Aesthetics

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CONTENTS

DEVOTEES OF AJANTA
ARTIST & ASPIRATION
TWO SONNETS
ART AS A SOCIAL FORCE
EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION OF VISUAL ARTS
OLD STORY TELLER
OEUVRE
OUR CULTURAL TREND
THE QUEST OF A STANDPOINT IN AESTHETICS
CACTUS
SPRING
TWO POEMS
THE ETIOLOGY OF A MODERN MALADY
READY FOR DANCE
THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE
SISTERS
FREEDOM & BOOKS
REPOSE
MORNING WALK
OUR NEW INDIA MUST HAVE NEW MUSIC
WILLIAM TURNER
LOVE
TWO POEMS
CHAOS IN INDIAN DANCING

RAVISHANKAR RAVAL
GURDIAL MALLIK
HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA
KAMALA DEVI CHATTOPADHYAYA
O. C. GANGOLY
AMRIT SHER-GIL
NICHOLAS ROERICH
KRISHNA HUTHEESING
D. CHATTOPADHYAYA
K. K. HEBBAR
J. M. AHIVASHI
AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY & PREMENDRA MITRA
SACHIN CHAUDHURY
K. H. ARA
BALRAM DAS
LADY TEMPLE
MANUEL KOMROFF
B. D. GARGA
HARBANS CHADHA
BHUPENDRA NATH MUKHOPADHYAYA
JOHN FLETCHER
BISHNU DEY
NICHOLAS ROERICH
RAJENDRA SHANKER
Two Poems

by NICHOLAS ROERICH

At The Last Gates

We were told "Forbidden!"
Yet we entered none the less.
We approached the gates.
Everywhere we heard "Forbidden!"
We wanted to see the signs.
We were told: "Forbidden!"
We wanted to kindle the light.
We were told: "Forbidden!"

Gray, seeing, knowing guards,
You are erring guards.
The Host has permitted to know,
The Host has permitted to see.
No doubt it is His wish
That we shall know, that we
shall see.

Behind the gates a messenger stands.
He brings us something.
"Let us in, guards!"
"Forbidden!" we were told.
And the gates were closed.

But none the less many were the gate
We passed. We broke our way through
And "Permitted" remained behind us.
The guards at the gates halted us.
And they begged. And threatened.
And we were warned: "Forbidden!"
All forbidden? Forbidden all?
To all forbidden?

And only behind us "Permitted?"
But on the last Last Gates
It will be traced "Permitted!"
And behind us "Forbidden!"
"Thus inscribe!" He commanded
Upon the Last Gates.

(From Russian)

TO US

In life there is so much of wonder,
Every morning near our shore
Sails by an unknown singer
Every morning slowly from behind the mist
Moves a light boat and
A new song always rings
And as always the singer
Is hiding behind the next crag.
And it seems to us we shall never
Know who he is—this
Singer—nor whereeto he is directing his path
Every morning. And to whom
Does he always sing the new song?
Oh, what hope fills
The heart and to whom does he sing?
Maybe
To us.

(From Russian)