

Cigarette Case with the Main Pavilion or VSKhV Fairgrounds in Moscow, circa late 1950s.

In nickel-plated steel, measures approx. 4¼" x 3¼" x 5/8". The obverse lid shows a high 3D relief of the central building of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition (VSKhV) grounds surrounded by a floral motif. The VSKhV abbreviation appears immediately below the central image. We had an identical case before and were very surprised to see that this case shows traces of what looks like green paint on the recessed parts of the artwork. It is hard to imagine that this was a factory-made modification. More likely, the owner of the case thought the green background would make the artwork stand out.

The case is in very good condition from the structural integrity perspective. The halves fit perfectly when closed, the hinge is straight and tight, the latch is in perfect working order. Nickel plating shows moderate deterioration but oxidation is mild on the outside and even less on the inner surfaces, focused mostly on the high points of the artwork.

The VSKhV first opened in Moscow in 1939. Essentially a giant theme park, it was greatly publicized and was even featured as background of several popular Soviet movies, not to mention endless Soviet and foreign documentaries. The exhibition complex closed during WW2 only to reopen in 1954 in even grander, more ostentatious format. In 1959, it was closed. Work began on redesigning the space and the entire idea of the exhibition to reflect not only agricultural achievements but the new post-war industrial and scientific might of the USSR. The new exhibition, named VDNKh (All-Union Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy) opened its doors and although it later acquired the famous Space pavilion, the fair lost much of its original Stalinist luster and went downhill from there. The exhibition still exists, now under the acronym VVTs (BBQ) which stands for All-Russian Exhibition Center.

Please note that the penny in our last photo is for size reference.

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