Russian Enamels

Kievan Rus to Fabergé

Anne Odom

Introduction by William R. Johnston

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Russia has had a long and rich tradition of enamel production from Kievan times to the reign of Fabergé, the preeminent master of the early 20th century. The international attention lavished on Fabergé has dominated Western impressions of a Russian art-form that deserves serious attention and study. This exhibition represents the first attempt in the West to explore the many techniques mastered by the Russians and their extraordinary assimilation of the artistic motifs and styles from their neighbors.

With Russia situated at a crossroads, not only between Paris and Persia, but between Scandinavia in the north and Byzantium, and later Turkey in the south, it is not surprising that Russian enamels reflect the ornamental traditions of many cultures. A meshing of influences over the centuries is one of their most distinctive characteristics. Thus ornament, whether inherited from Byzantium in the 11th century, from Germany in the 17th, or from France in the 18th, had by the 19th century been totally absorbed into the Russian artistic vocabulary and internationally recognized as such.

Enamel was produced in many different locations in Russia. Style and technique generally allow each type of enamel to be identified with a specific geographical area. The history of these centers, therefore, becomes an important part of the story of Russian enamel. Enamel work on gold and silver is an expensive craft and was, therefore, usually found in cities like Moscow and St Petersburg, where the wealth of the inhabitants could support the production of such works of art. Less expensive materials and simpler techniques were used in Solvychegodsk and Velikii Ustiug, places virtually unknown to Westerners today but among the largest and most active cities in Russia in the 17th and early 18th centuries, conveniently located on the main trade route from Moscow to the port at Arkhangel'sk on the White Sea and from both these cities to Siberia. Here enamel production thrived where the local nobility and a merchant population, both literate and well-traveled, could support a lively industry of silversmiths and enamelers.

The greatest flowering of Russian enameling occurred in the second half of the 17th century in the Kremlin Armory workshops in Moscow. Styles and techniques introduced by foreign craftsmen were fused with native motifs and methods into a distinctive Muscovite style. This style is characterized by bright colors – blues, emerald greens, whites, and bits of red – and the variety of techniques used – several often combined on one object – and by the use of gold and large cabochon gemstones, creating a general lushness of decoration. These lavish creations ceased abruptly in 1712 when Peter the Great moved the capital and the market for luxury goods to his new city of St Petersburg on the Baltic Sea. In his enthusiasm for all things Western he imposed European culture and all its trappings on his fellow countrymen. From foreign craftsmen, enamelers learned portrait painting, stylistically so different from traditional Russian icon painting. Foreign goldsmiths lured to Catherine's court in the second half of the 18th century introduced *en plein* enameling, producing dazzling snuff-boxes for the court.

The scholarly study of Russian enamels and its

OPPOSITE 1. Detail of cat.85

history coincided with the renaissance of enamel manufacture in the mid-19th century as part of the so-called Russian Revival. Nicholas I initiated the process when in 1830 he sent a young graduate of the Academy of Art, Fedor Solntsev, to the Moscow Kremlin to copy the antiquities preserved there. Solntsev's drawings for the multi-volume *Drevnosti rossiiskogo gosudarstva* ("Antiquities of the Russian State"), published in the 1850s, not only inspired further publications of Russian design and ornament, but were also used as design manuals by future students of all the arts, particularly of metalwork. Thus scholars began to draw attention to Russian treasures, and particularly to their ornamentation, that had been ignored during the preceding century and a half of forced Westernization. Scholars organized societies for the study of Russian history and antiquities in both Moscow and St Petersburg. This interest in the past was intensified by the discovery and opening of many barrows in southern Russia that brought to light for the first time native Russian enameled silver and goldwork from the 11th to the 13th century.

2. Museum at the Stroganov Institute

The important role that enamel was considered to play in the history of Russian art is evident by the fact that in 1851 the Imperial Russian Archeological Society commissioned a study of Russian enamels, from the pre-Mongol period (10th–12th centuries) to the 17th century. That same year a special commission accepted a proposal by the historian Ivan E. Zabelin for a *Historical Review of Enamel and Precious Work in Russia*.[1] Among other things the commission wanted to know the differences between Russian and West European enamels, the centers of production, the names of masters, the most important works and where they were located; and how much of Russian enamel's distinctive color and ornament was influenced by the West and what came from the East. When it was published in 1853, Zabelin's work became a primary source of information and inspiration for students and collectors of Russian enamels.

Both the study and production of enamels in the late 19th century benefited from the efforts of Russia's two most prominent schools for the applied arts, the Imperial Stroganov Central Institute for Industrial Art (established in 1825, reorganized in 1860) in Moscow and the Shtiglits (Stieglitz) Central School for Technical Drawing (established in 1876) in St Petersburg. They were founded to provide design and technical education in the decorative arts and to improve the quality and study of native crafts in the face of foreign competition. Tired of Russian culture's long domination by Western forms and style, educators like Viktor Butovskii, Director of the Stroganov Institute, advocated a return to native

traditions and went to great lengths to emphasize the Byzantine and Eastern origins of Russian design. Both institutions established museums (fig. 2) and held exhibitions to broaden the exposure of students to the treasures of their past. Moscow's Imperial Russian History Museum was founded in 1883, to house objects, including liturgical pieces, excavated in various digs, not only in the south, but all over Russia, and the major silversmiths sent their designers there for study.

3. Petr Shchukin's collection

Collectors responded to this new interest in Russian antiquities, and the more prominant ones, such as Petr Shchukin (his brother Sergei, was famous for his collection of modern French paintings), made their collections available to the public in their homes (fig. 3). Others began to lend to exhibitions, such as the 1901 *Historical Exhibition of Objects of Art* in Moscow, where many rare treasures from private collections were exhibited, including objects belonging to the imperial family. A similar exhibition with the same title was held at the Shtiglits Institute in St Petersburg in 1904. Several of the objects shown in these exhibitions are now in the Walters Art Gallery and are illustrated here (cats 5, 6 and 53).

The Russian Revival, which spawned such an interest among collectors and researchers, had a practical impact on the production of enamels at the end of the 19th century. This was the great age of world's fairs, which inspired competition among Russian firms to succeed in the international market. Moscow silversmiths soon exploited the positive attention the Russian Revival styles received abroad. The two firms of Pavel Ovchinnikov and Ivan Khlebnikov won medals throughout the second half of the 19th century, but they were only the best known of a remarkably large group of able silversmiths and enamelers, producing for a growing middle class in Moscow, as well as for foreigners in search of the exotic.

Significantly, most of the gifts presented by imperial officials to visiting dignitaries from the 1880s to World War I were Moscow enamels, a clear demonstration of the regime's desire to show off its native industry and cultural heritage. In fact the "native" claim was not entirely valid. These quintessentially "Russian" enamels were the result of a melding process that had been going on for centuries, mixing Turkish, Persian, and Western styles that had entered the Russian design vocabulary in the 17th century. By the end of the 19th century they had been fused into a style that today is popularly recognized as Russian.

Despite this rediscovery of Russia's pre-Petrine enamel tradition by historians, scholars, and silversmiths, the production of gold boxes and objects of vertu continued to be a staple of the court in St Petersburg, symbolizing that city's more cosmopolitan

culture. By the 1880s the jewelry firm of Carl Fabergé was receiving international recognition with enamels in the tradition of the great 18th-century goldsmiths. The World of Art group, whose founding members included Sergei Diagilev and Aleksandr Benua, devoted attention to 18th-century Russian rococo and neo-classicism through publications and exhibitions with the same vigor and pride that Muscovites had given to the 16th and 17th centuries.

By the end of the 19th century the rich layering of stylistic influences that had been accumulating for about three hundred years had created overt tension between Moscow's "Russianness" and Petersburg's "Europeanism." These different approaches to cultural heritage are evident in the production of Fabergé's St Petersburg and Moscow workshops, the one creating boxes, frames, and bell pushes with shimmering *en plein* enamel (see Technical Terms) in the French manner while the other made robust silver *kovshi* and inventive *charki*, using traditional Russian shapes, inspired by the Russian Arts and Crafts movement.

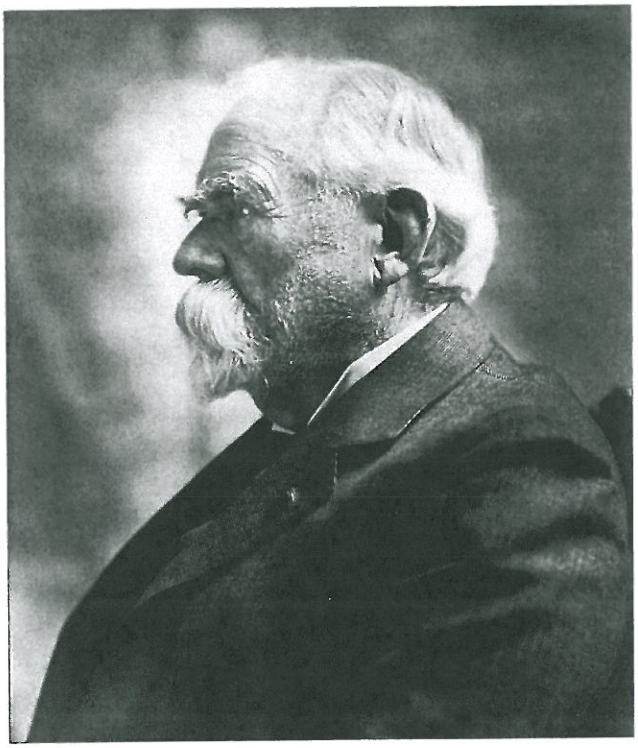
The early 20th century in Russia has been justly called the "Silver Age" for the bursting creativity in literature, painting, theater design, and music. It was also the Silver Age of Russian enamels. The Revolution in 1917 instantly ended this gloriously productive period in the metal arts. The plain whiteware left over at the Imperial Porcelain Factory could be adapted to propaganda needs, but not gold and silver, which were quickly melted down for bullion. Luxury art was clearly unsuitable for a socialist society; thus silver- and goldsmiths became almost extinct after the Revolution. Only rarely were objects of any kind made in silver or gold during the Soviet period. When the Soviet Union took part in the 1925 Decorative Art Exhibition in Paris, there were no art deco enamels like those exhibited by Cartier. Sadly there are no Russian art deco enamels at all.

Despite such an abrupt ending to their enamel production, Russians can justly be proud of their enamel creations over nine centuries. Their bright, clear colors, their technical mastery, the successful result of so many diverse influences, assure their works a special place among world enamels.

The Collectors

An exhibition of enamels from three collections – the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, the Hillwood Museum in Washington, D.C., and a private collection – offers the unique opportunity outside Russia to view in detail the whole spectrum of this enamelwork, which is almost without exception distinguishable from enamels made elsewhere.

Revolutions are not kind to art and traditional culture. Soon after the Russian Revolution in 1917 the Soviet government began the process of selling off first jewels and then paintings and decorative art confiscated from the imperial palaces and from private collectors. These efforts were intensified in the late 1920s and early 1930s as the government tried to raise hard currency to finance industrialization in the First Five Year Plan (1928–33). Two of the collections



4. Henry Walters

formed by Americans from what the Soviet authorities considered the detritus of the old regime are now museums, open and available to the public. This means that the beauty and vigor of Russian art, and in this case the genius of Russian enamelers, can be appreciated in America as well as in Russia. Each of the collections that makes up this exhibition was formed by a single individual, and each brings something special to this exhibition.

Henry Walters (1848–1931) (fig. 4) inherited a passion for collecting from his father William Thompson Walters (1819–94) who had concentrated in the fields of contemporary European painting and the arts of China and Japan. Apparently determined from the outset to establish a comprehensive art museum, an intent he never publicly acknowledged, Henry Walters collected the arts of widely ranging cultures over three millennia. His only visit to Russia was in July 1900, when he cruised to St Petersburg on his steam yacht, the *Narada*. On that occasion, he visited the Fabergé firm and bought some enameled parasol handles and carved stone animals. Most of his purchases of Russian art, however, coincided with his desire to create a collection of historical breadth, and his collection is rich in 17th and 18th-century enamels, rare in the West.

Marjorie Merriweather Post (1887–1973) (fig. 5), as wife of the American ambassador to the Soviet Union Joseph E. Davies, had the unusual opportunity of actually living there in the late 1930s. Initially a collector of French 18th-century furniture and Sèvres porcelain, she became immediately attracted to the lush color and robustness of Russian art. She began the nucleus of her collection at that time, when she bought many of her liturgical objects. She continued, however, to acquire in the West when she returned home, eventually amassing the most important Russian decorative art collection outside Russia. She favored the 18th and 19th centuries and especially objects with connections to the imperial family. Hillwood was Mrs Post's Washington residence, and her collection is now housed there, as she arranged for it to be seen. Unlike Mr Walters, who bought most of his Russian art from Aleksandr Polovtsov in Paris

5. Marjorie Merriweather Post at Tregaron, 1945. Courtesy *Vogue*

in the late 1920s, Mrs Post bought at auction and from dealers in New York, London, and Paris until her death in 1973.

A private collector has devoted her collecting interests to Moscow enamels from the 1870s to the Revolution in 1917. Beginning her collection in the 1970s, she has always been attracted not only to the technique of enamels, but also to the vibrant and often unusual colors of Moscow enamels. For historical comparison she has also collected some earlier pieces, which help round out those from the other two collections.

Together these three collections reveal the enormous creativity of Russian enamelers and provide an opportunity for serious study of this subject.

37 Medallion Reliquary with Doubting Thomas

St Petersburg, 1741-61
Silver gilt, painted enamel
H. 3 1/8 in (7.938 cm), W. 2 11/16 in (6.833 cm)
Hillwood Museum 15.204

38 Pendant Icon of SS Khariton and Aleksandr

St Petersburg(?), 1768
Silver, painted enamel
H. 3 1/8 in (8 cm), W. 2 1/16 in (5.2 cm)
Walters Art Gallery 44.627

Both the relatively early dates and the sophistication of the painting on the medallion reliquary and the pendant icon suggest they were probably made in St Petersburg. The facial details, the realistic rendering of the body, the billowing folds, and shading of the draperies are reminiscent of Elizabethan baroque ceiling paintings in the palaces of St Petersburg.

The reliquary depicting the figure of Doubting Thomas, an appropriate subject, is inscribed on the front in Cyrillic: "Because thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." The reliquary opens to reveal a small, removable, gold cross, and an inscription: "This cross containing wood and a piece of the robe of Christ was presented by Elizabeth Petrovna." The miniature of SS Khariton and Aleksandr is a baptismal icon, inscribed and dated on the back, "born September 9, 1768," and "name day 28 September;" September 28 is St Khariton's day. According to its provenance, the pendant was always in the Pashkov family.

39 Chalice

Moscow, 1787
Silver gilt, painted enamel on copper, paste gems
H. 11 7/8 in (30.163 cm), Dia. 5 in (12.7 cm)
Hillwood Museum 12.85

40 Chalice

Moscow, 1805
Parcel gilt, painted enamel on copper
H. 10 15/16 in (27.783 cm), Dia. 4 in (10.16 cm)
Hillwood Museum 12.92

41 Chalice

Moscow, 1810
Silver gilt, painted enamel on copper, paste gems
H. 14 1/2 in (36.83 cm), Dia. 7 3/4 in (19.685 cm)
Hillwood Museum 12.93

These three chalices arranged opposite in the order 39, 41 and 40, are decorated with painted enamel medallions representing the quite different tastes and color schemes that can be found among Rostov enamels. The plaques on the oldest of the chalices reveal the often naive rendering of the figures. The hand of Christ raised in blessing is as large as his face, the garments fit loosely on the figure, and the color range is very limited. The medallions in grisaille on a blue ground are not original to the chalice to which they are now attached. They represent an unusual style of Rostov painting that appears to have been most popular in the 1790s. The medallion depicting the Lamb of God in place of the Crucifixion is a vivid pictorial description showing the blood dripping from the lamb which is rare in Russian iconography. Other medallions on this chalice are painted in the somber colors of Dutch Old Master paintings. In each case the enameled copper medallion is framed in silver and then attached to the chalice.

On each chalice the medallions follow the standard iconography: the deesis around the cup, that is Christ with Mary on his right and John the Baptist on his left, with the Crucifixion on the back. On the foot of the chalice, the scenes can vary, but depict the events of Passion Week. These include the Last Supper, Christ at Gethsemene, Christ Crowned with Thorns, the Road to Calvary, the Mocking of Christ, and the Entombment. The enamel plaques have been molded to fit the curved shape of the foot.

On the 1810 chalice grapes decorating the bowl of the cup and the foot of the chalice are also Western symbols, which did not appear on Russian chalices before the 18th century. The inscription around the bowl reads: "Accept the body of Christ; taste of the immortal source." The stones found around most enameled medallions on chalices, miters, and icons are paste, imitating diamonds, emeralds, and rubies.


ІЇС.
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47 Onion Watch with Portrait of Catherine I

Watch: Heydrich; Enamel miniature: Grigorii Musikiiskii
Watch: London, ca. 1710; Miniature: St Petersburg, ca.1725
Gold, diamonds, painted enamel
H. 3 in (7.62 cm), W. 2 5/16 in (5.875 cm), Dia.1 3/4 in (14.445 cm)
Hillwood Museum 16.45

This English onion watch, so-called because the outer case comes off like an onion skin, is mounted with a miniature of Peter's second wife, Catherine. She was a Lithuanian peasant, born Martha Skavronskaia, who faithfully and courageously followed Peter to the wars and bore him twelve children, only two of whom survived to adulthood. Following a secret marriage in 1707, Peter and Catherine officially married with great pomp in 1712. Peter designated her his successor, and she became empress on his death in 1725. Unlike earlier images of Catherine, she is wearing a crown, and the miniature is signed "G.M." in Cyrillic and dated 1725, so may have been a presentation piece at the time of her coronation. Catherine reigned until her death in 1727.

English watches with portrait miniatures, including those of Peter, were extremely fashionable in this period. There were several in the collection of Aleksandr Menshikov, Governor General, now in the Hermitage.[53]

54 Oval Box with Portrait of Zakhar Chernishev (?)

G.K. (Georg Kuntzendorf ?)
St Petersburg, 1773
Gold, enamel
H. 1 3/8 in (3.467 cm), W. 3 3/16 in (6.193 cm)
Hillwood Museum 11.33

This gold box with an enameled portrait miniature possibly of Zakhar Grigorevich Chernishev (1722–84) is representative of Russian assimilation of the French style. The zigzag guillochéd pattern under the transparent dark blue enamel, set with opaque white enamel six-pointed stars, provides a lustrous background for the miniature. The stars and the globe, pens, compass, and other objects under the portrait were symbols of the Freemasons, of which Chernishev was a member. A scrolled leaf design and a ribbon in transparent blue combined with white opaque enamel are entwined around the border.

Chernishev is dressed in a green waistcoat, trimmed in yellow and red, and is wearing the star of the Order of St Andrew. In 1773 Catherine promoted Chernishev to the rank of field marshall, and he was named governor general of White Russia. The miniature has always been identified as Chernishev, although a prototype has not been found.[64] The year of the box would be consistent with his promotion to field marshal, an appropriate occasion for such a presentation box.

55 Presentation Box with Portraits of Nicholas I and Alexandra

Firm of Keibel
St Petersburg, ca. 1826
Gold, enamel, miniatures on ivory
L. 3 13/16 in (9.373 cm), W. 2 3/4 in (6.833 cm)
Hillwood Museum 11.39

This enameled gold box with miniature portraits of Nicholas I and his wife, Alexandra Feodorovna, was probably a presentation box at the time of Nicholas' coronation in 1826.

The portrait miniatures set in frames of diamonds and gold with a scrolling leaf ornament are mounted on a thick cobalt-blue ground, enameled over a barely visible horizontal basket-weave pattern of machine engraving. Although unsigned, the miniatures may possibly be the work of Ivan Andreevich Winberg (Vinberg, d. 1851), a Swedish-born miniaturist to the court of Nicholas I.

A vine motif in green and yellow gold forms the border of the box. On the bottom the double-headed eagle in yellow gold is framed by sprays of oak and laurel leaves.

Otto Keibel (1768-1809) established his firm in 1797. After his death, his son Iogan continued the business which remained in existence until at least 1910.

56 Presentation Box with Portrait of Alexander II

Miniature, Alois Gustav Rockstuhl (1798–1877)
St Petersburg, ca. 1858
Gold, enamel, miniature on ivory
L. 3 in (6.007 cm), W. 2⅜ in (7.62 cm)
Hillwood Museum 11.45

This gold box in the rococo style is a rare example of *basse-taille* enameling. The romping putti engraved in the gold on either side of the portrait miniature are covered with a dark cobalt-blue enamel. On the side of the box, baskets of flowers in cartouches are enameled in the same blue, and birds are enameled in an orange over foil, producing an unusual and bright color combination for this presentation box. On the bottom, love birds in an oval cartouche are also enameled in blue. The surface of the box itself is partially engraved with enameled figures on smooth gold cartouches outlined with rococo scrolls.

The miniature portrait of Alexander II, set in diamonds, is signed by the Baltic miniaturist Alois Gustav Rockstuhl (or Aloizii Petrovich Rockshtul the younger, as he is referred to in Russian) and is dated 1858. Rockstuhl was court miniaturist during the reign of Alexander II.[65]

57 Collar of the Order of St Andrew

Firm of Keibel, Aleksandr Kordes, workmaster
St Petersburg, mid-19th c.
Gold, enamel
L. 40 in (101.6 cm)
Hillwood Museum 18.1

Peter the Great established the Order of St Andrew First Called in 1698 to be awarded to members of the imperial family, to foreign royalty, and to especially important servants of the state. This order is the only one which has a chain in addition to the sash. Worn on special ceremonial occasions, the chain is made up of repeated medallions with the badge of the order, showing St Andrew martyred on an X-shaped cross, at the bottom. Other medallions include the crossed Ps of Peter I on blue with banners and flags, a round medallion with the cross of St Andrew and the Roman letters "S.A.P.R.", standing for Sanctus Andreas Patronus Russiae, and a third medallion of the double-headed eagle holding the orb and scepter with a small painted round plaque in the center of St George, the patron saint of Moscow.

Aleksandr Kordes, a workmaster for Keibel when this chain was made, later established his own firm. Each of the medallions is enameled in opaque enamels on gold with gold letters and details.

66 Bread and Salt Dish

Firm of Pavel Ovchinnikov
Moscow, 1883
Silver gilt, filigree, *champlevé*, and painted enamel
Dia. 20¾ in (52.705 cm)
Hillwood Museum 15.202

The inscription on this bread and salt dish, which was presented to Alexander III at the time of his coronation in 1883 (he ascended the throne in 1881), reads: "To their Imperial Majesties the Sovereign Emperor Alexander III and the Sovereign Empress Maria Feodorovna on the day of their Blessed Coronation from their Loyal Subjects the Citizens of the Town of Ivanovo-Vosnesensk." Around the rim of the dish miniatures of Alexander, his wife, Maria Feodorovna, and the Tsarevich Nicholas, are interspersed with medallions decorated with Russian-style ornament, all linked with leaf and vine interlace. The exquisitely painted portrait miniatures of the emperor, his wife, and his heir are executed in enamel, rarely found so late in the 19th century when most portrait miniatures were on ivory or paper. At the bottom is the coat-of-arms of the city of Ivanovo-Vosnesensk, one of the largest textile manufacturing centers in the country, known as the Manchester of Russia.

In the center of the dish the imperial coat-of-arms – the double-headed eagle holding the orb and scepter – is affixed to the ermine mantle surmounted by the imperial crown and defined in low relief, decorated with *champlevé* enamel.

The offering of bread and salt was a traditional ceremony of welcome in Russia. Newly married couples and important visitors to towns were greeted with a round loaf of bread presented on a dish covered with an embroidered cloth. On top of the bread was placed a cellar of salt, sometimes in the shape of a salt chair (cat. 73). Provincial dignitaries in attendance at the coronation also presented the emperor with bread and salt or other gifts in an elaborate ceremony in the Kremlin Palace (fig. 22).

22. Bread and Salt Ceremony, the Kremlin Palace, 1896


СЪ НАМИ БОГЪ

67 Bread and Salt Dish

Firm of Pavel Ovchinnikov
Moscow, 1888
Silver gilt, filigree and *champlevé* enamel
Dia. 21½ in (54.61 cm)
Hillwood Museum 15.43

In the fall of 1888 Alexander III and his wife, Maria Feodorovna, and the tsarevich made an extensive tour of southern Russia and the Caucasus.[78] This dish is one of dozens that loyal citizens presented to the imperial couple as they traveled from town to town. The dish is inscribed in *champlevé* enamel around the entwined ciphers of Alexander and Maria: "To their imperial highnesses from the former Mountain Armenians now inhabitants of the village of Armavir."

Armavir in the Kuban area of southern Russia was founded in 1848 by General Zass and settled by Armenians from mountain villages in the northern Caucasus. Christian Armenians were probably moved into this town, named after the ancient capital of Armenia, to protect them from the religious leader Shamil and his attempts to unite the Muslims in the north Caucasus.

This tour to inspect military preparedness on the frontiers was memorable for other reasons. On the return trip at Borki near Kharkov, the train was derailed, causing the roof of the railway car in which the imperial family was dining to collapse. Alexander saved his family by supporting the roof while they escaped.

The ciphers in chased silver are mounted on a turquoise ground decorated with wire scrolls set in the enamel. Stylized palmettes and floral motifs form the inside border on the rim. Red enamel over foil provides colorful accents. The broad flat area of the rim is covered with strapwork ornament in blue, turquoise, and white. A repeated abstract design forms the outer border. The blue, turquoise, and white coloring and the interlace ornament give the dish a decidedly Middle Eastern cast.


ИХЪ ИМПЕРАТОРСКИМЪ ВЕЛИЧЕСТВАМЪ

70 Tankard

Firm of Pavel Ovchinnikov
Moscow, 1890
Silver gilt, filigree and *plique-à-jour* enamel
H. 6¾ in (17.145 cm)
Hillwood Museum 15.44

Although the body of this tankard is very similar to the Ovchinnikov tankard in cat. 69 and to its Turkish prototype in the Kremlin Armory, this one has a flat top. Both the top and bottom are pierced *plique-à-jour*, and in the bottom is a double-headed eagle in red enamel. As on the other tankard, wires have been added to the outside of both the top and bottom to give the appearance of a filigree cage.

Lewis Day, writing on enamel early in the 20th century, has likened the use of enamel wires to appliqué embroidery, "where colored stuffs are outlined with gold cord, couched down, to cover and clean up the joints."[81] On enamels the twisted wire, like the twisted cord, provides the same relief and is used to form the stems of leaves and flowers. His description admirably suits these tankards.

This particular tankard is possibly the one that was presented to a member of a French delegation in 1897 (fig. 24),[82] that is several years after its completion. However, because Ovchinnikov varied the colors slightly, it is impossible to determine for certain that this is the same tankard, especially since a similar one was sold at auction in 1993.[83] The pages of the illustrated weeklies in the late 19th century are full of such objects given to one important state visitor or another. It is clear that Russians wanted to present gifts that looked distinctly Russian. It is ironic that an object of Turkish origin had come to be viewed as quintessentially Russian.

24. Gifts presented to officers of French squadrons from the city of St Petersburg. *Vsemirnaia illustratsia*, 6 September 1897

79 Icon of the Iverskaia Mother of God

Firm of Pavel Ovchinnikov
Moscow, 1896-1908
Silver, filigree enamel, seed pearls, tempera on wood
H. 4¾ in (12.065 cm), W. 4¼ in (10.955 cm)
Hillwood Museum 54.30

Ovchinnikov produced many *oklads*, or covers, for icons, both small and large. The enameling is in the traditional colors of blue, turquoise-blue, green, and white with highlights of red over foil for accent, and is especially typical of Moscow enameling in the 1870s and 1880s. On the ground behind the figure of the Mother of God the wires form a pattern in the turquoise enamel rather than separating any colors. Crosses in green at the corners and in red at the sides are enameled over foil. On the halo and along the sides the enamel is raised over an oxidized ground.

The clothing of the Mother of God and Christ, which are often covered with silver, enamel, or textiles, are here formed of seed pearls.

In 1654 a copy of the miracle-working Iverskaia Mother of God in the Iverskii Monastery on Mount Athos in Greece was presented to Tsar Alexis, father of Peter the Great, who in 1669 had a chapel built for it at the gates to Red Square. The icon was one of the most celebrated in Moscow and was often taken through the streets of the city to the sick. The chapel, torn down by Stalin, was rebuilt in 1995.

84 Easter Egg

Firm of Ivan Khlebnikov
Moscow, 1908–17
Silver gilt, matte wire enamel
H. 4¼ in (10.795 cm)
Hillwood Museum 15.66

This Easter egg, with St George slaying the dragon on the front, differs in technique from the usual Moscow production. Khlebnikov has used flat, straight wires, which are associated with *cloisonné*, though in this instance the enamel is not flush with the wires; the wires remain raised above the surface. In addition, the enamel has a matte finish, achieved through the use of acid. The final stoning process required working between the metal wires. Usually matte surfaces were confined to painted plaques attached to objects after the enameling was complete.

The figure of St George in a blue cloak, mounted on a white steed and slaying a magnificent green dragon, stands out against a soft orange background. This cartouche is framed by a *kokoshnik*-shaped (ogee-shaped) border perhaps inspired by Viktor Vasnetsov's 1900 design of the relief pediment over the portal of Moscow's Tretiakov Gallery.

A large flower in pastel colors on a cream ground decorates the back of the egg, which opens vertically.

104 Easter Egg

Fedor Rückert
Moscow, ca. 1900
Silver, *champlevé* enamel
H. 3⅝ in (9.157 cm), W. 2⅝ in (6.617 cm)
Hillwood Museum 15.52

This blood-red Easter egg is a rare example in Rückert's work of *champlevé* enamel in the art nouveau style. Silver laurel branches grow up from the bottom to open out into a naturalistic band of chased silver leaves around the center. Branches continue up the top part of the egg to form another mass of leaves at the top.

Red was a traditional color for Easter eggs; real eggs were soaked in onion skins to achieve a dark red color, and many red eggs were made at the Imperial Porcelain Factory for Maria Feodorovna to give as Easter gifts.