



# SWAN Fruit bowl

N.V. Nemirov-Kolodkin Company,  
Moscow, Russia

1908–1917

*Silver, rhodonite, almandine, calcedony,  
rhodusite, enamel painting, embossing,  
engraving*

About the project

[https://tsaritsyno-museum.ru/  
events/special/p/lyudi-i-fondy-eng/](https://tsaritsyno-museum.ru/events/special/p/lyudi-i-fondy-eng/)





SELECTED BY

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The first time I saw the Swan vase was in the previous century when I was working on my thesis. The image of the vase, among other works from the collection of our museum, was published in the catalogue of the exhibition ‘The Brilliant Age of Fabergé’, which was held in the Catherine Palace of Tsarskoe Selo in 1992. I was studying jewellery art of the Art Nouveau era and could not help but notice this remarkable object, which harmoniously embodies the features of the Neo-Russian style — a branch of Art Nouveau that combines the traditions of national culture and the artistic search for a new style, which carried different names in many countries: Art Nouveau in France, Liberty in Italy, Modern in Russia.

It so happened that at the turn of the century, I found a job at the Tsaritsyno Museum-Reserve, and after a while was appointed as a curator of the precious metals collection. Miraculously, I had the opportunity to hold and study the Swan vase.

The story of how this object came into our collection is an interesting one. The museum was founded in 1984 as the State Museum of Decorative and Applied Arts of the Peoples of the USSR, and the main means of forming the collection, in its early days, were transfers of objects from various state museums and other organizations. The important transfer for the museum was the one when in 1985 the Intourist National Hotel gave it over 600 pieces of art made by the leading jewellery firms of the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries: K. Fabergé, P. Ovchinnikov, I. Khlebnikov and others. It was a significant event for the museum. The transfer of these objects reflected the breakthrough that occurred in 1980s in the way the art of the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries was viewed: the approach to the artworks and masters of that period radically changed, art historians, specialists and antique lovers no longer consider Art Nouveau tasteless imitation

and poor legacy of the past. Art of the turn of the century became a subject of study, exhibition and collecting.

The Swan vase, the jewel of the Tsaritsyno collection, has no analogues in museum collections.

The vase is remarkable for its amazing harmony and subtle poetry. It is an amazing piece of jewellery art, although it is certainly not a single commissioned item, like the famous Fabergé Easter eggs.

The vase is designed in the form of a stylized ladle — one of the most common forms of vessels in ancient Russia. The artistic solution is built on the juxtaposition of the sculptural form of the ladle-swan and an insert with a miniature copy of Mikhail Vrubel's painting 'The Swan Princess'. The artisan contrasts the flowing shapes of the ladle, the poetic image of the Swan Princess with the Art Nouveau-style angular curve of the neck and the 'demonic' fever of red-green eyes that create a veiled picture of the struggle between good and evil, referring to the fairy tale by Alexander Pushkin. It is impossible not to admire the magnificent skill of the unknown enameler, who perfectly conveyed the charm of the character and the subtle nuances of Vrubel's painting. It is impossible not to delight in the mastery of metal work, finely chiseled details of the plumage, strings of beads, decorated with semi-precious stones, whose colour matches the palette of the painting. Maybe that is why, when the vase is on display, I always find a moment to come and admire it in silence, as it stands under the spotlight, eternally beautiful and... lonely. It is a witness to the Golden Age heyday in Russian jewellery art, which was interrupted on the rise and has gone forever.