

URAL JASPER MASTERPIECES BY RUSSIAN STONE CARVERS: COLLECTION OF THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM

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The immeasurable treasures of the "Ural Stone Belt" are truly amazing! These are aventurine quartz sparkling in sunrays, porphyry rocks of mild colors, white and yellow quartz, sometimes with various inclusions, brightly colored orlets (rhodonite), malachite and, of course, the rich diversity of colors of splendid Ural jasper. Stones from the Urals have traditionally been carved at two major centers – in Peterhof (near St. Petersburg) and Yekaterinburg (at the Peterhof and Yekaterinburg Carving Workshops, respectively) – while a third one, the Kolyvan workshop in Kolyvan, Altay Mountains, worked with rocks from the Urals only sporadically. Russian craftsmen have carved beautiful vases, cups, standing lamps, chandeliers, desks, and consoles, which are proudly displayed at the State Hermitage Museum (Mavrodina, 2007², p. 10).

A remarkable place in our museum's collection belongs to articles made of picture jasper from the South Urals. Adorning many halls of the museum, these masterpieces seem to be the most diverse in the New Hermitage exposition. They were carved of variegated jasper from Orsk, banded Koshkulda jasper and Yamskay jasper (from the vicinities of Yamskoy Spring), pale-colored Aushkul jasper with black dendrites, spotty Uraz jasper (aka meat agate), and a steel-gray Kalkan one. The deposits and occurrences of these jasper types were discovered in the second half of the 18th century, and the Jasper Belt extends as a continuous stripe for more than 500 km, from the outskirts of the town of Miass far southward to the steppes of the Kazakh Republic. The jasper types were named either after lakes on whose shores the jasper was found (for example Kalkan and Aushkul jasper after Kalkan and Aushkul Lakes) or after cities and villages (Orsk jasper for Orsk town).

The most widely known jasper mined in the South Urals was made up of basaltic tuff material produced by submarine volcanism and mixed with clayey and carbonate sediments. The mixture was then opalized and silicified, as well as deformed, folded, and fractured into strong brecciation (Abakumova *et al.*, 1982, p. 10). In other words, jasper is a metamorphosed volcano-sedimentary siliceous rock, which contains 80–95% silica and is made up of cryptocrystalline quartz (including chalcedony and opal) and a diversity of mineral admixtures, which predetermine its picturesqueness. Iron and manganese oxides are the most widespread chromophores of jasper (they are responsible for its colors). Depending on the oxidation states of the latter, jasper is colored in various shades of red, yellow, brown, and green. Manganese oxides may also occur in jasper in the form of beautiful black dendrites. Mineral inclusions can modify the color of jasper: hematite imparts reddish colors, goethite is responsible for brownish and yellowish shades, pumpellyite and celadonite make jasper greenish, and alkaline amphi-

6. Vase with panther figurines.
Imperial Yekaterinburg Carving Workshop,
A.N. Voronikhin, 1802.
Uraz jasper ("meat agate") and bronze; carving, filing, polishing, casting, embossing, and gold coating.
Height 80.5 cm (64.5 cm without bronze fragments), width 79.5 cm (51.0 cm without bronze fragments).
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, No.Epr-2665.



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4. Vase.
Imperial Yekaterinburg Carving Workshop,
I.I. Galberg, 1841–1845.
Yamskoy jasper; carving, filing, and polishing.
Height 73.5 cm, width 40.0 cm.
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg,
No.Epr-2548.

5. Vase.
Imperial Yekaterinburg Carving Workshop,
Ya.V. Kokovin, after 1827–1833.
Aushkul jasper; carving, filing, and polishing.
Height 73.5 cm, width 46.0 cm.
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg,
No.Epr-2573.



7. "Carved Eliptian" cup.
Imperial Yekaterinburg Carving Workshop,
G.F. Nalimov, 1829–1850.
Kalkan jasper; carving, filing, and polishing.
Height 193.5 cm, 167 x 100 cm.
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg,
No.Epr-2522.

1. Winter Palace (1754–1762, architect
Francesco B. Rastrelli), which nowadays
houses the expositions of the
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

