



**Estate  
Landscape  
as Exhibition  
Space:  
Drawing on  
the Experience  
of the Ostafyevo  
State Museum**

**by Irina Reznikovskaya and Svetlana Ryabina**



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**T**he Russian country estate is an important element of national culture, and the object of frequent academic interest. An estate forms a separate world, a lifestyle that lends itself to privacy and seclusion, reflection, poetic and philosophical moods. This way of life nurtured many talented people—poets, artists and philosophers. A Russian estate as a phenomenon of cultural life includes a whole spectrum of important features. These comprise the surrounding scenic landscapes, the estate gardens and the house built in accordance with the owner's taste and financial

means. The house would have unique architectural qualities as well as vast libraries and collections of paintings, sculptures and antique weapons.

Unfortunately, almost all country estates in Russia have experienced periods of decline and ruin, or, at best, disrepair and neglect. Nowadays, some old estates house museums. The main purpose of such museums is to help their visitors discover the culture of the country estate, learn about the people who best represent its legacy and, if possible, recreate the unique atmosphere of a Russian country estate. To achieve this, restoring the house and its interior do not suffice. It is also necessary to recreate the surrounding landscape, the estate gardens with features typical of the chosen historical period.

The purpose of this paper is to explore issues related to late 18th and early 19th century Russian country estate garden restoration, by drawing on the experience of the Ostafyevo State Museum, the 'Russian Parnassus'. The aim is to emphasise the importance of rebuilding the original garden structure as a means of creating a unique atmosphere typical of a Russian country estate. From our point of view, the absence of characteristic recreational architectural features will strip the gardens of their historical, esthetical and 'semantic' functions. This is why the possibility and legitimacy of entirely rebuilding such features should be addressed by museum complexes like Ostafyevo.

## Landscape restoration in Russia

**T**he principles articulated in the present paper derive from the Russian school of restoration, some of which were established in the 19th century. Any conservation and restoration work carried out on Russian buildings is based on these principles and regulated by the Russian government. National and international frameworks are also primary instruments, insofar as the National Heritage Law of the Russian Federation (2002) and a number of international charters such as the Venice Charter (1964) are applied.<sup>1</sup>

**L**andscape conservation and restoration are still a relatively new phenomenon in Russia. The first attempts in this field date back to the 1940s. The leading Soviet conservation and restoration specialists had emphasised how difficult it was to restore a garden and how much creative effort this required. According to N. A. Ilyinskaya, 'while trying to preserve the stylistic features of a garden complex as a whole, it was necessary to take into account its historical developments, the surviving trees, new functions, large numbers of visitors and other factors such as modern use of the garden space' (Ilyinskaya 1984). However, in the effort to meet new requirements, the architect must not put

in jeopardy the historic structure of the gardens. As L.M. Tverskoy pointed out, 'making modifications to the existing appearance of a garden involves creative composition work rather than simple restoration' (Tverskoy 1971).

**A**s such, landscape restoration is problematic for many museums that are housed in former country estates. The gardens—with their ornamental architectural features and recreational facilities—constitute their most vulnerable aspect. The museum landscape thus has a dual role. Firstly, the estate gardens as a whole can be considered as a museum exhibition. They contribute to the understanding of the owners' attitudes and values, and also give visitors a sense of belonging. This means that the landscape should be as close to the original as possible, according to the principle of authenticity. Secondly, museum gardens are an exhibition space, where separate features such as alleys, meadows, historic trees, pavilions, grottos and sculptures play the role of exhibits. These objects are framed within the park space. The structure of the gardens and their ornamental features should be characteristic of the historic period that has been selected by the restoration team.

**T**he issue of recreating undocumented architectural features while restoring historic gardens has not been settled yet, and, to our knowledge, no thorough scientific studies discussing this matter have been published in Russia or internationally. However, the possibility of rebuilding some structures that would be typical of a particular historical period has been discussed at seminars and conferences at Ostafyevo. This is why the importance of including such features in newly restored garden complexes should be pointed out. As a rule, most recreational architectural features in country estate gardens disappear without leaving a trace due to their fragile and ephemeral nature. A conservative approach to landscape restoration excludes the introduction of newly built structures, whereas our attitude is fundamentally different. We firmly believe that the absence of recreational architectural features reduces the gardens' exhibition potential and makes them less attractive to visitors, as they cannot be offered a full Russian country estate experience.

## The Russian country estate as a cultural phenomenon

The Russian country estate as a cultural phenomenon appeared in the last 30 years of the 18th century, after Peter III issued a manifesto 'granting freedoms and liberties to Russian nobles' in 1762. In 1785, Catherine II adopted a legislative act confirming the manifesto. These laws consolidated the rights of the Russian nobility. In particular, they made noblemen exempt from mandatory military service. This meant that aristocrats were given the right to choose, depending on their natural inclinations, whether they wanted to continue to serve in the army, to make a career in government service or to manage their own private estate. Thanks to their new individual rights, members of the nobility made a major contribution to Russian culture. The country estate culture became one of its essential aspects. Passionate young people who had decided against devoting their future life to government service rushed to their country estates in order to start anew. Each built their new residence according to their tastes and interests.

The owner's personality became the focal point of the estate. For some, country life meant an escape into the wilderness where they could find privacy and seclusion to devote themselves to philosophical reflection and moral development. Others looked upon their estate as their entertainment retreat, where they could throw parties and show off quirky recreational facilities to their neighbours. Another category of owners devoted most of their time to scientific research. They built up botanical and entomological collections, grew exotic plants in greenhouses, and made astronomical observations. Many were determined to build a model estate where industrial production facilities were exploited to their full potential and crops were grown for sale alongside the best cattle breeds. Owners wanted their new bower to suit their aesthetic taste. They would draw plans so as to create a world of their own in a restricted space. The estate landscape played a crucial role in making this possible and was therefore organised depending on the owner's individual preferences. Secluded pavilions were particularly well suited to quiet reflection; pathways ran through

the park, offering open and perspective views. There were also grottos, antique-looking ruins, monuments and masonic symbols, recreational spaces with swings, slides, fireworks and light installations. All this created an oasis, an ideal world, which reflected the owner's idea of an idyllic place and made up their 'microcosm'.

A tour of this ideal world was an integral part of country estate hospitality. The structure of the estate gardens was a matter of pride for the owner. Showing it off to guests became a special ritual. The order in which different places were visited was important, as well as the choice of specially designed itineraries. The guests had to visit all the viewpoints, it was necessary to show them the monuments and explain their symbolic meaning, tell them about the legends linked with these places.<sup>2</sup> Contemporaries wrote detailed accounts of their estate visits in letters and memoirs, and dedicated exalted poems to them. Thus, every country estate landscape was represented by a structured park space that reflected the owner's personality and carried a particular cultural message.

## Garden landscape structure

Unfortunately, the garden-and-park landscape is the most vulnerable component of an estate. Even in perfect maintenance conditions, the gardens keep changing: trees grow and then die; well thought out perspectives disappear; meadows, which used to provide light, become overgrown; the configuration of old planted areas changes. The surrounding landscape is caught between constantly expanding newly built-up areas. Furthermore, the perception of a park's natural features by museum visitors and the purpose of their visit have also changed. Old gardens can only be understood in the light of their own era, so it is necessary to develop visitor awareness of estate landscapes, to educate them in how to perceive gardens as works of landscape art.

One of the estate museum's important tasks is to convey the typical estate atmosphere to the visitors, and to familiarise them with garden 'semantics'. This would be impossible without at least partially restoring the *structure* of the estate landscape. *Structure* (or, effective spatial organisation) is the most important

feature of a country estate landscape. Below are listed the main elements of garden structure, which differ in terms of their spatial dimensions. They may be categorised as *zones* (two-dimensional elements), *pathways* (linear elements) and separate *points* of interest. Zones are estate areas that have different functions. The most typical zones are:

- the entrance zone, which includes the access road and the main gate;
- the main estate house zone with the formal front garden;
- the garden zone;
- the water zone (ponds, streams, springs, dams);
- the work zone (may consist of several miscellaneous parts).

In a museum open to visitors, there will also be:

- an administrative zone;
- a recreational zone for visitors.

Zones can be split into smaller functional areas. For example, a garden zone is made up of formal and natural sections, groves and orchards. Sometimes, different zones may overlap—the natural garden section may include elements of the work zone, such as kitchen gardens, greenhouses, etc. Open spaces like meadows and perspectives are very important for landscape structure. According to the famous 20th century art historian Kurbatov, '[a]n architect's role consists of filling space beautifully, whereas a gardener's role is to open up this space and lead our admiring gaze far into the distance' (Kurbatov 1916). All the zones in the museum grounds are linked via one-dimensional, that is to say, linear structural elements that make up a network of roads and pathways. They are shaped depending on their function: in a country estate, one can find anything from wide access roads and spacious alleys to narrow pathways.

The choice of itineraries is very important. They should take visitors to the most impressive spots in the gardens, provide variety and, most importantly, lead to points of interest in the garden structure, such as viewpoints, pavilions, grottos, sculptures and other

recreational features. If the garden structure has been damaged, the estate gardens lose their museum value. They simply turn into an unkempt and disorganised green area. This is why restoring landscape structure is the main priority in the process of recreating estate

gardens. No less importantly, restoration teams should bear in mind that it is crucial to rely mainly on existing historical descriptions, as well as carry out field studies and widely use similar landscape design features, both existing and described in written sources.

## Estate gardens as an exhibition space

A serious problem for most estate gardens is the loss of their ornamental and recreational architectural features. Not only are architectural structures themselves missing, but also their descriptions and images are often unavailable. Moreover, even if the existence of such a feature was documented, in many cases it is impossible to find its exact location during a field study, as light architectural structures were built without foundations. As a result, estate gardens are often seen by visitors simply as places for leisurely walks. The 'cultural message' mentioned in the 1981 Florence Charter is mainly lost, in particular the point concerning garden structure, which includes ornamental and recreational architectural features:

### *Historic Gardens*

Article 18 of the Florence Charter states that:

*While any historic garden is designed to be seen and walked about in, access to it must be restricted to the extent demanded by its size and vulnerability, so that its physical fabric and cultural message may be preserved* (Florence Charter 1981).

This brings us to the main issue discussed in the present article: the problem of restoring the *structure* of the gardens and recreating their ornamental and recreational architectural features in an estate museum. Clearly, turning old gardens into an amusement park for visitors is out of the question. This would completely destroy the unique atmosphere of a country estate. However, we believe that it would be insufficient to limit restoration work to setting up garden benches and clearing overgrown and disorganised green spaces because, from our point of view, museum gardens should also have an educational function.

What can be done? While working on an estate house, restoration teams use historical analogues if written or graphic sources featuring facades and interior decoration of a given period are unavailable. In the absence of authentic objects, relevant exhibits that represent the historical period in question are displayed. Sometimes, if a particular manor house was inhabited throughout several historical periods, visitors may be shown a sequence of respective interiors. This means that a historical building is considered not only as an authentic *exhibit*, but also as an *exhibition space*, where objects of interest are displayed. It goes without saying that such objects cannot be chosen randomly. Careful examination is required.

We believe that the same principle can be used in relation to historic gardens while restoring ornamental and recreational architectural features (Reznikovskaya 2009). Small garden structures should be rebuilt in accordance with the trends that were typical of the estate's days of glory. These eye-catching elements should also become the focal points of guided tours for visitors. Thanks to them, it will be possible to imagine what estate gardens looked like in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They will also provide information about lifestyles and traditions in a Russian country estate. However, it is preferable to recreate the spatial structure of the gardens as close to the original as possible: the layout of the road and path network, alleys, groves and lawns should be planned after field studies and the results of historical and archive research.

As mentioned earlier, not all representatives of the Russian school of conservation and restoration agree with this approach. Many specialists believe that it is sufficient to carry out conservation works on the surviving garden features, and that adding new undocumented elements to the existing landscape should by no means be allowed. This point of view reduces the role of the estate gardens to that of a simple exhibit. By contrast, to consider a garden as an exhibition space would allow architects to fill this space with features that are similar to the ones that have been lost, and thus, turn the gardens into a testimony of bygone days.

Thus, a restoration team confronted with a country estate landscape without a reliable description of its layout has two options:

- carrying out conservation work on the existing landscape.
- shaping it according to the way estate gardens used to be structured during the historical period chosen for the whole architectural and landscape complex.

From our point of view, the second option should be favoured, so that the estate gardens can become a valuable part of the museum that carries an educational message. It is necessary to point out once again that before any new architectural structures can be erected, careful scientific analysis must be carried out, and historical and archive research must be carried out. All the new ornamental and recreational architectural features should blend into the surrounding landscape and be perceived as its natural part. The following section describes current restoration works at the Ostafyevo estate museum.

## The Ostafyevo country estate

The Ostafyevo State Museum stands unique in the Russian country estate culture. It is also one of the few sufficiently well-preserved examples of the Russian country estate dating back to the early 18th and late 19th centuries. For many years, the estate belonged to the Vyazemsky princes and their heirs. Ostafyevo became a nobleman's country estate at the very end of the 18th century, when Prince Andrey Vyazemsky, a statesman and one of the most educated people of his time, bought an estate near Moscow, where he created a splendid architectural and landscape complex. He may have been seduced by the lovely gardens with their linden tree alley, pond and dyke, and the textile mill that later produced hefty profits.

Upon leaving office in 1800, Andrey Vyazemsky dedicated himself entirely to the estate. His first step was to create the gardens. Invaluable documents dating back to that time have been preserved: one is a set of detailed instructions on laying down the pathways; another document is a handwritten plan of the estate, which, according to researchers, was drawn up by Vyazemsky himself. Where the old manor stood, works on the new house started in 1801. Family legend has it that Andrey Vyazemsky took an active part in the construction. After Andrey Vyazemsky's sudden death in 1807, works on the manor house were stopped. His son-in-law, Nikolay Karamzin, took on the role of guardian for Vyazemsky's 15 year old son Pyotr.

The famous writer and Russia's first historiographer N. M. Karamzin came to live on the estate in 1804 where he worked on his *History of the Russian State*. Thanks to this book, the general public became acquainted with Russian history and the book played an instrumental role in promoting national self-awareness. During his stay in Ostafyevo (1804-1815), Karamzin completed eight of the 12 volumes of his famous *History*, thus making Ostafyevo the cradle of Russian historiography. Already under Andrey Vyazemsky, the Ostafyevo estate attracted the intellectual elite of that era. This tradition was kept up by his son, Pyotr Vyazemsky, who became one of Russia's famous poets. Many Russian literary celebrities came to stay there. Pushkin, Zhukovsky, Griboyedov, Gogol, the Polish poet Mickiewicz and many other representatives of the Russian Golden Age were Ostafyevo's guests. The Ostafyevo country estate, which had become known as 'the Russian Parnassus', played a leading part among other literary circles, which were numerous in 19th century Russia.

At the dawning of the 20th century, the new owner, Count Sergei Sheremetev, who was married to Pyotr Vyazemsky's granddaughter, ordered the erection of monuments in the estate gardens to commemorate Karamzin, Zhukovsky, Pushkin, Pyotr Vyazemsky and his son Pavel. All this has contributed to Ostafyevo's current status as a 19th century historical and literary highlight and a gem of Russian country estate culture. In 1899, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of A. S. Pushkin's birth, S. D. Sheremetev opened Russia's first public museum in Ostafyevo. Apart from the late poet's personal belongings, the museum display contained splendid collections made by several generations of the Vyazemsky princes. There was a vast library containing ancient books, as well as paintings, sculptures, weapons and numerous rare objects brought to Ostafyevo from distant trips.

The museum was still open to visitors during the early years of Soviet rule. It was nationalised, and Pavel Sheremetev, the founder's grandson, became its director. However, in 1929, a tragic event marked the history of the estate. During the National Young Pioneers' Rally, it was decided to house the rally participants in former Russian nobility estates.<sup>3</sup> The Ostafyevo museum was closed and its collection was displaced within ten days. Some of the exhibits were sent to other museums, but a large part irrevocably perished. From that time on, the estate was used as a holiday resort for employees of various Soviet organisations.

In 1988, following the decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, museum status was returned to Ostafyevo. By that time, the estate had been reduced to neglected gardens, an overgrown pond and a house mutilated by multiple reconstructions. The main task of the reborn museum was to restore the estate's original appearance, by recreating the splendid design of the architectural and landscape complex (Fig. 1).

## The Ostafyevo gardens



Fig. 1. The Ostafyevo manor house. © The Ostafyevo Estate Museum

Ostafyevo is a rare example of the beautifully harmonious union between nature and architecture that characterises the Russian country estate style.

Ostafyevo, situated in the Moscow region, is usually contrasted with the gardens of Saint Petersburg and the provinces. Nature in the Moscow region is not as luxuriant. However, there are picturesque spots, a variety of reliefs, and every season brings its own noble palette. Ostafyevo is a rare example of the beautifully harmonious union between nature and architecture that characterises the Russian country estate style. A deep ravine with the river Lubutchka and the mirror-like crescent of the pond isolate the estate from the outer world. The access road runs from the 18th century village church along the dyke. The manor house blends nicely into the surrounding landscape. The protruding semi-rotunda of the Oval Room is virtually part of the gardens: the only separation is a transparent circular wall made up of seven tall arches that match the open colonnades on each side of the house. The open galleries serve as an architectural frame for their natural surroundings and enable visitors to catch a glimpse of the park from different angles as they approach the manor house.

In the following sections, we will only discuss problems related to restoration works on the Ostafyevo garden landscape. As for the main house, it is worth mentioning that the first step was to restore its original appearance by opening the galleries, which were fitted with glazing and transformed into a cinema and a dinner hall during the Soviet era. Opening the galleries brought back the lost connection between nature and architecture. The gardens have played a major role in shaping the artistic identity of the estate. Their creation dates back to the 1760s. The park grounds comprise

28.6 hectares. They are made up of a forest zone and a park zone. The park zone consists of a formal and informal part. Already at the beginning of the 20th century the gardens were showing signs of neglect. It is worth mentioning that the Ostafyevo estate museum is in a more favourable position than many other country estates, as several documents concerning the Ostafyevo gardens have been preserved:

### The plan of the English gardens dating back to the 1790s.

This drawing belongs to the earliest stages of the creation of the Vyazemsky estate. Presumably, it was made by Andrey Vyazemsky himself and represents a sketch of the future English landscape gardens in Ostafyevo. The author of the drawing was clearly attracted to naturalistic parks, an artistic phenomenon that came about in England in the 18th century and then spread to Russia in the 1770s. However, this plan can only be considered as a preliminary sketch, which was part of A. Vyazemsky's overall plan (Perfilyeva 2000).

### The axonometric map dating back to 1805 by I. Vakhromeyev

It represents a bird's eye view of the estate. By the time the map was drawn up, the works on the gardens had been mainly completed. This is why it could be considered as an accurate replica of the garden layout of that period. Significantly, the map features a network of pathways. The map key also details the existing ornamental and recreational architectural features (Fig. 2).

Foma Melnikov's 1821 and 1822 plans

The drawings were ordered by Pyotr Vyazemsky. No historical documents have survived to prove that Melnikov's project was implemented. The plans are in the form of topographic diagrams complete with a detailed list of numerous ornamental architectural structures (Fig. 3). The role of these drawings in rebuilding the ornamental and recreational architectural features in the gardens will be discussed later on in this article.

Thanks to the surviving documents, it is possible to imagine the garden structure as it was conceived and implemented by the estate's owners. Not only do we know the location of the main zones, but also the layout of the pathway network, which, all in all, replicates the pathway network organisation of the late 20th century. Thorough historical and archive research, as well as extensive field studies have been carried out by the estate museum's team. The results of these studies have served as the foundation for *The Project of Restoring the Layout and Planted Areas of the Ostafyevo Gardens*. The project is based on three main principles: conservation, restoration and maintaining the historical appearance of the gardens. The purpose of the project is to provide favourable conditions for the conservation of the estate in its architectural and natural environment. Restoration works have been carried out to achieve the following goals: recreate the original layout of the gardens, restore the volume and spatial structure of planted areas as well as some aspects of their composition, and rebuild a number of ornamental and recreational architectural features.

The sections below deal with the main zones of the Ostafyevo gardens and the restoration works that have been carried out there.

Fig. 3. The plan of the English Landscape Gardens in Ostafyevo by Foma Melnikov, 1822. Some of the ornamental architectural features marked with numbers are listed below: The Main House with service buildings (1); The English Parterre in front of the house (2); A circular terrace in the shade of a massive linden tree on the bank of the pond (3); The Main Pond (7); The Excavated Pond (15) Apollo's Temple (13); The Dragon's Den (16); The Grotto with a Waterfall (17); The Crocodile's Nest (18); The Observatory Pavilion (12); The Ruins of Troy (11).  
© The Ostafyevo Estate Museum



Fig. 2. The plan of the Ostafyevo village by Ivan Vakhromeyev, 1805. © The Ostafyevo Estate Museum







Fig. 4. The 'Russian Parnassus' Linden Tree Alley. © The Ostafyevo Estate Museum

## The park zone (15.48 hectares)

### Formal gardens

The formal part of the gardens highlights the architectural properties of the manor house, which fully dominate the estate's composition. On the south side, the formal garden includes the access road and the 'circular lawn'. On the north side, there is a linden tree alley, some bosquets and a quincunx-shaped grove (Fig. 4). In the past, there was a sundial complete with a tiny cannon and an optical system in the centre of the circular lawn. At midday, as the sun's rays were captured by the optical system and directed to a handful of gunpowder, the cannon would fire. A similar sundial existed in the Palais-Royal gardens and may have impressed Andrey Vyazemsky during his travels in Europe. Later on, the central part of the lawn was occupied by a fountain brought from the Italian city of Genoa.<sup>4</sup> Recreating the sundial with its cannon would be an effective way of attracting visitors.

In the northern part of the formal gardens, the historic linden tree alley, which is also called 'The Russian Parnassus', dominates the rest of the composition. The Pyotr Vyazemsky and Pavel Vyazemsky monuments have been restored, as well as those erected to commemorate other literary figures: Karamzin, Zhukovsky and Pushkin. These unique monuments represent important points of interest in guided tours and an indisputable source of attraction for visitors. The bosquets on the north side of the manor house have been restored and a quincunx-shaped linden tree grove has been replanted to provide a link between the formal and informal parts of the gardens.

Ancient and historic trees are part and parcel of the museum's park display, and the presence of these trees adds to the charm of historic gardens. Ostafyevo has its own veteran trees, for instance Lyapunov's Linden Tree and Karamzin's Oaks (Fig. 5). The existing linden germinated 180 years ago from the 17th century mother tree that was planted under Lyapunov, one of the earliest owners of the estate. Unfortunately, the original tree has not survived. The two 150-year-old oak trees in the park's southern parterre in front of the colonnades are known by the name of Karamzin's, or Washington's

oaks. It is said that Karamzin's will stated that his daughter should plant acorns from the oak tree that grew on George Washington's grave.

### Informal gardens

The informal part of the gardens reflects a fashionable trend in the second half of the 18th century to reject a formal garden layout and imitate untamed nature. This approach was imported from England, hence the 'English landscape gardens'. Russian sentimentalism and a special interest in the world of emotions linked with this landscaping style altogether proved to be close to the Russian mindset. In the early 19th century, the natural gardens included the Linden Park, the Field of Mars, the Planted Grove with its recreational lawn, the English Landscape Gardens behind the Pond and many other features. Over time, the informal park lost its former meticulously planned structure because of neglect. Open lawns, which were so important for the gardens' spatial organisation, disappeared behind uniform thickets consisting mainly of old trees.



Fig. 5. One of Karamzin's Oaks with the eastern gallery in the background. © The Ostafyevo Estate Museum

Once careful archaeological studies were completed, the pathway network was restored in accordance with the plans found in the museum archive. Open lawns saw the light of day again, and the configuration of *the Field of Mars* was restored. Sick ancient trees have been treated, deadwood and wild undergrowth cleared, and new trees and shrubs replanted. The newly planted areas in the natural part of the gardens are made up of six types of non-coniferous trees: the birch (*Betula verrucosa*), the linden (*Tilia cordata*), the oak (*Quercus robur*), the willow (*Salix fragilis*), the maple (*Acer platanoides*), the alder (*Alnus incana*), and two types of coniferous trees—the fir (*Picea abies*) and the pine (*Pinus sylvestris*).

#### The forest zone (13.3 hectares)

The boundaries of the English Gardens are marked by earthen berms and a roadside ditch. Along one of these cut-off lines, two parallel berms have formed an alley. The forest zone beyond this boundary consists of a coniferous and birch tree grove. It also includes the grounds on the other side of the pond. This zone lends itself to leisurely walks. It was Karamzin's favourite promenade area, and as a result, the birch tree grove and the alley which is included in this zone carry his name.

#### The Coniferous Grove (2.25 hectares)

The Coniferous Grove was planted in 1905 to replace the degraded parts in the south estate's birch tree grove, which holds 468 trees that date back to the period when the estate was owned by Sheremetev (1898-1917). The trees that have survived are still very attractive and add to the park's beauty. Before the beginning of the restoration works, the Coniferous Grove accounted for 765 trees belonging to five coniferous and ten non-coniferous types. Some of those trees were unwanted seedlings, which sprouted through neglect. In the process of the restoration work 85 trees were cut down and 24 were planted: nine coniferous trees and 15 non-coniferous ones.

The museum's park display, its composition and pathway network, was laid out after meticulous research, in a effort to respect the original 19th century design.

Shrubbery plays an important role in the make-up of the Coniferous Grove. It constitutes the undergrowth and serves as a nesting and feeding base for birds. Before the restoration works, only a few shrubs made up the grove: one could see sparse growths of bird cherries (*Prunus pádus*), separate raspberry bushes (*Rubus idáeus*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera*), and irregular patches of sorbaria (*Sorbaria sorbifolia*) along the pathway around the pond. Creating shrub compositions was an important objective for the restoration team. In order to decorate the lawns, clearings and recreational spaces, a variety of shrubs has been planted: barberries (*Berberis vulgáris*), spindle (*Euonymus verrucosus*, *Euonymus europaeus*), hawthorns (*Crataégus sanguínea*), dogwood (*Cornus alba*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatárica*), hedge cotoneaster (*Cotoneáster lucídus*), maple (*Acer tatáricum*), hazel (*Corylus avellána*), lilac (*Syringa vulgáris*), snowberries (*Symphoricarpos albus*), spiraea (*Spiraea chamaedryfolia*, *Spiraea japonica*), and wild rose (*Rosa*). Several types of flowers, such as forget-me-nots (*Myosotis sylvatica*), primroses (*Primula*) and bluebells (*Campánula*) have been planted along the pathways.

Taking into account the current function of the coniferous grove as an area for leisurely walks, new paths were laid down throughout the grove and along the bank of the river Lubutcha.

### Karamzin's Birch Tree Grove (5.3 hectares)

The Birch Tree Grove and Karamzin's Alley were planted in 1805 by Pyotr Vyazemsky and his sister Ekaterina. Today, this area has lost its original trees because many birches died and other, unwanted types of trees have grown in their place. The overall number of trees is roughly 600. Some of the deadwood has been cleared. In the winter of 2011, many trees were severely damaged by freezing rain; tree trunks and branches became coated in glaze ice. The Birch Tree Grove requires a complete makeover. However, replacing all the old birches with young trees is highly undesirable because it would destroy the atmosphere of an old park. Replacing the dying century-old trees with new ones gradually was excluded because cutting down separate trees will inevitably lead to the death of their weakened neighbours.

After long discussions, a compromise was reached: it was decided that for the next 10 to 20 years, the central part of the Birch Tree Grove—its historic core—would be kept intact. In due course, the trees in the outer part of the grove would be felled and replaced with young ones. Once the birch trees on the periphery of the grove have grown tall enough to make up a uniform wood, the replacement process of the central part would begin. As part of the restoration project, it has been decided to plant silver birches along the pathways and groups of white birches together with different types of shrubs inside the grove. At the same time, conservation work on ancient trees will be carried out: dead branches will be cut off, blemishes will be treated, unstable trunks will be propped up with supports. A network of pathways will run through the grove, lending itself to guided tours and leisurely walks. Some recreational areas will also be created.

### Burial mounds

In the early 19th century, the historian Karamzin found a few ancient burial mounds in the grounds of the estate, as well as in its immediate vicinity.<sup>5</sup> These mounds were a matter of pride for the estate owners and the objective of many walking tours, as they were vivid proof of the area's ancient cultural history. Two of the mounds are located in museum grounds at the highest point of the gardens—at the end of Karamzin's Alley. This place renders a picturesque panoramic view of the river Desna floodplain, especially at sunset.

Ornamental features such as burial mounds were highly sought after, as they were proof of the area's rich cultural history.

## Rebuilding architectural structures in the Ostafyevo gardens

This section will explain the problem of rebuilding ornamental and recreational architectural features in the Ostafyevo gardens. Unfortunately, all of them have perished. Not a single pavilion—the 'heart and soul' of a Russian estate park—has survived. Ivan Vakhromeyev's 1805 drawing of the gardens contains a few ornamental features: an excavated pond, a grotto with a waterfall and an open pavilion overlooking the pond. Conducting an archaeological study has enabled the team to pinpoint the boundaries of the excavated pond. The excavations have also revealed fragments of a pipe, which might have provided a connection with the main pond. Unfortunately, the traces of the grotto with its waterfall have not been discovered yet.

To ensure stylistic integrity, it is necessary to fill the gardens with various architectural features. In such a situation, it would seem reasonable to adopt the exhibition space approach to the gardens in order to present park structures that are typical of the historical period selected by the restoration team. For the Ostafyevo gardens, it would seem quite natural to resort to this approach, as

the restoration team has in its possession Melnikov's designs drawn up on P. A. Vyazemsky's request. Even if this idea was not fully developed, showcasing some of the ornamental features would be like carrying out an 'unfulfilled project'. The method based on the 'development of an unfinished concept' certainly has drawbacks. Indeed, it may lead to the ruination and total reconstruction of valuable historical layers. Here, the inclusion of new elements in the garden space will create more interest in visitors (Kedrinsky 1999, p. 16).

Melnikov's plans contain a vast list of ornamental and recreational architectural features and mention their exact location, but a large part of the project was not implemented. Taking this fact into consideration is important for conducting restoration works on the structure of the Ostafyevo landscape. First of all, it undoubtedly corresponds to the spirit of the Romantic era. Some of the ornamental structures refer to antiquity: Apollo's Temple, the Ruins of Troy and the Field of Mars with a statue of Hercules (Fig. 6 below). Others relate to oriental mythology, for example the grottos called the Dragon's Den and

the Crocodile's Nest. Some of the names sound archaic, so they seem to reflect Andrey Vyazemsky's unfulfilled plans. The project is carefully thought out, the architectural features are located in the most suitable places, and the landscape reliefs and bodies of water are taken into consideration. A chain of grottos is situated along the pond in the hollows of its sloping bank. *The Grotto with a Waterfall* uses the water discharge system from the Excavated Pond. Apollo's Temple is located on the high bank of the pond in such a way that its reflection in the pond's waters adds to the park's overall beauty.



Fig. 6. The Open Pavilion (or, 'Apollo's Temple' features among the estate's rebuilt structures. © The Ostafyevo Estate Museum

Upon museum management request, the restoration team has developed a concept of rebuilding the ornamental and recreational architectural features of the gardens. This concept is part of the General Development Plan of the Ostafyevo Estate Museum. The main purpose of this plan is to use the example of Ostafyevo's rich cultural history in order to familiarise visitors with a typical Russian country estate in its heyday. According to the results of the historical analysis, placing and rebuilding ornamental and recreational architectural features in the Ostafyevo gardens should be carried out with Melnikov's plans in mind. It is important to note that not all of Melnikov's structures will be rebuilt, but only those that are based on historical fact and represent the most typical aspects of country estate gardens of the era in question. The reconstruction concept includes rebuilding six main park structures: the Open Pavilion (or, 'Apollo's Temple'), the Observatory Pavilion, the Ruins of Troy, as well as the chain of grottos: the Dragon's Den, the Crocodile's Nest and the Grotto with a Waterfall. Apart from this, it has been decided to reconstruct the Excavated Pond, as its exact location and shape are well-known to the restoration team. The plan is to locate these features in the places selected by Melnikov, mainly on

the periphery of the gardens. This will attract more visitors to that part of the park and will result in developing new itineraries for guided tours.

Architectural solutions for the newly built ornamental structures should be elaborated out of already existing analogous features. It is important to avoid eccentric, highly ornate designs. These features should not be too bright or bulky. They need to be given an aged appearance, as if time had coated them in a fine patina. Nevertheless, their functions may be altered, given modern reality and the museum's needs. For instance, the Observatory Pavilion, which was conceived as a viewpoint over beautiful surroundings, could be used as an exhibition hall for temporary displays. Our first experience in implementing this concept was rebuilding Apollo's Temple.

### Apollo's Temple

Open pavilions are an integral part of Russian country estate gardens. The Russian word for 'pavilion', 'беседка' (pronounced *bisetka*), literally means 'a place for intimate conversations'. A 'беседка' is expected to be an open structure built in a secluded place affording a beautiful view and shelter from rain and direct sunlight. Russian pavilions were designed after European open rotundas, which, in their turn, found their source in antiquity: for instance, the temple of Vesta in the Italian city of Tivoli inspired a number of European architects.

In order to provide a scenic view, open pavilions were located at a high point on the bank of a river or a pond. They also served as an organisational feature of the surrounding landscape. Melnikov's choice of location for Apollo's Temple was quite judicious. It is situated on a protruding tip of the pond near a curved bridge. The architect placed these two ornamental features in this way, so that visitors could contemplate them and their double reflection in the waters of the pond as a whole.



Fig. 7. Open Pavilion (or, 'Apollo's Temple') and the Curved Bridge.  
© The Ostafyevo Estate Museum

It is important to bear in mind that in the 19th century, the water level in the pond was 1.5 to 2 metres lower than today. Should the waters be lowered to their original level, the distance between the pavilion and the edge of the bank is expected to stay the same, whereas the pond itself would be deepened in this particular location (Fig. 7). The inside part of the sloping bank, uncovered as a result of lowering the water level, could be used for rebuilding the grottos and laying down a path that would wind between them.

There are few authentic pavilions left in Russian country estates that are similar in style to Melnikov's project. The surviving examples have served as an inspiration for the restoration team, while Ostafyevo's *Apollo's Temple* was being designed. In Melnikov's sketch, *Apollo's Temple* has a circular shape. The rebuilt pavilion represents a six-column rotunda, which consists of a limestone-faced plinth with some steps, limestone Doric columns, a balustrade with a set of elegant balusters, an entablature and a dome. The base of the rotunda is approximately five metres, and the

whole structure is seven metres high. The frieze features stucco decorations: a tripod, a garland, a rosette and a disk with Apollo's bas-relief. On the inside, the dome is painted azure blue, whereas on the outside, it is covered with copper sheets.

Apollo's Temple was rebuilt in 2011. Immediately after its inauguration, it became an important point of interest for visitors. Views from the pavilion, as well as the view of the pavilion from the bridge, have become favourite spots for taking photos.

## Work of the estate museum under modern conditions

Currently, restoration works on the manor house are drawing to a close, but works in the gardens are still underway. The park's ecological situation has improved, as the number of different types of birds and small animals who inhabit it has increased. Regardless of the restoration works in progress, the museum has not stopped welcoming visitors. Organised guided tours around the gardens and museum's exhibitions take place on a regular basis. Chamber music concerts are regularly held in the restored parts of the manor house and in the open galleries.

The Ostafyevo gardens also play a recreational role. An important task the museum is currently facing is to reduce the burden of excessive visits in the formal park zone by moving the main walking itineraries to the forest zone. Mass events are often held on open lawns. In June, large-scale celebrations are held to commemorate Pushkin's birthday, and in September, the museum organises Karamzin Day. University and high school students help a lot with garden maintenance. In addition to a number of educational programmes built around the history of the estate, explanations on its owners and famous guests are given. Visitors of all ages are attracted to the museum, thanks to guided walking tours around the park, which include stories about the trees with a special historical and literary significance, the information about the gardens' role in the life of the estate and the meaning of separate garden features.

Even now, as museum visitors walk through the main gate, they find themselves in a unique world, not entirely foreign to the ideal world previous owners had dreamt of. The visitor is propelled into 'another dimension'. The bustling noise of a busy road gives way to the rustling sound of tree leaves and warbling birds. One can join a guided tour or find respite in a secluded spot and enjoy scenic views. As the winding path twists and turns, views and impressions change: an old alley is replaced with a panorama of the pond with shimmering reflections of its picturesque banks. Historic trees are the living proof of past centuries when the estate was experiencing its heyday and vigorous intellectual activity dominated all aspects of its life. This idyllic picture solves the problem of the fate of old Russian estates in the 21st century. Estate museums should be transformed into oases of beautiful architecture and scenic landscapes, which would give rise to nostalgic feelings about life in an old Russian country estate and create a sense of belonging to Russian history and bygone times.

This paper has explored the problems that the Ostafyevo restoration team encountered while recreating the estate gardens, as well as the solutions found. In the course of many meetings and discussions, the authors of the restoration concept concluded that it would not suffice to proceed to the simple conservation of the surviving landscape, impoverished by long periods of neglect and destitution. It was agreed that recreating the original garden structure, as well as putting in place some view points and recreational architectural features, was indispensable. One of the main difficulties was the absence of reliable sources documenting the original architectural structures in the gardens. However, Foma Melnikov's 1821–22 drawings proved to be an important source as they included a detailed list of recreational architectural features. Although the field studies carried out at Ostafyevo did not confirm that Melnikov's plans had been implemented, the simple fact of their existence helped the restoration team to overcome a psychological barrier. It was clear that the newly built features were going to be representative of the historical period that the restoration team had in mind. Another argument in favour of rebuilding some of Melnikov's structures was the approach to the museum's gardens as an exhibition space rather than an exhibit in its own right. The first step in the process was the rebuilding of Apollo's Temple in 2011. As the number of visitors in that part of the gardens rose considerably and as the pavilion became one of the major attractions, it was clear that the restoration team had made the right decision. Further rebuilding works based on Melnikov's drawings are on the agenda in order to increase the appeal of other sections of the park. However, it is important to bear in mind that landscape design requires taste and moderation: the two main features of the Russian country estate culture.

TRANSLATED BY IOULIA GOUSSEVA

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#### NOTES

1 As defined by the Getty Conservation Institute, '[t]he Venice Charter codifies internationally accepted standards of conservation practice relating to architecture and sites. It sets forth principles of conservation based on the concept of authenticity and the importance of maintaining the historical and physical context of a site or building' (Getty Conservation Institute online).

2 Russian estate owners were not alone in wanting to admire and show off their property. Louis XIV personally drew up instructions as to how to organise a visit of the Versailles Gardens. Here is an example drawn from his guidebook: 'Go to the triumphal arch and note the diversity of the fountains. Jets, pools, basins with statues and the different water effects. When leaving the Dragon, you pass along the Children's Avenue and, on reaching the stone between the two basins at the bottom, turn round to catch a glimpse of all the jets of Neptune and of the Dragon; then continue to walk up the avenue (Louis XIX 1992).'

3 Translator's note: 'Young Pioneers' was the name of a Soviet youth organisation similar to Boy and Girl Scouts.

4 In Soviet times, both the sundial and the fountain disappeared, and a statue of Lenin was erected in their place.

5 No archaeological studies have been carried out on these burial mounds, as they were not dated as archaeological monuments.

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