

HISTORY IN ART

Zinaida Serebriakova 1884–1967

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1884 – Zinaida Lanceray is born near Kharkov/Kharkiv, Ukraine into a very artistic family of French and Italian origins.

1900 – She completes her secondary education and enters art school, where she is taught by the well-known painter, Ilya Repin.

1905 – She marries her cousin Boris Serebriakov.

1908 – Her early works in a Realist style show peasants in the Ukrainian countryside where she lives.

1909 – Her self-portrait *At the Dressing Table* is a great success when exhibited in a large exhibition staged by the Union of Russian Artists.

1911 – She joins the *Mir Iskusstva* (World of Art) movement, which was formed in 1899 as the result of the founding of a magazine of that name by her uncle Alexandre Benois, together with Léon Bakst and Sergei Diaghilev.

1914 – She continues to produce more paintings of rural life in the region of Ukraine where she grew up.

1916 – She joins her uncle Alexandre Benois and other artists including her brother, Yevgeny Lanceray, in a commission to paint murals at the Kazan railway station in Moscow.

1917 – The Russian Revolution brings with it chaos for her. Her husband is arrested and contracts typhus in jail, dying shortly afterwards. She is left with four children and a sick mother to look after and with no income. Food shortages locally bring extra hardship. She paints *House of Cards*, a poignant image of her now father-less children. Her nomination to become a member of the Russian Academy of Arts in Petrograd (St Petersburg), a rare honour for a woman artist, is not voted on because of the Revolution.

1920 – She takes the family to Petrograd where the Academy invites her to teach some of its courses.

1922 – Her paintings of ballerinas at the Mariinsky Theatre are well received when exhibited but bring little financial reward.

1924 – She leaves for Paris in the hope of earning money there to take back to her family, who are looked after by relatives. But the Soviet authorities introduce a travel ban when she is abroad, meaning that she is unable to return and her children are unable to leave to join her in Paris. Eventually two of the four children are allowed to leave but not the other two. She manages to send some of her income, mostly from portrait commissions, back to Russia.

1928 – She visits Morocco and paints portraits and scenes in Marrakech. In the next few years, she also visits England, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Switzerland and many regions of France.

1947 – Having always hoped to return to her homeland, she finally decides to take French citizenship.

1960 – During Khrushchëv’s “Thaw” she is reunited with her daughter Tatiana, who is allowed to visit her in Paris – it is the first time they have seen each other for 36 years. At the same time, Serebriakova is rehabilitated in the Soviet Union and recognised for her “solidarity with the masses”.

1965 – Tatiana organises a retrospective exhibition of her mother’s work and the artist visits Moscow for the first time since her involuntary exile began in 1924. The exhibition is a huge success and also travels to Leningrad and Kiev (Kyiv).

1967 – Serebriakova dies in Paris after a brain haemorrhage.