Lecture 2: Russian Art in the Age of Tolstoy

In this lecture we examine Russian Realism in the nineteenth century through portraiture, landscape and history painting. In 1870 a group of fourteen artists broke away from the Imperial art establishment to form a movement that would produce some of the greatest pictures in the history of Russian art. These students disagreed with the conservative attitudes of the St Petersburg Academy of Arts and sought instead to represent topics that they believed were more relevant to everyday Russian life. Their primary ambition was to create art that would become an active voice in the call for social reform and was easily accessible in its realist style. To fulfil these aims the artists took to a Nomadic lifestyle, taking their pictures away from the traditional gallery setting and into rural areas of Russia, earning them the title of "The Wanderers" (*'peredvizhniki'*).

This lecture will explore how the Wanderers presented their homeland and brought these depictions to a wider Russian public. In order to do this the wider historical context of the group will be explored and links will be made with their contemporaries including the famous authors Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Leo Tolstoy. We will also take a closer look at a number of the Wanderer's greatest masterpieces by artists such as Ilya Repin, Isaac Levitan and Ivan Shishkin and consider how their paintings communicated the group's core aims.





