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## COMMEMORATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ROERICH EXHIBITION.

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ONE of America's most renowned centres of culture—the Boston Public Library—with its many reminiscences of the 'Brahmins' of American creation, opened its large Exhibition Hall to a Commemorative Bibliographical Exhibition, covering the Life and Art of Nicholas Roerich. It is the longest Exhibition ever held by the Library and remained on view from November 2 to December 9, 1936.

There is a singular coincidence, of which Mr. Richard G. Hensley, Chief Librarian of the Reference Division, who arranged the Exhibition, was especially mindful—Roerich's happy contact with Boston since his arrival in America in 1920. For it was in Boston, under the auspices of the Boston Art Club, that Roerich's second Exhibition in this country was held. He was elected an honorary member of the Boston Art Club and his visit still stands as a vivid and unforgettable memory of Boston's artistic record. In addition, the large Exhibition Hall in which the Roerich Exhibition is being held is close to Salons dedicated to the masterpieces of two artists, who seem intimately related to Roerich in their breadth of creation and the universality of approach—Sargent and Puvis de Chavannes. In the Sargent Hall are the far-famed murals of the Prophets, and the equally famed symbolic murals of Puvis de Chavannes decorate the Chavannes Hall—and the sublimity of their themes makes fitting company with the awesome scope of Roerich's own creative ardour. Nor does it seem mere accident that in this Exhibition, the

spirit of Puvis de Chavannes, so often a theme of Roerich's writings and appreciations, keeps guard at the entrance.

Designed to cover the versatile phases of Roerich's life and creation, the Exhibition has had to cover an amazing scope, reaching across not only the multiform aspects of his luminant artistic yield, but also reflecting the facets of his achievements as archaeologist, educator, writer, and as Peace apostle of a harried world. Despite this extremely diverse ground to be covered, the Exhibition has been hung with such wisdom and taste as to create a harmonious synthesis, one peculiarly fitting to Roerich's destiny. One is very naturally guided, by photograph, reproduction and book, through Roerich's childhood and on to his mature and mellow life-work, reaching his present artistic and philosophic Himalayan vistas.

One is arrested on entering the Hall to see before one the Banner of Peace, which symbolizes its author's attitude both to culture and the question of international peace. As an intrinsic part of the Roerich Treaty, the symbol of the Banner of Peace was designed by Roerich and accepted as the sign which should be placed above the sites of culture, as the token of their inviolability. Through this emphasis of man's creative genius, as the lasting treasure of humanity, Roerich has given practical expression to a doctrine of peace based on education and culture. It is a peace based, not on scraps of paper, but on the increasing enlightenment of men as to their lasting international wealth. It brings



the nations together in a common guardianship of their united patrimony.

In the centre of the adjoining wall hangs the portrait of Nicholas Roerich, painted by his son, Svetoslav Roerich, and one of the series of portraits of Roerich by his son, which are already far-reputed as bearing ample testimony of the brilliant creative gifts of the portraitist. This and the adjoining wall are completed with a brilliant array of reproductions of the works of Roerich, taken from the numerous monographs of his art, which cover the two-score-and-more years of his continuous labour. To the student, as well as the layman, no happier opportunity of studying the development of Roerich's art has presented itself. Because, although brilliant collections of Roerich's work hang in many museums, covering his accomplishment of more than 4000 paintings, it is rare to see this retrospective array of his themes as it ranged from his first work, "The Messenger" to the most recent of his paintings, done before Himalayan nature. The impression which, above all, is transmitted in this panorama of Roerich's works, is the enormity of, not only his creative, but his philosophic vision. Because it is apparent that Roerich's creations flow from a conscious formula of living, a synthesis of vision, which make his works equally important whether he expresses himself on canvas, or in the other phases of his creative expression. Whether it is in his paintings of early man, his folklore paintings, his saints' lives, or his Asiatic concepts, there is behind them the unified theme of man's spiritual development. If one studies the works, the range between the first paintings and the most recent, one is intrigued by the continuous development towards greater and greater simplicity. Realism in its narrow

sense was never the concern of Roerich—he was from the first striving for a universal realism which does not attach itself to insignificant details, but concerns itself with the expression of a larger reality. And even this 'Larger Reality' has evolved to greater heights in the breath-taking simplicity of his most recent works.

The cases throughout the Exhibition Hall have unique interest, because they represent Roerich's life, and also his writings and the appreciations that have come to him. In the cases devoted to photographs of his life, we follow him in photographs, from the student in May's Academy in St. Petersburg, through the early years in the family estate at Isvara, where his earliest archaeological explorations were begun. Here too are photographs of the School for the Encouragement of Arts, which Roerich directed with such sweeping success. The brilliant years, when Roerich was taking his role as a leader in the Mir Isskuttva, as a force of inspiration in the Moscow Art Theatre and Diaghileff Ballet are reflected also in photographs of his settings, for such works as *Peer Gynt*, *Prince Igor*, *Snow Maiden*, and others. And his efforts for the preservation of the culture of Russia, ancient and in its folk life, are reflected in the exhibits of the work in Talashkino.

Boston has not forgotten Roerich's work in America, and the numerous photographs of the Roerich Museum, as well as other institutions bearing the name of Roerich, bear witness to the far-reaching field which he has penetrated. The final photographs lead us through Asia—along the trails of Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan, Sikkim, Tibet, the Gobi, and over Himalayan Passes—to end finally in the Kulu Valley where Roerich continues his work. There, in the Himalayan Research



Institute of the Roerich Museum, which Roerich has founded, Roerich continues his labours as artist and also sets stones for the growth of a research foundation which will explore the inspiring depths of Vedic knowledge and Asiatic medical lore, and bring the fruits to the good of humanity.

The other cases are given over to Roerich's writings beginning with his earlier writings published in St. Petersburg in Russian, down to his most recent works, published in America, in Paris, in Latvia, Yugoslavia, and in India and Japan. The various editions of his works take us from the English version of the *Adamant* to the Japanese translation by Itsuzo Takeuchi, published in Tokio. Here, too, are his poems *Flame in Chalice* in English besides his *Flowers of Morya* in Russian. The many recent books and articles, covering issuances from India, America, Latvia, France, Lithuania, and other countries, would indicate that the fund of his literary sources is as depthless as his artistic resources.

Finally we come to the cases which bear examples of the various expressions of appreciation of his art. Here the range of literature is not only voluminous, but especially intriguing in the wide horizons which it has transcended. The imposing Monographs on his work are here—those of 1916 and others published in Russia, with their brilliant appreciations by such leading critics as Serge Ernst, Remisoff, Benois, Gidoni, Baltrushaitis, Yaremich, Mantel and others. We find here the two most recent Monographs published in America, that of 1926, *Himalaya*, with articles by Siegrist, Narodny, Grant, Grebenstchikoff and the Monograph of 1931 with its retrospective review of reproductions. Besides these larger Monographs, one is especially impressed by the numberless monographs and appreciations which practically

cover the globe. In America, Christian Brinton, Babbete Deutsch, Nina Selivanova; in France, Italy, Belgium; in Japan, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Latvia, Lithuania; throughout South America; everywhere his work seems to have penetrated and brought a message intimately moving to the people of that country. One is especially impressed by the consistence of his appreciation in Asia—the East has felt the direct inspiration of both his art and his philosophic concepts, and it is not unexpected to see his writings throughout India, Japan and even Mongolia and Tibet. For the East seems to have recognized this Wise man, whom Asia often has called a Rishi, and to feel that his pervading message may give a formula for a happier and more evolved life. Two of the most engaging exhibits are to be found in the Mongolia monograph of appreciation, published in Inner Mongolia, too rarely heard from in our Western life, and the magazine from Gangtok Tibet, which despite the mysterious character of its script carries two illustrations of the Roerich Banner of Peace, which need no words to bring their implication.

As a whole, this Exhibition may be said to do ample justice to Roerich—a sincere praise when the field to be covered is so universal and the directions so enormous. To the thousands of visitors who would have seen the Exhibition before it closed its doors, it must have brought a very awe-inspiring message of the amazing creative capacities of the man Roerich, and of the Himalayan reaches to which he has directed his art and his life in order to propound so symphonic and clarion a message of Beauty and Brotherhood.

As a part of the Exhibition, on November 19th, a Lecture on the Art and Life of Roerich was presented in the Auditorium of the Boston Public Library, by Frances R. Grant, Vice-President of the Roerich Museum in New York. A capacity audience completely filled the 500 seats of the hall, and gave evidence of their singular interest in the subject.