Chapter 8

THE MOSCOW ART MARKET

JOHN E. BOWLT

The poetry, philosophy, and painting of Russian Modernism owed much to the organizational talents and aesthetic sensitivity of a group of entrepreneurs often referred to as the Moscow merchants. Distinguished patrons of the arts, they came to the fore in the decade before the First World War by acquiring works of art, subsidizing art books and magazines, arranging exhibitions, and in general constituting a principal clientele for the growing art market in Moscow. It should be stressed, however, that the title "Moscow art market" here is provisional: by art market we might understand that complex—or conspiracy—of methods whereby artefacts are bought and sold. In contemporary terms, the art market presupposes the presence of the manufacturer or supplier of the work of art (e.g., the painter, the archaeologist, the faker), the dealer or merchant who offers the piece for sale in the marketplace, and the buyer (private collector, museum, average consumer). This series of interactions is stimulated and facilitated by the ancillary system of galleries, auctions, exhibition facilities, publications (e.g., catalogs), appraisers, and attributors who sell their expertise, auctions, and so on. The art market, therefore, is an intricate mechanism that functions efficiently and advantageously when all or nearly all these elements are operative.

As the capitalist boom and embourgeoisement of Imperial Russia proceeded, Moscow and St. Petersburg society at the turn of the century began to adopt certain cultural rituals and customs generally identifiable with "middle-class values": an aspiration toward and claim to intellectual awareness, an increased desire to attend scholarly meetings devoted to the arts, and, not least, a vigorous interest in connoisseurship in collecting works of art both antique and modern, Russian and non-Russian. Of course, there were many regal and common precedents to these activities, but perhaps the figure most emulated by Moscow's Modernist collectors was Savva Mamontov. After all, during the 1880s and 1890s Mamontov and his wife Elizaveta not only turned their estate Abramtsevo (thirty kilometers from Moscow) into an art colony, during the 1880s and 1890s Mamontov and his wife Elizaveta not only turned their estate Abramtsevo (thirty kilometers from Moscow) into an art colony, but also inspired prominent or promising artists such as Vasily Polenov, Ilia Repin, and Valentin Serov to share in their nationalist revival, but they also established their own art market. They trained peasants to create specimens of popular arts and crafts such as toys, icons, and embroideries; then they advertised these products, exhibited them, and sold them at their Moscow outlet. In other words, Abramtsevo, contrary to what Soviet historians tell us, was not altogether a philanthropic venture; rather, it was an entire program of commercial investment. If it had not been for Mamontov's untimely imprisonment in 1899 and the collapse of his industrial empire, Abramtsevo might have proven to be a major force in the packaging, disseminating, and marketing of the new Russian art.

Mamontov, like Pavel Tretiakov, was a member of an economic or social group that might loosely be associated with the notion of "middle class," although it is a middle class that cannot be easily categorized or described. The real problem is that Moscow's merchants of the Modernist period, from about 1900 until the October Revolution, did not form a cohesive, integrated unit. True, Vladimir and Genrietta Girshman, Ivan Morozov, Nikolai Riabushinsky, and Sergei Shchukin owed much of their wealth and power to their support of the capitalist system; that is, they bought and sold, juggled with stocks and shares, and established and disbanded companies to suit the shifting patterns of the Russian and international economies. In this sense, they shared the same economic base, but, by their very nature, the fiercely individual Moscow merchants commercially and artistically distrusted each other. Nikolai Riabushinsky, for example, came from a family of Old Believers, while the Girshmans were Jewish, and even though neither party manifested particular interest in their religions, they were distant from each other. Morozov and Shchukin, also Old Believers, had little time for each other. And Ilia Ostroukhov and Stepan Riabushinsky, the great icon collectors, were hardly on speaking terms. In other words, it is misleading to regard the Moscow merchants and patrons of the Silver Age as a single cohesive class united in their aspirations and endeavors, even though they all took considerable pride in their newfound fortunes and supported similar types of art.

As far as artistic preference is concerned, for example, it is important to realize that the merchant patrons of Moscow were contemporary rather than retrospective in their taste, despite their general interest in their national past. They did not try to duplicate the aesthetic preferences of the old aristocracy by amassing Italian Renaissance and Old Dutch Masters, as the Demidovs and the Stroganovs had done. Rather, they concentrated on the new art—Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Symbolism. Certainly, members of the old Moscow dvorianstvo—the Gagarins, the Golitsyns, and the Tolstois—were still active as patrons and collectors during the Silver Age, but their traditional role as the arbiters of taste was rapidly assumed by the new representative middle class. Unlike the Moscow and St. Petersburg aristocracy, with their...
nostalgia for more classical and more tranquil eras, the Moscow merchants—
when it came to studio or "high" art—looked forward, not backward, recog-
nizing precisely those artistic trends that questioned and rejected artistic con-
vention, just as their own social position was also to some extent presumptu-
ous and avant-garde. Perhaps that is why so many paintings by the early
Moscow Modernists such as Pavel Kuznetsov and Nikolai Milioti were ac-
quired by Genrietta Girshman, Nikolai Riabushinsky, and their colleagues.
These collectors were not impervious to the ceremonies of aristocratic life;
they were flattered by imperial attention. Nikolai Riabushinsky was received
by Tsar Nicholas for his services as publisher of the lavish journal Zolotoe
rulno. They sat for court painters (both the Girshmans and Morozov were por-
trayed by Valentin Serov, Russia's painter laureate), and, of course, they built
themselves palatial residences in town and country. Indeed, they realized that,
by the early 1900s, their influence on the development of artistic taste and
the market was as decisive as that of kings and queens. Indicative of this is the
impressive exhibition of Russian portraits, furniture, and icons—the "Exhi-
bition of Art Works from Antiquity"—held at the Stroganov Institute of Tech-
nical Drawing in Moscow in 1901. Merchant families (for example, the Mo-
rozovs) lent just as many pieces as the old dvoriane (for example, the Goli-
tsyus).3

Those qualities of private initiative and rugged self-assurance that we as-
ociate with Moscow's business interests in the prerevolutionary era also
helped them operate in a cultural environment where the slightest deviation
still caused condemnation and reprehension and where, as the poet Benedikt
Livshits later recalled "atrophy of artistic taste had become a general phenom-
emon. While continuing to pay official tribute to the great shadows of the past,
the bourgeoisie, firmly ensconced in power, created few idols for itself, ones
that incarnated its esthetic. It is important to remember that from about 1904 to about 1914—that is,
the Silver Age—Moscow did not have an intricate, sophisticated art market of

3 For commentary on the "Exhibition of Art Works from Antiquity," see Moskvich, "Mo-
skovskaiia vystavka khudozhestvennykh proizvedenii stariny," in Mir iskusstva 6 (1901): 325. See
also D. Nikolov: Sokrojishcha v Moskve (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1901).

4 Karl Avgustovich Lenner (Le Mercier) had been an employee at the Avanto (Avanzo) art
supply store in Moscow before opening a hat store and then a private gallery on Saltykovskii
pereulok in Moscow. His gallery never really enjoyed social or commercial success and, in the
early years, was dismissed as a feeble attempt to imitate Georges Petit and Durand-Ruel in Paris.
The Le Mercier exhibitions were moderate in style and catholic in taste, although occasionally
avant-garde artists were represented, for example, Ivan Puni at the "Exhibition of Industrial De-
sign" in 1915—1916. The kind of art favored by Le Mercier—paintings and Russian genre scenes
by Aleksej Khlahumov and Fedot Sychkov—appealed to the petite bourgeoisie and had little
relevance to the Moscow merchants. For some information on the Le Mercier Gallery, see
I. Ziberebrin and V. Samkov, eds., Valentin Serov v vospominaniiakh, dnevnikakh i perepiske
relevante to the Moscow merchants. For some information on the Le Mercier Gallery, see
I. Ziberebrin and V. Samkov, eds., Valentin Serov v vospominaniiakh, dnevnikakh i perepiske
4 One commercial Moscow
the kind that New York, Paris, and Milan have today. For example, there was
no specialist auction house, and the first private commercial art gallery, the
Le Mercier Gallery, appeared there only in 1909. In other words, we are
concerned here only with the beginning of an art market in the Madison Ave-
ue sense, a promising development cut short by the October Revolution,
never to be renewed except in the umbrageous world of private collecting,
wheeling, and dealing that exists in Moscow today. Conservative, moderate,
and radical artists practiced a wide range of artistic systems. Various clienteles
had various tastes, and, while some Moscow merchants possessed an ex-
tremely refined understanding of art, many did not. Collecting, cataloging,
and connoisseurship were occupations that grew space in prerevolutionary
Moscow, and the nouveaux riches acquired all manner of artifacts—from sam-
overs to French Impressionists paintings, from icons to Japanese prints—but
not for financial investment. Some collectors acquired works of art simply
because ownership offered a traditional status symbol; others felt that the enor-
mous walls of their Moscovskaia osobniakki (mansions) needed pictorial relief
and decoration. Still others maintained a serious and expert interest in their choice
of subject, and they sought, restored, and catalogued their acquisitions with
pride and joy. And a few collectors—such as Ostrookhov—were regarded as
the ultimate scholarly authorities on particular areas of art history.

Moscow was not, and never has been, a major international art market, even
though during the years from 1910 to 1925 it was one of the four or five axes
of the international avant-garde (with Paris, Milan, Munich, and Berlin).5
Like their illustrious predecessor, Catherine the Great, local collectors of an-
tiques, oriental art, Old Masters, and modern French painting bought works
through galleries and auction houses in Berlin, Paris, Rome, London, and
New York, but rarely in Moscow, unless, of course, their preference was for
Russian icons or contemporary Russian painting.6

5 Perhaps the series of art and book auctions initiated in Moscow in 1987 will stimulate the
formation of a Soviet "art market" in the Western sense. Of particular interest in this respect was
the auction of contemporary Soviet artists organized by Sothery's in Moscow on July 7, 1988.

6 Indicative of this strong orientation toward Western centers for buying and selling art is the
fact that Riabushinsky himself organized auctions of Russian collections in New York and other

1 J. Bowlt, trans., Benedikt Livshits: One and a Half-Eyed Archer (Newtonville: Oriental Re-
search Partners, 1976), 81; first published in Russian in 1933.
gallery, Le Mercier, favored the decorative arts and eclectic shows, but it had only limited financial success because of this traditional bias toward the West. St. Petersburg did not fare much better, although the breakup of noble houses and the sale of their contents did contribute to a lively auction market there just before the Revolution, and there were art supply stores run by Ivan Avanto and Aleksandr Begrov. The one private art gallery in St. Petersburg, Nadezhda Dobychina’s Art Bureau, founded in 1910, dealt only with contemporary Russian art (for example, Natan Altman, Lev Bakst, Marc Chagall, Boris Grigoriev, Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin) and gained a certain prestige thanks to the obdurate bargaining powers of its abrasive, no-nonsense proprietress who “dealt with the artistic Olympi of both capitals as she would with her household menagerie” (fig. 4). 7

Still, as we know from memoirs and telephone books of the period, Moscow had numerous stariievshchiki (junk dealers), flea markets, and old book dealers (who would often sell prints and paintings), and it was a regular pastime of the Moscow middle classes to visit the markets on Saturdays in search of knickknacks, engravings, and old porcelain. In other words, Moscow in 1904–1914 did not have an equivalent to our Madison Avenue or New Bond Street, but it already possessed the structure upon which such a market could have flourished. Moscow had two important public art museums—the Tretiakov Gallery and the Museum of Fine Arts, headed by the able Ivan Tsveleva.8 It had two major art schools—the Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture and the Central Stroganov Institute of Technical Drawing, which also had its own museum—numerous private studios (for example, those of Fedor Rerberg and Konstantin Iuon), as well as reasonable art supply stores (a branch of Avantso’s St. Petersburg store and the artist store on or near Kuznetsky Most), a good rental exhibition space, the Art Salon, on the Bolsshaya Dmitrovka, and regular exhibitions featuring retrospectives, one-man shows, and group shows.9 The Moscow construction boom of the early twentieth century also encouraged the direct involvement of artists in public spaces. For example, Sergei Maliutin produced the folkloric decorations for the Pertsov Apartment House, and Fedor Shekhtel made the swirling organic decorations

cities (i.e., not in Moscow). See, for example, the auction catalog Primitives and Other Old Master Belonging to Nicholas Riabushinsky from the Collection of Prince Golinchaff-Kroustovskoff (New York: American Art Galleries, 1916).

7 Bowlt, Benedikt Livshits, 116.
8 For information on Ivan Tsveleva and the opening of the Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow (now called the Pushkin Museum of Visual Arts), see Mazci 3 (1982). The whole issue is devoted to the Pushkin Museum.
9 The Art Salon was also known as the Mikhailova Art Salon. It operated from 1912(?) through 1917 and witnessed a number of important shows of modern Russian art: for example, Natalia Goncharova’s large one-woman show in 1913, Konstantin Kandinsky’s panorama of contemporary trends called “Exhibition of Painting, 1915” in 1915, and the first and second “Exhibitions of Contemporary Decorative Art” in 1916 and 1917.

for the Stepan Riabushinsky villa, which he also designed. Aleksandr Lakimchenko made panneaux for the interiors of several villas, while Sapunov and Sudeikin designed the interiors for cabarets. In other words, the private and public art commissions for vestibules, walls, club lounges, and evening costumes generated by Moscow’s thriving capitalist economy also accelerated the trend toward the semblance of a professional art market. Indeed, by around 1906, just as the “World of Art” held its last exhibition in St. Petersburg and just as Sergei Diaghilev, a prime mover of the new art, began to concentrate his activities on Paris, so a new generation of Moscow artists and patrons manifested itself, communicating ideas through social gatherings, the press, and exhibitions. Aesthetically and psychologically this generation differed from their more refined colleagues in the North. The poet Mikhail Kuzmin recorded his impressions during a trip to Moscow at this time: “the loud Moscow accent, the
peculiar words, the manner of clicking the heels as they walked along, the
Tatar cheekbones and eyes, the moustaches twirled upwards, the shocking
neckties, colored waistcoats and jackets, a certain bravado and implacability
in their opinions and judgements involuntarily I thought: new people have
come forward." These "new people," the Modernist artists, literati, and
their patrons, many of whom associated with the Symbolist reviews Iskusstvo
and Zolotoe runo, owed much of their success to the "art market." In fact,
Modernist painting in Moscow could scarcely have developed without its
complex artistic mechanisms, especially the social and cultural "mixers" that
brought together artists and collectors, sellers and buyers.

By the mid-1900s the Moscow art market was diverse and developing, but
a particular point of emphasis as far as the Girshmans, the Morozovs, Ivan
Troianovsky, and Nikolai Riabushinsky were concerned, was Moscow Sym-
bolist painting, a primary ingredient of early Russian Modernism that prefig-
ured what is now called the avant-garde. The painters and sculptors who sup-
ported the Symbolist aesthetic, some of whom were members of the Crimson
Rose and Blue Rose groups (1904–1908) drew upon both European and do-
mestic sources.11 Thanks to their older colleagues, Viktor Borisov-Musatov and
Mikhail Vrubel, artists such as Nikolai Feofilaktov, Pavel Kuznetsov, Alek-
sandr Matveev, Nikolai and Vassili Milioti, Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, Nikol-
ai Sapunov, Martinos Sarian, Sergei Sudeikin, and Petr Utkin were aware of
Gauguin and the Nabis, of Art Nouveau and Jugendstil. They were also
close to the Russian Symbolist poets, especially Konstantin Balмонт, Alek-
sandr Blok, Andrei Belyi, and Valery Briusov and, like them, appreciated the
mystical philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev whose famous poem of 1892 sum-
marized their worldview:

Dear friend, don't you see
That all that is seen by us
is only a reflection, only shadows
Of what the eye cannot see?12

The basic idea of Soloviev's poem—that the "real" reality is beyond the
world of concrete appearances—applied to both poets and painters of Rus-
sia's fin de siècle, and they endeavored to perceive and represent this higher
harmony in their visionary poems and pictures. Kuznetsov, for example, felt
that renewed attention to the primitive functions of the life cycle, especially
pregnancy and childbirth, could remove the false outer shell of civilization
and reconnect us with the cosmic essence. Utkin saw the ultimate truth to lie
in astrological and meteorological changes, and Sapunov and Sudeikin inter-

10 A. Belyi, Mezhdu dvukh revoliutsii (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo pintseteii, 1934), 244.
11 For information on these groups, see J. Bowlt, "Russian Symbolism and the 'Blue Rose'
12 V. Soloviev, "'Milyi drug, il'ly ne vidish'" (1892).
kov played an enthusiastic part), the Way, and the House of Song. Moreover, these professional assemblies were matched by the many socialite salons that mushroomed in Moscow and St. Petersburg at the same time, offering entertainment as well as enlightenment.

By the mid-1900s several cultural salons and clubs established in Moscow were frequented by both art patrons and artists and writers. Chief among them were the Literary and Artistic Circle (the ‘Circle’) and the Society of Free Aesthetics (the ‘Aesthetics’). These two clubs were the most important from the point of view of Moscow Modernism and the art market, although several similar societies, both formal and informal, existed simultaneously. In this respect, I should mention Vladimir Shmarovin’s ‘Wednesdays,’ held regularly from 1886 through 1924, (fig. 6)13 and Nikolai Teleshov’s Wednesdays of the 1890s and 1900s.14 Although the meetings were, in principle, open to

14 See N. Teleshov, Zapiski pisatelei (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel, 1952), esp. chap. 3.
all artists and writers, a certain section of the intellectual community was fa-
loved: established artists and literati such as Levitan, Repin, Chekhov, and Gorky. With the rise of a new generation of artists, the need was felt for a more progressive, more tolerant cultural meeting place. This need was filled by the foundation of the Circle and the Aesthetics. Both societies had direct relevance to the Symbolist painters, especially the Aesthetics; they acted as platforms for discussing artistic ideas, exhibiting pictures, and meeting rep-
resentatives of the capitalist and intellectual hierarchies. However, the impor-
tance of these societies was not limited to their relevance to the Symbolist artists alone, because both existed until the First World War (1916 and 1917, respectively) and therefore witnessed and encouraged the rise of Neo-Primitiv-
ism and Cubo-Futurism.

The ‘Circle’ was founded in 1899 by members of the former ‘Artistic Circle’ (Artistitcheskii kruchok) club, a meeting place primarily for actors and musicians. The new Circle quickly became a focal point of Moscow’s cultural life, as its premises in the Vostrianovsky House of the Bolshaia Dmitrovka began to draw representatives of all art media. Its library, restaurant, and bili-
iard hall were among its main attractions, but most popular were the Tuesday discussions devoted to questions of art and literature. In the early 1900s these ‘Tuesdays,’ now conducted by Balmond, Briusov, and V. Ivanov, took the form of papers delivered by members followed by discussions between speaker and audience. Many representatives of the Scorpion and Gryphon publishing houses and of Zolotoe runo took part, and colleagues from St. Peters-
burg, such as Gippius and Merezhkovsky, were invited to attend. In this way a wide arena was provided for communicating ideas between writers, painters, and musicians. It is significant, therefore, that Balmond’s Three
Dawns should have been produced at the Circle with decor by Nikolai Feofi,
and patrons visited it. The comfortable, well-appointed club was conducive to
and physically—with their audiences.

The Society of Free Aesthetics, especially relevant to the Moscow art mar-
ket, was very active in its organizations of intellectual and artistic confronta-
tions. Of all the Moscow clubs, it was the most international and the most
sophisticated. Founded in 1906 on the Bolshaia Dmitrovka, the society ar-
ranged lectures, exhibitions, and dinner parties, and most of Moscow’s artists
and patrons visited it. The comfortable, well-appointed club was conducive to
intimate discussion and contemplation: ‘You come in on to a staircase cov-
ered in blue-grey carpet, you turn into three or four rooms given over to us for
conferences; the same blue-grey walls; the carpets beneath your feet, the so-
fas, the armchairs and the little tables are of the same colors: blue-grey and
blue-grey; the light is dull.’18 Under the auspices of Belyi and Briusov, the
society did much to propagate Symbolism, although it broadened its interests
considerably after 1909–1910 when mercantile members began to ‘raise their
voices.’19 The intellectual membership of the society was actually dominated
by painters and musicians, and writers were disproportionately few, mainly
supporters of the magazine Vesy (Scales). Painters included all the Blue Rose
artists, Goncharova, Larionov, Vasily Perepletchikov, Serov, Georgii Iaku-
lov, and many others; musicians included Leonid Sabaneev and Aleksandr
Skrabin; and foreign visitors included Matisse, Verhaeren, and Vincent
d’Indy. As at other cultural clubs in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the society
inspired a continuous cross-fertilization between the representatives of the vari-
ous disciplines, resulting in many joint projects. Sudeikin, for example, col-
lected with Bely on the idea of a puppet theater there with texts by Bely
and designs by himself. In addition, carpets designed by Sudeikin were dis-
played in the rooms of the Society in 1907. In 1910 Briusov sanctioned a one-
woman exhibition of Goncharova that caused a public scandal.20 A Larionov
exhibition was also held there in 1912.

The Society of Free Aesthetics lasted until 1917 when it closed, as Belyi
recalled, because of an ‘excess of lady millionaires’ among its members.18
Of course, other meeting places in Moscow, such as the Polytecthnic Museum,
sponsored all kinds of public lectures, from Belyi’s ‘Art of the Future’ in
1907 and the Cubo-Futurist escapades of 1912–1913 to M. Lapirov-Skob’s
discussion of interplanetary travel in 1924. There were also the bohemian ca-
fés such as the Café Grecque on Tverskoi Boulevard that inaugurated Mos-
cow’s café culture—culminating in the brilliant, but ephemeral Café Pittor-
esque, which opened in January 1918.21 All these institutions, but especi-
ally the Society of Free Aesthetics, can be regarded as symptomatic of, if not stimu-
li to, the development of the Moscow art market to the wider appreciation of art,
the establishment of particular artistic values, and the easier communication
between vendor, collector, and supplier.

Recalling his experience of the Society of Free Aesthetics, Belyi wrote sar-
donically: ‘‘Savva Mamontov, lots of them, suddenly caught on to us—it was
almost pitiful. . . . Such couples (the Girshmans) appeared everywhere; the

18 Belyi, Mezha dvukh revolutsii, 184.
19 A. Belyi, Na rubrzech dvukh stoletii (Moscow: Zemlia i fabrika, 1930), 219.
20 See the references to Goncharova’s 1910 exhibition in V. Briusov, Dnevniki 1891–1910
(Moscow: Sabushnikov, 1927), 142, 191, 192.
21 Belyi, Mezha dvukh revolutsii, 219.
22 For Moscow’s café culture, see L. Dobranov, Kanaun (Moscow: Sovetski khudozhnik, 1968), esp. 80–92. For the Café Pittoresque, see S. Aladzhalov, Georgii Yakulov (Erevan: ATO, 1971), esp. chap. 5; A. Galiuzhina et al., Agitatsionno-massovoe iskusstvo pervykh let Oktiabria
(Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1971), 100–101; V. Komardenkov, Dni minuzha (Moscow: Sovetski khu-
husbands would give subsidies to societies trying to obtain something from us with the persistence of goats; the wives were languorous and, like Venuses, issued forth from a beautiful foam of muslin and diamond constellations."

In spite of Belyi’s ironic tone, the Girshmans, Ostroukhov, the Riabushinskys, Ivan Troianovsky, and, of course, Ivan Morozov and Sergei Shchukin, acted as positive forces in disseminating new artistic ideas, and purchasing works by the early Modernists from both public exhibitions and private showings. Troianovsky, in fact, “like a child, got carried away with every achievement of Larionov, Kuznetsov, Sudeikin.” Additional support was provided by the regular soirées of Genrietta Girshman whose physical beauty inspired several portraits, for example by Serov in 1906, 1907 and 1911 and by Somov in 1911. Girshman was especially close to Sapunov and Sudeikin, whose pictures she collected, and to N. Milioti, who was rumored to have been her lover.

Of particular import to the general development of the Moscow art market and Russian Modernism were the names of the collectors Ivan Morozov and Sergei Shchukin, both members of the merchant community. The most celebrated of the Morozovs in the sphere of art was Ivan, the owner of a complex of textile mills, whose collection of modern Western European paintings became internationally known (fig. 7). But in addition to his interest in French masters, Morozov purchased many works by young Russian painters, including Goncharova, Nikolai Krymov, Sarian, and Utkin; and Serov’s portrait of him (1910) perhaps demonstrates the respect and sympathy that he enjoyed among the artists of his time. Starting his collection of French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist pictures only in 1903, Morozov soon owned one of the greatest collections of such art, rivaled only by that of Shchukin. His villa on Prechistenka, the interior of which had been reconstructed on the lines of an art gallery, boasted examples of Bonnard, Cézanne, Denis, Gauguin, Matisse, and Renoir. By 1917 the number of such pictures totaled 250. Morozov was in personal contact with many of these artists, and on his invitation Denis came to Moscow to paint panneaux for his villa. The music room, for example, Denis decorated with the story of Psyche. Morozov’s collection of French paintings was catalogued by Sergey Makovsky in 1912 and published in Apollon (1912, no. 3-4).

Sergei Shchukin started his equally famous collection of modern Western European paintings about 1897 (fig. 8) and by the early 1900s he owned examples of all the principal Impressionists including Degas, Monet, and Renoir housed in his eighteenth-century villa on Znamensky pereulok. The most valuable part of his collection was a room devoted to Gauguin. In later years he included the Cubists such as Braque, Derain, Le Fauconnier, and Picasso, and artists of rather different trends, such as Liebermann and Redon. Like Morozov, Shchukin was in personal contact with Western artists, and at his invitation Matisse visited Moscow in October 1911, under the auspices of the Society of Free Aesthetics. Shchukin’s impressive collection overshadowed the more modest interests of his brother Petr, whose activities covered a more eclectic field, but his collections of Persian and Japanese art, Russian engravings and drawings and Russian icons and domestic utensils were particularly fine (fig. 9). The catalog of Sergei Shchukin’s Western masters was pub-

20 Belyi, Mezhdu dvukh revoliutsii, 224–25.
21 Ibid., 225.
22 For information on the collecting activities of Morozov and Shchukin, see B. Kean, All the Empty Palaces: The Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Russia (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1983). See also A. Podzun-Davydov, Russkoe iskusstvo promyshlennogo kapitalizma (Moscow: GAKhN, 1929), esp. chaps. 6, 7, 8.
23 For information on Matisse’s visit, see Yu. Rusakov, “Matisse in Russia in the Autumn of 1911,” Burlington Magazine (May 1975), 284–91.
24 On Petr Shchukin and his collection, see P. Shchukin, comp., Kratkoe opisanie Shchukin-

Fig. 7. Pavel Pavlinov, Portrait of Ivan Morozov (1918). Reproduced in Lobanov, Kanuny, 146.
Fig. 8. Dmitry Melnikov, Portrait of Sergei Shchukin (1915). Present location unknown. Reproduced as the frontispiece to B. Kean, All the Empty Palaces (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1983).

Fig. 9. Photograph of one hall in Petr Shchukin’s mansion in Moscow showing part of his collection (ca. 1895). Reproduced in P. Shchukin, Kratkoe opisanie Shchukinskogo muzeia v Moskve (Moscow: Mamontov, 1895), opp. p. 56.

In 1913, and the outline collection was recataloged upon its transfer to the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in 1918 (then called the Museum of New Western Painting).25

Through their collections, Morozov and Shchukin exerted an appreciable influence on the formation of Modernist art in Russia, and Moscow artists such

as Goncharova and Larionov paraphrased a number of the Gauguin and Matisse canvases that they saw in these merchants’ homes. But both men, rather aloof from Moscow’s bohemia, led a conservative, patriarchal way of life. In this respect they differed markedly from Nikolai Riabushinsky—the prodigal son of the famous banking family and surely the most colorful of the Moscow patrons.26

Riabushinsky was a playboy and a dilettante, possessing neither the business acumen of his brothers Stepan (the banker) and Pavel (owner of Utro Rossii) nor the artistic refinement of Diaghilev whom, ostensibly, he chose to imitate. Nevertheless, Riabushinsky was fascinated by the new art and did much to propagate it. His luxurious review Zolotoe runo, what many called a

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25 See Katalog Gosudarstvennogo museia novogo zapadnogo iskusstva (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi Muzei novogo zapadnogo iskusstva, 1928). Useful information is also contained in the exhibition catalogs Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Paintings from the USSR, the National Gallery, Washington, D.C., 1973; Capolavori impressionisti e postimpressionisti dai musei sovietici (Lugano: Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, 1983).

"merchant’s whim," produced a grand gesture; its Moscow panache and enthusiasm for Symbolism and Post-Impressionism did much to advance the cause of Moscow artists. Riabushinsky also rendered a valuable service to modern art by financing and coorganizing four major exhibitions: the "Blue Rose" (1907), the international "Salon of the ‘Golden Fleece’" (1908), and the two "Golden Fleece" exhibitions (1909–1910, the first of which was international). Apart from collecting works by modern Russian and French artists, Riabushinsky painted profusely, contributed to exhibitions, wrote critical reviews, and even published a book of his own poetry (under the name of N. Shinsky). To indulge his pleasures, Riabushinsky built himself a mansion in Petrovskii Park called the Black Swan; behind its neo-classical proportions the most outlandish events took place (fig. 10). There were cages for lions and tigers in the garden, at Christmas a huge fir tree would be erected and decorated with electric lights, and the interior boasted an impressive array of furnishings. To a large extent, his creative activity was questionable, merely a pretext for enjoying the license that an artist’s life could afford. His maxim—"I love beauty, and I love a lot of women"—betrayed the kind of life he led. But whatever his personal faults, Riabushinsky was liberal with his financial resources. For example, in 1906 Riabushinsky commissioned a series of portraits of contemporary writers which resulted in Somov’s remarkable heads of Blok and V. Ivanov. The same year he sent paints and brushes to Vrubel, then in Usoltsev’s mental asylum, so that he could complete his portrait of Briusov in the same series. Also in 1906 Riabushinsky organized a curious competition with a cash prize for the most convincing depiction of the devil. Riabushinsky’s prestige as a merchant Maecenas, while doubted and parodied in some quarters, did not go unrecognized by the tsar who received him in October 1906 and accepted the nine numbers of Zolotoe runo in handsome bindings "executed, according to rumors, by famous artists from a design by Riabushinsky himself." Still, Riabushinsky was interested in not only promoting a magazine and art exhibitions but also enjoying the profits that the buying and selling of art could produce. This prompted him to consider building a Palace of the Arts in Moscow based on a shareholder scheme of five hundred shares at 1,000 rubles per share. The construction was to have been a permanent exhibition hall and museum of modern Russian art with auction facilities; although Riabushinsky himself bought twenty-five shares, the project was never realized, due to his own financial collapse in 1909–1910. To counteract his losses, he auctioned some of his paintings in 1911 and 1916, and, in fact, much of his collection was destroyed by a fire in the Black Swan in 1914. Riabushinsky quickly restored his fortune and opened a Russian antique store on the Champs-Elysées, Paris. After the Revolution he was employed by the Soviets as a buyer and valuer for the new Commission Stores, but he soon emigrated to Paris, where he spent the remainder of his life as an antique dealer, traveling between Paris and Nice.

The patronal activities of Riabushinsky, Morozov, Shchukin, and the Girshmans played a central role in the development of Russian Modernism. The diversity and rapid proliferation of their collections in the late 1900s were symptomatic of the energy and versatility of the Moscow art market as a whole—qualities that also helped create another vital ingredient in that potpourri of artistic ferment, that is, periodicals and books devoted to modern art. Prominent among them were the magazines Ikasstvo and Zolotoe runo.
Iskusstvo was founded in 1905 by a cultured and wealthy Muscovite, Nikolai Tarovaty, who, like Riabushinsky, had close personal ties with many artists. Tarovaty's magazine filled the need for an artistic and doctrinal platform for the Symbolist poets and painters, and its articles and reproductions held a distinct bias toward Moscow. Iskusstvo treated only the initial stage of Modernism because it was forced to close after only the eighth issue in spite of strong financial support from Sergei Krechetov (Sergei Sokolov), director of the Gryphon publishing house. In 1906 its place was taken by Zolotoe runo, although on a much grander scale, and Tarovaty was retained as art correspondent until his death in October of that year when the artist Vasili Milioto (brother of Nikolai) succeeded him.

Iskusstvo provided the first opportunity for the new Moscow artists to submit graphic decorations to an art journal devoted wholly to their cause: examples of graphics by Anatolii Arapov, Feofilaktov, Sapunov, and other Symbolist artists as well as reproductions of paintings from current exhibitions appeared in most numbers. Although Iskusstvo was oriented strongly toward the Moscow Symbolists, it also paid attention to other Russian and Western movements. Tarovaty himself appreciated the attainments of the St. Petersburg World of Art group and included Alexandre Benois, Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, Evgenii Lancéray, and Nikolai Rerikh as well as Moscow artists in his editorial staff. The wide diapason of articles indicated this artistic tolerance: Konstantin Siunnerberg contributed a lucid examination of Benois, Grabar, Fillip Maliavin, Somov, and Vrubel in an article entitled "Five Artists"; Nikolai Vrangel wrote a long review of the "Exhibition of Historic Portraits" at the Tauride Palace; and Sergei Makovsky submitted a perceptive critique of Carrière's portraits. Iskusstvo even drew attention to the art of Mexico and Japan, a move that preaged the interest of the avant-garde artists such as Mikhail Larionov and Kazimir Malevich in primitive and Eastern cultures.

With the collapse of Tarovaty's Iskusstvo in 1905, the urgent need for a well-organized, progressive art journal that would champion the ideas of the new art arose. This vacuum was filled in January 1906 when the first number of Riabushinsky's Zolotoe runo, one of the most exciting products of the Moscow art market, appeared. Undoubtedly, Zolotoe runo reflected the personal preferences of its owner, and its initial interest was in Symbolism, especially the art of the Blue Rose artists. But it did not ignore St. Petersburg. Indeed, the World of Art painter, Lancéray designed the magazine's cover for the 1906 and 1907 issues and augmented the Vrubel design for the subsequent numbers; moreover, during its first year of existence many St. Petersburg artists and critics contributed, including Benois, Siunnerberg, Filosofov, S. Makovsky, and Aleksandr Shervashidze. By 1908 Zolotoe runo had become an art journal rather than a literary review as a result of Riabushinsky's private desires—partly hostilities between him and Iurgis Baltrešaitis, Bely, Briusov, Gippius, and Merezhkovsky (all of whom resigned at the end of 1907) severed the literary connection, and partly the journal's close relationship with the "Blue Rose" and "Wreath" exhibitions in 1907–1908 melded the artistic personal. Many important contributions appeared during the few numbers published, not least the successive presentations on Vrubel, Somov, Borisov-Musatov, and Bakst, a sequence that achieved a nice balance between the art of Moscow and that of St. Petersburg. Particular mention should also be made of two philosophical articles that related directly to the predicament of the Russian visual arts, that is, Benois's "Artistic Heresies" (1906, no. 2) and Imsgard's "Painting and Revolution" (1906, no. 5). The former opposed the contemporary fashion for extreme individualism in art, arguing that this would lead eventually to aesthetic chaos. Imsgard was more optimistic, implying that the next phase in art would be "visual music and phonic painting without themes"—a gesture to the Symbolist search for artistic synthesis and a clear anticipation of abstract art.

Zolotoe runo ran out of funds in 1909 and was forced to close, although its last issues for that year did not appear until early 1910. By then the journal had served its purpose, for the apogee of Symbolism had passed. Its philosophy was replaced by the more abrasive gestures of the avant-garde. By and large, however, the Moscow merchants did not favor the extreme artistic manifestations of the avant-garde and expressed little interest in the abstract painting and sculpture, of say, Malevich and Vladimir Tatlin. Suprematist painting and "assemblages of material" were too radical even for that new and vigorous class, and the exhibitions and societies that propagated these art forms after about 1910, for example, the Jack of Diamonds, were rarely patronized by the Girshmans, the Morozovs, the Riabushinskys, and the Shchukins. In fact, the real avant-garde had no developed market, and if the public attended their exhibitions, it was out of curiosity and jocularity, not aesthetic delight. After all, how could one take seriously artists who painted their faces and wore wooden spoons in their buttonholes? In other words, the Moscow merchants were content to remain with the early Modernism that they had discovered in around 1905 and continued to buy works by Feofilaktov, Grabar, Kuznetsov, the Miliotis, Sarian, Serov, Somov, and Sudeikin until the Revolution. True, Shchukin acquired major Cubist paintings by Picasso, but to Malevich and Tatlin even these were hopelessly passé by 1915. How do we explain this sudden reticence on the part of Riabushinsky and his colleagues?

By 1912 the political and social mood of Moscow differed greatly from what it had been in 1905–1906, when the art of the Symbolist poets and painters had responded to a longing for peace in a society rocked by the first revolution and the tragedy of the Russo-Japanese War. On the eve of the First

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33 Tatlin referred to his first reliefs of 1914 as "assemblages of materials."
34 On the Jack of Diamonds, see G. Pospelow, Karo-Bube (Dresden: VEB, 1985).
World War, the Moscow merchants seemed to awaken from this blissful state of retreat and realize that profound social transformation was inevitable and imminent in Russia. This growing unease and insecurity might explain their switch in artistic taste from the unusual in art to historicism and retrospectivism. The return to convention was manifest, for example, in the application of the neo-classical style to the new villas and dachas designed by Ivan Fomin and Shekhtel for the Moscow merchants. In turn, this was matched by their support of Acmeism, not Futurism, in literature and their acceptance of the more academic painting of Boris Grigoriev, Vasily Shukhaev, and Aleksandr Jakovlev. The new art magazines—Apollon, and Stolitsa i usad'ba—that replaced Iskusstvo and Zolotoe runo were now published in St. Petersburg, reflecting that city’s sense of aesthetic measure, clarity, and proportion.

With the outbreak of war, this new conservatism among the Moscow merchants was consolidated, forcing an irreparable break between their artistic aspirations and the extreme developments of the avant-garde (for example, Malevich invented and exhibited his Black Square in 1915). By then the circle was fast closing. Surrounded by the misleading vividness of Kuznetsov’s and Sarian’s primitive landscapes, by the false logic of Matisse’s and Picasso’s still lives, by the irretrievable grandeur of Serov’s portraits, and by the erotic knickknacks of Piotrifikov and Somov, the Girshmans, the Riabushinskys, the Morozovs, and the Shchukins encountered the October Revolution. The resultant closure of the stock exchange, the liquidation of assets, the nationalization of private collections, the ban on the exportation of art objects, and above all, the virtual disappearance of the merchant class led immediately to the collapse or at least transmutation of the Moscow art market.