



THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE SIBERIA AND THE EAST

KANDINSKY MALEVICH FILONOV GONCHAROVA

FLORENCE, PALAZZO STROZZI
27 SEPTEMBER 2013-19 JANUARY 2014

PROMOTED AND ORGANISED BY FONDAZIONE PALAZZO STROZZI - MINISTERO PER I BENI E LE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI
SOPRINTENDENZA PSAE E PER IL POLO MUSEALE DELLA CITTÀ DI FIRENZE - STATE RUSSIAN MUSEUM IN ST. PETERSBURG
STATE TRET'YAKOV GALLERY IN MOSCOW - WITH COMUNE DI FIRENZE - PROVINCIA DI FIRENZE - CAMERA DI COMMERCIO
DI FIRENZE - ASSOCIAZIONE PARTNERS PALAZZO STROZZI - AND REGIONE TOSCANA

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The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East 27 September 2013 to 19 January 2014

Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, will present *The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East*, the first international exhibition to examine the fundamental importance of the Oriental and Eurasian connection to Russian Modernism. The exhibition follows the destinies of Russia's self-proclaimed "Barbarians" in their search for new sources of artistic inspiration. Neolithic stone figures, Siberian shaman rituals, popular Chinese prints, Japanese engravings, Theosophical doctrine and Indian philosophy are just some of the elements which inspired Russia's new artists and writers as they developed their aesthetic and theoretical ideas just before and after the Revolution of October 1917. *The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East* demonstrates how modern Russian culture experienced a deep attraction to – and an apprehension of – the exotic, the unknown and the "Other", which artists and writers identified with the spirit of the taiga, the virgin territories of desert and steppe and the "otherness" of Oriental culture.

Emphasising the key role which radical Russian artists played in the development of Modern art over a century ago, this exhibition underscores their complex relationship with the Orient, both the Russian East and the Far East. Léon Bakst, Alexandre Benois, Pavel Filonov, Natal'ia Goncharova, Wassily Kandinsky, Mikhail Larionov, Kazimir Malevich and other prime movers of the Avant-garde were deeply aware of the importance of the East and contributed to the rich debate – West or East? – which left a profound and permanent imprint on their creative imagination. In addition to the heroes of the Russian Avant-garde, this exhibition will also acquaint the visitor with other, less familiar but strikingly original, artists of the day such as Nikolai Kalmakov, Sergei Konenkov and Vasilii Vatagin, many of whose works are being shown in the West for the first time.

The Russian Avant-garde

The Russian Avant-garde was characterised by bold experiment and innovation, culminating in such works as Kandinsky's *Improvisations* and Malevich's *Black Square*, which have long been recognised as central to the history of 20th-century European art. *The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East* argues that the "Russian" Avant-garde was not only Russian or even European, but was inspired by other traditions, notably those of the Orient. Bakst and Malevich, for example, were at the forefront of this cultural trajectory, the former with his costumes and sets for the Ballets Russes, paying homage to Shiva sculptures, Buddhist temples and Siamese costumes, the latter with abstract paintings informed by the Buddhist concept of nirvana. Kandinsky, Larionov and Vatagin studied shamanistic and Hindu rituals, referring to them in their paintings or sculptures; Goncharova, Konchalovsky and Mashkov reproduced Chinese and Japanese broadsheets in their still lifes; Theosophy, elaborated by Helena Blavatsky after her exposure to Indian philosophy, was an important influence on Russian painters, sculptors and writers of the time.

In recognising the importance of Eastern culture to Russian studio painting, sculpture and design a century ago, *The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East* complements preceding exhibitions which have focused on Russia's artistic debt to Western Europe or on influences from the vernacular legacy such as Russian icon painting and peasant artefacts. The exhibition invites the viewer to approach Russia's innovative movements, from Symbolism to Cubo-Futurism and from Suprematism to Constructivism, not as extensions of Paris and Milan or as paraphrases of indigenous culture but as genuine tributes to the East – the Middle East, Siberia, China, Tibet, Japan and India. Goncharova exclaimed in 1913: "We belong to Asia", and Georgii Yakulov called for an "Oriental Renaissance", while artists of the Revolution, eager to fuse West and East within the cradle of a new Russian civilisation, even spoke of the need for an "Oriental Constructivism".

The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East is curated by John E. Bowlt (University of Southern California, Los Angeles, USA), Nicoletta Misler (Università di Napoli "l'Orientale", Italy) and Evgenia Petrova (State Russian Museum, St Petersburg, Russia) with the assistance of a team of international advisors. One of the goals of the

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exhibition is to recreate the “other” atmosphere in which artists such as Kandinsky, Konev and Malevich developed their own visual systems, organised their exhibitions and interpreted the rich and diverse cultures of the

Orient. The installation will also reflect the mood of the Russian Avant-garde, and will be accompanied by an extensive interpretative programme for all ages.

Principal Sources of Inspiration

During the 19th century the vastness of the Russian empire had been explored by numerous state and private expeditions to gather anthropological and ethnographical material. A consequence of these expeditions was the rapid expansion of museum collections in St Petersburg and Moscow through the accession of significant objects such as Mongol and Buryat *thangkas*, sculpture and other works from the Far East, as well as physical testimonies to shamanism and the rituals of the various ethnic Russian groups. The great Russian explorers of the day travelled as far afield as Australia, North America and the Pacific Ocean in their search although, for political reasons, many of the Imperial geographical and ethnographical expeditions concentrated on the Near and Far East. The culmination of these expeditions to the Orient, which began in the 18th century, was the 1890-1 whirlwind tour of Tsar Nicholas to India, Ceylon, Java, Japan and China. The diplomatic success of this mission is signalled by the huge collection of souvenirs and gifts which were transferred to a number of Russian museums including the Hermitage, the Kunstkammer and the Russian Ethnographical Museum. The Tsar’s journey back to St. Petersburg took him through the interior territories, acquainting him with indigenous peoples and exposing him to the vastness of the Russian state. It is precisely at this moment that the relevance of the Orient to the Russian people and to the Western or Eastern destiny of Russia became an important debate.

The 1890s also witnessed a growing awareness of Russia’s ambiguous position between West and East, illustrated by the substantial number of relevant exhibitions, publications and political events. In 1897, for example, the St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts hosted the first Russian exhibition of Japanese art, which was overshadowed by the misfortunes of the Russo-Japanese War seven years later. In 1900 the troupe of the Royal Siamese ballet danced in St. Petersburg, enjoying acclaim from artists and writers, and in 1902 the Imperial Buddhist collection was exhibited in the Russian Academy of Sciences. Between 1888 and 1919 both Moscow and St. Petersburg saw major exhibitions of Buddhist objects.

The Burlin brothers, Filonov and Konev, amongst many others, were well aware of these collections and exhibitions, studied them and imported images and motifs – often highly eclectically – into their paintings and sculptures. The objects from these ethnographical collections have rarely left Russia and this exhibition will be a unique opportunity to see some of the treasures which the Russian expeditions amassed together with the masterpieces of the Avant-garde they inspired.

Content

The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East comprises 130 works: 79 paintings, watercolours and drawings 15 sculptures, 36 Oriental artefacts and ethnographical objects from the period 1890 to 1930, including works by Bakst, Benois, David and Vladimir Burlin, Filonov, Goncharova, Vera Khlebnikova, Yakulov, Kandinsky, Petr Konchalovsky, Konev, Larionov, Malevich, Il’ia Mashkov, Mikhail Matiushin, Nicholas Roerich, Olga Rozanova, Martiros Sarian, Innokentii Suvorov, Vladimir Tatlin, Vatagin and Aleksandr Volkov. The works are loaned by the State Russian Museum, the State Ethnographical Museum and the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg; and the State Tretyakov Gallery and the State Museum of the Peoples of the East in Moscow as well as regional museums in the Russian Federation.

The ethnographical items and specimens of Oriental art will be displayed in much the same way in which the Avant-garde artists would have seen them, as *bric-à-brac* or a curiosity shop, the objects grouped in vitrines, subdivided according to the taxonomic idiosyncracies of their original custodians and accompanied by original documentary photographs and other scientific data from the celebrated expeditions of the time. For example, Hokusai engravings will be displayed alongside Chinese statues of Buddha next to the instruments used in shamanistic rituals.

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Accompanying these antiquities and relics are the Avant-garde pictures and sculptures inspired by this “pagan” legacy, by the voices of the forest, by the silence of the glaciers of the north and by the inexpressible infinity of the steppe. Visitors to the exhibition will discover these connections as vital, albeit “alien”, sources of inspiration. The overriding goal of the curators is to demonstrate how Russian artists studied, assessed and paraphrased Oriental and Eurasian cultures.

The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East uses the elegant spaces of the Palazzo Strozzi to re-conceptualise modern Russian art, bringing together objects which, while drawing upon the East, convey the energy of the Avant-garde: Benois’ drawings for the costumes in Stravinsky’s *Le Rossignol* (1914) next to coloured Japanese prints; Bakst’s costumes for *Les Orientales* (1910) alongside Indian, Persian and Chinese textiles; Kononov’s, Matiushin’s and Suvorov’s wooden figures next to shamanistic installations; Yakulov’s evocations of “Asiatic” perspective; Roerich’s primordial landscapes next to petroglyphs; Anisfeld’s paintings of Buddhas, Malevich’s Suprematism beside nirvanic elements; Kandinsky’s *White Oval* next to Theosophical forms; Filonov’s people and beasts alongside shamanistic animal spirits next to Rozanova’s thematic drawings. These are just some of the bold artistic confrontations that the visitor will encounter. The resulting vigorous interactions between works of art and physical objects will enable the visitor to appreciate the “alternative” dimension of the Avant-garde as well as the mixed emotions of unease and physical attraction which the artists experienced when confronting the “Other”.

Sequence

The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East, divided into 11 sections, begins with an authentic *kamennaia baba* (stone maiden), examples of which used to dot the landscape of Imperial Russia between Siberia and the Far East as if to usher the visitor into a rite of Siberian and Oriental passage towards the Russian Avant-garde. Facing this are the three most important paintings in the exhibition: Goncharova’s *Emptiness*, Kandinsky’s *Black Spot* and Malevich’s *Black Circle*, all symbols of the worldview nurturing Oriental and shamanistic cultures. Subsequent sections of the exhibition present objects from the great anthropological collections of St. Petersburg and Moscow, surrounded by the paintings they inspired. Near the centre of the exhibition is a section showing major works by the Avant-garde artists together with precious Oriental and ethnographical artefacts. Coming full circle, the exhibition concludes with a single wooden statue by Kononov which, with its enigmatic gesture of the raised hand, reminds us that “absence” or “zero” is the origin of everything.

Note

Russian names have been transliterated in accordance with the Library of Congress system, the soft sign being rendered by an apostrophe. When a name variant has long been established and recognized, this has been retained (e.g., Alexandre Benois, not Aleksandr Benua). Dates referring to events in Russia before January 1918 are in the Old Style. Consequently, if they are in the nineteenth century, then they are twelve days behind the Western calendar, whereas if they are between 1900 and 1918 they are thirteen days behind.

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FACT SHEET

- Exhibition:** *The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East. Kandinsky, Malevich, Filonov, Goncharova*
- Dates:** 27 September 2013 to 19 January 2014
- Location:** Palazzo Strozzi, Piazza Strozzi, 50123 Florence, Italy
Tel. +39 055 264 5155, www.palazzostrozzi.org
- Promoted and organised by:** Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Soprintendenza PSAE e per il Polo Museale della città di Firenze, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; with the Province of Florence, the City of Florence, the Florentine Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Private Partners of the Palazzo Strozzi and Regione Toscana; under the patronage of Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Russian Embassy in Italy.
- Main Sponsor:** Banca CR Firenze
- Sponsor:** Irkutsk Oil
- Curators:** The exhibition is curated by John E. Bowlt (University of Southern California, Los Angeles, USA), Nicoletta Misler (Università di Napoli "l'Orientale", Italy) and Evgenia Petrova (State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia).
- Catalogue:** The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue containing essays by an international team of art historians and ethnographers and a substantial documentary section. The catalogue will be published by Skira editore (Milan) in Italian, English and Russian.
- Opening hours:** Daily 09.00 to 20.00, Thursday 09.00 to 23.00. Last admission one hour before closing
- Admission:** Adult: €10.00; concessions: €8.50, €8.00, €7.50, schools: €4.00. Combined ticket with *Unstable Territory. Borders and identity in contemporary art*. Adult €12,50; concessions €10,00; € 5.00 groups and university students; Family ticket € 20,00; Palazzo Strozzi season ticket € 20,00
Free caption booklets in French, Russian and Chinese available on request.
- Booking:** Sigma CSC, Tel. +39 055 246 9600, Fax. +39 055 244 145 prenotazioni@cscsigma.it
- Café:** The café is open daily from 09.00 to 20.00, Thursdays 09.00 to 23.00
- How to get there:** By plane: Florence Airport www.aeroporto.firenze.it Tel. +39 055 306 1700
By car: From north (Milan) A1 Bologna, Firenze, Firenze Nord exit, follow directions for city.
From south (Rome) A1 Roma, Milano, Firenze Sud exit, follow directions for city
By train: Nearest stations are Stazione di Santa Maria Novella, Piazza del Duomo, Via Tornabuoni
- Access:** Lifts and wheelchair access to all areas

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PHOTOSHEET

1.03	Aleksei Stepanov (Simferopol' 1858–Moscow 1923), <i>Wolves by Night</i> , 1912, oil on canvas; 65 x 98 cm. St. Petersburg, Scientific Research Museum of the Russian Academy of Arts, Isaak Brodsky Museum, inv. MBr Zh-1356	
1.05	Kazimir Malevich (near Kiev 1879–Leningrad 1935), <i>Black Circle</i> , 1915, oil on canvas; 102 x 102 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-9472	
Section 2 Exotic sources: from Greece to Siam		
2.04	Léon Bakst (Lev Rozenberg; Grodno 1866–Paris 1924), <i>Siamese Sacred Dance</i> , 1901, oil on canvas; 73.2 x 109.5 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. 6098	
Section 3 Enchanted by the Orient		
3.03	Boris Anisfel'd (Bel'tsy, Bessarabia 1879–Waterford 1973), <i>Stage Design for Miliï Balakirev's Ballet "Islamey"</i> , 1911, watercolour, gouache, tempera, bronze, varnish on paper on canvas, 69.5 x 79 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. R-14976	
3.04	Anonymous engraver, India, Calcutta, <i>Krishna and Gopi</i> , 1880–90, coloured lithograph on paper; 237 x 194 mm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. 87278	
3.09	Master Arufbek. Iran, <i>Kalamkar. Shah Izmail out Hunting</i> , 19 th century, printed and hand decoration on cotton fabric; 331 x 154 cm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. MSO 1760 II	
3.10	Il'ia Mashkov (Mikhailovskoe 1881–Abramtsevo 1944), <i>Portrait of a Lady in an Armchair</i> , 1913, oil on canvas; 177 x 115 cm. Ekaterinburg, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 370	

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3.11	Il'ia Mashkov (Mikhailovskoe 1881–Abramtsevo 1944), <i>Still Life</i> , 1911–12, oil on canvas; 100 x 127 cm. Saratov, State Radishchev Museum of Art, inv. 1030	
Section 4a The Far East: Japan, beloved enemy		
4a.01	Vasilii Vereshchagin (Cherepovets 1842–Port Arthur 1904), <i>Boat Ride</i> , 1903, oil on canvas; 70 x 103 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-1470	
Section 4b The Far East. Chinoiserie		
4b.04	Anonymous. China, Sichuan Province, <i>Men-shen (Spirit Defender of the Doors)</i> , late 19 th –early 20 th century, coloured xylograph, ink, whitening on coloured and tinted paper; 495 x 280 mm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. 86910	
Section 5 Oriental prints and the Avant-garde		
5.03	Anonymous, China, <i>Boy with Dragon and Carp</i> , early 19 th century, Yangliuqing, Wanqinghe Typography, coloured xylograph with colours added by hand; 580 x 1020 mm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. I 4438	
5.08	Utagawa Kunisada (Honjo 1786–1865), <i>Japanese Actor with a Sword</i> , coloured xylograph; 368 x 253 mm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Vsp 77 11057-4	
Section 6 East or West?		
6.01	Pavel Filonov (Moscow 1883–Leningrad 1941), <i>East and West</i> , 1912–13, oil, tempera, gouache on paper; 39.5 x 46 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-9581	

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6.02	Pavel Filonov (Moscow 1883–Leningrad 1941), <i>West and East</i> , 1912–13 oil, tempera, gouache on paper; 38.5 x 42 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-9582	
Colours and spaces of the Eurasian steppes		
6.13	Pavel Kuznetsov (Saratov 1878–Moscow 1968), <i>Rain in the Steppe</i> , 1912, tempera, graphite pencil, gouache on board; 52 x 70.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. ZhB-1174	
6.14	Aleksandr Nikolaev (Voronezh 1897–Tashkent 1957), <i>The Bridegroom</i> , 1920, tempera on paper on wood; 30 x 26.5 cm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. 5791 III	
Section 7 Kamennye baby. Custodians of space		
7.01	Polovets People <i>Kamennaia baba</i> , 10 th –13 th century, stone; 164 x 51 x 33 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 13031-1	
Section 8 Effigies of wisdom. Emissaries of the cosmos		
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THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE SIBERIA AND THE EAST

KANDINSKY MALEVICH FILONOV GONCHAROVA

FLORENCE, PALAZZO STROZZI
27 SEPTEMBER 2013-19 JANUARY 2014

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EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH

Introduction

Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the individual was all but swallowed up in the vastness of the Russian Empire. The non-civilised world began on his doorstep, but in the melting pot of Eurasia, in the broad variety ethnic groups (Scythians, Huns, Mongols, Inuit) the seeds of extremely ancient – Chinese, Indian and Tibetan – cultures mingled with the primitive rituals of initiation, ecstasy and the loss of self taught by the shamans of the northern peoples.

The wolf, the sacred animal of shamanism, and the hyena, whose blue shadow reflects the light of the steppe, symbolise the fear and the dream of the Russian Empire's inhabitants which this exhibition sets out to capture. A *kamennaia baba*, a primitive megalith countless numbers of which were scattered throughout the vast empire, is the guardian of this uneasiness, while Natalia Goncharova with her *Emptiness*, Malevich with his *Black Circle* and Kandinsky with his *Black Spot* unwittingly forge its modern expression.

Section 2

EXOTIC SOURCES: FROM GREECE TO SIAM

Nicholas II, future Czar of all the Russias, set out from Trieste on 26 October 1890 on a voyage that was intended to bolster relations with the people on the Empire's eastern border. The Crown Prince's itinerary took him first to Greece, a country seen not as the cradle of Classical civilisation but rather as a land overflowing with local colour and imbued with a murky archaic and primal atmosphere. Reaching Vladivostok in May 1891, he then took two months to make the return journey to St. Petersburg overland across the sweeping plains of Siberia. The journey was also a voyage of initiation for the twenty-two year old Nicholas and it helped to popularise knowledge of such exotic lands as India, Ceylon, Java, Siam, Japan and China in Russia, forging the future Czar's contacts with the unexplored territory and the "minor" and "primitive" peoples of Siberia. The exhibition follows his journey, though metaphorically rather than geographically, interpreting it as a metaphor of East-West and West-East circularity

EXCHANGING GIFTS

The Crown Prince exchanged gifts with the local authorities at every stage of his journey, and the gifts he received were later to be displayed in an exhibition at the Hermitage Museum, which opened in 1893. The exhibits included the extremely precious silver *Tara* on display here. The most valuable of these gifts are still housed in the Hermitage, while the items of purely ethnographic interest were moved to the Anthropological and Ethnographical Museum in St. Petersburg. Other important works of oriental art were given to the Hermitage by Prince Esper Ukhtomsky, who accompanied the young prince on his journey. A passionate collector of Buddhist art, Ukhtomsky shared artists' and scholars' interest in Theosophy, which was extremely fashionable in St. Petersburg circles.

Section 3

ENCHANTED BY THE ORIENT

The first Buddhist temple (or *datsan*, a temple/monastery) of the Tibetan "Yellow Hat" sect, a branch of Buddhism with houses in Tibet, Mongolia, Siberia and elsewhere in the empire, was opened in St. Petersburg in 1913. Tibetan Buddhism began to creep into Russia in the 16th century, although worship was only officially authorised in 1741. The temple, completed in an eclectic Art Nouveau and Tibetan style with decorations by Nikolai Roerich in 1915, met the needs of St. Petersburg's central Asian population who had adopted Buddhism as their official religion, and at the same time it responded to the attraction Buddhism held for aristocratic circles in St. Petersburg, thanks also to "Tibetan doctor" Petr Badmaev who was close to Czar Alexander III and later to Nicholas II. Photographs of Nicholas II and Crown Prince Aleksei at the altar of the as yet unfinished temple under the Russia and Buriat flags testify to the imperial family's tolerance of its Buddhists, especially the Kalmyks and the Buriats.

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Section 4a

THE FAR EAST. JAPAN, BELOVED ENEMY

Japanese prints prompted the post-impressionist artists in the *World of Art* (Mir iskusstva) group, men such as Alexandre Benois and Ivan Bilibin, to modify their concept of space, their choice of colours and their viewpoint in the same way as they had done for their European counterparts, paving the way initially for the Modern Style and, as a consequence, the formal revolution of the Avant-garde. This heightened interest in Japanese culture just as the storm clouds were gathering which were to lead to the tragedy of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 might be explained by the frequent lure of enemy culture in a love-hate relationship between the two belligerent powers.

4b

THE FAR EAST. CHINOISERIE

Russia already shared the European countries' passion for *chinoiserie* during Catherine II's reign in the 18th century but this eclecticism, in its decorative and architectural expressions, was the result of an adaptation to Western aristocratic tastes – a legacy which Sergei Diaghilev revived for his Paris audiences as a new genre of visual entertainment through the exotic performances of the Ballets Russes, for whom Alexandre Benois created the “Chinese” costumes for Igor Stravinsky's opera *Le Rossignol* in 1914. As Benois tells us: “I initially thought of maintaining the *chinoiserie* styles that were so popular in the 18th century. But as work progressed, I became increasingly irritated by their obvious absurdity and my enthusiasm for things genuinely Chinese began to shine through in my designs. Chinese popular prints provided invaluable material for the costumes.”

4c

THE FAR EAST. CHINA: EMPIRE OF SIGNS

Russian artists' fascination with the connection between signs and images, between poetic and visual content, began with the Symbolists and the Cubo-Futurists. The interval between the *fin de siècle* and Avant-garde approaches to oriental art, one of the crucial themes of this exhibition, might be called emblematic in this instance, as we can see from the way in which the Avant-garde overturned the rather affected and outmoded elegance of *chinoiserie*, as in Natalia Goncharova's painting of the same name, in an attempt to capture the intrinsic value of the calligraphic sign as a visual mark in Chinese art.

Section 5

ORIENTAL PRINTS AND THE AVANT-GARDE

David Burliuk, Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov collected popular prints of all kinds from all countries, but a large part of their collections was devoted to oriental prints. Their fellow artist Nikolai Vinogradov organised the “First *Lubki* Exhibition” in Moscow in February 1913. The following month Larionov held an “Exhibition of Models for Icons and *Lubki*”, which Goncharova described in the catalogue as works that “did not copy or enhance nature, they recreated it.”

Avant-garde artists saw the print-based motifs which they introduced into their pictures not only as occasioning a change of scenery in their narrative but also as tool for modelling painted space. The Chinese prints in Goncharova's *Still Life* or in Konchalovsky's *Family Portrait with Chinese Print* are deliberately out of proportion, bringing the background into the foreground and creating an unsettling perception of the alternation between true and false in a fictitious imitation of Chinese and Japanese figurative space.

Section 6

EAST OR WEST?

As it expanded eastwards, Russia always found it difficult to consider Asia and the East as “totally alien”. It encountered numerous orientals in its path, starting with the (Turkish, then Caucasian) Islamic orient, followed by the Mongol Buddhist orient and the Christian Caucasian orient. The presence of Asian (especially Turkish and Muslim) minorities within its borders coupled with its proximity to very different societies such as Turkey, Persia and China, gradually led to the development of expressions of self-representation that were to culminate in the creation of the geographical and political concept of Eurasia, which saw Russia as an independent continental area stretching from the

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THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE SIBERIA AND THE EAST

KANDINSKY MALEVICH FILONOV GONCHAROVA

FLORENCE, PALAZZO STROZZI
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Carpathians to the Pacific, a huge plain centring on the steppes, whose nomadic peoples, the heirs to Genghis Khan, had made such a significant ethnic and cultural contribution to Russia.

Section 7

THE KAMENNYE BABY. CUSTODIANS OF SPACE

The Avant-garde artists, like so many Russian intellectuals in the early 20th century, were fascinated by the ancient image of the so-called *kamennye baby* (literally “stone women”) rooted in the steppes of the Russian Empire, a petrified presence of archaic and immortal forms of worship. These statues, which stood guard at the entrance to burial mounds, were erroneously interpreted as female and held to embody (presumed) fertility. Varying in size, shape and position, the *kamennye baby* were also to be found in private collections such as the garden of the artists’ colony in Abramtsevo and the farm at Chernyanka, both of which were visited by numerous Avant-garde artists. Turning her back on the West in her essay on *Cubism* in 1912, Goncharova argued that the *kamennye baby* (together with the wooden toys sold at fairs and with the *lubki*) were one of the primitive sources to which the “New Barbarians” of her generation should turn for inspiration in their search for new plastic forms alternative to Cubism.

Section 8

EFFIGIES OF WISDOM. EMISSARIES OF THE COSMOS

According to animistic tradition, the spirits of the Russian steppes, forests and mountains communicate with spiritual intermediaries such as shamans, witches and warlocks who recognise them in the clouds, in the waters, in trees and in stones. These spirits take on bodily form in natural phenomena – a presence that is the common denominator in Choros-Gurkin’s *Lake of the Spirits of the Mountains* and Igor Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps* of 1913. Beside a tree or a sacred stone, the ritual unfolds under the guidance of the “wise old men”, or intermediaries who possess real wisdom. Writing in 1931, Roerich tells us: “There are entities in the Cosmos that know more than we do, but few people can grasp the wonderful significance of living thought in space. For those few people, however, thought in space becomes the Voice of Silence.” Filonov, a “voice crying out in the wilderness” in St. Petersburg, also evokes the voice of the silence of nature and of the Cosmos in his work.

Section 9

GESTURES AND RITUALS

The absorption of ancient oriental cultures in the heart of the empire also involved the revisitation of older rituals and gestures. Ecstatic dancing to drums before a hunt was a crucial element in the ritual of the Ostyaks and the Samoeds, who collected the skulls of the slain animals as an object of veneration after the hunt. Ethnographers and explorers published visual material to illustrate these rituals and the objects used in them, inevitably arousing the interest of early 20th century artists fascinated by the primitive and the oriental – although adopting a New Age approach *avant la lettre*, they often saw the ecstatic ritual as a variant on oriental practices designed to achieve altered states of consciousness. In shamanic drawings, space is divided up into sections corresponding to the three worlds of the shamanic Cosmos. Space is divided into three sections also in Larionov’s *Seasons*, though in his case the division is imbued with irony. Similar formal affinities can be found in the simplification and the hieratic posture of his figures and in his almost hieroglyphic script.

Section 10

THE PRESENCE OF THE FOREST

Artist and critic Vladimir Markov (born Voldemars Matvejs, 1877–1914), a member of the St. Peterburg Youth Union and a contemporary of Filonov, Malevich, Matiushin and Olga Rozanova, was the first art historian in Europe to study African and Oceanic art. The objects produced by the shamanic peoples of northern Russia, which he photographed in the ethnographic museums in St. Petersburg, proved to be one of the primary sources for his contemporary artists. The context of these idols, which Markov himself ignored, was respected by the ethnographers who first collected them, photographing them in the sites and situations in which they had originally stumbled upon them, frequently in a forest.

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Artists such as Matiushin or the anonymous Chinese sculptor who produced the *Old Man Dancing* met spirits and elves in the forests, like *Stribog (God of the Winds)* by Konenkov or *Leshak (Master of the Wood)* by the poet Velimir Khlebnikov, portrayed by his sister Vera; or else they discerned their shapes in the bark of trees, which they saw as living creatures, or in the unusual silhouettes of trunks and roots.

IDOLS OF WOOD—IDOLS OF TEMPERAMENT

Unlike in the work of Markov, who was interested only in his subjects' formal qualities, one can see in the photographs of such early 20th century ethnographers as Dmitri Klemenc (1848–1914) and Vladimir Jochelson (1855–1937) that the idols and objects which they collected for display in a museum had originally been placed together in ritual groups or units in strategic parts of the taiga by the shaman himself. This arrangement generated psychological and spiritual associations which the more sensitive artists proved capable of perceiving and of communicating. Thus the small idols, each one of which had a very specific function often related to healing (including curing headaches and madness), also began to dialogue with the artists' existential anxiety. Avant-garde artists and poets listened to their incomprehensible language, seeking to assimilate it into a new form of artistic expression

Section 11 SYLVAN SPIRITS

Matiushin's pupil Maria Ender noted that the artist sought to embrace the entire structure of an object and, through "the height of a tree, to understand the form of support of the roots and branches, or through the rotation of the earth and of the clouds on the horizon, to define the shape of the boundary of a wood with a field." Philosopher Pavel Florensky appears to echo this concept in 1923 when he says: "The forest is a quadridimensional form which expresses itself over time, whereas the life experience of a man or even of generations is too fleeting by comparison with the time span of a forest. There remains the mystic contemplation of the forest, but in the symbolic aspect of a given creature, which does not resemble the forest externally but which becomes the forest itself the way a perfume can become the sensation of the whole flower; in other words, our sole option is to see the forest in its instantaneousness, for instance in the image of an elf."

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PALAZZO STROZZI AND THE CITY: Activities beyond the exhibition

The goal of Palazzo Strozzi is to be a catalyst for the city and for the region, and each exhibition allows visitors to see Florence from a new perspective and always differently.

A rich programme of events, lectures, courses and more invites young people and adults to explore art in a stimulating way.

Touchscreen

The touchscreen in the Palazzo Strozzi Courtyard – a permanent feature for every exhibition – allows visitors to discover the places that have marked the presence of the Russian colony in Florence.

Passport

In keeping with what has now become a tradition at Palazzo Strozzi, the exhibition will be accompanied by a passport guiding visitors to places associated with Russia and the Russians in Tuscany, including the organisation of guided tours to sites generally closed to the public. Just as there is a Florence of the English, of the French and of the Germans, so there is also a Florence of the Russians. Maurizio Bossi writes: “in the panorama of foreign colonies in Florence, the presence of the Russians tends to offer a unique fusion between their own never-forgotten and constantly celebrated culture, and the life of the city experienced with a sense of participation in which sentiment plays a substantial role.”

Guided Tours

There will be guided tours of the following:

the Contemporary Archives “A. Bonsanti-Cabinet G.P. Viesussex”; the Primo Conti Foundation in Fiesole; and Visitation of the Nativity and St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church

Conferences and Concerts

Strong cooperation with the International Lyceum Club of Florence has resulted not only in the organisation of three conferences designed to tie in with the exhibition (Francesco Galluzzi will be talking about *Shamanism in Russian Art*, Vincenzo Farinella about *Kandinsky and Primitivism* and Lucia Tonini on the subject of *An Empire Heading East: Czarevich Nikolay Aleksandrovich's Journey in 1890-1 and the New Direction in National Art*) but also in two extremely significant musical evenings:

1913 – The Russian Avant-garde Between the Past and the Future in the Sacre du Printemps, introduction by Eleonora Negri and Lucia Tonini with a performance of Igor Stravinsky's four-hand transcription of his *Le Sacre du Printemps* by the piano duo Antonio Ballista and Massimo Giuseppe Bianchi;

Concert entitled *Preludes to the Avant-garde in Russian Music*, music by Modest Musorgsky, Aleksandr Skryabin and Igor Stravinsky, with Beatrice Muntoni on the piano.

Related Exhibitions

The Museo Enrico Caruso – Villa Bellosguardo (Lastra a Signa) will be hosting an exhibition entitled *From Russia With Love. The country of the Tsars in postcards from the Caruso collection* from 21 September 2013 to 19 January 2014. The great tenor visited Russia in 1899 and 1900 for a tour of the theatres of St. Petersburg and Moscow, bringing testimonials back with him that bear witness to his temperament. These “souvenirs” range from his success embodied in an award from the hands of Tsar Nicholas II himself to the postcards that were one of his chief hobbies as a collector. Some four hundred postcards from his travels will be on display alongside other mementos of Russia in an exhibition at the Museo Enrico Caruso in the villa and gardens of Bellosguardo, which the tenor owned from 1906 until his death in 1921.

From the “Tolstoy affair” to the legendary Cossacks, the exhibition will provide a picture of the Tsars' country at the turn of the 19th century, a picture with which many Italians are still unfamiliar.

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Tuesday at the Movies with Palazzo Strozzi

In collaboration with Cinema Odeon Firenze. **Tuesdays, 20.30**, admission free

The film programme created by Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and Cinema Odeon Firenze involves the screening of classic avant-garde movie-related and côté ethnographic films related to the *Piano Nobile* exhibition, along with movies correlating to the exhibition of the CCCS investigating the contamination between territories and nations in our globalised era.

Thursday for Young People

This presents a special opportunity to explore the exhibitions with new eyes, and hear the students' points of view on a selection of works. Florentine high school students from the Liceo Linguistico Piero Calamandrei di Sesto Fiorentino become guides for a night in the exhibitions *The Russian Avant-garde* and *Unstable Territory*. Italian only

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VISIBLE LISTENING: Activities in the Exhibition

With its range of proposals for all ages, Palazzo Strozzi offers everyone the chance to shape their own encounter with art. Palazzo Strozzi believes that there should be no single interpretation: the meaning of a work of art is a result of the sum of meanings that those viewing it assign to it. So culture is made up of many voices and it is important to listen to them all. Called "visible listening", the concept underlying this constructivist approach makes the museum a place for informal learning, whereby each visitor has the opportunity to implement strategies for enriching his or her personal knowledge. That is why every exhibition held at Palazzo Strozzi accommodates different points of view and accommodates each visitor's personal experience. This approach has won Palazzo Strozzi the honour of being named the Children's University's first international "Learning Destination". The Children's University is a British organisation offering innovative extracurricular educational activities for children aged 7 to 14.

Special family labels designed to stimulate conversations and dedicated interactive rooms offer everyone fun and unconventional experiences inside the exhibition. Programmes such as the **Weekend Workshops** and materials such as the **Family Suitcase** give families pride of place, offering a variety of ways to discover the exhibition together. Youth and adults are equally catered for: from **Speaking of art** to the **Drawing Kit** – everyone is offered the opportunity to find their own way of interacting with art. Palazzo Strozzi believes art should be accessible to all and therefore places great emphasis on its access programming, including **A più voci – With many voices**, its project for people with Alzheimer's and their carers.

Palazzo Strozzi feels that exhibitions should be places that visitors return to, having new experiences each time. This is why it has created the **Family ticket** which allows unlimited access to both exhibitions: each member of a family (up to 2 adults + children aged 7 to 18) may visit the exhibitions as often as they like, for just **€20.00 for the whole family**.

INTERACTIVE ROOMS

The Russian Avant-garde has two interactive rooms for visitors and families, where they can explore art in a different, unconventional way.

The Reading Room

The Reading Room offers visitors of all ages the opportunity to explore the themes of the exhibition in greater depth. Alongside a specially curated selection of books, the installation for the exhibition *The Russian Avant-garde* focuses on the idea of narration. Panels will share visitor-created stories inspired by the exhibition from Palazzo Strozzi programmes **A più voci – With many voices**, **A thousand and one tales of... The Russian Avant-garde** and **The Storyteller**.

The Radio Room

The exhibition also features a real **Radio Studio** in which visitors can record their own thoughts about the experience of travel, exploration and emigration. Every Thursday at 09.35 (repeated on Sundays at 11.30), *ControRadio* will broadcast the best interviews conducted during the week.

Make your own postcard

The traditional **Postcard at Palazzo Strozzi** is back, asking visitors to leave behind a memento of their experience to share with other visitors. For the exhibition *The Russian Avant-garde* the chosen theme is journeys: if you were to go away from home, what would you take with you?

FOR FAMILIES

The Family Suitcase: The Explorer's Map Case

For everyone over the age of three

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The **Family Suitcase**, devised for *The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East*, is a very special map case with everything needed to become a real explorer! The suitcase contains a compass and maps to help visitors find their way around the exhibits on display and to follow in the footsteps of Tsar Nicholas, who went on a journey in 1890–1 that took him to India, Ceylon, Java, Japan and China and across his vast Russian domains. The map case also contains explanatory cards and games for every age group, allowing the whole family to explore the show in a thought-provoking and fun way.

To book the **Explorer's Map Case**, please telephone in advance +39 055 2645155 or enquire at the Information Point on the exhibition floor.

Palazzo Strozzi is grateful to Il Bisonte for its support of the **Explorer's Map Case**.

Weekend Workshop: Artist Explorers

For families with children age 7 to 12

Enchanted places and perilous views as seen through the eyes of Russian artists of the early 20th century are the inspiration for the Weekend Workshops. From Japan to the Arctic, visitors may explore a selection of works in the exhibition and discover that taking a journey is more than just moving from one place to the next, it is also a flight of the imagination. The personalised artist's sketchbook will capture the visitor's experiences in the galleries and remain as a souvenir of each unique journey.

Every Sunday, 10.30-12.30 in Italian

Available in English on request, please telephone +39 055 3917141. Minimum group participation may apply.

The storyteller's tale

For families with children aged 3 to 6

The first Tuesday of each month, 17.30-18.30, other Tuesdays on request (minimum five participants)

Every work of art has hundreds of stories to tell, you just have to be ready to listen! The myths, fables and legends hidden in each work of art are revealed and then, based on a painting in the exhibition, participants can draw and play. Tuesday: 1 October, 5 November, 3 December 2013 and 7 January 2014. Italian only. Reservations required: Sigma CSC: Monday to Friday 9.00-13.00, 14.00-18.00 Tel. +39 055 246 9600, prenotazioni@csigma.it

Look, discover, create... Palazzo Strozzi

For families with children aged 7 to 12. The first Sunday of each month, 15.30-16.30

Through games and activities, there are three interactive visits to discover Palazzo Strozzi, an extraordinary example of private Renaissance architecture. Have you ever really looked closely at Palazzo Strozzi? We will use our senses to discover the sounds, colours and forms of this building and its relationship with the city. Games and activities will help us discover the details which hold the clues to understanding this "grand home" of the Strozzi family. Three sessions explore the spaces of this extraordinary Renaissance palazzo:

Sunday 6 October 2013: 100 Ways to say Piazza

What is a piazza? And a courtyard? Explore the "Strozzi piazze" to discover what they are like...and how they could be.

Sunday 3 November 2013: The Stone Giant

Become a space explorer – architectural space – and discover a very special building, Palazzo Strozzi, one of the finest examples of Renaissance architecture full of interesting details.

Sunday 1 December 2013 and 5 January 2014: A grand family for a grand home

Who lived at Palazzo Strozzi? Why did they build such a big house? Together we'll explore the corners of the palazzo that hide clues about its past and discover how much our own houses today tell about who we are!

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Italian only. These activities are free and do not require a ticket to the exhibition.

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Sunday 8 December 2013: Christmas at Palazzo Strozzi

Palazzo Strozzi devotes an afternoon to families and friends, offering a unique opportunity to meet up and have fun together, exploring the exhibitions. Activities in the courtyard are free. All other activities are included in the admission fee. Visitors admitted while places are available.

YOUTH AND ADULT PROGRAMMES

Drawing Kit

Drawing in front of a work of art allows you to express yourself with immediacy and spontaneity, and to discover something more about the picture in front of you. The important thing is not necessarily to produce a beautiful drawing but to use the creative process to gather information and to explore details of the subject matter that often escape an initial, cursory examination. The **Drawing Kit** comprises: an elegant leather folder which includes paper, pencil, eraser and a brief manual with tips for sketching your way through the exhibition. The manual, with easy-to-consult cards, has tips to break the ice, instructions on drawing techniques, and a guided exercise in front of a work of art in the exhibition. It has been created for both those with and without drawing experience.

The **Drawing Kit** is free with a ticket to the exhibition and may be borrowed at the Information Point on the exhibition floor.

Thursdays Squared

The second Thursday of each month from 19.30

Free event in the courtyard, exploring art in all its forms. Sip a cocktail at the café in the Palazzo's courtyard and allow yourself to be drawn into the activities proposed by **Creative in the Courtyard**, giving free rein to your ideas, and sharing them with others. Don't miss live music with **Acoustic Carpet!**

The programme changes every month.

Thursday: 14 November, 12 December 2013, and 9 January 2014

Special Thursday 2 for 1 ticket: €10.00

Ticket admits two visitors to the exhibition after 18.00 and entitles the holder to the same offer for an aperitif.

Speaking of art. A conversation in the exhibition

Third Thursday of the month, 18.00-19.30. For a deeper look at art

The Education Department offers guided conversations in the exhibition closely observing selected works. These observations form the starting point for sharing ideas and opinions, allowing us to deepen our understanding of themes related to the exhibition. No previous knowledge is required.

Thursday: 17 October, 21 November, 19 December 2013, and 16 January 2014

Free with a ticket to the exhibition. Available in English on request, + 39 055 39 17 141; minimum group participation applies.

Special Thursday 2 for 1 ticket: €10.00

Ticket admits two visitors to the exhibition after 18.00.

Reservations required: Sigma CSC: Monday to Friday 9.00-13.00, 14.00-18.00 Tel. +39 055 2469600,
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ACCESS PROGRAMMES

A più voci – With Many Voices. A project for people with Alzheimer's and their carers

Tuesday afternoon, 15.00

This project for people with Alzheimer's, their relatives and carers, was created by the Education Department in collaboration with specialist educators in this field. It focuses on the use of observation and imagination rather than

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THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE SIBERIA AND THE EAST

KANDINSKY MALEVICH FILONOV GONCHAROVA

FLORENCE, PALAZZO STROZZI
27 SEPTEMBER 2013-19 JANUARY 2014

PROMOTED AND ORGANISED BY FONDAZIONE PALAZZO STROZZI - MINISTERO PER I BENI E LE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI
SOPRINTENDENZA PSAE E PER IL POLO MUSEALE DELLA CITTÀ DI FIRENZE - STATE RUSSIAN MUSEUM IN ST. PETERSBURG
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memory and cognitive skills to promote the remaining communicative abilities. The project also aims to change the social perception of the disease through an encounter with other museum visitors.

For this exhibition Palazzo Strozzi offers four cycles, each of three sessions. A different work of art is chosen for each of the first two meetings, while the third is devoted to a creative workshop focusing on the relationship between people with Alzheimer's and their carers to create new experiences through making art. During the encounters, educators invite participants – through a guided conversation – to contribute to the creation of a collective narrative about the selected work. The narrative transcribed during the course of the activity serves not only to document the experience but also as a resource for the group and the public in general, giving space to new voices and suggesting new ways of looking at art.

Tuesday 1 October, at 15.00, presentation meeting with carers

First series – Tuesday: 8 October, 22 October, and 5 November 2013

Second series – Tuesday: 15 October, 29 October, and 5 November 2013

Third series – Tuesday: 19 November, 3 December, and 7 January 2013

Fourth series – Tuesday: 26 November, 10 December, 14 January 2014

Tuesday 21 January, final meeting with carers

Participation is free; it is possible to participate in individual sessions. Italian only. Info and reservations required:
tel. + 39 055 3917141, edu@palazzostrozzi.org

PUBLICATIONS

For each exhibition, the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi publishes a number of related publications.

For this show, there will be:

Exhibition catalogue

The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East, Kandinsky, Malevic, Filonov, Goncharova at Palazzo Strozzi, Florence (Italy) (27 september 2013-19 january 2014) edited by di John E. Bowlit, Nicoletta Misler, Evgenia Petrova. Milano, Skira editore, 320 pages. Price at Palazzo Strozzi € 35,00; bookshops stock hardcover version only price € 45,00.

Family and Children's Book

Beyond the Horizon. Borders, Boundaries and Finding your Home, edited by James M. Brabdburne, Milano, Skira editore, 96 pages.

Passport to Russia in Tuscany

In keeping with what has now become a tradition at Palazzo Strozzi, the exhibition will be accompanied by a passport guiding visitors to places associated with Russia and the Russians in Tuscany, including the organisation of guided tours to sites generally closed to the public. Just as there is a Florence of the English, of the French and of the Germans, so there is also a Florence of the Russians. Maurizio Bossi writes: "in the panorama of foreign colonies in Florence, the presence of the Russians tends to offer a unique fusion between their own never-forgotten and constantly celebrated culture, and the life of the city experienced with a sense of participation in which sentiment plays a substantial role."

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CATALOGUE INTRODUCTION

Fire and Ice

John E. Bowlt, Nicoletta Misler, Evgenia Petrova

“Here we were at the end of the Bay of Bears when before us arose a majestic iceberg, so overwhelming in its mass that one felt wretched and insignificant. But suffice it for the sun to come out – true, a rare guest in this forsaken territory – and the gloomy picture of the iceberg vanished forthwith. Those gigantic blocks of ice played with all the colours of the rainbow, like some fantastic palace of a Northern kingdom.” Aleksandr Borisov, 1902. “In Tanjore I came upon one of the customary holy processions of the Temple of Shiva. In the black, tropical night vast, fantastic crowds of people were advancing, illumined by the flame of crimson torches. At the head of the procession was the holy white elephant, while robust young men carried a throne upon which arose the statue of Vishna covered in pearls and precious stones. There then thundered by a grandiose chariot of ebony bearing the god Shiva, unseen, but within, while, bemused, people threw themselves beneath its wheels.” Aleksei Kravchenko, 1913. The primary aim of *The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East* is to demonstrate that the development of latenineteenth- and earlytwentieth-century Russian art was forged through the extension of both outer and inner borders. At the same time, the exhibition indicates that its specific qualities were also fuelled by contact not necessarily with the West but, rather, with the East – both the Russian Far East of Siberia and Mongolia and the Orient of Persia, India, China, Japan and Siam. The exhibition, therefore, highlights the birth of a Russian cultural self-awareness stimulated both by adoption of new aesthetic developments from the West (manifest in the large number of Gauguin’s Polynesian paintings in Muscovite collections) and by the autonomous Russian exploration of new artistic territories. As Natal’ia Goncharova declared, “Our aspirations look to the East and our attention is focused on national art”.

Since 1962, the year of Camilla Gray’s pioneering study of the Russian avant-garde and the ensuing revelation of the richness of modern Russian art, over three hundred exhibitions have been held on this subject in Europe, Asia, America and Russia, some in private galleries and others in prestigious museums, more public and more ambitious, including *Paris-Moscou, 1900–1930* at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, in 1979 and *The Great Utopia, 1915–1932* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and other venues, in 1992–93. While such events have played a key part in the reappraisal of an unfamiliar, yet vital, sector of Russia’s visual culture, in many cases the rediscovery has been related to developments in Western art such as French Cubism, Italian Futurism and German Expressionism, suggesting that the heroes of Russian Modernism (Pavel Filonov, Wassily Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Tatlin) drew their strength from contact with the new artistic movements of Paris, Milan and Munich.

Our exhibition seeks to reverse this one-sided view by proposing another, and no less important, parallel flow between Russian art and the East. A little-known precedent to this different approach was the bold exhibition *The East and Russian Art* held by Moscow’s State Museum of Oriental Art in 1978, a pioneering, scholarly attempt to address the phenomenon, including its refraction in modern art.⁵ Attention should also be drawn more recently to *Russia’s Unknown Orient. Orientalist Painting 1850–1920*, organised by the Groninger Museum in 2010, which defined a Russian counterpart to European Orientalism.

Of course, this eastward tendency was not new in the history of Russian art, as reflected for example, by the marginal, but evident, traces in seventeenth-century Russian architecture, porcelain, majolica and Chinese fabrics and upholstery for interior decorations. In the early nineteenth century, the appeal of Oriental exoticism led to the introduction of novel accessories in portraits such as Turkish carpets, pipes and turbans: as depicted in Karl Gampel’n’s *Portrait of Konstantin Bulgakov* of c. 1818 or Karl Briullov’s painting *By Order of Allah, We Change Our Blouses Once a Year*, 1845, both in the collection of the Russian Museum. However, this exhibition is not a mere account of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian Orientalism, even though artists of a more documentary character such as Nikolai Karazin and Vasilii Vereshchagin can be placed under this heading.

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While European Orientalism drew sustenance from the exotic sources of Romanticism (as in the case of Eugène Delacroix), this did not happen with Russian Romanticism, which turned instead to the rustic idyll portrayed in the landscapes of Aleksei Venetsianov, to the natural catastrophe seen in Briullov's *Last Day of Pompeii*, 1830-33, Russian Museum or deep religious fervour found in Aleksandr Ivanov's *Appearance of Christ to the People*, 1837-57, Tretyakov Gallery. If the "myth of the Orient" was consonant to the Russian Romantic vision of the world, it did, in fact, relate more to the "South" – and not only Italy (where many Russian artists lived) but also the Crimea where, for example, Alexander Pushkin set his poem *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (1824) and Mikhail Lermontov his exotic tale *Taman*' (1840).

Despite a few ambitious anthropological and ethnographic expeditions to the East, including those led by Avram Norov through Egypt and Nubia in 1834-35 and by Aleksei Saltykov through Russia and India in the 1840s, we cannot speak of a strong Eastern impact on Russia's national culture in the first half of the nineteenth century. Like her European neighbours, Russia did display the same passion for *chinoiserie* during the reign of Catherine the Great and for Egypt under Alexander I and Nicholas I, but this eclecticism in decoration and architecture was a pleasant form of adaptation to aristocratic Western tastes rather than any correct application of intrinsic Eastern ideas about line, colour, perspective and structure – qualities which prompted the celebrated historian Vladimir Stasov to study examples of illuminated manuscripts and architectural details and publish them in a magnificent volume devoted to Slavic and Eastern ornament. It was this legacy that Sergei Diaghilev brought to life as a new kind of visual entertainment for his Parisian public through the exotic productions of the Ballets Russes such as *Le Dieu Bleu* (1912) with Indian-Siamese-Persian costumes by Léon Bakst and Igor Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol* (1914) with Chinese-style costumes by Alexandre Benois. The discontinuity between this kind of approach to the East and that of the avant-garde, which constitutes the focal point of our exhibition, is emblematic: the avant-garde turned the affected, retrospective elegance of *chinoiserie* upside-down, as we can recognise in the work of Natal'ia Goncharova, and in Chinese art pinpointed the intrinsic value of the calligraphic brushstroke as visual sign.

The connection between sign and image, between poetical and visual content, had a particular attraction for the avant-garde, as exemplified by the collection of Russian translations of Chinese poetry which Vladimir Markov (Russian pseudonym of the Latvian artist and critic Voldemars Matvejs) published in 1914, just as he was working on a monograph about Chinese art. A key promoter of the Russian avant-garde, Markov contended in one of his articles for the St. Petersburg magazine *Soiuz molodezhi* [Union of Youth] in 1912 that the hallmark of Western art was its constructive character as opposed to the non-constructive art of the East.

Pointing to the free and irregular application of glazing on the surface of Chinese vases as an example of Eastern "non-logicality", Markov affirmed the cultural priority of the East and urged the new Russian artists to look to the aesthetic spontaneity of countries such as China and Japan rather than rationalistic Europe. In the meantime, he wrote the first European studies of black primitive art (1914, published in 1919) and the art of Easter Island,¹¹ and prepared an important work on the art of the peoples of northern Russia (Siberia), drawing the attention of the avant-garde artists in Moscow and St. Petersburg to the incredibly modern character of shamanic artefacts.

Strangely enough, as a practising artist, Markov remained impervious to his own theoretical constructs concerning the primitive and the East, pursuing a mildly Symbolist and innocuous style bereft of exotic references. As a symbol of the variety of impulses generated by the new century, or expectation of the same, and providing sustenance also for the most radical expressions of the Russian avant-garde, it was decided to open this exhibition with three highly significant works: Malevich's *Black Circle*, Goncharova's *Emptiness* and Kandinsky's *Black Spot*, which encapsulate the Apocalyptic tension of the imminent end of the millennium and the peculiar spatial perception of the Russian artist. This territory consists of completely different biomes: the far north of Siberia (shown in Mitrofan Beringov's *Nordic Sonata*, 1927) with the sub-polar regions of the tundra, the reign of moss and snow; the taiga, the Russian forest covering the northern part of the Empire; the steppes of Central Asia (Pavel Kuznetsov's *Rain in the Steppe*); and the Mongolian deserts. The "black hole" which Goncharova, Kandinsky and Malevich interpreted almost concurrently

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seems to express, albeit in abstract form, the combination of unconscious fear and attraction aroused by the boundless, unknown spaces of the Russian Empire.

This complex background, so essential to the self-identification of Russian culture a century ago, is encapsulated in a famous journey which may be taken as a metaphor: on 26 October 1890, the Tsarevich Nicholai Aleksandrovich set off from Trieste on his Eastern journey visiting Greece, Egypt, India, China, Japan, Cambodia, Siam and other Eastern countries to return to St. Petersburg ten months later, on 4 August 1891, via the vast expanse of Siberia in order to acquaint himself with the various peoples of the Empire which he was about to rule.

Symbolically, on 19 May 1891, just before his return home, the Tsarevich inaugurated the last stop on the Trans-Siberian railroad (projected, but not yet completed) by laying the first sod on the future line. The exhibition also follows this metaphorical, circular path, examining the influence of the Far East on Russian figurative culture and the way in which the East returns, encounters the autochthonous cultures of the Empire, assimilates their characteristics, and is in turn assimilated. The Tsarevich's Grand Tour and its influence on Russian culture is addressed by Ol'ga Sosnina elsewhere in this catalogue.

The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East intends to delineate a new "topography" of Russian art in the glorious period of Symbolism and the avant-garde, embedding it within a broader historical and geographical context on the one hand, and presenting the variety of its sources, influences and relationships on the other. The exhibition speaks to us about "otherness" and how Russian artists related to "others", to exotic foreigners (*inostrantsy*) from far away (the Japanese, Chinese and Tibetans living in or passing through St. Petersburg) as well as the "other" peoples on Russian soil (*inorodtsy*): from the Buddhist Kalmyks to the animistic minorities of Siberia. It invites us to consider the very idea of the East to which Russia itself has often been relegated, if not marginalised.

This exhibition raises deeper questions about what constitutes the sense of nation and homeland in Russia and the extent to which these conditions are created only by exigencies of ethnicity, race, and religion. For the Russian citizen, the East was a territory or rather a condition that embraced all the different peoples of the Empire, an entire variety of cultures, something which, generally speaking, is still not appreciated.

However, as Aldo Ferrari shows, this notion was firmly rooted in the Russian consciousness even in the nineteenth century, thanks to reports by the first explorers within the Empire (which Evgenia Petrova addresses in her essay), for whom, the East still remained "a certain combination of alien and unknown phenomena". The exhibition offers many examples of these contacts with the East, such as the Eastern journey of the Tsarevich Nicholai or Vasiliï Vereshchagin's travels to India and Japan or those of Pavel Kuznetsov in Kirghizia and Uzbekistan. At the end of the nineteenth century, the already Islamised peoples of Central Asia began to assimilate the innovations of Moscow and St. Petersburg and to create a figurative language of their own that not only broke away from traditional local patterns but also succeeded in making a fundamental contribution to the formal language of the avant-garde. Conversely, as Maria Tsantsanoglou argues here, the Russian drive eastwards was stimulated by the presence of artists who were already Eastern by virtue of ethnicity or upbringing, such as Martiros Sar'ian and Georgii Yakulov (Armenian), Lado Gudiashvili, Kirill Zdanevich and Isidor Frikh-Khar (Georgian), and Ruvim Mazel', Aleksandr Nikolaev (Usto Mumin) and Aleksandr Volkov (Uzbek). At the same time, the citizens of Moscow and St. Petersburg who went east were both repelled and attracted by the sweltering heat, blinding sunlight and boundless spaces of the steppe and the desert. Mazel's figures move as though in a dream through sandstorms or wait before the door of a yurt opening onto infinity. Ekaterina Ermakova and Elena Terkel' both touch on this phenomenon.

From the cultural standpoint, the borders of the Russian Far East, subject to constant territorial claims, were fluid and permeable, thus making it possible for Tibetan Buddhism to arrive as far as St. Petersburg, as Adele Di Ruocco demonstrates, and for the dance of Shiva to be reflected in the works of early twentieth-century Russian artists such as Vasiliï Vatagin and Aleksei Kravchenko, as discussed by Kirill Gavrilin. These considerations take us back to Russian

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artists, writers and thinkers such as Andrei Bely, Helena Blavatsky, Kandinsky and George Gurdjieff who, for both aesthetic and spiritual reasons, were drawn to the East as they tried to explore systems other than those of Orthodox Christianity. In approaching Buddhism, Hinduism and shamanism, Russian Modernists such as Nicola Benois and Niko-lai Kalmakov came to contemplate psychological and spiritual conditions such as ecstasy, nirvana and levitation that can be perceived in their paintings on display here.

A variant of these mental states manifests itself in the various visible and invisible entities that inhabit Russian territory, both perceptions of the real “other”, as discussed by Silvia Burini, and more abstract presences sensed in the impenetrable forest, the swamps and the rivers where the treacherous *rusal'ki*, or fish-women, lurk in the boundless plains of the steppe and in the vast expanses of icebound winter that have halted so many invaders. It is from the steppe, roamed by “enchanted wanderers” such as the poet Velimir Khlebnikov and his sister Vera, the painter, that the nomadic hordes of Tatars and Mongols, the enemy with slanted eyes, arrived. Latent for centuries in the Russian subconscious, this image of the enemy then took concrete shape in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05. Even when hostilities were underway, the war posters of the two countries drew inspiration from the classic Japanese print and hence, perhaps paradoxically, expressed mutual interest and admiration, as Elena Barkhatova explains. The danger of losing this artistic connection troubled Alexandre Benois: “And if the war moves ... on to the island [of Japan], then goodbye to all the delightful art and sophisticated culture that my friends and I have loved so much in recent years”. Even when the war was over (and lost), Khlebnikov continued to dream of a new brotherhood with India, China and Japan.

The germs of the ancient Chinese, Indian and Tibetan cultures were sown within the boundaries of Eurasia and amidst the most disparate peoples and races (Huns, Mongols, Buryats, Goldi, Orochi, Udegei and Gilyaki) and primitive rituals of initiation, including ecstasy and loss of self as practised by the shamans of Siberia. The hybridisation of Buddhism and shamanism is addressed by Marina Fedorova, Svetlana Romanova and Tatiana Sem, while Valentina Gorbacheva sheds light on the accessibility of sources and their popularisation through geographical and ethnographic expeditions, and Nicoletta Misler discusses their influence on the Russian avant-garde.

The paintings, sculptures and objects presented at this exhibition offer a variety of answers to the many questions raised. For example, a fundamental quality that Russian artists discovered, assimilated and paraphrased was the free and varied use of colour as reflected in the carpets, fabrics and popular prints of China, Japan, Vietnam and other countries – as encapsulated in the Russian term *lubok*, a subject examined by John E. Bowlit. As a matter of fact, the avant-gardists often used the term *lubok* interchangeably with “primitive”, although they were well aware of the complex dialectic between “Eastern” and “primitive”, because, as the painter Aleksandr Shevchenko declared: “The word ‘primitive’ immediately indicates also an Oriental origin. In our day, the term is, therefore, used to refer to an entire constellation of Eastern arts – Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indo-Persian and so on”. In spite of such adamant assertions, Shevchenko, like Markov, did not extend his “Oriental” ideas into his own painting, although he did draw inspiration from Russian trays and signboards. It was also the organic bonds between objects and their territory that challenged the imagination of avant-garde artists: this is the case of the *kamennye baby* or so-called “stone maidens”, ancient idols keeping watch over burial mounds in vast expanses of space, which radical artists such as David and Vladimir Burliuk, Larionov and Goncharova admired and collected.

For this reason, a *kamennaia baba* has been chosen to be a virtual emblem of the exhibition, drawing attention to the most archaic aspects of the primitive, prehistoric culture on the territory of the Russian Empire. The concepts of Fire and Ice, the backbone of this exhibition, indicate pathways, but do not claim an exhaustive overview of the culture of the Russian East. Owing to limitations of space and issues of fragility and accessibility, important visual references have been excluded, for example, the Alexandre Jacovleff expeditions for the Citroën Company in Africa and China during the 1920s and 1930s, Roerich's numerous expeditions in the Himalayas, Ivan Bilibin's evocative “Persian” images, and Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin's encounter with Samarkand. Nevertheless, theoretical and critical issues, essential to the mission *The Russian Avant-garde, Siberia and the East*, are addressed in the catalogue essays.

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Perhaps the predicament of Russia's Eastern dialogue was summed up by Vaslav Nijinsky, the celebrated dancer who worked for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, who, with his contribution to the *Sacre du Printemps* in 1913, revealed an extraordinary consonance with the avant-garde and who, in the "ecstatic" delirium of his diaries, expressed the indissoluble bond with other cultures, with nature and with cosmic space peculiar to the Russian artist of his era: "I am Apis. I am an Egyptian. I am a Hindu. I am an Indian. I am black. I am Chinese. I am Japanese. I am an outsider. I come from elsewhere ... I am the tree ... I am the roots ...".

Introduction, by the curators John E. Bowl, Nicoletta Misler, Evgenia Petrova, from the exhibition catalogue published by Skira editore

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PALAZZO
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THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE SIBERIA AND THE EAST

KANDINSKY MALEVICH FILONOV GONCHAROVA

FLORENCE, PALAZZO STROZZI
27 SEPTEMBER 2013-19 JANUARY 2014

PROMOTED AND ORGANISED BY FONDAZIONE PALAZZO STROZZI - MINISTERO PER I BENI E LE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI
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- 1.01
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- 1.02
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- 1.03
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- 1.04
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- 2.02
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- 2.03
Sergei Konenkov (Karakovich 1874–Moscow 1971), *Eos*, 1913, painted marble; 34.5 x 32 x 34cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. SkS-3049
- 2.04
Léon Bakst (Lev Rozenberg; Grodno 1866–Paris 1924), *Siamese Sacred Dance*, 1901, oil on canvas; 73.2 x 109.5 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. 6098
- 2.05
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- 2.06
Buryats, Eastern Siberia, North China, Mongol school, *White Tara*, 19th century, silver; 36 x 38 x 26 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 3030-484
- 2.07
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3.06

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3.07

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3.08

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3.09

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Il'ia Mashkov (Mikhailovskoe 1881–Abramtsevo 1944), *Portrait of a Lady in an Armchair*, 1913, oil on canvas; 177 x 115 cm. Ekaterinburg, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 370

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Il'ia Mashkov (Mikhailovskoe 1881–Abramtsevo 1944), *Still Life*, 1911–12, oil on canvas; 100 x 127 cm. Saratov, State Radishchev Museum of Art, inv. 1030

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4a.02

Kōkyo Harada, *Our Destroyers Hayatori and Asagiri Sunk a Russian Warship at Port Arthur in spite of the Wind and a Snowstorm*, 1904–05, coloured xylograph; 350 x 695 mm. St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Elb. 14652

4a.03

Kakō Morita, *Russian Sailors in Combat on Lifeboats after their Two Battleships had been Sunk by the Japanese Fleet at Port Incheon*, 1904–05, coloured xylograph; 347 x 692 mm. St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Elb. 14653

4a.04

Kiyochika Kobayashi, *The Battle of Motien Pass*, 1904–05, coloured xylograph; 361 x 720 mm. St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Elb. 14651

4a.05

Kakō Morita, *The Sinking of a Russian Warship during the Great Naval Battle of Port Arthur*, 1904, coloured, xylograph; 345 x 700 mm. St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Elb. 14655

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Anonymous Russian engraver, *To the Russo-Japanese War*, 1904, chromolithograph; 530 x 384 mm. St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, E 027766

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Anonymous Russian engraver, *The Variag and the Koreits in the Battle of Chemulpo Bay*, 1904, chromolithograph; 360 x 520 mm. St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, inv. 152778

4a.09

Anonymous Russian engraver, *The Russo-Japanese War. The Ship Retvizan Rebutts a Japanese Attack*, 1904, chromolithograph; 364 x 520 mm. St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, inv. 152745

4a.10

David Burliuk (Semirotoevshchina 1882–Hampton Bays, Long Island 1967), *In the Rice Fields*, 1921, oil on canvas; 45 x 60 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-11891

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Alexandre Benois (Aleksandr Benua; St. Petersburg 1870–Paris 1960), *Costume Design for the Chinese March in Igor Stravinsky's Opera "Le Rossignol"*, 1914, watercolour, ink, pencil on paper; 51.5 x 33 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. R-38477

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Nikolai Kalmakov (Nervi 1873–Chelles 1955), *Buddha and Chinese Maiden*, 1913, watercolour, gouache, silver, ink, graphite pencil on paper, 56 x 38.6 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. R-35262

4b.03

Alexandre Benois (Aleksandr Benua; St. Petersburg 1870–Paris 1960), *Costume Design for the Chinese March in Igor Stravinsky's Opera "Le Rossignol"*, 1914, watercolour, ink, pencil, whitening on paper; 47.4 x 30.2 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. R-38480

4b.04

Anonymous, China, Sichuan Province, *Men-shen (Spirit Defender of the Doors)*, late 19th–early 20th century, coloured xylograph, ink, whitening on coloured and tinted paper; 495 x 280 mm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. 86910

4b.05

Georgii Yakulov (Tiflis 1884–Erevan 1928), *Horse Race*, 1906, paper on board, watercolour, gouache, 102.5 x 69 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. LS 4419

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4c.01

Zhu Yumming, *Scroll with Calligraphy. Detail of a Poem Dedicated to Autumn*, 16th century, ink on paper, silk; 167 x 43 cm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. 16113 I

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Natalia Goncharova (Nagaev 1881–Paris 1962), *Chinoiserie*, 1912–13, oil on canvas; 121 x 72 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. Zh-1622

4c.03

Lev Bruni (Malaia Vishera 1894–Moscow 1948), *Negatives. Composition with Cross*, 1921, ink on paper; 26.8 x 16.6 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. RS-304

4c.04

Petr Miturich (St. Petersburg 1887–Moscow 1956), *Graphic Motif*, 1918–20, ink on paper; 12.5 x 26.6 cm. Moscow, Vera Miturich-Khlebnikova Collection

4c.05

Petr Miturich (St. Petersburg 1887–Moscow 1956), *Graphic Motif*, 1918–20, ink on paper; 11.2 x 18.8 cm. Moscow, Vera Miturich-Khlebnikova Collection

4c.06

Petr Miturich (St. Petersburg 1887–Moscow 1956), *Graphic Motif*, 1918–20, ink on paper; 12.5 x 26.6 cm. Moscow, Vera Miturich-Khlebnikova Collection

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Vladimir Burliuk (Kharkov 1886–Thessaloniki 1917), *Spring*, 1910, oil on canvas; 207 x 128 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-8887

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Natalia Goncharova (Nagaevo 1881–Paris 1962), *Still Life with Chinese Print*, 1908–09, oil on canvas; 140.1 x 106 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. Zh-1608

5.02

Petr Konchalovsky (Slavianka 1876–Moscow 1956), *Family Portrait with Chinese Print*, 1911, oil on canvas, 179 x 239 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-10121

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5.05

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5.06

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5.08

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Natalia Goncharova (Nagaevo 1881–Paris 1962), *Chinese Lubok*, early 1910s, gouache, ink on paper; 31.5 x 24 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. R-5453

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Lev Bruni (Malaia Vishera 1894–Moscow 1948), *Tiger*, 1920, charcoal and watercolour on paper; 36.6 x 24.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. RS 282

Section 6

EAST OR WEST?

6.01

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6.02

Pavel Filonov (Moscow 1883–Leningrad 1941), *West and East*, 1912–13, oil, tempera, gouache on paper; 38.5 x 42 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-9582

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Aristarkh Lentulov (Voronezh 1882–Moscow 1943), *An Old Castle in the Crimea, Alupka*, 1916, oil on canvas; 120 x 104 cm. Saratov, State Radishchev Museum of Art, inv. 1092

COLOURS AND SPACES OF THE EURASIAN STEPPES

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Aleksandr Volkov (Skobelev 1886–Tashkent 1957), *From the Oriental Primitive Series: Conversation beneath the Branch of a Pomegranate Tree*, 1918–19, tempera on board; 23 x 49 cm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. III 8665

6.05

Aleksandr Volkov (Skobelev 1886–Tashkent 1957), *From the Oriental Primitive Series: Conversation in a Tent*, 1918–19, tempera on board; 32 x 50 cm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. III 8666

6.06

Aleksandr Volkov (Skobelev 1886–Tashkent 1957), *From the Oriental Primitive Series: Congregation*, 1918–19, tempera on paper; 32 x 46.5 cm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. III 8664

6.07

Ruvim Mazel' (Vitebsk 1880–Moscow 1967), *Old Ashkhabad*, 1930, oil on canvas; 75 x 158 cm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. MSO III 5519

6.08

Pavel Kuznetsov (Saratov 1878–Moscow 1968), *The Spell*, 1912, tempera; 72 x 75.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-6661

6.09

Ruvim Mazel' (Vitebsk 1880–Moscow 1967), *In the yurt*, 1929, oil on canvas; 95 x 92 cm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. 1720 III

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6.11

Boris Korolev (Moscow 1885–1963), *Salomé*, 1922, wood; 110 x 71 x 34.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. SO 234

6.12

Nicholas Roerich (Nikolai Rerikh; St. Petersburg 1874–Kullu Valley 1947), *The Polovtsian Encampment*, pastel, tempera, graphite pencil, gouache on board; 43 x 60 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-1983

6.13

Pavel Kuznetsov (Saratov 1878–Moscow 1968), *Rain in the Steppe*, 1912, tempera, graphite pencil, gouache on board; 52 x 70.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. ZhB-1174

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6.14

Aleksandr Nikolaev (Voronezh 1897–Tashkent 1957), *The Bridegroom*, 1920, tempera on paper on wood; 30 x 26.5 cm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. 5791 III

Section 7

KAMENNYE BABY. CUSTODIANS OF SPACE

7.01

Polovets People, *Kamennaia baba*, 10th–13th century, stone; 164 x 51 x 33 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 13031-1

7.02

Natalia Goncharova (Nagaevo 1881–Paris 1962), *Statues of Salt*, c. 1910, oil on canvas; 80.5 x 95.5 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. Zh-1579

7.03

Natalia Goncharova (Nagaevo 1881–Paris 1962), *Still Life with Sculpture*, 1908, oil on canvas; 85 x 97 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. Zh-1764

Section 8

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8.01

Innokentii Suvorov (Irkutsk 1898–Leningrad 1947), *Wisdom*, 1928, coloured wood, chalk, paint; 140 x 38 x 6 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Sk-114

8.02

Grigorii Choros-Gurkin (Ulala 1870–Siberia, concentration camp 1937), *Lake of the Spirits of the Mountains*, 1909, oil on canvas; 96 x 128 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-10431

8.03

Mitrofan Beringov (Poimi 1889–Moscow 1937), *Nordic Sonata*, 1927, oil on canvas; 89.4 x 103 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. ZhS-752

8.04

Pavel Filonov (Moscow 1883–Leningrad 1941), *Formula of the Period 1904-July, 1922. Universal Shift in the Flowering of the World via the Russian Revolution* (formerly entitled *Cosmos*), 1920–22, oil on canvas; 186 x 186 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-9571

8.05

Pavel Filonov (Moscow 1883–Leningrad 1941), *White Painting*, 1919 (?), oil on canvas; 89 x 72 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. ZhB 1419

8.06

Nicholas Roerich (Nikolai Rerikh; St. Petersburg 1874–Kullu Valley 1947), *Omen*, 1901, oil on canvas; 103 x 230 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-1958

8.07

Nicholas Roerich (Nikolai Rerikh; St. Petersburg 1874–Kullu Valley 1947), *The Great Sacrifice*, 1910, tempera on board; 52.3 x 75 cm. Saratov, State Radishchev Museum of Art, inv. 141

8.08

Nicholas Roerich (Nikolai Rerikh; St. Petersburg 1874–Kullu Valley 1947), *Exorcism of the Earth*, 1907, tempera, graphite pencil, gouache on board; 49.6 x 64 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-1966

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THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE SIBERIA AND THE EAST

KANDINSKY MALEVICH FILONOV GONCHAROVA

FLORENCE, PALAZZO STROZZI
27 SEPTEMBER 2013-19 JANUARY 2014

PROMOTED AND ORGANISED BY FONDAZIONE PALAZZO STROZZI - MINISTERO PER I BENI E LE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI
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8.09

Konstantin Korovin (Moscow 1861–Paris 1939), *Remains of a Samoed Encampment*, 1899, tempera on canvas; 100 x 326 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-5661

8.10

Konstantin Korovin (Moscow 1861–Paris 1939), *Caravan of Samoeds*, 1898, oil on canvas; 102 x 454 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-5746

8.11

Khanty People (Samoeds), *Deer Horns (elements of a shaman ritual) from a Ritual Site*. Three pairs of deer horns: 110.8 x 78 x 64.5 cm; 85.3 x 81 x 48 cm; 100 x 81 x 54.3 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 1711-494/1-3

8.12

Nicholas Roerich (Nikolai Rerikh; St. Petersburg 1874–Kullu Valley 1947), *Idols*, 1901, gouache on board; 49 x 58 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-1951

8.13

Nivkhi People, *Bear Skull on a Ritual Celebratory Spoon*, 19th century, brown bear bone, wood, pearls; 18 x 80 x 15 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 5169-99 a,b,v

Section 9

GESTURES AND RITUALS

a) The Magic Circle of the Ritual

9a.01

Grigorii Choros-Gurkin (Ulala 1870–Siberia, concentration camp 1937), *Baichiiak, the Shaman*, 1907, oil on canvas, 156.8 x 102.5 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 2633 NV

9a.02

Khakhasy People, Enisei Region, *Shaman's drum*, late 19th-early 20th century, wood, reindeer skin, copper, fabric, dyes; 64 x 68 x 15 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 8761-8301

9a.03

Vasilii Kandinsky (Moscow 1866–Neuilly-sur-Seine 1944), *Composition no. 217 "Grey Oval"*, 1917, oil on canvas, 104 x 137 cm. Ekaterinburg, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. ZhR 391

9a.04

Vasilii Kandinsky (Moscow 1866–Neuilly-sur-Seine 1944), *White Oval*, 1919, oil on canvas; 80 x 93 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. Zh-11924

9a.05

Vasilii Kandinsky (Moscow 1866–Neuilly-sur-Seine 1944), *Two Ovals*, 1919, oil on canvas; 107 x 89.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. ZhB-14

9a.06

Kazimir Malevich (near Kiev 1879–Leningrad 1935), *Supremus no. 58*, 1915–16, oil on canvas; 79.5 x 70.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. ZhB-1687

9b

IMAGES OF HEALING

9b.01

Mikhail Larionov (Tiraspol' 1881–Fontenay-aux-Roses 1964), *From the Cycle "The Seasons": Spring (New Primitive)*, 1912, oil on canvas; 142 x 119 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. Zh-22006

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9b.02

Mikhail Larionov (Tiraspol' 1881–Fontenay-aux-Roses 1964), *From the Cycle "The Seasons": Winter (New Primitive)*, 1912, oil on canvas; 100 x 122.3 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. Zh-11950

9b.03

Nanai People, Eastern Siberia, *Shaman Drawing*, fabric, dyes; 80 x 78 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 8762-18191

9b.04

Mikhail Larionov (Tiraspol' 1881–Fontenay-aux-Roses 1964), *Yellow, Happy Autumn*, 1912, oil on canvas; 53.5 x 44.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. ZhB 1576

9c

THE MASK

9c.01

David Yakerson (Vitebsk 1896–Moscow 1947), *Masks*, c. 1930, wood; 32 x 58 x 38 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. Sk-2971

9c.02

Alisa Poret (St. Petersburg 1902–Moscow 1984), *Drawing for the Dust Cover of the Book "Kalevala"*, c. 1933, watercolour on paper; 24.6 x 17.8 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. RS-7079

9c.03

Koryaki People, Kamchatka, *Ritual Mask*, early 20th century, wood; 28 x 18 x 5 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 8761-10138

9c.04

Kazimir Malevich (near Kiev 1879–Leningrad 1935), *Head*, 1928–29, oil on canvas; 61 x 41 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-9498

Section 10

THE PRESENCE OF THE FOREST

10a

IDOLS OF WOOD – IDOLS OF TEMPERAMENT

10.01

Vera Khlebnikova (Maloderbetovskii 1891–Moscow 1941), *Venus and the Shaman*. Illustration for Velimir Khlebnikov's poem "Venus and the Shaman", c. 1920, pencil on paper; 17 x 19 cm. Moscow, Vera Miturich-Khlebnikova Collection

10.02

Mikhail Matiushin (Nizhnii-Novgorod 1861–Leningrad 1934), *Venus*, 1920, wood; 246 x 6 x 8 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Sk 2055

10.03

Ul'chi People (Manguns), Eastern Siberia, *Proprietary Spirit of the Mountains and Woods*, late 19th–early 20th centuries, wood; h. 93 cm ø 15 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 8761–9414

10.04

Mikhail Matiushin (Nizhnii-Novgorod 1861–Leningrad 1934), *Man Running*, 1915–16, tree root; 55 x 48 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Sk-813

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10.05

Mikhail Matiushin (Nizhnii-Novgorod 1861–Leningrad 1934), *Woman Dancing*, 1915–16, wood root; 44 x 46.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Sk-815

10.06

Koryak People, Kamchatka, *Protector Spirit of the Family*, early 20th century, wood, skin, pearls; 24 x 32 x 6 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 8761-1012 8 D2

10.07

Nivkhi People, Eastern Siberia, Island of Sakhalin, *Proprietary Spirit of the House*, wood, 12 x 11 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 5169-11

10.08

Kazimir Malevich (near Kiev 1879–Leningrad 1935), *Woman at Prayer*, 1910–11, pencil on paper; 186 x 142 mm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. R-25044

10.09

Dmitrii Tsaplin (Malyi Malik 1890–Moscow 1967), *Fish*, 1934, stone; 30 x 92 x 14 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. Sk-566

10.10

Evenki People, Eastern Siberia, *Shaman's Spirit Helper. Fish*, late 19th–early 20th century, larch wood; 9 x 64.5 x 7.8 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 5093-168/2

10.11

Pavel Filonov (Moscow 1883–Leningrad 1941), *Untitled*, 1923, oil on canvas; 79 x 99 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-9025

10.12

Khanty People, *Protector Spirit for Hunting and Fishing*, birch wood; 171 x 22 x 14 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 1711-511

10.12b

Vera Khlebnikova (Maloderbetovskii 1891–Moscow 1941), *Linden Tree Man*. Illustration for Velimir Khlebnikov's novel, *Snezhimochka* (Little snowflake), c. 1920, pencil, ink, watercolour, whitening on paper; 26 x 18 cm. Moscow, Vera Miturich-Khlebnikova Collection

10.13

Mikhail Matiushin (Novgorod 1861–Leningrad 1934), *Root Sculpture*, early 1920s, wood; 8 x 16 x 23 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. Sk-3078

10.14

Anonymous, China, *Old Man Dancing*, 19th century, carved and polished root; 57 x 22 cm. Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. I-5212

10.15

Pavel Filonov (Moscow 1883–Leningrad 1941), *Oxen (Scene from the Life of Savages)*, 1918, oil on canvas; 62.5 x 80 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-8579

10.16

Orochi People, *Shaman's Spirit Helper. Tiger*, wood, dyes; 11.5 x 55 x 9.5 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 1870-48

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10.17

Udegei People, *Guardian Spirit of the Taiga*, early 20th century, painted wood, pearls, metal, bearskin; 42 x 75 x 9,5 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 5656-167

10.18

Pavel Filonov (Moscow 1883–Leningrad 1941), *Beasts (Animals)*, 1925–26, oil on board; 36 x 44 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-9584

Section 11 SYLVAN SPIRITS

11.01

Nanai People, Khabarovsk region, *Miracle Figure. Bear*, early 20th century, painted wood; 36 x 14 x 24 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, inv. 8761-9220

11.02

Evenki People, Eastern Siberia, halting-place on the River Ol'dokon', *Spirit Helper of a Shaman. Owl* (elements of a shaman ritual), late 19th–early 20th century, wood; 15 x 35 x 33 cm. St. Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography, 5636-8

11.03

Vasilii Vatagin (Moscow 1883–1969), *Eagle*, 1913, wood; 77 x 24 x 25 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Sk 1929

11.04

Vera Khlebnikova (Maloderbetovskii 1891–Moscow 1941), *Wind. Longing for the Forest*, c. 1920, pencil, ink, black watercolour, whitening on paper, pencil, 39 x 28 cm. Moscow, Vera Miturich-Khlebnikova Collection

11.05

Vera Khlebnikova (Maloderbetovskii 1891–Moscow 1941), *Vila and Leshak. Longing for the Forest*, c. 1920, watercolour on paper; 39 x 28 cm. Moscow, Vera Miturich-Khlebnikova Collection

11.06

Vera Khlebnikova (Maloderbetovskii 1891–Moscow 1941), *Forest and Mushrooms*, c. 1920, pencil and pastel on paper, 70 x 53 cm. Moscow, Vera Miturich-Khlebnikova Collection

11.07

Sergei Konenkov (Karakovich 1874–Moscow 1971), *Stribog (God of the Winds)*, 1910, wood with incrustations; 174 x 45 x 42 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, Sk-25414

11.08

Aleksandr Borisov (Glubokii Ruchei 1886–1934), *Eclipse in Novaia Zemlia in 1896*, 1904, oil on canvas; 201.5 x 357.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, inv. Zh-2170

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