



The Kremlin. Divine Glory and Luxury of the Czars
14 February – 31 May 2004
Press conference: 13 February 2004, 11 a.m.

“Only the Kremlin is higher than Moscow and only God is higher than the Kremlin” is a popular saying of earlier times. In its dual function as centre of political and religious power, the Moscow Kremlin has always been experienced by Russians as the centre of the empire, giving it its identity and, in that capacity, being perceived far beyond the frontiers of the state. Admired and feared, *the Kremlin* in its eventful 800-year history developed into the symbol of the Russian state, the Orthodox faith and Russian culture.

To gain a closer insight into the complex mythology of the Kremlin, to observe it from the perspective of the present, and to place it in a wider cultural context – that is the purpose of this exhibition. Against the background of defining events of Russian history, and closely interlaced with it, visitors are shown the highlights of the cultural development associated with the Moscow Kremlin from the twelfth to the nineteenth century, including the construction of this unique architectural ensemble, the artistic creations of the famous Kremlin workshops and the development of an independent aesthetics within Russian Orthodox sacred art.

Towards the end of the twelfth century, Moscow began its inexorable rise from an insignificant market town to the centre “of all Rus”, fully aware of its power. The Kremlin, restructured in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the help of Italian Renaissance architects, offered the grand dukes and metropolitans who resided there a worthy background to their rule.

The coronation of Ivan IV, the Terrible, as czar in 1547 was an expression of the new self-confidence of the Moscow state: it now manifested itself as the legitimate heir of the Byzantine empire – as the “third Rome” – and set out to realise its dreams to be a great power. In doing so, Moscow once again increasingly became the focus of international political and trade interest: precious gifts from the kings of England, Sweden and Poland, the Turkish sultan and the Persian shah bear witness to the intensive efforts which were made to woo the lord of the Kremlin.

With a magnificent fireworks display in Moscow at the turn of the year 1699/1700, Peter I celebrated Russia’s entry to the new era. The introduction of the Julian calendar was to herald this ruler’s unprecedented reforms. He took account of the imperial claims of his empire with his own coronation as czar in Moscow’s Ascension Cathedral in 1721 (it remained the church in which the Russian rulers were crowned until the end of the monarchy in 1917) – the day of his greatest triumph. Another emperor, Napoleon I, experienced his bitterest hour here in 1812 as he looked down from the terrace of the abandoned Kremlin on a burning Moscow emptied of its people.

Approximately 300 highly-prized exhibits of the highest quality comprising icon and portrait painting, goldwork, liturgical instruments, manuscripts, books and historical maps, textiles, weapons and armour (some of them exhibited for the first time) await the visitor to the exhibition. An elaborate CAD reconstruction aims to document the main building phases of the Moscow Kremlin (wooden Kremlin – white Kremlin – red Kremlin) and offer virtual tours through the historical architectural ensemble.

The exhibition project is being organised in close cooperation with the Moscow Kremlin State Museums, whose legendary collections will make up the core of the presentation. Several

supplementary objects from well-known Russian and European museums are intended to give additional emphasis to the unique nature of the historical and cultural “location Kremlin”.

The exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue with illustrations of all exhibited objects as well as written contributions by Russian and German authors. A supporting programme with films, music and literary events is intended to add to the presentation with additional aspects.

Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 4, 53113 Bonn, Germany

Maja Majer-Wallat, Press Spokesperson

Tel.: +49 (0)228/9171-205 / Fax: +49 (0)228/9171-211

e-mail: majer-wallat@kah-bonn.de, www.bundeskunsthalle.de