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Potsdam, November 11, 2019

***Impressionism in Russia: Dawn of the Avant-Garde***

November 7, 2020 to February 28, 2021

Even before 1900, Paris was a magnet for Russian artists. Here they encountered the works of Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir and were inspired by the themes and techniques of the French Impressionists. Back in Russia, they would paint outdoors and sense the fleeting nature of the moment as they depicted scenes of everyday Russian life. Artists who later joined the avant-garde likewise drew on Impressionist studies of light for their new art. This is the first exhibition to be devoted to the many facets of Impressionism in Russia. The show, a partnership with the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the Museum Frieder Burda in Baden-Baden, illustrates that the visual idiom around 1900 was international and integrates Russian artists into the modernist adventure in European art.

The time these artists spent in Paris, the capital of European art, left its traces in Russian painting. The generation that followed Ilya Repin took their bearings from the west. The boulevards and cafés of Paris were a major theme around 1900. The artists studied not only the architecture, but also Impressionist urban views with their dramatic street fronts and bold perspectives. Nocturnal street lighting fascinated Konstantin Korovin and Nikolai Tarkhov, who popularised the motif.

At home in Russia they put their memories of French Modernism to good use, painting *en plein air* and choreographing light on the canvas. It was a major impetus for landscape art and provided the first experimental arena for artists like Mikhail Larionov, Natalia Goncharova and Kazimir Malevich. They saw themselves as Impressionists before laying the foundations for Russian avant-garde art from 1910 onwards with their expressive Rayonism and non-representational Suprematism.

The study of light in the landscape also had an impact on depictions of interiors. Rooms now became worthy of art as windows opened up vistas and let in sunlight to bring indoor spaces to life. Although interiors by French artists such as Edgar Degas and Édouard Manet had managed without daylight, Russian painters like Stanislav Zhukovsky and Valentin Serov tested the Impressionist effects of indoor light. Meanwhile, decidedly Impressionist themes such as walks through rural fields and meadows or still life with fruit and flowers were adopted into Russian art by painters like Ilya Repin, Igor Grabar and Alexei Jawlensky.

The exhibition also shows how painters like Nikolai Tarkhov and David Burliuk built on Impressionist practice, rather like the Neo-Impressionists in France and the Expressionists in Germany, to construct planar surfaces of bright, powerful colours.

Ultimately, the show features those works painted in Moscow before the First World War that transformed Impressionist light painting into the abstract metaphors of light that came to define the Russian avant-garde.

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On 14 November 2019 the 11th Symposium at the Museum Barberini will address the wide-ranging aspects of this theme. The presentations by such eminent experts as Olga Atroshchenko, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; Rosalind Polly Blakesley, University of Cambridge; Maria Kokkori, The Art Institute of Chicago; Susanne Strätling, University of Potsdam; Irina Vakar, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; Tatiana Yudenkova, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, will be published in the exhibition catalogue. You will find the programme at [www.museum-barberini.com](http://www.museum-barberini.com).

With the Hasso Plattner Collection, the Museum Barberini places a major focus on French Impressionism. Every year, one of our three exhibitions is therefore dedicated to Impressionism from an international perspective and in a framework of international partnership.

The Museum Frieder Burda, domiciled in Baden-Baden close to Germany's border with France, has been fostering relations between the two countries for many years at the express wish of founder Frieder Burda. From the 19th century Baden-Baden was a refreshing summer residence and meeting-place for the European—and especially Russian—aristocracy, soon attracting artists and writers in their wake. Even today, the Black Forest town remains a favourite destination for Russian tourists.

The exhibition will run at the Museum Barberini in Potsdam from 7 November 2020 until 28 February 2021 and then at the Museum Frieder Burda in Baden-Baden.

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7 November 2020 to 28 February 2021

Museum Barberini, Alter Markt, Humboldtstr. 5–6, 14467 Potsdam

In partnership with the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, and the Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden.

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