

GANGOLF VON KIESERITZKY
AND THE CLASSICAL DEPARTMENT
OF THE HERMITAGE
IN THE LAST DECADES OF THE 19th CENTURY

The main body of the Hermitage Classical collection was formed by the late 1860s. The most important objects from the excavations in South Russia were presented in 1854 in the luxurious publication *Antiquités du Bosphore Cimmérien*,¹ which had been planned already in 1843 by F. A. Gille (1801–1865), the Head of the Department at that time.²

L. Stephani (1816–1887),³ his successor, who had held the post of the curator of the Classical Department since 1851, made a great contribution to the study of the Hermitage collection. His first task was to prepare a publication of epigraphic monuments for the 1854 edition, and from 1859 for almost thirty years he was a permanent contributor to the annual *Comptes rendus de la Commission Impériale archéologique*, in which he was publishing new monuments from South Russia and other outstanding objects in the collection. He was the author of the first catalogue of the Hermitage Greek painted vases⁴ and the first guidebook to the Classical department.⁵

¹ *Antiquités du Bosphore Cimmérien* (St Petersburg 1854).

² About F. Gille see: Ж. К. Павлова, *Флориан Жиль и Императорский Эрмитаж. Жизнь и судьба* [J. K. Pavlova. *Florian Gille and the Imperial Hermitage. Life and Fate*] (St Petersburg 2010).

³ See: G. Kieseritzky, “Stephani Ludolf”, *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 36 (Leipzig 1893) 93–95; Г. И. Качалина, В. Ф. Маришкина, Е. Я. Яковлева, *Сотрудники Императорского Эрмитажа 1852–1917. Биобиблиографический справочник* [G. Kachalina, V. Marishkina, E. Yakovleva. *Research workers of the Imperial Hermitage: 1852–1917. A Biographical and Bibliographical Handbook*] (St Petersburg 2004) 139–141.

⁴ L. Stephani, *Die Vasen-Sammlung der Kaiserliche Ermitage* (St. Petersburg 1869).

⁵ Л. Стефани, “Путеводитель по античному отделению Эрмитажа” [L. Stephani, “A Guide through the Department of Classical Antiquities of the Hermitage”], in: *Пропилеи V* (1856 = a separate edition: Moscow 1856).

In 1867, Johannes Doell (1832–1879)⁶ was appointed assistant curator to help L. Stephani. In 1870 he was sent to Cyprus to provide an expert's conclusion on a huge collection of local antiquities, as its owner, Russian and American consul general Luigi Palma di Cesnola had put it up for sale. Finally, the whole collection was acquired by the newly founded Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. I. Doell published the report of his mission, which became the first description of this collection.⁷

L. Stephani was growing older and needed an assistant. After discussing the problem with him, the Director of the Museum, Prince A. A. Vasil'chikov, asked the Minister of National Education, Count D. A. Adlerberg “to lend (*sic!*) Kieseritzky to the Hermitage” as an assistant curator.⁸ Kieseritzky, then a young graduate of Dorpat university, was introduced to the Director in 1876, during his first visit to the Hermitage. This time, the Director suggested that he “think about the catalogue of Classical gems”. Three years later G. Kieseritzky was put in charge of all practical activities at the Department.

Reingold-Gustaw-Gangolf von Kieseritzky⁹ (Gangol'f Egorovich in Russian tradition) was born in 1847 in Fellin, a small town in the Governorate of Livonia (now Estonian city of Viljandi) into the family of a local judge. He graduated from Dorpat university (now Tartu) in 1873, and after one year of additional studies at Munich university, in 1876, he wrote a thesis for his Master's degree on Nike's iconography.¹⁰ The same year he was sent to Munich again, this time for three years “to prepare for the rank of professor” under the guidance of Professor Heinrich Brunn. During this term he also studied Classical art in museums in Italy and Greece. At the start of 1880, G. E. Kieseritzky returned to Russia and became an assistant curator at the Hermitage.

His first important task at the Museum was a mission to Berlin in 1884. He had to take care of a newly purchased collection of terracotta statuettes,

⁶ Качалина, Маришкина, Яковлева (п. 3) 57.

⁷ J. Doell, *Die Sammlung Cesnola* (Académie des sciences. Mémoires. Série 7-e. T. 19, № 34) (St Petersburg 1873).

⁸ *The State Hermitage Archives*. Ф. 1. Оп. 12 л/с. Дело № 37. Л. 1.

⁹ А. В. Половцов, *Крупная утрата. Гангольф Егорович Кизерицкий. 1847–1903* [A. V. Polovtsov, *A Great Loss: Gangolf Egorovich Kieseritzky*] (Moscow 1904); A. Polowzow, “Zum Gedächtnis an G. von Kieseritzky”, *Biographisches Jahrbuch für Altetumskunde* 28 (1906) 102–109; Качалина, Маришкина, Яковлева (п. 3) 79–80; И. Л. Тихонов, “Хранитель древностей Императорского Эрмитажа Г. Е. Кизерицкий” [I. Tichonov, “G. E. Kiesiritzky, Curator of the Classical Department of the Imperial Hermitage”], in: Э. Д. Фролов (ed.), *Мнемон. Исследования и публикации по истории античного мира* (St Petersburg 2012) 419–438.

¹⁰ G. von. Kieseritzky, *Nike in der Vasenmalerei I* (Dorpat 1876).

which had been collected by Russian ambassador in Berlin P. A. Saburov during his service in Athens. The most valuable part of this collection, Tanagra figurines, has been a real adornment of the Hermitage permanent display. That year he was also sent to Paris with a similar mission, to take over a huge collection of Mediaeval art of A. P. Bazilevsky. Subsequently, he was given the task of putting the two newly acquired collections on display at the Hermitage. This mission could be considered evidence of the trust and appreciation of his efficiency.

Indeed, Kieseritzky was very diligent. After L. Stephani's death in 1887, there were only two curators at the Department: Kieseritzky himself and V. S. Golenishchev, who was responsible for the Egyptian and Near East collections. The latter was regularly absent as he participated in excavations in Egypt. It was G. E. Kieseritzky who had to shoulder the entire routine: taking care of exhibits, lending books from the Department library, and consulting colleagues. The most absorbing work, however, was dealing with new acquisitions, which were particularly numerous on account of the ever increasing mass of archaeological objects from excavations. Over several years G. E. Kieseritzky compiled the catalogue of the Nicopol Room, named after the famous silver vase found in the Chertomlyk Scythian barrow close to the city. Finds from Scythian barrows as well as Siberian antiquities were displayed in this room. The extent of the material grew constantly, however the curator himself was often busy, thus this work was never finished.

Kieseritzky's first scholarly work (not counting the thesis) was an article on golden temple pendants embossed with the head of Athena from the Kul-Oba barrow. In spring of 1882 he visited Athens to study a newly found 2nd century AD marble statuette of Athena Parthenos, which was the best ancient reproduction of the famous Phidias work. Resemblance of the Kul-Oba head of Athena to that of the marble statuette confirmed that it was of the Phidias type. Kieseritzky had the brilliant idea of comparing the golden relief of Athena's head with its plaster copy in order to bring it closer to the sculptured image – which permitted the smoothing over some effects which had been produced by the shining metallic surface. An excellent article published¹¹ as a result of his study remains useful for art historians even today.¹² Apart from this work, Kieseritzky published

¹¹ G. Kieseritzky, "Athena Parthenos der Ermitage", *Athenische Mitteilungen* 8 (1883).

¹² Thus, N. A. Onayko drew on his experience when she studied golden impressions from Kul-Oba: Н. А. Онайко, "К художественно-технической характеристике золотых оттисков" [N. Onayko. "Artistic and Technical Qualities of the Golden Estampes"], *Советская археология* 1979: 1, 265.

several articles dealing mostly with statues (which perhaps reflects the influence of his Munich teacher, Prof. H. Brunn), and the catalogue of the Hermitage sculpture.¹³ For a long time he worked on the corpus of gravestones from Greek cities of the Black Sea littoral, but this labour-consuming work was interrupted by his unexpected death at the age of 56 from a hearth attack.

Two visits to Athens were of great importance for G. E. Kieseritzky. The scholarly aspect of his visits resulted in the above-mentioned article on the Kul-Oba pendants, which is probably his best work. Of more private importance was the acquaintance with his future wife, Anastasia-Caroline von Geldreich, who was the daughter of the German consul in Athens (or, according to other sources, of the director of the Athens botanical garden). Her mother came from an old Greek stock of Kantakouzenos¹⁴ – this explains her first name, Anastasia, which is rare in Germany. Kieseritzky and Anastasia-Caroline married during his second visit to Athens in 1882. It was a happy family, with two sons and two daughters.

L. Stephani, whose primary interests were epigraphy, was also knowledgeable in different branches of Classical culture. He published various monuments and supplied these publications with extensive commentaries. Owing to his work, many Classical monuments from the Hermitage collection have entered scholarly circulation.

In the second half of the 19th century the excavations in South Russia developed on a large scale, which highlighted the problems of Scythian archaeology. Owing to marked specialization among Classical scholars, several research centres were established. The Imperial Archaeological Commission, scientific societies, universities and the Academy of Sciences played a leading part in this process. Epigraphy – and notably, the publication of the North Pontic inscriptions¹⁵ – is a remarkable example of achievements of this period. However in the field of Classical art, as Dr. A. A. Peredolskaya (Chief of the Classical Department in 1935–1965) once commented, Russian art historians worked mainly with widely known monuments from European museums and often neglected the Hermitage holdings. Despite this, the interest for North

¹³ Г. Кизерицкий, *Музей древней скульптуры. Императорский Эрмитаж* [G. Kieseritzky, *A Museum of Ancient Sculpture. The Imperial Hermitage*] (St Petersburg 1896, 41901).

¹⁴ Половцов (n. 9) 12.

¹⁵ *Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini Graecae et Latinae* [IOSPE], ed. B. Latyshev. I (Petropoli 1885; 21916) ; II (1890); IV (1901).

Pontic antiquities gradually developed. For example, the famous Russian art critic V. V. Stasov was the first scholar to study the sepulchral painting of various Kerch vaults as an original artistic phenomenon, and attempted to determine its sources.¹⁶ Meanwhile, many European scholars paid attention to the Hermitage materials: A. Furtwängler, for example, used the Hermitage collection extensively in his study of Classical gems,¹⁷ while C. Watzinger studied wooden sarcophagi found in South Russia.¹⁸ In the late 19th – early 20th centuries, many Russian art historians, among them V. K. Malmberg¹⁹ and B. V. Pharmakovsky,²⁰ took an interest in Classical art revealed in the South Russia discoveries. Worthy of mention is the study of the late Athenian vase-painting by S. S. Lukyanov and Yu. P. Grinevich.²¹ At the same time a young O. F. Waldhauer began his research activity.²² Some prominent historians, such as S. A. Zhebelev²³ and M. I. Rostovtsev, worked on local art and spiritual life in the North Pontic cities. The latter published a monumental study of Greek decorative painting in South Russia, which remains indispensable to this day.²⁴

The Hermitage had to show its treasures to the public. The attendance increased annually (for example: from 50 000 in 1880 up to 180 000 in 1903), but the educational work was in embryo form. In pre-revolutionary

¹⁶ W. Stasoff, “Chambre sépulchrale avec frescoes découverte en 1872 près de Kertch”, *Compte-rendu de la Commission impériale archéologique pour l’année 1872* (St Petersburg 1875).

¹⁷ A. Furtwängler, *Die antiken Gemmen. Geschichte der Steinschmiedekunst im klassischen Altertum I–III* (Berlin 1900).

¹⁸ C. Watzinger, *Griechische Holzsarkophage aus der Zeit von Alexanders der Grosse* (Leipzig 1905).

¹⁹ В. К. Мальмберг, “Описание классических древностей, найденных в Херсонесе в 1888–1889 годах” [V. Malmberg, “Description of classical Antiquities found in Chersonesus in 1888–1889”], *Материалы по археологии России* (=МАР) № 7 (St Petersburg 1892).

²⁰ As an example see: Б. В. Фармаковский, “Архаический период в России” [B. V. Pharmakovsky, “The Archaic Period in Russia”], *МАР* № 34 (Petrograd 1914).

²¹ С. С. Лукьянов, Ю. П. Гриневиц, “Керченская кальпида 1906 года и поздняя краснофигурная живопись” [S. S. Lukyanov, Yu. P. Grinevich, “A Kalpis from Kerch Found in 1906 and the Late Red-figured Vase-painting”], *МАР* № 35 (Petrograd 1915).

²² About him see: Е. Мавлеев, *Вальдгауер* [E. Mavleev, *Waldhauer*] (St Petersburg 2005).

²³ С. А. Жебелёв, “Пантикапейские Ниобиды” [S. A. Zhebelev, “The Panticapaeon Niobids”], *МАР* № 24 (St Petersburg 1901).

²⁴ М. И. Ростовцев, *Античная декоративная живопись на Юге России* (St Petersburg 1914) = M. Rostovtseff, *La peinture decorative antique en Russie Méridionale* (Paris 2004).

years, out of 180 000 annual visitors only 14 000 were guided in groups.²⁵ It seemed to be mostly the Easter vacation visits of students from the Academy of Fine Arts, the College of Design, of military high schools, and of schools for girls. The need to develop educational work was evident, but the Museum authorities considered the Hermitage visitors educated people who did not need additional explanations.²⁶ G. E. Kieseritzky had a similar view of the situation. As his friend A. V. Polovtsov mentioned, Classical art for Kieseritzky was something like an ivory tower, inaccessible for laymen.²⁷ Mistrustful by nature, he saw visitors as a source of every conceivable damage for the exhibits. Thus, the famous Athenian shaped lekythoi with polychrome painting from Phanagoria were on display in a special case with a green silk curtain inside to prevent colour fading. The curtain could be moved by two white cords from the outside, and only a museum attendant (as a rule, a retired Household Guards soldier) operated this device. Curious visitors could ask him (having backed their request with 20 kopecks) to move the curtain aside so that they could admire the masterpieces. G. E. Kieseritzky had sealed the cord and strongly protested against such practice in a special report, as he was convinced that not every visitor needed to look at these objects, and that the hands of attendants, not properly washed, made the cords dirty. As a result of this fight for cleanliness, he himself had to run to the exhibition each time to unseal the ill-fated cord and open the view of the exhibits to those who deserved to contemplate them.²⁸

By the end of the 19th century, the staff of the Department was not great: it included the senior curator (G. E. Kieseritzky himself), the curator of the Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities (V. S. Golenishchev), and the scribe. V. S. Golenishchev was spending a lot of time abroad, mostly in Egypt at the excavations and at Cairo university, and in 1899 he resigned his post.²⁹ The vacancy was filled by Baron P. F. Meiendorf, who had neither a Classical education nor experience in the museum work, and the authorities simply informed G. E. Kieseritzky of his new assistant (whereas twenty years ago the candidacy of Kieseritzky himself was discussed by

²⁵ В. Ф. Левинсон-Лессинг, *История Картинной галереи Эрмитажа (1764–1917)* [V. Levinson-Lessing, *The History of the Hermitage Picture Gallery*] (Leningrad 1985) 244.

²⁶ Б. Б. Пиотровский, *История Эрмитажа. Краткий очерк. Материалы и документы* [B. Piotrovsky, *The History of the Hermitage. An outline. Materials and documents*] (Moscow 2000) 69.

²⁷ Половцов (п. 9) 27.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁹ Пиотровский (п. 26) 234.

the Director with L. Stephani). The collection numbered many thousands of objects and increased annually due to excavations. In a letter written after his death, Kieseritzky's friend, A. V. Polovtsov depicted his assistants as "unprepared persons",³⁰ which was true.

Thus, Baron P. F. Meiendorf (1858–1913) was appointed to a curatorship at the Classical department in 1900. He graduated from the Riga Polytechnic College as a construction engineer; took part in several building projects (such as the Novogeorgievsk fortress in the northern outskirts of Warsaw); and later had worked on railways. When he was 31, a Court career opened to him: he was promoted to Gentleman of the Emperor's bed-chamber (камер-юнкер), and later appointed secretary of the Ceremony expedition at the H. M. Court ministry (the Hermitage was part of this ministry as well; thus it is not surprising that all directors of the Imperial Hermitage held high Court positions).

In 1900, Baron Meiendorf was transferred from one Imperial building (the Winter Palace, the Tzar's residence) to another (the New Hermitage, the Museum). As for G. E. Kieseritzky, he was simply informed about his new colleague, who could never be of real help. In 1901, Baron Meiendorf was promoted to be Gentleman in attendance (камер-преп). When at the Department, he translated from German into Russian the manuscript *Catalogue of the Nicopol room* compiled by G. E. Kieseritzky. After the death of Kieseritzky, his main occupation was keeping the inventory and registering new acquisitions, so that by the time of the general revision of the Museum everything was put in order at the Department. Furthermore, he had a chance to show his engineering knowledge as a member of the technical commission for reconstruction of the heating system in the Museum rooms.

From 1902, Baron Meiendorf added two or three unpaid months to his annual vacation "for domestic reasons", and after 1908 – for medical cure. One may suppose that his health was weakening for a long time, and it was, probably, the true reason of his transfer from the vanity of Court ceremonies to the tranquillity of Museum work. In 1913, after two amputations, firstly of the finger, then the leg up to his knee, he retired and a month later died in Nice.

The Swedish subject, Count Roderic-Bengt-Emil Stenbock (1869–?),³¹ an out-of-staff employee, was appointed "a scribe in foreign languages" at the Classical department in 1901 (there were typewriters in the Museum office from the start of the 1890s).

³⁰ *The State Hermitage archives*. Ф. 1. Оп. 13 л/с. Дело № 686. Л. 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Ф. 1. Оп. 12 (л/с.). Дело № 12.

There were four to five scribes at the Museum office at that time, including Dr. James Theodor (Dzhems Al'fredovich) Schmidt (1876–1933), who had graduated from Leipzig university in 1899 as an art historian,³² and two aged unmarried women (one of whom was the daughter of the Museum Office chief). Some of them worked at the Departments. Thus, D. A. Schmidt was a scribe at the Classical Department in 1899–1901 on recommendation of G. E. Kieseritzky. Later he continued his work at the Museum as a curator of West European painting and subsequently as an acting Chief of the Painting Gallery (1923–1930).

It is curious to note coincidences of various details in biographies of Stenbock and the protagonist of the novel “The Idiot” by F. M. Dostoyevsky. He was born the same year as the novel was written. Like Prince Myshkin he was noble, solitary and poor; furthermore, while still young he was in poor health. This apparently well-educated man relied on his one and only talent: he wrote with a good hand, but he certainly could not be of any substantial help to the curator. In April 1909, he fell ill and retired after five months of medical treatment abroad.

In any case, some of G. E. Kieseritzky's personal features could not assist him with many of the tasks – despite of his knowledge, diligence and strong sense of responsibility. Even V. S. Golenishchev and A. V. Polovtsov, who sympathised with him, noted his lack of trust and perfectionism, – accompanied by overestimation of his own resources and endless immersion in small details.³³ It was natural that he did not really succeed either in curatorial work or scholarship. Thus, he spent his time constantly improving and correcting the corpus of Greek grave reliefs from South Russia. This very important work was finished thanks to specially invited German archaeologist C. Watzinger who was familiar with the South Russian antiquities through his studies of wooden sarcophagi. The corpus was published in Berlin in 1909.³⁴

After the death of G. E. Kieseritzky, it became clear that many Department affairs were in disorder. New acquisitions were not systematized in a timely fashion, so that the lists accompanying new acquisitions were the only documents for their identification. Kieseritzky used to leave some newly acquired objects aside in order to study them later on. Thus, the famous pelike with the painting of a swallow (ca. 510 BC) and white

³² Качалина, Маришкина, Яковлева (n. 3) 166–167. He took the Ph. D. degree at the Leipzig university in 1899.

³³ Половцов (n. 9) 23.

³⁴ G. Kieseritzky, C. Watzinger, *Griechische Grabreliefs aus Südrussland* (Berlin 1909).

lekythos by the Pan Painter (ca. 490 BC) were hidden in a library-case behind the bulky volumes of Piranesi works. These vases were purchased in 1901. Subsequently, the Museum story-tellers exaggerated the number of hidden masterpieces (although no bookcase could contain such a quantity of objects, plus all Piranesi's volumes), thus inflating a funny story into a small legend. It should be said, however, that the 1909 audit did not discover any real damage to the collection.

Nevertheless, outcome of the activities of G. E. Kieseritzky, who was the fourth curator of the Classical Department, was significant. He spent a quarter of century taking care of the constantly growing collection, even if his care was sometimes small-minded and fussy. Some of his work is still indispensable for scholarship: the analysis of the Kul-Oba gold reliefs from the point of view of art history; the catalogue of the Hermitage sculptures and the corpus of Greek funeral reliefs from Southern Russia, which was partially substituted by the recently edited album of the illustrations to the *Corpus inscriptionum regni Bosporani*.³⁵

E. M. Pridik (1865–1935)³⁶ succeeded G. E. Kieseritzky as the head of the Classical Department. He was transferred from the Department of Numismatics, but his scholarly interest was the study of the North Pontic antiquities, especially of inscriptions. Despite his ability to concentrate, he encountered the same difficulties as his predecessor, which was due to working alone in the Department for a long time. In one of the archive paper-cases of 1912, there are Pridik's notes, such as: "Shugaevsky has left for a month till 20th of August, and Baron Meiendorf has left on 24th of July",³⁷ which meant that Pridik was left alone in the heat of the Petersburg summer. However, the situation changed, albeit rather slowly. In 1904, O. F. Waldhauer, a young disciple of A. Furtwängler, took over the role of "candidate for a class post" – that is, the position of a non-paid scholar affiliated to the Department. This position allowed him to work at the Museum and even to reorganize the exhibition. E. M. Pridik entrusted

³⁵ A. Gavrillov et al. (ed.), *Corpus inscriptionum regni Bosporani. Album imaginum* (Petropoli 2004), see also: Л. И. Давыдова, *Боспорские надгробные рельефы V в. до н. э. – III в. н. э. Каталог выставки. Государственный Эрмитаж* [L. Davydova, *Bosporan Funerary Reliefs. 5th Century BC – 3rd Century AD. The Catalogue of the Exhibition. The State Hermitage*] (Leningrad 1990).

³⁶ See Н. А. Павличенко, "Евгений Мартынович Придик (1865–1935)" [N. Pavlichenko, "Eugenij Martynovich Pridik"], *Древний мир и мы II* (St Petersburg 2000); Качалина, Маришкина, Яковлева (n. 3) 118–120.

³⁷ *The State Hermitage Archives*. Ф.1.Оп. 12 л/с. Дело № 48. V. A. Shugaevsky was the Museum registrar in 1910–1918 (Качалина, Маришкина, Яковлева [n. 3] 168).

him with supervising Classical sculpture and vases, having reserved the archaeological part of the collection for himself: he was preparing the 3rd volume of *IOSPE* and published the catalogue of the Hermitage amphora stamps³⁸ and the list of astynoms.³⁹

These are just some features of the Classical Department of the Hermitage in the last decades of the 19th century. It was a quiet and stagnant time; but even so, the Hermitage increased its collection of Classical art and accumulated archaeological materials. The following decades of the 20th century would become a starting point for dramatic changes at the Museum, which eventually became a modern centre of art and historic studies.

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The paper describes the atmosphere that reigned at the Classical Department of the Hermitage in the 2nd half of the 19th century. This atmosphere was greatly influenced by the personalities of the three Heads of the Department of that period: L. Stephani, R.-G.-G. von Kieseritzky and E. M. Pridik.

В статье описывается атмосфера, царившая в Античном отделении Эрмитажа во 2-й половине XIX в., которая в значительной степени определялась личностями трех старших хранителей отделения Древностей того времени: Л. Стефани, Г. Е. Кизерицкого и Е. М. Придика.

³⁸ Е. М. Придик, *Инвентарный каталог клейм на амфорных ручках и на горлышках и на черепицах Эрмитажного собрания* [E. Pridik, *An Inventory of Stamps on Handles and Necks of Amphorae and on Tiles from the Hermitage Collection*] (Petrograd 1917).

³⁹ Е. Pridik, “Die Astynomennamen auf Amphoren- und Ziegelstempeln”, *Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie* 34 (1928).

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