

IN-SIGHT
ELENA LUKSCH-MAKOWSKY.
SILVER AGE AND SECESSION

Upper Belvedere
24 September 2020 to 10 January 2021



Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *self portrait*, 1896
Photo: Christopher Kesting / Belvedere, Vienna

IN-SIGHT

ELENA LUKSCH-MAKOWSKY.

SILVER AGE AND SECESSION

Upper Belvedere
24 September 2020 – 10 January 2021

An artist bridging Russian and Viennese Art Nouveau: Elena Luksch-Makowsky was one of Vienna's most significant painters around 1900. She exhibited at the Secession, worked for the Wiener Werkstätte, and published in *Ver Sacrum*. Her background in Saint Petersburg art circles and her role as a networker helped forge links between the Russian Silver Age and Viennese Modernism. The Belvedere examines this extraordinary woman's life and works as part of the *IN-SIGHT* exhibition series.

"This solo exhibition of artist Elena Luksch-Makowsky widens the perspective on Viennese Modernism by adding vital aspects that until now have received little attention. Luksch-Makowsky's work also highlights the close links between Russia and Vienna at the time, thus calling into question art history's later separation of East and West. Following on the heels of our large-scale City of Women show, the exhibition is yet another milestone in the rediscovery of women artists of that time," says Stella Rollig, CEO and artistic director of the Belvedere.

In 2019, *City of Women* introduced a remarkable number of female artists involved in Viennese Modernism – most of whom were ousted from art history at the beginning of World War II. Now the *IN-SIGHT* exhibition on Elena Luksch-Makowsky focuses attention on one of the most colorful figures of the times. The documentation of this exceptional artist's life highlights her pioneering work as a woman and her essential role in forging networks between Vienna and Russia. European art historical knowledge is thus rehabilitated in the context of this exhibition.

*"Elena Luksch-Makowsky was an exceptional phenomenon in the art world of Vienna. More than any other female artist, she participated in major Secession exhibitions. She was not afraid to pursue controversial and socio-critical topics, such as awakening sexuality in her painting *Adolescentia or people on the margins of society* in *The Cat Eater*,"* explains Alexander Klee, curator of the show.

Elena Luksch-Makowsky, daughter of the wealthy court painter Konstantin J. Makowski, was born in Saint Petersburg in 1878. From an early age she met with numerous artists and traveled with her mother throughout Europe. In 1895, she enrolled at Ilya Repin's private school and then continued her studies in his master class at the St. Petersburg Academy. A scholarship provided her with the opportunity to study in Munich. There she met her future husband, the Viennese sculptor Richard Luksch, with whom she eventually moved to Vienna in 1900. Vienna's vibrant Modernist art scene at the beginning of the 20th century became a stage for the Russian-born Luksch-Makowsky, where she soon assumed a prominent role. Just one year after she arrived in the capital she was already one of six women exhibiting at the Secession; which was soon to be followed by participation in four more exhibitions at various art venues. Even by today's standards, her use of handcraft techniques and the criticism of gender relations expressed in her art distinguish her as a pioneering feminist.

Aside from her cosmopolitan stance, her Russian identity also featured prominently in her work – especially in her later Hamburg period when she felt an increased longing for her native homeland. Russian folk art such as wooden toys or *luboks* [a type of popular print, characterized by simple graphics and narratives] recurrently appear as motifs.

In 1907 she moved to Hamburg with her husband. She maintained her connections to Vienna, partly by producing work for the Wiener Werkstätte. The marriage failed, and contacts to Russia became increasingly difficult after the Russian revolution. In the wake of World War I, Elena

Luksch-Makowsky gradually faded into oblivion – a fate she shared with many of her colleagues. She died in Hamburg on 15 August 1967.

The exhibition portrays a personal history of art, politics, and society at the beginning of the 20th century. It focuses on Elena Luksch-Makowsky's Vienna period, her ties with Russia and its influence on the Secession, and her inspiration from Russian folk art.

The *IN-SIGHT* exhibition series highlights specific aspects of the museum's in-house collection and is held three times a year at the Upper Belvedere. Works of art are studied in light of new scientific perspectives and are then presented to the public.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Elena Makowsky is born in Saint Petersburg on 14 November 1878.

1895 – Enrolls in Ilya Repin's private school.

1897 – Studies at the Academy in St. Petersburg.

1898 – Studies with Anton Ažbe in Munich and with Mathias Gasteiger in Deutenhofen near Dachau.

1899 – Returns to the Repin class and attends the sculpture class of Wladimir A. Beklemischew.

1900 – Marries Richard Luksch. Participates in Exhibition VIII of the Vienna Secession. Moves to Vienna at the end of the year.

1901 – Exhibits in Exhibition X of the Vienna Secession.

1902 – Participates in the XIII and XIV exhibitions of the Vienna Secession. Travels to Russia and participates in the 4th Exhibition of Mir Iskusstwa in St. Petersburg.

1903 – Participates in Exhibition XVII of the Vienna Secession.

1905 – Participates in Exhibition XXIII of the Vienna Secession. Commissioned to design the terracotta reliefs of the Vienna Bürgertheater.

1906 – Prolonged stay in Russia.

1907 – Richard Luksch is appointed to a position at the Hamburg School of Arts and Crafts, and relocates.

1908 – Participates in the Kunstschau in Vienna. Travels to Russia and exhibits in St. Petersburg.

1909 – Exhibition at the salon of her brother Sergei in St. Petersburg.

1910 – Spends June to October in Russia with her sons.

1911 – Travels to Russia again.

1912 – Exhibition with Mir Iskusstwa in St. Petersburg.

1921 – Ongoing marriage crisis (since 1916) ends in divorce.

1920s – Participates in exhibitions in Paris: in 1927 at the Salon des Tuileries and in 1928 at the Salon des Indépendants.

1937 – Five-week residency in Paris during the World Exhibition.

During the war, she begins painting icons for the Russian congregation in Hamburg.

1948 – Six-month residency with her family in France.

1954 – Solo exhibition at the Museum for Ethnology in Hamburg.

Elena Luksch-Makowsky dies in Hamburg on 15 August 1967.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Exhibition title	IM BLICK: Elena Luksch-Makowsky. Silver Age und Secession
Exhibition duration	24. September 2020 – 10. Jänner 2021
Venue	Upper Belvedere
Exhibits	48
Kurator	Alexander Klee
Exhibition management	Aathe Boruszczak / Monica Strinu
Exhibition catalogue	Elena Luksch-Makowsky. Silver Age und Secession Series: IN-SIGHT Editors: Stella Rollig, Alexander Klee Authors: Athina Chadzis, Sabine Fellner, Alexander Klee, Stella Rollig, Alla Rosenfeld Graphic Design: Atelier Liska Wesle Printing: Gugler GmbH, Melk 144 pages, 123 pictures, 16,5 × 23,5 cm, Softcover German Edition: ISBN 978-3-903327-08-5 EUR 19,-
Contact	Belvedere, Prinz Eugen-Straße 27, 1030 Vienna Austria T +43 1 795 57-0 www.belvedere.at
Guided Tours	T + 43 1 795 57-134 M public@belvedere.at
Opening Hours	daily 10am to 6pm
Regular Entry	€ 16,- (Upper Belvedere)
Press Contact	Belvedere Press Office Prinz Eugen-Straße 27, 1030 Vienna T +43 1 795 57-177 M press@belvedere.at

Complimentary images can be downloaded for press purposes at www.belvedere.at/press.

#BelvedereInsight