

REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

1923-1926

Introductory Word.

Frances R. Grant, Executive Director.

In the lives of institutions as in the lives of individuals, there come moments to pause and measure the distance that has been traversed. Such a moment comes now in the life of the Roerich Museum, which on November 17th, celebrates the third anniversary of its foundation.

By its dedication to the creative power of one master, Nicholas Roerich, the Roerich Museum was from the first a departure. For such, even in Europe, are rare, and in America this Museum appears as one of the first of its kind; perhaps the only one to a living master, anywhere. Such a museum as this can be dedicated only to a creative power which transcends nationality and which has won the acclaim and recognition of many countries. Roerich's power is such a one. His art has reached not one country but scores of countries, and his word has merged into the spiritual language of all peoples.

America, by the very nature of its being, by that inflow of so many national strains which compose the stream of its life, stands as the most cosmopolitan of all countries. Therefore, it is we, in America, internationally cognizant, who can best appreciate and value the gesture for international relation which the Museum represent.

On December 15, 1925, were fulfilled thirty-five years of Roerich's creative life. In these years-- a straight ascending path since that first exhibition--there has been full harvest of creative work, one rarely paralleled. From this abundance, the Museum possesses numerous periods of the master's art.

This art needs no longer be appraised--the authorities of numerous



countries, the leaders of art life, have contributed their praise to the bounty of work of Roerich. True, there have been dissenting voices--for a profound creative source, such as Roerich's never leaves one indifferent. Either it evokes aedent friendship and admiration or it summons up a tense enmity. But, then, this is not surprising--observe the annals of art and the works of master and one sees the same manifestation.

The art of Gauguin and that of Vrubel have been held up in comparison to that of Roerich. This is not accidental. Each of these--as does each force which creates its own style, characteristic and unrepeatable--has his own unrepeatably way. "Clouds of Roerich", "Mountains of Roerich", "Blue of Roerich" "Stones of Roerich", "Style of Roerich"--all these epithets have long since become a familiar part of life.

Roerich's is<sup>an</sup> independent art, a tower rising splendidly secure and sufficient unto itself. Tagore, in his characterization of Roerich has well summed this up, when he says, "Your art is independent, because it is great".

The biography of Roerich needs no repetition here--suffice it to say, that it appears among those most full of fantasy. After reaching the position as the greatest figure in Russian art, his importance, after the revolution, becomes international. The highest recognition comes to him during his lifetime, while his vigor and creation are in full bloom. To him America dedicates a special museum. He is recognized and chosen as president and honorary president of numerous institutions. Yet his searching does not cease. At the moment of highest acclaim, he is seeking new peaks. He ascends the far recesses of Himalaya; he crosses Karakoram--the world's highest pass. As a veritable viking, he wrestles with new decisions. Such is the independence of his creative life.

And to this spirit of independence is added that broad, sweeping understanding of the master, striving ever peaceward, as one may see in the fragments of this letter from Moscow which recently appeared in the press of America.



"Friends, if you could have seen the benevolent crowds that came to say farewell to us at our departure. If you could have heard the warm greetings which this multitude directed towards America, you would still more profoundly all the strong threads binding our two great countries---countries which have never had war between them.

"Why are such manifestations especially touching? Because in them we see nothing of politics, but you feel how in thought, the hands of one people are in friendship shaking the hands of another people across the ocean. And in just such a handshake across the oceans is being expressed the cosmic aspect of our moment.

" We recalled the American farmers who came to our camp fires in 1921, during the famine here. They asked how better and more quickly they could help the Russian people. Through such striving of the people, through such folk understanding is being constructed true peace.

" In the greeting from multitudes to multitudes is contained the real pledge of world relations. What bliss there is when people can greet each other. And each gesture of such a folk greeting has to be inscribed in the page of history. From the very of the Russian border along the Irtysh through Siberia and upto Moscow--this heart of the union--we saw an astonishing change in popular thought. Stevedores, soldiers of the Red army along the border, peasants, laborers, school teachers, as well as the numberless students visiting the museums, seemed to burn with a genuine striving "to know". And you can understand that a people lit up by the striving towards knowledge has beneath its feet firm ground for real construction. Know and you will receive. In this striving toward knowledge is all the bliss of positivism. If I know, then nothing can deprive me of this accumulated knowledge. I saw the striving toward knowledge in groups of youth and workmen in America. And now I personally saw this burning towards knowledge among the broad masses of the republics of Russia. A greeting from a people to a people.



"Soon from the railroad train, we shall change for the caravan route and again we shall see new peoples. I shall be joyous to send over greetings from them also".

In the following report, the directors have summed up those aspects of the life of Roerich Museum, which graphically illustrate its growth of the last few years. But that other side of the museum's life--its more intangible but equally potent side, that of its spirit, cannot be transmitted into word or figures: Its definite impress upon the people; its spiritual inspiration; its upliftment of those who visit it.

That the Museum is fulfilling these purposes of spirit in a great way, is seen by the fact that it has become a source of inspiration to artists in all the fields; and that to youths, to workmen, educators, students, these paintings seem to impart a joy, a new surety, to life.

Poets and prose writers have rejoiced before the paintings and have dedicated lines to those works which have enflamed their muse: and in this regard one may recall the writings of A. Merritt, Ivan Narodny, Mary Siegrist, Charles Wharton Stock, Barbara Young.

One can remember with keen pleasure, the vivid exclamations of artists --- Zuloaga, who stood before the paintings and with a great artist's full tribute, pronounced them "the lofty sentiments of a profound spirit", and the equally exulting and profound remarks of Mestrovic. Interwoven into that unrecordably potent life of the Museum stand the appreciations of such fellow artists as Bellows, Chandler, Kent and others, and the dedicated and glowing words of Faggi, Stokowki, Dr. Holland, Mr. Eggers, Mr. Harshe, Mr. Papin. Bragdon acclaimed the thrilling beauty of the "Sanctuaries", Olin Downes found in this art a sure answer to the despair that seemed to be ensnaring our day; Kanu; Mukerji, proclaimed the mission of Roerich's art. So that the ~~the~~ Museum, by the fire-cycle of inspiration has lighted the torch of other creators.



And besides artists, here have come the worker, ~~of~~ students, peoples from all stratas of society, and in the irradiating message of beauty have found that "surety of hope " in a moment of seeming world restlessness.

Thus, in its record of influence which transmits its firece onwardly, outwardly ,this Museum is attesting to the truth of Dr. Edgar L. Hewett's words when he called the spirit of Roerich, the realization of Browning's Sordello---all-containinh, all imparting.'

1926.