The Baron Stieglitz Museum in St. Petersburg

This thesis will focus on the Baron Stieglitz Museum which was attached to the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. The museum was founded after it turned out that the objects of France, presented at the Great Exhibition, were superior to those of all other countries.

In Europe, several decorative art museums were founded after the International Great Exhibition of 1851 held in London. It turned out that the Industrial Revolution and the abolition of the guilds had had more impact on the decorative arts than anticipated. Aesthetically and technically there was a decrease in quality. The newly founded schools were supposed to educate craftsmen and future artists. Collections of decorative art were assembled which served the students as proper examples from which they could learn and develop their own objects. These collections expanded and came to stand on their own which required new museum buildings. The decorative art museums and schools from London, Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg and Moscow have been examined in this thesis. These five have influenced the development of the St. Petersburg school and museum of Baron Stieglitz architecturally and educationally. This thesis will begin with a historiography which shows that not much research has been carried out on this subject other than in Russia. Then, chapter two discussed the foundation of the museum and the historistic architecture. Also, Russia’s development of a national style, the kustar art movement and its connection to the Stieglitz Museum will be treated. Chapter three discusses the European context of the decorative art museums and in what way the schools and museums in London, Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg and Moscow have inspired the Baron Stieglitz Museum and School. Chapter four elaborates on the collection of the Baron Stieglitz Museum with a focus on eighteenth-century French furniture, unique tapestries, five paintings by G.B. Tiepolo and a collection of Russian tile stoves. Chapter five gives more information about the changing politics at the beginning of the twentieth century and what the consequences were for the Baron Stieglitz Museum.

Finally, in chapter six, an epilogue is provided where more information about the current state of affairs at the Baron Stieglitz Museum is given and chapter seven gives a conclusion where the research questions are answered. The chapter about the collection is devoted to its formation as it was before the 1920s. The collections of Baron A.L. Stieglitz and A.A. Polovtsov were the start collections of the museum, but unfortunately it is not known what they consisted of. The objects were not acquired systematically, but came to the museum through donations or bequests. Also A.A. Polovtsov and M.E. Mesmacher made large acquisitions which they bought mostly abroad. They had good relationships with several antiquarians from whom they bought regularly. They also bought at auctions which probably had been the case with the five large Tiepolo paintings. The Baron Stieglitz Museum has been formed through events that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Nationalism has been of importance to the foundation of the school, since Stieglitz was sincerely concerned with the development of the crafts in Russia. It has also been of importance to the architecture of the museum building. After the Napoleon wars the patriotic feelings of the people were stimulated and when their confiscated objects returned home (after being part of the Musée Napoleon) national museums were founded. The historicist style has been frequently employed to illustrate the summits of history in one building. Halls in museums were decorated in different styles to suite the objects on display. When the visitor went through the museum he was able to determine his own national legacy and compare it to those of the other countries all over the world. The South Kensington Museum was founded after it turned out that the objects of France, presented at the Great Exhibition, were superior to those of all other countries. England believed they should have been the best nation instead. The South Kensington Museum is throughout the nineteenth century considered the most important school and museum and has served as an example for many design schools and decorative art museums that followed. The Baron Stieglitz Museum has never been able to reach the level that the South Kensington Museum and the other museums had in the European economical market. The Baron Stieglitz Museum focused mainly on the national Russian market. The position the Baron Stieglitz Museum held within the other European decorative art museums has been minor even though the collection and building were not inferior to those of the others. Political factors have been of lesser influence to the Baron Stieglitz Museum as the cultural factors. Nationalism and the results of industrialism have played a major role and were the main reasons for the foundation of the school and museum. They have influenced the Baron Stieglitz Museum in a positive way. The political factors on the other hand caused the downfall of the museum. Due to the wars and the changing perspectives in Russia, the museum and its collection were neglected. At some point, the museum needed money to pay for restoration, but was not able to. In 1923 it was decided that the collection came under the supervision of the State Hermitage and in 1927 it was decided that all 12,000 objects should be transferred to the main premises. At the State Hermitage they were divided among the departments and other museums. After the Second World War, some objects returned but only the least valuable ones and copies of original works. The Baron Stieglitz Museum in its original form had ceased to exist two decades earlier: a new museum had come in its place.
Hidden gems in Saint-Petersburg, Russia. Here’s the list of TOP 10 not the most popular, but from this no less exquisite places in St. Petersburg, which we recommend to visit.

Hidden gems in St. Petersburg, Russia. Brusnitsyn mansion, the richest industrialist of St. Petersburg in the mid-19th century is an architectural monument of 1884 in an eclectic style. It is worthwhile to come here with an excursion, at least in order to learn the legend of the mystical mirror. Here he and other graduates of the School of Technical Drawing Baron Stieglitz created unique interiors, equal in artistic qualities to the interiors of the Winter Palace and other well-known Petersburg palaces. This museum is not as widely known as the Hermitage or the Russian Museum.