

## THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

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**Abstract:** The article provides information about some of the most interesting museums of Uzbekistan. The history of their creation is revealed, the features of museum architecture and interiors are described, and materials on the expositions and collections of the museums of the 19th–21th centuries are presented.

**Key words:** Amir Timur Museum, Museum of Applied Art, I. V. Savitsky Museum, history, expositions, cultural heritage.

The role of museums in modern society is enormous; they contribute to the preservation and interpretation of cultural heritage. Museums act as intermediaries between culture and society, where different forms of art intersect, and where traditions, continuity, and contemporary culture intertwine. Museums are places where history and art meet, preserving fascinating stories and the heritage of our ancestors [6].

In Uzbekistan, approximately 140 museums of various types have been established, including art, historical, and regional museums. The country has registered more than 8,200 tangible cultural heritage sites, which include museum-reserves as well as architectural monuments.

Museums in Uzbekistan play a significant role in preserving the rich cultural heritage, educating the youth, and fostering respect for the nation's history.

One of the most interesting museums in Tashkent is the Museum of the History of the Timurid Dynasty. It is one of the oldest museums in Central Asia, housing many rare exhibits that tell the story of the rise, development, decline, and transformation of civilizations from the 5th century BCE to the present day.

The Amir Timur Museum, operating in Tashkent since 2006, is one of the city's landmarks. The round building with a large blue dome is an example of exquisite architecture, executed in the style of Eastern design. The building's perimeter is adorned with elegant columns supporting the roof, and the museum's windows feature arched niches. [4].



**Fig. 1, 2. Amir Timur Museum – general view, interior**

The richly decorated façade of the building is surrounded by beautiful fountains. Many residents of Uzbekistan and tourists visit the Amir Timur Museum, which houses about three

thousand exhibits narrating the centuries-long history of Uzbekistan. Visitors can see paintings, explore historical documents detailing the life and activities of Sahibqiran, and view unique manuscripts, weapons, ancient clothing, household items, and various coins in the museum halls.

One of the important contemporary urban planning issues is also the preservation and use of historical and cultural heritage. In Uzbekistan, considerable attention is given to these matters, as it is a country with one of the oldest civilizations [8].

The preservation of architectural monuments is an essential component of society. In Uzbekistan, there are many examples of using architectural monuments for various purposes. One successful example is the **Museum of Applied Arts of Uzbekistan**, which was established on the basis of the Polovtsov Palace, once owned by the Russian diplomat Alexander Polovtsov, who held architecture and art in high regard [2].



**Fig. 3, 4, 5. State Museum of Applied Arts of Uzbekistan (former Polovtsov Palace). Tashkent, Uzbekistan, late 19th century. Interior**

Alexander Alexandrovich Polovtsov (1867–1944) came from the family of the influential statesman Senator Alexander Alexandrovich Polovtsov. His family was among the wealthiest in Imperial Russia. After retiring, he entered service in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. At the end of the 19th century, he undertook several work trips to various countries and regions. During one of these trips, he first visited Tashkent, fell in love with the city at first sight, and decided to settle there. Later, when he was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a diplomatic official under the Governor-General of Turkestan in 1903, Polovtsov decided to purchase a house in the city. He entrusted this matter to the diplomat's personal secretary, M.S. Andreev, an expert in Eastern languages who later became a renowned orientalist and a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan. They chose a house belonging to the Tashkent merchant Ivanov, one of the largest capitalists of Turkestan, owning numerous enterprises. Under the guidance of architect A.A. Burmeister, the house's interior was slightly modified [7].

The construction of the house combined European and Eastern architectural styles. The façade was designed in an Eastern style, featuring carved wooden columns, painted ceilings and walls, and ganch (plaster) work. Russian influence is particularly noticeable in the interior, including fireplaces and small pools [5].

The building is an example of architectural and decorative art, with a richly decorated interior. The architectural decoration, ganch carving, wood carving, and painting were executed by Uzbek folk craftsmen: Usta T. Arslankulov, A. Kazymdzhanov (Tashkent), Usta Shirin Muradov (Bukhara), Usta A. Palvanov (Khiva), Usta Abdulla (Rishtan). From the 1930s, various organizations operated in the building, including a training center for ganch carving, metal embossing, and an embroidery workshop. During the second half of the 20th century, numerous restoration and reconstruction works were carried out. Between 1984 and 1987, during a new round of restoration, the architectural décor was returned to its exhibition appearance. The complex was also renovated in 2010.

The history of the Museum of Applied Arts of Uzbekistan dates back to 1927, when the first exhibition of Uzbek craftsmen's works was organized here. Ten years later, in 1937, the House of Handicrafts Museum was opened, and today it houses the State Museum of Applied Arts of Uzbekistan, which in 1997 was transferred to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The museum's collection comprises more than 7,000 exhibits. Several hundred of the most outstanding items are displayed across 13 halls with 20 thematic collections, showcasing over 50 types of folk crafts. These works are created by folk masters, often from hereditary families, following the traditions of several generations of professional craftsmen, producing unique applied art pieces [3].

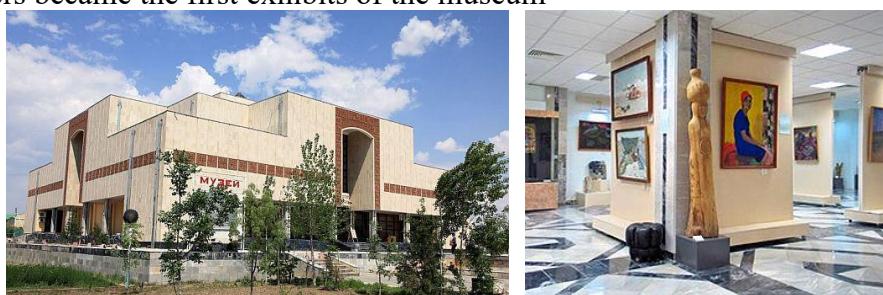
Currently, the State Museum of Applied Arts and Crafts operates on the basis of the Museum of Applied Arts of Uzbekistan in Tashkent. The museum building has been renovated, a new exhibition hall and administrative building were created. Thanks to the new museum, it is possible to preserve, promote internationally, and continue scientific research, as well as pass traditional crafts and applied arts to future generations [9].

In 1966, the unique I.V. Savitsky Museum was opened in Nukus, where, thanks to enormous efforts, a large collection of works by Russian artists and representatives of the avant-garde—who had suffered during political upheavals and were harshly rejected by many members of the creative intelligentsia—found a safe place.

The history of the museum began when Igor Savitsky, after moving from Moscow to Nukus, actively participated in archaeological research and the ethnography of the Karakalpaks, collecting a collection of ethnographic materials from Karakalpakstan. In parallel, Savitsky began collecting contemporary art. He managed to gather a large number of artworks, which later formed the basis for the museum. Passionate about painting, Savitsky also worked with Karakalpak artists, and through interaction in the art community, he conceived the idea of creating a museum.

In 1966, Igor Savitsky convinced the city authorities that the museum was essential. A building was allocated for this purpose, and Savitsky was appointed director. At his own expense, he carried out repairs in the building and began creating exhibitions, collecting works by various unknown and unrecognized artists.

Works by artists such as A. Isupov, L. Kramarenko, N. Ulyanov, R. Falk, M. Voloshin, R. Mazel, A. Volkov, M. Kurzin, N. Karakhan, U. Tansykbayev, V. Ufimtsev, V. Midler, and many others became the first exhibits of the museum



**Fig. 6, 7. Savitsky Museum. General view, interior**

Thanks to the diverse development, tireless energy, and love of I.V. Savitsky, who was nicknamed the “Central Asian Tretyakov,” he was able to create in a remote and little-known region one of the best collections in the world. The Savitsky Museum collection is recognized as the second most significant and extensive in the world among collections of Russian avant-garde works, and it is considered the best art collection in the Asian region [1]. Some masterpieces from the museum’s collection have been exhibited in recent years in Switzerland, France, and Italy.

The museum houses rescued works of avant-garde artists, applied art by local artists, Savitsky’s personal works, and many other materials, totaling around 90,000 exhibits. This unique collection represents one of the last promoters of Russian art in Central Asia. In 1984, I.V. Savitsky passed away, and the museum director became M.M. Babanazarova, the daughter of the Karakalpak scholar M. Nurmukhamedov, a friend of Savitsky.

Since September 2003, the museum has been located in a new three-story building, equipped by international organizations in accordance with modern requirements for the storage and exhibition of museum objects. In January 2025, G. Izentaeva became the director of the State Art Museum named after I.V. Savitsky in Nukus (Karakalpakstan), replacing T. Mkrticheva, who led the museum from 2021 until December 2024, when her contract expired. Izentaeva had previously held this position from 2017 to 2021.

Since Uzbekistan gained independence, special attention has been given to improving the activities of the republic’s museums. In 1994 and 1998, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted decisions on measures to improve museum activities, creating the “Uzbek-Museum” fund, organizing the Tashkent State Museum of History of Uzbekistan, the State Museum of the Timurid Period, the Museum in Memory of the Victims of Repression, and the Archaeological Museum in Termez. Additionally, in the Presidential decree of January 12, 1998, “On the Radical Improvement and Advancement of Museum Activities,” the necessity of enhancing the museum system in Uzbekistan was emphasized. It highlighted the importance of preserving, studying, enriching, exhibiting, and promoting the rare and invaluable exhibits stored in museum collections to the world. These exhibits demonstrate steps toward independence, the rich history of the people, and contribute to raising public awareness, patriotism, and cultural identity.

Today, museums not only preserve history but continue to develop, becoming more accessible through modern technologies such as interactive exhibitions and virtual tours [6]. Moreover, adapting architectural monuments to modern conditions contributes to their preservation and extends their lifespan for many more years.

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