

The Art of Roerich

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I

-ROERICH...

THIS name has long since come to identify an entire cosmos called into being by the creative will of the artist,—an entire world of forms of the deepest significance, inspired by *wisdom* in the antique meaning of the word; sophia is “mastership”, ability to create a thing; not without reason in Pindar and Aristotle is the true artist called the “wise”. Aristotle understood wisdom as “goodliness of art”; the ancient grammarians immediately construed this the same as “art” and “craft”.

The lofty “craft” of Roerich has been marked by unquestionably sound *knowledge*. Roerich is a philosopher, a lover of wisdom; knowledge for him, as for every artist, denotes vision, or rather pre-vision. Visions and Vision are for him inseparable. As one of our contemporary thinkers (A. F. Losev) has truly observed, in Homer the word for “I know”, “I am cognizant of”, is very often joined with the verb denoting *vision*, (one of many examples; “and Aeneas *recognized* Apollo before him, gazing into his eyes”); the Greek “I know” usually signifies “I have seen”; ordinarily, knowing is latently understood to be knowing on the basis of *seeing*. The “optical” meaning of knowledge is revealed in the words of Plato; “we have not heard this from others, we *know*

it with our own eyes" (and so on). And finally, the Greek "idea" is nothing else but vision, sight; in Plato "eidos" often denotes an outward appearance, a concretely visible body or figure. The crown of Plato's philosophy is existence, organized into as much of an artistic theme as a work of sculpture; for Plato, "philosophy is the greatest blessing of the eyes"; and according to Heraclitus "the eyes are far more precise witnesses than the ears". Let us add to this that Russian expression "saw with one's own eyes" likewise contains within itself the categorical ratification of visual perception which leads to *indubitable* knowledge.

All this is involuntarily called to mind when you survey the creativeness of Roerich, permeated with knowledge of things visible and with revelation of things invisible. In his attitude toward the world, there is something deeply philosophical, something tranquilly earnest. This is the artist, no levity nor play, concentrated and austere. Goethe said; "ernst ist das Leben"; Roerich might add; "ernst ist die Natur". Ancient Mother-Earth, taciturn, long-suffering, prophetic, disclosing her hoary secrets only to the elect—this is Roerich's unchanging theme, his unchanging love. About the pantheism of the artist, about his archaic style, not a little that the true has been said at various times, yet still the "cardinal verity" about Roerich is inexpressible, as inexpressible in the last analysis as the "content" of his best pictures; they open to the initiates such vistas, they raise them to such heights, about which there is no necessity to speak, nor even the *possibility* of speaking. In this is the best goal of graphic art; by the force of its immediate, almost instantaneous

suggestion, it eliminates any need of "literature". To connect Roerich with some sorts "of explanatory text," with anything smacking of belles-lettres, would mean vulgarizing the essence of his creativeness. Here, as in many other cases, the art commentator should set himself a limited purpose; he is obliged to assist one to understand Roerich as much as he is able, but he ought not to obtrude "his" Roerich, he must in no wise "prepare" one for the artist, who speaks for himself.

II

It has so happened that a very important part of Roerich's works are in America, separated from us by the great ocean expanses and almost inaccessible to us (except through reproductions). But in his essence Roerich is ours, he is Russian of the Russians, and even more Russian than the Russians themselves; his is an enormous world-feeling, expanded to cosmic scales; it may be symbolically expressed as the all-embracing Russian heart being eagerly drawn to the world, the "cosmopolitan" heart. And the *thought forms* of Roerich—his pictures cannot be characterized otherwise—are incursions into the cosmos, provisions of *inter-nationality*, of humanity as a whole, of brotherly unity—the creativeness of Roerich must be especially near and dear to the Land of the Soviets.

That Roerich is an artist of international significance is simply for the reason that the true values of art are always international—if not in the forms of their reaction, then in the results. Though the mystical elements in Roerich's creativeness are foreign to the materialistic creed of advanced Soviet sociality, yet even to the positivistic

mind it is clear that the mysticism of Roerich has nothing in common with that trivial boulevard mysticism with its ill savour, nothing in common with a brummagem theosophy or with popular occultism,—in it there is no decadent psychology. The “mysteriousness” of Roerich is loftier and better than current mysticism; it lies in the very foundation of his stylistic originality. Decadent mysticism is watered wine, the sweetish falsification of church communion vessels. Roerich however, quaffs from his Viking drinking horn the thick sharp wine of thousands of years, black as dried blood.

Each artist has his own “mode of expression”; the historical previsions of Surikov are arrayed in a form more realistic than that of Roerich, and therefore his painting is nearer and more comprehensible to a present-day Soviet spectator. Roerich is a “seer” in no less degree than Surikov,—but he is also a philosopher, his forms are symbolic, they not only depict somethings, they synthesize and summarize the manifestations depicted.

Roerich is no decadent, least of all is he an artist of decay; it is impossible not to feel in his works the strong healthful roots of “nature-love,” it is impossible not to sense their profound humanness and lucid virtue which it would be unthinkable to suspect of the least perversion, sanctimoniousness, or profanation of great truths.

We have at our disposal too little data to express an opinion about the degree and character of Roerich’s success in Western Europe,—we know only about his exceptional and well-merited success in America,—a success which truly does honor to the Americans themselves,

It must be assumed that the people of the Old World and the New are equally impressed by the fascinating enigmaticness of many of the Roerich pictures. They "adapt," as it were, this enigmaticness to their own "mystical frames of mind." But it may be that the "nervo" itself of Roerich's art, the very essence of his profound and subtle perception of "historical nature" is more remote from them than from our own contemporary spectator, who grasps full well the distinctions between the really beautiful and the outwardly pretty, between the *truthful* and the *diverting*.

III

That which it is customary to call *religious* art is sometimes very far removed from the living and eternal sources of religion. Indeed, let us direct our thought to European painting of the past, and cast a retrospective glance at what has gone on in this field; do we find herein much true genius, many vibrant "infectious" reflections of religious feeling? Are we not left cold at the faultless creativeness of the brilliant Raphael, do not the works of his followers and imitators seem impersonal to us, are we not bored with the decorous creations of the Bolognese school? Biblical subjects are repeated hundreds, thousands of times; there is a countless number of reverent "copies" upon themes of the Old and the New Testaments; tiresome are the monotonous variants of the "Holy Family", "Annunciation", "Ascension", "Assumption of the Virgin", "Madonna and Child", "Crucifixion", "Pieta," and so on; we perceive and refer all this as to a plan or this or that historical or formal particularities rather than as to quality of spontaneous

and inspiring expressions of a religious idea; "quality" drowns in "quantity," and all that remains from a study of this enormous mass of material amounts to a scrupulous analysis of the technical methods of the different masters. The history of religious painting makes up an immense library, which in all honesty we have not the time to read as we should, and to which we refer with the chilly, almost sacrilegious curiosity of investigators remote from religious experience. Sometime the problem of religious art must be treated and elucidated on a completely different plan from any hitherto used. Must it not be understood that along with absolutely inert "pseudo-religious" "Madonnas" and "Saviours" there exist religiously influential landscapes? Who will deny that Roerich has done landscapes which, by a conjunction of all the pictorial resources composition, dynamics of some forms and statics of others, interaction of lines and masses, gradations of light and shade, combinations and modulations of color and their striking interaction, even by technique itself,—act as inspirations of religious order? Authentic historical painting is at the same time religious art according to the very meaning of the word "religion," because historical painting *connects* past with present, and in its best manifestations not only recreates the past, but also transforms it into a new reality, possessing its own particular credence, in so far as the past has been exhibited in it through the prism of creative imagination, which is always tinged to a certain extent by contemporary psychology and which does not ignore the contemporary attitude toward life, which cannot finally be crushed by any archaeology. Historical art, as a museum, is created in the name of resurrection of the past; if the

museum is, as N. F. Fyodorov remarks, a "temple in memory of the departed," erected as a safeguard of faith, hope and love, then historical painting in its essence is theurgic activity directed toward the same goal.

IV

For a time pupil of the sculptor Mikeschin and the mosaicist Kudrin (before entering the Academy,) and of A. I. Kuindji (in the Academy of Fine Arts,) Roerich from the very beginning of his artistic activity worked independently and reflectively, alone and apart. Some of the names of his first works, "Yaroslavna's Plea", "Kurgans" (1893), "Ivan Tsarevitch Comes Across A Hut", "Sea Pirate", "Carrying the Quarry" (1894), "In Byzantium" (1895), "Morning of the Knighthood of Kiev" and "Evening of the Knighthood of Kiev" (1895-96), already define the circle of interests of the artist, Russian antiquity, the creative restoration of its forms on the basis of archaeological materials and memorials of ancient literature. In itself such a problem was nothing unprecedentedly new, but it was solved in an unparalleled manner, without that state nationalism and stage-property stylization which was paraded by Russian "historical painting" in the second half of the last century (exclusive of such admirable exceptions as the creative work of Surikov). Roerich's principal "graduation" picture, "The Messenger" (1897); now in the Tretyakov State Gallery), is far from displaying all those possibilities which have been revealed in his ultimate creative work, but it does speak convincingly about his vast pictorial talent, his free and bold technique, his strong sincere lyricism, void of any banality in its self-revelment.

This picture, as well as the following ones, "Meeting of the Elders" (1898) and "The Campaign" (1899), bear the character of "historical provision" in that aspect which is inherent to all Roerich's "historical oeuvre;" this is history without "history", this is antiquity perceived *intuitively, physiologically*, and not patriotic restoration. This is penetration into the universal through the Russian, a penetration made possible solely by the fact that in Roerich there is always present a feeling of the "elemental-Russian" in contra-distinction to those who have painted a tinsel "Holy Russia."

These three pictures, together with the next two, "Birds of Ill Omen" and "Building the Town," compose the cycle "Beginning of Russia of the Slavs." In 1900 Roerich journeyed to Paris for the purpose of visiting the World Exposition and studying with Cormon; the French painter gave him a certain training in the field of drawing, as witnessed by such work of Roerich as "Man with a Horn", "Models", "Idol", "Sea Gull" (1900-01). He remained cold to the founders of impressionism, greater impression was made upon him by Puvis de Chavannes; he was pleased with Segantini, Besnard, Latouche, Simon. Popular as he was in those years, Boecklin impressed Roerich for less than the then little known Maris. To this period is referred the reinforcement in Roerich's creativeness of those "principles of artistic transformation" of manifestations which were to lead to the formation of his isolated, individual *style*.

Upon Roerich's return to Russia, there were displayed at the Academy exhibition in the spring of 1902 his "Birds of Ill Omen", "Idols", and "Strangers from Overseas," "Red Sails," pictures which impelled the

public to speak more and more about the artist. There breathed something fresh and new from them, from their broad and vibrant decorativeness, from their poignant austere melancholy, from their mysterious penetration into a domain long avoided. And yet in these things there was a remarkable combination of expressed "stylicity" with great veracity. V. V. Rozanov was on firm ground when he wrote about the picture "Building the Town" (shown in 1903 at the "World of Art" exhibition, and acquired by the Tretyakov Gallery to the murmur of disapproving comment):

If you in advertently stand too close to the picture, instead of people's figures, you see a sort of whitish spots, yet at the proper distance "Building the Town" produces an impression of such naturalness and animation that one is inclined to sniff the air so as to capture the lovely scent of the newly sawed pine timber.

By those words Rozanov wished to express that amazing combination of impressionistic expressiveness with realistic strength such as constitutes the distinctive peculiarity of the Reorich *style*. A sense of style as such still does not in itself predicate an artistic creed, though the latter is unthinkable without the former, likewise inconceivable is a writer who does not know how to handle words and is incapable of working out a manner of his own. We know of a whole group of excellent stylists, most accomplished masters of form, who are identically lacking in a true world-outlook. It cannot be said that they completely lack a "point of view" toward the world; in the sense of style there is something immanently philosophical, but the quality and quantity of philosophic elements are inversely proportional to the cult of pure

form. The more exclusively the artist's attention is absorbed by the purely formal, technical problems, which lack any inner content, the more damage is inflicted upon the development of his inner "I"; only a close bond of technical training with the emotional driving force of creativeness and philosophical interest communicates real meaning and substantial significance to the artist's productions.

The creativeness of Roerich is without exception that of a "world-viewer". Moreover, he has none of the obtrusive "literariness" or native narrativeness, in a word, tendentiousness and that pictorial "arithmetic" which is so disagreeable in the works of the naturalist chronicler or the painter—"Historiographer".

In the past Roerich has sometimes been regarded as an "artist-archaeologist." This appellation, of course, has by no means covered exhaustively the essence and significance of his creativeness. In this dry archive designation the essential is left out; there is not even a hint of that poetization of the Russian North, of that "exegesis" of Ancient Russia which inspirits the works of Roerich apart from any archaeology. It is present everywhere, in "The Village" (1902), in "Building the Boats" (1903), in "Ancient Life" (1904) and in a series of studies done in 1902-05 in Novgorod and Tver provinces; it is also revealed in the splendid decorative works of the artist, such as the two panels, "The Prince's Hunt" (1902, in the Roman Palace, Voronezh province), in church murals (1904-06), and in motifs dealing with demons and enchantment, such as the pictures "Sorcerers", "Conjuration by Water" (1905), and "The Serpent

Princess " (1906), which disclose to us "earth's evil side".

The pictures "The Battle" and "Morning" (1906), studies of the Italian journey (same year), Finland studies (1907), Rhine studies (1909 and 1912), Caucasian studies (1913), a series of theatrical works—"Die Walkure", "Snegourochka", "Prince Igor", "Le Sacre du Printemps", "La Fuente Ovejuna", "Peer Gynt", "Tristan und Isolde", "La Princesse Maleino," and "Soeur Beatrice", the pictures, "Unkrada" (1909), "Our Forefathers" (1911), "Starry Runes" (1912), "Church Murals in Talashkino" (1911-14), twelve panels for the Villa Livshitz at Nice (1914), two huge panels for the Kazan Station in Moscow (1915-16),—all this constitutes the "steps of exaltation", the important landmarks in Roerich's creativeness, about which many score pages could be written and about which it is better not to speak at all than to say a few fleeting words.

Is it not superfluous to say that the name of Roerich has become a "stylistic definitive", that we often speak about the "*Roerich* landscape", "*Roerich* colors", "*Roerich* clouds and hills," finally about the "*Roerich* mood?" This means that the magic of Roerich's style has so taken root in our consciousness that at times it colors our perception of nature. Such power has only been given to artists who are of the elect; in the history of Russian art there are only two or three masters whose creativeness is so stylistically integral and "definitive". Thus we speak about the "Levitan landscape", or the "Nesterov landscape", far less frequently are recalled the "moonlit nights" of Kuindji, or the "trees" of Shishkin, perhaps

for the reason that in them there is not that creative intensity that willing self-revelment, such as one senses in Roerich, Nesterov, and Levitan. And indeed, almost humorously do we refer to such landscapes as those of Aivazov or Klever, never naming them in a class with those above mentioned. Not without reason has entered into usage the ironical expression—"this is worthy of Aivazov's brush", as well as the disdainful reference to Klever's "winters" with their "cranberry juice" smeared over snow. Yet certainly at one time these artists were new, needed, and interesting. What is the point here? Indeed, it is not only in the fact that Aivazov and Klever were incredibly productive and that they cheapened their creativeness with a countless multitude of banal "variations," (in the matter of productivity Roerich does not yield to them), but also in the fact that they were naturalists, slavishly bound to nature, to concrete objectives; they knew not how to "read between the lines," nor to convey this to an observer. For the book of nature reveals its secrets only to him who can "read between the lines," who sees under the many-colored veil of Maya the ageless symbols, the forms of the eternally existent, who under the multiformity of the temporal and perishable is able to divine the permanent forms, who recognizes under the *mask* the *face*.

Who of the contemporary Russian painters might be compared with Roerich? In the sense of gravitation toward the church motifs of Old Russia, Vasnetsov and Stelletsky are akin to him; in love of the earth Bogayevsky approaches him, in attraction to the unearthly, Nesterov; but none of these masters occupy nor will

occupy in the history of Pan-European art the place which Roerich has achieved for himself, and not for the reason that they are less original (Nesterov cannot but be considered original), but because their thematics or rather "scope" of portrayable manifestations is more limited (not limited of course in its reprehensible sense). Roerich has a greater scale of creativeness, wider horizons; the sedately disposed, narcotic church orthodoxy of Vasnetsov, the rigid Byzantinism of Stelletsky, and the ascetic anemia of Nesterov,—these would be for Roerich as constraining as a narrow monastic cell would be for one of the legendary Paladins. Perhaps in a certain sense Nesterov is the closer to him, but not in the matter of his themes but of spirit, of lofty spiritual order, but too this parallel upon closer analysis turns into a parabola whose limbs diverge into unfathomable distance, into "two different infinitudes." Nesterov is orthodox throughout, and even nature is to him orthodox, monastic, delicate and appealing, arrayed in unearthly purity. With all the "orthodox" motifs which go into his works, Roerich can by no means be called "merely" orthodox; he is a pantheist, "pandemic, universal, firmamental", affirming his Earth religion in which there can be no "partyism", no separate "religious sects" and "castes"; if you like, all these melt away in occult depths of pantheism, they are all encompassed by the one truth, known to the illuminate and too often concealed from religious fanatics, from the "orthodox" sectarians who glorify their own patented truth and cannot see that truth is universal. They do not see Truth with a capital letter, as so often one does not see the forest for the trees. They incline to say; Roerich is not a philosopher, it is even uncertain

whether he is a "believer". We rather say; he is more than a philosopher, and more than a "believer"!

V

Roerich's earth is like the first mother, Cybele the many-breasted; his low flat mountains, round hills, arise like the resilient breasts of woman predestined to nourish all humanity. His landscapes distinctly indicate the geological structure of the earth, they reflect the hidden seismic forces which have sometime produced mighty perturbations of the earthly crust. Looking upon these beautifully sad vistas, these hills and slopes fading away into the distance, you not only see their green mantles, the patches of light and shadow, but you also begin to grasp the hidden dynamics, the secret rhythm of these clefts and hollows.

About the Roerich stones, clouds, and sunsets, one could write a whole treatise if drawn to this theme, as Andrew White was fascinated in his youth by "sunsetology", and later, by "rockology". His stones are dark and sad, proud and arrogant, modest and humble; his clouds light, guileless and joyful, or menacing, ill-omened, solemn. His "The Cloud" (1913) embodies an entire poem or story; the clouds in "Prince Igor" (1909) are like to a grave foreboding a sinister silence; in the "Conquest of Kazan" (1914) the clouds are saturated with exultation, triumphal arrogance; a sharp cry to arms, unwavering will-power fills the clouds in the pictures, "Arrows of Heaven—Spears of Earth" (1915); in the picture "The Messenger" (1915) they bear good tidings, promise of wonders, unexpected joy.

The lighting in Roerich's pictures has nothing in common with the light effects of Kuindji, in it is nothing of "transparency" or "magic-lantern effect"; here color and light are, as it were, inseparable, the strength of light is determined by values, by density of color and its play, and not by any lighting "coming from without".

Roerich's sky is never perceived by us as simply a "decorative background"; it always has a positive reaction on us. He can paint gloomy lowering skies which inevitably call to mind the lines of Blok;

The violet west comes closing down
As the press of a leaden hand;
Onward we hasten fatedly,
Fulfilling an austere will.

Perhaps these lines were written without any connection with Roerich, but their lyric nature is entirely adequate for many of his themes;

All are in mail and grayish cloaks,
Like fire the golden links;
In the north let us scatter the ashes,
To the south, the azure leave.

In Roerich's architectural scenes, he shows a remarkable ability not only for finding a felicitous visual angle upon this or that architectural ensemble or individual memorial, but also for sensing the meaning of the encompassed mass, its "ponderability", weightiness, corporality; in his treatment of the surrounding landscape, the artist is so subtle and thoughtful; he selects the time of the year and the time of day (and hence, lighting), the extent and character of cloud arrangement, even the placing of the horizon line with reference to the given architectural form and the

composition encompassing it—all this is thoroughly reasoned out and made sure of.

It would be pointless to argue about whether Roerich is Christian or heathen. It may be he is a Buddhist,—is it not all the same through what gates he has arrived at his religion? As media of religious cognition, all forms of belief are alike effective if they “come from beyond”, and they are alike ineffective if they remain on the “surface” of the consciousness. There is faith which is creative and faith which is wingless, inert. For those who believe that the Christian creed is the highest and truest path to salvation and who are able to derive from this belief all the possibilities latent in it, for those there is no other path, but this does not mean that other paths are altogether non-existent.

The question of the nature of the “artistic creed” is one which is extremely obscure and complicated. In defining the concept, “artistic creed”, one must go on from the fact that the mother of all philosophies, the Hellenistic, has been far from clear in separating the “eidos” from the “idea”, that is, visibility, externality, from thought, from the spiritual essence, that much has since been expounded in the creeds of certain German thinkers, (Fechter et al.) as to affirmation of the dual, spiritual-physical essence of being, in which spirit and matter complement each other as the surfaces of a concavo-convex mirror.

VI

Turning to the works of N. K. Roerich which are now in the museums of the U.S.S.R., it can be said that

we do not have a single large museum of art in which the creativeness of this painter is not represented. We are indebted to the October Revolution in this, that a great number of works of art, among them Roerich pictures, formerly kept secluded in the palaces and private residences of the aristocracy, were made public property, enriching our museums. It is enough to point out that in 1904 the Russian Museum possessed only one of Roerich's pictures ("Birds of ill Omen"), while the Tretyakov Gallery had two ("The Messenger" and "Building the Town"). Even in 1917, on the eve of the Revolution, there were only two Roerich pictures in the Russian.

This situation was abruptly altered after the revolution in connection with the revival of museum building.

At the present time there are on exhibition in the Tretyakov State Gallery the following works of Roerich; "The Battle" (1905), "Putivl" and "Polovetsi Camp" (sketches of the settings for "Prince Igor, 1908), Rostov the Great (1903), "The Messenger (1894), "Red Sails" and "Building the Town". These seven pictures are arranged in alternation with the works of K. F. Bogayevsky in the following order (going from left to right); at the extreme left is placed the picture "Building the Town", then two Bogayevsky pictures, next are "Red Sails" and "Polovetsi Camp", then "The Messenger" over a picture by Bogayevsky, then "Rostov the Great" and "Putivl", then two Bogayevsky pictures, and at the extreme right, "The Battle".

On the whole the balance must be considered successful, though it is always more agreeable to view the pictures of a single artist in an "isolated" grouping than alternating

with the works of other masters. The general conditions of exhibition in the Tretyakov Gallery—a somewhat inadequate lighting, lessened by cross screens placed perpendicular to the windows—reduce the effect, and certainly in that room where the Roerich pictures are hung.

In the Russian Museum Roerich's pictures are located in the same room with the works of Stelletsy, K. F. Bogayevsky, and A. Y. Golovin. The arrangement must be recognized as a very successful one, and it would be too bad if it were altered in connection with a future shift in policy to a complex scheme of exhibition. First of all it is fortunate that the Roerich pictures are hung by themselves, that is, not intermingled with the others but occupying one whole wall of the room. Their order is as follows; in the upper-most row, (from left to right)—"Strangers from Overseas", "Birds of ill Omen", "Holy Island"; in the next row—sketch of the setting for "Sœur Beatrice", "Summer Scene", "Strangers from Overseas", "Procopius the Blessed", "The Messenger"; in the third row—sketch of the setting for "Peer Gynt", "The Heavenly Battle", "Monastery of the Resurrection in Uglich", "Slavs on the Dnieper", sketch of the setting for the ballet "Le Sacre du Printemps"; in the lowest row—study of the setting for "Prince Igor", "Lichens", "The Serpent Princess", sketch of the setting for "Snegourochka" and "Earth Conjunction". There are also "Babylonian Furnace" and "Blue Mural". Besides the works on exhibition there are others in the Museum's reserve store.

In addition to the central art museums, many secondary museums possess Roerich productions; thus, for example, in the Museum of the Moscow Theatre named

for A. Bakhrushkin, there are the following works ; two sketched for "Snegourochka," three sketches and one working draft for "Tristan und Isolde," and a stage model for "La Princesse Maleine." These works are placed in a group of the theatrical artist of the "World of Art," including Shervashidze, Sudeikin, Dobuzhinsky, and others.

There is a series of Roerich works in provincial museums ; in Nizhegorod, "The Spies" ; in Vyatka, "Rhine Study" ; in Ufimsk, "Strangers from Overseas" and "Idols" ; in Yaroslavl, "The Valley of Yarila", (in the 1928 Catalogue of the Yaroslavl Museum, it is noted that in 1900 Roerich worked in the Yaroslavl district, studying the memorials of antiquity there ; the studies of this period, the church of Nikolas the Wet, the Rostov Citadel, and others, are in America) ; in Smolensk, sketches of murals ; in Odessa, "The Omen ;" in the Omsk Museum, "Building the Boats."

The Roerich pictures which were in the late Archaeological Society ("Kurgans") and in the late Archaeological Institute ("Old Ladoga") were in 1929 transferred to the Leningrad State University. In the Academy of Fine Arts is "The Cry of the Serpent." At Bazhanov, Friezes of Legends.

At the present time it is extremely difficult to determine the pre-war distribution of Roerich's works among the private collections of Moscow and Leningrad, for in the following years of the revolution there occurred repeated changes in the status of the private collections, and many of his pictures changed hands more than once. None the less it is possible to list several collectors who

possessed Roerich paintings in pre-revolutionary time and have not parted with them up to the present. Thus there are Roerich works in the collections of F. F. Nottgaft, I. M. Stepanov, M. I. Roslavlyov, V. Y. Kurbatov, I. I. Brodsky, B. K. Roerich, S. P. Yaremich, and many others.

We know that America is far richer in the works of Roerich than the U. S. S. R.—on the other hand, the things of his which we have collected are the ones which belong to the epoch of “storm and strife,” of the “World of Art,” to those years when the “World of Art” won its right to existence. This imparts special interest to the Roerich pictures and makes them particularly valuable.

These are Rosench paintings in pre-revolutionary time and have not passed with changing to the present. Thus there are Rosench works in the collection of F. F. Novosilov, I. M. Stepanov, M. I. Koshlyakov, V. Y. Kuznetsov, I. I. Brodsky, B. K. Koshch, S. P. Yermolov and many others.

We know that America is far richer in the works of Rosench than the U. S. S. R.—on the other hand, the things of this which we have collected are the ones which belong to the epoch of storm and strife, of the World of Art, to those years when the World of Art was in its prime to existence. This makes special interest in the Rosench pictures and makes them particularly valuable.

Случилось так, что значительная часть произведений Рериха находится в Америке, отделенная от нас огромными просторами океана и нам почти недоступная /репродукция - не в счет/. Но, по существу, Рерих - ~~наш~~ русский из русских, и даже более русский, чем сами русские: огромное мироощущение его, расширенное до космических масштабов, символически может быть обозначено, как всеобъемлющее сердце русское, жадно влекущееся к миру, "космополитическое" сердце. И мыслеобразы Рериха - иначе нельзя определить его картины - суть прорывы в космос, прозрения космополитической истины. Вот почему в эпоху величайшего внимания к проблемам всенародности, всечеловечности, братского единения - творчество Рериха должно быть особенно близко и дорого ~~Стране Советов~~.

Рерих - художник интернационального значения уже просто потому, что подлинные ценности искусства всегда интернациональны - если не в формах воздействия, то в результатах своего воздействия. Пусть мистические элементы в творчестве Рериха чужды материалистическому мировоззрению ~~передовой советской~~ общественности, но даже для позитивно-настроенного ума ясно, что мистицизм Рериха не имеет ничего общего с тем пошлым, бульварным "мистицизмом" дурного тона, ~~ничего общего с дешевой теософией или популярным синкретизмом~~, - в нем нет упаднической психологии. "Таинственность" Рериха выше и лучше ходячего мистицизма; она лежит в самой основе его стилистического своеобразия. Декадентский мистицизм это - вино, разбавленное водой или сладковатый фальсификат, ~~церковных потир~~. Рерих же пьет из своего варяжского рога густое и терпкое вино тысячелетий, ~~черное~~.

Рерих - не декадент, он менее всего упадочник: нельзя не чувствовать в его произведениях здоровых, крепких корней "природолюбия", нельзя не ощущать их глубокой человечности и ясного целомудрия, которое немислимо заподозрить ни в малейшей извращенности, ханжестве или в профанации великих истин.

Э. Г О Л Л Е Р Б А Х

ИСКУССТВО РЕРИХА.

- РЕРИХ...

Это имя уже давно стало обозначать целый космос, творческой волей художника вызванный к жизни, - целый мир образов глубочайшего значения, одушевленный мудростью в античном смысле слова: софия есть "мастерство", умение создавать вещь; подлинные художники недаром именуются у Пиндара и Аристотеля "мудрыми".

Все это невольно вспоминается, когда обзираешь творчество Рериха, проникнутое знанием вещей видимых и обличием вещей невидимых. Есть нечто глубоко-философское, спокойно-серьезное в его отношении к миру. Это - художник без "улыбки", без "игры", сосредоточенный и строгий. "Ernst ist das Leben", сказал Гете; "ernst ist die Natur", мог бы добавить Рерих. Древняя Мать - Земля, безмолвная, многострадальная, вещая, только избранным открывающая седые свои тайны - неизменная тема Рериха, неизменная его любовь. О пантеизме художника, об его архаическом стиле было в разное время сказано не мало верного и, все-таки, "главная правда" о Рерихе невыразима, как невыразимо, в конечном счете, содержание "лучших его картин: они открывают посвященным такие дали, возводят их на такие выси, о которых говорить нет надобности и даже возможности нет говорить. В этом - лучшая цель изобразительного искусства: силой единовременного, почти мгновенного, внушения своего он устраняет всякую нужду в "литературе". Связывать Рериха с каким то "пояснительным текстом", с какой то беллетристикой значило бы вульгаризировать сущность его творчества. Здесь, как и во многих других случаях искусствовед должен ограничить себя в намерениях: помочь пониманию Рериха, поскольку это в его силах, он обязан, но не должен навязывать "своего" Рериха, ~~не должен никак "препарировать" художника,~~ говорящего сам за себя.

Земля Рериха словно праматерь Кибела - многогрудая: невысокие плоские горы, округлые холмы возвышаются, подобно упругим женским грудям, предназначенным насытить все человечество. Пейзажи Рериха отчетливо показывают как бы геологическое строение земли, отражают скрытые сейсмические силы, некогда создавшие грандиозные пертурбации земной коры. Смотря на эти прекрасно печальные дали, на эти далеко уходящие холмы и косогоры, видишь не только их зеленые покровы, пятна света и тени, но и начинаешь постигать скрытую динамику, тайны ритм этих изломов и впадин.

О рериховских камнях, облаках и закатах можно было бы написать целое исследование, если увлечься этой темой так, как Андрей Белый увлекался в юности "закатологией", а позднее, в дни кактебельские - "петроманией". У него есть камни мрачные и грустные, гордые и заносчивые, скромные и приниженные, облака темные, чуждые и радостные, и облака-грозовые, злобные, торжественные.

Освещение в картинах Рериха не имеет ничего общего со световыми эффектами Климта, в нем нет ничего от "транспаранта" или "волшебного фонаря": цвет и свет здесь как бы нераздельны, сила света определяется валерами, насыщенностью краски и ее игрой, а не каким-нибудь "извне идущим" освещением.

Небо Рериха никогда не воспринимается нами, как просто "декоративный фон": оно всегда активно действует на нас. Есть у Рериха пасмурные закатные небеса, неизбежно вызывающие в памяти строки Блока:

"Фиолетовый запад гнетет,
Как пожатые десницы свинцовой.
Мы спешим неизменно вперед
Исполнители воли суровой."

Может быть эти строки были написаны ~~вне всякой~~ связи с картинами Рериха, ~~но~~ их лирическая природа совершенно адекватна многим рериховским темам:

"Все в кольчугах и дымных плащах,
Как огонь золотые кольчуги,
Развеваем на севере прах,
Оставляем лазурность на юге."

Нужно ли говорить о том, что имя Рериха стало "стилистическим определением", что мы часто говорим о "рериховском пейзаже", рериховских красках", "рериховских облаках и холмах", наконец, о "рериховском настроении"? Это значит, что магия рериховского стиля настолько укоренилась в нашем сознании, что порою определяет наше восприятие природы. Такая власть дана только избранным художникам: в истории русского искусства есть только два три мастера, творчество которых столь же стилистически целостно и "определительно". Так, мы говорим о "левитановском пейзаже", о "нестеровском пейзаже", гораздо реже вспоминаются "лунные ночи" Куинджи или "шишкинский лес", может быть, оттого, что в них нет той творческой напряженности, того волевого самообнаружения, какое чувствуется у Рериха, Нестерова, Левитана. / ~~И уже почти имористически относимся мы к таким пейзажистам, как Айвазовский или Клевер, никогда не на-~~

Кто станет отрицать, что у ~~того же~~ Рериха есть пейзажи, которые всей совокупностью изобразительных средств - композицией, динамикой одних форм и статикой других, взаимоотношением линий и пятен, градациями света и тени, сочетаниями и переливами красок, их мощным взаимодействием, даже самой фактурой письма действуют, как внушения религиозного порядка? Подлинно-историческая живопись есть, вместе с тем, религиозное искусство уже по самому филологическому смыслу слова "религия", ибо историческая живопись связывает прошлое с настоящим и в лучших своих проявлениях не только воссоздает прошлое, но и претворяет его в новую действительность *символически*

А книга природы раскрывает свои тайны только тому, кто умеет "читать между строк", кто видит под многоцветным покровом Майи извечные символы, образы вечно-сущего, кто под многообразием временного и тленного умеет угадывать непреходящие образы, кто узнает под личиной - лик.

14

Р Е Р И Х



1939



RĒRICHA MUZEJA IZDEVUMS

— Рерих . . .

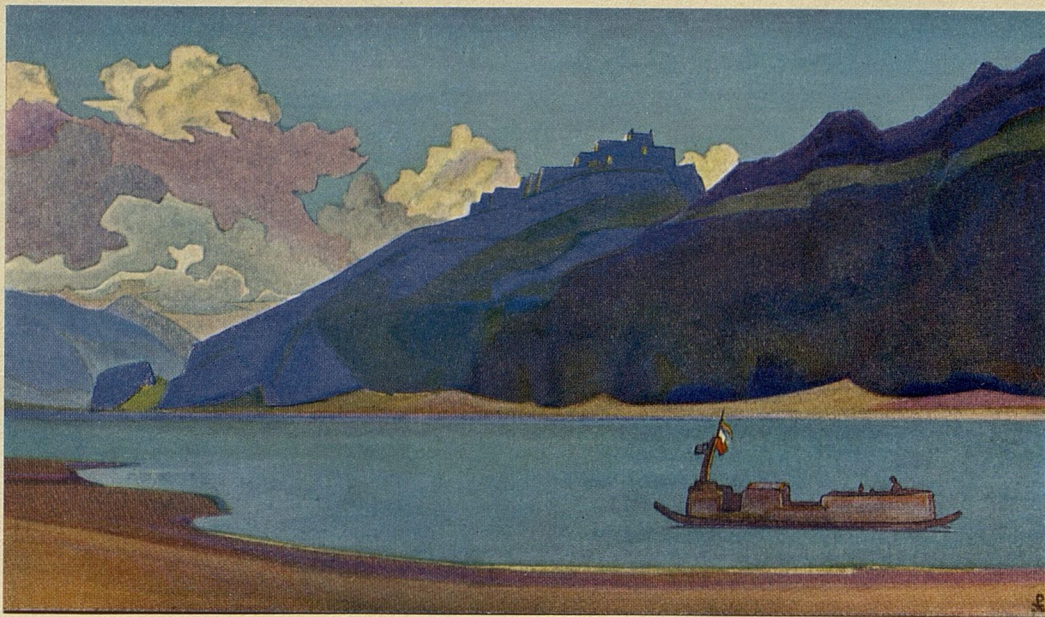
Это имя уже давно стало обозначать целый космос, творческой волей художника вызванный к жизни, — целый мир образов глубочайшего значения, одушевленный *мудростью* в античном смысле слова: софия есть „мастерство“, умение создавать вещь: подлинники художники недаром именуются у Пиндара и Аристотеля „мудрыми“. Аристотель понимал мудрость как „добротность искусства“; древние грамматики непосредственно приравнивали ее к „искусству“ и „ремеслу“.

Высокое „ремесло“ Рериха отмечено несомненным и прочным *знанием*. Рерих — философ, мудролюб: знание для него, как для всякого художника, означает видение, точнее — провидение. Видения и видение для него нераздельны.

Есть нечто глубоко-философское, спокойно-серьезное в его отношении к миру. Это — художник без „улыбки“, без „игры“, сосредоточенный и строгий. „Ernst ist das Leben“, сказал Гете; „ernst ist die Natur“, мог бы добавить Рерих. Древняя Мать-Земля, безмолвная, многострадальная, вещая, только избранным открывающая седые свои тайны — неизменная тема Рериха, неизменная его любовь. О пантеизме художника, об его архаическом стиле было в разное время сказано не мало верного, и, все-таки, „главная правда“ о Рерихе невыразима, как невыразимо, в конечном счете, „содержание“ лучших его картин: они открывают посвященным такие дали, возводят их на такие выси, о которых говорить нет надобности и даже возможности нет говорить.

Э. Голлербах.





Н. Рерих.

Брамапутра.

И посланный высшим Провидением идет Рерих по миру и говорит. И делает.

— Что говорит?

— Что делает?

Да то, что едино на потребу, что едино нужно, верно, очевидно. Огромная интуиция художника, направленная на мир, дает чистейшие, динамические созерцания самой Правды, самой Истины.

В изысканной, несравненно художественной форме, в чудесных образах, в поющих красках, во всем обаянии современной культуры, избранной, утонченной и высокой, Рерих принес миру, во множестве своих картин, такое напряженное чувство безусловной Красоты, такую свежесть впечатлений, такую сияющую святость настроений, которых давно, очень давно не чувствовал Западный мир в своем обиходе. Европейский, пожалуй, со времен Возрождения, а мир Американский — еще никогда за все время своего существования.

Всеволод Иванов.

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В начале 1939 выйдет и поступит в продажу в том же издании монография на
английском языке.

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Из манускрипта монографии Иванова, стр. 58 манускрипта:

В Выборге 1918 года наш художник один. Без денег. Без друзей. Его ищет его почитатель, его меценат, ищет всюду и главным образом на базаре:

- Туда то он выйдет. -

Находит он жену Николая Константиновича, Елену Ивановну. А через нее находит и самого его.