THE 'BLUE ROSE' MOVEMENT AND RUSSIAN SYMBOLIST PAINTING

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THE "BLUE ROSE" MOVEMENT
AND
RUSSIAN SYMBOLIST PAINTING
by
John E. Bowlt
DECLARATIONS.

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my own composition, that it is the record of my own study and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree. I declare also that this thesis is the result of my research work undertaken in the U.S.S.R. at Moscow State University (1966-1968), in Great Britain at the University of St. Andrews and in London (1968-1970) and in the U.S.A. at the University of Kansas (1970-1971). I was accepted as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. by the University of St. Andrews under Resolution of the University Court, 1967, No. I in October, 1968.

John E. Bowlt (Candidate)

15. IX. 1971.

I, the undersigned, declare that the conditions of the Resolution and of the Regulations have been fulfilled.

Larissa S. Haskell (Supervisor)

15. IX. 1971.
# THE "BLUE ROSE" AND RUSSIAN SYMBOLIST PAINTING

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PREFACE

The object of this essay is two-fold: firstly, to present an examination of the "Blue Rose" group of artists in the context of Russian Symbolism and secondly, to indicate its importance to the evolution of modern Russian painting. It was felt that while the development of the Russian visual arts of the period 1910-1930 had been studied in some detail, especially by Western scholars over the last few years, the preceding decade was still an obscure and confused field of research: the total absence of any adequate appraisal of the "Blue Rose" movement either in Russia or in the West and my own conviction that this movement warranted particular attention as a vital link between Russian Realism and the so-called avant-garde acted as the prime motives for the completion of this work.

In order to justify this assertion I have attempted to consider the emergence of the "Blue Rose" group as part of an organic, indigenous process and to relate it to the achievements of Russian art of the late 19th century. Since the work of the "Blue Rose" group is unknown to Western observers, certain paintings of leading members—Kuznetsov, Sapunov, Sar'yan, Sudeikin—have been analyzed in detail; in the case of less active members—Arapov, Feofilaktov, Utkin—a more cursory examination has been presented; since this essay is concerned with the development of easel
painting above all, the output of Bromirsky and Matveev (the two sculptors of the group) has been given only marginal consideration.

Throughout the text the name, "Blue Rose," has been used to denote that group of sixteen artists who exhibited at the single exhibition of that name in March, 1907. Although the name was used for the first time only at that exhibition, I have applied it in this essay to the group and to individual artists throughout their Symbolist period, i.e. c. 1904-1908.

The text of this work is based largely on material studied in Moscow between 1966 and 1968. Although original "Blue Rose" paintings are very rare, some examples were found both in public and in private collections: in this respect, access to the store-rooms of the Tret'yakov Gallery, Moscow and the Russian Museum, Leningrad facilitated my task. Published material concerning the genesis and development of the "Blue Rose" group amounts to very little and, therefore, I had to rely heavily on private archives and personal reminiscences of contemporaries as well as on more general sources such as the Symbolist journals and memoirs: in this respect, of particular value were the manuscript of Arapov's autobiography, the diaries and documents of P. Kuznetsov, the unpublished guide to the reserves of the Tret'yakov Gallery and the oral collections
of the late V. M. Lobanov; W. Nouvel's unpublished monograph on Diaghilev provided me with useful material in my study of the "World of Art." In addition, relevant written material was found and consulted in the Lenin Library, Moscow, the Tret'yakov Gallery Library, Moscow, the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, the Central State Archives of Literature and Art, Moscow, the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library, Leningrad, the Russian Museum Library, Leningrad; in the West extensive use was made of the facilities of the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Library of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at the University of London, the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library and the Widener Library, Harvard.

Because of the complete absence of Russian exhibition catalogues of the Symbolist period in the West, and of their rarity in Russia, detailed listings have been made where relevant to the text. In the case of the "Crimson Rose" and "Blue Rose" exhibitions the participators and their contributions are listed in full in Appendices I and III; this is because only one copy of the former is known to exist (in the library of the Leningrad Academy of Fine Arts) and only two copies of the latter have been located. In these instances and in those of the "Golden Fleece" exhibitions the original Russian has been retained in order
to avoid that constant confusion which translation and retranslation of picture titles has caused in the West. The illustrations are from pictures in Russian public and private collections and, in some cases, where the original has been lost or has not been traced--from reproductions in contemporaneous books and journals.

The system of transliteration is that used by the Journal, Soviet Studies (published by the Institute of Soviet and East European Studies, Glasgow), although where a variant has been established already this has been used, e.g. Diaghilev (not Dyagilev), Jawlensky (not Yavlensky).

I would like to thank my English and Russian supervisors, Mrs. L. Haskell and Dr. D. V. Sarab'yanov, for their unfailing support and valuable advice. In addition, my thanks are due to the following Russian scholars and collectors: Yu. G. Arapova, the late E. M. Bebutova, G. D. Costaki, B. A. Denisov, E. A. Gunst, N. P. Lapshina, the late V. M. Lobanov, Z. Ya. Matveeva, I. A. Myasnikova, Ya. E. Rubinshtein, A. A. Rusakova and L. I. Semeonova. Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to the following: Miss M. Chamot, Mme. A. Cherkessova-Benois, M. S. Ernst, Mme. A. Larionov, Mr. N. Lobanov and Mrs. J. Sudeikin.

In the hope that this essay will lead to a fuller understanding and appreciation of the "Blue Rose" group,
I would like to dedicate it to the memory of its leader, Pavel Varfomoleevich Kuznetsov.

John E. Bowlt
Moscow/St. Andrews/London/Kansas
1966-1971
Chapter I

"Our real art began....only in the '50s." (V. Stasov, 1882)¹

The late 1890s and early 1900s were a period of intense activity within the Russian cultural arena and witnessed a spiritual regeneration in literature, music and the visual arts after the comparative stagnation of the preceding decades. The school of Symbolism which dominated the intellectual horizons of Russia's literati at this time exerted an equally powerful effect on her artists and, similarly, produced a first and second wave of Russian Symbolist painters. Just as the first generation of Russian Symbolist writers, led by Bal'mont and Bryusov, had been concerned above all with literary craft and the second, led by Bely, Blok and V. Ivanov, with literature as an artistic and theurgic force, so their counterparts in the visual arts upheld the same divergent principles. The basic difference between the two literary camps, epitomized by V. Ivanov's statement that "Symbolism would not have wanted to be and could not be "only art,"² was therefore also applicable to the two Symbolist movements in the visual arts, the "World of Art" ("Mir iskusstva") and the "Blue Rose ("Golubaya roza"). Whereas at the turn of the
century the "World of Art" group concentrated on the cultivation of style and technical finesse, in the early 1900s the "Blue Rose" artists gave their attention to painting not only as an exercise in colour and line but also as a theurgic, or at least, a philosophic force. Parallel to the literary ascent of Bely, Blok and V. Ivanov immediately after 1900, members of the "Blue Rose" cadre—Arapov, Feofilaktov, Kuznetsov, N. Milioti, Sapunov, Sar'yan, Sudeikin, Utkin—began to achieve recognition as painters. In fact, even by 1900 a distinct group led by Kuznetsov had been formed at the Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture; and just as their literary colleagues saw the genesis of Russian Symbolism in Russian rather than in Western traditions, specifically in the work of Tyutchev, Fet and V. Solov'ev, so the new painters saw themselves as part of an indigenous artistic process—unlike the more cosmopolitan, Alexandrine "World of Art" members. To a great extent, the "Blue Rose" group emerged as the culmination of the development of 19th century Russian painting and it was on the basis of this intrinsic experience that it advanced its artistic credo.

With the exception of one or two professional painters such as A. P. Antropov (1716-1795) and I. P. Argunov (1727-1803), a definite school of portrait and landscape painting
had scarcely existed in Russia before 1767. In that year, the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts had been founded in St. Petersburg, a move which caused the subsequent development of easel painting, as opposed to that of icon-painting, to be centred on St. Petersburg, at least until the 1820s. The fact that the Academy had been established in St. Petersburg rather than in Moscow meant that its cultural inclination was towards Western Europe and this, in turn, engendered a style of painting sharing little with the indigenous traditions and organic evolution of Russian art. The kind of painting which had emerged, the so-called Neo-classical or Idealist style, had been championed by such fine painters as V. L. Borovikovsky (1757-1825), D. G. Levitsky (1735-1822) and F. S. Rokotov (1735-1808) and, later, by K. P. Bryullóv (1799-1852) and O. A. Kiprensky (1782-1836): but despite their undoubted achievements, particularly in portraiture, Russian Neo-classicism remained a very conservative and pedantic discipline thanks to its direct dependence on the material and spiritual power of the Imperial Academy. Divorced from the main-springs of Russian art, members of the Academy looked for their inspiration in the art of Ancient Greece and Rome and in the work of the great European portrait schools; and because of the reliance on Western models, Russian easel painting of this period produced little of distinctive, i.e. specifically Russian, worth.
The 1850s marked an important turning-point in the evolution of Russian painting and provide the art historian with a convenient and justifiable date for drawing a division between what may be termed the "classical" and "modern" phases of Russian art. The imminent downfall of the Academy as an influential and imperious organ within the field of art was already apparent by the late 1840s, and it occurred finally in the late 1860s after the famous revolt of the fourteen artists. It was thanks to this internal rift that Modernist Russian art emerged, for the Academy's loss of prestige contributed directly to the foundation of an art more democratic in theme, more liberal in style and more accessible to all levels of society. However, even during the early years of the 19th century, when Neo-classicism was still a very cohesive movement, dissident voices were heard which, while not actively remonstrative, demonstrated dissatisfaction with the Academy by a choice of subject and technique alien to the Academic programme. Chief among such radicals was A. G. Venetsianov (1780-1847) who, significantly, did not receive his art education at the Academy: his depictions of peasant life, however sentimental, were in direct contrast to the portraits of aristocrats, Italian landscapes and scenes from Classical mythology which his contemporaries produced. Venetsianov's "poetry," his thematic
flexibility and delicacy of colour distinguished his work from the often static and unimaginative pictures by Academicians: both ideologically and pictorially he anticipated the "Wanderers" and contributed appreciably to the gradual disintegration of the Academy's principles—he called for drastic changes in the Academy system of teaching and established a school according to his own pedagogical and aesthetic ideals.

Venetsianov's finest work, such as "Summer. At Harvest" and "Sleeping Shepherd," was produced in the 1820s, after which time a definite decline could be observed. His place as leader of the artistic avant-garde was occupied in the 1830s by a very different painter, A. A. Ivanov (1806–1858). While on a thematic level, Ivanov was sufficiently conventional to remain within the Academic camp, on a stylistic one, he proved to be an innovator: for example, his treatment of colour in his masterpiece, "Christ's Appearance to the People" (late 1830s), points to an acute sense of tonal organization despite the artist's obvious preference for vivid colours—such features are foreign to the normally subdued colour combinations of the Neoclassicists. When this work, painted in Rome, was first exhibited in St. Petersburg, it was described by one critic as a "tapestry," such was its variegated, carpet-like effect. Used to the linearity and graphic perspective
of Academic pictures, critics reacted to a perspective created by colour confrontations, rather than by line; however, while the work as a whole met with only mild applause, the individual figures, depicted coldly and in accordance with a predetermined scheme were found to be acceptable. Ivanov, while not adopting a revolutionary pose, certainly questioned Academic values and his statement, "The Academy is a thing which belongs to the last century," summed up his position vis-à-vis the artistic establishment.

The third major figure in Russian art of the period under discussion, a figure who antedated, yet influenced, developments after 1860, was P. A. Fedotov (1815-1852). Fedotov was the first Russian painter to make extensive use of the domestic genre and to reject consistently the Academy's Idealist doctrine. Fedotov's pictures were often socially tendentious—although not in such an obvious way as, for example, Perov's or Repin's—in that they illustrated, sometimes caricatured, weaknesses of his contemporary social structure. Fedotov changed the conception of the genre picture from that of a contemplative, reflective depiction of the subject, to that of a didactic lesson in human behaviour. Thematically, therefore, Fedotov was not Academic and, as an army officer by profession, moved outside the established canons of the
Academy: indeed, he introduced highly unusual, even "surrealistic," elements into his presentations, as, for example, in the several sketches of headless figures which he drew as studies for the picture "Gamblers" (1852). Although technically unstable, Fedotov possessed a subtle mastery of tone demonstrated especially in his dark, indoor scenes such as the "Aristocrat's Breakfast" (1849-1851) and "Encore, Encore!" (1851); the half-lights and flitting shadows of these pictures make for allusion rather than representation, and it is Fedotov's transmission of a shifting reality, his formal flexibility which distinguish him from the Neo-classicists on the one hand, and the Realists on the other.

By the mid-1850s the Academy was no longer a united, autocratic organization for its position was being threatened both from inside and from without. Students at the Academy, aware of the discrepancy between what they were required to paint and what could be painted if attention were turned to contemporary Russian life, began to voice their protest. Owing to student pressure, the Academy allowed the establishment of a students' club or circle for the discussion of artistic matters, thereby contributing to its own loss of authority; by the 1860s these "Academic Fridays" as they were called had become popular and often noisy meetings at which the Academy
itself was criticized and at which the new aesthetics of N. G. Chernyshevsky and N. A. Dobrolyubov were widely disseminated: the propagation of Positivist thinking within the walls of the Academy led immediately to uncertainty with regard to its traditional tenets and a new credo, of Realism, began to be formulated.

The democratic intelligentsia headed by Chernyshevsky exerted a definite influence on the evolution of Russian painting. Chernyshevsky's tract, the *Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality*, published in 1855, advanced hypotheses opposed to the conceptions on which Academic art was founded, for the author's attitude to beauty was a purely materialistic one: "That being is beautiful in which we see life as it should be according to our conceptions; that object is beautiful which displays life in itself or reminds us of life." From the premise that life is as it is seen, that it exists objectively, Chernyshevsky moved on to define the role of art within his philosophic system:

... partly instinct, even more science (knowledge, meditation, experience) give (man) the means to understand which phenomena of reality are good and favourable for him and therefore must be maintained and developed by his assistance, which phenomena of reality are, on the contrary, difficult and pernicious for him and must be destroyed ... A very powerful aid in this matter is provided by ... art which is singularly capable of broadcasting ideas obtained by science to a vast number of people."
Dobrolyubov's essays, although oriented specifically towards literature, were based on the general principles of Realism: like Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov conceived reality as something tangible existing outside man's imagination, but he was more explicit in his references to the negative features of Russian life, especially to the plight of the peasantry—and he concluded that the function of art was to reflect this. Although neither Chernyshevsky nor Dobrolyubov were concerned exclusively with painting, their ideas found fertile ground both amongst the new generation of writers, musicians and painters; and in painting and music, at least, it was the famous critic, V. V. Stasov (1824-1906), who supported and promoted these ideas.

Stasov's presence did much to stimulate the emergence of a Realist school of painting in Russia. He was acquainted personally with representatives of the Revolutionary Democrats—Chernyshevsky, A. I. Herzen, N. P. Ogarev—and developed and applied their ideas especially when he became a newspaper art critic in 1859. In turn, Stasov became the spokesman and unfailing champion of the future "Wanderers" when they came to the fore in the early 1860s. In addition, as an acute observer, he was able to recognize certain features of his cultural environment, which thitherto had been overlooked: he acknowledged the essential dichotomy between the art of St. Petersburg and
the art of Moscow and the provinces, he stressed the climactic importance of his own epoch to the development of Russian art and pointed to the inherent weaknesses of the Academy—its anachronistic practice of Neoclassicism and its irrelevance to the burning questions of the day. Yet while rendering invaluable service to the cause of Realist art, Stasov assumed an inflexible position with regard to the first stages of Russian Modernism in the late 1890s and early 1900s: his attitude towards the "World of Art" and particularly towards the initial output of the "Blue Rose" was highly critical, often condemnatory.

By the early 1860s a definite movement had been formed within the Academy which was opposed to the tenets of this establishment. Before the actual revolt of the fourteen in 1863, a dissident group, led by V. G. Perov (1833-1882), had already come together, and it required but a slight pretext for an open rift to occur between them and the Academy. Perov by this time had earned an artistic reputation as a disciple of Fedotov from his scenes of everyday life: his "Sermon in the Village" and "Religious Procession at Easter," both of 1861, were violent protests against the Orthodox clergy and displayed an unprecedented interest in the plight of the peasantry vis-à-vis the Church and the Establishment—for the first
time in the history of Russian painting, the Church came under attack. Such pictures heralded the revolt of 1863.

The general dissatisfaction with the Academic system, the impact of the new, democratic aesthetics and the revolutionary fervour apparent at the Moscow "Academy," the Moscow Institute of Painting and Sculpture, provided the real occasions for the inevitable action which took place in November, 1863 at the St. Petersburg Academy. At the annual Gold Medal Competition a group of Academy students refused to depict a set title, namely the "Banquet of the Gods in Valhalla," which they considered to be totally irrelevant to the real needs of art and society. The group of fourteen, thirteen painters and one sculptor, led by I. N. Kramskoi (1837-1887), resigned en masse from the Academy after their demand for a free choice of subject had been dismissed. What is frequently ignored either deliberately or unwittingly by Russian and Western art historians, is that while the Valhalla theme was stipulated for the historical section, a topical and provocative subject was proposed for the genre section, i.e. the "Liberation of the Serfs." This indicated, therefore, that on the one hand the Academy was modifying its policy, although essentially its requirements in pictorial treatment remained conservative, and on the other that the revolt was symptomatic of overall discontent, the climax to a period of tension.
With the withdrawal of the radical group, the autocracy of the Academy was seriously undermined and its power continued to decline until its partial reformation in 1893/’94 and its transformation in 1918. The fourteen artists, bound together by a unanimity of purpose and doctrine, organized an artel quite outside any official affiliation. Although they issued no written manifesto, it became immediately obvious that they saw art as a vehicle for exposing social ills and not for idealizing the status quo. Their trenchant canvases depicting the corruption of the clergy, the cruelty of landowners, the poverty of the peasants, etc. constituted a drastic departure from the aesthetics of Academic art which had held sway thitherto. Yet despite their cohesive structure, their vision and creative energy, they emerged as an influential force only during the 1870s and 1880s, the climactic years of their existence. In the 1860s, however, the group included many mediocre artists such as M. K. Klodt (1832-1902) and L. I. Solomatkin (1837-1883) and it was not until later that their principal members joined them; at this time painters such as I. E. Repin (1844-1930), A. K. Savrasov (1830-1897) and I. I. Shishkin (1831-1898) still lacked the artistic maturity which their later canvases would display and their major contributions to the Realist school date from
the 1870s. At first the group experienced considerable financial hardship because of the Academy's monopoly of the art market and artists were forced to resort to illustrative work and casual, private orders, public commissions being out of the question. Hence, their very livelihood depended, initially, at least, on their cohesion. However, by the late 1860s the group began to receive extensive material help from P. M. Tret'yakov (1832-1898), the first of a new class of Russian Capitalist patrons. It was thanks to his efforts that the largest collection of paintings by Russian Realists, representative particularly of the late 1860s and 1870s, was compiled and presented to the town of Moscow in 1892. Tret'yakov's association with the first generation of the "Wanderers" and with their critical spokesman, Stasov, did much to propagate their cause, although he did not limit himself to purchases of their works alone; in the late 1880s Tret'yakov extended preferences to include the more progressive painters, Levitan and V. Vasnetsov, and his catholic taste was maintained by the public committee of the later Tret'yakov Gallery—for example, several purchases of "Blue Rose" and Neo-primitivist works were made in the 1900s.

In 1871 the group, the "Wanderers," was formed when the "Society of Wandering Art Exhibitions" was established
and opened its first exhibition. The founders of the Society including Kramskoi, Perov, I. M. Pryanishnikov (1840-1894), Repin and Shishkin and their pictures at the first exhibitions well demonstrated their revolutionary conception of painting: although by no means all socially tendentious, their canvases were topical, intelligible and conjointly opposed to Academic art. The first exhibition, for example, showed such famous works as Savrasov’s the "Rooks Have Come!" (1871) and Perov’s "Hunters at a Halting-Place" (1871): it was obvious that the old principle of "art for beauty's sake" had been replaced by one of "art for society's sake," for not only were subjects no longer purely esoteric and idealized, but they were now accessible to the masses. As M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, the reviewer of the 1871 exhibition wrote: "Art ceases to be a secret, it ceases to distinguish the invited from the uninvited. . . ." Indeed, the unquestionable value of the Wandering Exhibitions was that they allowed the populations of the remote provinces as well as of St. Petersburg and Moscow to acquaint themselves with the achievements of modern Russian art and, in turn, that they stimulated social and political awareness.

However, the artistic value per se of the Exhibitions was debatable. Most major Russian painters of the second half of the 19th century, with the notable exception of
V. V. Vereshchagin (1842-1904), were represented at them, but their artistic attainments, when judged internationally, are not great. Artists such as Kramskoi, Repin and N. A. Yaroshenko (1847-1948) are acknowledged by Soviet historians, at least, to have been incisive portrayers of their time, pictorial exponents of Critical Realism, and they were little more than this. To a marked extent it was their faithfulness to reality which proved to be artistically pernicious: because of their objectivity, their concreteness of subject and rigid ideology (not to mention their unstable technique), imaginativeness, individual interpretation and audacity to experiment were lost. It was apt, therefore, that A. N. Benois should have referred to the "materialism" of Repin's portraits--because Repin, like his colleagues, did not care to dissect reality, to select one element from it and treat it individually and aesthetically. Owing to their constant desire to link a scene with its social and historical background, the Realists could not conceive a picture as a hermetic unit, as an essay in purely aesthetic problems and resolutions. Pictorially this attitude is reflected in their frequent insertion of figures pointing to, or looking at, something beyond the frame (e.g. Repin's the "Zaporozhets Cossacks" (1886-1891) and their frequent recourse to a landscape or sequence of buildings or interiors which continues outside the main
action (e.g. Kramskoi's "Christ in the Wilderness" (1872), Repin's "They Did Not Expect Him" (1884)). On the one hand this immediate relationship with external reality affords such pictures a mobility, a sense of continuum which was so wanting in the pre-1850 Academic studies, on the other it means that figures and objects lose their independence and become mere pieces in an overall scheme. It is because of this approach that, with the notable exception of Repin, portraits of the Realists, however precise and concrete, lack vitality and psychological depth: this is especially evident in Kramskoi's portraits where a distinct naturalism betrays the painter's initial profession of a photographic retoucheur. It is relevant to note at this juncture that this kind of visual presentation was renounced by the "World of Art" and "Blue Rose" movements for they not only sought to reject socio-political considerations, but also tended to regard the picture as something intrinsic and self-sufficient. It was partly as a reaction against the Realists' tendency to extend a picture "into reality," that such "World of Art" painters as K. Somov and A. Benois concentrated on the "theatricalization" of a given scene, i.e. the deliberate limitation of a picture by the insertion of theatrical wings in the form of equidistant trees, walls, curtains, etc.; at the same time thanks to this approach
their portraits often demonstrate a much more reflective, subjective interpretation of individual personality than those of the Realists. The same concentration on the picture as such is identifiable with the "Blue Rose" work and, as will be shown, it was their additional rejection of strict delineation which separated the "Blue Rose" artists even further from the Realists.

By the mid-1880s the "Wanderers" movement had degenerated as their Positivist credo lost its momentum. A second generation of "Wanderers" consisting of lesser Realists such as K. Ya. Kryzhitsky (1858-1911) and S. I. Svetoslavsky (1857-1931) transformed the radical principles of the first Realists into either sentimental depictions of the lower classes or innocuous landscapes. As the impact of Critical Realism passed, another direction began to assert itself: in literature the works of A. A. Fet, F. I. Tyutchev and, on a different level, I. S. Turgenev achieved increasing popularity, for now they appealed to a new demand for introspection and "philosophy" --their descriptions of Nature, their evocation of the countryside provided a tentative answer to a search for peace and spiritual identity. This general tendency towards pantheism immediately affected painting and by the late 1880s a distinct movement of landscape painting had emerged, the members of which were very close to the "Wanderers" (indeed, some of them were), although the best
of them were too subjective and lyrical to merit the term, Realist. Chief among these newcomers were A. I. Kuindzhii (1842-1910) and I. I. Levitan (1861-1900).

The "Wanderers," although sometimes compared to apparently similar Western artists such as Courbet and Menzel (of which, incidentally, Sergei Tret'yakov, Pavel's brother, was an avid collector), were very much an indigenous movement. Their dominance of the artistic arena in Russia and their own indifference to Western trends contributed to the anachronistic and reserved recognition which, for example, French Impressionism enjoyed in Russia only at the turn of the century; in turn, their own geographical and cultural isolation contributed to their non-recognition in the West, although to a taste nurtured on the innovatory canvases of the Impressionists, the narrative pictures of the "Wanderers" were bound to have had little effect. Indeed, what S. P. Yaremich said of Repin's art in 1915 could, with equal validity, be applied to the "Wanderers" as a whole:

"Repin outside Russia is unthinkable. Accept him or reject him, he is outside personal evaluations, he is from the people and is popular in the real sense of the word." While their choice of theme limited their effectiveness to the audience which could understand Russia's social predicament, the "Wanderers" at least eased that Academic
pressure which had so stunted the organic development of Russian art; it was they who founded a genuine school of Russian easel painting and who opened the way to such masters as Levitan, V. A. Serov (1865-1911) and members of the "Blue Rose" and avant-garde groups.

Levitan imparted to art that formal and thematic flexibility which it had lost on the one hand with the Academy, and on the other with the "Wanderers." While closely connected to the "Wanderers," in particular through their exhibitions to which he contributed regularly, Levitan emerged also as the supporter of an inherent, albeit tenuous, tradition of landscape painting. Despite the artificial position into which Russian painting had been forced by the middle of the 19th century, this tradition had been observed from the late 18th century in the topographical scenes of F. Ya. Alekseev (1753-1824) and S. F. Shchedrin (1745-1804) through the early 19th with S. F. Shchedrin (1791-1830) and later with Venetsianov and his school. Levitan inherited the fluidity of Venetsianov and developed his pictorial approach to include a high degree of subjective interpretation: this, together with his delicate colour scheme, contributed to the peculiar aetheriality of his landscapes. The direct relevance of Levitan to the "Blue Rose" painters will be mentioned below, but it is important to bear in mind within
this immediate context that such artists as Kuznetsov, Sudeikin and Utkin—members of the "Blue Rose"—were concerned almost exclusively with landscapes in their early work. Whether their plein air compositions depicted real or fictional landscapes, it was in many respects because of the formal elasticity which this genre offered (especially after the innovations of Levitan) that the "Blue Rose" artists turned to landscape painting with such enthusiasm. It is important to remember, too, that their principal mentor, Borisov-Musatov, was, above all, a landscape artist, although his idealized, retrospective approach to the subject differed substantially from Levitan's. In this sense, the landscapes of Borisov-Musatov form a bridge between the purely representational canvases of Levitan and the Symbolist canvases of the "Blue Rose" painters: unlike Levitan, Borisov-Musatov imbued his landscapes with products of his imagination or even invented compositions without any reference to reality. The "Blue Rose" artists, in turn, relied almost exclusively on subjective conceptions during their Symbolist period and only much later returned to depictions of actual landscapes. However far removed, thematically, a typical "Blue Rose" landscape such as Sar'yan's "Fairy-Tale" (1904) (Figure 1) or Utkin's "Autumn Grove" (Figure 2) (1907) might appear to be from, for example, Levitan's
"Summer Evening" (1899) (Figure 3) or "Lake. Russia" (1899-1900), it is evident that formally both styles are very close. Therefore, it is thanks to Borisov-Musatov and, in turn, Levitan that the "Blue Rose" artists emerged as the culmination of an indigenous, organic development and not as the sole product of a superimposed European culture.

The Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture

The appearance of such masters as Levitan and Serov in the early 1890s was closely linked to the powerful position which the Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture was occupying by then. It can be argued, in fact, that the renaissance of Russian art at the turn of the century took place as a direct result of the policy and teachings of the Moscow Institute and it was thanks to this that Moscow usurped St. Petersburg as leader of artistic Russia well before 1900. Since nearly all the "Blue Rose" members received some or all of their tuition there, an examination of its structure and function during the last years of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th is essential.

While by the late 1850s the St. Petersburg Academy was already experiencing the stirrings of revolt within
its walls, its prestige was being undermined further by new developments at the Moscow Institute of Sculpture and Painting (the Department of Architecture was established only in 1865). Although during the first years after its foundation in 1832 the Moscow Institute had differed little from its St. Petersburg counterpart, it began to assume a more provocative position by the 1850s and at the end of that decade was considered by younger artists to be artistically superior. This arose from two factors: from the innovations in art instruction and from the increasing radical element in the student population (by 1856 this included over seventy students of peasant extraction). The appointment of A. N. Mokritsky (1811-1871) and S. K. Zaryanko (1818-1870), both pupils of Venetsianov, in the mid-1850s did much to separate the Moscow Institute from the conventions of the Academy and Zaryanko's new teaching methods, in particular, were of profound significance for its subsequent evolution: his emphasis on life models, on drawing from nature both in the elementary and advanced classes, his discouragement of Academic specialization and his demand for equal attention to drawing and painting were principles which maintained the best traditions of Venetsianov and Fedotov, and which were to be supported during the next fifty years. In contrast to the Academy where primary consideration was given to the study and
copying of Classical models, the Moscow Institute soon came to be identified with a more naturalist artistic code engendered obviously by Zaryanko's own conception of the artist as "the slave of Nature." This concern with Nature, with the living model, contributed directly to the revival of the landscape genre which was associated so closely with the development of the Moscow Institute after 1860; even by the mid-1850s several artists who were to achieve renown later as landscapists, including Savrasov and Shishkin, had already completed their studies there. The same decade saw the emergence of other artists who, if not strictly landscapists, at least shared their colleagues' enthusiasm for depicting outdoor life: among their number were V. V. Pukirev (1830-1890) and N. V. Nevrev (1830-1904) who, together with Savrasov and Perov, returned to teach at the Moscow Institute.

During the 1860s the reputation of the Moscow Institute as a centre of art instruction increased significantly, and was acknowledged in 1865 by an official decree whereby it was allowed to grant large and small silver medals for outstanding work. In the same year a Department of Architectural History and Design was opened. But it was the 1870s which marked the beginning of its artistic hegemony. By the early 1870s many "Wanderers" had joined the Institute's teaching staff and Perov was recognized as its ideological leader. The tendency towards
Realism, towards socially tendentious painting, which their presence inevitably gave rise to, was further inspired by the regular showing of the Wandering Exhibitions within the perimeter of the Institute—and in the same hall as the regular students' exhibitions. It was during these years that such painters as K. A. Korovin (1861-1939), Levitan and M. V. Nesterov (1862-1942) entered the Institute, painters who, in turn, exerted a definite influence on the future avant-garde artists and who formed an organic link between the Realists of the 1870s and the leftists of the 1900s. By the end of the 1870s the general artistic standard of the Institute was so high that it was decided to separate the student exhibitions from those of the "Wanderers" and to organize showings arranged and judged by the students themselves: it was from these that Tret'yakov bought his first canvases of Levitan, A. P. Ryabushkin (1861-1904) et al.

Although the high traditions of the Institute were maintained during the 1880s, thanks especially to the replacement of Savrasov (who had long lost the breadth of his artistic vision) by V. D. Polenov (1844-1927) in 1882, it did not receive full official recognition: as a pivot of social and political awareness it did not meet with the approval of Alexander III and, as a direct result, was refused the title of Higher Educational Institute and
all the advantages which that implied. Yet despite the material insecurity which official disfavour caused, the Moscow Institute continued to attract talented artists and to pursue its policy of artistic liberalism. The 1890s, in fact, was probably the most important decade in the Institute's history since it was during this time that many of the future "Blue Rose" painters enrolled there, so contributing to the formation of the so-called avant-garde movements. In this connection it is essential to mention the appointment of four particular artists to the Institute's teaching staff during this period: in 1897 Serov was placed in charge of the higher art studios, in 1898 Levitan was entrusted with the landscape class, in 1898 P. P. Trubetskoi (1867-1938) became an instructor in the sculpture class and in 1901 K. Korovin established his own studio within the Institute. By the turn of the century other important teachers arrived, including A. E. Arkhipov (1862-1930), L. O. Pasternak (1862-1945) and A. S. Stepanov (1848-1923), so that the level of teaching at the Institute far surpassed that at the St. Petersburg Academy—and although the latter boasted Kuindzhii and Shishkin as leaders of its landscape class, it resembled, according to one painter, "a terrible ghost touched with mould." The importance of the dynamic teaching staff at the Moscow Institute during this period
lay not only in their ability to teach technique and to win the respect of their pupils—which many of them affectionately recalled—but also in their intellectual interest in modern cultural developments both in Russia and in the West. K. Korovin's love of opera stimulated by his close friendship with Chaliapin and Mamontov, Serov's association with the "World of Art" members in St. Petersburg, Levitan's interest in literature, Trubetskoi's knowledge of French and Italian culture, Pasternak's contact with the Munich circle and with such Modernists as Zorn—all these factors contributed to that artistic elasticity and eclecticism which were particularly identifiable with the Moscow Institute after the mid-1890s.

Most of those artists who were to participate in the "Blue Rose" exhibition of 1907 and many of their future leftist colleagues studied for short or long durations at the Moscow Institute: by 1898 A. Arapov, N. Feofilaktov, P. Kuznetsov, M. Larionov, K. Petrov-Vodkin, N. Sapunov, M. Sar'yan, S. Sudeikin, N. Ul'yanov and P. Utkin had enrolled there and by the early 1900s V. Drittenpreis, A. Fonvizin, N. Goncharova, N. Krymov, A. Matveev and the Milioti brothers, Nikolai and Vasilii had also entered. It is relevant to note that Kuznetsov and Sapunov studied under K. Korovin, Levitan and Serov (Levitan particularly influenced the early landscapes of Sapunov), Sar'yan
attended the classes of K. Korovin and Serov, N. Milioti and Sudeikin those of K. Korovin, Krymov those of Serov.

Kuznetsov later recalled his impressions of his three teachers at the Moscow Institute:

In Korovin's studio . . . we used to paint nudes. Konstantin Alekseevich (Korovin, J. B.) possessed a special talent for positioning the nude model . . . and draped her so strikingly and interestingly that we rushed to paint her with extraordinary delight. Then we would move on to Serov for portrait painting. He was a perfect teacher . . . we appreciated with what a great artist we were dealing and we were glad to study under him. Levitan, who taught landscape, used to cover the floor of his studio with pots of flowers; and students . . . would try to transmit these cascades of flowers and greenery.17

Levitan, who died in 1900, was replaced by A. M. Vasnetsov (1856-1933), brother of the more famous Viktor, but his influence on the future "Blue Rose" painters was insignificant. The importance of Levitan to such painters as Kuznetsov and Sapunov lay in the flexibility of his pictorial approach evident in his distinct tendency away from structuralization and stylization. Compared to the contemporary artistic output of Abramtsevo and Talashkino (see Chapter II) and the emergent trends of the "World of Art" (see Chapter III), the subdued colour scale and delicate interchange of light and shade in Levitan's landscapes represented a refreshing, rather impressionistic development in Russian painting; and although closer to the Barbizon school than to the Impressionists themselves, Levitan was evolving apparently towards a less concrete,
less formal conception of painting by the late 1890s—
comparative examination of an early canvas such as the
"Bridge. Savvinskaya Village" (1884) and a late one such
as the "Hay-stack. Twilight" (1899) demonstrates this very
clearly. This direction towards "dematerialization" which
is so identifiable with the work of the "Blue Rose"
painters was maintained further by the presence of K.
Korovin: strongly influenced by the Impressionists,
Korovin, by the mid-1890s, was tending towards extreme
divisionism (see, for example, "In the North" (1898) and
"Paris After the Rain" (1900)) and this distinct trend
away from direct representation contributed, in turn, to
the formlessness of the "Blue Rose" painting. K. Korovin,
together with I. E. Grabar' (1871-1960), formed the nucleus
of what came to be called the school of Moscow Impression-
ism, although this movement played only a minor role in
the development of Modernist Russian painting. In this
respect Korovin's influence was noticeable in the very
early canvases of Kuznetsov, Sudeikin and Utkin, but
scarcely in their actual "Blue Rose" work, at least from
the point of view of colour scale and subject. In the
case of Serov a profound influence on the "Blue Rose"
painters was less obvious even though he enjoyed their
affection and respect. The two areas of his art which are
deserving of most attention, namely portraiture and draw-
ing, were precisely those which the "Blue Rose" artists
chose to neglect: it was logical, therefore, that Serov with his mastery of line should have felt a deeper kinship with the "World of Art" members, rather than with the young Moscow group, and whereas he praised the endeavours of Bakst, Benois and Somov, he did not encourage the "Blue Rose" work of Kuznetsov, Sapunov and Sudeikin. Serov's attitude was representative of increasing tension between staff and students during the 1900s, particularly as the leftists—the Burliuks, Larionov, Shevchenko—came to dominate student circles at the Institute. Although Serov was by no means directly antagonistic towards the "Blue Rose" painters, he became so towards the post-Symbolists, especially towards the Burliuk brothers, David and Vladimir: his description of the artistic scene of around 1910 summed up the situation at the Moscow Institute during the first phase of Cubo-futurism: "Everyone is concocting in his own way, they all want to catch up with Paris, but don't want to study... Such rubbish has appeared." The conflicting currents of artistic life so manifest in the 1900s in Moscow could serve only to disrupt the internal cohesion peculiar to the Moscow Institute before 1900, and the mass expulsion of 1910 marked the final rift between teachers and progressive students. Their mutual respect was restored only after 1918 when such dynamic artists as K. S. Malevich (1878-1935) and L. S. Popova (1889-1924) were appointed to professorships at the Institute and when, in any case,
radical changes were made in all sections of its organization.\textsuperscript{20}

The arrival of the four provincials, Kuznetsov, Petrov-Vodkin, Sar'yan and Utkin, at the Moscow Institute during 1897 marked the foundation of the group which, Petrov-Vodkin apart, would later call itself the "Blue Rose." They were joined in the same year by Sudeikin and in 1898 by Arapov and Sapunov; later P. Bromirsky, Drittenpreis, Krymov, Matveev and the Milioti brothers also came into close contact with the group, but Fonvizen and I. Knabe, although participants in the 1907 exhibition remained personally and ideologically outside them. The forceful character of Kuznetsov and his advocacy of artistic principles derived from Borisov-Musatov contributed to the formation of the group's common purpose. With his fellow citizen, Utkin, Kuznetsov was able to broadcast and develop the influence of Borisov-Musatov and to discuss those Western artists, especially Puvis de Chavannes and the Nabis, with whose work he had become acquainted while studying under Borisov-Musatov; their familiarity with originals of Corot and Courbet in the Radishchev Museum, Saratov, also gave them an advantage vis-à-vis their colleagues. Even at the very beginning of their careers at the Moscow Institute, both Kuznetsov and Utkin were distinguishable immediately both by their physical appearances and by their artistic approaches.
Petrov-Vodkin recorded his valuable impressions of these two painters:

On my first day at the Institute I noticed two young men amongst those who had just enrolled: one was a tall, blonde and thin with a sharp nose intelligently protruding over his moustache... The young man lisped slightly when talking... He was carefully dressed... The other was the opposite - up to the other's chest in height, dressed in a tight jacket and trousers, hair all over the place... Don Quixote and Sancho Panzo were inseparable... Panzo was Pavel Kuznetsov... Don Quixote was P. Utkin... Kuznetsov would attack the canvas: now he would throw himself on it with a jump, now he would steal up to it... Utkin would approach the canvas like a guest...

By 1910 a distinct group of painters headed by Kuznetsov had been formed at the Moscow Institute: what was significant in the group's organization was the predominance of non-Muscovites, for, with the exception of Sapunov and Krymov, all the leading members were from either Saratov, St. Petersburg (Arapov and Sudeikin) or the remote provinces. Yet, at least in the case of Kuznetsov and Utkin, such painters were felt to be more civilized, more cultured—thanks to their association with Borisov-Musatov: "To us they appeared to be more European than we Muscovites were, and the wit Sapunov called the Saratov group the "Gothamites" ("poshekhontsy")." Undoubtedly, it was thanks to Kuznetsov and Utkin (particularly the former) that such artists as Krymov and Sudeikin were made aware of the importance of Borisov-Musatov, and the Moscow Institute acted, therefore, very much as a centre...
for the propagation of his ideas. The association between the young artists of the Moscow Institute and Borisov-Mustaov became especially close after his move to the outskirts of Moscow at the end of 1903; and even before that date he had come into contact with most of them thanks to his activity within the "Moscow Association of Artists": indeed, it was on the advice of Borisov-Musatov that the hanging committee invited Krymov, Kuznetsov, Matveev, V. Milioti, Sapunov, Sar'yan, Sudeikin and Utkin to contribute to the 1905 showing of the "Association." It was through Borisov-Musatov, too, that the future members of the "Blue Rose" were introduced to the first and second generations of the Russian Symbolists: both Bal'mont and Bryusov were closely associated with the "Moscow Association of Artists" and with the "Moscow Society of Lovers of the Arts" (with which Borisov-Musatov was also affiliated) and attended salons organized by them; in turn, it was partly through Borisov-Musatov that Arapov, Kuznetsov, Sudeikin, Utkin et al. established a close connection with the literati of the Scales, including Bely and Blok.

The importance, then, of the Moscow Institute in the formation of the "Blue Rose" group and of the whole Russian movement of the avant-garde was two-fold: on the one hand it served as a point of convocation for many metropolitan and provincial artists and on the other it brought
painters into contact with other areas of contemporaneous Russian culture. Although, to a certain extent, the Moscow Institute had always played this double role, especially during the climactic years of the "Wanderers," the results of this process became particularly evident during the period, 1900-1917. The fact that the Moscow Institute attracted simultaneously such provincial radicals as the Burliuk brothers, Larionov, Malevich and Shevchenko, contributed directly to their joint advocacy of peasant art forms which, in turn, contributed to the rise of Neo-primitivism and Cubo-futurism after 1907. At the same time there began that intensive cross-fertilization of artistic and literary ideas which was so identifiable with the avant-garde groups: the presence of such painter/poets as V. V. Kamensky (1864-1961) and V. V. Mayakovsky (1893-1930), the appearance of numerous booklets of verse illustrated by Goncharova, Larionov, Rozanova, etc. and the rapid formation and disbandment of cultural groups and sub-groups well reflected the current concern with synthesis. And it is not to be forgotten that the direct stimulus to this aspiration towards a synthetic art was provided by the Symbolists—and specifically in the field of painting by the "Blue Rose" artists. It was, in turn, the Moscow Institute which united these artists and enabled them to embark on their collective search.
Thanks to their presence at the Moscow Institute in the late 1890s and early 1900s the future members of the "Blue Rose" group were able to learn of the achievements of the newly founded Russian school of painting. For their part, they assimilated and developed these achievements and progressed towards a revolutionary, artistic conception: their pictures, by c. 1904, pointed to unprecedented possibilities and anticipated the period of discovery and transformation which we identify with the course of Russian painting after 1907. In brief, for the art historian the importance of the "Blue Rose" group lies precisely in their position between tradition and innovation, between 19th century Realism and 20th century non-representationalism. Belonging both to the past and to the future and yet caught between two opposing directions, the "Blue Rose," like the whole of Russian Symbolism, was doomed to premature necrosis. V. Bryusov's comparison of the Symbolists to the crest of a wave, was particularly applicable to the "Blue Rose" members, for, while deriving their strength from the traditions of Russian easel painting, they sensed intuitively the disintegration and impasse which would presently confront it: in this sense the "Blue Rose" was the last cohesive movement in the history of pre-Revolutionary Russian painting.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


2. V. Ivanov, Borozdy i mezhi, M., 1916, p. 137.


4. Quoted from D. Sarab'yanov, Narodno-osvoboditel'nye idei, p. 54.

5. Quoted from A. Mantel', "Populyarnost' iskusstva" in Na rassvete, St. P., 1911, p. 34.


7. Ibid., pp. 165-166.


10. See, for example, A. Benois in R. Muther's History of Modern Painting, London, 1907, vol. 4, p. 281; also see A. Benois, The Russian School of Painting, New York, 1916, p. 126.

11. It is interesting to note that as late as 1892 Moscow was "shocked" by the French Impressionists at an exhibition of that year. See A. Bely, Na rubezhe dvukh stoletii, M.-L., 1929, p. 311.

*Throughout the notes the following abbreviations have been used: M. = Moscow; L. = Leningrad; St. P. = St. Petersburg; Pg. = Petrograd; GRM: Russian Museum, Leningrad; GTG: Tret'yakov Gallery, Moscow; TsGALI: Central State Archives of Literature and Art; IRLI: Institute of Russian Literature, Leningrad.

13. Statistics on the student population at the Moscow Institute are given by N. Dmitrieva, Uchilishche zhivopisi, vayaniya i zodchestva, M.-L., 1950, p. 23.


15. The statement is K. Somov's. Quoted from S. Ernst, Konstantin Somov, Pg., 1918, p. 11.


17. Ibid. Also in N. Moleva, Korovin, pp. 267-268.


19. Fifty students were expelled including most of the future members of the "Knave of Diamonds" group, organized at the end of that year. For more details see Chapter IX of this text.


22. A. Arapov, Vospominaniya (archive), 1940. Arapov was, in fact, born in St. Petersburg.

23. See for example, A. Kruchenykh, Starinnaya lyubov', M., 1913 (illustrations by Larionov); A. Kruchenykh and V. Khlebnikov, Igrov adu, M., 1913 (illustrations by Goncharova); A. Kruchenykh, Utkinnoe gnezdyshko, St. P., 1913 (illustrations by Rozanova).

24. For example, the "Wreath" (1907-1910), the "Independents" (1908), the "Knave of Diamonds" (1910-1926), the "Donkey's Tail" (1912), the "Target" (1913).

25. V. Bryusov, "Bal'mont" in Mir iskusstva, 1903, No. 7/8, p. 29.
Chapter II

It was precisely this "decadent" painting which attracted the Maecenes, lovers of Nesterov's consumptive phantoms, Konstantin Somov's lascivious young ladies, Levitan's Impressionism, Malyutin's maiolicas, Vrubel's crazy "Demons" and "Tsarevnas." (S. Makovsky, 1922)

Although the "Blue Rose" and avant-garde groups of the 1900s emerged very much as the culmination of a specifically Russian tradition of painting founded well after 1800, they owed some of their personal and public success to a particular section of Russian society. This was the new class of wealthy Capitalists who, after 1850, eclipsed the aristocracy as art patrons and collectors and who, by their understanding and devotion, provided a necessary stimulus to the formation of Russian Modernist art.

The merchant Medici of Moscow who exerted such a profound influence on Russian art of the 1880s, 1890s and the first decade of the 20th century were wielding effective power as early as the 1850s. At this time investors and businessmen such as I. I. Chetverikov, G. I. Khludov and the Mazurin brothers gave support to the arts by purchasing only Western European masters and it was G. G. Soldatenkov and P. Tret' yakov in the late 1850s and
early 1860s who were the first to enlarge their field of collecting to include contemporary Russian painting. By the 1870s the appreciation and purchase of current Russian art had grown considerably thanks to the endeavours of Tret'yakov, S. I. Mamontov and I. E. Tsvetkov. By the 1900s thanks to the advent of such powerful Maecenes as N. P. Ryabushinsky, A. A. Bakhrushin and K. K. Ushkov the former structure of the Russian art market had been transformed: their material support alone amounted to more than that provided by exhibition entrance fees, catalogue prices; casual purchases, etc. But, for the most part, men such as Tret'yakov and Mamontov were not merely "merchants" with the negative qualities which the word implies, but were men of wide cultural horizons, of sensitive taste, Europeans—who, in this respect, had replaced the dying aristocracy. And while undoubtedly seeking to preserve the status quo, to direct their energies into financial gain, the industrialist benefactors, like so many aristocratic Maecenes, including Alexander III himself, also recognized that much of the revolutionary work of Russian painters was intrinsically valuable: such a contradiction as Tret'yakov's abolition of an institute for factory inspectors on the one hand and his purchases of N. A. Kasatkins' working-class pictures on the other, was symptomatic of this attitude in
the 1860s and 1870s. Nevertheless, the fundamental difference between the aristocracy and the merchant class, between St. Petersburg and Moscow, namely of tradition and innovation, was reflected by the type of purchase by either class. While the aristocracy preferred the restored Academic art of I. K. Aivazovsky (1817-1900) and G. I. Semiradsky (1843-1902), and later of Benois and Somov, the merchant industrialists appreciated and invested in the progressive paintings of Levitan and Vrubel'. This was one of the reasons why Moscow became the centre of avant-garde art during the 1900s—the artists of such groups as the "Blue Rose" and the "Knave of Diamonds" (themselves, for the most part, impoverished, unlike the upper middle-class members of the "World of Art"), were certain at least of some material support from the Mamontovs and Ryabushinskys of their milieu.

From the 1860s until the first decade of the twentieth century the Capitalists of Moscow assumed increasing importance, changing their role of mere collectors of pictures to one of arbiters of public taste, of cultural dictators. In the 1860s collectors such as Tsvetkov and the young Tret'yakov limited their relationships with artists to the purchase of pictures and the enlargement of their collections. By the 1870s Tret'yakov was already applying commercial methods to his acquisition of paintings
--purchasing before works were exhibited or even finished, placing orders, buying "on spec."--methods which were shared later by Mamontov. By the 1880s Russian art had come virtually to rely on these Maecenes for material support with regard not only to individual works of art, but also to communication of ideology, propagation of trends, etc.: the industrialists moved into the field of publishing, they lent financial reserves to art magazines, as Mamontov and Princess Tenisheva did for the World of Art, they subsidized and edited art publications as Ryabushinsky did with the Golden Fleece, they established artists' colonies and they opened art salons for the display, buying, selling and auction of pictures (e.g. the "Contemporary Art" enterprise in St. Petersburg, the Lemers'e Gallery in Moscow, Dobychina's Bureau in St. Petersburg). In this way, rich Capitalists achieved the autocratic position of being able to "launch" an artist or group of artists regardless of public taste or reaction: without the financial backing of Ryabushinsky and the free access to his vehicle of propaganda, the Golden Fleece, the "Blue Rose" artists and the Neo-primitivists would have been unable to affect the art world and the public as profoundly as they did. At the same time, this should not signify that the course of modern Russian painting was shaped by the private tastes of a few wealthy
industrialists alone. However pernicious to art such a commercial structure was, it had, nevertheless, certain positive features. Primarily it freed the artist of material want and also of the need to obey the canons of public taste. Thanks to the artistic tolerance which the leading industrialists in this sphere possessed, artists were allowed maximum thematic and stylistic liberty and it was often the artists who dictated their needs and suggested artistic ideas to their benefactors, rather than vice versa; this creative licence allowed them, in turn, to experiment and to introduce those formal innovations which engendered the avant-garde art of later years. On a specific level, original elements were introduced which left their mark on the development of Russian art: for example, because of frequent private orders by industrialists such as Ryabushinsky for the execution of friezes and frescoes for their villas, artists came to think in terms of large spatial resolutions and to transfer elements of fresco painting into easel painting. The direct results of such iconographic methodology were stylization and decorativism, while the spatial mass of the fresco was reduced to a new genre—the panneau and gobelin, used particularly by Borisov-Musatov and the "Blue Rose" artists. Stylization and decorativism, peculiar to the work of, for example, V. M. Vasnetsov (1848-1926) and E. D. Polenova (1850-1898) after
the 1880s, anticipated a whole pleiad of stylists centred on the "World of Art." Concentration on the large-scale canvas also indirectly inspired the "parade portraits" of rich merchants and aristocrats by Serov, Somov et al.

Despite their undoubted influence on art and artists of the period, it cannot be said that either Mamontov or Ryabushinsky were exclusively responsible for the actual formation and development of the "World of Art" or "Blue Rose" movements. Rather, their enthusiasm and material support acted as catalysts to inherent tendencies which would certainly have emerged—later and less dramatically—without their presence. The painter and critic, Grabar', a peripheral member of the "World of Art," made this clear in his argument against a purely economic analysis of Russian art at the turn of the century:

The "World of Art" did not have its roots in industry and Diaghilev received the first money for its publication from Princess Tenisheva, and Serov obtained subsequent funds during his portrait sittings (from the Tsar, J.B.) . . . Conventionally, it is thought that the consumers of the "World of Art's" artistic output, its buyers, patrons and collectors were also industrial big-wigs. This is quite false . . . the first pictures of the "World of Art" artists were bought by doctors, solicitors, important Petersburg officials and only many years later did the financial aristocracy grow up to them. . . .

Although Grabar' certainly oversimplified the situation and ignored the role which Mamontov played in the "World of Art," his statement prompts the art historian to doubt the validity of a predominantly socio-economic approach
the period, which, until recently, Soviet scholars have favoured. Indeed, it was being felt already by the late 1900s that the age of Capitalist patronage had long passed and that such *nouveaux riches* as Ryabushinsky possessed neither the single-mindedness, nor the cultural resources to maintain the patronal traditions of the second half of the 19th century. Bencis implied this in 1912 when writing on the enterprise, "Contemporary Art": "... amongst all the many millions in Russia at the present time, there is not one man who, unselfishly and with no wish for advertisement, would want to do what P. M. Tret'yakov did for art in the '60s and '70s."^4

"Contemporary Art" was a case in point and well represented the waning influence of the Maecenas in Russian art during the 1900s. Ostensibly, the St. Petersburg art shop founded by Prince S. Shcherbatov and the wealthy businessman, V. von Mekk in 1903 was a progressive and original project (although it was based, in part, on Bing's "Maison de l'Art Nouveau" in Paris): its function was to exhibit not only contemporary paintings, but also objects of domestic use--furniture, porcelain, embroidery--designed by modern Russian artists, including, Bakst, K. Korovin and Vrubel'. Under the artistic direction of Grabar' the rooms were designed by Bakst, Bencis, Lancéray and A. Ya. Golovin (1863-1930) with plaster decorations by the sculptors A. L. Ober (1843-1917) and A. Matveev and
Lalique was employed to design glass ornaments. Yet despite its grand pretensions, "Contemporary Art" remained open for only a year and "only one chair was sold." The overt reasons for its failure—the overspending on interior decoration, von Mekk's financial collapse in 1904 and the dishonesty of the accountant—concealed the essential defect of such an organization: it lacked artistic vision and demanded from artists what was fashionable rather than what was unorthodox, and thereby deprived them of the possibility to experiment and research. In this respect the artists of "Contemporary Art," controlled both by the prerequisites of the management and by the standards of public taste, immediately lost their spiritual independence. Their position can be contrasted not only with that of artists connected with Tret'yakov and Mamontov or even Ryabushinsky, but also with an interesting parallel movement in Moscow, the "Murava" society. This was a communal studio opened in 1904 which was run by artists alone, independently of any financier; its function was similar to that of "Contemporary Art" in that its members attempted to exhibit and sell furniture and porcelain designed by modern artists, such as K. Korovin and Vrubel' as well as by themselves, but unlike its counterpart in St. Petersburg it maintained its viability and artistic integrity at least until 1910.
In this context it is relevant to mention that the "Blue Rose" artists, although supported materially and ideologically by Ryabushinsky in much the same way as the "Wanderers" were supported by Tret'yakov, also retained their artistic independence. Ryabushinsky endeavoured to enter their Bohemian circle, but he did not take financial advantage of them by attempting to treat their artistic output as a profitable proposition: as in the case of Tret'yakov, Ryabushinsky compiled his collection of Symbolist pictures not from the point of view of financial investment, but to assist impoverished artists and to satisfy his own aesthetic demands.

Yet however important the role played by Ryabushinsky in the propagation of the "Blue Rose," his cultural stature never equalled that of Tret'yakov or Mamontov. The Moscow school of Symbolist painting would have developed without the presence of Ryabushinsky—albeit in a less forceful manner—but without Mamontov and even Princess Tenisheva the revival of folk art and the impact of Neo-nationalism would have been scarcely felt. The importance of these two figures to the development of Neo-nationalism and, in turn, of Modernism warrants separate examination, because they served as direct links between the Realism of the "Wanderers" and the aestheticism of the "World of Art" and the "Blue Rose."
By the late 1860s Russia was being transformed into a Capitalist, industrial state with the consequent effects of mechanization and urbanization on all walks of life. The impact of Russia's modernization was felt appreciably in the countryside--peasants turned to the towns for employment abandoning their traditional way of life, whole villages became deserted as the migration intensified and the tastes and demands of a patriarchal mode of existence became blurred, obsolete. One of the results of this rapid social transformation was the neglect of traditional peasant art by the peasant himself and the gradual replacement of hand-made, domestic wares by manufactured products. Traditional methods of wood-carving, dyeing, embroidery, wood-painting and icon-painting became faced with the danger of oblivion as the urbanized peasant came to look on such occupations as old-fashioned and unnecessary. A whole cultural heritage was suddenly placed in a catastrophic position and was threatened with immediate necrosis.

But before the situation had become hopeless, a few people, aware of the imminent danger, took measures to preserve and maintain the sources of peasant art. The "Zemstva" tried, if somewhat half-heartedly, to revive peasant art by establishing in Moscow a Handicraft Museum.
and by opening depots in various towns for the sale and distribution of peasant wares. But the real task of saving a national heritage was undertaken by the very class which had placed it in such danger: rich patrons, for the most part industrialists (an important exception being Princess Tenisheva), with both immense funds and artistic sensibility played the decisive role in saving peasant art from disaster: wealthy individuals such as K. Dalmatov and A. L. Pogoskaya began to collect and commission peasant made fabrics, the Stroganov family opened the famous art institute in Moscow, industrialists contributed money to the foundation of craft centres for the propagation of peasant art; but it was two benefactors, in particular, who eased the situation so effectively that they not only saved a whole culture from extinction but also exerted a profound influence on the evolution of Russian art from the 1880s onwards. They were Savva Ivanovich Mamontov (1841-1918) and Princess Mariya Klavdievna Tenisheva (née Pyatkovskaya: 1867-1928). The first of these, Mamontov, upheld the patronal traditions of Tret'yakov and in his enthusiasm for art and in his organizational abilities anticipated Diaghilev and Ryabushinsky; of Mamontov and Tenisheva, Mamontov was the more productive, the more dynamic, the more knowledgeable and the more influential—Tenisheva is, a little unjustly, often argued to have been a mere imitator of Mamontov, a dilettante and a seeker of glory.
Abramtsevo

Mamontov came of a well-established, rich Moscow merchant family and assimilated from birth those methods of business and organization which he manipulated so successfully within the sphere of art. By the 1860s Mamontov was a millionaire, having made his money from railways and business investments. However, he was not only a wealthy businessman, but also a man of taste and culture, being a singer and painter and later a sculptor and dramatist in his own right.

In 1870 Mamontov and his wife, Elizaveta Grigor'evna, bought an estate called Abramtsevo not far from Moscow, and it was here that the famous artists' colony of that name was established. Mamontov by 1870 was already interested in peasant art, both Russian and Western European, and was familiar with the tenets of William Morris. His sympathies towards this aspect of art grew when he befriended the artists and critics Polenov, A. V. Prakhov (1846–1916) and M. M. Antokolsky (1843–1902) (sculptor) in Rome, for they all shared a common interest in the culture of Ancient Russia. The very environment of Abramtsevo was also conducive to the study of Russia's patriarchal, artistic traditions since the collection of Russian antiquities belonging to the former owner, the
Slavophile writer S. T. Aksakov, was still intact there, and the famous Troitse-Sergieva Lavra and Khotkovsky Monastery stood close by attracting thousands of pilgrims in summer. In 1876 Polenov visited Abramtsevo and in the following year Repin and V. Vasnetsov stayed for a short time. By 1880 an artistic collective had been formed there, i.e. a number of artists now came regularly to spend the summer months working there, including Antokolsky, Polenov, Repin and V. Vasnetsov. They were united ideologically by their mutual interest in the history of Russian culture, in landscape painting and by their negative attitude towards the lesser disciples of the "Wanderers." Their creative efforts were united when Mamontov proposed the construction of a church on the estate in traditional peasant style: realized from a design by Polenov, the church was decorated mainly by V. Vasnetsov and finished in 1882. This marked the beginning of the period of intense artistic activity which was to continue at Abramtsevo for at least the next decade. Young artists came, including K. Korovin, E. Polenova (Polenov's sister), Serov and M. B. Yakunchikova (1870-1902); on Elizaveta Grigor'evna's initiative a school for peasant children was established and to it were attached carpentry and, later, pottery workshops under the supervision of Yakunchikova; plays were staged with sets and
costumes by V. Vasnetsov while the roles were performed by the artists themselves; in 1885 Mamontov created his Private Opera and with sets by K. Korovin and Levitan he produced "Aida" and Gounod's "Faust"—but after a few initial, successful presentations his opera project failed because of bad musical organization and overriding competition from the Imperial Opera, and it was resurrected only in 1896.

With the establishment of workshops the aesthetic programme of Abramtsevo could be realized, i.e. the rebirth of the peasant applied arts: furniture, vessels and embroidery were created according to traditional designs and methods of execution. But while the craftsmen were peasants working in the workshops, the designers were professional artists such as Vrubel', Vasnetsov and Polenova. This combination of forces led to a concentration on retrospectivism and stylization, elements which became identifiable with much of Russian art during the 1890s and 1900s. The resultant product was sometimes a version of peasant art adulterated either by an unprecedented mixture of local styles or by features of Modernism, Art Nouveau, which artists of that period had inevitably assimilated. Polenova was especially culpable in this respect for she tended to use peasant motifs out of context by applying, for example, an embroidery design to a table, or vice versa, and so
destroyed the essential cohesion of style and form in peasant made objects. Her sister, N. Polenova, later recalled a case in point, the subject being a cupboard:

Its general form was inspired by a certain cupboard made by V. Polenov, but the details were taken by Elena Dmitrievna (Polenova, J. B.) from a museum and from her album sketches; the lower part with a removable door was from a shelf from the village of Komyagino; the handle from a painted bowl found in the village of Vilishchevo in the Podolsk area; the upper enclosure from the front of a cart; the column was found in the village of Bogoslov in the Yaroslavl' district, and the vase of roses depicted on the first cupboard was from V. Polenov's album sketched from some swings in the Devichii playground. The indiscriminate application of peasant art motifs to modern designs was a feature peculiar to both the art and architecture of Neo-nationalism. The excessive extent to which new buildings were being decorated in the Russian Style after 1880 caused one observer to remark that "... marble towels and brick embroideres have appeared ... they will go to show that our young art thirsted nobly to create in the national style but did not find its due gratification."

In 1889 Vrubel' was introduced to Mamontov by Serov and shortly thereafter he established his artistic base at Abramtsevo, residing there frequently until 1896. In the pottery workshop, later transferred to Moscow, he produced his famous majolica works whose subjects of fantasy and myth were directly inspired by his study of Ancient Russia and, specifically, by the operas of Rimsky-Korsakov,
"Sadko" and "Snow White," staged at Abramtsevo. Vrubel' painted several of his masterpieces during these years at Abramtsevo, including "Christ Walking on the Waters" (1890) and "Gypsy Fortune-teller" (1893). It was while working there in 1891 that Vrubel' embarked on his series of illustrations to Lermontov's "Demon," a subject to which he had already devoted two large canvases. At Abramtsevo, also, he painted two large panneaux of mythical content for the pavilion of Mamontov's Moscow-Yaroslavl' Railway Company at the Nizhnii-Novgorod All-Russian Art and Industry Exhibition in 1896: these panneaux, "Dream Princess" and "Mikula Selyaninovich," were removed after the jury of the art section had protested against their "decadence"; but Mamontov, aware of the true value of Vrubel's art, had a special pavilion constructed for the two panneaux.

In 1896 Mamontov revived his Private Opera and transferred it to Moscow where, with décor by Golovin, K. Korovin and Vrubel' and with singers such as the newly discovered Chaliapin and Zabela (later Vrubel's wife), it was an immediate success. In 1898 Mamontov took his company to St. Petersburg, to a public far more refined and conservative than the Moscow one: their reaction was described by Benois:

I did not like everything - the planning was rather poor at times, and there was a certain roughness in
the technique - but these shortcomings could have been explained by the very modest means the private enterprise had at its disposal. On the whole, Korovin's décors amazed us by their daring approach to the problem and, above all, by their high artistic value - the very quality which was so often missing in the elaborate productions of the Imperial stage. It was obvious that the path Korovin had chosen was the right one and needed only to be developed and improved.10

The path was indeed developed when in the years immediately after Mamontov came into contact with the new generation of Saratov and Moscow artists such as Arapov, Kuzetsov, Sapunov and Sudeikin. They became, in fact, the nucleus of the group which formed round him in 1900 after his arrest, partial disgrace and financial collapse of 1899,11 for his closest collaborators of the late 1890s, Korovin, Chaliapin and Zabela, deserted him after his arrest and entered the Imperial Theatres under Telyakovsky. Although in 1900 greatly impoverished, Mamontov resurrected his artistic commitments including his ceramic workshop and the remains of his private opera. It was at this juncture that young artists came close to him visiting his workshop on Butyrskie pechi, designing sets for his unsuccessful new series of opera productions,12 and submitting their works to him for critical appreciation: Arapov recalls in his unpublished memoirs a time when Kuznetsov showed some of his new pictures to Mamontov which depicted cupids—Mamontov's comment was: "These, my boy, aren't cupids but some sort of clean-shaven
landlords." Mamontov's ability to move with the times, to interest himself in new artistic movements, never deserted him, although by 1904, with the transference of his opera company into the hands of the entrepreneur, S. I. Zimin (1875-1942), his influence and energies had diminished appreciably.

Although the early 1890s marked the climax of creative activity at Abramstevo, its function as an artistic colony was preserved until 1917 when it became a national museum. Even after Mamontov's financial collapse in 1899 a certain amount of artistic work continued thanks to the presence of such artists as Nesterov and the Vasnetsovs, and younger artists continued to visit the colony.

Kuznetsov later described his visit to Abramtsevo in 1902:

We (K. Korovin and Kuznetsov, J. B.) stayed with Mamontov for several days since he would not let us go immediately, and I had the chance of getting to know him closely.... He loved art to distraction.... In this sphere he searched for everything that was new, progressive, developing and he rarely made mistakes. By instinct he divined new talents, searched for them and discovered them; he coaxed them, gave them direction and furthered their development.... Mamontov's most valid contribution to the evolution of Russian art was the material and spiritual support which he gave to such artists as K. Korovin, V. Vasnetsov and Vrubel', for in appreciating and propagating their depictions of the fabulous and the mystical, their retrospectivism and their stylization, he pointed to the path which
Russian art was to take through the "World of Art," the "Blue Rose" and Neo-primitivism. In this respect perhaps the greatest tribute to Mamontov was paid by Benois in his "History of Russian Painting in the 19th Century":

"... Savva Mamontov (has played) the role of a Tret'yakov in the development of the new Russian school. ... Together with Diaghilev, the despotic Mamontov, loving pomp and loud glory, is the main figure to whom the young Russian art is primarily indebted for its prosperity."

Abramtsevo's creative programme was well displayed in the work of V. Vasnetsov, with whom, as one critic remarked, "the conflagration began." By the early 1870s Vasnetsov was already finding the tendentious Realism of the "Wanderers" inadequate and began to look back to the remote past of Russian culture for inspiration. In 1880 he painted his monumental picture, "After the Battle of Igor' Svyatoslavovich with the Polovtsians" and in the following year designed the retrospective décor for Ostrovsky's play, "Snow White," décor which anticipated his widely acclaimed sets for Mamontov's production of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera of the same name in 1885.

Vasnetsov's concentration on peasant motifs, his attention to bright and colourful effects and his evident simplification of line, composition and pictorial rhythm heralded a whole creative system of "geometrization" and stylization to be employed by the "World of Art" and some of the "Blue Rose" artists. Although he succeeded in
avoiding exaggerated stylization during his initial period at Abramtsevo, Vasnetsov's art nevertheless declined after his work on murals in the Vladimir Cathedral, Kiev in the early 1880s, when he had recourse to such iconographic devices as one-dimensional transmission of figures, conventional gold backgrounds and abstract decorative patterns. In his paintings of the late 1890s, e.g. "Ivan the Terrible" (Figure 4), stylization is obvious and anticipates the intense stylization and decorativism of his disciples, I. Ya. Bilibin (1876-1942), G. I. Narbut (1886-1920) and D. S. Stelletsky (1875-1947). His art of the 1900s displays a marked tendency towards Modernist stylization and like Nesterov's morbid religious visions and Vrubel's tormented demons evokes, in the hauntingly dull colours and lifeless figures, that gloomy mysticism which so pervaded the painting and literature of the Decadents and which, in turn, transmitted the vague awareness of the end of an age. The elements of depersonalization, fantasy and ornamentation at the expense of naturalist representation to be found in Vasnetsov's work of the late 1890s and in some cases earlier, anticipated much that was to occur in Russian painting within the following decade—the theatricalized figures of Benois, Somov and Sudeikin, the uninhabited, retrospective landscapes of K. F. Bogaevsky (1872-1943), the mystical
visions of Arapov, Kuznetsov and Utkin and the intense decorativism of the first and second generations of "World of Art" artists.

Despite the negative elements of his work, Vasnetsov remains an important representative of his age. Together with Golovin, K. Korovin, S. V. Malyutin (1859-1937), Polenova and Ryabushkin, Vasnetsov was the first to turn back to the mainsprings of indigenous Russian art for his inspiration and to establish the trend towards Neo-nationalism: it is significant, therefore, that the two greatest symbols of this movement, the church at Abramtsevo and the main building of the Tret'jakov Gallery should both have been decorated by Vasnetsov.

**Talashkino**

An artistic colony similar to Mamontov's enterprise at Abramtsevo was established by Princess Tenisheva on her estate, Talashkino, just outside Smolensk. Although set up as an artistic colony per se much later than Mamontov's, its aims were similar to those of Abramtsevo -- to resurrect the traditions of peasant art -- and its artistic production was almost as industrious and as prolific. Important artists worked at Talashkino and its products came to be known as far away as London, but
essentially its influence on the formulation and direction of Russian art was marginal. Whether it was by virtue of its comparative geographical remoteness, by the Princess's misdirected energies and ill luck, or by the fact that "it arrived too late," Talashkino never won the place it merited in the history of Russian art and for art historians has been overshadowed unjustifiably by Mamontov's undertaking. Intrinsically, Talashkino was an important source of inspired art particularly in the spheres of embroidery and wood-carving, but it lacked the broad horizons and far-reaching effects of Abramtsevo.

Just as the dynamic character of Mamontov made Abramtsevo what it was, so the more effete, less convincing personality of Princess Tenisheva was reflected in her brain-child, Talashkino. She was, undoubtedly, of an artistic nature and was even an artist in her own right, creating, inter alia, designs for embroidery and small articles of furniture, but she lacked the artistic sensibility of Mamontov as her erratic purchases of pictures indicated, and was held up to ridicule as an artless Maecenas and a dilettante.

The colony at Talashkino originally started as a school for peasant children opened in 1887 by Princess E. K. Svyatopolk-Chetvertinskaya, then owner of the estate. This was enlarged and developed when Princess
Tenishëva's husband bought the estate in 1888 and was eventually moved to Flenovo, a neighbouring estate which Prince Tenishev had also bought. By the late 1880s Princess Tenishëva's interest in art had greatly increased thanks to her establishment of an art studio in St. Petersburg, her meeting with Mamontov in Moscow, and her access to the large library of art on the estate itself; she opened a sketching school in Smolensk (one of her several failures) and in 1891 introduced balalaika classes into the Flenovo school. This, in turn, stimulated the establishment of a workshop for the construction of balalaikas—the first of several such workshops—which were also painted and decorated on the estate. Vrubel', Malyutin, Golovin, K. Korovin, N. Ya. Davydova (1873-1926) and Tenisheva formulated and executed designs for the painting of these instruments (Figure 5), some of which were submitted to the 1900 Paris exhibition of Art and Industry. However, despite the short or long visits of artists such as Repin, Ya. F. Tsionglinsky (1858-1912) and Trubetskoi (in addition to the names above) and despite the intense activity on the estate—the building and decoration of a theatre, the construction and decoration by Malyutin of a tower-room ("teremok"), the rediscovery of vegetable dyes and the production of embroideries according to traditional methods, the organization of
an exhibition of works in Smolensk—despite all this, Talashkino before 1900 was little known inside Russia, not to mention Western Europe. Undoubtedly the Paris exhibition, illustrations of Talashkino products in the World of Art23 and contributions to the ”World of Art” exhibition of 1902 helped to broadcast the ideas and practical achievements of Talashkino: the years immediately after 1902 witnessed its period of climax and artistic prosperity. In 1904 a shop called "Rodnik," was opened in Moscow for the sale and distribution of Talashkino wares, and contacts were established with business houses in the leading European capitals; established art institutions, such as the Stroganov Institute in Moscow, took a deep interest in the activities of Talashkino and artists' visits were as frequent as ever (in 1903 Stelletsky stayed for a year, N. K. Rerikh (1874-1947) came for short periods). The output of dyed and embroidered table-cloths, upholstery material, cushion-covers, etc., reached such proportions that at one time "two thousand peasant women"24 were employed in their production. The demand for hand-made and hand-carved icon frames, tables, chairs, etc. also increased despite the frequent disregard for comfort or convenience in their design.25

In 1905 reverberations of the revolution which so shocked Moscow and St. Petersburg were felt even in
Smolensk and the good relations which Princess Tenisheva had maintained with the peasants were disrupted: buildings at Talashkino were burnt down and Princess Tenisheva closed her school at Flenovo as the police came increasingly to meddle in her affairs; in the same year she travelled to Paris, leaving Talashkino for three years, by which time the workshops there had ground to a halt and even after her return their activity was never resumed.

Princess Tenisheva’s influence on the actual development of Russian art was perhaps of more effect and duration in the sphere of financial benefaction than in the sphere of artistic influence. It was she, together with Mamontov, who gave financial backing to the first numbers of the World of Art magazine. She came into contact with the group as a result of her friendship with Benois who in 1897 helped to organize an exhibition of her collection of pictures, the Russian part of which she donated to the Russian Museum of Alexander III in the following year. In 1898 she was approached by Diaghilev for a subsidy towards his magazine, and "thirsting for noble fame" she agreed to furnish half the expenses, 12,000 roubles, Mamontov providing the other half—and the contract was sealed at a majestic dinner which she arranged. Thanks to her the magazine was able to begin its short but momentous career.

Princess Tenisheva undertook to revive peasant art, yet unlike Mamontov she did not invest it with elements
of *Art Nouveau* or apply consciously the ideas of William Morris to which Mamontov was so partial. Pictorially, therefore, the products of Talashkino appeared to be more genuine than those of Abramstevo in being founded on original peasant designs without obvious reprocessing. In this respect, Talashkino was close to the Neo-primitivist movement, in particular to the "Blue Rose" members, Krymov and Sudeikin and to the "Knave of Diamonds" group headed initially by Larionov and Goncharova, who sought inspiration in the traditional peasant crafts of Russia and the East. Although Talashkino was never visited by any of the future Neo-primitivists, it was, of course, closely linked to them in their common endeavour to develop Russian art within the framework of its own, or at least, non-European, cultural experience.

M. A. Vrubel', V. E. Borisov-Musatov

and M. K. Chiurlionis

It is significant that Vrubel' should have been referred to in the context of both Abramstevo and Talashkino, since he was one of two artists who exerted a profound and lasting influence on the evolution of Russian painting during the Symbolist period, particularly on the "Blue Rose" artists. The other artist was Borisov-Musatov. Before any
examination of the "Blue Rose" movement is attempted, mention must be made of these two artists and of a third, but less relevant one, Chiurlionis.

Of the three figures, Borisov-Musatov was the closest artistically and spiritually to the "Blue Rose" artists and for several years was in direct contact with them. Vrubel', on the other hand, while stylistically and thematically an influential force, was geographically removed from the main "Blue Rose" colony in Saratov and, later, in Moscow associating himself with Abramtsevo, Talashkino and the "World of Art" society. Chiurlionis was never in direct contact with the "Blue Rose" group. The sympathies of Vrubel' and Borisov-Musatov were indicative of their creative world views: Vrubel' tried to invent a world of myth and legend, Borisov-Musatov endeavoured to depict a lost world of country estates haunted by the pale reflections of aristocratic ladies; Vrubel' conjured up tortured visions of gods and devils in the bold brushstrokes of his crimson and purple oils, Borisov-Musatov evoked nostalgia by the soft and lyrical shades of his water-colour and tempera; Vrubel' could see only disintegration and destructive forces in reality and in dream, Borisov-Musatov was searching so evidently for a bygone spiritual cohesion, a peace and tranquility which he identified with the early 19th century. Vrubel's disturbing visions
reflected his tormented time, but offered no solace to those who doubted and despaird, whereas the illusion which Borisov-Musatov conveyed—of a reality unaffected by the social and philosophical fragmentation germane to the age of Symbolism—attracted those who wished to perpetuate such escapism, to attain the mystical heights of the "Blue Rose." It was therefore logical that Vrubel should have left no spiritual progeny, no "school" (although there were imitators), whereas the behests of Borisov-Musatov were honoured and developed by the actual "Blue Rose" movement.

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Vrubel

Although born as early as 1856, Vrubel's artistic career did not begin until the 1880s and he became recognized nationally only in the early 1900s. He died in a lunatic asylum in 1910.

The works which date from his period at the St. Petersburg Academy (1880-1884) reflect its general concern with Classical beauty, structure and linearity. These elements, which appear with such mastery of the principles of anatomy and perspective in, for example, the "Betrothal of Mary to Joseph" (1881), are peculiar to the greater part of his work. Vrubel's passion for line, for an almost geometrical pictorial arrangement, produced his idiosyncratic style of sharply delineated local areas of
colour, an approach which earned him the description, "Cubist." 27

In 1884 two events contributed significantly to the evolution of Vrubel's style: he was employed to assist in the restoration of ancient frescoes in the Church of St. Cyril, Kiev and he journeyed to Venice. The combination of these two factors enabled him both to assimilate mural and iconographic devices into his easel painting and, under the influence of the Old Masters, particularly Bellini, to modify his colour scale: from the mid-1880s blue, lilac and pink tones become prominent in his canvases. His interest in mural painting, an interest which reflected the current concentration on traditional Russian art forms, was stimulated by a second stay in Kiev in 1887. During this period Vrubel' designed murals for the new Cathedral of St. Vladimir, including studies for "Pietà," but the definitive versions were never realized. It is significant that Polenov and V. I. Surikov (1848-1916) refused to participate in the decorative scheme, sensing, as they did, that requirements were dictated by fashion rather than by sanctity; therefore V. Vasnetsov, who worked together with Vrubel' on this project, felt creatively at ease relying on that dry stylization which was by then a hallmark of his work. Vrubel', however, looked on the designs as exercises in easel painting and
depicted the Virgin Mary, Christ and the Angels as if they were the Ophelias, Hamlets and Demons of his subsequent canvases: it should be noted parenthetically that while not an overt atheist Vrubel' was by no means religious in the narrow sense of the word and never took part in the "God searching" initiated by his contemporary, Vladimir Solov'ev.

In 1889 Vrubel' moved to Moscow where he came into contact with the Abramtsevo circle. His friendship with Mamontov in turn directed his artistic energies into other art forms such as décor for Mamontov's operas, designs for majolica sculptures and projects for stores and furniture. In his paintings of this period (i.e. the mid-1890s) a definite tendency towards the monumental and the statuesque is noticeable culminating in the series of panneaux for the All-Russian Exhibition in Nizhni-Novgorod (1896) and for S. T. Morozov's Moscow villa. As with his projects for St. Vladimir in Kiev, Vrubel' was inclined to think in terms of easel painting rather than in terms of the finished mural, and in most cases the small-scale designs for the Morozov panneaux are more successful than the panneaux themselves: this is certainly the case with his decorative mosaics on the upper storey of the Hotel Metropol' in Moscow, the subjects of which are scarcely identifiable from the street below. On a
Vrubel's panneaux and easel paintings of the 1890s reflected his intense interest in folklore and the supernatural. Even while he was working in Kiev, Vrubel' had given thought to the image of the Devil, especially as embodied in Lermontov's poem (1890-1891); the Demon is depicted not as the incarnation of evil, but as a human figure torn by suffering: in this respect the Demon appears often as a self-portrait of Vrubel' himself, a reflection of his fruitless search for wholeness of faith, for spiritual unity—a search shared by so many of his contemporaries. Probably the most important picture in the "Demon" series and, significantly, Vrubel's largest easel work is the "Demon Downcast" (1902): the elongated, almost deformed human body of the Demon, his ashen face, his chaotic environment and the colour scheme of faded blue,
grey and brown transform the picture into a symbol of despair, a presage of Vrubel's insanity. As in the case of Borisov-Musatov, Vrubel' looked to the past for inspiration particularly in his search for cohesion: yet while Borisov-Musatov saw the 18th and 19th centuries as epochs of purity and beauty (as, indeed, so many of the "World of Art" artists did), Vrubel' turned to the mists of Russian folk-lore and sought there an elemental, synthetic force so lacking in his contemporaneity. His search for this wholeness and vitality is well displayed in the "demonic philosophy" of his series of mythological pictures such as the "Bogatyr" (1898) and "Pan" (1899). Vrubel's escape to a world of fantasy, which reached its creative culmination in the nostalgic pictures of the "Sea Tsarevna" (1900) and the "Swan Tsarevna" (1900), stimulated undoubtedly the younger artists of Moscow and Saratov to seek inspiration in the mystical and supernatural. Moreover, Vrubel's striking use of blue, mauve and grey tones at this time (see, especially, the "Sea Princess") again served to influence the "Blue Rose" artists in their choice of colour; and led Symbolist writers to speak of the "poison of Vrubel's green-mauve lilac." An appreciable loss of linearity in some of Vrubel's pictures of the early 1900s such as the "Swan" (1901) and the "Sea" (1903) also contributes to a formal
resemblance to Borisov-Musatov's work and, in turn, to the early canvases of Kuznetsov and Sudeikin.

Although by 1902 Vrubel' was experiencing the first symptoms of approaching insanity, his pictures between this date and 1906 display, in some cases, an easing of tension and congestion: the pictorial flexibility of the "Sea," the rural clarity of the "Portrait of N. I. Zabelia-Vrubel Against a Background of Birches" (1904) and the immediacy of the "Portrait of Valerii Bryusov" (1906) point to an essential departure from the confusion and unreality of many of the earlier works.

In 1906 Vrubel' lost his sight and spent his remaining years in creative silence, deliriously preparing himself for the return of his eyes, which were to be "of emerald." His portrait of Bryusov (Figure 6), commissioned by Ryabushinsky for the Golden Fleece, was one of his last works and was never completed: although marred by the twisted shapes and unexpected colours of the background, which Vrubel's failing sight was unable to distinguish, the portrait marked an artistic and spiritual culmination, for Vrubel' had returned at length from the sphere of fantasy to the world of reality. It was, perhaps, this realization that prompted Vrubel's rejoinder to his doctor's offer of some wine: "No, I mustn't drink . . . I've already drunk all my wine."
Borisov-Musatov was born in 1870 in Saratov, a town which he made his home until the end of 1903 when he moved to Podolsk, outside Moscow. He died in Tarusa in 1905.

Although he entered the St. Petersburg Academy in 1891 after a year at the Moscow Institute, his real artistic career began when he returned to the Moscow Institute in 1893 and was confronted by the more progressive teaching system there. From this date onwards the cardinal aspects of Borisov-Musatov's work became increasingly evident: intense concern with the effects of light, a propensity towards pale colours and a preference for landscapes rather than portraits or domestic scenes. His departure from the Realists on the one hand and the Neo-nationalists on the other, to whom Moscow was accustomed in the mid-1890s, caused critics to take notice of him, although for the most part in negative terms: writing on the 17th exhibition of pupils' works at the Moscow Institute, one observer paid particular attention to the impressionistic works, "May Flowers" and "Poppies": "... all this is no more than a morbid illusion. Take a close look and you'll have to agree immediately that essentially there's nothing of this at all, there's merely a mass of rough blots without any drawing at all thrown on
by a big, decadent hand." The words "morbid illusion" and "decadent," although used negatively in the above context, aptly summarized Borisov-Musatov's creative interests at this time and pointed to his increasing attraction towards the Symbolist poets, both of Russia (especially Bal'mont) and of France (especially Verlaine).

Towards the end of 1895 Borisov-Musatov journeyed to Paris where he stayed over two years. Although certain impressionist devices had been evident in his earlier works, e.g. the concentration on light in "May Flowers," Borisov-Musatov was not inspired by the French Impressionists as such and during his sojourn in Paris he turned more readily to the Symbolists such as Puvis de Chavannes and the Nabi group, especially M. Denis. Consequently, Borisov-Musatov renounced any former tendency towards divisionism and directed his energies towards decorativism, towards representing the lyrical and the symbolic; at the same time, thanks to Puvis de Chavannes, he began to give serious thought to the panneau and the mural as art forms. In this context it is important to observe that as a direct result of Borisov-Musatov's influence many "Blue Rose" artists early on in their careers painted panneaux and frescoes, and even transferred methods peculiar to these forms to easel painting and theatrical décor. Before he left France Borisov-Musatov had projected the first of his retrospective
landscapes, visions which were to haunt him until his death: this initial project tentatively called "Maternité" which was never realized in detail, pointed directly to the influence of Denis: it was to have depicted a woman, young girls and children in a garden of trees which "were covered in white and pink blossoms . . . they stood divided by wide spaces, and these spaces were air satiated with the exhalations of spring. The sun's rays like spiders' webs ceaselessly intersected these spaces." 34 The central subjects of this design and the whole lyrical concept were to find parallels in the "maternal" works of Kuznetsov and Sudeikin executed between c. 1904 and 1906.

With Borisov-Musatov's return to Saratov in 1898 his nostalgic evocation of a remote feminine beauty, of an irrevocable past began to assert itself. His two works "Autumn Motif" (1899) and "Motif Without Words" (1900) depict woman as a beautiful, yet unattainable ideal who remains silent to man's solicitations: this attitude to Woman as a symbol of purity, of an ulterior reality, was of course, peculiar to the Symbolists as a whole, both to writers such as Blok and Bryusov, and to painters, particularly Kuznetsov. Brysov35 and Kuznetsov36 came especially close in their common laudation of the pregnant woman or mother as the apotheosis of spiritual beauty, although in the case of both there were obvious
precursors such as Vladimir Solov'ev, Puvis de Chavannes and M. Denis: suffice it to say that the concept of the Eternal Feminine advocated by Vladimir Solov'ev and propagated so intensely by the Symbolists was not confined to their literary output, but was also a vital principle of their visual art. But whereas this concept permeated the prose and poetry of both the St. Petersburg and Moscow Symbolist writers, it was only the Moscow-Saratov painters who used it at all extensively in their work: their confrères in the "World of Art" such as Bakst, Benois and Somov remained outside the credo even though they were in direct contact with interpreters of the philosophy, such as V. Ivanov. Indeed, the only point of contact between Borisov-Musatov, at least, and the "World of Art" was in their mutual tendency towards retrospectivism, although the ways in which they viewed the past differed radically: for Borisov-Musatov it was the guardian of an irretrievable beauty, for Bakst and Benois it was a source of intellectual and cultural inspiration, for Somov it was a theme for parody and caricature. Borisov-Musatov, in fact, was not completely accepted by the Petersburg artists until after his death when for the first time he was represented at a "World of Art" exhibition (1906). Indeed, at one of the exhibitions of the "Moscow Association of Artists" it was reported that Diaghilev said of Borisov-Musatov: "If we have anything which is quite devoid of talent, then it's your Borisov-Musatov."
When Borisov-Musatov moved from Saratov to the vicinity of Moscow he came into closer contact with the Moscow Symbolists led by Bely and Bryusov. In 1904 he was invited by Bryusov to contribute to the design and artistic make-up of the new Symbolist journal the Scales and his decorations for both the outside and the inside of the journal were accepted for the second issue of 1905. In 1904 also he began to attend Bely's "Sundays" at which the cream of Moscow's intelligentsia gathered to discuss Steiner's anthropomorphism, Merezhkovsky's Christ and Anti-Christ or Skryabin's synthetic music. Borisov-Musatov had little time for the cult of mysticism which was already corroding the intellectual pursuits of such salons, but he was interested in the development of art forms, especially of painting and music. Concerned as Borisov-Musatov always had been with the need for spiritual cohesion in an age of scepticism, his comments on Wagner—whose music the Symbolists saw as the apex of artistic synthesis—were of particular significance:

The endless melody which Wagner found in music is also present in painting. This melody is in the melancholy, northern landscapes of Grieg, in the songs of the mediaeval troubadours and in the romanticism of our native Russian Turgenevs... in frescoes this leitmotif must correspond to line. Endless, monotonous, impassive, without angles.

In Borisov-Musatov’s own work this "endless line" is style, a symptom of artistic integrity which is organic
and consistent; and because Borisov-Musatov possessed style, and not stylization, his ideas were assimilated and developed by a whole school of painters, the "Blue Rose."

The years immediately after 1900 marked the zenith of Borisov-Musatov's artistic career. It was during this time that he created the large canvases such as "Gobelin" (1901), the "Reservoir" (1902), "Phantoms" (1903) and the "Emerald Necklace" (1903-04) (Figure 7) which, with their illusive depictions of feminine grace, immediately recall Blok's early verse to the "Beautiful Lady." The images of his spectral figures, shimmering water and elusive foliage executed in the pale tones of blue, grey and green, weakened formal discipline and undermined the stability of visual reality (Figure 8). It was the "Blue Rose" artists who adopted this tendency and developed it almost to the point of abstraction.

Mikalojus Konstantinas Chiurlionis

Although never in direct contact with the "Blue Rose" group and known virtually only to the St. Petersburg Symbolists, the Lithuanian painter-musician, Chiurlionis, deserves at least some attention in any discussion of the Moscow Symbolist School of painting.
Chiurlionis was born in 1875 in South Lithuania and died in St. Petersburg in 1911. Although he never received professional art training, a deficiency reflected in his weak technique, his paintings made an important contribution to Russian and East European culture of the 1900s and have certain obvious affinities with the "Blue Rose" output. This is not to say that Chiurlionis influenced such painters as Kuznetsov, Sudeikin and Utkin or that he was, in turn, influenced by them or by Borisov-Musatov and Vrubel', yet the tendency to reject reality and to escape to a world of dream and fantasy is common to them all. With few exceptions, in fact, all of Chiurlionis' work—which was executed between 1903 and 1911—is concerned with subjects identifiable with the Russian Symbolist movement. The juxtaposition of dissonance and consonance which is evident in such allegorical works as the "Sonata of Stars" cycle (1908) mirrors the Symbolists' search for cohesion and integration in the face of the fragmentation of their age; moreover, the interest of Chiurlionis in folk-lore, both of Europe and of the East, links his pictures directly to the retrospectivism of the "World of Art" painters and of Borisov-Musatov and Vrubel'. It was this belief in the unity of a bygone age, this aspiration towards synthesis, which could inspire such manifestly contradictory works as, for example,
Chiurlionis' "Fairy-tale of the Kings" (1908) and Bakst's "Terror Antigua" (1908). The many pictures of Chiurlionis which are concerned with the signs of the zodiac, with the philosophies of ancient civilizations, with a primeval, elemental world develop this concept so fundamental to the whole Symbolist movement: as N. Berdyaev remarked so aptly: "In painting Chiurlionis expressed the quest for synthesis." On a different level this aspiration towards synthesis was represented by the attempts of Chiurlionis to "paint music," i.e. to unite two art forms in one work: the majority of his pictures have musical names such as "Sonata of the Sun-Allegro, Andante, Scherzo" (1907) or "Fugue" (1908) and, indeed, their basic qualities are rhythm, motif and abstraction of visual reality. Although Chiurlionis never attempted to develop the hypothesis that the seven notes of the musical scale corresponded to the seven colours of the spectrum—an argument which so occupied Skryabin—his tendency to combine musical and pictorial form won the applause of the Symbolist philosophers, not least V. Ivanov.

Chiurlionis' move from his home in South Lithuania to St. Petersburg in 1909 was indicative of his spiritual kinship with the artists and literati who were associated with the journal Apollon and V. Ivanov's "tower." It was not only his retrospectivism which linked him to such figures as Bakst, Benois, V. Ivanov and Merezhkovsky, but...
also his familiarity with the work of Beardsley, Puvis de Chavannes, Ibsen, Kant, Nietzsche, Stuck and Wilde. Stylistically, too, his pictures have certain affinities with those of the St. Petersburg painters, particularly in their elements of linearity and symmetry (see, for example, "Sonata of Stars, Allegro" (1908) and the "Victim" (1909)); it was this which prompted V. Ivanov to speak of the "geometrical transparency" of Chiurlionis' pictures and V. Chudovsky to observe that: "One of the main peculiarities of Chiurlionis' composition is the dominance of the vertical line. He is a poet of the vertical... Every vertical is a denial of earthly life." This linearity, this "geometry" links him in turn to Vrubel', whom he greatly esteemed, yet distinguished him from Borisov-Musatov and the Saratov-Moscow school.

But despite this fundamental difference between Chiurlionis and Borisov-Musatov and the "Blue Rose" artists, there are certain features which are common to both. A rejection of contemporary reality is common to nearly all their pictures as is their aspiration towards a world of peace and silence. Technically, Chiurlionis shared a great deal with Borisov-Musatov and the "Blue Rose" painters such as Kuznetsov, Sapunov and Sudeikin: his extensive use of tempera and his subdued colour scale of grey, blue and green paralleled the restrained tone of the "Blue
Rose's pictures; the lack of delineation and indefiniteness characteristic of some of Chiurlionis' early work (e.g. "Peace" (1905), "Friendship" (1905) (Figure 9)) also recalled the "dematerialization" of the "Blue Rose" canvases and, like them, anticipated non-representationalism. In this context it is significant that both Chiurlionis and the "Blue Rose" artists consistently avoided the genre of portraiture, with its exacting demands for formal representation.

In 1910 Chiurlionis lost his reason and in the following year died in a lunatic asylum, an event, of course, which links him even closer to Vrubel'. But his passing went unnoticed by the "Blue Rose" painters, who by 1911 had already forsworn their credo of Symbolism and had turned their attention to the principles of Neo-primitivism and other directions.

The establishment of Abramtsevo and Talashkino produced two important, general results in the context of the Russian visual arts. On the one hand they drew attention to the motifs and devices of peasant art and hence stimulated the evolution of the Russian decorative and illustrative arts, on the other they afforded the artist a considerable degree of material independence and therefore enabled him to concentrate on other areas,
specifically easel painting. This combination of circum-
stances would explain why both decorative artists and
easel painters worked simultaneously and in close
proximity at these estates. To a certain extent Vrubel' and
Borisov-Musatov were representative of these two de-
velopments for Vrubel's painting, whatever its intrinsic
value, was very much part of the stylized, retrospective
decorativism which emerged at Abramtsevo, whereas Borisov-
Musatov's painting was, above all, easel work and owed
little to the stylization and ornamentation identifiable
with the work of Polenova or V. Vasnetsov. This differ-
ence between Vrubel' and Borisov-Musatov becomes more
evident when one considers the respective circles by
which the two artists were favoured: Vrubel' was accepted
by the "World of Art" artists, Borisov-Musatov by those
of the "Blue Rose." This choice was symptomatic of
divergent aesthetic world-views since the St. Petersburg
group maintained a distinct preference for the decorative
arts, while the "Blue Rose" artists regarded easel paint-
ing as the most viable artistic medium. These two atti-
tudes constituted a fundamental difference between the
two movements of Russian Symbolist art.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. S. Makovsky; Siluetы russkikh khudozhnikov, Prague, 1922, p. 29.

2. Statistics concerning the growth of the art market in Russia are to be found in: A. Fedorov-Davydov, Russkoe iskusstvo promyshlennogo kapitalizma, M., 1929, pp. 203-216. The increase in the number of art publications between 1861 and 1915 is especially notable.


5. Ibid.

6. "Murava" products were exhibited frequently at the "Moscow Association of Artists" exhibitions and its artists were in direct contact with Vrubel'. For details see: N., "Moskovskaya artel' khudozhnikov 'Murava'" in Na rassvete, St. P., 1911, pp. 45-46.

7. The church still stands. It was there, incidentally, that Polenov was married. For further details see: V. Mamontov, Vospominaniya o russkikh khudozhnikakh, M., 1951, p. 19.


11. In 1899 Mamontov was accused of financial misdeal- ings in connection with his construction of the Archangel-Murmansk Railway. After three months in prison he was exonerated from blame and his sentence was quashed.
12. For example, Kuznetsov and Sapunov executed décor for a private production of "La Bohème." See Chapter IV of this text.

13. A. Arapov, Vospominaniya, (archive), 1940.


16. S. Makovsky, Siluety... ..., p. 28.

17. S. Makovsky sets the date of the establishment of Talashkino as a complex of workshops as late as 1903, but this should be qualified: craft products were being made there even in the early 1890s. See: S. Makovsky i N. Rerikh, Talashkino. Izdeliya masterskikh kn. M. Tenishevoi, St. P., 1905, p. 43.


19. A notorious example of this was a newspaper caricature by P. Shcherbov which depicted the Princess as a cow with Diaghilev as a milkmaid. For details and reproduction see: A. Savinov, P. E. Shcherbov, L., 1969, pp. 25 and 71-75; also see Note 20 to Chapter III of this text.

20. This was a short-lived enterprise, although Repin was one of the teachers there. See: M. Tenisheva, Vpechatleniya moei zhizni, Paris, 1933, p. 180.

21. Ibid., p. 93.

22. The exhibition contained a special section devoted to Russian handicraft work which was organized by Davydova, Golovin and Yakunchikova.


25. In some cases designers lost sight of an object's function and treated it merely as an exercise in ornamentation. For example, see the chairs designed by Malyutin in: S. Makovsky i N. Rerikh, Talashkino..., plate 153.

27. S. Makovsky, Siluety...., pp. 120-121.

28. The villa still stands and is called the "Dom druzhby" on Kalinin Prospect, Moscow.


32. These words were spoken by Vrubel' to Dr. Usol'tsev while he was staying at the latter's sanatorium. They were recorded by Bryusov who was present there for a portrait sitting. See: V. Bryusov, "Poslednyaya rabota Vrubelya" in Iskusstvo, Kiev, 1912 No. 11/12, p. 370.


34. GRM, Manuscript Section, fund 27, ed. dep. 88, l. 36. Quoted from: A. Rusakova, V. E. Borisov-Musatov, p. 46.

35. For example, see: V. Bryusov, "Habet illa in alvo," 1902.

36. Many of Kuznetsov's "Blue Rose" pictures were devoted to the themes of pregnancy and maternity. See Chapter VI of this text.

37. This according to A. Shemshurin: V. I. Denisov, M., 1907, p. 15.


39. N. Berdyaev, Krizis iskusstva, M., 1918, p. 5.
40. For example, see: V. Ivanov, "Churlyanis i problema sinteza iskusstv" in Apollon, 1914, No. 3, pp. 5-21.


42. Quoted from a letter from V. Ivanov to S. Makovsky in S. Makovsky, "N. K. Churlyanis" in Apollon, 1911, No. 5, p. 25.

Chapter III

"... for them the call of the past was stronger than the call of the future." (N. Berdyaev, 1914)

The last decade of the 19th century was a time of tension and search in all areas of Russian art, and with regard to painting in particular it marked the beginning of a renaissance which was to last for the next thirty years. The 1890s witnessed not only the intense development of the Neo-nationalist style established at Abramtsevo and Talashkino, not only the gradual recognition of Borisov-Musatov, Chiurlionis and Vrubel', but also the formation of the St. Petersburg "World of Art" movement. While, contrary to general opinion, the "World of Art" can scarcely be considered as an avant-garde group, it deserves the attention of the art historian on two scores: on the one hand it rejected consciously and absolutely the tenets of didactic Realism and on the other it formed an alliance with the first representatives of Russian Symbolism. Yet while extremely important and valuable as a school and source of artistic output its influence on the "Blue Rose" movement and Moscow Symbolist painting was indirect: it could not be said that the "Blue Rose" movement grew out of the "World of Art," that it maintained
its artistic tenets or based itself on thematic and stylistic innovations which the "World of Art" masters established. The "Blue Rose" artists, rather, reacted against the "World of Art" essentially on all fronts—thematic, stylistic, formal, doctrinal—although at the same time affinities between the two groups can be observed: however much they differed, they both shared the Zeitgeist of pessimism, escapism and eschatological mysticism.

Because the "Blue Rose" consciously and unconsciously rebelled against the canons of the "World of Art," an examination of the "World of Art" artists and their work is obviously called for.

The organizational force of the "World of Art" movement was S. P. Diaghilev (1872-1929), the "man with an eye," and it was his ability to arrange exhibitions of lasting importance, to appreciate immediately the good and bad features in a work of art, that earned him his fame. Diaghilev was not an artist (reputedly, he never put brush to canvas), but a critic and an aesthete of extraordinarily perceptive taste and wide culture. Because of his immense knowledge of art, both Russian and Western European, both ancient and modern, and because of his natural inclination to dominate, to use people ruthlessly and autocratically, he was able to mould a
group of artists and critics to reflect his own tastes and desires. And it was the forcefulness of his personality which both founded the group as a group in the late 1890s and disrupted it after 1903. In a letter to his step-mother, E. V. Panaeva-Diaghileva, he summed up his own character:

... firstly, I'm a great charlatan, albeit a brilliant one, secondly, I'm a great charmer, thirdly, a great lout, fourthly, a man with a great amount of logic and with few principles and fifthly, it would seem, untalented; anyway, it would seem, if you like, that I've found my real objective - art patronage. Everything is available except money, mais ça viendra.

Before the establishment of the magazine, the World of Art, in 1898, the group of artists, literati and musicians who were to be associated with that name had, for the most part, already been in close contact for several years. This was because the leading members were all of St. Petersburg, because they attended the same high school and/or art schools and because they remained together even while studying in Germany and France: L. S. Bakst (1866-1924), A. N. Benois (1870-1960), Bilibin, Diaghilev, D. V. Filosofov (1872-1942), E. E. Lancéray (1875-1946), Walter Nouvel (V. F. Nuvel') (1871-1949), A. P. Nurok (1863-1945), Rerikh and K. A. Somov (1869-1939) were all inhabitants of St. Petersburg (although Diaghilev was not born there) and of these Benois, Diaghilev, Filosofov, Nouvel, Rerikh and Somov attended Mai's High School simultaneously. Hence,
early on, between 1885 and 1890, a close bond was established between the future aesthetes; an esoteric group was formed which even at school began to cultivate their fund of knowledge—and ultimately the world's—by their researches into Hellenism, Egyptology, Japanese and Chinese art and the Italian and Flemish schools of paint-int. Despite, perhaps because of, their vast collective knowledge and refined critical sensibility a rarified atmosphere was created within the group which allowed of no vulgarity, no provincialism, no civic or social tendentiousness.

It was logical, therefore, that their artistic output should have been diagonally opposed to the paintings of the 1860s and 1870s, of the Realist "Wanderers" with their imitative presentations of peasant suffering, social disorders, etc. Diaghilev, writing in 1897, described their reaction to the Realists: "It's time for these anti-artistic canvases to stop appearing—with their militia-men, police-officers, students in red shirts and cropped-haired girls."6 The motto which appeared as an insignia on "World of Art" publications epitomized their attitude towards the function of art: "Art is Free; Life is Paralyzed"—in other words, art was something too aetherial, too mobile to be anchored to depictions of the realities of life. Indeed, not
until the 1905 revolution did the "World of Art" painters turn their attention to the burning social problems of the day; and even then only a few, including Lanceray and the newcomer M. V. Dobuzhinsky (1875-1957) worked at all effectively in this sphere by producing illustrations to satirical magazines; but their effort was abortive and, for the most part, they retired soon after to the calm world of their retrospective visions at least until the Revolution of 1917. The fundamental doctrine, then, of the "World of Art" was "art for art's sake," an assumption likely to bring forth objections since the group never published a manifesto and never formulated its principles as such. Their aestheticism, their alienation from social and political reality linked them closely to the Symbolist literary movement, particularly to the so-called first wave of Russian Symbolists, many of whom frequented their circle, and, in turn, to the "Blue Rose" movement whose credo might equally well be regarded as "art for art's sake."

What were the valid contributions which the "World of Art" gave to Russian culture? In which spheres did it precede the "Blue Rose?" Perhaps its greatest contribution was to the development of the graphic arts, particularly of graphic technique. This technical prowess, especially noticeable in the works of Lanceray,
A. P. Ostroumova-Lebedeva (1871-1955) and Somov, arose from a combination of circumstances: firstly, at an early age many of the "World of Art" members were urged to draw or to paint and were surrounded by works of art, often minor masterpieces, in their well-to-do homes; secondly, they were born and nurtured within the confines of St. Petersburg, a severely classical complex of straight lines, perspectives and planes; thirdly, they received expert tuition from the leading art tutors of the day both in Russia—P. P. Chistyakov (1832-1919) and Repin—and in the West—Ažbe and Whistler; fourthly, they looked back to the Neo-classicism of the late 17th and 18th centuries as the apex of Western Man's cultural development and saw the symmetry and stylization of Versailles—one of their most frequent pictorial subjects—as an antidote to the disintegration of their own society. Indeed, it was their inclination towards stylization, towards what they termed the "theatralization of nature," so evident in the pictures of Benois, Rerikh and Somov, that oriented them towards the theatrical décor and costume designs for which the "World of Art" movement became so famous (often to the exclusion of other attainments). Their technical mastery in graphics was well demonstrated in miniatures, book illustrations and title pages where an abundance of detail had to be
included within strictly curtailed limits, a tradition which was maintained without loss of brilliance until the late 1920s by the original members of the "World of Art" and by a second generation of similar stylists. Their craftsmanship was displayed also in their watercolours especially of Benois and Somov—despite a slight gaucherie detectable in some elements of Benois' technique (Benois was the only member of the group to receive no professional art tuition). The medium of oils was neglected by the "World of Art" painters since they did not consider it to be sufficiently malleable to render the refined and subtle linearity of which they were so fond. Both as regards technical finesse and medium the "Blue Rose" artists differed: technically they were, with the exception of Kuznetsov and Sapunov, behind the "World of Art" artists, a fact which was symptomatic rather of their creative exuberance and revolutionary approach to easel painting, than of artistic immaturity; in addition, the media preferred by the "Blue Rose" artists were oil and tempera and their subjects—the mystical, the symbolic, the indefinite—dictated a less precise technical approach than that of the "World of Art" artists with their feeling for classical symmetry and architectural perfection.

As a group the "World of Art" deserves recognition in more spheres than that of technique in painting and
graphics. Diaghilev, with his organizational abilities, successfully arranged large exhibitions of both Russian and Western European art and hence allowed the Russian public to grow acquainted with the achievements of the French Impressionists and Post-impressionists. In this he was imitated by Ryabushinsky who financed and sponsored the "Blue Rose" group and later by the critic and connoisseur, S. K. Makovsky (1877-1962). Diaghilev was the pioneer in the field of professional art exhibitions which spanned the period of the late 1890s to the early 1920s and thus was directly responsible for the communication and cultural interchange which arose out of them. The first exhibition which he arranged was one of British and German water colours at the Stieglitz Museum, St. Petersburg, in 1897, when he was only twenty-five. The second came in the following year—of Russian and Scandinavian painting—in the same place. This was the prototype of the series of "World of Art" exhibitions which began in 1899. The occasion for the exhibition Diaghilev explained in a circular letter to the leading artists of St. Petersburg and Moscow, the text of which was relevant not only to this one specific exhibition, but also to the "World of Art" movement as a whole:

At the present moment Russian art is in that transitional position into which history places every emergent direction when the principles of the older
generation clash and struggle with the newly developing demands of youth... This phenomenon can be observed everywhere and is expressed in such brilliant and vigorous protests as the Munich "Sezession," the Paris "Champ de Mars," the London "New Gallery," etc. ... 25 years ago a group of artists separated into a new society of "Wanderers." ... They have grown old, and if it were not for a small handful of young "Wanderers," the best of our exhibitions would also be deprived of individuality and collapse. ... However, our art has not only not collapsed— but, perhaps, on the contrary, there is a group of young artists scattered throughout various towns and exhibitions who, if collected together, could prove that it is fresh, original and able to introduce much novelty into the history of art.

The Russian section of the exhibition did, indeed, bring together the diverse talents which Diaghilev had acknowledged because it introduced to the public not only the work of the "World of Art" in the persons of Bakst, Benois, Lancéray and Somov, but also the canvases of the Moscow/Abramtsevo circle—K. Korovin, Levitan, Malyutin, Nesterov, Serov and Vrubel'. The appearance of Vrubel's panneau, "Morning," at the exhibition caused a public reaction almost as damning as that which his contribution to the Nizhnii-Novgorod Exhibition had caused in 1896, and the outbursts of the old-guard critics, N. K. Mikhailovsky and Stasov, were to be repeated almost word for word at the first showings of the "Blue Rose" pictures: "Nobody could decide just what kind of beasts were painted in it or to which species they belonged, and whether they were beasts or women." This violent reception of Vrubel's work sprang not only from his highly original style, but
also from the general unfamiliarity with his work, especially in St. Petersburg. But Diaghilev braved the wrath of fashionable authorities and so presented publicly the beginnings of the Russian avant-garde.

Diaghilev's third exhibition was the most important of those organized thitherto, for it was the first of the so-called "World of Art" exhibitions. Opened in St. Petersburg early in 1899, it showed works not only of the "World of Art" members and sympathizers, among them Bakst, Benois, Golovin, K. Korovin, Serov and Somov, but also of contemporary Western European artists including Degas, Liebermann, Monet and Puvis de Chavannes: some of these were borrowed from Shchukin's newly begun collection of European art in Moscow, others were brought by Diaghilev from Paris or sent directly. The fact that Diaghilev managed to bring together the leading artists of Europe under the umbrella of a single exhibition was for the Russian public, at least, an unprecedented event. The importance of Impressionism as a whole had been unrecognized in Russia virtually until this exhibition, because on the one hand the "Wanderers" had dominated the artistic arena and on the other no opportunity had presented itself for viewing originals and reproductions had been very poor. Yet even after this exhibition Impressionism did not make an impact on Russian art: the
"World of Art" painters regarded it as unaesthetic and technically pernicious and even though they must obviously have been familiar with it before 1899 from their frequent sojourns in Paris, their pictures reflected only a superficial influence. Benois, writing in 1899, summed up their attitude to Impressionism: "For art the theories of the Impressionists do not have particular significance. . . ." In turn, the "Blue Rose" artists were affected only indirectly by Impressionism and Post-impressionism, mainly through Borisov-Musatov and K. Korovin, and in any case they did not become closely acquainted with Western trends until at least 1906 when some of them attended the "Salon d'automme" in Paris or were allowed access to the Morozov and Shchukin collections. In fact, it was not until after 1910 that an interest in the Paris school was cultivated deliberately—inspiring the Cubist canvases of the "European" faction of the "Knave of Diamonds," particularly of R. R. Fal'k (1886-1958). But their output was of limited significance in the general development of Russian art, which continued to evolve very much according to an intrinsic, organic process of action and reaction.

In addition to his organization of exhibitions, to which a whole monograph could be devoted, Diaghilev was active in other areas, notably in the production and editorship of the group's literary organ, the World of
Art, and in art criticism. The first number of the World of Art was projected in 1897 and appeared in November, 1898 after innumerable conferences in Diaghilev's apartment on the Fontanka which served as the editorial board room. Both in design and content it was modern and professional and gave rise immediately to comparison with the Berlin journals, Insel and Pan: the cover, headpieces and decorations were by "World of Art" artists, the type was chosen especially from a range of 19th century matrices in the letter foundry of the St. Petersburg Academy and the illustrations were of first-rate quality—the excellent monochrome and colour reproductions incorporated the latest attainments of European polygraphy for the heliogravure and phototype were executed in Germany, the autotype in Germany and Finland. The first number was devoted to V. Vasnetsov and the Abramtsevo group (Figure 10). But the choice was not altogether fortunate for Vasnetsov's excessively stylized depictions of scenes from Russian mythology were accepted readily by the conventional, public and critics, despite their deep impression on such diverse intellectuals as A. A. Blok and Filosofov; paradoxically, this was the reason why reproductions of V. Vasnetsov should have appeared simultaneously in Stasov's rival magazine, Art and Art Industry (1898, No. I), which saw Vasnetsov's prowess not in his stylization and proximity to Art Nouveau, but in his
maintenance of 19th century Realist traditions. It is safe to assume that Diaghilev's choice of material for the first number of the World of Art was an autocratic decision supported by Filosofov, but censured by Benois, although the pressure of Mamontov, an admirer of V. Vasnetsov, should not be ruled out. Benois argued that Vasnetsov did not deserve this publicity when such great landscapists as Levitan were still not appreciated adequately, an opinion which he advanced in the second part of his History of Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century (1902). The choice of material also worried such astute connoisseurs as P. Tret'yakov, as he explained in a letter to his son-in-law, the collector, S. S. Botkin: "The outside is alright but it's been put together in a terribly muddled manner. Why have photographs of Vasnetsov been put in?" But whatever the polemics concerning Vasnetsov, it was significant that Diaghilev should have concentrated on the latest Moscow/Abramtsevo trends rather than on the stylists of St. Petersburg and thereby have contributed directly to the propagation of subsequent provincial movements. The World of Art magazine helped also to focus attention on the young Moscow generation by waging open war against all those who considered didactics more essential to art than formal beauty (a condemnation which included Tolstoy): after a request in the Chronicle of No. 7/8 for 1899 that all pictures by
certain 19th century artists be removed immediately from an exhibition in the Russian Museum, the hostility of Repin and his colleagues towards the "World of Art" became particularly bitter. The ensuing numbers of the journal continued to advance arguments on behalf of the new art and against Realism—a cursory examination of its pages finds illustrated contributions on Polenova (1899, No. 18/19), Nesterov (1900, No. 3/4), Talashkino (1903, No. 10/11).

But despite its evident support of the Moscow/Abramtsevo movement, the World of Art magazine did not remain blindly national, and brought its readers into contact with the Modernist art of Western Europe. Although in this a distinct predilection for the graphics of Beardsley, T. Heine, Conder and Valloton was evident, the magazine did not ignore the current concern with exterior and interior decoration of buildings and acquainted its readers with the latest designs of Mackintosh, Simpson, Golovin and Vrubel' in this area. The reproduction of graphics by Beardsley and Heine exerted an undoubted influence on many young Russian artists and contributed to the renaissance which Russian graphic art enjoyed in the 1900s: in this respect the last numbers of the magazine for 1904 were particularly interesting since instead of reproductions of Western graphists, readers saw decorations
by the subsequent "Blue Rose" member, Feofilaktov (No. 8/9), Benois' illustrations to Pushkin's "Bronze Horseman" (No. I (Figure 11) and Lanceray's drawings to Bal'mont's cycle of poems, "Round of Seasons" (No. 12). Benois' illustrations to Pushkin and Lanceray's to Bal'mont were indicative of the close association between the visual arts and literature observed within the "World of Art" orbit. However, the collaboration between the artists and literati of the magazine's editorial board was never complete and a formal split between them occurred when D. S. Merezhkovsky established the separate philosophical-literary organ, New Path, in 1903; as Grabar' recalled: "There was never . . . a moment when the "World of Art" presented a common, united front, whether political, social or even purely artistic."

But despite internal differences the "World of Art" attempted to examine all areas of art within the framework of a single journal and serious (although occasionally unprofessional) endeavours were made in the field of comparative criticism, e.g. Bal'mont wrote on Goya (1899, No. 11-12), Filosofov argued with Benois on A. Ivanov and V. Vasnetsov (1901, No. 10) and Benois wrote on Palestrina and Rossini (1899, No. 6). In addition, reports and reviews were presented within the covers of any one number on art, music and literature, so that an overall
view of Modernist developments—whether of Vrubel' or Bryusov, Somov or Debussy, Sologub or Reger—could be achieved with a minimum of effort. This aspiration towards synthesis was perhaps the greatest legacy of the "World of Art" and in this it preceded the literary vehicles of the "Blue Rose"—the Scales and the Golden Fleece.

Because of its progressive outlook and encouragement of Modernism, the *World of Art* magazine was attacked by the Press and labelled as "tasteless affectation" and during the five years of its existence it was never a popular periodical (subscribers rarely exceeded 1,000). At first the magazine was subsidized by Mamontov and Princess Tenisheva, but Mamontov withdrew his support after his financial collapse in 1899 and Tenisheva did the same in 1900—owing to her strained relations with Benois, Diaghilev and Mamontov and her uncomfortable position as a Maecenas which was caricatured twice in the Press. The life of the magazine, the luxurious presentation of which consumed exceedingly large sums, was saved in 1900 only by a grant of 10,000 roubles from the Tsar's private funds, an act prompted by the intercession of Serov. Although the magazine was an artistic success, it was doomed to a premature collapse not necessarily through lack of financial support (which
is suggested frequently as the main reason for its failure), but through the unsympathetic domination of Diaghilev. Within four years Diaghilev's position was being threatened by personal and professional hostility from his colleagues, especially Bakst and Somov and the newcomers, B. I. Anisfel'd (b. 1879) and Dobuzhinsky. By 1904, when Nicolas II withdrew his annual subsidy, the enterprise was already enfeebled enough to collapse even though other finances were offered. In any case, Diaghilev had already begun to expand his cultural endeavours: in 1905 he organized the famous Tauride Palace Exhibition of Russian portraits; in 1906 he went to Paris to arrange the Russian section of the "Salon d'automne"; in 1907 he arranged a season of Russian music in Paris. Even before moving westwards Diaghilev had cooled towards the magazine and at the beginning of 1904 put its editorship into the hands of Benois, as a result of which it became oriented much more towards the history of Russian art, rather than towards contemporary movements. Despite its brief period of activity, the World of Art, like its contemporary exhibitions, deserves to be remembered by the way in which it familiarized Russians with their own art and with that of the West, particularly of the preceding decade. Its communication both via critiques and illustrations of the Paris school, the German Simplicissimus group, the Russian Neo-nationalist movement and the
"World of Art" itself undoubtedly exerted a certain influence on the direction and development of the Russian visual arts.

The critical achievements of the "World of Art" have been sadly neglected. It was this capacity, perhaps more than any other, which separated the group from the subsequent artistic collectives such as the "Blue Rose" and the "Knave of Diamonds," for while the members of these groups were artists, and as such were probably more important and valuable than their "World of Art" colleagues, they had little of the cultural universality or critical sensibility which such figures as Bakst and Benois possessed. Diaghilev himself contributed much of critical value: his book on D. Levitsky, one of a series of similar monographs projected by Diaghilev, was a work of profound aesthetic insight and lucid presentation, while his short articles on the art of his own time revealed almost a sixth sense to determine the artistic success or failure of a work. Diaghilev was both aware and articulate: his famous speech given after the opening of the Tauride Palace Exhibition in St. Petersburg, 1905, demonstrated convincingly his ability to appreciate the changes in his contemporary environment:

. . . Do you not feel that the long gallery of portraits . . . is but a grand and convincing reckoning of a brilliant, but, alas, mortified
period of our history? ... we are living in a
terrible time of crisis; we are destined to die
in order that a new culture be resurrected, a cul-
ture which will take from us the relics of our
weary wisdom. ... 26

Such acute perception, one might add, was shared by his
contemporary and colleague, G. Apollinaire. 27 Perhaps
an even greater critic than Diaghilev was Benois, greater
in the sense that his knowledge of Western and Eastern
cultures was wider than that of Diaghilev and more pro-
lific in literary output. Apart from large-scale works
such as the History of Russian Painting in the 19th Cen-
tury and the Russian School of Painting, his reviews and
articles (he contributed regularly to the newspapers,
Word and Speech, and to the journals World of Art and
Apollon) were valuable, although sometimes debatable,
contributions to art criticism. 28 Bakst, Rerikh,
Filosofov, not to mention the many peripheral members of
the "World of Art" such as Grabar' and Yaramich displayed
perceptive critical faculties as well as creative talent.
The gift of perceptive criticism which the "World of Art"
members possessed was partly the result of their eclecti-
cism, of their broad cultural interests and knowledge,
inspired by their regular meetings with representatives
of national and international art media at a host of cul-
tural events—at Diaghilev's "Sundays," at Nouvel's
"Evenings of Contemporary Music" and after 1905 at V.
Ivanov's "Wednesdays" held at his famous "Tower." This
high level of intellectuality was to be met with in Moscow and the provinces only on a much smaller scale, and although the quest for artistic synthesis was pursued there perhaps even more avidly than in St. Petersburg, the critical and theoretical output of such radicals as the Burliuk brothers, Larionov and Malevich betrayed an ignorance of art history, faulty reasoning and little sense of balance; and, significantly, the "Blue Rose" artists limited themselves to painting and sculpture and did not embark into the field of aesthetic theory and art criticism. Yet Moscow and the provinces retained an energy which the "World of Art" members lacked: "We are enfeebled, sick right through and deprived of a fundamental, vital force," wrote Benois; K. S. Petrov-Vodkin (1878-1939), one of the new, provincial artists, expanded this statement: "They know the end of the past is inevitable—therein lies the fascination of the mood of the "World of Art" and therein lies the old age of their aesthetic beliefs. . . ." It was the youth, the whole-hearted passion for painting and the contempt for artistic norms possessed by the new artists of Moscow and the provinces which ensured the dynamic development of Russian art after 1900 and turned Moscow into the centre of avant-garde activity until well after the Revolution.
The disintegration of the "World of Art" in the early 1900s did much both directly and indirectly to accelerate the evolution of provincial art groups, particularly of the "Blue Rose." After the second "World of Art" exhibition of January, 1900, Diaghilev's dictatorship in the organization of the group's art exhibitions was superseded by a committee which consequently altered the content and artistic direction of subsequent exhibitions. One of the results of this reorganization was the more pronounced orientation of the exhibitions towards the artists of Moscow. Although since the first exhibition of 1899 Moscow artists had been represented, e.g. Levitan; Nesterov, the Polenovs and the Vasnetsovs, their presence had not made an effective impression; furthermore, the public was a St. Petersburg one whose taste was geared to the refined, aesthetic graphics of Benois or Somov rather than to the freer, more expansive canvases of the Muscovites. The fundamental difference between the artists of St. Petersburg and Moscow and the fact that for the first three exhibitions only St. Petersburg was capable of viewing, created an initial rift which by 1901 had reached pernicious proportions: in the early autumn of 1901 certain Moscow artists, among them A. E. Arkhipov (1862-1930), K. Korovin, Malyutin, I. S. Ostroukhov (1858-1929) and S. A. Vinogradov (1869-1938),
decided to establish their own exhibition group independent of the "World of Art." The primary difference between the two organizations was that the Moscow group resolved to dispense with the jury system of picture selection employed by the "World of Art" in order to preserve artistic freedom. Because they numbered thirty-six the Moscow group decided to call itself the "Society of the 36 Artists," and at the end of December, 1901, their first exhibition was opened. Paradoxically, the list of contributors included several "World of Art" names, including Benois, Lancéray and Somov, and overtly it differed little from the "World of Art" shows. But the exhibition of the "36" was held in Moscow and not in St. Petersburg, Muscovites were for the first time able to witness the successes of their artists on home ground and for the first time the Moscow artists were able to ignore the artistic and organizational requirements laid down by the "World of Art." It was soon realized that the name would have to be altered as the number of contributors would increase and, at the suggestion of Vrubel', it was changed to the "Union of Russian Artists." The second exhibition of the "36" (i.e. now the "Union of Russian Artists") held in December, 1903, was virtually independent of St. Petersburg and even competitive since, with the exception of O. E. Braz (1872-1936) and A. A. Rylov (1870-1939), only Muscovites contributed: the final
rift was recognized by the "World of Art," even by its leader, Diaghilev: "We have parted with the Association of the 36 artists! . . . there's only one thing I can say— that the group of artists which constitutes the nucleus of the Association of the 36 possesses too great a taste to admit of anything inartistic or vulgar. . . ." The second exhibition, as the first, was a success both artistically and financially and served to establish the "36" as a permanent force in the sphere of artistic creation and propaganda. From 1903 until 1923 annually, with intermittent exceptions, the "Union of Russian Artists" held memorable and valuable exhibitions: in the history of modern Russian art—its regular presentations of contemporary artistic trends played an extremely important role in introducing to the public the younger, avant-garde artists including many of the "Blue Rose" artists and Lentulov, Malevich and Yakulov.

Because of the tension between St. Petersburg and Moscow which reached its climax in 1901, the "World of Art" committee decided that a "World of Art" exhibition should be held in Moscow, and in December, 1902, this proposal was realized. It was hoped that the measure would pacify Moscow hostility and democratic protest, but by then Moscow had already formed its own artistic front and thanks to the "36" realized that it could exist
independently of the "World of Art." In March, 1902 the fourth "World of Art" exhibition had opened, as usual, in St. Petersburg. Pictorially this exhibition well reflected the essential dissension between the two artistic poles: for the first time, several of the new Moscow generation were represented including members of the future "Blue Rose" group—Kuznetsov and Sapunov—and, unlisted, Larionov. The distinct tendency away from formal rigidity in the pictures of Kuznetsov, Larionov and Sapunov in addition to the loud "bouquets of roses" of K. Korovin and Vinogradov, so pleasing to the grosser taste of mercantile Moscow, disrupted still farther the fragile organization of the "World of Art." The Moscow exhibition, opened in December of that year, was dominated by St. Petersburg artists and, apart from Sapunov, lacked the above names, but their very absence drew attention to the aesthetic differences between the "World of Art" and Moscow and made hopes of a compromise even more remote. The fifth "World of Art" exhibition was held only in St. Petersburg early in 1903 but Moscow was represented by Arkhipov, K. Korovin, Vinogradov and the newcomers, V. I. Denisov (1862-1922) and K. F. Yuon (1875-1958). While the exhibition was in progress a fateful meeting of the "World of Art" members was held at Diaghilev's apartment and the death sentence of the society was declared.
Ostensibly the reason was unresolved complications which greeted the proposal to merge the "World of Art" exhibitions with those of the "Union of Russian Artists":

Grabar' recalled the occasion:

I was silent and began to realize that an open fight between Moscow and St. Petersburg was on, that it was not fortuitous that so many Muscovites had turned up. But what was most unexpected was that some of the Petersburgians who had grounds for feeling offended took the side of Moscow. Still more unexpected was Benois' speech - he also declared himself in favour of the organization of a new society.

Diaghilev and Filosofov exchanged glances. The former was very worked up, the latter sat calmly smiling sarcastically. With that it was decided. Everyone stood up. Filosofov loudly pronounced: "Well, thank God, that's it - the end".

But this was the outcome not of arguments at this one meeting, but of the atmosphere of tension and potential disruption which had been felt from the early days--as Benois wrote, all felt that "we ought to finish." The sixth "World of Art" exhibition held in St. Petersburg early in 1906 was the last of the series (although exhibitions similar in organization and direction were begun in December, 1910); yet although the last, it was probably the most important from the point of view of the formation of Russia's avant-garde, since not only was a large section of it dedicated to a posthumous showing of Borisov-Musatov's work, but also much space was taken up by the distinctive canvases of the Saratov-Moscow Symbolist school (See Chapter IV): it was, in fact, an exhibition
of provincial painters rather than of St. Petersburg ones—among the contributors were Feofilaktov, Kuznetsov, the Milioti brothers, Larionov, Sapunov and Ul'yanov (in addition, Jawlensky sent nine canvases from Munich). Feofilaktov, Kuznetsov and Sapunov presented a pre-view of the main tendencies of the "Blue Rose" group displayed at their exhibition of the following year, and their mysticism together with the new colour harmonies of Larionov and Jawlensky indicated that the classical severity and symmetry of the "World of Art" painting were bound to yield to the more dynamic trends of the provincial artists. Indeed, by the following year the "World of Art" had disintegrated as a cohesive group: Diaghilev transferred his interests to Paris where many of his artist friends joined him, the political and social atmosphere after 1905 dictated new demands in art and the Muscovites established their monopoly of the artistic front with the organization of the "Blue Rose" exhibition.

Fully representative of the "World of Art's" creative output was K. Somov. His painting merits a brief examination at this juncture because it was against the background of such painting that the "Blue Rose" moved to the forefront of the artistic arena.
The most important phase of Somov's artistic career began in the mid-1890s. Certainly by 1894 he had already painted many landscapes and portraits, but it was not until at least 1895 that a definite, mature style emerged. During the years 1896-1900 Somov produced a number of fine plein air works simple in composition and colour orchestration and devoid of the structuralization, detail and ironic comments typical of his later work. The watercolour, "Landscape" (1897), reveals a freshness and immediacy reminiscent of the later landscapes of Levitan: the maximum interplay of light and shade and the unstylized pictorial components indicate that Somov was still artistically pliable and free from rigid canons. In "Winter's Walk" (1898) (Figure 12), however, a device is introduced which Somov was to employ extensively in his subsequent work, i.e. structuralization; or what one may choose to call theatricalization: winged by the uprights of the birch tree and the negro, the subject moves along the surface of the picture parallel to the snow, path, fence, lake, trees and horizon while the uprights of the negro, tree and two figures on the right of the tree, fiacre and small figure on the left afford a foreshortened, "rapid" perspective. The only escape from this theatricalized, and hence insularized landscape of pale tones and positioned figures is in the disappearing fiacre, analogous
to the image of the divan which in Somov's later pictures continues as if it were beyond the confines of the canvas. In the "Firework" (1904) the compositional elements are similar, even more marked: the symmetry, the architectonic structure is disturbed only by the fleeting but fruitless image of the firework projected against the claustrophobic montage of the night sky; such an image, together with the fountains and mirrors so common in Somov's work, come to symbolize the artist's world-view—his tendency to reduce every innovation to an act of futility, his cynicism and his increasingly sceptical attitude towards humanity.

Somov's portraits form a stylistic oasis in the arid expanse of pictures in which structuralization intrudes with painful excess. In his depictions of contemporary intellectuals and friends theatricalization is reduced to a minimum and even in the later unsuccessful portraits of middle-class ladies there is an obvious attempt to animate the persons by neglecting structural elements. It is significant, therefore, that Somov's most renowned picture should be a portrait in which the assessment and presentation of reality are successfully blended without the preponderance of excessive stylization or excessive naturalism. In "Lady in Blue" (1897-1900 oil), the portrait of the artist's friend,
E. Martynova, Somov harmonized period background and foreground subject without any of the caricature and deliberate structuralization to be found in so many of his eighteenth and early nineteenth century plein airs. Martynova's pose, particularly the position of her hands, lends the composition plasticity and vitality despite the absence of vital colours such as red and yellow. Her half-turn position (most of Somov's models face the viewer remaining parallel to their background) fuses the background and foreground instead of isolating each and hence acts as a bridge between the intimacy of the left part of the picture and the distance of the right; in broader terms this could perhaps be seen as Somov's gradual move in those years from objective to subjective reality, from "outside" to "inside," from open landscapes to intimate interiors.

Apart from "Lady in Blue" Somov's most successful works in which theatricalization and ironic comment are reduced to a minimum are his series of heads commissioned in 1906 by N. Ryabushinsky for the magazine, the Golden Fleece. They display not only a mastery of line unsurpassed by any of Somov's "World of Art" colleagues but also a remarkable gift of psychological insight and artistic expressiveness. The series is preceded by many sketches and watercolours of heads including the portrait
of Pushkin (1899) and several self-portraits but none of them is as immediate and unstylized as those of 1906-1910. His portrait of A. Blok (1907) (Figure 13), perhaps the finest in this series, well reflects the spirit of his time—the renunciation of social reality, the search for "other worlds." Blok appears statuesque and monumental since his face seems to be carved with infinite care from a background of stone; no extrinsic detail deflects attention from the abnormally long face and the symmetrical haircut and the deep, vertical furrow of the brow point to the most expressive part of Blok's face—the unnatural, penetrating blue of his eyes: "In Blok's eyes, so clear and seemingly beautiful, there was something lifeless—and it was this, probably, which struck Somov."41 This lifelessness is continued into his complexion, hardly distinguishable in colour from the background.

Such lifelessness, such debility is further apparent in the large society portraits of 1910 onwards. It is not a question of pale colours or stylization but of spiritual prostration both in painter and painted, and in spite of Somov's sincere attempts to impart vitality and unity to his presentations they emerge as mere pretexts for the depiction of dresses, hairstyles, chairs, cushions and wallpaper, but not of human-beings: his
subjects—rich, bourgeois women of whom, paradoxically, he was very fond,—appear expressionless and hollow amidst the antique disjecta membra of their social status. Nevertheless, Somov's portraits of nouveaux riches are stylistically, at least, an important deviation from his previous approaches to painting since while there are still elements of structuralization there is a distinct move away from "toyness" and meticulous detail towards monumentality. It is in this monumentality, in these "frozen poses," that Somov unwittingly embodied bourgeois materialism, complacency and spiritual insolvency. In the portrait of Girshman for example, all elements combine to create the effect of heaviness and immobility: the close position of the column, the dress so remindful of classical Greece, the marmoreal head and shoulders and the narrow, rectangular format of the picture lend the subject the command and statuity of a solid piece of furniture.

Despite his awareness that these portraits were failures Somov continued to work in this genre until 1918 by which time his rich clientèle was compelled to leave Russia, and occasionally turned to it in his emigration. At the same time he maintained his production of elegant descriptions of the eighteenth century, of Versailles, of a society at play, in essence so like his own: in the swoon of love beneath fireworks which celebrate no
great event, in the aimless walks beneath rainbows which herald no better day Somov painted the diversions of his own society in the face of its imminent destruction. From the endless panorama of marquises and cavaliers, Columbines and Harlequins, immobile women and objects there exudes a great weariness, behind the gay colours and erotic play there yawns the tomb of a dying civilization; and it is in this that Somov consciously or unconsciously depicted the ethos of his "effeminate, spiritually tormented, hysterical time."  

As a postscript to this examination of the "World of Art" during the late 1890s and early 1900s, it should be mentioned that the "cult of frozen beauty" was maintained at least until the 1920s by a second generation of stylists. Although the departure of Diaghilev to the West contributed significantly to the group's decline, a new cohesive force was supplied in 1909 by S. Makovsky and his art journal, Apollon. It was thanks to this new propagational organ that original members of the "World of Art" group such as Bakst, Benois and Dobuzhinsky were able to join forces with other artists such as S. V. Chekhonin (1878-1936), B. D. Grigor'ev (1886-1939), D. I. Mitrokhin (b. 1883) and Narbut and establish a new and valuable series of art exhibitions under the title, "World of Art," which lasted from 1910 until 1924. Although the
new members did not share their elders' passion for the "Regia Versaliarum" or retrospectivism in general, they maintained, at least, their concern with linearity and structure, exemplified by the drawings of Chekhonin, Grigor'ev and A. E. Yakovlev (1887-1938). Perhaps the most significant service rendered by the second "World of Art" movement to Modernist Russian art was its direct association with Moscow and provincial centres: N. Milioti, for example, a member of the "Blue Rose," became an active member of the new "World of Art" committee in 1910 and most leading Moscow avant-garde painters exhibited at its St. Petersburg, Moscow and Kiev shows before the Great War.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III


2. This point has been underlined by L. Haskell in her article, "Russian Paintings and Drawings in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford" in *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, Vol. 12, 1969, p. 7.


8. The element of theatricality peculiar even to the early easel painting of the "World of Art" artists is discussed in some detail by N. Sokolova in her book, *Mir iskusstva*, Chapter 6.


11. Indicative of this was Grabar's statement concerning the late 1890s: "We had not even seen the Impressionists either in originals or in reproductions, let alone Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh": I. Grabar' i Moya zhizn'. *Avtomonografiya*, M.-L., 1937, p. 126.

13. It has been asserted that A. Blok's "Gamayun, ptitsa veshchaya" (1899) and "Sirin i Alkonost" (1899) were inspired by Vasnetsov's paintings. See: G. Sternin, Khudozhestvennaya zhizn'..., p. 180.


16. For example, see: S. Volkonsky, "Ieskustvo" in Mir iskusstva, 1898/1899, No. 1, pp. 63-66.


19. This according to P. Pertsov, Literaturnye vospominaniya, M.-L., 1933, p. 301.

20. See Note 19 to Chapter II of this text. Also see: A. Benua, Vozniknovenie "Mira iskusstva," L., 1928, p. 48; for Princess Tenisheva's version of the incidents see: M. Tenisheva, Vpechatleniya moei zhizni, Paris, 1933, p. 278.

21. There are conflicting opinions as to the exact size of the Imperial grant. P. Pertsov in his Literaturnye vospominaniya and S. Lifar in his Serge Diaghilev (New York, 1940) both suggest 30,000 roubles; W. Nouvel in his manuscript, Diaghilew, Nijinsky et sa femme, (Paris, N. D.) and A. Benois in Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet (London, 1941) agree that it was 10,000 roubles; but S. Shcherbatov in his Khudozhnik v ushchedhei Rossii (New York, 1955) claims that it was 12,000 roubles; pp. 294, 110, 209, 100 and 107 respectively. Because of their close collaboration with Diaghilev and the magazine, Nouvel and Benois are to be preferred as sources of information on this point.

22. Serov asked for a subsidy on behalf of Diaghilev when the Tsar was at a portrait sitting for the portrait of 1900. W. Nouvel provides details on this in his Diaghilew, pp. 99-103.
23. One evening Bakst was thrown out of the room by Diaghilev who condemned him for being a Jew; Somov took affront and challenged Diaghilev to a duel. Details are provided by W. Nouvel, Diaghilev, pp. 94-95; also see: A. Haskell, Diaghilev. His Artistic and Private Life, London, 1955, pp. 122-123.

24. This according to P. Pertsov, Literaturnye vospominaniya, p. 294.


27. M. Davies, in her book, Apollinaire, New York, 1964, quotes several statements similar in content to Diaghilev's speech; see pp. 92 et seq.

28. Benois was highly critical of the Cubo-futurists and Suprematists: "The art of the Futurists ... is one constant assertion of the cult of emptiness, of the gloom of nothingness" ("Poslednyaya futuristetskaya vystavka" in Rech', 1916, 9 January); also see his review: "Vystavka "Soyuza"" in Rech', 1910, 26 February. D. Burliuk's reply to Benois' criticism in the latter review summed up the hostility between the two camps: "What colossal harm you inflict on Russian art ... by calling Yakulov, Larionov, P. Kuznetsov etc. 'crazy' ... Larionov is valuable in that tirelessly, year in year out, he moves to the left, to forms less and less Philistine and more and more refined - the same goes for Pavel Kuznetsov. ..." (GRM, fund 137, ed. dep. 766, 1910, p. 2). However, Benois did change his opinion: see his review, "Mashkov i Konchalovsky" in Rech', 1916, 15 April.

29. Quoted from: N. Sokolova, Iskusstvo na rubezhe XIX i XX vekov" in Ocherki po istorii russkogo iskusstva, M., 1954.


32, 33, 34. Lentulov exhibited at the St. Petersburg session of the "Union of Russian Artists" in 1910; Malevich was there too and Yakulov was represented at the St. Petersburg session of 1906/1907.

35. Kuznetsov was represented by: "After the Rain," "Town," "Spring," "Morning," "Refuge," "Before the Storm," "Evening on the Volga" and "Fisherman's Camp on the River Volga." For further details see Chapter IV this text.

36. Sapunov was represented by "Willow-trees" and a study. For further details see Chapter IV this text.

37. According to N. Sokolova, Mir iskusstva, p. 85 and V. Lobanov, Khudozhestvennye gruppirovki, p. 17. Larionov contributed, although the catalogue list does not justify this view.

38. V. Lobanov, Khudozhestvennye gruppirovki, p. 17.


40. A. Benua, Vozniknovenie...., p. 53.


42. N. Sokolova, Mir iskusstva, p. 117.

43. A. Benua, Istoriya russkoj zhivopisi v XIX veke, p. 271.
Chapter IV

Sudeikin, Kuznetsov, the Miliotis, etc. are extremely talented... their work is marked by real artistry, and it is quite probable that in the very near future, they will become the great figures of Russian art... (A. Benois, 1904).

By 1900 most of those artists who would form the "Blue Rose" group in 1907 had met at the Moscow Institute, although A. V. Fonvizen (b. 1882) did not arrive until 1901 and N. P. Krymov (1884-1958) until 1904. Particularly close were A. A. Arapov (1876-1949), N. P. Feofilaktov (1878-1941), P. V. Kuznetsov (1878-1968), N. N. Sapunov (1880-1912), M. S. Sar'yan (b. 1880) and S. Yu Sudeikin (1882-1946) who by that date had formed a distinctive, but still untitled, group within the Institute. Several members of this group had been confrères in Saratov, before they enrolled at the Moscow Institute, i.e. Kuznetsov, A. T. Matveev (1878-1960) (sculptor), V. P. Polovinkin (1878-c. 1912) and Utkin, and Kuznetsov and Utkin had studied under Borisov-Musatov; hence a Borisov-Musatov school had been formed well before he moved to the vicinity of Moscow in 1903. En passant it should be mentioned that the Saratov artist, Polovinkin, although exhibiting at the "Crimson Rose" (see below), played no role...
in the formation of the "Blue Rose" in 1907; he was a close friend of Sar'yan and introduced him to the "Volga company" of Kuznetsov, K. S. Petrov-Vodkin and Utkin, but according to Sar'yan he was not a serious artist and, in any case, died shortly after completing his course at the Moscow Institute in 1904. Also present at the Moscow Institute before 1900 were A. E. Karev (1879-1942) (also a resident of Saratov), M. F. Larionov (1881-1964) (N. S. Goncharova (1883-1962) did not join until 1901) and G. B. Yakulov (1884-1928), who, although aware of Borisov-Musatov's ideas did not consider themselves his disciples and remained outside the tenets of the "Blue Rose."

When not attending classes at the Moscow Institute, Arapov, Kuznetsov, Sapunov, Sar'yan and Sudeikin engaged in much extra-mural activity together. It was the fact that the Saratov and Moscow artists were in continuous contact which led to the cross-fertilization of ideas and mutual sympathy characteristic of their creative and personal relationships between 1900 and 1907. Not only did many live together, for example Arapov, Feofilaktov, N. D. Milioti (1874-1955), Sapunov and Sar'yan were at one time residing simultaneously in the Dom Pertsova, an artists' cooperative designed by Malyutin, but also they frequented the same meeting-places and took part in the same art excursions. All led a Bohemian way of life, unlike their
"World of Art" contemporaries, and most were impoverished: Sapunov was especially poor owing to his partiality for strong drink, a weakness which caused him to sell one of Arapov's most important Symbolist pictures, "Grieving Angel" (at the "Blue Rose" exhibition and now lost), and one winter his colleagues were forced to furnish him with an overcoat by a collective donation. At one time Sapunov rented a studio with the architect V. M. Mayat where it was so cold in winter that "they used to run from their beds in the morning and rub themselves with snow, then drink half a glass of vodka." Sapunov was, indeed, one of the most colourful and dynamic members of the "Blue Rose" group and was nicknamed, not in vain, "Sarakiki," after a then fashionable Japanese wrestler: his canvases reflected his stormy temperament and he was one of the first of the group to reject the pale tones of Symbolism and to explore colour and movement.

One of the favourite meeting-places of the group was the Greek Café (the "Grek") on Tverskoi Boulevard which earned its intellectual repute from the frequent visits by members of the Scorpion and Scales fraternity—among others, Baltrushaitis, Bely, Ellis and Polyakov. They were joined by the future artists of the "Blue Rose" and later by representatives of other avant-garde trends such as Fal'k, Goncharova, P. P. Konchalovsky (1876-1956),
A. V. Kuprin (1880-1960), Larionov, A. V. Lentulov (1882-1943), I. I. Mashkov (1881-1944), V. V. Roshdestvensky (1883-1963) and Yakulov. It was there that ideas were exchanged not only with painters but also with writers and musicians—F. I. Chaliapin, A. N. Skryabin, L. V. Sobinov and S. N. Vasilenko. At the Greek Café plans for the "Blue Rose," "Knave of Diamonds" and "Donkey’s Tail" exhibitions were discussed, orders were placed by S. Polyakov, editor of the Scales, for headpieces and vignettes, graphic designs were executed by Arapov, Feofilaktov and Sudeikin and pictures such as Yuon's "Tverskoi Boulevard by Night" (1908) were inspired and prepared. Polyakov later recalled the atmosphere of verbal and creative industry which prevailed at the Greek Café:

Often I was surprised when they managed to work, to fulfil orders. I think their main occupation was to sit in the "Greek," to argue, to discuss matters of art, to dream irrepressibly, to build fantastic plans and to subject what they had seen at exhibitions to the cruellest criticism. . . . Smiling, Valerii Yakovlevich (Bryusov, J. B.) listened to these conversations, slowly sipping his liqueur. Baltrushaitis usually maintained a gloomy silence while Boris Nikolaevich (Bely, J. B.) orated passionately and jumped up from his chair throughout the conversation attracting not only our attention, but even that of the surrounding public.5

Other meeting-places included the restaurant, "Bohemia," on Neglinnaya Street and the Filippov cafe on Tverskoi Boulevard. It was upstairs above the Filippov café, in
fact, that Arapov and N. Sorokhtin attempted to organize a theatre of décors around 1900: "... on the stage lay a girl and everything she saw was depicted by moving décors."  

The young Saratov and Moscow artists found an additional meeting-place at Mamontov's workshop and house near Savelovsky Station, christened by Mamontov, "New Abramtsevo." Although comparatively impoverished now after his financial collapse, Mamontov projected occasional operas there and staged them in a theatre on Carriage Row ("Karetnyi ryad"). One of these was "La Bohème" for which Kuznetsov and Sapunov did the sets—but because of bad singers and an incompetent orchestra the production was a failure. While working on this opera in 1901, Kuznetsov and Sapunov lived at New Abramtsevo attracting frequent visits by fellow students. It was at the workshop there, the "Abramtsevo Ceramic Factory," that Kuznetsov created his first and only majolicas, but to the sculptors, P. I. Bromirsky (1884–1919) and Matveev, it provided an opportunity to execute commissions and improve their insolvent condition—which, in the case of Matveev, had forced him to discontinue his courses at the Institute in 1901.

The group of young Moscow artists also travelled together in the summer months when it was the custom to make landscape expeditions in order to paint from nature.
It is recorded that Arapov, Feofilaktov and Sudeikin lived together on a building-site to the north of Moscow in the summer of 1901 under the supervision of the architect, V. P. Drittenpreis, who, in 1907, became a casual member of the "Blue Rose." Arapov and Drittenpreis, both interested in Russian church architecture made frequent excursions to ancient towns such as Porkhov, Pskov and Rostov. Kuznetsov and Sar'yan journeyed along the Volga together in 1905.

By the early 1900s the nucleus of the "Blue Rose" group had been formed both on the doctrinal and on the creative fronts. Aware of their Zeitgeist, Symbolism, and under the influence of their assumed leader, Kuznetsov, the "Blue Rose" artists came to protest pictorially against the tendentious, representational canvases of the Realists on the one hand, and against the static, stylized essays in technical brilliance of the "World of Art" painters on the other. Attracted to ornamentation and decoration through a tradition already established by V. Vasnetsov and Vrubel' and, to a lesser extent, influenced by the disintegrational effects of Moscow Impressionism, they loosened technique from the rigid shackles of St. Petersburg and imbued it with a freedom of movement and youthful energy which opened the path to the formal experimentation of the post-Symbolist groups. The
subjects they chose, although by 1900 still diverse, indicated a general withdrawal from objective reality: Sapunov's "Winter" (1900), bought by the Tret' yakov Gallery from the 28th Wandering Exhibition, contained mysterious overtones in the mournful winter twilight, the deserted house and the skeletal trees; Kuznetsov's works such as "Evening on the Volga" (1900-1901) and "Before the Storm" (1900-1901), shown at the "World of Art" exhibition of 1902, displayed a poetical lyricism not far removed, despite subject-matter, from his Symbolist pictures of 1904; even in the more conventional works of Sar'yan of this period such as "Portrait of the Artist's Mother" (1898) and the "Village Makravank" (1902) the dark colour scale stamps them with a certain lifelessness. However, it should be stressed that the above pictures were still far from the real Symbolist work of the "Blue Rose" artists and were painted according to the obvious principles of Moscow Impressionism and naturalism. But while united in their creative searches at this time, the future "Blue Rose" artists were still unable to broadcast their ideas to the public and although they had taken part at the regular exhibitions of students' work at the Moscow Institute, they needed obviously to communicate over a wider area. An opportunity was given to two of them in 1902 when Diaghilev, on Serov's suggestion, invited Kuznetsov and
Sapunov to submit works to the "World of Art" exhibition in St. Petersburg in March of that year. Kuznetsov was represented by nine works of which one, "(Evening) on the Volga" was reproduced in the *World of Art* magazine (1902, No. 5/6) and another, "Morning," was bought by the Tret'yakov Gallery; Sapunov sent two works, one of which also figured at the Moscow "World of Art" exhibition in December of that year. These exhibitions played a strategic role in the propagation of the new Moscow artists for their physical and spiritual force contrasted noticeably with the fragile organization of the "World of Art."

While St. Petersburg began to realize that its dynasty of art leadership was being threatened by the students of the Moscow Institute, Moscow and Saratov themselves began to experience the effects of their radical ideas. Symptomatic of their new searches and rebellious energy was the scandal which arose from the Kazan Church affair in Saratov. In 1902 Kuznetsov, Petrov-Vodkin and Utkin were commissioned to paint murals for the Kazan Church (now demolished) in Saratov: the proposed subjects were the "Sermon on the Mount" for the west wall, the "Walking on the Waters" for the south wall and "Christ and the Adulteress" and the "Evangelists" for the north wall. Petrov-Vodkin agreed to paint
the "Evangelists" and the "Sermon on the Mount" inserting his self-portrait in the latter "according to Italian traditions," Utkin executed the "Walking on the Waters" and Kuznetsov "Christ and the Adulteress"—"a most poetic composition on women's equality of rights." Kuznetsov had recently returned from a journey to the far north and had been captivated by white nights, icebergs and oceans which he duly transmitted to his conception. Christ in his mural was distinguished by a "mother of pearl colour" and was surrounded by a "crowd of morose northerners" reminiscent of "Samoyeds." Utkin's mural, "Walking on the Waters," was renamed by his colleagues "Into Storm and Tempest" ("V buryu, vo grozu"). Kuznetsov's picture was pyramidal in shape with Christ at the apex and the remaining space filled with His audience. During the time the painters were at work no church elder or member of the public was allowed into the church in order that they should not be disturbed. Therefore the public was quite shocked when they saw the final product—what the clergy described later as figures of "monkey, beast-like origin" with "impenitent faces of extreme length." Both the public and the church dignitaries were horrified at the results of the profanation committed by the "Moscow heretics" and the matter was taken to court after violent protests from the bishop and the local Press. Despite an earnest defence by
Borisov-Musatov, the artists were required to pay court expenses and their contract was annulled. Not only were they compelled to forego the 450 roubles due to them from their contract, but also they were forced to witness the destruction of their work by the overpainting of professional icon-painters. Their only compensation was that the bishop was taken ill with a nervous disorder "which evil tongues attributed to our painting." But this event did not break their contact with Saratov which, of course, in the case of Kuznetsov and Utkin was their home town. In January, 1904 a local 'cellist and close friend of Borisov-Musatov, M. E. Bukinik, organized an "Evening of Modern Art" in Saratov Music Institute at which representatives of literature, music and drama, including Bal'mont, the pianist A. B. Goldenveizer and a certain actor by the name of Stefano-vich demonstrated their respective arts. For the Evening Kuznetsov and Utkin were commissioned to paint panneaux which were hung on the stairs, in the foyer and in the hall itself. These panneaux, "in the style of Impres- sionism," again brought forth a series of protests epitomized by the review in the local newspaper:

... (Visitors) take off their coats, go up the stairs, look round at the walls and ceilings expecting to see something special, spectacular and extraordinary. And, indeed, on the wall of the entrance by the second landing something is hanging: it is a picture and yet it isn't, it is decoration and yet it
isn't... it's a "panneau" as it's called so splendidly in the advertisements, and, of course, it's the brush of Messrs. Utkin and Kuznetsov. The curious brush of Messrs. Utkin and Kuznetsov has daubed something quite beyond the imagination - some sort of choleraic "spots," white and black bacilli. Some say that it is Vesuvius erupting, some guess that it is birds' feathers heaped up in a pile, and others simply turn away from the pictures and spit. In the hall behind the stage hang three "panneaux" the length of the wall, again painted by those artists whose church pictures it was decided to paint over in the Kazan Church. These - if I may call them - pictures put the public in a cheerful frame of mind. Nobody understood anything of this absolutely pretentious daubing. If you dismiss all this decadent rubbish, all these decorations and "melomimicries" then in actual fact the evening wasn't too bad.

Unfortunately, the panneaux are no longer extant and a contemporary critical appreciation is therefore impossible, but it is obvious from the above review alone that the pictures tended toward subjectlessness and, in technique, were correspondingly flexible and obscure: this tendency towards the indefinite, towards allusion, rather than representation was being maintained evidently both in the Kazan Church murals and in the pictures for the Evening.

In May, 1904 a third event occurred in Saratov which was to have most significance in the formation of the "Blue Rose" group. In the "House of the Nobility on Moscow Street" there opened an exhibition entitled the "Crimson Rose" ("Alaya roza") organized by Kuznetsov and Utkin (see Appendix I). This exhibition was the first show which was devoted almost exclusively to those artists who would constitute the Moscow Symbolist school of
painting, the "Blue Rose." Apart from local painters, including Kuznetsov's brother, M. Kuznetsov-Volzhsky (appearing here under the pseudonym, Volgin), Borisov-Musatov and his wife, E. V. Aleksandrova, significant contributions were made by Kuznetsov's Moscow colleagues, Arapov, Feofilaktov, I. A. Knabe (1876-1910), Sapunov, Sar'yan and Sudeikin. Even the cover to the catalogue, drawn in a rather desultory fashion by Sudeikin (Figure 14), pointed to the graphic fluidity identifiable with the "Blue Rose" artists and summarized the essential difference between them and the "World of Art." The hall was dominated by the contributions of Kuznetsov and Utkin including, of the former, a series of lyrical landscapes of the far north, the picture "Fading" which would be exhibited at the "Blue Rose" in 1907 and a portrait of Chaliapin; inter alia, Sapunov submitted a panneau and several designs to pieces by Tchaikovsky "in faded, misty tones"; Sudeikin contributed a phantasmal "Leda and the Swan" and "Eros"; Sar'yan, apart from a few naturalist landscapes, was represented by mystical works such as "Eastern Landscape" which reflected "... a sharp departure from the naturalist study of nature into a world of fantasy and picturesque fairy-tales"; Arapov, Feofilaktov and Knabe contributed works which were also imaginative and highly subjective. Indicative of the
group's recognition of their debt to Borisov-Musatov and Vrubel' was the fact that those were the only extrinsic artists invited to send works—Borisov-Musatov submitted three works and Vrubel' an alabaster head, "Tamara". As expected, the local press review was unappreciative and superficial, but as a contemporary document it provides details otherwise unobtainable:

... The catalogue has 109 works mainly oils, two-thirds of which belong to Kuznetsov and Utkin. The name is a symbol of youth, freshness and bloom... The "Crimson Rose" is a servile imitation of the "World of Art" exhibitions. At the entrance to the "white hall" are two huge, decorative panneaux which were shown before at Bukinin's "Evening of Modern Art." One is Kuznetsov's "White Morning," the other Utkin's "Thirst for Love." Amongst the pink, blue and green coarse brush-strokes are visible hints at human figures... The background cloth is of grey... Amongst the titles in the catalogue are "White Nights," "Autumn Nights," "Nights"... Apart from Kuznetsov's oils there are some sketches which are childish—neither horses nor cows and with four legs on one side of the body... 17

Whether, as the critic suggests, the name "Crimson Rose" was meant to symbolize "youth, freshness and bloom" and was chosen as such, or whether in choosing the name Kuznetsov and Utkin were paying homage to Mamontov who had written and produced a fairy-tale play of that name, 18 it is impossible to say. Whatever its source, it did, indeed, epitomize the energy and vitality possessed by the young Saratov-Moscow group in contrast to the general decline of their St. Petersburg counterparts. Unfortunately, as with the panneaux at the "Evening of Modern Art,"
nearly all the works at the "Crimson Rose" exhibition have been either destroyed or lost; moreover, the catalogue was unillustrated, few reproductions were made of relevant pictures and documents of contemporary criticism were limited to the above review; therefore, a reliable appraisal of the works in question is hardly possible now. But the basic aim of the exhibition—to communicate the new ideas of the young generation of Saratov-Moscow artists to a wider public—was not entirely frustrated and, significantly, Borisov-Musatov thought it of such import as to write to Diaghilev:

Arriving in Saratov I encountered the "Crimson Rose" exhibition which Kuznetsov and Utkin had organized—whom you know through Mamontov. Out of curiosity I am sending you a photograph of their exhibition and pictures and a newspaper with a criticism of this exhibition. These are the kind of exhibitions we have in the provinces now and this is how they are criticized.19

We do not have the photograph mentioned and we do not know whether Diaghilev replied, but his subsequent invitation to Feofilaktov, Kuznetsov and Sapunov to contribute to the 1906 "World of Art" show proved that his attention had been focused on them and that he appreciated their art.

Theatrical activity of the future "Blue Rose" painters

While some members of the future "Blue Rose" collective headed by Kuznetsov were receiving publicity
within the sphere of easel painting, a few of the Moscow members were becoming increasingly involved in the theatre. It was mentioned above that Kuznetsov and Sapunov had had experience in theatre décor as early as 1901 thanks to Mamontov and that Arapov, even in 1900, had created a theatre of décors. While Kuznetsov in subsequent years turned his attention primarily to easel work, a few of his colleagues, particularly Sapunov and Sudeikin, came to concentrate on the theatre as a source of inspiration and artistic creation. This early concern with decorativism was a cohesive force in the "Blue Rose" group and their initial efforts at decoration for the popular theatre, "Buffoon" ("Skomorokh"), for public fêtes, for balls and for illustrated magazines were indicative of the path which many of them were to take in the immediate future: it was a trend which culminated in the creation of many masterful sets for such famous producers as Stanislavsky, Meierkhol'd and Tairov.

In 1901-1902 Kuznetsov and Sapunov worked together with N. V. Nekrasov and P. V. Sizov in the Bolshoy Theatre painting décors from designs by K. Korovin who was in charge of the décor section there, having left Mamontov's company in 1899: this included designs for "Die Walkürie" produced in 1902. The period immediately after 1902 witnessed a change in Sapunov's painterly
approach for under the influence of the theatre and to a lesser extent of his journey to Italy in May, 1902, he turned away from his Levitanesque landscapes such as "Winter" and "Apple-trees in Bloom" to a more stylized, theatrical conception of reality: he began to depict magnificent scenes of festivity such as "Minuet" and "Night Celebration" in which nature was transformed into a montage of evening and nocturnal shadows against which danced ladies and cavaliers. This "World of Art," more specifically, Somovian retrospectivism was paralleled by a technique quite different to Somov's: for example, in his designs for a 1904 production of Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet" his diffused, "broken" method of painting served to transmit the mysteriousness of the scene, its profundity, the timidity of the lovers: "The beautiful design for the duet... compels one to hear the music. Not one of our decorators has ever had such tender and simple lyricism." After 1902, in fact, Sapunov was especially busy in the theatre and executed décors for "Orpheus" and "Carmen" (both 1903), "Hansel and Gretel" (1904), "Don Juan" and "Eugene Onegin" (both 1905). In the latter Sapunov was assisted by Arapov, an event which anticipated several such collaborations between Sapunov and other "Blue Rose" artists, e.g. with Feofilaktov for Bal'mont's "Three Dawns" staged at the Artistic-Literary Circle under N. N. Vashkevich in 1906.
At the beginning of 1905 Stanislavsky founded his "Theatre-Studio," an experimental theatre workshop on Povarskaya Street in Moscow. Although the Studio existed for less than a year, it played a decisive role not only in the theatrical development of Sapunov and his colleagues, but also in the evolution of the Russian theatre itself. The Studio was affiliated to MKhAT and was established as a forum for theatrical discussion and private production of new plays, factors which stimulated the development of Modernism in the Russian theatre immediately after the death of Chekhov. Stanislavsky, aided by Meierkhol'd, turned his attention to the "decadents" of Western Europe and Russia, such as Hauptmann, Ibsen, Maeterlinck and L. N. Andreev. It is true that even before the foundation of the Studio Stanislavsky had produced Maeterlinck's "Les Aveugles," "Intérieur" and "L'Intruse," but neither artists nor critics had been ready for them and they did not enjoy success. Under Meierkhol'd's practical direction several such plays were reintroduced and work was done on them. Stanislavsky and Meierkhol'd attracted to their Studio the younger generation of Moscow artists including members and sympathizers of the "Blue Rose" group—Arapov, V. I. Denisov, V. D. Milioti (1875-1943), Sapunov, Sudeikin and N. P. Ul'yanov (1875-1949); and it was there that Sapunov and
Sudeikin created sets for Maeterlinck’s "La Mort de Tintagiles," that Denisov did those for Pahibyshevsky’s "Snow" and Ibsen's "Comedy of Love" and that Ul’yanov made his stylized décor for Hauptmann’s "Schluck und Jau" (Figure 15)—none of which was ever used in full-scale productions because of the Studio’s closure at the end of 1905. The muted colour harmonies and the trend towards pictorial allusion rather than direct representation identifiable with the "Blue Rose" canvases was present in greater or lesser degree in these early décors, especially in the Maeterlinck:

Sudeikin presented a bluish-green space, a beautiful, cold world. Here there bloomed huge, fantastic flowers, red and pink, forming bright patches of light. The wigs of the women coloured lilac and green, their lilac clothes recalling the tunics of holy men harmonized with the décor. Sapunov’s décor was in grey-lilac tones.25

Although Stanislavsky realized that such sets would not be accepted by a conventional audience, he gave every support to the young artists, even commissioning them to design the foyer of the Studio:

... young artists who were in charge of the art section, led by the talented Sapunov and Sudeikin, offered their services for decorating the foyer. This work fired their unbridled imagination. It reached the point where they painted the parquet floor with green paint thanks to which it warped, and it had to be relaid again. . . . Instead of restraining the projects of the young crowd, I myself got carried away and, at my own risk, instigated others. The new ideas seemed very interesting to me.26
The fact that Sapunov and Sudeikin decorated the foyer and that Sapunov designed carpets for it was symptomatic of the concern of many "Blue Rose" artists with large-scale interior and exterior decoration. The Kazan Church incident, mentioned above, was therefore not a casual example of activity in the field of applied art: as early as 1900 Arapov was working on the portals of the Novodevichii Monastery, in 1904 Kuznetsov had designed a series of carpets (as the "Crimson Rose" catalogue indicated), in 1905 Kuznetsov and Utkin, together with Lanceray, worked on interior décor for Ya. E. Zhukovsky's villa in Kastropol' and three years later Kuznetsov did the frieze for Ryabushinsky's villa, the "Black Swan," in Moscow.

The innovations of the "Blue Rose" artists, Sapunov and Sudeikin, were demonstrated further after their introduction to V. Komissarzhevskaya's theatre in St. Petersburg at the beginning of 1906. It was to her theatre on Ofitserskaya Street that Meierkhol'd transferred his theatrical experiments in 1906 working there again in close conjunction with Denisov, V. Milioti, Sapunov and Sudeikin for a year. Here the décors for Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" were created, with sets by Sapunov and costumes by V. Milioti, and the play was performed publicly in November of that year. Pictorially the
production was a resounding success but its overall value was questionable—as Blok wrote: "Ibsen was not understood or, at least, was not incarnated—either by the artist who painted the extraordinarily beautiful décor, which had nothing in common with Ibsen, or the producer..."27 In other words, Sapunov had paid more attention to his own and Meierkhol'd's demands than to those of the play itself. In any case, the decorative approach was audacious and original and was bound to warrant disproportionate consideration. The play was performed not between the usual three walls, but against a background of a single curtain-panneau which was situated not very far back, leaving a comparatively narrow stretch of stage for the actors: in this scenic framework Meierkhol'd was attempting to "burn the outmoded devices of the Naturalist theatre."28 Sapunov was already sensitive to the tonality of colours and his colour combinations in his décor for the Ibsen play, particularly of blue and orange, displayed this well. F. Komissarzhevsky described the décor:

It was romantic. A blue ("goluboe"), northern harmony. The colours did not whirl about, they were not restless. Everything was tranquil. Everything was like a phantom. The stage seemed to be enveloped in a bluish-green, silver smoke. The back curtain was blue. On it, to the right, was a huge, transomed window, the length of the stage. Underneath it were the leaves of a black rhododendron. Beyond the window was greenish-blue ("sinii")
air with glittering stars. . . . To the left, on the same curtain, was a blue tapestry: a gold and silver woman with a deer. Along the side of the stage and above it was silver lace. On the floor a green-blue carpet. White furniture. A white piano. Green-white vases with white chrysanthemums in them. And white furs on the strangely shaped divan. And, like sea water, like the scale of a sea serpent, Hedda Gabler's dress.29

The atmosphere of this "blue, cold, fading mass"30 was strikingly similar to that of the actual "Blue Rose" exhibition of the following year: blueness, silence, phantoms, flowers were images equally identifiable with it, and it could be argued, perhaps, that the scenic arrangement of "Hedda Gabler" directly inspired the visual effect of the exhibition. Sapunov was not alone in his pictorial discoveries: also in November of 1906, a few days after the production of "Hedda Gabler," Maeterlinck's "Soeur Beatrice" was staged, the sets for which were based on Meierkhol'd's recent experiences and impressions of a Catholic church service in Kaunas. The décors this time were created by Sudeikin, but in colour and structure they were similar to Sapunov's. Again a black panneau was employed on which Sudeikin depicted a cathedral wall with a series of pointed, Gothic windows, and the greenish-lilac stone of the wall was mingled with the grey tones of gobelins which shone dully with pale silver and old gold.31

The high water mark of the "Blue Rose" artists' involvement in Komissarzhevskaya's theatre was the
production by Meierkhol'd in December, 1906 of Blok's "Balaganchik" (dedicated, incidentally, to Meierkhol'd) with décor by Sapunov. The play itself, although essentially a satire on Symbolism as a philosophic world view, was to the taste of the "Blue Rose" artists with its overtones of mysticism, fantasy and illusion, and gave Sapunov scope to employ his powers as a Symbolist painter. From his décor for it, it was obvious that Sapunov fully understood the significance of the play with its themes of the double, depersonalization, the insolvency of mysticism as a philosophy and the profound despair and "inescapability" ("nevkykhodnost'") which life offered. Sapunov dismissed his former construction of a back panneau and created a stage within a stage, the original stage being hung with blue canvases; the inner stage was "undressed" so that the trappings—ropes, footlights, boards, prompter's box, etc.—were fully visible to the audience, thus lending the scene the aura of artificiality and duality which the play required. Sapunov's choice of colours emphasized the basic qualities of the play—the dark-green, black, blue and reddish-mauve made a subdued, sombre scale admirably suited to the theme of despair (Figure 16). At the same time, the "illusiveness, the vacillation of life"32 manifested in Sapunov's décor was tempered by elements of prosaic domesticity—the wallpaper, the pseudo-recoco table—which Sapunov was to exploit in
the pictures of his colourist period, e.g. "Carousel," the décor to "Columbine's Scarf." With the production of "Soeur Beatrice" and "Balaganchik," Sudeikin's and Sapunov's theatrical activity diminished for the time being because their audacious innovations in the sphere of décor and Meierkhol'd's revolutionary production methods caused a rift between them and Komissarzhevskaya. Their activity in her theatre had witnessed the climax of Symbolist décor design, and the sets which followed, created in the same vein by Anisfel'd and Denisov (Figure 17), were derivative and stylized. With the exception of Sudeikin's designs for a puppet theatre in Moscow in 1907 (see Chapter V) neither Sudeikin, Sapunov nor any of the other "Blue Rose" artists worked for the theatre until 1909 when Meierkhol'd established his "House of Interludes" in St. Petersburg. The production of "Balaganchik," just as the "Blue Rose" exhibition of the following year, marked the culmination of Symbolist domination in the theatre and the visual arts: a catch phrase of the period was "That's the limit" ("dal'she - nekuda") and it was felt that Symbolism as an art movement had run its course. This sentiment was implicit in "Balaganchik" and was well expressed in the closing scene: "(Arlequin) jumps through the window. The distance, visible through the window, turns out to be drawn on paper. The paper burst. Arlequin
flew head over heels into emptiness." The "emptiness" which Blok exposed in Symbolism at least as a philosophical and literary credo was made manifest in painting immediately after the "Blue Rose" exhibition, in mid-1907, for it was then that members of the group, especially Kuznetsov, underwent a spiritual despair which engendered such morbid visions as his "Night of the Cumsumptives" (1908) (Figure 18). At the same time the theatrical experience of such artists as Arapov, Sapunov and Sudeikin helped them to overcome their disillusionment in Symbolism at least as a painterly direction, since as a creative alternative they were able to transfer their energies increasingly to the decorative and applied arts especially after 1910.

**Exhibitions before the "Blue Rose"**

After the solidarity displayed at the "Crimson Rose" exhibition in Saratov, it became evident to the Moscow Symbolist group that their ideas would have to be disseminated on a wider scale—in St. Petersburg and in Moscow. In fact, the years immediately after the "Crimson Rose" show saw substantial contributions by the "Blue Rose" artists to exhibitions in both cities.

Their attack on the current artistic conventions and tastes of the two metropolitan publics was launched at the exhibition of the "Union of Russian Artists" in St.
Petersburg and Moscow (December, 1904–January, 1905 and February, 1905 respectively) at which Sudeikin's "Eros" was shown. This large picture, painted as a panneau was, one may assume, the same picture as the "Eros" submitted to the "Crimson Rose." It was an obscure, phantasmal depiction of three figures, two of them forming the centrepiece, the third allocated to the top right hand corner. The influence of Vrubel' was felt particularly in Sudeikin's rendition of the figures (their hair-styles recall those of Vrubel's Demons) and in the application of his almost geometrical brushwork. The original elements of the picture were the close attention to texture (noted by the critic N. Tarovaty) and the muted colour scheme which emphasized the obscurity and illusiveness of the subject. Sudeikin's concentration on texture was demonstrated in the way he had reduced the canvas to several basic areas, for each of which he employed a different brushstroke. The consequent formal and thematic indefiniteness of the picture associated it immediately with music and the illusionism of Symbolism—it was significant, therefore, that one critic should have referred to Tchaikovsky and Oscar Wilde in his discussion of the picture. The intrinsic value of "Eros" was scarcely appreciated by the 5,000 visitors to the exhibition, most of whom it perplexed, but it was saved from oblivion by the collector and theatre enthusiast, S. I. Daragan.
January, 1905 saw the opening of the 27th exhibition of students' work at the Moscow Institute: contributors included Arapov ("striking in his archaic simplicity"), Krymov, Polovinkin, Sar'yan and Utkin who painted a panneau for the stairs. The catalogue cover was designed by Ponvizen although he and Larionov had been disqualified from submitting works since they had been suspended in April, 1904 for organizing their own, unofficial show within the Institute. The exhibition was considered a success especially after the "sad misunderstanding" of the previous year at which no "Blue Rose" artists had been represented.

Also in January, 1905, but in St. Petersburg, there opened the twelfth exhibition of the "Moscow Association of Artists," which moved to Moscow in the following month with a slightly different complement. It was this exhibition, particularly its Moscow session, which introduced the "Blue Rose" artists as a distinct group to the general public. Under the auspices of Borisov-Musatov, one of the Association's organizers and regular participants, Kuznetsov, V. Milioti and Utkin were invited to contribute to the St. Petersburg showing. In Moscow they joined Bromirsky, Denisov, Matveev, Sapunov, Sar'yan and Sudeikin all of whom, with the exception of Denisov, were to take part in the actual "Blue Rose" exhibition two years later. Kandinsky, Ul'yanov and Vrubel', inter al.
were also represented at both sessions. The Association exhibition did, to a marked extent, form a preview of the "Blue Rose" show because at both reigned the same atmosphere: the canvases of the young Moscow artists were nearly all mystical or erotic, indefinite and subdued in colour—the titles alone were enough to indicate this: "Beneath the Moon," "Evening Silence," "Frosty Twilight" (Krymov); "Ecstasy," "Morning of Love," "Evening of Disenchantments," "Lovers" (embroidery), "Evening," "Morning" (Figure 19), "Northern Tapestry," "Melancholy" (tapestry motif), "White Night," "Pomors," "Autumn" (Kuznetsov); five decorative motifs—sketches on wood (V. Milioti); "Nocturne," Designs for the operas "Don Juan;" "Romeo and Juliet" and "Barber of Seville" (Sapunov); Study for "Eros," "Moonlit Eros" (Sudeikin); "I Love This Night," "Autumn Song" (Utkin). S. Makovsky, writing in the journal, Art, described the exhibition in terms similar to those which he was to use of the "Blue Rose" exhibition: "A kind of light, pensively tender shroud envelopes the exhibition . . . A palely glowing streak glimmers. . . . The light of constellations not yet extinct glimmers in the dawn clouds . . . the drowsy quietude and silence of daybreak." The "pale, smoky dreams" of Denisov's panneaux, the "secret twilight" of Sapunov's designs were images which prompted one critic to refer to these
painters as "artists of nuances and allusions," and another to refer to the "musical emotions" of Sapunov's exhibits and the "almost real tapestries remindful of Maeterlinck" of Kuznetsov. Although, for the most part, reviewed favourably, the exhibition did meet with opposition from supporters of the rival exhibition body, the "Union of Russian Artists": one of these was S. Glagol', pen-name of S. S. Goloushev (1854-1919), who called the Association a "purgatory" for the Union and dismissed the efforts of the new artists. Thanks to their unity and to their literary vehicle, Art, which propagated their cause by the publication of Makovsky's long, sympathetic review and of several reproductions, the "Blue Rose" artists were able to register their protest: this they did in the form of a collective letter criticizing both Glagol' and the current Union exhibition. It was signed by V. I. Komarov (1868-1918) a landscapist and the founder of the Association in 1894), Borisov-Musatov, Denisov, Kuznetsov, Matveev, Sapunov, Sudeikin, Ul'yanov, Utkin et al. and appeared first in the newspaper Russian Gazette (Russkie vedomosti) (1905, No. 69) and later in Art (1905, No. 3). (See Appendix II)

Apart from intermittent exhibitions at which individual "Blue Rose" artists were represented by a few works, e.g. N. Milioti at the well attended "New Society of Artists" exhibition of March, 1905 in St. Petersburg.
and Krymov at the Moscow Association exhibition of February, 1906, there were three important exhibitions just before 1907 which served to publicize the cause of the "Blue Rose." These were the "Watercolour Exhibition" of January, 1906 in Moscow, the "World of Art" of March, 1906 in St. Petersburg and the "Salon d'automne" in Paris, 1906.

At the "Watercolour Exhibition" Fonvizen, Krymov, Matveev, N. Milioti together with Denisov and Larionov were well represented, and it was here that Fonvizen and Larionov made their first appearance to St. Petersburg spectators. Coverage in the Press was slight but it was reported that of all the exhibitors Krymov and Fonvizen were "the most promising." The "World of Art" exhibition was more important in that it displayed Moscow's decisive opposition to St. Petersburg and underlined their artistic divergencies. Not only were the "Blue Rose" artists well represented, but also a section was devoted to a large posthumous showing of Borisov-Musatov's work and, in addition, Vrubel's contribution was substantial. The presence of these three forces at the exhibition indicated, therefore, both the derivation and the latest developments of the Moscow Symbolist school. Ironically, it was the "Blue Rose" artists and not the "World of Art" representatives who impressed the public here—even Ostroumova-Lebedeva whose sympathies
lay obviously with the latter recalled that of the artists at the exhibition she remembered most vividly "Sapunov, the young Larionov who had not yet fallen under the influence of Goncharrova, the still lives of Jawlensky who always imitated one of the extremist French artists, Kuznetsov, Ul'yanov, Feofilaktov." To the visiting public who had not witnessed a "World of Art" exhibition for three years the atmosphere was unexpected: the straight lines and symmetry of, for example, Bakst's "Autumn in Versailles," Bencis' illustrations to Pushkin's "Bronze Horseman" and Dobuzhinsky's "Man in Spectacles," all on show there, were eclipsed by the obscure, mystical visions of the Moscow artists whose cryptic titles alone provided a sharp contrast:--"Poet," "Grotto," four title pages for the almanach; Northern Flowers (Feofilaktov) (Figure 20); "Mother's Love," (Figure 21), "Morning Joy," "Blue Fountain" (Figure 22), "Morning," "Morning Star," "Birth of Spring" (Figure 23), "Farewell to the Sun," "Love" (embroidery), Embroidery (Kuznetsov); "Fairy-tale," "Erotique," "Telem," "Diurne," "Morning" (Figure 24), "Legend" (V. Milioti); "Fête galante," "Rosa mystica," "Fragment de panneau," "Ce fût un matin d'automne rose," the "Chime," "Les galants," "Ermesse," "Motif From Verlaine," Pastel, Design--"Hymen," "Fleurs du mal," "Leda" (two versions), "Fête galante" (N. Milioti); "Portrait," "Reflection," "Roses," "Minuet,"
Designs for the operas, "Don Juan" and "Barbara of Seville" (Sapunov). What Tarovaty wrote of Kuznetsov in his review of this exhibition was applicable, in many respects, to the "Blue Rose" group as a whole:

An intoxicating vision beckons you into a world of aetheriality and vague outlines. Dreams in azure of pale blue and dull, serene tones, trembling, unearthly silhouettes, transparent stalks of mystical flowers fanned by the light of dawn - and over all the haze of the unspoken, of that which can be fathomed only by vague presentiment.50

Such terms as "the light of dawn" ("utrennimi zoryami"), "presentiment" and "azure" were, of course, an integral part of the Symbolist writers' vocabulary and one need not look far for literary parallels, e.g. Blok's Ante Lucem cycle of verse and Bely's Gold in Azure, both published in 1904. But while the authors of such works had been optimistic when they wrote them anticipating a cosmic event which would transform reality, the "Blue Rose" artists by 1906 were working in a different social and philosophical environment: the prestige of Symbolism as a school of art and philosophy was declining, for the apocalyptic moment which the Symbolists had hoped would accompany the 1905 revolution failed to arrive, and their subsequent despair contributed towards their spiritual disintegration and escape into urban decadence. Blok's withdrawal into a melancholic subjectivism after his disillusionment in the "Beautiful Lady," very much an
eschatological symbol, was matched by a similar change in Kuznetsov's world view. While the "Crimson Rose" had been devoted to the "lyrical," aetherial phase of paint-erly Symbolism, the 1906 "World of Art" show pointed already to elements of despair and gloom at least in the work of Kuznetsov—elements which would be more apparent at the actual "Blue Rose" exhibition (even though the latter was more retrospective than contemporary). Despite the positive titles of his pictures at the "World of Art," which as titles remind one of Puvis de Chavannes and Denis, the embryonic figures of such canvases as "Blue Fountain" and "Mother's Love" harbingered Kuznetsov's morbid, pessimistic period of late 1907 to 1910. Although it was unlikely that Kuznetsov had read V. Solov'ev's ideas on the Divine Sophia, he was aware, undoubtedly, of Blok's homage to the Beautiful Lady and from Borisov-Musatov knew of the cult of femininity amongst the Nabis. Possibly he may have been familiar with Gauguin's views on the subject—"Studying the Eve of my choice, whom I have painted in forms and harmonies of a different world, she whom you elect to enthrone, evokes perhaps melancholy reflections. The Eve of your civilized imagination makes nearly all of us misogynists"—and certainly Kuznetsov's search for a primitive conception of Woman aligned him with the French. Just as in the same year Sapunov dis-covered and transferred to décor the sorrow of Blok's
"Balaganchik," so Kuznetsov was realizing that the quest "ab realia ad realiora" was in vain and by the spring of 1906 his works became stamped with the traces of death and decay: Kuznetsov's pregnant women, unborn babies and fountains were, as one critic commented, symbols of the unattained—and of the unattainable—and they heralded the tragic, almost Munchian visions of after 1907.

However, at the same time, at the "World of Art" exhibition, N. Milioti with his "game of hovering, pale veils . . . and disturbed flashes of mystical lights," V. Milioti with his "ruby, emerald and amethyst fairy-tales" and Sapunov with his "movement and dull glitter of figures slithering in a dance" still represented the positive phase of the "Blue Rose" Symbolism as well as underlining the basic tendency towards thematic and formal obliquity. The Miliotis with their bold colour combinations and Kuznetsov with his "vulgarization" of content (noticeable also in Larionov's contributions) presaged an emergent direction towards a grosser, more rudimentary approach to the canvas, towards Neo-primitivism. In his censorious review of the exhibition, Stasov alluded unwittingly to this direction:

... Larionov, Sapunov, Ul'yanov, Falileev, Feofilaktov— they all promise a splendid, really ugly future. But I think P. Kuznetsov has outstripped them all. Of all the decadents, he is the most
hopeless. Not the slightest ray of even an implication of light struggles through his canvases. . . . His pictures, "Mother's Love," "Morning Joy," "Blue Fountain," "Morning," "Morning Star," etc., are all the ravings of an old man lying incurably ill in a sick-bay. On his stage are not people, but ghosts in long garments with crazy, jaded faces. . . . The whole of his painting, all his colours have been wiped away, as it were, with a huge broom and there remain merely weak, grey, faded allusions to what was once colour. 56

Yet despite such harsh words the exhibition was a success both ideologically and financially (pictures were sold for 45,000 roubles): the death knoll of the "World of Art" had been sounded and the "Blue Rose" artists had moved to the front of the artistic arena, a position which they upheld at their own group exhibition almost exactly a year later. Collectors who had thitherto concentrated on Western European masters, on the Neo-nationalists or on the "World of Art" now took notice of the new generation of Moscow artists; for example, the Moscow connoisseur, I. I. Troyanovsky bought Kuznetsov's "Blue Fountain" (later acquired by the Tret'yakov Gallery), the Tret'yakov Gallery bought his "Morning," M. A. Morozov bought N. Milioti's "Ce fût un matin d'automne rose" and M. S. Botkin bought his "Fleurs du mal."

Undoubtedly, the "World of Art" exhibition prompted Diaghilev to invite certain of the new Moscow artists to contribute to the Paris exhibition of Russian art at the "Salon d'automne" in 1906. Although already familiar with
their work, he made a special journey to Moscow to inspect the latest achievements of the "Blue Rose" artists "receiving those who wished to exhibit at the "Salon d'automne" in the Hotel National." The result of his visit was that Arapov, Feofilaktov, Kuznetsov, Matveev, the Miliotis, Sudeikin and Utkin, as well as several colleagues outside the group such as Denisov, Goncharova, Larionov and Ul'yanov, were asked to exhibit, and Kuznetsov, Larionov and Sudeikin were invited to accompany Diaghilev to Paris to help in the organization of the exhibition. Diaghilev's show of Russian art at the "Salon d'automne" came after his famous exhibition of Russian portraits at the Tauride Palace in St. Petersburg in February, 1905, i.e. both involved incredible organization, financial manipulation and unfailing determination to propagate the cause of Russian art—and in this both exhibitions anticipated Diaghilev's seasons of music and ballet in the West after 1906. The number of exhibits in the Russian section of the Salon totaled 750 and covered all periods from early icons to contemporary movements, the spearhead of which was formed by the "Blue Rose" artists. The exhibition was seen not only by the Paris public, but also by that of Berlin to where it was transferred in modified form at the end of 1906 and by that of Venice early in 1907. The catalogue itself was an important document because not only did it list artists,
works and owners, but also contained several monochrome illustrations of, inter alia, "World of Art" and "Blue Rose" pictures. There were twelve rooms and a special hall for the icons; the seventh room was devoted exclusively to Vrubel' and six rooms were given over to art of the last fifteen years. The elegant interior decoration included a sculpture garden and a frieze designed by Bakst, the floor was covered with blue cloth, laurel bushes stood at the entrance and pots of hyacinths in front of the pictures. Diaghilev was concerned particularly with the way in which the pictures were hung: he allowed for maximum space between each exhibit and arranged that each artist should have a special background colour, e.g. Vrubel's pictures were backed by lilac coloured muslin, N. Milioti's by bright red velvet and Borisov-Musatov's by white muslin while the icon hall was hung with gold brocade; in addition, Diaghilev paid attention to the shape and colour of picture frames—Borisov-Musatov was given narrow, white ones, N. Milioti gilt ones and A. Rylov oak ones. With such careful organization the exhibition could not fail to be a success both with intellectual circles and with the public at large and served to communicate the ideas of the Moscow Symbolists to an international audience—the only opportunity which the "Blue Rose" artists ever had of appearing abroad as a group. Their exhibits here were similar to
those seen at the "World of Art" show earlier that year treating of mystical, symbolical themes in a style correspondingly subtle: Arapov contributed "Fright" (which would be shown at the "Blue Rose" the following year); Feofilaktov "Quadrille," four illustrations to Northern Flowers, cover design for the Scales and a drawing dedicated to Beardsley; Kuznetsov "Blue Fountain" (reproduced in the catalogue), "Fountain," "White Cascade," "Mother's Love," "Morning," "Morning Joy," "Birth of Slumber" and two other fountain pictures; Sudeikin "Firework," "Peacocks" (reproduced in the catalogue), "Flowers" (the same as "Gathering Flowers" at the "Blue Rose"), "Swing" (also at the "Blue Rose"), "Plafond," "Evening", and "Branch"; Utkin "Dream" and "Night" (both at the "Blue Rose"); the Miliotis contributed almost the same works as they did to the "World of Art." Kuznetsov's colour scheme of blues and greys identifiable with his "maternal" and fountain pictures caused a minor sensation and workmen at the Salon refused to hang them, considering them "crazy." 58 Prince A. Shervashidze, reviewing the exhibition for the Golden Fleece, summed up the success of the Moscow artists by calling attention simply to their "talent for painting" ("zhivopisnye talanty"), 59 a compliment which was relevant and meaningful.

The "Salon d'automne" was the last exhibition at which the "Blue Rose" artists were represented in any
number before their own exhibition of 1907. Krymov and N. Milioti appeared at the fourth exhibition of the "Union of Russian Artists" in St. Petersburg (December, 1906-January, 1907), but they were overshadowed by Neo-nationalists, "World of Art" painters and an emergent group of provincial artists who were soon to cause excitement in the art world, including D. D. Burliuk (1882-1967) and his sister, Lyudmilla. Even so, discerning visitors to the exhibition did not pass by the "Blue Rose" artists and the critic, P. P. Muratov (1871-1947), who was to write a detailed and favourable review of the "Blue Rose" exhibition, named Krymov (and Larionov) as exceptions at what, in his opinion, was an uninteresting show. His description of Krymov's pictures used vocabulary similar to that used in most critiques of "Blue Rose" paintings: "You think of his work as you would of a morning woven in silver, of a group of fleecy clouds. . . ."60 Mention might be made also of the exhibition of posters, water-colours and drawings arranged by the "Leonardo da Vinci Society" in Moscow in January, 1907. It was a badly organized project at which many mediocre artists appeared, but a small contribution was made by "Blue Rose" painters and their sympathizers, including, Denisov, Goncharova, Krymov, N. Milioti, Rozhdestvensky and Ul'yanov.
The involvement of the "Blue Rose" artists in the theatre, their succès de scandale in Saratov, St. Petersburg and Paris and their ascendancy over the "World of Art" prepared the public for their one and only group exhibition in the spring of 1907. Their direct contact with such important figures as Mamontov, Stanislavsky and Diaghilev contributed significantly to the group's assertion of a new art which, in turn, would beget Russian Neo-primitivism and Cubo-futurism.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. A. Benua, Russkaya shkola zhivopisi, St. P., 1904, p. 96.

2. This was a sobriquet applied by students of the Moscow Institute to Karev, Kuznetsov, Matveev, Petrov-Vodkin, Polovinkin and Utkin. See: R. Drampyan, Sar'yan, M.-L., 1964, p. 10.


4. S. Kara-Murza, "Vospominaniya o N. N. Sapunove" in N. Sapunov. Stikhi. Vospominaniya. Kharakteristiki, M., 1916. V. Mayat was close to the "Blue Rose" and "Golden Fleece" circles; see Note 19 to Chapter V in this text.

5. Quoted from: V. Lobanov, Kanuny, M., 1968, p. 82.


7. This according to A. Arapov, Vospominaniya (archive), 1940.

8. See Note 35 to Chapter III in this text.


10. "... parishoners were already talking about the profanation of the immaculate icons by the Moscow heretics." Ibid., p. 425. It is significant that Kuznetsov and Utkin were regarded no longer as Saratovians by Saratov society.

11. This according to an unsigned report, "Delo o zhivopisi v Kazanskoi tserkvi" in Saratovskii dnevnik, 1904, 25 May, No. 110.

15. From exhibition review by S. Gris-n (Grishin) in Saratovskii listok, 1904, II May.
17. S. Gris-n, op. cit.
18. This was a fairy-tale drama staged by Mamontov in 1883 with sets by Polenov. See: V. Mamontov, Vospominaniya o russkich khudozhnikakh, M., 1951, p. 17
19. GRM, Manuscript Section, fund 27, ed. dep. 40, 1.
20. See Chapter II and this Chapter of this text.
21. For example, Arapov contributed drawings to A. Fedorov-Davydov's magazine, Muravei, M., 1903; Feofilaktov contributed also to the second number.
24. Sapunov was entrusted with the fourth and fifth acts, Sudeikin with the first, second and third.
29. F. Komissarzhevsky, "Sapunov-dekorator" in *Apollon*, 1914, No. 4, p. 16.


33. My comments on this décor are based on a study of original designs and of the large picture, "Mystical Meeting" (1909), a second version of the 1906 work, all of which are in GTG.


35. A. Blok, "Balaganchik" in *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 4, p. 20.


37. B. L., "Emotsializm..." p. 56.

38. N. Tarovaty, "27 vystavka uchenikov Uchilishcha zhivopisi, vayaniya i zodchestva v Moskve" in *Iskusstvo*, 1905, No. 1.

39. Ibid.


43. Arbalet (M. Shesterkin), "Na vystavakh" in *Vesy*, 1905, No. 1.

44. B. L., "Emotsializm..." p. 56.

45. S. Glagol', "Vystavka kartin Moskovskogo tovarishchestva khudozhnikov" in *Russkoe slovo*, 1905, No. 56.

46. See: "Zametki" in *Iskusstvo*, 1905, No. 3.

47. For details see: Skif, "Vystavka Moskovskogo tovarishchestva khudozhnikov" in *Zolotoe runo*, 1906, No. 2, pp. 117-119.


52. A. Efros, "P. Kuznetsov" in Profili.


57. A. Arapov, Vospominaniya.

58. The incident is related by A. Efros, "P. Kuznetsov."

59. A. Shervashidze, "Vystavka russkogo khudozhestva v Parizhe" in Zolotoe runo, 1906, No. 11/12, p. 133.

Chapter V

"Through a thin mist of doubt
I look into a bluish dream."
(A. Blok, 1903)\(^1\)

The 1905 Revolution

The "Blue Rose" movement emerged at a time of social and political crisis in Russia and, inevitably, this environment exerted a certain influence on its formation and direction. The "Blue Rose" may, of course, be examined purely intrinsically, as a phase in the organic evolution of Russian painting, but because of its associations with the civic tensions of 1905, however tenuous they may have been, a more synoptic approach is obviously called for at this juncture.

The revolutionary activities of 1905 manifest particularly in Moscow were symptomatic of the social disintegration which Russia was then undergoing. This general fragmentation was reflected in the arts, both on the literary and painterly levels, and to a marked extent the "Blue Rose" harbingered that artistic disintegration which was to continue in Russia for at least the next twenty years—until the foundation of a Soviet school of painting. However devoid of social tendentiousness the "Blue Rose"
art was, it transmitted, unwittingly, the loss of form and discipline which its social milieu was experiencing. The asocial pictures of the "Blue Rose" painters offered an alternative reality, a reality of silence and dream, an antidote to the chaotic impasse which Russia had reached. While they were concerned more with subjective escapism than with didactic interpretations of reality, the "Blue Rose" artists were not altogether alien to the Russian revolutionary movement and contributed occasionally to leftist satirical magazines. Although they did not go so far as to publish a political statement, as some of the "World of Art" members did,² they did not remain completely silent: in fact, Sapunov and Sudeikin proposed to establish a magazine in the spring of 1905 under the title, Square (Kvadrat), which was to have been a weekly leaflet of anti-social caricatures and cartoons, but the authorities refused the right of publication and the project was not realized. Undoubtedly, Kuznetsov shared their liberal views although his conception of the artist's role in society was not clarified until his first published, individual statement in 1910, in the miscellany, Where Are We Going?: "... Pictures are wanted just to decorate hotel walls and people's boudoirs... I reject these pictures. The art of painting must be linked with the feelings of the working man...."³
For all that, the "Blue Rose" artists with their youthful energy and revolutionary spirit were less active, politically, than their "World of Art" colleagues: for example, Diaghilev participated in the projection of a theatre of political satire in St. Petersburg, Bakst, Bilibin, Dobuzhinsky, B. M. Kustodiev (1878-1927), Lanceray et al. contributed to the famous satirical journals, Hellish Post, Bugbear and Torches and most of the group voiced their enthusiasm for the revolution—even the retiring Somov welcomed change: "I do not fear what is happening, I delight in every new victory of the revolution, I do not doubt in its good since I know that it will bring us not to the abyss, but to life. I hate our past too much." Perhaps one can explain this paradox by reference to the social positions of the two movements: the "World of Art" artists were financially independent and did not rely for their livelihood on purchases of their work by Capitalist patrons; moreover, they were convinced that their society was doomed as Diaghilev had declared so movingly in his Tauride Palace speech; these two factors, therefore, prompted them to invite social and political reform. The "Blue Rose" artists, on the other hand, although for the most part of humble origins, were dependent to a large degree on the financial support of the Moscow industrialists and bankers and, in this sense, were an outgrowth from them. Because of their close
bonds with the Moscow Capitalists, the very class against which so much revolutionary fervour was directed, they were not in a position to condemn or rebel. And apart from isolated incidents such as the explosion at the Stroganov Institute in the spring of 1906, the young Moscow artists remained outside the mainstream of political and revolutionary activity.

The eschatological ideals which had permeated the atmosphere of Russia's intellectual salons just before 1905 were shattered suddenly by the abortive revolution. The ensuing state of shock and sense of despair demanded an art which would afford an escape from harsh reality into a world of fantasy and dream, a demand epitomized by Rozanov's declaration, "I don't want truth, I want peace." The "Blue Rose" pictures provided a haven of rest at a time of disillusionment and reaction, but as society became more and more introspective, the purity of painterly Symbolism gave way to a cult of eroticism and necromancy. Soon after 1905 Symbolism as an elitist literary doctrine degenerated into a popular concern with theosophy and spiritualism: the same trend was noticeable in painting, for with the passing of Borisov-Musatov in 1905, the idealist stage of Symbolist painting passed also. And while the "Blue Rose" artists throughout 1906 continued to paint exquisite canvases of the mystical and
the spiritual, the delicate bloom of their flower began
to wilt as two directions--towards Decadence and Neo-
primitivism--began to assert themselves.

Despite the concentration of Arapov, Sapunov and
Sudeikin on the theatre before 1907, the majority of the
"Blue Rose" artists were still concerned primarily with
easel painting and were developing those tendencies
which had been first manifest at the "Crimson Rose" ex-
hibition in 1904. As a group, too, the "Blue Rose"
artists still presented a cohesive front vis-à-vis the
disorganized ranks of the Neo-nationalist and "World of
Art" groups. M. A. Kuzmin, familiar with the art move-
ments both of St. Petersburg and of Moscow was impressed
by the new Moscow artists and felt that they had definitely
replaced the Diaghilev group by 1906:

... And the loud, Moscow accent, the peculiar words,
the manner of clicking the heels as they walked along,
the Tatar cheek-bones and eyes, the moustaches twirled
upwards, the shocking ties, coloured waistcoats and
jackets, a certain bravado and implacability in their
opinions and judgements . . . involuntarily I thought
- new people have come forward.?

These "new people," the "Blue Rose" artists, gained pub-
licity and assumed artistic leadership essentially in
three ways: they revolved round three particular Symbolist
magazines all published in Moscow, they established direct
contact with the new generation of Moscow financiers and industrialists and they frequented the leading Moscow cultural societies.

The Moscow Symbolist Press

At the end of 1903 it had been felt, especially in Moscow, that Modernist literature had no adequate vehicle of expression, the moreso since the World of Art was, by then, concerned primarily with the visual arts and the New Path with philosophy. As a result of this situation, Bryusov prevailed upon S. Polyakov, owner of the Scorpion publishing-house, to found a journal which would cater for the needs of the new literature, namely, the Scales (Vesy). The Scales first began to appear at the beginning of 1904 at a time when the so-called "second wave" of Russian Symbolists, led by Bely and Blok, had already asserted itself. Their conception of Symbolism as a credo which should affect both the art and the philosophy of the writer was one which differed from the purely aesthetic interpretation favoured by the first wave led by Bryusov. A similar divergent attitude towards Symbolism was identifiable with the "World of Art" and "Blue Rose" groups, for while the former concentrated on technique and pictorial aestheticism, the latter tended to treat their pictures as reflections of the beyond, as paths to the ulterior reality. The Scales acted as a forum for both trends, although as
time progressed it came to favour the second approach to Symbolism: this was demonstrated by increasing contributions not only from Blok and Bely, but also from members of the "Blue Rose." Whatever its ideological position, the Scales remained an authoritative journal of high intellectual calibre, whereas its rival, the Golden Fleece, was not always a reliable, intelligent source of information. The differences between the two journals were very much the result of their editors' own interests: the editor of the Scales was Bryusov and its financial supporter was Polyakov, the editor and owner of the Golden Fleece was N. Ryabushinsky.

S. A. Polyakov (c. 1870-1938), although a cultured man, did not necessarily influence the policy of the Scales and preferred to leave its editorship completely in the hands of Bryusov. He rarely visited the editorial office of the Scales situated on the second floor of the "Metropol'" building, unlike Ryabushinsky who liked to be seen driving in his impressive carriage to the office of the Golden Fleece on Smolensk Boulevard. While of a retiring nature, or in Bal'mont's words as "tender as mimoza," Polyakov was respected by the Moscow intelligentsia who appreciated his vast knowledge of languages and of world art. He was an avid collector of antique porcelain and of modern art particularly of the "World of
Art" and "Blue Rose" painters and his apartment on Strastnoi Boulevard and his dacha became meeting-places of the literary and artistic élite. His publishing-house was responsible not only for the Scales, but also for the annual recueils of verse and illustrations (including many drawings by Feofilaktov) called the Northern Flowers (1901-1911) and for larger Symbolist works; in addition, it was Scorpion which published the only album of Feofilaktov's drawings in 1909 and published Yuon's cycle of illustrations, "Creation of the World," as a separate edition.

The contact between the "Blue Rose" artists and the Scales was not as close or as enduring as their connection with the Golden Fleece. Many of them did contribute vignettes, headpieces and sketches to the Scales (Figures 25, 26, 27) and sometimes their canvases were reproduced; also, its literary contents served as occasional sources of inspiration as in the case of Utkin's designs for Bely's Silver Dove which appeared in instalments during 1909 (Utkin's design for the cover appeared on the separate edition of the novel in 1910). Even when the Golden Fleece came to dominate the Moscow art scene in 1906, the Scales maintained contact with the "Blue Rose" members through its reviews of Moscow exhibitions and articles on modern Russian art. Feofilaktov, in particular,
was close to the Scales throughout the years of its publication (1904-1909): the pornographic and demonic elements of his work were admired by Bryusov who decorated the walls of his apartment with examples of them, and indicative of their lasting friendship was the fact that the 1933 Soviet edition of Bryusov's poetry carried a cover and illustrations by Feofilaktov. Bely also admired him and frequently encountered him in the Metropol' office—as he recalled:

... Feofilaktov used to loll about on a blue divan either picking his teeth with a toothpick or dropping his profile into his palms; he had a profile like Beardsley's; don't pay attention to his "peculiarities" - a really good, straightforward chap.

Also prominent amongst the artists there were Arapov and Drittenpreis who transferred their loyalties from the Golden Fleece to the Scales in 1908 after a personal quarrel with Ryabushinsky.

Although its main interests were literary, the Scales was in continuous touch with developments in the visual arts both in Russia and in the West. It made a significant contribution to the recognition of Vrubel' both in critical texts and in reproductions, it published articles on Western masters including Cézanne and Beardsley and its exhibition reviews by such figures as Blok (v. 1904, No. 3), Muratov (v. 1905, No.12) and V. Rozanov (v. 1905, No. 6) did much to communicate Moscow Symbolist painting. Apart from detailed articles on Yakunchikova (by
Voloshin, 1905, No. 1), Borisov-Musatov (by Arbalet (pseudonym of M. I. Shesterkin), 1905, No. 2) and Bencois (by A. A. Rostislavov, 1907, No. 7), the Scales rendered a valuable service to the new Russian art by its attention to external and internal decoration: although Feofilaktov and V. Milioti were the main contributors of graphics (after 1904 the cover was normally a design by Feofilaktov), practically all of the "Blue Rose" artists were represented at one time or another by vignettes and headpieces, and although one commentator chose to ignore the reproduction of Sapunov's "Winter" in the World of Art (1900, No. 9/10), he was correct in asserting that the works of Arapov, Feofilaktov, Sapunov and Sudeikin were reproduced for the first time in the Scales. Large-scale illustrative works by artists outside the "Blue Rose" camp were also reproduced, such as Rerikh's illustrations to Maeterlinck's collected works in translation (published by Pirozhkov, Moscow, 1906-1907) and Yuon's line drawings, "Creation of the World." Although the Scales was overshadowed by the Golden Fleece in its propagation of Symbolist painting, it continued to play an important role in this area particularly during the last two years of its existence by the presentation of whole-page monochrome and colour reproductions: in this way readers became conversant with the emergent leftist generation, including
The presence of examples by the latter artists, who by the end of 1907 had rejected Symbolism and Impressionism and were turning towards Neo-primitivism, was a welcome innovation especially after the dominance of Feofilaktov's eroticism in the first issues.

Art

The short-lived art journal, Art (Iskusstvo), played a crucial role in the dissemination of the "Blue Rose" ideas. In many ways it was the forerunner of the Golden Fleece both in its positive attitude towards Modernism and in its negative attitude towards Realism and Moscow Impressionism. It was founded by a cultured and wealthy Muscovite, N. Ya. Tarovaty (1876-1906), who, like Ryabushinskyy, had close personal ties with the "Blue Rose" artists. Tarovaty's magazine filled the need for an artistic and doctrinal platform for the "Blue Rose" artists and its articles and reproductions held a distinct bias towards the new art of Moscow. Despite additional financial support from the director of the Gryphon publishing-house, S. A. Krechetov (pseudonym of S. Sokolov), Tarovaty was forced to close his enterprise after only the eighth number because of financial losses, so that Art treated only of the initial stage of the "Blue Rose" movement, i.e. from late 1904 until summer of 1905.
In 1906 its place was taken by the *Golden Fleece*, although on a much grander scale, and Tarovaty was retained as art correspondent until his death in October of that year, when V. Milioti succeeded him.

Art provided the first opportunity for the new Moscow artists to submit graphic decorations to an art journal which was devoted wholly to their cause: examples of graphics by Arapov, Bromirsky (very rare examples of this sculptor's illustrative talent), Feofilaktov and Sapunov appeared in most numbers as well as reproductions of their pictures from current exhibitions. The first issue of Art established the artistic direction which the journal was to pursue by its publication of an introductory article entitled "What Art Is" by Viktor Hoffmann. In this the author defined Symbolism as the science of the individual, of the subjective "I," of mystical intimism and implied that Symbolism was valid both as an aesthetic and as a theurgic force, a conception appealing to the "Blue Rose" artists. Indeed, "mystical intimism" was an obvious tenet of the "Blue Rose" credo as their pictures had indicated at the "Crimson Rose" and it was this which attracted the critic B. L. at the Moscow Association of Artists' exhibition at the beginning of 1905: in a review article entitled "Emotionalism in Painting" (No. 2) he described the effect of the "Blue Rose" canvases on
the exhibition: "... details fuse together, and all there remains is something perplexingly elusive, and on this as on a canvas you begin to weave dreams and images related to the basic subject of your consciousness only by some kind of strange association."13 Although Art was oriented towards the Moscow artists, specifically the members of the "Blue Rose," it did not limit its scope to praise of Arapov, Kuznetsov, Sudeikin, etc. and paid attention both to other Russian trends and to Western movements. Tarovaty himself appreciated the attainments of the "World of Art" and included in his editorial staff Benois, Braz, Dobuzhinsky, Lancéray and Rerikh as well as "Blue Rose" artists.14 The wide diapason of articles was indicative of this artistic tolerance: K. A. Syunnerberg (1871-1942) contributed a lucid examination of Benois, Grabar', Malyavin, Somov and Vrubel' in an article entitled "Five Artists" (No. 2), N. N. Vrangel' wrote a long article on the Tauride Palace exhibition (No. 4) and S. Makovsky submitted a perceptive critique of Carrière's portraits (No. 5/7)—one of the first of his many incisive articles on Russian and Western art. Illustrative material was prolific although rather poor in quality and only two colour reproductions were present in the whole series; even so, the Moscow public for the first time (apart from the "World of Art" to which, for
the most part, Petersburgians had subscribed) was able to see contemporary art both of Russia and of Western Europe—there were reproductions of Cézanne, Denis, Gauguin, Monet, Seurat et al. Art even drew attention to the art of Mexico (No. 8) and of Japan (No. 5/7), a move which presaged the interest of the Neo-primitivists in Eastern cultures, but its main objective was to propagate the cause of the "Blue Rose" artists: and this it achieved through direct material support (i.e. many of them were paid members of its staff), its detailed reviews of exhibitions at which they were represented, its presentation of their graphic decorations and its publication of relevant reproductions.

Ryabushinsky and the Golden Fleece

With the collapse of Tarovaty's Art there arose the urgent need for a well-organized, progressive art journal which would champion the ideals of the Moscow Symbolist artists. This vacuum was filled in January, 1906 with the appearance of the Golden Fleece (Zolotoe runo) launched by the Moscow banker and industrialist, N. P. Ryabushinsky (c. 1875–c. 1940).

Ryabushinsky came of a wealthy family of Moscow merchants. His brother, Stepan, possessed a large collection of Russian icons which, in rarity and value, rivalled that of the famous I. S. Ostroukhov, and the eldest brother,
Pavel, owned the highly successful newspaper, Russian Morning (Utro Rossii). Hence, Ryabushinsky was in close contact both with the world of art and with the world of publishing and his knowledge in both spheres assisted him in his creation of the luxurious Golden Fleece. But essentially, Ryabushinsky was a dilettante and possessed neither the business acumen of Mamontov, nor the aesthetic taste of Diaghilev whom, ostensibly, he chose to imitate; and therefore the Golden Fleece, not always justifiably, was referred to as a "merchant's whim" and, like its exhibitions, was boycotted by the upper classes of the Establishment. But the Golden Fleece was a grand gesture and its Moscow panache and enthusiasm for the new art did much to advance the cause of the "Blue Rose" artists and of the Neo-primitivists. As for Ryabushinsky, his most valuable service to art lay in his organization of four exhibitions crucial to the development of the Russian avant-garde—the "Blue Rose," the "Salon of the 'Golden Fleece'" and the two "Golden Fleece" exhibitions. (See Chapters VI, VII and VIII).

Apart from collecting works of modern Russian and French art, Ryabushinsky painted profusely, contributed to exhibitions, compiled critical reviews and even wrote poetry (under the pen-name, N. Shinsky). To a large extent his creative activity was valueless and acted
merely as a pretext for enjoying the licence which an artist's life afforded, and his shallow maxim—"I love beauty and I love a lot of women"—betrayed the kind of life he led. To indulge his pleasures Ryabushinsky built himself a mansion in Petrovsky Park called the "Black Swan" and behind its façade of swirling Art Nouveau and Symbolist frieze decorated by Kuznetsov there took place the most outlandish parties: in the garden there were cages for lions and tigers, at Christmas a large fir-tree would be erected and decorated with electric lights and inside were the most impressive furnishings—as Prince Shcherbatov recollected:

"Poisoned arrows brought from barbaric countries, vases and terrifying dragons from Majorca, Russian graphics, canvases . . . of young leftist artists, decadent, sumptuous furniture and a luxurious bedroom smelling of exotic perfumes where the sybaritic owner . . . would recline with his ever changing mistresses and wives."19

Such epicureanism reflected Ryabushinsky's wish to impress rather than to discern, to be appreciated rather than to appreciate and it was this which led to his disagreements with so many of Moscow's intellectuals and dignitaries, specifically with Bely and Bryusov. Lobanov described him in his memoirs:

Tall, fair-haired, a picture of health, a real lad looking as if he'd come out of a Kustodiev picture, Nikolai Pavlovich Ryabushinsky endeavoured to be as noticeable as possible. A stalwart, self-assured figure dressed in a dinner jacket or suit from a fashionable tailor, one could always see his pink face bordered by a red beard at all theatre premières, at every preview - everywhere where Moscow's artistic elite congregated.20
Although the list of participators in the Golden Fleece remained impressive to the end—including such names as Benois, Blok, Gorodetsky, Kuzmin and Somov—it was Ryabushinsky's wish to dictate literary and artistic policy which caused Arapov, Bely, Bryusov, Bunin, Chulkov, Drittenpreis, Zaitsev et al. to resign from his staff before 1909. Whatever his personal faults Ryabushinsky was liberal with his financial support to artists: for example, in 1906 he sent paints and brushes to Vrubel' who was then in Dr. Usoltsev's mental asylum so that he could complete his portrait of Bryusov; in the same year Ryabushinsky commissioned the series of contemporary portraits (of which the Bryusov was one) which resulted in Somov's remarkable heads of Blok and V. Ivanov; also in 1906 Ryabushinsky organized a rather absurd competition with a money prize for the most convincing depiction of the Devil. Ryabushinsky's prestige as a merchant Maecenas, although doubted in some quarters, did not go unrecognized by the Tsar who received him in October, 1906 and who accepted the nine numbers of the Golden Fleece in handsome bindings "executed, according to rumours, by famous artists from a design by Ryabushinsky." Ryabushinsky was interested not only in promoting a magazine and art exhibitions, but also in the profits which the buying and selling of art could produce. It
was this which prompted him to propose the construction of a "Palace of Arts" in Moscow which was to have been based on a shareholder scheme of 500 shares at 1,000 roubles per share. The building was to have been a permanent exhibition hall and museum of modern Russian art with auction facilities, but although Ryabushinsky himself bought 25 shares the project was never realized owing to his financial collapse in 1909-1910. To counteract his losses some of his own pictures were sold at auction in 1911 and, in fact, his whole collection was destroyed by fire which gutted the "Black Swan" in 1914. By the summer of 1914, however, Ryabushinsky's fortunes were restored enough to enable him to invest in art again and he opened a Russian antique shop on the Champs Elysées, Paris. After the Revolution he was employed by the Soviets as a buyer and valuer for the new Commission Shops, but very soon he emigrated to Paris. He spent his émigré life as an antique dealer in Paris.

Like Mamontov, I. A. Morozov and other Moscow Maecenes, Ryabushinsky was a colourful figure intensely interested in contemporary trends of Russian painting. Just as the future "Blue Rose" artists had once turned to Mamontov and then joined forces under Tarovaty, so in 1906 they sided with Ryabushinsky and enjoyed his support during the ensuing years--1906-1909. It would be dangerous to assert that without him the "Blue Rose" would not
have achieved the renown which it did for even by 1904, as the "Crimson Rose" had shown, the young Moscow artists had already formed a distinct and cohesive group; and, in any case, both before and after 1906 they had close financial and ideological links with the \textit{Scales}, \textit{Art} and the \textit{Pass} (\textit{Pereval}, appearing in 1906 only). But for the "Blue Rose" artists Ryabushinsky's importance lay in his personal and unfailing support of their art and in the consequent accessibility of his magazine, factors which allowed them to ignore conventional taste. Above all, perhaps, Ryabushinsky was their friend and fellow Bohemian.

The \textbf{Golden Fleece} was launched at the beginning of 1906 at a time when Russia was recuperating from the social upheaval of the preceding year and its last issues were dated 1909, a year which marked the twilight of Symbolism. Its polygraphic excellence, its elaborate lay-out, its high price, its disregard of the burning questions of the day and its name, mythical and symbolic, surprised the contemporary public. The name, with its legendary associations, was, of course, significant as a symbol of its rejection of contemporaneity. Its immediate derivation was obvious, being inspired directly by the name "Argonaut" which Bely had applied to his informal Moscow group.

Bely, however, was not consulted over the choice of name and was vexed at the overt borrowing and at the evident
association with his book of verse, *Gold in Azure* (published in 1904 with cover design by Feofilaktov). Bely's essential objection, however, was based on the view that the *Golden Fleece* was bound to become the champion of St. Petersburg Symbolism, in contradistinction to the *Scales*, since Chulkov and V. Ivanov had played a considerable role in convincing Ryabushinsky of the need for a new magazine. But despite Bely's arguments, the *Golden Fleece* came to stand for Moscow Symbolism both in literature and in painting although it did advocate a new direction—of mystical anarchism—when Andreev, Bunin and Zaitsev joined the staff in 1907.

The rejection of social and political reality by the *Golden Fleece* aligned it immediately with the "Blue Rose" artists, themselves little concerned with civic problems. The *Golden Fleece* at once became their organizational and ideological centre and while the "Blue Rose" never issued its own independent manifesto, the editorial of the first number could be taken as their declaration of intent:

> We embark on our path at a formidable time. Around us, like a raging whirlpool, seethes the rebirth of life... Art is eternal for it is founded on the intransient, on that which cannot be rejected. Art is whole for its single source is the soul. Art is symbolic for it bears within it the symbol, the reflection of the Eternal in the temporal. Art is free for it is created by the free impulse of creation. [24]
Despite its orientation towards the art of Moscow, the *Golden Fleece* did not neglect St. Petersburg and did not ignore the art of Western Europe or the East. Indeed, it was the "World of Art" painter, Lanceray, who designed the magazine's cover for the issues of 1906 and 1907 and who augmented the Vrubel' design for the subsequent numbers; and during its first year of existence many St. Petersburg artists and critics contributed including Benois, Ergberg (pseudonym of Syunnerberg), Filosofov, S. Makovsky, and Shervashidze. By 1908 the *Golden Fleece* had become an art journal rather than a literary review as a result partly of Ryabushinsky's private desires, partly of hostilities between him and Baltrusaitis, Bely, Bryusov, Gippius and Merezhkovsky (all of whom resigned at the end of 1907) and partly of the close connection which the journal had with the "Blue Rose" and "Wreath" exhibitions. For the art historian, however, the first two years of its publication are probably the most important because it contained a vitality and critical penetration which it lacked after 1907 when Symbolism as an artistic and philosophic school was already degenerating into mass occupation with table-tapping and spiritualism. After 1907, in fact, a general decline was apparent both in the outward appearance and in the contents of the *Golden Fleece*. After the first issue for 1908 which still retained the elaborate ingredients of
the initial numbers—quarto paper, texts in Russian and in French, good reproductions—the format was reduced and both paper and reproductions became poorer. The sudden change in the journal's presentation was caused mainly by the change in Ryabushinsky's financial fortunes because during the first two years he was forced to subsidize it heavily (at the end of 1906 the revenue obtained from sales totalled 12,000 roubles, while overall expenses amounted to over 80,000). Ryabushinsky's position worsened in 1909 and the magazine was forced to close, although the last issues for 1909 were not published, in fact, until early 1910 because of lack of funds.

Many important contributions appeared during the first few numbers, not least the successive presentations on Vrubel', Somov, Borisov-Musatov and Bakst, a sequence which achieved a nice balance between the art of Moscow and that of St. Petersburg. But there were two early articles, in particular, which were worthy of note by their presentiment of imminent trends in Russian art. In the second number Benois published an article entitled "Artistic Heresies": opposed to the notion that subjectivism and the soul could serve as exclusive sources of artistic inspiration, Benois inferred the results of such a doctrine:

Does not individualism—the cornerstone of contemporary artistic life—teach us that only that
has value which has arisen freely in the artist's soul and has poured forth into his creation freely? . . . Artists have scattered into their own corners, they amuse themselves with self-admiration, they beware of mutual influences and at all costs try to be only themselves. Chaos reigns, something turbid which has scarcely any value and which, strangest of all, has no physiognomy.  

The artistic chaos which Benois perceived was initiated by the "Blue Rose" artists with their thematic and formal innovations and it was obviously their art which he had in mind. As many of his contemporary intellectuals, Benois was acutely aware of the lack of cohesion in his society and he understood, as the "Blue Rose" artists did later, that individualism and subjectivism would lead only to further disintegration. To a certain extent it was this awareness which on the one hand prompted the "World of Art" members to look back to the rationality and integration of 18th century France and to Classical culture and on the other prompted the "Blue Rose" artists to escape into an imaginary dream-world; the same realization contributed to the Neo-primitivists' re-examination of archaic and peasant arts, to their rejection of the "civilized" art of the West and, in the case of Kuznetsov, to seek inspiration in the natural, primitive culture of Kirghizia. But, of course, the frantic search for a style which Benois had pointed to as early as 1902 served only to accelerate the process of fragmentation, culminating in the explosive activity after 1910.
The second article of insight was entitled "Painting and Revolution" by one D. Imgardt, a name which was undoubtedly a pseudonym. It appeared in the fifth number. The text was concerned not so much with painting and the social revolution of 1905 as with the revolution which was occurring within painting itself: in the author's opinion contemporary artists were already aware that the aims of art as they had been defined thitherto were exhausted and that new artistic criteria would have to be created for the application and appreciation of colours and musical tones; Imgardt argued that the resolution of this problem would lie in the invention of "visual music and phonic painting without themes." Two important ideas arise from this statement—the idea of synthetic art and that of abstract art. Of course, synthetic art had already been investigated by Chiurlionis who had attempted to paint music and Skryabin was deeply interested in the affinities between the spectrum and the seven note scale, but Imgardt was the first, in Russia at least, to think in terms of a subjectless art, i.e. of abstractionism. While, obviously, it might be argued that the Neo-nationalist and "World of Art" decorativists such as V. Vasnetsov and Bilibin sometimes created pieces devoid of figurative content, e.g. decorative patterns for theatre sets or book illustrations, it must be concluded that such products were always part of a larger,
representational conception and were not self-sufficient units. Imgarit was advocating the subjectless picture not as an arbitrary, irrational creation, but as a work of art organized and founded on its own principles—and four years later Kandinsky began to paint according to this philosophy. Although Imgarit's declaration might seem oddly prophetic, its derivation can be traced to his immediate artistic environment, to the art of the "Blue Rose" painters: by 1906 their pictures were formally and thematically obscure to the point of unintelligibility and the perceptive critic could have surmised logically that the next stage in such art would be non-representationalism. In fact, the "Blue Rose" artists did not take this pictorial obscurity to its expected conclusion and, on the contrary, reacted against it failing to think consciously in abstract terms; Kandinsky, on the other hand, arrived at his abstract creations according both to intuition and to scientific formulation. The "Blue Rose" artists "re-materialized" reality after their Symbolist aetheriality and imbued it with a more static, at times tangible, quality identifiable particularly with the post-1907 canvases of Krymov and Sudeikin. At the same time this did not lead necessarily to a more naturalistic concept, but often to a more intense concern with the intrinsic
properties of a painting--form, colour, texture, mass--which, in turn, presaged the Cubo-futurists of the "Knave of Diamonds" group.

Of course, the above articles were only two of many important contributions to the appreciation of Modernist Russian art, especially to the understanding of synthesis. Despite the personal disagreements between members of the art and literature factions within the Golden Fleece—for example, between V. Milioti and Bely, Ryabushinsky and Bryusov—the journal did much to bridge the gap between the two areas. The trend towards artistic synthesis was apparent not only in the reproductions of portraits of literati such as V. Ivanov by Somov (1907, No. 3), Bely by Bakst (1907, No. 1) and Zaitsev by Ul'yanov (1909, No. 1), but also in the fact that Blok's famous article, "Colours and Words," was published in the first number and that Bely wrote on Borisov-Musatov in the third. This aspiration to combine art and literature manifested itself also in the rich graphic decoration of poems and articles (Figure 28) even if unfortunate errors were made in formulation—for example, the silver, and hence almost invisible, page decorations in the first number. A particularly successful synthesis of poetry and artistic design was provided by the publication of Bal'mont's "Round of Seasons" (1907, No. 11/12) each month of which
(including a thirteenth) was illustrated by a different artist: the designs by Arapov (January), Dobuzhinsky (September), Krymov (May), Sudeikin (April) and Utkin (June) were of particular note. In this context mention must be made of Krymov's illustrations to the text of Remizov's Little Demon (1907, No. 1) and Posolon' (1907, No. 5) (Figure 29) which were associated with the "Devil" competition organized by Ryabushinsky. Graphic submissions to this competition by Arapov, Dobuzhinsky, Feofilaktov, Kuznetsov and V. Milioti (Figure 30) were reproduced in the same issue and well represented both their common ethos and their individual approaches to decorativism: above all, such illustrations demonstrated the wide difference between the precision of the "World of Art" (Dobuzhinsky) and the fluidity, the virtual formlessness, of the "Blue Rose" (Feofilaktov, Kuznetsov, V. Milioti).

Although almost exclusively a champion of Symbolism, the Golden Fleece was not too introspective to realize that by 1909 Symbolism was doomed as a creative and philosophical force. But this advocacy had been its raison d'être as the farewell editorial reminded us: "The Golden Fleece . . . realized that for the renaissance of art it was essential to cross from purely negative, subjective individualism to a new, religious vitality . . . it understood the close tie between the disclosure of
religious experience and the idea of Realist Symbolism and of synthetic art."29 Ostensibly, its reason for closure was a lack of funds, but essentially it was already out of date: in painting, at least, Symbolism had given way to Neo-primitivism and the transfer from individualism to a new vitality had been achieved.

Moscow patrons and cultural clubs

By the early 1900s Moscow was becoming a national and international art centre owing to the appearance not only of new artists, but also of new patrons and collectors. Apart from the Ryabushinskys, other names of financiers and industrialists came to be connected with the world of art and while, of all of them, N. Ryabushinsky played the most decisive role in the evolution of the "Blue Rose" group, such figures as A. A. Bakhrushin, the Girshmans, the Morozovs, I. S. Ostroukhov, S. I. Shchukin and I. I. Troyanovsky also exerted an appreciable influence. As Bely later recalled:

"Savva Mamontovs, " lots of them, suddenly caught on to us - it was almost pitiful ... such couples (i.e. the Girshmans, J. B.) appeared everywhere; the husbands would give subsidies to societies trying to obtain something from us with the persistence of goats; the wives were languorous and like Venuses issued forth from a beautiful foam of muslin and diamond constellations.30

Despite Bely's ironic tone, the Girshmans, Ostroukhov, Troyanovsky, etc. acted as a positive force in the dissemination of new artistic ideas and purchased works
specifically of the "Blue Rose" artists both from exhibitions and on a private basis, Troyanovsky, in fact, "like a child, got carried away with every achievement of Larionov, Kuznetsov, Sudeikin." Mme. Girshman, Genrietta Leopol'dovna, provided additional support by her regular cultural soirées and her physical beauty inspired several portraits of her, e.g. those of Serov (1906, 1907, 1911) and Somov (1911); she was particularly close to Sapunov and Sudeikin whose pictures she collected and to N. Milioti who was rumoured to have been her lover at one time.

Of more import to the general development of Russian art in the Modernist period were the names of the collectors, Morozov and Shchukin, although their relevance to the "Blue Rose" group as such was marginal. The Morozov family was a merchant dynasty similar to Mamontov's, of which many members were interested in art, ancient and modern. The most famous of them, at least in the sphere of Russian and Western European art, was Ivan Abramovich (1871-1921), the owner of a complex of textile factories, whose collection of modern Western European paintings became world famous. In addition to his interest in this area, Morozov purchased many works by modern Russian painters, including Goncharova, Krymov, Sar'yan and Utkin—Serov's portrait of him (1910) demonstrated very well the respect and sympathy which he enjoyed amongst
artists. His relations, Aleksei Vikulovich and Margarita Kirillovna also possessed examples of work by "Blue Rose" artists. Morozov began to collect French Impressionist and Post-impressionist pictures only in 1903 but within a very short time he owned one of the greatest collections of such art, rivalled only by that of Shchukin. His villa on Prechistenka, the interior of which had been reconstructed on the lines of an art gallery, boasted examples of Bonnard, Cézanne, Denis, Gauguin, Matisse, Monet, Renoir, Sisley et al., and by 1917 the number of such pictures totalled 250. Morozov was in personal contact with many of these artists and it was on his invitation that Denis came to Moscow to paint panneaux for his villa—the music room, for example, Denis decorated with the story of Psyche. Morozov's collection of French pictures was catalogued by S. Makovský in 1912 and published in Apollon (1912, No. 3/4).

Sergei Ivanovich Shchukin (1854-1937) started his equally famous collection of modern Western European masters in about 1897 and by the early 1900s he owned examples of all the principal Impressionists including Degas, Monet and Renoir housed in his 18th century villa on Znamensky pereulok. The most valuable part of his collection was a room devoted to Gauguin and in later years he extended his preferences to include the Cubists, such
as Braque, Derain, Le Fauconnier and Picasso and artists of rather different trends, such as Liebermann and Redon. Like Morozov, Shchukin was in personal contact with Western artists and it was at his invitation that Matisse visited Moscow in October, 1911 under the auspices of the "Society of Free Aesthetics." Shchukin's impressive collection overshadowed the more modest interests of his brother, Petr, whose activities covered a more eclectic field, but his collections of Persian and Japanese art, of Russian engravings and drawings and of Russian icons and domestic utensils were particularly fine. Shchukin's whole collection of Western masters was catalogued and published in 1913 and it was recatalogued on its transfer to the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in 1918 (then called the Museum of New Western Painting).

The impact of Morozov and Shchukin on the evolution of modern Russian art lay not merely in their purchases of Western European painting, but in their active propagation and communication of connected trends especially after the mid-1900s. The Morozov and Shchukin Western collections were the only comprehensive presentations of contemporary Western movements to be found in Russia in the 1900s, and until the appearance of Art reproductions of the French moderns had been very few—even the World of Art magazine had done little in this field preferring
Beardsley and the Simplicissimus group to Cézanne or Monet. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the Morozov and Shchukin collections exerted a profound influence on Russian art at least before 1906 because it was only after that date that the collections became easily accessible to young Moscow artists. For example, it was only in 1906 that Kuznetsov and Sar'yan became acquainted with them which, for Sar'yan, meant it was the first time he had seen an Impressionist picture. Until that time only a few privileged people were allowed to private views and it was not until the "Salon of the 'Golden Fleece'" of 1908 that pictures similar to theirs were exhibited publicly. This is not to say that the young Moscow artists were completely ignorant of Western European trends: some of them had visited the West well before 1906—the year of Diaghilev's exhibition at the Salon d'automne—since Kuznetsov had been to Norway in 1903 and to France in 1905, Matveev to France in 1905, N. Milioti to France in the early 1900s and Sapunov to Italy in 1902. But their assimilation of Western artistic innovations was either delayed as in the case of Kuznetsov and Sar'yan or reduced to a minimum as in the case of Sapunov and Sudeikin: although Kuznetsov was indebted to Denis by way of Borisov-Musatov, he did not react consciously to modern French art until at least 1910.
when he rejected Symbolism completely and entered his colourist, Kirghizian period—and it was then that the influence of Gauguin, whose retrospective exhibition he had seen in Paris in 1906, made itself felt; the same was true of Sar'yan who initiated the so-called Russian Gauguinism only after 1908. In this respect it must be emphasized that French Impressionism and Post-impressionism played only a very minor role in the formation and development of the "Blue Rose" art, i.e., of its Symbolist phase, from 1904 to 1907. It was only after 1907 with the advent of Neo-primitivism that Russian artists paid attention to French models, but even then the central members of the former "Blue Rose" group never joined forces with the conscious imitators of Paris trends, i.e., the "Paris wing" of the "Knave of Diamonds"—Fal'k, Konchalovsky, Kuprin; Mashkov and Rozhdestvensky.

By the mid-1900s several cultural salons and clubs had been established in Moscow which were frequented both by art patrons and by artists and writers. Chief among them were the "Literary and Artistic Circle" (called familiarly, the "Circle") and the "Society of Free Aesthetics" (called familiarly, the "Aesthetics"). These two clubs were the most important from the point of view of the "Blue Rose" and avant-garde art, although several similar societies, both formal and informal, existed
simultaneously. In this respect mention should be made of V. E. Shmarovin's "Wednesdays" held regularly from 1886 until 1924 and of N. D. Teleshov's "Wednesdays" of the 1890s and 1900s. Yet while their meetings were, in principle, open to all artists and writers, a certain section of the intellectual community was favoured, i.e. established artists and literati such as Levitan, Repin, Chekhov and Gor'ky. With the rise of a new generation of artists, the need was felt for a more progressive, more tolerant cultural meeting-place and this need was filled by the foundation of the "Circle" and the "Aesthetics." Both these societies had direct relevance to the "Blue Rose" painters, especially the "Aesthetics," for they acted as platforms for discussing artistic ideas, for exhibiting pictures and for meeting representatives of the Capitalist and intellectual hierarchies. However, the importance of these societies was not limited to their relevance to the "Blue Rose" artists alone, since both existed until the Great War (1916 and 1917 respectively) and therefore witnessed and encouraged the rise of Neo-primitivism and Cubo-futurism.

The "Circle" was founded in 1899 by members of a former club called the "Artistic Circle" ("Artisticheskii kruzhok") which had been a meeting-place primarily for actors and musicians. The new "Circle" quickly became
a focal point of Moscow's cultural life and its premises in the Vostryanovsky House on the Bol'shaya Dmitrovka began to draw representatives of all art media. Its library, restaurant and billiard-hall were among its main attractions but most popular were the Tuesday discussions devoted to questions of art and literature. In the early 1900s these "Tuesdays" came to be conducted by Bal'mont, Bryusov and V. Ivanov and took the form of papers delivered by members followed by discussions between speaker and audience. Many representatives of the Scorpion and Gryphon publishing-houses and of the Golden Fleece took part and colleagues from St. Petersburg such as Gippius and Merezhkovsky were invited to attend. In this way a wide arena was provided for the communication of ideas between writers, painters and musicians, and it is significant, therefore, that Bal'mont's Three Dawns should have been produced at the "Circle" with décor by Feofilaktov and Sapunov in 1906. The "Tuesdays" were not comfortable meetings of a conservative intelligentsia, but were scenes of intense, often fierce, arguments between rival factions and anticipated the often violent disputes of the leftists after 1908; indeed, the "Circle" sponsored some of the later, Futurist meetings in the Polytechnical and Historical Museums when such figures as the Burliuks, Khlebnikov and Mayakovsky clashed ideologically and physically with their audiences.
While the "Circle" pursued an eclectic cultural policy, the "Aesthetics" was interested in little outside the confines of Symbolism and Decadence. Founded in 1907 and accommodated in the same building as the "Circle," the "Aesthetics" was much closer to the spirit of the "Blue Rose" artists, and under the leadership of Bely and Bryusov did much to propagate painterly Symbolism. With the decline of Symbolism around 1909 the intellectual prestige of the "Aesthetics" waned and the several Moscow Maecenes amongst its members contributed further to its loss of vigour by "raising their voices." Nevertheless, the "Aesthetics" retained some vestiges of its progressive, intellectual repute even after 1910, indicative of which was Bryusov's organization of a reception there in honour of Matisse in October, 1911. Moscow art patrons such as the Girshmana, Ostroukhov and Troyanovsky were key members of the "Aesthetics" throughout its existence and donated funds to subsidize its lectures and exhibitions. The intellectual membership was dominated by painters and musicians and writers were disproportionately few—mainly supporters of the Scales ("vesovtsy"): painters included all the members of the "Blue Rose" and several extraneous figures such as V. V. Perepleotchikov (1863-1918) and Serov, musicians including K. N. Igumnov, L. L. Sabaneev, Skryabin and Vasilenko.
As in the "Circle" a continuous cross-fertilization of cultural ideas took place in the "Aesthetics" especially between writers and painters; it is significant therefore that the only recorded description of the "Blue Rose" group is in Bely's account of activities at the "Aesthetics":

The "Aesthetics" was coloured by the "Blue Rose" . . . the "Blue Rose" artists were very friendly with the Scales and returning from Paris I gave a lecture to them; Pavel Kuznetsov affectedly presented me with a bouquet of flowers38 . . . Kuznetsov was vivacious and clever. . . . I remember him dressed in a yellow, checked coat with something wound round his waist; . . . Drittenpreis was cheerful and kind, youthful and tall: in spectacles, looked like a romantic . . . And everywhere flickered the rather ridiculous, sun-burnt artist Arapov, looking like a thick-lipped negro; like the moon, a melancholic through and through stood the pale, silent Sapunov a little drowsy and bent as if he were broken. . . . And the pale, black-bearded Greeks, the Miliotis, used to come here: the talented brother, Nikolai, and the untalented, evil intriguer, Vasili, our enemy. . . . I remember Sar'yan who, his black moustaches drooping, would walk about gloomily and absent mindedly. . . .

The close contact between artists and literati within the "Aesthetics" resulted in a variety of projects: Sudeikin, for example, became especially friendly with Bely and Bryusov and apart from making spontaneous illustrations to their new verse declaimed there, worked on the idea of a puppet theatre with texts by Bely and décor by himself;40 in addition, carpets designed by Sudeikin were exhibited in the rooms of the "Aesthetics"
in 1907 and his works were sought after by the wealthier members such as the Girshmans, Troyanovsky and E. I. Loseva. Even after the "Blue Rose" group disintegrated, the literary members of the "Aesthetics" retained a deep interest in the development of Russian art, a fact which prompted Bryusov to sanction the notorious one man show of Goncharova in 1909—which "dared to transgress the limit of decency"—and the Larionov exhibition there of 1912.

The period from the beginning of 1905 to the beginning of 1907 was a crucial one in the evolution of the "Blue Rose" art. The material and spiritual support which the "Blue Rose" artists received from art journals, patrons and cultural clubs during this time contributed directly both to the crystallization of their Symbolist world view and to the wider appreciation of their art: both factors became evident at their first and last titled exhibition in March, 1907.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V


5. The explosion did considerable damage. See: K., "Moskovskaya khronika" in Zolotoe runo, 1906, No. 4, pp. 94-95.


10. R.: "Zolotomu runu" in Vesy, 1907, No. 6, p. 75.

11. Rerikh's illustrations are in Vesy, 1905, No. 8; Yuon's drawings are in Vesy, 1908, No. 10 and 1909, No. 3.

12. For example, Larionov's "Restaurant on the Seashore" was reproduced in colour in 1909, No. 8; Yakulov's "At the Races" in 1908, No. 6.


17. A book of his verse appeared in 1907 under the pseudonym of N. Shinsky.


19. Ibid., p. 41. The "Black Swan" was begun in about 1907 and finished in 1909 to a design by V. D. Adamovich; amongst the villa's attractions was a private zoo in the garden, designed by V. Mayat. The villa was destroyed by fire in 1914. In 1912 Ryabushinsky employed L. and V. Vesnin to redesign the interior, but their projects were not realized. The outside of the building was in the style of Neo-classicism typical of villas at the end of the 1900s and the interior relied heavily on Art Nouveau. There are reproductions of the outside and inside in Ezhegodnik Moskovskogo arkhitektturnogo obshchestva, M., 1910-1911, vyp. II; from these one can see that several of Kuznetsov's pictures were hanging in one of the main rooms including three panneaux and the pictures, "Head of a Woman," the "Bride," "Female Study" and one of the "Fountain" series.

20. V. Lobanov, Kanuny, p. 179.

21. For references to these resignations see: A. Bely, Mezhdu dvakh revolyutii, L., 1934, pp. 245-248; G. Chulkov, Gody stranstvi, M., 1930, p. 182; "Iz zhizni" in Pereval, 1907, No. 5; letter from Arapov and Drittenpreis in Ves', 1908, No. 2.

22. "Iz zhizni" in Pereval, 1906, No. I.

23. A. Bely, Nachalo veka, p. 315.


28. Ryabushinsky offered a sum of money as a prize, but it was not awarded because submissions were considered inadequate.


30. A. Bely, Mezhdu dvukh revolyutsii, pp. 224-225.

31. Ibid., p. 225.

32-33. Details concerning the Morozov family are given by P. Buryshkin, Moskva kupecheskaya, pp. 112-125; concerning the Shchukin family, pp. 138-143.


35. For further details see: E. Kiseleva, Sredy moskovskikh khudozhnikov, L., 1967.

36. For further details see: M. Teleshov, Zapiski pisatelya, M., 1966.

37. A. Bely, Mezhdu dvukh revolyutsii, p. 219.

38. It is interesting to record that Chekhonin, Kuznetsov, Matveev and Utkin presented Isadora Duncan with a bouquet after one of her performances; see: "Zametki" in Iskusstvo, 1905, No. 2.


40. Ibid., pp. 235-236.

Chapter VI

This exhibition is very distinctive . . . in that it reflects absolutely that strange, enigmatic mood which at present can be perceived in our society. (A. Skalon, 1907)

By the beginning of 1907 the young generation of Moscow artists led by Kuznetsov was recognized as the new avant-garde of Russian art. Their works and ideas had been broadcast widely through art exhibitions and through the Symbolist Press and the public's wish for silence after the tensions of 1905 was consentient to their artistic strivings. Forewarned, the art world was prepared for the large-scale exhibition which the "Blue Rose" artists arranged in March, 1907.

The project of a group exhibition in Moscow had been discussed ever since the small provincial show of 1904 and the final decision was encouraged undoubtedly by the Muscovites' success at the "World of Art" exhibition in March, 1906. The "Blue Rose" exhibition was preceded by a particularly busy winter season which saw not only the regular "Union of Russian Artists'" showing (December, 1906-January, 1907) which, at its Moscow session, included D. and L. Burliuk, Krymov, Larionov, Malevich and N. Milioti, but also a large one-man show of Nesterov.
and a posthumous exhibition of Borisov-Musatov (both in February). The "Blue Rose" exhibition itself was paralleled by the important exhibitions of the "Moscow Association of Artists," the "Independents" and the "St. Petersburg Society of Artists," all of which opened in March.

As a presentation of painterly Symbolism, the "Blue Rose" exhibition arrived late since the greatest Symbolist achievements of the "Blue Rose" artists had already been made between 1904 and 1906, and by the spring of 1907 members were turning away from Symbolism as an artistic credo: by then they were moving either towards an emergent Neo-primitivism (Krymov, Sudeikin) or towards a morbid concern with eroticism and death (Feofilaktov, Kuznetsov).

Therefore, the "Blue Rose" exhibition acted very much as a retrospective show, as the culmination of a development, the moreso since the majority of the exhibits dated from 1905 and 1906. By February, 1907 an exhibition was definitely scheduled and was advertised in the Press without a name; it was proposed that the following would take part: Arapov, Bromirsky, Denisov, Drittenpreis, Feofilaktov, Knabe, Kuznestov, Matveev, N. and V. Milioti, Ryabushinsky, Sapunov, Sar'yan, Sudeikin and Utkin—and with the exception of Denisov and the addition of Fonvizin this corresponded with the catalogue list. On 18th March the exhibition opened under the title, "Blue Rose," the
first time that the name was used. The ideological organizer of the exhibition was Kuznestov and the financial provider was Ryabushinsky without whose support the exhibition would not have materialized. Thanks to Ryabushinsky, no effort was spared to launch the event as luxuriously as possible: the spacious accommodation was decorated in the spirit which best suited the pictures wide publicity was given in the leading journals and newspapers and parties were thrown on a Bohemian scale. But the main advantage which Ryabushinsky's generosity afforded was that the exhibition could be designed and realized with a Diaghilevan taste and lavishness which was still a novelty to the Moscow art world. This was one of the main reasons for the success of the "Blue Rose" exhibition.

It has been suggested by certain critics that Larionov was the main organizational force behind the "Blue Rose" group and their exhibition, and that on his return from Paris, where he had gone at Diaghilev's invitation in 1906, he gathered together a circle of Moscow Symbolist painters. This, of course, was not the case, for while Larionov was a fellow student of the "Blue Rose" members and even sympathized with their cause, their basic principles of Symbolism were foreign to him. He was, like Goncharova, influenced by Borisov-Musatov
early in his career and works such as the "Garden" series (1904-1905) and "Rain" (1904) betrayed the master's "decorative pleinairisme," but by the end of 1905 Larionov had broken with the Borisov-Musatov tradition and had embarked on a path which was to lead him to Neo-primitivism by the end of 1907. In any case, the Moscow group of Symbolists needed no founding for it had been a cohesive, artistic unit since 1904 when their first exhibition, the "Crimson Rose," had taken place—to which, significantly, Larionov had not been invited to contribute. Larionov was, all along, a peripheral, rather than a central member of the Moscow Symbolist movement and, indeed, both his artistic and emotional temperaments made it difficult for him to be a member of a collective: Larionov was too individualistic, too intolerant of competition to be a member of a group unless he was its leader—and that is, in part, why he and Goncharova rejected the "Knave of Diamonds" soon after its initiation and why the organization of the "Donkey's Tail" and "Target" groups was so fragile. Larionov and Goncharova gave their spiritual support to the "Blue Rose" artists and played a certain role in the mechanics of the exhibition, but it is certain that neither of them took part; it has been stated that Exter and Yakulov also participated, but neither the catalogue, nor the Press reviews justify this
view. However, Larionov, Goncharova and Yakulov were all present at the concurrent exhibition of the "Moscow Association of Artists," an important milestone in the evolution of the Russian avant-garde movement, and evidently this has led to confusion among critics both in Russia and in the West.

The origin of the exhibition's name, the "Blue Rose," is obscure. It has been asserted that Bryusov, an avid supporter of the Symbolist cause in painting, suggested the words "Blue Rose" as a title; it has been asserted, in turn, that Bryusov conceived the idea after seeing a blue rose made of paper: paper flowers were used extensively not only by the public for decorative purposes, but also by artists as still life models and it has been recorded, for example, that Sapunov made his own flowers and painted them, as did several of the "Knave of Diamonds" artists (furthermore, it will be recalled that part of his décor for "Hedda Gabler" was black rhododendrons). Whether or not Bryusov was directly responsible for the term the choice of words was in keeping with the Zeitgeist of Symbolism and must have engendered a series of associations consistent with the aspirations of the young Moscow artists. Not only did the title recall directly the "Crimson Rose" exhibition, the starting-point of the group's career, but it was reminiscent also of a basic concept of Symbolist philosophy: for the Symbolists
"blue" ("goluboi") was the description of the ulterior world, of the higher, spiritual reality and was a key word of their vocabulary. For example, Bely's volume of verse entitled Gold in Azure and Blok's poems to the "Beautiful Lady" (who in the early stages was associated with blue) advanced symbols often of blue, which signified another reality attainable only by Symbolist aesthetics. It is in the sphere of literature, rather than in that of painting that one must seek a possible derivation—and it should be stated immediately that any connection between the name "Blue Rose" and the so-called "Blue" period of Cézanne or Picasso would be fortuitous. For a broader derivation one is obliged to refer to certain developments in the West: for the French Symbolists, especially for Verlaine, "l'azure" had denoted an aetherial world of spiritual harmony, and perhaps the most famous image associated with an unearthly blue was Maeterlinck's L'Oiseau Bleu written in 1906. The importance of Maeterlinck's title for the Russian Symbolists was later discussed by Blok who objected to the translation "Sinyaya ptichka" and proposed "Golubaya ptichka" instead:

... behind Maeterlinck's fairy-tale play there lies a long literary tradition which extends from folk tales through their literary refraction in the French story-teller, Perrault, on the one hand, and through a whole period of German Romanticism on the other... Let us be true to the word "goluboi" (light blue) and replace the word "sinii" (dark blue)
with it both in the title and in the text of the play; because the flower is light blue, the sky is light blue, the moonlight is light blue, the magic kingdom is light blue (or azure as with Turgenev) and the haze which enwraps all of Maeterlinck's fairy-tale and any fairy-tale which speaks of the unattainable is light blue and not dark blue. 9

The "light blue flower" was, of course, a direct reference to "Die blaue Blume" of Novalis, an author whom Blok mentioned in the same context. The influence of Novalis on the French and Russian Symbolists was an accepted fact and Blok and Ellis were quick to point out the probable debt of Maeterlinck to Novalis, although some critics doubted this. 10 The direct relevance of L'Oiseau Bleu to the formation of the "Blue Rose" group was highly improbable, but in the case of Novalis a definite association can be traced. If we examine the initial appearance of the phenomenon of the blue flower in Novalis' novel, Heinrich von Osterdingen, we find striking parallels between his narrative imagery and the motifs of certain "Blue Rose" pictures:

... As he entered the grotto he was dazzled by a shaft of light, bright as gold, which sprang up like a fountain, almost touching the high, vaulted roof and showering down innumerable sparks into a great marble basin. ... The walls of the grotto were clothed in light, which diffused a pale-blue lustre ... At a little distance rose hazy blue cliffs, through whose sides shone gleaming veins of gold. All around him was a soft, mellow light, and the skies above were blue and cloudless. What most attracted him was a lovely blue flower growing at the edge of the well ... As he rose to examine it more closely, it seemed to move and change; ... the petals slowly opened, and he saw a lovely, tender face. 11
The subjects of a grotto, basin and fountain together with the colour scheme of blue and gold (but primarily blue) were key elements of "Blue Rose" pictures such as Kuznetsov's "Blue Fountain" and "Morning" or Fefilaktov's "Grotto." Although in the case of Kuznetsov, the image of the fountain was derived directly from the presence of fountains in Saratov and the overall concern with water could be traced to Borisov-Musatov, a distinct similarity remains between the novel and the paintings; furthermore, the symbol of the blue flower, which in the novel takes on erotic or, at least feminine associations, finds a clear parallel in the blue-grey babies and maternal figures which haunt Kuznetsov's, Sudeikin's and some of Utkin's "Blue Rose" pictures. With so many nuances the title, "Blue Rose." was particularly appropriate to the exhibition of 1907: in addition, a blue rose was then non-existent and this lent the whole conception a further dimension of spirituality.

The colours blue and grey figured prominently in the colour schemes of the Moscow group even in the early years, both in their pictures and in their interior decorations. The "faded, misty tones"\textsuperscript{12} of Sapunov, Sar'yan and Sudeikin at the "Crimson Rose" exhibition of 1904 had been matched by a "background cloth of grey"\textsuperscript{13} and Sapunov's and Sudeikin's early theatre décors were often of pale tones, particularly of blue and grey.
Similarly, the interior decoration of the "Aesthetics" establishment was of blue and grey, a fact which would suggest that "Blue Rose" artists designed it:

You come in on to a staircase covered in blue-grey carpet, you turn into three or four rooms given over to us for conferences; the same blue-grey walls; the carpets beneath your feet, the sofas, the arm-chairs and the little tables are of the same colours: blue-grey and blue-green; the light is dull.14

This "dull light" was noticeable at all those exhibitions to which the "Blue Rose" artists contributed in any large number before 1907: apart from the "Crimson Rose," the 1905 exhibition of the "Moscow Association of Artists" (February) and that of the "World of Art" (March) and the "Salon d'automne" in 1906 shared an atmosphere of blueness and aetheriality which was to be the hallmark of the "Blue Rose" exhibition itself. Makovsky's description of the Association exhibition, Tarovaty's review of the "World of Art" and even Stasov's tirade (quoted in Chapter IV) all referred to the subdued colour scheme and thematic obscurity of the Symbolists' pictures, their "painting of the soul."

At the "Salon d'automne," too, the pale tones of canvases by Arapov, Denisov, Kuznetsov, Sudeikin and Utkin, all present in the same hall of the exhibition and counterpoised by the floor covering of blue cloth, evoked the same mood which would prevail at the "Blue Rose" exhibition itself.

The "Blue Rose" exhibition was opened on 18th March and lasted until 29th April. Its accommodation was in the
building of the Kuznestov firm (no relation of the painter) on Myasnitskaya Street in the centre of Moscow and not far from the Greek and Fillipov cafés, where its organization had been formulated. Visitors to the exhibition were impressed immediately by the careful design and arrangement of the whole presentation: the walls of the room were covered in dark grey material and the floor was carpeted throughout so that noise was reduced to a muffled hush; the scent of hyacinths, lilies and daffodils and the strains of a quartet wafted through the rooms as spectators gazed with misgivings at the strange pictures; the artists themselves were present, well-dressed and with asters in their button holes— an innovation which anticipated the custom of avant-garde artists after 1907 to defend their painterly ideology against the often hostile visiting public.

The exhibition comprised over a hundred works submitted by sixteen artists (see Appendix III): Arapov, Bromirsky (painter and sculptor), Drittenpreis, Feofilaktov, Fonvizen, Knabe, Krymov, Kuznetsov, Matveev (sculptor), N. Milioti, V. Milioti, Ryabushinsky, Sapunov, Sar'yan, Sudeikin and Utkin. Although a few sculptures were included, the "Blue Rose" was first and foremost an exhibition of easel painting which presented essays in painterly problems and resolutions. The "Blue Rose"
artists attempted to display the effect which the painterly and psychological aspect of a work could produce: they were interested, therefore, in the qualities of a canvas, particularly its colour combinations, which they employed to evoke mood and to allude to a theme, rather than to represent it figuratively. In this they were opposed to the "World of Art" painters for whom the emotional content of a work of art was subordinate to technical finesse. On the other hand, the "Blue Rose" artists' concern with the evocation of mood by colour, mass and texture led to their neglect of technique, evident especially in their graphic works (e.g. Feofilaktov and Sudeikin). At the same time they opened the way to formal experimentation, however timid their attempts: their delicate juxtaposition of colours and flexible spatial resolutions anticipated the audacious innovations of the post-1907 groups.

The aetherial, fragile atmosphere of the exhibition was in distinct opposition to the harsh reminders of 1905 outside: the traces of bullets on walls, the burnt out shell of Schmidt's factory, the remains of barricades. Makovsky's review of the exhibition made this especially clear:

The "Blue Rose" is a beautiful exhibition, a chapel. For the very few. Light. Quiet. And the pictures are like prayers. When you enter this small chapel, you feel at once that the "Blue Rose" is not only a
hothouse flower, but also a spring flower of mystical love. They have heralded that primitivism to which modern art had come in its search for a renaissance at its very sources, in creation spontaneous and unweakened by the weight of historical experience. Their effect is not outward, physical, but psychological. Narrative is absent, precision of imagery is rejected.

The "Blue Rose" artists had tried to replace the world of fact by a world of symbols—and thematically, had reached an impasse. Although wrong in his conclusions, Makovsky was correct to apply the term "dematerialization" to the works of the "Blue Rose" artists and to indicate that their victory of the "spirit over the flesh" was but the precursor of the disintegration of their art into "fantastic smokes." And although the "Blue Rose" artists never issued a manifesto or any collective ideological statement, their undoubted theoretical aim was indeed to record and, in turn, to incite subjective experience, implemented by the substitution of analytical observation by individualistic interpretation. The flight from reality and the transmission of a dream world by an unprecedented approach to the surface of the canvas was part of the sincere reaction by the "Blue Rose" artists towards the artistic output of other movements, a position voiced by Arapov:

Without the slightest doubt or hesitation I was profoundly and sincerely convinced that to paint in the way in which the majority of my contemporaries painted—members of the "Union of Russian Artists"—
was to reiterate something which had been discovered earlier on and which had been beautifully realized in its own time. My friends and I didn't want to do this. Hence our search! Perhaps we did the wrong thing and not in the way we should have done, but we were sincere. We wanted to renew art, to make it more expressive, powerful, essential, and we were sometimes saddened that many people did not understand what we were doing. . . .

The attempt of the "Blue Rose" artists to "renew art" was, perhaps, their greatest contribution to the evolution of Russian art—for despite the atmosphere of decay in which they lived, the Symbolist awareness that they were "ripe for the grave," they acted as a bridge between the exhausted canons of representational art and the first movements towards abstract art.

It might be argued that the main weakness of the "Blue Rose" artists was, in fact, their main virtue: i.e. their comparatively poor technical mastery. Their liberation of technique from the severe demands of St. Petersburg Neo-classicism and from the "World of Art" traditions, and hence their distortion of form, deliberate or not, injected Russian painting with that formal flexibility, which, in turn, became the hallmark of the avant-garde movements. The "Blue Rose" painters, particularly Krymov, Kuznetsov, Sudeikin and Utkin, "vulgarized" visual reality by neglecting precise delineation and linear perspective. Because of this they were considered bad technicians (and some, indeed, were) and critics condemned them for this: "... there were very negative
aspects ... in the militant innovations of the Muscovites: a disregard of form, of technique, a disbelief in the continuity of artistic methods. ... 21 Yet it was this very elasticity which allowed them to be compared to musicians 22 and which aligned them with the musical painter, Chiurlionis. In turn it was this essential feeling for pictorial movement, so alien to the "World of Art's" "cult of frozen beauty," this ability to reverberate, as it were, within and beyond a confined space, which caused the works of the "Blue Rose" artists to be compared to tapestries and frescoes 23: they had, in fact, been nurtured on a tradition of gobelin and fresco work and most of them were accustomed to problems of space and large-scale decorativism, rather than to the demands of the miniature or the silhouette. This was a distinctive feature which invited critical comments: "They aspire towards decorative painting: instead of giving a picture depth, they present surfaces of wall decorations similar to carpets or fabrics." 24

Kužnetsov, leader of the group, was representative of the general directions pursued by the "Blue Rose" artists and his works at the exhibition illustrated their Symbolist policy. He contributed nine works, mostly tempera, and concerned with mystical love: "White Fountain" (1905) (the same as "White Cascade" at the Paris
Salon), "Fading" (1904, also at the "Crimson Rose") (Figure 31), "Fading Sun" (1905 (?)) (Figure 32), "Birth" (1906, pastel), "Morning" (1905) "Acacia Flower" (1906 (?)), "Illuminated Woman" (1906 (?)), "Love" (1905 (?)) and "Birth of the Devil" (1906, charcoal drawing). The pictures shared a set of motifs—fountains, arches, female heads, embryos, wispy foliage—and a uniform colour scheme of blue, grey and green. The general effect conveyed by Kuznetsov's exhibits was a disturbing one for here were representations not of Versailles, naturalist landscapes, sentimental interiors or social grievances, but of things oblique and indefinable which the titles failed to clarify: "White Fountain," for example, depicted four female heads against a Borisov-Musatovian background of foliage and no fountain was visible; "Love," ostensibly, had little to do with love—three female heads were presented against a background of foliage and arches while in the foreground lurked a mysterious shape with a hand on it; "Morning" depicted seven figures, women and children, near a fountain with the outline of a gazebo visible in the background. Such pictures have been described as a eulogy of maternal love, and while they might produce the impression of spirituality and lightness from the point of view of colour, the figures (interpreted by one critic as "... life of the soul
. . . in all its transformations on the road to death. . . ." 26 which inhabit the mists of opaque foliage bear masks of gloom and despair: as one observer remarked: " . . . in front of this world of Kuznetsov you were enveloped by a feeling of alarm and uneasiness." 27 The sensation that a tragedy was imminent, that something was terribly wrong, was conveyed most forcefully by the vulgarization of the figures, particularly by the introduction of embryonic features: the last years of Kuznetsov's Symbolism, 1906-1907, came to be referred to as the "period of unborn babies" 28 as a result of the spiritual frustration which he experienced after his disillusionment in Symbolism as a viable creative and philosophical force. These "unborn babies" haunted the canvases of Kuznetsov as conscious or unconscious projections both of his own despair and of the frustrated hopes of his age. The motif itself, however, was not a casual invention, but the extension of the artist's own personal experiences: as early as 1904 Kuznetsov had believed that the incarnation of the world's higher truths was a pregnant woman, and it has been recorded 29 that he lived for a while in a maternity home, painting from nature. He soon doubted such a doctrine and his pessimism was reflected in these pictures with their " . . . foetuses, big-heads, blue, dawn-like and melting on the edge of
reservoirs. . . ."30 It was these visions which shocked
the public and the critics—it will be remembered that
workmen at the "Salon d'automne" in 1906 refused to hang
them and Stasov at the "World of Art" show of 1906 had
referred to the "ghosts in long garments" of Kuznetsov's
pictures. For Muratov, Kuznetsov's embryos were the
product of an idée fixe, a superfluous element which
hindered the artist's rightful development along the path
of decorativism.31 Makovsky, however, was one of the few
critics not to condemn Kuznetsov's motif and it was in-
dicative of his perception of the symbolic value in these
morbid images that he praised them; writing of "Birth of
the Devil" he exclaimed: "This delirious declaration
excites with its morbid absorption in the mysticism of
'sin,' in the very bowels of voluptuous terror . . .
bodies of children emerge from the pregnant gloom—seductive
werewolves of the flesh. . . ."32 During the years immedi-
ately after, the despair of Kuznetsov's world-view in-
tensified which was reflected in his pictures, but the
immediacy and artistic sincerity of his pre-1907 works
were lost as his style became stylization. One of the
lasting values of Kuznetsov's "Blue Rose" pictures is
their movement, their restlessness, expressed by the
curves of fountains, foliage, garments and by the long,
un-Impressionist brushstrokes; the continuum is assisted
by the lack of delineation and by the absence of colour
contrasts, i.e. the eye is forced to travel continuously without the visual break which a sharply defined object or an unexpected piece of colour afford. By 1908 this effect had already been partly lost as Kuznetsov assimilated the Neo-primitivist devices of accentuation and crude contrast.

At the "Blue Rose" exhibition Kuznetsov emerged as the undoubted leader of a whole group and many of his colleagues were censured (only sometimes justifiably) as being mere imitators. In certain cases, notably of Sudeikin and Utkin, the influence of Kuznetsov was very marked and obviously prompted Grabar' to wonder whether the "... bluish-pearl, faded, somnolent, colours of Bromirsky, Sar'yan, Sudeikin and Utkin are not the same well-known colour scale of Kuznetsov." Nevertheless, there were essential differences between individual artists even though at this stage they were still members of a distinct group: Krymov's imminent concern with Neo-primitivism, Sapunov's interest in colour, Sar'yan's rejection of neutral colours and mysticism in the immediate future and Sudeikin's discovery of vivid reds and yellows later in 1907 were changes anticipated in greater or lesser degree at the "Blue Rose" exhibition.

After Kuznetsov the most talented of the "Blue Rose" artists was Sapunov and his contributions to the exhibition emphasized his originality. Apart from décor studies for
Blok's "Balaganchik" he was represented by five pictures mostly oils: "Ballet," "Masquerade" (Figure 33), "Minuet," "Roses" and "Golden Evening." All dating from 1906 they were cast in the same idiom as the studies, i.e. they were theatricalized scenes of action on a "stage" with a corresponding symmetrical division of space and arrangement of figures. Although the effect of Sapunov's work was in keeping with the general atmosphere of silence and fantasy owing to his use of muted colours and lack of delineation, it was evident that his derivation was not from Kuznetsov or, in turn, from Borisov-Musatov, but, rather, from the "World of Art" movement with its stylistic and thematic attention to the theatre and to a Watteau-esque 18th century: Sapunov's "Masquerade," for example, depicts a crowd of masked figures dressed in 18th century costume, moving, as it were, on an open-air stage; the overall composition is a delicate and subtle combination of blue and green deliberately blurred to produce an intermingling of figures, background foliage and fountain centre-piece; at the same time focal-points within the colour complex are provided by the small areas of red, pink and yellow. Muratov was the only critic to associate Sapunov with the "World of Art" movement (although he did not refer specifically to this group) by praising Sapunov's mastery of linear rhythm and
pictorial arrangement, \(^{34}\) elements peculiar to the work of Bakst, Lanceray and Somov. In addition, Muratov was particularly struck by Sapunov's approach to colour and considered "Roses" to be the most successful work at the exhibition with its "harmony of dull pink and pale yellow colours arranged with astonishing taste."\(^{35}\) Sapunov's ability to concentrate pictorial forces within a confined area and his distinct tendency towards colourism distinguished him from many of his colleagues whose main occupation was the transference of panneau and fresco devices to easel painting; the often resultant unwieldiness and bad pictorial integration in such cases were criticisms which could scarcely be levelled at Sapunov.

Sudeikin's contribution to the exhibition comprised eleven works, most of them panneaux which had been shown at previous exhibitions. The titles were: "Defiles" (1906), "Fresco Design-Venice" (1906), "Gondolas" (1906), "Plafond Design-Gathering Flowers" (1905), "Panneau-Birds" (1905), "Capriccio" (1906), "L'Intérieur" (1906), "Swing" (1905), "Les Esthétiques" (1906), an untitled design (1906 (?) ) and an untitled miniature (1906 (?) ). His medium was oil except for "Defiles" (tempera) and "Gondolas" (pastel) but his overall colour scale approached that of Kuznetsov: because of his extensive use of grey and blue his works were described as "pale
twilights, although the presence of pink and red, albeit subdued, indicated the imminent divergence between him and Kuznetsov. In his treatment of imagery Sudeikin was close to Kuznetsov, although despite the large heads and exaggerated eyes his figures did not convey the intense despair which haunted the canvases of Kuznetsov. Other motifs such as the gazebos and delicate foliage also pointed to Kuznetsov's and, in turn, Borisov-Musatov's influence, while Sudeikin's very choice of genre--the panneau and plafond--derived directly from the Saratov tradition of the gobelin and fresco. As his "Blue Rose" pictures indicated, Sudeikin was shortly to turn to a much more audacious colour scheme which, consequently, was to dictate a change in genre: this Grabar' forecast in criticizing Sudeikin's use of the panneau and in urging him to concentrate on miniatures.

Inasmuch as Sudeikin's contribution was a retrospective showing--the pictures all antedating 1907--Sudeikin's newest attainments were not represented; for example, the canvas, "Columbine," not at the exhibition but approximately of the same period, displayed a distinct move from the large surfaces of "blue mist" to the intimacy of "carpet-like floridity" with its liberal use of red, orange and yellow; this trend, together with a more precise approach to pictorial construction, was
very evident at the "Wreath" exhibition later in the year (see Chapter VII). The emergence of such innovations, apparent in the large "Blue Rose" works, was seen as a weakness in this context: particularly interesting was the critics' reaction to Sudeikin's propensity to structuralization, the "coldness of his 'geometricity' of construction," which was out of place in the aetherial content of his large canvases. Sudeikin's own dissatisfaction with his pre-1907 work was marked by his destruction of most of his "Blue Rose" pictures and hence, the art historian has little evidence on which to found a contemporary assessment—apart from the very occasional piece in private collections, a limited number of mediocre reproductions and reviews of the exhibition itself. All in all, such meagre sources scarcely do justice to the artist's undoubted ability, and place him merely as an imitator of Kuznetsov: Makovsky's impressions of Sudeikin's work, for example, do not distinguish the painter from his colleagues and might equally well have been gained from Kuznetsov's: "These are allusions, trembling silhouettes, blue diffusions in which glimmer spectral images ready to disappear at the first loud exclamation." The similarity between Kuznetsov's, Sudeikin's and other artists' "Blue Rose" work was not necessarily a token of artistic insolvency or of blind imitation of Kuznetsov,
but an "expression of a communal search," a collective act of faith which made them the last cohesive school of Symbolist painting in Europe.

Like Sudeikin's contribution, Sar'yan's exhibits were representative of his pre-1907 activity and not of his most recent discoveries, although one work, "By the Pomegranate Tree" (1907) (Figure 34) did predict his Gauguinist period. As the titles indicated he was concerned predominantly with themes of dream and mystery: "Charms of the Moon" (1906), the "Serpent's Lover" (1906), "Day's Brightness" (1906), "Lake of Fairies" (1906) (Figure 35), the "Mare" (1905), "Sacred Grove" (1905), "Oasis - the Lovers" (1905) (Figure 36), "On Flat Roofs" (1906 (?)), "Day's Gladness" (1906 (?)), "Charms of the Sun" (1906), "Man With Gazelles" (1906), "Portrait" (1905), "By the Pomegranate Tree" (1907), "Hot Evening" (1906) and "Morning in the Green Garden" (1906 (?)). As with Kuznetsov Sar'yan's medium was tempera except for two oils - the "Mare," "Portrait" - and two water colours - "Sacred Grove" and "Oasis." In general his motifs were essentially derived from his Eastern environment, Armenia, although his treatment of them was specifically Symbolist, i.e. his colours were subdued, his approach to form indistinctive and his interpretation of reality subjective. Despite these elements, Sar'yan's divergence was evident
in his overall colour scheme which included frequent areas of light brown, yellow and orange, any potential effect of brilliance being softened by the matt qualities of tempera. In addition, a tendency towards coarse delineation of forms rather than a general interfusion of them—as in the case of Kuznetsov or Sapunov—was perceptible. Sar'yan was soon to develop these features as he came to experience the influence of Neo-primitivism with its emphasis on formal vulgarity. The duality of Sar'yan's "Blue Rose" work—the tendency towards mysticism and the tendency towards Neo-primitivism—was partly the result of the artist's conscious attempt to synthesize the two elements.

While studying the nature and life of the East at that time, I gave a lot of thought as to how to express my impressions. The latter, because of the sharpness of my new perception, were close to the past of my childhood. Like a child I began to synthesize my impressions without breaking contact with nature, but with a distinct bent towards the fantastic and the fairy-tale... In love with the beauty of the East, I aspired towards colourful, florid painting, towards a profound expression of colour, light and form.43

By the end of 1907, as the "Wreath" exhibition indicated, Sar'yan had already gone far in his search for colour and intensity of light and form—mainly thanks to his acquaintance with modern French art (particularly Gauguin and Matisse) in the Shchukin and Morozov collections; this was further inspired by the subsequent "Golden Fleece"
exhibitions (see Chapters VII and VIII). However, Sar'yan did not completely reject the "Blue Rose" aesthetics until c. 1912, as such canvases as "Hot Day (1908) and "Night Landscape. Egypt" (1911) readily indicate, and even certain works of his Soviet period still maintain that pictorial flexibility and lyricism which was the hallmark of his early endeavours. Like Kuznetsov, but some time before him, Sar'yan turned to the vivid, exotic life of the East as Symbolism degenerated into stagnant spiritualism and morbid eroticism. In this context it is relevant to note that Sar'yan's and Kuznetsov's development towards naturalism (a happier term might be positivism), even towards Socialist Realism, was a result as much of their natural, organic development as of extrinsic, coercive machinery.

Utkin was represented by seventeen works, all of which reflected the general absorption in mysticism and formal elasticity derived from the school of Borisov-Musatov. They had obvious affinities with those of Kuznetsov, who exerted a marked influence on Utkin. Apart from "Spring" which may have been the same title as that exhibited at the "Crimson Rose," all of Utkin's contributions were of 1906 and the dominant medium was tempera: "Mirage," the "Grasses Were Swaying" (two versions), "Dream," "Here He Lives, Loves and Dies," (a trilogy), "Tatar Song," and a cycle called "My Nights"
consisting of "Pale Sleepers," "Triumph in Heaven," "Beneath the Blue Sky," "Branches," "Spring," "Autumn," "Silent and Warm," "Beneath the Sleeping Tent," "Greater Uzen" and two designs for trilogies. Thematically his canvases were obscure but the absence of Kuznetsov's symbolic embryos lent his work a freshness and rural clarity absent in the former's forebodings of tragedy. His technique, too, differed slightly in a more solid, crystallized approach to form which was remindful of the later Sar'yan and Kuznetsov. But it was evident that Utkin lacked the vitality and originality of his confrère, as Makovsky indicated in his critique: "His canvases are promising mirages of presentiments and memories. But the artist is still a long way from convincing art; he must learn and--most important--must not complicate his subjects too much." The complications to which Makovsky alluded were caused, in part, by Utkin's lack of pictorial balance and tendency to include excessive imagery: "Mirage," for example, is an almost geometric complex of symbols—seven stars, a tubular band across the centre, biblical figures in the foreground; "Triumph in Heaven" affords no explanation of its title, but offers a weirdly shaped symbol on the horizon as a key to the secret. Despite the rather shallow quality of Utkin's subjects, his style, at least, was worthy of attention since he, perhaps more than Kuznetsov, developed Borisov-Musatov's colour harmonies and
pictorial arrangements. Utkin's sensitivity to pale greens and blues imparted a lyricism and tenderness to his pictures (often executed in a single colour idiom of either blue or green) which was lacking in the coarser canvases of his colleagues. Indeed, Utkin was little affected by the swing towards Neo-primitivism which the majority of the "Blue Rose" artists experienced sooner or later. Yet however cryptic his pictures may have appeared, their affect was not intended, as the artist later asserted: "I did not invent anything, and everything in my pictures I saw with my own eyes... Even the mirages which I depicted I observed quite clearly, and tried, with all the painterly resources at my disposal, to express them veraciously." It was, perhaps, this very attempt to combine reality with mirage, and not to concentrate on one or the other, which branded his "Blue Rose" work with an awkwardness and insincerity; he did not have that vitality and breadth of vision which, for example, Kuznetsov and Sar'yan possessed, and, for all their defects, Utkin's "Blue Rose" pictures marked the climax of his painting career.

Krymov was represented by only three oils, all of 1906—the "Early Bird," "Approaching Spring," "Spring Evening"—although his stature as an artist deserved more. Thematically, Krymov was rather outside the main
tenets of the "Blue Rose" nucleus, and, as the titles of his exhibits indicated, sought to depict a natural reality rather than the mystical and the symbolical. It was his approach to colour which aligned him with Kuznetssov and Sudeikin for he paid particular attention to the combination and integration of white, silver, pale blue and pale yellow, and these tones gave his paintings a distinctive, "milky" effect. Although the pictorial effect was in keeping with the general colour scale, the reasons which produced it differed from those of his colleagues: Krymoy was interested not in evoking a mood of profound mystery or in seeking an ulterior reality, but in transmitting light in varying contexts (early morning, moonlight, etc.), which earned his pictures the description of "misty." His method of applying paint to canvas also differed in his tiny brushstrokes, an impressionistic device which served to transmit the vibrations of light; the resultant "broken" texture distinguished him technically and was noted by critics and painters alike, D. Burliuk describing it as a "rare, earthy surface (mat, dusty)." Krymoy was first and foremost a landscapist (his first picture was of "water with the moon reflected in it and trees round it") and was interested in the structure of natural phenomena. "Approaching Spring," for example, already pointed to a
shift from pure analysis and transference of light to
delineation and construction of form. Such a trend
towards "rematerialization" was, of course, part of the
general move towards Neo-primitivism with its re-
establishment of form, and in this sense Krymov could
be called a Neo-primitivist as early as 1908. Like his
colleagues, Kuznetsov, Sapunov, Sar'yan and Sudeikin,
Krymov soon turned to a different scale of colours al-
though instead of red and orange he chose shades of green
and brown. Apart from the remarks on his "mistiness"
Krymov was afforded little attention by the critics:
both Grabar' and Makovsky ignored him, while A. Koiran-
sky limited his survey to a pronouncement that Krymov
stood aside from the others by virtue of his being a
"realist"; only Muratov recognized that the distinc-
tive trait of Krymov's work lay in his rejection of mysti-
cism and in his concern with light, with the sun.

Feofilaktov, like Krymov, was represented by a dis-
proportionately low number of works—"Devil," "Dialogue"
and "Mme. X."—all of them drawings (the first two com-
missoned in 1906 by the Golden Fleece and the Scales).
At this time Feofilaktov was predominantly a graphic
artist much indebted, thematically, to Beardsley and the
Simpliccismus group, but technically, Feofilaktov lacked
Beardsley's vitality and intensity of line, a factor which
was not necessarily an artistic defect: Feofilaktov was, like the majority of the "Blue Rose" artists, interested in allusion rather than in direct representation, so that his subjects tended to disappear in a haze of swirling lines and not to assert themselves by an economy of line and spatial balance. The incisiveness of Beardsley or Heine was therefore missing. Despite his reputation as the "Moscow Beardsley" and the numerous commissions from art journals and the Scorpion publishing house, Feofilaktov did not possess the technical ability to be a first-rate graphic artist and in this idiom was merely another of the numerous imitators of Beardsley, Heine or, for that matter, Somov. Feofilaktov was, in fact, a potential oil painter rather than a graphic artist: "I am an inate easel painter and I'm forced to go in for graphic work from necessity, for wages, so that I can drink coffee at the 'Greek'."

But he produced very few paintings before 1907 and it was not until later that they first appeared at exhibitions when Neo-primitivism, with its simplification and vulgarization of form, allowed Feofilaktov the licence to neglect technique deliberately. His contribution to the "Blue Rose" exhibition was ignored by the critics who rightly considered it as derivative and merely pornographic.

Much attention was paid to N. Milioti. He was represented by seven oils all of 1905 or 1906: "Pastorale,"
"Study for a Portrait" (two versions), "Decorative Pannneau," "Noise of the Sea," "Prehistoric Landscape" and "Angel of Sadness" (Figure 37), the last four all being panneaux. In painterly approach Milioti differed from his colleagues, remaining alien to their scale of pale colours and Borisov-Musatovian opacity. Milioti was much closer to Vrubel' both in choice and application of paint and the Vrubelian "cubist" brushwork, for example, was a distinctive feature of his pictures; in theme, too, Milioti owed much to Vrubel'—his "Angel of Sadness," for example, was derived evidently from Vrubel's Demon series. Amidst the muted blues and greys of Kuznetsov, Sudeikin, etc., the carmine and mauve of Milioti attracted the perhaps undue attention of the critics: to Grabar' he was the only artist at the exhibition who "by his sonorous fanfares destroys the effect of a mute which remains with you. . . ." Like Grabar', Makovsky was also struck by the colours of Milioti: "From Milioti's magic grotto you emerge bemused, deafened by the resounding interusions of colours." Makovsky found Milioti's complex of colours to be a carefully conceived pattern—a fact which perhaps bore witness to the artist's maturity in contrast to the more unsystematic, arbitrary productions of the lesser "Blue Rose" members. Muratov was of a more reserved opinion of Milioti and condemned his "naive
fantasy" and "pointillist manner which leads to a coarse diversity of colour." As in his views on Kuznetsov, Sapunov and Sudeikin, Muratov showed a more acute insight into the value of Milioti's work than did his fellow critics, for Milioti, like Drittenpreis, Knabe and Ryabushinsky, quickly degenerated into a producer of lifeless stereotypes: it was symptomatic of their artistic inflexibility that these four did not alter their style radically after 1907, remaining virtually unaffected by Neo-primitivism and the avant-garde movements—their sensibility had, as it were, already been crystallized. The same can be said of Vasilii Milioti, Nikolai's brother. Vasilii Milioti was represented by only two works: "Portrait" and "Vignette," and although nothing is known of them (apart from the fact that "Vignette" was a drawing commissioned by the Golden Fleece), a general estimate can be made on the basis of his own contemporary work. This, again, pointed to the influence of Vrubel' rather than of Borisov-Musatov, particularly in the sphere of colour, and his miniatures of exotic scenes were exquisite, if derivative, essays in colour combinations especially of emerald green and dark blue. But even in 1907 V. Milioti was a man of art rather than an artist, i.e. he played the role of critic and organizer, rather than that of creator, and in this capacity he contributed far more the the "Blue Rose."
Arapov deserves attention even though it is possible to form only an approximate opinion as to the appearance of his "Blue Rose" pictures. Of his five exhibits—"Fright," "Playing On the Pipe," "Grieving Angel," "Rhythm" and "Song"—none has been located and, in any case, "Fright" was destroyed by the artist and "Grieving Angel" was sold by Sapunov and was lost. It is known that "Grieving Angel" was a "large graphic work" and that "Rhythm" (Figure 38) was an idealized, Classical scene technically well executed (the same was true probably of "Fright"). It was obvious that Arapov's "Blue Rose" pictures possessed a marked tendency toward linearity and precise delineation, which earned him the reputation of being the "driest and most geometrical of all at the "Blue Rose."" Arapov's abilities as a graphic artist were evident in the many headpieces and decorations which he produced for Art, the Scales and the Golden Fleece; and this propensity for structuralization inherent in them anticipated his subsequent concentration on theatre décor.

Little of value can be said of the remaining contributors, either because no vestige is left of their exhibits and only one or two reproductions were made, or because they were mere imitators and casual contributors to the "Blue Rose" exhibition: to the former belong Bromirsky, Matveev and Fonvizen, to the latter belong Drittenpreis, Knabe and Ryabushinsky.
Bromirsky and Matveev were represented by sculptures and, in the case of Bromirsky, some paintings, but little is known about these works. Muratov mentioned casually that Bromirsky's sculptures had a "genuine grace" while Grabar' reviewed both Bromirsky and Matveev unfavourably: "Bromirsky wanted to be a Maillol ... an ancient Greek of the plastic arts, an Egyptian ... there is more sculpture in the clumsy marble blocks of that lout Matveev."60

Fonvizen was alien to the aesthetics of the "Blue Rose" in that his contribution of sketches and water colours was already nearer to the Neo-primitivism of Larionov than to the Symbolism of the Saratov-Moscow school: such a generalization, founded essentially on one reproduction and contemporary pictures of Fonvizen, is, of course, dangerous and perhaps inaccurate, but circumstantial evidence dictates this view: an oil, dated 1902, of a woman with black cats already shows a marked tendency towards coarseness of form while pictures at the 1907-1908 "Wreath" exhibitions were definitely Neo-primitivist.

Drittenpries submitted three graphic works—"Masquerade - Fantoccini," "Dolls' Comedy" (two versions)—all of them outside the "Blue Rose" traditions of mysticism and fantasy. Although technically good, they were derivative (much influenced by Beardsley) and of little
intrinsic value. Although the ultimate fate of Drittenpreis is unknown, his appearance at exhibitions after 1907 became less and less frequent, ceasing altogether after the Izdebsky "Salon" of 1909/1910, which would indicate that he soon gave up professional painting and graphics.

Little comment can be reserved either for Ryabushinsky or for Knabe, although, again, there is only marginal evidence on which to base an appreciation. Both submitted mystical, or at least, mysterious works which were dismissed peremptorily by the critics, e.g. Koiransky wrote that: "Ryabushinsky ... figures with some of his dried up goods, exhibiting his conceited dilettantism."62 Ryabushinsky, inspired by V. Milioti's proclamations that he was a genius, continued to exhibit his amateur efforts for several years, Knabe did not develop into a mature artist.

Financially, the exhibition was not a success, although it had not been planned as a profitable venture. A few pictures were sold but most of these were bought either by members or by sympathisers of the group—for example, Ryabushinsky bought Krymov's "Approaching Spring" and Sar'yan's "Sacred Grove," Utkin bought Sar'yan's "Hot Evening" and the wife of Drittenpreis bought Kuznetsov's "Love." In addition, some purchases were made by collector financiers—for example, V. O. Girshman
acquired Sar'yan's "Lake of Fairies," Morozov his "By the Pomegranate Tree" and the St. Petersburg musician, G. N. Beklemishev, bought Sudeikin's "Swings." But the material aspect of the exhibition was not important to its contributors: what was significant to them was that the art of the Moscow Symbolists had been publicized and in this the aim of the exhibition had been achieved.

While the exhibition was in progress a series of so-called "Meetings of Art Performances" was arranged during the weekday evenings and three "Saturdays of Art Performances" were also held. At these events discussions were staged between the exhibitors and the public, lectures were read and representatives of allied arts declaimed poetry and gave recitals.

The idea of artistic evenings was, of course, not new, for they had been in vogue at least in St. Petersburg since the late 1890s when the "World of Art" fraternity used to meet regularly in the evenings at Diaghilev's apartment; in Moscow they began to enjoy popularity in the early 1900s when the Scorpion group first came together. Soirées quickly became a common phenomenon even in the provinces—and it will be remembered that an evening of modern art had been organized in Saratov in 1904 in which Bal'mont, Goldenveizer et al. had taken
part. In 1906, in St. Petersburg, a regular sequence of "Literary Saturdays" had been arranged under the auspices of Komissarzhevskaya where the nucleus of the performers had consisted of a so-called "Circle of Youth" --painters, musicians and literati of the younger generation. The hall in which these evenings had been held, on English Prospect, was decorated with canvases painted by Sapunov and Sudeikin for "Hedda Gabler" and "Soeur Béatrice" and the stage was scattered with flowers. Against this background artists, poets, dramatists and critics had participated in the programme of events: in October, 1906, for example, Blok read his "King on the Square" there, Sologub read his "Gift of the Wise Bees" and members of the "Circle of Youth" enacted V. Ivanov's "Dithyramb." In Moscow cultural evenings were being organized by the "Literary and Artistic Circle" and, in 1907, by the "Aesthetics" and even less intellectual societies such as the "German Club" and the "Hunting Club" (where Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko were active members) began to follow suit. By 1905 private soirées arranged by the merchant Maecenes were commonplace: the Girshmans, for example, organized receptions for Moscow and St. Petersburg artists at their house by the Red Gates during the exhibition season and after 1908 Ryabushinsky planned regular evenings of artistic entertainment at his villa, the "Black Swan."
The public was therefore prepared for the "Blue Rose" evenings and congregated willingly to witness the latest achievements in cultural synthesisism. At the weekday meetings members of the **Scales** and the **Golden Fleece** circles, representing all branches of art, contributed either to performances or to theoretical discussions of the new art, and at the Saturday meetings more specific programmes were compiled: Bely, Bryusov and Remizov read their works, modern Russian music was interpreted by the pianists Beklemishev and Igumnov and Greek dances were performed by a certain Mme. K-ya; Cherepnin, Rebikov and Skryabin also participated.63 The practical consequences of these evenings were, for the "Blue Rose" painters, at least, not significant and did not stimulate them to experiment with a synthetic art as Chiurlionis had done and as Skryabin was still doing. Rather, the "Blue Rose" artists now turned away from the doctrine of synthetic art, just as they were turning away from Symbolism as a source of inspiration: thenceforth they retreated from the "musicality" of Symbolism and directed their energies into an examination of painterly problems --colour, form, texture--which the new movement, Neo-primitivism, dictated. The "Blue Rose" exhibition and evenings, therefore, marked the culmination of the group's development as a Symbolist group and served rather as a record of prior achievements than as a declaration of intent.
Fortunately most of the "Blue Rose" members were quick to realize that Symbolist painting had run its course and some of them, recognizing the value of the discoveries of Larionov and Goncharova, embarked on new paths of artistic search: Fonvizen and Krymov went on to develop their own interpretations of Neo-primitivism, Sapunov and Sudeikin moved increasingly away from easel painting towards the theatre, Sar'yan initiated Russian Gauguinism and Kuznetsov dismissed his Symbolist worldview with his dramatic move to Kirghizian colourism after 1910. Ryabushinsky was also aware of the importance of the new trends and did much to stimulate the evolution of Russian Neo-primitivism by organizing exhibitions and by offering private support. In turn, he allowed his journal, the Golden Fleece, to widen its horizons to include examination and reproductions of Neo-primitivist works.

In his somewhat shallow critique of the "Blue Rose" exhibition S. Glagol' had headed his main commentary with a facetious, but meaningful epigraph:

"— Que ce que c'est la rose bleue?
— C'est la rose, qui ne rougit jamais."64

He had then continued:

The blue rose has been found and the secret of beauty has been fathomed. If you want to convince yourself of this, then go to Myasnitskaya Street, to the House of Kuznetsov, to the exhibition organized by the Golden Fleece circle.
A certain beauty had been found, a beauty of crystal dreams and mystical journeys, although whether "I'azure" had been attained, was, of course, debatable. But just as in reality there was no such phenomenon as a blue rose, so in art the "Blue Rose" flowered but briefly and by the end of 1907 had withered. The reason for its ephemeral existence was surely implicit in Glagol's maxim—it was alien to any life-giving force, it was out of contact with life, preferring the blues and greys of death and the spirit to the red of blood and emotion. Even Grabar', for the most part supporting the "Blue Rose" artists, was aware of their coldness, of their irrelevance to concrete reality: his quotation from Claude Lorrain which headed the conclusion to his report on the "Blue Rose" exhibition was indicative both of what the "Blue Rose" artists lacked and of the subsequent direction which Russian painting would take: "I had the best teacher a painter ever had: his name was the Sun." The sun, warmth, colour, an almost sensual concern with form, were elements which the Neo-primitivists rediscovered. Grabar' reproached the "Blue Rose" artists for retiring from life, for ignoring the sun:

You shiver from the cold ... you put masks on your young faces: what for? ... I do not believe in your decrepitude! Long live youth ... Surrender the "devils" to Merezhkovsky, the "angels" to Rozanov and the symbols to Maeterlinck, and don't believe that there is a "fading sun." Here it is staring me straight in the eyes and laughing at you.
The "Blue Rose" artists themselves felt what Grabar' had commented on and the years after their exhibition marked the beginning of a colourist period in which they rediscovered the potency of red, yellow and orange. In the case of Sar'yan and, later, Kuznetsov the period was marked also by a return to "life" in the form of their escape to the primitive East (Armenia and Kirghizia) with its sultry heat, colour and rural beauty; Krymov and Sudeikin, especially the latter, came nearer to the Larionov-Goncharova kind of Neo-primitivism with their solidification of form and interest in traditional, domestic Russian art.

Vivid colour and attention to form emerged as the key elements of the Neo-primitivist movement—the very elements which the "Blue Rose" artists had ignored. Petrov-Vodkin, at one time a sympathizer of the group, but never a member, discussed in a lecture of 1912 what he regarded as the tragedy of the "Blue Rose" artists, the "Oscar Wildeans":

Not with resentment but with deep sadness do I say this . . . about the "Blue Rose." It is the fault of their aberration, of the oppressiveness of the Maeterlinck infection. . . . Everything existing on Earth is coloured by the sun. The painter who studies the variegation of natural phenomena, thereby fathoms their interrelations, defines a phenomenon's position in the world, i.e. a phenomenon's existence. . . .

But the very fact that the "Blue Rose" artists ignored the sun, that they remained aloof from "life" and
consequently from form and colour constituted their most valuable contribution to the evolution of Russian avant-garde painting. The formlessness of their pictures was the result of their attempt to allude to, rather than to represent figuratively, a subject—and however fascinating the symbols and motifs in themselves, this resultant formlessness is, for the art historian, the most important element: in this the "Blue Rose" artists heralded abstract art, for they not only intensified the formal disintegration which Impressionism had begun, but also reduced the importance of the concrete subject to a minimum. Of course, this neglect of concrete subject was already part of a specifically Russian tradition established by Borisov-Musatov and Vrubel: evidence of their "dematerialization" lay in their pictorial rendition of figures which in many of their landscapes constituted merely one part of a plein air complex without regard to their formal independence and entity—hence the 19th century women of Borisov-Musatov's landscapes seemed to be part of the mists which shrouded their country estates, aetherial phantoms rather than human beings. In this Borisov-Musatov dismissed strict formal contrast and created a kind of formal continuum which imbued his pictures with distinct movement—in contrast to the well-defined, static forms of the "Wanderers" and,
with exceptions, the "World of Art" artists. Vrubel' also achieved a visual dynamism not only by reducing precise outline to a tentative suggestion, but also by presenting the subject as moving, e.g. the "Flight of Faust and Mephistofoles" (1896) and "Flying Demon" (1899). What has been said in the context of Borisov-Musatov and Vrubel' could be applied with amplification to the "Blue Rose" artists: their canvases were dynamic both on a formal and thematic plane as such titles as "Rhythm," "White Fountain," the "Grasses Were Swaying" and "Ballet" would indicate. Therefore, it was significant that hardly any portraits were offered by the "Blue Rose" artists for exhibition before or during 1907, because such a genre with its inherent demand for formal accuracy was alien to them. They reduced formal delineation still farther not only by neglecting graphic outline even more than Borisov-Musatov, but also by replacing tonal contrast by a very subdued chiaroscuro: this meant that light contrast was kept to a minimum resulting in the "milkiness" of Krymov and the unrelieved blueness of Kuznetsov. In some cases this process was intensified by the continued application of the Vrubelian brushstroke which created the effect of "mosaicness" peculiar to the work of the Miliotis. In the sphere of graphics outline of form came to be superseded by line itself as the intrinsically expressive characteristics of line came
to dominate the basic formal requirements of a given subject: in the works of Feofilaktov and in the graphic miniatures of Arapov, Kuznetsov and Sudeikin the stage is reached where the subject itself has been almost dismissed in favour of the values *per se* of volume and space. It was only one step from this kind of product to the conception of the picture as a complex of extrinsically meaningless shapes and colours, to abstract art.

But, to a certain extent, this step towards abstractionism was delayed by the advent of Neo-primitivism with its partial return to concrete subject and form. Neo-primitivism re-established form as a basic precept of art and even exaggerated it beyond proportion—a tendency which, in turn, led to the concentration on form exclusive of subject-matter, typical of the later Russian avant-garde. In this sense, Russian Cubo-futurism emerged as the direct result of Neo-primitivist aesthetics, thanks to which the peculiar qualities of painting—form, colour, texture—had been given unprecedented emphasis: and this division of the canvas into separate elements stimulated an almost geometrical reduction culminating in Suprematism. The formless pictures of the "Blue Rose" painters would therefore seem to be closer to the amorphous improvisations of Kandinsky than to the linear abstractionism of Malevich, an observation which takes on more significance if one remembers Kandinsky's concern with theosophy before 1910.
The "Blue Rose" exhibition witnessed a crucial stage in the history of Russian painting because it demonstrated two specific developments: on the one hand it marked the culmination of the Symbolist movement in painting and on the other it presaged the trend towards non-representational art. The ensuing exhibitions of the "Wreath" and the "Golden Fleece" made this abundantly clear.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. A. V. Skalon, "Vystavka "Golubaya roza" in Russkie vedomosti, 1907, 25 March, No. 69.

2. See: "Vesti otovsyudu" in Zolotoe runo, 1907, No. 2, p. 87.


5. For example, see the catalogue to the exhibition, "Two Decades of Experiment in Russian Art" at the Grosvenor Gallery, London, 1962; also the catalogue to the exhibition, "The Non-objective World, 1914-1924" at Annely Juda Fine Art, London, 1970; S. Makovsky is mistaken when he writes that Yakulov took part in the "Blue Rose" exhibition. See: S. Makovsky, Silueti russkikh khudozhnikov, Prague, 1922, p. 133.

6. By the late E. Bebutova in conversation with the author.

7. Also by E. Bebutova.


10. See: Ellis, ""Golubaya ptitsa." Po povodu postanovki p'esy v Moskovskom khudozhestvennom teatre" in Vesy, 1908, No. 12, pp. 97-98. For comments on the significance of "light blue" and "dark blue" to contemporary observers, see: S. Auslender, "Goluboi tsvetok" in Apollon, 1909, No. 3, pp. 41-42; also see: Z. Vengerova, "Since i goluboe" in Rech', 1909, 12 January.

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12. The words are Rusakova's in V. E. Borisov-Musatov, p. 112.


14. A. Bely, Mezhdu dvukh revolyutsii, L., 1934, p. 244.


17. S. Makovsky, "Golubaya roza" in Zolotoe runo, 1907, No. 5, p. 25.

18. Ibid., p. 27.


24. P. Muratov, "Vystavka kartin "Golubaya roza"" in Russkov slovo, 1907, 1 April. No. 75.


28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.
31. P. Muratov, "Vystavka kartin...."
34. P. Muratov, "Vystavka kartin...."
35. Ibid.
36. S. Makovsky, "Golubaya roza," p. 27.
38. P. Muratov, "Vystavka kartin...."
40. P. Muratov, "Vystavka kartin...."
41. S. Makovsky, "Golubaya roza," p. 27.
42. Ibid., p. 27.
44. S. Makovsky, "Golubaya roza," p. 27.
49. A. Koiransky, "Vystavka kartin "Golubaya roza"" in *Pereval*, 1907, No. 5.
50. P. Muratov, "Vystavka kartin...."
52. V. Lobanov, *Kanuny*, p. 82.
54. B. Makovsky, "Golubaya roza," p. 27.
55. P. Muratov, "Vystavka kartin...."
56. A. Arapov, Vospominaniya (archive), 1940.
57. Later Arapov painted a second version of "Fright" which at present is with his widow.
58. P. Muratov, "Vystavka kartin...."
59. Ibid.
60. I. Grabar', "Golubaya roza," p. 94.
61. This is in the store-room of GTG; the picture is untitled.
62. A. Koiransky, "Vystavka kartin...."
63. For further information see: "Vesti otovsyudu" in Zolotoe runo, 1907, No. 4, p. 81.
64. S. Glagol', "Golubaya roza" in Moskovskii ezhenedel'nik, 1907, 7 April, No. 14.
66. Feofilaktov, in fact, designed the cover to Merezhkovsky's Gogol' i chert, M., 1906.
67. K. Petrov-Vodkin, "Zhivopis' kak remeslo": TsGAI, fund 2010, ed. dep. 98, 11. 13-14. The reference to Oscar Wilde was, presumably, an allusion to the blue carnation which he used to wear.
68. The term is Fedorov-Davydov's. See: A. Fedorov-Davydov, Iskusstvo promyshlennogo kapitalizma, M., 1929, p. 56.
Chapter VII

"... painting of the future will crawl down into the depths of coarseness..." (L. Bakst, 1909)

When Bakst referred to the "coarseness" of Russian painting in his article on the contemporary state of Russian art, he was thinking, obviously, of Neo-primitivism. The term, however, was equally applicable to a second, parallel direction which the "Blue Rose" directly inspired: just as Kuznetsov did not turn immediately to Neo-primitivism as a source of inspiration, so a distinct painterly movement based on a cult of such themes as sickness and death emerged both in Moscow and in St. Petersburg. This Neo-symbolism, especially popular in St. Petersburg between 1908 and 1910 was described by Makovsky as a distinct debasement of "Blue Rose" principles: "... the Moscow 'Blue Rose' degenerated into a bazaar of mercantile decadence." The crucial word in Makovsky's statement was "mercantile" because it was the wide-spread prestige which Symbolism enjoyed amongst the Capitalist hierarchy after 1907 which contributed, in part, to its rapid decline and ultimate exhaustion.
In this sense the "Blue Rose" evenings marked the beginning of a sequence of cultural gatherings devoted specifically to the popularization of Symbolism—but in the form of spiritualist séances and mystical experiences. Blok writing on the St. Petersburg evenings of 1908, described them as: "... pernicious, because it all ... engenders an atmosphere not only of banality and vulgarity, — worse than that: the evenings of new art in particular ... are becoming like cells of social reaction." In 1908, in St. Petersburg, a society called the "Golden Ship" was organized which held evenings devoted to the synthesization of art and theurgy. The introduction of the subjective experience into art, which the "Blue Rose" artists had advocated, was inflated into a popular philosophical system, into a fashionable religion. The "Golden Ship" pronounced:

God is the Spirit, His garments are beauty, His prayer — creation, His temple — art ... God is that which creates through us ... this divine quality of the soul we call genius ... the Holy Spirit is belief in its genius ... individual creation in art should be merely preparation for a form of ritual; only the latter, fused with religion, will regenerate Man and bring him closer to the light of Heaven. ...

The "Golden Ship" meetings continued for two years during which time vain endeavours were made to intensify, and to magnify out of all proportion, the theosophic and theophanic qualities of art; the atmosphere which presided at such meetings was suspiciously close to that of
the suddenly widespread table-tapping séances: "...Beautiful rites consisting of ... vague allusions, symbols and moods, both musical and visual." In Moscow similar soirées were organized by the Girshmans, the Nosovs and E. I. Loseva and such artistic evenings flourished well into the epoch of Russian Futurism, although they took on a different appearance as members of the avant-garde such as the Burliuks and Kul'bin came to use them as platforms for their declarations and disputes. Until 1910, at least, the Girshman-type salon gained ground and the sincere attempts to formulate ideas and to discuss art within a synthetic framework associated with the earlier meetings were weakened considerably. Nevertheless, the role of the Capitalist Maecenas in the evolution of Russian art after 1907 should not be condemned without qualification. It is true that the majority of them did not sponsor the more radical of the leftists such as Goncharova, Larionov and Malevich, indicative of which was the fact that very few of Goncharova's post-1908 canvases were purchased, but this did not mean that their financial services were altogether fruitless. The journal, Apollon, for example, was in some ways the brainchild of the Moscow and St. Petersburg financial hierarchy, not least of the Girshmans; and this, of course, contributed to the snob appeal which the journal enjoyed: "Apollon was the
cult of dandyism. At the soirées of Apollon appeared men in frock coats and ladies in décolleté dresses."

And although Apollon emerged very much as a supporter of Alexandrine culture, it did not ignore modern developments in Russian art, although its opinions were more reserved and academic than those of the Golden Fleece. Indicative of this guarded attitude was its recognition of Krymov (1911, No. 3), Sapunov (1914, No. 4), Sar'yan (1913, No. 9) and Sudeikin (1911, No. 8) only when they were already established and known.

The cheap mysticism which the "Blue Rose" gave rise to was seen not only at subsequent artistic evenings such as the "Golden Ship" series, but also in artistic output. While the "Blue Rose" exhibition marked the climax of its members' Symbolist searches, who were aware of the impasse which their art had reached, artists of lesser calibre chose to take advantage of the motifs which the "Blue Rose" artists had offered. It was symptomatic of the rear position which St. Petersburg was maintaining in the visual arts during the "Blue Rose" and avant-garde periods that a movement of Symbolist painters arose there only after the summer of 1907. In November of that year two exhibitions were opened in St. Petersburg—the "Autumn Exhibition" and "Auer's Commercial Exhibition"—at which the St. Petersburg Symbolist group
led by N. K. Kalmakov (1873-1955) presented its erotic and necrological pictures (Figure 39). Mystical canvases of Kalmakov and his colleagues A. I. Ball'er and A. I. Dmitriev with dedications to, and epigraphs from, Bely, Bryusov and V. Ivanov indicated their obvious debt to the "Blue Rose" painters and their own lack of originality. For example, a sketch by Dmitriev was headed by Bryusov's lines, "Uncherished dreams fade in my heart, flowers of a ridiculed spring perish," and depicted a corpse, a young girl and an old woman. Ball'er was represented by the "Wreath," a picture of a skull in water. Other pictures contained similar motifs—a skeleton in a field with a cannon on its back, corpses, a sphinx, a pink river, a cemetery, doves, etc. Benois, who reviewed the "Autumn Exhibition," summed up the situation very well:

Hitherto, we in St. Petersburg, have not had any "formal" Symbolists. Well, now they have appeared. In more progressive Moscow they have existed already for several years. And, of course, I'm not talking about Vrubel'. . . . The "formal" Symbolist creates profound and enigmatic things on purpose and becomes a real specialist. This speciality arose in France and Germany in the '80s. . . . Now we have "formal" Symbolists in Russia, both in Moscow and in St. Petersburg . . . Dmitriev's and Kalmakov's intentions are, in most cases, very successful . . . Kalmakov is more literary, more philosophical, more distinct. His pictures "narrate themselves" without particular difficulty. . . . Dmitriev has more of a purely visual talent. It is hardly possible to find the key to his sadly mysterious masks, to his crazily grimacing compositions. . . .

Despite Benois' encouraging remarks in the context of Dmitriev and Kalmakov, it was obvious that he felt that
the new movement of St. Petersburg Symbolism was already out of date and doomed to premature necrosis. Kalmakov did achieve a certain notoriety as an erotic artist—his scandalous sets for Wilde's Salomé in 1908 demonstrated this, but he lacked the spontaneity and conviction of the "Blue Rose" artists. Kalmakov and his colleagues found a certain sympathy in their interpretations of Symbolism with N. I. Kul'bin (1866-1917, see below) and his "Impressionist" group and they, in turn, contributed to the Symbolist/Expressionist faction of the "Union of Youth" organization (see Chapter IX). Despite the advancement of their cause at several exhibitions between 1908 and c. 1911 (nearly all in St. Petersburg), they exerted little influence on the evolution of Russian painting—although it might be argued that the Expressionist, P. N. Filonov (1883-1941), owed his early development to the Kalmakov group.

In direct opposition to the subjectivism and fantasy of the Moscow and St. Petersburg Symbolist movements arose Neo-primitivism, a direction which had been manifest at the "Blue Rose" exhibition. The tendency towards brighter colours and crude delineation perceptible there became increasingly pronounced after the summer of 1907 culminating in a distinct artistic credo by the end of that year. At the "Blue Rose" exhibition the reaction against
the aestheticism of the Moscow Symbolists had scarcely been a conscious one and it took a deliberate cultivation of ideas to form a definite movement based on the philosophy of Neo-primitivism. Although its principal supporters had played only a minor role in the advocacy of Symbolism and, apart from the atypical Fonvizin, had not been members of the "Blue Rose" group, Neo-primitivism shared a common denominator with Symbolism, at least according to Symbolist aesthetics. Both arts acted, essentially, as modes of escape to more cohesive realities, one in a world of myth and fantasy, the other in a state of rural, barbaric purity: both ideas found expression in the writings of the Symbolist theoreticians, e.g. V. Ivanov wrote: "Symbols are experiences of the forgotten and lost property of the people's soul,"¹⁰ Bely wrote: "Symbolism in art is the affirmation of the vital wholeness of experience as the principle of image arrangement."¹¹ These definitions of Symbolism which relied, evidently, on Freud's theory of the archaic consciousness were equally applicable to the phenomenon of Neo-primitivism, at least as it manifested itself in painting—for Neo-primitivism, too, sought artistic experiences in the "people's soul." By late 1907 a group of Moscow artists, led by Larionov and Goncharova, was beginning to turn to primitive sources for inspiration such as the domestic crafts of signboard painting and the "lubok." Their examination of such art
forms was similar to the revival of interest in peasant art which had occurred in the 1870s and 1880s, but while the painters of Abramtsevo and Talashkino had concentrated on decorativism and stylization, the new easel painters paid attention to such specific elements as the use of large areas of vivid colours, the coarse texture of domestic paint and the naive rendition of figures and objects. At the same time artists began to take notice of the French, particularly of Matisse and Rousseau, although their experience of them was limited to the collections of Morozov and Shchukin. The kind of Neo-primitivism which emerged in Russia was therefore half indigenous and half Western in origin, and it was not until after 1910 that Larionov and Goncharova, at least, dismissed the West and concentrated exclusively on Russian models. Indeed, it was not until 1913 that a Neo-primitivist manifesto was issued—by the colleague of Larionov, A. V. Shevchenko (1882-1948)—in which the Russian genesis of Neo-primitivism was set forth.12

Despite the anachronistic appearance of the Neo-primitivist statement, the movement itself was born in 1907 and reached its apogee in the years 1908-1910. The rejection of Symbolism as a creative force was demonstrated at the March/April exhibition of the "Moscow Association of Artists" in 1907, which acted as a preview of later, specifically Neo-primitivist shows. This
exhibition was an important milestone in the history of the Russian avant-garde because it contained most of those artists who would become famous after 1908, but hitherto it has been either ignored by art historians or confused with the parallel "Blue Rose" show. It will be remembered that before 1907 the "Blue Rose" artists had been closely connected with the "Moscow Association" mainly because of Borisov-Musatov, but thanks to their allegiance to their own exhibition, they submitted nothing to this session; therefore, by their very absence they focused attention on those who did participate. Indeed, the complement of painters at the "Moscow Association" pointed to a collective search essentially different to that of the "Blue Rose" artists. With the exception of Denisov, I. G. Ehrenburg, Ul'yanov and, on a different level, Kandinsky, all the exhibitors were subsequently to contribute to the development of the Russian Neo-primitivist movement. Apart from those mentioned above, the catalogue contained the following: V. Burliuk, Goncharova, Larionov, Malevich, A. Morgunov, Rozhdestvensky, Shevchenko and Yakulov. Unfortunately, contemporary descriptions of the works were minimal and provided little guidance to the exhibition's reception: for example, Burliuk's "Study" was described as "successful", Ehrenburg's lithographs as "done with feeling" and
Yakulov's "Races" as "vivid" in Muratov's review of the exhibition. But it was obvious that the exhibition presented a new, but united, ideological front since the exhibitors were, in the main, colleagues at the Moscow Institute and were all outside the "Blue Rose" group. Indicative of the shift away from Impressionism and Symbolism were the leaders of the imminent Neo-primitivist movement, Larionov and Goncharova. Larionov was represented by "Still-life," "Street in the Provinces" and "Yard"; Goncharova by "Flowers," "Birch-trees," "At Work" (two versions), "View From the Window" and "Study." The childish approach to form, the crude outlines and vivid colours of Larionov's "Street in the Provinces" were typical of the deliberately vulgarized, solid forms which abounded in his Neo-primitivist works of 1908-1911 and was close to more famous works such as "Walk in a Provincial Town" (1908) (Figure 40) and "Restaurant by the Seaside" (1908 (Figure 41). This trend away from nebulous shapes and allusive themes, from the subdued colour scale and absence of narrative peculiar to the "Blue Rose" pictures was evident in the contributions of Shevchenko—"Snails," "Vases," "Nightingale's Night" --and Malevich—twelve studies. The "rematerialization" of visual reality in their canvases indicated a return to the tactile qualities of colour and texture and lent
the exhibition a vitality and energy so lacking at the "Blue Rose" show. The prominent genre of still-lives was also indicative of the renewed concern with mass and form and it was this genre, in fact, which became the most popular area of activity amongst the declared advocates of Neo-primitivism, the "Knave of Diamonds" group in 1910.

The new direction which emerged at the exhibition of the "Moscow Association of Artists" was represented together with the newest achievements of the "Blue Rose" group at an important exhibition in Moscow at the end of 1907. It was at this exhibition that the insolvency of painterly Symbolism as an artistic credo became obvious to all, for the pale, spiritual subjects of the "Blue Rose" painters were eclipsed by the louder, mundane canvases of the Neo-primitivists. This exhibition was called the "Wreath-Stefanos" and was the first of a series of exhibitions of that name held in several Russian towns. The probable derivation of the name was from the book of verse of the same name by Bryusov published by Scorpion in 1906, although, alternatively, the name may have been suggested by Benois who at the "Blue Rose" exhibition had referred to the exhibitors as "sovereigns" ("ventsenostsy"—lit. "wreathbearers"). If the name was taken from Bryusov's cycle and as such was meant to serve as a gesture of respect towards Symbolism, then the
result was a misnomer because pictorially the exhibition was not a Symbolist one.

Misleadingly, the "Wreath" has been described by critics as a second "Blue Rose" show. The ostensible justification for this would lay in the fact that many "Blue Rose" artists contributed (with the notable exception of Kuznetsov) and that the exhibition was organized under the general auspices of the Golden Fleece. What conflicts with this view is the fact that the exhibition was financed not by Ryabushinsky but by the Burliuks (allegedly, their father) and that the Neo-primitivists formed the majority of the exhibitors, i.e. D., V. and L. Burliuk, Goncharova, Larionov, Lentulov, Rozhdestvensky and, peripherally, Yakulov. Their pictures betrayed creative stimuli quite different to those of the "Blue Rose" contributions and appeared forceful and barbaric in contrast to the still indecisive and restrained works of Arapov, Sapunov, Sudeikin and Utkin (not listed in the catalogue, but present). In addition, a third faction was formed by several casual contributors not affiliated either with the Neo-primitivist or with the Symbolist groups: Z. Baikova, L. Baranov (later associated with Kul'bin in St. Petersburg), Kuznetsov-Volshsky (Kuznetsov's brother), S. Petrov (known only much later, in Soviet times) and L. Styurtsvage (better known as Survage). As in the case of the "Blue Rose" exhibition much confusion
has arisen as to who contributed to the "Wreath" and as to where it took place. The reason for this is that there were three principal exhibitions of that name which differed in location, size and ideological direction. The first "Wreath," the one under discussion, was opened on 27th December, 1907 and closed 15th January, 1908 in the Moscow Stroganov Institute; the second exhibition, called simply "Wreath" (i.e. no addition of "Stefanos"), was organized in "one of the cellar accommodations near the Anichkov Bridge" in St. Petersburg and lasted from the end of March, 1908 until the end of April; the third exhibition, again entitled "Wreath - Stefanos," took place in St. Petersburg during March and April of 1909 and then travelled to other towns including Kherson in the autumn of that year. Apart from these three shows, a fourth was recorded in St. Petersburg in April, 1910 but it appeared as part of a larger exhibition organized by Kul'bin, namely the first of his "Triangle" shows.

The Moscow "Wreath" was large in comparison to the "Blue Rose" exhibition containing at least 25 contributors, although its interior decoration of grey drapes and vases of flowers followed the pattern established by the Symbolist show. Of the original "Blue Rose" members Krymov and, to a lesser extent, Sudeikin had parted with Symbolism, although their canvases were still too intimate and delicate to merit the term Neo-primitivist, at least as
interpreted by Larionov and Goncharova; Fonvizin, however, who had never been a central member of the "Blue Rose" emerged as a definite disciple of the new movement. Of course, with the absence of Kuznetsov the strength of the Symbolists was seriously undermined and their prestige was dependent on the weaker members of the group such as Knabe, the Miliotis and Utkin. Although some Symbolist works reminiscent of the fruitful years of 1904-1906 were present in the panneaux of Denisov and the lyrical landscapes of Utkin ("Spring-Night," "Frosta" et al.), they did not compensate for the loss of identity and cohesion which the "Blue Rose" was evidently undergoing. It was obvious, for example, that Krymov's landscapes were far more formal and stylized than his contributions to the "Blue Rose" showing and anticipated his "toy" miniatures of 1908 such as "Ox" and the "Storm," a development summarized by Grabar': "The milk of Krymov's painting of last year has definitely gone sour." Sudeikin, represented here by three "Ecossaises," was striking in his use of orange and red and had already developed those tendencies discernible nine months before. Arapov, too, had become much more "geometrical" in his new canvases. In all, the "Wreath" demonstrated that the disbandment of the "Blue Rose" group was imminent and that their aspirations to attain the ulterior reality had been frustrated. The critics afforded them little praise or even
attention since they were concerned with the new, leftist contributions of the Neo-primitivists—even if they did not approve of them. Grabar' described the situation: "The Blue Rose' was essentially an exhibition of small gobelins. And one has to confess that this 'cult of the gobelin' ('gobelenovshchina') has become downright boring and one feels like something different."20 The "something different" was supplied by the Neo-primitivists, above all, the Burliuks.

The Burliuks had not long been in Moscow although David and Vladimir had already become friends of Larionov. David, in particular, had had organizational experience from the several informal exhibitions which he and his brother had staged at their country home at Chernyanka and he was widely travelled having studied in Odessa, Munich and Paris before 1907. The personal characteristics of the Burliuk family have been described succinctly by B. Livshits21 and their "Homerian proportions" were revealed, pictorially, at the "Wreath." The fact that the Burliuk brothers played a major role in the actual organization of the exhibition would explain why, together with Lyudmilla, they managed to occupy a separate room with their canvases; and this gesture was to be typical of their dominance and fighting spirit during the audacious years of Cubo-futurism. The critics condemned such immodesty together with their contribution:
Grabar' wrote: "When you enter the exhibition you get the impression that apart from the Burliuks there is nobody else; then it turns out that there are only three of them: one paints in numbers and squares, the second in commas and the third with a swab." Glagol' shared Grabar's opinion: "... the Burliuks have a complete triumph ... they've really cocked their hat here and they have the violent joviality of the proletariat whose erudition lies in the fact that he doesn't have any." The critic Matov (pseudonym of the editor, P. N. Mamontov) writing for the conservative journal, Russian Artist (Russkii artjist) expanded these statements:

When you look at the pictures of the Burliuk family which consist, seemingly, of postage stamps or Koch's bacilli, you think that they must suffer from defective sight. They realize that God's world is not created from postage stamps because at the same time, at this exhibition, there are works of beauty painted jolly well.

The references to "commas" and "postage stamps" were prompted by the Burliuks' coarse brushwork and neglect of detail, elements to be associated with Neo-primitivist painting. The subjects of the Burliuks' pictures were rural, including several farm scenes, and colours were bright and it was this sudden move from aestheticism to crudity which, on the one hand, shocked the public, and, on the other, presaged their sensational activities as future members of the anti-social Cubo-futurist movement.
Ponvizen, Goncharova, Larionov and Lentulov presented a group almost as formidable as the Burliuks. Goncharova submitted several still-lives and Larionov sent several provincial scenes similar to their contributions to the March show of the "Moscow Association," but with colour and deliberate outline more pronounced. Lentulov, who would be a central member of the "Knave of Diamonds" group, was represented by three nudes "bathing in oil," a favourite subject of the early Lentulov: these were large canvases of female bathers ample in proportions, sensual in texture and vivid in colour and predicted his concentration on these specific, painterly elements during his "architectural" period of 1912-1914. Fonvizen's sketches, mainly illustrations to Hoffmann, were gross caricatures, "perverted, repellent images," which emphasized thickness of line and immobility of masses. His one oil, "Scene in the Circus," was indicative of his love of the theatre, of dehumanization and artificiality, features which came to be identified with the static, "wooden" quality of certain peripheral members of the Neo-primitivist movement, e.g. Sudeikin. Fonvizen's inclination towards theatricality was shared by Yakulov whose main contributions, "Street" and "Café Chantant," contained the same sense of tragedy and gloom. While they pointed to a certain Chinese influence in the falling perspective and grouping of figures, Yakulov's pictures
owed little to the Larionov/Goncharova concern with traditional peasant art, and only in the sense that he had turned to the East could Yakulov be called a Neo-primitivist at this stage. Rather, he was closer to Expressionism: in the two works mentioned above, of which "Street" was an illustration to E. A. Poe's *Man of the Crowd*, the artist was concerned with crowds of human beings possessed of some diabolical force, very much recalling Pechstein or Vallotton. "Street" was a nocturnal scene in which figures jostle round an open pool evoking the sensation of claustrophobic fear, for the only escape from the chaotic reality is into the night sky. Similarly, "Café Chantant" transmits the feeling of impending doom, of panic in the mass of figures on a stage dancing before a Kuznetsovian fountain. Yakulov stood aside from the mainstreams of the exhibition since his canvases were, above all, urban and contrasted directly with the aetherial dreams of the "Blue Rose" artists on the one hand, and with the rural scenes of the Neo-primitivists on the other. At this exhibition Yakulov was joined by his brother, Aleksandr, who made his début as a sculptor with a contribution of a female head.

The "Wreath" closed at the beginning of 1908, a time which introduced a period of frenetic, transformative activity in the history of modern Russian art. It advanced Neo-primitivism as the solution to the crisis
besieging Symbolist painting and bade artists revive art by injecting it with a coarse, primal vitality: in this respect, Grabar's censure of Fonvizen proved to be, paradoxically, the greatest compliment provoked by the exhibition: "What Fonvizen does would be wonderful if I knew he was only 8 years old."29.

The principal members of the "Blue Rose," including Kuznestov, were represented at the regular exhibition of the "Union of Russian Artists" open in Moscow also from December, 1907 until January, 1908. At this show Symbolism was still very much in evidence, causing one critic to refer to the "symbolization" of Denisov, Kuznetsov, the Milliotis, Sapunov and Sudeikin. Kuznetsov was represented by some of his morbid canvases including "Gathering Grapes" (1907 (?)) and "Night of the Consumptives" (1907). The latter, in particular, revealed Kuznetsov's current despair and spiritual exhaustion: it was a picture of sick human beings marooned on an unearthly sea-shore; the colour scheme of blue and grey and the crude outlines of the faces transmitted a sense of hopelessness and decay which contrasted sharply with the positive, aetherial visions of before 1906. Kuznetsov's move from "pure" Symbolism to Decadence illustrated very well Blok's statement of 1907: "... in lyricism there is the danger of
putrefaction.\(^{31}\) Despite the morbidity of Kuznetsov's exhibits, V. Milioti in his review of the exhibition noticed the tendency towards more definite outline and formal contrast and thought fit to describe Kuznetsov as "harder" and "more manly.\(^{32}\) While Sudeikin was represented at the "Wreath" by more colourful and structured canvases, his contribution to the "Union" was more in the tradition of "Blue Rose" Symbolism and included "Pastorale" (1905) (Figure 42) and "Love" (1907) (Figure 43), both of them sharing the motifs of mothers and children—referred to as "monstrosities" by Glagol; in addition, Sudeikin was represented by "Holiday," a picture of dancing-couples in an 18th-century, Watteau-esque setting, executed in bright colours. N. Milioti and Sapunov stood outside the "Blue Rose" tradition although the latter's "Hydrangeas," despite its combinations of red and yellow, retained the same blurred, indistinct qualities as his earlier ballet and theatre scenes. (Hydrangeas" was bought from the exhibition by the Tret'yakov Gallery.)

The second exhibition of the "Wreath," in St. Petersburg, was a more modest show than the first and the Burliuks were conspicuous by their absence. The catalogue listed the following: Anisfel'd, Bromirsky, A. Gaush, M. Derkach, Karev, Kraakht, N. Kubasov, Kuznetsov, E. Luksh-Makovskaya, Larionov, Matveev, N. Milioti, P. Naumov,
I. Plekhanov, Rakovich, Sar'yan, Utkin, T. Chernyshev, S. Chekhonin, V. Shavrin, M. Shitov, Fonvizen, V. Masyutin, M. Yakovlev, Jawlensky, A. Yasinsky and M. Eberman. One Soviet critic has added the Burliuks, Exter, Malevich, Mashkov and L. Popova and Lentulov, in his autobiography, stated that he participated: such additions cannot be disproved, but neither the catalogue, nor the Press reviews justify them and in the former case a confusion of facts is evident. The exhibition was organized by the painter A. F. Gaush (1873-1947) and the art critic and connoisseur, S. Makovsky, but because of their limited finances the exhibition lacked the luxury and decorative appeal of the Moscow shows. As at the winter exhibition of the "Union" Symbolism was still very much in evidence and overshadowed the essays in Neo-primitivism. This was because both of contributions by original "Blue Rose" members and of the presence of a Neo-symbolist/Expressionist group: such titles as "Leda and the Swan," "Blue Statues" (Anisfel'd) and "Morning of Love" (Rakovich) indicated that the Kalmakovian interpretation of Symbolism was acquiring followers (who, at this stage, also included Plekhanov and Masyutin). The contributions of the "Blue Rose" artists were less striking since the majority of them had been exhibited before: Kuznetsov, for example, was represented by "Fading," "Fading Sun," "Night of the
Consumptives," "Birth of the Devil" and "Girl Playing with a Rainbow"; N. Milioti was represented by "Angel of Sadness," "Noise of the Sea" and "Birth of Venus": the fact that, in most cases, these were canvases of 1904, 1905 and 1906 confirmed the impression that the "Blue Rose" was no longer a solvent, productive group. In contrast to the subdued canvases of the Symbolists the pictures of the Neo-primitivistts appeared as "bright, colourful—from the influence of Western European paintings in the Hermitage." Larionov, as uncrowned leader of the new movement, submitted several large oils, including "White Peacock," "Tea Roses" and "Garden in the Morning" all of which demonstrated his wish to accentuate coarse colour contrast and crude delineation: "White Peacock" for example, with its large areas of colour and rough texture lent the exhibition a vitality and sensuality lacking in the effete endeavours of the Symbolists. Povizen, too, was still drawing and painting like a "child of eight" anticipating his primitive still-lives at the first "Knave of Diamonds" show in the 1910. The presence of Jawlensky with his concentration on colour emphasized further the return to a pictorial barbarism. It was significant, therefore, that in his review Grabar' should have referred to the provincial company of the exhibition and contrasted it with the
one-time prestigious aristocratic aestheticism of the "World of Art." 37

Owing to the audacious and unexpected canvases of the Neo-primitivists on the one hand and to the imitative evocations of the Symbolists on the other, the exhibition encountered only hostile criticism. Makovsky, of course, praised the exhibition not only because he had a vested interest in it, but also because he was one of the few supporters of the new art amongst the leading art critics of conservative St. Petersburg. 38 The general reception of the exhibition was summed up in poeti- cized form in the weekly satirical review, "Satirikon" (see Appendix IV):

At the Exhibition, the "Wreath"

I. Anisfeld, B.

Thin, little worms
Have put out little flowers,
And down below, where there's a puddle
Mice are running around.

III. Derkach, M. A.

"Close to God" and "Worship."
Was the artist right
To exhibit two glazed tiles
And to call them "Close to God?"
- Quite right! - Awful!
IV. Karev, A. E.

"Confirmation."
On a cranberry pastila
Lie two white veins,
And to the side is somebody's nose . . .
Where's the confirmation? That's the question.

V. Milioti, N. D.

"Birth of Venus."
Epithets are superfluous
For the "Birth of Venus" —
Flowers of spring cherry
Painted in all manners.

VIII. Shutov, M. A.

The "Music of Presentiments."
Mikhail Shutov's "Music of Presentiments"
Reminds me of an unwashed negro.

X. Chernyshev, T. P.

"Etching."
The devil daubed his nose with chalk,
Pomaded his paw
And took out of his cellar
A nankeen hat.
And then this devil turned up
In Chernyshev's etching.39
The third exhibition of the "Wreath" was organized by D. Burliuk in St. Petersburg. It was a small show and did not contain the diversity of its predecessors. Essentially, it was similar to the Moscow session of the winter of 1907 because it included D. and V. Burliuk, Baranov and Lentulov, but they were complemented by the newcomer, A. A. Exter (1884-1949). The exhibits were seen to incline towards "colour and light more than line and contour" and the titles pointed to a preference for the still-life, the nude and rural subjects: "Orchard," "Camel," "Ox" (V. Burliuk); "Flowers," "Still-life" (Exter); "Bathers," "Tree," "Nude" (Lentulov). A contemporary review mentioned that "psychologism" was absent— an obvious reference to the "Blue Rose" artists—but that technique was weak; the most successful works were considered to be D. Burliuk's "August in Tauride Province" and Lentulov's nudes and still-lives. In brief, while the first "Wreath" at the end of 1907 had shown examples of Symbolism and Neo-primitivism, the third show almost two years later proved that Neo-primitivism was now the only viable and progressive art movement.

While, in 1908, the St. Petersburg public had been given the opportunity to acquaint itself with the latest trends in Russian painting, a similar exposé had been organized in Moscow which had incorporated also examples
of modern Western European art. This was the "Salon of the 'Golden Fleece,'" the first of three major exhibitions sponsored by Ryabushinsky which presented a synoptic view of Russian Symbolism and Neo-primitivism together with the Neo-primitivism and Cubism of France. The exhibition was organized, in part, by Larionov, but the choice of canvases depended on Ryabushinsky. It meant that for the first time contemporary Western European painting was seen by the Russian public on a comprehensive scale, apart from the Morozov and Shchukin collections which, in any case, were not readily accessible. Ryabushinsky did not borrow any works from the two Moscow collectors since they refused to co-operate, but imported directly from Paris or contributed from his own modest collection of Western masters. The final complement of the Western section included: Bonnard, Braque, Cézanne, Denis, Van Dongen, Gauguin, Gleizes, Le Fauconnier, Matisse, Redon, Rouault, Signac, Vuillard, Maillol and Rodin. The Russian section was almost as diverse although it was centred on two basic movements, Symbolism and Neo-primitivism: it consisted of: Fonvizin, Goncharova, Karev, N. I. Khrustachev, Knabe, Knuznetsov-Volzhsky, Kuznetsov, Larionov, Matveev, V. Milioti, Ryabushinsky, Sar'yan, Shitov, Ul'yanov and Utkin. Although Ryabushinsky's sympathies lay with the
"Blue Rose" group, he was sufficiently aware to realize that Symbolism as a cohesive school had already run its course and it was very much with this in mind that he decided to organize such an eclectic exhibition, i.e. both to demonstrate the fragmentation which was threatening the evolution of Russian art and thereby to stimulate the growth of any emergent direction which might provide a new, distinct style. Ryabushinsky stated his motives for arranging the exhibition in an article entitled "Art, its Friends and Enemies" published in the Golden Fleece:

After rejecting any group allegiance, the Golden Fleece decided to make its physiognomy more distinctive by confronting individual groups (the St. Petersburg-Moscow "World of Art" and the "Blue Rose" group) . . . The young "Blue Rose" should have rallied, inspired by the importance and significance of the task of confronting modern Russian trends with the latest trends of the French. But a confused fermentation has already begun - a symptom of the ephemeral and lifeless qualities of blue roses. Only a small group from the flower which had faded, probably opportunely, realized that it was not the time to display trivial self-respect and discord, realized the significance of the task. . . .

Ryabushinsky's reference to discord was, presumably, to his strained relations with certain of the "Blue Rose" members, particularly Arapov and Drittenpreis who had resigned from the staff of the Golden Fleece earlier in the year; he had also quarreled with Sapunov and Sudeikin who, in any case, were becoming closer to St. Petersburg circles, and their absence at the "Salon" was a serious loss to the "Blue Rose" group. Ryabushinsky's assertion
that he had confronted the "World of Art" and the "Blue Rose" was not justified since no representatives of the St. Petersburg "World of Art" group accepted the invitation to exhibit—essentially because of the low opinion which Ryabushinsky and his magazine enjoyed in St. Petersburg.

The "Salon" opened at the beginning of April in the Khludov House on Rozhdestvenka and continued until June. Over two hundred foreign works and almost a hundred Russian were on view and visitors totalled six thousand. As with the "Blue Rose" and Moscow "Wreath" exhibitions much care was given to the interior decoration: the walls were draped with grey material, vases of flowers stood on the spiral staircase, art books lay on discreet tables and a buffet decorated with Japanese lanterns catered for the visitor's physical needs; in addition, a military band performed at the opening—as one observer remarked: "The accommodation of the exhibition wins you over as soon as you enter." Critical comments on the exhibition itself were varied although enthusiasm for the new Russian art was not great, and, as was to be expected, critics tended to praise the foreign contributions while dismissing the Russian: "It's like mass suicide. On the one hand French originals, on the other Russian imitations. . . . You get the impression of a zealous bear trying to dance a minuet with a pomaded marquise." Grabar'
did not share Matov's conservative attitude and considered the "Salon" to be the most important artistic event of the year.\(^{45}\)

The image of the bear encountered in the above critique was, despite its intended negative connotations, an indication of the impression which the coarse canvases of the Neo-primitivists created, specifically of Larionov and Goncharova, although the corresponding image of the pomaded marquise was not a happy term in the context of Matisse or Rouault. Larionov was represented by thirteen works which spanned his Impressionist and Neo-primitivist periods so that the spectator was able to trace his rapid development from early pictures such as "Rain" and "Lilac" to the vigorous, rural subjects of "Bathers in the Morning," "Bathers at Midday," "Flower-lady's Table," et al. Goncharova was represented by a series of sketches entitled "Street Impressions" (anticipating her urban pictures of c. 1912), illustrations to Knut Hamsun and five oils--"Petrovsky Park," "Singers on an Open Stage," "Urban Landscape," "Bouquet of Autumn Leaves" and "Spring Landscape." In the latter a new departure was evident in a certain "toyness" or stylized intimacy, an approach favoured by Krymov and Sudeikin after 1907: the doll-like figures, huts and miniature landscape anticipated her intense activity in the theatre after 1912. The formal simplification caused by the heightened contours
in such pictures was fundamental to the Neo-primitivist approach between 1908 and 1912 and, inevitably, the work of other painters came to be affected. This included Kuznetsov whose contributions to the "Salon" were in the main, far more precise in outline than his exhibits at the "Blue Rose" a year ago, although they were still concerned with Symbolist subjects: "Birth of Spring" (1906), "Visions of a Woman in Childbirth" (1908), "Children with Flowers" (1908), "Woman's Head" (1908), "Maternal Love" (1906), "By the Pool" (1907 (?)), "Morning" (1905), "Branches" (1908), "Morning Song" (1907 (?)) and five untitled entries. They shared the usual motifs of mothers and children, but they served not as panegyrics of femininity and of a higher spiritual plane, but rather as caricatures of them: the impression was one not of aetheriality, but of despair and death, an impression evoked both by the artist's traditional use of pale colours and by his new insertion of hard, exaggerated outlines, especially of features. While in one respect Kuznetsov was observing the tenets of the Symbolist credo in painting, in another he was evidently moving away from the obscurity and delicacy of his "Blue Rose" work: from formlessness he was returning to form. The influence of Neo-primitivist solidity was manifest, for example, in "Visions of a Woman in Childbirth" and "Children with Flowers" since the figures in these canvases
were more pronounced, more recognizable than the diaphanous, spectral figures in the earlier work: this new assertion of line was particularly evident in "Woman's Head" where the crude delineation of features of the person in the foreground contrasted strikingly with the "Symbolist" obscurity of the background, and undoubtedly it was this development which prompted Glagol' to remark that Kuznetsov had exhibited "carefully sketched heads . . . but he had not mastered form." Yet while stylistically Kuznetsov was modifying certain elements, thematically he was exhausting his stock of subjects by vulgar reiteration and this, of course, convinced the Moscow public that the collapse of the "Blue Rose" school was imminent. This impression was enforced by the divergent canvases of Sar'yan who had achieved a decisive move from "l'azure" to the "sun." For the most part his contributions were of late 1907: "On the Pomegranate Tree" (1907), the "Comet" (1907), "Gay Day" ("Pestryi den'") (1907), "Women with Coloured Fabrics" (1907), the "Lizard" (1907), "Poet" (1906) and "Hot Day" (1908) (Figure 44). The most remarkable change in these later canvases was one of colour because instead of the grey, blue and green peculiar to his Symbolist work, Sar'yan was now employing red, orange and yellow; in fact, his concentration on vivid colour was so excessive now that
it appeared almost as if he was treating the canvas purely as an exercise in combining colour masses. While the artist acknowledged the stimulus of Gauguin and Matisse, with whose works he was now familiar, the real reason for his move from fantasy to concrete reality was determined by his local environment, Armenia, with its continuous sunshine, its bright colours and diverse natural phenomena. Sar’yan’s assertion that he "took to the path of Realism" in 1908 was indeed justified by his canvases at the "Salon," for his juxtaposition of planes not by chiaroscuro but by arrangement of colour masses, his accentuation of textural qualities and his firm outlines were elements quite opposed to his dream pictures of before 1907. In his application of these elements Sar’yan could be considered as a member of the Neo-primitivist camp, although he did not incline towards the stylized, "wooden" kind of painting which such artists as Krymov, Sudeikin and even Goncharova were favouring then: significantly, Sar’yan remained an easel painter and did not transfer his loyalty to the theatre as so many of his colleagues did and this, of course, was symptomatic of his overriding concern with the intrinsic properties of painting per se.

Of the remaining contributors Fonvizen was the most notable. His eighteen works, including thirteen sketches,
were, in the main, theatrical and Hoffmannesque as at the Moscow "Wreath" show. Although the crude outlines and childish emphasis of salient features betrayed an unstable technique, especially clear in "Short Pause During a Walk," it was obvious that Ponvizen was an avid supporter of Neo-primitivism (Figure 45): in any case, at this time he was a close friend of Larionov and Goncharova and it was only on Larionov's initiative that Ponvizen's works were submitted to the "Salon," Ponvizen himself then being abroad in Munich. 49

Of the remaining "Blue Rose" artists little of value appeared. Utkin was represented by seven canvases including "Before the Dawn" ("Mezhduzor'e"); "Lovers of the Storm" and "Night" all executed according to his earlier principles and they indicated no development towards Neo-primitivism. The same was true of Knabe and V. Milioti.

Since the decline of the "World of Art" movement and the emergence of the "Blue Rose" group in the early 1900s, it had become evident that the development of Russian painting would be maintained by provincial forces rather than by sophisticated, cosmopolitan trends. The "Blue Rose," of course, had been centred on Saratov and Moscow and the new movement of Neo-primitivism also relied heavily on Moscow and other centres outside
the capital. Many members of the Neo-primitivist and later avant-garde groups originated from rural back-
grounds and transferred, as it were, the primitive 
vitality of the countryside to their painting: this was 
true, for example, of the Burliuks, Exter, Larionov, 
Lentulov, Malevich, O. V. Rozanova (1886-1918), Shev-
chenko, V. E. Tatlin (1885-1953) and N. A. Udaltsova 
(1886-1961). Although most of them moved to Moscow, gen-
erally as students, they did not forget their provincial 
environment and even cultivated their interest in it: 
this, in turn, contributed to the formulation of some 
of their theoretical and practical output—for example, 
the credo of the "Donkey's Tail" group—and prompted their 
discovery of peasant artists such as Niko Pirotsmanashvili 
(1862-1918) and P. Kovalenko.

By mid-1908 a group of young artists had been formed 
in Kiev by D. Burliuk. It was one of many, ephemeral 
provincial groupings which appeared during the avant-
garde period, but its role in the evolution of Russian 
painting was important acting both as a catalyst for the 
development of Neo-primitivism and as a declaration of 
the debt of the Russian avant-garde to the "Blue Rose" 
movement. The name of the group was the "Link" which, 
according to documentary sources, had only one exhibition 
of that name, in Kiev; it has been suggested that the
group exhibited under that name for the first time in St. Petersburg, but factual evidence for this view has not been found. The Burliuks' family home was at Kherson, near Kiev, and one of their most important fellow-contributors, Exter, was from Kiev itself. Other exhibitors included V. D. Falileev (1879-1949) and a certain V. A. Lokkenberg; it is also possible that Fonvizen, Goncharova, Larionov and Lentulov took part, although the newspaper reviews do not support this.

The "Link" exhibition opened on 2nd November in Kiev, on the Kreshchatnike, and it closed at the end of that month. It was organized by D. and V. Burliuk and the tasteful interior decoration associated it with the "Blue Rose," "Wreath" and "Salon" shows: it was, in fact, possible that Ryabushinsky was consulted over the project and even contributed finances, the more so since the review of the opening in the local Press referred to the "Wreath" and Golden Fleece" circles. The exhibition was illuminated by electric light in the evenings, a novelty for the Russian provinces in 1908, a buffet was in continuous service and an evening of poetry reading and music was arranged for the 16th November. On the last day of the month an auction of exhibits was held, the catalogue for which contained furniture, clocks and embroideries as well as the pictures. Unfortunately,
little detailed information was provided by the Press although it was reported that Exter submitted many canvases including "Brittany," Falileev contributed "Snow," "Rain," "Wind" and "Geese by Night" and V. Burliuk was represented by pictures of "pigs, goats, turkeys, camels, oxen, borzois and one canvas which is the crudest monstrosity—a portrait of a noseless man which V. Burliuk has called 'Summer Landscape.'"53 A particularly intriguing piece of information provided by the newspaper sources was that most of the artists painted in blue and that the walls were draped with "faded blue bits of chintz"—a fact which takes on added significance when one considers that the Burliuks were responsible for the similar decoration of the Moscow "Wreath" show and that some "Blue Rose" artists may have been represented here; in any case, Exter was painting predominantly in blue at this time, as a review of a local exhibition in March that year had indicated: "Mr. (sic) Exter has daubed his canvas with unrelieved blue paint, the right corner with green and signed his name. . . ."54 Whatever the derivation of the blueness of the exhibition, the exhibitors were quite aware of their debt to the "Blue Rose" artists and their manifesto, attached to the catalogue, made this clear. This declaration was entitled the "Voice of an Impressionist — in Defence of Painting"
and its tone betrayed the authorship of D. Burliuk. The word, Impressionist, was, however, misleading, since it had little to do with the Western European movement of that name and referred to a circle of St. Petersburg artists founded by Kul'bin earlier in 1908, called the "Impressionists." Impressionism for this group meant intuitivism and subjectivism, a doctrine supported by the St. Petersburg Neo-symbolists. The group's first show had been as a joint contribution to Kul'bin's "Exhibition of Modern Painting" also earlier in 1908 and it was probable that the Burliuks had taken part. The manifesto issued at the "Link," is a document of considerable importance in the history of the Russian avant-garde since it formed the first of a series of sensational, anti-social protests culminating in the Futurist manifestos of after 1910:

The "Voice of an Impressionist - in Defence of Painting"

I see exhibitions of pictures packed out with noisy crowds.
The priests of art go off in their motor-cars, carrying away their gold in bags closed tight. Complacent bourgeois, your faces shine with the joy of understanding. You have fathomed the profound meaning of the pictures! I'm not worried for the true art burning in the canvases of geniuses. The crowd does not see, it smells, but the fire of art does not burn and there's no stench of lard from it. It is lucid just as the column of smoke blazes up bearing the soul away to the blue of purgatory!
The bitter lard, fumes and stench are in the works of those whom the crowd loved, whom they fed so long with sweet praises that they ceased to resemble living creatures.

The art of the past is all that painting in which time has passed by with a delicate net of decrepit wrinkles!

The works of genius and mediocrity - the latter are justified for they have historic interest.

The painting of those who have long since decayed (who they were is forgotten, a riddle, a secret), how you upset the XIX century. Until the '30s the age of Catherine was enticing, alluring and delightful: precise and classical.

Savage vulgarization. The horrors of the "Wanderers" - general deterioration - the vanishing aristocratic order. Hooligans of the palette a la Makovsky and Aivazovsky, etc.

Slow growth, new ideals - passions and terrible mistakes!

Since the first exhibition of the "World of Art" in 1899 there has been a new era. Artists look to the West. The fresh wind blows away Repin's chaffy spirit, the bast shoe of the "Wanderers" loses its apparent strength. But it's not Serov, not Levitan, not Vrubel's vain attempts at genius, not the literary Diaghilevans, but the "Blue Rose," those who grouped round the Golden Fleece and later the Russian Impressionists nurtured on Western models, those who trembled at the sight of Gauguin, Van Gogh (the synthesis of French trends in painting) - these are the hopes for the renovation of Russian painting. . . .

Despite its generalities, rash judgements and aberrations (in regard to Vrubel'), this manifesto was the only contemporary statement written by artists which recognized the significance of the "Blue Rose" to the evolution of Russian painting, specifically, Neo-primitivism. At the same time it pointed forwards to the extremist declarations of the Cubo-futurists. As a comment on the two movements, Symbolism and Neo-primitivism, it underlined
a fundamental difference between the two: the "Blue Rose" had remained socially and politically alien to society never even voicing its philosophy; Neo-primitivism, uncouth and ill-mannered, declared its credo publicly and vociferously, shattering the dreams and silence of the Symbolist school.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VII


4. GRM, fund 237, ed. dep. 2695.

5. Ibid.

6. For example, see the list of owners in the catalogue to Goncharova's one-man show, Moscow, 1913.

7. G. Chulkov, Gody stranstvi, M., 1930, p. 188.

8. "Gasnute v serdtse nevzleelayanye aly, gibnut tsvetiki osmeyannoi vesny." The original source of these lines has not been traced, although the artist, Dmitriev, attributed them to Bryusov.

9. A. Benua, "Dnevnik khudozhnika" in Moskovskii ezhenedel'nik, 1907, 17 November.


13. See Notes 3 and 5 to Chapter VI in this text.


15. This according to A. Chebotarevskaya, "Khudozhnik S. Yu Sudeikin" in Novaya zhizn', M., 1914, kn. 2.


20. Ibid.


23. S. Glagol', "Iz zhizni iskusstva. Vavilonskoe stolpotvorenie" in Moskovskii ezhnedel'nik, 1908, 22 January, No. 4.

24. This kind of description was used very often of unconventional pictures: cf. Grishin's review of the "Crimson Rose" exhibition in Saratovskii listok, 1904, 11 May (see Chapter IV in this text); reviewing the 1906 "World of Art" exhibition Stasov referred to the "bacilli" and "bacteria" of N. Milioti's work - V. Stasov, "Nashi nyneshnie dekadenty" in Izbrannye sochineniya, M., 1937, t. 1, p. 670; also see Repin's review of Izdebsky's "Salon" in Birzhevye vedomosti, 1910, 20 May (reprinted in catalogue of "Salon," Odessa, 1910, p. 33).


27. Matov, "Khudozhestvennaya khronika."

28. The role of the individual vis-à-vis society interested Yakulov deeply. See his essay: "Chelovek tolpy" in Zhizni iskusstva, 1924, No. 2, pp. 9–10; No. 3, pp. 7–9.

30. S. Glagol', "Iz zhizni iskusstva."


32. V. Milioti, "O "Soyuze"" in Zolotoe runo, 1908, No. 1, p. 95.

33. S. Glagol', "Iz zhizni iskusstva."

34. L. D'yakonitsyn, Ideinye..., Chapter 6.

35. A. Lantulov, "Avtobiografiya."

36. Ibid.

37. I. Grabar', "'Soyuz' i 'Venok,'" p. 142.


39. Gudim Bodai-Korova, "Na vystavke 'Venok'" in Satirikon, 1908 (June), No. 2. See Appendix IV in this text.

40. "Khronika" in Zolotoe runo, 1909, No. 4, p. 84.

41. Ibid.

42. N. Shinsky (N. Ryabushinsky), "Iskusstvo, ego druz'ya i vragi" in Zolotoe runo, 1908, No. 7/9, p. 123.

43. Matov, "Salon "Zolotogo runa" in Russkii artist, 1908, 27 April, No. 14

44. Ibid.

45. I. Grabar', "Salon "Zolotogo runa"" in Vesy, 1908, No. 6, p. 91.

46. S. Glagol', "Iz zhizni iskusstva. Salon "Zolotogo runa" i "Vesennyaya vystavka"" in Moskovskii ezhenedel'nik, 1908, 20 May, No. 20.

47. See: M. Sar'yan, "Avtobiograficheskie svedeniya" in introduction to the catalogue of his exhibition of works, Moscow, 1936.

48. Ibid.


52. This according to advertisement in Kievlyanin, 1908, 1 November, No. 303.

53. I. Chuzhanov, "Vystavki. "Zveno!"

54. Quoted from, A. Filippov, "Vystavka zhurnala "V mire iskusstv"" in V mire iskusstv, 1908, No. 2/3.

55. From catalogue of "Zveno," Kiev, November, 1908. The text is quoted from Skirgello's review of the exhibition in Kievlyanin, 1908, 30 November, No. 332 and from I. Chuzhanov's review (op. cit.). See Appendix V in this text.
Chapter VIII

"Artists of the World, Disunite!"  
(Y. Karatygin, 1906)¹

The advent of Neo-primitivism at the end of 1907 and its rapid move to the forefront of Russian art in 1908 overshadowed the exploits of the "Blue Rose" group, at least as it had manifested itself between 1904 and 1907. Most of the individual members had moved away from Symbolism as an artistic credo by mid-1908 and some of them, notably Krymov, Sapunov, Sar'yan and Sudeikin became associated with the Neo-primitivist movement. The leader of the "Blue Rose," Kuznetsov, did not turn to Neo-primitivism or at least to a more concrete interpretation of reality until after 1910 and continued to paint in a Symbolist manner through 1909 and most of 1910; Utkin, too, continued to paint according to earlier principles. In any case, the "Blue Rose" group did maintain some vestige of its original cohesion, however divergent its members' styles, even after 1912, as their joint contributions to exhibitions showed. In addition, their initial Symbolist doctrine was pursued, albeit in a different form, by the St. Petersburg Neo-symbolists.
which, in turn, contributed to the establishment of a small Expressionist group after 1910.

The presence of a Symbolist/Expressionist style during the avant-garde years played an important role as an organic tradition of painting in the face of the surrounding cultural disintegration. The tempo of artistic life accelerated as Neo-primitivism and ensuing trends came into open conflict with the canons of conservative taste. As the old disciplines weakened numerous groups arose intensifying the process of fragmentation; particularly active as a destroyer of the old art was D. Burliuk, but his artistic substitutions were often of debatable merit and arbitrary, a failing which inspired the formation of such derogatory terms as "burlyukat!" ("to fool around") and "burlyukstvo" ("fooling around").

With the collapse of artistic rules, it became easier to paint and many untalented artists joined the ranks of the avant-garde, although the great names which we associate with the period—Malevich, Shevchenko, Tatlin—worked according to an intellectual system observing certain artistic priorities. In this sense, the loyalty of Kuznetsov to the principles of the "Blue Rose" was to be commended and it is not surprising that as a thinker and a painter he accepted a new trend cautiously. Therefore, in one respect, the presence of Kuznetsov at the avant-
garde exhibitions of 1909 and 1910 was reassuring since he retained an organic link with the immediate past of Russian painting vis-à-vis the complex of new and conflicting tendencies. Indeed, the importance of the several catholic exhibitions of these years lay in their simultaneous presentation of the rational and the capricious, the authentic and the imitative.

At the beginning of 1909 the critic and editor of *Apollon*, S. Makovsky, organized a comprehensive exhibition called the "Salon." Although Makovsky was a member of the St. Petersburg cultural hierarchy and in artistic preferences favoured the "World of Art" artists, he was of sufficiently wide horizons to acknowledge the significance of the new movements and, in any case, had been one of the few enthusiastic supporters of the "Blue Rose." When he assumed a position of authority in the St. Petersburg art world he followed in Diaghilev's footsteps by organizing exhibitions, particularly one-man shows in the offices of *Apollon*, writing articles and frequenting the upper echelons of society. By family ties he was very close to the sphere of art, specifically painting, since his father, Konstantin Egorovich (the Makovsky whom Burliuk had censured in "Voice of an Impressionist") and uncle, Vladimir Egorovich, were both members of the "Wanderers" and his sister, Elena Luksh-Makovskaya was a
fringe member of the "World of Art." Although quick to recognize new trends, Makovsky received them with hesitation and his caution was reflected in his "Salon." As with Diaghilev Makovsky attempted to sustain an aristocratic superiority in his dealings with artists, especially with those from Moscow and the provinces and considered it an honour for them to be invited to contribute—as Petrov-Vodkin commented: "Lolling in an armchair letting hang his long nailed hand with its gold bracelet, the future 'Apollon' told me through his teeth how élite those artists were who had been favoured with a part in the 'Salon.'" Such a patronizing attitude did, of course, produce negative results, indicative of which was Larionov's and Goncharova's refusal to participate.

Makovsky's "Salon" opened on 4th January, 1909 and closed at the beginning of February. Its accommodation was in part of Prince Menshikov's former palace which provided ample space for the large number of exhibits, at least 450, although lighting was poor and pictures were hung too close together. In the second volume of his Pages of Art Criticism issued in the same year, Makovsky advanced what he considered to be the main aim of the exhibition: "The time of narrow pictorial seclusion is over. The time has come for unifying exhibitions. . . . We need a Russian "Salon"—a concentration of all
that is valuable and characteristic not only of the Russian artist, but also of world art. 3 Although several important names were missing at the "Salon," Larionov and Goncharova among them, this exhibition did present the most comprehensive selection of Russian trends witnessed thitherto, and this universality provoked a variety of comments. Petrov-Vodkin, for example, saw it as a test of strength between the art of St. Petersburg and that of Moscow: "... a rift had to take place between St. Petersburg and Moscow. The 'Salon' exhibition served as a touchstone for taking stock of forces in case of a rift"; 4 the critic, M. L. (Larionov?), writing a review for the Golden Fleece felt, on the other hand, that the "Salon" was simply a badly organized potpourri of paintings, graphics and sculptures. 5 But whatever its disadvantages, the "Salon" did demonstrate the similarities and differences between specific movements—the "World of Art" (first and second generations), the "Blue Rose," the Neo-primitivists, the Munich school and several unaffiliated artists. The catalogue contained: Bakst, Benois, Bilibin, Lanceray, Mitrokhin, Somov, Denisov, Drittenpreis (unlisted, but present), Feofilaktov, Krymov, N. Milioti, Sapunov, Sudeikin; D. Burliuk, Konchalovsky, Yakulov; Jawlensky, Kandinsky, Werefkina; V. Izdebsky, Petrov-Vodkin; in addition, Borisov-Musatov, Chiurlionis and Vrubel' were represented.
Although Neo-primitivism, as interpreted by Larionov and Goncharova, played only a minor role at the "Salon" (Burliuk and Konchalovsky scarcely did justice to the leaders' principles), a particular kind of stylized, primitive art was contributed by the former Symbolists, Krymov, Sapunov and Sudeikin. By this time these artists had completely rejected the devices of the "Blue Rose" aesthetics and had turned decisively to colour and tactile form. Unlike Larionov, however, they did not resort to the painting of large canvases, but reduced landscapes and still-lives to miniature, toy-like proportions. The consequent theatricalization of reality, especially noticeable in the works of Sapunov and Sudeikin, pointed to their recognition of the "World of Art" principles and separated them still farther from the pictorial fluidity of the original "Blue Rose" output. This intense concern with structure was more typical of Somov, whom Sapunov and Sudeikin greatly admired, but his interest in the 18th century was not assimilated by Krymov who remained outside the direct influence of the "World of Art." The inclination towards Neo-primitivism manifest in the work of these three artists, albeit in varying degrees, was stimulated undoubtedly by the revival of interest in peasant art initiated by Larionov and Goncharova. By the end of 1908 artists were making a systematic examination of specific forms such as the "lubok," the sign-board
and wood-carving and this affected both their theoretical and practical work: it is significant, therefore, that by 1908 Sudeikin was already an avid collector of antique Russian toys, porcelain and fabrics, that Sapunov was collecting peasant made furniture and ceramics and that Burliuk was assembling his fine collection of sign-boards. Such activities were part of a widespread attention to the indigenous sources of Russian art which culminated in the nationalist concept declared by Larionov at the "Target" exhibition in 1913. In the case of the "Blue Rose" artists who in 1907 had been concerned still with the ulterior-reality, the visual discovery of domestic motifs, emphatic colours and solid forms was one of immediate consequence and assisted in that liquidation of decadence which Blok called for at the end of 1908. The transference of a rural freshness to easel painting was embodied by Burliuk's contributions—"Oxen," "Horse," "Cabbage"—which formed a bold contrast to the mystical panneaux of Denisov and N. Milioti and the aesthetic essays of Benois and Stelletsky. The naïveté of peasant painting was reflected both in the choice of subject and in the formal approach of Krymov, Sapunov and Sudeikin: Krymov submitted "Storm" (1908), "Morning in the Mist" (1908 (?)), "After the Rain" (1908), "Game of Dice" (1908) and "Women at a Table" (1908 (?)); Sapunov submitted
"Carousel" (1908) (Figure 46), "Pantomime" (1908) and "Landscape" (1908); Sudeikin submitted "View of an Estate" (two versions, both of 1907), "Trip to the Mill" (1908), the "Storm" (1909), "Ballet Pastoral" (1906) "Strolling" (1908), "Russian Venus" (1907), the "Alcove" (1907) and a design for a frontispiece of the Scales (1907). The bright colours, thick paint and crude delineation of such works as "Carousel" and Sudeikin's "Storm," the child-like figures and farm-yard scene of Krymov's the "Storm" betrayed familiarity with the "lubok": it was this which prompted Benois to remark on the current popularity of peasant art:

One of the notable phenomena of the art of our time is what I call "turning to the 'lubok'"... Recently artists were escaping from the realist countryside into the fantasy of Versailles, into golden dreams, into refined delights. Now, from those same magic castles whither the rabble has penetrated artists are escaping to the peasant, to his simple-hearted joys, to his brightly coloured toys, from him they want to learn how to look at things simply, radically and to laugh coarsely but happily. . . .

Benois' attitude to this trend was not, however, positive since he saw it as a symptom of the artistic disintegration of his time, a passing fashion, a culture without a cult.

Makovskv's "Salon" demonstrated this disintegration convincingly by its juxtaposition of styles, which wavered between the naturalism of Levitan and the almost non-representational studies of Kandinsky ("Two Movements,"
"Scenes," "Landscape with Figures" "Autumn Study" (two versions) and three colour engravings). In this respect the "Salon" acted as a preview of the post-1910 years, the period when Cubo-futurism intensified the process of fragmentation culminating in the ultimate reduction to Suprematism. At the "Salon," however, there was still a sense of organicality, even of tradition, since the three harbingers of the "Blue Rose" movement—and subsequently of the avant-garde—were well represented, i.e. Borisov-Musatov, Chiurlionis and Vrubel', so that with the exception of Kuznetsov and Larionov the artistic development of the first decade of the 20th century was summarized adequately. Paradoxically, Symbolism and Neo-symbolism were ignored at least as far as the "Blue Rose" and the St. Petersburg movement were concerned and it took a different, but simultaneous, exhibition to present them. This was the "Exhibition of the Golden Fleece" organized by Ryabushinsky.

Much later Petrov-Vodkin recalled the position of Russian art around 1909:

The cult of decadence was felt in every crevice. There was no school . . . In Moscow, in decadent languor the Golden Fleece was ending its days . . . the banner raised by Shchukin began its revolutionary cause. Young artists bristled up . . . went beyond any sensible limit, became anarchic and rejected any teaching.9

The search for a new school to replace that of Symbolism was the express aim of the "Golden Fleece" exhibition (January-February, 1909)—although Symbolism was well
represented, perhaps indicative of Ryabushinsky's "decadent languor." This enterprise was not as comprehensive as Makovsky's, although it did contain a Western European section as in 1908, and limited its Russian complement to just over a hundred items. The emphasis of the show was on Symbolism as represented by Kuznetsov and on Neo-primitivism as represented by Larionov and Goncharova, and there was no contribution from St. Petersburg both because of Makovsky's parallel "Salon" and because of the antipathy felt there towards Ryabushinsky.

The catalogue listed the following as Russian exhibitors: Ponvizen, Goncharova, Karev, Knabe, Kuznetsov-Volzhsky, Kuznetsov, Larionov, Matveev, V. Milioti, Naumov, Petrov-Vodkin, Plekhanov, Ryabushinsky, Sar'yan, Ul'yanov and Utkin; the French section included Braque, Derain, Le Fauconnier, Matisse and Rouault totalling forty-eight works. Although Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh were missing at this exhibition, it was as popular as its predecessor in 1908 and was visited by 8,000 people.

Larionov helped in the organization and, as at the "Blue Rose" and "Salon" exhibitions, Ryabushinsky supported it financially, this time relying on purchases as reimbursement. Ryabushinsky also wrote the preface to the catalogue which as the declaration of a formal "Blue Rose" member (however minor) deserves some attention.
A distinctive feature of what Russian art is undergoing at the present time is the decomposition and necrosis of previous groups... Distinguished by the "Blue Rose" exhibition organized by the Golden Fleece and appearing now for the second year this group of artists has broken with the group of aesthetes and Symbolists in its searches. Its essential feature is its aspiration to overcome formulae which have already grown stagnant: of aestheticism which has broken the link between the colourful joys of the eye and those, more profound, which excite the spirit; and of historicism which has narrowed the area of personal experiences.... (the French are more of sensualists, the Russian artists have more spirituality).... Here we see the overcoming of aestheticism and historicism, there a reaction against Neo-academism into which Impressionism degenerated. If the forefathers of this movement in France were Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh, the first stimulus in Russia was provided by Vrubel' and Borisov-Musatov.10

Ryabushinsky's statement was not borne out by the exhibition since "aestheticism" was still present in the work of Kuznetsov and Utkin, both still close to their "Blue Rose" principles. Their formal modifications which had been observed at the Moscow "Salon" were certainly more emphatic here, but their subject-matter relied heavily on Symbolism. According to the catalogue Kuznetsov contributed: the "Bride" (1908), "Holiday" (three versions) (1908) (Figure 47), "Christening" (1908), "Birth" (1906), "Infants Bathing" (1906) (Figure 48), "To the Sea" (1907), "Night" (1907), "Morning" (1905), "Study of a Woman" (1908) and "Self-portrait" (1907) (Figure 49). To a certain extent these works, for the most part oils, approached the materiality of Larionov: shapes were delineated coarsely, features were exaggerated
and a toy-like quality was evident in the embryonic figures, remindful of the contemporaneous "marionette" landscapes of Krymov, Sapunov and Sudeikin. But unlike them Kuznetsov was still faithful to the "Blue Rose" colours of blue, grey and green and it was not until later that year that Kuznestov began to alter his spectrum. However, even at this exhibition there was one exception, an unlisted work submitted presumably at the last moment: this was "Woman with a Dog" which although displaying the pessimism and despair of the artist in the woman's tragic face, pointed to a concern with more vital colours--brown, yellow and dark blue. In the case of Utkin this tendency was not visible and his contributions--"Flood-lands" (three versions), "Frost" (two versions), "Frost-Madness" (Figure 50), "Morning Prayer," "Winter Moon" and "Sketch"--demonstrated the same formlessness and allusiveness characteristic of his earlier work. Kuznetsov and Utkin were neglected by the established critics such as Grabar', although a newcomer, G. E. Tasteven (1880 (?)–1916) (pen-name Empirik) who was shortly to achieve renown as a champion of Futurism, praised the canvases of Kuznestov. In his opinion, Kuznetsov, V. Milioti and Utkin had overcome the "decadent aestheticism which had confined the field of painting" by aspiring towards a new, realist Symbolism espoused by
S. M. Gorodecky, G. I. Chulkov, V. Ivanov and A. M. Remizov. In this sense he called Kuznetsov a "realist-mystic" who had established contact with nature, thereby conquering impressionistic aestheticism. Tastevan's reasoning was not convincing especially when he placed V. Milioti amongst the successful artists at the exhibition and ignored Larionov and Goncharova who, of all the exhibitors, had rejected aestheticism and returned to concrete reality. Grabar', however, did recognize the value of the Neo-primitivists and condemned the "grimaces" of V. Milioti.

Larionov and Goncharova were well represented and emphasized the widening gulf between Symbolism and Neo-primitivism. Larionov contributed: "Marina," "Fish" (two versions), "Heads of Bathers," "Study," "Sea-shore," "Through Nets," "Restaurant by the Seaside," "Shells," "Pears," "Peacock," "Landscape after the Rain" (Figure 51), "Tulips" and one sketch; Goncharova contributed: "Pierrot and Columbine," "Spring Walk," "Circus," "Spring Bouquet," "Restaurant," "Supper During a Masquerade," "At the Dacha," "Beggars," the "Deserted Pond," "Migraine," "Rain," "Landscape" and one sketch. Of the two artists Larionov was the most forceful at this exhibition since the ebullience and vigour of Neo-primitivism was more in keeping with his character, while Goncharova's endeavours
in this area were adulterated by her inclination towards lyricism and decorativism. It was her lack of aggressiveness which prompted Grabar' to remark that "It's alright when Larionov paints Larionovian pictures, but when Goncharova paints them, it's tedious." Of Larionov's works Grabar' was impressed particularly by "Pears" while his comment on "Peacock"—that it was "deprived of any sense of rhythm"—pointed to the static, tangible approach of Neo-primitivism vis-à-vis the visual dynamism of Symbolism. Typical of Larionov's Neo-primitivist works of 1908/1909 was "Restaurant by the Seaside," a simple scene of people in the grounds of an open-air restaurant (reputedly, the picture depicts Larionov, Goncharova and his friends). Structurally the picture was simple consisting of a complex of horizontals and verticals and this was supported by the arrangement of the figures moving either across the surface of the canvas, or at right angles to it. Perspective, although observed in part, was disrupted by the appearance of the sea in the top half of the scene, a compositional device immediately reminiscent of children's painting. The colours were bright—red, orange and green—and were used to achieve formal contrast rather than to decorate: this colour-scheme, matched by a neglect of shading, created the impression that the
artist was far more interested in the painterly elements of the picture than in the transmission of a scene from reality to a two-dimensional space. Obviously, Larionov was now concerned with the "how" rather than the "what" of painting and it was this attitude developed over the next few years which would culminate in Rayonism. In retrospect, Larionov's searches could be seen as the extension of the "Blue Rose" painting in which "narrative is absent, precision of imagery is neglected," but at that time those qualities were a side-issue and had never constituted the central aim of the Symbolist group. Nor, at this time, had Larionov formulated a precise ideology and only unconsciously was he turning away from representationalism.

The attention to specific elements of painting encountered in the work of Larionov at this exhibition was shared by Petrov-Vodkin, who had recently returned from a sojourn in Paris. His contribution of five canvases—"Shore" (Figure 52), "Au Théâtre du quartier" (Two versions, "drama" and "farce" respectively), "Versailles," "In the Luxembourg Gardens"—testified to the artist's intellectual and analytical conception of painting. The "Shore," for example, served as a convincing illustration of his concentration on form, balance and movement, although this did not harm the narrative qualities of the
picture. In the "Shore" Petrov-Vodkin expressed a formal continuum not by a simple clash of colour masses as in Larionov's "Restaurant by the Seashore," but by the introduction of a series of circles: the pebbles and boulders on the beach, the postures of the women, the sea and the rolling hills in the background contributed to a continuous circular movement, an essential feature of his more famous canvases such as "Boys at Play" (1911) and "Bathing of the Red Horse" (1912) (Figure 53). Petrov-Vodkin's visual dynamism aligned him, in turn, with Borisov-Musatov and the "Blue Rose" painters with whom he sympathized, and the mythical, occasionally mystical, motifs of his early works would certainly bring to mind the term, Symbolist.

Sar'yan's renewed interest in colour was maintained at this exhibition, although the paleness and obscurity of his "Blue Rose" period were not renounced completely. He was represented by: "Leopard and Woman," "Moonlit Night," "Bathing Fairy," "Morning," "Midday-Mountains," "Sultry Midday," "Evening," "By the Sea" (two versions), "Moonlit Evening" and two untitled water-colours; except for "Bathing Fairy" (1906) they all dated from 1908. The subdued colour scheme of the "Blue Rose" pictures was evident not only in "Bathing Fairy" but also in the predominantly turquoise "Moonlit Night," but works such as "Sultry Midday" presented exercises in arrangements of
red, orange and yellow masses. In all Sar'yan's exhibits linearity was kept to a minimum and delineation of objects was achieved simply by colour contrast, a device which expressed the aerial clarity and heat of Armenia very forcefully.

Little of importance was exhibited by the remaining contributors, although Ul'yanov sent his very fine portrait of Zaitsev (commissioned by the Golden Fleece) and Ponvizen provided additional support to the Neo-primitivists with twelve titles.

By the autumn of 1909 Ryabushinsky was entering financial difficulties, although he continued to sponsor the Golden Fleece both as an art journal and as an exhibition society. In the September issue (No. 7/9) it was announced that there would be a second "Golden Fleece" exhibition at the end of December; this opened on 27th of that month and closed at the end of January, 1910.

The second exhibition entitled the "Golden Fleece" acted as a belated farewell to the "Blue Rose" movement. Its elaborate accommodation in the Khludov House on Rozhdestvenka, where Ryabushinsky's "Salon" had taken place, paid homage to the traditions of the "Blue Rose" exhibition with its vases of flowers, string orchestra, buffet and soft carpets. Because of Ryabushinsky's financial position no foreign artists were invited and this served to stress the difference between the canvases of
original "Blue Rose" members and the Neo-primitivists whose forces were considerably enlarged now. The catalogue contained the following: Baikova, Chekhonin, A. G. Chorchon, Derkach, Fal'k, Goncharova, Karev, Knabe, F. K. Konstantinov, Konchalovsky, Kuznetsov, Kuprin, Larionov, Mashkov, Naumov, Polovinkin, Ryabushinsky, Sar'yan, Shitov, N. A. Tarkhov, Ul'yanov and Utkin; the works of Polovinkin and Shitov were withdrawn at the last moment. The importance of the list lay in the appearance of a group of Neo-primitivists led by Konchalovsky who, together with Larionov and Goncharova, would form part of the "Knave of Diamonds" collective at the end of 1910: indeed, the large number of Neo-primitivist works exhibited here—at least a third of the 158 titles—formed a preview of the first "Knave of Diamonds" show in December, 1910.

Kuznetsov's contribution was centred on his usual images of women and children, even though he had been travelling in the Kirghizian steppes—which after 1910 would provide him with more vital, more positive subjects. He submitted: "Children Playing by a Bonfire" (1909), "Peasant Children" (1909), "Study for a Fresco" (1909), "Portrait of Mrs. B." (1909), "Boy" (1909 (?)) "Female Study" (1909), "Dog-trainer" (1909), "Woman with a Dog" (1909) and "Children Playing" (two versions) (1908-1909).
Kuznetsov's shift to more vivid colours noticed at the January exhibition was maintained here by the presence not only of "Woman with a Dog," but also of "Dog-trainer" which, again, emphasized brown rather than grey or light blue; but his traditional approach to colour was manifest in the several "embryonic" visions in which the new motif of dogs was interwoven with the haunting dreams of mothers and children—as Lukomsky remarked: "Kuznetsov's monsters have grown up and are 'frolicing' with dirty, shaggy dogs." The fact that they had "grown up" was perhaps indicative of the transformation which was about to occur in Kuznetsov's work and this exhibition was the last major demonstration of canvases founded directly on "Blue Rose" principles. His colleague, Utkin, complemented these Symbolist works by his own contribution still very close to his "Blue Rose" period: "By the Sea - Nights," "Lightning," "Cradle Song," "Moon Over the Sea," "Mimosa," "Study in the Crimea," "Sea-gulls," "In Mist by the Sea," "By the Sea" and the "Milky Way Above the Sea." Contrast was provided by Sar'yan whose exhibits all of 1909 included his famous self-portrait (Figure 54): this work with its vivid orange, red and yellow colour combinations was so admired by Shchukin at the exhibition that he commissioned Sar'yan to paint a portrait of his son. Of contributions by other "Blue Rose" sympathizers, only
Ul’yanov's portrait of Bal'mont was of particular significance.

The key position at the second "Golden Fleece" exhibition was occupied, of course, by the Neo-primitivists: Larionov contributed twenty canvases and two sculptures, Goncharova thirteen canvases, Fal’k seven, Konchalovsky six, Kuprin two and Mashkov seven. The prominent genre was the still life, an idiom which was especially suitable for concentration on the painterly elements of mass, colour and texture. This was more evident in the contributions of Fal’k and Mashkov than in those of Larionov which were, for the most part, earlier canvases including, for example, none of the "Soldier" series and only one "Hairdresser." With such important artists within their ranks the Neo-primitivists presented a united front against the exhausted principles of the "Blue Rose" and against that artistic fragmentation which the exhibitions of 1908 and 1909 had exposed. Their manifest attempt to recreate the objective world according to a code of rational laws rendered the final blow to the survivors of the "Blue Rose" school and yet at the same time replaced it by a definite, cohesive movement. In the last issue of the Golden Fleece the critic A. I. Toporkov (who would achieve fame as the champion of industrial art in the early 1920s) explained why the transition was necessary:
Their pictures (of the "Blue Rose" artists, J. B.) seem to be deprived of any substantial skeleton, of any density. . . . That no longer suffices. The confines of subjectivity must be broken, a cognition and feeling for things must appear, people want to touch reality. 19

This contact with reality was established by the "Knave of Diamonds" artists who followed a style of painting which remained intact at least until the early 1920s.

The sequence of grand exhibitions inaugurated by Ryabushinsky in 1908 was maintained by a provincial newcomer to the art world, V. A. Izdebsky (1882-1965). Although he was a resident of Odessa, Izdebsky was in close contact with Moscow and with Munich being a personal friend of Jawlensky, Kandinsky, Münter and Werefkina. Together with them he founded the "Neuekünstlervereinung" in Munich in 1909 and in the same year invited them to contribute to the first of his two large "Salons."

Izdebsky was a man of independent means, although he did not approach the financial stature of Ryabushinsky, and he was a sculptor in his own right as his two exhibits at Makovsky's "Salon" had shown. Belonging neither to Moscow nor to St. Petersburg, Izdebsky was able to form a more objective view of their artists, although as a native of Kiev he had a preference for those artists who had originated in south Russia—the Burliuks, Exter, etc. Like Ryabushinsky and Makovsky, Izdebsky realized that Russian art had divided into many conflicting
factions and that any exhibition of contemporary Russian art would have to represent all trends to supply a total spectrum. This he attempted to do at his first "Salon," which he dedicated to works not only from Russia, but also from the West. His "Salon. An International Exhibition of Pictures, Sculpture, Engravings and Drawings" opened in Odessa in December, 1909 and then traveled with a modified complement to Kiev (February, 1910), St. Petersburg (April/May) and Riga (June/July). Izdebsky set forth his aim in his rather shallow preface to the exhibition catalogue:

... The aim of the present "Salon" is to present a picture of contemporary art. We thought it would be more correct to give the representatives of all trends the possibility of expressing themselves. ... Artists want to stimulate ... to call Man to the intimacies of the "I". ... We wish to believe that art ... is a means to create the unknown ... another world.

Despite the subjective tone of the preface the "Blue Rose" artists were not well represented and Kuznetsov, in fact, contributed neither to the first nor to the second showings. Symbolist paintings formed only a small part of the 700 works exhibited by 150 artists and the examples of Borisov-Musatov, Denisov, Drittenpreis, Krymov and Utkin gave little indication of the former prestige of the "Blue Rose." But, of course, the exhibition was meant to be a demonstration of modern art, and, therefore, the canvases of the Neo-primitivists
--the Burliuks, Goncharova, Larionov, Lentulov and Mashkov--and of the Munich group were given prime consideration. In addition, the first and second generation of the "World of Art" (Bakst, Lancéray, Ostroumova-Lebedeva, M. Ya. Chembev-Bilibina (1874-1962), Narbut, et al.), the St. Petersburg "Impressionists" (M. V. Matyushin (1861-1934)) and the Paris-Russian school (E. S. Kruglikova (1865-1941), N. A. Tarkhov (1871-1930)) were represented adequately. The Western European section included more than forty exhibitors among them Bonnard, Braque, Metzinger, Redon, Rousseau and Vuillard.

The reception of the "Salon" by the local critics was, to say the least, cool and it was not until it reached St. Petersburg that a more objective appraisal was given. Even there where critics and artists were, allegedly, more professional the reaction was not favourable. The august Repin was quite dismayed at the presence of so much leftist art:

God! What have we seen here!!! ... I don't know where to begin ... the Devil is creeping in and is spitting cynically on the essence of life's beauty ... "Cézanne" is the best answer to this kind of painting - the snapshot of a donkey who painted a picture with his tail ... \[21\]

Repin's inaccurate reference to the "Fantasie" affair was particularly apt since it was some of those painters whom he censured who would found the "Donkey's Tail"
group in 1912. Not all observers, however, shared Repin's attitude and some saw works of artistic value amongst the "artistic illiteracy and utter ignorance". Bénois and Rostislavov were impressed with Lentulov whose contribution was one of the largest in the Russian section (several "Bathers" and still-lives) and his "extraordinary colour" associated him with the Burliuks, Exter, Larionov and Mashkov. In this respect, Izdebsky's "Salon" emphasized the unity of purpose of the Neo-primitivist groups and this impressed future disciples such as A. A. Osmerkin (1890-1953): "The great event in my life was Izdebsky's "Salon" . . . where I first became acquainted with the 'Knave of Diamonds' group." Indeed, like the 1909/1910 'Golden Fleece' show, Izdebsky's "Salon" formed a preview of the opening show of the "Knave of Diamonds" one year later.

The predominance of the Neo-primitivists at the "Salon" overshadowed the achievements of other groups. Krymov paid homage to the "Blue Rose" with his "Moonlit Night" (1906) which Rostislavov considered "good" and Utkin sent several canvases "ex catalogue." In turn, domestic art was neglected by the critics in favour of the Western imports: Bénois found Matisse the most striking since "he lies consciously, consciously by-passes the truth" while Rostislavov was most impressed by Le Fauconnier. Kandinsky received little critical attention.
although his contribution was indicative of his renewed ties with the Russian art world: he was already Munich correspondent for *Apollon*, he would be represented very shortly at the first and second "Knave of Diamonds" shows, he would be contributing to the Futurist miscellany, a Slap in the Face of Public Taste, and he would be involved in national art conventions.  

Yet despite the diversity of Izdebsky's first "Salon," it did not win the attention which it deserved both because of its provincial organization, and because of the large contribution by minor artists. Its initial reception detracted, in turn, from the impact which Izdebsky's second "Salon," in 1911, should have made. This was an exhibition of Russian art only, although the Munich school was represented by Jawlensky, Kandinsky, Münther and Werefkina: and because of the absence of the French a more vivid impression of current Russian developments could be gained. New names were added to the group of Neo-primitivists and leftists including Kuprin, V. F. Stepanova (1894–1958) (appearing under the pseudonym of A. N. Bart) and Tatlin (Figure 55). Although Kuznetsov sent nothing, the "Blue Rose" group was represented by Krymov, Utkin and, on a different level, Denisov and Fonvizen. Krymov contributed: "Birch Grove," "Evening," "Portrait of M.P.K.,” "Moonlit Night" and a study; Utkin contributed "Floodlands," five canvases dealing with the
motif of frost and the original "Blue Rose" exhibit, "Beneath the Sleeping Tent." Although the second "Salon" did not travel to other towns and was ignored by the established critics, it did have intrinsic value as an art exhibition; some of the exhibitors were there in person to explain their works to the public, and the catalogue (with a Kandinsky woodcut on the cover) contained important articles including a eulogy of the modern city by Izdebsky and an essay on content and form by Kandinsky.

Exhibiting at Izdebsky's second "Salon" was Kul'bin who was represented by eight "Intuitivist" works. By 1911 Kul'bin had achieved the reputation of a champion of leftism both from his foundation of the "Impressionist" group in 1908 and from his own theories and painting. Although he supported the Neo-primitivists and Cubo-futurists, Kul'bin's main concern was with Neo-symbolism and with so-called Intuitivism which had been emphasized in 1908 when he had invited the St. Petersburg Neo-symbolists and a blind painter to contribute to his "Exhibition of Modern Painting." In some respects Kul'bin replaced Ryabushinsky, for just as the Moscow financier had sponsored the "Blue Rose" group, so Kul'bin gave spiritual and material support to the St. Petersburg Neo-symbolists, even though their painting was derivative and of less value than that of the Moscow Symbolists; in turn,
it was partly owing to Kul'bin that St. Petersburg re-
captured some of her earlier prestige as an art centre
because Kul'bin's several exhibitions, his lectures and
propagation of the "Union of Youth" group attracted wide-
spread attention. Like Ryabushinsky, Kul'bin was not an
artist by profession although he devoted much time to
painting and to the formulation of art theories: his
position as a military doctor and as a State Counsellor
provided him with sufficient means to pursue his real in-
terests. As with Ryabushinsky his most important service
to the development of Russian art lay in his organizational
strength and unfailing generosity rather than in his own
artistic output. His consulting-room and apartment in
St. Petersburg became the meeting-place of Neo-symbolists
and Futurists alike, as G. Ivanov recalled: "At three in
the morning Konchenykh rings up to demand money. Home-
less Futurists spend the night in the sitting-room. . . .
In the morning the booming bass of D. Burliuk echoes from
the bathromm. His brother, Vladimir, demands breakfast
in bed. . . ."28 Kul'bin did not restrict his efforts
to broadcast the new art to straightforward patronal
duties, but used his medical and social influence to
absolve artists from military service as in the case of
Sapunov. Amongst the cosmopolitan art critics Kul'bin
was not accepted and was regarded as a figure of fun, but
his activities were acknowledged by artists even in printed form, e.g. by Sudeikin. Wracked by illness until his premature death in 1917, Kul'bin never slackened in his pursuit of innovation and, although aligned with the Neo-symbolists, moved in the same circles as Burliuk and Mayakovsky; indeed, it was at his invitation that Marinetti visited Russia in 1914. The painter E. K. Spandikov (1875-1929), a sympathizer of the Neo-symbolists, described Kul'bin in his unpublished obituary to him:

... he was a bit like an orang-outang, life forced him to take on airs, he loved self-advertisement, he suffered a bit from a mania of grandeur which he enjoyed and, like Leonardo-da-Vinci, was something of a dilettante. His time was a time when dilettantism smashed headlong, forcefully and fruitlessly, against the walls of the mathematical grammar of painting's canons.

Although a scientist by profession, Kul'bin attempted to undermine the traditional principles of logic by creating art by intuition: but paradoxically he advanced his own aesthetic system to justify his highly subjective art which was founded on an obscure cosmic view of the interrelations of art and reality. Within his system Kul'bin attributed certain mystical properties to letters of the alphabet and to certain signs, especially the triangle, and he was convinced of the existence of a fourth, fifth and sixth dimension. He was particularly interested in the link between emotion, intuition and the
objective world and endeavoured to abolish the concept of time from his theories as something irrelevant to sensation, as a means only of rational thought. For Kul'bin the sensation was the motive force of art and he invented a scale of intensity based on units of "kul'bins," one "kul'bin" being equal to the sensation evoked when a blunt needle is stuck into the skin to a depth of 0.01 mm. Painting, therefore, was, according to Kul'bin, the transmission of sensations—"painting is the spontaneous projection of conditional signs from the artist's brain into the picture."32 One of these signs was the triangle, which, as in the case of the Symbolists such as Belyë and V. Ivanov,33 contained unwordly connotations for Kul'bin and it was this belief which inspired him to found the "Triangle" exhibition group and to sign some of his paintings and theoretical tracts with the graphic representation of the triangle. Kul'bin achieved fame as a theorist because of his many lectures delivered between 1908 and his death, lectures which reminded listeners of a "jumbled telegramme" and the "profundity of a schoolboy."34 Rostislavov reviewed one of these lectures for Apollon:

His lecture put one in mind of a fast gallop along... all kinds of aesthetic conceptions dumped in a pile and all sorts of extraneous examples including one of a cook who knocked her heel on a bed seven times in order to get up at seven... Diction and the comical, authoritative tone of the reader did not correspond to the character of the lecture.35
At the end of 1909 Kul'bin organized his second major exhibition, called the "Impressionists," at which many Intuitivist and Neo-symbolist works were shown. Kul'bin was represented by eleven pictures which were divisionist in style and treated of melancholy, rural scenes, but they did not offer a pictorial explanation of his mystical theories. The Neo-symbolists led by Kalmakov formed the majority of the exhibitors since they now included new members such as B. D. Grigor'ev, I. S. Shkol'nik (1883-1926) and S. Ya. Shleifer (1881-1940). Titles recalled the Decadent period of the "Blue Rose," i.e. of Kuznetsov's morbid visions: "Sorrow," "Delirium" (L. Arionesko-Ball'er), "Autumnal Weeping" (L. D. Baranov), "Nightmare," "Light Shadows" (Grigor'ev), "Sorrow," "Night-Sadness" (Shkol'nik). In contrast to the dynamic achievements of Neo-primitivism, such canvases seemed a retrograde development and, of course, they embodied that deliberate cultivation of Symbolism which Benois had referred to in 1908: it was this which inspired Mayakovsky to describe them as the "same old Wanderers" cum photographers, only blue ones. The "Impressionists" published a miscellany of articles and poems in the following year which advanced their subjective philosophy in the form of Kul'bin's essay on Free Art as the Basis of Life and N. Evreinov's monodrama,
Presentation of Love with Munchian illustrations by Kul'bin (Figure 56) and L. Shmit-Ryzhova. In April, 1910 Kul'bin organized an exhibition called the "Triangle" which served as a common forum for representatives of the Neo-symbolists and of the "Wreath" group thereby forming an indirect link with the "Blue Rose" group, even though none of them contributed. The same kind of essays in mysticism and eroticism, witnessed at the "Impressionist" shows, were seen here, although Kul'bin himself submitted, among others, two intriguing canvases called "Blue on White" and "White on Green"—involuntarily one wonders whether Kulbin's Intuitivist exercises had led him to a Suprematist conclusion. The subjective visions of Ball'er and Shmit-Ryzhova contrasted sharply with the concrete, mundane canvases of the "Wreath" faction—D. and V. Burliuk, Exter, V.V. Kamensky (1864–1961) and Kovalenko—although some of the "Impressionists" were listed as members of their group too—E. G. Guro (1877–1913), Kul'bin, Matyushin, et al. Early in 1911 there was a second showing of the "Triangle" at which Moscow Symbolism was represented in the persons of Denisov, Krymov and Matveev and at which Neo-primitivism was given added support by the presence of Goncharova, Larionov, Lentulov and Mashkov. That inclination towards synthesis which had been an integral part
of Symbolist aesthetics and which, on a different level, was maintained by Neo-primitivism was illustrated here by contributions of sketches and autographs by writers including Andreev, Blok and Chekhov.

The two "Triangle" exhibitions marked the high-point of Kul'bin's career as an organization man. As the fashionable popularity of Neo-symbolism waned, so Kul'bin turned away from easel painting and concentrated increasingly on the theatre (Figure 57). His work for the Terioki Theatre and for the "Society of Intimate Theatre" brought him into closer contact with Arapov, Sapunov and Sudeikin who by 1910 had transferred their allegiance from Moscow to St. Petersburg. In any case Kul'bin's sponsorship of Neo-symbolism was taken over by the newly formed "Union of Youth" organization which, after absorbing the vestiges of Symbolism, gave birth to a tentative movement towards Expressionism.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII


6. See Larionov's preface to the catalogue of the exhibition, "Mishen'," Moscow, 1913.


12. Ibid.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.


23. A. Benua, ""Salon" i shkola Baksta" in *Rech',* 1910, 1 May, No. 117.


26. A. Benua, ""Salon" i shkola Baksta."

27. Kandinsky's contribution to *Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu* (M., 1913) consisted of four short stories from his *Klänge*; in November, 1911 he gave a lecture to the Committee for the Convention of Artists in St. Petersburg (see Russkaya khudozhestvennaya letopis', 1912, No. 18); his tract, "O dukhovnom v iskusstve" was read by Kul'bin at the Convention of Artists, St. Petersburg, December, 1911-January, 1912 (see Russkaya khudozhestvennaya letopis', 1912, No. 1).


29. See: S. Sudeikin (et al.), *Kul'bin*, St. P., 1912.
30. The date of Marinetti’s arrival in Russia is a vexed question. Documentary evidence, including newspaper reports, indicates that his first and only visit was in 1914, but some sources suggest an earlier date: see “Iz vospominani E. A. Katsmana” in N. Moleva, Konstantin Korovin. Zhizni i tvorchestvo. Pis’ma. Dokumenty. Vospominaniya, M., 1963, p. 409; also see: R. Carrieri, Futurism, Milan, N.D., p. 129. Katsman states 1909, Carrieri 1910.

31. E. Spandikov, "Nekrolog Kul’binu." GRM, Manuscript Section, fund 121, ed. dep. 87.

32. N. Kul’bin, "Novoe mirovozzrenie" (tesisy). TsGALI, fund 1497, ed. dep. 281, l. I.

33. For example, see: A. Bely, "Venets lavrovyi" in Zolotoe runo, 1906, No. 5, pp. 43-50; also see: V. Ivanov, "Granity iskusstva" in Borozdy i mezhi, M., 1916; the question interested Hippius as T. Pachmuss has shown in her book, Zinaida Hippius, Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p. 82 et seq.; and Kandinsky, in his essay, "O dukhovnom v iskusstve," expressed ideas on the subject.

34. The words are N. Radlov’s. Quoted from: E. Gollerbach, "Puti noveishego iskusstva na Zapade i u nas" in Istoriya iskusstv vsekh vremen i narodov, L., 1929, Kn. 6.


37. Studiya impressionistov, St. P., 1910.

38. The "Wreath" was still active as a small exhibition group even in October, 1910, at least in the provinces. See: B. Kozlov, "Khudozhestvennyi sezon v Ekaterinoslav" in Apollon, 1910, No. 11, p. 40.
Chapter IX

"Painting is self-sufficient: it has its own forms, colour and timbre." (M. Larionov, 1913)\(^1\)

The "Union of Youth" and the "Knave of Diamonds"

The two artistic tendencies of Neo-primitivism and Neo-symbolism which the "Blue Rose" movement gave rise to found expression as definite schools of painting in two organizations, the "Union of Youth" and the "Knave of Diamonds." The former acted as a platform for both trends, although it became more extremist after 1912, while the latter propagated Neo-primitivism and Cubo-futurism almost exclusively. These two societies, which have received only scant attention from art historians, deserve examination at this juncture both as outgrowths of the "Blue Rose" and as specific movements in the evolution of the Russian avant-garde.

The "Union of Youth"

The "Union of Youth" ("Soyuz molodezhi") was organized in the autumn of 1909 in St. Petersburg by a group of artists and literati among whom figured A. I. Ball'er (1879-1962), E. G. Guro (1877-1913), M. V. Matyushin

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(1861-1934) and O. V. Rozanova (1886-1918, wife of Kruchenykh) and it was financed at first exclusively by the entrepreneur and businessman, L. I. Zheverzheev (1881-1942). The society was registered formally in February, 1910 when it acquired many new members including the Burliuk brothers, Chagall, Denisov, P. N. Filonov (1883-1941), Goncharova, Kalmakov, Karev, Kul'bin, Larionov, Malevich, Mayakovsky and V. E. Tatlin (1885-1953); in addition, it introduced a new generation of St. Petersburg graphists to the art world such as D. I. Mitrokhin and P. I. L'vov (1882-1944). From 1910 until its disintegration in 1914 the "Union of Youth" contributed regularly to the St. Petersburg art scene; in 1917 there was an attempt to renew its activity but this was of no avail. It was Zheverzheev who managed the society as a business undertaking and endeavoured to base its viability on profits from theatre productions sponsored by it and on commissions on pictures sold at its exhibitions. Yet although the society was run according to such commercial principles, it incurred heavy losses and Zheverzheev and other members were forced increasingly to subsidize it from their own private funds—a defect which caused S. Makovsky, editor of the well-organized and well financed journal, Apollon, to comment that the "'Union of Youth' is . . . no more than a kind of one-sided, casual enterprise, not thought out properly and
hastily put together. The derivation of the name is obscure: just as we do not know for sure who suggested the title, "Blue Rose," for the Moscow-Saratov Symbolist group, so it is open to question who invented the name, "Union of Youth." Since the chairman of the society, Zheverzheev, was a devotee of the theatre, it does seem probable that he borrowed the name from Ibsen's play De Unges Forbund, which had been translated into Russian precisely as Soyuz molodezhi, and thereby he stressed the revolutionary fervour of his society of young intellectuals; whether that was the case, or whether the name was chosen merely as a rubric for a school of new artists and writers, the "Union of Youth" soon became synonymous in the eyes of the Establishment with artistic extremism, sensation and capricious experimentation. To a certain extent this was true, as it was true of Futurism in general, but the "Union of Youth" was also an organizational and creative force which contributed significantly to the more profound accomplishments of the Russian avant-garde. As a powerful society with its own secretary, I. S. Shkol'nik and lawyer, E. K. Spandikov, it assumed a role of art patron similar to that which Diaghilev had played in the early 1900s and which Ryabushinsky played between 1906 and 1910: it arranged exhibitions, public debates and public lectures, it published members' books and its
own almanach, it subsidized theatrical presentations and it sponsored visits by foreign intellectuals (contributing, incidentally, to the financial arrangements for Marinetti's trip to Moscow and St. Petersburg early in 1914). As with the "World of Art" and "Golden Fleece" circles, the "Union of Youth" propagated both Russian and non-Russian art: it maintained direct contact with "Der Sturm" and "Der Blaue Reiter" groups, it ran articles on Western and Oriental art in its booklets (the first full translations of two Boccioni-Severini Futurist manifestos appeared in No. 2 and a résumé of Gleizes' and Metzinger's "Du Cubisme" by Matyushin appeared in No. 3) and at one time—during the All-Russian Congress of Futurist Writers in Finland in the summer of 1913—it attempted to form an alliance with Finnish and Swedish avant-garde writers. It is relevant to mention at this juncture that one of the "Union's" leading theoreticians, Vladimir Markov (Russian name of Waldemar Matvei (1877-1914)), was the first Russian art critic to make detailed examinations of African, Chinese and Polynesian art forms.

The fact that the "Union of Youth" is mentioned in the context of both literature and painting is significant, for, as its name would imply, it sought to unite the talents of young writers, painters and even musicians under the umbrella of a single cultural organization—
very much as the "Golden Fleece" had done. Apart from Fonvizen, none of the "Blue Rose" painters was an actual member, although some of them, particularly Sapunov and Sudeikin, contributed to theatrical productions staged under the auspices of the "Union." It was the aspiration towards artistic synthesis which emphasized the Janus-like physiognomy of the "Union," because although born between the twilight of Symbolism and the dawn of Futurism, it maintained a direct link with the Symbolist concentration on complete art and with the Futurist endeavours to demolish the barriers of separate art media. Just as the "Golden Fleece" circle had fostered the cross-fertilization of ideas between Symbolist poets and painters, so the "Union of Youth" encouraged this trend amongst representatives of Neo-symbolism, Neo-primitivism and Cubo-futurism by providing a meeting-place in various theatres, salons and a communal studio for practitioners of different art forms. It was certain members in particular, however, who inspired this move towards synthesis, members who were themselves competent in more than one artistic discipline: these included the Burliuk brothers, Kul'bin, Markov and Matyushin, but, above all, Kul'bin.

The name of Kul'bin is associated especially with the exponents of Neo-symbolism, and his several exhibitions of before 1910 relied heavily on the contributions
of such painters as Grigor'ev and Kalmakov (see Chapter VIII). The exhibitions to which he and the Neo-symbolists contributed after 1910, such as "Contemporary Trends in Art" of 1912, were organized under the general auspices of the "Union of Youth" and Kul'bin's activity as an organizer of independent exhibitions waned with the increasing prestige of the "Union." Within the framework of the "Union" Kul'bin was connected closely with its theatrical presentations contributing both funds and designs to several spectacles, including Evreinov's Presentation of Love (1910), Meierkhol'd's Lovers (1912) and the Meierkhol'd-V. N. Solov'ev Arlequinade of 1912; he was instrumental in the formation of the "Society of Actors, Artists, Writers and Musicians" ("Tovarishchestvo artistov, khudozhnikov, pisatelei i muzykantov") and had a hand in the creation of several short-lived theatrical enterprises such as Meierkhol'd's "House of Interludes" and the "Free Theatre." Throughout his organizational career in the "Union of Youth," Kul'bin continued to paint, but despite his direct contact with the Futurist faction within the "Union," he remained a Symbolist/Expressionist at heart: spiritually, he sympathized with the subjectivism of Filonov and Kalmakov, rather than with the geometrical abstractionism of Malevich and Tatlin.
Of other key members of the "Union of Youth" mention should be made of the Lithuanian, Markov, who was particularly active in publicism and edited the first and second almanachs of the "Union." Although a painter and a former pupil of Tsionglinsky at the St. Petersburg Academy, Markov earned his reputation as an art critic and the oretician. His most important essay, "Principles of the New Art," published in the first and second issues of the "Union of Youth" almanach, was a penetrating examination of what he termed "constructiveness" and "non-constructiveness" in primitive, Classical and modern art: by criticizing Western European art for its reliance on scientific principles and by praising primitive and Oriental art for its appreciation of caprice or fortuity, Markov approached Kul'bin's conception of a free, intuitive art:

Modern Europe does not understand the beauty of the absurd, of the illogical. Our artistic tastes, nurtured on strict rules, cannot be reconciled with the disintegration of our existing world-view, cannot reject "this world" and yield to the world of feelings, love and dreams, cannot be inspired by the anarchism which mocks our formulated rules and cannot escape to a non-constructive world. 6

A similar argument was maintained by Rozanova in her essay, the "Bases of the New Creation and the Reasons Why it is Misunderstood" which appeared in the third almanach: in this she justified abstract painting by considering it as the logical conclusion to implementation of the intuitive principle, and joined Malevich in her demand for an
art that should be independent and self-sufficient. The possibilities of accidental or intuitive art were explored also by Ball' er and Spandikov. 7

A friend and colleague of Kul'bin was Matyushin, the husband of the Intuitivist writer-painter, Guro. Although during the "Union of Youth" period Matyushin earnt his living as a professional violinist, he maintained a parallel interest in painting and later developed this into a full-time occupation, becoming head of a studio at the Petrograd Svomas after 1917. 8 His canvases during the early years reflected an intense concern with colour and with what he termed later "extended viewing" ("rasshirennoe smotrenie"), 9 although they were still thematic at this point. He was particularly close to Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh and Malevich, regarding them as fellow fighters in the struggle against the "annoying bars of a cage in which the human spirit is imprisoned." 10 Malevich's esteem of Matyushin led to his dynamic portrait of him in 1913, a gesture which was reciprocated by Matyushin's publication of From Cubism to Suprematism at his own private press, the "Crane," in 1915. Matyushin's personal links with the avant-garde painters and writers in the "Union of Youth" reached artistic fruition in the presentation of Victory Over the Sun, one of the most striking monuments to synthesisim produced by the
"Union of Youth" or, indeed, by the whole Symbolist and Futurist movements. As in the case of Malevich, Matyushin's intellectual reasoning was often obscure and tended towards mysticism, a fact which aligned him with the Neo-symbolists and their advocacy of the subjective experience:

Why don't I want to paint objectness ("predmetnost"), portraits? They are merely part of a whole. How can one depict the whole of mankind by one face? ... I inhale a pulverized god, but I cannot hold it. ... The whole of mankind has become filled with objectness, has grown tired and oversaturated. ...11

Such statements with their inherent rejection of concrete reality were in keeping with the philosophies both of the "Blue Rose" group and of the St. Petersburg Neo-symbolists, for whom, significantly, the portrait was a foreign genre.

It was in the theatrical spectacles subsidized by the "Union of Youth" that practitioners of separate art forms succeeded in creating a true alliance. Although many straight plays were produced under the auspices of the "Union" in a number of St. Petersburg theatres, it was two spectacles, in particular, which served as creative platforms for the representatives of various media—these were the tragedy, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and the opera, Victory Over the Sun, both staged in December, 1913 in the operetta theatre, Luna Park. Both pieces were part of a programme of Futurist theatre projected by Kruchenykh, Malevich and Matyushin in the summer of
that year and they were advertized as the "First Futurists' Spectacles in the World." However, despite the emphasis on Futurism, the décor for Mayakovsky's drama was executed by the Symbolists/Expressionists Filonov and Shkol'nik (assisted by Rozanova): for Filonov, designer of the sets for the prologue and epilogue and of the costumes, Mayakovsky's conception of the contemporary city as a demonic force ("Gorod-Adishche") peopled by cripples was in keeping with his own view of the modern, industrial city as a place of torment and despair. Filonov's sets included a black backdrop of square cardboard relieved by collage and different coloured spots which were manipulated by the artist to depict the town as a chaotic and hostile phenomenon. As K. Tomashevsky, one of the actors, later recalled: "Filonov had only 'madness' and 'terror,' nothing else" and, in fact, it was this Expressionist interpretation of urban reality, met with in much of the work of the Neo-symbolists, which continued to haunt Filonov's painting until his death in 1941. Shkol'nik's designs for the sets of the first and second acts also treated the town as something evil and inhuman, but his stylistic approach was more conventional, or, as Livshits put it, "lower than the show itself." Zheverzheev commented on the décor in similar terms:
The three-dimensional sets (with numerous ladders, bridges and passages) originally intended by Shkol'nik were not feasible in those days, so the designer went to the other extreme and contented himself with two picturesque backdrops on which were painted two excellent urbanistic landscapes, in form and content little connected with the text of the tragedy. The most complicated (in composition, that is) "flat" costumes were provided by Filonov, who painted them personally on canvas, without preliminary sketches, and then stretched them on figure frames (corresponding to the contours of the drawing) which the actors pushed in front of them. These costumes, too, were barely connected with Mayakovsky's text.

The opera, *Victory Over the Sun*, with text by Kruchenykh, score by Matyushin and décor by Malevich was an attempt at "transrationalism" in literature, music and painting: the language was often unintelligible, although enough could be understood to know that a band of Futurist strongmen was endeavouring to upset all conventional artistic and historical values by challenging and conquering the sun; the music relied heavily on audacious consecutive fifths, intense chromatics and melisma, all of which contributed to spasmodic atonality—in addition, the piano was flat and the chorus sang out of tune. The decorative contribution by Malevich, who helped also to direct the presentation, is normally seen by critics as the first example of what in 1915 came to be known as Suprematism: one of the several backdrops to the opera consisted of simply a black square on a white background, a process of reduction which, of
course, culminated in the "White Square on White Background" of 1918. While as an isolated phenomenon, the black square may be regarded as the herald of Malevich's post-1914 linear abstractionism (as opposed to Kandinsky's colour abstractionism of post-1909), one should beware of over-emphasizing its significance: firstly, the black square was not a Suprematist work per se for not only had Malevich not formulated the term by then, but also the work was by no means "art as an end in itself"--it was simply an example of abstract design, the kind of applied art which one can find, for instance, in peasant icon-painting or wood-carving; secondly, the other backdrops by Malevich were very much in the tradition of his Cubo-futurist easel paintings, i.e. thematic and not abstract; thirdly, Filonov's black cardboard backdrop to Vladimir Mayakovsky was not so very far removed from Malevich's contribution, and, in any case, both works maintained an organic link with the simplified, unrelieved backdrops being used by Meierkol'd as early as 1907. However, there is no doubt that Malevich was close to a purely abstractionist conception of art for, apart from the one backdrop, the illogicality of the text was matched by non-representational volumes and planes scattered on the stage in the shape of cylinders, cones and spheres, and extensive use was made of electric lighting to produce additional abstract forms--
a phenomenon which obviously anticipated the avant-garde stage productions of the early 1920s. For Matyushin, the two spectacles, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Victory Over the Sun, denoted the boundary between the old art and the new: in his opinion the real tragedy of Mayakovsky's play was that its language was still semantic, whereas the opera was a success thanks to the "complete break-up of concepts and words . . . old-style décor . . . and . . . musical harmony." It should be mentioned, however, that the triumph of absolute or "Suprematist" art in Matyushin's opera was presaged earlier in 1913 by the publication of V. I. Gnedov's "Poem of the End" ("Poema kontsa") consisting of the title and a blank page. It is tempting to suggest, therefore, that a poet "painted" "White on White" five years before Malevich did, and, in any case, the title of the cycle of verse in which "Poem of the End" appeared, namely, Death to Art (Smert' iskusstvu), well anticipated the Constructivists' loud declaration that "art is dead" in the early 1920s.

Of other spectacles sponsored by the "Union of Youth," the folk drama, Emperor Maximilian and His Disobedient Son, Adolf, staged in 1911 with costumes by Tatlin et al. should be mentioned (Figure 58). The innovatory significance of this production was emphasized unwittingly by the moderate critic S. Auslender who was most irritated by the "bad taste in costumes, the absence of footlights,
the free passage of actors from stage to audience, the walls decorated with posters and the barrels instead of chairs in the buffet." On a slightly different level, the "Union of Youth" continued its sponsorial, if not strictly theatrical, activity by financing public discussions ("disputy") at which such figures as D. Burliuk, Kruchenykh and Mayakovskiy would declaim poetry or advance new theories often against backdrops decorated by the Burliuks, Malevich, etc. In this way, the "Union of Youth" retained a cultural and financial interest in such Bohemian night-spots as the "Stray Dog" cellar in St. Petersburg and the "Pink Lantern" in Moscow.

As regards the evolution of Russian painting per se, the "Union of Youth" played a major role in the advancement of specific movements, namely, Neo-symbolism, Neo-primitivism, Cubo-futurism and, later, abstract-ionism. Since the "Union of Youth" emerged at a time when Symbolism as an artistic credo had declined into fashionable urban decadence and mysticism, it tended to encourage (obviously for financial reasons) painting which treated of such themes: in this way, it championed the early pictures of Filonov with their subjects of urban chaos and despair and the ominous canvases of Chagall dating from 1910/1912. On a slightly different level Filonov and Chagall were joined in their tendency towards
Expressionism by members of the "Wreath," "Triangle" and "Impressionist" groups with their emphasis on intuitive and highly subjective art: such titles as "Melancholy," "Nightmare" and "Night of Love" exhibited by the Symbolist/Expressionist painters, Shkol'nik, Grigor'ev and Kul'bin indicated the kind of themes explored at these exhibitions, and which the "Union of Youth" found financially rewarding at its own first exhibitions. The five so-called "Union of Youth" exhibitions organized between 1910 and 1914 were centred on St. Petersburg, although in certain cases they travelled to Riga and Moscow, and their arrangement and composition owed much to the Burliuks and Kul'bin who had been arranging art exhibitions since 1908. But, unlike Kul'bin's "Impressionist" exhibition of 1909 when Kamensky and Kruchenykh contributed as painters, or his "Triangle" show of 1910 where the Gorodetsky brothers were also represented, the "Union of Youth" exhibitions were less eclectic and more professional.

The first "Union of Youth" exhibition opened in St. Petersburg in March, 1910 with a complement of 488 works, some of which were transferred to Riga in June where they formed an extension of the original show. Although the exhibition was accompanied by no written declaration, it was evident from the exhibits that the society intended
to propagate two main tendencies: Neo-symbolism and Neo-primitivism. Although the latter dominated at this session by weight of numbers, Neo-symbolism was well represented by Filonov and associates of the Kalmakov group including S. I. Boduen-de-Kurtene, E. Ya. Sagaidachny, Shkol'nik, Shleifer and Spandikov; Neo-primitivist contributors included the Burliuks, Exter, Goncharova, Larionov and Mashkov and works such as Larionov's "Walk in a Provincial Town" and Goncharova's "Potato Planting" acted as a preview of the great Neo-primitivist show of later that year, the first "Knave of Diamonds" exhibition. To the St. Petersburg critics, accustomed to the more reserved salons at which associates of the "World of Art" exhibited, the "Union of Youth" exhibition appeared as an artistic pot-pourri: reviewing the event for the journal, Apollon, N. Vrangel remarked that the exhibition recalled those of the "Wanderers" with their mutual "absence of individuality . . . and weak technique" and he found the pictures of Goncharova, Larionov and Mashkov to be mere caricatures of Matisse and Van Dongen. The second "Union of Youth" exhibition organized a year later again concentrated on the Neo-symbolists and Neo-primitivists and additional support was given to the latter by the coarse canvases of Malevich, Stepanova, Tatlin and, on a rather different
level, Chagall. At the third exhibition, in the winter of that year, certain new features could be observed which deflected attention from the two main currents: a distinct trend towards what Larionov called Rayonism in 1912 was manifest in his "Head of a Soldier" and Tatlin's imminent concern with relief and volume was felt in the curves and spatial control of "Fish Vendor" and costume designs for Emperor Maximilian. This shift away from deliberate vulgarization of the picture's surface to a more refined, geometrical conception was emphasized at the fourth exhibition in the winter of 1912 when Malevich contributed several peasant scenes striking in their formal reduction and simplification. The last "Union of Youth" exhibition in the winter of 1913 marked a climactic point in this development towards linear abstractionism, for apart from the many Cubo-futurist pictures, there were exercises in "Transrational Realism" by Malevich and titles such as "Compositional Analysis" and "Dissonance" by Rozanova; certainly, thematic pictures were present in the contributions by the Neo-symbolists Shkol'nik, Shleifer and Spandikov, but the best artists of this faction, Filonov and Matyushin, were also abandoning representationalism as such titles as "Picture," "Half a Picture" (Filonov) and "Red Ringing" (Matyushin) indicated.
Perhaps the most important product of the "Union of Youth" society was the advancement of a small, but distinctive, Russian Expressionist movement of which Filonov can be considered the leader. Although by origin a Muscovite and although he worked in isolation, Filonov found artistic sympathy with such painters as Grigor'ev and V. N. Masyutin (1884–1956) for whom also the world was a source of Munchian suffering and despair. Concentration on such conditions as fear, pain and cruelty had been evident already in the 1908-1910 canvases of Ball'er, Dmitriev and Kalmakov as well as in the Decadent art of certain "Blue Rose" members, especially Kuznetsov and V. Milioti, but their endeavours had emerged rather as the result of Symbolist ennui, of spiritual debility, than of artistic conviction. For Filonov, however, such themes were an integral part of a definite creative world-view which was alien to the deliberate sensuality and monotonous reiteration of the later Symbolists.

Filonov's participation in three of the "Union of Youth" exhibitions (1910, 1911-1912, 1913-1914) drew attention to his weird canvases of demonic heads (Figure 59) and evocations of human distress which, although substantially different from the Symbolist paintings of the preceding decade, shared with them an intense subjectivism. His links with Russian Symbolism were strengthened by
his frequent recourse to religious and mythological subjects particularly during his "Union of Youth" period, and even in his work of the 1900s a thematic retrospection together with a formal linearity recalled the parallel work of the "World of Art," although their fragile aestheticism and excessive stylization were powerless to transmit his disturbing visions of after 1909. At the same time Filonov's interest in peasant crafts, especially of the "lubok" and icon-painting, with the consequent child-like magnification of objects, concentration on salient features and disruption of academic perspective associated him with the Neo-primitivist camp. (Figure 60). In this respect he resembled Kuznetsov of the 1908-1910 period, i.e. phantasmagoric in theme, but vulgar in form, although Filonov's canvases contained a creative vitality which Kuznetsov's lacked. Filonov's extraordinary attention to every fraction of the pictorial surface, a process which recalled Vrubel's "cubism," and his constant insertion of images almost to the point of claustrophobia, tended to enforce the often tragic meaning of his pictures. Even in the more naturalist portraits, e.g. of E. N. Glebova, (Sudeikin's sister-in-law) (1915), the same emotional intensity, to be found in the many analytical heads and legendary subjects, was present. Although frequently his depictions of historical and mythological scenes
amounted to caricatures, it was evident that Filonov found a brute force in the peasant rituals and hunting motifs which was lacking in his own decaying social and cultural environment. It was to be expected, therefore, that when Filonov transferred his attention to the modern city after 1912, he should have conceived it as a diabolical force pernicious to Man; artistically, however, the results of this move were positive and Filonov's consequent concern with architecture and urban dynamism contributed partly to his formulation of the theory of Analytical art after 1915. Like Kuznetsov after 1910, Filonov retained his artistic integrity and continued to paint according to his own private beliefs, although he never returned to naturalism as Kuznetsov did.

While operating from St. Petersburg, the "Union of Youth" served to bridge the gap between St. Petersburg and Moscow, which had arisen as a result of the artistic revolution in Moscow and the provinces after c. 1904. In fact, much of the "Union's" artistic strength was from outside the capital, and to the St. Petersburg public it chaperoned such ebullient figures as the Burliuks, Larionov and Malevich. The "Union of Youth" strove to organize art at a time of artistic disorganization, to unite Symbolism and Cubo-futurism, representationalism
and non-representationalism. Ultimately, its designs failed and a grand, synthetic art was not accomplished. Nevertheless, for the art historian the "Union of Youth" does not lose its importance as the last exposition of painterly Symbolism and as a refractive medium of Modernist culture.

The "Knave of Diamonds"

The "Knave of Diamonds" group ("Bubnovyi valet") was founded in the autumn of 1910 after fifty students had been expelled from the Moscow Institute in April of that year, an event reminiscent of the 1863 mutiny. The occasion for this mass expulsion lay in the "leftism" and "rebelliousness" of certain artists which, however, the more progressive teachers saw simply as the assimilation of contemporary trends; the administrators, on the other hand, wished to restore a semblance of academic peace and to "return to V. Makovsky and Pryanishnikov." The number of dissidents included Fal'k, Kuprin, Mashkov and Rozhdestvensky, all of whom formed the nucleus of the "Knave of Diamonds" group. The "Knave of Diamonds" was primarily an exhibition society and was responsible for the seven important exhibitions of that name between 1910 and 1918, although until its disbandment in 1926 it also extended its activities to include publishing and the
organization of Futurist "disputes." Although it issued no manifesto or declaration of intent, it became identified with the propagation of Neo-primitivism and Cubofuturism and hence acted as a formal channel for the expression of those tendencies which had been evident at exhibitions since the "Blue Rose" of 1907. Ostensibly, it had little in common with the Symbolism of the "Blue Rose; and its creative output appeared very much as a reaction against it: at the same time it both developed and attempted to resolve those painterly problems which the "Blue Rose" had posed.

The initial leader of the "Knave of Diamonds" group was Larionov, who, of course, had already demonstrated his allegiance to Neo-primitivism at the "Golden Fleece" shows, inter al. It was he who advocated the idea of establishing a distinct, Neo-primitivist group and his project was supported enthusiastically by Goncharova, Lentulov and Mashkov. The name, the "Knave of Diamonds," was coined, obviously, "to shock the bourgeoisie," although its authorship is in doubt: Larionov claimed that he invented the title because of a "very interesting combination which can be formed from these two words." Mashkov, however, asserted that he suggested the name because he "imagined a prisoner on whose back was the sign of diamonds" and this was an association which
appealed to him and his colleagues, also social outcasts; Lentulov, for his part, affirmed that the author was he. The true derivation of the name is of little import, although the name itself was symptomatic of the current wish to create a public sensation and draw attention to the new art. Larionov did not remain at the head of the group for long and formed his own faction in 1911 after disagreeing with other members on certain fundamental issues, specifically on the group's policy vis-à-vis Paris. Despite ideological divergencies, the group was united in its attitude towards form: they rejected theme and genre as important elements in painting and placed as their aim the solution of problems of colour, form and composition. Their dismissal of psychological tendencies and their concern with concrete form found expression both in their pictures and in their occasional artistic statements: "... colour constructs space..." (Rozhdestvensky), "... the liberation of form from the fortuitous... space is presented through volume..." (Fal'k), "... the baring of the object's construction... the displacement of planes..." (Lentulov). It is obvious from these utterances that the "Knave of Diamonds" painters favoured an architectural conception of the picture and supported this by their application and development of Cézanne's analytical principles. In
this way they achieved the sensation of form and space not by the use of chiaroscuro and linear perspective but by the arrangement of coloured areas, juxtaposition of textures and accentuation of fundamental architectural shapes: their concentration on form and structure made them sympathetic to French Cubism and certain members, notably, Fal'k, Kuprin and Rozhdestvensky, cultivated deliberately the principles of the Paris school. As a result, their orientation towards the West contributed to the internal rift which took place in the group in mid-1911, for Larionov and Gocharova declared that the subsequent evolution of Russian art depended not on the West but on indigenous stimuli. Their continued concentration on peasant art forms therefore constituted the doctrinal basis of their splinter group, the "Donkey's Tail," founded early in 1912. This is not to say that the other "Knave of Diamonds" artists ignored traditional Russian art forms--Lentulov, for example, was particularly interested in icon-painting and church architecture (Figure 61) while Mashkov endeavoured to apply the devices of sign-board painting. Whatever their differences, the two branches of the "Knave of Diamonds" did present a united front against the "vibrating light of Impressionism," the stylization of the "World of Art" and the aetheriality of the "Blue Rose."
The first exhibition of the "Knave of Diamonds" opened in Moscow in December, 1910 and lasted for a month. Indicative of the group's general recognition of their Western contemporaries was the parallel demonstration of modern French works and examples of the Munich school. The catalogue list included the following: V. S. Bart (Stepanova), D. and V. Burliuk, Exter, Fal'k, Fonvizen, Goncharova (Figure 62), Konchalovsky, Kuprin, Larionov, Lentulov, Malevich and Mashkov; Gleizes and Le Fauconnier; Kandinsky, Werefkina, Jawlensky and Münter. Although the emphasis was on Neo-primitivism and Cubism, a minor diversion was supplied by the Neo-symbolist works of Boduen-de-Kurtene and I. A. Skuie, and a direct link was maintained with the "Blue Rose" group by the presence of Fonvizen. The spacious accommodation on Vozdvizhenka was secured with the financial help of Burliuk's father, but it lacked the elaborate attributes of the "Golden Fleece" exhibitions. Not only the name of the exhibition, but also the lay-out of the rooms produced a sensation, since pictures were hung as closely together as possible in four rows, one above the other: the first room was dominated by thirteen "biting and geometrically angular" landscapes of Fal'k (Figure 63) while the centre of attraction in the middle room was Mashkov's large portrait of himself and
Konchalovsky, together with seven other portraits, three nudes and eight still-lives. The group's aspiration towards formal solidity, a style which Bakst happily described as "lapidary,"\textsuperscript{31} was especially apparent in Mashkov's portrait of the poet, Rabinovich, in its thick layers of paint and textural contrasts. The same was true of Larionov's contributions which included such famous canvases as "Bread," "Soldiers" and "Street in the Provinces" all of which caused one critic to compare him to a sign-board painter;\textsuperscript{32} similarly, Goncharova's thirty-three works, including the "Wrestlers" and five religious compositions, prompted the remark that she had moved from "the simplicity of sign-boards to the artistic complexity of "lubok" pictures."\textsuperscript{33} Konchalovsky, recently returned from Spain, submitted many large canvases of bull-fighting and Spanish landscapes, striking in their bold colours; Lentulov's gravitation towards large-scale colour resolutions was manifest in his several panneaux and harbingered his intense concern with colour after 1912 when he resorted to collages of coloured paper.

Despite the wish of the exhibitors to shock the public, the exhibition was recognized positively by collectors and critics alike, and Morozov, Shchukin, Grabar', K. Korovin, Nesterov, Surikov (Konchalovsky's father-in-law) and M. Voloshin became eager supporters of the group.
The reception which the exhibition was afforded was essentially from Moscow, since it did not travel to other towns, and only in 1913 did St. Petersburg see a "Knave of Diamonds" show. Shortly after the 1910/1911 exhibition the split, referred to above, occurred when Larionov and Goncharova left to found their own faction. This resulted in a short outburst of polemics, especially from the side of Larionov but his assertion that the "Knave of Diamonds" had become pitifully academic because of its reliance on Western models seemed ironic when he departed for Diaghilev and Paris in 1915. In fact, Larionov's withdrawal from the "Knave of Diamonds" did not undermine its organization and it continued to attract important artists such as N. I. Al'tman (1889-1970) and I. V. Klyun (1870-1942) to its subsequent exhibitions.

At the second exhibition in January, 1912 in Moscow a distinct move towards Western Cubism was discernible, the more so since the presence of the French was emphasized by additional canvases of Delaunay, Léger and Matisse. That Neo-primitivism had passed its apogee was indicated by the innovatory exercises of D. Burliuk such as "Disintegration of planes" and "Displaced construction" and by the Improvisations of Kandinsky. The central members of the original group, Fal'k, Konchalovsky
(Figure 64), Kuprin, Lentulov and Mashkov, presented essays in Neo-primitivism and/or Cubism—which they continued to do at the ensuing exhibitions, i.e. they never advanced as far as non-representational art. Financially, the exhibition was a success and was visited by 10,000 people and a series of lectures was arranged while the show was open. One year later the third exhibition of the "Knave of Diamonds" opened in Moscow which had a complement similar to that seen at the 1912 show, although new interest was aroused by the presence of Tatlin with three canvases and two ink designs. Later in the year this exhibition travelled to St. Petersburg where it was much enlarged by additional contributions from Fal'k, Konchalovsky, Kuprin, Lentulov, Mashkov and Rozhdestvensky (Figure 65). Lentulov was especially noticeable since his concentration on colour masses—witnessed at the previous exhibitions had given way here to a much more schematic approach: his exhibits included works which he had executed in Paris where he had stayed for eight months, and his assimilation of French Cubism was apparent in his several architectural pictures of churches. It was at this exhibition (at both sessions) that Lentulov presented his "Allegorical Depictions of the Patriotic War" (dedicated to 1812) which, with their simultanism and formal reduction to geometrical shapes, incited public
argument: Lentulov recalled that a student at the St. Petersburg showing declared his readiness to go to prison for two weeks if the artist could explain satisfactorily the meaning of these depictions. But although Lentulov continued to develop his architectonic principles he did not reach abstractionism and by 1916 he had moved away from formal experimentation towards "synthetic realism, and I almost reached naturalism." The 1914 exhibition of the "Knave of Diamonds," held in Moscow, presented paintings similar to those viewed already, at least in the case of the original cadre, and it was altogether a smaller show: the presence of L. S. Popova (1889-1924) and N. A. Udal'tsova (1885-1961) did, however, point to new developments and countered Tugendkhol'd's current remark that the "feeling of reality ..., the gravitation towards the beautiful flesh of things has again been found."

The return to realism experienced by the leaders of the "Knave of Diamonds" was maintained at the sixth formal exhibition of 1916 held in Moscow, although their achievements were overshadowed by the more audacious works of Al'tman, Klyun, Malevich, I. A. Puni (Pougny, 1894-1956), Popova, Rozanova, Udal'tsova and, on a rather different level, Chagall. Of especial note was Malevich's contribution of sixty examples of Suprematist painting
which demonstrated how far he had progressed beyond the Neo-primitivism and Cubism of the Lentulov/Konchalovsky camp. His attitude to his colleagues was summed up by his commentary on the exhibition:

The "Knave" exhibition, if we take it relatively, is not so bad, but specifically it has come to the final brink, after which begins the fence of Vagan'kovsky cemetery... Konchalovsky, Kuprin and Mashkov are standing by the fence and are asking for the key to the gate.39

In mid-1918 there was a seventh (and last) exhibition in Moscow at the Mikhailova Salon, but the original members were poorly represented and the show was given over to Suprematists.

However valuable the exhibitions of the "Knave of Diamonds" were to the evolution of modern Russian art, it does not lie within the bounds of this essay to examine them in further detail. It could be argued that Malevich's Suprematism shown at the 1916 exhibition was the direct descendant of Russian Cubo-futurism and Neo-primitivism, both of which owed much to the painterly principles of the "Blue Rose": and in this respect the consideration of Suprematism as an indigenous, organic artistic phenomenon would gain support from a comparative analysis of the two schools. Furthermore, such an examination would underline the vital role which the "Knave of Diamonds" society played between 1910 and 1916, for, surely, its greatest service to Russian art was that it provided a
fundamental connection between that Neo-primitivism which the "Blue Rose" inspired and the specifically Russian movement of Suprematism.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IX


2. Levkii Ivanovich Zheverzheev was a wealthy, St. Petersburg businessman whose main source of income was from the sale of church furnishings and ornaments. He was deeply interested in the Russian theatre and like A. Bakhirshin in Moscow, he collected set and costume designs especially by contemporaneous artists. After 1917 his collection became part of the holdings of the Leningrad State Theatrical Museum, and Zheverzheev acted as curator there until his death.


4. For example, see the following books by Markov: Iskusstvo negrov, St. P., 1919; Svirel' Kitaya (co-author V. Egor'ev), St. P., 1914; Iskusstvo sostrova Paskhi, St. P., 1914.

5. Vol'mar Lyustsinus (pseudonym of V. N. Solov'ev) wrote the text, entitled: "Arlekin, khodatai svadeb." The production in question (the second) was given by Solov'ev, assisted by Meierkhol'd, in January, 1912 at the theatre of the "Society of Actors, Artists, Writers and Musicians."


7. E. Spandikov, "Labirint iskusstva" in Soyuz molodezhi, 1913, No. 3; A. Ball'er, "Apollon budnichnyi i Apollon chernyavyi" in Soyuz molodezhi, 1913, No. 3.

8. Svomas (Svobodnye khudozhestvennye masterskie) was the name given to the reformed Petrograd Academy and the Moscow Institute in 1918. In 1921 the Academy was restored. See Note 20 to Chapter I in this text.


12. They were announced as such on 21 November, 1913 at the Troitsky Theatre, St. Petersburg.


17. For example, V. K. Kolenda (1872-1945) designed a monochrome montage for L. Andreev's Zhizn' cheloveka, produced by Meierkhol'd in 1907. Some of Denisov's backdrops of the same period were similar.


19. S. Auslender, "Vecher "Soyuza molodezhi"" in Russkaya khudozhestvennaya letopis', 1911, No. 4, p. 60 (adapted).

20. The spring, 1910 exhibition moved to Riga in June; part of the winter, 1911 exhibition moved to Moscow early in 1912.


22. Of particular interest in this respect are some of V. Milioti's paintings of 1909, e.g. "Death" (reproduced in Zolotoe runo, 1909, No. 1).
23. V. Midler, Preface to catalogue of "Vystavka khudozhnikov gruppy "Bubnovyi valet,"" Moscow, 1927.


25. This according to V. Parkin in his article on the exhibitions of the "Donkey's Tail" and the "Target" in Oslinyi khvost i mishen', M., 1913, p. 54.


28. Quoted from; E. Gollerbach, "Russkaya zhivopis' v predrevolyutsionuyu epokhu" in Istoriya iskusstv vshek vremen i narodov, L., 1929, kn. 6.

29. V. Midler, Preface to catalogue of "Vystavka khudozhnikov gruppy "Bubnovyi valet.""


33. Ibid.

34. See Larionov's preface to the catalogue of the "Target" exhibition, Moscow, 1913 and his manifesto, "Luchisty i budushchniki" in Oslinyi khvost i mishen', M., 1913, pp. 9-48.

35. V. Parkin in Oslinyi khvost i mishen', p. 54.


37. Ibid.


39. Letter from Malevich to Matyushin and Shkol'nik. GTG, Manuscript Section, fund 25, ed. dep. 9, l. 9.
Chapter X

"My soul speeds away into the distance and is tormented, enduring that of which he who has not communed with art knows not."

(P. Kuznetsov, 1912)

From 1904 until the spring of 1907 the "Blue Rose" artists formed a cohesive group with its own ideology and creative style. After the "Blue Rose" exhibition the group suffered an internal rift as certain members rejected Symbolism, moved away from Moscow and began to concentrate on areas of activity outside easel painting. By the end of 1908 there was no longer a "Blue Rose" group as such, just as there was no longer a purist Symbolist movement, at least in the visual arts. But the disbandment of the group did not mean that the "Blue Rose" had flowered in vain and that it had left no artistic legacy: on a general level it harbingered the audacious innovations of the avant-garde period and on a specific level it influenced the further development of its individual members. The fact that they had absorbed its principles early in their artistic careers and continued to observe them to a greater or lesser degree in the later years justifies a brief examination of
the subsequent creative roles of the leading "Blue Rose" painters. In turn, this will provide a fuller understanding of the position and significance of the "Blue Rose" movement in the history of modern Russian painting.

Kuznetsov

The move towards pictorial solidity, towards what one critic called "objectness" ("veshchnost'"),\(^2\) initiated by Neo-primitivism affected ultimately all the members of the "Blue Rose" group. As early as the Moscow "Wreath" at the end of 1907 it had been evident that Kuznetsov's colleagues, among them Krymov, Sapunov and Sudeikin, had moved away from the aesthetics of the "Blue Rose" towards the colour and plasticity of Neo-primitivism; but it was not until 1911 that Kuznetsov finally renounced the traditions of Symbolism peculiar to the period of his "Blue Rose" painting. The stimulus to his transformation was provided by the cumulative effect of impressions gained from long journeys in the Kirghizian steppes particularly between 1909 and 1911. At this stage in Kuznetsov's artistic career Kirghizia afforded an antidote to his spiritual exhaustion, and consequently its primitive way of life came to replace the dream world of his Symbolist painting. Kirghizia gave him that vitality and optimism which he had lacked immediately after 1907: there the sun which Grabar' had described so pointedly in his review
of the "Blue Rose" exhibition struck him with its full intensity bringing into relief the colours which he had avoided and producing an arid clarity alien to the mists and half-lights of his earlier canvases. Kuznetsov now became aware of red, orange and yellow and recollected the vivid colour scale of Gauguin which he had seen at the Paris retrospective exhibition in 1906. Indeed, the relevance of Gauguin to Kuznetsov is worthy of note: like Gauguin, Kuznetsov also rejected the art of an ingrown, cosmopolitan society and escaped to a rural, uncivilized community, just as the Symbolist poet, Rimbaud, had done after 1875. The drastic change which occurred in Gauguin's work after his departure from the West was paralleled by Kuznetsov's move from Symbolism to colourism, although even before this the two artists shared certain affinities: both imbued their painting with a sense of mystery, with a belief in cosmic forces and with a certain melancholy, cf. Gauguin's "Vision After the Sermon" (1888) and Kuznetsov's "Mother's Love"; occasionally the colour schemes of both artists coincided even before Kuznetsov's transformation—the pale tones of Gauguin's "Calvary" (1889), for example, bring to mind the restrained colours of the "Blue Rose" pictures. And while such resemblances before 1906 were quite fortuitous they pointed to the contiguity of their world views and
anticipated the so-called "Gauguinist" period³ of Kuznetsov's career.

In December, 1910 Kuznetsov contributed to two important exhibitions, the first of the new series of "World of Art" exhibitions and the first show of a new society called the "Moscow Salon."⁴ The "World of Art" society, resurrected in 1910, differed from its predecessor in its catholic committee which consisted of artists from St. Petersburg, Moscow and the provinces,⁵ in its eclectic exhibitions and in its itineration. This meant that its exhibitions included many Moscow artists as well as those of St. Petersburg and that they offered a distinct alternative to the aestheticism and stylization of the former Diaghilev circle. At the 1910 show Kuznetsov was quite overshadowed both by his colleagues (Feofilaktov, N. Milioti, Sapunov, Sudeikin and Utkin) and by the Neo-primitivists (Goncharova, Konchalovsky and Lentulov). His exhibits differed little from those seen at the preceding exhibitions of 1908, 1909 and 1910 and only served to emphasize his spiritual prostration. The same was true of his contributions to the "Moscow Salon" which were dominated even more by the exciting canvases of such radicals as Larionov, Malevich, Shevchenko and A. A. Vesnin (1883-1959). Similarly, Kuznetsov's Symbolist contributions to the spring showing of the "Moscow Association of Artists" in 1911—
"Portrait of a Woman," "Bather," "Birth of Nymphs" (two versions), "Morning," the "Dream," "Blue Aubergines," "Flowers," "Woman with a Dog," "Fish" and two alfresco studies—were an artistic failure in contrast to Borisov-Musatov, Mashkov, Sar'yan, Yakulov et al. The critics received them with disdain convinced that Kuznetsov had reached the end of his artistic career: "With his former energy Kuznetsov paints his foetuses and crippled women in paradise." Kuznetsov himself was aware that he was "pale and sluggish" and that he must seek inspiration in "reality," a need which he voiced in his declaration in the miscellany, Where Are We Going? His new conception of painting was presented at the second exhibition of the "World of Art" in December 1911.

This exhibition, held in Moscow, was even more comprehensive than the first. Many of the avant-garde were present including the Burliuks, Goncharova, Larionov and Fal'k, and the former "Blue Rose" group was represented by Arapov, Drittenpreis, N. Milioti, Sapunov and Sudeikin as well as Kuznetsov; in addition, a section was dedicated to a posthumous showing of Chiurlionis' work. Kuznetsov submitted nine canvases most of them based on his recent experiences in the steppes: "Bathers' Holiday," "Cascades," "Spring in the Crimea" (two versions), "Woman Sleeping in a Tent" ("Spyashchaya
zhenshchina v koshare") (Figure 66), "Family," "In the Steppe" (two versions), "Kirghizian Still-life" and "Family Portrait." All these titles reflected the profound artistic change which Kuznestov had undergone since the first "World of Art" show and contrasted to the despair and immobility of such earlier works as "Night of the Consumptives." For example, in the pictures "In the Steppe" and "Woman Sleeping in a Tent" there was a spaciousness and rhythm rendered both by structural arrangement and colour combination which was quite alien to most of the artist's Decadent work. "In the Steppe" was essentially a complex of curves from the sky through the tents to the figures on the ground which created a series of formal reflections, a visual continuum, reminiscent of Kuznetsov's early "Blue Rose" canvases. Linearity was reduced to a minimum and the coarse delineation and brushwork of the post-1907 works were missing. The lyrical quality produced by the picture's mobility was maintained by the choice of colours: while the blue and green echoed the "Blue Rose" colour scheme, the equilateral distribution of yellow and orange produced a decisive contrast and focal-point. In "Woman Sleeping in a Tent" the same pictorial movement was present although the freshness of "In the Steppe" was less immediate owing to the Sar'yan-like predominance of orange.
This visual dynamism, simplicity of theme and assertion of objective reality were elements which Kuznetsov retained during the ensuing years and which became especially marked in his "agricultural" and Socialist Realist work.

Although a comparison of Kuznetsov's canvases mentioned above with his contributions to exhibitions between 1908 and 1910 would indicate that his move from Decadence to Orientalism was sudden, it would be rash to assume that his change of values came about only in 1910/1911. In fact, Kuznetsov had been painting scenes from Kirghizian life since 1906, and possibly earlier, although he did not exhibit them. Whether Kuznetsov withheld such works out of sympathy with the "Blue Rose" traditions, or whether, as one critic observed, he wished to form a "cult," is a matter of conjecture, but the result of his reticence was, of course, that critics condemned him as creatively insolvent. His early pictures of the steppes were, however, a refreshing contrast to the usual depictions of gloom and despair which were peculiar to the period 1908-1910, and they resembled his best "Blue Rose" work in their evocation of mood and in their contemplative subjects: such elements were manifest, for example, in "Camels" (1906) and "Night in the Steppe" (1908). Both were nocturnal scenes executed in
blue and green and both transmitted an atmosphere of spirituality, whereas the suffering and melancholy expressed in the contemporaneous canvases such as "Holiday" and "Portrait of a Woman" were missing. At the same time certain Neo-primitivist devices such as coarse delineation were present in some of the early Kirghizian pictures. In this respect, a work like "Evening in the Steppe" (1908) acts as a synthesis of both approaches combining the delicacy of theme germane to the pre-1907 work and the vulgarization of form associated with the post-1907 work: the two elements are integrated by the juxtaposition of the linear figure on the left with the more circular figure on the right; by the introduction of yellow and light brown against the background of blue and green and by the intense rhythm generated by the sequence of movements (i.e. the gestures of the arms, the directions of the sheep, the position of the tree). This pictorial flexibility linked the picture organically with the early "Blue Rose" work on the one hand, and with the post-1910 Kirghizian series on the other.

Although Kuznetsov's pictures exhibited at the 1911 "World of Art" show contained attributes of his "Blue Rose" work particularly in his approach to form, it was clear that Kuznetsov, like the "Knave of Diamonds" artists, had re-established contact with objective reality.
By 1912 critics were talking of his "regeneration" and referring to him as the most outstanding of the Muscovites, and it was assumed that Kuznetsov had regained his former creative strength. It was with this date that the so-called "period of steppes and camels" began which, with few modifications, continued throughout the rest of the artist's life.

The primary factor which separated Kuznetsov's "rural" pictures from those of his first period was, of course, his treatment of colour: although blue and grey tones were still in evidence they were tempered after 1911 by areas of orange and brown, a process which was intensified over the next few years culminating in still lives of 1916 executed in yellow and gold without light blue and grey. By the early 1920s Kuznetsov was concentrating on combinations of pink and yellow and by the end of that decade he had established the spectrum which he would observe for the rest of his career, consisting essentially of yellow, brown, pink and blue: this tendency towards more vivid colours, especially red, was exemplified by the large canvas, "Paris Comedians" (1922-1929), inspired, obviously, by Cézanne's "Mardi Gras." As regards form, however, Kuznetsov remained more faithful to the "Blue Rose" traditions. Although he never developed the aetherial forms of his early Symbolist pictures to the point of complete formlessness, he
did maintain his initial neglect of overt linearity and schematicism. Inevitably, there were exceptions especially in the artist's graphic work such as his illustrations to Gumilev's *Child of Allah* (published in *Apollon*, 1917, No. 6/7), Kuzmin's unpublished *Exploits of Alexander the Great* and the series of lithographs dealing with Turkestan. The Turkestan albums and certain contemporaneous easel paintings such as "Portrait of the Artist E. M. Bebutova" (1922) (Figure 67) and "Rest" (1922) demonstrated Kuznetsov's spasmodic interest in architectural form, but his preference for curves rather than straight lines, his distortion of perspective and his neglect of architectonic balance helped to preserve the formal flexibility of his earlier work. In this respect Kuznetsov's own prefaces to the Turkestan albums were misleading and warranted serious qualification in the light of both his preceding and subsequent work:

... My sketches contain pictures of architecture, people, birds, camels, sheep. ... But all this everyday life is derived from architecture because it is so closely linked to it... The development of a mathematical regulator ... is the main task of the artist in the field of pictorial culture.

It could be argued, however, that it was the very absence of architecture and mathematical regularity in Kuznetsov's work both before and after 1911 which afforded them that
subtlety and sense of movement so readily associated with his best productions. Indicative of Kuznetsov's preeminence as a painter rather than as a graphist, i.e. as an artist concerned far more with colour and texture than with strict delineation and formal discipline, was his rare recourse to the theatre after 1911: it was significant that his first designs for the opening play at the Kamerny Theatre in 1914—"Sakuntala"—were rejected by Tairov precisely because of their rich painterly qualities and irrelevance to scenic structure.15

It was in this devotion to easel painting both before and after 1911 that Kuznetsov upheld his loyalty to the credo of the "Blue Rose," and even the more mundane pictures of farm workers in the late 1920s and 1930s retained a lyricism and delicacy engendered by the absence of graphic outline and architectural rigidity. In this respect colour played the most vital role in the whole of Kuznetsov's painting, and it was in his usage of it—to disemboby form rather than to represent it, to paint allusion rather than illusion—that he established a direct link between his Symbolist and Orientalist periods.

Sapunov

The premature death of Sapunov in the summer of 1912 cut short what could have been a remarkable artistic career, one which, undoubtedly, would have surpassed that
of his closest rival, Sudeikin. As in the case of
Sudeikin, Sapunov achieved renown as a theatrical de-
signer rather than as an easel painter, a fate shared
by his brother, Konstantin, although he did not abandon
easel painting as a creative medium. By 1908 Sapunov
was already experiencing the attraction of colour, al-
though unlike Sudeikin he did not concentrate on a
stylized pictorial approach. His maxim--"depict beauti-
ful things beautifully" 16--summarized his elemental,
sensual conception of art which transcended both academic
convention and "World of Art" aestheticism.

The gamut of colours in his two "Carousel" pictures
of 1908 which startled a public lulled by the tranquility
of the "Blue Rose" canvases became a consistent feature
of his subsequent examples of easel painting and theatri-
cal décor. Hence we can find the same tangible colour
masses in the still lives and theatre sets of 1910 and
after: in particular, the combinations of blue and orange,
identifiable with the later work of Sapunov, can be traced
even in pictures of 1907, e.g. "Still-life with self-
portrait" (Figure 68). Sapunov's increasing attention
to still-lives after 1907--often modelled on paper flowers
--pointed to a wish to crystalize reality, to combine the
essence of life with the artificiality of art, a wish
which found its most adequate expression in the theatre.
In the winter of 1910 and the spring of 1911 Sapunov affirmed his decisive move from easel painting to theatre décor by executing stage and costume designs for five separate productions in St. Petersburg: these encompassed Komissarzhevsky's staging of Shaw's *Anthony and Cleopatra* and four plays at the experimental theatre, "House of Interludes," headed by Meierkhol'd and Kuzmin. In the Komissarzhevsky production Sapunov was assisted by Arapov and Sudeikin, but he worked on the other enterprises almost independently; the four plays at the "House of Interludes" which served as a première programme after its opening in November, 1910, were: Kuzmin's the *Reformed Eccentric* and the Dutch Girl Liza (in which Arapov co-operated), Schnitzler's pantomime *Columbine's Scarf* and Gibshmann's *Black and White, or a Negro Tragedy*. Sapunov's uninhibited use of vivid colour contrasts was especially noticeable in his sets for the Dutch Girl Liza and Columbine's Scarf, both of which were entirely suitable as illustrations to the tense action on stage. The sense of the tragic and the grotesque, derived from the sets to Columbine's Scarf, tallied particularly well with the sceptical, Hoffmannesque vision of the world which Schnitzler presented. The same elements of striking colour and formal caricature, so remindful of Toulouse-Lautrec, were retained in the masterful sets
for Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* produced by Komissarzhevsky at the Nezlobin Theatre in 1911. His colorific bravura and tendency towards vulgarization of form were developed further in his unfinished series of stage and costume designs for Gozzi's *Princess Turandot* staged at the Nezlobin Theatre in the autumn of 1912, even though the final designs were painted by Arapov. In all these productions Sapunov was successful as a decorator simply because he was able to apply his artistic conception to the ethos of a given play and to restrain any wish to exhibit purely painterly achievements: his costume designs for *Princess Turandot* exemplified this attitude, for the blue, dark brown and black shades of the Princess' dress reflected her cruel character well while the orange, yellow, red and blue of Prince Calaf's outfit were in keeping with his boldness and magnanimity. It is a matter of conjecture as to what heights Sapunov's decorative art would have risen, had he lived, and it is sadly ironic that shortly before his death he was preparing to leave St. Petersburg for Paris where he was hoping to be entrusted with the whole scenic design of one of Diaghilev's ballets.

Although Sapunov's easel paintings of this time owed much to his theatrical work both in subject and in style, they did constitute an area of artistic development
worthy of comment. His scenes of taverns, brothels and tea-rooms expressed an urban despair similar to that of Blok's poetry: figures seemed to be dehumanized, rooms seemed to lose perspective and the nocturnal gloom seemed almost to yield to the forces of chaos. One of Sapunov's last paintings, "Tea-drinking" (1912) (Figure 69), although theatricalized in the symmetrical distribution of images, transmitted this conception of reality by the elusive, spectral quality of the figures and objects. It has been asserted\(^\text{17}\) that this work may have been inspired by Manet's "Bar" and Vuillard's intérieurs but the argument needs serious qualification—neither of the French works carries the bizarre unreality of "Tea-drinking" which, in any case, was one of a whole series of such scenes. Sapunov's several essays in portraiture of the years 1910–1912 also presented an indefinite, ambivalent reality and in this sense adhered to the principles observed in his first mature portrait—of N. Milioti—in 1908 (Figure 70). It is to be regretted that Sapunov's portraits of Blok and Bryusov projected during the last two years of his life were not realized.

It was in his easel painting rather than in his theatre work that Sapunov remained close to the "Blue Rose" traditions, even though he was less active as an easel painter after 1907. The distinct tendency away
from graphic delineation, from overt structuralization, which was peculiar to both branches of his art, but more especially to his easel paintings, owed its origin largely to the decorativism of the Saratov and Moscow Symbolists. In addition, the subdued colour scheme present in his post-1910 easel paintings and the extensive reliance on tempera pointed further to the maintenance of cardinal principles of the "Blue Rose" credo. Above all, the aura of mysticality, the sensation that reality was not what it seemed, identifiable with much of Sapunov's later work betrayed his continued allegiance to the aesthetics shared by the masters of Russian Symbolist painting.

Sudeikin

It was observed above that immediately after the "Blue Rose" exhibition Sudeikin turned away from the pictorial obscurity of Symbolism towards sharp colour and concrete form. This was a tendency which assumed increasing importance in his subsequent work and reached a climax in the solid, static presentation of visual reality encountered in his post-Revolutionary theatre and ballet designs. By 1910 critics were referring to the "complete artificiality" of his landscapes and by 1912 to his "deep sonority of colour" (Figure 71). Unfortunately, Sudeikin's concentration on colour after
1907 was matched by a move towards intense stylization as a pictorial device and as a direct result much of his later work was devoid of that elasticity germane to such early pictures as "Eros." His enrolment at the St. Petersburg Academy in 1909 represented his transference of allegiance from the Moscow avant-garde to the St. Petersburg conservatives, and it was thereafter that the stylization of the "World of Art," specifically of Somov, became especially manifest in his work.

More than his confrères Sudeikin lost sight of the genuine innovations of the "Blue Rose" school and even reacted consciously against its principles, yet his work after 1910 received widespread praise and attention. This was due, probably, to his ability to combine Neo-primitivism and "World of Art" stylization and to reduce them to a compromise solution immediately acceptable to the moderate St. Petersburg society in which he moved. Sudeikin's work after 1910 became fashionable and sought after—factors which contributed to a subsequent lack of development and to the continued production of pictures of Byronic poets and aristocratic young ladies painted according to the adulterated traditions of the "lubok" and domestic porcelain. The acceptance of his work by St. Petersburg was matched by his personal popularity amongst the nouveaux riches and intellectuals centred
on Apollon and V. Ivanov's "Tower": in 1910 he designed décor for the Meierkhol'd amateur production of Calderon's Devotion to the Cross in the theatre of Ivanov's "Tower" and in 1914 he contributed to the décor for the amateur production of Kuzmin's Venetian Madmen in the house of the millionairess, E. Nosova (Ryabushinsky's sister).

His first wife, the actress Glebova, was one of the most beautiful women of her day and was admired by national and international theatre personalities: her affairs with leading figures of St. Petersburg's cultural élite were well known, as was Sudeikin's "whole harem of pretty students." Inevitably, Sudeikin's social position, his material success and enjoyment of fashionable pleasures after 1910 contributed directly to his artistic decline and ultimate creative exhaustion.

The importance of Sudeikin after 1910 lay in his decorative and illustrative work and not in his easel painting, a medium which he neglected. Although even well before 1907 Sudeikin had been associated with the theatre, he did not achieve fame as a theatrical designer until several years later. His concentration on colour, on what one critic termed "objectification" ("oveshchestvlenie") after 1908 coincided with the beginning of his intensive activity in the theatre, an activity which he maintained both in Russia until 1920
and in France and America thereafter. To a certain extent Sudeikin's success as a set and costume designer after 1910 could be seen as a natural development of his distinct tendency towards decorativism—the panneau, the gobelin—of his "Blue Rose" period; in fact, Sudeikin continued to execute panneaux for clubs and restaurants throughout the later years: the rooms of the famous "Stray Dog" cellar in St. Petersburg were decorated by him with panneaux of "flowers, trees and exotic birds" in 1911, the short-lived theatre, "Comedians' Halt" (Figure 72), organized by B. Grigor'ev, Meierkhol'; and Sudeikin in 1916 was decorated similarly and the New York cabaret, "Cellar of Fallen Angels," opened in 1924, also boasted Sudeikin's panneaux. A parallel development can be traced from his illustrative work in the Symbolist journals, Art, the Scales and the Golden Fleece to his important illustrations to Rafałovich's poems, Speculum Animae (1911), Kuzmin's tale, the Journey of Sir John Fairfax (1910) and Kuzmin's comedy, Venetian Madmen (1915); this tradition was maintained in his very fine project for the cover of the children's book Rainbow in 1917 (which came out under the title of Christmas Tree, but without the Sudeikin cover, in 1918) and in his several posters for Balieff's "Théâtre de la Chauve-Souris" in 1921 and after.
Although Sudeikin had renewed his activity in St. Petersburg theatres after his contact with Kul'bin in 1909 his real début as a theatre designer came with his décor for the comedy, the Transformed Prince by Znosko-Borovsky and Kuzmin staged by Meierkhol'd in the "House of Interludes" in December, 1910. There then followed his décors for Tairov's production of Benavente's Life Upside Down in 1911 together with Kuzmin's operetta, Virgins' Play at the Maly Theatre; in 1913 Sudeikin contributed costume designs to Diaghilev's production of Salomé in Paris, and between 1914 and 1916 worked on designs for a whole series of Meierkhol'd productions. Perhaps the highlight of Sudeikin's career as a theatrical designer came with his participation in the Tairov production of the Marriage of Figaro at the Kamerny Theatre in 1915, although despite the enthusiastic reception by the public and critics, Tairov was not altogether satisfied with Sudeikin's "stylized, contrived screens, bouquets and curtains": the bright golds and reds of the sets, their extreme decorativism and loud dissonances served to detract from the action and dialogue rather than enhance it. The same criticism could be made of Sudeikin's décor for Meierkhol'd's revival of Columbine's Scarf in 1916: whereas Sapunov in the 1910 production had attempted to capture the spirit of the
pantomine, to extend its action into the décor, Sudeikin succeeded merely in asserting his rights as a painter, thereby competing with the action. This fault was even more evident in his décors and costumes for the Balieff productions in Paris in 1921 and the New York ballets of 1925 and 1929. The position was summed up by the theatre critic, N. B. Gilyarovsky, who, while obviously intending to compliment Sudeikin, described, unwittingly, his greatest weakness: "Sudeikin is a theatre unto himself, he has assimilated the Italian Commedia dell'arte, the most theatrical of all theatrical acts. ... More than anybody else he can be considered the father of the theatre's theatricality."28

The tragic flaw in Sudeikin's artistic development lay precisely in his theatricality: by 1912 Sudeikin's art had crystallized in a mould of excessive stylization. In turn, it was this concentration on a structured, artificial presentation of life which caused Sudeikin to lose that formal flexibility which had been the hallmark of his finest "Blue Rose" work.

Sar'yan

The evolution of Sar'yan's art after 1908 was similar to that of Kuznetsov's after 1910. The "Self-portrait" exhibited at the last "Golden Fleece" exhibition in the winter of 1909 symbolized Sar'yan's final departure from
the aesthetics of the "Blue Rose," although occasional later works did recall the pale dream world of his first paintings. Sar'yan's attraction towards loud combinations of red and yellow, emphasized in his "Self-portrait," was intensified further by a trip to Turkey in 1910: the result of his sojourn in Constantinople was three canvases: "Wistaria," "Fruit Stall in Constantinople" and "Street. Midday. Constantinople," all of which were acquired by the Tret'yakov Gallery. The artist's direct experiences of bright sunlight and striking colours in Armenia and Turkey were confirmed by further visits to Egypt in 1911 and to Persia in 1913. Yet despite the extensive application of yellow and red in Sar'yan's oriental pictures, he did observe certain principles assimilated during the "Blue Rose" period particularly in his concentration on colour mass at the expense of strict delineation, and, furthermore, his primary medium, at least until after 1917, was tempera. With his attention to oil painting in the 1920s, Sar'yan's canvases became even brighter and took on a solidity and tangibility far removed from the phantasmal fairy pictures of 1904–1906, and with few exceptions his subsequent work produced the same impression.

Despite his dramatic move from one end of the spectrum to the other Sar'yan did not abandon completely the blue,
grey and green tones of his "Blue Rose" pictures. In "Night Landscape. Egypt" (1911), for example, the colour scale of unrelieved turquoise, blue and brown recalled the tranquility and mysticality of his earlier canvases. To a lesser extent this was true of "Hazy Autumn Day" (1928) or even "Valley of Ararat" (1945). But the single "Blue Rose" principle to which Sar'yan remained faithful was that of decorativism: although it appeared in a guise different to the ornamental features of the "Blue Rose" pictures (elaborate foliage, flowing garments, etc.), it linked the canvases even of the 1950s and 1960s with their point of departure. With few exceptions, notably designs for the cover of the 1910 number of the almanach, Garun (Moscow) and for the cover of Shaginyan's Orientalia (fourth edition, Moscow, 1918), Sar'yan channeled his decorative talent exclusively into easel painting, at least until the late 1920s. The several still lives and portraits executed between c. 1911 and the early 1920s contained frequent pretexts for ornamentation such as plates, carpet patterns and florid wall-paper (probably a borrowing from Matisse as much as a reflection of Armenian life), not to mention the occasional insertion of masks (e.g. the "Portrait of the Poet Egishe Charentsa" (1923)). Sar'yan's tendency towards decorativism reached its climax at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s when he produced graphic illustrations and a cover
design for the recueil, *Armenian Fairy Tales* (1939) and contributed his first theatrical designs to opera and ballet presentations in Erevan. While his portraits of the late 1930s and early 1940s contained a minimum of ornament and, in consequence, appeared static and shallow, the still lives and landscapes of the period still maintained the tradition of decorativism: "To Armenian Fighters, Participators in the Great Patriotic War. Flowers" (1945), for example, was, in spite of its Heroic Realist title, a colourful exercise in flower arrangement and colour decoration. A distinct, but isolated, move towards Impressionism in the landscapes of the early 1950s points to Sar'yan's concern with the decorative qualities of light and colour vibrations, and the tendency towards disembodiment of form can be traced in Sar'yan's latest pictures such as "Parting Day" (1964). Although, essentially, Sar'yan never returned to the subjective visions of his "Blue Rose" years and in some ways pursued a path opposed it them, he did not lose contact with the artistic discoveries which he had made then. Unlike Sudeikin, Sar'yan never became the slave of stylization and schematicism and in his general conception of painting retained the subtlety and elasticity of the "Blue Rose" traditions.
Arapov

Although less typical of the "Blue Rose" output, as the 1907 exhibition had shown, Arapov's subsequent work warrants attention. The linearity and geometricality of his early paintings and graphics had associated him more with the "World of Art" group than with the Moscow-Saratov group and it was to be expected, therefore, that he would devote his energies to theatrical design. His move from Moscow to St. Petersburg with Sudeikin in 1909 was symptomatic of his departure from easel painting to theatre décor as an exclusive area of activity.

Arapov's début as a mature theatrical designer came in the winter of 1911 when Komissarzhevsky staged Goethe's Faust at the Nezlobin Theatre. Arapov's sets and costumes were realized on the basis of ethnographical and historical sketches which he had made in Germany and Italy while travelling with Komissarzhevsky earlier in the year: the whole composition—the subdued colours, the architectural foundation of the décor and the sparsity of painted surfaces—was far removed from the easel painting of the "Blue Rose." As far as it could be, the spectacle was a faithful representation of the Middle Ages and was not a product of subjective interpretation and intense imagination. With the exception of Tairov's production of Schnitzler's Veil of Pierrette in 1913 in which Arapov resorted to symbolistic elements, particularly
in the dominant colour scale of silver and grey, the artist tended towards historical accuracy rather than artistic invention in his conception of theatrical décor: this was true of his designs both for plays which dealt with ancient Russia such as A. K. Tolstoy's Vice-regent (Posadnik) (produced in 1918) and for plays which treated of more contemporary themes such as Trenyev's On the Bank of the Neva (produced in 1937). This is not to say that Arapov became academic and impervious to new developments for his designs of the 1920s and early 1930s, in particular, demonstrated his ability to assimilate innovations: his décor for Lunacharsky's Duke (1924) and the Puccini-inspired In the Struggle for the Commune (1924) both betrayed the influence of Constructivism and recalled the contemporary sets of L. Popova and A. Vesnin; in the early 1930s a significant development could be seen in Arapov's incorporation of Surrealist devices into his presentations, and his sets for Don Carlos (1933) complemented the parallel work of A. G. Tyshler and P. V. Vilyams.

Arapov produced little easel painting after 1910. Canvases which he did execute such as the "Portrait of the Actor, V. Sokolov" (1923) owed much to his theatre work both in subject and in style. Nevertheless, his retention of decorativism as an essential artistic principle aligned him with the original practice of the "Blue Rose" artists, and it might be argued that in transferring the
art of the panneau and gobelin to the montage of the stage. Arapov maintained a semblance of loyalty to the "Blue Rose" school.

Little of substantial value can be given concerning the later work of the remaining members of the "Blue Rose" group. The move away from fantasy and obscurity after the "Blue Rose" years towards a more concrete conception of reality, noticeable in the work of Kuznetsov, Sapunov, Sar'yan and Sudeikin, was shared by their confrères in greater or lesser degree. In the case of Utkin an appraisal of his work is made difficult by the scarcity of his paintings dating from the period 1910-1914: this is because many of his canvases were destroyed by a fire at the Maly Theatre in 1914 in the flat of Utkin's friend, K. V. Kandaurov. While not as talented as the leaders of the "Blue Rose" circle, Utkin continued to work as a professional painter particularly in the landscape genre, but it was not until 1911 that he broke with his earlier principles: at the beginning of that year S. Makovsky noted that Utkin had crossed from the "abstract, contrived and purely lyrical landscape" of the "Blue Rose" period to a "spontaneous admiration of the world." Even so, Utkin never made extensive use of the bright colours peculiar to the later work of Sar'yan and Sudeikin; Krymov, also, used them sparingly. Both Utkin and Krymov
remained landscapists at heart although their objective interpretations of the 1920s and 1930s expressed a weariness and conventionality alien to their best "Blue Rose" work. The intensity of colour and solidity of form identifiable with Russian painting during the Neo-primitivist period were elements shared by Feofilaktov (who turned from graphics to painting after 1912), Fonvizen (who worked subsequently both as an easel painter and as a décor designer) and the Miliotis, especially Nikolai (Vasili painted little after 1910). As regards the other painters of the "Blue Rose" group there is little to add: Drittenpreis, an architect by profession, left the artistic arena soon after 1909, Knabe died in 1910 and Ryabushinsky continued to paint and exhibit purely as a dilettante.
NOTES TO CHAPTER X


3. A. Efros regarded Kuznetsov as the "Russian Gauguin" on the basis of his post-1910 work. See: A. Efros, "Yubileinyi epilog. Pavel Kuznetsov" in Russkoe iskusstvo, 1923, No. 2, p. 7. It is significant that S. Makovsky should have referred also to Gauguin in his review of the "Blue Rose" exhibition; see: S. Makovsky, "Golubaya roza" in Zolotoe runo, 1907, No. 5, p. 25.

4. The "Moscow Salon" existed as an exhibition society until 1918, although its last exhibitions were conservative.

5. For example, Feofilaktov, Goncharova, Kuznetsov, N. Milioti, Petrov-Vodkin, Sar'yan and Utkin were members.


11. V. Kurbatov, "Gruppa khudozhnikov "Mir iskusstva" in Iskusstvo, Kiev, 1912, No. 3/4, p. 117.


17. Ya. Tugendkhol'd, "Vystavka Sapunova" in Apollon, 1914, No. 4, p. 64.


23. This appeared as a separated edition at the end of 1911 although it had been printed already with Sudeikin's illustrations in Apollon, 1911, No. 8, pp. 17-27.

24. In Apollon, 1910, No. 5, pp. 11-64.


26. For details see: L. Zheverzheev, Opis' vystavlenykh v pol'zu lazarety shkoly narodnogo iskusstva se Velichestva Gosudarnyj Imperatritsy Aleksandry Fedorovny pamyatnikov Russkogo teatra iz sobraniya L. I. Zheverzheeva, Pg., 1915.

27. A. Tairov, Zapiski rezhissera...., p. 104.

29. For details see: A. Kamensky, "Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva" (no page numbers) in Sar'yan, M., 1968. Kamensky is mistaken in giving the year, 1929, as the date of publication of the Armenian Fairytales.

30. S. Makovsky, "Vystavka Novogo obshchestva" in Apollon, 1911, No. 1, p. 41.
Conclusion

"The "Blue Rose" had ... purely painterly objectives" (V. Midler, 1925)¹

Immediately after 1917 the Russian visual arts were dominated by three basic trends—towards abstract experimentation, towards industrial and applied art and towards Heroic Realism, all of which combined to overshadow the achievements of Russian Symbolist painting. This did not mean, however, that the "Blue Rose" movement lacked spiritual heirs and that its influence was not active during the 1920s: on the contrary, the central members of the original "Blue Rose" group maintained their positions as leading artists and, in addition, they were joined by an important younger generation of artists with a distinct incline towards Symbolism.

Within the framework of early Soviet realist-alism in the 1920s there emerged three distinct directions: Realism, Symbolism and Expressionism. The former was practiced in an official capacity by the members of AKhRR² and contributed to the formulation of Socialist Realism as an artistic doctrine in the early 1930s, but Symbolism and Expressionism provided the progressive artist with a creative alternative. Both movements owed much to
intrinsic stimuli, Symbolism to the "Blue Rose" and Expressionism to the St. Petersburg Neo-symbolism which had been identified with the early work of Filonov, although the direct influence of German Expressionism must not be ruled out.3 The occasions for the appearance of these two tendencies can be traced on the one hand to the conscious reaction of young artists to abstractionism and on the other to the preferences of a new clientèle, specifically the NEPmen. The new middle-class which arose as the result of NEP demanded an art which was more intelligible than the abstractionist experimentation of the avant-garde and yet its members were not satisfied with mundane naturalism or realism: their wish for a painting which was mid-way between naturalism and abstractionism encouraged the reexamination of Symbolism as a creative force and, significantly, they were able to supply private finance to those artists who painted pictures to their taste. On a broader scale, the partial return to Symbolism in the early 1920s can be seen as a conscious or unconscious reaction against the Positivism of the Communist régime, just as the "Blue Rose" had come out in opposition to the Realism of the "Wanderers."

This new concern with Symbolism in painting inspired the creation of an important, but short-lived, group of
painters in 1922, the "Union of Artists and Poets: Art-Life," which in 1924 changed its name to "Makovets."

The society was founded by V. N. Chekrygin (1897-1922), N. M. Chernyshev (1885-1956), Fonvizen and Shevchenko and posed as its credo the transition from concrete reality to an ulterior, spiritual world: "Our art proceeds from the passionate needs of the soul which gathers the individual rays of light disseminated by the reflective brain of contemporaneity"; the painter's aim they asserted was to express the "unconscious voices of Nature raised into a higher sphere of spiritual life." The artistic interpretations of such tenets were often reminiscent of the "Blue Rose" work: Fonvizen's delicate water-colours of scenes from the theatre and the circus were a direct development of his pre-1910 essays in this area while Chekrygin's sketches of faces torn with suffering recalled the "consumptive" canvases of Kuznetsov's Decadent period. The society lasted until 1925 during which time it arranged three exhibitions (1922, 1924 and 1925), all of which complemented their contributors' initial declaration: "We see the end of analytical art, and our task is to gather its disparate elements into a mighty synthesis . . . We value the noble feeling which monumental art expresses. . . ." This emphasis on synthesis and monumentalism, elements which had been peculiar
to Symbolist aesthetics, was maintained by the members of a parallel group, "4 Arts," founded in 1924. At its four exhibitions (1924, 1925, 1926 and 1928) contributions were made by former "Blue Rose" members—Feofilaktov, Kuznetsov, Sar'yan and Utkin—and although their canvases betrayed a distinct trend towards vivid colour, they retained a decorativism and lyricism germane to their "Blue Rose" work. The value of the two societies, "Art-Life" ("Makovets") and "4 Arts," lay not only in their demonstration of Symbolist traditions in the painting of the older generation, but also in their advancement of certain younger artists: the delicate landscapes and intérieurs of F. V. Antonov (b. 1904), L. A. Bruni (1894–1948) and Yu. I. Pimenov (b. 1903) both of this period and of subsequent years manifested a subtlety of colour and composition which belonged to the best work of the "Blue Rose." The fact that young Soviet artists assimilated certain principles of the "Blue Rose" school was not surprising since by 1920 Kuznetsov and Sar'yan, at least, had occupied influential administrative and pedagogical posts in the new Soviet cultural hierarchy and hence they were able to disseminate their ideas on a far larger scale.

Interest in the Symbolist painting of the "Blue Rose" group was stimulated just after the Revolution by certain
publications and exhibitions which presented various aspects of its output. In 1919 the publishing-house, Al'tsion, announced that it would print monographs on the individual "Blue Rose" members (although this project was not realized), and critics such as A. M. Efros (1888-1954) began to examine their work in some detail. The culmination of this new, but ephemeral, attention to the "Blue Rose" painting was the organization of a retrospective exhibition devoted to the "Blue Rose" at the Tret'yakov Gallery in 1925. Although several important works were missing at this show, it did provide an indication of what the "Blue Rose" artists had stood for and produced, the more so since their mentor, Borisov-Musatov, was also represented. Unfortunately, this exhibition was the first and last formal recognition of the "Blue Rose" group by the Soviet Union, and not until very recent years has its name been resurrected from virtual oblivion. Individual members of the group did, however, continue to paint and exhibit regularly: in 1923 Kuznetsov and his wife were sent to France to assist in the restoration of cultural ties between Russia and France and in the following year they held a two-man show at the Galerie Barbazanges in Paris; in 1929 the Tret'yakov Gallery staged a large exhibition of Kuznetsov's paintings and Fonvizin was given a one-man show at the Moscow
House of Scientists in the same year; in 1928 Sar'yan was invited to exhibit at the Galerie Gérard in Paris, an event which presaged several such connections with Western galleries; in 1935 a comprehensive retrospective was held of Utkin's works in Leningrad.

The "disembodiment of painting" which had been seen as a symptom of the aesthetic crisis being experienced by Russia shortly before 1917 was, to a great extent, the result of the "Blue Rose" artists' endeavours to transcend the concrete reality of form. Yet this process was almost a fortuitous one since the resultant formlessness was the side-effect of theosophic exploration and not the product of rational, analytical thinking. The fact that the "Blue Rose" artists never formulated their artistic beliefs in a written manifesto or tract was therefore indicative of their inclination to dismiss logic and intellectuality from their world-view. In turn, this would explain why all the members of the group, with the exception of Arapov, remained alien to the "scientific" movements of Constructivism and Functionalism in the early 1920s. For them synthesis was always more important than analysis and they were unable to join forces with those who reduced painting to an applied or self-sufficient exercise in formal arrangements; and in contrast to those who declared "Death to Art" in the early 1920s, the "Blue Rose" artists continued to regard easel
painting as a vital creative medium. In this respect they were among the first to welcome the return of Realism as a tentative answer to the cultural fragmentation which surrounded Russian artists even after 1925. As early as 1906 Bely had referred to the Moscow-Saratov group as a school, a remark which formed a fitting tribute to their search for cohesion and development of a specific style: subsequently it was their unfailing allegiance to painting as an absolute and definite medium of artistic expression which allowed them both to achieve recognition as individual artists and to influence the course of Russian painting.
NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. V. Midler, Preface to catalogue of "Vystavka proizvedenii masterov Goluboi rozy," Moscow, 1925.

2. Abbreviation of "Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia." It was changed to AKhR ("Association of Artists of Russia") in 1926. AKhRR advocated the concept of Heroic Realism in its manifesto of 1922.

3. The development of Russian Expressionism received a definite stimulus from the examples of German Expressionism present at the "First All-German Art Exhibition" in Moscow, 1924.


5. Ibid.

6. See the announcement in Khudozhhestvennaya zhizn', 1919, No. 3.

7. For example, see: A. Efros, "Iskusstvo Pavla Kuznetsova" in Russkoe iskusstvo, 1923, No. 2/3, pp. 5-15.


9. In this respect it is relevant to refer to Skalon's review of the 1907 "Blue Rose" exhibition: ". . . the artists . . . acknowledge emotion and replace thought, form, and, indeed, even reason itself by it. . . ." In Russkie vedomosti, 1907, 25 March, No. 69.

10. This slogan from A. Gan, Konstruktivizm, Tver', 1922.