



Olga Kozlova  
(1942–2015)

## TO VLADIMIR LENIN Vase

About the project

<https://tsaritsyno-museum.ru/events/special/p/lyudi-i-fondy-eng/>

Gus Crystal Factory, Gus-Khrustalny,  
Vladimir Region, RSFSR

1970s

*Crystal glass, free-blown glass,  
faceted glass*





SELECTED BY

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One of the most difficult assignments that I ever had to do was to pick a favorite object from the museum's collection and present it to the visitors of an exhibition. So, I want to tell you about an item that surprised me and allowed for some small discoveries.

The vase 'To Vladimir Lenin' by Olga Kozlova was displayed at the exhibition 'Basic Elements' in the 'Fire' hall and became a clear favorite, attracting everyone's attention and causing puzzlement: 'Why is it called that?' While I was preparing an art-mediation for this exhibition, I asked myself the question: why is it that this particular object fascinates so many visitors as well as staff members? How is it different from other equally wonderful objects that stand in the next display cases?

While trying to figure it out, I discovered neuroaesthetics. It is a somewhat young discipline that studies aesthetic perception in terms of neurophysiology, psychology, and biochemistry. Scientists and art historians work together to research audience reactions to visual art in the museum space. In this country, the issues of art-work perception are studied by experts from the I.M. Sechenov Institute of Evolutionary Physiology and Biochemistry of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the staff of the State Russian Museum. Neuroaesthetics and its principles have become part of my art mediation. In short, according to the laws of perception, we single out works of art because of contrast, among other things.

When a visitor looks at this vase, they focus on the red blazing flower. The artist's play of colours is successful: there is such an obvious, powerful and definite emphasis on ruby red making a strong impact on the viewer. The colourless stand goes unnoticed as if it is invisible. It is remarkable how the viewer 'misses' the object.

And it is no less surprising that this perception effect failed to work one day. It happened during a masterclass for students. Children understood the idea of the artist, which, to put it bluntly, is quite opaque, although this unique vase was created by the artist for the 100th anniversary of the leader's birth.

As usual, during the art mediation, I hid the label of the object and asked the kids to brainstorm. Against the law of neuroaesthetics, the teenagers, while examining the vase, saw the colourless lower part. And they compared it to the pedestals of Soviet monuments and also pointed out its resemblance to a faceted glass. And recently in class, they learned that the design of the glass was created by Soviet sculptor Vera Mukhina. Using a line of reasoning, they came to the conclusion: this item belongs to the Soviet era. Then they noticed the red part of the vase and compared it to the Eternal Flame at the Kremlin wall and to the symbol of the revolution. And who was at the head of the revolution? Vladimir Lenin! This piece of art is probably dedicated to him!

So, thanks to this vase, I saw a material proof of the principles of neuroaesthetics and also realized that our wonderful visitors sometimes perceive art in their own way, contrary to all theories and laws.