

## Nikolai Timkov 1912-1993

I am extremely pleased to introduce to you tonight the beauty of Russian Impressionism.

Many of you may think Russia and probably think of our International treasures such as our Icons and other religious treasures, detailed Faberge pieces and, above all, our Palaces, built by the Czars long ago. But, then there is another side, which presents to us the Russian Landscape, its villages and mountains, its winters and its spring and the vast beauty of our countryside. It is here that we learn about the heart and soul of the Russian people. The Seasons of Timkov presents to us a period of art, which is so special in his extraordinary and uniquely Russian Impressionist way.

Born on the eve of the Russian Revolution in 1912, in the small village of Nakhichevanskiye Dachi, on the lower reaches of the River Don, Nikolai Timkov was the son of a farming family. His parents raised wheat and he spent his childhood close to the farm, close to the earth. Orphaned at the age of 12, he began painting with homemade paints and whatever surfaces he could find. Thus began his lifelong journey as an artist.

Timkov attended Art College at Rostov on Don, a Town along the great River Don. In 1929, he traveled for the first time to Leningrad and Moscow. He studied at the Academy of the Arts in what is now St. Petersburg. His academic training and work is strongly influenced by other great Russian landscape painters, all of whom have died long ago, including Levitan, Polenov, Shishkin, Kuidzhi and Brodsky.

Timkov began to create his own view of the world and Russian landscape. A lifelong journey, which would span over 60 years of painting. Influenced by Monet and others, he would return time and time again to the country to paint similar scenes and to explore them in changing phases and seasons. His use of color with lavenders, oranges, blues is extraordinary. Ready to surprise us with his varying styles, quick brush strokes and brilliant use of light and snow. His paintings flow and provide a relaxing yet moving sense of Nature. Addressing man's place in Nature with small figures within the larger landscape thereby symbolizing the strength and significance of the Russian countryside. Timkov's landscapes, small huts, villages and towns were examples of the living unity of Russia and its people.

Russian Impressionism grew and gained significance shortly after World War 2. The roots of Impressionism had take place earlier in other Countries, where artists sought to find vibrant new meanings and presentations, which were not filtered by romance, religion or philosophy. For Russians this was a difficult period, just after the war, and Russian Impressionism presented a unique challenge to Soviet life. Resources were challenged, as were artists to create a more realistic view.

According to Dr. Alexander Borovsky, Head of Contemporary Art, The State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, " Hence the energy of resistance which we feel resonating in Timkov's landscapes,

which are spontaneous, fresh, and frank. But his landscapes result from suffering, and the suffering sounds a note, which can be heard by viewers. It is perhaps this quality of suffering which distinguishes Russian Impressionism. And distinguishes Timkov above all.”

Timkov chose to retain his uniquely human presentation of the land and provides us with a view not always easily accepted at that time. He was indifferent to worldly success, unassuming about the greatness of his art and remained unconcerned with success or a role in a sanctioned position. He was more concerned with his inner development the construction of a new way of life. He was determined to present the beauty of Russia and the depiction of the heart and soul of the Russian people. Very private, he was happiest in the country with his paint and brushes and the land he knew so well.

He maintained a keen sense of composition and captured what is so unique about Russian Impressionism – natural, & tranquil. He resisted external pressures and his works are fresh and spiritually open.

The Russian scholar, Mikhail Nesterov, once told Timkov “ One should paint with good sense, not for effect or beautiful brush strokes, but for deep and sincere expression of human feelings. Art is not just a profession; it is the highest duty of an artist, of a human being. Never try to deceive Nature but approach it with all the love, which you are capable. Only then will it open its soul to you.”

By his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, Timkov had earned the coveted title “HONORABLE ARTIST OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION” for his extraordinary achievements and artistic talents. This honor properly allowed Timkov to be recognized by all of his peers and the Country as a whole. He had held over 100 exhibitions and, at his last exhibition at the St. Petersburg Union of Artists, at the age of 81, he died of a heart attack at its close on December 23, 1993.

His works are represented at over 40 museums throughout Russia including the State Russian Museum, the Central Naval Museum, the Popov Museum and the Museum of History in St. Petersburg. They are also in private collections throughout the world including the United States.

Dr. Albert Kostenevich, Curator of Impressionist and Post Impressionist Works, at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, best describes Timkov when he says “ Timkov’s longevity and stylistic range make him arguably the most important Russian Impressionist of this period.”

Examples of Timkov’s work are now here, at the Organization Of American States, for all of you, to enjoy the beauty of Russian Impressionism at its best.