

## A Russian kaleidoscope: shifting visions of the emergence and development of art criticism in the electronic archive *Russian Visual Arts, 1800–1913*

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### 1 Origins

The project *Russian Visual Arts, 1800–1913* as it appears today at the Humanities Research Institute at the University of Sheffield (<http://hri.shef.ac.uk/rva>\*) is the result of three years of AHRB-funded labour (2000–2003) by a team of individuals from the Universities of Exeter and Sheffield, the British Library, and the National Library of Russia.<sup>1</sup> *Russian Visual Arts, 1800–1913* is a compendious electronic archive consisting of four sub-archive areas: a textbase of approximately 100 primary texts, in Russian and in many cases in English translation for the first time; a research bibliographic database of the 1900+ publications used for the project; a timeline designed in order to locate writings on art in the context of political and cultural life as well as events in the art world; and a collection of several hundred digital images taken from contemporaneous publications, and which contributes to the reconstruction of the ambience in which the art critical texts existed. This core material is augmented by an extensive scholarly apparatus which includes biographical

notes on major art critics of the period under consideration, new editorial and translators' notes, and a glossary. The project also provides details of on-going research activity in the field: these include the work of various team members in writing articles, delivering papers and also running a commemorative conference at the University of Exeter in September 2003 (Art Criticism, 1700–1900: Emergence, Development, Interchange in Eastern and Western Europe).

There were several sources of inspiration for this multi-faceted project. First, it was clear that in terms of Anglophone research, nineteenth-century Russian art had been, with some notable exceptions, relatively neglected in favour of work on the modernism of the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Such Soviet-era scholarship which did focus on the nineteenth century, of both Russian and Western origins, tended to view the period through the prism of political affiliation, constructing a teleological history which favoured the social realist work of artists

\* For the sake of readability full links to the electronic archive *Russian Visual Arts, 1800–1913*, related to the underlined archive areas within the text, are included in an appendix at the end of this article.

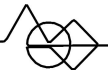
post-1863 and in the 1870s onwards.<sup>3</sup> Art historical accounts took a similarly selective and politically-determined approach to textual writings on art: for example, even the compendious writings of Vladimir Stasov, a notable critic of the 1860s onwards, are mentioned sparingly in Anglophone scholarship, most probably as a result of the Soviet authorities' equally inaccurate representation of him as laying the ground for their own forms of 'socialist realism'. Furthermore, while there exist art histories which draw on textual documents as historical evidence, there was no work which focused on textual art criticism itself as the primary object of scrutiny; that is to say, there was no attempt to examine the *historiography* of Russian art.<sup>4</sup> What was entirely absent in the Anglophone world of research into Russian art was any systematic or comprehensive attempt to explore the status and effects of the art-critical text in Russian cultural development, the importance of the art-critical text in the construction of art history, the development of forms of art discourse – all of which informed the relationship of art criticism to both the art world itself and the public.

The British Library provided further inspiration for the project, as well as practical resources to realise these ideas. For some years before the project the British Library's Slavonic section had demonstrated a commitment to the arts in Russia in various ways: through the organisation of public exhibitions on avant-garde book illustration in the old museum lobby in the early 1990s, for instance, and in the publication of several special catalogues of the library's holdings in this area.<sup>5</sup> Further explorations of the library's holdings in 1997 revealed the existence of a compendious, rich body of contemporaneous Russian material on nineteenth-century art which, at the time, was thought to consist of over 400 art journals and books, including: *Apollon* (Apollo), *Iskra* (The Spark), *Iskusstvo i khudozhestvennaia promyshlennost'* (Art and Industry), *Istoricheskii vestnik* (The

Historical Herald), *Khudozhestvennaia sokrovishcha Rossii* (Art Treasures of Russia), *Mir iskusstva* (The World of Art), *Novyi put'* (The New Path), *Otechestvennye zapiski* (Notes of the Fatherland), *Rech'* (Speech), *Severnyi vestnik* (The Northern Herald), *Russkie vedomosti* (Russian News), *Russkii vestnik* (The Russian Herald), *Slovo* (The Word), *Vesy* (Scales), and *Zolotoe runo* (The Golden Fleece).

The third source of inspiration came from a growing awareness of the potential of the electronic medium for the creation of projects with unprecedented opportunities for textological comparison, interconnectivity, dissemination of material, and long-term preservation of data. The Humanities Research Institute at the University of Sheffield offered a tremendous opportunity to support the creation of such a project. At the same time the then newly-formed Arts and Humanities Research Board invited applications to support digital as well as more traditional forms of scholarship and research. In July 1999 the team was successful in a bid for a large-scale grant from the AHRB: this enabled the project to be developed over the following three years, bringing together the departments of Russian at Exeter and of Russian and Slavonic Studies at Sheffield in the first such inter-institutional collaborative project in the field of Russian and Slavonic studies in the UK; moreover, this project was unique in uniting the preservational heritage aims of the British Library with the research aims of two higher education institutions.

The project thus had both scholarly and research-based aims and objectives. As a scholarly research resource, it was designed to disseminate little known primary material as fully as possible to a wide audience of specialists and non-specialists potentially comprising Russianists, cultural historians, art historians, literary specialists, theoreticians, and others more broadly concerned with the development of the European arts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



The research aims of the project were to investigate two broad areas: firstly, the emergence of art criticism and art theory as a distinct genre in Russia in the early- to mid-nineteenth century; secondly, to investigate the ways in which the newly-evolved art criticism related to artistic developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The primary purpose of the archive was therefore to make a significant number of texts pertaining to Russian art criticism available to scholars and students of Russian culture around the world, and to encourage a re-examination of the role which art played in Russian society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The web site therefore includes a [selection of texts](#) written between 1814 and 1909 devoted to the Russian visual arts, thereby covering the period from the emergence of Russian art criticism as a distinct genre of writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, up to the early manifestations of modernism. As discussed at length below, a number of essential sources, which are translated into English for the first time, highlight the work of major writers on art and the nature of discussions on contemporary art in Russia.

## **[2 Core materials](#)**

### *2.1 The text archive*

The core element of the website is the on-line archive of primary sources, which in all cases are published in the most complete versions accessible to the project team. The selection and presentation of texts was a complex several-stage procedure which consisted of locating materials both in the UK and abroad, establishing selection criteria, scanning and/or translating selected texts, and providing a full editorial apparatus for each text (editorial notes, introduction, and supporting glossary). While the British Library formed the chief resource provider, the project also involved a comprehensive survey of primary texts held in the [National Library of Russia](#), formerly the Imperial Public Library, St

Petersburg, which has one of the most complete holdings of Russian periodicals. More than 700 documents were obtained from these libraries in the form of photocopies; these, together with a selection of books on Russian art, now form the foundation of a hard-copy archive of Russian art criticism based at Exeter University. The texts represented on the project web site are drawn from this archive and indicate the scope of material uncovered by the project.

While many of these materials have come from numerous original publications located in the British Library and the National Library of Russia, the work of Russian scholars in the field has also been a significant source. For example, one source of primary material for the on-line archive has been the anthology *Russkaia progressivnaia khudozhestvennaia kritika vtoroi poloviny xix-nachala xx veka* (Progressive Russian Art Criticism of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century to the Start of the Twentieth Century), edited by VV Vanslov (Moscow: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo 1977). *Russkaia progressivnaia khudozhestvennaia kritika* is an extensive compilation of indispensable source documents written by a range of critics including Ivan Dmitriev and Pavel Kovalevskii in the 1860s, to Vladimir Stasov, Ivan Kramskoi, Il'ia Repin, Igor' Grabar, Sergei Glagol and Aleksandr Benua in the 1870s and beyond, and, bridging the turn of the twentieth century, a selection of 'Marxist art critics' who are, it goes without saying, better known for their writings in fields other than art criticism (among them VI Lenin, Georgii Plekhanov, Maksim Gor'kii). Although such texts are extremely valuable, they also require some caution as source texts: for instance, the ideological slant of the compilers of *Progressive Russian Art Criticism* is particularly obvious in this last section, devoted as it is to the condemnation by Marxist writers of 'bourgeois' culture. This tendency is also responsible for an overemphasis of the significance of texts favouring realist art, and a corresponding exclusion of other texts, such as

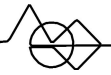
articles published in the turn-of-the-century proto-modernist journals *The World of Art* and *The Golden Fleece*; it also resulted in the truncation or expurgation of certain sections of the reprinted texts which may not conform to the author's putative 'progressive' viewpoint. An example of this form of censorship arises in the redaction of an article written by the artist Vasilii Vereshchagin: the collection editors gave the text the title *O realisme* (On Realism), and abridged it to such an extent that Vereshchagin's frequently 'bourgeois' ideas about art are, in this version, entirely excluded.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, the project has proceeded on the assumption that the integrity of original documents should be respected in order for them 'to speak for themselves', and to avoid, as far as is possible at any time, alterations which may be dictated by any particular concept of history at any given time. The project has therefore attempted to represent the sources objectively: thus, for instance, the full version of Vereshchagin's article has been reproduced under its original title, 'Realism'.

The approach to the selection of the original documents has been to create a balanced overview of discussions on art by including texts regardless of whether or not their authors had been designated previously as 'progressive', 'retrograde', 'modernist', 'conservative', 'decadent', etc. Instead, the task of the editors has been to represent the texts as fully as possible in the context of their time, bearing in mind that public debates, particularly those in the periodical press, reflected the views of significant segments of Russian society. In this sense the project has attempted to represent the way in which Russian people thought about art, notwithstanding their political persuasions and ideological commitments. Nevertheless, several publications which affected the development of discussions on art were not included in the on-line archive because they are already well known and widely available in the West. Such texts included Nikolai Chernyshevskii's dissertation *Aesthetic*

*Relation of Art to Reality* (1855), which, by placing reality above the ideal, provided critics with a new criterion for judging works of art, and Leo Tolstoy's treatise *What is Art?* (1896), which accused both professionalised art and art criticism of being harmful to society, and which advocated a revival of art's spiritual mission.

Notwithstanding this comprehensive task, it was necessary also to devise a strategy to guide the user through the largely unknown and extensive body of writing which would be made available by the project, both in English translation and in original Russian versions. A number of texts are readily categorisable, either generically or thematically: exhibition reviews, for instance, occupy a significant place in the available field, as do texts which address the relationship between literature and art criticism, or those which indicate the tensions between professional art criticism and the publicistic art press. Any of these broad categories would have served as an eminently revealing index against which to measure the development of art criticism: the predominance of exhibition reviews, for instance, is a reflection of the powerful standing of the two main exhibiting organisations which dominated the art world for the greater part of the nineteenth century: viz the Academy of Arts in St Petersburg, founded in 1757, and the Association of Itinerant Art Exhibitions (Tovarishchestvo peredviznykh khudozhestvennykh vystavok), established in 1870. Their periodic exhibitions were representative of the state of art in Russia, and attracted the attention of major art critics; this is why we have chosen to include a number of such pieces.

The identification of these key categories, however, has not entailed the exclusion of other types of writing pertaining to visual arts. Such a limitation would not only have left the texts themselves without sufficient context, but also have impoverished our understanding of the variety of ways in which art was interpreted in society. Essays on indi-



vidual paintings, reflections on the meaning and function of art criticism, editorials from art journals, lectures on aesthetics, public recriminations between supporters of opposing ideologies, statutes, petitions, published documents and private correspondence – all these sources contribute to the reconstruction of the atmosphere in which art existed in nineteenth-century Russia.

Art criticism in the form of exhibition reviews emerged in Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This early period in the development of art criticism is represented by Konstantin Batiushkov's essay *A Stroll to the Academy of Arts* published in the journal *Notes of the Fatherland* in 1814. Written by a well-known Romantic poet, this review includes the first published criticism of an Academic painting, *The Scourging of Christ* by Aleksei Egorov.

A selection of reports on the academy exhibitions published in the middle of the nineteenth century in the journal *The Contemporary*, the organ of the radical intelligentsia, demonstrates a rapid change of attitude towards official art after the death of the Emperor Nicholas I in February 1855. The accession to the throne of Alexander II brought with it a relative relaxation of censorship, and a period of *glasnost'* which allowed art critics to turn the genre of exhibition review into a highly polemical discourse. For example, a review of the Academy exhibition of 1855 by Vasilii Botkin, although not openly critical of the academy, aimed to limit its influence by commending the development of 'national character' in art, which, in turn, was linked to progress in society. Mikhail Mikhailov's *Art Exhibition in St Petersburg of 1859* applied ideas developed in literary criticism to the visual arts and found the majority of the works displayed irrelevant to the needs of his contemporaries, while in *On Art and Artists in Russia* (1860) Pavel Kovalevskii used the pretext of reporting about an academy exhibition for publishing a highly critical investigation of the relationship between art and society.

Attacks by radical art critics on the academy came to a head in 1863 when Ivan Dmitriev produced a damning report of its annual exhibition under the title *The Art which Bows and Scrapes*. Its publication preceded the 'Revolt of the Fourteen', when a group of academy students, headed by Ivan Kramskoi, wrote several petitions to the Academic Council requesting that they should be permitted a free choice of subjects for their Major Gold Medal examination. Receiving no positive response, the students left the academy to form an independent community of artists called the *Artel'*, the precursor of the Association of Itinerant Art Exhibitions. Vladimir Stasov's and other critics' assaults on the exhibition of 1865 prompted the rector of the academy Fedor Bruni to appear in print with a refutation entitled *To the Antagonists of the Academy of Arts* this is one of the rare attempts by the academy to confront its opponents in the press openly, rather than silencing them by means of censorship.

One of the characteristic features of Russian culture of the nineteenth century was that the visual arts were frequently perceived as following in the footsteps of literature, which was itself developing rapidly. It was therefore important to consider the views of art held by such eminent Russian writers and literary critics as Nikolai Gogol and Fedor Dostoevskii, whose essays are included in the archive. Nikolai Gogol's contribution to discussions on contemporary Russian art, for instance, is represented by his article entitled *The Last Day of Pompeii (Briullov's Painting)*. This article, published in 1834, appraised Briullov's spectacular canvas, while his later article *The Historical Painter Ivanov* (1846) drew the attention of the authorities to the tragic fate of Aleksandr Ivanov, and explained the significance of his momentous painting *The Appearance of Christ to the People*.

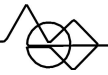
Articles by such literary critics as Vissarion Belinskii, Nikolai Dobroliubov and Apollon Grigor'ev were enormously influential in society, and were instrumental in forming readers' attitudes to art in general and to

the visual arts in particular. A selection from their writings was therefore considered essential to include in the archive in order to attempt an understanding of art critical discussions of the middle and second half of the nineteenth century. Vissarion Belinskii, an influential journalist and literary critic of the 1840s, and ardent propagandist of the 'natural school' in literature, was largely responsible for the creation of an intensely interrogative response to the established views which were approved by the authorities in Russian intellectual life. Belinskii's *Speech on Criticism* is eloquent testimony to his belief in the ideas of reason and progress which infected Russian intellectuals during his lifetime and in the following decades. His insistence on broadening the appeal of art to include a wide audience is manifest in the excerpt entitled *On Book Illustration*. Although Belinskii himself did not focus specifically on the visual arts, his ideas ultimately reverberated strongly in the writings of the art critics of the following generation who came to maturity in an atmosphere of greater intellectual freedom during the early years of the reign of Alexander II. Indeed, essays by Belinskii and Dobroliubov provided the ideological foundations of the radical criticism of the academy which the critics of the 1860s undertook: Vladimir Stasov was particularly noteworthy for systematically applying Belinskii's ideas to the criticism of Russian art.

Stasov's case highlights a further aim of the project, which is to explore the development of what may loosely be called 'professional art criticism'. We must note that Stasov's classification as a 'professional art critic' should be used with caution: in fact, none of the Russian art critics who could be called 'professionals', such as Stasov, Adrian Prakhov, Aleksandr Benua or Sergei Diagilev, were able to fully support themselves by publishing art criticism: Stasov was a librarian, Prakhov an academic, Benua was a practising artist, and Diagilev found his

true vocation as the impresario and the manager of a number of celebrated cultural projects, including the *World of Art* journal, exhibitions of Russian art, and the theatrical and ballet productions which led to the organisation of the Russian seasons in Paris. Nevertheless, such figures as Stasov signalled the emergence of a type of author who regularly contributed articles on contemporary Russian art to the periodical press and assumed an active role in the art world.

Stasov and Ivan Kramskoi became the chief ideologues and advocates of the Association of Itinerant Art Exhibitions, the formation of which was a turning point in the history of Russian art. *The Statute of the Association* is significant in that it articulates the association's mission to disseminate interest in art among Russian people, and, importantly, to assist artists in marketing their works. Stasov enthusiastically appraised and passionately defended the Itinerants against their opponents, who were primarily affiliated with the Academy of Arts. Il'ia Repin was one of the artists promoted by Stasov in such articles as *Repin's painting 'The Volga Barge Haulers'* and *Deplorable aestheticians*. Moreover, Stasov firmly believed that realism was the most productive mode in which a truly national art, liberated from the foreign influence of the academy, could be developed. His works testify to this historicising impulse: in his article *On Ivanov's Significance in Russian Art*, Stasov attempts to draw together the history of Russian culture under this banner by proclaiming Aleksandr Ivanov the harbinger of the Russian realist art; similarly, in his article *Perov and Musorgskii* Stasov pursues his argument about the affinity between the development of realism and of nationality, in both painting and music. Stasov was an indefatigable opponent of the supporters of the concept of 'art for art's sake', as we see in an article of 1874 devoted to *Mr Prakhov's inaugural lecture* (Adrian Prakhov was Professor of Art History at the Academy of Arts: his ideas are represented in a *lecture* delivered at the Academy of Arts which has also



been translated for the site). Stasov's bitter disappointment with young artists of the turn of the century who discarded what he believed to be the right path for Russian art is expressed in his furious attacks on the 'decadents' (see, for instance, his article *False Art and False Artists*, by which he meant primarily the artists of the World of Art group).

In addition to texts such as these produced by writers, literary critics, art critics and journalists, the project also provides exemplars of writings by artists themselves, two examples of whom are Ivan Kramskoi and Vasilii Vereshchagin. The latter's articles entitled *Realism* and *On Progress in Art* – based on his public lectures delivered during the exhibitions of his works in Europe and America – and Kramskoi's thoughts on 'tendentsiia' (tendentiousness) in painting, provide an insight into how these concepts, which were so hotly debated in educated society, were interpreted by the people who actually articulated them in works of art.

## 2.2 Bibliographical database

During the nineteenth century the rapidly growing press generated literary and scholarly journals, illustrated magazines, and daily newspapers. This explosion of mass media gave a significant impetus to the development of Russian art criticism, by publishing reviews of current exhibitions in Russia and abroad as well as articles on the aesthetic and political aspects of art. The *database* illuminates this intensely symbiotic relationship between the press and the art world, since it lists articles published in specific journals and newspapers.

The *database* contains bibliographical information on all primary sources, and on the most important secondary sources used for the project. It allows specific searches which combine different criteria, such as author, type of publication, year span, texts included in a specific periodical, and texts devoted to a particular exhibition. It incorporates information

about pseudonyms and records not only the details of the original publication of a text, but also subsequent republications which may be more accessible. Currently the database includes c 1900 primary sources, of which c 1500 are articles published in the periodical press.

Russian periodicals devoted specifically to visual arts also require careful examination. Indeed, one of the purposes of the project was to investigate the Russian art journals published at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries which are kept in the Slavonic collection of the British Library. These include such specialist publications as *Vestnik iziashchnykh iskusstv (The Messenger of Fine Arts)* (St Petersburg, 1883–1890), which, although financed by the Academy of Arts, preached impartiality in its coverage of Russian art, and *Artist* (Moscow, 1889–1895), which attempted to appeal to a wide audience by discussing music, theatre and literature as well as the visual arts. The lavishly illustrated journals *The World of Art* (St Petersburg, 1898–1904), *Art and Industry* (St Petersburg, 1898–1902), *The Scales* (Moscow, 1904–1909) and *The Golden Fleece* (Moscow, 1906–1909, last issues printed in 1910) provide a fascinating insight into the 'Silver Age' of Russian culture at the turn of the century and beyond. These publications were approached from several different perspectives in the course of the project: bibliographical information on the articles devoted to Russian art is contained in the research database, their visual appearance is represented by a selection of digital images, and significant articles, such as the editorial for the initial issues of *The World of Art* which was signed by Diaghilev and entitled *Complicated Questions*, and Benua's *Artistic Heresies*, which prompted a debate on the role of individualism in art in *The Golden Fleece* in 1906, have been re-published in the site in translation. It has also been possible to digitise a large number of other relevant articles published in *The Golden Fleece* and to represent them in their original version.

### 2.3 *Image archive*

The images included in the web site provide one particular form of contextual information for the art-critical debates of the texts, and illustrate the types of visual information made available to the Russian public by contemporaneous periodicals. For example, the exhibition reviews of the academy are complemented by a collection of caricatures published in the satirical journals *The Spark* and *The Alarm-Clock* during the 1860s. The appearance and organisation of the exhibitions is represented by the plans of the Academy's exhibition halls, while the illustration of an exhibition in 1851 reveals the manner in which the works of art were displayed and represents the public visiting the exhibition. Reproductions of works by the Academy's artists published in the press add to the reconstruction of the ambience of which art critical texts were an essential feature. The images have also been arranged into a number of online 'galleries', ordered by one of the following headings: artists; publication; major artistic movements; theme; society/organisation; and reproduction technique. This variation in the presentation of the project's image collection is intended to facilitate the orientation of the user through the vast amount of visual information, which comprises more than 500 separate images.

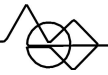
### 2.4 *Timeline*

The interdisciplinary nature of the project is fully realised in the timeline, which allows a cross-comparison of diverse events in the art world, culture and politics and provides the background against which art critics' texts acquire significance. The timeline represents an overview of the events which shaped Russian attitudes to art, from the foundation of the Academy of Arts in St Petersburg in 1757 onwards, to the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, detailing such significant events as sales, exhibitions, censorship laws, visits by European cultural thinkers, publications in translation, circulation dates

of journals, political movements, assassinations, and wars, inter alia. Moreover, the timeline serves both as a reference source and a starting point for the exploration of other parts of the web site, such as the texts and the images, many of which are both mentioned in the timeline and linked to it.

The word 'timeline' is, however, somewhat misleading, since it gives too great an emphasis to the idea of a single line of progress, or the steady evolution from a less developed form to a more sophisticated state: in fact, this arrangement of facts and comments may be described more accurately by the terms 'a kaleidoscope' or a 'jigsaw puzzle' of Russian nineteenth-century culture. After all, art criticism responds to and comments on not only works of art, but also a variety of events and influences, which may be unrelated to aesthetics, but which are intimately connected with politics, economics and social change. For example, the introduction of the first censorship statute in 1804 may well have had a direct impact on the emergence of art criticism in Russia, since it encouraged discussions of topical issues in society, thereby opening up opportunities for journalists to comment on contemporary art amongst those issues more generally. The result of this was the publication of a number of articles on art in the journal entitled *The Northern Herald* in 1804, among which one finds the first exhibition review published in Russia. However, the timeline also demonstrates the ways in which the censorship of the second half of the nineteenth century hindered the publication of the writings of such critics as Vladimir Stasov, whose attacks on the academy were considered to be criticisms of the authorities. Social, as well as political, changes profoundly influenced Russian art criticism. In the middle of the nineteenth century Russia developed a middle class, which was first recorded by Maksim von Vock, the director of the Tsar's secret police, in 1827. This class comprised a large segment of the public at the exhibitions; these were the buy-





ers of works by Russian artists, and they comprised the audience whom art critics addressed. The changes in the economic status of art during the last decades of the nineteenth century which accompanied the rapid transformation of Russia into a capitalist society, were also crucial for art criticism: in addition to the state-sponsored academy exhibitions the reviewers concentrated on commercial exhibitions, including those of the Itinerants and of Vasilii Vereshchagin. These attracted both the public and major investors such as the Moscow merchant and industrialist Pavel Tret'iakov. Pavel Tret'iakov was a major art collector, rather than an investor in art and did not purchase paintings for them to gain more monetary value in the future. His whole collection was donated to the city of Moscow.

### 3 The future of the project

Although the funding period of the project expired at the end of September 2003, the project's longevity is guaranteed by long-term deposit with the Visual Arts Data Service (VADS) and by the hosting of the site in perpetuity by the Humanities Research

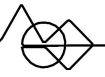
Institute at Sheffield. The outcomes of the project have been many, and are not restricted to traditional hard copy publications: we hope that the project will serve as the basis for future research in the field, developing the notion of the significance of art critical writings in the cultural development of nineteenth-century Russia. In these ways the project will serve as the basis for investigations not only into art history, but also into the art historiography of Russia.

Finally, perhaps the most surprising result of the combination of such research which deliberately interrogates the traditional categories of text, image, history, and historiography, with the capacities of the electronic medium, is that the end product seems to have acquired certain characteristics of the primary material. The archive itself has gained that complex and all-embracing quality that confronts researchers into art criticism, and at the same time it reveals an almost infinite net of relationships between art and society. In this sense it is not just the timeline, but the project itself in its entirety, which allows us to view the kaleidoscopic history of Russian art discourse.

- 1 Dr Carol Adlam (Department of Russian, University of Exeter) was the initiator of the project; she and Professor Robert Russell (University of Sheffield) were the project directors. Dr Alexey Makhrov was AHRB-funded research fellow at the University of Exeter, and Dr Peter Webster (University of Sheffield) was technical assistant. Dr Christine Thomas and Mr Peter Hellyer (Slavonic Collections, British Library) worked closely with the team, as did Dr Natal'ia Verbina from the National Library of Russia.
- 2 See in particular Valkenier, E, *Russian Realist Art. State and Society: The Peredvizhniki and Their Tradition*, Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977; Gray, C, *The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863–1922*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1962. A significant publication in the field during the duration of the project was Gray, RP, *Russian Genre Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon, 2000.
- 3 Notable exceptions to this are Sarabianov, DV, *Russkaia zhivopis' XIX veka sredi evropeiskikh shkol*, Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1980; Sternin, Glu, *Khudozhestvennaia zhizn' Rossii serediny XIX veka*, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1991.
- 4 At a later point Richard Wrigley's groundbreaking work on the development of French art criticism provided an extremely useful model of the re-evaluation of the art-critical text which the project sought to enable. See Wrigley, R, *The Origins of French Art Criticism: From the Ancien Regime to the Restoration*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- 5 Compton, S, *The World Backwards, Russian Futurist Books 1912–16*, London: British Museum Publications, 1978; Compton, S, *Russian Avant-Garde Books 1917–34*, London: British Library, 1992; Hellyer, P (ed), *A Catalogue of Russian Avant-Garde Books 1912–1934*, London: British Library, 1994.
- 6 Vereshchagin, VV, 'O realisme', in Vanslov VV, ed, *Russkaia progressivnaia khudozhestvennaia kritika vtoroi poloviny xix-nachala xx veka*, Moscow: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo 1977: 457–60.

## Appendix

[textbase](http://hri.shef.ac.uk/rva/texts.html) - <http://hri.shef.ac.uk/rva/texts.html>  
[bibliographic database](http://hri.shef.ac.uk/rva/search.htm) - <http://hri.shef.ac.uk/rva/search.htm>  
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