

Faberge Flowers

Marilyn Pfeifer Swezey

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Marilyn Pfeifer Swezey : Faberge Flowers before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Faberge Flowers:

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Exquisite craftsmanship of nature's beauties By Rebecca Huston Just about a year ago, I went to a special exhibition in Newark, New Jersey that had artifacts from the private domain of Russia's last Tsar and his family. As I strolled among the clothing and photographs and paintings, there was one object that stood in solitary splendour in a glass case, occupying a place of honor. The object was a bouquet of lilies of the valley, arranged in a beautifully woven basket, nestled in moss. But unlike real flowers, this was all crafted in gold, pearls and diamonds, and jade. It's so carefully made that you can see the veining in the leaves, the delicate strands of moss, and so vivid that if there was a breeze, you would swear that the arrangement would quiver. Presented to the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna as a coronation gift, it sat on her desk until the Revolution. But it wasn't the only object that she owned that was crafted by Faberge. Every well-to-do and aristocratic home had frames, silver, and other designs created by Faberge and his firm in their homes. One of the most popular of these were the small floral arrangements, usually just one or two sprigs of a particular flower in a vase of rock crystal. In *Faberge Flowers*, Marilyn Pfeifer Swezey explores these tiny treasures. Most are only a few inches high at the most, and delightful to look at. With other researchers and others that have fallen under the spell of Faberge's work, she takes a look at the works of this craftsman. Each essay is accompanied by splendid photographs of the flowers -- and a few of the famous Imperial Eggs -- which made the book worth purchasing. One of the top researchers on Faberge, Alexander von Solodkoff, writes the first essay, cleverly disguised as the introduction, where he talks about the fondness of Russians

for flowers, and the cultural significance of them, especially with their associations with spring and Easter. He also talks about the varied collectors of Faberge, both before the Russian Revolution and after."A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Foever:" The Faberge Flowers, by the editor of the book, Marilyn Pfeifer Swezey, goes into the history of these little objects of art. Known as "flower studies," these were also the rarest of the various objects d'art that the firm crafted. Only a hundred or so of these fragile objects are known to have survived to now, and when they rarely come to the open market, they fetch astronomical prices. Swezey discusses the materials used -- most remarkable is the actual dandelion fluff used to create the dandelion flowers, each held in place with minute wires -- along with the Art Nouveau style which drew inspiration from nature. For the Russian court, it was a breath of fresh air, and reaction to the at times overbearing magnificence of the most wealthy court in Europe. Also covered are the various exhibitions that were held of the Faberge flowers as well. An Astonishing Discovery by Ulla Tillander-Godenhjelm discusses how the fall of the Soviet regime in Russia has led to the discovery of the original designs and notes that were made in the creation of the flowers. She shows the finished object side by side with the designer's notes, and the details on both are what takes my breath away when I look at them. The author also goes into the decision making process and the steps in crafting the finished product, from the selection of the stones to the making of the rock crystal vases that formed the base of many of the flowers. "His Greatest Patroness:" Queen Alexandra and Faberge's Flowers by Caroline de Guitaut talks about the largest collection of Faberge outside of Russia, and the woman who started it. The elder sister of Empress Marie, Queen Alexandra was very familiar with Faberge's work, collecting small hardstone animals as well as more than twenty-three of the floral studies. There are also notes about the others who have added to the Faberge objects in the Royal Collection today. Faberge's London Branch and the London Ledgers by Tatiana Faberge is the shortest of the essays, just covering how Faberge opened the London branch of the firm, and how the surviving business ledgers have proved to be valuable in tracking down where many of the objects are today. In Search of Faberge's Flowers in Russia by Valentin V. Skurlov is translated by Dudley Hagen, and talks about the collectors in Russia before the Revolution. Not only discussing the various collectors, he also mentions that having a knowledge of flowers was a sign of being educated, and that the flowers were quite an acceptable present when a piece of jewelry would be 'awkward.' Many of these objects vanished in the confusion of the Revolution, and their whereabouts are unknown. Another tidbit is that Skurlov talks about the various floral firms that supplied many of the hothouse flowers for the aristocracy -- and as models for Faberge's artisans. Using notes and ledgers, Skurlov gives a list of the various flowers purchased or given by the Romanovs, and among the photographs can be seen one creation nestled in the original case. Faberge's Flowers: Science in the Service of Art by Mark A. Schaffer talks about his own love of Faberge (his firm A La Vieille Russe sells jewelry and often Faberge objects in New York City) and the little touches and detail that Faberge put into his designs, showing fruits and flowers in every stage. Every photograph is annotated, and the essays have plenty of notes attached. There is an extensive index and while the book is not cheap -- the cover price is over 30\$US -- it is worth it to add to any collector who is interested in Russian art, Faberge, or who simply delights in beautiful things. This is one of the best books about the Faberge workshops, and gives plenty of information that hasn't been revealed before. The photographs are what make this worth looking at -- they are very sharp, clear and evocative, each one a serene portrait of nature caught in time and craftsmanship. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By CatM Interesting coffee table book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful book and well worth the price! By Laurie Bentley Beautiful book. I can't imagine where one would find better representations of the Faberge flowers. Well worth the money.

Faberge Flowers tells the story of Faberge's botanical pieces for the first time. This beautiful book, written by a group of scholars in the field of Russian decorative arts and cultural history, illuminates the lost world of Faberge's collectors, and presents a selection of superb examples of these objects of fantasy. Richly illustrated with photographs of Faberge work now in museums and private collections, including that of Queen Elizabeth II of England, the book will enthrall lovers of the decorative arts and will fascinate anyone interested in European cultural history.

From Publishers Weekly At one time, the royal families in Europe and Russia were accustomed to having their every whim satisfied, even apparently impossible desires like freezing and preserving nature in its most perfect form. This collection of photographs and essays documents Carl Fabergé's attempts to do just that for the Russian Imperial Family and other aristocrats throughout Europe. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Fabergé (who's best known for his extravagant jeweled Easter eggs) created delicate replicas of pansies, lilies of the valley, violets and other flowers and berries that were most often destined for glass display cabinets in the royal palaces of London and Moscow. In somewhat dry terms that draw heavily on sales ledgers and collection inventories, Swezey, a noted authority on the Russian Imperial Family, and a handful of decorative arts experts chronicle the history of the sculptures, from their genesis to the disappearance of many during the outbreak of the Soviet revolution. The lush color photos allow readers to get closer to the pieces than they could ever hope to otherwise, so close that one can see the real fuzz used to augment an intricately crafted dandelion puff and get a sense of how the jars were fashioned in order to look like they were filled with water. Sadly, the book is short on insights into how these impressive pieces of art were made. Instead,

the text concentrates on Fabergé's relationship with his royal patrons. Although the text is no match for the crisp, bright illustrations and likely won't interest many outside a small group of curators and collectors, the images are an eye-pleasing introduction to Fabergé's talent for reproducing, and sometimes improving upon, natural beauty. 78 illustrations, including 70 full-color plates. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Marilyn Pfeifer Swezey is an independent scholar of Russian decorative arts and cultural history. Alexander von Solodkoff is a historian of Russian decorative arts. Joyce Lasky Reed is the president of the Fabergé Arts Foundation of Washington, D.C., and St. Petersburg, Russia.