

22.07.2026

Museum of Brands, History and Packaging Design: from Moscow to Sergiev Posad

“Forgotten brands come to life here,
and behind each box or bottle lies a full-fledged
human destiny, full of risk, passion and love for Russia”

Museum of Brands, History and Packaging Design in Sergiev Posad is a formidable gallery that features packaging of famous confectionery, perfume, food and other products dating back to the XIX and XX centuries, vivid examples of marketing and advertising technique, as well as items of unique artistic design.

In the second half of the 1990s, the idea of creating a Packaging Museum was born in the editorial office of the magazine "Container and Packaging". Even then, the first exhibits appeared in the archive of the magazine – unique samples of packages of the XIX – early XX centuries, as well as their analogues produced in the USSR throughout its existence. Igor Smirenny, Editor-in-chief of the magazine "Container and Packaging", became the founder of the museum. From 1999 to 2011, the exhibition operated in the center of Moscow, in one of the rooms of the Polytechnic Museum until its closure for

© MOSCOW FORESIGHT - 2026. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

reconstruction. After 11 years, in 2022, the renovated museum resumed its work in the city of Sergiev Posad.

Over the years, the Museum's exhibits have been showcased at various international packaging industry exhibitions in Moscow, Milan (Italy), Poznan (Poland), Düsseldorf (Germany), and several other venues. The magazine's staff, together with their partners, prepared and published several monographs dedicated to the history of this specific business, including "Two Centuries of Russian Labels", "Beer of the Russian Empire", "The Other Life of Packaging", "Moscow on Packages and Labels", and the terminological dictionaries "Packager's Lexicon" and "Dictionary of Packaging Designer Terms".

© MOSCOW FORESIGHT - 2026. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



© MOSCOW FORESIGHT - 2026. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The Museum of Brands, History, and Packaging Design is unique since preserves living evidence of how Russian and foreign entrepreneurs not only filled the market with products, but also turned their business into a true art form. The museum features a theatre poster that still carries the scent of perfume, candy compositions that were sold using boxes that could be hung on the wall after their contents were consumed, and exquisite bottles that are true works of art that reflect the soul and character of their creators. Special attention in the collection is given to bottles for alcoholic and soft drinks, which before the revolution were made in non-standard shapes. For example, they were made in the shape of bears, balalaika players, attractive girls, and even the Eiffel Tower!

The XIX century was an era of dizzying changes, a time when brave adventurers, magicians of their craft, and talented businessmen came to Russia to create brands that would outlive them. In early 2026, the museum collaborated with the staff of the magazine "Container and Packaging" to organize a retrospective exhibition titled "A Heart Given to Russia: Foreign Entrepreneurs of the XIX Century."

The XIX-century Russia was a land of contrasts, where the crunch of a French baguette was intertwined with the roar of Donbas mines, and the scents of foreign perfumes were more intoxicating than Russian vodka. At that time, Russia was a canvas on which foreigners painted their destinies with bright colors. The scents of perfumers Rallet, Brocard, Bodlot, Lemercier, Siou, and others – French by birth but Russian in spirit – hovered over Moscow like memories of the Parisian spring.

Those were those gallant heart-beaters who brought the art of perfumery to Russia. The famous houses of Brocard and Co. and Rallet and Co. (known as Krasny Oktyabr and Svoboda during the Soviet era), founded by Frenchmen, became the Russian trendsetters in the world of perfumes and soaps. Their names sounded like a spell, opening doors to a world where every note was a declaration of love, a promise of passion, and a whisper of mystery.

© MOSCOW FORESIGHT - 2026. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



© MOSCOW FORESIGHT - 2026. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

At the same time, the sweets of Russian pastry chefs from Germany, such as Eynem, Ding, Renome, Flei, Tide, and Bejo, were like forbidden fruit to the public. The XIX century in Russia was a time of change, contrasts, and extraordinary lives. Many foreigners genuinely fell in love with Russia, its vast landscapes, and its mysterious soul, even if their love was not always reciprocated. Sometimes, behind the glitter of gold coins and the scent of foreign perfumes, there was a bitter truth about a foreign land where they remained strangers until the very end.

The Museum of Brands, History, and Packaging Design hosts similar exhibitions every few months, revealing new and sometimes unexpected pages of the past to visitors. Here, stories that might otherwise be forgotten are carefully preserved, including those of family dynasties, daring experimenters, and individuals who have transformed their craft into a form of art. Each new exhibition is a small discovery, offering a glimpse into a world where a simple box or label represents an entire era filled with passion, risk, and love for their craft. The museum will be of interest to schoolchildren, students and adults who care about the history of our country.

Behind each exhibit of the Museum of Brands, History and Packaging Design is a person. And behind the whole museum is Igor Smirenny, the founder of the collection and editor-in-chief of the magazine "Container and Packaging", who revealed in an interview how it was possible to implement this grandiose by all standards idea. Here are the excerpts from my conversation with this dedicated enthusiast.

“In 1997, we came to the Polytechnic Museum and met with the directorate at the time. We told them that we had a collection and that we published the magazine "Container and Packaging", which focused on the history of this particular craft. The administration listened to us with interest and suggested that we organize an exhibition. The first exhibition was titled "Packaging from Old Moscow." We showcased packaging that had been made before the revolution and explained how old Russian factories changed their names. For example, the Eynem factory changed its name to Krasny Oktyabr (Red October) during the Soviet era, and many people learned about it for the first time. In this way, we have restored the connection between the past and the present.

– Then there was the exhibition “My Favourite Label.” We invited artists who worked at the Soyuzprodoformlenie plant during the Soviet era. This organization, which united packaging artists for food products, existed until 1993, when it collapsed, and the artists dispersed (or went “on their own”). The exhibition itself was unique, as we presented packaging artists that no one in the Soviet Union had ever heard of. It turns out that they made packaging for all the republics in a centralized manner: they traveled to Moldova, Georgia, or another region, studied the local culture, and created labels (food and beverage labels).

© MOSCOW FORESIGHT - 2026. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

– We worked at the Polytechnic Museum for a little over 10 years. The collection grew – people brought boxes, bottles that were kept at home, saying: “Take it for your museum.” Then the Polytechnic Museum was closed for reconstruction. The exhibits lay in boxes in the editorial office for several years. My heart was bleeding.”



Fortunately, the collection eventually found a new home. There were many offers regarding a new destination, but fate brought Igor Smirenny together with Olesya and Semyon Zhiltsov, the creators of successful museum projects in the city of Sergiev Posad. They found common ground, and the new partners invested in renovating a building in the city's tourist area.

© MOSCOW FORESIGHT - 2026. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

In Sergiev Posad, the museum has changed not only its address, but also its name. The "Museum of Containers and Packaging" has officially become the "Museum of Brands, History, and Packaging Design." The inclusion of the word "brand" in the name is not accidental, as it refers to the merchant dynasties that used their names on labels to guarantee the quality of their products. These foreign and Russian entrepreneurs transformed simple packaging into a work of art and a symbol of trust in the XIX century.

Today, their stories, carefully preserved within the museum, continue to live on and inspire new enthusiasts.

Ksenia Kalinevich

*Photo by Vladimir Mikheev

© MOSCOW FORESIGHT - 2026. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.