

## NICHOLAS ROERICH

We are honoring today a renowned artist Nicholas Roerich, in opening an exhibit of his most important paintings. During his life time he painted over 7000 paintings, including frescoes in churches and public buildings, designs for mosaics and architectural motives, decors for operas of Wagner, Moussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, stage settings for the dramas of Maeterlinck, Ibsen, Ibanez, and for the ballets of "Prince Igor" by Borodin and "Sacre du Printemps (Rites of Spring)" by Stravinsky. The latter two have become classics of the stage. He painted the Himalayas in numerous aspects of their glory. In a special series, he painted great spiritual leaders of humanity, such as Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, and others. The collection which is being shown here has principally those significant Roerich paintings of the religious Teachers of all times.

Roerich was a man of the highest ideals and principles. His life was a constant quest for harmony, a constant seeking to be of service to mankind. His life and his work fully reflected the essence of truth which characterized his nature. The scope of his interests and achievements was world-wide. In countries throughout the world there were numerous groups and societies dedicated to fostering his ideals.

Born in 1874 in St. Petersburg, Nicholas Roerich was educated first in Russia. He attended simultaneously at the University the School of Law, the Faculty of History and Philology, and at the same time attended the Academy of Art and the Institute of Archeology. He graduated at the same time from the University and the Academy with high honors. He later studied under Cormon in Paris and traveled extensively throughout Europe.

His whole life can be described as a continual, progressive, harmonious striving toward a definite ideal. Actually, his life seems, as it were, many lives concentrated in one. As an author and scholar, he wrote over forty books on art, culture, philosophy and humanitarian subjects, besides numerous articles and essays. As an explorer and scientist, he carried out extensive archeological research and excavations in Russia. Later he organized and conducted a five-year expedition to Central Asia (1924-1929). In 1935 he was invited by the U. S. government to head another expedition in search of drought-resisting grasses in China and Mongolia. As an educator, his work was of wide influence in many countries. As an intellectual leader, he was associated with many scientific and cultural organizations throughout the world. He was honored by many countries, as well as by scientific and cultural societies.

One of his greatest contributions to a better understanding and a greater harmony among nations was his Pact for the international protection, both in war and in peace, of monuments, cultural treasures and historic sites, to be safeguarded for posterity. This pact became known as the Roerich Pact, its symbol is the Banner of Peace, designed by Prof. Roerich. It was accepted by 39 nations and actually ratified by the 21 Latin-American countries and the United States. At the signing of the Pact on April 15, 1935 at the White House, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in an address over the international radio: "It possesses a spiritual significance far deeper than the text of the instrument itself." The Roerich Pact is not only designed to protect the great cultural treasures of humanity, but to draw the attention of mankind to those values which are the common heritage of the entire civilized world. The Banner of Peace, a flag which would provide immunity to cultural sites, bears a symbol consisting of three red spheres within a circle, on a white field. Its meaning may be interpreted as the past, present, and future, encircled by eternity.

(over)

Nicholas Roerich died on December 13, 1947 in India, but he still lives in his work and his continuing world influence. He was greatly beloved in India, where he lived for the last 18 years of his life. They called him, there, the Master of the Mountains, because of his great love of the Himalayas which ever beckoned to him. In his book Himalayas - Abode of Light, he has written: "If someone would begin to trace, historically, these aspirations, having Himalayas as their goal, an unusually significant study would result. Truly, if one could trace back the force of attraction of these heights for a thousand years, one could readily see why the Himalayas have been called 'Incomparable'. Since ancient times, innumerable tokens of Divinity have been connected with this country of mountains."

Widely known in America, Europe and Asia through his great art, his paintings are to be seen in the Nicholas Roerich Museum in New York, in a museum in India, in Naggar, Kulu, where he lived for 18 years, and also in the museums and private collections in many countries. In Russia, the land of his birth, his paintings are in the leading museums of that country. He is greatly beloved there, and special exhibitions of his paintings are continually organized and sent on tour of the whole country.

It will be fitting here to conclude with the words of Dr. G. H. Paelian, taken from his Thesis 'Nicholas Roerich's Contribution to Modern Life and Education,' for which he was awarded a Ph.D. from the New York University.

"Nicholas Roerich is one of the most inspiring cultural leaders of the present day. He has devoted his life to showing humanity a new point of view which, he believes, through knowledge, beauty and culture, will lead men into the path of universal brotherhood. To him, culture is not synonymous with civilization. Culture is a living, growing, qualitative characteristic of a race and, like an organism, has its birth, growth and death. Civilization is the crystalized form of it. It is the fulfilment of culture, the termination, the goal.

"Nicholas Roerich believes that the present civilization has seen its day and that the time is near when humanity must pass into another stage. The consciousness will develop into a form of social consciousness, and men and women will feel the unity of humanity. As a prophet of the new era, Roerich already sees signs of the approach of such an age and he feels that the system of education should be modified in such a way that it will prepare the youth of the world to bring about this regeneration. He also thinks that America will be the home of the new culture and that it is up to the American people to do their utmost to hasten its coming."

Sina Fosdick  
Executive Vice President  
Nicholas Roerich Museum

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N I C H O L A S      R O E R I C H

by

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