

Citation for published version:

Pat Simpsons, ' A Cold War curiosity?: The Soviet collection at the Darwin memorial museum, Down House, Kent', *Journal of the History of Collections*, fhx043, 2017.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/fhx043>

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<title>A Cold War curiosity?

<subtitle> The Soviet collection at the Darwin memorial museum, Down House, Kent

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<running header> A Cold War curiosity?

In the late 1950s–early 1960s, the Charles Darwin memorial museum at Down House in Kent acquired a collection of Soviet paintings, sculptures and photographic albums, none of which are currently on display to the public. These artefacts were sent to the UK from the State Darwin Museum in Moscow, by its directors, the ornithologist Professor Aleksandr Kots and his wife, the animal behaviourist, Dr Nadezhda Ladygina-Kots. The ostensible reasons for the gifts were largely connected to anniversary celebrations of Darwin’s life and work. The focus on works of art related to the Darwin Museum’s particular concern with the use of art to stimulate and inform visitors without the use of too much text in the displays. This article explores the potential impact of the contemporary, Soviet and international, Cold War debates over ‘Lysenkoism’ and ‘Soviet Darwinism’, on the short-lived display at Down House, entitled the ‘Russian Room’ (c.1961–1964).

DOWN House in Kent was once the home of the British evolutionary theorist, Charles Darwin (1809-1882). After the death in 1896 of Emma, his wife, the house had a varied history of sporadic tenancies, including two schools, until the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) successfully campaigned to raise funds to buy the virtually derelict property, with a view to creating a ‘national memorial to Darwin’, to celebrate his life and works. A generous benefactor, the surgeon, Sir George Buckston-Browne bought the house, and the proposed commemorative museum was duly opened in 1929.¹

During the period of the Cold War the museum was maintained by the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCSE). Under its regime there took place an intriguing, significant,

but little known chapter in the history of this important British institution and its collection. Between c.1961 and 1964, Down House had a so-called ‘Russian Room’. In this room were displayed **unsolicited gifts of** commemorative paintings and monumental sculpture busts relating to the life of Darwin, as well as photographic albums representing the scientific and populist work of the Soviet State Darwin Museum in Moscow. These items are no longer on public display at Down House, although images of twelve of the paintings are now available to view on the Art UK website.² They were all sent to Britain between c.1958 and c.1963 by the ornithologist, Professor Aleksandr Kots and his wife, the animal behaviourist, Dr Nadezhda Ladygina-Kots, **the** co-directors of the State Darwin Museum 1907-1964.³

Unlike Down House, which had/has a largely reconstructive, biographical orientation regarding Darwin and his home life, the State Darwin Museum was a natural history museum – and is still the only such museum in the world to be specifically named after Darwin. It had been founded in 1907 by Aleksandr Kots at the Women’s Higher Courses Institute of Moscow University as the ‘Museum of Evolutionary History’. In 1914 it was officially adopted by the University. After the October Revolution of 1917, it remained attached to Moscow University but changed its name to the ‘State Darwin Museum’.⁴ This shift in the museum’s title not only reflected the Bolshevik concern with promoting Darwinism as a properly ‘modern’, materialist, and atheistic science, but also underscored the pre-revolutionary Russian scientific preoccupation with Darwin and his ideas that had begun in the 1840s, and with which Aleksandr Kots’ own research was closely tied.⁵

For Kots, the creation of the ‘Russian Room’ at Down House marked the high point of the Darwin Museum’s attempts to re-establish cultural connections with British individuals, institutions and organizations connected with bio-science, between the mid-1950s and early 1960s. These attempts were made in the wake of the communications rift

between Soviet and western bio-scientists created by the triumph of Trofim Lysenko's 'Michurinist biology' in 1948.

Kots's pursuit of cultural exchange with Britain was both enabled and problematized by the Cold War context of the 1950s–1960s, which was fraught with contradictions in terms of political, scientific, cultural and trade relationships between the West and the USSR. On the one hand, the period was characterized by Nikita Khrushchev's 'Thaw'. This included the tentative resumption of Anglo-Soviet cultural and scientific relations, a temporary decrease in Lysenko's power over Soviet bio-science, a relaxation of the rules on Soviet Socialist Realist art practice, and the introduction of exchange art exhibitions between western countries and the USSR. On the other hand, these years were also marked by a number of events that enhanced Western perceptions of the Soviet Union as a threatening power. In such circumstances, any cultural exchanges between Britain and the USSR were highly unlikely to be perceived by either side as being ideologically neutral. As I will argue, this appears to have been the case in relation to the rendering, reception and display of the Darwin Museum's gifts to Down House during the period.⁶

Here we shall examine some aspects of the possible strategic motivations for the Soviet gifts to Down House from the Darwin Museum, their display, and the eventual closure of the 'Russian Room' in late 1964, in relation to the history and vagaries of Anglo-Soviet cultural exchange in the period c.1958-1963. **A central theme in the argument is the historically developed propensity of the Moscow Darwin museum to use art works as a currency of cultural exchange with the West, between the 1920s and 1960s.** The approach is necessarily interdisciplinary, using sometimes fragmentary archival evidence from Russian and British sources, and also drawing on secondary sources within the disciplines of the social histories of art and culture, as well as from political history and the histories of science.

Each of the five sections of the present article pursues a distinct research question. The discussion begins by exploring what the ‘Russian Room’ may be argued to have contained and looked like, using a variety of archival, visual and textual materials, as well as the physical evidence of some key works of art to support the arguments. The second section considers the possible reasons why the Darwin Museum chose to send works of art to Down House, both in relation to its own unique display policy, and to its relatively successful pre-World War II strategy of using works of art as a currency of cultural exchange with western scientists and institutions. This is followed by an investigation of the possible, specific strategic motivations for sending the paintings, sculptures and and photograph albums to Down House within the time-frame of 1958-1963. The fourth section of the article then examines the possible British strategic motives for the installation of the ‘Russian Room’ c.1961 at Down House, in the conflicted context of Khrushchev’s ‘Thaw’ and Lysenko’s apparent resumption of power over Soviet bio-science in that year. The final section looks **speculatively at the possible** reasons for the closure of the ‘Russian Room’ in late 1964, and the resulting dispersal of the works of art and the albums to other spaces in the museum and elsewhere, in relation to both the ‘Lysenko Affair’, and to British critical denigration of Soviet Socialist **Realist art**.

The article concludes that the gifts successfully fulfilled the Darwin Museum’s intentions to commemorate and communicate shared values and interests between Soviet and British scientists and institutions, which the directors hoped would lead to better and closer relations with the West. Ultimately, however, it would seem that this message was compromised by the political context of the exchange, in the spheres of both art and bio-politics. Perhaps for this reason, although a significant part of the Cold War process at the time, and thus as genuine a cultural exchange as was possible in the circumstances, the story

of the ‘Russian Room’ at Down House, perhaps known only to a relatively small number of people at the time, has completely dropped out of view for contemporary researchers.

<H1>The ‘Russian Room’

This section seeks to establish briefly what the ‘Russian Room’ at Down House may have contained over the period c.1961-1964, and what the display may have looked like. It focuses particularly on the paintings and sculptures, using the contents of the contextualizing albums as a springboard to the following sections of the discussion. The primary evidence on which the discussion is based comprises eighteen Soviet works and nine photographic albums held by the English Heritage [Down House Archive](#) (EHDHA),⁷ as well as a small number of photographs relating to the ‘Russian Room’ held in the archives of the Linnean Society of London (LSL) and the RCSE, and fragmentary items of associated correspondence. Because the materials on which the article is based are largely unavailable to the general public, the section is necessarily mainly descriptive. Some of the points raised about the style, subject-matter and possible significance of the art works in relation to the contextualization provided by the albums will be followed up in more detail in further sections of the article. In addition, there are two important provisos to make regarding the ensuing discussion: firstly that it is not currently possible to identify accurately from the archival materials, when some gifts from the Darwin Museum were sent to/arrived at Down House,⁸ and secondly, when – or if – all of the gifts were incorporated into the ‘Russian Room’ display at any point in its history.⁹ Thus, no detailed contextual sense can be gained about how the display may have mutated historically during the brief period of its existence.

It is likely that two of the earliest Soviet gifts to be displayed at Down House, were a pair of monumental sculptural busts of *Young Emma Darwin* and *Young Charles Darwin*. These were created especially for Down House in 1958 by a Darwin Museum resident artist,

Viktor Evstaf'ev, and sent to the RCSE in late 1958 or early 1959. The preparation for their transit was recorded by a photograph from the Darwin Museum reproduced in one of the photograph albums sent to Down House (Fig.1), and their initial installation at Down House was celebrated in an undated photograph held in the archives of the RCSE (Fig. 2).

Evstaf'ev's plaster busts were clever, three-dimensional constructions based on reproductions of the nineteenth-century artist, George Richmond's well-known, tiny two-dimensional chalk and watercolour portraits of Charles and Emma Darwin on their wedding day, held at Down House in 1840. The sculptures were smoothly executed, with a lot of detail of dress and physiognomy, giving a strong illusion of naturalism despite the huge, more than twice life-size nature of the busts. The monumental scale is visually underlined by the contrast between the sizes of the busts in relation to the human figure of Aleksandr Kots in Fig. 1. As will be seen later, the scale can be linked to the display practices of the Darwin Museum, and more broadly to the contemporary practices of Soviet Socialist Realism.

An undated photograph held in the Linnean Society archive (Fig. 3), shows a large painting of Darwin at work, located as the centrepiece on one wall of the 'Russian Room'. This was one of two large, framed oil on canvas paintings that are known to have featured in the early construction of the 'Russian Room' display.¹⁰ The central work in the photograph is *Middle Aged Darwin in His Study* (Fig. 4). According to a photograph in the RCSE archive,¹¹ the other painting, *Alfred Russel Wallace on the Malayan Archipelago* (Fig. 5), hung over the mantelpiece at the opposite end of the room. These large paintings were also made in 1958 by Evstaf'ev, who, indeed, executed all the other paintings that were sent to Down House. Like the busts, the paintings were carefully researched with particular attention to physiognomic and other details.

The portrait of Darwin would seem to be largely based on a painting by S. Uranova (*Darwin at His Desk*, 1930) held at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. Even so, the facial

features and dress referred to a well-known photograph of Darwin in middle-age, and the setting alluded to available photographs of Darwin's study and of the reconstructed display of the study at Down House. The aspect of copying here suggests that the Darwin Museum and Evstaf'ev prioritized perceived accuracy of documentary detail over originality of composition or approach, something that may be seen also in the dependence on photographs and reproductions of other artistic representations in the works sent to Down House from the Darwin Museum. Notwithstanding this general point, however, the portrait of Wallace appears to have been a more imaginative creation than the Darwin portrait. The physiognomy and pose were derived from a currently available photograph of Wallace, Darwin's potential rival evolutionary theorist and the source of some of his specimens, but the depiction of the setting presumably relied on the Darwin Museum's extensive anthropological, zoological and botanical knowledge, since there is no known image of Wallace in the Malaysian jungle.

In terms of subject matter, and in relation to their context of display, the two paintings constituted a very specific historical narrative, depicting aspects of the 'habitats' in which the two scientists developed quite similar views on evolution, expressed in a joint paper at a historic meeting of the Linnean Society in 1858, following which, Darwin's theory of evolution, rather than Wallace's, was given primacy in British scientific discourse.¹² This pair of works matched by their narrative, share (perhaps unsurprisingly) similar technical and stylistic characteristics. They are naturalistic, with accurate representations of spatial illusion and recognizable depicted objects. Sparingly painted, with little use of impasto, the works nevertheless show some areas of faintly impressionistic brushwork, although they appear at first sight – and particularly in reproductions – to be highly finished objects.

The precise stylistic characteristics of these two keynote paintings were not entirely replicated in all sixteen of the other smaller painted works in oil on board, card or paper that

were sent to Down House. These other works were equally concerned with accurate, historically sourced representations of contextual and physiognomic detail, in order to present a series of convincing narrative historical scenarios. But, rather than being new works within the Darwin Museum's purview of its own artistic collection, these were all (smaller scale) copies of works that there were already in the museum's collection. **It may be concluded,** therefore, that occasionally other criteria were involved.

A notable example of this, registered in the photograph of the 'Russian Room' display (Fig. 3), relates to the painted copy by Evstaf'ev of an image of *Darwin's First Encounter with a Tier Lander [Tierra del Fuegian]* (Fig. 6). The original on which it was based, was produced in the 1920s by an early Darwin Museum artist, Mikhail Ezuchevskii,¹³ as part of a series of narrative works on the life of Darwin. The painted copy of the work by Evstav'ev attempted to replicate not just the content, but also Ezuchevskii's freer and more sketchy, impressionistic style of representation. Evstaf'ev's own, more conservative style, exemplified in the portraits of Darwin and Wallace (Figs 4 and 5), was, however, dominantly represented in the veritable 'iconostasis' of images around the central portrait of Darwin illustrated in Fig. 3. This featured copies of works from Evstaf'ev's own series of illustrations of the life of Darwin 1948- c.1958,¹⁴ such as *Darwin and K.A. Timiriazev* (Fig. 10), a work which will be discussed later.

The works of art, taken as a group, presented a well-researched narrative about Charles Darwin that can be seen as potentially appropriate to the contemporary Darwin centenary celebrations, as well as to the function of Down House as the British Darwin memorial museum. The photograph albums that were displayed in the 'Russian Room's' glass cases not only provided contextual information about the professional and scientific concerns of the Darwin Museum as a natural history museum, but may also be argued to offer

some clues as to why hagiographic paintings and sculptures might feature so largely in Kots's attempts at cultural exchange.

<H1>Art and the Darwin Museum

The albums show that the Darwin Museum made copious use of art of various kinds within its museum displays. Indeed, it had done so since its foundation c.1907 at the Women's Higher Courses Institute of Moscow University.¹⁵ The works ranged from imaginatively staged taxidermy accompanied by illustrative paintings and drawings of contemporary plants, creatures and their habitats, through 'reconstructive' narrative paintings and sculptures representing early hominids and prehistoric flora and fauna (see Fig. 7), to dramatic depictions of the lives of evolutionary theorists, including Darwin, and monumental commemorative portrait busts of past and contemporary international bio-scientists. This style of museum display related to the Kotses' very particular vision of the natural history museum as an exciting visual experience for visitors during the process of the guided lecture tours, which were the only form of public access to the collection. In relation to this process, it was theorized by Aleksandr Kots that encounters with illustrative pictures and sculptures, with a minimum of textual information in the displays, would best stimulate the visitors' imaginations, and hence their inclinations both to question their assumptions about evolution, and to study natural science.¹⁶

This vision had been nurtured initially by the Kotses' acquaintance with displays in natural history museums in England, Germany, Belgium and France before the Russian Revolution, particularly on their honeymoon visit to Europe in 1913.¹⁷ On this occasion they may have encountered such works as Emmanuel Fremiet's fantastical *Gorilla Carrying off a Woman* (1887) in the Parisian Jardin des Plantes.¹⁸ They certainly saw Eugene Rutot and Louis Mascrae's more scholarly 'reconstructions' (1909-1914) of early hominids in the

Institut Royale des Histoires Naturelles Belgique in Brussels.¹⁹ They were also probably aware of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century large-scale ‘reconstructive’ and illustrational museum paintings about prehistoric life, as created not only by French Salon painters such as Fernand Cormon,²⁰ but also notably by the Russian artist Viktor Vasnetsov for the Historical Museum in Moscow during the 1880s,²¹ and by the American artist Charles R. Knight for the American Museum of Natural History, New York, in the early 1900s.²² On the basis of these sorts of visual stimuli, the Kotses set out to create a museum that rapidly became unique among contemporary natural history museums, both in the Soviet Union and in the West, because of the sheer quantity and diversity of the paintings and sculptures packed into the displays. After the 1917 Revolution, these displays were specifically designed to create an immersive experience for visiting groups of workers, soldiers and teachers.

This unusual display policy was perhaps comprehensible to any viewer of the photograph albums as a possible explanation of why the Darwin Museum would send art works to Down House. But, some images in the albums also implied another, more strategic function for hagiographic sculptures in particular, about which most British viewers of the ‘Russian Room’ may have been unaware.

In the 1920s and 1930s, selected examples of such sculptures had been used by the Darwin Museum to commemorate visits from, or contacts with, western scientists. This might have been as a setting for documentary photographs, as in the case of the visit by Sir Charles Galton Darwin in August 1928. One album photograph, for instance, had him posed against the recently completed large-scale *Seated Darwin* sculpture by the museum’s senior artist, Vasilii Vatagin,²³ a work which, for Kots, was equivalent and equal to Sir Joseph Edgar Boehme’s sculpture *Seated Darwin* (1884), in the British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH). More commonly, however, the commemorations were realized through monumental plaster busts of western visitors or correspondents, largely also created by Vatagin.

Thus, for example, the museum's extensive collection of portrait busts celebrating the history of evolutionary theory and bio-science, contained a bust of the British scientist and coiner of the term 'genetics', William Bateson,²⁴ who had visited the museum in 1925.²⁵ While the relationship with Bateson was not to develop further (he died in 1926), the bust in the Museum's collection both commemorated the visit of this distinguished British scientist, and symbolically represented the Darwin Museum's developing professional interest in western genetics in the 1920s. This visit and its artistic commemoration, as recorded in the albums sent to Britain, was something that would arguably be useful to the museum in the late 1950s, as a means of registering its long-term alignment with western, and particularly British constructs of genetics.

Equally significant was the fact that in 1929 a copy of a bust of Francis Galton – the British founder of eugenics – was sent to Henry Fairfield Osborn.²⁶ Osborn was director of the American Museum of Natural History in New York (AMNH), and was also a eugenicist and leading member of the American Galton Society.²⁷ The bust was a strategically appropriate 'thank-you' gift from Kots for Osborn's generous responses to his requests for current western scientific publications that were unobtainable in the USSR during the early 1920s.²⁸

It was appropriate on two counts. It represented a novel contribution to the AMNH's 'hall of fame', in which were displayed busts of famous naturalists and bio-scientists. It also symbolically signified Kots's engagement with Soviet and international eugenics discourse – an engagement shared with the majority of contemporary bio-scientists around the world, including Bateson.²⁹ Osborn's acknowledgement of this message was implicit in the prominent position given to the bust at the entrance to the exhibition accompanying the Third International Eugenics Congress at AMNH in 1932.³⁰ In return for Kots's gift, around 1935 Osborn sent the Darwin Museum a copy of a bust of himself, by the American sculptor

Chester Beach³¹ for Kots's own 'hall of fame'. The exchange of busts appeared to confirm the existence of shared interests between the two museums and their directors, although this was not to last past Osborn's death in November 1935.

Perhaps the most successful use of art to memorialize the Darwin Museum's international communications, however, was a bust of Robert Yerkes, an American ape-researcher and eugenicist. Yerkes visited the museum in 1929 to discuss Nadezhda Ladygina-Kots's comparative behavioural psychological study of an infant chimpanzee and her own son Rudi.³² Yerkes and his daughter stayed with the Kotses for several days and thereafter carried on correspondence with them until 1942.³³ One important element of the interchange of communications was a copy of the bust, which Yerkes received with delight in January 1930.³⁴ This copy, and its original, symbolically commemorated a cross-cultural relationship that had extended from the purely scientific (and pseudo-scientific) to the personal.

Thus, between the 1920s and 1930s, from Kots's perspective, sculptural busts had become a relatively successful currency for consolidating scientific and intellectual relationships between the Darwin Museum and western scientists and institutions. The works seemed to confirm in their subject-matter a generic commonality of values and interests with the intended recipients. Moreover, both the originals remaining at the Darwin Museum, and the copies sent abroad, arguably took on symbolic communicative resonances in their different locations. These resonances were not always long-lasting in the West and usually did not survive the demise of the main contact person. Arguably, however, the former strategic policy did provide the Darwin Museum with a potentially useful model on which to build a new strategy for its own re-inclusion in British scientific discourse during the 'Thaw' of the late 1950s and early 1960s. In this **context**, art, including photographic reproductions of works of art, could act symbolically as commemorations of past connections, and hence as potential catalysts for further East-West bio-scientific communications. In the post-war

context, although the types of work used by the Darwin Museum to consolidate cultural exchange were extended to include narrative, hagiographical paintings as well as sculptures, as will be seen, subject matter was still of paramount strategic importance as symbolizing shared East-West concerns and interests.

<H1>Motivations behind the Darwin Museum's gifts to Down House

The context in which the works of art and photograph albums were sent from the Darwin Museum to Down House, was suffused with potential opportunities for a Soviet natural history museum, deliberately named after Charles Darwin, to make bids for international prominence. Since Britain was the birthplace of Darwin and Darwinism, it seems logical that in relation to the centenary celebrations, Kots should have exclusively targeted British institutions and individuals in these bids, particularly, as will be seen, when his most recent and fruitful professional contacts with the West had been with Britain.

The initial trigger for the Darwin Museum's gifts was the 15th International Congress of Zoology held at the BMNH in 1958, which included in its published *Proceedings* an abstract of a paper by Ladygina-Kots, a copy of which was sent in an album to Down House in 1961.³⁵ The Congress was a huge affair,³⁶ designed to celebrate the centenary of the presentation to the Linnean Society (1 July 1858) of the ground-breaking joint paper by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace: 'On the tendency of species to form varieties; and on the perpetuation of varieties and species by natural means of selection'. It also commemorated the bicentenary of the publication of the 10th edition of *Systema Naturae* (1758, first published in 1736) by the Swedish botanist, zoologist and physician Carl Linnaeus.³⁷

The following year, 1959, was the global centenary of the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 and the 150th anniversary of his birth in 1809. Both were

celebrated widely in the USSR,³⁸ where Kots and Ladygina-Kots both made scientific contributions to scholarly events in Moscow. These anniversaries were also commemorated both at Down House and around the world. The anniversaries provided further legitimate excuses for the Darwin Museum to send more materials to Down House – and indeed to the RCSE, the BMNH, the Linnean Society of London, Sir Julian Huxley, and also to Darwin's *alma mater*, Christ's College in Cambridge. The year 1962 presented a third Darwin-orientated opportunity to send to the RCSE more photographs of works relating to the life of Darwin, to commemorate the 180th anniversary of Darwin's death in 1882. This was followed in 1963 by a more personally motivated album in memory of Ladygina-Kots, who had died on 2 November 1963.³⁹

Correspondence between Kots and VOKS⁴⁰ – the Soviet agency through which the gifts were sent to Britain – centred on the global relevance of the British Darwin celebrations to Soviet alignment with Darwinism, as a powerful reason for sending the crates and packages to Britain.⁴¹ Official support for the Darwin Museum as a sort of scientific ambassador to the Anglophone world of bio-science, however, apparently dated back to 1955. In this year, the *VOKS Bulletin*, a propaganda vehicle produced in English for western consumption, published an illustrated article by Kots about the Darwin Museum.⁴² This emphasized the value of using works of art to engage museum visitors, and delineated plans for the projected (but ultimately unrealized) construction of a new and more adequate building to house the Darwin Museum's collection. Most importantly, it boasted of the museum's long history of good relationships with western scientists. This latter statement was very significant in relation to shifts in the contemporary politico-scientific climate in the USSR in the mid-1950s, particularly with regard to western bio-science and Soviet interpretations of Darwinism. In effect, the article implied that there was now potential for better relations between Soviet and western bio-scientists, in which Kots and the Darwin

Museum could play a significant role. Embedded in this implication was also a signal that Lysenkoist criteria regarding Soviet bio-science were now to be seen outside the USSR as less important than they had been.

To backtrack briefly regarding the relationship of this implication to the context of the 1940s-1950s for the Darwin Museum: relations between Soviet and western scientists had been interrupted when political relations soured as a result of the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact (August 1939). During World War II the links between the Darwin Museum and its western contacts had been cut. In 1945, the eminent British bio-scientist, Julian Huxley, visited the USSR and re-forged his long-standing connection with the Darwin Museum.⁴³ When Huxley returned to Britain from his celebrated post-war visit to the USSR,⁴⁴ he wrote glowingly about the quality of the Darwin Museum's collection in the authoritative international scientific journal *Nature*.⁴⁵ Moreover, in response to Aleksandr Kots's pleas for support in re-gaining entry to western scientific discourse, Huxley enabled him to publish two papers written in 1946 in the *Journal of the Zoological Society of London*.⁴⁶ Also within the brief time-frame of 1945-46, professional communications between the Darwin Museum and the BMNH, which had existed in intensive but sporadic bursts from 1913 to c.1935,⁴⁷ were re-opened. This resulted in a shipment of rare Soviet mammalian and avian specimens exemplifying variety and variation in colouring of fur or plumage in relation to region,⁴⁸ from Moscow to London in October 1945.⁴⁹ By August 1948, however, the links between the Darwin Museum and its British contacts (and indeed, between all Soviet and western bio-scientists and institutions) had again been severed.

The reason for this was that, at the annual conference of the Soviet All-Union Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VASKhNIL) July 31– August 7, 1948, the Director of the Institute of Genetics of the Academy of Sciences USSR, Trofim Lysenko, effectively brought about the abolition of Soviet genetics research. Instead, there was to be an enforced adoption

of his own theory of ‘Michurinist biology’ – defined as ‘Creative Darwinism’ – as the exclusive future model for Soviet bio-science.⁵⁰ Lysenko’s ideas had parallels with Neo-Lamarckism and focused on the notion that permanent genetic change could be forced by changes of environment. He claimed to have authoritative support for this hypothesis from the ideas and practices of Ivan Michurin (1855-1935), a fruit-tree grafter and plant breeder,⁵¹ largely regarded in his lifetime as a ‘crank’ by Soviet geneticists.⁵² Following the VASKhNIL session, and with the personal support of Stalin,⁵³ Lysenko’s ‘Michurinist biology’, became the sole approved mode of Soviet bio-science.⁵⁴ In addition, Soviet geneticists, as well as all of the western bio-scientists who featured in the Darwin Museum’s hagiographic pantheon of monumental busts and narrative paintings – particularly William Bateson, Gregor Mendel, and also those such as Yerkes and Osborn, who had engaged with discourse on eugenics – were now to be regarded as ‘enemies’ of the Soviet Union.⁵⁵

In a forced response to the VASKhNIL outcome in August 1948,⁵⁶ rapid adjustments were made to the Darwin Museum’s displays.⁵⁷ This can be seen in a photograph from the museum archive (Fig. 8). The photograph shows a display of stuffed albinoid foxes and rabbits, flanked by busts of Lysenko and Michurin made by Vasilii Vatagin in August 1948, and features the museum’s taxidermist of small animals, Dmitri Fedulov, looking **up** at the bust of Lysenko **with apparent intense veneration**.⁵⁸ By the end of the year, the painter Viktor Evstaf’ev had produced a quantity of oil sketches for an exhibition of a series of paintings charting the life of Michurin. These works formed the basis for a new hagiographic series of paintings, which, in terms of subject-matter, were deliberately matched as far as possible with the two existing series of narrative representations about the life of Darwin by himself and Ezuhevskii. The series culminated *c.*1956 in the Darwin Museum’s display of the ‘Michurinist’ iconostasis illustrated in Fig. 9. After this point, however, the production of Michurin images ceased, and tellingly, Evstaf’ev’s next big commissions between 1956 and

1957 were for portraits of ‘Eminent Russian Darwinists’ – illustrated in an album sent to Down House.⁵⁹ These portraits included images of Nikolai Vavilov⁶⁰ and Nikolai Kol’tsov, Soviet geneticists well-known in the West, who had **died as a** result of Lysenko’s rise to power,⁶¹ but who were being **cautiously** ‘reinstated’ at the time.⁶²

The change in the Darwin Museum’s commissioning policy was driven by Nikita Khrushchev’s ‘Thaw’ period of the Cold War, Lysenko’s temporary loss of the Presidency of VASKhNIL in 1956,⁶³ and a strengthening of the moves to remake connections between Soviet and western scientists that had begun in earnest after the death of Stalin in 1953.⁶⁴ In 1955, while Kots’s article in the *VOKS Bulletin*⁶⁵ still used elements of the Lysenkoist rhetoric of what **Nikolai** Kremmentsov has termed ‘Marxist Darwinism’,⁶⁶ it was severely toned-down in comparison with the politically correct, Lysenkoist language of his lecture notes between the **late** 1948 and the early 1950s.⁶⁷ Also in Kots’s 1955 article, although a copy of the Lysenkoist display photograph shown in Fig. 8 was included, it was reversed and carefully cropped to exclude the busts of both Michurin and Lysenko.⁶⁸

It hardly seems accidental that it was in this context correspondence between Kots and the BMNH was resumed between 1955 and 1963. In 1956, for example, ten years after receiving the consignment of specimens from the Darwin Museum, the BMNH finally reciprocated by sending the Darwin Museum two crates of much needed plaster casts of paleontological specimens.⁶⁹ This apparently prompted the delivery to the BMNH of a further four crates of materials from the Darwin Museum in 1957.⁷⁰ The interchange seemingly endorsed the possibility implied in Kots’s *VOKS Bulletin* article of 1955, that the Darwin Museum could take a leading role in the re-establishment of bio-scientific relations between the USSR and the West.

The ensuing deluge of works of art and photographic albums from the Darwin Museum to Britain, indicate that with the official blessing of VOKS, Kots was taking strategic advantage not only of the new, ‘Cold War’ political context and the Darwin celebrations, but also of the museum’s renewed professional and museological relations with Britain. The aim seemed to be to establish even closer relationships with British scientists and institutions, and also to proclaim both the international status of the Darwin Museum, and of the research of its co-directors, using an extended form of the art-based cultural exchange strategy established before World War II, supported by the contextualizing evidence of the photograph albums. The temporary success of Kots’s strategy was arguably indicated by the creation of the ‘Russian Room’ at Down House in the early 1960s.

<H1>The creation of the ‘Russian Room’ at Down House

At one level, the installation of the ‘Russian Room’ c.1961 would seem to represent the fulfilment of Kots’s strategic ambitions, with the compliance of the RCSE. As such, it also might be seen to offer a sign of international recognition for the Darwin Museum that could (but did not) lead on to a deeper, permanent partnership between the two museums dedicated to Darwin, or indeed to enduring relationships with any other institution in the UK with which Kots regained contact in the period. It might even have indicated a positive appreciation of the value – aesthetic, or museological, of the works that were received from the Darwin Museum. On another level, however, given the context, there is no reason to suppose that the creation of the ‘Russian Room’ at Down House was not an equally strategic move on the part of the RCSE, albeit differently orientated to a western rather than a Soviet, politicized sense of the values associated with the exhibit.

There is a hint of this sort of strategic thinking on the part of the RCSE in a letter dated 27 February 1959 from R. S. Johnson-Gilbert, the Assistant Secretary of the RCSE, to the

Director of the BMNH, Sir Gavin de Beer,⁷¹ in which Johnson-Gilbert expressed the desire to ‘keep the museum [at Down House] alive’, by introducing novelty into the displays through exhibiting the paintings illustrated in Figs 4 and 5.⁷² Superficially, the styles and techniques of these paintings, the other paintings and sculptures sent to Down House, and indeed those illustrated in the albums were very traditional by the late 1950s, in terms of naturalistic representation and attention to physiognomical and contextual detail. In this sense, they were largely aligned with the stylistic characteristics of the other works already on display at Down House, so were unlikely to cause comprehension problems for the visitors. Moreover, as has already been argued, the subject-matter was suitably committed to the commemoration of Darwin’s career and family life, making visual homage to art works held at Down House, as well as to known photographs of Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace. Yet they were undeniably novel, both in relation to what the albums implied about the use of art in their home museum setting and, perhaps most importantly, what the albums implied about the museum’s apparent orientation to Darwin’s ideas.

Superficially, the albums showed that the art works sent to Down House signified a very different approach to structuring natural history museum displays than was used in the West, or indeed in the USSR at the time. By contrast with the Darwin Museum, for example, the array of hagiographical portrait busts in the AMNH ‘hall of fame’ **foyer** had been done away with by 1960.⁷³ The BMNH never really had such a feature, **nor had the very prestigious Zoological Museum of the Academy of Sciences USSR in Leningrad.**⁷⁴ Although the BMNH gave prime space **in its entrance hall** to Boehme’s sculpture of *Seated Darwin*, an original homage to which was commissioned by Kots from Vatagin in 1927-28, there was no extensive focus on narrative or hagiographical paintings and sculptures in its **displays – another characteristic apparently shared with the Leningrad Zoological Museum.** Arguably it was this element of extreme ‘otherness’ regarding **museum** display policy, added to the

primary fact that the works of art and supporting albums originated from behind the feared ‘Iron Curtain’, which made the exhibited gifts from the Darwin Museum exotic and topical. **They were** curiosities from a potentially dangerous and technologically advanced, but largely unknown foreign power that was currently much in the news.

The period when the contents of the ‘Russian Room’ arrived and were displayed included the failure of the Paris summit conference between the USSR, the USA, France and Britain in May 1960, the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, and the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962. On a potentially more benign note, it also included: the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty between the USSR, Britain and the USA in 1963;⁷⁵ the publication in the West of results from the three Russian ‘Sputnik’ flights;⁷⁶ as well as the huge Soviet Industrial Exhibition staged at Earls Court in 1961 and the reciprocal British trade fair in Moscow’s Sokolniki Park in the same year;⁷⁷ as well as the exchanges of art and trade exhibitions between the USSR and the USA during the period.⁷⁸

In the specific realms of bio-science and Darwinism, there was another equally topical and very powerful, potential strategic reason for the creation of the ‘Russian Room’ by the RCSE. This was connected with Lysenko’s brief resumption of the VASKhNIL presidency from 1961 to 1962, with support from Khrushchev. Western scientists and, as will be seen, some leading Soviet scientists were deeply opposed to Lysenko’s ‘Michurinist biology’.⁷⁹ Sir Julian Huxley was a particularly significant, vociferous and influential British campaigner against Lysenkoism in the journal *Nature* and elsewhere.⁸⁰ As a supporter of the Darwin Museum, he believed that Kots was ‘a real Darwinian’⁸¹ – and thus no advocate of Lysenkoism – which was probably true. Indeed, it may have been Huxley who had facilitated the publication of Ladygina-Kots’s abstract in the *International Congress of Zoology Proceedings* (1959), despite the fact that the paper had not been publicly delivered at the event in 1958, as he was involved in the Congress as the deliverer of the ‘Inaugural

Lecture'.⁸² The publication of Ladygina-Kots's abstract in this volume was also an implicit, political criticism of a regime that had refused permission for her to attend the congress to deliver the paper, as well as an important public endorsement in the West of the scientific credibility of her research in the field of animal behaviourism.

There was little in any of the albums and other works sent by the Darwin Museum to Down House – or anywhere else in Britain in this period – to gainsay Huxley's faith in the western-style Darwinist integrity of the museum or its directorate. The only image with an implicit but ambiguous link to Lysenkoism sent to Down House was Evstaf'ev's small painting of *Darwin and K.A Timiriazev* (Fig. 10). The connection, which would have been obvious to the delegations of Soviet bio-scientists who visited Down House in the late 1950s and early 1960s, related to Lysenko's exclusive emphasis on Timiriazev as the 'founder' of Russian and Soviet Darwinism, because he was the only pre-Revolutionary Russian Darwinist to engage explicitly with Marxism.⁸³ Yet in a non-Soviet context, rather than signifying alignment with Lysenkoism, the painting perhaps stood more as a tribute to the shared Russian and Soviet obsession with Darwin and Darwinism.⁸⁴ Moreover, it implicitly drew attention to the personal connections that had existed between Charles Darwin, the Russian Academy of Sciences, and pre-Revolutionary Russian scientists.⁸⁵ The artistic revelation of such historical connections, little known to a British audience, symbolically spoke of a significant precedent for closer communications between British and Soviet bio-scientists, that could be spearheaded by the Darwin Museum.

As if to support this implication, none of the albums sent to Down House gave any hint of the previously mentioned, overtly 'Michurinist' displays hastily assembled at the Darwin Museum in August 1948 and thereafter. There were no images of Lysenko, **or of Michurin and those** Soviet scientists who supported Lysenko. Instead, the album representations of 'Eminent Evolutionists of Russia' included images of recently painted portraits of Lysenko's

victims, Vavilov and Kol'tsov by Evstaf'ev, while images of 'Eminent Western Darwinists' included photographs of monumental busts by Vatagin of Hugo De Vries, William Bateson, Gregor Mendel, Wilhelm Johannsen, and Francis Galton – all of whom had been anathematized in Lysenko's 1948 speech to VASKhNIL.⁸⁶ In addition, the albums contained visual allusions to the work of another Soviet scientist criticised by Lysenko in 1948 – the research of M. M. Zavadovskii into sexual dimorphism in chickens⁸⁷ – the tangible results of which had been taxidermized and preserved at the Darwin Museum.⁸⁸ These implicitly politicized nuances of the album images might not have been obvious to the general public in Britain. They would, however, arguably have been understood by the British scientific community – including the members of the RCSE – who were by then aware of the published, translated transcript of the 1948 VASKhNIL session,⁸⁹ and hence would know the names of the Russian and European scientists that Lysenko had castigated.

The absence of overt Lysenkoist content in the albums, however, may not have been an entirely accurate representation of the contemporary displays at the Darwin Museum. For instance, it is likely that the Michurin iconostasis (Fig. 9) created in 1955⁹⁰ may still have been in place in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Lysenko and his supporters remained very influential despite his temporary loss of the VASKhNIL presidency, and Kots, always politically canny, would have been hedging his bets to preserve the existence of the Darwin Museum in a very difficult time. Thus the choice of imagery in the Darwin Museum albums sent to the UK, appears to have been strategically orientated by a form of self-censorship, to signify a lack of allegiance to Lysenko on the part of the museum and its directors.

Notwithstanding any remaining 'Michurinist' elements of the museum display, however, Kots's lack of sympathy with Lysenko as implied by the album contents, was also corroborated by foreign visitors to the Darwin Museum. In November 1959, for example, William Swinton, curator of fossil amphibians, reptiles and birds at the BMNH, visited

Moscow.⁹¹ On his return, Swinton's enthusiastic discussion of the Darwin Museum's collection as 'unique and remarkable', published in *New Scientist* on 14 January 1960, adamantly supported closer relations between British and Soviet scientists,⁹² and implicitly with those at the Darwin Museum. In doing so, he further endorsed Huxley's opinion of Kots and the Darwin Museum, and the anti-Lysenkoist impression given by the contents of the photograph albums sent to Britain.

This level of public support for the Darwin Museum by eminent British scientists is highly likely to have influenced the decision-making amongst the leading RCSE members. The leadership of the RCSE, aware that Lysenko remained a powerful, albeit increasingly contested force in the Soviet scientific realm, were antipathetic to Lysenkoism. **In 1959, correspondence between R.S Johnson-Gilbert, the Assistant Secretary of the RCSE, and the eminent surgeon and RCSE Honorary Librarian, Sir Geoffrey Keynes, indicates their distaste for contributing an illustrated article on Down House to a special Darwin centenary edition of the Lysenkoist journal *Agrobiologia*, requested by the journal's Assistant Director, E.I. Glushchenko.**⁹³ This situation, combined with the novelty and topicality of the items sent from the Darwin Museum, may have prompted the creation of the 'Russian Room' c.1961, in order to demonstrate that there were, nevertheless, 'right-thinking' and truly 'Darwinian' - that is to say, genetically-orientated Soviet scientists in the USSR.

<H1>The closure of the Russian Room 1964

The 'Russian Room' exhibit was closed down in late 1964, to be replaced by the 'Erasmus Darwin Room', a display dedicated to Charles Darwin's famous grandfather, another significant British natural historian. In the absence of sufficiently documented explanations of why this happened, this final section speculatively explores the possible, **complex**, contextual motivations for the closure, in relation to the issues of strategic value, novelty and

topicality introduced in the previous sections. It also considers the Darwin Museum's gifts of works of art in relation to constructs of the aesthetic value of Soviet art in Britain within the period, as a possible factor influencing the dispersal of the 'Russian Room's' contents into other display rooms or into storage.

As a preface to the ensuing discussion, it needs to be acknowledged that it is unclear whether the 'Russian Room' was ever intended to be more than a temporary display. Given the concerns of the RCSE expressed by Johnson-Gilbert with injecting novelty into the displays at Down House to keep it 'alive',⁹⁴ it is entirely conceivable that the 'Russian Room' was only ever thought of as a short-term, politically topical exhibition to make convenient use of a room well overdue for redecoration. In this sense, its inevitable closure at some point may have been naturally assumed, and therefore not subject to question or discussion in the RCSE records.

Such an assumption, indeed, seems implicit in the correspondence from the resident curator of Down House, Professor Hedley Atkins of Guy's Hospital, to Johnson-Gilbert between 14 September and 2 October 1964.⁹⁵ The letters merely note that the room was in serious need of re-decoration, that this should be strongly recommended at the next committee meeting in November, and that after re-decoration the room should become the 'Erasmus Darwin Room', as it would be particularly 'suitable' for this role.⁹⁶ Yet, in relation to this correspondence, even if the 'Russian Room' exhibit was conceived of as topical and ephemeral – shown for its novelty value including its anti-Lysenkoist bio-political implications – there remains the question of why this should have happened in late 1964 and not at any other time.

In relation to this date, there seems to be another strong connexion with Lysenkoism. In 1962 Lysenko permanently lost the Presidency of VASKhNIL. His ideas had been

denounced as ‘false science’ by three leading Soviet atomic physicists, Yakov Zel’dovich, Vitalii Ginsburg and Piotr Kapitsa.⁹⁷ There followed a purge of the Stalinist structures that had been put in place to control Soviet science and ensure the dominance of Lysenko’s influence. Moreover, at the General Assembly of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in June 1964, the nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov denounced Lysenko and his follower Nikolai Nuzhdin. At the time Nuzhdin was a candidate for election to the Academy of Sciences, and the result was that his application was rejected by a huge majority.⁹⁸

It must have been evident in Britain at this point that Lysenko’s period of power was over, as was confirmed by subsequent events. Khrushchev, Lysenko’s leading political supporter and fellow Ukrainian, was dismissed as the Soviet Communist Party Secretary on 14 October 1964 and the end of Lysenko’s immunity from criticism was thereafter declared by the Academy of Sciences. By early 1965, Lysenko had been removed from office at the Soviet Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Genetics,⁹⁹ which effectively put paid to Lysenkoism as a significant element in Cold War politics. Thereafter, the East/West scientific manoeuvring shifted to focus more completely on the politics of nuclear physics. After all, the latter had been a significant underlying current in the controversies over Lysenkoism, in the sense that some of the strongest oppositional voices on both sides of the Iron Curtain had been nuclear physicists rather than biologists.¹⁰⁰ These events effectively obviated whatever strategic bio-political motives may have informed the creation of the ‘Russian Room’ with its crucially contextualizing albums *c.*1961. Moreover, Aleksandr Kots had died on 17 September 1964, so any sentimental or personal motives within the RCSE for keeping the Russian Room open had also been cancelled out.¹⁰¹

Potentially, however, the paintings and sculptures remained relevant to the function of Down House as a memorial to the life and work of Darwin. By their Soviet origin the works were still intrinsically topical, as the USSR continued to be spectacularly newsworthy

throughout the 1960s. The works also conceivably retained a level of novelty value, in the sense that it was unusual for Soviet art work to be displayed in the West for more than a few weeks. It would seem, however, that the RCSE did not place much value on the Soviet paintings and sculptures as works of art *per se*, by comparison with some of the other works by western artists that were held in the collection, which may have put their continued display as a group into question after the fall of Lysenko.

In October 1960, for instance, Mrs Dagmar Cooper, a Russian emigré connected with the Borough of Hove in East Sussex, wrote to Down House concerning a proposed exhibition of Russian art to be held in the seaside town of Hove in June–July 1961. She had heard that the museum might have some ‘Russian art treasures’ such as ‘paintings and sculptures’, and inquired whether they could be loaned for display in the exhibition.¹⁰² By this time both the large paintings of Darwin and Wallace (Figs 4 and 5) and the two sculpture busts of *Young Charles Darwin* and *Young Emma Darwin* (Figs 1 and 2) had certainly arrived at Down House, and probably some of the smaller paintings as well. Indeed, these may already have been exhibited in the Down House display. Yet, the terse reply from Johnson-Gilbert stated baldly that there were ‘no Russian art treasures at Down House’.¹⁰³ This reply may have been given to avoid the extra administrative trouble that would have been incurred by the RCSE in lending the works to a short-term provincial exhibition. Although in 1960 it did lend a painting by Joseph Wright of Derby to a British Council exhibition of British art shown in Moscow and Leningrad, Down House was not strictly an art museum, and its curators and administrators were scientists. But there may have been other reasons why the Soviet works were not regarded as ‘art treasures’ by the RCSE.

One reason for this may be that the paintings and sculptures sent to Down House via the official channel of VOKS effectively counted as Soviet Socialist Realist art. This sort of art had received largely negative British critical responses in relation to the exhibition

Russian Painting from the 13th to the 20th Century at the Royal Academy in 1959,¹⁰⁴ that were expressed in a wide range of newspapers as well as other media.¹⁰⁵

Soviet Socialist Realism was essentially a mode of cultural practice for a nation that no longer had an independent, consumerist art/culture market. The four principal tenets were laid down in 1934: ideological correctness, party-mindedness, orientation towards the working class, and truthfulness (in Russian, *ideinost'*, *partiinnost'*, *klassovost'* and *pravdivost'*).¹⁰⁶ In pursuit of these principles, the subject matter depicted in Soviet art was theorised as primarily needing to be legible to the least educated elements of society. It also needed to be educational, optimistic/aspirational, and thus present a vision of Soviet society, not as it was at present, but rather as it should be in the future, when it had been totally renovated by socialism.¹⁰⁷ The most celebrated works in this genre over the period 1934 to the 1970s tended to be large-scale narrative representations (*kartiny*), and monumental sculptures of 'heroes'.

Soviet Socialist Realism, now acknowledged as a significant art movement of the 20th century, was never, as largely perceived by western critics, particularly during the Cold War, 'stylistically monolithic',¹⁰⁸ or intrinsically poor quality because of its political orientation.¹⁰⁹ Rather, as clearly pinpointed by the title and content of the catalogue for the exhibition *Socialist Realisms: Soviet Painting 1920-1970* (Rome, 2011), it fluctuated in stylistic terms according to the political climate of the day, although extreme or non-objective abstraction remained a forbidden area. In order to ensure a level of ideological control over Soviet art products, artists were, however, required to join artists' unions, as this became the only means of access to materials with which to make art.

The art works sent to Down House by the Moscow Darwin Museum were implicitly items of Soviet Socialist Realist art. At the most basic level, Evstaf'ev had to be a member of

the Moscow Union of Artists, in order to get hold of art materials to make the paintings and sculptures in the first place, and his usage of these had to be approved by the Party, as well as by the Darwin Museum. The works clearly had been approved, otherwise they would not have been exported to the UK via VOKS. In addition, Darwin was highly venerated within the USSR as a scientific 'hero', and all of the works were educational in intention. Also, they were 'truthfully' based, as far as was possible, on existing historical, photographic and artistic representations of Charles Darwin, Emma Darwin, Alfred Wallace, Down House and so on. So the works were effectively aligned with the main principles of Socialist Realism, as well as being products of a skilled artist who was supported by both the Soviet art system, and the Moscow Darwin Museum.

In their favour, contextually the works principally lacked the propagandistic element of 'historicism'¹¹⁰ typical of Soviet Socialist Realist art that British critics of the Royal Academy 1959 exhibition had particularly disliked.¹¹¹ Moreover, Evstaf'ev's works were focused on portraiture, an element of Soviet art that found critical approval in the British context of 1959.¹¹² Yet, perhaps crucially, the cautious level of impressionistic brushwork in the paintings, and gestural inscription in the sculptures, was not as bold as in some works shown in Soviet art exhibitions during Khrushchev's 'Thaw'.¹¹³ So the naturalistic style of Evstaf'ev's paintings and sculptures, may have been seen by the RSCE to support the general British art critical opinion, that in this respect, contemporary Soviet art was at least fifty years out of date in relation to both western and early Soviet avant-garde art.¹¹⁴ Because of the spread of such views in contemporary newspapers, it is possible that the RCSE officers, while probably conservative in their personal artistic tastes, nevertheless may have been influenced to see no aesthetic value in any sort of contemporary Soviet art, including the works that had been donated to Down House by the Darwin Museum. Additionally, one of the problems with the Darwin Museum materials, perhaps, was that its own art-based display regime was

entirely unique, thus incomprehensible to the British. Ultimately, for whatever reasons, once the fall of Lysenko was assured, a few of the paintings (including Figs 4, 5 and 6), while afforded low financial values, were dispersed to other rooms, where they would have been less clearly identifiable as Soviet works from the Darwin Museum, while the rest of the art works and albums were stored, as they still are, out of the public eye.¹¹⁵

<H1>Conclusion

Works of art were an officially acceptable currency of cultural exchange in the Cold War period, as is borne out by the examples of the Anglo-Soviet exchange of art exhibitions in 1959-60, which involved works from the established collection at Down House. The Moscow Darwin Museum seems to have engaged wholeheartedly with this possibility, based on a relatively successful, pre-World War II strategic use of such works to commemorate and celebrate professional and private correspondence with western scientists and institutions. This strategy was revived and elaborated upon in the late 1950s to early 1960s through gifts of paintings, sculptures and photograph albums to UK institutions, particularly Down House, in relation to a number of Darwin-related celebrations. The contents of the ‘Russian Room’ established at Down House mainly underlined shared Anglo-Soviet narratives on the life and ideas of Darwin, while Evstaf’ev’s painting *Darwin and K. A. Timiriazev* (Fig. 10) also indicated a significant historical precedent for the currently desired closer links between British and Soviet bio-scientists. The Darwin Museum materials also symbolically commemorated successful collegial communications between the Kotses and British scientists, including papers published in British scientific publications, and the exchange of specimens between the Darwin Museum and the BMNH. For a brief time from c.1961 to 1964 the ‘Russian Room’ appeared to indicate the fulfilment of Kots’s aim of re-inclusion in western scientific discourse, and the possibility of a leading role for the Darwin Museum in encouraging closer communications between Soviet and British bio-scientists.

There are two levels of deep irony, however, that pervade the fleeting history of the ‘Russian Room’ at Down House. One of these relates to the ‘Lysenko affair’. On the one hand, the context of Khrushchev’s ‘Thaw’ and Lysenko’s temporary loss of the VASKhNIL presidency from 1956 to 1961 provided the conditions that enabled the Darwin Museum to send the gifts of albums and works of art to Down House, the RCSE and BMNH, as well as elsewhere in Britain. Yet, on the other hand, it was the period when Lysenko regained the VASKhNIL presidency between 1961 and 1962 that seemed to prompt the RCSE to use in a strategic way the materials sent from the Darwin Museum, to create the ‘Russian Room’ at Down House in order to bring topicality and novelty to the displays. The exhibit exemplified the fact that, despite Lysenkoist propaganda, there were ‘right-thinking’ Soviet scientists who were engaged with western-style discourse on genetics and Darwinism. This assumption about Aleksandr Kots and the Darwin Museum was supported by the self-censored absence of overtly Lysenkoist material in the albums and art works sent to the UK. It was also corroborated by the eminent British scientists Julian Huxley and William Swinton, both personally acquainted with Kots and the Darwin Museum displays. By autumn 1964, however, when Lysenko’s final downfall appeared inevitable, the ‘Russian Room’ was closed. In effect, the very circumstances that should have enhanced the significance of the Darwin Museum in Britain, as a focus of viable bio-scientific liaison with the USSR, **apparently** caused its eclipse from British public knowledge.

The second level of irony regarding the ‘Russian Room’, concerns the potential signification of the paintings and sculptures – the ostensible primary currency of exchange – when exhibited in a British context. In their Soviet cultural context, these were perceived **by Kots as works of functional fine art that were highly valued in relation to his own museological concerns. Moreover, the works and their functions within the museum had implicit approbation from the state, not only in the very practical sense that the museum**

artists were allowed access to the requisite materials, but also because the works were legibly narrative, one of the requirements of Socialist Realism. Such values were arguably successfully communicated by the works with the supporting evidence of the albums.

Yet, in relation to the developing, authoritative and largely antagonistic, contemporary western discourse on Soviet Socialist Realism, the communication of these values potentially identified the works sent by the Darwin Museum as lacking in aesthetic value.¹¹⁶ As argued here, this may have impacted marginally on the closure of the ‘Russian Room’. It may also have influenced the initial selection of a small number of Soviet works to be dispersed into other display rooms at Down House – where they were no longer so clearly identified as Soviet in origin – as well as the eventual removal of all of the Soviet works from the publicly accessible displays.

In the circumstances, the relationships between the Darwin Museum and the RCSE/Down House were inevitably politicized on both sides. Ultimately, there is a sense in which this cultural exchange was as genuine as possible in the given context, and is a rich and complex episode in the history of the Cold War in Britain that has undeservedly fallen into obscurity.

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Captions **amended**

Fig.1. Photograph of Aleksandr Kots with busts of Emma and Charles Darwin by Viktor Evstaf'ev ready for shipping from the Darwin Museum, late 1958-early1959 (A.E. Kohts, Album, (1960), EHDHA P2 37 88203384). By permission of English Heritage.

Fig. 2. Undated photograph of Viktor Evstaf'ev, *Bust of Young Emma Darwin*, 1958, plaster, 68 x 69 x 37 cm, and *Bust of Young Charles Darwin*, 1958, plaster 69 x 57 x 38cm, *in situ* at Down House, Kent (RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/3). From the Archives of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

Fig. 3. Photograph of the 'Russian Room' at Down House early 1960s (A.E. Kohts, Album dated November 19 (1960), LSLA LS MS 638, photo no.10. By permission of the Linnean Society of London.

Fig. 4. Viktor Evstaf'ev, *Charles Darwin in His Study*, 1958, oil on canvas, 109 x 82.5cm. Down House Collection, Downe, Kent. © Historic England Archive.

Fig. 5. Viktor Evstaf'ev, *Portrait of Alfred Wallace*, 1958, oil on canvas, 108 x 82.5cm. Down House Collection, Downe, Kent. © Historic England Archive.

Fig. 6. Viktor Evstafiev, 1948-58, copy of M. Ezuchevskii, *Darwin's First Encounter with a Tier Lander [Tierra del Fuegian]*, 1920, oil on paper. Down House collection, Downe, Kent. © Historic England Archive.

Fig. 7. Darwin Museum display on 'The New Stone Age', sculptures and paintings mainly by Vasilii Vatagin (seated in the display) c.1920, with inset photograph of Aleksandr Kots (A.E. Kohts, Album, (1960), (EHDHA, P2 3788203384). By permission of English Heritage.

Fig. 8. Photograph of taxidermist Dimitri Fedulov with display of variation in domestic and farmed fur-bearing animals, overlooked by busts of Lysenko and Michurin by Vasili Vatagin, with a quote from Michurin, c. August 1948. Archive of the State Darwin Museum, 57 Vavilov Street, Moscow.

Fig. 9. Alexander Kots and Nadezhda Ladygina-Kots with a group of school teachers, flanked by the busts of Lysenko [left] and Michurin [right] and portrait of Michurin [centre], mid 1950s. Archive of the State Darwin Museum, 57 Vavilov Street, Moscow.

Fig. 10. Viktor Evstaf'ev, *Charles Darwin and K.A. Timiriazev*, 1948-58, oil on paper, c.30 x 15cm. Down House Collection, Downe, Kent. © Historic England Archive.

Notes and references

¹ The Royal College of Surgeons of England eventually took over the museum, before the passing it on to the British Museum (Natural History) in the 1980s. It was acquired by English Heritage in 1996: retrieved from <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/home-of-charles-darwin-down-house/history/>. English Heritage (formerly the Ministry of Works) is a British national body that maintains and runs historic buildings for public access.

² See, 'Viktor Eustaphieff 1916-1989', Art UK, retrieved from, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/search/actor:eustaphieff-viktor-19161989>. It is interesting to note that the number of the Soviet works displayed on the website (originally only the two big portraits) has increased in response to my research in this area.

³ NB. Library of Congress transliteration has been used for all materials in Russian written by Aleksandr Fedorovich Kots and his wife Nadezhda Ladygina-Kots. In their correspondence with and publications for English speakers, however, their surname was largely transliterated as 'Kohts'. In such communications Kots chose to give his second (patronymic) name as 'Eric'. Kots also occasionally chose to call himself 'Alexander Eric Coates'. All references to A.E. Kohts or A.E. Coates given in this article should be seen as written by or to A.F. Kots. To make things even more complicated, in the correspondence with the RCSE, Kots also anglicised his wife's name to 'Esperantia Coates' (and so did she) – 'Esperantia' being a Europeanised translation of 'Nadezhda', both names meaning 'hope'. In the endnotes 'Esperantia Coates' signifies Nadezhda Ladygina-Kots.

⁴ P. Simpson, 'Beauty and the Beast: Imaging Human Evolution at the Moscow Darwin Museum in the 1920s', in F. Brauer and S. Keshavjee, eds, *Picturing Evolution and Extinction: Regeneration and Degeneration in Modern Visual Culture*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing (2016), pp.157-178.

⁵ For the Russian C19th, and Soviet obsession with Darwin and Darwinism see for example: A. Vucinich, *Darwin in Russian Thought*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1988); D. Todes, *Darwin Without Malthus: The Struggle for Existence in Russian Revolutionary Thought*, New York: Oxford University Press

(1989); P. Simpson, 'Imagining Post-Revolutionary Evolution', in Barbara Larson and Fae Brauer, eds, *The Art of Evolution: Darwin, Darwinisms and Visual Culture*, Dartmouth, New England: University Press of New England, (2009), pp.226-261.

⁶ Other British recipients of similar gifts included the British Museum of Natural History (BM(NH)), Christ's College Cambridge, the Linnean Society of London, Sir Charles Darwin and Julian Huxley. Not all of these gifts were enthusiastically received and some of the art works have so far proved untraceable.

⁷ See note 1.

⁸ There is not enough accurately dated material in the Down House or Darwin Museum archives to do this, but that is not to say that more accurate data may not yet turn up in other, not yet identified archival or published sources.

⁹ I have not, so far, been able to discover any contemporary published reviews or historical accounts of the 'Russian Room' at Down House, apart from the data in the archives I have cited.

¹⁰ Initially sent to the BM(NH) in late 1958 – early 1959, they were given to Down House on 'indefinite loan' by consent of the BM(NH) Trustees on 21 March (1959): R. S. Johnson-Gilbert, letter to Sir G. de Beer, February 27 (1959), Royal College of Surgeons of England Archive (RSEA), RCS-MUS/14/9; R. S. Johnson-Gilbert, Letter to Sir G. de Beer, April 7 (1959), RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9; G. de Beer, Letter to R. S. Johnson-Gilbert, 11 March (1959), RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9; G. de Beer, Letter to R. S. Johnson-Gilbert, 6 April (1959), RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9. Both of the paintings now hang in the Down House 'Boardroom', an area which is not open to the general public.

¹¹ RCSE RCS- MUS/14/3.

¹² Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace, 'On the Tendency of Species to Form Varieties; and on the Perpetuation of Varieties and Species by Natural Means of Selection', Linnean Society of London, 8 August (1858), retrieved from Wiley Online Library, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1096-3642.1858.tb02500.x/abstract>. Debate has raged for years over which of the two scientists actually invented the idea of natural selection that is has been attributed to Darwin. The most recent trajectory of this debate is exemplified by Charles H. Smith, 'Wallace, Darwin and Ternate 1858', *The Royal Society Journal of the History of Science: Notes and Records*, 8 August (2014), retrieved from <http://rsnr.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/68/2/165>.

¹³ V. Udal'tsova 'Mikhail Dimitrivich Ezuchevskii', in *Gosudarstvennyi Darvinovskii Muzei Moskva: Sokrovishcha russkogo iskusstva*, Moscow: Belyi gorod (2007), p. 28.

¹⁴ English Heritage Down House Archive (EHDHA), HOMS List of Russian works (undated).

¹⁵ Even after the deaths of Ladygina-Kots in 1963, and of Kots in 1964, their vision lived on, and is still alive in the displays and policies of the current State Darwin Museum, which is now one of the foremost natural history museums in Russia. Large numbers of art works by Vatagin and other museum artists of the past, as well as creations by the earliest museum taxidermists are still integral parts of the contemporary Darwin Museum displays.

¹⁶ A. F. Kots, *Muzei evoliutsionnoi istorii moskovskikh vysshikh kursov za 1913-1914 god* [The Museum of Evolutionary History of the Moscow Higher Courses [Institute] for 1913-1914], Moscow : (no publisher given), (1914); A. E. Kohts, 'The Museum Darwinianum on the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation by Professor Alexander Kohts, Dr. Sc (Biology), founder and director of the Museum Darwinianum', *VOKS Bulletin* 6 no. 95 (1955), pp. 28-32, EHDHA P2 37, 88203381, 88203383, 88203390. This was apparently the only mode in which the Darwin Museum operated in the Soviet period.

¹⁷ A. F. Kots, 'Darvinovskii muzei do oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii 1907-1917' [The Darwin Museum up to the October Revolution 1907-1917], in *Darvinovskii Muzei. 100 Let so dnia osnovaniia 1907-2007* [The Darwin Museum. 100 Years Since the Day of its Foundation, 1907-2007], ed. N. I. Tregub, *Trudi gosudarstvennogo Darvinovskogo muzeiia* 11, Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi darvinovskii muzei (2007), pp. 18-19.

¹⁸ See: Bridgeman Images, https://www.bridgemanimages.com/en-GB/search?filter_text=Fremiet+jARDIN+DES+PLANTES&filter_group=all#close .

¹⁹ See A. Hurel, 'The paleoanthropologist and the artist (1)', *Arts and Societies*, Seminar 1 (undated), accessed 29 June 2016, retrieved from, <http://www.artsetsocietes.org/a/a-hurel.html>.

²⁰ A. P. Gindart, 'Fleshing out the museum: Fernand Cormon's painting cycle for the new galleries of comparative anatomy, paleontology and anthropology', *Nineteenth Century Artworlds* 7 no. 2 (2008,), retrieved from, <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn08/38-autumn08/autumn08article/92-fleshing-out-the-museum-fernand-cormons-painting-cycle-for-the-new-galleries-of-comparative-anatomy-paleontology-and-anthropology>.

²¹ See Viktor Vasnetsov, *Stone Age Feast*, 1883, State Historical Museum Moscow, retrieved from, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%D0%9A%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B9_%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BA._%D0%9F%D0%B8%D1%80%D1%88%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE.jpg .

²² See 'The World of Charles R. Knight', retrieved from, <http://www.charlesrknight.com/AMNH.htm>.

²³ A. E. Kohts, Album inscribed 'To Mr. Charles Darwin with profound respect and unbounded admiration', EHDHA P2 49 88203380, (n.d. 1950s-early 1960s).

²⁴ Illustrated in the red photographic album dated 1917-1947 but also containing images from the 1950s, *Museum Darwinianum*, BMNHA MSS Mus 8 Vols. (undated).

²⁵ Bateson was in the USSR as part of a delegation of British scientists from the Royal Society, who had been invited to participate in the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of the Russian Academy of Sciences. A. E. Kohts, Letter to William Bateson, *Royal Society Visit to Russia, John Innes Centre Archive, Norwich, UK (JICA), G6e - 4*, William Bateson Papers, (undated, 1925).

²⁶ A. E. Kohts, Letter to H. F. Osborn (undated, 1920s-early 1930s), Arkhiv gosudarstvennogo darvinovskii muzeia (AGDM) fol. 492, o.10141, ed.khr.1239.

²⁷ 'Leading Eugenists', Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Image Archive of the American Eugenics Movement, undated), retrieved from <http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/html/eugenics/static/themes/14.html>.

²⁸ A. E. Kohts, correspondence with colleagues at the American Museum of Natural History, AGDM fol. 376, 492-4, o.10141, ed.khr.1239, and fol. 1077-81, o.12497, ed.khr.1239, (undated, 1920s-1930s).

²⁹ Such engagement is supported by the presence of editions of the *Russian Eugenics Journal* in the library of the Darwin Museum as well other materials relating to eugenics in the Kotses' private library catalogues: A. F. Kots, handwritten personal library catalogue, 4 vols, (undated), AGDM, fol. 1243, o.0.21, ed.khr.107; I. P. Kalacheva, *Arkhivnyi fond Ladygina-Kots, Nadezhda Nikolaevna (1889-1963)* [The Archive Fond on Ladygina-Kots, Nadezhda Nikolaevna (1889-1963)], *Opis 1*, 7 October 2010, pp. 286-8.

³⁰ *A Decade of Progress. Third International Congress of Eugenics, American Museum of Natural History, New York City, August 22 – September 23, 1932* Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company (1934), p. 487.

³¹ A.E. Kohts, letter to W. K. Gregory, 9 November 1934, AGDM, fol. 12497, o.1079, ed.khr.1239; W. K. Gregory, letter to A. E. Kohts, 7 January 1935, American Museum of Natural History Archive (AMNHA) MS G7441. William King Gregory Correspondence 1920-47.

³² Published in the USSR in 1935, and in English translation in 2002. N. N. Ladygina-Kohts, *Infant Chimpanzee and Human Child*, ed. F. de Waal, trans. B. Vekker, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press (2002).

³³ A. E. Kohts, N. N. Ladygina-Kots, and R. Yerkes, correspondence, (undated/varied dates late 1920s-1942), AGDM fol. 12497, o. 650, 651, 653-655, 647-649, ed. khr.1304; fol. 10141, o. 502- 504, ed. khr.1304.

³⁴ R. Yerkes, Letter to A. E. Kots, 30 January 1930, AGDM fol. 502, o.10141, ed.khr.1304.

³⁵ N. N. Ladygina-Kots, album inscribed 'To the library of Down House in memory of the great naturalist philosopher, Charles Darwin, founder of comparative psychology, from a modest investigator of this field of science. Dr N. Ladygina-Kohts, Moscow Museum Darwinianum', 16 July 1961, EHDHA P2 47 88203381. She was not allowed by the Soviet authorities to attend and give her paper in person, but the abstract was published in the Congress *Proceedings* in 1959. N. N. Ladygina-Kohts, 'The handling of objects by primates in the light of anthropogenesis', in *Proceedings: XVth International Congress of Zoology, London, 16 – 23 July 1958*, London: XVth International Congress of Zoology, section X, paper 21, ed. H.R. Hewer, and N.D. Riley (London, 1959), pp. 855-7, with the cryptic rider: 'Author not present. Paper included here to complete the symposial analysis', p. 855. The album also contains an offprint of another paper in Russian, published in the proceedings of the Institute of Genetics' Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences USSR in 1961. N. N. Ladygina-Kots, 'Darvinizm i problema proiskhozhdeniia soznaniia' [Darwinism and the Problem of the Origin of Consciousness] *Darvinizm zhivet i rastaetsiia* [Darwinism lives and grows], Akademiia nauk SSSR institut genetiki institut filosofii, (Moscow, 1961), pp. 191-202.

³⁶ The congress was attended by over 1,900 international scientists from various countries including the USSR and the Soviet bloc. C.F.A. Pantin, 'The International Zoological Congress: some reflections', *New Scientist*, 31 July 1958, pp. 535-6.

³⁷ The congress formed the high point of a series of commemorative events organized in London by the Royal Society, the Linnean Society and the Geological Society, which included an exhibition of 'Darwiniana' and 'Wallaceana' at the Linnean Society's premises at Burlington House. Pantin, op. cit. (note 29). The exhibition formed the setting for the Congresses' evening receptions, and was also available to delegates during the day. Hewer and Riley, op. cit. (note 28), p. 7.

³⁸ E. N. Pavlovskii, two albums inscribed 'From E. N. Pavlovsky 1963'. EHDHA P2 31 88203389 and P2 42 88203388.

³⁹ A. E. Kohts, Album, *In Memoriam: Esperantia Coates, Doctor of Biology, Foundress of the Department of Comparative Psychology at the 'Museum Darwinianum' of Moscow and at the Institute of Philosophy at the Academy of Sciences USSR 2.11.63*, (1963), RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/29. This was accompanied by a seemingly unfulfilled request for an obituary to be published in Anglophone scientific publications. A.E. Kohts., Letter to Lady Jessie Dobson, 12 November (1963), RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/29.

⁴⁰ VOKS, the acronym of the Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoi svyazi s zagra nitsei (All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries). VOKS were officially in charge of cultural relations between the USSR and the West.

⁴¹ A. F. Kots, letter to Tatiana Mikhailovna (VOKS), undated, late 1950s, AGDM, fol. 251, o.12497, ed.khr.1244; A. F. Kots, letters to N. Gromyko (VOKS), undated, late 1950s, AGDM fol. 290, 292, 299, o.10141, ed.khr.1248, undated, late 1950s; A.F. Kots, 2 letters to the Obshchestvo kul'turnoi svyazi (Society for Cultural Relations), (undated, late 1950s c), AGDM fols 702-3, o. 2116, ed.khr.1244; A. F.Kots, letter to Tatiana Mikhailovna (VOKS), undated, late 1950s AGDM fol. 251, o.12497, ed.khr.1244; N. Gromyko, VOKS letter to the USSR – Great Britain Society, 13 February 1959, AGDM fol. 293, o. 10141, ed.khr. 1248.

⁴² Kohts, op. cit. (1914 note 16), pp. 28-32.

⁴³ The relationship had been initiated in early 1928 through the auspices of the secretary of the British Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR, Catherine Rabinovich. A. E. Kohts, letter to Catherine Rabinovich, (undated, 1928), AGDM fol. 244, o.12497, ed.khr.1292. It had been strengthened by Huxley's visit to the

museum in 1931. Kohts, op. cit. (1955 note 16), p. 31; J. S. Huxley, Letter to A. E. Kots, 10 January 1932, AGDM fol. 142, o.12497, ed.khr.1203.

⁴⁴ N. Krementsov, 'A "Second Front" in Soviet genetics: the international dimension of the Lysenko controversy', *Journal of the History of Biology* 29 no. 2 (1996), pp. 236-7.

⁴⁵ J. S. Huxley, (1945). 'Science in the USSR: evolutionary biology and related subjects', *Nature* 156 (1 September 1945), pp. 254-6. doi: 10.1038/156254a0.

⁴⁶ K. R. Dronamraju, *If I am to be Remembered: The life and work of Julian Huxley*, Singapore, London: World Scientific Publishing Co. (1993), p. 111; A. E. Kohts, 'Analogical variations in the plumage of domestic fowls and grouse: a contribution to the problem of the inter-relation of Darwinism and genetics', *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* 117 no. 4 (1948), pp. 742-7; A. E. Kohts, 'The variation of colour in the common wolf and its hybrids with domestic dogs', *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* 117 no. 4 (1948), pp. 784-90. Both articles carried the legends 'Received October 17, 1946', and 'Submitted through the British Council and published at their request'.

⁴⁷ The State Darwin Museum Archive catalogue has many pages listing correspondence with the BMNH in sporadic bursts: starting with correspondence with Kots in 1905, then with Kots in relation to the museum in 1913, before 1918, 1923, 1931-2, 1935, and then 1945-6, as well as 1956-60, 1962-3.

⁴⁸ This related to the focus of Kots's personal research as illustrated in albums sent to Down House. A. E. Kohts, album inscribed 'To the Royal College of Surgeons with Respectful and Cordial Greetings from the Founder (1905) and Director of the Museum Darwinianum of Moscow, Prof. Dr Alexander Eric Kohts/Coates, Moscou', (undated, late 1950s), EHDHA P2 46 88203379; Kohts, op. cit. (note 23).

⁴⁹ C.G. Goodwin, Letter to A. E. Kohts, 10 January 1935, AGDM fol. 494. o.10141. ed.khr.1244; G. de Beer, letter to A. E. Kohts, 31 October 1945, AGDM fol. 1173, o.12497.ed.khr.1244; F. Stahlschmidt & Co. (general shipping and forwarding agents and 'official agents to the British Museum of Natural History'), letter and inventory on behalf of the BMNH to A. E. Kohts, 26 September 1956, AGDM fol. 11171, o.12497, ed.khr.1244; A. F. Kots, draft list of preserved mammalian and avian specimens to be sent to the BMNH, (undated, mid-late 1950s), AGDM, Card Index, Scientific-Historical Archive, fol. 19, 2358, kod.2.4, 1990.

⁵⁰ T. D. Lysenko, 'The situation in biological science: address delivered to the VASKhNIL session, 31 July 1948', in T. D. Lysenko, *Agrobiology. Essays on Problems of Genetics, Plant Breeding and Seed Growing*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House (1954), pp. 515-54.

⁵¹ Lysenko, op. cit. (note 50), pp. 521, 527-30, 532-54.

⁵² D. Joravsky, *The Lysenko Affair* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 40-53.

⁵³ K.O. Rossianov, 'Editing nature: Joseph Stalin and the New Soviet biology', *Isis* 84 no. 4 (1983), pp. 728-45.

⁵⁴ Joravsky, op. cit. (note **).

⁵⁵ Lysenko, op. cit. (note 42); E. Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars* (Princeton, 2006), p. 47.

⁵⁶ A. F. Kots, 'Doklad na rasshirennom zasedanii itogam sessii VASKhNIL po dokladu akademika Lysenko "O polozhenii v biologicheskoi nauke"' (paper to the enlarged meeting on the results of the VASKhNIL session, through Academician Lysenko's paper 'The situation in biological science'), August 12, (1948), AGDM fol. 1014, o.101, ed.khr.33, pp.1-3; A. F. Kots, 'Ob itogakh sessii vsesoiuznoi Akademii s.kh. Nauk po dokladu Akademika Lysenko; "O polozhenii biolog. Nauka" v primenenii k eksponature Gosudarstvennogo Darvinovskogo muzeia"' [Regarding the outcomes of the session of the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Science, according to Academician Lysenko's paper 'On the situation in biological Science'], in application to the displays of the State Darwin Museum'), 12 August 1948, AGDM, fol. 1014, o.101, ed.khr.33,1-6.

⁵⁷ For a detailed account of this see: P. Simpson, 'Lysenko's "Michurinism" and Art at the Moscow Darwin Museum 1935-1964', in William deJong-Lambert and Nikolai Krementsov, *The Lysenko Controversy as a*

⁵⁸ The Lysenko and Michurin busts were commissioned by Kots from Vatagin in response to the VASKhNIL outcome, and this was emphasized on 12 August 1948 in Kots's speeches to the museum council and staff (see note 54). Vatagin was able to make busts quickly, so it is likely that this display was in place by the end of August 1948. Certainly, it would have been politically expedient to have done so. A. F. Kots, 'Vasilii Alekseevich Vatagin i ego raboty v Darvinovskom muzee 1902-1952' [Vasilii Alekseevich Vatagin and his work in the Darwin Museum 1902-1952], (undated, 1952?), AGDM, fol. 10141, o.623, ed.khr.215, p. 43.

⁵⁹ *Museum Darwinianum Moscow* (1959), photo album, Linnean Society of London (LSLA) LS MS 639.

⁶⁰ Vavilov had studied briefly with William Bateson who was also reviled by Lysenko.

⁶¹ Kol'tsov apparently died of a 'stroke' in 1940, while Vavilov died of starvation in Saratov [gaol](#) in 1943: P. Pringle, *The Murder of Nikolai Vavilov* (New York, 2011), pp. 36-7.

⁶² Pringle, op. cit. (note 61), p. 339; V. N. Soyfer, 'The consequences of political dictatorship for Russian science', *Nature Reviews Genetics* 2 (2001), pp. 723-9. doi: 10.1038/35088598; N. Roll-Hansen, 'A new perspective on Lysenko', *Annals of Science* 42 (1985), pp. 262-78.

⁶³ C. Zirkle, 'L'Affaire Lysenko', *Journal of Heredity* 47 no. 2 (1956), p. 47.

⁶⁴ N. Kremontsov, 'Darwinism, Marxism and genetics in the Soviet Union', in *Biology and Ideology from Descartes to Dawkins*, ed. D. Alexander and R. Numbers (Chicago and London, 2010), pp. 215-46; A. Bone, 'Introduction', in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, ed. A. Bone, vol. 28: *Man's Peril 1954-1955* (Abingdon and New York, 2003), no page numbers.

⁶⁵ Kohts, op. cit. (1955 note 16).

⁶⁶ Kremontsov, op. cit. (note 64).

⁶⁷ See for example, A. F. Kots, 'Teziso soderzhanii dvukh lektcii. Lektsiia I. Osnovy darvinizma i michurinskaia biologii: Lektsiia II. Proiskhozhdenie cheloveka v svete darvinizma' [The theses of two lectures. Lecture I. The Bases of Darwinism and Michurinist Biology. Lecture II. The Origin of Mankind in the Light of Darwinism], AGDM, fol. 12430, o.6, ed.khr.39, pp.1-2.

⁶⁸ Kohts, op. cit. (1955 note 16), p.29.

⁶⁹ Stahlschmidt & Co. op. cit (note 49).

⁷⁰ Kohts, op. cit. (note 23).

⁷¹ Formerly one of Julian Huxley's students.

⁷² R.S. Johnson-Gilbert, op. cit. (27 February note 10).

⁷³ This included the destruction of the bust of Galton in 1960, which had languished in store-rooms after the eugenics exhibition at AMNH in 1932. G. E. Pindar, 'Memorandum', 5 March 1930, AMNHA, William King Gregory Papers, Box 48, Folder 17; W. Hersey, 'Memorandum', 13 February 1935, AMNHA William King Gregory Papers, Box 48, Folder 17; K. Benker, (1960). 'Memorandum to Dr James A. Oliver on the Report of the Committee for Evaluation of Disposable Materials', (1960), AMNHA, 1232, 1, 1958-1960.

⁷⁴ **There is limited photographic evidence that this museum had few paintings or sculptures but rather vast arrays of class cabinets containing taxidermised creatures or skeletons: Album given to William Bateson by the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Leningrad, 1925, William Bateson Archive, John Innes Centre, Norwich, Royal Society Visit to Russia, G.6.e – 172.**

⁷⁵ Editorial, '1960: East-West Summit in Tatters after Spy Plane Row', BBC News Archive for 17 May 1960, retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/17/newsid_2512000/2512335.stm; M. Heller, and A. Nekrich, *Utopia in Power: A history of the USSR from 1917 to the present*, trans. P. B. Carlos London, Melbourne, Auckland, Johannesburg: Hutchinson Ltd (1986), pp. 564, 573, 578.

⁷⁶ Editorial, 'Sputnik results', *New Scientist* 4 no. 89 (1958), p. 537.

⁷⁷ V. Clarkson, '“Sputniks and Sideboards”: Exhibiting the Soviet “Way of Life” in Cold War Britain 1961-1979', in *A People Passing Rude: British Responses to Russian Culture*, ed. A. Cross (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 285-300, retrieved from <http://openbookpublishers.com/htmlreader/PPR/chap20.html>.

⁷⁸ D. Cauter, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New York, 2003), p. 40; U.S. Department of State, '50th Anniversary of American Exhibits to the USSR' (2009), accessed 29 June 2016. <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/rs/c26472.htm>.

⁷⁹ W. de Jong-Lambert, 'Biological Utopias East and West: Trofim D. Lysenko and his critics', in *Divided Dreamworlds*, ed. P. Romijn *et al.*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2012), pp. 33-52.

⁸⁰ See for example J. S. Huxley, 'Soviet Genetics: The Real Issue', *Nature* 163 (25 June 1949), pp. 974-82.

⁸¹ J. S. Huxley, letter to H. J. Muller, 12 December 1956, in Dronamraju, *op. cit.* (note 46), p.109.

⁸² Hewer and Riley, *op. cit.* (note 35) pp. 11-29.

⁸³ N. Krementsov, *op.cit.* (note 64).

⁸⁴ See A. Vucinich, *Darwin in Russian Thought*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press (1989).

⁸⁵ See for example C. Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, vol. I (London, 1881), pp. 205-6, accessed 29 June 2016, <http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?pageseq=1&itemID=F937.1&viewtype=text>; A.I. Tauber and L. Chernyak, *Metchnikoff and the Origins of Immunology: From Metaphor to Theory* (New York, 1991), p. 214; Pavlovskii, *op. cit.* (note 38).

⁸⁶ *Museum Darwinianum*, *op. cit.* (note 59).

⁸⁷ Lysenko, *op. cit.* (note 50), pp. 525-6.

⁸⁸ Kohts, *op. cit.* (note 23).

⁸⁹ *The Situation in Biological Science: Proceedings of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences USSR, Session July 31-August 7, 1948, Verbatim Report*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House (1949).

⁹⁰ Iu.V. Shubina, *Vek darvinovskogo muzeia v faktakh i fotografiakh (A Century of the Darwin Museum in Facts and Photographs)*, Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi darvinovskii muzei (2008), p. 72.

⁹¹ At the time, Swinton was in the USSR as a guest of the USSR Academy of Sciences, to receive a medal commemorating the centenary of the publication of *Origin of Species*, at a special ceremony at Moscow University.

⁹² W. E. Swinton, 'Some impressions of a Visit to the USSR', *New Scientist* 7 no. 165 (1960), pp. 94-5.

⁹³ E. I. Glushchenko, letter to the RSCE on behalf of the editorial board of the journal *Agrobiologia*, 3 February 1959, RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9; R. S. Johnson-Gilbert, letter to Sir Geoffrey Keynes, 27 February 1959, RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9; Sir Geoffrey Keynes, letter to R.S. Johnson-Gilbert, 3 March 1959, RCSEA, RCS-

MUS/14/9. It is interesting that, perhaps to preserve their good names in British biological discourse, Keynes and Johnson-Gilbert suggested that this be done – if at all – either by Lady Nora Barlow, Darwin’s niece, or by Lady Jessie Dobson, Curator of the RCSE Hunterian Museum and general secretarial administrator for Down House. A telegramme held at the RCSE, suggests that it was Dobson who provided the copy to the Soviet journal: I. Varuntsiian (Editorial Director of *Agrobiologiia*) telegramme in Russian and transcript in English, 30 December 1959, RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9.

⁹⁴ R.S. Johnson-Gilbert, op.cit (notes 10 & 72).

⁹⁵ H. Atkins, letter to R. S. Johnson Gilbert, 14 September 1964, RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9; H. Atkins, letter to R. S. Johnson Gilbert, 2 October 1964, RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9.

⁹⁶ Atkins, op. cit. (note 95).

⁹⁷ Kapitsa, an eminent Soviet physicist, had spent time at Cambridge (UK) working with Ernest Rutherford at the Cavendish Laboratory. In 1934, however, after a trip back to Russia to see his mother, his return to the UK was denied by the Soviet authorities, but was able to maintain contact with his western colleagues: D. Shoenberg, ‘Piotr Leonidovich Kapitza (sic) 9 July 1894-8 April 1984’, *Biographical Memoires of Fellows of the Royal Society*, vol.31, November (1985), p.352. Although Lysenko’s triumph over the biological sciences was followed in January 1949 by a full scale attempt by the Soviet Academy of Sciences to gain control over the activities of physicists and curtail their relationships with western colleagues, this was apparently largely unsuccessful because of State concern with building nuclear weapons, for which it needed the cooperation of Soviet physicists: Heller and Nekrich, op.cit. (note 75) pp.484-486. This may help to explain why the Soviet physicists/atomic scientists felt they were in a better position to combat Lysenkoism than the bio-scientists.

⁹⁸ J. Mosterin, ‘Social factors in the Development of Genetics and the Lysenko affair’, in *Epistemology and the Social*, ed. E. Agazzi *et al.*, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi (2008), p. 152.

⁹⁹ Mosterin, op. cit. (note 98).

¹⁰⁰ See for example: E. Rabinowitch, ‘The Purge of Genetics in the Soviet Union’, *American Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 5 (1949), p.130; Anonymous, ‘History of the Genetics Conflict’, op. cit., pp. 131-40; S. Wright, ‘Commentary by American geneticists: Dogma or Opportunism?’, op. cit., pp.141-2; L.C. Dunn, ‘Commentary by American Geneticists: Motives for the Purge’, op. cit., pp. 142-3; T. Dobzhansky, ‘The Suppression of a Science’, op. cit., pp.144-6; K. Sax, ‘Commentary by American Geneticists: Genetics and Agriculture’, op. cit., pp.143, 146; M. B. Crane, ‘Lysenko's Experiments’, op. cit., pp. 147-9, 156; R. B. Goldschmidt, ‘Research and Politics’, op.cit., pp. 150-55.

¹⁰¹ It is clear that there was a fondness, at least within the female coterie around the RSC, for the Kotses. One example of this, is the partial record of exertions to send a telegramme to Nadezhda Ladygina-Kots on the occasion of her 70th birthday: Margaret Keynes, letter to Lady Jessie Dobson, with a transcription of a letter from A.E. Kohts, 15/05/59, RCSEA, RCS-Mus/14/29; Lady Nora Barlow, letter to Lady Jessie Dobson, Whit Sunday 1959, RCSEA, RCS-Mus/14/29.

¹⁰² D. Cooper, Letter to the Caretaker and Warden of Down House, 15 October 1960, RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9. The exhibition, finally entitled *Russian Art and Life*, involved Mary Chamot, a Russian emigré and Tate Gallery curator, who had contributed to a special edition of the *Burlington Magazine* on Russian and Soviet art in 1959: Editorial, *Burlington Magazine* 101 no. 671 (1959), p. 43 (special issue devoted to Russian art and artistic activity in the USSR with contributions from David Talbot Rice, Mary Chamot, Tamara Talbot Rice and Hans Werther Grohn). Chamot was also to be involved in the British Council exhibition *British Art 1770-1960*, shown in Moscow and Leningrad in 1960, to which Down House lent *The Blacksmith’s Shop* (1771) by Joseph Wright of Derby: M. Mcleod, (Fine Arts Department British Council), letter to R. S. Johnson-Gilbert, 15 February 1960, RSCEA, RCS-MUS/14/9; L. Somerville, letter to R. S. Johnson-Gilbert, 2 June 1960, RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9; J. S. Acton (Fine Arts Department British Council) Letter to R. S. Johnson-Gilbert, 18 August 1960, RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9; R. S. Johnson Gilbert, letter to Sydney Robinson, 1 June 1960, RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9.

¹⁰³ R.S. Johnson-Gilbert, Letter to D. Cooper 27 October (1960), RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/9.

¹⁰⁴ David Caute's extensive research on the reviews of the exhibition cites only two enthusiasts for Socialist Realism, the painter Sir Alfred Munnings and the ex-director of the Barber Institute, Professor Thomas Bodkin: Caute, op. cit. (note 78) p. 532.

¹⁰⁵ Caute, op.cit (note 78, 104) pp. 33, 530, 533-4, 596; Editorial, *Burlington Magazine*, op. cit. (note 102), p. 3; 'At the Royal Academy – seven hundred years of Russian painting', *Illustrated London News*, 3 January (1959), pp. 15-18.

¹⁰⁶ M. Bown, '1928-1932', in *Socialist Realisms: Soviet Painting 1920-1970*, Milan: Skira Editiones, S.p.A (2011), p.38.

¹⁰⁷ A.A. Zhdanov, 'Soviet Literature – The Richest in Ideas The Most Advanced Literature', in H.G. Scott, ed. *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934; The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism*, London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd. (1935 reprinted 1977), p.21.

¹⁰⁸ M. Bown, Zelfira Tregulova, Evgenia Petrova, 'Foreword', in *Socialist Realisms*, p.18.

¹⁰⁹ Christina Kaier, 'Fairy Tales of the Proletariat, or, Is Socialist Realism Kitsch', in *Socialist Realisms*, pp.183-189.

¹¹⁰ E.A. Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press (2007), pp.23-24, 303.

¹¹¹ See for example, Editorial, *Burlington Magazine*, op. cit. (notes 102, 105), p.18.

¹¹² Editorial, op.cit. (notes 102, 105, 111) p.18.

¹¹³ M. Bown, '1954-1964', in *Socialist Realisms*, pp.97-113. See also: S. E. Reid, 'Toward a New (Socialist) Realism', in *Russian Art and the West: A Century of Dialogue in Painting, Architecture and the Decorative Arts*, ed. R. P. Blakesley and S. E. Reid, Dekalb, IL: 2007), pp. 217-21; A. Hilton, 'Holiday on the Kolkhoz: Socialist Realism's Dialogue with Impressionism', in op.cit., pp. 195-216; M. Cullerne Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, New Haven and London: (1998), pp. 308-9.

¹¹⁴ Caute, op. cit. (note 69), p. 533. See also M. Cullerne Bown, and B. Taylor, eds, 'Introduction', in *Art of the Soviets: Painting, sculpture and architecture in a one-party state 1917-1992* (Manchester and New York, 1993), pp. 7-8; C. Lindey, *Art in the Cold War* (London, 1990); F. Frascina (ed.), *Pollock and After: The critical debate* (London, 1985).

¹¹⁵ By 1990, only six of the larger paintings, including Figs 4, 5 and 6 were recorded by a Sotheby's insurance inventory as being on public display in the 'Charles Darwin Room' and the 'Drawing Room'. Eight of the smaller works had been relegated to the 'Curator's Office', and there was no mention of the remaining two small paintings and the sculpture busts. All of the works recorded were given low market values. Sotheby's, *Inventory of Down House for insurance purposes* (1990), RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/24; Sotheby's, *Additions to Sotheby's catalogue and inventory of Down House* (undated), RCSEA, RCS-MUS/14/24.

¹¹⁶ See for example: Alastair Sooke, 'The Royal Academy Epic Russian Revolution Exhibition', *The Telegraph*, 6 February 2017, retrieved from, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/what-to-see/royal-academys-epic-russian-revolution-retrospective-just-history/>; Sarah Kent, 'Revolution: Russian Art 1917-1932, Royal Academy. An Exhibition of Russian Art purged of the Artists who Promoted the Revolution', *The Art Desk* (2017), retrieved from, <http://www.theartdesk.com/visual-arts/revolution-russian-art-1917-1932-royal-academy> .