



**INTERNATIONAL ART CENTER
OF
ROERICH MUSEUM**

**FIRST EXHIBITION
OF
CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE PAINTINGS**

**ASSEMBLED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE GOVERNMENT**

UNDER THE DISTINGUISHED PATRONAGE OF

**HIS EXCELLENCY, KATSUJI DEBUCHI,
JAPANESE AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES**

AND

MADAME DEBUCHI

JANUARY NINTH to FEBRUARY NINTH

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**310 RIVERSIDE DRIVE
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NEW YORK CITY**



THE ARCHIVE OF
**NICHOLAS
ROERICH
MUSEUM**

GLORY OF SAMURAI

By NICHOLAS ROERICH

TO THE JAPANESE BEARERS OF CULTURE*

Komio, the beautiful Queen of Nara, sang: "I shall not pluck thee, oh flower! but shall dedicate thee to the Buddhas of the past, present and future."

In this invocation of the past and the future is contained the entire power of the Japanese genius. Why does one's memory so ineffaceably retain the pictures of old Japanese Masters? Why do we remember the gestures and the unrepeatable mimicry of the Japanese actors? And why does the spirit of the Japanese Samurai remain in the history of humanity as an image of heroism, of true patriotism and courage? It was necessary to imbue these concepts with such persuasion that friends as well as enemies, near and distant ones, would have no doubt in applying these epithets.

Beyond the obvious limits is constructed a special language. An unutterable feeling-knowledge is created there where we contact the realm of Spirit. In this realm we understand each other by unexpected rules of life. There we begin to cognize with a vision close to the eternal miracle of Truth.

The miracle of life, all-conquering and majestic! That miracle which fills all depths of Being. Seldom is it manifested by the human hand. From ancient times its radiant sparks have reached us, but its substance is usually already disintegrated. But, still alive is the web of this miraculous life embodied by the old Japanese Masters. The fragrance of the benevolent fairy-tale still streams from the leaves guarded by time from the unbreakable patina of the varnish. Unlimited is the horizon of the living eye and heart — that, which has been created by the old Japanese, teaches and amazes.

An astounding life is depicted; even in the minute is expressed the great truth. In the finest hieroglyphs of life is given the entire character of the synthesis. In daily striving is realized the highest lawfulness. The phantasmagoria of life has become filled with highest persuasion. In a beautiful harmony of colors is expressed a mighty song which can uplift our restless consciousness. Many summits of art are culminated in the

Japanese artists has gone so far as to succeed in establishing an independent school of their own in the art of oil painting.

In the present Exhibition of Contemporary Japanese Paintings, whose existence we owe to the Toledo Museum of Art, with Mr. J. Arthur MacLean at the head of its Oriental Department, and where only the works by the artists of the native school are represented, some visitors are sure to feel at sea in face of an art-form so very different, in ideal and technique, from what they have been accustomed to consider as the only correct way of the pictorial representation of nature and life — more especially will that be the case with paintings where the artist has chosen monochrome, the technically so called water-and-ink style, as the best means of expression for his art.

And different indeed, from your way they are — most of these pieces exhibited here! But that they are so is just what makes your attention to them worthy of your while — the more because it might eventually lead you to the healthy mental habit of seeing things in a new celestial light of cosmopolitan understanding. It is therefore with a deep sense of honor and delight for me here to assure all who come to see these pictures that practically all of the pieces on show are by well known artists of a country in the far Orient where Art has long found her earthly home,— by master spirits in painting who have made their way to fame at home and abroad, in the different spheres of their several art-activities.

Allow me, in this connection, to add a word of warning against the frequent, and often only too hasty, echoing to the charm of the famous lines of Kipling's:

"Oh, East is East, and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet."

Here, of course, the poet has in view a phase of occurrence which can be true only in the domain of five senses. In the world of emotion, however, in the heavenly realm of Art, peoples of different race and language, can freely meet and realize, to their mutual gain and delight, that, in pursuance of one mighty purpose running through ages,

"God fulfils himself in many ways."

With this conviction, it is indeed an unmitigated joy to stand thus together in the truly international common-ground of artistic appreciation where heart speaks to heart and souls call and respond with each other in the firm spiritual harmony, and that in a building where new and pregnant forms of art-activity center themselves under the able guidance of President Horch and the Trustees. This sentiment we feel the more strongly when we remember that all this, after all, connects itself with an overflow of a great mind of an artist-philosopher, who founded this Museum, Professor Nicholas Roerich, whose belief in the salvation of man by Art has made the present Exhibition eventually possible in this world-city of New York.

creations of the Japanese Masters. Many problems so difficult for manhood have been boldly solved by the Japanese creators. The aristocracy of art, popularity, attainment — all these, so very precious to human nature, and so frequently rejected by prejudice — all these gems, correlated by Japanese Masters, are clad in the Beautiful.

In speaking of Japan — we may use the word, beautiful. To this people belongs this concept; a people which in spring comes forth to salute awakening nature; a people, which, delving daily into its treasury of art, selects the painting for every day; a people unable to appraise a work of art in ordinary terms. Where else, besides Japan, are there so many private collections of art? In what other country is it so honorable to be called an art collector? In what country, other than Japan, as in the school test "Fujiyama," is a prize awarded for the most selfless description? A multitude of such facts will be evident if in an affirmative way we study the life of Japan; and yet we are unaware of many touching and heroic details. Our measurements are, no doubt, insensible to a great deal which is perfectly evident to the Japanese themselves. But we recollect Japan in the blossoms of its cherry orchards, and we feel that that sacred flower, of which Komio, the divine Queen of Nara, sang so beautifully, still lives.

And the Japanese nation, vitally realizing its rich traditions, will carry further the high culture which, in its time, uniquely helped this nation to occupy such a prominent place.

The supreme human stronghold and treasure consists in the possibility of our meeting in the name of the highest culture. In this great conception we shall all bring together all conquests of the highest cults, of all-conquering Beauty and uplifting Knowledge. In our time of earthly upheavals it is not a truism to pronounce an invocation to high Culture. It is more than timely to strengthen each other, so that the Conception of high Culture be not neglected, and individual, family, and state be affirmed on this strong basis; for beyond these noble gates no vulgarity, nor deterioration can intrude.

We are searching for mutual understanding. Prizes for peace are awarded. We aspire to the Banner of Peace, which will protect all cultural treasures against vandalism and brutality in time of war as well as in time of peace. We understand that in time of peace very often vandalism pursues its ravages no less than in time of war. We know that

sometimes war in spirit is not less dangerous than a war in the field. A spiritual murder is also more dangerous than a physical one. All the latest inventions and discoveries offer so many still unrealized possibilities, that the duty of all the devotees to Culture is to apply the given possibilities to the highest. Each fire can be extinguished. In the twilight of daily life, people can involuntarily decline in spirit and unnoticeably effect cruelty, vulgarity and egoism. The spiritual garden is still more in need of watering than the material one, and in the name of the beautiful gardens of Japan, in the name of reverence of the great ancestors, in the name of the eternally blossoming flower of Komio, the Queen of Nara, I welcome you, invisible friends! I firmly believe that since the ideals of highest Culture are everywhere similar, no oceans nor mountains can impede the friendly intentions of humanity.

Those who live in aspiring ascent will unavoidably meet on the cross-roads of the great Infinity. In mutual creative work I welcome you!

*From "Realm of Light" by Nicholas Roerich, Published by Roerich Museum Press, 1931.