

EXHIBITION OF SCULPTURE
BY
PRINCE PAUL TROUBETZKOY
DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART
FEBRUARY · NINETEEN SIXTEEN





Portrait of
PAUL TROUBETZKOY

After an original etching by
Andreas Zorn

THE ART OF PAUL TROUBETZKOY*

By CHRISTIAN BRINTON



THE creator of the spirited and graphic phase of modern sculpture which is herewith collectively presented for the first time in Detroit, was born February 16, 1866, at Intra, Lago Maggiore. The second son of Prince Pierre and Princess Ada Troubetzkoy, *nee* Winans, his childhood and youth were passed amid the picturesque surroundings of his birthplace, where nature and art seem to have achieved their own serene and indissoluble unity of contour and color. Despite the fact that there were no specific aesthetic proclivities in his immediate ancestry, the boy's artistic instincts manifested themselves at the early age of six, that which first aroused his interest in such matters being the visit to the family home of a well-known Italian portraitist who was engaged in painting likenesses of his parents. Though he was fond of drawing, and had also amused himself by cleverly tinting the countenances of a set of marionettes with which he and his brothers used to play, it was, however, sculpture that attracted him most. He began modelling in soft bread, and later in wax, his themes being the heads of dogs and other domestic pets so plentiful around the house. Desiring to widen the scope of his activities, his next subject was a tattered mendicant who used to loiter about the villa gates, and whom he induced to pose by offering him his own dessert

*From the Official Catalogue of Sculpture by Prince Paul Troubetzkoy, exhibited at the Hispanic Society, New York, and the Albright Gallery, Buffalo.

of fruit or sweets, an act of epicurean abnegation conspicuously rare in a child not yet in the teens.

Although strong, healthy, and devoted to exercise in the open air, particularly tramping or riding among the mountains and along the lake front, he was uncommonly absorbed in his chosen task, and tried his hand by turns at every sort of problem. Having completed a faithful and life-like head of a horse, his mother, who had thus far regarded the boy's efforts mainly in the light of juvenile diversion, became so impressed by his ability that she was moved to take the work to Milan, where she submitted it to the inspection of the sculptor Grandi. With the ready discernment of a practised executant, Grandi at once pronounced the bit of wax a production of youthful genius, and prevailed upon the lad's mother to allow him to pursue the vocation of an artist.

Superficially it requires no special effort on the part of the casual spectator to appreciate the art of Paul Troubetzkoy. Its appeal is immediate, instantaneous. In choice of theme and subject-matter it is marked by a refreshing absence of pretence and scholasticism. It involves no feat of the imagination and exacts no knowledge of classic myth or of those traditions, academic or literary, that have so long obscured the true meaning of plastic form. Devoid alike of symbol and allegory, its message is wholly specific and concrete. There is nothing in the entire range of this art which is not familiar to anyone, no matter how prescribed his experience or outlook may be. It is, however, through the attainment of just this naturalness and spontaneity that the work of Prince Troubetzkoy differentiates itself so sharply from that of



Monument of the
EMPEROR ALEXANDER III

Place Znamenskaia, Petrograd
Dedicated June 5, 1909

the majority of his contemporaries. The position which he occupies is an individual one, yet it must not be assumed that it came to him without the favouring touch of circumstance, as well as through his own inherent animation of vision and statement.

Paul Troubetzkoy approached his given task with unclouded mind, and this very freedom from restraint, from the irksome constriction of the past, and the confused ideals of the present, is the dominant note of his production. Almost alone among his colleagues he has been able to confront actuality with unprejudiced eye, to see in the world about him plastic possibilities which have escaped or have been ignored alike by his predecessors and his contemporaries. The text of his art is life, and its gospel truth to life as he sees it. "I merely copy what I find in nature," is his candid reply to those who are moved to ask for some explanation of his aims. Yet that which Prince Troubetzkoy is pleased to call copying is in essence a recreation of what he sees. The objects which, under the impress of his nervous, expressive finger-tips, shape themselves so spontaneously out of wax or clay, are by no means what another would term a copy of the model before him. They are instinct with the very breath and movement of nature, and convey to us an infectious sense of vitality.

The aesthetic creed of Paul Troubetzkoy consists of two brief, concise, and inter-dependent statements: "Pas de nu, pas de symbole," and his achievement is remarkable alike for its avoidance of the conventional nude and of that vacuous symbolism so dear to those who are too cowardly or too incompetent to face the facts of every-



COUNT TOLSTOY

Owned by Charles R. Crane, of New York

day existence and extract whatever measure of beauty may reside therein. There are no feeble compromises in this art. It has freed itself from the tyranny of classic routine and ranged itself frankly on the side of contemporary life. These men wear the customary garb of to-day, and these slender, patrician women do not disdain the most modish of modern toilettes. The individual characterization so cleverly attained in his studies of men is indeed supplemented by an equal though more intimate sense of particularization when he turns to his women subjects. The faint, indefinable perfume of femininity pervades each of these spirited bits of bronze or plaster which, collectively, constitute the flower of the sculptor's achievement. No technical problem has been too difficult for him to essay, and to solve, with his accustomed dexterity. The sheen of silk, the soft flutter of an ostrich plume, the caressing undulation of the coiffure, or the rose-petal radiance of a delicate complexion—each seems to have presented but scant difficulty. The suggestion of color as well as of movement is remarkable in all Prince Troubetzkoy's work, but notably so in his portraits of young girls and women, who in these drab days are the only section of our society to indulge in any sort of chromatic freedom.

Sculpture, according to Prince Troubetzkoy, is a living medium, and his art is simply the result of his emotions when face to face with nature. As we have already indicated, his position is personal, and in no sense a reflection of the opinion and practice of those who have gone before. "Close the studio doors to literature, to tradition, to everything that is not form, expression, and



MRS. LEONARD THOMAS

color," is his own significant dictum, and it is obvious that he is true to this salutary credo. He is an artistic instinct, not an artistic intellect, and this is mainly the reason why he is able to preserve unspoiled his primal unity of vision. "That which I strive to do," he says, with contagious enthusiasm, "is to convey as effectively as possible the impressions I receive, without troubling myself about the artistic production of either past or present. When I study and reproduce an object, it is not the thing itself I wish to represent, but life — that life which vivifies and animates all things alike."

The essence of the matter is that Paul Troubetzkoy is not a slave of academic precedent. He glories in explicit observation, and such is his fundamental veracity of purpose that he would not condescend to depict anything that was not directly before his eyes. Since he does not see man in the guise of a Greco-Roman hero, or woman desporting herself as a sylvan goddess, he flatly declines to picture them so. Banal abstractions rejoicing in appellations of "Vanity," "Surprise," "Benevolence," and the like, he holds in righteous horror, and he looks with a mixture of pity and indignation upon those who continue to perpetrate such plastic anachronisms.

Paul Troubetzkoy, as may well be inferred, treats his material with spirited liberty. He is far too spontaneous to weary us with unconsequential detail. If there is in this art a proportionately greater area of informal treatment than is the case with most sculpture, the reasons are obvious. It is not myopic exactitude, but the invigorating simulation of life and motion, that he is after. He deems it better to leave his work pulsating with



PAVLOVA

vitality than to deaden it, as so many do, with meticulous elaboration. That he is successful in attaining the desired effect there can be scant question. These figures in bronze or plaster do not seem isolated objects paraded for pedantic inspection. They are veritable fragments of that creative impulse which seeks expression in all forms and all channels, and which has found in him an eloquent exponent.

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PRINCE Paul Troubetzkoy is represented in the National Gallery in Rome by three bronzes, in the National Gallery in Venice by two bronzes, in the Luxemburg by three bronzes, in the Brera Museum by one bronze, in the Museum of Alexander III., in Petrograd, by one bronze. He has one bronze in the Treliakofsky Gallery in Moscow, three in the National Gallery in Berlin, two in the Royal Gallery in Dresden, one in the Gallery in Leipsig, three in the Art Institute in Chicago, three in San Francisco, one in Buffalo, two in Toledo, and one in Buenos Ayres.

Prince Troubetzkoy does not care to give titles to his works, as the following in his own words will show: "I not only work to express the form, but more than all the feeling of life, because the form has more meaning if the life is there, therefore a title could never express all that my work really means."

THE DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART

is open to the public on week days from 9 a. m. to 5 p. m.; on Sundays from 2 to 6 p. m.; on holidays from 2 to 5 p. m. It is also open frequently in the evening for the display of special exhibitions and for lectures. The Museum is free to the public on all occasions.

The collections of the Museum include the James E. Scripps collection of paintings, comprising eighty-five pictures belonging to the early Italian, Flemish, Dutch and French Schools; the Edward Chandler Walker collection of paintings, including works by Isabey, Troyon, Hoppner, and a number of the best examples of Gari Melchers; the Charles Willis Ward collection, containing several fine examples of the work of contemporary artists, and a collection of paintings by present-day American artists, acquired by purchase and gift.

The Frederick Stearns collection comprises objects illustrating the habits and customs of the peoples of China, Japan, and the South Sea Islands; collections of the American Indian and Egyptian Archaeology, and Scientific collections, including Mineralogy, Conchology, and other branches of natural history.

CATALOGUE

1

Dancer

2

Mrs. James Byrne

3

Master James Byrne

4

Mrs. H. Van Buren

5

Caruso

6

Mrs. Charles Crane
and daughter

7

Mr. Charles Crane

8

Mrs. Castle

9

Mrs. Castle

10

Mr. Archer W. Huntington

11

Mrs. Harold McCormick

12

Mrs. Ogden Mills

14

Master Moore

15

Mr. Charles McDonald

16

Pavlowa, dancing

17

Pavlowa, sitting

18

Pavlowa, standing

19

Mr. Reilly

20

Mrs. Reilly

21

Dr. Hamilton Rice

22

Mrs. Thomas Ridgway

23

Lady Constance Richardson

24

Miss Barbara Rutherford

25

Miss Barbara Rutherford

26

Mr. Thomas F. Ryan

27

Mr. Thomas F. Ryan
and dog

28

Sons of Mrs. Stuyvesant
Rutherford

29

Mr. Shaukopf

30

Svirsky

31

Segantini

32

Mrs. Leonard Thomas

33

Mrs. Newell W. Tilton

34

Princess Paul Troubetzkoy

CATALOGUE

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|----|---|----|
| Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt | 35 | Bedouin Horse | 45 |
| Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt | 36 | "How Can You Eat Me?" | 46 |
| Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney | 37 | Samoyed Dog | 47 |
| Wilding | 38 | Samoyed Dog, lying down | 48 |
| Young Woman, standing | 39 | Girl with Lamb | 49 |
| Girls with Wolf | 40 | Hunting Dog | 50 |
| Elephant | 41 | Pekinese Dog | 51 |
| Bull Dog | 42 | Mrs. Frederick Lewisohn | 52 |
| Young Woman, standing | 43 | Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney | 53 |
| Bedouin on Horseback | 44 | Marguesa de Santa Ana y Santa Maria Senora de Aróstegui | 54 |

PORTRAIT SKETCHES

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| Miss Abercrombie | 55 | Mrs. Walter Lewisohn | 60 |
| Madam Bahkmeteff | 56 | Princess Paul Troubetzkoy | 61 |
| Mr. Craig Biddle | 57 | Wilding | 62 |
| Dr. Christian Brinton | 58 | Prince Paul Troubetzkoy
(etching by Zorn) | 63 |
| Marchese Casati | 59 | | |