SILVER AGE
RUSSIAN ART IN VIENNA AROUND 1900

Lower Belvedere
27 June to 28 September 2014

Boris M. Kustodiev
The Family, 1905
Oil on canvas
182.5 x 198 cm
© Belvedere, Vienna
The Belvedere's exhibition Silver Age - Russian Art in Vienna around 1900, showing from 27 June to 28 September 2014, explores Russian art and the cultural links between Russia and Austria in the early twentieth century. The term Silver Age refers to the cultural heyday in Russian literature and the fine arts after 1900 and is considered to be the equivalent of the German term Jugendstil or Art Nouveau.

Two exhibitions organized by the Vienna Secession in 1901 and 1908 introduced the Viennese public to contemporary Russian art, which was extremely well received by both critics and collectors. While the first exhibition was dedicated to art in Nordic countries and only had one section on Russia, the second was devoted entirely to modern Russian art. It placed an emphasis on established artists from the group World of Art (Mir Iskusstva), as well as exponents of the young association of artists Blue Rose (Golubaya Roza), the last generation of Russian Art Nouveau. At this 1908 exhibition, three paintings were purchased for the Moderne Galerie (today's Belvedere), including the important portrait of the Polenov Family by Boris M. Kustodiev that had been previously rejected by the conservative Russian art scene. The exhibition Silver Age will showcase Russian artists whose work could have been seen in Vienna over a hundred years ago. It thus illustrates the mutual influences of this cultural exchange between Russian and Austrian art.

All through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Russian art could be seen in Vienna with relative frequency. There was an unprecedented flowering in art's various fields, prompting contemporaries to dub this period the Silver Age. But this astonishing heyday of creativity was relatively short-lived and lasted only from the late 1890s to the latter years of the 1910s. Its exponents, however, considered it to be the next step in Russia's artistic evolution, following the blossoming of literature in the Golden Age between 1810 and 1830.

During these years, when Russian literature was taking the West by storm – the novels by Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky were a worldwide triumph – this enthusiasm also swept across the borders of the Austro-Hungarian empire. "Russian artists followed the Vienna art scene and works by Gustav Klimt were published in Russian art magazines. And Austrian artists also knew the works by their Russian colleagues – in Gustav Klimt's studio, for example, there was a majolica figure by Michail A. Vrubel,” Agnes Hussels-Arco, Director of the Belvedere, described the artistic exchange between the countries.

The new Russian art emerged in the works of the World of Art group, which had been established in St. Petersburg just two years before the Vienna Secession's exhibition. In many respects, this bore close resemblances with the creative experiments by Austrian artists during this time.
“The Silver Age made an important contribution to Russian art, as it was in this period that Russians turned their attention to their own roots and traditions, after almost two hundred years of orienting themselves toward the West,” curator Konstantin Akinsha explained. “Russian Symbolism and the Mir Iskusstwa exhibitions were short-lived but their artistic legacies captured the essence of a time that defined a new worldview and constructed strong foundations for the avant-garde,” Belvedere Deputy Director and curator Alfred Weidinger added.

The Vienna Secession exhibitions in 1901 and 1908

In 1901 the Vienna Secession staged an exhibition featuring the work of key artists, such as Michail A. Vrubel, Konstantin A. Korovin, Nikolai K. Roerich, and Konstantin A. Somov, in a show designed by Josef Hoffmann. In contrast to the presentations from other countries, the Russian section also comprised impressive examples of applied art: majolica figures, vessels, and even an enormous fireplace from the workshops of Abramtsevo, where these arts were being fostered by the vibrant industrialist, railway builder and patron of the arts Savva Mamontov. For the first time, the Secession was introducing the Viennese public to Russian Symbolism and Russian arts and crafts, and this met with resounding approval in both public and private circles. Peter Altenberg praised the Russian paintings in his personal guide, which was published in the journal Ver Sacrum, and the respected Austrian collectors Gallia and Wärndorfer acquired exquisite watercolors by Konstantin A. Somov.

The second exhibition of Russian art in Vienna was presented in 1908 and was to be the largest show of foreign art ever staged at the Vienna Secession. It not only comprised works by established artists – Boris M. Kustodiev, Valentin A. Serov, and Léon S. Bakst, among others – but also impressive pieces by a new generation of Symbolist painters, including Sergei Y. Sudeikin, Nikolai N. Sapunov and other members of the Blue Rose group of artists. They were the last exponents of Russian Symbolism, which, in 1908, was already dwindling, soon to be replaced by the experiments of the avant-garde.

“In this sense, Vienna witnessed both the beginning and end of Russian Symbolism. The last exhibition of Russian art shown in Vienna was on the eve of the First World War and was dedicated to set designs by Léon S. Bakst,” curator Alfred Weidinger said. Elegant stage sets and costume designs for The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian by Claude Debussy and Gabriele D’Annunzio were shown at Salon Heller in the spring of 1914. Just a few months later the First World War broke out, and both fin-de-siècle Vienna and Russia’s Silver Age were brought to an abrupt end.

A PDF of the catalog can be downloaded at the following link: www.belvedere.at/presse (password: pr2014)
ARTISTS’ BIOGRAPHIES

Léon S. Bakst
1866 Grodno, Belarus, Russian Empire – 1924 Paris
1883 studied at St. Petersburg Academy of Art. 1890s exhibited his works with the Society of Water-Colourists. 1893–1897 lived in Paris, studied at the Académie Julian. In 1898 presented his works at the First Exhibition of Russian and Finnish Artists organized by Sergei Diaghilev, later in “The World of Art” group exhibitions, exhibitions at the Munich Secession, exhibitions of the Union of Russian Artists. 1901 art teacher at the Private Art School “Zwanceva” (one of his pupils was Marc Chagall). Member of “The World of Art” group. Stage-designer for Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes: Cleopatra (1909), Scheherazade (1910), Le Spectre de la Rose (1911), Daphnis et Chloé (1912), L’après-midi d’un faune (1912). 1914 member of the Imperial Academy of Arts.

Ivan Y. Bilibin
1876 Tarkhovka village, St. Petersburg – 1942 St. Petersburg
1896–1900 studied at St. Petersburg University at the faculty of Law. At the same time he practiced painting in the art school of duchess Maria Tenisheva under protection of Ilya Repin. 1900–1904 secondary school of Academy of Arts. Member of the “World of Art” group. 1899 created his first illustrations to Russian fairy tales Ivan Tsarevich, Firebird (Jar-ptica). 1899–1902 illustrated fairy tales of A. Pushin’s Tsar’ Saltan and Fairytale of a golden cock. 1907 professor in a graphic class of Society of Encouragement of Artist. 1915 member of the Society of Revival of Artistic Rus’ (Ancient Russia). 1920 Bilibin went to Egypt. From 1920 he lived in Cairo, made research in ancient Egyptian and Coptic art. 1925 moved to Paris. Prepared decorations for Russian operas in Paris, a ballet by Igor Stravinsky The Firebird in Buenos Aires and operas in Prague. 1936 returned to Soviet Russia, to Leningrad. Teacher at Russian Academy of Art. Died in Leningrad blockaded by German Nazis in 1942.

Viktor N. Deni (Viktor Denisov)
1893 Moscow – 1946 Moscow
Russian and Soviet artist, graphic and caricaturist. Was born in a family of the impoverished aristocrat Nikolai Denisov. 1900 student of Nikolai Ulyanov. 1906 took part in the Association of Independents and Salon of Humorists. In 1910’s worked in many comic journals. 1913 was invited to Satirikon. Since 1919 lived in Kazan. Collaborated with Soviet political publishing houses like “Bedniak”, “Krasnie Zori”, “Znamia Revolutsii”. Took part in publishing of Okna satiri ROSTA. Since 1921 worked in an important newspaper Pravda. He was one of the founders of Soviet political poster art. 1932 received a title of Meritorious Art Worker of RSFSR.

Mstislav V. Dobuzhinsky
1875 Novgorod – 1957 New York

Aleksandr Y. Golovin
1863 Moscow – 1930 Tsarskoe Selo, St. Petersburg
Was born the son of a priest. Studied in Polivanov gymnasium with famous poets like Andrei Bely, Valery Bryusov. Since his school years he was fascinated by theatre. 1881 entered the Moscow School of Art,

Konstantin A. Korovin
1861 Moscow – 1939 Paris
1875 started studying in Moscow School of Art, Sculpture and Architecture. In the studio of Alexei Savrasov and later Vasily Polenov. 1884 Polenov introduced him to the Savva Mamontov family and he entered the Abramtsevo circle of painters and amateurs. Over 14 years there he created decorations for Mamontov’s home theatre. 1888–1889 Korovin visited France, Italy and Spain. One of his paintings that he created after the trip, *At the balcony. Spanish Leonora and Ampara*, won a golden medal at the World Fair in Paris 1900. 1892–1893 lived and worked in Paris and created the cycle of paintings *In the studio of the artist and Paris café.* 1894 he received an invitation from Savva Mamontov to take part in an expedition to the North of Russia. After the expedition Mamontov commissioned Korovin with the project and decoration of pavilion *Far North* at the Russian Art and Industry Exhibition in Nijniy Novgootod 1896. 1900 Korovin was elected to artist-consultant of the Russian department at the World Fair in Paris. Korovin was honored with the Ordre national de la Légion d’honneur. His most important paintings at the World Fair were a huge frieze for the Northern department and four signs titled *Siberia*. 1890 Korovin prepared decorations and scene design for operas at Imperial theatres in Russia, at La Scala and the Opéra de Paris. Since 1910 he was general director and artist-consultant of Russian Imperial theatres. At this time he joined the exhibitions of “The World of Art” group. From 1922 Korovin lived and worked in Paris till his death in 1939. During this period he created designs for the tours of Russian artists like Anna Pavlova and Fedor Shalapin in Europe.

Nikolai Y. Korchergin
1897 Moscow – 1974 Leningrad
Studied at Stroganoff Art School. One of the founders of Soviet political poster art. 1918 –1920 at the time of the Civil War he was director of a poster-workshop in Kharkov. One of the organizers of Baku department of Okna satiri ROSTA, later of the Caucasus department. Lived in Petrograd (St. Petersburg). 1920–1930 collaborated with Leningrad Marionette Theatre, worked as a decorator in other theatres of St. Petersburg. Worked as book-, journal- and children’s book-illustrator. During WWII produced posters in an art group “Boevoi Karandash” (Battle Pencil). 1965 received the title Meritorious Art Worker of USSR.

Boris M. Kustodiev
1878 Astrakhan – 1927 Leningrad
1896 entered St. Petersburg Academy of Art. Was a student of Vasily Savinsky, later of Ilya Repin. 1903 graduated from the Academy with a golden medal. As a student won a Major Golden Medal of International Association in Munich. 1903 travelled around Germany, Italy, Spain and moved to Paris. Same year he returned to Russia, to Kostroma region and worked on paintings cycle *Village celebrations*. Founder of “New Society of Artists” 1904. Member of “Union of Russian Artists” 1907. Member of Academy of Art 1909. Member of “World of Art” group. 1923 member of Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia.
El M. Lissitzky (Lazar' Lissitzky)
1890 Potshinok, Smolensk province – 1941 Moscow
Russian artist, architect, photographer, typographer and designer. Spent his childhood in Vitebsk. Studied in Germany at Technical University of Darmstadt till 1915. Graduated as an engineer-architect. Travelled around Italy and France. After returning to Russian Empire studied at the Riga Polytechnic Institute which moved to Moscow after the beginning of WWI. Worked for the Jewish community of artists, illustrated books and texts, took part in exhibitions in Kiev and Moscow. Friends with Marc Chagall. Worked in Vitebsk as an art teacher in National Art Secondary School. Took part in organization of Soviet propaganda events. In this period of time he created suprematist works and *prouns* (projects of new art) – compositions "between art and architecture" in form of graphics and painting. Later his *prouns* became a basis for new style in theatre decorations and space-decorative objects. El M. Lissitzky was one of the founders of Russian Avant Garde.

Elena Luksch-Makovskaya
1878 St. Petersburg – 1967 Hamburg
Elena Makovskaya grew up in St. Petersburg, the daughter of court painter Konstantin J. Makovsky, a member of *Peredvizhniki*. She was instructed in painting and drawing already at an early age by her father. Beginning in 1895 she studied with Ilya Repin at a private art school in St. Petersburg and from 1896 in his master class at the academy. She painted portraits of her fellow students there; Somov, Boris Kustodiev, Nikolai Murashko, Filip Malyavin, and Alexander Shmarov. A grant enabled her studies at Anton Azbe's school in Munich in 1898 and Adolf Häzel's painting school in Dachau. During a longer stay in St Petersburg in 1899/1900 she came into contact with the *Mir Iskusstwa* group. After her marriage to Richard Luksch, the couple lived in Dachau for several months before moving to Vienna at the end of 1900. Beginning in 1901, Makovska was continually represented with works in the exhibitions of the Secession and published artistic contributions in *Ver Sacrum*, *Der liebe Augustin*, and the satirical, Russian magazine *Shupel*. In addition, Makovska designed the facade reliefs for Vienna's Bürger-Theater and worked for the Wiener Werkstätte. Her exhibition activity at the Secession ended with the departure of the Klimt group in 1905. In 1907, Makovska followed her husband to Hamburg where he had received a professorship at the school of arts-and-crafts. In 1908 she exhibited works in the Kunstschau in Vienna. In Hamburg she again intensified her contacts to artist colleagues in Russia, especially to the *Mir Iskusstwa* group. In 1912 she presented her Russian folk image sheets at the *Mir Iskusstwa* exhibition in St. Petersburg. In 1926 she became a member of the *Gemeinschaft deutscher und österreichischer Künstlerinnen* (GEDOK) founded by Ida Dehmel.

Vladimir V. Mayakovsky
1893 Bagdati, Kutais province, Georgia – 1930 Moscow
Russian Soviet poet, dramaturge, cinema scenarist, artist. 1902–1906 studied in a gymnasium in Kutaisi. 1906 moved to Moscow, entered a classical gymnasium, studied till 1908. Mayakovski was interested in Marxist literature, early started to take part in protests and demonstrations, joined the social-democratic party in 1908. 1911 his friend and artist Evgenia Lang inspired him for art. Mayakovsky started studying at Stroganoff Art School. 1911 entered Moscow School of Art, Sculpture and Architecture and joined a cubo-futuristic art group. 1912 first publication of his poem *Night*. Held lectures about futurism in theatre of Malov Brothers, wrote his own tragedy *Vladimir Mayakovskiy* where he performed the main role. Together with Vsevolod Meyerhold and Kazimir Malevich 1917 he wrote a scenario for a comic opera *Misteria Buff*. 1919 moved to Moscow and started working for ROSTA (till 1921). He designed the agitation posters as an artist and poet. Mayakovsky collaborated with many newspapers like *Izvestiya*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, wrote articles for journals (*Noviy Mir*, *Krokodil* and *Krasnaya Niva*). 1930 he committed suicide.
Nikolai D. Milioti
1874 Moscow – 1962 Paris
1894–1900 studied art in Moscow School of Art in the studio of Abram Arkhipov, Leonid Pasternak and Valentin Serov and in the private studio of Konstantin Korovin. 1898 entered the historical-philological faculty of Moscow University. Later studied at the Sorbonne. Short period of time studied at the Académie Julian in Paris. 1907 one of the founders of the exhibition “Blue Rose”. 1910 one of the founder members of “The World of Art” group. 1923 emigrated to Paris. Together with Natalia Goncharova worked in the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier. 1929–1930 taught at the Russian Academy of Tatyana Sukhotina-Tolstaya. 1931 member of Union of Russian artists in France.

Dmitrii S. Moor (Dmitry Orlov)
1883 Novocherkassk – 1946 Moscow
Was born in a family of mountain engineers. 1898 moved with parents to Moscow. 1910 studied at an art school–studio of Piotr Kelin. Worked at Mamontov’s publishing house. 1907 first publications of his caricatures. Created agitation posters against bourgeoisie, imperialists and religion at the time of the Civil War in Russia. Illustrated a poem of Vladimir Mayakovsky Horosho 1940. During WWII designed posters showing the cruelty of German Nazi occupiers.

Emil Orlik
1870 Prague – 1932 Berlin
Orlik studied at the private painting school of Heinrich Knirr in Munich from 1889 to 1893 and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. Very early on already Orlik’s works were published in magazines such as Pan or Die Jugend [The Youth]. A decisive juncture in his artistic evolution was a trip to Japan which he undertook from 1900 to 1901. In particular the technique of coloured Japanese woodcuts influenced his work. Already in 1899 Orlik became a full member of the Association of Austrian Artists, the Secession. He took part in numerous Secession exhibitions and also published in the magazine Ver Sacrum; he was also active in the Wiener Werkstätte. Together with the group around Gustav Klimt, he resigned from the Secession in 1905. From Vienna, Orlik followed the call to become professor at the State Teaching Institute of Berlin Applied Arts. In 1908 Orlik became a member of the Berlin Secession. In the same year he took part in the exhibition ‘Kunstschau 1908’ [Art Show 1908] organised by the Klimt group. Orlik was considered a chronicler of his time. Besides numerous decoration and costume designs for the Deutsche Theater led by Max Reinhardt, he captured numerous contemporaries in etchings and woodcuts, such as Koloman Moser, Gerhard Hauptmann or Josef Hoffmann.

Leonid O. Pasternak
1862 Odessa, Russian Empire – 1945 Oxford, Great Britain
Studied at University of Moscow at the department of Medicine 1881–1885 and the Department of Law. Entered the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Munich 1887. 1889 started a career as painter in Russia. Member of Vasily Polenov circle of artists. Member of Peredvizhnik circle and of the Union of Russian Artists. Was a friend of Leo Tolstoy, illustrated his novels War and Peace and Resurrection for which he was awarded a medal at the World Fair in Paris 1900. Member of Imperial Academy of Arts 1905, and professor of Moscow School of Art, Sculpture and Architecture.

Nikolai K. Roerich
1874 St. Petersburg – 1947 Nagar, Kulu Valley, India
Born into a well-known family of lawyers in St. Petersburg. In his childhood he took part in archaeological excavations which took place near the country house of his parents. From an early age interested in Russian culture and history which influenced his future works. 1893 he entered at the same time St. Petersburg University and the Academy of Art. In the Academy his teacher was a famous landscape
painter Arkhip Kuindzhi. 1897 finished the Academy with a golden medal. At the same time Roerich was continuing his archaeological research and lectures at the St. Petersburg Archaeological Institute. 1900–1901 studied in Paris at the Academy of Fernand Cormonne. The main themes of his art works were Scandinavian and Russian epos, legends of the East and of the Stone Age. Roerich worked as one of the decorators of Diaghilev’s “Russian Seasons” in Paris. 1910–1915 he held a post as chairman of “The World of Art” group. Private exhibitions in Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, England, USA. 1923–1928 major Asian expedition (Northern India, Mongolia, China, Tibet, Altay, Baykal). 1928 his family moved to Kulu Valley in India. Roerich founded there the “Urusvati”, an Institute of Himalayan scientific research. 1934/35 second Asian expedition. 1929 the International Pact of Guarding of Cultural Values (Roerich Pact) was elaborated on his initiative and was used as a basis for the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Nikolai N. Sapunov
1880 Moscow – 1912 Terioki, St. Petersburg

Valentin A. Serov
1865 St. Petersburg – 1911 Moscow
Valentin A. Serov was born into a family of a composers. His childhood he spent in Munich and Smolenskaya province. Started studying art at a studio of a German engraver Karl Koepping. 1874 studied in Paris in Ilya Repin’s studio. 1875 returned to Russia and spent his summer in Abramtsevo circle of artists and amateurs – at Savva Mamontov’s country house. (Savva Mamontov – important Russian art patron and industrialist). 1882 entered the Emperor’s Academy of Arts. 1888 painted a portrait of the royal family in collaboration with Konstantin Korovin. 1894 was a member of Peredvizhniki art group. 1897 professor at Moscow School of Art, Sculpture and Architecture. Among his pupils were famous Russian artists like Pavel Kuznetsov, Nikolai Sapunov, Martyros Saryan, Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin.

Konstantin A. Somov
1869 St. Petersburg – 1939 Paris
The family of Somov was close to the sphere of art: his mother was a musician, his father collected art and a long time worked as keeper of the collection of St. Petersburg Hermitage. 1889–1897 Konstantin studied at the Academy of Art in studio of Ilya Repin. 1897 studied in Paris. Friends with Alexandre Benois. Member of “The World of Art” group. Illustrated books and art journals. Exhibited his works together with “The World of Art” artists, at personal exhibitions, in Berlin Secession and at Paris Salon d’Automne in 1906. Emigration to the USA 1923. Last years of his life he lived and worked in Paris.

Sergei Y. Sudeikin
1882 St. Petersburg – 1946 Nyack, New York
Crimea, Yalta together with Nikolay Milioti. 1920 emigration to France. Created decorations for the ballets of Anna Pavlova. 1922 moved to New York. 1924–1931 worked for the Metropolitan Opera – ballets of Igor Stravinsky, operas by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

Michail A. Vrubel
1856 Omsk – 1910 St. Petersburg
1880–1884 studied at the Academy of Art in the studio of P. Chistyakov. 1884–1889 lived and worked in Kiev, painted icons, created interior design and frescos for churches. His works of this period were influenced by Byzantine and ancient Russian art. 1889 moved to Moscow and entered the Abramtsevo circle of artists and amateurs organized by S. Mamontov. Worked as a sculptor and architect. Created decorations for operas like Sadko, The Tsar's Bride and The Tale of Tsar Saltan by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov for Mamontov's private theatre. The main theme of his Moscow period is the Daemon (influenced by Michael Lermontov's novel) and the struggle between the good and the evil in human's life. 1900 his works acquired tragic dimensions of personal drama. From 1902 suffered from serious mental illness, 1906 went blind.

Viktor I. Zarubin
1866 Kharkov – 1928 Leningrad
Russian and Ukrainian artist and theatre decorator. Graduated from Kharkov First Gymnasium. Studied Physics and Math at Kharkov University. 1891 started an official career. Retired in 1893 and went to Paris to study art. 1896 returned to Russia, to St. Petersburg and started studying at the St. Petersburg Academy of Art. 1909 received a title of academic of art. In the Soviet era organized revolutionary and propaganda events, took part in Soviet artists' exhibitions, illustrated children's literature.
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*Russian Art in Vienna around 1900*

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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Exhibits
154

Curators
Alfred Weidinger
Konstantin Akinsha

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