

Ann Thorson Walton's excavation from historical oblivion of . . . the International Decorative Arts Exposition held in St. Petersburg takes us back to an era when international exhibitions were spheres of major influence and innovation . . . vibrant arenas for political and economic competition, dedicated to the idea of progress and offering visions of future prosperity. In an era of growing nationalism they were also venues at which each nation was expected to establish its distinctive and inimitable national identity. . . . They were, as the Russian critic Vladimir Stasov put it, "international examinations" that helped determine each country's ranking in the family of nations and maintain the international balance of power through peaceful displays of art and industry. . . . In this painstaking reconstruction of the St. Petersburg exposition . . . the concerns, ambitions, and ideals of the six participating nations are preserved with remarkable freshness after a century.

. . . Ann Thorson Walton returns us to the age of the great exhibitions, when the decorative arts—whether made by hand or machine, peasant or gentlewoman, designed in historic styles or new—still functioned as highly effective pawns in the complex game of international commerce and national self-presentation.

*From the foreword by Wendy Salmond*

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Ann T. Walton received her Ph.D. in Art History from the University of Minnesota and has served the field as curator, editor, and consultant. She is the author of *Ferdinand Boberg, Architect: The Complete Work* (1994) and has also written about the Swedish section in the 1902 Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte Decorativa Moderna in Turin and the Swedish and Finnish pavilions in the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris.