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VENUS GALLERY PROJECT
BY YURI KOLOGRIVOV:
THE LIST IN ITALIAN

The reign of Peter the Great is without doubt the most important time in the story of Classical studies in Russia. At that time the ancient culture transformed from the abstraction of scholarship into a tangible object as works of ancient art became collectable: they were acquired, donated, described, restored, and exhibited. With some effort, today's researchers can reconstruct how at the court of Peter the Great the collection of ancient works progressed, as well as how the first – albeit never finished – museum space[1] was conceived by Yuri Ivanovich Kologrivov (1680/1685–1754). Recall that he was the person to found and purchase, among other decorative sculptures in Rome, extremely valuable statues, above all, *the Venus of Taurida*. Kologrivov proposed exhibiting other ancient works around her in

1   Anna G. Kaminskaya and other researchers have written extensively on this project: A. Kaminskaya, 'Ju. Kologrivov and his Contribution to the first Collections of Sculpture in St. Petersburg', *Muzej. Hudozhestvennye sobrabija SSSR*, 5 (1984), 136–151, etc. Among recent papers, refer to: Tatyana A. Lapteva, 'An Addition to the Biography of Ju. I. Kologrivov, Peter the Grate's Agent in Rome (1719–1727)', *Istoricheskij arhiv*, 6 (2011), 179–187. See, on the significance of this initiative as the first Russian museum space, in the collected volume *Muzeology Ideas if Russia 18–20 centt.: Documents and Materials*, ed. by Eleonora A. Shulepova, et al. (Moscow: Eterna, 2010), 15–21.

several halls of the palace, the design of which Nichola Michetti[2] was working on at the time.

The project was described in a letter[3] by Kologrivov to Peter the Great dated March 7, 1719. The communication consists of the following:

1) a description of the decor of two halls (with the modern and ancient works placed separately, a point Kologrivov emphasised) (this letter has been previously published);

2) an interior drawing[4];

3) a recently published[5] plan with places of statues marked. Their list in Russian is given on the edge of the plan (hereinafter referred to as The Russian list);

4) a short addition[6] – a sheet in Italian (obviously to be handed over to Michetti) with the listed statues purchased for the gallery: 'marmi per collocare nella galleria' (fig. 1). In Italian, Kologrivov's handwriting is more legible and, in addition, the list might also provide new data as it includes the art history terms conventional for European languages, while the Russian list included a few vague notations that did not come into use later.

We are primarily concerned with point 6 in the Russian list, mentioned as *Trup Venusovykh zabav* (*The Corpse of Venus Amusements*) by all researchers. In the Russian list, the first letter 'Т' (T) looked like 'Г' (G) to some extent. However, there was no term *Grup* either in the letter under examination, or in the Russian conventional terminology. That is why there was nothing for the researchers but to assume the reclining silhouette was of a mythological figure, perhaps, that of
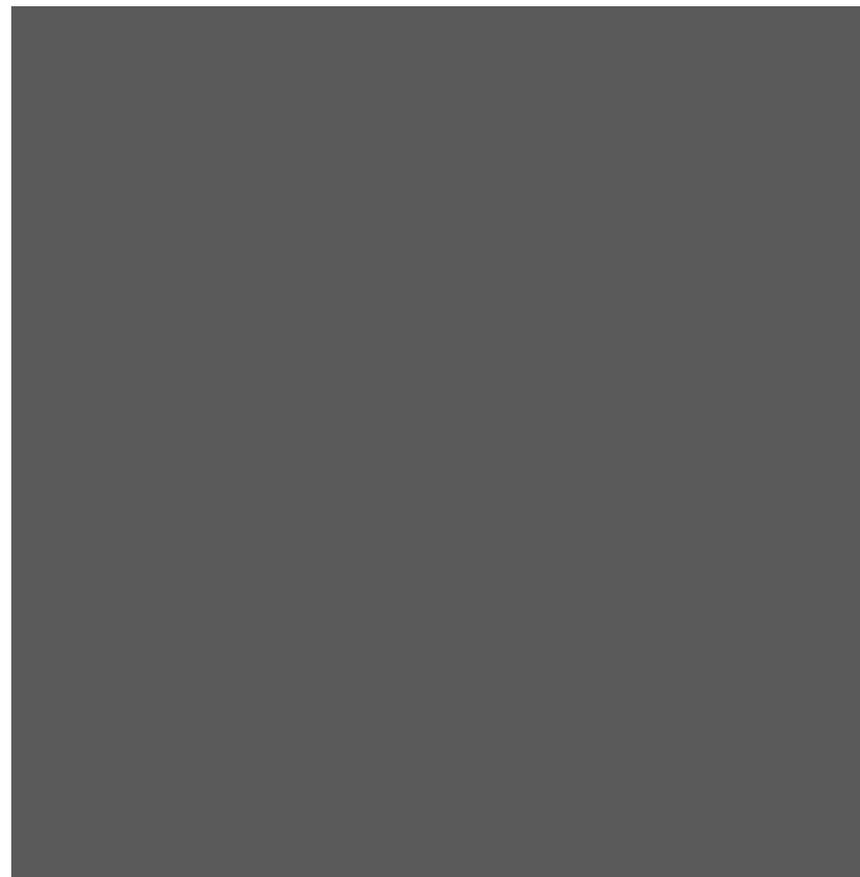

FIG. 1. YURI I. KOLOGRIVOV. THE ITALIAN LIST OF PURCHASED STATUES. RGADA F. 9, P. II, BOOK 41, FOL. 236.

Narcissus. Meanwhile, the Italian list clearly and legibly features *Gruppi*, plural of Italian *Gruppo*, translated by Kologrivov with a masculine noun *Grup*. Likewise, he borrows, for instance, *bust* (*busto*), *vaz* (*vaso*), *verd* (*verde <antico>*, sort of marble), etc.

It is of interest that in the Russian version, Kologrivov calls another similar group *Venus with Cupid*. I believe that this might be explained by the fact that *The Group of Venus' Amusements* included more figures. The catalogue of the royal collection, made by Jacob Stählin[7], although

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2   It seems that it is repeated changes of construction site (Kadriorg, Strelna, and Peterhof) that brought the project to nothing, so that the statues acquired by Kologrivov were placed in the Grotto of the Summer Garden. Importantly too, his disappearance came at the same time (Kologrivov was captured by pirates, spent about ten years in slavery and returned to Russia many years later).

3   *RGADA* [= Russian State Archive of Old-time Acts], F. 9, P. II, book 41, fol. 234–236.

4   Cited by Igor E. Grabar (*The Russian Architecture of the 1st Half of the 18th Century* [Moscow, Gosudarstvennoe izdate'stvo literatury po stroitel'stvu i arhitekture, 1954], 175). Interestingly, Grabar thought that the drawing was an exercise as he obviously considered it to belong in a series of drawings sent from Rome by students of architecture, whose training was supervised by the same Kologrivov. Grabar writes on drawing quality in another work: *The History of the Russian Art*, vol. III: *Architecture in 18th and 19th Centuries* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Knebel', 1910–1913), 166.

5   Sofia Egorova, 'A Paradise for Venus', *Philologia Classica*, 15:2 (2020), 285.

6   *RGADA* F. 9, P. II, book 41, fol. 236.

7   *The Notes on Fine Arts in Russia by Jakob Stählin*, vol. 2, tranl. and ed. by Konstantin Malinovskij (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1990), 194.

FIG. 2. YURI I. KOLOGRIVOV. DRAWING OF A GALLERY WITH MARBLE STATUES. RGADA, F. 9, P. II, BOOK 41, FOL. 235.

including the statues purchased later, mentions the group of Venus, Cupid and 'pigeon under foot' (that of Cupid, I imagine). On the other hand, it is quite possible that Kologrivov simply wanted to

diversify his list and marked similar groups with figures of Venus and Cupid in different ways.

Another detail is important for point 9 in the Russian list, i.e. the groups of six statues, called 'Statues in niches' in the Russian list. The Italian list includes, albeit a little obscure, *Sign*. I would suggest interpreting this as male figures. Among these statues, undoubtedly, there was *The Old Peasant*[8]. The above-mentioned catalogue by Jacob Stählin, in addition to the statues mentioned by Kologrivov, includes statues of Hercules, Apollo, Bacchus, Paris, possibly Meleager, a shepherd in the reed wreath and only one female figure, that of Thetis. If prior to acquaintance with the Italian version, the assumption of the group of male figures had been only deduced from quantitative data, then having considered the term *Statue non isolate o Sign<ori>* ('statues without all-round view or males'), the assumption receives adequate support.

Apart from these two perhaps minor clarifications, the Italian list adds details relating to the structure of the gallery space. Kologrivov clearly divides the sculptures into two groups, namely *isolate* (isolated) and *non isolate* (non-isolated), i.e. the former demand an all-round view (there are only three of them, *The Venus of Taurida*, *Flora*[9], and *Diana*[10]), and the latter are to be placed in niches according to exhibiting practice of that time. This division is also seen from the plan. However, here it is much clearer.

Thus, in all its laconism, the list in Italian does not duplicate the Russian one but contains some details that might be of interest to specialists in Classical studies, as well as historians of architecture.

8   The statue is kept in the State Hermitage Museum and is currently on display in Hall 108 ('Roman Courtyard').

9   According to Neverov (Oleg Ya. Neverov, 'The Pieces of Classic Art in Russia of the Petrine Period', *Kul'tura i iskusstvo Petrovskogo vremeni. Publikatsiji i issledovanja* [Leningrad: Avrora, 1977], 53, No. 84) it is presumably the same statue as *Prosperity with the Horn of plenty* in the Stählin list and the surviving statue kept in the Menshikov Palace (main vestibule). For details of its restoration and proportion of ancient materials see the Valdgauer's catalogue: Oscar Val'dgauer, *Ancient Sculpture* (Petrograd: Brokgauz-Efron, 1923), No. 56.

10   It had probably been never purchased, as Kologrivov made the note, 'I am making a bargain with Pamphili'. This refers to the member of the Pamphilj (also Pamphili) family, known for art collecting. Among the sculptures in the Summer Garden, Stählin only mentioned the figure of Diana among the statues 'in the separate building where sculptor Zwengov trains his students', (*The Notes on Fine Arts in Russia by Jakob Stählin*, 212, No. 34); in the Hermitage collection Valdgauer mentions *Artemis and the dog* of an unknown origin (Val'dgauer, *Ancient Sculpture*, No. 498).

Sofia Egorova: Venus Gallery Project by Yuri Kologrivov: The List in Italian
Keywords: Yuri Kologrivov; Peter the Great´s Classical art collection; Kadriorg Palace; Strelna Palace

SUMMARY

This article supplements what is known about the project to create an exhibition space for the Classical art collection at one of Peter the Great's suburban palaces (either in Kadriorg or Strelna). The project was proposed by Yuri Kologrivov (1680/1685–1754), whose main task was to source pieces of both modern and ancient art in Rome. A letter detailing the plans has survived and consists of the followings items: 1) a textual description (which has been published several times); 2) a drawing of the interior; 3) a scheme with statues numbered and listed on the same sheet; and 4) an additional page in Italian, which has not been published until now. This sheet contains a list of the purchased statues in Italian. It was probably meant for Nicola Michetti, the architect in charge of the palace construction. The Italian text contains *Gruppi* which allows us to correct point 6 of the list in Russian, where in place of *Труп Венусовых забав* (incomprehensible *The Corpse of Venus' Amusements*) one should read *Груп Венусовых забав* (*The Group of Venus' Amusements*, probably Venus and Cupid playing with a dove). Some other new details are discovered: the statues were divided into two kinds ('statue isolate' and 'statue non isolate', i.e. for display in niches); and six statues left without specification in point 9 of the list in Russian must have represented male characters (*Sign<ori>*).

CV

Sofia Egorova, PhD (Classical philology) is an associated Professor at St Petersburg State University and an editor of *Hyperboreus: Studia Classica*. Her main area of study is Roman literature, especially Roman poetry of the 1st century BC. Her articles deal mostly with Horace's lyric (manuscript tradition and interpretation, including questions of the art works mentioned by Horace). Sofia's recent interests include the reception of Antiquity in Russia, specifically the influence of material works of art (mainly revealed by excavation) on the conception of the Classical world in the education system and everyday culture.