"World in Miniature" – Cameos and Intaglios

The year of the centennial anniversary of the Pushkin State museum of fine art was marked by the opening of an exhibition "*World in miniature*" – on cameos and intaglios (i.e. "*glyptic*"), in one of its halls. Such an exhibition was held for the first time in the the history; it reveals 174 glyptics from collections of the departments: Art & Ancient world archeology, Ancient Orient and Numismatics.

The main purpose of this exhibition is to introduce the best pieces of antique, oriental and European glyptic from the museum collections (which numbers over 500 items) to the public. This includes relics showing the history of carving arts through five centuries (from 3rd century BC until 19th century AD).

The authors wants to show the breadth of carved subjects in gems – from spiritual images, scenes of mythology and magic symbols, to the world of nature and portraits of famous persons. Aesthetics – is not the only difference between craved stones, these are miniature monuments of art and history. Intaglio was used as a "*personal signature*" i.e. as a seal, which had a very important practical use in ancient society. The majority of carved gemstones at the exhibition are represented by antique gems from the period of the Roman Empire. The oldest carvings are Oriental and Iranian seals, dating from the 3rd century BC. The

Sassanian seals from 3rd–7th centuries comprise unique and rare carved gemstones. The small part of European glyptic includes intaglios and casts of glass from the olden gems. The images on the majority of such carvings correspond to well-known events and persons of antiquity; this determined the development of European carving art of the Renaissance epoch to the end of the 19th century.

Special attention was drawn to the materials used for carved gems; therefore some displays show rocks and minerals from the very localities where they were mined in antiquity – loaned from the collections of the Vernadsky State Geological Museum Russian Academy of Sciences.

Some of the material that was used for making gems in the Ancient world was found nearby, and some was brought from afar. In Greece and Italy only agates, jasper, chalcedony were mined. Attractive material needed to be found overseas. Imported material became dominant by the 5th century BC. This was pale blue chalcedony (sapphirine) from Asia Minor, brecciated jasper from Sicily and also gorgeous carnelian, rock crystal and sometimes amethyst. In the late 4th century BC, after the campaigns and conquests of Alexander Macedon the Great, treasures from the East flooded Greece. These are bright, sparkling and colorful gemstones: amethyst, green "*plasma*", Indian fire carnelians, red and cherry-red almandines and magnificent Indian multilayered sardonyx.

Glyptics of various periods reveal preferences in using certain stones. Thus, in the early years, the most popular stone was banded agate, in Greece (5th–4th centuries BC) it was bluish sapphirine, in Etruria – carnelian, in Roman glyptic (1st–2nd centuries AD) the most dominant minerals were carneol and onyx topped by bluish band – so called "*niccolo*".

Victoria V. Chernenko & Natalia M. Smirnova,
victoria@sgm.ru – smirnovanataliya@mail.ru

Victoria V. Chernenko is a senior curator of the Vernadsky State Geological Museum RAS.

Natalia M. Smirnova is a senior curator of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Art.

1. Mithridates II. Intaglio. 2nd–1st centuries BC. **Almandine.**

2. Lion tortures zebu bull. 6th–7th centuries AD. **Chalcedony.**

3. Head of Athena Minerva. 1st–2nd centuries AD. **Almandine.**

All glyptics are from the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Art.

"Echo of 1812"

The "Echo of 1812" exhibition was opened in the Mineralogical Museum of the Russian State Geological Exploration University (MGRI-RGGRU) on the 1st of September 2012, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Borodino Battle. The principal part of the exhibition consists of mineral and rock specimens, which are somehow related to the Russian and French participants and commanders of the battles of the 1812 Patriotic War with Napoleon.

We would like to mention several interesting exhibits from this exposition.

Volkonskoite was discovered in 1830 in the Perm Governship by Kemmerer. It was named to honour the Prince Pyotr Mikhailovich Volkonskiy, General-Field Marshal and participant of the 1812 Patriotic War. After the Borodino Battle, aged 35, he became Head of the General Staff for the General-Field Marshal Prince Kutuzov-Smolenskiy. In May 1813, he was appointed Head of the General Staff for His Imperial Majesty.

Cancrinite is represented at the exhibition by a beautiful specimen from the Vishnevye Mountains in the Urals. It has a gentle-pink color, rare for this mineral. First Kammerer described cancrinite as a blue mineral from the Ilmeny Mountains, which happened to be sodalite. However later, in 1839, Gustav Rose insisted on naming a new discovered mineral to honor the Earl Egor Frantsevich Kankrine, famous Russian statesman and Minister of Finance. In 1811, Kankrine (aged 37) was appointed Assistant to the General-Proviantmeister. In 1812, he was already General-Intendant of the First Army. In 1813, he was General-Intendant of the acting Russian Army. His service was important to supply the Russian Army and finally helped to defeat a strong enemy.

The showcase also has beautiful **topazes from the Volynian chamber pegmatites** collected near the village of Volodarsk in Ukraine. Before 1921, this village was called Kutuzovo and belonged to General-Field Marshal Prince Mikhail Illarionovich Kutuzov, hero of the 1812 Patriotic War. He visited it many times between 1802 and 1805. This Estate (called Goroshki or Horoshki before 1912) was presented to the famous commander by the Empress Catherine II in 1796 for his role in the Russian-Turkish War.

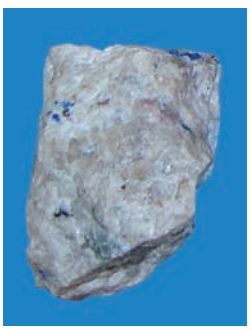
Shoksha Quartzite – was used to produce a sarcophagus for the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Nicolas I, presenting 40 tonnes of raspberry-coloured quartzite from Shoksha (Karelia) to France, said, "*what a strange fate Emperor Napoleon has. Fighting with Russia, he lost his glory, and now Russia is providing his gravestone*". Before this, several expeditions explored different countries of his battles in Africa and Europe, searching for the suitable stone to decorate his grave, but they failed to find anything better than the Shoksha quartzite, proposed by the Russian tsar. In 1847, the architect Louis Visconti received 47 blocks of the raspberry-colored quartzite from Karelia.

In those times, the raspberry-colored quartzite was called the *"Shokhan Porphyry"*. Shokhan possibly originates from the Karelian village of Shoksha, near which is the world's only deposit of the raspberry-colored quartzite. Porphyry means purple in Greek. The stones of such color were treated as symbols of the royal power since ancient times. They were widely used in decorations of the imperial residences in Europe. In St.-Petersburg, one can see this quartzite in the ensemble of the richly decorated altar of the St Isaac Cathedral, in the parade halls of the Winter Palace, and also in the memorial plates on the Kazan Cathedral walls.

Chronologically, the exposition is not limited just to the 1812 Patriotic War. Part of it is dedicated to the important discoveries in mineralogy between 1800 and 1825.

Almost every exhibit is accompanied by an informative description of its relation to the theme of the exposition and the most important events in the lives of outstanding people at those times.

Tatiana Yu. Dolzhanskaya, dolzhanskaya@rambler.ru
Mineralogical Museum of the Russian State
Geological Exploration University (MGRI-RGGRU)



On the Exposition "Echo of 1812":
1. Portrait of Prince Pyotr Mikhailovich Volkonskiy.
2. **Volkonskoite**.
Okhansk district, Perm region.
MM RGGRU # 3511.
3. **Cancrinite**. Vishnevye Mountains, Urals.
Specimens: Mineralogical Museum of Russian State Geological Exploration University (MGRI-RGGRU).