Nicolas Roerich

From a photograph by Arnold Genthe
THE
NICOLAS ROERICH
EXHIBITION

WITH INTRODUCTION AND CATALOGUE
OF THE PAINTINGS

BY
CHRISTIAN BRINTON

A.I.C. 4/15-5/15/1921

1920-1921-1922
ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TOUR OF THE NICOLAS BOERICH EXHIBITION HAVE BEEN MADE BY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ROBERT B. MARSH, OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

COPYRIGHT, 1920, BY CHRISTIAN BRINTON
FIRST IMPRESSION FIVE THOUSAND COPIES

REDFIELD-KENDRICK-ODELL COMPANY, INC., NEW YORK
The White Lady
INTRODUCTION
BY CHRISTIAN BRINTON

His Blue is the Blue of the Northern Twilight;
His Green is the Green of the sea-grass;
His Red is the Red of Pagun watch-fires,
And his Flame—from Byzantine arrows.

SCREENED by protecting trees there stood, in the
spacious park of Iswara, a glass-covered orangery to
which, throughout certain busy weeks during the early
summer, came a serious-browed young man. The slanting
rays of the sun filtered through the dust-filmed panes, the
door swung ajar, and in floated the song of birds, the fresh
scent of the forest, and the cool breeze from the nearby lake.
Day after day he stood before the easel, and often did not
forsake his impromptu studio until the sun had set, and the
magic of the northern twilight enveloped park and green and
white family mansion in its diffused radiance. The painting
that so engrossed the young man’s attention, a study in green,
violet, and brown, showed a stretch of water with a wooden
kreni, bristling on a rugged promontory to the left, and, gliding silently forward, a rude craft in which were two figures, one standing in the stern, the other, a bearded, patriarchal giant, seated in the bow gazing tensely before him. The title which the youthful artist gave his picture was The Messenger, and nothing could have been more typical of his maturing taste, or more prophetic of his career, than this composition which to-day seems at once the prelude and the epitome of his entire achievement. Although he did not at the time realize it, the mysterious Messenger was bringing him treasures from a remote, eloquent past, and pointing the pathway of a luminous future.

While born in Petrograd, on the Vassili Ostrov, not far from the Imperial Academy of Arts where he was later destined to study, Nicolas Roerich's boyhood was passed at Iswara, the family country place near Gatchina. The son of a distinguished barrister, he first saw the light of day September 27, 1874, and his earliest memories go back to the great estate of some ten thousand acres with its tracts of primeval forest, its shining lakes, and mysterious mounds wherein lay buried the Viking warriors of dim, heroic days. Passionately devoted to outdoor life, the youthful Nicolas Konstantinovich spent most of his time hunting, now afoot, now gliding over the crusted snow upon skis. He glowed in the solitude of nature, his only companions on such occasions being his dogs and his guide and body-servant, a taciturn Finn named Gustav, who would tramp for hours by his side without uttering a syllable.

Yet blackcock, deer, and even bear did not claim his entire attention, for when about fourteen years of age the young hunter became deeply absorbed in the hundreds of tumuli
that dotted field and forest glade and which, tradition avers, date from the time of Rurik, the doughty Varia from whom his own family name actually derives. With the help of the faithful Finn he began excavating these moss-grown mounds, a task that had to be undertaken in secret, for it was at that period proscribed by law. Together they uncovered the tombs of a number of these fabulous chieftains, finding quantities of bronze and iron swords, battle-axes, spear-heads, belts, brooches and the like. The fascination of such experiences may well be imagined, and with a mind richly stored through the constant perusal of the old-time legends and listepis of his race, it is scant wonder that the young man’s creative fancy should have drifted back across the ages to that shadowy period when the blond men out of the North first set foot upon the troublous soil of the Slav.

There was however another side to Nicolas Roerich’s temperament, for devoted as he was to the thrill of the outdoors and the thrill of the past, he was also an excellent student along approved scholastic lines. Upon completing his preliminary training at the May Gymnastum, where his fellow-pupils included Benois and Somov, he entered the university in deference to the paternal wish that he prepare himself for the practice of the law. His avowed determination to devote his life to art was nevertheless not relegated to the background, for concurrently with his courses at the university, he also studied at the Imperial Academy of Art, where his master was Kuindji, a really inspired teacher of landscape. The influence of Kuindji, formerly a shepherd lad from the Crimea who had won his place in the hierarchy of art despite incredible obstacles, was most salutary. An
avowed admirer of Turner, and a man of rare emotional endowment, Kuindji displayed keen interest in the future artist who came to him wearing the blue uniform of a university student, yet whose mind was bent upon more congenial tasks.

At the end of three years Nicolas Roerich had completed his course at the university, and by happy coincidence also won his diploma at the academy with the painting entitled The Messenger, which was exhibited in November, 1897, and was at once purchased for the Tretiakov Gallery of Moscow, the leading museum for contemporary Russian art. With such an outstanding success there was no gainsaying the young man's aptitude for art, and all trace of parental opposition inevitably vanished. The aspiring painter of two-and-twenty who worked so ardently during May and June in the sun-steeped orangery of Isvara park had not laboured in vain. His first picture having won the stamp of public recognition and approval, he could face the future with confidence.

As already indicated, the genesis of Nicolas Roerich's art is to be found in The Messenger, a canvas notable for its subtle sense of objective verity and its singular power of imaginative suggestion. The composition was not however an isolated production, a chance pictorial fancy, for from the very outset the artist's mind moved in logical progression. He never sees things singly, but always as it were in sequence. His least impression seems linked to that which has gone before, and forms part of something which is to follow. The Messenger in fact proved but the first of a suite of closely related compositions including The Council, Going to War, Building the Town, and Birds of Ill Omen, all of which found place in leading museums and private collections.
The completion of the series, which may be termed the Ancient Russia cycle, occupied a period of some five years, and meanwhile Roerich travelled and studied extensively both in his own country and abroad. Following his appointment in 1898 to a professorship in the Imperial Archaeological Institute, he was commissioned to undertake important excavations in the governments of Pskov, Novgorod, and Tver. His researches took him to the most picturesque corners of Old Russia where he both recovered and recorded with pencil and brush the vanishing remains of a pregnant and colourful past. He frequently came upon traces of the flaxen-haired Nordic folk who forsook the land of the Varengians and made their way afloat and afoot down to the land of the Greeks. And it was the pathway of these intrepid Northmen that he followed with keenest zest, for in his own veins coursed not a little of their courageous and questing blood.

So deep was the spell cast upon him by the barbaric beauty and power of his native country, that when Nicolas Roerich went to Paris in 1900 for a year's study, he remained untouched by current French artistic aims and ideals. He painted neither the approved salon machine, nor did he indulge in those exhilarating displays of individualism so popular with certain younger spirits who foregathered on the butte of Montmartre and add diversity to the Salon des Indépendants. While he admired Gauguin above all French painters of the day, he did not seek to emulate any of them, and none appears to have exerted the least influence upon his development. He in fact expended most of his energy whilst in Paris upon the initial version of the large composition known as Pagan Russia, the prelude to his Stone Age series. And so utterly un-French
was the picture in theme and treatment, that his preceptor, the admirable Cormon, on seeing it for the first time was moved to exclaim: "Nous sommes trop raffinés; nous devons étudier chez vous!"

On returning to Russia after an extended foreign sojourn Roerich plunged afresh into his favourite world, which is in brief a subtle fusion of the real and the fanciful, a species of aesthetic evocation in which observation is supplemented by genuine creative potentiality. The fruits of the next few years consisted mainly of glimpses of old-time towns, many of them dating from the days of "Wooden Russia," before stone came into general use as a building material. To such more or less impersonal records is however frequently added the human note. We here see not only primitive settlements each with its frowning kreml, but likewise the builders of these houses, and those who dwell therein, as well as they who for sake them to battle and plunder on land or venture across wide sweeping seas. We note not alone the burial mounds and totem poles of dark, paganistic days; we also behold pious spirits from Byzantium who bear the message of benig nity up winding rivers into the distant reaches of the North.

It is actuality coloured by a fertile reconstructive imagina tion, and there remains to-day nothing in contemporary Slavonic painting comparable to Nicolas Roerich's impres sions of Ancient Russia, and ancient Russian life and scene. Cities such as Pskov, Izborsk, Yaroslavl, Vladimir, and Rostov the Great, with their massive walls and bulbous cupolas or loukondely looming pale green or deep blue against the encircling sky, pass in picturesque review. And fantastic as dream visions rise suddenly from the plain great monastic
fortresses purely Byzantine in the south, or with soaring stone or wooden spires as one approaches the north. Although Roerich was not the first Russian artist to turn his eyes toward the treasury of the past—witness the eloquent medieval inspiration of Vasnetsov and the fervid evocations of Nesterov—his is the most illuminating record of ante-Petrian Russia which any painter has thus far placed to his credit.

Two notable exhibitions, one at the Imperial Academy of Art, the other in conjunction with his colleagues of the Mir Iskusstva at Moscow, served to stamp Nicolas Roerich in the mind of the public as a painter of individuality and power. From every point of view both displays proved successful, it being interesting to recall in this connexion that the Tsar personally acquired for the Imperial Palace of Tsarskoje-Selo the dramatic and colourful Strangers from Overseas, while important purchases were also made for the Alexander III Museum of Petrograd, and the Tretjakov Gallery, Moscow. Indulging his penchant for decorative expression, Roerich also began at this period the first of his numerous mural paintings, which consisted of two large hunting scenes for the palace of the Grand Duchess Olga.

And yet marked as were his early successes, Roerich was in no sense content to repeat himself either in theme or in treatment. There were in fact already intimations of a change in the spirit of Slavonic art. The renaissance of that native decorative tradition which must ever remain the basis of Russian aesthetic endeavour was indeed at hand, and Nicolas Roerich was among the first to sense its significance and adapt himself to its exigencies. Within a brief space we discover him passing through a progressive evolution from what
may be termed the illustrative phase of his production toward the attainment of a definite plastic and colouristic synthesis. The movement became general. The revival of the arts and crafts under the enlightened leadership of Helen Polenova, the Princess Marie Tenisheva, and others, the application of genuinely decorative principles to house furnishing, book illustration, and above all to the designing of stage scenery and costume added, within a remarkably short time, new character and colour to contemporary Russian art. The painstaking verity so beloved of the Peredvizhniki gave place to that freedom and creative vitality which were the watchwords of the newly organized group known as the Mir Iskusstva. Realism was relegated to the background. Folk tale and fairy legend again came into their own. The Swan Princess, the enchanting hand of Vrubel, beckoned from the reality of Repin toward the radiant kingdom of passion and fancy.

As director of the School for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Russia, and later first president of the Mir Iskusstva, Nicolas Roerich played a conspicuous part in the aesthetic renaissance that, from the beginning of the century, began to transform Slavonic art. Prominent among his contemporaries were Vrubel, the virtual initiator of the modern movement, Golovin, Serov, Bakst, Benois, the scholarly painter-critic, Somov, the apostle of eighteenth-century exoticism, Lanceray, a decorator of great distinction, and a host of younger men including the sumptuous-visioned Boris Anisfeld, as well as Sapunov, Sudeykin, and Larionov, the enfant terrible of stage decoration. While each has succeeded in preserving intact his proper individuality, their achievement as a whole possesses certain features in common. It is inva-
riably broad, synthetic, and decorative in aspect, and is en-
livened with a luxuriant creative fantasy. There seems no
limit to the sheer chromatic opulence which these men have
at ready command. And not only do they flaunt the shi-
mering richness of their imagination before the footlights,
they also apply it to mural decoration and to easel pictures,
which in the current exhibitions of the Mir Iskusstva or
the Soyuz gleam from the walls like Byzantine mosaics.

During the ensuing decade the art of Nicolas Roerich sub-
mitted to certain striking changes both of manner and matter.
It was a fruitful epoch for the painter-archaeologist who had
hitherto restricted himself to a somewhat limited range of
subject and treatment. While remaining typically Russian
in spirit, his artistic sympathies turned to the East as well
as to the West. He found a measure of inspiration in the pure
colour spaces and definite lineal patterns of the Oriental
masters, and he likewise assimilated not a little of that Gothic
mysticism which attains characteristic expression in the poetic
dramas of Maurice Maeterlinck. And yet you will not, in
the work of this period, whether it be ambitious murals or
informal sketches, discover the least sacrifice of the painter’s
sovereign individuality of aim and purpose. He everywhere
and at all times remains personal in his outlook. There is
in fact an inner unity to Nicolas Roerich’s artistic develop-
ment as rare as it is refreshing. His production taken as a
whole is but an amplification of tendencies that were mani-
fest at the outset of his career, and which persist because
they are part of an inalienable aesthetic patrimony.

It was but natural that Roerich should turn from legen-
dary theme or the subdued ecstasy of religious composition
to the vivid, decorative pictorialism of the contemporary
drama, opera, and ballet. His first work for the stage, which
consisted in the designing of the scenery and costumes for
a twelfth century Mystery Play produced at the Staninny
Theatre under the direction of Baron Drisen, was notably
successful, and was followed by numerous commissions of a
similar character. In 1909 he executed the sketches for the
Paris presentation of Snegurochka at the Opéra Comique,
and the same year contributed his boldness of design and
imaginative fervour to the Petrograd and Paris productions
of Prince Igor and Ivan the Terrible. It is unnecessary to
mention in detail the numerous successes in the province of
scenic presentation which Nicolas Roerich has placed to
his credit. He himself thinks that his most significant con-
tributions to the stage are his Wagner and Maeterlinck
settings, yet it would seem unfair not to include in this cate-
gory the idyllic fantasy of his latest designs for Snegurochka,
or the primitive power of the Polavetzky Stan scene from
Prince Igor with its smouldering camp fires and ominous
expanse of saffron sky.

Roerich's work for the theatre, together with his interior
decorations for the Bajanov residence in Petrograd, the chapel
of Princess Tenisheva at Talashkino, and the important
mural panels for the Moscow-Kazan railway station carry
his achievement down to the brink of the war, the tragic
horrors of which he actually seems to have anticipated. Always
something of a mystic and a visionary, he appears to have
had a subtle premonition of the fate that was to overtake
himself as well as his countrymen, and this feeling he recorded
in a remarkable cycle of compositions that begins with The
Last Angel, and was continued with The Lurid Glare, The Cry of the Serpent, and The Doomed City. The chronology of these canvases is indisputable, and quite apart from their suggestive power and beauty they constitute one of the most striking instances of prescience in the annals of art.

In the summer of 1914 Roerich achieved a notable success at the Baltic Exposition at Malmö, where he had on view no less than twenty-eight canvases effectively displayed in a separate room. The war did not indeed immediately disrupt the cultural life of the capital, and it is of interest to note that the following year, which marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of Professor Roerich’s professional appearance, witnessed two of the most important events of his career. One was the publication of a sumptuous volume on his art prepared under the direction of a special committee including the foremost critics, men of letters, and artists in Russia, the other was the organization of a jubilee exhibition of his work arranged by the same group of friends and admirers. And yet the sinister dénouement which he had so clearly sensed was not long deferred, and in May, 1917, following the outbreak of the revolution, he felt constrained to leave the country and settle with his family across the Finnish border.

With his arrival in the Old Russian province of Karelia, where he passed the two succeeding summers on the shores of Lake Ladoga, begins a new phase of Nicolas Roerich’s artistic development. Profoundly moved by the tragic disillusion on every side, he sought consolation in a species of cosmic mysticism, which found expression in landscape views wherein distinct traces of anthropomorphic suggestion serve to heighten rather than diminish the aesthetic effect. Painted in tem-
pera, like all his later work, these glimpses of lake, sky, imme-
memorial rock and majestically sweeping cloud possess a
freshness and clarity of tone and an imaginative appeal
seldom encountered in contemporary art.

Foreshadowed in a measure by a number of panoramic
views executed in the Northern Caucasus during the summer
of 1913, the Finnish landscapes carry much further the note
of simplification indicated in the earlier work. Synthetic in
conception, these panels and canvases devoted almost exclu-
sively to outdoor subject witness the artist’s progressive
transition from a world of specific reality into the elusive
kingdom of the spirit. The various forms are indicated with
truth and surety. You feel that the distant silhouette of
low-lying mountain range is accurately observed. You
sense the weight and bulk of great masses of rock, yet every-
where is evinced a rigorous suppression of detail, and over
all is cast the indefnable spell of an imaginative conception
of nature and natural forces.

Individual as are the structural qualities of these paintings,
as well as their general strength and integrity of design, not
the least of their attractions lies in their colour. The virile,
barbaric hues you note in the stage settings for Prince Igor
and Ivan the Terrible have here been muted by the mists
of the north. Far up in the clouds dwells the Rain Fairy
ready to drop a gossamer curtain over mountain and lake,
while from behind the hills creeps the pale yellow, delicate
green, and purple mystery of the Arctic night. Each subject
differs from the preceding, and in studying these expressive
panels you spontaneously think of jewels—of turquoise,
sapphire, or emerald—steeped as it were in the atmospheric
ambience of the north. It seems indeed as though the painter
were filling his pictorial panorama with carefully-selected
mosaics as did the fervid Byzantines and the pious fashioners
of the early “prayer pictures.”

After passing several months in Finland, where he saw
much of the late Leonid Andreyev, who in fact dedicated to
the painter his last published article, Professor Roerich resided
for a time in Stockholm, and later settled in London for a still
longer period. His work in London consisted mainly in
designing scenery for several projected productions at the
Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and nothing in his entire career
exceeds the lyric freshness of his Snegurochka sketches, or the
rich fusion of Slavic and Oriental fantasy that characterizes
the Tsar Saltan series. And finally, he has reached our shores
where he plans to pause awhile en route to India, a country he
has long desired to visit, and which possesses for him numerous
attractions both spiritual and aesthetic.

The varied and colourful fruits of Professor Roerich’s
Finnish and London sojourns, of which the present exhibition
is mainly composed, will introduce to the local public a
definite and homogenous artistic personality. While you will
readily recognize in this work that predominately Slavic
note which is fortunately becoming more familiar to us year
by year, yet it must not be forgotten that there are two dis-
tinct types of Slavs. Nicolas Roerich is not a Southern Slav
such as Boris Anisfeld, for instance. He is a Slav of the
North, a Baltic, not a Bessarabian, and the general character
and appeal of his art differ accordingly. The stream of
divine beauty and passion which Anisfeld pours so lavishly
before us is Asiatic in its origin. The art of Roerich on the
contrary stems from solitary, sub-Arctic wastes where mind and eye have been forced to seek inspiration from within not from without. Despite its colouristic appeal there is a note of reserve, of heroic detachment in the later work of Nicolas Roerich. These burnished lakes and rock-ribbed mountains and valleys suggest moon landscapes in which one wanders ceaselessly without respite, for the kingdom of the soul is ever a sparsely populated region. Like his roving Vikings, his priests, anchorites, and sorcerers Nicolas Roerich is himself a seeker after hidden treasures, an idealist to whom reality is but a suggestion of that which lies beyond.

Personal as is his pictorial vision, the art of Roerich remains typically national in spirit. A modernist, if you will, in his strength of colour and decision of design, he nevertheless rarely alters the basic verities of line, form, and tone. And moreover, despite its seeming novelty to Occidental eyes, the work of these Slavs is not technically modernistic. It constitutes not a departure but a resurgence, a revival of certain definite artistic characteristics which had merely been crushed beneath imperial formality and academic routine. Scorched by Peter and Catherine, scoffed at by the so-called Europeans, and neglected for generations the true spirit of the Slavic genius has at last asserted its supremacy. The art of Nicolas Roerich and his colleagues likewise owes much to the purity of tone and linear integrity of the early Byzantines. Its mystery, its passion, and its luminous chromatic glory may be found in miniature in the iconography of the anonymous masters of Kiev, Novgorod, Moscow, and Vladimir, and the frescoes that gleam from the walls of many a green or blue domed lavra. The painters of to-day and the designers of
stage setting and costume do not in brief differ greatly from
their predecessors of the past. The resplendent ballet is but
a profane processional. It has taken on a more sensuous,
more passionate significance, yet the aesthetic elements remain
essentially the same.

A scholar and a poet as well as a painter, no one realizes
the successive steps by which Russian art has attained to its
present position better than Professor Roerich, and few artists
display a more definite grasp of technical considerations, or a
clearer conception of the exigencies of their profession. It is
Professor Roerich’s habit to conceive each theme in a specific
colour-key before actually beginning work. He then lays on
his ground colours—ochre, scarlet, vermillion, ultramarine,
emerald-green, crimson, or purple—and paints rapidly over
this ground tone until the composition is complete. The
method is not new, but it is chiefly notable in Roerich’s case on
account of the strength and intensity of the basic tones which
he employs. He scarcely ever repeats a scheme, one of the
most significant features of his work being its seemingly end-
less chromatic variety.

The dominant note in the art of Nicolas Roerich is unity—
unity of colour, form, technique, and fundamental inspiration.
“Never,” he avers, “paint the scenery for an opera or a ballet
without first having an intimate acquaintance with both the
drama and the music. I study both deeply, in order to get at
the spirit that lies behind both, which spirit must be one and
the same if the work is to be great and lasting. Having
steeped myself in the central idea, the inspiration that gave
birth to the work, and permitted it to take possession of me, I
then endeavour to express the same thought, the same inspira-
tion in my painting, that the composer and the librettist have expressed in music and in words.

"Particularly do I feel myself in sympathy with music, and just as a composer when writing the score chooses a certain key to write in, so I paint in a certain key, a key of colour, or perhaps I might say a leitmotiv of colour, on which I base my entire scheme. Thus for example when I painted the scenery of the Valkyrie for the Moscow Imperial Opera, I felt the first act as black and yellow. This was my ground tone, for it seemed to be the ground tone of the music with its deep-surfing tragedy and sudden flashing forth of the momentary happiness of Siegmund and Sieglinde in the final scene. So strongly did I feel this basic tonality that I placed the hearth not at the side, where it is usually found, but towards the centre, so that when Siegmund relates the sad story of his lonely life, he and Sieglinde, at one end of the table, sit bathed in the light of the fire, the yellow flames shining on their golden locks, their heritage from the gods, while Hunding sits at the other end a black silhouette outlined against the glow, like the sombre presence of evil."

Characteristic as is Professor Roerich's description of his own technical methods, he is equally illuminating along more general lines. "We cannot," he says, "have an art in the present without being in sympathy with the art of the past." This art he has studied profoundly, and it is difficult to refrain from quoting in his own picturesque language the following miniature but wonderfully suggestive résumé of Russian artistic development:

"Starting from the present day, and directing our minds towards remote ages, we behold many powerful and brilliant
modern artists. Behind them stands the important group known as the World of Art. Farther back are the traditionalists, with their national tendencies. Then the native artists, Brullov, Ivanov, and the incomparable portraitists, Levitzky and Borovikovsky, and beyond them the group of foreign artists attracted to the courts of Catherine II and Peter the Great. Farther back come many-coloured Moscow and the realm of sviatitsky and ikons. Before Moscow flourished we find the wonderful Hanse town of Novgorod, with its original types of buildings, and broad, and powerful ikon painting. Earlier than Novgorod rises before us the civilization of great Kiev, the mosaics of which rivalled the Sicilian palace of the Norman Rogers, while the number of its churches and schools ran into hundreds. Here also reigned the mighty Romance style, essential features of which penetrated all Europe. Far beyond the limits of the Nomads and the boundaries of the Variags we meet with Scythian culture, and earlier the Phoenician, with reminiscences of the antique world. Through the profound discoveries in the tombs we reach the beautiful Russian Stone Age, the finds of which have been compared with the classic productions of Egypt. It is however impossible to mention details without reference to the fundamental Russian relation to art in general. We maintain that art and science, beauty and wisdom, are the two foundation stones upon which will rest the future culture of the spirit, which will take the place of the present mechanical civilization. In our day there is a manifest return to savagery on the part of an enormous number of people, and only beauty and wisdom can bring back to humanity the treasures of the spirit it has lost." You will doubtless not fail, on
noting the closing sentence, to recall a similar attitude on the part of Dostoyevsky, who it seems felt much as Professor Roerich does upon such matters. In one of his expansive moments the troubled, aspiring Fyodor Mikhailovich passionately exclaimed: "Beauty will save the world!"

You could not have a better insight into the method and inspiration of Nicolas Roerich than that which is afforded by the foregoing passages. The technical side of his work is here clearly set forth, and so also is its underlying spirit, a spirit deeply archaistic, deeply stylistic, and courageously optimistic. The art of Roerich touches the fundamentals of nature and of life. It stresses only that which is essential, leaving less important considerations shift for themselves. There is in certain of these landscapes and stage settings an imaginative sweep and power that is little short of inspiring, and there are also reactions to reality which are infinitely responsive and sensitive. Roerich is above all else a master of tonal gradations, of delicately rendered colour juxtapositions. Within the definite limitations which he imposes upon himself the variations are magical in their depth and subtlety. And as you survey these many-hued canvases, the treasures of a fertile but logical and consistent creative faculty, you cannot fail to note their melodic quality. They form a clear-sounding chorus of colour, a canticle in praise of that beauty which the eye can see, and that deeper beauty which can be apprehended only of the spirit.

Not a little has lately been made in Stockholm, London, and elsewhere of the so-called mystical significance of Nicolas Roerich's art. That it possesses certain qualities which are unusual, if not actually supernormal, there can be scant
question. His suggestive and often frankly symbolistic vision of nature and natural phenomena reveals however but the logical evolution of a man who, never a realist, has with time and circumstance become more and more subjective in his outlook. The veritable descendant of an older, more primitive social order, and an avowed enemy of the materialistic and mechanistic tendencies of the present day, he instinctively employs a highly subtilised form of aesthetic expression. And yet he manages successfully to bring his visions from the province of the unconscious and the subconscious within the sphere of definite and conscious apprehension. Roerich's sojourn in Finland, cut off as he was from home and country, and encircled by the spectres of starvation and civil strife, naturally coloured his outlook. His recent work, and his mental attitude toward it, may indeed be likened to the last few canvases of Segantini who, alone upon the heights of Maloja, wrested with visions of Life, Desire, and Death.

"Roerich's realm," as Andreyev aptly characterizes it, fantastic though it be, is not however morbid or stressful. It is a luminous, rarefied province of primal awe and wonder, a species of spontaneous identification with the eternal forces of life and nature, with the perennial creative rhythm of the universe. Eloquent of unconscious atavisms, this world is a world of sun worship and moon frenzy, but not of sex and of sin. Touched by a fairy tale naivété and lightness, you do not meet here the demoniac obsession of Vrubel or the delicate eroticism of Somov. The serpent may cry out in agony, but its scarlet trail does not, save in time of world strife, stain these distant snows or disturb the serenity of these remote, subliminal mountains and valleys.
The pictorial inspiration of Nicolas Roerich is virile and salutary. In its finer essence it is a deification of the antique spirit of struggle and conquest that actuates the male, not a glorification, or palliation, of feminine fondness and frailty. These shining protectors of enchanted cities, these fervid saints, and cabalistic weavers of spells are supermen. The Knight of the Morning proudly rides the sun-tipped clouds. The Sons of Heaven look from aloft upon the Daughters of Men—who remain close to earth. There is a cosmic impersonality to this art that recalls the days when the world was fresher and more spacious than it seems at present. Nordic in its imaginative richness, the art of Roerich is also classic in its apollonian love of light and clarity. It fittingly epitomizes the spirit of those who, born in the mist-wrapped reaches of the North, seek the radiant serenity of Hellas.
CATALOGUE

Paintings in Oil

1 THE TREASURE OF THE ANGELS
   Design for mural painting in the chapel of Princess Tenishev, Talashkino, Smolensk. Painted in Petrograd, 1905.
   First exhibited: Prague, 1905. Canvas. Size 124 x 144.

2 SAINTLY VISIONS

3 EVENING

4 PAGAN RUSSIA

5 THE VIKING’S DAUGHTER
600 6 ROCKS (Study)

600 7 ROCKS AND SKY

8 THE CALL OF THE SUN (Second Version)
   Size 46×60. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.

9 THE TREASURE
   Size 39½×59. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.

10 COURTYARD—OLD NOVGOROD
   Size 10×21½. Panel. Monogram, lower left.

OIL TEMPERA

600 11 THE VARENGIAN SEA

1200 12 MESSENGERS OF MORN

600 13 STUDY—KARELIA
14  STUDY—LAKE OF HYMPOLA
Painted in Finland, 1917. First exhibited: Helsingfors, 1919.
Size 13 x 15.5. Panel. Monogram, lower left.  $500

15  MISTY MORNING
Painted in Yhinalahti, 1917. First exhibited: Helsingfors,
1919. Size 12 x 15. Panel. Monogram, lower right.  $500

16  BLUE MORNING
Painted in Yhinalahti, 1917. First exhibited: Helsingfors,
1919. Size 13 x 16.5. Panel. Monogram, lower right.  $400

17  ECSTASY (Sketch)
Size 18.5 x 13.5. Board. Monogram, lower right.  $600

18  ENDLESS TRACKS
Painted in Sortavala, Finland, 1917. First exhibited: Stock-
holm, 1918. Size 20 x 37.5. Panel. Monogram, lower left.  $1500

19  MOONLIGHT—SORTAVALA
Size 15 x 15.5. Panel. Monogram, lower right.  $600

20  SILENCE
Size 18.5 x 30. Panel. Monogram, lower left.  $500

21  THE SECRET PASSAGE
Size 20 x 31.5. Panel. Monogram, lower left.  $900

22  ECSTASY
Painted in Sortavala, 1918. First exhibited: Helsingfors,
1919. Size 60 x 50. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.  $5000
23 MYSTERY
Size 19 x 30. Canvas. Monogram, lower right.

24 COGITATIONS

25 LAKE OF LADOGA

26 THE CALL

27 THE WIZARD
Size 18 x 29. Panel. Monogram, lower left.

28 THE KNIGHT OF THE MORNING
Size 18 x 29. Panel. Monogram, lower right.

29 THE KNIGHT OF THE EVENING
Size 18 x 29. Panel. Monogram, lower left.

30 THE KNIGHT OF THE NIGHT

31 THE KNIGHT OF THE NIGHT (Variant)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Signed</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>NORTHERN ISLANDS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Painted in Tulola, 1918. First exhibited: Helsingfors, 1919.</td>
<td>19x30(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>Panel</td>
<td>Monogram, lower left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>CLOUDS—LAKE OF LADOGA (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Painted in Tulola, 1918. First exhibited: Helsingfors, 1919.</td>
<td>15(\frac{3}{4})x18(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>Panel</td>
<td>Monogram, lower left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>CLOUDS—LAKE LADOGA (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Painted in Tulola, 1918. First exhibited: Stockholm, 1918.</td>
<td>16x20(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>Panel</td>
<td>Monogram, lower left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>THE WEAVER OF SPELLS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Painted in Tulola, 1918. First exhibited: Stockholm, 1918.</td>
<td>28(\frac{3}{4})x31</td>
<td>Panel</td>
<td>Monogram, lower right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>THE MISER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Painted in Sortavala, 1918. First exhibited: Stockholm, 1918.</td>
<td>20x31(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>Panel</td>
<td>Monogram, lower right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>THE LORD OF NIGHT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Painted in Sortavala, 1918. First exhibited: Stockholm, 1918.</td>
<td>28(\frac{3}{4})x31</td>
<td>Panel</td>
<td>Monogram, lower left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>“NOT GONE YET”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Painted in Sortavala, 1918. First exhibited: Stockholm, 1918.</td>
<td>16x31</td>
<td>Panel</td>
<td>Monogram, lower left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>FAMAGUSTA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Design for wooden mosaic. Painted in Sortavala, 1918. First exhibited: Stockholm, 1918.</td>
<td>12(\frac{3}{4})x28(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>Panel</td>
<td>Monogram, lower left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>ROCKS—TULOLA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Painted in Tulola, 1918. First exhibited: Helsingfors, 1919.</td>
<td>19(\frac{3}{4})x15(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>Panel</td>
<td>Monogram, lower right.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
950  41  ISLANDS—LAKE LADOGA (I)
Size 14x21. Monogram, lower left.

950  42  MIDSUMMER NIGHT—LAKE LADOGA
Size 13x16. Monogram, lower right.

950  43  THE MOTLEY BAY—LADOGA
Size 12x33. Panel. Monogram, lower centre.

950  44  VALLEY—TULOLA
Size 103/4x22. Panel. Monogram, lower right.

950  45  THE STONE OF SPELLS
Size 91/8x24 1/4. Panel. Monogram, lower left.

950  46  SUNSET—TULOLA

950  47  SUNSET—THE CASTLE MOUNT
Size 93/8x303/4. Board. Monogram, lower left.

950  48  THE OUTCAST
Size 93/8x30. Panel. Monogram, lower right.

950  49  AUTUMN—VIBORG
Size 93/8x25. Panel. Monogram, lower right.
50 REFUGEES (Sketch)
Size 9x24. Panel. Monogram, lower right.

51 MOONLIGHT—KARELIA
Size 10x31. Board. Unsigned.

52 AUTUMN—TUOLA
Painted in Tuola, 1918. First exhibited: Stockholm, 1918.
Size 10x41. Panel. Monogram, lower left.

53 REPENTENCE
Size 24.5x31.5. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.

54 ISLANDS—LAKE LADOGA (II)
Painted in Viborg, 1918. Never before exhibited. Size 18.5x33.
Panel. Monogram, lower right.

55 THE WEAVER OF SPELLS (Variant)

56 MORNING (Study)
Size 17x18.5. Canvas on panel. Monogram, lower right.

57 THE HEAT OF THE EARTH
Size 19x13.5. Panel. Monogram, lower right.

58 THE CALL OF THE BELLS—OLD PSKOV
Size 5x31. Panel. Monogram, lower left.
59 THE SONS OF HEAVEN

PAINTINGS IN TEMPERA

60 THE SECRET PASSAGE (Sketch)

61 KHAN RONCHAK

62 THE CALL OF THE SUN (First Version)

63 THE RED MOUNTAINS
   Lost by Valentin V. Stenberg, Esq.

64 THE CAVE OF THE TROLLS

65 THE LAST ANGEL
THE PALACE OF TSAR BERENDEY

PRINCESS MALEINE SERIES
Seven scenes for Maeterlinck's Princess Maleine; Moscow Free Theatre production, 1913. First exhibited: Malmö, 1914.

IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE
Size 73x7. Board. Monogram, lower right.

THE TOWER
Size 30x28. Board. Monogram, lower left.

THE QUEEN'S ROOM
Size 30x205. Board. Monogram, lower right.

THE GARDEN
Size 9x33. Board. Monogram, lower right.

QUEEN ANNE'S TOWER
Size 30x205. Board. Monogram, lower right.

A CORRIDOR IN THE CASTLE
Size 30x205. Board. Monogram, lower left.

PRINCESS MALEINE'S CHAMBER
Size 30x28. Board. Monogram, lower right.

PRINCE IGOR SERIES

THE SQUARE IN PUTIVILE
Size 37x38. Board. Monogram, lower right.
75 PRINCE GALITZKY'S COURTYARD
Size 27 x 28. Board. Monogram, lower right.

76 YAROSLAVNA'S TOWER ROOM
Size 27 x 38. Board. Monogram, lower right.

77 CASTLE MOUNTAIN—YHINHLATI
Size 18 x 32. Board. Monogram, lower right.

78 WHITE NIGHT
Size 18 x 32 1/2. Board. Monogram, lower right.

79 THE GIANT'S GRAVE
Size 17 x 24. Board. Monogram, lower left.

80 THE ISLAND OF SLAVES
Size 17 x 24. Board. Monogram, lower right.

81 LAPLAND CASTLE (Study)
Size 14 x 34 1/2. Board. Monogram lower right.

82 MOUNTAIN LAKE

83 THE WHITE LADY
Size 36 x 28. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.

84 THE LAND OF GIANTS (Sketch)
Size 83 x 103 1/2. Board. Monogram, lower left.
TSAR SALTAN SERIES

Ten Scenes for the Pushkin—Rimsky-Korsakov opera
Tsar Saltan, for the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Painted

85 A RUSSIAN HUT
Size 20 x 36. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.

86 TMUTARAKAN
Size 21 x 36. Canvas. Monogram, lower right.

87 THE GATES OF TMUTARAKAN

88 THE BLUE SEA

89 LEDENETZ TOWN (I)
Size 24 x 36. Canvas. Monogram, lower right.

90 LEDENETZ TOWN (II)
Size 24 x 36. Canvas. Monogram, lower right.

91 THE SHORE NEAR LEDENETZ TOWN
Size 24 x 36. Canvas. Monogram, lower right.

92 TSAR GVIDON'S GALLEY
Size 16 x 20. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.

93 THE SHORE

94 LEDENETZ PALACE
Size 14 x 20. Canvas. Monogram, lower right.
TWENTY COSTUME DESIGNS FOR TSAR SALTAN.

116 PRINCE GOLITZIN'S PALACE
Scene for Mourgovsky's opera Kovetskchina. Painted for
the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, 1919. First exhibited:

117 THE ENCHANTED CITY
Size 28x36. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.

118 THE ECLIPSE
Scene for the prologue of Prince Igor. Painted for the Royal
Size 20x34. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.

119 COURTYARD OF PRINCE GALITZKY'S PALACE
Scene for Prince Igor. Painted for the Royal Opera, Covent
Garden production, October, 1919. First exhibited: London,

120 THE POLOVETZKY CAMP
Scene for Prince Igor; Diaghilev's Paris production, 1920.
First exhibited: London, 1920. Size 20x30. Canvas. Mono-
gram, lower right.

121 SAINT BORIS AND SAINT GLEB
Religious folk tale motif. Painted in London, 1919. First ex-
lower right.

122 THE SONG OF LEI
Popular folk tale motif. Painted in London, 1919. First ex-
lower right.
SNEGUROCHKA SERIES


123 DROP CURTAIN AND PORTAL 
Size 18x30. Canvas. Monogram, lower right. 650

124 A NORTHERN NIGHT (Prologue) 
Size 28x36. Canvas. Monogram, lower right. 1300

125 VILLAGE OF THE BERENDEY 
Size 24x36. Canvas. Monogram, lower right. 1500

126 THE SACRED GROVE 
Size 24x36. Canvas. Monogram, lower right. 1300

127 THE VALLEY OF YARILA 
Size 24x36. Canvas. Monogram, lower right. 1300

SADKO SERIES


128 THE NOVGOROD MARKET 
Size 28x36. Canvas. Monogram, lower right. 1200

129 THE SHORE OF VOLHOV 
Size 18x32. Canvas. Monogram, lower left. 900

130 SADKO'S PALACE 
Size 20x30. Canvas. Monogram, lower left. 1000

131 THE DEEP-SEA REALM 
Size 25x30. Canvas. Monogram, lower left. 900

132 THE CITY OF THE SERPENT 
133 SAINT GLEB, THE GUARDIAN

134 THE SONG OF THE MOON (Sketch)

135 THE WHITE MONASTERY

136 A PERSIAN THEATRE (Sketch)

137 THE DOOMED CITY (Variant)

138 SAINT GEORGE

139 DREAM OF THE ORIENT

140 OUR FOREPARENTS (Variant)
DREAMS OF WISDOM SERIES

141 THE SONG OF THE WATERFALL (Sketch)

142 THE SONG OF THE WATERFALL (Panel)
Size 92x48. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.
Lent by M. L. Skidelsky, Esq.

143 THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIRDS (Sketch)
Size 30x20. Canvas. Monogram, lower left.

144 THE SONG OF MORNINGS (Panel)
Size 92x48. Canvas. Monogram, left.
Lent by M. L. Skidelsky, Esq.

145 SAINT NICOLAS

146 MESSAGE FROM THE PAST

PAINTINGS IN TEMPERA AND PASTEL

147 OFFERINGS

148 BUGURSTAN—CAUCASUS
THE BLUE RANGE—CAUCASUS

THE RAIN FAIRY

Paintings in Pastel

ECSTASY (Sketch)

ROCKS AND CLIFFS—LADOGA SERIES
Painted in Karelia, 1917-18.

THE UNKNOWN SINGER

THE SECRET OF THE WALLS

152 = 500
153 = 500
154 = 510
156 = 500
159 = 260
160 = 1000
162 = 550
164 = 200
165 = 200
166 = 250
167 = 500
PAINTINGS BY NICOLAS ROERICH
IN VARIOUS COLLECTIONS

AUSTRIA
VIENNA: Mietke Collection.

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA
PRAGUE: Marten Collection.

DENMARK
COPENHAGEN: Hageman Collection; Sheinin Collection; Savitzky Collection; Feigenberg Collection.

ENGLAND
LONDON: Victoria and Albert Museum; Worthing Art Gallery.
Private Collections: Countess Benkendorff; Brauckwich; Coates; Cooper; Lady Dean Paul; Dembovsky; Hagedorn-Wright; Hubrecht-Northfield; Johnson; Skidelsky.

FINLAND
HELSENGOROS: Athenaeum.
Private Collections: Gallén-Kallela; Hvatt; Jarvinen; Lyddeken; Strindberg.
FINLAND (continued)

VIBORG: Private Collections: Crotte; Gourevich; Groenross; Rosenthal; Rodnev; Shein; Tumarkin.

RAVOLA: Kersten Collection.

SORTAVALA: Frey Collection; Relander Collection.

Tyrrikeya: Andreyev Collection.

FRANCE

NICE: Livshitz Collection.

PARIS: Louvre, Pavillon Marsan; Musée Nationale du Luxembourg.

Private Collections: Baron de Baye; Armand Dayot; Maurice Denis; Goloubef; Jacquin; Levinson; Mello; Pavlovsky; Denis Roche; Roumanov; Sviatopolk-Zetvertinsky; Princess Tenicheva.

GERMANY

DRESDEN: Rubin Collection.

MUNICH: Private Collection.

HOLLAND

AMSTERDAM: Sturz Collection.

INDIA

BHALPUR: Tagore Collection.

ITALY

ROME: Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna; Kamensky Collection.

RUSSIA

KAZAN: Mantel Collection.

KIEV: Parhomovka Church.

Private Collections: Bielashievsky; Filipov; Hansen; Terechenco; Vlassov.

KISHINEV: Museum of Bessarabia.
RUSSIA (continued)

Moscow: Tretyakov Gallery; Bahrushin Museum; Moscow-Kazan Railway Station; Palace of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth.

Private Collections: Casianov; Challapin; Cousse-vitzky; Hirschman; Jakontshikov; Karichev; Korsin-kin; Langovoy; Lokhov; Matveev; Mark; Ouchnov; Peritzov; Pokrovsky; Schussev; Prince Stcherbatov; Tret'akov; Troyanovsky; Vissotsky; Zimin.

Nijni-Novgorod: Municipal Art Museum.

Odessa: Aschkinasi Collection; Braievich Collection.

Perm: Voskresensky Convent.


Private Collections: Prince Argutinsky-Dolgor-uky; Bajanov; Bejetsky; Benois; Burtsiev; Comoiko; Davidov; Drampov; Ermanov; Count Golenitchew-Kutuzov; Maxim Gorky; Gourian; Grigoriev; Grouchetsky; Hulse van der Paals; Count Ignatiev; Kaiser; Kamensky; Kestlin; Kistiakovsky; Kirovskiy-Kirovsky; Komninari-jevsky; Krivoshein; Levin; Duke of Leuchten-berg; Lipovsky; Makovsky; Neusheller; Nort-gaft; Count Olsourovsky; Baroness Osten-Sacken; Platnev; Pokrovsky; Prince Pourtain; Reutern; Rimsky-Korsakov; Romanov; Sergovsky; Shu- bin-Pauletiev; Sviatlovskey; Sleptsov; Tchernishev; Tokarev; Princess Troubetzkoy.
RUSSIA (continued)

POCHAYEV: Cathedral.
PSKOV: Cathedral.
SCHLUSSELBURG: Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul.
SMOLENSK: Tenichev Municipal Art Museum.
TALASHKINO: Church of the Holy Spirit.
TSARKOVSELO: Grand Imperial Palace.
UFRA: Municipal Art Museum.
VLATKA: Municipal Art Museum.

SWEDEN:

STOCKHOLM: National Museum.

Private Collections: Arne; Björck; Key; Måsson;
Nobel; Palmstierna; Rubenstein; Schanzer; Slept-
zov; Taube; Thiel; Wohlin.

SWITZERLAND

GENEA: Horvat Collection.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BURLINGAME, CALIFORNIA: Private Collection of Jerome Land-
field, Esq.

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA: Oakland Art Gallery; Private Col-
lection of Dr. William S. Porter.
NICOLAS KONSTANTINOVICH ROERICH

Academician of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, Petrograd; Director of the School for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Russia; Honorary President of the Council of Courses of Architecture for Women in Petrograd; Honorary Member of the Imperial Moscow Archaeological Institute; Professor in the Imperial Petrograd Archaeological Institute; Member of the Commission of the Fine Arts Editions of St. Eugenia, Petrograd; First President of the Mir Iskusstva (World of Art), Petrograd; President of the Council of the Red Cross Art Workshops for Disabled Soldiers, Petrograd; Vice-President of the Council of Art in Russia; President of the Council of the Museum of Ante-Petrian Art, Petrograd; President of the Museum of Russian Art of the Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Russia; Member of the Board of the Imperial Society of Architecture, Petrograd; Member of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society, Petrograd; Commander of the First Class of the Royal Swedish Order of the North Star; Member of the Académie Nationale de Reims; Société de l'Exposition de l'Automne, Paris; Member of the Société des Antiquaires de Paris; Member of the Société Préhistorique, Paris; Honorary Member of the Vienna Secession; Member of the Finnish Artists Society of Helsingfors; Member, Anglo-Russian Literary Society, London.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


The Treasure
The Call of the Sun
PAGAN RUSSIA
SAINT BORIS AND SAINT GLEB
OUR FOREFATHERS
Queen Anne's Tower
The Call of the Bells
Yaroslavna's Tower Room
The Last Angel
Saint Nicolas
The Call
The Secret Passage
The Song of Morning
A Corridor in the Castle
Princess Maleine's Chamber
A Northern Night
The Song of Lel
Courtyard, Prince Galitzky's Palace
The Sons of Heaven
Village of the Berendey
LEDENETZ TOWN
MOUNTAIN LAKE
THE SHORE NEAR LEDENETZ TOWN
The White Monastery