother's Fate* (1969), one of many works the artist created on the theme of peasant women's fates after World War II. The elderly, grief-stricken subject of Formozov's painting, who sits in her small rural kitchen near a framed photograph of

a young man—undoubtedly, the son she lost in the war—is the embodiment of maternal suffering. Wearing a peasant kerchief, she is surrounded by symbols of traditional Russian life that include a samovar and several examples of *Khokhloma* (a form of folk craft developed in the seventeenth century that involves painting on wood to achieve a gilded finish without the actual use of gold).

Such everyday peasant objects were also depicted in still lifes of the period. Paintings such as Yuri Katts's undated *Still Life* and Geli Korzhev–Chuvelev's *Teapot and Old Russian Vessel* (1977) present items like bread, teapots, and linen tablecloths in a photographically precise style that conveys reverence for their subjects.

A typical feature of the Russian peasant hut was the icon corner, an area devoted to the display and worship of icons. This is the subject of Korzhev–Chuvelev's shimmering *Icons in the Log House* (1949), whose visible brushstrokes and sketchy forms almost make it appear almost abstract. Korzhev–Chuvelev's painting depicts a group of stacked icons that feature the characteristic red and gold palette of the medium and are situated behind a hanging lamp, as was (and still is) the custom in many peasant homes.

Along with the icon, the onion-shaped church dome is another perennial symbol of Russianness. This form, modeled on the sun, is the focus of Vladimir Stozharov's *Novgorod Yaroslav Monastery* (1972). One of Russia's oldest cities, Novgorod was an important commercial center and cradle of political ideas during the medieval era and functioned as a symbol of nationhood in Soviet art created during and after World War II. *Novgorod Yaroslav Monastery*, pictured on a beautiful sunny day under a brilliant blue sky, presents a view of what was one of the busiest districts of the city in the medieval



GELI KORZHEV
TEAPOT AND OLD RUSSIAN VESSEL
1977 25½ x 31½ inches Oil on canvas



period, named after the eleventh-century prince who ruled Novgorod before his accession to the Kiev throne. The central image in the painting is the Church of the Assumption in the Marketplace (1135; reconstructed 1458).



BORIS VALENTINOVICH SHCHERBAKOV **LANDSCAPE**
n.d. 29¾ x 54½ inches Oil on canvas

While Russia’s churches and cathedrals were intended to inspire awe in their worshippers, the Russian landscape often elicited that feeling as well. Many Russian artists and writers regarded the steppe’s boundless plains as a catalyst to religious meditation, although others, such as Maxim Gorky, saw its infinite quality as monotonous, “[filling] man... with the feeling of indifference[,] killing his ability to think.” In his famous work *Evenings on the Volga* (1888), the great landscape painter Isaak Levitan devoted a large portion of the canvas to the sky to suggest the steppe’s vastness.

The sky is the dominant presence of Sergei Gerasimov’s *Evening* (1950), which uses a low horizon line and a combination of earthy and vivid colors—purple, orange, and green—to present a dramatic sunset view. A small, dark, horizontal structure and several sketchily rendered trees in the lower portion of the painting are the only forms that interrupt the flatness of the landscape. It is perhaps interesting to note that Gerasimov headed the Moscow Artists’ Union, the state organ that played an important role in the 1940s revival of landscape painting.

Boris Shcherbakov’s undated *Landscape* presents a very different view of the Russian landscape. The artist, who traveled throughout the Soviet Union—Moldavia, the Caucasus, the Urals, and the Volga region—to observe the nation’s geographic diversity, used a meticulous naturalism to create a majestic, sweeping view of mountains and trees that captures every individual leaf and blade of grass. Shcherbakov’s *Landscape* is inhabited by several animals and one person—who has perhaps given himself over to the contemplation described by some of Russia’s finest writers and explorers of the Russian soul.



Jane Friedman is a Chicago-based independent scholar, editor and exhibition consultant with expertise in Russian and Soviet art.



Yes, I share the vision and support the mission to help perpetuate TMORA's cultural legacy!

**The Museum of Russian Art
Membership Application**

11300 Hampshire Avenue South
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438-2400
Phone: 952-914-0200 | Fax: 952-943-2072
www.tmora.org

Individual Membership \$30 Receive two issues of VIEW newsletter, 10% discount at the Museum Gift Shop and advance invitations to limited attendance events at the Museum.

Partners Membership \$50 Benefits apply to two adults.

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Benefactor Membership \$125 Family membership benefits plus complimentary copy of the 28-page “Hidden Treasures” brochure.

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Masters of Russian Impressionism: Aleksei & Sergei P. Tkachev

By Aleksandr Y. Sidorov

The first art reference book published by The Museum of Russian Art and written by the Assistant to the President of the Academy of Russian Art, this book is a retrospective of the art of the Brothers Tkachev, internationally recognized as leading proponents of Socialist Realism for more than 50 years.

180 pages, 178 illustrations in color and black and white, hardbound.

The Museum of Russian Art, 2002. \$60.00 Member price: \$54.00



Soviet Impressionism

By Vern G. Swanson, Ph.D.

This fascinating account of the history of Russian painting for a proletarian society covers the three major styles of Soviet Impressionism, analyzing how "art for the masses" evolved into Russian Impressionism.

300 pages, 176 illustrations in color and black and white, hardbound.

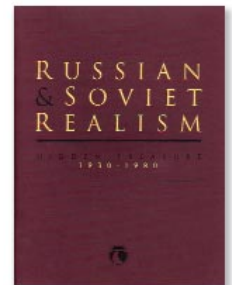
Antique Collectors Club, Ltd. 2001. \$75.00 Member price: \$67.50



Russian & Soviet Realism

By Vern G. Swanson

This book is an excellent introduction to the artistic sources, evolutionary development and social objectives of Soviet era Realist painting. 26 pages, 24 color illustrations, soft cover. Overland Gallery, 1991. \$10.00 Member price: \$9.00



Posters



"Milkmaids, Novella"

by Nikolai Nikolayevich Baskakov

17 1/2 x 33 inches • \$25 (unframed)

Member price: \$22.50

"The Young Skier"

by Aleksandr Filippovich Burak

27 x 17 1/2 inches • \$25 (unframed)

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Orders may be placed by phone: 952-914-0200 or by fax: 952-943-2072 Shipping and handling, per item, is \$7.50. Minnesota residents add 6.5% sales tax.

Checks may be sent to: **The Museum of Russian Art**
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11300 Hampshire Ave. So.
Bloomington, MN 55438



TMORA Plans Three Exhibitions in 2004

An exhibition exploring symbolism in Russian Impressionist art is scheduled to open March 6, 2004. While the exhibit is currently being curated, it is expected to consist of more than 90 paintings, most of which will include symbols in paintings of village life and the countryside in the early to mid-20th century.

“Inspiration for this exhibition sprang from the information furnished to us by art historians from the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, who are assisting in curating the event. Also, Russian nationals who visit the museum often point out meanings that are not apparent to the casual observer,” noted Raymond E. Johnson, founder. “We want to share the culture and symbolism that is such an important component of this art,” he added.

Note these important TMORA events on your 2004 calendar

Spring Exhibition

“Symbolism in Soviet Art”

March 4 – May 15, 2004

What does it all mean? Many of the paintings in this exhibition contain elements unnoticed by the casual observer that hold symbolism for the people of the time.

Summer Exhibition

“150 Years of the Tretyakov”

June 17 – August 21, 2004

In 2003 the prestigious State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow borrowed 24 paintings from The Museum of Russian Art. Our summer exhibition will feature paintings by many of the artists whose works hang in the Tretyakov, which celebrates the 150th anniversary of its founding in 2004.

Fall Exhibition

“Art Under Stalin: Repression to Liberation”

Sept. 23 – Dec. 23, 2004

Representative paintings from the early part of the 20th century are contrasted with works painted after 1953, the year of Stalin’s death.

All dates and titles are subject to change. Check our web site for updated information: www.tmora.org

Our sincere thanks to all of you who became TMORA members during our recent fund drive or who have renewed your memberships since September. Your contributions help us to fund our future exhibitions and the Saturday Seminar Series.



The Museum of Russian Art

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