

**FOREVER AMBER: THE IMPACT OF THE AMBER ROOM ON RUSSIA'S
CULTURAL STATURE THEN, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE**

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ABSTRACT

May 31, 2003, found Russian President Vladimir V. Putin presiding over a unique ceremony in St. Petersburg attended by heads of state including Gerhard Schroeder, Silvio Berlusconi, George W. Bush, Jacques Chirac, Tony Blair and Junichiro Koizumi along with hundreds of well-wishers, celebrities, diplomats, and art lovers representing the different nations of the world. What had brought them together was the tercentenary celebration of the founding of St. Petersburg, Peter the Great's legendary monument to civilized achievement. At the heart of this grand celebration was the unveiling of a newly reconstructed room, a legend, stolen by the Nazis and then lost after World War II: the resplendent, toffee-colored Amber Room. Once housed in the grand Catherine Palace in Tsarskoye Selo, the summer residence of Russia's last ruling family, the Romanovs, the room was once called the "Eighth Wonder of the World." What happened to the original room is a mystery that continues to inspire historians and treasure hunters around the globe. This thesis, however, is more concerned with what inspired the Russian government, a German petroleum company and a host of master craftsmen to spend more than 20 years painstakingly bringing the Amber Room back to life. This thesis will examine why the room was important in Russian political

and cultural history when it was created in 1709, and why it was so important to construct an exact replica of the room now, and what impact any future discovery might have on the future of Russian cultural and political stature.

I am using a comparative qualitative approach to explore the existing theories related to this topic. I will conduct in-depth research and analysis to understand and illustrate the probable fates that befell the Amber Room. I am interested in extracting the motivations supporting the formulations of theories that in turn drove post-war explorations for the Amber Room. I will compare the historical records, evidence and interpretations supporting both the German and Russian points of view in those explorations that ultimately resulted in reconstruction. I will conclude by supporting my own understanding of why the Amber Room was taken and the impact resulting from the ultimate recreation.

This work is dedicated to my family:

Colonel Robert A. Owen Jr. and Nancy C. Owen

who took me to museums from a young age, and plumbed their own library in support of this project.

Mary Sara Owen,

who read my first draft in a Paris hotel, offering critical observations that helped refine my analysis.

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who always encouraged me to “write it down.”

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CHAPTER ONE AFFAIRS OF STATE

Humanity looks to works of art to shed
light upon its path and its destiny.

Pope John Paul II

“Where do I begin to tell the story of how great a loss has been? Where do I start?”

The eighteenth century in Europe gave rise to innovations in both science and the arts. Creativity flourished across the continent, spurred by the patronage of wealthy aristocrats anxious to display their cultural awareness and fiscal ability. This confluence of wealth and artistic innovation resulted in an artwork so unique it was later dubbed the eighth wonder of the world. The room was officially known as Yantarny Komnata, or the Amber Room.

An investigation into the Amber Room raises hundreds of questions, first among them questions regarding the impact of this particular artwork. How is importance measured? What makes a work of art part of the cultural fabric of a nation? Is this merely a function of geography? How does an object obtain iconic status or recognition? Is it merely a function of being first or being unique? Finally, how does a work of art become a myth? The Catherine Palace began its life as the summer palace constructed for Catherine I, the wife of Peter the Great. The palace was later reconstructed by Catherine and Peter’s daughter, Empress Elizabeth. It is this edifice, 325 meters long, executed in the decorative Rococo style, which houses the Amber Room. The Amber Room is located in the fifth chamber in the right-hand wing of the

palace. And it is this room that boasts the kind of history that elevates a work of art beyond iconic status into the realm of myth. This is not a new phenomenon; many objects over the years have gained this kind of status, holding sway over popular imagination and understanding, among these are Vermeer's painting, "The Concert" or the Titanic, before it was found.

Long before its disappearance in 1945, the Amber Room awed and inspired visitors who trekked to Northern Russia to see it. Artistic use of amber was not new at the time the room was conceived—what made the Amber Room unique was the ambitious scale of the artwork. In its current setting in the Catherine Palace, the Amber Room consists a dozen twelve-foot panels, ten panels approximately three feet high, and twenty-four sections of amber skirting board containing more than 100,000 perfectly fitted pieces of amber (Scott-Clark 2004, 25). The decorative panels cover 150 square meters of wall space, and incorporate amber pieces in twenty different hues. The room's parquet flooring includes fifteen different types of wood fitted into a swirling pinwheel design. Separating the amber panels are tall, thin, gilt mirrors that reflect the light of more than 550 candles. The entire reconstructed spectacle required the creative energies of the more than seventy artisans, sculptors, and chemists laboring for twenty-five years in the Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, Ltd. Finally, in May, 2003, the completely restored Amber Room was revealed to the world.

In addition to its size, another quality that makes the Amber Room unique is its very public history. This introductory chapter will focus on defining the Amber Room and exploring its cultural significance for both Prussia and Russia. Included here will be a short description of amber as a material, to illustrate its artistic properties, which bolster its cultural and political significance. I will then address the role of the room in Russian, Prussian, and European history while reviewing the motivations behind its creation and bequest, as well as the resultant significance.

It is important to understand the early historical context for the Amber Room as it informs several elements of the modern recreation of the room. Chief among these is defining the tension between the artistic value of the rooms and the economic value of the rooms. When the Amber Room was first created, it was an artistic tour de force nothing like it had ever been created. The modern recreation also represents an artistic tour de force, but in this case, it is the act of successfully re-generating the room that awes and inspires. A similar parallel can be drawn regarding the economic value. The original room is estimated to be worth approximately \$150 million, today. The modern replica is no less luxurious in its materials and details, but the total cost to build it was \$11 million, a fraction of the estimated value of the original. Still, it is the historical context of the original room that helps to define the artistic and economic value of the modern counterpart.

The opening decade of the eighteenth century was a momentous time in both Russian and Prussian history. The two sovereign leaders of these countries sought legitimacy on the world stage and they used every means possible to attain it. Despite vast differences in the size of the territories they ruled, both Peter I and Frederick I were compelled to work with each other to realize their goals. Both rulers also looked to Western countries for guidance and inspiration during their respective reigns. Both rulers viewed patronage of the arts as a vehicle by which they might attain prominence. Support of the arts not only proved one culturally adept, but economically viable. And both rulers would ultimately be linked by their attachment to the Amber Room.

The city of St. Petersburg served as the capital of the Russian Empire for two centuries. During the period of the Empire, between 1703 and 1917, St. Petersburg was the trendsetter in Russian architecture, the source and arbiter of architectural taste. It owed this attainment, as it did its very existence, to Peter I, tsar and first emperor (Cracraft 1998, 147). Peter I assumed full power and leadership of Russia in 1689 at the age of seventeen following his successful navigation of internal power struggles involving his brother, Ivan, and their sister, Sofia. Peter was intent on modernizing the Russian state at every level: militarily, culturally, and economically. To accomplish this, he traveled incognito through the Netherlands, France, and England for sixteen months in 1697 and 1698. In addition, he opened Russia to the influences of Western European artists, architects, and artisans. Most notably, he built a new capital city, St. Petersburg, where French became the language of the court (Barzun 2000,319).

It was no secret that Russian leaders had long sought a viable port to support economic expansion and military capability. One of Peter's main goals was to regain access to the Baltic Sea and Baltic trade. Peter declared war on Sweden in 1700, fighting for almost a quarter century before Russia was able to claim the vast lands on the Baltic coast as its spoils of war (Saint-Petersburg.com 2008) Peter did not wait for final victory to establish his new capital city, however. St. Petersburg was founded in 1703, on the delta of the Neva River. In 1708, Peter I gave his wife, Catherine I, an estate located 24 kilometers south of the center of St. Petersburg. The estate was formerly owned by a Swedish noble and its Finnish name was translated by eighteenth-century Russians into *Tsarskoye Selo*, which means "The Royal Village." It was not until 1712 that Peter officially moved the Russian capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg.

Now established as Emperor of Russia, Peter continued his political and economic reforms. He reorganized the government, establishing the *Senat* as the highest government institution and creating ten semi-ministries known as *kollegii*. Peter I introduced a new poll tax which established funding for an active foreign policy and for boosting national manufacturing and trade. Peter I became popularly known as the "Tsar reformer," as he organized a Russian regular army and founded the Russian navy.

Not everyone received Peter's ideas with equanimity, however and many of Peter's opponents argued that the tsar's form of westernization represented corruption, decadence, a loss of spirituality, and a break with both Russia's Slavic past and the sources of creativity found in the East (Blakesley 2007, 6). Interestingly, this conflict was uniquely embodied in the creation and recreation of the Amber Room. In the early eighteenth century, under Peter and his successors, the room was the product of foreign imagination and craftsmanship. During its twenty-first century renaissance, the room became exclusively the work of Russian scientists and artisans. This leads to an interesting question to be addressed in chapter five: might the room now be considered more Russian than its predecessor?

Meanwhile, to the south and west of Russia in the late seventeenth century, Frederick William, also known as "the Great Elector," was given full sovereignty over Prussia in the Treaty of Whelau. The former Duchy of Prussia had been held in fief by the Polish crown until Frederick William pressed his advantage during the Northern Wars involving Poland and Sweden. The Great Elector established friendly relations with Russia during a series of Russo-Polish wars which further aided his claim against the Polish crown.

As Russia was declaring war on its northern neighbor, Sweden, Frederick William's son Elector Frederick III, transformed Prussia from a duchy into a kingdom. On January 18, 1701, Frederick III crowned himself King Frederick I. Interestingly, in

response to King Frederick I's ascension, Holy Roman emperor Leopold I allowed Frederick only to title himself "King in Prussia" not "King of Prussia." Leopold I made this declaration in deference to Poland, where a portion of the old Prussia lay. The historic city of Königsberg, a city destined to play a recurrent role in the story of the Amber Room, served as the capital of the Duchy of Prussia. However, with the elevation of Elector Frederick III to King, Berlin replaced Königsberg as the capital city. Unlike his Russian counterpart, Peter I, King Frederick I moved his capital city south and west away from direct access to the Baltic Sea.

The Prussian state grew in splendor during the reign of Frederick I. It was often said that he sponsored the arts at the expense of the treasury. Frederick I was aided in his support of the arts by his wife, Sophie-Charlotte. Sophie-Charlotte disliked court intrigue, preferring instead to pursue her own interests by entertaining a wide variety of musicians, artists, and scholars. Her palaces were intimate, divided into small but elaborate salons decorated with muted bronze and burnished gold (Scott-Clark 2004, 23). Like Peter I, the Kingdom of Prussia looked to the West for social and cultural guidance. It was in July 1700 that Sophie-Charlotte convinced her husband that it would be an asset to his reign to establish an academy devoted to scientific inquiry, similar to those in England and France. Shortly thereafter, she urged Frederick I to commission a room made entirely of amber as a novelty to attract dignitaries to his Lutzenburg Palace.

Interestingly, the modern reconstruction has served a similar purpose. Though the reconstruction effort began before Vladimir Putin was elected President of Russia, he saw to it that the rededication ceremony in May 2003 included dignitaries and a host of world leaders. Putin, a native of St. Petersburg, viewed the refurbished Amber Room as a credit to his presidency. Its rededication ceremony was also a way to draw attention to his home town, while establishing a parallel between his leadership of Russia and that of the powerful Tsars of history. Putin's office orchestrated an elaborate ceremony culminating in the rededication ceremony of the Amber Room which was witnessed by world leaders including Gerhard Schroeder of Germany, George Bush of the United States, Jacques Chirac of France, and many others.

Amber as an artistic material was not new. In the eighteenth century, amber was very popular because of its golden color and its rarity and softness. The golden age of amber carving in Europe was during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with special carving workshops organized in Königsberg, Danzig and Dresden (Kuchumov 1989, 267). These towns had grown to prominence in artistic circles because their locations along the Baltic Sea made them well-suited to capitalize on the amber deposits that occurred naturally under the water.

The Baltic coast boasts one of the largest and richest deposits of raw amber. Amber was considered an extremely rare commodity because one could never predict how much might be found. It is theorized that the area now covered by the Baltic Sea

was once a large pine forest. Once the area was flooded by the sea, the raw amber was packed down under layers of sand and silt. Violent storms helped raise the amber from the sea floor, depositing it along the coast where fishermen would collect it. Amber was so valuable because of its rarity and the spontaneous nature of its appearance.

Not surprisingly, kings enacted strict laws to govern the search for and sale of amber. Illegal sale of amber was even punishable by death. Eventually, German knights assumed control over and responsibility for the amber monopoly. The knights reserved the most valuable pieces of amber to create artwork in their workshops in Königsberg and Danzig. In fact, cutting amber became a recognized profession in the seventeenth century.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries these two artistic centers of the world produced jewelry, decorative jars, and even furniture in amber. According to Anatoly Kuchumov in his history of the Amber Room, it was during the mid-seventeenth century that the technique of inlaid amber was created in what we know today as a typical Baroque style. This technique was employed in particular to fabricate large works in amber such as altars and furniture paneling (Kuchumov 1989, 268).

By the eighteenth century, amber furnishings were coveted as royal gifts. Royalty wanted to give amber objects to display their wealth, good taste, and generosity, while the receivers of the gifts were anxious to project their importance at court and

increasing good fortune. Prussia financed its steady rise to kingdom status partially by selling amber works to Poland, Austria and oriental countries. With their proximity to the amber guilds of Königsberg, the Prussian kings became good customers, commissioning amber pieces as gifts. Thus, a great number of amber objects found their way to European countries in the form of gifts to kings (Kuchumov 1989, 267).

It is widely—though not unanimously—accepted that it was Andreas Schlüter, a German-born Baroque sculptor, hired in 1701 to design the amber room envisioned by Sophie-Charlotte. As with many things surrounding the Amber Room’s history, however, there is contention on this point. Dr. Burkhard Göres, director of palaces at the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg contends that Schlüter’s important rival, Johann Friederich Eosander, was the true author of the project. Investigative journalists Catherine Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy offer an alternative narrative stating that Sophie-Charlotte preferred the work of Johann Eosander, who had been out of the country in 1701 and returned some years into the undertaking. Upon his return to Prussia, she hired Eosander as the lead architect on the project. Her preference caused Schlüter to quit the project as he was so offended by her choice of a project lead twenty-five years his junior (Scott-Clark 2004, 24).

Danish amber craftsman Gottfried Wolfram, aided by Ernst Schacht and Gottfried Turau, both of Danzig, were charged with execution and construction of Schuler’s plan from 1701 through 1709. Unfortunately, Sophie-Charlotte, the novel room’s

champion, did not live to see her vision to fruition, dying of pneumonia in 1705. Another complication arose in 1707 when the room was only half-complete. A disagreement occurred between Andreas Schlüter and his superiors, resulting in Schlüter's departure from Berlin.

Both the Russian and Prussian states continued to develop and expand space of each other during this time. Not long after Andreas Schlüter's departure from Prussia, Peter I gave his wife the northern estate formerly owned by a Swedish noble. The estate, recently won during Russia's war with Sweden, was situated approximately 24 kilometers outside the rapidly expanding St. Petersburg. It is this estate that developed into the royal conclave we now know as *Tsarskoye Selo*, the "Tsar's Village." Peter's wife was destined to give the main palace in this complex its name, The Catherine Palace.

Four years later, in 1712, Peter I officially relocated the Russian capital to St. Petersburg. With the seat of government officially installed in his namesake city, Peter further expanded his program of westernization. Much like the critical author Vladimir Stasov, Peter I believed the benchmark of progress in the fine arts was firmly located in western Europe (Blakesley 2007, 6). Peter I instigated an ambitious program of importing artists from various countries while sending Russian students on study tours of the artistic capitals of Europe. It was during this period that Andreas Schlüter made his way north to St. Petersburg. Schlüter's reputation as an architect preceded him to

Russia. At Peter I's behest, he, along with Freiderich Braunstein, designed the Grand Palace and Monplaisir Palace in Peterhof. His relocation to Russia in 1713 is yet another intriguing example of the shared narrative of the two territories and two leaders associated with the artwork that would ultimately join them permanently in history.

Unfortunately, 1713 also saw the death of Prussia's first king, Frederick I, and so neither original sponsor of the amber room lived to see it completed. Frederick was succeeded by his son, Frederick Wilhelm, known as the soldier king. Frederick Wilhelm was concerned with other affairs of state like a long-running dispute with Sweden. He was disgusted by what he viewed as a waste of time and money, so he halted the still incomplete Amber Room project. The unfinished panels were crated for storage in Berlin. Shortly thereafter, the room's designer and architect, Andreas Schlüter, died in St. Petersburg, taking with him any plans that clarified how the panels were to be fitted together and installed.

Meanwhile, Russia was still fighting its long war with Sweden, and was seeking allies and legitimacy for the fight. This created an opportunity to develop close relations between Russia and Prussia, officially uniting Peter I and Frederick Wilhelm as allies against the military aspirations of Swedish king Charles XII (Kuchumov 1989, 269). Peter I finally met with his ally, Frederick Wilhelm, in person in the fall of 1716 for three days of negotiations to address their common enemy. In the course of these discussions, Peter I, a great collector of amber art objects, learns of Frederick I's

ambitious amber room project. The opportunity presented to Frederick Wilhelm during these negotiations was compelling.

After learning of Peter's fascination with amber, the ambitious soldier king—already anxious to strike an accord—resorted to the well-known path traveled by his forefathers, and decided a gift of the amber for which his country was famous would be just the thing to seal an accord between himself and the great Russian king. This decision was made all the easier by his knowledge that he possessed a unique amber creation. Thus, in one diplomatic move, Frederick Wilhelm could catapult his country onto the world military stage while ridding himself of the Amber Room, which he viewed as a financial albatross.

This is the first critical moment in European history in which these two countries are forever joined by this singular room. So begins the geo-political chess game in which the Amber Room is now and ever will be a pawn. This opening move was made in a moment of peace, the Amber Room given as a testament to good faith. In 1716, no one could have dreamed this beautiful work of unfinished art would be ultimately destined to pit their respective successors against each other.

The unfinished panels were packed into eighteen crates and each crate was loaded onto its own cart for the overland journey to St. Petersburg. The harsh Russian winter required the crates to make the last leg of their journey by sleigh, finally arriving in St. Petersburg in 1717. Lacking the plans to install the panels, and with Peter I still

abroad, the crates simply went into storage in their new country. Finally, in 1721, Russia wins the long war with Sweden, prompting Peter I to create the Russian Empire, proclaiming himself the first Emperor, much like his counterparts had done in Prussia earlier in the century. Unfortunately, Peter I did not live very long thereafter to enjoy the fruits of his long and costly war. He died in 1725 in his new capital, St. Petersburg. It would be left to his daughter and successor, Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, to oversee the completion of her father's work, including the installation of the Amber Room eighteen years later in the Winter Palace in 1743.

The first installation of the Amber Room coincides with its first major renovation. Elizabeth Petrovna hired Francisco Bartolomeo Rastrelli to lead the installation project. Rastrelli was an Italian-born architect who had traveled to Russia with his father. Rastrelli sought to combine Italian architectural style with Russian baroque style. He was appointed senior court architect in 1730. His major works include The Winter Palace in St. Petersburg and The Catherine Palace in Tsarskoye Selo.

When Rastrelli unpacked the crated amber panels, he discovered that they had been made to cover a much smaller room in their originally intended destination in Prussia. Rastrelli conceived a solution to enlarge the wall coverings without disturbing the actual amber panels. He proposed the addition of eighteen mirrored pilasters framed with carved, gilded decorations to be interspersed between the amber panels (Kuchumov 1989, 270). It was also during this time that he proposed the substitution

of paintings to be placed inside the amber frames present on three of the large wall panels. The original plan intended for the frames to contain mirrors. Rastrelli's inclusion of mirrored pilasters as an expansion device demanded new objects for the frames. Thus Rastrelli introduced an Italian sensibility into the Prussian original by substituting Italian paintings for the original Prussian mirrors. Continuing the international artistic tradition already begun in St. Petersburg, a French cabinet maker named Michel was commissioned to make the mirrored pilasters for installation the following year.

In the meantime, the death of Frederick Wilhelm in 1740 brought on a change of leadership in Prussia. The king was succeeded by his son, who took the name Frederick II, who later became known as Frederick the Great. Unlike Peter I, who bestowed the great moniker upon himself, Frederick earned his honorific thanks to popular reforms and balanced leadership in his home country. Frederick II was more like his grandfather, Frederick I in his championship of the arts. It was under the leadership of Frederick I that the Amber Room project was initiated, as well as the founding of the Prussian Academy of Arts and Sciences.

According to Anatoly Kuchumov's history of the Amber Room, it was in the spring of 1745 King Frederick II learned from his ambassador to Russia that Empress Elizabeth regretted the absence of a fourth frame in the Amber Room which had not been completed by the German masters by the time Frederick Wilhelm halted the

project in 1713. As further evidence of their friendly relations, King Frederick II commissioned a new frame as a gift to the Russian tsarina. Like the existing panels, the frame was created in Königsberg and shipped as a surprise to the Empress in St. Petersburg. Thus, in 1746, almost half a century after its conception, the Amber Room was at last completed and installed in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. The room served as the audience room and hall for official receptions for Empress Elizabeth Petrovna for the next nine years. Its role, as Sophie-Charlotte originally envisioned it, was to inspire, awe, and impress.

The room's second full installation brought about its second major renovation. Bartolomeo Rastrelli had stayed on in St. Petersburg as the chief court architect, and in 1752 he was ordered by Empress Elizabeth to refurbish and expand the summer Imperial residence in Tsarskoye Selo. It is this palace that we know today as the Catherine Palace. Following three years of construction, Elizabeth ordered that the Amber Room be transferred to the new summer residence. Once again, the destination room for the panels was larger than the space they previously occupied, necessitating another ingenious expansion scheme. Rastrelli relied on the use of mirrored pilasters once again; however, he took the opportunity of a second renovation to enhance the contents of the amber frames worked into the larger amber panels. Rastrelli removed the paintings which had decorated the room in the Winter Palace, replacing them with Florentine mosaics made of multi-colored, semi-precious jasper stones. The mosaics depicted the senses of taste, sight, hearing, and smell (Kuchumov 1989, 271).

Even with five additional mirrored pilasters, there remained gaps above and below the original amber panels. According to Kuchumov's history, the panels under the pilasters were wooden, painted to imitate amber as they had done in the Winter Palace. The upper part of the wall above the original panels was draped with canvas that was also painted in imitation of amber. It was not until 1760 that Empress Elizabeth Petrovna commissioned genuine amber panels to replace the imitations. On her orders, invitations were issued to masters in Königsberg and Danzig to compete for the commission. A construction team was eventually assembled from the pool of successful respondents. It was this team of master craftsmen who executed the third renovation, albeit on a smaller scale than Rastrelli's first two enlargement schemes. It was also this group that dated in amber mosaic pieces the front of one of the panels to mark the beginning of their project, a detail that remains to this day. Finally, in 1770, the Amber Room was completed and put into service, alternately used by the ruling Romanovs as a private meditation space, an official reception room, and a trophy room for amber connoisseur Alexander II who shared Peter I's fascination with the material.

The Amber Room necessitated several repairs during the nineteenth century due primarily to the extreme temperatures to which the material was subjected. St. Petersburg suffered bitterly cold winters with low temperatures that would cause the wax binding that adhered the amber pieces to their frame to contract. At the same time, when the room was in use, it was lit by more than five hundred candles, which put off sufficient heat to cause the wax binding to expand and loosen. Catherine Scott-

Clark and Adrian Levy also mention the impact of central heating, which further aggravated the suffering of the ancient binding. Years of these temperature extremes took their toll on the amber panels and periodic repairs were necessary, the most comprehensive repair was executed in 1833. Beyond these efforts at preservation, the amber panels rested peacefully in the Catherine Palace for more than 170 years.

Led by two ambitious men, both were hungry to compete on a world stage dominated at the time by their nearest neighbors, it is not difficult to imagine that some of the seeds for what would destroy the happy relations between Russia and Prussia had already been sown during their respective rises to power. After Peter I, Russia lay largely silent and contained to the East. The two centuries following his death bore witness to terrible internal power struggles that resulted in the overthrow of the Imperial Family during the Bolshevik Revolution that gave rise to Josef Stalin. No friend of the arts, Stalin nonetheless realized that the former Imperial residences could be useful to his party in other ways. They were converted to state museums and thus the Bolshevik revolution produced a democratization of art, if not power.

Prussia, on the other hand, continued to expand its power and influence, specifically under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck, who consolidated the Prussian state in the days leading up to World War I. This action, along with the punitive reparations imposed on Germany following World War I, paved the way for Adolf Hitler's rise to power in the 1920s. Like his Russian counterpart, future military ally,

and then foe, Hitler was also no friend of the arts. He too envisioned a use for the arts to promote Nazi party ideology. His plan included domination of Europe in every capacity, including the production and display of art.

Unlike Stalin, Hitler was not content to simply convert existing works of art into tools for the state. Hitler had a much larger vision: to rid the world of any art he deemed degenerate or worthless while exalting some German art as superior. He had in his mind the creation of a great museum in his hometown of Linz, Austria, where he would display Germany's superior artwork. And he intended to gather to this museum all works of German origin, regardless of where those works were currently housed.

The primary life of the Amber Room unfolded in the affairs of state. Originally conceived as a mechanism for accrediting Prussian power, it went on to serve Russia in accruing power. The outbreak of World War II reinvigorated the political power of the room as Germany stole the room in a show of force. Even as the room went missing in 1945, the compelling story of its mysterious disappearance continued to exert power on Russo-German relations.

CHAPTER TWO

MYSTERY

All things beautiful and mortal pass,
but not art.

Leonardo da Vinci

The Amber Room was last seen in Tsarskoye Selo, Russia in May, 1941, as Nazi troops advanced on St. Petersburg. During preparations for Operation Barbarossa, Hitler mused that the founding of St. Petersburg had been a catastrophe for Europe. He decided, therefore, it must disappear completely from the earth (Nicholas 1994, 189). Furthermore, Hitler believed that the Amber Room was a prime example of German cultural patrimony, having begun its life in Prussia under Frederick I. Hitler wanted the room back as a powerful symbol of German creativity, while the taking of it itself served as a symbol of power. The room was installed and displayed in Königsberg, East Germany, until spring 1944, after which it was never seen again. All traces of the Amber Room were lost, and its fate a mystery which museum workers and experts in the Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other countries have been trying to solve for several decades (Kuchumov 1989, 274).

Understanding why the room was taken leads to questions about what subsequent fate befell the room. A brief examination of what probably happened to it figures in the analysis of what motivated the Russian searchers and their German counterparts to search for the room over the next thirty-four years. The prolonged search emphasizes

the continuing political and cultural significance of this particular work of art. It also sheds light on the continuing role that mystery plays in the story and lure of the Amber Room.

This chapter will also explore in greater detail the actions and motivations of the key players in the room's fate at critical points in the timeline from 1941 when it was removed from the Catherine Palace, until 2003 when the new room was revealed in a magnificently staged ceremony in that same palace. Also addressed will be questions of who stands to gain and what is to be gained by sustaining the mystery of the room's fate. Furthermore, what conclusions might be drawn from the existence of layers of mystery surrounding the Amber Room? In question is not just the fate of the room itself, but the fate of the individuals most closely connected to the room, all of whom end up dead or missing under suspicious or mysterious circumstances.

No investigation of the Amber Room is complete without some understanding of the continuing role played by the mystery of its disappearance. The mysterious disappearance, itself, has become a key element in defining the context for the recreated Amber Room. Obviously, there would be no need for a replica had the original room not disappeared. So often the lure of the mysterious disappearance overshadows questions about why the mystery persists in a time when an exact replica exists. The mystery links the original room directly to the replica, so addressing the

persistent existence of the mystery as a unified element creates context and maintains relevance of the modern replica.

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 as Nazi-ruled Germany invaded Poland inspired Josef Stalin to sign a non-aggression treaty between Russia and her German neighbor. Needless to say, the pact was insufficient as Hitler invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, without a declaration of war (Scott-Clark 2004, 3). By evening on the day of the invasion, the order had been given to evacuate the treasures of the city of St. Petersburg. To give some idea of the scope of treasures involved, the State Hermitage museum housed 2.5 million exhibits with hundreds of thousands more housed in the Alexander, Catherine and Pavlosk Palaces, Peterhof, Oranienbaum and Gatchina. In point of fact, Lynn Nicholas points out that one of the first rooms to be emptied at the Catherine Palace was the famous Amber Room. Chairs, tables and ornaments made of amber were easily packed, but the carved amber panels covering the walls proved too difficult to remove and were left in place (Nicholas 1994, 190).

Hitler was a student of Napoleon's strategy both militarily and where artistic plunder was concerned. Like Napoleon, Hitler had lists of desired art formulated in advance by "art students" he had stationed all over Europe to discover the exact locations of particular works he coveted for his Linz Museum. After the war, Paul Enke, a Stasi agent, discovered that the Nazis had been preparing to "cherry-pick" works in Eastern Europe as far back as 1933 (Scott-Clark 2004, 191). Enke's

discovery of premeditation will figure prominently in later chapters regarding the topic of repatriation.

Hitler invaded Russia as much for plunder as a show of might. There were certain items of Germanic origin that had been targeted and listed in the Kümmel Report, which placed at the top of its list the Amber Room (Nicholas 1994, 191). In the case of the Amber Room, however, more was at stake than just loot. Russian curators had raced through the former Imperial Palaces packing artwork into crates so they could be shipped further east into Siberia for safekeeping. The Nazi Army had moved swiftly toward St. Petersburg, cutting the roads by which supplies might have reached the overextended curators. They quickly ran short of packing materials and were reduced to using the gowns of the former Tsarinas to pack goods. When it came to the Amber Room, an initial attempt to remove one of the panels resulted in damage to the amber mosaic. Thus, the decision was made to use what materials remained to cover up the amber panels on the walls in an effort to make the room look like the valuable panels had already been removed and the room was under construction. Unfortunately, the thin disguise that had been hastily constructed by the museum curators using paper and muslin fabric was insufficient to fool the Nazis.

The Nazi removal of the famed Amber Room from its barely disguised housing in the Catherine Palace was intended to accomplish three things:

1. “Repatriate” a Prussian/German work of art
2. Demonstrate by a show of force that the Russians could not and did not protect the Amber Room and therefore did not “deserve” it
3. Destroy Russian cultural links to break the spirit of the people

Most scholars agree on the early history of the Amber Room with rare exception, as noted in the first chapter. Where a great deal of disagreement arises is in the fate of the room after its relocation to Königsberg, then known as Kaliningrad.

In November, 1941, the Amber Room was removed from the Catherine Palace in St. Petersburg by Von Kunsberg’s Special Battalion, who were far better equipped than the recently departed Russian curators. This unique group of Nazi soldiers worked without rest, and removed the Amber Room panels in a mere thirty-six hours—a timeframe shocking and noteworthy to current scholars who are now in possession of more complete information about the sequence of events surrounding the evacuation and later siege of St. Petersburg. These authors point out that Anatoly Kuchumov had eight days to remove the fabled masterpiece. It is stupefying to them that he was unable to accomplish this when the Nazi team was able to remove and pack the entire room in approximately a day and a half.

We know that following the dismantling of the room, the panels were carefully packed into twenty-nine crates which were then loaded onto a train bound for Königsberg, Germany. In addition to being the birthplace of the now famous Amber Room, Königsberg had become the showplace for the top “gatherings” of artwork and spoils from the Eastern Territories (Nicholas 1994, 191). Königsberg Castle, the

medieval fortress built by the Teutonic Order of knights in the mid–thirteenth century, served as both museum and stronghold.

We already know that some elements of the room’s decoration did not make it to its final destination, thanks to the discovery in 1997 of one of the four original Florentine mosaics. A German soldier had stolen the mosaic somewhere between St. Petersburg and Königsberg. It was known in 1945 when Brusov visited the heavily bombed ruins of Königsberg Castle that one mosaic was missing, as he discovered the remains of only three of the mosaics amongst the castle ashes. No one then knew what had become of the fourth mosaic, but its disappearance was enough to cast doubt on the fate of the entire room.

This doubt in turn fed more than sixty years of intense searching by both Russian and German authorities for any evidence of the room’s remains. The economic value of the room and the potential magnitude of the discovery, continue to attract treasure hunters of every stripe. The bulk of scholarly writing on the topic explores three main theories of what fate befell the original Amber Room. These are:

1. The room sank while in transport away from Königsberg by boat
2. The room is hidden either disassembled or intact in Russia or Germany
3. The room was destroyed in the heavy bombing sustained by Königsberg Castle

Thus far, in choosing to support one of these three theories, no one can fully dispel the alternate theories that remain. Very little investigation was conducted outside

Russia and Germany before the 2003 revelation of the newly constructed replica, when the unveiling of the new Amber Room revived international interest in the mystery. An examination of the three possible answers to the question of what happened after November 1944 reveals a set of common goals for the investigators, with subtle variations of responsibility.

Like so many other aspects of the Amber Room's history, the first theory to address the possible fate that befell the room raises as many questions as it answers. The first theory is that the crates containing the amber panels were successfully evacuated from Königsberg Castle in 1945. Those crates were then loaded into the hold of the ill-fated Nazi ocean liner, the Wilhelm-Gustloff.

The remains of the Wilhelm-Gustloff now rest at the bottom of Baltic Sea. The wreck, according to author Leigh Bishop, represents maritime's largest ever loss of life, and quite possibly serves as the final resting place for World War II's most famous missing artwork. However, support for Bishop's theory is thin. He references a note authored by Dr. Alfred Rohde, who served as the Nazi Director of the Königsberg Castle Museum during the period when the Amber Room was on display there. Dr. Rohde's note dated January 12, 1945, was written eighteen days before the Gustloff sailed. In the note, Dr. Rohde writes: "I am packing the Amber study in boxes and other containers on the orders of the provincial custodian. As soon as it is done, I shall evacuate the panels to Wechselberg near Rochlitz in Saxon." Leigh notes that the

panels were packed into twenty four strongboxes suitable for “long transportation” which was completed by January 15, 1945.

Catherine Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy also realized that Alfred Rohde had only two choices for quickly and safely hiding the Amber Room: the castles of Wechselburg and Kriebstein (Scott-Clark 2004, 171). They note that Kriebstein was ruled out due to the fact that it was already filled to the rafters with Nazi war booty. This left Wechselburg to be investigated as a possible destination for the second evacuation of the Amber Room.

As early as 1946, Anatoly Kuchumov was re-creating Alfred Rohde’s movements in Königsberg using Rohde’s correspondence with Nazi leadership. Kuchumov concluded that the last train out of Königsberg had been on January 22, 1945, however, Paul Enke later learned that there were in fact two trains departing Königsberg that day. Enke also found a record of a ship leaving Königsberg on January 22, 1945. This ship, a small cruiser called the Emden, sailed directly from the Königsberg shipyard to Pillau where its contents were transferred to the passenger steamer Pretoria, which set out for Stettin that same night (Scott-Clark, 200). This boat has largely been ruled out as a method of transport for the Amber Room based on the size constraints of its hold and the number of crates required to transport the amber panels.

Meanwhile, the Wilhelm-Gustloff set sail eight full days after the Emden from a point close to Königsberg Castle, according to Leigh Bishop. Even though the roads and railways were blocked by Allied troops, it is possible that a desperate Dr. Rohde attempted an evacuation by sea. Evidence discovered during investigations by both Dr. Georg Stein and the writing team of Catherine Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy strongly suggests the Amber Room was successfully evacuated. Unfortunately, the theory that the panels made it onto the Gustloff, unlike the other two theories, has only circumstantial evidence to support it. The Wilhelm-Gustloff was sunk by Russian submarines in 1945 in waters that belonged to Poland after the war. By the time the Anglo-American expedition visited the wreck in 2003, the dive leader, Mike Boring, concluded that the Gustloff had already been visited by salvage divers. He offered evidence to suggest that heavy-duty work had been carried out there. He also recalled that there was talk by local Polish residents of a Russian visit to the wreck that is still within their memory.

The second theory about the probable fate of the Amber Room is the one that continues to lure both amateur and professional treasure hunters. This theory posits that the Amber Room is hidden away in a storehouse in Russia, or in Germany or buried in a mine near Königsberg. The idea that the room might be buried in a mine is not wholly improbable given Nazi use of former mines throughout Europe to hide everything from paintings, to gold, to munitions. The Nazis would have been desperate to keep the room out of Russian hands, and once it left Alfred Rohde's care,

it is possible that some transport officer thought nothing of stashing in a dank, disused mine what he saw only as crates in need of hiding. In fact, an active dig is being executed near the small German town of Deutschneudorf located near the Czech border as of February 2008.

The theory that the room is hidden away in a storehouse in Russia has been strongly supported by authors Grigorii Kozlov and Konstantin Akinsha in their 1995 book *Beautiful Loot: The Soviet Plunder of Europe's Art Treasures*. They cite well-documented evidence of the Red Army's vengeful post-war looting. The Red Army justified its actions as retribution for the horrible sufferings of the Russian people at the hands of the fascists. The authors uncover and name numerous depots of looted art in Russia. These depots remain closed, the records known only to a few of the highest-ranking Russian officials. Even then it is speculated that no one person knows everything about what the Russians might have hidden.

Unlike the organized looting by the Nazis, which included careful, detailed records, the Red Army engaged in frenzied looting. As might be surmised, this theory is unpopular in Russia, where the Red Army is publicly acclaimed for its actions against the German invaders. This theory was also dismissed by Adrian Levy in my July 2008 phone interview with him. He stated that the Red Army, much like its German Army counterparts, possessed highly efficient trophy squads. Mr. Levy believes that had the Red Army discovered any meaningful evidence of the Amber Room, they would have

displayed it immediately and triumphantly. As evidence he points to the Trophy Brigade Shows conducted in Russia during the 1950s conducted in order to act as a show of force, to the victor the spoils. Mr. Levy contends that the Amber Room was a great prize, and would not have been omitted from shows such as these had the Red Army Trophy Brigades recaptured it.

At this point the first and second theories are joined by a tantalizing concurrent theory which posits that the Russians did locate their treasure. The theory holds it was found in the hold of the sunken Wilhelm-Gustloff, a castle dungeon in Saxony, or Königsberg Castle itself. Regardless of where it was located, proponents of this theory posit that the real Amber Room is now hiding in plain sight on display in the Catherine Palace as the “new” Amber Room. Most experts agree that if the room was hidden in a mine, it almost certainly could not have survived the conditions intact. Thus, it is not possible that salvageable pieces could be used in the recreated room.

If the room had been carefully hidden after January, 1945, either in Germany or in Russia, it seems highly possible that large portions of it might still have been usable in the modern reconstruction effort. It is particularly possible in the context of Dr. Alfred Rohde’s choice to remain in Königsberg after January, 1945, knowing that at least two trains and one boat successfully departed the besieged city. Knowing Dr. Rohde’s obsessive love of the Amber Room, combined with his highly developed sense of duty to Nazi leaders, it might be argued that he stayed in Königsberg to protect the treasure

he knew remained hidden there. During my July, 2008, phone interview with Adrian Levy, he also dispelled this theory by offering several counterpoints. Chief among his arguments are KGB reports from 1945 establishing that nothing could have left Königsberg by road, rail, or sea. Furthermore, Mr. Levy is adamant that no part of the original room is present in the refurbished Amber Room. He observed that the old amber would have the clearly identifiable patina of age, as opposed to the new amber used to recreate the fabled room. He explained that specifically, the old amber in the original room was mellowed and the colors less sharp. The new room, by contrast, is very bright with clear distinctions in the color of the amber mosaic. His theory is that the room was still hidden in Königsberg—and he and his writing partner both subscribe to the third theory on the fate that befell the Amber Room.

The last and most widely accepted scholarly theory is that the Amber Room burned when Königsberg Castle sustained significant damage under heavy bombing in late 1944 and early 1945. Authors Catherine Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy write about the post-war finger pointing that went on in an effort to determine exactly who bombed the castle area. The Russians blame the British, while the British lay blame on the Red Army. Here, Adrian Levy offers evidence in support of exonerating the British Army. He stated that British bombing records available through the Imperial War Museum show that no bombing missions were targeted for Königsberg. Regardless of who dropped the bombs, we know that newly developed fire bombs were dropped on the city beginning in August, 1944. The resulting inferno incinerated a vast swath of the

city and burned out the fortress castle. Despite this heavy onslaught, which was followed by ground artillery and urban fighting in 1945, ruins of the castle remain thanks to the original thick walls.

This brings us back to Dr. Alfred Rohde, who served as the Nazi Director of the Königsberg Castle Museum during the period when the Amber Room was on display there. Dr. Rohde harbored a deep love for the magnificent treasure in his care. He had authored a book, *Bernstein* (which means “amber” in German) in 1937, and was known as an amber expert. Dr. Rohde’s expertise on the subject was further supported by Anatoly Kuchumov’s 1949 interrogation of Dr. Gerhard Strauss, who claimed to have important information about the location of the Amber Room (Scott-Clark 2004, 147). Dr. Strauss maintained that “Dr. Rohde was a lover of amber. There is no doubt that he would have tried to save the Amber Room.” (Scott-Clark 2004, 155). Though he had not been responsible for ordering its theft, Dr. Rohde was directly responsible for decisions made concerning the room after its arrival in Königsberg. It is noteworthy that in Kuchumov’s many interviews with Dr. Strauss, the interviewee admitted that the Amber Room was already badly damaged when it first reached Königsberg in 1942. This is not wholly surprising given the fragile, brittle condition of the panels when Kuchumov and his associates tried to evacuate the panels in 1941. No one can know what condition the panels were in as they were dismantled and crated a second time. Nor can we know what damage might have been incurred during transit.

As Allied forces moved toward Königsberg from the West, and the Russian Red Army advanced from the East, Dr. Rohde ordered the removal of the amber panels from their installation in the castle museum on the river-facing south wing of the second floor. The crated panels were moved to a stronghold location known as the Knight's Hall, also on the south wing of the castle. After the fall of Königsberg, as with other cities in Europe, the city was divided into zones with different countries overseeing the activity in each zone. Königsberg Castle came under the direction of the Red Army.

Russian leaders from Moscow dispatched an investigator named Alexander Brusov almost immediately following the capitulation of the city. Brusov authored numerous reports to the party leaders detailing his findings. Notably, he concluded that "digging started for the Amber Room before I arrived" (Scott-Clark 2004, 82). He noted that earlier excavators had begun work near the largely destroyed south wing of the castle which they knew had formerly housed the stolen Amber Room. The question of who might have started the digging in advance of Brusov's arrival remains tantalizingly unanswered.

By June 5, 1945, Brusov and his team finally accessed the Knight's Hall, which Dr. Rohde claimed to have used as the hiding place for the re-crated amber panels. There they discovered evidence of a raging inferno that had left only ash and charred bits of the room's former contents. Catherine Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy note that Brusov

was on the scene only three days before reaching the devastating conclusion that the Amber Room was destroyed by fire. Brusov was unwilling to return to Moscow bearing only bad news, so he continued his search for further evidence in the castle ruins.

By the time Brusov and his team returned home, they had happily recovered sixty crates of treasures they hoped would soften the blow of their revelation about the fate of the famed Amber Room (Scott-Clark 2004, 87). In his official report, Brusov concluded the room had been destroyed in a devastating fire that gutted the Knight's Hall of Königsberg Castle. Brusov based his conclusion on Dr. Alfred Rohde's confession that the crates containing the amber panels were still in the castle as of April 5, 1945. Soviet troops had surrounded the city two days later, making it impossible for the crates to be moved. Thus he concluded that the crates remained secreted in the castle, where they ultimately burned in a fire that began after the German surrender between April 9 and April 11, 1945. Remarkably, Brusov did not make another public comment about his findings for another fourteen years, and his written reports were classified for more than fifty years (Scott-Clark 2004, 88).

Interestingly, investigative journalists Catherine-Scott Clark and Adrian Levy reached the same conclusion about the room's fate in their 2004 book, *The Amber Room: The Fate of the World's Greatest Lost Treasure*. What is different about their conclusion is their contention that the Russian Red Army, not Allied forces, was

responsible for the fires that destroyed the famed Amber Room. They support their conclusion with years of research in both Russian and East German archives, interviews with workers at the Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, Ltd., and meetings with individuals connected to those with direct familiarity with the missing original.

Their book was published almost one year after the elaborately staged re-opening of the refurbished Amber Room, and it set off a firestorm of denial by Russian officials. During our July 2008 interview, Adrian Levy responded to the counter-theories offered by Russian critics that followed the 2004 release of the book. The conclusion of their investigation had been that the Amber Room was destroyed in an act of friendly fire instigated by the Red Army. In our July 2008 interview, Mr. Levy remarked that no one can ascribe motives to the Red Army at this late date. He offered support for the book's conclusion by pointing out that Königsberg was the epicenter of Prussianism at that time. It was the birthplace of the double-headed eagle and in his words, "it rang of evil to the Red Army." He went on to say that there was no security governing the Red Army in Königsberg. He stated that the Russian soldiers were neither malicious nor purposeful, it was simply a melee in that city in 1945.

Adrian Levy's assertions are supported by the experience of another journalist living and working in Russia, John Varoli. During our August 2008 telephone interview, Mr. Varoli pointed out that even as late as the 1990s, people in Russia were

not anxious to share information—particularly with journalists. Mr. Varoli met Russian journalist Konstantin Akinsha when they were both pursuing the same news story. Following the publication of Mr. Akinsha’s book, *Beautiful Loot*, in 1995, Mr. Varoli conducted his own research on the accusations at the root of the book. Mr. Varoli says that he discovered that Mr. Akinsha was dependent on unreliable sources offering uncorroborated stories. It is his contention that Akinsha is a typical Russian journalist in that “any Babushka is a reliable source.”

Mr. Varoli went on to say that it is still very difficult to determine what is true in Russia. He notes that there is so much distrust and that many investigators are too lazy to seek out and verify good sources. He believes, as does Adrian Levy, that many Russians are still convinced that the West wants to conquer and occupy Russia and all that protects them is their secrets. When asked directly, Mr. Varoli also asserted that the original Amber Room was destroyed in World War II. He followed the story on his own for ten years living and working around St. Petersburg, but his interest waned once the reconstructed Amber Room made its debut. He went on to say that he believes adventurers and treasure seekers remain drawn to the mystery because it is fun to go seeking for treasure. Certainly it is a heady prospect to solve a mystery that has endured for sixty-four years.

Having examined the most probable theories of what fate befell the Amber Room, it is quickly evident that no one theory can be wholly dismissed as impossible. It also

demonstrates the frustrating difficulty of this mystery, while unveiling one source of the Amber Room's enduring power. Though the original has disappeared, the memory of it continues to capture public imagination. Thus, in researching what is to be gained by keeping the mystery of the room's fate alive, one realizes the very mystery of its fate actually serves multiple purposes. Primarily, the mystery creates a natural interest in the room. Secondly, the mystery continues to corroborate power by commanding attention, just as the room itself corroborated power when it was created. Finally, the mystery keeps the room relevant on the world stage. As to questions regarding who stands to gain from the ongoing interest in the mystery of the room's fate, there are again multiple possibilities.

At this juncture, the mystery is irrevocably intertwined with the history of the room. If not for the tantalizing mystery surrounding this remarkable work of art, it might never have gained the international acclaim it now enjoys. At the time the Nazi soldiers stole the room in 1945, it was no longer used for official receptions by heads of the Russian state. Following the war, it might just as easily have slipped into oblivion like so many other destroyed works of art. It is the tantalizing mystery of what happened to the room that sustains its allure.

CHAPTER THREE

BEUTEKUNST

It [exploitation] used to be called plundering. But today things have become more humane. In spite of that, I intend to plunder, and to do it thoroughly.

Hermann Goring

The term *Beutekunst* translates loosely to looted or stolen art. Over the years, however, it has developed a more specific connotation. It is now commonly applied to art stolen by the Red Army upon its entrance in Berlin in 1945, and taken to the former Soviet Union. According to Lynn Nicholas, the actions of the Nazi Army in Russia did not set a good precedent for the Red Army—which despite the Germans’ refusal to admit it to themselves, would soon be on the soil of the Reich. In fact, along with informing the foreign press, the Russians had been keeping very careful track of the damage done to their cultural monuments. An Extraordinary State Commission, established in November, 1942, was systematically compiling reports which enumerated losses “in painstaking detail.” (Nicholas 1994, 201)

After the war, the Russians immediately commenced a search for the missing Amber Room. In their search efforts the Red Army uncovered vast storehouses of stolen artworks hidden for later use by retreating Nazi soldiers. A short time later, the East Germans joined the search in support of their Russian comrades. The Russians desperately wanted the room back as one of the greatest examples of Russian cultural patrimony. They also viewed the Nazi theft of the room as further evidence of Nazi

barbarism directed against Russia during World War II. Taking back their room would be a statement of Russia's renewed power.

The primary goal for this chapter is a better understanding of the theories developed by both the Russians and the Germans that in turn motivated each side to continue searching for the missing Amber Room. This chapter will analyze and compare the extant evidence supporting the Russian point of view and theory of what befell the Amber Room. Specifically, what are the Russians trying to achieve by promoting this theory? What is to be gained, politically, in continuing to keep Germany on the defensive? Aside from political clout, what economic gain might be realized? Secondly, are the Russians only keeping Germany at bay, or is there a larger framework into which their actions fit? This chapter will also analyze and compare the extant evidence supporting the German point of view and theory of what became of the Amber Room. In this case, what are the Germans trying to achieve by promoting their theory? What of the theories of third-party observers like journalists, treasure seekers and students of art history?

The secondary goal for this chapter is to determine how these conflicting theories have shaped arguments for restitution that will be explored in the final chapter of this thesis. Following a lengthy investigation of the competing theories, it is my contention that neither side is interested in voluntary restitution. Rather, each prefers to force the other to act through criticism, condemnation and obfuscation.

My analysis begins during the latter years of World War II. As the Red Army expelled the Nazi Army from Russia it became clear that the Nazi invaders had ravaged the Russian landscape. New York Herald Tribune reporter Marcus Hindus reported the scene at Peterhof as the Red Army regained control of the city of St. Petersburg:

Now that the battle is over the countryside is quiet. The quiet is not peace but death...Brick dwellings, marble castles with granite towers are leveled to the ground or are battered heaps of debris and refuse. There aren't even the customary flocks of winter birds...I had neither seen nor heard anything like it in France after the World War. Only windblown tall reeds rising out of deep snow give one a feeling of some life within nature itself...all Peterhof is gone. It isn't even a ghost town like Kiev, Kharkov, Poltava, Orel or Kursk...it is a desert strewn with wreckages from which, perhaps, has been blown away some of the most exquisite and most joyful art man has created. (Nicholas 1994, 200-201)

Unfortunately, this level of devastation was not limited to Peterhof. The other former Imperial palaces had been subjected to particularly brutal treatment. Upon their return to their recaptured cities, the Red Army found nothing of value remained in their museums. "They found instead burned and defaced buildings, ruined laboratories...and the terrible desolation left after battles in which there was no question of surrender." (Nicholas 1994, 200) The desolation encountered by the returning Red Army aggravated an already profound level of rage against all things German. As the Red Army advanced the Eastern front along the German border, one of the first German cities they encountered was Königsberg. As Adrian Levy pointed

out in our conversation, the city of Königsberg was viewed as the heart of Prussianism. Added to this sentiment is the very real knowledge that the Amber Room was last seen on display in Königsberg Castle.

Thus the Russian investigation begins in Königsberg, which was absorbed into the Soviet Union and renamed Kaliningrad after the war. Königsberg fell to Russian and Allied forces between April 9 and April 11, 1945. Victoria Plaude, author of *The Amber Room*, writes that work on revealing the art valuables taken away from Soviet museums to Königsberg and the towns of Eastern Prussia started in May, 1945, (Plaude 2004, 37). This corroborates Alexander Brusov's discovery in June, 1945, that someone had been digging in the ruins of Königsberg Castle prior to his arrival. Additionally, Brusov and his team discovered furniture from the Catherine Palace in one of the castle towers (Plaude 2004, 37). It was not until Anatoly Kuchumov's visit to the castle ruins in 1946, however, that direct evidence of the Amber Room was found.

Kuchumov and his colleague, Stanislov Tronchinsky, discovered three charred fragments of the Florentine mosaics near the outward staircase of the Great Order Room (Plaude 2004, 40). By this time, the Königsberg museum curator, Dr. Alfred Rohde, had been dead for approximately three months. Though death certificates were produced for both Dr. Rohde and his wife, Kuchumov did not believe them. Having

found no other evidence in the castle ruins, the two men returned to Russia with more questions than answers.

Unofficial inquiries continued for the next twenty years, including personal investigations conducted by Anatoly Kuchumov from Russia and Paul Enke from Germany. It was not until the Russian Government founded the Commission for Searching for the Amber Room in 1967 that systemic research into the mystery was ordered (Plaude 2004, 40). The Commission conducted official inquiries and explored the contents of basements, bunkers, mines and underground repositories. It operated for seventeen years, amassing quantities of information relevant to the Amber Room. Unfortunately, by the time the group was disbanded in December 1984, no actionable evidence had been discovered.

However, it is the very creation of this group and its seventeen years of existence that leads to an important question. What was the real purpose of this group? Was the group formed to locate the Amber Room, or did it serve a larger purpose? There are a couple of curious elements to the group's history. First, the group was not formed until twenty-two years after the end of World War II. Secondly, the group remained officially active until 1984, despite the fact that on April 10, 1979, the Council of Ministers registered an official vote to re-create the Amber Room. On the surface it would seem that the Russians were hedging their bets. Every year the Commission returned no definitive evidence, the hope of finding the original Amber Room faded a

bit more. Clearly, though, the Russians possessed little definitive evidence that the room would not be found, as the mystery simply has too many confounding elements. So it would seem they decided to keep looking and begin working to create an exact replica at the same time.

Whether the Russian leadership actually believed the original room was destroyed or still hidden is not known. It is reasonable to wonder why a country would continue to spend money searching for something they had already decided to recreate. This query is all the more interesting in light of Russia's weak economic status at the time. We do know that continuing the search for the original room accomplished several tasks on a political level, however:

- The search gave the world the impression that the Russians believed the original could still be found.
- The search served as a clear reminder of Russia's suffering and loss at the hands of her German neighbor.
- The search directed the world's attention on Russia's loss, which effectively calmed questions about Red Army activities during World War II.

Each of these objectives has some element of national pride at its root. The Russian people and their homes, their businesses, their museums, everything in which they took pride was cruelly leveled by the invading Nazi forces. Thus, the first objective owes as much to national pride as it does to political savvy. Continuing to search for the Amber Room meant all was not yet lost. Continuing to search for the Amber Room means the Germans did not succeed in breaking the spirit of their Eastern neighbor. It also defied Hitler's smug assumption that the Eastern peoples did

not deserve or value cultural objects. And should they have succeed in finding it, the power base would have shifted back from the Germans to the Russians.

The second objective also has some elements of national pride, but is more heavily weighted in favor of attaining political objectives. The ongoing search for the Amber Room decidedly placed Germany on the defensive. The search was a twenty-year old reminder of what the Russians have lost, how it was lost and who was directly responsible for that loss. There is also a more subtle possibility behind this theory; which journalist Mikhail Shvidkoi describes in “Russian Cultural Losses During World War II.” Mr. Shvidkoi explores how the atmosphere of secrecy following World War II hampered clarification of the fate of lost Soviet cultural property. It also hampered an understanding of what had returned to the USSR and what had been irretrievably lost (Simpson 1997, 68). In other words, the disarray and disorganization at work in the chaotic period following the war left Russian officials uncertain about what was truly lost. Rather than admit this uncertainty, though, the leadership has elected silence and the focusing of attention elsewhere.

This leads to the third objective, which is similar to the second, but it is the theory most heavily weighted toward attaining political objectives. The continuing search for the Amber Room not only placed Germany on the defensive, but focuses attention outside of Russia. As Konstantin Akinsha and others demonstrate in recent books and journals, the Red Army engaged in active looting as they pursued the Nazi Army into

German territory. They justified their actions by claiming that they were making reparations for Russia's suffering and losses. However, it is widely suspected that their looting took place on at least as great a scale as that undertaken by Nazi forces, but in a far less organized fashion. Thus, no one truly knows what items settled in Russia.

The fall of the Iron Curtain after World War II effectively severed all attempts at research and claims of restitution for over fifty years. Even now, as authors Akinsha and Voslov contend, only the highest level of Russian leadership may be aware of all that Russia has hidden away since World War II. Existing records are carefully protected, and access is strictly limited to a very small number of people. Journalist John Varoli noted in our interview that these days, information is the remaining source of power left to Cold War-era civil servants. Russian leaders steadfastly denied rumors of rapacious looting by the Red Army. The activities of World War II-era Russian soldiers are praised, and any hint of criticism is swiftly contradicted. It behooves Russian leadership to maintain an outward focus by consistently highlighting Nazi atrocities.

A corollary to this objective is consistent finger-pointing at Germany keeps questions about repatriation to Germany at bay. It also deflects questions concerning repatriation to other countries. At the time the Red Army moved into Germany, the vast repositories of looted art and objects it discovered contained specimens from all over Europe. Therefore, items allegedly taken by the Red Army as reparations for

losses suffered at the hands of Germany might very well have belonged to another nation. This thorny issue will be examined later in the chapter.

Aside from these political considerations, there are economic gains to be had by keeping Germany on the defensive. Specifically, Russia has been able to negotiate very favorable energy contracts with her German neighbor. The Russian position is strengthened in negotiations conducted on the world stage under the guise that any undertaking with Germany should be carefully monitored given the terrible and aggressive history. Germany can therefore expect not to receive any pricing favors in contracting with Russian energy suppliers. Russia can press the advantage knowing that they are the closest supplier of natural gas, and control tremendous reserves of this natural resource.

Economics have always played a role in the history of the Amber Room. The project was initially undertaken precisely because its lavish nature served as a testament to the wealth of the fledgling Prussian kingdom. Well over two hundred and fifty years later, the project almost came to a halt due to lack of funds to complete the new Amber Room. In 1998 the Russian economy suffered a devastating setback when the value of the ruble destabilized in a worldwide crash. The crash arrived ironically on the heels of the political movement known as perestroika, which means reconstruction. The Amber Room project ran short of funds and no reserves available from the state. Dr. Burkhardt Göres, the German Director of Palaces for the Prussian

Palaces and Gardens Foundation, was also a friend of Anatoly Kuchumov. Dr. Göres had been following the project since its inception. He even supplied documentation to Kuchumov and made regular visits to Russia. Dr. Göres observed that an unintended consequence of perestroika was that major cultural projects, whose funding had previously been guaranteed by the State, lost their most important sponsor in the new market environment. The Amber Room reconstruction project was dangerously close to being shuttered when an unlikely source of funds was presented by Dr. Göres.

As the Director of Palaces for the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation, Dr. Göres was well-connected with German businessmen, who also contributed to his foundation. Among these businessmen were members of the board of directors for the German energy distributor, Ruhrgas (now E.ON Ruhrgas AG). Göres presented the board with a unique proposition. The company, which was extensively involved in Russia, could donate funds to keep the project afloat. This action would be simultaneously healing and lucrative for both countries. Russia needed money. They needed to be able to sell product and only foreign buyers could help them at this point. Germany needed access to energy supplies and Russia's location is ideal for swift transport of natural gas. A deal was made. Ruhrgas donated the equivalent of \$3.5 million U.S. dollars in exchange for contracts with Russian natural gas suppliers. The Amber Room project received the badly needed cash infusion to continue work. And so, the Amber Room continues to play a unique role in Russo-German relations.

This turn of events led to an investigation of the German point of view, what they believe happened to the room, and what is accomplished by promoting this theory. Presenting at the Bard Graduate Center Symposium in 1995, Russian journalist Mikhail Shvidkoi wrote: “As with love, so it is with our relations with Germany: a great many things are the concern only of the two parties involved, who have absolutely no need of advice from others, even if such advice is given with the best of intentions” (Simpson 1997, 67). What Mr. Shvidkoi identifies is the post-war tension between Russia and the German Democratic Republic. They remained uneasy bedfellows for which claims against one another were not possible (Simpson 1997, 68). Still, the Germans knew that the Red Army had discovered a great many former Nazi storehouses of looted items. The Germans also knew that the Red Army availed itself of much of what they discovered. What began as a quest for collecting equivalents for Soviet losses quickly devolved into outright looting (Simpson 1997, 164).

Germany was in a very difficult position in this case. On the one hand, it is well aware of the part played by Nazis in displacing thousands of works of art and cultural treasures during World War II. On the other hand, Germany suffered tremendous cultural losses due to the Allied bombing of German cities and the chaos of the post-war era. Discounting Paul Enke’s research, the general German consensus is that the original Amber Room was destroyed as a result of the heavy bombing of Königsberg

Castle. German officials are careful not to name the Red Army in this theory, but like the Russians, they blame Allied forces, the British in particular, for the destruction.

The motivation for espousing this theory is two-fold: it allows the Germans to effectively spread blame for the loss of the Amber Room. It also makes possible the restoration of their own losses by avoiding placing blame on Russia. The Germans know, despite the absence of detailed records, that many of their cultural treasures found their way to the Soviet Union. Therefore, if the Germans hope to recover any of the cultural items that were taken to Russia, they must maintain amicable relations regarding cultural losses.

Not unlike the Nazi Army, the Red Army possessed a trained group of soldiers whose specialty was recognition of and confiscation of valuables. This group, known as the Trophy Brigade, would later stock the shows that toured post-war Russia as a demonstration of Russia's return to autonomy. It was via the Red Army Trophy Brigades that vast numbers of German cultural items, in addition to the cultural items looted from other European nations, found their way into Russia. The vast and unfortunate difference between the Red Army methods and the Nazi Army methods boiled down to organization. The Nazis looting efforts were extremely well orchestrated. In many ways they could afford to be organized, as they had all the time they desired to take what they pleased. The Red Army, in contrast, operated under the

knowledge that any confiscation of loot would have to be swift and under the cover of the chaos governing the days immediately following the end of the war.

We know that equivalency was one reason the Red Army gave for transporting back to the Soviet Union all cultural property of international renown that they could find within their occupation zone (Simpson 1997, 96). Ironically, another justification offered by the Red Army was the very same justification used by Hitler and his operatives when they invaded Russia in 1941: protection. In a letter written to Erich Koch, the last Gauleiter of Prussia, an unidentified Nazi Party leader wrote:

“Perishing in the fire of the war are many cultural and historical values of world significance. It is probable that this lot may befall to the great works by outstanding masters and to the Amber Room, the national pride of Germany, now at the Catherine Palace in the town of Pushkin. It is necessary to take all measures for returning this masterpiece to the Fatherland...” (Plaude 2004, 29).

The Red Army cited this as an explanation for their removal of works of art to the Soviet Union beginning in 1945 and extending as late as 1947.

Perhaps the most difficult element facing Germany in seeking restitution from Russia, in particular, is lack of documentation. In 1995, author Werner Schmidt noted that this lack of documentation is not simply a result of post-war chaos or the expedited movement of items by the Red Army. He states that in 1945 and 1946, Soviet

detachments actively confiscated inventories, academic indexes, photographic documentation, and reference libraries from German museums, along with works of art (Simpson 1997, 97).

While Russia and Germany are locked in something of a stalemate, each accusing the other of cultural theft and looting, what of the theories of third-party observers such as journalists, treasure seekers, and students of art and history? Interestingly, authors, curators and students present for the Bard Graduate Center Symposium in 1995 largely managed to avoid succumbing to nationalist propaganda. Most presenters, even those who were from Russia or Germany, acknowledged in the end that the only way to progress in the arena of restitution is to begin with an honest acknowledgement of who has what and where. The goal of these individuals, by virtue of their third-party status, is to ensure that items are returned to cultural circulation for the benefit of humankind (Simpson 1997, 71). Adrian Levy offered the following observations about why it has been so difficult for either the Russian or the German side to admit to what it has:

- The passage of time has legitimately dulled memories
- Formerly secret information is power today
- Fear of consequences such as public condemnation or imposed restitution

Marlene Hiller supports Mr. Levy's first assertion by stating that for almost four decades dust was allowed to settle, often quite literally, on the archival documentation of these losses, as well as on at least some of the cultural objects under discussion.

Memories of eyewitnesses have been allowed to fade (Simpson 1997, 81). In the case of the Amber Room, there is the added difficulty that most eyewitnesses actually disappeared under mysterious and suspect circumstances.

Ms. Hiller's research also supports Mr. Levy's third assertion regarding fear of consequences. She states that the term "cultural treasures" embraces a wide variety of objects (Simpson 1997, 81). The items locked away in storage depots all these years have now formed something of a Pandora's Box. The Russians fear that if they admit to one item, there is nothing to prevent the evolution of a slippery slope that would take from Russia items it claimed as equivalents for losses they suffered. By the same token, Russia cannot reasonably seek to make restitution only with Germany, as many of the items taken after the war had themselves been taken from other locations by the Germans. Thus, the question of restitution becomes a Hydra, and Russia and Germany remain locked in a stalemate.

What is evident is that a new approach to restitution must be determined. Restitution need not lead inevitably to a loss of face. Rather, Russia and Germany might be inspired to recognize the tremendous gains that might be made by restoring works that currently languish in dark storehouses, hidden away from the world. Investigative journalists and students of art history argue that access will be the primary benefit of restitution. The Amber Room, which is an authentic reproduction, is the perfect case study supporting their contention. Restoration of cultural objects to

the public allows students the opportunity to learn the techniques of past artists. This, in turn, works to preserve methodology and reduce permanent loss of artistic techniques. Restoration of cultural objects also offers the opportunity for preventive maintenance and protection from destruction brought about by neglect. Finally, restoration of cultural objects to the public enhances the world's cultural fabric, creating opportunities for appreciation of the variety of creative output generated by artists the world over.

Perhaps most important, Russia and Germany have an opportunity to set the precedent for restitution in other cases. Actions taken at the national level have the power to heal a generation of painful wounds and possibly prevent the recurrence of such large-scale cultural tragedies as those suffered during World War II. Items we define as cultural treasures, especially unique items such as the Amber Room, belong to all of humanity. Loss of the Amber Room not only affects Russia, it affects the world. Acts of restitution by Russia and Germany have the power to educate individuals, to help them understand that we are all reduced by the disappearance of objects like the Amber Room, and the only resolution, if protection is impossible, is to return those items that belong to our human family.

The Amber Room stands out in art history because we have gained by its loss and we stand to gain by its possible rediscovery. The initial creation of the room inspired world leaders, artists and the common citizenry. The Amber Room was a point of

pride for its Prussian artists and Russian owners. The loss of the room in war became a catalyst for investigative and restorative action by a new generation of world leaders, artists and common citizens, only this time the events played out on a worldwide stage. The history of the Amber Room is still being written. The room has been at the heart of Russo-German relations for more than two centuries. Following World War II, the Amber Room expanded its reach beyond those two countries using education as a means to communicate the importance of the arts. The Amber Room also plays an active role not only in global matters of restitution but also questions of legal protections for cultural objects.

CHAPTER FOUR

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

...Art is a human activity having as its aim to convey to people the highest and best feelings up to which mankind has lived...

Leo Tolstoy

There is no doubt that the loss of the original Amber Room represents a cultural deficit. However, it also presents a unique and remarkable opportunity in both art and education. Once the Russians determined they could not locate the original room, despite years of concerted efforts searching for it, they did not merely surrender to loss. Rather, in 1979 they decided to recreate the famed masterpiece. In all likelihood, they had expected to perform extensive repairs once they found the original panels, however in that case, artists and scientists would have benefited from having original samples from which to learn. In the case of the recreated Amber Room, very little evidence survived World War II. There existed a limited supply of guiding materials in the form of drawings, photographs, and a handful of chipped amber preserved by Anatoly Kuchumov. Added to these challenges was the unique problem of reviving a centuries-old process of cutting, dyeing and carving amber. The project to recreate the Amber Room required a team of artists, architects, carvers, chemists and engineers. All of them were formed into the Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, LTD., which averaged approximately seventy dedicated workers over the years. The project

was a massive undertaking that would last almost a quarter of a century, almost twice the time it took to conceive and construct the original Amber Room.

This chapter will examine the twenty-four year project to construct an exact replica of the Amber Room. Of particular interest is the motivation for such a project. Also examined will be the methods employed by the artisans in reviving a three hundred year old process of craftsmanship. Included is a brief introduction of who was involved in the project, and the various educational iterations in which the project evolved. Educational opportunities involving discovery, documentation and dissemination will be specifically addressed. Finally, this chapter will define parallels that might be drawn between the multi-national origin of Peter the Great's "Gateway to the West" and Vladimir Putin's multinational celebration of that same gateway.

The goal of this chapter is to explore the disappearance of the Amber Room as an opportunity, rather than just a loss. The Russians faced several challenges when they decided to reconstruct the room. The first challenge was a great deal of criticism from the world's art community which frowned on the creation of a replica of a lost artwork. The second challenge was finding the artistic and scientific talent to execute the work. The third challenge was reviving process that had been forgotten over the intervening centuries since the room was first conceived. Yet, none of these seemingly insurmountable challenges kept the Russians from achieving their stated goal of recreating the Amber Room. What is more remarkable is that they maximized the

occasion, expanding the learning opportunities to include web-based documentation and interactive internet access that made the project available to anyone in the world using a computer.

As discussed in chapter three, Russian officials decided to reconstruct the Amber Room in April, 1979. Beyond an opportunity to revive a lost art, it might be argued that the lush, refurbished Amber Room forms a counter argument against what some view as the culturally insensitive stock image of Russia ‘marching in the laggard Eastern train of Europe, forever hobbled by the double burden of poverty and despotism’ (Blakesley 2007, 7). At the time when the project was officially undertaken, the entire world was emerging from a bitter economic recession while Russia remained firmly entrenched in economic hardship. And yet, the project had such significance that it progressed in the face of country-wide economic shortfalls. Work on the room engendered restorative pride allowing Russian artisans to prove their skill in craftsmanship on the world stage, and their ability to afford the luxury of this singular artwork. These sentiments are similar to those that inspired the commissioning and creation of the original in 1701.

Once the Russian government determined that they would pursue the recreation, they faced the complicated task of deciding how to pursue the project. According to Wieslaw Gierlowski, Russian officials knew they could command access to the raw amber material from largest amber mine in the world. This mine is located in Kaliningrad, formerly known as Königsberg. The officials hoped to

transfer the experience of the still thriving school of glyptics in Leningrad to working with amber. Glyptics, the oldest form of stone carving, is now considered the art of precious and semi-precious stone carving.

Russian officials also hoped the Sculpture Facility at the Mukhina Academy of Arts and Design, also in Leningrad, would be able to train specialists in amber carving techniques and art based on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century methods (Gierlowski 2008, 2). Dr. Alexander Kedrinsky, the acting Senior Architect responsible for the reconstruction of the Catherine Palace, was named chief architect of the project. Under his direction, the ceiling painting, the precious intarsia wood floor and the sculpted woodwork of the Amber Room had already been created (Göres 2009, 1).

Work on the project began right away with an enormous research effort. Very little visual evidence existed to support the restoration efforts. So began the first phase of the educational opportunity created by the Amber Room reconstruction project: discovery. The process of discovery covered three main areas of the project: locating plans and photographs to guide the restorers, reviving the ancient art of dyeing and carving amber and learning how to bind the amber mosaic to panels that would cover the walls. Researchers were finally able to locate a copy of the original drawing created by Andreas Schlüter in 1701. They also had access to eighty-six black and white photographs taken in the 1930s, before the outbreak of World War II (Gierlowski 2008, 2). Unfortunately, these photographs were incomplete, covering

only parts of the room. At last, they were able to locate one full-color slide taken in 1937. Dr. Göres noted during his visits to the Palace Museum workshops that the restorers took a very disciplined and meticulous approach to their work. They carefully examined the photo documentation and then created models from plasticine and plaster in preparation for actually using the valuable amber (Göres2006, 1).

Alexander Krylov was considered a young expert of architecture when he joined the project. Now considered a master amber craftsman, Mr. Krylov worked two years on resurrecting the long-forgotten practice of amber working (Varoli 2000). In his spare time, Krylov created the first complete model of the Amber Room. It was while he and his comrades were working on the first model of a wall for the room that they realized the unique difficulty facing them. Göres explains that the craftsmen were not creating a copy in the usual sense, in which it is possible to compare the copy with the original at all times. Though they were considered “restorers,” in some respects the craftsmen had more in common with the original creators of the Amber Room. Dr. Göres elaborated in his eyewitness recollections that when an item is recreated, demands are made on the restorer like the original creator, above all in his capacity as an artist (Göres 2008, 2). The trouble with taking artistic license in this case was that the restorers had pledged to create a faithful copy, an exact replica of the original Amber Room.

The problem was resolved through the use of photogrammetry. This technique allowed for the black and white photographs of the original room to be enlarged and enhanced, revealing new details of shading and grayscale, as well as details of the many carvings. Wieslaw Gierlowski noted that seventy-six bits of the original décor were found in the rubble of Königsberg Castle. These details were invaluable in the recreation of the correct color scheme (Gierlowski 2008, 2). Finally, having established a clear artistic goal via photographs and scaled-down models, the actual execution was achieved through a combination of trial and error.

One development that arose from the restoration project ran counter to the broad goal of documenting the process which a stated goal within the educational opportunity. This development involved the process of dyeing amber. This process was truly a lost art. The Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, Ltd., employed chemists to devise a method for dyeing amber in order to achieve the variations of color that existed in the original. The restorers desired to remain as close to the old methods as possible, and so the chemists worked with the same materials available to the original amber craftsmen, namely cognac and honey.

It was not until 1984 that a process for tinting the amber was finally developed. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of the reconstruction team director and the Leningrad Institute of Technology, a method was evolved in which a thin layer underneath the polished surface of the amber shapes and plates could be saturated with

a coloring substance. The process makes the amber fade-resistant, protects it against weathering, and makes possible the use of an unlimited range of colors (Gierlowski 2008, 3). The team has protected this technique with patents, and the process has become a closely guarded secret. Documentation, however, exists in the form of patent records. Thus, future generations that may have to restore the panels will not have to reinvent the process each time.

The next area of educational opportunity, also in the discovery phase, was to determine an effectual binding process. The problem of the binder was one of the most important issues concerning the planned reconstruction of the large panels comprising the middle section of the walls (Gierlowski 2008, 2). These sections were more problematic due to the size of the panels, which required more amber pieces to cover the panel. In addition, the restoration team discovered that the amber could not be glued directly to the plywood used as the grounding board due to differences in the amber's reaction to temperature and humidity changes. Enter a new team of researchers to aid the restoration team from the Criminology Institute. This group of scientists was called upon to apply their skills in gathering evidence from minute pieces of material. They also possessed the diagnostic equipment required to analyze the chemical compounds found on the original amber pieces. Members of the Criminology Institute took samples of the original binding material taken from extant amber chips from the Amber Room (Gierlowski 2008, 2). These chips were the result of much earlier maintenance efforts on the room and had managed to survive the war.

The criminology researchers discovered that the antique binding material liquefied easily and bound perfectly after cooling. The binder was a mixture of beeswax and dammar resin, which Gierlowski notes was commonly used by the Gdansk masters at the end of the seventeenth century (Gierlowski 2008, 2). Therefore, after a great deal of trial-and-error experimentation with modern glues, the project came full circle. Developing a “new” binding process depended on the materials used by the original artisans. This “new” old binder had a couple of advantages over modern synthetic resins. The new binder was reversible, simply by directing a stream of hot air into the binder, and the binder did not penetrate the amber’s naturally porous and bubbly structure (Gierlowski 2008, 2).

After five years of research, the restoration team was ready to try its newly mastered skills. The Amber Museum in Kaliningrad commissioned replicas of the Königsberg Collection of amber objects, which also had been lost in World War II. The Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, Ltd., began by copying small decorative objects from this collection, which had been well-documented before the war. Gierlowski points out that the finished objects were identical in shape to their historical counterparts, but different in size, usually scaled approximately 20% larger than the originals. This preliminary test of the restoration team’s skills provided ample opportunity to get accustomed to the material and the process while refining the judgment and eye for scale that would be needed to recreate the much larger room. Once they completed the commission work for the Amber Museum, which included a

reduced size reconstruction of one of the large panneaux of the Amber Room's walls, the team began the full-size reconstruction of the Amber Room's décor (Gierlowski 2008, 3).

As the project moved out of the discovery phase and the real restoration work began, the next two educational opportunities were presented: documentation and dissemination. Although some documentation had been created during the discovery phase, the bulk of it was protective in nature, taking the form of patents for the processes developed by the restoration team. What remained lacking at this point was general documentation recording information sources, materials employed and general processes.

It is important to recognize that the Amber Room restoration project afforded educational opportunities for art history and graphic arts students beyond the artisans, scientists and craftsmen of the Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, Ltd. Thanks to the development of computers and the internet, the restoration effort could be recorded and disseminated throughout the world.

A team of researchers based at the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography at the Russian Academy of Science in St. Petersburg developed a web-based project to provide wide public access to information about the process of reconstruction of the Amber Room (Bogomazova 2000, 1). While one of their stated goals was documentation, the web designers sought a broader goal than that of the

Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, Ltd. Their goal was not only to record the process for posterity, but to educate the public about a unique event in world art history. Their project, like the Amber Room itself, lies at the intersection of science, technology and art. The website became known as “The Amber Room on the Web” project, with the fitting URL of (<http://www.tzar.ru/amber>).

The project leaders recognized in their work the same challenge Göres had noted earlier. Through their web documentation, they hoped to address the gap between the process of reconstruction of the Amber Room and a typical process of restoration and conservation of an art monument. Their project clearly addresses the problem created by the lack of any original details of the monument, and the need to recreate the Amber Room based on a very limited number of reliable sources. This internet project was of great interest to the museum staff because it would allow them to develop their first online exhibit tied directly to a permanent on-site exhibition of the Amber Room (Bogomazova 2000, 3). This embracing of technology by the curatorial staff and team of restorers supports Blakesley’s contention about dispelling the image of Russia as a backward country. The use of cutting-edge technology in support of a large-scale artistic revitalization venture was the very thing needed to drive home the counterpoint image Russia wanted to project.

Although their web project accomplished both goals of documentation and dissemination, the project leaders were conscientious about protecting the hard-won

knowledge of the restoration team. The web site limited the images it shared only to those fully completed parts of the recreated interior. They did not share images of panels in the process of being recreated. They were careful not to document the actual process of restoration, which was closed to visitors, and occurred in a workshop separate from the Catherine Palace in order to preserve the patent-protected processes. Because of the scale and the level of public interest in the recreation, the Catherine Palace Museum was interested in finding a way to utilize the website to promote the project (Bogomazova 2000, 3).

The website, helped to re-establish Russia's artisans to a place of prominence based on their growing expertise in this field, and it also gave a world-wide audience the next best thing to direct access: virtual access in the form of an interactive Amber Room. The site was designed to be fully interactive to allow a virtual visitor to view an entire wall and then zoom in on the elements he or she wished to examine in greater detail. The walls were clearly marked and the panels assigned numbers corresponding to the real panels that were being reconstructed in the Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, Ltd. The web project designers went one step further in their efforts to educate the world about what the artisans were doing, without giving away the deeply guarded secrets of how they were doing it. Their goal was to give context for the reconstruction efforts by highlighting important elements such as color variations, molding depths and the various carving methods involved. The web project designers

hoped that by making the site interactive, visitors might learn and remember more than they would in a traditional view-only website.

In this way, the educational opportunities afforded by the recreation of the Amber Room took on even greater scope. No longer was the project simply about recreating a lost work of art. What began as the restoration of an artwork developed into a revival of lost skills, an opportunity to harness technology in new ways and an opportunity to showcase the progress of Russia. As it had when it was first created in the early eighteenth century, the Amber Room project generated enormous political and cultural capital. There are, however, some distinctions between the political and cultural capital generated by the original room and that which was created during the modern reconstruction.

The original Amber Room was conceived in Prussia, by Prussian artists for the Prussian King's palace (Varoli 2000, 1). The project was executed by Prussian artisans using Prussian amber and materials. Now, two centuries later, the new Amber Room was being reconstructed by Russian artists for the Russian Tsar's palace, using Russian amber and materials. In some ways, Russian leadership can think of this Amber Room as "more Russian" than the original. The new room was the perfect centerpiece to highlight the very skills that Hitler believed nonexistent in the Russian East. Now, however, Russian leaders targeted not only Hitler's incorrect assumptions about Russia, but the inaccurate assumptions of the modern world.

The reconstructed Amber Room is evidence of Russia's artistic ability, her cultural appreciation and savoir-faire, her economic ability to support, for the most part, such a lavish undertaking, the technical prowess of her citizens, and her political savvy in dealing with Ruhrgas when they volunteered the financing to complete the project. This prowess was clearly on display when Vladimir Putin and his government masterfully orchestrated the May, 2003, ceremony to re-dedicate the newly refurbished Amber Room.

After the re-opening of the Amber Room in 2003, there was some concern for the fate of the Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, Ltd. Granted, a case could be made to retain a reduced staff there for future maintenance purposes. Fortunately, the reconstructed Amber Room proved so successful that the workshop continues to undertake restoration projects for the entire Catherine Palace complex which was so badly damaged during the war that restoration work will continue for many years into the future.

At present, the Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, Ltd. has turned its attention outside the palace proper. The restorers hope to engage their efforts to restore the rooms collectively known as the Agate Room. Thanks to the world wide attention garnered by the successful restoration of the Amber Room, the workshop masters hope to expand on what they learned about working with natural substances including precious and semi-precious stones. Unfortunately, the financing problem that almost

shuttered the Amber Room restoration project has so far halted the restoration of the Agate Room. Russia's proposed solutions to the problem will be explored in greater detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

In the meantime, Russian art restorers have catapulted themselves onto center stage of the world community. They learned to combine modern technology with old-world techniques to recreate one of the world's most unique works of art. Regardless of questions concerning the ethics of their undertaking, their singular achievement has earned them a permanent chapter in the ongoing history of the Amber Room. Their achievement created a multi-faceted educational opportunity that has focused world attention on the Amber Room and Russia, but also on the many corresponding issues still facing the world community regarding the fate of art in the World War II era. These issues include questions of restitution, restoration, and respect. It is this author's contention that we will continue to discover both disturbing and/or exhilarating information about this and other artworks. As time goes by, I believe more World War II era secrets will come to light with the passing of the individuals who guarded them. In this way, the Amber Room and many other lost artworks provide an almost endless educational opportunity.

CHAPTER FIVE

RENAISSANCE

For whatever cause a country is ravaged, we ought to spare those edifices which do honor to human society, and do not contribute to increase an enemy's strength...

Emmerich de Vattel

The focus of this chapter is the impact of re-opening the Amber Room in concert with St. Petersburg's tercentenary celebration in May, 2003. The questions to be addressed here center on three themes: restoration, restitution and respect. Each of these themes raises overlapping legal, economic, political, and artistic considerations. Specific questions to be addressed within these themes include an investigation of a purpose for the ongoing search efforts and the larger issues of restitution. Given the heralded replica, what has become of the search for the original Amber Room? What purpose might a continued search serve, at this point in time? Has the search for the Amber Room become just another lure for treasure hunters and fame seekers? Why does the search continue for the original when a suitable replacement has been constructed? Most important, what does the replica mean for Russian cultural and artistic stature? What does the successful replica mean for questions of restitution? And finally, if the original is found, what threat(s) is possible regarding a Russo-German accord on the Amber Room that might set precedent for other arguments of repatriation? The third theme of respect primarily involves research into the legal

protections afforded to cultural property. Of particular interest are defining what protections currently exist and what legal impact is possible based on the history of the Amber Room.

The elements of restoration, restitution, and respect are closely related and ultimately intertwined in the Amber Room. The primary impact of the reconstructed Amber Room centers first on restoration. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines restoration as “bringing back to a former position or condition,” with a second definition of “a representation or reconstruction of the original form.” The ongoing search for the Amber Room figures prominently in this category, in that searchers are literally seeking to restore the original Amber Room to its former home in the Catherine Palace. As noted earlier, the ongoing search also keeps the story alive. Keeping the story alive and in circulation sustains interest in both the original and reconstructed Amber Room.

An often overlooked and indirect benefit to keeping the search alive is the possibility of uncovering other lost artworks. This might be especially true of searches of old mineshafts which were popular repositories for art looted by the Nazi party. It can also be argued that the ongoing search maintains the Amber Room’s relevance in modern legal circles where art is concerned. The room is particularly relevant when considering the role of replicas. This issue also informs on the second theme of restitution which will be examined in greater detail, shortly.

The second definition of restoration offered by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* addresses the area that is a sore spot with purists who disagreed with the decision made by Russian leaders to reconstruct the Amber Room. There remain critics who have not accepted the refurbished Amber Room, though the definition of restoration allows for the possibility of reconstruction as a means of representing the original form. The critics are active proponents of the effort to keep the search for the original or “real” Amber Room alive. Their position is not without some legal standing. Gierlowski noted in his documentation of the reconstruction process that the Russian government decided to reconstruct the Amber Room in contradiction to the general principle of not making copies of historical monuments as expressed in the Venice Charter and other international conventions. There are also a few older critics who saw the original Amber Room before the war. They state that the new version is much brighter and somehow less harmonious (Nalley 2004, 4). The director of the museum’s amber workshop responds to such criticism by pointing out that earlier repair efforts included the uses of varnish which not only darkened with exposure to air, but also seeps into the porous surface of the amber, causing it to darken over time.

Despite the many benefits created by the restoration of the Amber Room, including revival of the lost arts of dyeing and carving amber; the refusal of some of the Russian people to allow a truly unique work of art to simply remain lost to posterity; and the opportunity to address issues of preservation and documentation; an important question

still looms regarding the ongoing search for the original. Since a suitable replica has been painstakingly created, what value remains in discovering the original?

Arguably, the value is largely economic, as the original room is valued at more than \$150 million in today's dollars. There will also be value in terms of fame and glory for the hunter who finally locates the elusive prey. However, the individuals interviewed for this thesis echo the sentiments expressed by Dr. Shedrinsky who was interviewed for a *New York Times* article published on January 23, 2000. Shedrinsky concluded that the reconstructed Amber Room is actually an improvement over the original. Dr. Shedrinsky, a Russian-born amber expert and chemist, is an adjunct professor of conservation at the Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University. He stated in the article that "If the Amber Room lies hidden somewhere, it is most probably in some damp mine, which means it is almost certainly in a state of ruin." He went on to say that "Even before it was stolen, it was in poor shape, in need of restoration, and the amber pieces were falling out." Boris Igdalov, director of the Catherine Palace Museum's amber workshop, notes that he and the workshop artists believe the reconstructed Amber Room may actually be closer to the way the original Amber Room would have looked to the first people who saw it (Nalley 2004, 4).

Despite the few critics who remain, the restored Amber Room has been well received. The faithful reproduction performed by the many dedicated artists, scientists,

architects and engineers has received wide acclaim by both the Russian and international press. As discussed in chapter four, the restoration effort effectively reestablished Russian artists and artistry on the world stage. The project offered them an unprecedented opportunity to dispel common myths about Russian artistic skill and the value of Russian cultural contributions.

The secondary impact of the reconstructed Amber Room centers on the issue of restitution. The elements of restitution and restoration are closely linked, with regard to the Amber Room, though there exist several distinguishing factors. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines restitution as “making good of or giving an equivalent for some injury.” A second definition is “a legal action serving to cause restoration of a previous state.” The theme of restitution deals more directly with economic and legal concepts because it is primarily concerned with the notion of equivalents.

Logically, the notion of equivalents demands an assumption of economic value. However, this raises a host of problematic issues. Chief among these is determining how to value an artwork. This is especially complicated when there are no reasonable comparisons from which to derive an economic context. As evidence of the difficulty imposed by attempting to determine economic value, Lynn Nicholas quoted an observation made by an American intelligence officer at the close of World War II. Despite careful documentation of items taken, “American Intelligence noted that the Russians had not placed an ‘evaluation on the losses of cultural objects’ but had simply

stated that ‘the day is not far off when we will force Germany to restore the treasures of our museums and fully pay for the monuments of our culture destroyed by the Hitlerite vandals’” (Nicholas 1994, 201). Oddly enough, this prophecy was partially fulfilled when, Ruhrgas A.G. effectively financed one third of the Amber Room restoration project.

Economic value plays a part in the subtext present in the continuous circulation of the story of the Amber Room’s theft and mysterious disappearance. Russia can use the story of the Amber Room to continue to support its restitution claims against Germany for other damages suffered. At the Nuremburg trials, a document was entered as evidence of the Nazi approach to the East. It was an order issued by Field Marshall Walter von Reichenau and approved by Hitler that stated the following: “The Army is interested in extinguishing fires only in such buildings as may be used for Army billets...All the rest to be destroyed; no historical or artistic buildings in the East to be of any value whatsoever” (Edsel 2006, 125).

A case in point is the current saga surrounding the stalled restoration effort of the Agate Rooms of the Catherine Palace in St. Petersburg. These rooms were added to the palace complex by Catherine II, who commissioned court architect Charles Cameron to construct a private bath pavilion in 1783. According to an article listed on the official Russian tourist site, www.travel.ru, palace officials estimate that ten million Euros are needed to fully restore these badly damaged interiors in the Agate Rooms.

Since a funding precedent had been set with the Amber Room, these officials applied to Germany for funds in support of this latest restoration effort. They were refused, and the project now languishes for want of financial support.

This leads to a second important concept regarding the determination of economic value as it relates to restitution. As important as determining an economic value is deciding who is responsible for making that decision. Certainly the injured party will claim a right to making the determination of value. No doubt the party responsible for making restitution will offer its own interpretation of appropriate value. It therefore seems logical that an objective third party must be chosen to determine the value.

This, of course, assumes that a value can be determined in cases involving singular works of art, such as the Amber Room. Furthermore, there is the very real complication of defining appropriate value. As was noted at the Bard Conference addressing issues of restitution, there is a certain desire to deal with problems of losses only in terms of financial cost and value. Unfortunately, though, the problem of the destruction or removal of artistic cultural property exists in a more complex historical, political, and social-psychological context (Simpson 1997, 71).

These questions of value lead naturally to consideration of the legal issues involved with issues of restitution. The case of the Amber Room involves three main legal concerns: international law, precedent, and enforcement. Remarkably, international law governing artworks is outdated, sparse, and lacking specific enforcement. The first

formal legal statements addressing the sanctity of cultural property were codified in the Congress of Vienna in 1815. This Congress was called in response to the unprecedented levels of looting carried out by Napoleon during his campaigns to conquer Europe. The Congress of Vienna witnessed the earliest articulation of the first rationale for the restitution of cultural property in modern international law (Vrdoljak 2006, 23). Prior to this time, the prevailing thought was defined by the view that “to the victors go the spoils.”

Napoleon’s final defeat at Waterloo forced the Allied European leaders to consider a redistribution effort at the European level to restore cultural (Vrdoljak 2006, 25). What is interesting about the solution these leaders developed was their emphasis on the return of cultural objects to the European collections from which they had been removed, rather than to their places of origin (Vrdoljak 2006, 26). This important distinction is illustrated by the example of items that had been taken from other cultures by the British for the British Museum collections were not returned to those native peoples. Instead, the items were returned to the British museum. Also noteworthy in their effort is the specific exclusion of non-European peoples from benefitting from these protections. Some updates occurred with the creation of laws of war and war crimes defined by the Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907; however, the international laws protecting cultural objects remained woefully outdated and inadequate well into the twentieth century.

Compounding this weakness in the law was Hitler's utter disregard for any law he did not author. The other factor hampering the application of international law was the lack of unified enforcement. Essentially, each country can and did act in its own best interest. A modern example of this occurred in 2000, when Vladimir Putin unilaterally declared that all trophy art in Russia's possession was henceforth considered the de facto property of the state. Despite Russia's repeated claims for restitution for enormous losses of cultural property sustained in World War II, Putin effectively ended all negotiation that might involve Russia returning cultural items. Thankfully, more recent history suggests Putin may be reconsidering his stance. The situation facing Russian leaders is clear: if they expect to have their claims for restitution honored, they can expect to be called upon to honor the restitution claims of others. Author Robert Edsel summed up the conundrum facing Russian leaders thus: "Someday, a major work of art, such as the missing Raphael from Cracow, or one or more of the Amber Panels will either surface, or the way it met its demise will become known. Each such event will steer greater attention to other missing works" (Edsel 2004, 286).

This leads to an examination of the next legal concept involved in matters of restitution: precedent. There have been landmark examples of the restitution of artworks and cultural objects between countries involved in World War II. Unfortunately, both Russia and Germany have managed to avoid setting a modern precedent of restitution with each other. At issue is the concept of precedent which,

once set, guides future adjudicators in deciding legal matters. In the case of Russo-German relations, the resulting precedent that might be established by a large-scale restitution effort is daunting. Russian leaders are well aware that not all of the cultural objects they removed at the close of the war were of German origin. In Russia's view, to settle up with Germany is to open a Pandora's Box of possible claims from all over the world. Therefore, the Russians continue to stall by avoiding any firm action in this arena.

Remarkably, the reconstructed Amber Room acts as an impediment to arguments for restitution. The original Amber Room was Russia's greatest cultural sacrifice in World War II, as evidenced by thirty-four years of the nation's concerted efforts to locate its missing treasure. Possibly, had the Russians not been so successful in their restoration effort, they might be willing to negotiate and consider matters of restitution between themselves and Germany. This theory can only truly be tested when and if the original room is located outside of Russia, however. Should that come to pass, perhaps the Russians will have a new impetus to join Germany at the bargaining table.

The reconstructed Amber Room also introduces interesting questions about the third legal concept surrounding matters of restitution: enforcement. Enforcement actually raises two concerns: compliance and protection of cultural objects in the future. The issue of legal compliance remains a problem. Countries have agreed, in theory, to protectionist laws for cultural objects. However, no central body exists to

ensure compliance by member countries. The corollary issue of what can be done to ensure compliance by non-member countries is even more complicated. What is certain is that this issue will be further tested in coming years as more information comes to light about the fate of cultural objects in World War II. Countries will no longer be able to hide behind the uncertainty and disinformation policies that have protected them thus far. The sheer volume of possible restitution claims ensures that the issue will remain present in the world forum.

Furthermore, we can be certain that World War II will not be the last armed conflict to threaten cultural objects. It would behoove international leaders to begin dealing with this topic now, as rationally and reasonably as possible. Just as they did in 1945, the choices they make today will have consequences long into the future.

In this regard, the reconstructed Amber Room does introduce an interesting wrinkle in terms of legal revisions proposed to protect cultural property in future conflicts. The very fact that the Russians were able to successfully replicate what had heretofore been accepted as a singular work of art does bear careful consideration. One might reasonably question whether it is necessary to enact laws to protect cultural property where the ability exists to create an exact copy as a replacement. While this is an unpleasant proposition, it is worth consideration when formulating an international response to issues of restitution.

The third impact of the reconstructed Amber Room centers on respect. The elements of restitution and restoration have at their root a common element of respect. There can be no meaningful progress toward restitution or effective restoration without the presence of basic respect. Our future success will be measured by our ability to respect the international laws governing the treatment of cultural objects in times of armed conflict; our ability to develop a respect for culture that is separate from the considerations of politics; and our nurturing of respect for artistic achievement whether or not we apply the same value to that achievement. The story of the Amber Room is a case study that illustrates this concept. The original room was given in a gesture of respect between two nations. The room was then stolen in an unfortunate lack of respect for Russia's cultural existence. And finally, the room was reborn out of respect for artistic achievement.

The Amber Room has acted as an intersection of culture, economics and politics since its inception in the late eighteenth century. These three topics recur consistently in the analysis of the impact of the Amber Room in modern times. But it is important to realize these ingredients have always played a role in the history of the Amber Room with varying degrees of importance over the years. As a singular work of art, it is tempting to view the Amber Room simply as a cultural touchstone. While it is primarily identified with Russian culture, the unique history of the original room includes Russia, Germany, and Italy.

As discussed in Chapter Four, it might be argued that the new Amber Room is “more Russian” because it was undertaken by Russian craftsmen, scientists, and artists. However, it has been noted by various artists, art historians, and art aficionados the world over that works of art—though geographically limited to one location—truly belong to all members of humanity. Our human experience is collectively and individually enriched by the experience of great art, regardless of country of origin or present location. Similarly, our human experience is collectively and individually diminished by the disappearance of great artworks. This is why it is so important that we deal honestly with each other in matters of looting and restitution. This sentiment was best expressed during the Bard Graduate Center symposium exploring the spoils of war: “...first and foremost we must know what we have lost—and whatever we find, we must return it as quickly as possible to cultural circulation for the benefit of humankind.” (Simpson 1997, 71)

Economics have also played a key role in the history of the Amber Room. The project was initially undertaken precisely because its lavish nature served as a testament to the wealth of the fledgling Prussian kingdom. More than 250 years later, the project almost came to a halt for lack of funds to complete the new Amber Room. The economic crisis of 1998 that forced then President Boris Yeltsin to suddenly resign his post cleared the way for Vladimir Putin to become acting President in December, 1999. Putin, a native of St. Petersburg, has been a staunch supporter of the renewal of the old capital city and the major monuments there. However, as discussed in Chapter

Three, Russia could not complete the project alone. It was the timely donation of funds from the German energy company, Ruhrgas A.G., which secured the project's future.

In that moment, the whole story of the Amber Room came full circle, with Russians and Germans working together to create a singular and magnificent work of art. At the May 31, 2003 ceremony to officially re-open the Amber Room, both Russian President Vladimir Putin and German President Gerhard Schroeder were present. Thus the Amber Room continues to play an active role in Russo-German relations. It is a unique example of how a work of art—a cultural icon—has remained politically and economically relevant more than 200 years after it was first the subject of a Russian-German accord.

The reconstructed Amber Room has been open for almost six years. There are no official numbers available to determine whether or not it has driven greater numbers of tourists to St. Petersburg, though anecdotal evidence abounds in the form of testimonials offered by those who have been to see it. Their words echo the sentiments first offered by eighteenth-century visitors, who dubbed the magnificent room the “Eighth Wonder of the World.” The newly refurbished room is a featured stop on Baltic itineraries of every description. It was on such a tour that Dr. Art Manfredi and his wife, Priscilla Powers, first encountered the room. They, in turn, shared their

observations with friends and acquaintances upon their return home—which is how the unique story of the Amber Room first garnered the attention of this author.

Not unlike the treasure hunters who continue to seek the remains of the original room, the story took hold, a treasure in itself. This is one aspect of the enduring power of the Amber Room that exceeds sole economic measurement. This unique artwork stands as a monument to Russian resourcefulness, dedication and ingenuity. The Amber Room also serves as a cautionary tale about what can happen during armed conflict in the absence of viable international laws to protect cultural treasures.

The Amber Room is ultimately a testament to the enduring power of art to motivate, inspire and instruct. The impact of the Amber Room can best be captured in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson who said: “We ascribe beauty to that which is simple; which has no superfluous parts; which exactly answers its end; which stands related to all things; which is the mean of many extremes.” Regardless of what may happen next in its storied history, the Amber Room will continue to be active at the intersection of art, politics, and economics.

APPENDIX 1

FOREVER AMBER-TIMELINE

1689	Peter I assumes full power and leadership of Russia
1700	Peter I declares war on Sweden
1701	Urged by his wife, Sophie Charlotte, Friederich I of Prussia commissions a room made entirely of Amber as a novelty for his Lutzenburg Palace
1703	St. Petersburg is founded during the Northern War with Sweden
1701-1709	Panels for the Amber Room are constructed by the Danish amber craftsman Gottfried Wolfram aided by Ernst Schacht and Gottfried Turau, both of Danzig
1705	Sophie-Charlotte dies and Lutzenburg Palace is renamed Charlottenburg in her honor
1708	Peter I gives to his wife Catherine I the estate formerly owned by Swedish noble Max Vasmer which became Tsarskoye Selo
1712	Peter I officially relocates the Russian capital to St. Petersburg
1713	Friederick I dies and is succeeded by his son, Friederick Wilhelm, who halts the Amber Room project and crates the unfinished panels for storage in Berlin
1716	Friederick Wilhelm gives the unfinished Amber Room to Peter the Great in a show of alliance between their two countries against Sweden
1717	The amber panels arrive in St. Petersburg via sleigh, in 18 crates
1721	Russia wins the war with Sweden, claiming the lands of the Baltic Coast, creating the Russian Empire with Peter I as its first Emperor

1740	Empress Elizabeth has the panels removed from storage at Peterhof and installed in the Czar's Winter Palace, instigating the first enlargement of the room
1755	Amber panels are removed from the Winter Palace and installed in the Summer Palace, now known as the Catherine Palace
1755	Tsarina Elizabeth, Peter the Great's daughter, has the room enlarged under the direction of Italian court architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli
1770	The Amber Room is finally completed and used by the ruling Romanov's as a private meditation space, an official reception room and a trophy room for amber connoisseur Alexander II
1833-1890	Maintenance work executed on the Amber Room
January 1933	Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany
1939	Joseph Stalin signs a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany
June 1941	The Nazi's invade the Soviet Union under Hitler's Operation Barbarossa
Summer 1941	Anatoly Kuchumov, Russian curator of the Catherine Palace evacuates
September 1941	Amber Room last seen installed in the Catherine Palace, Leningrad
October 1941	Nazi Rittmeister Graf Solms-Laubach orders the evacuation of 27 crates from St. Petersburg to Königsberg, East Germany
April 1942	The complete Amber Room goes on display in Königsberg Castle
1943	The Amber Room is last seen in public
March 1944	Soviet curators return to the Catherine Palace

April 1945	Allies advance on Königsberg, town and castle sustain heavy damage
June 1945	Soviet investigator Alexander Brusov concludes the Amber Room was destroyed in the heavy bombing sustained by Königsberg Castle in early 1945
December 1945	Alfred Rohde, German curator of Königsberg Castle disappears
1960's	The Red Army destroys the remains of Königsberg Castle in what is now Kaliningrad, under Soviet control since the end of World War II
1979	The Soviet Union officially abandons the search for the original Amber Room
1982	Work begins after four years of learning and experimenting with forgotten secrets of the ancient amber guilds Alexander Krylov founds the Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya, Ltd., which is now the world's leading school of amber craftsmanship
1992	Russian President Boris Yeltsin approves an agreement to allow the return of German art confiscated by the Red Army in the period following the end of World War II
1997	One of the four original Florentine mosaics surfaces in Germany when the son of a deceased Wehrmacht soldier attempts to sell it
1999	Ruhrgas, A.G., a German natural gas company donates \$3.5million and American philanthropist donates \$10,000 to help the Russians construct a replica
2000	Russian President Vladimir Putin approves a law making trophy art the property of Russia
May 31, 2003	Restored Amber Room is revealed to the world

APPENDIX 2



Figure 1. Map of the Eastern Europe, 1941



Figure 2. Exterior of the Catherine Palace, St. Petersburg, Russia



Figure 3. 1938 Color photograph of the original Amber Room



Figure 4. Photographs taken in the 1930's before the war later used to guide the reconstruction



Figure 5. Full-Color plan/model for reconstruction of the Amber Room



Figure 6. Photograph from the Tsarskoselskaya Yantarnaya Masterskaya



Figure 7. Detail of the carving and variety of amber hues used in the reconstruction



Figure 8. Detail of Romanov Crest in amber



Figure 9. A reconstructed large amber panel with frame and inset Florentine mosaic



Figure 10. German Chancellor Schroeder and Russian President Putin, admire the re-constructed Amber Room in the Catherine Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia at its opening in 2003

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Map of Eastern Europe-

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Exterior of Catherine Palace-

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Full Color Photograph of Original Amber Room-

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Full-Color Illustration of Recreated Amber Room-

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Detail of mosaic amber panel-

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Detail of amber carving-

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Detail of Romanov Family Crest-

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Detail of Florentine mosaic-

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Official photo from 2003 rededication ceremony-

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