

RUSSIAN 'OLIGARCH' ART MUSEUMS AND FOUNDATIONS

FINAL REPORT OF FWF-FUNDED STAND-ALONE PROJECT: P 31388-G26

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Including summaries in German and English and appendix

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SUMMARIES PR WORK

Summary in English: Russian 'Oligarch' Art Museums and Foundations

Private art museums and foundations are on the rise – worldwide. Since the 1990s, their number and impact on global art and museums have dramatically increased. In the Russian Federation, however, this development lagged behind. Only after the millennium, in the wake of the privatization of the economy, did Russia's newly formed economic elite follow suit. Notably the second decade of the 21st century witnessed a sharp increase in 'oligarch' art philanthropy, foundations and museums – covering a broad range of genres: from contemporary to religious art, from modernism to the avant-garde, from Socialist realism to the Soviet 'severe' style, from Imperial Russian heritage to ethnic or foreign legacies. Some philanthropists have launched museum or institutional initiatives. Others have invested in urban gentrification projects for mixed commercial-cultural use; still others have funded museum projects, awards or donations. A characteristic feature has been their growing involvement abroad: Russia's tycoons financed biennials, co-operated with leading foreign institutions and private foundations, acted as donors and trustees on international museum boards. In addition, some bought into auction houses or took over prestigious publishing networks in the West.

For years, their contribution to the (inter-)national museum world had been of increasing relevance. Yet contrary to the rising influence of Russian private art museums and foundations, international museum research has long neglected this subject.

This widely uncharted, multilayered terrain has been the subject of a comprehensive research project funded by the Austrian Science Fund, FWF. The results are now available open-access. The innovative study is based on representative case studies and rare empirical data, drawn from mainly Russian primary and secondary source material. It relies on a broad comparative theoretical framework, elaborated largely by contemporary museum and philanthropy studies.

The work spans three decades, from perestroika to the outbreak of the health crisis in 2020; the latter considerably impacted both philanthropic ventures and on-site research.

Kurzfassung: Private Kunstmuseen und Stiftungen russischer Oligarchen

Weltweit erleben private Kunstmuseen und Stiftungen einen Boom. Ihr Einfluss auf globale Kunst- und Museumsinstitutionen steigt seit den 1990er Jahren stark. Doch in der Russischen Föderation setzte diese Entwicklung verspätet ein. Erst zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts, im Zuge der Privatisierung der Wirtschaft, begann sich die neue wirtschaftliche Elite des Landes in größerer Zahl mäzenatisch zu engagieren. Insbesondere die 2010er Jahre waren geprägt von einem Gründungsboom privater Stiftungen und Museen russischer Milliardäre. Deren Förderung umfasste ein zunehmend breites Spektrum – vom imperialen Erbe der Zarenzeit und der Ikonenkunst über die Moderne und Avantgarde bis hin zum Sozialistischen Realismus und der Gegenwartskunst; sie inkludiert russische wie internationale Kunst. Einige Stifter, selten Stifterinnen, haben Museen und Kunstinstitutionen gegründet. Andere investierten in Bauvorhaben mit gemischter kulturell-kommerzieller Nutzung. Zudem wurden und werden Kunstpreise, Schenkungen, Publikationen, Museums- und Forschungsprojekte vielfach von vermögenden Einzelpersonen oder Gruppen finanziert.

Von wachsender Relevanz erwies sich das globale Engagement russischer Wirtschaftstreiber: Vor Beginn des Ukrainekrieges finanzierten sie internationale Biennalen; sie kooperierten weltweit mit führenden öffentlichen Institutionen und privaten Stiftungen. Schlagzeilen machten ihre Übernahmen von traditionsreichen westlichen Auktionshäusern und Kunstmedien.

Ihr mäzenatischer Beitrag zur (inter-)nationalen Kunst- und Museumswelt gewann kontinuierlich an Bedeutung. Ungeachtet dessen vernachlässigte die internationale Museumsforschung bislang diesen Bereich.

Dieses Desiderat zu thematisieren, zu erforschen und zu analysieren war Gegenstand eines interdisziplinären Forschungsprojekts, das vom österreichischen Wissenschaftsfonds FWF finanziert wurde. Die Ergebnisse sind nun in Open-Access-Publikationen verfügbar. Die innovative Studie umfasst repräsentative Fallstudien – vorwiegend basierend auf primären und sekundären (Online-)Quellen und Daten in russischer Sprache, bereitgestellt von Stiftungs- und Behördenportalen. Methodisch-theoretische Ansätze aus der erweiterten Museumswissenschaft sowie aus der komparativen Forschung zur Philanthropie leiteten die Untersuchung.

Der erfasste Zeitrahmen umspannt drei Jahrzehnte – von der Perestroika bis zum Ausbruch der Pandemie 2020; letztere schränkte philanthropische Unternehmungen ebenso ein wie die Durchführung der Forschung vor Ort.

REPORT ON RESEARCH WORK

1.1. Information on the development of the research project

The project examined the rise of 'oligarch' philanthropy in the arts in the Russian Federation as well as their cultural involvement abroad. Its main objectives as laid out in the proposal of 2017 were to research, to analyze and to describe a representative selection of private art foundations and museums of Russia's new economic elite. It covered the emergence and the work of Russian patrons, donors and museum founders over three decades – from perestroika to the recent past.

In contrast to the steady increase in and relevance of Russian arts and museum philanthropy, the topic had not been analyzed and documented in international museum studies and basic research prior to the launch of the FWF project. The international conference *The Global Power of Private Museums*, organized at TU Berlin in late 2017 coinciding with the submission of the proposal, had substantiated this assumption of the PL that research on private art museums of the 2000s and 2010s was then in its initial stages (see output). Other than the widely known art patrons, donors and museum founders of the 19th and 20th centuries, the contribution of their successors in the 21st century remains largely unexplored. This pertains to an even greater extent to post-Soviet art foundations and private art museums.

The research was conducted over a period of 3.5 years – both in person in the Russian Federation, in Germany and Austria as well as via online libraries, archives, repositories, institutional websites, legal platforms and media. Research trips to Moscow helped mapping the complex subject matter; they notably enabled the PL to start investigations into the section of the case studies on site (as results in 1.2). Based on rare primary and secondary, mostly Russian source material, the subject matter was contextualized as a contribution to the growing international research on cultural philanthropy.

From its start in July 2018, the project progressed in line with the program approved by FWF in mid-2018. It largely ran as scheduled. In addition, supplementary in-depth research resulted from a symposium at Technical University Berlin in 2019 as well as from a virtual conference at Ludwig Museum, Cologne, in 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the course of the project from 2020 on. Due to travel bans and closures of cultural institutions, in-person events at home and abroad had to be reduced or cancelled. The uncertainty resulting from the prolonged crisis affected reliable planning; the non-simultaneous spread of the virus as well as inconsistent COVID-19 lockdown and quarantine regulations in the countries involved complicated matters further.

Over time, the disruptions caused by the crisis could be compensated for considerably: Subsequent research was primarily carried out digitally; apart from one in-person workshop on digital studies, cooperation was confined to hybrid, mostly web formats and events. In some instances, thematic and methodological approaches had to be revised and reorganized accordingly (see below 1.2 and 1.3).

The results of the research are available in Open-Access-repositories and journals (see appendix).

1.2. Most important results and a brief description of their significance

EMPIRICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL RESULTS: The project work was conducted from 2018 to 2021. It yielded important source and data material relating to the development of Russian philanthropy in general and to the case studies explored. Empirical research progressed well.

Theoretical and methodological approaches had not been advanced and provided rather fragmentarily at the outset; developing them required cross-disciplinary effort. A variety of publications in Russian and English, devoted to aspects of philanthropy in the context of civil society, charities and non-profit organizations proved helpful, notably those by Joan E. Spero, Caroline Hartnell, the late Jamey Gambrell, Alexander Livshin and Richard Weitz, by Natalia Bourjaily, Julia Khodorova, Grigorij Ochotin [Okhotin], Lev Jakobsen, Stefan Toepler and Irina Mersianova. Their important research is mainly carried out within economic, political and legal studies; so far, it has been reviewed in art and museum studies only marginally, if at all.

Building an adequate theoretical framework in the course of the research, first and foremost required more detailed legal and institutional knowledge pertaining specifically to post-Soviet art and cultural foundations and private museums. For this reason, the PL studied relevant Russian legislation from 1992 to 2019: Included were laws and regulations on philanthropy, on non-commercial and non-profit organizations, on endowment funds, on art patronage, on the enlargement of the federal inventory of art works, the so-called Goskatalog, and on state awards to leading patrons. Furthermore, regulations on the legal status of private museums, on tax relief in exchange for patronage and on so-called 'undesirable' organizations and persons were studied. Source material provided as a digital or digitized resource by the Russian Ministry of Cultural Affairs (Open Government) was added. All in all, this valuable resource allowed for a more nuanced, rather comprehensive assessment of foundations and private museums within the broader context of the country's philanthropic development. The results were summarized in the lengthy introductory chapter of the OA-study FILANTROPIJA.RU, published as a preprint version on ZENODO (2022).

CASE STUDIES: The fundamental groundwork elaborated in part by the authors mentioned above had not been reviewed in the field of cross-disciplinary, transnational museum studies before; it opened up new perspectives. As a result, the empirical part of the project was extended. Instead of briefly describing major foundations and their activities, eight case studies were selected, thoroughly researched and analyzed. Their findings were contextualized within a broad chronological, generational and typological framework. These studies, composed as eight autonomous chapters, are exemplary narrations of representative features of post-Soviet philanthropy in the arts and museum field. They are briefly characterized below:

- **INKOMBANK:** This study is dedicated to the little-known art sponsorship of Russian banking institutions, which prepared the ground for corporate philanthropy in the 1990s. In 2018, the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, MMoMA, published rare archival material on the acquisition of its major holdings from the former INKOMBANK art collection, acquired in 2002 and 2003. This digital access opened up new perspectives in researching corporate and bank collections that arose during perestroika, which are still poorly researched and often ended prematurely as a result of bankruptcy proceedings.
- **V. O. POTANIN FOUNDATION:** This most influential foundation spans the longest time period, from 1999 to the present. Its founder, a billionaire-industrialist and former politician, funds various philanthropic activities from sports to culture in the Russian Federation and abroad. This study focuses on his contribution to the arts and museums: It comprises his long-time sponsorship for the State Hermitage in St. Petersburg and the museum's activities with the Guggenheim museums in the USA, the Somerset House in the UK, the former Hermitage Amsterdam, Holland, also in Italy (Venice, Ferrara) as well as the many training and cooperation programs for the Hermitage's staff abroad. He has served as a trustee on the boards of the Hermitage and (prior to Russia's war in Ukraine) of the Guggenheim, New York. Through his Moscow-based main foundation he has funded a vast number of art and museum, academic and publishing projects. He helped create contemporary organizational structures for philanthropy in Russia – from the Russian donor's forum to endowment funds to state institutions. His foundation has been active abroad – at the Guggenheim, the Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C., and the Centre Pompidou, Paris. Apart from his grant-making organization, he launched and funded major endowment funds (Hermitage; Tretyakov Gallery; Skolkovo), financed blockbuster exhibitions and the architectural and organizational modernization of museums. He greatly contributed to professionalizing Russian museum studies. Potanin is also known for major donations of art works to museums (e. g. Centre Pompidou). He was the first Russian to join the Giving Pledge.
- **JEWISH MUSEUM:** The Potanin foundation represents the mission of an individual philanthropist. In contrast, the creation of the Moscow Jewish Museum and Center for Tolerance opened in 2012 is based on the **collective philanthropy of various Jewish donors**, embedded in the Federation of Jewish Communities in Russia, FJCR. It acts in close cooperation with Jewish organizations abroad, notably in Israel, the USA and UK. Apart from its main mission to exhibit Jewish history and art, in particular of the Russian-Soviet avant-garde, it serves as a platform for interethnic, interreligious dialogue and for education.
- **CONTEMPORARY ART (CA) FOUNDATIONS AND PRIVATE MUSEUMS:** The 1st Moscow International CA Biennial, 2005, ushered in a boom in art foundations; some of them led to the

creation of private museums (e. g. Garage, recently V-A-C), some operate art centers (Wine Factory, Ekaterina, Stella), while others were short lived. From the start, they have actively promoted Russian art of the 2nd half of the 20th century and the early 21st century in line with global international art trends. They have served as trustees in museums and committees with the cultural bureaucracy and helped represent Russian art abroad (e. g. as commissars to the Venice biennial). Not least to their involvement, contemporary art has been comprehensively integrated into the official canon. This section on contemporary art museums draws on the FWF-project CCAM: https://waltraudbayer.at/open_access/CCAM_finalreport_fwf_2016.pdf. See the e-book by the PL resulting from CCAM, 2017: Moscow Contemporary, <https://e-book.fwf.ac.at/view/o:961>.

- IRRRI – Institute of Russian Realist Art, 2011-2019: Founded by the banker and investor A. Anan'ev, currently involved in a court case, the institute was part of his business complex. It was the first private venue to exhibit and popularize Russian and Soviet realist art from the 19th to the 21st centuries at home and abroad. Prior to his trial, the founder served as a trustee of the Tretiakov Gallery.
- MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN IMPRESSIONISM: Founded by the investor Boris Minc on the premises of his business complex in 2016, the museum shows works of his private collection. It also stages exhibitions on (post)impressionist art in Moscow and abroad. The museum is still operating, although the founder fled Russia in the wake of a lawsuit.
- IN ARTIBUS: The foundation was set up by the investor Inna Bazhenova, a former Gazprom employee, who is known as an art collector and the publisher of the globally influential The Art Newspaper and its licensed editions. On its Moscow premises at a business and office center, the foundation organizes events and exhibitions; it publishes art books and catalogues and sponsors academic activities. The founder is actively supporting the campaign against art forgeries from and in Russia.
- MUSEUM AZ: Established in 2015 by the LANTA banker and investor Natalia Opaleva who launched the gold mining company GV Gold. The museum is devoted to the nonconformist art of Anatolii Zverev, who signed his works with his initials AZ. It cooperates closely with the heirs of the Soviet-Greek collector George Costakis whose immense funds of avant-garde and nonconformist art entered Russian museums and a Greek museum alike.

In addition, a ninth study arose in part from joint research activities. It emerged from the symposium *Objects on the Art Market*, organized by the Forum Kunst und Markt at TU Berlin in 2019. Initially conceived as a lecture on Russian avant-garde forgeries, it developed into a comprehensive analysis on art fakes in private as well as corporate art collections and foundations. The research of primary and secondary sources documented the willingness of Moscow's economic elite to take action against

corruption and fraud on the art market in cooperation with the local and federal authorities, state museums and foreign partners. It also highlights the pitfalls of international museums in dealing with fraudulent Russian art foundations (as exemplified by the Ghent museum scandal, 2018).

The case studies listed above comprise philanthropic art institutions and museum foundations based in Moscow, yet operative throughout the Russian Federation and abroad. The exemplary research on a variety of cases has produced a wealth of empirical data, relevant findings and detailed knowledge of a cross-disciplinary matter; it has helped illustrating complex frameworks and transformational contexts. The results of this painstaking research form a solid basis for future empirical studies and theoretical approaches. To facilitate subsequent in-depth work by fellow scholars, they are presented as autonomous sections in the open-access-study FILANTROPIJA.RU.

1.3. Information on project execution, the use of available funds and any changes of the original plan

The project largely ran as planned. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, research trips, networking and conference activities at home and abroad had to be reduced or cancelled (see 1.1). Subsequent deviations could, however, be mostly compensated for, as a wealth of digital data and sources was available in institutional repositories not anticipated upon submission and, to some extent, resulting from the general restrictions. The means allocated for travel, translation and conference work thus saved were used to prolong the project cost-neutral, without having to ask for higher personnel costs. Thus, the duration of the project (originally scheduled to be 3.5 years) could be extended by 6 months. No major items of EQUIPMENT were purchased.

2. Career development (including PI)

The project was of high importance to the PI, identical with the PL. It facilitated complementary, broadening and deepening expertise in a previously unknown area of research. With the PI's long-standing experience in museum and collecting studies – on bourgeois art patronage in Tsarist Russia as well as on Soviet cultural policy, on Soviet exports of nationalized art and on private art collecting (1917-1991) – the current study explored the post-Soviet era. In part, it grew out of the preceding research on the institutionalization of contemporary art from perestroika to 2015, which had yielded valuable insight in post-Communist museum and biennial work and institutional critique. Nonetheless, it developed independently and opened up research on art and museum philanthropy.

Previous projects had been based on extensive networking, conference work and on-site-research. As for the current project, research was largely limited to digital formats due to COVID-19.

Several work contracts were issued throughout the duration of the projects to colleagues (now formerly) at RGGU, Moscow, and in Digital and Slavic Studies, Vienna. These contracts never amounted to more than EUR 750 at a time.

3. Effects of the project beyond the scientific / scholarly field

The project was conceived as a first round of a new research cycle. The start of Russia's war in Ukraine changed conditions profoundly. As a result, the 'oligarchs' whose foundations are central to the study were sanctioned by the EU, the US and their allies. In view of the general uncertainty, no follow-up applications will be submitted for the time being.

Nevertheless, some of the effects beyond academia can be assessed for sub-areas of the research. This pertains to the topic of art forgeries from Russia: Firstly, this is relevant to international museum and art commercial partners, as many fakes produced in Russia have entered Western collections and galleries. Secondly, Russian billionaire-collectors and foundations themselves have supported efforts to counter forgeries (see publications).

In addition, the immense body of Russian primary sources and data accessed, compiled, and analyzed during the project constitute a solid groundwork for the scholarly as well as for the museum and philanthropic community. The material was translated; it is thus available to non-Russian speaking audiences.

4. Important aspects

Several publications including the recent monograph preprint (2022) are available open-access (see appendix and RESEARCHFISH)

Lectures (PPTs) were held in project-related international conferences / academic setting:

- Private Art Museums in post-Soviet Russia, TU Berlin, 11/2017
- From Russia with / without Doubt: Globale Netzwerke – Expertisen – Gerichtsprozesse. TU Berlin 11/2019

Organization of symposia / workshops

- The 2019 symposium at TU Berlin (see above) was jointly planned with Dr. Dorothee Wimmer, FOKUM, TU Berlin
- Onlineressourcen von Kunst- und Museumsstiftungen im russischsprachigen Internet, Workshop, 9/2021, Vienna

Review of online symposia (COVID-19)

- Symposium Russian Avant-garde: Original and Fake, Museum Ludwig, 11/2020

APPENDIX

Publications

- Waltraud M. Bayer, FILANTROPIJA.RU. Kunst- und Museumsstiftungen der Moskauer Wirtschaftselite [Wissenschaftliche Studie im Rahmen des FWF-Projekts P 31388-G26], open-access-monograph, preprint: DOI 10.5281/zenodo.6631165
Upload on ZENODO, June 10, 2022, <https://zenodo.org/record/6631165>
Printout-version (with modified page layout) available below:
https://waltraudbayer.at/open_access/Filantropija_Bayer_Preprint_Printout.pdf
- Waltraud M. Bayer, A Past That Won't Pass: Stalin's Museum Sales in a Transformed Global Context, in: Journal for Art Market Studies (JAMS), Volume 2, Number 2, 2018, Translocations and the Art Market, Guest editor Bénédicte Savoy, <https://www.fokum.org/journal-for-art-market-studies-4/>
- Waltraud M. Bayer, Best Practice: Fälschungsforschung im Kölner Museum Ludwig, 11.2.2021, <https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/7222/>; DOI: [10.11588/artdok.00007222](https://doi.org/10.11588/artdok.00007222)
- Waltraud M. Bayer, [Review] Nebesnaia golubizna angel'skikh odezhd. Sud'ba proizvedenii drevnerusskoi zhivopisi. 1920–1930-e gody, by Elena Osokina, in: Wendy Salmond, ed., Journal of Icons Studies 2 (2019), 141-146, <https://www.museumofrussianicons.org/book-review-nebesnaia/>

Project-related participation in national and international scholarly conference and a list of the most important lectures held

- Waltraud M. Bayer, „Private Art Museums in post-Soviet Russia“, lecture at the international symposium „ The Global Power of Private Museums: Arts and Publics – States and Markets“, organized by the Centre for Art Market Studies TU Berlin, FOKUM, the Forum Transregional Studies and Art Histories and Aesthetic Practices, November 16-17, 2017, held at TU Berlin: <https://www.fokum.org/conference-2017/>
- Waltraud M. Bayer, „ From Russia with / without Doubt: Globale Netzwerke – Expertisen – Gerichtsprozesse“, keynote evening lecture for symposium Objects on the Art Market [Original oder Fälschung – eine Frage der Expertise], Centre for Art Market Studies TU Berlin, FOKUM, November 15-16, 2019, <https://www.fokum.org/konferenz-2019/>

Organization of symposia and conferences

- 2019 symposium at TU Berlin (see above): Was jointly planned with Dr. Dorothee Wimmer, FOKUM, TU Berlin
- Workshop „Onlineressourcen von Kunst- und Museumsstiftungen im russischsprachigen Internet“, September 23, 2021, Vienna, Austria

Ongoing applications for patents and licenses

- N. a.

List of the most important pending applications for grants

- No follow-up-grants are currently considered – due to COVID-19 restrictions, Russia's war in Ukraine and the sanctions of the 'oligarch' philanthropists (see text)

Any other aspects:

- N. a.