

Visual Resources
from Russia and Eastern Europe
in The New York Public Library

A Checklist

Hee-Gwone Yoo and Kristen Regina

The New York Public Library
Slavic, Baltic, and Eurasian Resource Series



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The New York Public Library
SLAVIC, BALTIC, AND EURASIAN RESOURCE SERIES



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[New York: New York Public Library, 1936].

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Preface

The almost one thousand books, albums, folios, brochures, artworks, and archival documents in this catalogue raisonné of the visual materials within the Slavic and East European Collections of The New York Public Library (NYPL) constitute a unique resource for the study of Russian art, architecture, the applied arts, and material culture in the Western world. Indeed, even if the relevant repositories of the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg and the State Library in Moscow are, naturally, even larger and more diverse, the NYPL Slavic and East European Collections boast concentrations and predilections that are extraordinary in their rarity and dazzling in their splendor.

Unlike many other public and private collections, the Slavic and East European Collections began acquiring Russian imprints steadily and comprehensively long before the current cult of the Russian and Ukrainian avant-gardes. For example, NYPL had already amassed a remarkable collection of Cubo-Futurist and Constructivist books, including Il'ia Zdanevich's monograph on Natal'ia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov (No. 202), the journals *Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo* of 1919 (No. 357) and *Gostinitsa dlia puteshestvuiushchikh v prekrasnom* of 1922-1923 (No. 282), and the extremely rare Kharkov miscellany *Sem' plius tri* of 1918 (No. 717). Fortunately, as early as the 1920s the Library had also begun to build a worthy collection of imperial tomes such as Nikolai Kutepov's *Velikokniazheskaia i tsarskaia okhota na rusi s X po XVI vek* (No. 418) and the elephantine portfolios of the last coronation (Nos. 396, 397)—which today, in the face of exorbitant prices and oligarchic rivalry, would be impossible to reassemble.

However, the Slavic and East European Collections encompass many more countries than imperial or Soviet Russia. The holdings include books, atlases, and periodicals concerning the cultures of Armenia, Bulgaria, Finland, Georgia, Latvia, Mongolia, Poland, Turkmenia, and, of course, Ukraine with its rich traditions of popular and applied art (cf. Nos. 328, 819), as well as titles about the Caucasus, the Crimea, and the Jewish diaspora. In turn, this geographical extension reminds us of Russia's constant concern with frontiers and boundaries, with the physical definition of her expanse, and with the notions of colony and commonwealth. Among the scarcer books concerned with Russia's adjacent territories, mention might be made of *Trudy Ekspeditsii Imperatorskago russkago geograficheskago obshchestva po Tsentral'noi Azii, sovershennoi v 1893-1895 gg.* (No. 206), Nikolai Murav'ev's 1822 description of Turkmenistan (No. 505), Vasilii V. Vereshchagin's pictorial record of Turkestan (No. 844), and Leopold Shrenk's inquiry into "nationals of the Amur region" (No. 710).

Still, a primary focus of the Slavic and East European Collections is on the evolution of Russian visual culture from its pre-Petrine roots to Socialist Realism and, as such, the holdings provide an unmatched resource for the scholar of Russian archaeology, painting, sculpture, architecture, structural engineering, photography, and the decorative arts, including book, stage, and fashion design in the form of historical surveys, critical assessments, *de luxe* celebrations, journals, and artists' monographs. Not unexpectedly, there are the standard histories of Russian art such as the multivolume *Istoriia russkago iskusstva* edited by Igor' Grabar' from 1909 to 1914 (No. 294) and the canonical monographs on artists such as Natan Al'tman (Nos. 25, 47), Léon Bakst (Nos. 60, 61, 427), Fedor Bruni (No. 595), Marc Chagall

(Nos. 144, 197), Nikolai Iaroshenko (No. 326), Sergei Konenkov (No. 262), Arkhip Kuindzhi (No. 519), Il'ia Repin (No. 641), Nicholas Roerich (No. 642), and Vasilii V. Vereshchagin (No. 132), to mention but a few.

But there are also publications on less obvious topics, especially within the decorative and utilitarian arts such as embroidery, coins and medals, uniforms, and ceramics—from Vladimir Stasov's splendid studies of Byzantine and Slavic ornament (Nos. 765-767) and Dmitrii Rovinskii's catalogs of sheets and pillow-cases (No. 438) and Vasilii A. *Iubki* (Nos. 657-658) to A. Litke's set of monograms for sheets and pillow-cases (No. 843). Not surprisingly, the Collections also emphasize textiles—costume, dress, fashion, haberdashery, upholstery, lace-making, sewing, and embroidery—making an especially solid category, with Sofiia Davydova's treatises on Russian lace (Nos. 166-167), Konstantin Dolmatov's pattern books (e.g., No. 181), and Vasilii Prokhorov's *Materialy po istorii russkikh odezhd i obstanovki zhizni narodnoi* (No. 621) taking pride of place. Illustrated surveys of the regimental uniform and other military paraphernalia enhance this section—such as *L'Armée russe d'après photographies instantanées exécutées par MM. de Jongh frères (Neuilly-Paris)*,* *Istoriia Leibgardii Egerskago polka za sto liet*, and the nearly complete edition of Aleksandr Viskovatov's history of Russian military uniforms, which is one of the jewels in the crown of the checklist (Nos. 229, 667, 855, respectively).

An intriguing question raised by the very consistency of the Slavic and East European Collections' holdings is the degree to which Russian art was and is "Russian," whence Russian art derived its purpose, and how it now addressed, now undermined, Occidental and Oriental traditions. Symptomatic of this search for a visual identity was the strong emphasis on archaeology and ethnography, especially in the mid- and late nineteenth century, and the Library is fortunate to possess many of the key investigations into Russian antiquity, folklore, and artistic tradition, commencing with Fedor Solntsev's *Drevnosti Rossiiskago gosudarstva* of 1849-1853 (No. 185, Appendix I). Sometimes more lyrical than scientific, the compendia, albums, object-lists, and visual renderings of Russian antiquities assembled by Ivan Golyshev (e.g., No. 274), Aleksei Olenin (e.g., No. 537), Petr Shchukin (e.g., No. 722), Ivan Snegirev (e.g., No. 739), and Vladimir Suslov (No. 785) in the nineteenth century are still invaluable records of pre-Christian and early Orthodox artifacts, decorative motifs, and traditional crafts, many of which have not survived the rigors of time. This is true of both solid, physical objects and of the more ephemeral phenomena of gesture, rank, and behavior, rendered so poignantly in *Volshebnoi fonar', ili, Zrielišche S. Peterburgskikh raskhozikh prodavtsev, masterov i drugikh prostonarodnykh promyshlennikov* (No. 861).

These records, statistics, atlases, and descriptions, often compiled by gentlemen of leisure, paralleled or prefigured more professional studies of icons, church architecture, dress, and textiles that flourished at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nurtured by the art retreat of Abramtsevo (No. 589), Russia's Neo-Nationalists gave special attention to the indigenous crafts, prompting a flurry of activities on the part of collectors, critics, and artists that resulted in important studies of architecture, fabrics, woodwork, and oral literature. To this day, the appreciations and analyses of, for example, wood carving by Aleksei Bobrinskii (No. 97), icons by Nikodim Kondakov, Nikolai Likhachev, and Aleksandr Uspenskii (Nos. 388, 433, 820), architectural monuments by Georgii Lukomskii (Nos. 446-447), and antiquities by Aleksei Uvarov (Nos. 825-827) constitute a major repertoire not only for the general history and historiography of Russian art, but also for the study of iconographic sources for modern Russian artists such as Boris Kustodiev (No. 859), Nicholas Roerich, and Viktor Vasnetsov (No. 836). Such publications were often supported by imperial or aristocratic patronage or resulted from imperial expeditions, for example, to Central Asia (No. 206), and prompted open debate in the form of annual archaeological conventions (Nos. 41-43) and the establishment of professional organizations such as the Imperial Archaeological Institute. In turn, these efforts did much to break new ground in the assessment and appreciation of traditional Russian art such as the pioneering exhibition of Russian icons that the Imperial Archaeological Institute arranged in 1913 in Moscow (No. 336) or the highly instructive issues of the *Ezhgodnik obshchestva arkhitektorov khudozhnikov* (No. 216). That modern Russian art owed much of its identity to the remote past, or, rather, to the past as interpreted and described by enthusiasts, is proven by the fact that professional Russian artists and architects, from Il'ia Repin to Konstantin Ton, often studied and paraphrased these sources in their own paintings and designs (Nos. 641, 811).

* Only a very small sampling of the Slavic and East European Collections' vast holdings of Russian and East European photographs, photograph albums, and photomechanical materials are listed in the present checklist. This body of photographic material will be the subject of a future publication.

True, not all artists and architects were charmed by domestic traditions; many, on the contrary, looked to Western styles such as Neo-Classicism and the Baroque for inspiration. Painters such as Aleksandr Ivanov (No. 351) and Dmitrii Levitsky (No. 429) or architects such as Auguste Ricard de Montferrand (No. 487) and Giacomo Quarenghi (No. 630), for example, were closer in spirit to French, German, and Italian conventions than to Russian traditions. Be that as it may, the study and interpretation of Russian antiquity persisted at least until the October Revolution with, for example, studies of the iconostasis by the Society of Architects and Artists (No. 529), new ecclesiastical and imperial designs and appreciations by Sergei Vashkov (Nos. 431, 834), and initiatives promoting the decorative revival such as Sergei Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*—captured so elegantly in Maurice Brunoff's *Collection des plus beaux numéros de Comoedia illustré et des programmes consacrés aux Ballets & Galas russes, depuis le début à Paris, 1909-1921* (No. 125).

Certainly, during the Soviet period the orientation changed, as state artists and architects came to recognize very different genres and styles—from the cool geometries of Richard Joseph Neutra (No. 518) and El Lissitzky (No. 435) to the Italian Renaissance reflected in many of Stalin's "wedding-cakes," such as the Palace of the Soviets (No. 192). The radical and inexorable shift away from the notion of art as an aesthetic enhancement to the notion of art as a political monument is well documented by the Soviet propaganda journals and albums of the 1920s and 1930s such as *Krasnaia niva*, *Krasnaia panorama*, *USSR in Construction*, and *Ot Moskvyy kupecheskoi k Moskve sotsialisticheskoi* (Nos. 409, 410, 824, 557). To some extent, the Russian émigrés in Berlin, Paris, and New York maintained the more traditional values of art appreciation and criticism, looking back to the Golden and Silver Ages of Russian culture, as is clear from their monographs and especially their periodicals, for instance *Illiustrirovannaia Rossiia* and *Zhar-ptitsa* (Nos. 329 and 882).

Among the many strengths of the Slavic and East European Collections, the often grandiose editions of the second-half of the nineteenth century deserve special attention, the more so since, at least in academic circles, this kind of publication was long neglected as being "historicist" and "eclectic." Those terms may still apply, but it is clear that from the mid-nineteenth century onward, the Russian book witnessed a renaissance in form, content, and design. A great deal about the diversity of authors, topics, and critical analyses, and also about technological advances in the printing industry such as the fast rotary press and chromolithography, can be seen in editions ranging from Vasilii Timm's *Russkii khudozhestvennyi listok* of 1851-1862 and Petr Petrov's *Al'bom 200-letniago iubileia Petra Velikago* of 1872, to the *Al'bom Moskovskoi Pushkinskoi vystavki 1880 goda* of 1887 (Nos. 803, 578, 9). Talented illustrators and writers such as Elizaveta Bem (No. 76), Petr Boklevskii (No. 104), and Nikolai Karazin (Nos. 368, 369) gave particular attention to the fairy tale, the caricature, and the adventure story, thereby building a foundation for the more exquisite editions of the Silver Age such as Ivan Bilibin's *Volga* (No. 860) and Aleksandr Benua's *Miednyi vsadnik* (No. 628).

The substantial representation of later nineteenth-century illustrated editions in the Slavic and East European Collections demonstrates, inter alia, that the more celebrated and luxurious journals of the Silver Age—such as *Apollon*, *Iskusstvo i pechatnoe delo*, *Khudozhestvennyiia sokrovishcha Rossii*, *Mir iskusstva*, *Stolitsa i usad'ba*, and *Zolotoe runo* (Nos. 36, 339, 380, 484, 773, 894)—were not born into a vacuum, but drew immediately upon precedents such as *Russkii khudozhestvennyi listok* and *Strekoza* (No. 774). Moreover, these earlier, lighter magazines for family reading also served as a vital precedent to the upsurge of the radical caricature journals generated by the 1905 revolution such as *Gudok*, *Kramola*, *Puli*, and *Striel'y* (Nos. 306, 407, 626, 775).

The high standards of Russian printing and publishing at the beginning of the twentieth century, represented, for example, by the house of Golike and Vil'borg, the Department for the Preparation of State Papers in St. Petersburg, or Musaget in Moscow, drew upon these innovations to produce masterpieces of typography such as *Kavkazskiiia mineral'nyia vody* (No. 373), Evgenii Nikolaev's *Istoriia 50-go piekhotnago Bielostokskago Ego Vysochestva Gertsoga Saksen Al'tenburgskago polka* (No. 521), and Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich's *Russkie portrety XVIII i XIX stolietii* (No. 523). Their filigrees, elaborate title-pages, head and tail pieces, capitals, customized covers, and jackets, seen in such sumptuous editions as the Hermitage's *Voennaia gallereia 1812 goda* (No. 857) and Suslov's *Pamiatniki drevniago russkago zodchestva* (No. 864), are compelling evidence of the remarkable level of typesetting, binding, design, and illustration in pre-Revolutionary Russia, culminating in bibliophilic masterpieces which, in themselves, have become an organic part of the history of Russian visual, literary, and material culture.

The art of the book received the unprecedented attention not only of authors, printers, and bibliophiles, but also of professional critics and theorists, a concern lasting well into Soviet times. During

the Silver Age, in particular, new concepts and definitions of the book were elaborated by outstanding specialists such as Pavel Ettinger, Erik Gollerbakh, Aleksei Sidorov, and Vasiliï A. Vereshchagin. Simultaneously, artists such as Yurii Annenkov, Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, and Konstantin Somov offered new and often provocative interpretations of book design, of the act of reading, and of the correlations between the spoken, the written, and the printed word (Nos. 93, 179, 267, 525, 754, 755, 841).

The history of Russian art is as much a history of absence as of presence. Russian artifacts, like people (No. 258), have been the heroes and the victims—repeatedly—of redeployment and ideological imposition, if not of criminal neglect and outright destruction, and not only during times of war and revolution. That is why travelogues and atlases can be especially useful as historical records, and, once again, the Library is fortunate to possess a major collection of accounts by foreign visitors to Russia from the eighteenth century onward. They include Rudolph Ackermann's *Historical Sketch of Moscow* of 1813 (No. 4), Prince Anatolii Demidov's *Album de voyage pittoresque et archéologique en Russie and Voyage dans la Russie méridionale et la Crimée par la Hongrie, la Valachie et la Moldavie* (No. 171), and Gustave Doré's *Histoire pittoresque dramatique et caricaturale de la Sainte Russie d'après les chroniques et historiens Nestor, Sylvestre, Karamsin, Ségur, etc.* of 1854 (No. 184).

For the early British, French, and Italian traveler, "Russia" denoted a land mass embracing many exotic lands, including the Crimea and Siberia, not to mention Poland and Ukraine. Intrepid explorers—such as Nicolas-Gabriel Clerc (No. 154) and John August Atkinson, with his three-volume "picturesque representation" (No. 50)—observed and described costumes and rituals, rivers and landscapes, huts and palaces, and flora and fauna, including geese and horses (cf. Nos. 381, 560, 22, 23, 309). These keen observers, foreign and domestic, often illustrated their records and atlases with charming, if not always accurate, renderings of types and customs, as was the case with Prince Grigorii Gagarin's Romantic scenes of the Caucasus (No. 237).

The rich collection of albums and folios of archaeological, architectural, industrial, and ethnographic photographs included in the Slavic and East European Collections is an extension of this energetic inquiry to identify and register the national achievements of Mother Russia. Among the more salient photomechanical digests in the checklist are the anonymous *Al'bom snimkov s pamiatnikov stariny v Kostrome*, *Al'bom snimkov s Tsarskikh gramot: prinadlezhashchikh Imperatorskomu S.-Peterburgskomu Arkheologicheskomu Institutu*, Osip Bodianskii's remarkably early (1855) *Snimki k sochineniiu o vremeni proiskhozhdeniia slavianskikh pismen*, and Mikhail Preobrazhenskii's *Revel'skii Pravoslavnyi Aleksandro-Nevskii sobor* (Nos. 14, 15, 101, 616). In many cases, the original manuscript or document no longer exists, is damaged, or has changed out of recognition, making these vintage prints especially valuable.

Antique exhibition catalogs and museum guides also help to restore historical continuity through their listings of works, provenance indices, and reproductions. The "Historical Exhibition of Objects of Art" in St. Petersburg in 1904 (No. 612), the "Historical Exhibition of Architecture" in St. Petersburg in 1911 (No. 530), and the "1812 Exhibition" in Moscow in 1912 (No. 121), for example, generated detailed catalogs and commentaries with full curatorial data that are still excellent reference works. Similarly, the descriptions of the various departments of the Hermitage are also useful in this respect, especially the early *Antiquités du Bosphore Cimmérien* and *Dessins originaux du musée de l'Érmitage impérial* (Nos. 284-289). Museum catalogs produced during the early Soviet period are perhaps more important as documents of fundamental changes in the discipline of museology than as data banks. This is clear from the didactic texts and illustrations in *Muzei novogo zapadnogo iskusstva* (Nos. 292, 293) and *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v kartinakh* (No. 506).

In many ways, The New York Public Library is also a hermitage, preserving and conserving in its Slavic and East European Collections priceless artifacts for future generations. Library staff mount exhibitions, publish catalogs, organize symposia, offer expertise, and continue to build these superb collections with rigor and discretion, independent of political pressure or intellectual whim. Not only are these collections a museum of Russian culture; they are also a monument to institutional commitment, professional dedication, and public engagement.

John E. Bowl