

## “The journey to the USSR gave start to the most important period of my life”

*From Rockwell Kent's correspondence with artist Yakov Romas and filmmaker Yakov Tolchan – translated and annotated by Dmitry (Mitya) Kiselev.*

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The **introduction (p.332-333)** contains general information about Kent, including positive characteristics of his art and peacemaking activities – not translated.

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The 1950-1960s were among the most significant years in the long life of Rockwell Kent – the years that saw lots of significant events; the years when the artist set up friendly ties with the USSR. During his 6 journeys to our country, Kent found many friends, with whom he remained in correspondence for many subsequent years. His letters to Soviet fellows made probably the best source of information about Kent's life in these decades. Many of these letters were already published in Russian – these are ones from the cold war time [*Iskusstvo* (“Art Magazine”), 1964, issue 8] and letters to editors [*Novoye Vremya* (“New Time Magazine”), 1958, issue 10; *Khudozhnik* (“Artist Magazine”), 1960, issue 1]. Yakov Tolchan cited many of the 1960s Kent's letters in his article “Rockwell Kent writing”, dedicated to the artist's exhibition in Moscow [*Sovetskiy Ekran* (“Soviet Screen Magazine”), 1984, issue 13].

Actually, all the artist's letters from the 1950-1960s can be considered as notes for an unwritten book about his Soviet experience or, at least, as a part of his autobiography.

The Central State Archive of Literature and Arts of the USSR (*CSALA*) keeps previously unpublished letters from Rockwell Kent to the Soviet landscape artist Yakov Romas [14 documents, 1964-1966, collection 2652] and filmmaker Yakov Tolchan [38 documents, 1958-1968, collection 3013], as well as a set of media cuts, documents related to the artist's exhibitions in the USSR and photographs, showing moments from his Soviet days.

Kent made his first trip to the Soviet Russian in 1950 as a member of international team of peace supporters. Later he described this voyage in his book "It's me, oh Lord!" Throughout World War II he worked as an anti-Fascist artist, and after the war [p.334] took active part in the struggle for peace: participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> World Peace Congress (Paris-Prague, 1949), worked on the text of historic Stockholm Appeal (1950). The art and Greenlandic tales came to the background of his lecture tours around the USA, while the main focus was put on propagation of peaceful policy and international friendship. In 1955, Kent became a member of the World Peace Council.

In 1957, the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries invited Kent to visit Russia to bring his artworks for an exhibition. The artist responded enthusiastically and promised to support this initiative with all his energy. At the same time, Kent had to reject the personal invitation as his travel documents were denied by the US Department of State. Also, in 1957, the National Council of the Society for American-Soviet Friendship celebrated his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday and elected Kent its Chairman.

Kent's exhibition was held successfully in the Pushkin State Art Museum in Moscow. It attracted wide public attention and later was demonstrated in some other Soviet cities. Kent's mastership in

art, his dedication to peaceful coexistence and friendship of nations were properly evaluated by Soviet media (see Soviet Culture Weekly, 22 February 1958). In 1958, Kent had finally obtained his passport and came to the Soviet Union. In 1959, he again was our guest.

In 1960, the Soviet Academy of Arts inaugurated another exhibition of Kent's works, almost four times more representative than previous one. He brought to the USSR around 900 items: 80 oil paintings, over 800 graphic works, illustrated books, including those authored by Kent himself – and all these treasures were donated to the Soviet people. During his press conference, held by the Soviet Ministry of Culture on 16 November 1960, Kent clarified reasons for presenting this generous gift to nobody else but the Soviet people. The documents, publicized in the press conference, are very interesting. The first of them is the **letter, addressed to Nina Popova**, the Chairman of the Presidium of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Nations. In this letter Kent wrote: “Dear Ms. Popova! Three years ago, you honored me with the invitation to show my artworks in the USSR. Showed in several Soviet cities [p.335], this exhibition saw the public interest that no other American artist has ever found in our own country. I have been moved by, and still keep deeply in my memory the fact that my works were taken by the Soviet audience as “folk art”, i.e. exactly as a sort of art that reflects life in the same way as most of people see it. Drawing and painting is my way to express my thoughts. My creativity has always been in search of friendly understanding, which I found in your people. From this point of view, your people – same as, actually, the humanity in general – are *my people* and *my friends*. The art belongs to those who love it mostly. That's why I kindly ask Soviet people to accept my humble donation, made from all of my heart.

“The Great Kent Collection”, as me and my wife call it ironically, is indeed quite massive. The essence of art is to inspire love of life and, subsequently, love of peace. In America, I refused to exhibit or sell

my works for long time because of the atmosphere of animosity towards life and peace that overwhelmed the nation throughout years. This made us real collectors, i.e. ones who keep in hide all the “treasures” – our paintings, drawings, wood prints, lithographs and manuscripts – until the days when becalmed and peace-hungry people will be ready to see them. I found, Ms. Popova, such people in your country. This donation is the sign of my great respect to them. Long ago, Soviet people, acting via their government, put in to practice awarding those who make outstanding efforts in pacifying our world. Unhappily, we have no such tradition in America that belongs to the world of “free” private entrepreneurship. In accordance with the spirit of such entrepreneurship (and in accordance with the old saying that “even a cat may look at a king”), I dare to offer Soviet people all I have after years of creative artistic life in return for the most impressive peaceful gesture in history – I mean your appeal in the United Nations for the complete global disarmament [p.336]. Unfortunately, our “award” for such a noble act is humble. However, I ask you to accept this gift of our hearts. Affectionally, your Rockwell Kent. 24 May 1960” (CSALA, collection 2329, inventory 4, folder 1201, p.1-2).

**Rockwell Kent's statement for his press conference in Moscow, 16 November 1960:** “When several months ago I informed some of my friends of my intention to make a donation to Soviet people, I was asked certain questions that inevitably could appear amongst my compatriots regarding the gift. Expecting these questions well in advance, I will try to give irrefragable answers to all of them. First of all, if I decided to donate my artworks, why did not I pass them over to Americans or why did not I ask any of the American museums to include them to its collection? In fact, I did it seven years ago. Feeling deep affection for people, living at the coast of Maine, where I spent best years of my youth, I offered all my works to the flourishing Farnsworth Art Museum in Rockland, State of Maine. The collection was accepted enthusiastically and the museum's director assured me that construction of a special wing is planned for its accommodation.

This, however, coincided with a call from the badly-famous McCarthy Committee, in Washington D.C., then investigating political views of writers, whose works were presented in the stately-owned American libraries abroad. As I considered these questions as not related to the case, I refused to answer them. The Farnsworth Museum had immediately rejected my donation. I told this story in my autobiography. If any other American galleries would have been interested in keeping my works, I could expect them expressing this intention directly. Nevertheless, as a result of above-mentioned investigation, all my books, as well as the books of some other American authors, were ordered to be withdrawn from libraries and eliminated. I can only hope that Americans, who have often appreciated my work as an artist, will understand that their access to my creations was limited due to the strict state control and for purely political reasons. Thus, I keep up hope that Americans will understand motives of my decision.

Of course, the most unusual moment in the whole story of my donation to people of a foreign nation is the fact that I do not pretend to any financial reward. If I sell my works, my colleagues and other people would send me congratulations on a “good deal”. [p.337] But in my letter regarding the offer, I have already made it clear: the respect of millions of people, who love my art, is way more important for me than money. Most of my works are owned by the US-based private collections, which makes them vulnerable to damage or even destruction. As an American, I think that we and other nations of the world are indebted to Soviet people for – if I can express it in just one word – Stalingrad. My donation serves as the symbol of my gratitude. I feel regret because of humble nature of my gift, but this is the only thing of a significant value in my possession.” (*CSALA, collection 2329, inventory 4, folder 1301, p.1-2*).

As soon as these two documents were publicized, the participants from Soviet side read out the formal letter to Kent, signed by representatives of the Soviet Ministry of Culture, Presidium of Soviet

societies for friendship and cultural relations with foreign nations, Soviet Academy of Arts, Soviet Union of Artists. The letter stated that Kent's donation was taken in the USSR "not only as a sign of his personal friendly attitude to Soviet people, but also as another step towards reinforcement of friendship and mutual understanding between our nations; as an evidence of concern about peaceful coexistence and cooperation that grows among progressive people of the United States". (*CSALA, collection 2329, inventory 4, folder 1201, p.3-4*).

The artworks, presented by Rockwell Kent, were distributed among the Soviet museums in accordance with his own desire "to make them open and available to the museum visitors; exhibited and not kept in store, like that limited selection of his paintings, owned by the American galleries, and hosted not only by the museums of Moscow and Leningrad, but also by those of the cities he visited during his first journey to the USSR (Kiyv, Odessa, Riga), as well as of Yerevan, where he has been on this visit." (*CSALA, collection 2329, inventory 4, folder 1301, p.3*) ...

In 1962, Kent again came to the Soviet Union. On 20-21 June 1962, the Academy of Arts in Moscow held the ceremony, in which Rockwell Kent was chosen its Honorable Member. The President of the Academy, artist Boris Ioganson, talked about his American colleague: "Kent is our co-worker and friend, our ally. His election to our Academy as one of its Honorable Members is an act of support, recognition and understanding of his heroic activities, demonstrated by the entire artistic community of the USSR". (*"Pravda" Daily, 21 June 1962*) [p.338] The Soviet Government has also sent a greeting letter, publicized in the ceremony. Kent received best wishes from cultural societies, trade unions, museum workers, young Pioneers etc. The Pravda Daily, the Literaturnaya Gazeta ("Literature Gazette") and some other Soviet newspapers published Kent's interviews and articles on his life and work.



'DOCK ON THE CASPIAN SEA' (1964), Yakov Romas

The Kents took a cruise along the Volga River, accompanied by artist Yakov Romas. Two years later, Romas remembered this trip: “I always wanted to meet this man personally since I have read his incredible books – especially his autobiography “It is me, oh Lord!” I am talking about Rockwell Kent. So, I was happy to have this chance to travel together with him. We made a charming Volga cruise all the way down to Volgograd [*the name of Stalingrad since 1961*]. He was with his wife Sally, I also traveled with my spouse. Needless to say, how much were we enriched by these interesting people. His catching talks about traveling in Greenland, Alaska and other remote parts of the world, his peace-making efforts left us under deep impression...”. (Sovetskaya Kultura (“Soviet Culture”) newspaper, 20 June 1967).

In 1967, Kent paid his last visit to the USSR. It was on board the Soviet passenger ship “Alexander Pushkin”, when he received information about the International Lenin Prize, awarded to him “for

strengthening peaceful ties between nations". The artist responded with the radiogram, expressing his gratitude for this high recognition. Kent was happy to take the medal and diploma, but asked to transfer the monetary part of the prize to the fund, supporting Vietnamese children – victims of the American aggression. (*Sovetskaya Kultura*, 11 May 1967). On the last day of May 1967, in the Kremlin's Sverdlov Hall, Academician Dmitry Skobeltsyn led the ceremony, in which Kent received his Laureate Medal and the International Lenin Prize Diploma. On 18 May, "*Sovetskaya Kultura*" published an interview, where Kent stated: "Any person, acting in the field of culture, now carries a twice bigger responsibility. Whoever you are – a painter, a writer or a musician, - first and foremost, you are a creator. And creativity itself is useless if it does not talk about life. An artist is obliged to defend life from dangers of war." [p.339] On 7 June 1967, Kent gave an interview to *Literaturnaya Gazeta* ("Literature Gazette"), in which he shared his impressions from the 4<sup>th</sup> All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers. The artist attended the venue and handed over a present to its participants – his painting "The Maxim Gorky's house in the USA". In the same interview, Kent told about his life-long passion for Russian and Soviet literature, whose main quality, in his opinion, was its ability to reflect national character. On 20 June, the Central House of Writers [*famous "Writers Club" in Moscow*] celebrated Kent's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. The exhibition of Kent's artworks was organized in the club's premises. (*Sovetskaya Kultura* [*"Soviet Culture"*], 20 June 1967).





*Maxim Gorky's house in Keene NY. Courtesy Gorky House Museum, Moscow*

In the following years, Kent maintained friendly relations with the USSR. When in April 1969 the artist lost his house in a catastrophic fire, his letter was published in the April's issue of the popular magazine "Ogonyok" and told the Soviet audience how Kent started "from the beginnings" at the age of 88.

Kent kept the hope to visit Russia again, he wanted to celebrate his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in our country. This never happened. In 1971, Sovetskaya Kultura and Literaturnaya Gazeta published obituary and articles, dedicated to the artist's memory (18 and 24 March respectively).

Let us turn to Kent's unpublished correspondence, collected by the

CSALA. In his letters to Yakov Romas and Yakov Tolchan, the artist speculates on different issues, including internal and external policy of the US government. He condemned American aggression towards Vietnam, Laos, Korea and African nations; internal tensions of American society and arms race. He was concerned not only by political, but also by ethical problems – for example, by the fact that raising of anti-Soviet hysteria led to the development of false patriotism in the USA. Kent was not indifferent to the problems of Afro-American community and young generation of Americans. Kent always preferred to express his thoughts openly and clearly. He wrote to the US President: “On my working desk there are two flags, standing side by side – a Soviet and an American... - [p.340] On 4 July last year, on the Independence Day, I half-masted my American flag. It will remain in this state until the government stops the immoral and inhuman war in Southeast Asia.” (Sovetskaya Kultura (“Soviet Culture”), 18 May 1967).

Here are some extracts from Kent's letters to his Russian friends:

“Being the voice of state administration, our media were keeping people in fear and stress, first by the coverage of African events, then of the situation in Laos. They made people believe that war is inevitable, and even our President painted the things in exaggeratedly dark colors. I think, if the modern war would have not naturally meant a nuclear war, they could take Laos as a solution of mass unemployment problem that we face now. We were ready to throw Indonesians [*according to the text*] into a devastating conflict as big as the Korean War, for those hundreds of millions and even billions of dollars that our military industries could earn on it.” [*collection 3013, letter to Yakov Tolchan, 30 March 1961*].

“The political atmosphere in America literally terrifies me. Our government, our big businesses and monopolies, whose positions the government defends, decided firmly to go forward in their Cold War against the Soviet government. They instill hatred and fear of

sudden nuclear blow. In the State of New York, 100,000 dollars are invested in construction of bomb shelters. These objects are well advertised and the construction is presented as an act of patriotism. Thousands of people build and equip them to withstand weeks of siege. The question is what will owners do if any other people, who do not have such shelters, will try to break in for saving of their lives? One Catholic priest has spoken on the radio, saying that Christians will be justified if any of them will shoot invaders in a situation like this. The idea gained a wide popularity. It is sickening to think about this. A proverb comes to my mind: "Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad". [*from Latin. "Quern Deus perdere vult, dementat prius"*]

Meanwhile, our civil rights are taken away fast. You likely have heard about the verdict, issued by our Supreme Court, which forces members of the Communist Party to register themselves as foreign agents. If any of them refuse, this person can be imprisoned for 5 years and sentenced to pay 10000 dollars for each day of delay in obeying the law. The American communists protested, stating that they are not Soviet agents and are not willing to lie." [*collection 3013, letter to Y.Tolchan, 24 November 1961*]. (p.341) [*Editor's note: Kent is probably referring to the case "Communist Party vs Subversive Activities Control Board" 367 U.S. 1 June 5, 1961.*]

"Here, in America, we are about to see the end of the presidential election, which looks shameful due to ignominious jabs that both candidates make against each other [*Lyndon Johnson vs Barry Goldwater*]. The American voters are offered a choice between a disgusting pro-Fascist demagog and a man, whose entire life seems to be focused on pursuing his own interests and whose readiness to listen to the public opinion depends on how much this opinion meets the interests of rich crooks. In fact, we have no any other choice rather than voting for a lesser evil, and the fact, that one of candidates is an incomparably greater evil, makes this choice easier." [*collection 2652, inventory 1, folder 84, pp.8-9, letter to Y.Romas, 24 October 1964*].

“America, you know, is a sad place today, as we dragged not only into bloody adventures abroad (first in Vietnam, now in Santo-Domingo), but also into the Negro issues in the South (and not just there, but in black ghettos of our Northern cities as well) – all these things are tragically serious. We are told that some of your young folks are dreaming of things that Western world offers to youngsters. But if these young Soviets could travel to America to see our reality with their own eyes, they would soon realize how far it is from a paradise. The problem of young generations is one of the biggest problems we have to solve.” [*ibid*, pp.33-34, letter to Y.Romas, 10 May 1965]

“You, of course, understand how much we all are concerned about American hostilities in Vietnam. We cannot stop thinking of it, we send letters and appeals – this is one of the ways for us to act. Unhappily, my health does not allow me to take more active part in resolution of this crisis.” [*ibid*, folder 85, pp.14-15, letter to Y.Romas, 12 November 1965]

“We cannot remember a fall so unpleasant as this year. In many weeks, the sun came out few times and not for long. The weather seems to be reflecting that oppressive anxiety, permeating our society, as well as the growing aversion to the Vietnam war. America is no longer a happy country and disappointment, felt by most of my compatriots, speaks in their favor. It expresses their growing hatred against the war and their fear of the war's further escalation.” [*ibid*, p.19, letter to Y.Romas, 14 December 1965] (p.342)

“The situation in America is complex: all fair people are deeply concerned about war that our country started in Santo-Domingo and, of course, about the bloody affair in Vietnam. In a younger age, I would spend more time and power fighting for peace, but now me and Sally can only write letters to our government. But you can trust – every honest American rejects what this country does. We are also worrying about the war's influence to our economy. The cost of life

grows endlessly and old people, living on their savings, have to deal with new problems again and again. We distribute large numbers of books about Vietnam and Santo-Domingo in hope to change public attitude, but, unfortunately, most people are prone to accept anything coming from the government. Among the things we distribute, there is a card that can be put on a desk as a reminder. It shows a word from the outstanding English thinker Edmund Burke, spoken 150 years ago: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." This is totally applicable to our today's America. And although people are demanding peace everywhere, this demand is not yet strong enough to affect this awful person – our President.

The life under such a government as ours is terrible. We want very much to go to your great peace-loving country again. We would be happy to settle in your country, or in a small socialist country, like Bulgaria, but we are no longer young, we have our beloved house and many precious things – such as our collection of several thousand books. We are fed up of being citizens of a big militarized country. We simply want to live in peace with all the world, to live the life we chose for ourselves." [*ibid*, pp.26-27, letter to Y.Romas, 28 April 1966]

As an artist, Kent pays attention to everything, related to the art and creativity. In the times, when formal trends prevail in the Western art, he firmly defends principles of realism. He wants to know how does the state control the art in the socialist world. He disproves fake accusations, made by the Western propaganda machine. [p.343] Kent was deeply touched when he realized that in the USSR, they correctly understood his art as a "people's art". Kent was inspired by stories, told by Yakov Romas about his life and work among fishermen of the Caspian Sea: "The fact that you lived with Caspian fishermen makes me jealous, because my early experience of living in fishing communities of our Northeast Coast gave a lot for all my subsequent life. This was the time when I produced most of my best works. While living among American fishermen and Greenlanders, I

understood that any art, created for people, is largely originated from them. This conclusion made me taking critically any artists who have “creative sanctuaries”, where they lock themselves in a closer circle of colleagues instead of staying in the midst of people’s life, as they are supposed to do.” [*ibid*, p.19, letter to Y.Romas, 14 December 1965] ...

Kent openly and clearly reveals his artistic credo: “Since the very beginning of my creative career, I was and I remain a dedicated realist. The art for me is the way to depict all the things I love in real life. Sometimes, in my graphic works you may find romantic notes and symbolic figures. However, they have never put me anywhere close to mysticism, which some unscrupulous critics attribute to me from time to time. I reject any attempts to repaint my works in these false colors. To my understanding, romanticism is an uplifting attitude to life and nature. And my realism is not a simple copying of nature and our daily life, but an intense emotional way to picture them.” (*Pravda Daily*, 17 January 1958).

*Kent to Romas*: “You know already that I, like you yourself, am a devoted realist. Living in America, I probably even more than you are irritated by the so called “contemporary art”. For many years, I protested against it, rejecting all invitations to show my works in the same exhibitions with the things of this sort. I was always saying that sending my paintings to these exhibitions is like sending a pure-bred race horse to the same fair with working animals. No, I am with you and your Soviet co-workers – or, if I can say so, with my Academy co-workers, – in your belief that visual art, like oral and written literature, must open itself to masses of people and must reflect life in the same way as all people know and understand it.” [*ibid*, folder 84, p.18, letter to Y.Romas, 13 February 1965] (p.344)

In his letters, Kent talks a lot about freedom of artists. “Our media vote for liberation of artists from any state control. I hope it does not mean tolerance to abstractionism, that now destroyed the art in

Poland and took the whole Western art out from people.” (*ibid*, p.8, letter to Y.Romas, 24 October 1964) “I do not remember precisely what I have written earlier about state control over the art. But I would feel ashamed if I have made you think that I believe in existence of such control in the Soviet Union.” (*ibid*, p.17, letter to Y.Romas, 13 February 1965).

“American periodicals pay much attention to violations against artistic freedom in the USSR, where authorities dictate the creative community not only subjects, but even forms of art. I openly call this a false information. I had a chance to visit studios of many Soviet artists, as well as many art exhibitions in Moscow and Leningrad. Honestly, in America we can only dream about such a great variety of styles, forms and subjects. From my experience, I have found Soviet artists always thinking about people, to whom they feel great responsibility. Such an art reflects deep humanism of the Soviet society, that leads the global struggle for peace on our planet, for friendship and fraternity between people of the world.” (*Pravda Daily*, 20 June 1962)

During his meeting with artists and other representatives of the Soviet cultural spheres, that happened in the Moscow House of Friendship and was later described by the artist in his book “Of Men and Mountains”, Kent also spoke about social responsibility, demonstrated by every artist in the USSR. He stated that, at the same time, the artists in the Soviet Union do not suffer any pressure from the state organs. (*Molodaya Gvardia* (“Young Guard”) magazine, issue 4, 1963, p.232)

Kent believed that exhibitions of realistic art can help reaching the mutual understanding in the field of culture. The exchange of realistic artworks “can be an important factor on our way to the global pacification and friendship building.” (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 23 September 1958). By Kent's initiative and under his supervision, an exhibition of American artists was organized in 1960 in the

Moscow House of Friendship. The event was participated in by 25 American masters of realistic genre. (p.345)

Kent and Romas were updating each other of exhibitions and art fairs in their countries. Romas was informing his correspondent of all significant events in the artistic life of the USSR. He sent Kent many invitations to join Academic exhibitions, telling him how warm was the reception of his works in the Academy of Arts: "Now about those two of your paintings, that finally arrived after all annoying logistical issues. They went straight away to the Academy. Now both paintings are exhibited, together with the rest of your works, in a big fair, participated by such big masters as Igor Grabar, Konstantin Yuon, Pyotr Konchalovsky, Arkady Rylov, Nikolay Krymov and others – 14 in total. The exhibition is visited by crowds of spectators every day. All your works, which I admire always, as well as your most recent ones, are awesome. They will be purchased for sure." (*collection 2652, inventory 1, folder 25, 42; letter to Kent, 18 October 1966*)

In his turn, Kent tells about two of his American exhibitions. In his letter to Yakov Tolchan from 16 April 1968, he writes: "...Last November I agreed with one of our state's colleges to organize an exhibition of Soviet graphic works from my collection. This plan was immediately attacked by our local Congressman, a notorious reactionary, but me and the college raised a media scandal and won. Finally, the exhibition took place and attracted bigger public attention than any other event, previously hosted by this college." (*collection 3013*)

Despite Kent's fruitful activism, energy and optimism, his life in the USA remained complex. New restrictions, cancellations of exhibition plans and purchases proved again and again that his political views and position regarding the art were not appreciated. According to the 1963-1964 Soviet-American cultural exchange plan, the Soviet Union hosted an exhibition of American graphic artists. It demonstrated prints, periodicals, book illustrations, posters and



industrial advertisements. In his report about this event, the Soviet art critic N.Stepanyan wrote: “Probably, if organizers of this exhibition would prefer to respect art more than political interests, they could bring us realists, which could give us a different overview of American graphics. We would welcome works by those who tend to depict real life in the USA, but here we have not seen Moses Soyer, Andrew Wyeth, Ben Shahn and Rockwell Kent at their best... “. (*collection 2329, inventory 4, folder 1835, p.42*) (p.346)

Kent always appreciated that interest in his exhibitions, demonstrated by Soviet people. “A few days ago,” - as he writes to Yakov Tolchan on 1 April 1961, - “we received a letter from our friend, artist Franz Zaborovsky from Leningrad. He attended my exhibition several times and added some sketches to his letter. We saw photos of long queue at the Academy of Arts in Moscow, but Zaborovsky’s drawings look even livelier. I hope to include them into a booklet about me, prepared now by the National committee of the Society of American-Soviet friendship. When it will be ready, I will, of course, send you a copy.” (*collection 3013*). “I am always busy, trying to build up another “Kent’s collection” – and I think that if I will succeed in creating really good paintings, they will go to people that love my art mostly.” (*ibid*).

The first Moscow exhibition of Kent’s works was commemorated in the short color movie, filmed by the Moscow Popular Science Film Studio. The movie was directed and produced by Yakov Tolchan, basing on screenplay by V.Popov and with the music composed by N.Peyko (art critic A.Chegodayev participated as an advisor). The release of the film was covered by Sovetskaya Kultura Weekly on 25 September 1958. A few screenshots from the movie, showing some Kent’s paintings, were published in the 6<sup>th</sup> issue of the Sovetskoye Kino Magazine (“Soviet Cinema”) in 1958. Likely in those days Kent befriended Yakov Tolchan. First letters, send from the artist to the filmmaker, were focused on the movie’s production. Kent loved the film very much and wanted to show it in the USA. The hardships he

faced in exhibiting his works in America had probably made Kent consider cinema as a better way to familiarize his compatriots with his art. In their correspondence, Kent and Tolchan discuss technical aspects (p.347) of making the movie available on the American market: translation of its narrative, sound recording, shortening of footage etc. (*collection 3013, letters to Y.Tolchan, 4 November 1958; 8 and 31 January, 13 March 1959; 27 January 1960, 5 June 1961, and others*) "I was excited to learn," - writes Kent on 27 January 1960, - "that your film was on screen in New York and met an enthusiastic reception. I have heard they plan to show it again. I have probably written you already that I had a pleasure to watch the movie in Russian in Bucharest. And you tell me that it has already been sold to many foreign countries. We have a friend in Australia – I will write her not to miss the show." (*ibid*) The film saw a great success at the 1961 Moscow International Film Festival. People of New York could watch it in 1971, in the Kent's memorial conference.

Kent started thinking of using cinema in the artist's creative work while being in Greenland, where he had a portable movie camera with him. Once he set it on the automatic mode and filmed himself while working *aux plenair* and driving a dog sled. On 5 May 1965, the artist wrote Tolchan about making this reel. According to Kent, his amateur movie was so good that nobody believed it was produced by the artist himself in the wild. (*ibid*)

Kent discusses with Tolchan a potential remaking of his Greenlandic footage on 16-mm film. He also shares his ideas of making art more accessible to people. "Yakov, let us step into your professional field. Long ago, I had an idea that paintings would become more accessible to a mass audience as color slides, included into public lectures and movies. If works of an artist can be exhibited only once, they could be backed by a movie, showing their author in working process – painting in the studio, making etudes outside or doing whatever related to the art." (*ibid, 5 May 1965*)

The Kents made many friends in the Soviet Union. The artist remembers them in his correspondence with Romas and Tolchan, he applauds their achievements, asks for more information about them. Soviet friends send him books, albums and prints of his friends' works. "Finally, we got a new book by Grigory Nissky, and we admire it" – writes Kent to Tolchan on 29 March 1963, - "Beyond all doubts (p.348), he is one of the most brilliant artists in your country. And printed copies of his paintings are impressive, even though we have seen many of his original works while visiting his studio more than two years ago. I will never forget him running down that long staircase to give us a bear hug. He is a big creator and we are happy to have prints of his paintings of such a good quality." (*ibid*) Kent is grateful to Tolchan for a book, set of drawings and a card by Martiros Saryan, whose studio the artist visited while being in Yerevan. (*ibid, letters to Y.Tolchan, 29 March 1963 and 27 November 1965*). In his letters to Romas, Kent appreciates paintings created by Soviet colleague. (*collection 2652, inventory 1, folder 84, p.17, letter to Y.Romas, 13 February 1965*).

When in 1960, Moscow hosted the second exhibition of Kent's works, the artist was invited to visit prominent Soviet sculptor Evgeniy Vuchetich, who planned to create a sculptural portrait of Kent. On 30 March 1961, in his letter to Y.Tolchan, Kent remembers that meeting: "A few days ago, one of our friends listened to a radio broadcast, in which Vuchetich talked about me. I spent a very pleasant time, posing for a sculpture of myself for three mornings in a row. However, looking at my photos, taken in those days, I see how exhausted I was." (*collection 3013*)

There was a chance for Kent to meet his Soviet friends even in his home country. In 1962, in New York, he met Vitaly Goryainov in one of the receptions, organized by Society for American-Soviet Friendship. (*ibid, letter to Y.Tolchan, 12 February 1962*) The illness prevented Kent from meeting Pavel Korin and attending his

exhibition in New York. "In a few days," - writes Kent to Romas, - "an exhibition of Korin's art opens in New York. It is a shame that we are not able to visit it, but I sent Korin a message to explain why we shall not come to meet him. The catalogue of his exhibition is impressive, the first and the last pages of its cover show his colossal painting "Requiem". (*collection 2652, inventory 1, folder 84, pp.34-35, letter to Y.Romas, 10 May 1965*).

The books by Kent are based on the same principles as his art – realism, openness to people and humanism. While working on his written works, including his autobiography, the artist set to himself a goal, which he described in such words: "An art is only a shadow of its creator. And the length of a shadow depends on where the Sun stays... This autobiography is aimed at founding, measuring and determining the value of a man, who has a shadow. And, also, at recreating this man, myself, with the help of words." (*It's me, oh Lord! M:1965, p.88*). (p.349)

Kent started as a writer in 1920. All but a few of his books describe his own experience of traveling the world. The artist wrote about his adventures in Alaska (*Wilderness, 1920*), Tierra del Fuego (*Voyaging..., 1924*), in Greenland (*N by E, 1930; Salamina, 1935; Greenlandic diary, 1962*) and in Europe (*Of Men and Mountains, 1958*). Kent also illustrated all of his books. In the 1960s, Kent's works were translated to Russian and published in the USSR – some of them were printed several times. In his correspondence, Kent writes a lot about his preparations for Soviet publications of his books; how glad he was to receive first copies of them and how touching was the careful attitude of Soviet translators to his texts. Kent was astonished by numbers of his books, printed in the Soviet Union - no American edition could be compared. Here are some extracts from the artist's letters:

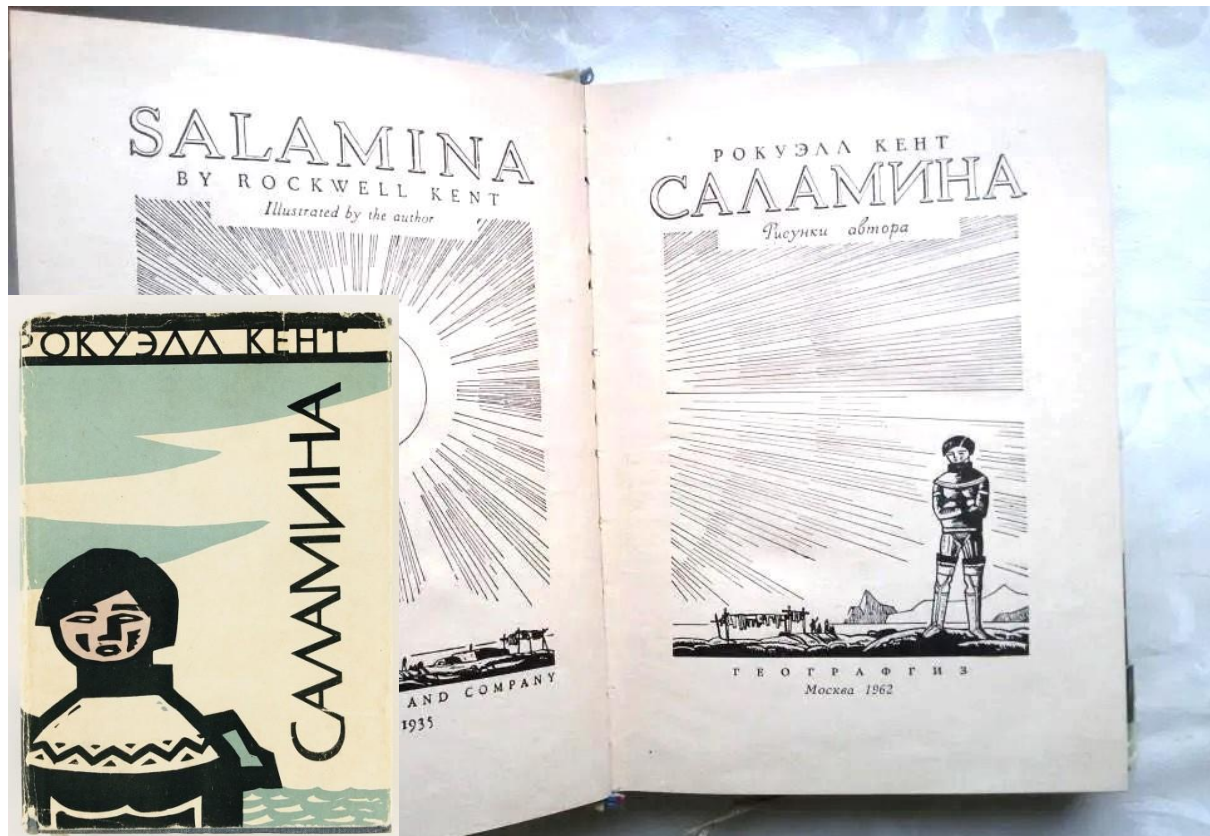
"Now I polish my manuscript before I will send it to Moscow. Almost everything is ready, apart from my long "Greenlandic diary", which

one of my friends in New York types at the moment, and shorter "Tierra del Fuego diary". (*collection 3013, letter to Y.Tolchan, 13 February 1961*)

"We are busy preparing the book "Written by Rockwell Kent" for publication in Moscow. Today 50 pounds of texts will be loaded on a ship heading to Leningrad. The parcel contains partially typed manuscripts, a few of my previously published books and part of a diary, which I wrote in Greenland in 1931-1932. I do not know if somebody will find them interesting, but, at least, they all will be in good hands. This leaves me feeling very much relieved." (*ibid, letter to Y.Tolchan, 30 March 1961*)

"I will send you a copy of my recently published 1931- 1932 Greenlandic diary, finally published uncensored and uncut. I used many of its entries while writing "Salamina", as I never expected this diary to be published. (p.350) Owing to this, it features some specific qualities that only such sort of literature can boast. The first part of edition was sold before the date of its official presentation. Honestly, for the Soviet Union its edition is tiny: 2000 copies only. But the book was received warmly by critics, even though the strike of New York newspapers prevented it from being advertised." (*ibid, letter to Y.Tolchan, 4 March 1963*)

"What a great and generous idea of you to send me a copy of "Salamina" from the second edition, - writes Kent to Romas, - You likely knew that I will be much more pleased to have second edition of this book rather than first one. I cannot remember if I had ever shared with you my disappointment by that ugly illustration somebody placed on the cover page of the first edition.



*Salamina, first Russian edition. Moscow, 1962*

I always not only wrote and illustrated my books, but also gave clear orders regarding their design. That's why I got angry when I found someone trying to decorate my book without asking me. Andrei Chegodayev sent me the very first copy of my autobiography that made me truly happy. I am absolutely sure the Russian translation is as close to the original text as it possible, given how careful and friendly is Andrei." (*collection 2652, inventory 1, folder 85, p.2, letter to Y.Romas, 10 July 1965*).

"We were satisfied to know how many of my books were published recently in Moscow. People from Progress Publishers just informed that my "Voyaging..." is about to come from the press. I am impressed how attentively they translate chapter titles and epilogue of "Wilderness". You Russians are incredible!" (*ibid, p.15, letter to Y.Romas, 12 November 1965*).

"Your admiration of my books moved my heart. We both are happy also with so big numbers of copies printed. I show Russian editions of

all of my books as examples of highly professional editing and design. Translation of last pages of "Wilderness" is made with excellence almost impossible. Mass printing and low prices are also not something we can see in America." (*ibid*, pp.31-32, letter to Y.Romas, 12 September 1966) (p.351)

In 1967, when Kent attended the 4<sup>th</sup> All-Union congress of Soviet writers in Moscow, he was interviewed by a journalist from the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. Addressing the Russian audience, the artist said: "For long I know that your literature is related tightly to the people's life. It comes naturally as this is its tradition. In my youth, I have read a wonderful book "Notes of a Hunter" by Ivan Turgenev. Then I turned to novels by Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky, which meant a lot for me. My love for Russia is inspired by Russian literature... This affection has long history, for I started following the news of your writing community several decades ago. On my working desk I always have books of leading Soviet authors, whose names I will not speak out – otherwise it would take too much time". (*Literaturnaya Gazeta ("Literature Gazette")*, 7 June 1967).

Kent was influenced by Leo Tolstoy's works. During his last visit to the USSR, the Kents had a plan to go to the writer's estate Yasnaya Polyana. The artist wrote Y.Tolchan about this: "We are reading actively, most of time Sally reads for me... Now we are working again on "War and Peace", adding to it everything we can find about that period of Russian history. We love Soviet people and consider some of them as our very best friends, that's why our interest in Russian history is almost patriotic." (*collection 3013*)

Soviet authors, particularly Konstantin Paustovsky and Ilya Erenburg, also provided Kent with a good read.

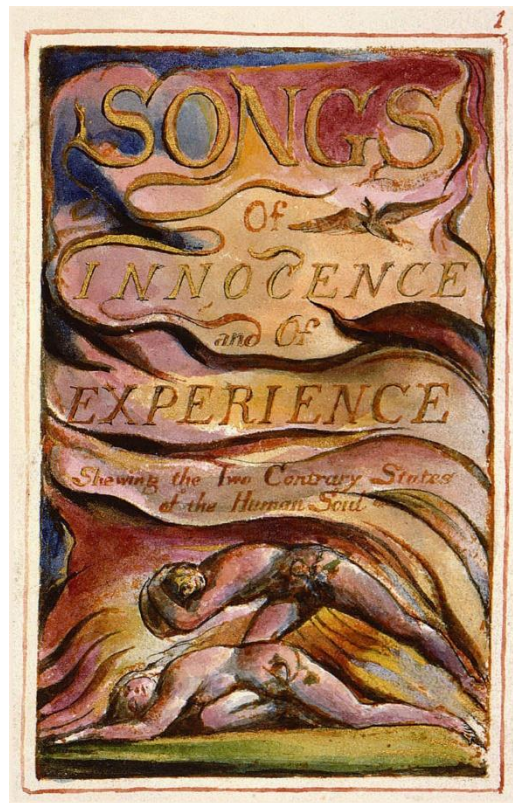
In Kent's letters to Yakov Tolchan there are some of his comments on Western writers – Rudyard Kipling and Robert Frost. "As I likely wrote you before, Kipling is not very popular in the nowadays English-speaking world. He was a devoted British imperialist, who

was credited as a Poet Laureate for serving the Empire. He lived in the USA for a year or so, moreover, he lived not far away from our place. He appeared to be a nasty neighbor and never gained any popularity among locals." (*ibid, letter to Y.Tolchan, 1 April 1961*) "My strong advice would be to read "The Death of the Hired Man" by Robert Frost. Frost passed away a few weeks ago, and with his death we lost probably the greatest of all our modern poets." (*ibid, letter to Y.Tolchan from 4 March 1963*)

Yakov Tolchan's son Alexander was trying himself in translations from English. In his letters to the Tolchan, Sr., Kent gave Alexander some advices, recommending to pay attention to works by certain writers. It was likely Kent who advised A.Tolchan to work on poems by William Blake and inspired the young man's interest by his tales of favorite poet. (p.352) Kent appraises Blake among all authors, who had ever written in English, and writes about him with passion and knowledge... Blake and Kent had much in common. The former was a gifted artist and poet, whose artworks were not valued by contemporaries, and whose books could not find publishers. As an engraver, Blake cut his own texts and illustrations on copper plates in his own specific technique of relief etching, painted them in colors and thus "published" in only several copies. Like Kent, Blake was struggling for social justice, welcomed the French revolution in 1789, belonged to the circle of progressive British scholars and saved American revolutionary Thomas Paine from arrest by backing his escape to France. Blake was prosecuted for "seditious intentions", but the jury acquitted him for lack of evidence. Blake was properly recognized long after his passing. Perhaps, this also contributed to Kent's sympathy. The artist wrote [Alexander Tolchan] about Blake: "One day, Sasha, I will send you poems of my beloved English poet William Blake. No, I did not illustrate this book, but he himself illustrated beautifully much of his own poetry. As a graphic artist he, probably, as talented as a poet." (*ibid, in the letter to Y.Tolchan, 13 February 1961*) "Forgive me, Sasha, for promising you a Blake book and not sending it. I completely forgot about it. But now I am going



to find one for you – not a complete collection of his poetry, for it contains some long mystic poems, named “Prophetic books”, which you may find difficult for understanding and even pointless. The whole volumes were written in order to explain his “Prophetic books”, but the best interpretation is that their symbolism and mythology were to camouflage their hidden rebellious ideas from British censors at the time of the French revolution and during the following years. Blake himself was a passionate rebel and made a name for smuggling Thomas Paine out of England, where that one was supposed to be arrested and perhaps executed. I will send you, Sasha, Blake’s “Songs of Innocence and of Experience”, as well as his lyrics from the “Prophetic books” (p.353) Blake was not only the greatest poet ever, but also an artist of perfect technique and incredible imagination. Practically nothing of his written works was published during his life. Blake had to support himself as engraver of drawings, created by less talented people. He illustrated his own “Prophetic books” and decorated them with beautiful engravings. I am sure the Lenin’s Library has something by William Blake – you should go and see.” (*ibid, letter to Y.Tolchan, 1 April 1961*) “I remember that Sasha, while talking about his ability to translate Blake to Russian, asked to recommend him some less difficult of his poems... The simplest of them are “Songs of Innocence and of Experience”. Marshak told me about his desire to include “Auguries of Innocence” in his book of selected translations. He also admires “The Everlasting Gospel”. The latter exists in a few fragments, so the translator should probably put them all together in order, to make each one continuing the previous.” (*ibid, letter to Y.Tolchan, 24 October 1964*)



*"Songs of Innocence & Experience" William Blake*

The field of Kent's interests was very broad. Being a professional artist and writer, he was also very attentive to the Soviet cinematography. In his letters to Y.Tolchan, Kent shows his interest in the movie "War and Peace", directed by Sergey Bondarchuk, and pays tribute to Sergey Eisenstein. In the letter from 27 March 1962, he writes: "Eisenstein's book tells how diverse were his talents. Interesting, I had a correspondence with one of your compatriots – writer Vladimir Zemskov. He is the author of two books about Vladimir Mayakovsky, and now prepares a paper about Sergey Eisenstein. He sent me a newspaper cut with an article about "Moby Dick", in which Eisenstein praises my illustrations that he has seen in American edition [of the Melvill's novel]. Four years ago, in Moscow, the translator of my autobiography told me how much did Eisenstein like my works. I have neither met him personally... nor seen any of his films. We remember that he had reportedly been terrified by what American producers have done with his documentary "Storm

over Mexico”.

Here is another characteristic extract from Kent's letter, sent on 13 February 1961. On each of his journeys, the artist always tried to learn more about the country by communicating with its people: “Not long ago, we received from Romania an album, containing three records of Romanian folk music. [p.354] The records are of high quality – beyond all doubts, this is true folk, a music that still lives among peasants and workers of Romania. Women's songs reminded me of those from two Bulgarian ladies, who greeted us in a farm house. When I told them that American women do not sing while working, they looked at each other, laughed and replied: “We would sing as we love it”. And they started a song, rising their beautiful strong voices as if the music was part of their nature. In Romania, we were under impression that folk music is flourishing there like nowhere else. The museum of traditional arts near Bucharest is an impressive evidence of that respect, paid to the ancient tradition.” (*ibid*)

In the USSR, Kent visited Crimea and Karelia, Caucasian Mountains and Central Asian republics; Moscow, Leningrad and other cities. Any invitation to visit the Soviet Union always made Kent enthusiastic and happy. For him this was another chance to meet friends and make new delightful discoveries. “Among all exciting events of our trip, - writes Kent in his letter to Y.Romas, - we will always gratefully remember our journey along the Volga River.” (*collection 2652, inventory 1, folder 84, p.3-4, letter from 13 July 1964*) “We have written Ms.Furtseva, in response to her warm invitation, that next year we will be happy to come to your country with the first cruise of “Alexander Pushkin” from Montreal to Leningrad. From Leningrad we plan to go straight to the North, to Karelia, to visit Kizhi for their marvelous wooden architecture. [*Kizhi – a small group of islands at Onega Lake, which hosts several wooden churches and houses of the 18 cent.*] We will return to Moscow afterwards... But what makes us really excited is the opportunity to see ourselves in the company of

good friends, among people who want to live in peace, who built a "Great society" instead of talking about it. As you can imagine now, America is not the land of happiness, and nobody is wise enough to predict what will our future bring us." (*ibid*, folder 86, p.32-33, letter to Y.Romas, 12 September 1966)

From letters we can learn about Kent's daily life. He owned 300 acres of land and a milk farm in the NW part of the state of New York, where he lived in mountains and forests. [p.355] The house, like all other houses where the artist has ever lived, was built by his own hands. Kent named it "Asgaard". The two-floor colonial style building was full of books, friendly gifts and souvenirs, brought from all over the world. Many of them came from the USSR: Kent himself called his dwelling "a museum of American-Soviet friendship". Living a quiet life in his farm, Kent remained well informed of the world's life and its main news. He was always busy as the Chairman of the Society for the American-Soviet Friendship. For example, in his letter from 24 November 1961, Kent writes Tolchan about a banquet, organized by the publisher of the America's only liberal weekly newspaper. And two days later he attended a meeting, called by the Society, in which only 1000 people took part. Kent is interested in the Soviet cultural news, he wants to see the performance by Igor Moiseev's band, traveling to the USA in 1961. He tells Tolchan about three performances of the Leningrad ballet company, which he saw in Washington, DC. He applauds the success of the Tolchan's film about the American exhibition [in the USSR]. The news of Gagarin's space flight was received by Kent with a great enthusiasm: the artist even wrote an article about this, published in New York and in the main Soviet daily newspaper Pravda. All these events are covered by Kent's letters to Tolchan, sent throughout the year of 1961.

Kent's energy and optimism were not affected even by his deteriorating health. At the end of 1964, the artist dared to fulfil a risky surgery. In simple words he told the story in his letter to Y.Romas: "In the early December... me and Sally went to Montreal,

90 miles north from us. There I was placed in a hospital, while Sally settled in the nearest hotel. We spent almost three weeks in Montreal, for I needed to repair myself. You remember how weak I was during our Volga cruise, how often I felt myself bad in Barvikha [*a locality NW of Moscow, famous for the closed hunting reserve and sanatorium, beloved by Soviet top-rank officials*]. I continued suffering from this weakness (caused by abnormally slow heart rate) after my return to the USA. When I learned about successful clinical tests of a new electric cardio stimulator, I decided to try it on myself. This was the reason for us to visit Montreal. The operation has been made with great success and now I feel myself a modern human being, powered by electricity. [p.356] But, please, do not get scared: Rockwell Kent did not turn into a monster. A tiny electric battery hides inside my body and does not create any sounds. Now my heart rate is at the same level as 50 years ago and I need only warm weather and sunlight to walk outside for recovery.” (*collection 2652, inventory 1, folder 84, p.17, letter to Y.Romas, 13 February 1965*)

Kent always remembered Russia, which, according to his own words, became his second homeland. He always kept Russian people in his memories. In our country, people fell in love with his art and books. Many Russians sent the artist warm words of support and admiration. “How wonderful,” - wrote Kent to Tolchan, - “that you decided to send us some extracts from the visitor’s book of my Moscow exhibition. They all have been translated and now remain among the most precious souvenirs, reminding me of that event. We are keeping memories of a man, who recognized me at the time of our departure for Warsaw and expressed his gratitude for bringing Greenland to Moscow, as well as of a taxi driver, who greeted me on behalf of all drivers of his company. We were warmed by your friendship when you came to say bye... nothing is forgotten.” (*collection 3013, letter to Y.Tolchan, 13 February 1961*)

The State Pushkin Art Museum organized a big exhibition of Kent’s works to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the artist. (*Rockwell Kent.*

*The Catalogue of the Personal Art Exhibition. Moscow, 1983)*

Thinking about this incredible human character, that did not spend a minute idle; about his life, dedicated to labor, struggle for peace and people's happiness, we would like to point out one important quality of Kent's nature, that allowed him to become a leading artist – his ability to take the best from life and to give it generously to others.

(p.357)



*Rockwell Kent, Yakov Tolchan and Sally Kent, Moscow, 1960s*



*Untitled (Asgaard Farm). Oil on canvas board (14 7/8 by 18 inches). Circa 1960-1965. Image courtesy Scott Ferris. Private collection.*

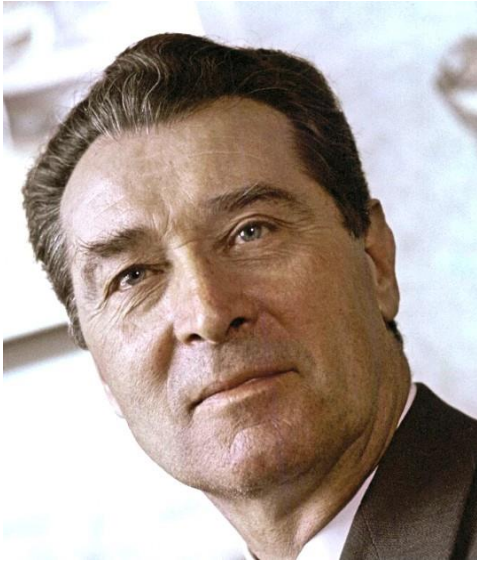
Kent often exchanged gifts with his friends. The painting above was given to Tolchan and his wife by Kent in the 1960's .



*The location of this photo is unclear – likely one of the 18th cent. museum estates in Moscow (Arkhangelskoye, Ostankino or Kuskovo). On the back there is a humorous note by Kent: «Jakov's friend Rockwell at his favorite pastime, love making — here shown with a young lady many centuries older than himself».*



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**Yakov Dorofeevich Romas (1902-1969)** – Soviet artist, who distinguished himself in landscape painting, theatrical decoration and design. Romas was born in Sokolka, Grodno Governorship (now in Poland), and studied art in Moscow in the 1920s. In 1935, he created a series of paintings and frescoes for the State Historical Museum in Moscow. In 1939, Romas was responsible for decorations of the Soviet pavilion at

the New York World Fair (*where he could meet Kent*). Also decorated some stations of the Moscow subway and cooperated with the Soviet Navy. In the 1950s was the Chief artist of the State Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow. Member of the Soviet Academy of Arts.



**Yakov Moiseevich Tolchan (1901-1993)** – Soviet cameraman and film director. Known for documentaries and popularization of science. In the late 1920s, Tolchan collaborated with famous Dziga Vertov – a classic of the early Soviet documentary. Focused on popular science movies after 1938. Professor of the All-Union Cinema Institute (Moscow).



**Boris Vladimirovich Ioganson (1893-1973)**  
– Russian/Soviet artist of Swedish origin. People's Artist of the USSR (1943), member of the Soviet Academy of Arts (1947, President in 1958-1962), First Secretary of the Soviet Artists Union in 1965-1968. Hero of Socialist Labor (1968). Studied art in 1912-1918 in St.Petersburg and Moscow (pupil of impressionist Konstantin Korovin). Participated in art exhibitions since 1914 and for the rest of life. Professor of the Soviet Academy of Arts, director of the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow in 1951-1954.

*In 1936, Ioganson participated in the exhibition of selected Soviet artists in New York and later worked on a fresco in the Soviet pavilion at the New York World Fair (1939). This potentially makes his encounter with Kent possible already in the 1930s.*



**Dmitry Vladimirovich Skobeltsyn (1892-1990)**  
– Soviet scientist in the field of nuclear physics, outstanding experimenter. Corresponding member of the French Academy (1943), member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (1946), Hero of Socialist Labor (1969). Set up the first Soviet experiments with the cloud chamber in the



early 1920s. Director of the Moscow Research Institute of Nuclear Physics (1951-1972). Participant of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs.

**Franz Eduardovich Zaborovsky (1915-1987)** – Soviet landscape painter, graphic artist and monumentalist, who belonged to the so called “Leningrad school”. Zaborovsky was born to a family of Russian immigrant in Melbourne (Australia), but his parents decided to repatriate in the early 1920s. He was trained in art studios of the Volga Region (Stalingrad and Astrakhan), but since 1936 lived mostly in Leningrad – with exception of war years, spent in Saratov (also Volga Region). Zaborovsky improved his skills in the Academy of Arts under Igor Grabar and called himself Grabar’s pupil. The first personal exhibition of Zaborovsky’s works was organized in Saratov in 1945. Despite his membership in the Union of Soviet Artists and active participation in collective exhibitions, he was not very successful and in Stalin’s times even balanced at the edge of repression for his open criticism of the Soviet regime and its policy regarding arts.



**Pavel Dmitriyevich Korin (1892-1967)** – Soviet artist, expert and restorer of antiques. People’s Artist of the USSR (1962), member of the Soviet Academy of Arts (1958), recipient of the Lenin Prize (1963). Korin was born to a family of traditional Russian religious artists in Palekh – an ancient village in the Vladimir Region (NE from Moscow); a place with old cultural traditions. Initially, he was trained in painting Russian Orthodox icons, which evolved from the medieval Byzantine art. For this reason, Korin’s own art featured spiritual richness, monumentalism and intense colors. He is known mostly for his portraits and the epic painting “Requiem (Old Russia)”, which he started in 1925 and never finished. Created numerous frescos and mosaics for the Moscow

subway stations, as well as for the Moscow University Building (highest of the so called "Stalin's skyscrapers").



*P. Korin, "Requiem (Old Russia). Mourning for the late Patriarch Tikhon in 1925". Only etudes and 29 portraits were created in 1925-1959 – all are collected now by the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, together with a colossal canvas almost 9 to 5 meter. I am sure, Kent could see some of these artworks in Korin's studio in Moscow and*

*was told about all the problems and ideological issues surrounding this painting, by Korin himself.*

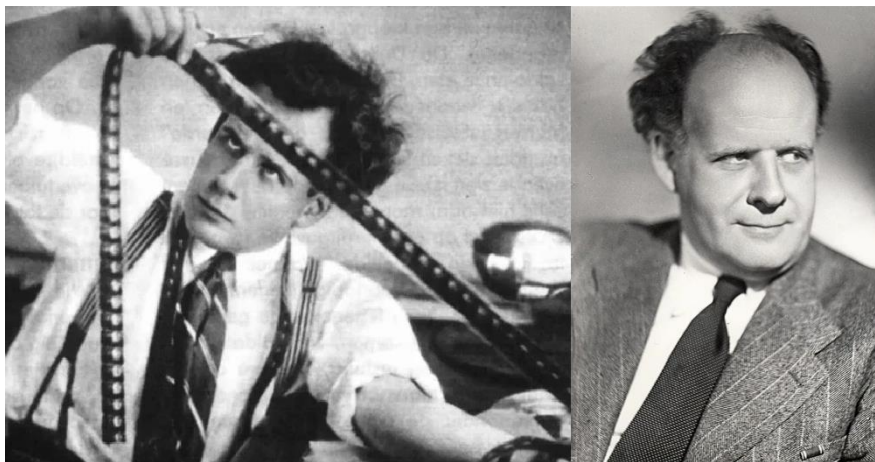


**Martiros Saryan (1880-1972)** – the founder of modern art school in Armenia. Was born in the Armenian community in Rostov-on-Don (Southern Russia). In 1897-1904, was trained in the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture; pupil of Valentin Serov and Konstantin Korovin. Took lessons from Leonid Pasternak (famous writer Boris Pasternak's father), Isaak Levitan and Appolinary

Vasnetsov. Already in the 1900s, Saryan participated in the events, held by art groups "Blue Rose", "World of Arts" and others. Supported activities of the Society for Armenian Artists, illustrated "Anthology of Armenian poetry", edited by poet-symbolist Valery Bryusov. In 1910-1913, made a long journey to Iran, Turkey and Egypt. In 1915-1916, lived in Armenia, assisting Armenian refugees from Turkey. In 1918-1919, lived with the family in Rostov, but in 1921 relocated to Yerevan – capital of Soviet Armenia. In 1926-1928, Saryan lived in Paris, where developed great interest in impressionism and studied creative technique of Henry Matisse and Paul Gauguin. Since 1928 and for the rest of life, Saryan lived in Yerevan, painting, teaching and decorating stage performances. People's Artist of the USSR (1960), Hero of Socialist Labor (1965). Recipient of Stalin (1941) and Lenin (1961) Prizes.



**Samuil Yakovlevich Marshak (1887-1964)** – the Soviet poet, famous for classic translations of William Blake, Robert Burns and many others to Russian. Was born in Voronezh (SE of European Russia), studied in St.Petersburg and London, where he developed interest in English folklore. In 1914, returned to Russia, where lived for the rest of life. Was recognized and highly praised for child poetry.



**Sergey Mikhailovich Eisenstein (1898-1948)** – probably the most talented and well-known Soviet filmmaker of all times. Was born in Riga (Latvia), started

in the late 1910s as theater decorator. Took part in the Civil War on the Lenin's side, volunteered in the Red Army. In the early 1920s, tried himself as a stage director, but soon turned to cinematography. Produced his first silent movie in 1922, in 1925 directed "The Ironclad Potyomkin" – a masterpiece, based on real events of the 1<sup>st</sup> Russian revolution (1905-1907). The movie gained wide recognition both in the USSR and abroad. In 1929-1931, lived in the USA, where he was writing screenplays for Hollywood studios and studied their organization. Visited Mexico. Upon return to the Soviet Russia, Eisenstein soon became one of the leading filmmakers and supporters of Stalin's regime. Received many awards from the government, but was heavily criticized by Stalin in the late 1940s for the second part of his historical drama "Ivan the Terrible". Died from heart attack soon afterwards.



**Ekaterina Alekseevna Furtseva** (1910-1974), aka “Catherine the Great”. Soviet politician, member of the Presidium of Party’s Central Committee at the time of Nikita Khrushchev, Minister of Culture of the USSR under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Was born to a poor family NW of Moscow, lost father during the WW1. Joined the Young Communist League of the USSR (“Komsomol”) at the age of 15, started successful political career shortly after. Held responsible positions in the Komsomol

organs in Kursk Region (South Russia) and Crimea. Worked in the Komsomol Central Committee in Moscow since 1935, started career in the Party organs in the Soviet capital after WW2. In 1949, was picked by Khrushchev, then the head of the Moscow City Party Committee and became one of his leading co-workers (and alleged mistress). When Khrushchev rose to the position of Soviet supreme Party leader, Furtseva was put at the head of Moscow Party organization and became a member of the Party’s Central Committee. But in 1957, when a group of officials from Stalin’s “Old Guard” tried to dismiss Khrushchev, Furtseva made a wrong choice by joining the coup. As a result, when K. won, she was thrown



away from the summit of Party hierarchy and attempted a suicide (failed). Paying respect to her previous loyalty (and maybe to their secret relationship), K. allowed Furtseva to head the Ministry of Culture in 1960 – the position she held for the rest

of life. The Kents definitely had chances to meet Furtseva during the formal events in Moscow. She was an attractive, emotional and energetic woman, who contributed a lot the “cultural boom” in the

USSR during the Khrushchev Thaw. Following the general line of Party policy, she opposed the legalization of Western pop- and rock music in Soviet Russia – so when the Rolling Stones played a concert in Poland in 1967, they were not allowed to go further east (and the Beatles did not make it at all). At the same time, Furtseva welcomed French chanson and classic American jazz in the USSR for the first time. She organized first Soviet exhibitions of Nikolay Roerich, Marc Chagall and Fernand Léger, as well as the exhibition of Mona Lisa and other masterpieces from the Louvre. Furtseva also opened the door for Italian opera music in the 1970s.



### **Dmitry Kiselev**

Born in remote Kamchatka Peninsula, Northeast Siberia, Mitya Kiselev is a polar historian, avid traveler and expedition guide, working for Silversea Cruises. When not travelling to the Arctic or Antarctic, Mitya and his family live on Cyprus.