

ROERICH. TEXT BY BARNETT D. CONLAN. 128 REPRODUCTIONS. PUBLISHED BY  
ROERICH MUSEUM. RIGA. 1939. RUPEES 30.

There are many books written on the great modern artists, and there are many opinions expressed about such subjects as plastic form and the importance of the visual as the source of creative art. But the book ROERICH, text by Barnett D. Conlan, edited by A. Prande, strikes a new note in books devoted to a single artist and his work.

It combines both the painter's significance as an artist possessing plastic qualities that place him with the few important artists of our time, and also the perhaps even greater significance of the artist as a thinking human being. Conlan points out Roerich's preoccupation with the Stone Age and his remarkable grasp of the thought and art of that remote period---a period, at least to this writer's mind, probably of deeper artistic import than the sculpture of the Congo that so influenced the school of Paris.

The element of mysticism in Roerich's approach is for the first time balanced with his qualities as a painter. Conlan points out that both Cezanne and Roerich possess plastic ability, but, to speak broadly, Roerich is concerned with both spirit and physical substance, while Cezanne was intent upon the external world perceived by the five senses. But there is no attempt to place either of these giants below or above the other. The author realizes the deep meaning inherent in a grasp of plastic form and skilfully analyzes the sources of such knowledge in the case of each master.

The background of Roerich is Russia, the Russia that has been in existence for so many centuries. And as this book so well tell, he has been able to blend the various elements into an artistic unit that has assisted, perhaps over-shadowed, many of his fellow countrymen



in their attempt to interpret a racial culture.

The balance between Roerich's early periods and his Tibetan phase is well maintained, and the link between is not overlooked. Perhaps the result of a former life, perhaps an unusual awareness of the submerged elements of race history has caused Roerich to grasp the plastic and emotional meaning of this almost unknown land. At any rate the reason is unimportant beside the result. Probably in no other artist of our time is there such a blending of a knowledge of Archeology, a religious tolerance, and purely plastic understanding.

A figure standing beside such men as Stravinsky and Diaghilew, Roerich has made legends plastic and the purely form-color painting rich with psychological meaning. This book is filled with color reproductions, reproductions that do not fail in their attempt to present the work of Roerich. His flat areas offer themselves to reproduction, and his ideas, though in many cases far from literary, blend with and join the words in a way that proves the fusion of the arts.

Conlan writes of the future and Roerich, and places him in that dim period-to-come when art will be better understood. He finds that these paintings will live---and I feel that he is right. With such masters as Picasso, Derain and Matisse, Roerich, as this book so well demonstrates, will have a place. There are many phases of art, many roads that lead toward the same goal of self-expression. If many of us are obsessed by the illusion of subject matter or by the absence of subject matter, it is of little consequence. Great art has always risen and will always rise, risen above the world in which it is painted.

Roerich has a universal mind. He sees a vision of peace. He is a man of mountains---spiritual mountains where the sight is unimpaired. This book is but an echo of the man and his work. It is a good echo, but there are many overtones that cannot be encompassed by words.



3  
Roerich's ties with India began from early childhood. His father's estate had the name "Iswara" and nearby was an estate which during the reign of Catherine the Great belonged to an Indian Raja and showed traces of an Indian Park.

There was in the family of Roerich an old painting showing majestic mountains which Prof. Roerich admired since his childhood. Only afterwards did he discover from a travel book by Bryan Hodson, that this was the famous Kinchenjunga Himalayan Range.

An uncle of Mme de Roerich went to India in the middle of last century. After his return he was seen at a court ball in resplendent Rajput garments. He left again for India and was never heard of again.

Already since 1905 many paintings and essays by Roerich were dedicated to India, for instance the paintings: "Deva Sari", "Lakshmi", "Boundary of the Kingdom", "Shri Krishna", "Damayanti", "Dreams of India" (Series) painted already before his first trip to India. His early essays on India include: "India Path", "Gayatri", "silent Cities", "Devasaari", "Lakshmi", and a series of poems.

In his recent -Tagore and Tolstoy Roerich remember with great enthusiasm his first meeting with Tagore. In the same article Prof. Roerich recalls that Mme Roerich's first ties with India were Ramakrishna's and Vivekananda's books. In Roerich's family "The Bhagavad Ghita" and further Tagore's "Gitanjali" had always a place of honour and accompanied them on all journeys.

Since his coming to India in 1923, Roerich has dedicated hundreds of paintings to the majesty of the Himalayas, to the sacred concepts of the wisdom of India and his essays in the Indian magazines are well known to all. Prof. Roerich concludes the chapter on India in his inspiring book "Altai Himalaya" as follows: "We know thy fragrant essence, India. We know the depths and finesse of thy thoughts. We know the great Aum which leads to the ~~inexpressible~~ heights. India, we know thy ancient wisdom! Thy sacred scriptures in which is outlined the past, the present, the future. And we shall remember Thee with the same tremor, as the most precious first on the spring meadow."



The paintings of Roerich are speaking for him; they will continue to speak when the art of the world has passed into other phases. Materialism and the occult are blended in Roerich's work. He is a man walking on the earth, and a man capable of understanding the messages contained in the carvings of races that have gone, and of reading the promise of stars in the deepest night.

Alfred Morang.

KACERACK BOND  
MADE IN SWEDEN



To the Paintings of  
**Nicholas Roerich**

The plains of barren land  
become living with shadows.  
The storm-battered hills  
fall inward  
under the eyes  
of rain-saddened travellers.....  
There is only the wind  
damp from the clouds,  
and its voice is a rusty bell  
calling the faithful to prayer.

Cliffs offer shelter to gods  
who play little games  
with weary dreams.  
We can hear  
the click of stones  
hurled by unseen hands.....  
each impact a count  
in the pattern of new lives.

The sea of mist recedes,  
exposing vistas of  
black volcanic shale  
that bend into human shapes  
under the heat of imagination.

See.....most of us  
have fallen victims to magic.  
It may not be true that the stars  
have dropped new seeds into our hands,  
but the illusion persists.

—Alfred Morang.

---