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# THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE OF ART

**APRIL, 1923**

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AND WE ARE BRINGING THE LIGHT (SANCTA SERIES)
NICHOLAS ROERICH

AND WE ARE FISHING (SANCTA SERIES)
NICHOLAS ROERICH
NOW ON THE eve of my departure for a trip to the Orient, I appreciate the opportunity to tell in the simplest way my impressions of America and American art. I feel that this privilege is mine, because some twenty-three years ago I already had faith in the art of this country and assisted in presenting an exhibition of American art for the first time in Russia. And now I have been fully justified for my optimism.

First I must speak of my opinion of America in general. I have often heard America spoken of as purely materialistic. But every man finds what he most searches for. Every man measures the world from his mental point of view. Life is complicated; we are often blind and deaf to the real miracles of life surrounding us. What is reality? What is fantasy? The people in their mental blindness often confuse these conceptions. Like a polished diamond, life reflects light in various ways. Very often where we see the shimmer of red, materialistic rays, close to it appear the blue and violet. It is a mistake to assume that the predominant color of the diamond is green or red.

If I look at America from the red spot of materialistic Wall Street, America naturally is seemingly only materialistic. But my interest has been in the blue and violet rays of your national life. And I found them plenty and they thrilled me. If you consider closely the American life, which has nothing in common with the stock exchange of the street, you will be astonished with the revelations. One finds nowhere, for instance, as many creeds and churches next to each other. This is a clear proof of spirituality. When you attend meetings of any denomination you will find crowded halls. The people do not go there for materialistic reasons. They go there for the call of the soul. People here are attracted to the teachings of Blavatsky, Vivekenanda, Tagore and other great ones. This country gave birth to Emerson and Walt Whitman; they grew up here and found an echo here.

These phenomena are naturally hidden from the masses that rush along Broadway and clamor for the mechanical invention of life. The mechanical side, however, has nothing to do with the spiritual side that thrives in the shadow of elevators and steam shovels. Here Claude Bragdon speaks to you about the fourth dimension and the color organ. Dr. Debye thrills you with her deep science of the horoscope. Dr. Hille shall show you a whole universe in one-thousandth drop of liquid gold. You shall hear Vedanta and Bahai teachers; you will hear men discussing openly the union of nations and religions, of moon people and Atlantis. Here you will find people interested in astrology and cosmic consciousness. This is all that America which is considered mad after money. The country is great and young—great and young are its aspirations.

Besides all that, we cannot forget the great inventors who are at the same time great poets. Edison the inventor is, at the same time, Edison the poet. Carnegie the manufacturer was also Carnegie the great poet. It requires a visionary mind to accomplish what those men have accomplished.

In pointing out the spiritual issues of American life, I cannot ignore its cosmic nature. In America is being composed a new nation by means of a quick experiment of mixing the elements of the world. In our very presence is being formed a new social produce, a new national soul which has already the qualities of its inherent ethnic importance. Of all the world's recent projects, this is the most marvelous experiment. Its reality produces realistic ideas of unions of religions and other universal achievements by means of a future spiritual culture. We know that the spiritual culture will ultimately conquer the mechanical civilization. We know that the spirit of man leads evolution and is gaining impetus with each day.

In Russia—and the union between America and the future Russia is imminent—there exists a beautiful legend of a Sunken
City which will emerge again when the proper time has arrived. Who knows, perhaps the tops of the towers of that Sunken City are rising and becoming visible.

Intensive life, with spiritual roots, deep-buried and sturdy, although they are not always apparent, must produce a strong and varied art. One of the most forceful impressions upon me when I first came here in 1920, was made by such men as Rockwell Kent, Bellows, Ryder, Sargent, Davies, Maurice Sterne, Sloane, Chanler, Ufer, Manship, Lachaise, Speicher, Prendergast, Frieske, Hopkinson, Kroll, Sterner. ... Among the younger men, I found Faggi, Davey, Johnson, Weisenborn, Hoeckner, Shiva. ... In the theatrical field, Jones, Urban and Geddes were brought to my attention. All these gave me the first impression of the full variety of American groups.

In several groups I have noticed the national feeling, but if this feeling has in the background an international viewpoint, it is justified, because America has so many treasures that can be expressed in a truly inspired national feeling. If you take the poesy of the skyscrapers; if you regard the romanticism of the national parks; if you note the profound tragedy and beauty of the Indian pueblos, or the sombre note of your Spanish relics, you have so many beautiful things to express that one can understand why the modern American's feelings are averse to repeating the formulas of other countries, but rather to express the original beauties of their own immense land.

I visited here the beauties of your mid-western plains; I saw the national parks of New Mexico and Arizona; I went to Niagara and the Pacific cities. Through all these I could perceive the real future of this country.

During my travels, it is true, I saw many young artists in difficult positions. Hard as
it may seem, however, it is only through Golgothas that achievement is tempered. But I saw that America had really many souls devoted to art and who through the most trying experience did not surrender their living vision. Thus I feel that, from the part of the artist, America's creative work is rapidly advancing and portends to make America a real art center.

Not so happy, however, is the condition of art collectors. If I was fortunate in meeting so many prominent artists, I did not have the same fortune in the way of collectors. Throughout the whole country I met only a few of them. I met several buyers of art, but real, sincere collectors I met rarely. In several cities I found that even the distinction between buyer and collector was not realized. Similarly I discovered a legend that it was not good taste to have many art objects in one home. From where comes this unfortunate idea, I do not know, nor am I eager to know, because life itself will erase this foolish prejudice.

The lack of collectors was for me even more pronounced, because in Russia we have not so many buyers, but many collectors. In one of my recent articles I have spoken about Russian collectors. I cited four examples of prominent types, one of a wealthy business man; another a high official; third, a young student of the university; and fourth, a colonel in the army. The last one was very poor financially, but even in his position he found the possibility to gather a very precious collection of the first small sketches for paintings. In such variety of conditions and in such diversity of classes one thing was unanimous; the search for beauty and the desire to have within the home real friends—objects of art, and the originals, because even the smallest original has more significance than any copy.

But this condition of devotion to art shall also come in America very soon. I have seen here many gifted and inspired teachers in art. Just now I recall a class given in the Master Institute of United Arts by Robert Edmond Jones, and I see to what real creative work these prominent artists are inspiring their pupils. During my travels here I met a large number of people really devoted to art. Several are directors of museums such as Harshe, Eggers, Laurvik, Mrs. Sage-Quinton, Maurice Block, Clyde Burroughs, Fox, Edgar Hewett, Dudley Crafts Watson, Kurtzworth and numerous others. They are fighting for art and I can see how from these homes of art—the museums—the rays of art shall penetrate to everyday life.

It seems already a truism to speak about the real international language of art. But as a prayer must we repeat it, because only by severe persistence can we act with full conviction. First the physician must admonish: “Try the remedy once, and you shall see the real results.”

Recently, when “Corona Mundi” asked me to give them a quotation from one of my lectures for its motto, I chose the following, which I quote, because it cites the three milestones of culture for America as for the world: “Humanity is facing the coming events of cosmic greatness. Humanity already realizes that all occurrences are not accidental. The time for the construction of the future culture is at hand. Before our eyes the revaluation of values is being witnessed. Amidst the ruins of valueless banknotes, mankind has found the real value of the world’s significance. The values of great art are victoriously traversing all storms of earthly commotions. Even the ‘earthly’ people already understand the vital importance of active beauty. And when we proclaim: Love, Beauty and Action, we know verily that we pronounce the formula of international language, and this formula which now belongs to the museum and the stage must enter every-day life. The sign of beauty will open all sacred gates. Beneath the sign of beauty we walk joyfully. With beauty we conquer. Through beauty we pray. In beauty we are united. And now we affirm these words—not on the snowy heights but amidst the turmoil of the city. And realizing the path of true reality, we greet with a happy smile the future.”

The Worcester Art Museum has recently been enriched by a very generous gift of a number of important paintings from Mr. and Mrs. Henry H. Sherman of Boston. Among the most interesting of these is a Portrait of a Musician, by Giovanni Battista Moroni; and a Portrait of John von Oldenbarnevelt, by Michiel Janszoon van Mierevelt, the former an Italian painting of the early sixteenth century, the latter of Dutch origin of approximately the same date.