



**NICHOLAS
ROERICH**

He was a genuine patriot who loved his Motherland dearly, but he also belonged to the whole world. The whole world was his playground. Every man was his brother. Each country interested him and held a special significance. Every branch of philosophy, every teaching of life was for him solely a path to self-development, and his life was for him the great gate to the Future.

Svetoslav Roerich

Nicholas Roerich (1874–1947) belongs to the galaxy of outstanding figures of Russian and world culture. He was a painter, scientist, traveller, public figure, writer, publicist and philosopher... His versatile talent can be only compared to the titans of the Renaissance epoch. Nicholas Roerich's cultural heritage is enormous – more than seven thousand paintings scattered all over the world, countless literary works – books, essays, articles, diaries...

Nicholas Roerich was born in a family of the famous notary Konstantin Roerich in Saint Petersburg on the 9th of October 1874. He graduated from the Karl May Gymnasium. Since early childhood he took interest in history, archeology. He participated in archeological excavations, wrote short stories, studied painting. Since 1893 he simultaneously studied at the Law Department of the Saint Petersburg University and at the Imperial Academy of Arts, under the tutelage of the famous Arkhip Kuinji.

At that time, he was in close contact with well-known people of the arts – V.Stasov, I.Repin, N.Rimsky-Korsakov, D.Grigorovich, etc. His interests were exceptionally broad: each summer he went to

Svetoslav
Roerich.
Portrait of
N.Roerich with
Sacred Casket.
1928



Nicholas Roerich and Vladimir Stasov at the Public library. Saint Petersburg. 1890s

archeological excavations, he gave lectures at the Imperial Archeological Institute, he was a successful writer and, of course, a painter – he never lacked subjects for his art. In 1897 he created his first substantial work – his final project painting “The Messenger: Tribe has Risen against Tribe.” It was highly appraised by the critics and was acquired by the famous collector P.Tretyakov for his art gallery. In 1898, at the age of 24, Nicholas became an assistant to the Director of the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of Arts and, at the same time, an editor assistant for the Society’s art magazine. Since 1902 he took part in exhibitions, organized by the “Mir iskusstva” (“World of the Art”) magazine.

In 1899 one more significant event happened in Nicholas’s life. In summer, at prince P.Putyatin’s estate in Bologoye, where Nicholas came to attend excavation affairs, he met Helena Shaposhnikova. Born into the ancient noble family of Golenischev-Kutuzov, she was an exceptional woman, spiritually close to Nicholas. Helena took interest in history, literature and philosophy. Their unity of views and mutual sympathy quickly grew into deep feelings, and on the 10th of November 1901 the young couple got married. Their entire life they would walk hand in hand, complementing each other artistically and spiritually.



Being a philosopher and a writer, Helena would share all Nicholas Roerich's aspirations and initiatives. Their elder son Yuri would become an internationally renowned scientist-orientalist, and their younger son Svetoslav would follow his father's path.

Confidently and persistently, working hard with a positive outlook, Nicholas Roerich advanced to the peak of his mastery. In 1900–1901, during his first visit to France, he took classes from the famous painter Fernand Cormon. Upon coming back home, he went on studying Russian antiquity with a great zeal. His passionate interest in archeology and history to a large extent defined the subjects of his paintings – ancient Pagan Rus, colourful images of folk epos, primordial grandeur of pristine nature... In 1903–1904 Nicholas Roerich and his wife made



Jewellery from the Roerichs' collection

Nicholas Roerich.
The Messenger: Tribe
has Risen against Tribe.
1897







Helena Roerich.
[1900]

Nicholas Roerich
in his apartment
at 38, Moyka st.
Saint Petersburg.
1910s

a trip to the old towns of Vladimir, Suzdal, Moscow, Pskov and Tver regions. More than a hundred sketches depicting beautiful architectural relics came as a result of that trip.

Around 1907 Nicholas Roerich received the first invitation to take part in set design for theatrical productions. He creates sketches for stage sets and costumes for the works of N.Rimsky-Korsakov ("The Snow Maiden"), A.Borodin ("Prince Igor"), R.Wagner ("The Valkyrie"), M.Maeterlinck ("Princess Maleine"), H.Ibsen ("Peer Gynt"), I.Stravinsky ("The Rite of Spring"), etc.



PRINCIPAL LITERARY WORKS OF NICHOLAS ROERICH:

Heart of Asia. New York, 1929.

Altai–Himalaya. New York, 1929.

Shambala: In Search of a New Era. New York, 1930.

Realm of Light. New York, 1931.

Fiery Stronghold. Boston, 1933.

Himavat: Diary Leaves. Allahabad, 1946.

The Invincible. New York, 1974.

LITERATURE ON NICHOLAS ROERICH:

Jacqueline Decter. Messenger of Beauty: The Life and Visionary Art of Nicholas Roerich. Rochester, 1989

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Text: T.Knizhnik

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