

M O S C O W

TREASURES AND TRADITIONS

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VESSELS OF TRADITION

THE KOVSH

Vast forests blanket northern Russia from western Europe to Siberia, punctuated at measured intervals by mighty rivers flowing north and south. In this impenetrable taiga of spruce and fir, birch and aspen, the networks of rivers and streams were the natural highways for the early Slavs who settled along their banks. Hunters, fishermen, and traders—they lived by the rhythms of the seasons, observing the flocks of ducks, geese, and swans summering on the myriad lakes and ponds left by retreating glaciers. The traditional beliefs and artistic forms of these ancient peoples were deeply rooted in the natural world surrounding them.

From the wood of the forests the early settlers fashioned not only boats and dwellings, but implements for daily life—bowls, dippers, salt boxes, and distaffs. Animist symbols predating the Christian era—the Sun disk, the Tree of Life, horses associated with the sun god, birds—adorned and even lent their forms to these household goods. Salt, the vital essence of life and hospitality, might be offered from duck-shaped containers. Carved heads and tails of horses and ducks graced the roof ridges of northern houses as protective spirit sentinels.

One of the most distinctive and appealing of these ancient forms, which continues into the present day, is the *kovsh*. Evocative of floating birds or boats, the earliest forms were carved wooden bowls, dippers, and small cups for drinking fermented honey (mead), kvas, and

beer. In some examples a bird head and tail served as handles; in others, the handles resembled abstracted ships' prows. In the Moscow region, the dipper forms—called *sudy* (boats)—were broad with short handles.

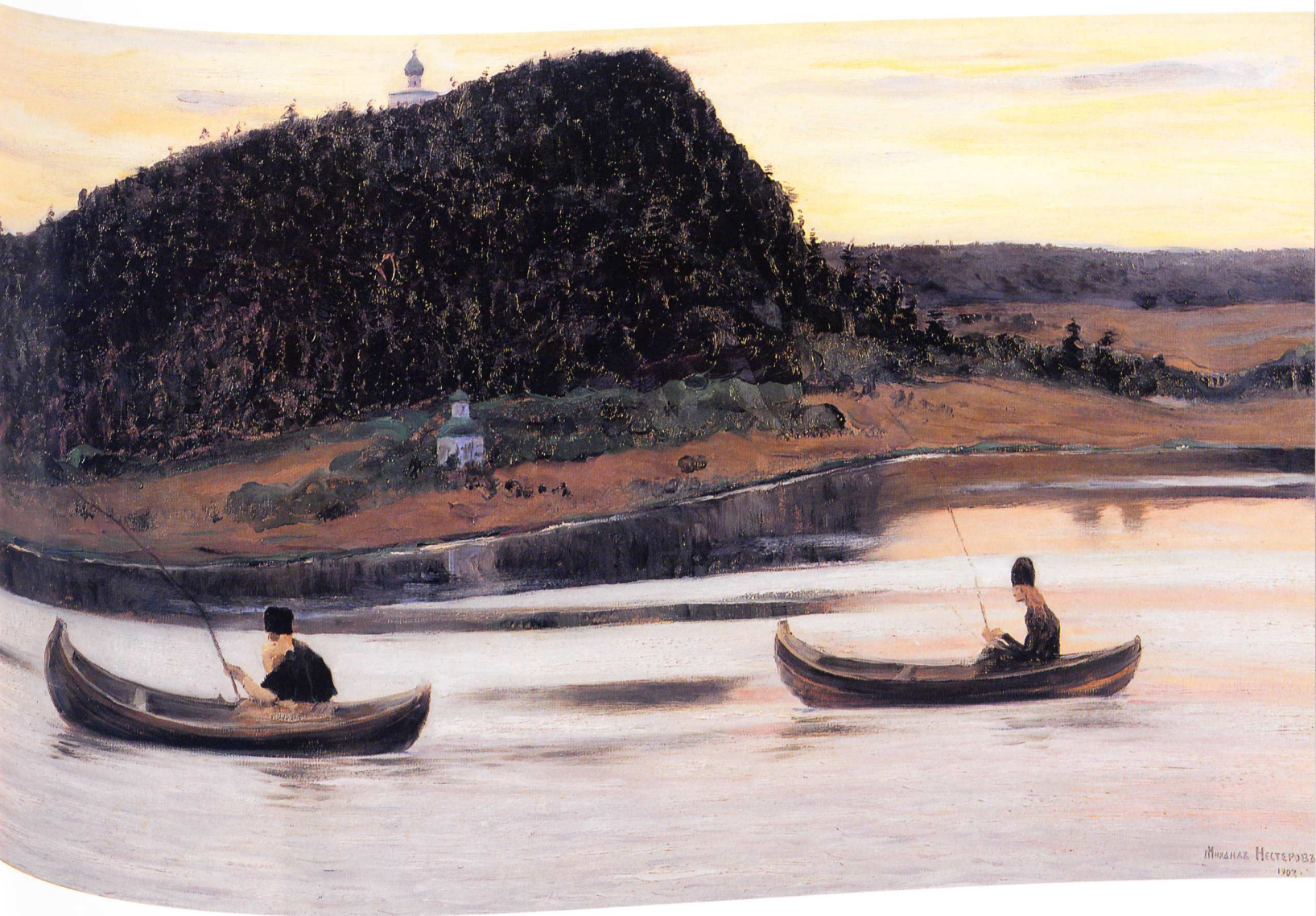
Kovshi in precious metals appeared as early as the 1300s. By the 1500s Moscow jewelers were creating a distinctive type—low and wide with a flat bottom. Such a kovsh belonged to Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich (cat. 30). Its flowing curved lines are reminiscent of the swimming ducks of the older wooden forms. An inscription, carved and chased around the outside of the simple shape, declares the full title of the tsar; inside, a crowned double-headed eagle is engraved. At that time, such kovshi were still used as drinking cups in ceremonial receptions. When not thus employed, they were displayed as decoration with other precious vessels in the court halls of the Granovitaya Palace, to demonstrate the wealth of the state and the skill of Russian silversmiths.

By the eighteenth century European-style vessels had replaced the kovsh for drinking at court. Kovshi created by the craftsmen of the Kremlin continued as tokens of esteem, and as such were awarded by tsars to individuals for service to the state, to Cossack chieftains for faithful protection of the borders, and to merchants for dutiful collection of state custom duties and fees. Although Peter's focus may have been on the ways of the West, when giving an of-

For centuries, monks retreated to Solovetsky Monastery in the far north to live in harmony with nature, a scene portrayed by Mikhail Nesterov in 1903 (cat. 192).

Created in the Kremlin workshops, this ceremonial drinking cup belonged to Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich, founder of the Romanov dynasty (cat. 30).

A likeness of Peter the Great, the coat of arms of Russia, and a laudatory inscription on this kovsh of 1712 express the tsar's gratitude to Fedor Malakhnevsky (far right, cat. 42).



ficial gift he chose the kovsh of Moscow. A kovsh he gave in 1712 (cat. 42) typifies the form at this time, with its royal double-headed eagles in relief on the bottom and in a small sculpted ornament on the point. Baroque ornamentation appears on the handle.

Rococo ornament, with its shells and curling waves, animated kovshi of the late eighteenth century, an apt reflection of the splendor of the court of Catherine the Great. Watery motifs of ships, dolphins, and swirling vines ornament a kovsh that the empress presented to Moscow merchant and tax collector Abram Zubkov in 1774 (cat. 45). Large cast eagles spread their wings at each end of the boat, while the embossed eagle in the bottom carries the coat of arms of Moscow—St. George on horseback.

Succeeding generations breathed new life into the form. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a burgeoning class of merchants

and manufacturers embraced traditions that Moscow kept alive during the period of westernizing trends, which led to a renaissance in the decorative arts. There was a revival of techniques from the great period of enamel and precious metalwork of the sixteenth century and of motifs from ancient Russia and peasant life. Arising initially from historicism, by the end of the century the traditional forms were reevaluated, now within the context of art nouveau. The features of art nouveau—luxurious ornament, brilliant textures, and flowing forms from nature—were adapted by Moscow jewelers to create a “neo-Russian” style.

By this time in the history of Russian metalwork, kovshi were far removed from their earlier incarnations as drinking vessels and presentation pieces. Now they reappeared as delightful, nostalgic, and precious ornamental objects. The enameled kovsh made by Sergey Sha-

Rococo ornament billows as imperial eagles perch on both ends of this cast silver kovsh of 1774—given on behalf of Catherine the Great to Moscow merchant Abram Zubkov for encouraging commerce and being first in the Senate to buy Moscow and St. Petersburg public houses (cat. 45).



poshnikov (cat. 63) between 1899 and 1908 reveals the distinctive patterns of art nouveau in the pastel scrolling plant motif. A tiny kovsh (kovshik), produced by Moscow's sixth artel between 1908 and 1917, combines geometric folk patterns with scrolling, stylized foliage (cat. 62). These small jewel-like objects embody the high degree of craftsmanship, superb filigree work, and glowing enamels that characterized the fine art of metalwork at the turn of the century.

Although the life and land of Moscow and northern Russian have changed enormously over five centuries, in Moscow you may still find the beautiful form of the ancient kovsh ever-present in colorful woodenware and contemporary works.

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Moscow jewelers of the early 20th century created marvels like this small kovsh by Sergey Shaposhnikov (cat. 63) by returning to the blend of Byzantine gold techniques, Islamic decor, and Russian forms that first flowered in the Kremlin workshops during the 17th century.

Fantasy forms in neo-Russian style, influenced by art nouveau, cover a tiny kovsh crafted between 1908-1917 by the Sixth Moscow Jewelers Artel. At the end of the century, and particularly after the 1905 Revolution, a number of cooperative jewelry workshops (artels) emerged in Moscow (right, cat. 62).



CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

Measurements are given in centimeters unless indicated otherwise; height precedes width precedes depth. The abbreviations *h* (height), *w* (width), *d* (diameter), and *l* (length) have also been used where appropriate.

An asterisk (*) preceding entry text indicates that this is the first publication of the material.

For the benefit of the general reader, a slightly modified Board of Geographical Names transliteration system has been employed throughout the catalogue, except for names already well known in English. In the last name "Alekseev," for example, a *y* has been inserted (Alekseyev) to ensure proper pronunciation.

In this checklist, the names of museums that lent works to the exhibition have been abbreviated as follows. The object's inventory number, assigned according to each museum's cataloguing system, appears after the abbreviation.

AMB	State Art Museum of Belorussia in Minsk
DFM	Dulevo Factory Museum named for the newspaper <i>Pravda</i>
HM	State Historical Museum
MAB	Apartment-Museum of I.I. Brodsky in Leningrad
MC	USSR Ministry of Culture
MCK	State Museum of Ceramics and 18th-Century Estate of Kuskovo
MFAK	Museum of Graphic Arts of the Tatar People in Kazan
MHM	Museum of the History of Moscow
MMK	State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin
OPM	Ostankino Palace-Museum

RAMV	Regional Art Museum, Ulyanovsk
RM	State Russian Museum
SAM	Saratov State Art Museum named after Radishchev
TG	State Tretyakov Gallery

Material in these entries is based upon information provided by scholars at the following institutions in the Soviet Union. Their generosity with their research is greatly appreciated.

All-Union Artistic Association named after E. Vuchetich: S.G. Dzhafarova, Z.I. Tregulova; Museum of the History of Moscow: Z.I. Bakhtina, I.M. Katsman; Ostankino Palace-Museum: V.A. Rakina; State Historical Museum: T.S. Aleshina, O.G. Gordeeva, I.L. Kyzlasova, N.A. Perevezentseva, L.Yu. Rudneva, S.Yu. Samonin, N.N. Skornyakova, G.G. Smorodina, N.F. Trutneva; State Museum of Ceramics and 18th-Century Estate of Kuskovo: L.G. Karogodina, T.A. Mozjukhina, N.G. Presnova; State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin: I.A. Bobrovnitskaya, I.D. Kostina, A.K. Levykin, N.D. Markina, E.A. Marshakova, M.V. Martynova, V.A. Menyailo, V.M. Nikitina, E.Ya. Ostapenko, E.V. Shakurova, I.I. Vishnevskaya; State Russian Museum: V.P. Knyazeva, G.K. Krechina, A.B. Lyubimova, O.N. Shikhireva, E.I. Stolbova; State Tretyakov Gallery: I.F. Krasnikova, G.V. Sidorenko; L. Andreeva, author

Ivan the Terrible respected and feared him. After one of the chapels of the Pokrovsky Cathedral was erected over his grave, the church itself became known as St. Basil's Cathedral. Basil was canonized in 1588 during the reign of Tsar Fedor Ivanovich. Consequently, icons of the saint could not have appeared before that date.

29. Descent into Hell

Moscow, 1st half of 17th century
Wood, gesso, tempera, silver, emeralds, rubies, turquoise, glass; chasing, carving, *kānfarenie*, gilding
29.4 x 25
MMK; No. Zh-540/1-2
Acquired from Archangel Cathedral, Moscow Kremlin
Illustrated p. 94

*As part of the cathedral's decoration, central, wall, and pillar iconostases commemorated patron saints as well as princes and tsars of old Russia. This mounted icon complemented larger icons that adorned the burial place of tsars from the Romanov dynasty.

30. Kovsh

Kremlin workshops, Moscow, 1st half of 17th century
Silver; chasing, engraving, gilding
29 (l with handle); 21 (w); 13.5 (h with handle)
MMK; No. MR-8912
Acquired from permanent collection of Armory Chamber
Illustrated p. 105

Kovshi, used during festive banquets to serve mead, were employed as drinking vessels until the late 1600s. Demonstrating the skilled workmanship of Russian silversmiths, highly decorative *kovshi* were awarded for services performed in civilian and military life.

31. Bratina (toasting cup)

Kremlin workshops, Moscow, 2d quarter of 17th century
Silver; chasing, niello, filigree, *kānfarenie*, gilding
11.5 (h); 12 (d)
MMK; No. MR-4172
Acquired from Sacristy of the Patriarch in 1920
Illustrated p. 95

As early as the late 1500s, gold and silver *bratins* were used by tsars and boyars as characteristic components of Russian tableware. Their design originated from the earthenware and wooden utensils of peasants. An inscription on this *bratina* reveals that it was owned by Timofey Vasilevich Izmaylov, a Moscow nobleman noted in documents from 1627 to 1640.

32. Dish

Moscow, mid-17th century
Silver; engraving, gilding
35.6 (d)
MMK; No. MR-441
Acquired from Sacristy of the Patriarch in 1920

The Kremlin court of the Moscow patriarch had its own studios that produced objects for religious ceremonies and for everyday use. According to the decorative inscription engraved in the wide rim, this dish was part of the "private" or personal tableware of Patriarch Yosif.

33. Chalice

Moscow, 1681
Silver; niello, chasing, engraving, *kānfarenie*, gilding
30 (h); 20 (d of cup)
MMK; No. MR-4428
Acquired in 1920s

34. Diskos (paten)

Moscow, 1697
Silver; niello, engraving, *kānfarenie*, gilding
11 (h); 27 (d)
MMK; No. MR-4432
Acquired from Church of the Elevation of the Cross, Moscow, in 1922
Illustrated p. 96

41. Charka (drinking cup)

Petr Ivanov (active 1686–c. 1708),
Moscow, 1704
Silver; casting, carving, niello, gilding
2.9 (h); 7.2 (d)
MMK; No. MR-5178
Acquired in 1924

Although a decree issued in 1613 ordered objects made of precious metals to be stamped, the earliest known marks date to 1651–52. Marks attributed to specific masters appeared in 1700, while a double-headed eagle mark, signifying Moscow, came into use by 1740.

42. Kovsh

Moscow, 1712
Silver; chasing, casting, engraving, niello, gilding
12 x 40 x 23.5
MMK; No. MR-1826
Acquired from collection of N.N. Boborykin
Illustrated p. 105

On the order of Peter the Great, this *kovsh* was granted to the merchant Fedor Malakhnevsky in appreciation of his service. Such gift items were awarded to merchants for collecting customs duties and fees, and for thus increasing the sovereign's income. This piece retains the boat shape of kovshi of the previous century.

43. Writing set

Petr Ivanov (active 1686–c. 1708),
Moscow, late 17th–early 18th century
Silver; niello
Inkwell: 9 (h), 5.5 (d); quill pen: 20.9 (l)
HM; No. 18397/ok 650
Acquired from collection of P.I. Shchukin

Writing sets similar to this one created by Petr Ivanov, a salaried master craftsman of the silver chamber, could be fastened to a belt and taken on journeys.

44. Gospel

Text: Moscow, 1753
Cover: Ivan Grigorev, workshop of Vasily Kunkin (active before 1751–61), Moscow, 1755
Silver, velvet, paper; chasing, casting, gilding, seal, engraving on copper
47.8 x 30.6
MMK; No. KN-52/1
Acquired from Solovetsky Monastery in 1922
Illustrated p. 101

The subjects on the cover of this Gospel are untraditional and doubtless reflect the wishes of Archimandrite Gennady, head of the Solovetsky Monastery, who commissioned the book. Handwritten notes attributed to Gennady explain that the book was purchased in Moscow for 4 roubles and 60 kopecks, and that the cover was made from contributed monastery silver.

45. Kovsh

Moscow, 1774
Silver
29.5 x 40 x 18.5
MHM; No. 57356/ok 3794
Acquired from collection of Yusupov Princes
Illustrated p. 106

Shaped like a *ladya* (an old Russian boat), this ornate piece was presented in the Empress' name to the merchant Abram Vasilev Zubkov for urging the purchase of drinking houses and "for encouraging others to engage in commerce."

46. Samovar

Aleksey Ratkov (?–1821), Moscow, 1782
Silver, wood
37.3 (h)
HM; No. 51415/ok 3937
Gift of A.A. Bobrinsky in 1918
Illustrated p. 98

The widespread consumption of tea and coffee in the 1700s led to the creation of a whole range of silver tableware, from samovars and teapots to tea canisters and sugar bowls.

47. Tureen

Aleksey Kosyrev (active 1747–91),
Moscow, 1783
Silver; chasing, gilding
19.5 x 23
HM; No. 51256/ok 5445
Gift of A.A. Bobrinsky in 1918
Illustrated p. 99

Inscriptions on the beaker attest that it was presented to "the industrial-commercial association of P.M. Ryabushinsky and Sons" by the artel workers. The Ryabushinsky family was famed as entrepreneurs who owned textile factories, a printing press, and a bank in Moscow.

61. Sugar bowl

Factory of Maria Semenova, Moscow, 1908-17

Silver; enameling

5.4 (h); 10.2 (d)

MHM; No. 107080/ok 23160

Acquired from collection of A.

Ostrovsky in 1987

Illustrated p. 117

Maria Semenova owned a silverware factory that had been founded by her father, Vasily Semenov, in 1852. Under her direction, the factory became famous for its brilliantly enameled articles.

62. Kovsh

Sixth Moscow Jewelers' Artel, Moscow, 1908-17

Silver; enameling

5.5 x 10.5

HM; No. 104909/ok 22790

Acquired from State Fund in 1974

Illustrated p. 107

In Moscow, jewelers' artels, as well as factories and studios, produced numerous pieces in enamels. These artels emerged in the late 1800s, and particularly after the 1905 Revolution.

63. Kovsh

Sergey Ivanovich Shaposhnikov, Moscow, 1899-1908

Silver; enameling

HM; No. 83590/ok 14149

Acquired from Moscow Mint in 1952

Illustrated p. 107

Active between 1897 and 1908, Shaposhnikov was a jewelry merchant and a master in the Kremlin silver-smith's workshop.

64. Vase

Workshop of Evgeny Andreyevich Roshet (active 1897-1908), Moscow, early 20th century

Silver; enameling

5.3 x 5.3

HM; No. 107614/ok 23314

Acquired from State Fund in 1988

In their quest for national forms, master jewelers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries turned to the legacy of pre-Petrine Russia and adopted its enamel filigree and painting designs. The flowers on this vase are reminiscent of the painted enamels produced in the town of Usole during the late 1600s.

65. Miter

Olovyanishnikov Firm (active 1766-1917), Moscow, 1908-17

Silver, semi-precious stones, pearls, mother-of-pearl, velvet, fabric; enameling

19.5 (h)

MHM; No. 75692/ok 8788

Illustrated p. 116

Cloisonné, one of the most ancient and complicated techniques of enamelwork, entered Kievan Russia from Byzantium. After it fell into disuse during the Tatar invasions, cloisonné experienced a revival in the 19th century among workshops and firms that produced jewelry and ecclesiastical items.

66. Box

Fabergé Firm (active 1842-1917), Moscow, 1908-17

Silver; enameling

5.5 x 2.5 x 2

MHM; No. 107257/ok 23224

Illustrated p. 121

The hinged lid of this octagonal silver box bears an image of a boyarin, or nobleman. The box may have been produced in the workshop of Fedor Ruckert, an associate of Charles Fabergé, whose father founded the famous jewelry-making firm in 1842.

67. Cigar case

Fabergé Firm (active 1842-1917), Moscow, 1906

Silver, diamonds, sapphires

18.9 x 13 x 4.1

MHM; No. 96515/ok 15421

Illustrated p. 120

A relief of snow-covered fir trees, an old man, and a sleeping girl, all part of the Russian folktale "Morozko" ("Father Frost"), decorates the diamond-studded lid.