

EXHIBITION OF
CONTEMPORARY
RUSSIAN ART

Organized by the Russian Department of
the Birmingham University

THE
RUSKIN GALLERY

CHAMBERLAIN SQUARE
BIRMINGHAM

June Eighteenth to July Seventh
1928

Catalogue - One Shilling

Foreword

THE origin and development of the Russian school of painting remains to this day a matter of controversy. In the words of a well-known Russian critic, A. Levinson, Russian art is still faced with the eternal question: "Where is my home?" "Its destiny," he says, is indeed without parallel. Our art has had two fountain-heads, both of foreign origin—the highly developed art of classical Byzantium, and, afterwards, the declining tradition of Baroque. . . . If historians have revealed how the transformation of Russian culture under Peter the Great had been gradually prepared, they have failed to provide a like explanation of that sudden change in the evolution of our Art. Icon-painting, and the tradition related to it, ended most abruptly and vanished." (*Jar Priga*, No. 12, *Bežis*).

Yet, it can be said that the old tradition of icon-painting did not suffer a total eclipse; and that perhaps the ancient Russian painting survives in its native originality, and may once again come to the foreground. If it be true that the secret of Russian national art is to be found in the works of the few lonely disciples of that school, such names as Ivanov and Vrubel deserve all our attention. They are unknown in Europe; yet they are unique and great masters of a profoundly religious Art—not necessarily religious in purpose and subject, but in its inward acceptance of life.

And every time Russian art returns to its native sources, it remains faithful to that old tradition. An example may be found in the works of our contemporary, Petrov-Vodkin. His remarkable illustrations to the Gospel of St. John (only twice exhibited in Europe, once in Paris and at present in Brussels), show a striking predominance of line over mass; "they breathe a sublime calm and a beatitude, full of a firm and resolute, though quiet wisdom. Here, every movement partakes of celestial peace; the transient has become lasting, the 'becoming' has risen to Existence. Contemplation fully dominates action, faith commands body and soul. And as in Russian icon-painting, and differing from Medieval Western Art, the spirit does not repress the flesh, does not distort its forms . . . but merely renders them imponderous, transparent, detaching attention only to be cast away and made to disclose the spirit." (*V. Wassiloff*, *Zvezda*, No. 4, *Paris*, 1918).

The present Exhibition comprises mainly the works of those artists who have associated themselves with the group of the "World of Art," founded at the close of the last century by Serge Diaghilev. By no means homogeneous in composition or in tendency, this group brought together those Russian painters who sought new and original paths and had abandoned the stereotyped, somewhat conventional, and strictly "classical" school of art.

Their influence, so considerable in Russia, has been deeply felt in Europe as well. This is especially true with regard to decorative and theatrical art, where the Russian influence has been and still remains of great importance. Russian painting, unlike the French, but perhaps not unlike British and German painting, has been at its best in the domain of drawing, *graphica*, scenography and illustration. Such has been its historical destiny. However, it would be a mistake to regard, as is often done, exotic decorativeness as the unique characteristic and interest of Russian art. The Russian painting of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a legitimate branch of European art. The values it has created and is creating have an all-European range and significance, and the present Exhibition should help to bring them out.

Three generations of Russian painters are represented in this Exhibition (by "generation" we do not mean the actual age of the artists, but their position in the history of Russian art). Kozlov and Maliavin, of the older generation, are the most distinguished representatives of an independent group which aimed at liberating Russian painting from school routine and preconceived themes. They find their true expression in a feast of light, in an orgy of colour. Somov, Dobuzinsky and Bilbin form the nucleus of the "World of Art." This, however, does not account for Somov's artistic individuality (s. *Enc. Britannica*, *xx*), nor for the interests and craftsmanship of Dobuzinsky—especially famous for his work in decoration and scenography—not for Bilbin's achievements in *graphica*, which rank among the finest in Europe. The group of A. Yakovlev, Shukhaev and Grigoriev belongs to the third generation. They are true virtuosi of plastic drawing aiming at a broader painting and more monumental forms. Grigoriev has lately been somewhat drawn away from that group, having most profitably absorbed certain of the methods of modern French painters. To the same generation belong Larionov and Goncharova, whose mode of expression emphasizes a more free use of colour with strict harmony in composition. The other participants of this Exhibition, belonging to one or other of these three generations, have contributed no small part to the richness and variety of the movement.

This small Exhibition does not, of course, aim at a comprehensive representation of Russian Art, even Contemporary Russian Art. For technical reasons we have had to limit ourselves to artists living outside Russia. We regret that it has not been possible, even within the narrow scope of the Exhibition, to obtain the works of such prominent painters as Benoit, Sorin, Sudeykin, Bakst, Kustodiev, Serov, etc., who belong to the movement which the Exhibition represents. We think, however, that the object of this first Exhibition of Russian Art in this country will be attained if the British public becomes, were it even partially, acquainted with the complex and varied paths of the Russian Art of to-day, and if attention is drawn for a moment to its present problems and purposes.

Catalogue

I. LEVITAN, b. 1861, d. 1900.

One of the best Russian landscape-painters.

1. AUTUMN EVENING.

Ph. MALLAVIN, b. 1869.

Paris World Exhibition of 1900, etc.

Museums: In Russia, Paris (5 pictures), Prague (4 pictures), Venice, etc.

2. MORNING.
3. PEASANT GIRL.
4. BOYAR WOMAN.
5. HARMONICA.
6. SLEIGH.
7. DANCER (drawing).
8. FRIENDS (drawing).
9. PEASANT WOMAN (drawing).

C. KOROVIN, b. 1864. 1861.

Paris World Exhibition of 1900, etc.

Museums: In Russia and abroad.

Theatre work: Petersburg and Moscow State Theatres (41 ballets and 64 operas), also Private Theatres (19 operas).

Sketches for Ballet "Konick."

10. THERE WERE THREE SONS.
11. PRINCE IVANUSHEKA.

Sketch for Ballet.

12. THE RUSSIAN GIRLS.

Sketch for Ballet "Prince Ivot."

13. THE YOUNG MEN.
14. TEAR KOSHICHEV—THE IMMORTAL.
15. REBIAYA (the lads).
16. Sketch for Opera "Ruslan and Ludmila."
17. WINTER.

ALF (A. Korovin,) b. 1897.

Exhibitions: Copenhagen, Prague, Paris, etc.

18. PARIS AT NIGHT (Bd. St. Denis).
19. STILL LIFE.

L. BUNATTIAN-BENATOV, b. 1899.

Exhibitions: "World of Art," "Salon d'Automne," etc.

20. MATERNITY.
21. FIRST JOY.

A. YAKOVLEV, b. 1887.

Exhibited in many European Countries and in U.S.A.

Museums: In Russia, Paris, New York, Brussels, Gothenburg, etc.

Travelled extensively in Italy, Spain, Manchuria, China, Japan, Abyssinia. Member of the first Citroen expedition in Africa.

22. NEGROES BY A CAMP FIRE (Mozambique).
23. ITALIAN LANDSCAPE (Vigoleno).
24. CARS OF THE CITROEN MISSION (Tanganyika).
25. NATIVES OF BONDA.
26. CHINESE.

V. SHUKHAEV, b. 1887.

Formerly Professor at the Russian Academy of Arts and other Russian Schools of painting, drawing and architecture. At present Director of his own School in Paris.

Exhibited in many European Countries and in U.S.A.

Museums: In Russia, Paris, New York, etc.

Illustration of Books: Pushkin's "Queen of Spades" and "Boris Godunov," A. de Musset's "Les deux Maitresses," etc.

Theatre work: Russian State Theatres, French Theatres, "Chaue Souris," etc.

27. STILL LIFE (Chair).
28. STILL LIFE (Tomatoes).
29. STILL LIFE (Salt-cellar).
30. LANDSCAPE (Port Vendres).
31. LANDSCAPE (Finland).

B. GRIGORIEV.

Exhibitions: London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Dresden, Munich, Copenhagen, Buenos Ayres, Santiago, New York, Chicago, Buffalo, San Francisco, etc.

Museums: In Russia, Paris, New York, Detroit, etc.

Illustrations of Books: "Rases," "Intimité," "Vivages de la Russie," "Boni-Boni au bord de la mer," "Russische Erotick," "Children's Island," etc.

32. LANDSCAPE (Haute-Savoie).
33. " " "
34. LAKE OF ANNECY.
35. LANDSCAPE (Cagnes).
36. LANDSCAPE.
37. FRENCH MARQUESE.

M-ME N. GONCHAROVA, b. 1881.

Painter, sculptor, stage designer, decorator.

Exhibited in many European Countries and in U.S.A.

Museums: In Russia, London (Victoria and Albert Museum), Paris, Vienna, etc.

1900-1905 Impressionist and Secessionist.

1906-1911 Cubist and Primitivist.

Since 1911 Futurist and Rayonist.

Theatre work: Russian and Foreign Theatres, "Golden Cockerel," "Sadko," "Fau" (Diaghilev), etc.

38. WILD FLOWERS.
39. LEMONS.
40. NOSEGAY.
41. FISHES.
42. SPANISH WOMAN (Mine de plomb).
43. FLOWERS (crayon in colour).
44. SERAPH (au pochoir, unframed in folio).
45. APOSTLE " " "
46. ST. ANNE " " "
47. JUDAS " " "
48. PROPHET " " "

M. LARIONOV, b. 1881.

Painter, stage designer, decorator, choreographer.

Exhibited in many European Countries and in U.S.A.

Museums: In Russia, London (Victoria and Albert Museum), Paris, Vienna, etc.

1900-1905 Impressionist and Secessionist.

1906-1911 Cubist and Primitivist.

Since 1911 Futurist and Rayonist.

Theatre work: Choreography and decoration: Diaghilev's "Children's Tales," "About the Midnight Sun," "Shout," etc.

49. WOMAN IN WHITE.
50. BRUSH DRAWING.
51. " "

M-ME A. TCHEKO-POTOCKA.

Exhibitions: "World of Art," "Salon d'Automne," "Salon des Tuileries," etc.

Theatre work: Opera and Ballet (Diaghilev).

Designer for St. Petersburg Imperial Porcelain Works.

52. KHAN TAMERLAN (tempera).
53. VICTORY OF MONGOLS (tempera).

I. BILIBIN.

Important work in book illustration (Russian Fairy Tales, Legends, etc.) and Church decoration.

Museums: In Russia, Prague, etc.

Theatre work: Operas—"Golden Cockerel," "Ruslan and Ludmila," "Sadko," etc.

54. BETWEEN THE GREAT GISEH PYRAMIDS (Egypt).
55. VILLAGE SILOR (Palestine).
56. MONASTERY OF ST. GEORGE KHOZEVITE AT THE DEAD SEA.
57. LAKE TIVERIAD (Palestine).
58. STONES (Crimea).

C. SOMOV, b. 1869.

Portrait, landscape, genre painter and sculptor.

Museums: In Russia, Berlin (National Gallery), etc.

5-

C. SOMOV (Continued)

Books illustrated: Goethe's "Reisenagebuch aus Italien," Berlin 1906;
"Le livre de la Marquise," Petrograd, 1918; "Maxim Lescaut,"
par l'Abbé Prevost, Paris 1927, etc.

59. CARNIVAL (Winter Colour).

60. IN AUTUMN " " "

M. DOBUZINSKY, b. 1875.

Exhibitions: Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, Venice, Leipzig, Malmo,
Rome (1907-1908); New York, Paris, Brussels, Copenhagen,
Dresden, Baltic States, Amsterdam (1912-1928).

Museum: In Russia and abroad.

Theatre work: Kovinarshevsky Theatre (1907-8), Ten plays for
Moscow Art Theatre (1909-06), Pavlova and Diaghilev Ballet
(1914), Russian State Theatre (1917-21), Foreign Theatres and
"Chamber Scenics" (1924-27).

61. PETERSBURG, A STREET IN WINTER.

62. VILNA, ST. GEORGE'S STREET.

63. VILNA, AT NIGHT.

64. REVAL, TOWN HALL.

65. HOLLAND, BRIDGE.

66. LONDON, VLADEUTY.

67. THE ROOM OF TATIANA.

(Chalkovsky's "Eugeni Onegin"—Dresden Opera House).

68. Sketch for Turgenev's "A MONTH IN THE
COUNTRY."

(Moscow Art Theatre).

69. Sketch for Gogol's "REVISOR."

(Dusseldorf Theatre).

70. PETERSBURG IN 1922.

(Lithographs coloured by the artist), series of three.

71. RUSSIAN PROVINCIAL TOWNS.

(Lithographs coloured by the artist), series of four.

V. YAKOVLEV, b. 1894.

Professor of Moscow Academy of Arts and Director of Restoration
work at Moscow Museums.

Museum: In Russia.

Works of Restoration: Raphael's "Madonna de Loreto," Jan
Mastart's "Ecce Homo," etc.

72. GAME MERCHANT.

9. 11. 1911. 100 & Tracy Ltd. Edin.