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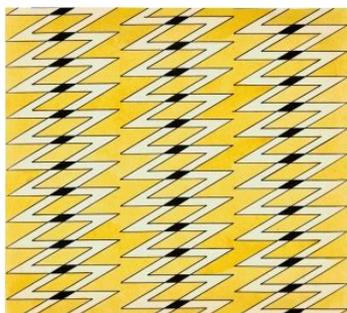
RUSSIAN ART HIGHLIGHTS

The Most Significant Work by Rodchenko to Appear at Auction in Almost 30 Years
One of the Earliest Crimean Works by Aivazovsky to Appear at Auction
Rare Non-Conformist Artworks from the Bar-Gera Collection
Royal Portraits, a Collection of Ten Works by Pokhitonov, Avant-Garde Masterworks

LONDON SALES 29 NOVEMBER 2016

Press Call, Friday 25 November 2016

Exhibition 25-28 November 2016



Sotheby's, November 2016: On 29th November, Sotheby's Russian sales will offer over three hundred works spanning several centuries of Russian history, including: a major work by Alexander Rodchenko, set to break the record for the artist; an important collection of ten works by Ivan Pokhitonov and rare Suprematist works by Nikolai Suetin and Ilya Chashnik.

This year's sale calendar also includes the Bar-Gera Collection of Non-Conformist art, a unique sale of over 60 works by Non-Conformist artists including Ilya Kabakov, Erik Bulatov, and Oleg Tselkov. Assembled over the course of several decades by Jacob and Kenda Bar-Gera, it is the most significant collections of its kind. **Please join us for a press preview at 10am on Friday 25 November 34-35 New Bond Street, London, W1A 2AA.**

SALES CALENDAR

29 NOVEMBER 10:30AM [RUSSIAN PICTURES](#)

29 NOVEMBER 1:30PM [THE BAR-GERA COLLECTION](#)

29 NOVEMBER 3PM [RUSSIAN WORKS OF ART, FABERGÉ AND ICONS](#)

EXHIBITION DATES

25-28 NOVEMBER FULL EXHIBITION AT SOTHEBY'S LONDON

Russian Pictures Highlights

Sale in London 29 November 2016

Russian Abstraction: Works from a European Private Collection

Never offered at auction before, this collection of 23 Russian *avant-garde* works is tightly focused on a brief period around the 1917 revolution. It represents the leading exponents of a ground-breaking period when Russia led the world in terms of artistic innovation. A century after their creation, these works still astound with their originality and boldness.

Works by these artists caused a veritable sensation when they first appeared in public, and their reappearance now represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to acquire works by names seldom seen at auction.

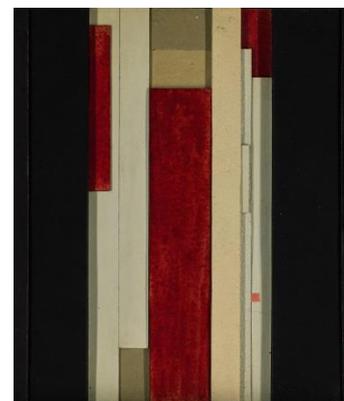
The star piece is [Alexander Rodchenko's *Construction No.95*](#) (est. £2.5-3.5m). Dating from 1919, this rare oil has been held in the same collection for 20 years, and is undoubtedly the most important work by the artist to appear at auction since Sotheby's landmark sale of Russian Avant-Garde and Soviet Contemporary Art in Moscow in 1988. The existing auction record for the artist is for a work on paper (£420,000 / \$646,000) set at Sotheby's New York last year.



Further highlights come from two of Kazimir Malevich's most dedicated followers and students, **Nikolai Suetin** and **Ilya Chashnik**, leading exponents of the Suprematist movement. Before his early death in 1929 at the age of 27, Chashnik was hailed as one of the movement's brightest stars. Following the almost total destruction of the archives at Vitebsk during the Second World War, [The Seventh Dimension, Suprematist Relief](#) (est. £100,000 – 150,000) is one of only a few works by the artist to remain. [Suetin's Suprematist Surface Forms, Textile Design](#) (est. £25,000-35,000), dates from 1921, when he was a student of Malevich at the art school in Vitebsk.



The collection also includes stunning examples of Russian textile design by **Liubov Popova** and **Varvara Stepanova**. Like all production in Russia, the textile industry had been brought to its knees by the years of war and revolution, and by the early 1920s it was an industry on the brink. The situation was so dire in 1922 and 1923 that most of the textiles being manufactured in the Soviet Union were entirely plain. In a bid to call a halt to the production crisis an official appeal was published in Pravda in 1923 calling for artists and designers to come forward. Varvara Stepanova, Liubov Popova and Alexander Rodchenko were the first to respond.



Left: [Liubov Popova, Textile Design in Orange and White](#),

est. £2,000-3,000

Centre: [Varvara Stepanova, Textile Design in Blue and Orange](#),

est. £6,000-8,000

Right: [Varvara Stepanova, Textile Design in Yellow and Black](#),

est. £12,000-18,000

19th-Century Paintings

The 19th Century paintings will be led by **Ivan Aivazovsky's** early Crimean view, [The Coast at Yalta](#) from 1851, one of the finest paintings by the master seascape painter to appear at auction in recent years (est. £300,000 – 500,000). Early works from the 1850s rarely appear at auction, and this large-scale canvas has been preserved in excellent condition.

A second work by the artist [Solar Eclipse in Feodosia](#) from 1876 (est. £250,000-350,000) has been held in the same collection for over fifty years. A member of the Royal Geographical Society, and renowned for his depictions of stormy seas, moonlit landscapes, and sunsets, it is not surprising that Aivazovsky would have taken a keen interest in natural phenomena such as solar eclipses.

The sale is also distinguished by three **royal portraits** that have remained with the descendants of the sitters for many generations, and have never been offered at auction until now. The portraits depict [Grand Duchess Elena Vladimirova](#) (the granddaughter of Emperor Alexander II), the great patron of the arts [Prince Paul Demidoff](#), and [Nicholas I](#). This last painting, in particular, holds special commemorative significance: in January 1910, it was given by Tsar Nicholas II to his cousin, Prince Nicholas of Greece and Denmark, during a hunting trip to Ropsha near Peterhof.

A collection of ten works by **Ivan Pokhitonov** are led by [Hunting for Quail in Zhabovshchizna](#), circa 1902-1906 (est. £200,000-300,000), one of the finest Russian-period works by Pokhitonov to come to auction. Living in Belgium and haunted by the fear of forever being an outsider, the artist took numerous extended trips to Russia during the second half of his life. This particular work dates from the important period spent at his father-in-law's estate at Zhabovshchizna. The idyllic depiction of rich meadowland echoes observations from the pages of Ivan Turgenev's *Sketches from a Hunter's Album*.

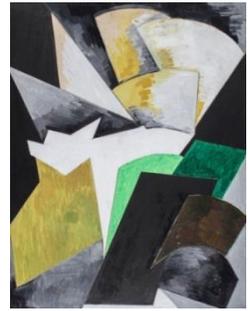
Ivan Turgenev was an immensely important figure in Pokhitonov's life. One of the earliest proponents of the artist's work, he became godfather to his eldest daughter Vera. As two champions of the unspoiled idyll of their homeland, the overlap in subject and sentiment in their art can be seen as one of shared sympathies and nostalgia. Indeed, Turgenev was the first owner of [Evening, Ukraine](#), circa 1880 (est. £160,000-200,000), and later gifted the work to Vera. It has not been exhibited publically since 1882, when it was included in a major show at the *Galerie Georges Petit* in Paris.

The collection is testament to the artist's ability to work with different genres and media, as well as the extraordinary talent that earned him positive acclaim from critics in New York, Paris, and Moscow during his lifetime.



20th-Century Works

Executed during the creative whirlwind of the mid-1910s, [Alexandra Exter's *Dynamic Composition*](#) (est. £80,000-120,000) is undoubtedly the most exciting work on paper by the artist to come to auction in recent years. The impressive exhibition history of this piece includes the artist's first retrospective which took place in 1972, as well as key American and European exhibitions of Russian avant-garde art staged in the 1970s and early 1980s.



The sale also includes one of the very few known surviving works by [Daniil Stepanov, *Prayer, Samarkand*](#), 1925 (estimate £150,000-200,000). This was most likely painted upon Stepanov's return from Central Asia to his wife's homeland of Italy in 1925. It is an important work of Russian modernism from a now legendary group of exiled artists in Turkestan at the beginning of the 1920s. *Prayer, Samarkand* was first exhibited at the 1926 Venice Biennale, and a year later at a solo exhibition held in Rome.

[Alexander Deineka's *In the Donbass*](#) from 1954 draws on the artist's favourite themes of vitality and health, prominent features of the newly imagined "Soviet man" (est £350,000-550,000). The artist returned to the subject time and again, one famous example being *Lunchbreak in the Donbass* from 1935, now housed in the National Museum of Riga. The work's provenance suggests it was of personal importance to Deineka, as he gifted it to the artist Serebryannyi, and it then later passed on to a pupil of Petrov-Vodkin's, Blagoveshenskaya. It comes to auction having never been offered before.



[Dmitri Stelletsy's *The Hunter*](#) (est. £150,000-200,000) was executed around 1921, not long after the artist's immigration to France. Russian-themed works such as this indicate the artist's firm attachment to his homeland; the subject of the hunt reflects Stelletsy's fascination with everyday courtly life in medieval Russia, with stylistic elements borrowed directly from Russian medieval illuminated manuscripts and icons. *The Hunter* was exhibited extensively throughout the 1920s, and most notably at the renowned Exhibition of Russian Art at the Grand Central Palace in New York in 1924, which marked the artist's debut in the United States.



The Bar-Gera Collection of Non-Conformist Art

Dating from the 1950s to the break-up of the Soviet Union, the aesthetic value of Jacob and Kenda Bar-Gera's collection speaks for itself, yet what is remarkable here is how these works collectively shine a light on a whole generation of Russian artists.

Spanning three decades, early acquisitions made in the 1960s were done in the most unusual circumstances, with foreign diplomats or students bringing works from the Soviet Union to their house in Cologne which the Bar-Geras had no chance to see and select before buying. Jacob started to travel to Russia only in 1988, and later the couple became close friends with many of the artists, such as Vladimir Nemukhin and Mikhail Grobman, several of whom had eventually emigrated to the West.

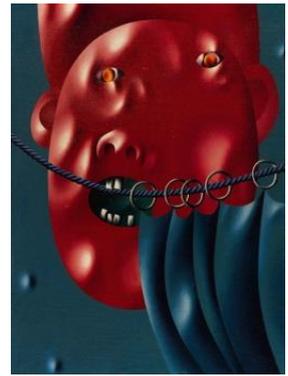
Works by over thirty artists including Ilya Kabakov, Erik Bulatov, Grisha Bruskin, Vladimir Nemukhin and masterpieces by Oleg Tselkov and Vladimir Weisberg together narrate a chapter of Russian art which until perestroika had no official written history.



[Vladimir Weisberg, *White Receiver on a White Background*, 1960, est. £60,000-80,000](#)

Jacob said that they never really felt like collectors, that they were themselves in the underground with the artists. Searching through the memories of their own harrowing past as Jewish children of the war and survivors of the holocaust, evidently something personally resonated in the task of gathering works which were painted by artists who were outsiders and whose work was repressed in their homeland.

The children of Jacob and Kenda Bar-Gera said: *“Our mother, Kenda, told us many times that her liberation from Auschwitz by the Red Army in 1945 gave her a deep love and appreciation for Russia and its people. Russia was always of special interest for her, initially the avant-garde artists of the early 20th century and later the period of Khrushchev and Brezhnev until perestroika. For our parents it was a moral obligation to help and support the oppressed artists in Russia in the late 1960s and the 1970s. Our father Jacob – or Yasha as he was called – was of Russian cultural origin and he immediately felt a connection with Russian artists.”*



[Oleg Tselkov, Circus, 1969, est. £50,000-70,000](#)

Some highlights of the collection include two early works by Vladimir Weisberg: *White Receiver on a White Background* dating from 1960 (£60,000-80,000), and *Portrait of Vishnyakova* (£50,000-70,000), as well as three early masterpieces by Oleg Tselkov. Click [here](#) to see the full list of works (lots 201 – 263), and [here](#) to read an interview with Jacob and Kenda Bar-Gera’s children.

Russian Works of Art Fabergé and Icons

[A Fabergé gem-set silver-gilt and enamel icon of the Yaroslavskaya Mother of God, Moscow, circa 1895](#)

28.5 by 32 cm, Estimate: £30,000 – 50,000

The original 13th century Yaroslavskaya Icon of the Mother of God has not survived, but the proliferation of its copies attests to the icon’s popularity, and it came to be inextricably linked with the House of Romanovs. Mikhail Feodorovich accepted his designation as Emperor of Russia in writing from Yaroslavl in 1613, and three hundred years later Emperor Nicholas II made a pilgrimage to the city. Both prayed to the Yaroslavskaya Mother of God.



The oklad surrounding this Fabergé icon reflects the impact of *Art Nouveau* with its glowing colours and curved lines. *Art Nouveau* was ushered into Russia thanks to the growing diplomatic relations with France towards the end of the 19th century, and Fabergé is understood to be the first St Petersburg jeweller to create works in the *Art Nouveau* style. In its synthesis of old and new, of reverence and whimsy, of tradition and rebellion, this icon illustrates the enormous artistic pool of creativity the House of Fabergé drew from to produce its unique and unparalleled art.

Please click [here](#) to browse the sale catalogue.

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Images are available upon request

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