

Press information

SUMMER | AUTUMN 2020

HERMITAGE
AMSTERDAM

Tsars and Knights

THE ROMANOV'S
LOVE AFFAIR
WITH THE
MIDDLE AGES

Tournament armour (detail)
Germany, Augsburg, master
Anton Peffenhauser, c. 1580–85

Press release

Exhibition *Tsars and Knights* shows Hermitage's Western European medieval art collection and Arsenal objects in Amsterdam

Early 19th-century revival of romantic medieval world at the Russian court

This summer and autumn, the Hermitage Amsterdam presents *Tsars and Knights, the Romanovs' Love Affair with the Middle Ages*. The exhibition will tell an entrancing tale of tsars and medieval knights through more than 250 items specially brought here from the collection of European medieval art and the Arsenal of the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many people in Europe fell under the spell of a romantic nostalgia for a distant era: the Middle Ages. There was a veritable revival, which spread to many different spheres and sparked a craze for collecting medieval *objects d'art*. The passion was shared by the Russian court. Tsar Alexander III snapped up a celebrated medieval art collection that was about to be auctioned off in Paris, to the fury of the French. Tsars Paul and Nicholas I both contributed to the vogue for the age of chivalry, the latter by establishing a collection of arms and armour at his Arsenal. Between them, these three tsars laid the basis for the present-day medieval collection and Arsenal at the State Hermitage – an assemblage of masterpieces that has expanded over time to become world-famous. Now, for the first time, a number of top items from the medieval art collection and the Arsenal are being brought to the Netherlands. They tell a tale of knights and ladies, of courtly love and tournaments, and the admiration for all this at the Russian court.

A selection of images can be downloaded via hermitage.nl



Crown
Western Europe, 15th century

Roman de la Rose, Basilewsky collection and the armour of Charles V

One of the themes of the exhibition will be courtly love: the chaste devotion between the sexes so widely celebrated in the literature of the Middle Ages. The high point will be a magnificently illuminated copy of the *Roman de la Rose*, one of the most famous works in all of medieval literature. The erotically charged love story dates from the thirteenth century and enjoyed an enduring popularity, due to its mixture of courtly traits and more explicitly sexual features.

Central to the exhibition, however, will be the medieval art collection of Paris-based collector Alexander Basilewsky. In 1884, when he decided to sell it, the collection numbered around 750 items. Just as it was about to be auctioned off, Tsar Alexander III paid a record sum to purchase it. The exhibition will feature a number of top items from the collection, including: a rare gilded reliquary casket of c. 1200, produced in the Limoges region of France and adorned with scenes from the Flight into Egypt; small panels from an ivory quadriptych showing other New Testament scenes; and a precious reliquary bust of St Thecla (c. 1325–50), now in the collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

The exhibition will also showcase around twenty complete suits of armour, spectacularly displayed in a veritable world of chivalric splendour culminating in a tournament. Particularly noteworthy examples are the armour of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and a unique sixteenth-century suit of armour specially adapted for use by Tsar Nicholas I, as well as a German suit of tournament jousting armour dating from around 1500 and weighing around fifty kilos.

The exhibition is scheduled to run from Tuesday 26 May to Sunday 8 November 2020.



Hugo van der Goes (1435/40–1482)
Triptych The Adoration of the Magi, c. 1460–82

Tsars and Knights

THE ROMANOV'S
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1 Comeback of the Dark Ages at the Russian court

Well into the eighteenth century, the medieval period was viewed as an unenlightened and uncivilised era – the ‘Dark Ages’. But around 1800, attitudes began to change. The rethink was connected with the emergence of the modern nation state, industrialization and the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. People began to yearn for the Middle Ages as a time when life was still pure and authentic. This striking U-turn eventually produced a full-blown ‘revival’ in which chivalric stories and faux historical styles were popularised and there was a growing craze for collecting medieval art objects. In literature, the ‘historical novel’ emerged as an important new genre, famously exemplified by the works of Sir Walter Scott (especially his 1819 chivalric romance *Ivanhoe*). In architecture, the Neo-Gothic style became popular and in the musical field composers produced pieces inspired by medieval tales, like Richard Wagner’s opera *Tristan und Isolde* (1865) or, in Russia, Alexander Borodin’s opera *Prince Igor*, based on a medieval epic poem. Completed by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Glazunov following Borodin’s death in 1887, *Prince Igor* was premiered in Petersburg in 1890.

The imperial court in St Petersburg played an enthusiastic role in the reappraisal of the Middle Ages. In their various ways, Tsars Paul I, Nicholas I and Alexander III all contributed to the romantic vogue for the age of chivalry in Europe. The last two laid the foundations for unique collections of European medieval art and armaments at the Hermitage. Nicholas collected suits of armour and display weapons for his Arsenal, while – to the fury of the French – Alexander succeeded in acquiring an



(Circle of) **Angelo Bronzino** (1503–1572)
Portrait of Duke Alessandro de' Medici, 1510–37



Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1533)
Portrait of a Woman, 1526

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entire celebrated Parisian collection of medieval artworks. Both collections were to expand considerably over time and are now world-famous. Top items from them are travelling to Amsterdam specially for this exhibition – an excursion into the chivalric world of knights and damsels, courtly love and tournaments, featuring phenomenal works of art, a *scandal* that rocked Paris and, of course: chivalrous Romanovs.

2 Chivalrous tsars

2.1 Tsar Paul I: protector of the Knights of Malta

Paul I (r. 1796–1801) was protector of the chivalric Order of Malta, which he also established in Russia in 1797. The concept of chivalry chimed with his mystical desire to create a kind of order of virtue via military action, but his fascination with the Order was also connected with the capture of Malta by Napoleon (who recognised its strategic importance and how its occupation could consolidate his power within Europe). Following Napoleon's seizure of the island, Paul assumed the protection of the Order in the hope that the move would enable him to become a major opponent to Bonaparte within Europe. In addition, however, he was fascinated by the knightly Order itself and by its medieval symbolism. The latter inspired him to rebuild his favourite summer residence, Gatchina, south-west of St Petersburg, in a highly medieval style and it was there that he provided accommodation for Giulio Litta, the Order's official ambassador in St Petersburg. Gatchina Palace had been erected in 1766 on the orders of Paul's mother, Catherine the Great, and Count (later Prince) Grigory Orlov. Catherine had presented it to her son in 1783, following Orlov's death. The new design, by Italian architect Antonio Rinaldi, combined features of a medieval castle with those of an English hunting lodge.

Paul was greatly inspired by the romantic history of the Crusades and by that of the Order of Malta in particular. Now known officially as the *Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta*, the Order of Malta was originally a Crusader order and has been headquartered variously in Jerusalem (until

1291), Rhodes (1310–1522), Malta (1530–1798), St Petersburg (1799–1801), Rome (from 1834) and elsewhere. Although it no longer possesses any territory, the Order is still recognised under international law as a sovereign entity (without land) and maintains diplomatic relations with 107 countries.

However, Paul's passion for chivalry and the Middle Ages was not confined to the chivalric Order. He held a number of tournaments and appeared in them in the costume of a medieval knight. Right from childhood, he had been fascinated by tales of chivalry and he dressed his gentlemen in waiting and other court officials in chain mail. The exhibition will include a throne that belonged to Paul and bears the emblem of the Order of Malta.

2.2 Tsar Nicholas I: 'the chivalrous tsar' and founder of the Arsenall

Nicholas I (r. 1825–55) was seen as an autocratic and exacting monarch, with a passion for medieval and other arms and military parades that earned him the sobriquet of the 'chivalrous tsar'. His marriage to his meek and gentle wife, Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna, was loving and harmonious. Nicholas remodelled Gatchina Palace, but his preferred summer residence was the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoe Selo (the cluster of imperial buildings that developed around the immense eighteenth-century Catherine Palace).

Nicholas grew up in a period of romantic hero-worship. He himself was interested in military affairs and spellbound by the Napoleonic wars. He was in awe of his elder brothers, Tsar Alexander I (r. 1801–25) and Konstantin, who were actively involved in the campaigns. In 1811, when General Alexander Langeron presented him with a sabre, the weapon became the starting-point for one of the world's most interesting collections of arms and armour, eventually numbering over 15,000 items. The collection was initially housed in a baroque pavilion at Tsarskoe Selo. This was remodelled in 1834 to produce a Neo-Gothic edifice resembling a castle with four turrets and based on

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an English ‘Gothic Revival’ example: Cranbourne Tower in Windsor.

The new building was renamed the Arsenal of Tsarskoe Selo and, after its opening in 1834, quickly became the most popular place in the imperial village (especially because it was open to the public). Dinners and receptions were held in the largest and most lofty room, called the Hall of Knights, where the walls were adorned with three rows of suits of half armour and sections of defensive weapons.

In 1885 the collection was moved to the Imperial Hermitage, its arrival coincided with that of the medieval art collection purchased by Tsar Alexander III from Alexander Basilewsky. A number of top pieces from the resulting Arsenal at the Hermitage will travel to Amsterdam especially for this exhibition. They will include a suit of armour worn by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and a sixteenth-century suit specially modified to fit Nicholas I. Another outstanding item is a German suit of tournament jousting armour from around 1500. The helmet alone – called ‘frog-mouth helm’ – weighs in at almost 8 kilos. Whole suits of armour of this kind could weigh as much as 40 to 50 kilos. Following the Revolution of 1917, the Tsarskoe Selo Arsenal stood empty and eventually fell into disrepair. It has recently been restored and was brought back into use in 2016 to showcase part of the Hermitage’s Arsenal collection and items from other collections.

2.3 Tsar Alexander III: founder of the medieval art collection

Alexander III (r. 1881–94) was another tsar with a passion for the Middle Ages. He ruled Russia with an iron fist and reversed many of the liberal reforms instituted by his father, Alexander II. He believed that the relaxation of control had led to his father’s terrorist assassination. For security reasons, he spent much of his time at the relatively isolated Gatchina Palace, which became known as ‘The citadel of autocracy’ because of the tsar’s reactionary rule. It was there that he signed decrees, held diplomatic receptions and – together



Horace Vernet
The Tsarskoe Selo Carousel, 1843
© Tsarskoe Selo Museum Complex, Pushkin, Russia



Alexander Petrovich Sokolov (1829–1913)
Portrait of Tsar Alexander II from his Coronation Album,
publ. St Petersburg 1883

with his wife, *fashionista* Maria Feodorovna – organised a multitude of theatrical performances, masquerades and costume balls. Alexander had a genuinely fond and faithful relationship with Maria (born Princess Dagmar of Denmark). The tsarina's popularity, fashion-consciousness and love of parties compensated to some extent for his rather lumpen personality. A great bear of a man, the tsar himself was socially ill-at-ease and hated appearing in public.

Alexander became fascinated by the Russian Middle Ages and the boyars, members of the highest rank of the feudal aristocracy in Russia. It was perhaps his admiration for the Middle Ages that inspired Alexander's desire to establish a medieval art collection at the Hermitage. The ambition was fulfilled at a stroke when he purchased the Basilewsky collection in Paris (see also section 3). The virtually simultaneous transfer of the arms and armour collection from the Tsarskoe Selo Arsenal instantly created a unique and extensive medieval collection at the Imperial Hermitage.

3 Medieval art, a collecting craze: Alexander Basilewsky

Among art collectors, art dealers and museums, the nineteenth century saw an enormous surge of interest in everything dating from the Middle Ages or indeed reminiscent of that period (in fact, their acquisitions frequently dated from the Renaissance). They began to form collections of medieval art, including furniture, arms and armour, sculpture, paintings and tapestries. Paris was the leading city in this respect. Amazing collections were amassed there, both in private homes and in new museums like the Musée de Cluny (1843), created in part to provide a faux medieval setting for visitors to enjoy.

Among the private collectors was Alexander Petrovich Basilewsky (1829–1899). He moved to Paris in around 1860, became acquainted with local antique dealers and collectors, and soon began to construct a serious collection of Christian decorative arts items, many of them

medieval. Money was no object, since he and his wife (Olga Bachmeteva) were both the sole offspring of wealthy parents. They led a life of luxury, astounding Parisians not only by the glamour of their receptions and balls, but also by the riches of their collection.

3.1 A staggering collection

The exhibition will include an 1870 watercolour showing the spacious gallery in Basilewsky's home in the Rue Blanche and many of the treasures displayed there. Twenty-five of these will also be on show in the exhibition.

One of the top pieces is an extremely rare gilded reliquary casket dating from around 1200 and bearing Biblical scenes from the Nativity and the Flight into Egypt. Objects of this kind, decorated with *champlevé* enamelwork (a technique developed in the Middle Ages in the Limoges region of France), were among Basilewsky's personal favourites. The iconography on this casket is virtually unique, occurring on only a very few objects anywhere in the world.

Basilewsky was also particularly interested in medieval ivories. These will be exemplified in the exhibition by three small panels from a quadriptych showing scenes from the New Testament (France, 1350–75), which can also be seen in the watercolour. Another outstanding item in the same group is a series of five ivory panels showing scenes from the romance of Tristan and Isolde (1300–25). Complete cycles of this story are extraordinarily rare in museum collections and unique in Gothic ivory. These particular panels were originally part of a casket exterior. Basilewsky also had a strong interest in religious artefacts. The watercolour shows – and the exhibition will include – a unique sculpture of John the Baptist (circa 1400). The extremely valuable reliquary bust of Saint Thecla (circa 1325–50) and the mosaic column in the middle of Basilewsky's gallery are also clearly distinguishable in the watercolour, and they too will come to the Hermitage Amsterdam.

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5



Vasily Vereshchagin (1835–1909)

Alexander Basilewsky in his Mansion in Paris, 1870

The collector's gallery can be seen on this watercolor. Basilewsky himself sits in the space, surrounded by many master pieces, of which twenty-five can also be seen in the exhibition.

Basilewsky was an important exhibitor at a number of World Exhibitions in Paris (1865, 1867 and 1878). In 1884, however, he decided to dispose of his art collection, by then comprising over 750 items. The announcement of the sale caused a sensation among experts and collectors in Paris. It would be one of the greatest auctions of medieval objects in recent times. And why was he selling off his life's work? Speculation was rife in the French press. Following the sale, Basilewsky himself told a reporter from *Le Figaro* that 'The collection had become so valuable that it was worthy only of an emperor'. But, thanks to recent archival discoveries, we now know the real reason: the Basilewskys had applied for a divorce on grounds of his infidelity. Basilewsky is known to have had liaisons in the 1860s and 70s with celebrated Parisian actresses and courtesans like Marie Louise Eloy – also known as La Ferraris – and Sarah Bernhardt. Apparently the couple had been living apart for some time, but in 1884 – the year of the sale – Olga began to build a palazzo of her own in Florence.



Haut relief: St George saves Princess Cleodolinda from the Dragon

Southern Germany or Netherlands, 1400–50



Casket for reliquaries of St John the Baptist

Upper-Rhine, Basle, 1400–25



Reliquary casket with depictions of saints

France, Limoges, late 12th century



Reliquary bust of St Thecla

Upper Rhine region, Strasbourg, c. 1290–1300 and/or 1325–50
Loan and © of image: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

4 Paris in shock: tsar buys entire Basilewsky collection

‘Yesterday evening the Basilewsky collection was sold by telegram’

Le Figaro, November 1884

Three years after Tsar Alexander III's coronation, he made a historic art purchase. He had seen the Basilewsky collection in Paris when still heir to the throne. Following the announcement of the sale in 1884, the tsar decided on 11 November to use his own funds to make an offer. Just 48 hours later, he received a telegram notifying him of Basilewsky's acceptance. The eagerly awaited auction at Hôtel Drouot was cancelled and Alexander paid Basilewsky 5.5 million Francs (around € 30 million now) for the entire collection. For comparison: an estimated amount of 7,5 million francs was needed for the construction of the Eiffel Tower, completed in 1889. It was a record sum but, even so, not a financial coup for Basilewsky. He might have got far more for the estimated 750 objects in the collection and only agreed to Alexander's price because he still felt Russian and wanted the tsar to have them. Ten days later the rare collection arrived in St Petersburg, providing a marvellous basis for a collection of European medieval art at the Hermitage. The tsar was delighted when his acquisition was safely ensconced in the Hermitage, stressing that such objects could be seen nowhere else in Russia.

In Paris, however, the cancellation of the great auction caused vast disappointment and shock was expressed that the unique collection of art treasures was lost to the country. For some people, however, the sale was a consolation. Alfred Darcel, curator of the Louvre and a friend of the collector, was glad that the collection Basilewsky had spent his life creating would remain intact and continue to bear his name.

4.1 Break-up of the Basilewsky collection

In 1885, few people could have imagined that the personal possessions of the tsar would ever be sold off, but following the Revolution of 1917 that was precisely what happened. Between 1928 and 1932, many items from the Hermitage were sold to buyers abroad to meet the Soviet regime's urgent need for cash. Among them were objects from the Basilewsky collection. Some of the top items ended up in London, New York, Amsterdam or Basel, although hardly any of them were acquired directly by the museums where they are now. For example, the Victoria and Albert Museum has a rare ivory *situla* (holy water container) made in 980 for the Holy Roman Emperor Otto II. And visitors to the Rijksmuseum can admire an extraordinary, silver-coloured reliquary bust of Saint Thecla. The latter object will be on show in the exhibition. Almost ninety years on, therefore, objects dispersed from the Basilewsky collection are now being reunited at the Hermitage Amsterdam.

5 Courtly love and *Roman de la Rose*: a medieval bestseller

One of the most famous romances to feature a white flower (in this case a white rose) is the *Roman de la Rose* ('Romance of the Rose'), a medieval French narrative poem on the subject of love. Composed in the thirteenth century, it was the most famous and important work in medieval French literature. It retained its popularity through into the sixteenth century and even today enjoys worldwide renown as the most iconic story of courtly love.

‘Un baisier dous et savoré. Pris de la rose errament’

(‘I [...] straightway took a sweet and delicious kiss from the rose’)

The stirring love story appeared in multiple languages. The exhibition will include one of the most beautiful and richly illuminated. The romance was composed in the course of the thirteenth century by two different authors, Guillaume de Lorris and – after his death –

Jean de Meung. This explains the diversity of styles within it, ranging from the highly conventionalised style of courtly love literature, which focuses on a spiritually elevating devotion to an aristocratic lady, to the bawdier and erotically suggestive literature of medieval townspeople.

Both authors deal with various aspects of love and do so in the form of allegory, with abstractions like love, resistance, shame, jealousy and fear appearing as personages who assist or obstruct the main character.

The *Roman de la Rose* is written in the distinctive medieval narrative form of the 'dream vision'. The first-person narrator dreams that he comes across a beautiful walled Garden of Love. But to

enter it he must be free of hatred, felony, avarice, envy, sorrow, old age and poverty – all personified in the poem by ugly women depicted on the walls of the garden. When he is found to be free of these vices, the gate opens. Inside the garden, he encounters noble companions of the God of Love, including Joy, Beauty, Wealth, Courtesy and Fair Welcoming. He also sees and falls in love with the Rose: the very image of a beautiful lady. The Lover then meets and is accompanied by Fair Welcoming, who promises to help him achieve the object of his desires. But the Lover is opposed by guardians of the Rose, such as Shame, Foul Mouth, Fear and Chastity – the chief opponent of Venus and Nature. Lady Reason tries to persuade the young man to distance himself from the God of Love and abandon his love of the Rose. Jealousy, the prime enemy of lovers, then builds a tower



Illustration from a manuscript of *Roman de la Rose* (Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meung, 13th century)
France, scribe unknown, late 15th century, cover 16th century

around the Rose. This is where Guillaume's narrative breaks off. Jean de Meung continues the tale with the siege of the tower, in which the Lover's constant friend, Fair Welcoming, is imprisoned. The Lover is assisted by Nature, who opposes Chastity. Nature conducts an implacable struggle against her opposite, Lady Reason, whom she eventually overcomes. Those who obey the laws of Nature attain paradise, to which they are conducted by lambs (the emissaries of Christ). In the end, Shame and Fear give way and the Lover is able to win the Rose.

6 Courtly love and spectacular tournaments

Courtly love is a medieval image of ideal love in which courtesy and service to the damsel or the knight take pride of place. Tournaments provided a perfect opportunity to display such devotion. The onlookers included large numbers of aristocratic damsels, who cheered on the star performers and encouraged their displays of courage.

The emergence of the tournament in the eleventh century makes it virtually contemporaneous with knighthood itself. Initially, tournaments consisted principally of a *mêlée*: mass combat involving as many as 200 knights fighting simultaneously on a large, open battlefield. Later, from the twelfth century onward, jousting – single combat between two mounted knights wielding lances – became an increasingly popular feature of them. The aim of jousting was to strike or, better still, unseat the opponent. The tournament was the main stage to display knighthood, but could end with injuries or even death.

7 Romanovs in Neo-Gothic surroundings

Virtually every tsar from Catherine the Great (r. 1762–96) onward displayed a love of Neo-Gothic design. In addition to various 'Gothic Table Services', they commissioned medieval-style jewellery, furniture and reliquaries. But the most conspicuous illustrations of their passion were the palaces and pavilions they built. Catherine

ordered not only the Gatchina Palace, but also two residences in Moscow: the Petrovsky Palace (intended to accommodate the imperial party on journeys from St Petersburg to Moscow) and the massive Tsaritsyno Palace. Paul I had little Bip Castle built for his own enjoyment in the grounds of Tsarskoe Selo, where it was later joined by Nicholas I's Arsenal, erected to house the latter's magnificent collection of arms and armour. Nicholas also had one of the towers of the Moscow Kremlin built in Neo-Gothic style and his favourite dacha, the Cottage Palace in the park surrounding the Peterhof, beside the Gulf of Finland, is likewise extremely Gothic in appearance. Not to mention the Gothic Chapel erected for his family in the same park. Later, Alexander III had a room in his Anichkov Palace on Nevsky Prospekt in St Petersburg totally refurbished in Neo-Gothic style. And the interior of the best preserved apartment of the last tsar, Nicholas II, his library in the Winter Palace, is entirely in that style. The exhibition will include Neo-Gothic objects once in the personal possession of Tsar Nicholas I.

8 Medieval-style carousels

On 23 May 1842, Nicholas I and Alexandra Feodorovna celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary at Tsarskoe Selo by holding a chivalric carousel – a 'contest' (earlier a circular dance) on horseback inspired by the tournaments of medieval times. Carousels had existed earlier but the nineteenth-century romantic vogue for the Middle Ages led to the emergence of specifically chivalric versions. At various European courts, including that of Russia, they were used to honour the chivalric traditions of the Middle Ages. For the 1842 event at Tsarskoe Selo, Florian Gille – the curator of the imperial collection of arms and armour – selected nine splendid suits of armour dating from the sixteenth century. The one worn by Nicholas will be on display in Amsterdam.

From the steps of the Tsarskoe Selo Arsenal, a parade of sixteen knights and their ladies set off for the nearby Alexander Palace. Accompanied

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by heralds and musicians, the picturesque procession – including almost the entire family of the tsar – rode through the park, headed by the tsar himself.

The main part of the carousel took place in front of the Alexander Palace and focused on the tsarina, dressed as a medieval maiden and mounted on a horse. The horsemen surrounding her were dressed in original fluted steel armour in the style associated with the German Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519), sometimes described as ‘the last knight’ in Europe. The carousel was formed by the knights riding around in a circle and performing a series of exercises, such as quadrilles, ‘chaînes’ and other dances, during each galoppade. The exhibition in Amsterdam will include a large group portrait of the imperial family at the 1842 carousel (image on page 2), painted by Horace Vernet and now normally on prominent display in the newly restored Arsenal at Tsarskoe Selo.

Although a carousel was intended to be a serious occasion, the tsarina wrote in her journal that she had never laughed so much in her life. The occasion suffered from a number of hiccups. The suits of armour were often too small and became baking hot in the May sun (which sets very late in St Petersburg). The participants were almost asphyxiated inside them and the horses became so nervous that they sometimes actually stumbled. Badly fastened sections of armour fell off and Nicholas himself was unable to control the visor on his helmet, which constantly slammed shut. Finding it hard to breathe, the tsar tried to rid himself of the visor by vigorously shaking his head. Consequently, the carefully staged carousel descended into a sort of parody, but was remembered fondly by the participants for that very reason. Both they and the onlookers ended up helpless with laughter.

Nicholas and Alexandra (born Princess Charlotte of Prussia, daughter of King Frederick Wilhelm III) had already attended earlier carousels, including one held in Potsdam in July 1829 in honour of her birthday. Although the event was intended to resemble a medieval tournament,



Armour in the style of Emperor Maximilian, adapted for use by Tsar Nicholas I
Germany, Nuremberg, 1500–35

there was no authentic combat on that occasion because jousting was regarded as too dangerous. To avoid accidents, the action was carefully choreographed in advance. The participants included Prince Frederick of the Netherlands (brother of King Willem II), who was the husband of Charlotte’s youngest sister, Princess Louise of Prussia. The exhibition will include an album containing a number of drawings of that carousel.

The white rose chosen as the emblem of the festivities was Alexandra’s favourite flower. It was also her nickname since girlhood, after *Blanchefleur*, the heroine of a popular historical novel featuring medieval chivalry and courtly love, *Der Zauberring* by Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué (1812). The name *Blanchefleur* (‘white flower’) occurs regularly in medieval literature, most prominently in the various versions of the twelfth-century romance *Floris and Blanchefleur* (originally *Floire et Blanceflor*).

9 Dutch (royal) collection

The exhibition will also include a number of objects of Dutch origin. They include two masterpieces from the Basilewsky collection: a unique chalice and a monstrance (a receptacle for the display of the consecrated Host). These will be joined by items on loan from Het Loo Palace and the Royal Collections of the Netherlands. The latter will provide a unique Neo-Gothic clock and a Neo-Gothic casket holding splinters of bone taken from the Prince of Orange, the later King Willem II, after he was wounded at the Battle of Waterloo (1815). The loan from Het Loo will consist of four hand-tinted prints showing the famous *Ivanhoe* ball.

9.1 European court life under the spell of the Middle Ages: Dutch carnival balls

The first Dutch royal carnival ball was organised by Willem II (1792–1849) in 1823, when he was still heir to the throne. The costume ball was held in Brussels, then still part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, where the prince was living at the time with his Romanov wife, Anna Pavlovna (1795–1865). The event came to be known as the *Ivanhoe* ball. British guests of honour danced quadrilles and were dressed as characters from Sir Walter Scott's influential historical novel *Ivanhoe* (1819), a rousing tale of courageous knights and charming medieval maidens. The ball was a huge success and it was decided to produce an album of prints recording the costumes of the main characters. Some of the prints from the resulting *Costumes d'Ivanhoe* album have been selected for inclusion in this exhibition at the Hermitage Amsterdam. A second such ball was held in 1842. Themed events of this sort reveal that the House of Orange under Willem II, too, showed a keen interest in the Middle Ages. For instance, the king had a number of Neo-Gothic buildings erected in The Hague and Tilburg.

The Dutch *Ivanhoe* ball was an early episode in a long series of events reflecting the nineteenth-century cult of chivalry. The novels of Sir Walter Scott were highly influential in this respect.

They were famous throughout Europe. In England, for example, an 'Ivanhoe Quadrille' formed part of the celebrated *Plantagenet Ball* held at Buckingham Palace in 1842, with Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert appearing in the guise of the medieval King Edward III and his wife Philippa of Hainault.



Ivanhoe and the black knight

Lithography by De Jobard, drawn by Félicité Lagarenne, 1823
© Het Loo Palace National Museum, Apeldoorn



Knights Waldemer Fitzurse and his daughter Alicia

Lithography by De Jobard, drawn by Félicité Lagarenne, 1823
© Het Loo Palace National Museum, Apeldoorn

9.2 Echo

The exhibition will show how the bestsellers of the medieval revival – legends and tales like the stories of Ivanhoe, King Arthur, Prince Igor and Joan of Arc – still influence our perspectives, of how we experience the Middle Ages.



Hermann Stilke
(Berlijn, 1803–1861)
*Joan of Arc in Battle (Central Part of
The Life of Joan of Arc Triptych)*, 1843



Tristan and Isolde, 1913



Ivanhoe, 1913



Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc), 1889

Extra information



HERMITAGE
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Plaque with the
Apostle Philip
France, Limoges, c.1231

Ontmoet het creatieve team

Meet the Creative Team

De Hermitage Amsterdam maakt deze tentoonstelling samen met de collega's van de State Hermitage Museum in St.-Petersburg en een team van ontwerpers.

The Hermitage Amsterdam produces this exhibition in collaboration with the colleagues from the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg and a team of designers.

CONSERVATOREN CURATORS

State Hermitage Museum

St Petersburg

Yury Efimov

Arsenaal | Senior conservator

Arsenal | Senior curator

Tatiana Kossourova

Afdeling West-Europese Toegepaste Kunst | Senior conservator

Department of West European Applied Arts | Senior curator

Hermitage Amsterdam

Amsterdam

Pieter Eckhardt

Tentoonstellingsconservator

Exhibition curator

PUBLICITEITSCAMPAGNE PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN

CATALOGUS CATALOGUE

UNA designers

Amsterdam

unadesigners.nl

André Cremer

TENTOONSTELLINGSONTWERP 3D 3D EXHIBITION DESIGN

Lies Willers

Amsterdam

lieswillers.com

TENTOONSTELLINGSONTWERP 2D 2D EXHIBITION DESIGN

Studio Berry Slok

Amsterdam

studioberryslok.nl



Factsheet

LOCATION

Hermitage Amsterdam
Amstel 51 Amsterdam

DATES

26 May – 8 November 2020

Open daily 10 am – 5 pm

Current opening dates and hours:

[hermitage.nl](https://www.hermitage.nl)

WEBSITE

[hermitage.nl](https://www.hermitage.nl)

ADMISSION CHARGES

Adults	€ 18
CJP/Stadspas	€ 14.40
Museumkaart	€ 2.50
I Amsterdam City Card	free
Children aged 11 or under	free
ICOM	free
Hermitage all-in ticket*	€ 25
BankGiro Loterij VIP-KAART	free
Vrienden van de Hermitage	free

*3 exhibitions: *Tsars and Knights*, *Portrait Gallery of the 17th Century* and *Outsider Art Museum*

CATALOGUE

Tsars and Knights € 34.95

The Romanovs' Love Affair with the Middle Ages

Published by De Nieuwe Kerk / Hermitage Amsterdam

GUIDED TOURS

On request for groups of max. 15 people

€ 90 per hour

rondleidingen@hermitage.nl

LECTURES

€ 175 per lecture (plus admission charges and room hire)

rondleidingen@hermitage.nl

ACTIVITIES

Various activities will be organised in relation to the exhibition. For the current programme, visit:

[hermitage.nl](https://www.hermitage.nl)

SCHOOLS

Primary (greater Amsterdam) Lesson package for groups 4, 5 and 6. Preparation in school, exhibition visit and workshop at Hermitage for Children [hermitage.nl/en/education](https://www.hermitage.nl/en/education)

Secondary Programmes for various levels. Introduction followed by exhibition visit with activity cards.

MUSEUM SHOP

Daily 10.30 am – 5.30 pm, no ticket required

CAFÉ-RESTAURANT HERMITAGE

On the first floor, east side of the building

Open daily 10 am – 5.30 pm

Courtyard terrace open from April:
in fine weather 10 am – 5.30 pm

AUDITORIUM

Above the Café-restaurant, suitable for many purposes

events@hermitage.nl

MEETING ROOMS

Three rooms, perfect for lectures and meetings of relatively small groups of people

events@hermitage.nl

ACCESSIBILITY

Coaches Passengers board at Weesperstraat for group entrance on Nieuwe Keizersgracht 1

Boats Stop at main entrance on the Amstel (also Museum Boat stop)

Cars Car parks at National Opera & Ballet, Waterlooplein, Markenhoven

Public transport Tram 14 (Waterlooplein stop)

Metro 51, 53 & 54 (Waterlooplein stop, Nieuwe Herengracht exit)

DISABLED ACCESS

The whole building is wheelchair-friendly. Wheelchairs and walkers available on loan, reservation in advance is recommended:

+31 (0)20 530 87 55

mail@hermitage.nl

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND IMAGES

Hermitage Amsterdam

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ALL IMAGES

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St Petersburg

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A selection of images can
be downloaded via
hermitage.nl

Flabellum, liturgical fan
(detail)

Rhine-Meuse region,
late 12th century



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