

Russian decorative arts book written by Cynthia Coleman Sparke offers secrets of the Tsars



"Some lucky person is going to pick up a decorative Easter egg at a car boot sale one day and find they have won the arts lottery when it sells for £20m" says author Cynthia Coleman Sparke, whose book is being launched at Bonhams.

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LONDON.- With Easter drawing near and the recent discovery of The Third Imperial Easter Egg, thought lost for over 100 years, all eyes are on the legendary Russian designer, Fabergé. Each of the 50 Fabergé eggs created for the Tsar took one year to complete - from the original conception to delivery on Good Friday each Easter.

Russian Decorative Arts is an informative guide to Russian artworks and their historical context written by Cynthia Coleman Sparke, Russian Art consultant at [Bonhams](#). Published by Antique Collectors' Club, the book covers a wide range of crafts from Fabergé, jewellery, woodwork, hardstone, glass and porcelain to precious metals, explained against the fascinating backdrop of Russian history. Each topic is detailed with an illustrated chapter which introduces the creative technique, its specific Russian characteristics and an overview of the principle makers.

Pre-Revolutionary Russia is explored through the glittering artefacts of the Tsarist era from as far back as the 16th and 17th centuries and focusing in particular on works created in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, as night fell on the Imperial rule.

Russia's last great Imperial celebration took place at the Winter Palace in St Petersburg with the lavish ball of 1913 celebrating 300 years of Romanov rule. The finest gowns, jewels, snuff boxes, and banqueting tableware of the Tsarist era were sumptuously displayed then for the last time.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 brought such opulence to an end. In 1918, while under house arrest in Ekaterinberg, the entire Russian Royal family was executed by Bolshevik authorities and the Imperial era ended permanently.

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russians have been eager to repatriate their lost heritage. Works by jewellers and silversmiths to the Tsar and Tsarinas are particularly sought after today as status symbols, with the market for pre-Revolutionary decorative arts touching a wide audience - from museum curators to flea markets bargain hunters.

Cynthia Coleman Sparke was born into to a family of Russian art collectors and has lived on and off in Moscow and St Petersburg. After running the Russian department at Christie's New York, she worked with the Fabergé and Imperial porcelain holdings of the Hillwood Museum in Washington D.C. (the largest collection of Russian decorative arts outside of Russia). Later, Cynthia worked on a project in St Petersburg at the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoe Selo, helping with the restoration of Tsar Nicholas II's last residence - the subject of her Master's thesis from the Bard Graduate Centre. She is currently a consultant for Bonhams auctioneers, specialising in Russian works of art.