

# New Fabergé Museum Opens in Russia

by Dr. Géza von Habsburg



Tatiana Muntian, Armoury Museum of the Kremlin, Vladimir Voronchenko and Viktor Vekselberg, Link of Times Foundation at the Opening of the Fabergé Museum in St. Petersburg

(Courtesy Valentin Skurlov)

A must-see, St. Petersburg's first Fabergé Museum, opened on November 19, 2013, at the Shuvalov Palace, close to the Imperial Anichkov Palace and a brisk 10 minute walk from the Grand Hotel Europe. Access to the museum will be by appointment only the remainder of this year, and to the general public beginning in January 2014.



Dr. Valentin Skurlov Viewing the Fabergé Coronation Egg and Box  
(Courtesy Valentin Skurlov)



Fabergé Museum Exhibition Cases  
(Courtesy Géza von Habsburg)

The museum houses the celebrated Fabergé collection of the Link of Times Foundation owned by Russian entrepreneur Viktor Vekselberg, thought to be Russia's third richest man. With its more than 1500 choice pieces, it now outranks the comparatively smaller collection of the Kremlin Armoury Museum in Moscow. Mr. Vekselberg has assembled the most formidable collection in the world of

works by Carl Fabergé, the great Russian master craftsman, best known for his celebrated Imperial Easter eggs valued today in the millions.

The elegant Neo-classical palace at #21 on the Fontanka Embankment, built in the late 18th century by Giacomo Quarenghi, was formerly owned by the Vorontsov and Narishkin families and remodeled in the mid-19th century. After the 1917 Russian revolution, it stood empty and was in a very dilapidated state when the Link of Times Foundation acquired its lease seven years ago from the City of St. Petersburg. The building, painstakingly restored, features a spectacular marble staircase, and an upper floor including offices, a large ballroom, as well as the main exhibition space of 4700 sq. meters (over 50,000 sq. feet) divided into 12 spacious galleries. These contain 130 well-lit showcases brimming with over 3000 objects of vertu from the 18th to the early 20th century, porcelain and silver, 1500+ works of art by Fabergé, and Russian works of art by other competing masters. The rooms, lavishly decorated and furnished with luxurious textiles, are hung with select, mostly Russian, paintings.

In 2004, the Link of Times Foundation acquired the more than 200 Fabergé objects formerly owned by the Forbes family in New York City, and in particular, the nine Imperial and five non-Imperial eggs for over \$100 million. Fabergé friends will also recognize the prestigious collection of some 100 Fabergé cigarette cases collected by John Traina, late husband of author Danielle Steel, and the over 150 cloisonné enamel articles by master craftsman Fedor Rückert painstakingly assembled by André Ruzhnikov.

The new Fabergé Museum Collection covers all areas of the master's creativity - monumental silver, colorful Muscovite enamels, and a multitude of cigarette cases, bell pushes, frames, clocks, and a stunning collection of belt buckles all in elegant transparent guilloché enamels. A multi-volume, multi-author bi-lingual catalogue is planned for the near future.

An injustice has been corrected. "Egg-less" St. Petersburg, deprived in 1917 of the Imperial's families extensive Fabergé collections, has come back into its own.



Clock and Belt Buckle Collection  
(Courtesy Géza von Habsburg)