

## NICHOLAS ROERICH - LIFE

NICHOLAS ROERICH - 1874 (St. Petersburg, Russia) - 1947 (Naggar, Kulu, India)  
Artist, Archeologist, Author, Explorer, Philosopher, Humanitarian.

Born and educated in Russia, he developed into a Universal Man, into an individual who through self-realization belonged to the ages, to all times and to all peoples and became the repository of all that is beautiful and true, a guardian of mankind's cultural heritage.

A distinguished archeologist, he devoted the early phase of his creative life to a depiction of Old Russia - paintings which are of great value to any student of history and architecture.

His next phase took him to Paris, where his admiration for Gauguin and other masters of that period did not destroy in any way his unique individuality and power, and he turned out the famous Stone Age Series and the Viking Series. During this period he exhibited in a number of European capitals and also designed vivid and brilliant operatic stage settings and ballet costumes.

Visit to America -- At the invitation of Dr. Robert Harshe, director of the Chicago Art Institute, Roerich arrived in New York in October 1900 with nearly 400 paintings which were exhibited at the Kingore Gallery in New York. This exhibition toured the country through 29 principal cities and lasted for one and a half years.

His love of archeology and travel and the call of the mystic East led him on a five year expedition through the vast, craggy heartland of Asia, its mountain ranges and deserts. He traveled through India, Tibet, Mongolia, China.

On his returning from the expedition to Darjeeling in India at the end of 1928, he finally settled in Naggar, Kulu, in the western Himalayas, thus realizing the dream of his life. The majesty of this great mountain world, with all its beauty and splendor, took hold of him. He observed it all hours of the day and night. Many of his important paintings, including those of the "Templers of the East" series, belong to this period.

He adopted the Himalayas as his abode and established the now famous Himalayan Research Institute at Naggar. India and the beautiful Himalayas became his final, spiritual home, and the people of India in their affection called him the Master of the Mountains. From here outpoured untiringly, like the effortless perennial flow of a mighty glacier, in all their flawless beauty and purity, thousands of paintings of unique individuality and power.

Roerich traveled in the Himalayas and continued to paint the Himalayas - the abode of the Gods - in all their glory and majesty. This vision of perfection and purity, blended in harmony and color, continued to interest him to the last of his days.

To Roerich, the Himalayas (which comprise the background of many of his paintings) symbolized the synthesis of all religions, all teachings.

What impresses one about the life and work of Nicholas Roerich, is the energy, the creativeness, the versatility and the truly international character of the outlook and message of a unique individual. Such people are indeed the salt of the earth, people who give logic to the continued existence of the human race despite our individual faults.



## ROERICH'S PHILOSOPHY --

In explaining his thoughts on beauty, Roerich says: "The thought of beauty is so powerful and moving that man cannot contain it silently within himself...Perhaps in song or in other expression of his being, man must manifest and record his thought of the beautiful."

Roerich's words: "In Beauty we are united; Through Beauty we pray; With Beauty we conquer."

Roerich's own words: "Real Peace, Real Unity is desired by the human heart. It strives to labor creatively and actively. For its labor is a source of joy. It wants to love and expand in the realization of Sublime Beauty. In the highest perception of Beauty and Knowledge all conventional divisions disappear. The heart speaks its own language; it wants to rejoice at that which is common for all, uplifts all and leads to the radiant Future. All symbols and tablets of humanity contain one hieroglyph, the sacred prayer -- Peace and Unity."

## PAINTING TECHNIQUES --

All exhibited paintings employ tempera \* as the paint medium. In Roerich's mastery of the technique of tempera, the tones are deep and velvety, there is fluidity, but also strength.

\*Tempera -- Tempera is a painting medium that uses egg whites, water, and dry powder pigments. When tempera is correctly applied and built up in thin layers, it is neither transparent nor completely opaque. Tempera was perfected in the Middle Ages and was used for most easel paintings from the 1200's through the 1400's. Tempera paintings have great lasting qualities. Leonardo da Vinci used tempera in his painting of "The Last Supper" on the wall of a Milan, Italy church.

### Painting Techniques.

The delightful and delicate rendering of vivid color variations with their masterly gradations, this clear, full, and at times voluptuous chorus of colors and the harmony and purity of his communion with nature contribute so successfully to the sweep, power and majesty, vigor and grandeur of his Himalayan landscapes. The treatment of the sky and the clouds and the sunset, the shades and the shadows, is indeed classical. His brush combines strong contrasts and his paintings, even when appearing plain, contain a wealth of subtle movement, transparency and depth. It has been said that Roerich wrote in color, the language of the Gods. No one can help reading higher meaning and loftier significance in such beautifully composed landscapes, revealing the course of man's self-realization and spiritual evolution and emphasizing our oneness with nature.

## ROERICH PAINTINGS:

Painted over 7000 paintings in his lifetime which are in museums and private collections all over the world.

The 40 paintings in this exhibition were painted mostly in 1924-25 or early twenties.

The paintings in this exhibit represent four series:

"Banners of the East Series" - Of the 19 total, 14 are exhibited, Great Teachers of Humanity.

"His Country Series" - Of the 12 total, 6 are exhibited.



"Sancta Series" - Of the 6 total, 6 are exhibited.

"Saint Joan of Arc Series" - Of the 3 total, 3 are exhibited.

His other paintings of this period (in India and Himalayas) cover many mystic themes of Buddhist, Christian and Hindu origin. The divine dreamlands of the blue, the grey and the silver, with the symbolic human forms, know no limitation of time and space and envisage the Universe as a continuous song.

His paintings, apart from their beauty, their mastery of technique and his brilliant colors, evoked a deep response because of their themes. His power to translate art into spiritual and visionary language gave special significance to his paintings. In assimilating them, one derives a new force, which quickens the spirit and opens new reaches of attainment. As one writer said about him - "He leads humanity to the gates of heaven."

Today the paintings of Nicholas Roerich can be found all over the world in museums and private collections. In New York City a large collection is housed in the Nicholas Roerich Museum, at 319 West 107th Street, another museum dedicated to the artist's work may be found in Kulu, India. Four hundred of Roerich's paintings are housed in the Russian State Museum in Leningrad.

#### CRITIC'S COMMENTS ON PAINTINGS

Tagore: "Your paintings profoundly moved me," said Tagore, - "They made me realize one thing which is obvious and yet which one needs to discover for oneself over and over again; it is that truth is infinite -- your pictures are distinct and yet are not definable in words. Your art is jealous of its independence because it is great." (Tagore, 1861-1941, was an Indian poet, philosopher and supporter of freedom for India. He received the 1913 Nobel prize in literature.)

Claude Bragdon has written: "In Roerich's work, above all, one has the feeling that the final indelible impression is one of beauty. This is as it should be, for in the hierarchy of trades and talents the creative artist is nearest to the throne of God...one has the feeling that in everything Roerich does he is seeking the hidden truth, the unrevealed beauty; the Lost Word, in point of fact. Like some mighty, indefatigable hunter, armed not with a gun, but with his brushes and paints, he stalks his quarry from country to country across oceans, mountains, though knowing all the while that the thing he is seeking is in himself. To look at the 600 or more paintings of his in the Roerich Museum is to participate in this adventure and to draw nearer to that truth which is beauty and that beauty which is truth."

#### PAINTING EXHIBITION PROGRAM:

On September 11 to the 20th The Community Center opens a special exhibition of paintings by the Russian painter Nicholas Roerich. The paintings on exhibit are comprised of 40 important works from the collection the artist brought with him to this country for an extended tour in 1920, and features a series on the ancient Spiritual Leaders of the East.

For details giving the dates and times for special addresses and talks, please see the printed brochure on the exhibition.

As special guests from New York City, the talks will be given by Mrs. Sina Fosdick, Director of the Nicholas Roerich Museum in New York and Mr. Edgar Lansbury, Curator.