



PERM NEWS

Оксфорд и Пермь

О Р А

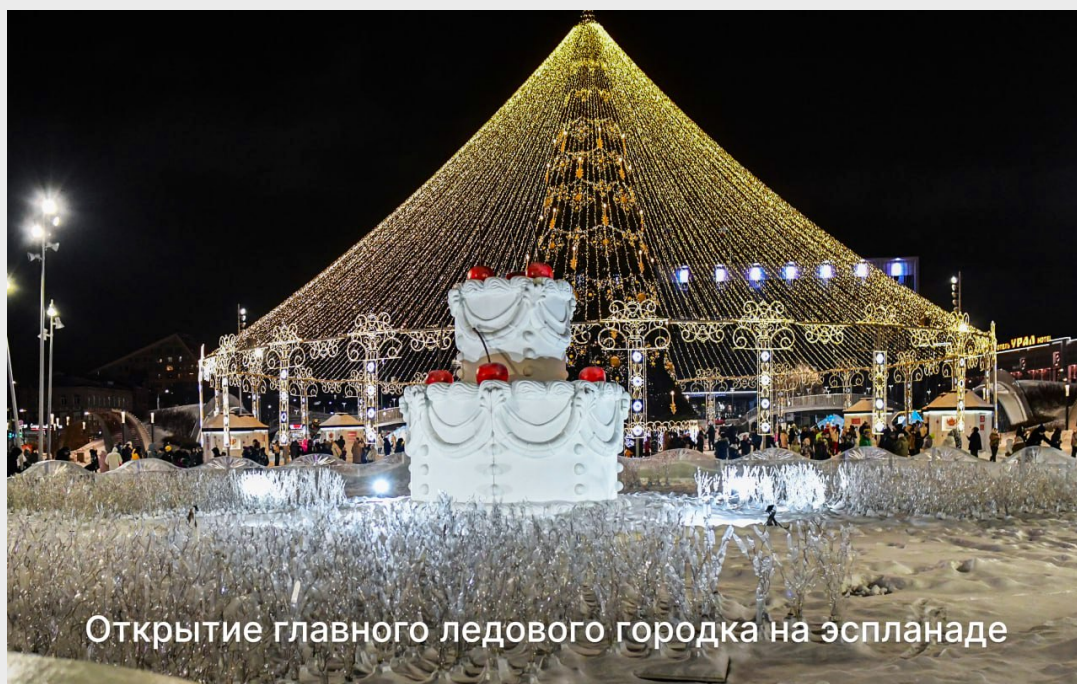
Oxford Perm Association

Newsletter February 2025



The New Year tree on the Esplanade. This year's theme for the ice village was 'A big Perm tea party' (Tatiana Grigorieva)

'Opening of the ice village on the Esplanade' (Perm City Administration)



Открытие главного ледового городка на эспланаде

Perm Ice Festival

An Ice Sculpture tournament for youth teams was organized in Perm on the city Esplanade in front of the regional Legislative Assembly at the beginning of January. The slogan “In Motion” inspired young artists from Yekaterinburg, Tumen region, Perm krai, Adygea and the Republic of Belarus to create their sculptures to show the dynamics of human life in the static of ice.

The Tobolsk team was the winner with its sculpture “On a Wave” devoted to the power of Siberian rivers. As the sculptors explained, they wanted to show the motion of water that connects generations. The Yekaterinburg team, “Ice Jam” (2nd place), carved a sculpture “Slamdunk in Space”. The idea of it unites art, sport, and cosmic space as three powerful vectors that symbolize aspiration for development and movement forward. The “Ice Clan” team from Perm was in third place. Perm artists were inspired by the image of Alkonost – a magic bird from Slavonic legends. This year the Ice village on the city Esplanade was decorated with a huge fir tree covered with a golden veil and “Permian Tea Party” ice objects.

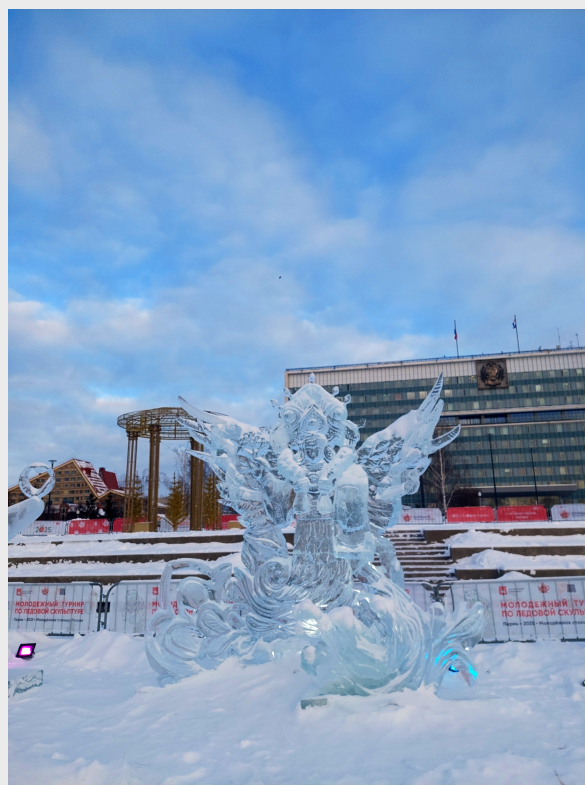
Tatiana Grigorieva



1st place: Tobolsk



2nd place: Yekaterinburg



3rd place: Perm

Perm awarded Youth Capital of Russia 2025

Tatiana Grigorieva

The status is awarded for one year and opens additional opportunities to develop the city's youth policy and to get priority in holding major youth events in the city and region.

Seventeen cities were nominated for the title in 2025. The Expert Committee had selected the top 5 and visited all of them in the format of a travel show. Perm's competitors were: Omsk, Tomsk, Khabarovsk and Novy Urengoy (Tumen Region).

The winner was to be determined by online voting which took place in December 2024. According to the rules residents had no right to vote for their own city but they could promote it among their friends and colleagues living in other territories, showing advantages of Perm as the Youth Capital.

Omsk became the main rival and was leading in the voting almost all the time. But at the very final point Perm made a rush and collected 325,900 votes, having outcompeted Omsk by 568 votes.

The Expert Committee decided to appoint two Youth Capitals for the year 2025 – both Perm and Omsk.

In 2025 Perm will become a flagship of youth events for the whole of Russia. All in all more than 100 youth events will take place in Perm with the estimated number of participants as 1million people. Perm youth events will include:

“Labour! Youth!” – XIII All-Russia Forum which will gather together young active working people who will exchange their expertise and discuss urgent issues.

“Cities of Labour Valour” Forum. It will include international Friendship Camp, theme exhibitions, discussion workshops, excursion routes, best practice exchange (Perm was awarded the title of the City of Labour Valour in 2020.)

“Graffiti-Perm” - street-art festival and competition for participants from Russian cities and towns. More than 30 design projects are expected from street artists which will decorate different urban spaces and murals in Perm. Diverse cultural programme will become a part of the festival.

All-Russia forum of teenagers' labour groups.

“Parma's Heart” medical project implemented by Russian students.

The first events have already taken place. Cultural collaboration between Omsk and Perm started in January with the concert of Omsk Chamber Orchestra in Perm. Later the two cities in their new status will work together on the projects that will involve young people in cultural life and give them opportunity for self-expression.

To celebrate Youth Day on June 29 Perm will invite former Youth Capitals of previous years: Vladivostok, Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod.

No doubt, the title of Youth Capital opens new horizons for Perm.

Past events:

A visit to Park Town where many of Leonid Pasternak's paintings are on display, including some of his son, Boris.

Two illustrated talks on Soviet and post-Soviet film, given by Kat Kottonen. The Association bought a new projector, speaker and screen which were used for the second of these talks.

Future events:

A screening of the Soviet comic thriller, 'The Diamond Arm' on Sunday, 23rd February at 3 p.m. at 6 Rawlinson Road.

The AGM will be held in the North Oxford Community Centre on Tuesday, 11th March at 6 p.m. After the official business, Carole Richardson will give an illustrated talk on a visit she and Chris Cowley, our Treasurer, made to Uzbekistan last summer. entitled "Impressions of Uzbekistan: Silk Road Cities and Russian Legacies". As usual, we ask members to contribute some 'finger food'; the Association will provide drinks.

A talk by Richard Sills 'Russia: Empire Builder or Victim? One thousand years of Russian history'. Friday, 21st March at 5.30 p.m. at 6 Rawlinson Road.

We are always grateful to receive letters, stories, comments from friends in Perm. In our Newsletter we will always preserve anonymity for such writers unless they specifically ask us to name them.

* * *

Visit our website where you can read newsletters going back to 2001, the history of the Oxford Perm twinning, past and recent events and see our photo gallery www.oxfordperm.org.

Russian Language Meetup Group

Graham Dane, a member of the OPA, continues to run a monthly Russian Meetup Group Russian/English conversation exchange. This is a great opportunity to practise speaking as you will be put into small groups. **The next zoom session is on 2nd March at 10am GMT.**

Link to join the language exchange:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84247799935?pwd=c0cxTk92YUFCMet6eitqMkYvdjRrUT09>

The Meeting ID is 842 4779 9935 and the passcode is 1234

Register on the Meetup website here: <https://www.meetup.com/meetup-group-ed-russ-eng/>

Oxford Perm Association contact details

Position	Name	Telephone	email address
Chair	Karen Hewitt	01865 515635	karen.hewitt@conted.ox.ac.uk
Secretary	Marcus Ferrar	07584 199488	marcus@ferrar.org.uk >
Treasurer	Chris Cowley	07760 251465	chrisacowley@gmail.com
Membership	Liz Wheeler	07891 141293	wheater170@btinternet.com
OIL	Sally Richards	07504 052264	s.c.richards77@gmail.com
Website/Newsletter	Jessica Vlasova	07766 025313	jessica.vlasova@gmail.com

In August 2024 a small group of us met at Tate Modern, London for the exhibition ‘Expressionists: Kandinsky, Münter and the Blue Rider’. It was an exciting opportunity to see works by the Blue Rider collective - the first such exhibition in the U.K. for sixty years. The exhibition was made possible by a collaboration with the Lenbachhaus in Munich, who loaned over 75 works.

In many ways the star of the show was Gabriele Münter. Along with her partner, Vassily Kandinsky, she was a key figure in the Blue Rider collective which was founded in 1911. A young woman of private means it was she who bought the house in Murnau, rural Bavaria, which she shared with Kandinsky. It was she who saved many of the latter’s paintings from destruction by the Nazis who considered them “degenerate art”. She hid the paintings in the basement of her Murnau house and later donated them to the Lenbachhaus where they form a significant core of the museum’s collection. Münter and Kandinsky frequently entertained friends at the house in Murnau. Münter considered the Blue Rider to be just a group of friends who “shared a passion for painting as a form of self expression”, but in fact the group was central to the development of European Expressionism. It is to Münter that the first room of the exhibition is devoted.

Other women artists featured prominently in the exhibition. Marianne Werefkin, whose paintings of street theatre and arresting portraits of gender-fluid dancer Alexander Sacharoff question conventional gender roles. A vivid use of colour and line also characterised works by Elizabeth Epstein, Sonia Delaunay, Erma Bossi and Maria Franck-Marc, wife of Franz Marc.

Franz Marc’s paintings convey his deep spiritual connection with nature. His *Blue Horse I* was there and we smiled at his joyful leaping yellow cow, in *Cows Red Green Yellow*. But it was Marc’s equally colourful *Tiger*, unconventionally stripe free, that was the ‘poster boy’ for the exhibition. Marc’s spiritual interests and explorations into the spiritual symbolism of colour were shared by Kandinsky whose own yellow *Cow*, with milkmaid, was nearby. To experience something of Marc’s experimentation with colour, we were invited to look at his *Deer in Snow* through a prism. This perhaps could have benefitted from more explanation.

These artists were avid collectors and the exhibition conveys their eclectic tastes and how these contributed to the development of their art, as seen in the *Blue Rider Almanac* which was also on display. Styles and techniques from folk arts and crafts traditions were repurposed by the group members, as in Kandinsky’s *All Saints Day* and the *Riding Couple*, which in different ways draw on Russian folk traditions. Both Münter and Kandinsky learnt the local Bavarian technique of reverse painting on glass used by Kandinsky in his mesmerising *St George I*, on a blue horse, slaying the dragon.

As noted in one of the excellent texts which accompanied the exhibition, the Blue Rider collective dispersed with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Jawlensky was expelled from Germany with twenty four hours’ notice and he and Marianne Werefkin fled to Switzerland. Kandinsky and Münter also relocated to Switzerland, but shortly afterwards Kandinsky returned to Russia, bringing to an end his relationship with Münter. Marc and Macke were both killed at the front.

We were fortunate to see this superb body of work in London this summer, but we left the exhibition wondering what further masterpieces might have been created, within the context of the Blue Rider, had it not been for the cruel intervention of war.



photo: Kat Kottonen

On the afternoon of Sunday 5th January, a group of over 30 members of the Association gathered in Karen's large room for a further fascinating talk by Kat Kottonen, this time on Russian films from the 1960s to the 1990s.

The thaw during the Khrushchev era led to increased cultural exchanges with the West, with the result that Soviet films from the 1960s were influenced by France, the USA and Japan.

Walking the Streets of Moscow (1964) – a comedy with an optimistic and youthful atmosphere.

Nine Days of One Year (1962) – a science fiction film centred on a nuclear physicist, with an ambiguous message.

The era of stagnation (1964-1982) was a period when the country was poorer due to the expense of the Cold War and other conflicts. Any criticism of the government was hidden or indirect. Television had an increasing influence and popular films from the 1950s continued to be old favourites. Colour films developed later in the Soviet Union, following the acquisition of Agfafilm from Germany as a war trophy.

The Diamond Arm (1969) - a comedy about foreign travel and diamond theft.

Viy (1967) – a rare example of a (not-very-scary) horror film, based on a novel by Gogol.

War and Peace (1967) – one of only 4 Soviet Films to be awarded an Oscar. It was said to be the most expensive Soviet film ever made.

Mirror (1975) – a film by Andrey Tarkovsky which was better received in the West than in the Soviet Union.

During the 80s and 90s there was much more freedom of expression but little money for film making. Foreign films were widely available and audiences were exposed to nudity, vulgarity and gruesome scenes which they hadn't seen before.

Come and See (1985) – a dark anti-war film set in WW2.

Burnt by the Sun (1994) – a film looking back to the era of Stalin. It was also awarded an Oscar.

Brother (1997) – a film featuring the new realities and the role of the Mafia. Stylistically similar to a Western film.

A Few Random Russian-Related Jottings from our Trip to Uzbekistan

Chris Cowley with Carole Richardson

Russian and Cyrillic From the moment of our arrival in Tashkent, it was clear that there were a lot of Russian speakers in Uzbekistan. This is not really surprising, as Uzbekistan was one of the 15 Republics of the Soviet Union. Indeed, it didn't exist as a separate country until it became a Soviet Republic, and its current borders were established under Stalin.

We heard Russian spoken on the streets and in restaurants - and much of the signage was in Cyrillic, both for writing Russian and Uzbek. When Carole and I were out and about on our own - not with our group and away from the tourist hotspots - people addressed us in Russian.

Ill Feeling towards the Soviet Union Our guide was careful about what he said, but there was clear resentment against the Soviet Union. Some historic buildings had been destroyed; many archaeological and cultural artefacts had been removed to Moscow or St Petersburg; and the environmental destruction of the Aral Sea was, he said, largely the result of Soviet activity which diverted water for cotton farming. He added that quantities of anthrax had been found buried under the lake, causing further damage. Furthermore, the Soviet ban on private enterprise was very difficult for a nation of traders and entrepreneurs!

Tashkent The city suffered from a devastating earthquake in 1966, destroying most of its historic buildings. It was subsequently re-built in the Soviet style, with wide tree-lined boulevards, multi-lane dual carriageways and residential areas of Soviet-style apartment blocks. We were told that these buildings, as well as more recent, modern ones, were built with earthquake-proof technology.

WW2 Our guide told us about the role of Uzbekistan in WW2. Uzbekistan exported a large amount of food to other parts of the Soviet Union and adopted children from the war zones. A book has been written about this: *To the Tashkent Station* by Rebecca Manley but it is currently out of print.

We were also told that around 1.5 million Uzbeks went to help to defend Moscow, including women snipers. Around one third of this number were killed. In recognition of this sacrifice, Stalin partially relaxed his anti-religion stance.

The number of Russian casualties in WW2 is generally estimated as over 25 million. We were left wondering how many of these were actually not ethnic Russians at all...

The Curse of Amir Timur The tomb of Amir Timur (Tamerlane) is inscribed in Arabic with the following words: 'When I rise, the World will Tremble'. Our guide told us that on 22nd June 1941, on Stalin's orders, Timur's remains were exhumed for scientific analysis. Within hours, Nazi tanks began rolling into the Soviet Union and many wondered if this was as a result of the curse.

It is alleged that the bones of Timur were later put in an airplane, and flown around above Stalingrad during the terrible siege, in order to encourage the soldiers defending the city (in much the same way as the icon Vladimir Mother of God was flown above Moscow earlier in the war). Shortly afterwards the siege was lifted and the tide of the war changed. Once the scientific analysis was completed, Amir Timur's remains were reinterred with full Muslim burial rites - and the Nazis were expelled from the Soviet Union! Internet searches suggest that there are other versions of this story, but this is the version we were told.

Натяжные потолки ('stretched ceilings') Towards the end of the trip, Carole and I were finally able to ask our guide about the натяжные потолки (stretched ceilings) which we had seen advertised everywhere during our trip. It turns out that these are, indeed, stretched ceilings, with designs printed onto some sort of soft plastic which can be stretched over a ceiling. A later Google search showed that such ceilings are also available in the UK, but we have never seen one (and I am not tempted to order one for my house!). They are obviously very popular in Uzbekistan!

And finally, here, for the amusement of Russian speakers, is a sign from the swimming pool in one of the hotels we stayed in. It is an illustration of the dangers of relying on Google translate!



Visit to Leonid Pasternak's house in Oxford

Jessica Vlasova



photo: Sergey Vlasov

In October, members of the OPA paid a visit to a house in Park Town, Oxford where the artist Leonid Pasternak (1862-1945) lived for the last six years of his life. His granddaughter Ann Pasternak Slater, who lives there, welcomed us and gave us a talk about the artist's life and her memories of her grandfather. She then gave us a printed guide to the paintings and we were free to wander the house to look at his works which were hanging in various

rooms, on the staircases and in the hall. The collection consists of what Pasternak brought from Russia when he moved to Germany in 1921 and from Germany to England in 1938. His works include portraits of his wife and four children, Tolstoy and family, Einstein, Rachmaninov, Chaliapin as well as still life paintings and landscapes. One of the rooms, The Green Room, was the artist's studio and bedroom and where he died.

Here is a link to the October 2015 newsletter to read about a talk that Ann Pasternak Slater gave on Leonid Pasternak to the OPA

https://www.oxfordperm.org/_files/ugd/d88c54_a559598b09db4ae685a4c8591d2afaa4.pdf

And a link to the September 2011 newsletter to read about his son Boris Pasternak

https://www.oxfordperm.org/_files/ugd/d88c54_17aafd721a8544adbfcd7ca288f32716.pdf