

LECTURE

13 January 2022

Presenter: Toby Faber

Between 1885 and 1916, Carl Fabergé made fifty jewelled eggs – Easter presents from Russia's last two emperors to their wives. They have become the most famous surviving symbols of the Romanov Empire: both supreme examples of the jeweller's art and the vulgar playthings of a decadent court. Given almost total artistic freedom, Fabergé and his designers had to conform to only three rules: that each year's Easter present should be egg-shaped, that it should contain some surprise to amuse or delight its recipient, and that it should be different from any predecessor. The result was a series of creations demonstrating ingenuity and creativity for which there are few parallels in any other field. Their styles range from traditional

Russian to Art Nouveau, and their materials from carved hardstone to exquisite enamelled gold. Their maker's relentless search for novelty also means that they provide a fabulously quirky illustrated history of the decline of the Romanovs.



The Imperial Eggs of Carl Fabergé



Toby was a banker and management consultant before spending four years as managing director of the company founded by his grandfather, Faber and Faber. He remains on its Board and is Chairman of its sister company, Faber Music, an Arts Society lecturer, and a director of Liverpool University Press. Toby has written three works of narrative non-fiction - *Stradivarius* (2004), *Faberge's Eggs* (2008) and *Faber & Faber: The Untold Story* (2019) - and one novel, *Close to the Edge* (2019).