

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

"COLLECTION OF COLLECTIONS"

REGARDING THE "DOLORES TOMÁS" COLLECTION OF RUSSIAN PAINTINGS

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Given that it includes a large number of works representing different periods and movements in Soviet painting, the Dolores Tomás Collection may be considered a "**Collection of Collections**". The earliest works date from the pre-revolutionary period in the early 1900s and the most recent from the 2000s. The Collection therefore provides an insight into the continuity of the traditions of the Russian School of painting.

The largest part of the Collection opens up post-war Soviet paintings to viewers, comprising a broad exhibition of art and the entire variety of genres and styles belonging to the second half of the 20th century. A small number, relating to the pre-revolutionary epoch and the period between the two world wars, are also of high artistic and historical value. The post-Soviet period represented in the Collection also inherits the finest traditions of the Russian School, dating

back to the experiments of Levitan and Korovin, the Union of Russian Artists.

The predominance in the Collection of works from the post-war period is explained by the peculiarity of Dolores Tomás's deep ties with the Moscow State Institute of Academic Art, named after V.I. Surikov.

It was through the artist Pyotr Litvinsky, for many years Vice-Rector of the Surikov, that Dolores Tomás began her research into Soviet Russian painting in the late 1980s. This knowledge led to her becoming familiar with different generations, from the first graduates during the 1940s to contemporary artists.

The Surikov Institute was created in the late 1930s and was in fact the successor and heir to the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture and the famous Vkhutemas.

The Institute's first graduation took place in 1942, at the height of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War. Although the Institute itself was evacuated from Moscow to Samarkand (now Uzbekistan) during hostilities, many of its students fell on the front lines, whilst others returned to their studies following the end of the war.

One of the founders of the Surikovka (as the Institute is affectionately known) and its first rector was Igor Grabar, a brilliant artist and art critic who did much not only to preserve the traditions of the Russian school, but also to promote its art. Grabar's creative development began in 1892 at the Academic Workshop of Professor Chystyakov and continued in 1894 at the Imperial Academy of Arts in the Repin Studio. In 1896 he departed for Europe and in Munich entered Anton Azhbe's School of Private Study, where he spent five years. He was a contemporary of Monet, Degás, Van Gogh, Matisse and Gauguin and possessed a wealth of versatile knowledge. His erudition and organisational talent made it possible to bring together in the Surikovka the best artists of his day, including Shegal, Deinek, Myzina, Domogatsky, Rodionova, Moora, Matveev, Osmerkin, Yuon and many others who represented fundamental trends in contemporary Russian art.

In 1943, during the war, the Institute was directed by Sergey Gerasimov, with whom such famous artists as Korovin, Ivanova, Arkhipova, Vasnetsova studied. Like no other, Gerasimov embodied the principles of the Moscow School in his work and teaching activities. He mastered all the possibilities of "open air" painting, based on the laws of colour and freedom and was able to convey this knowledge to his pupils.

Judging by the many generations of "Surikovites", the mastery of painting and the secrets of the artists' training were very consistently passed on within the walls of the Institute and, despite harsh state policy in terms of creativity, they remained faithful to the best traditions of Russian fine arts in their works. His paintings in the Dolores Tomás Collection give an insight into the integrity of the School and its development throughout the second half of the 20th century. Although the main layer of works between the 1950s and 1980s are evidence of the socialist era and reflect, to varying degrees, its ideals and aspirations, at the same time they demonstrate the undoubtedly high standard of painting of the masters working at that time. Meanwhile, in one way or another, the fate of the artists and of the Institute find their answer.

It is worth mentioning that, at the turn of the century, the works of mature masters were complemented in the Collection by the paintings of their successors, young artists who are today vivid representatives of the realist tradition on the modern Russian scene.

Of particular value is the fact that the Collection displays a complete section of the works of masters, whose training began within the walls of the Surikovska and who remained there to teach, among them Tsyplakov, Chirkov, Scuridin and many others.

Another, equally significant part of the Collection consists of the work of teachers from local schools, in particular the Volga region (Saratov, Volgograd, Samara Tuxla and Astrakhan) and within this, the MARI (Yoshkar-Olá). Working far from major cities, the artists created local associations, opening up opportunities for artistic training in their towns. The Collection thus includes works by such significant artists as Sergeevich and Pushkov, who created the MARI branch of the Artists' Union of the RSFSR in 1961 and contributed significantly to the unification of the artists of the Volga region, including Mikhailin, Nefedov, Tarelkin and others.

The discovery or, more accurately, the rediscovery of 20th century Russian painting in the late 1980s, occurred largely thanks to foreign rather than domestic researchers and collectors.

Despite the rich heritage and numerous educational institutions, schools, institutes and academies of art in the USSR, **artists were limited in the public demonstration of their work** during the Soviet period by a certain social order emanating from the state and the lack of a free art market for decades, both in the West and within the USSR. So-called official Soviet painting was largely known as "Socialist Realism".

During the 1920s and 1930s, the genre of the thematic image played a significant role, the artistic quest of the Russian avant-garde, which in many respects continued its development within the walls of Vkhutemas with the increasing influence of the role of the state in artistic processes, **gradually went underground**. In accordance with the ideology that penetrated every sphere of life in the Soviet period, creativity being no exception, painting was viewed as serving the highest ideals and educating the real Soviet person. The role of the thematic image as the main genre in which the Soviet artist worked was particularly strengthened in the late 1930s and the post-war period, consolidating the predominance of content over form at the official level.

It is notable that, in the part of the Dolores Tomás Collection relating to the pre-revolutionary and early Soviet period, the works of Vasily Martynov, one of the participants of the AHRR (already in the 1930s), are presented. Consisting mainly of landscapes, his works such as "Sunset" and "Coast", produced in the 1910s, display one of the creative quests for an artistic language characteristic of the period in the pan-European mainstream, in which "free painting" was born.

At the same time, landscape and still life became peripheral and even "persecuted" genres. Although his work contains many beautiful poetic images of Russian nature, particularly inspiring for him owing to his peasant origins, Vasily Martynov earned his place in the history of Soviet painting as a master of the industrial landscape.

In his work "The Release of the Bolshevik Political Prisoners" (1922), a sense of oneness is achieved through the use of almost monochrome red, reading as "revolutionary red".

The Union of Soviet Artists was formed in 1931, followed by the restructuring of all artistic and literary organisations in 1932.

A perfect example of an old pre-revolutionary school that was able to adapt to the new realities of Soviet life is Anton Yastrzhembsky, whose works from the 1930s were included in the Collection.

Yastrzhembsky studied with Apollinary Vasnetsov, participant in the avant-garde exhibitions "Donkey Tail" and "Target" and was a member of the art association "Makovets". In the 1930s he directed the Art Museum in Nizhny Novgorod and in the post-war period the Textile Institute. He continued to work in his favourite genres, in the many landscapes of the Volga expanses and, though there is an industrial motif, this is not dominant.

"In Russia you have to live for a long time". This phrase, belonging to the renowned writer Korney Chukovsky, is equally appropriate to subtitle the life and work of the great artist Valery Skuridin. His works in the Collection are **particularly valuable** given that they provide insight into not only the development of his individual method (his oldest work in the Collection dates back to 1934, with the most recent belonging to the 1980s), but also because they reflect the aspirations of the time in such a different manner.

The comparison of sketches with "tailor-made" thematic paintings of Lenin's life, as well as the landscapes, clearly illustrate the difficulties that Soviet artists had to resolve for themselves.

A clear palette, free painting and confident brushstrokes distinguish both the portraits and the clearly "plein air" works, while the thematic painting on Lenin "crackles", slipping from colour to colour as the narrative of the composition drags. However, the work "Back from the Front" in the Collection displays so many emotions with no single random element, rather a brilliantly constructed composition. The joy of red, the ochre warmth of an encounter with home and loved ones and the greyish tones of bitterness at loss all speak of a great artist able to make characters identify with life's realities.

Perhaps the answers to the questions as to why the artist was enthusiastic about this particular subject should be sought in his biography. A pupil of one of the most notable Soviet landscape painters, Nikolai Krymov, Valery Skuridin spent time at the siege of Leningrad and at the front. Following the end of the war he entered the Surikov Institute, where he studied with the "cezanist" A. Osmerkin (the artist's still lives recollect this) and the "impressionist" K. Yuon (here Skuridin's Crimean Landscapes are worth recalling) and then connected his life with teaching at the Surikov Institute. The "burnt by the fire of war" generation (the name of the series of paintings by the artist Helio Korzheva) includes most of the artists whose works are represented in the Dolores Tomás

Collection.

A special part of the Collection consists of works not by artists from the leading cities; the Moscow or Leningrad schools, but by those who were educated in Saratov and Samara and who became the founders of local movements. These include Aleksei Borodin, who graduated from the Saratov Art School in the 1930s and devoted most of his life to graphic art and posters.

The Tomás Pains Collection includes more than 250 works by the master, belonging to various periods.

An outstanding representative of the Volga School of Art, Borodin worked for a long period of time in Saratov, teaching at an art school. In 1962 he moved to Volgograd and lived there for the remainder of his life.

A master who had served in the war as a tank crewman, he created many canvases on battle themes and

in Soviet times was mainly known as a creator of thematic paintings. He was particularly fascinated by the theme of the village, especially images of villagers. Through his work, one can sense power, a connection to the earth and a deep understanding of life.

Borodin's work had a major influence on Volgograd artists of the younger generation. In particular, and now in the 1970s, Viktor Patrin, the works of whom are also present in the Tomás collection.

His personal experience of his stay in the Pamir was reflected in numerous landscapes that became the artist's first creative application.

Another member of the Volga School belonging to the previous generation, Mikhail Pyshta, was known mainly for his monumental works, mosaics and frescoes that decorated Volgograd: in the Central Market building, the Volga Hydroelectric Power Station, the Alley of the Heroes and in the Palace of Trade Unions.

A graduate of the Leningrad Higher School of Art and Industry named after V. I. Mukhina, he was chairman of the Board of the Volgograd Organisation of the Artists' Union of the USSR. With a perfect command of the small canvas, he was a magnificent landscape painter as can be seen in the works in the Surikov Collection.

Taking the Collection as a whole, it is easy to appreciate its different characteristics. There are, for example, many works by the great painter

Aleksandr Danilichev, an outstanding pupil of the master Sergey Gerasimov, including "Seated Figures in the Sun" (1948), "Portrait of V. I. Lenin", "Kalinin on the Way to Olonets Exile", "Komsomolsk Youth Brigade", etc. Though regularly reproduced in Soviet journals, only a few works by this artist in the Collection are revolutionary-historical in nature.

The majority of the works in the Dolores Tomás Collection are Impressionist. Impressionism legitimised the significance of a free-flowing sketch drawn from nature. In the future, the "etude" supplanted the traditional type of painting for the art of the 19th and part of the 20th century, carefully and slowly created in the studio.

Many of the works in the Collection are connected with southern landscapes, in particular with the Crimea. This was the location of the Surikov Institute's creative base and where many Soviet artists came in search of inspiration and sunlight.

Another favourite place of pilgrimage for painters was the so-called Academic Dacha in the Tver region, whose surroundings were captured by many artists. It is no coincidence that this place began to be known as the "Russian Barbizon".

Characteristic of Impressionism, outdoor scenes form an integral part of the work of the Soviet masters. This "plein air", the study of the constantly changing light-air environment enables the guiding impressionist principle: "painting what I see rather than what I know", consistently implemented in Soviet painting throughout the second half of the 20th century.

Antonina Sologub (1907-1997), an outstanding pupil of Sergey Gerasimov, graduated from the Surikov Institute. His works are renowned as being flooded with light.

Despite the unfamiliarity of his work, some of his paintings belonging to the Collection, created in Crimea, chime with the works of the Spanish artist Joaquín Sorolla, one of the foremost representatives of Impressionism. The understanding of light and the development of water and sky motifs in the "Verdiansk" series are close to the works of the Spanish artist. The figures of the children, one posing for the artist and the other enthusiastically engaged in his little boat, preserve the immediacy of youth in the images and the light that floods the whole space conveys incredible emotional energy.

One of the first attempts to systematise the works of Soviet artists and the use of the very term "impressionism" in relation to paintings of the 1930s-1980s by

Soviet artists was made by the American researcher Dr. Verne Swanson, Director of the Utah Museum of the Arts in Springville. Author of the book "Hidden Treasures: Russian and Soviet Impressionism 1930-1970s".

Twenty years later, the term "**Russian Impressionism**" developed and took root in art history practice. Subsequent large-scale exhibition projects such as "Russian Impressionism" at the Russian Gosudar Museum (2000) and "The Paths of Russian Impressionism" at the Tretyakov Gallery (2003), numerous studies by Russian art historians, as well as the creation of the Museum of Russian Impressionism in Moscow and its exhibitions testify to the relevance of this topic.

The Dolores Tomás Collection is particularly valuable "as it reveals to the fullest extent possible the originality of Russian Impressionism, along with its development, beginning in the 1930s and ending at the close of the century. The collection houses extensive monographs of works by individual artists of this movement, presented with the utmost integrity.

If we wish to go back to the origins of this movement in Soviet Russia, then we should turn to the 1930s. The artistic context of that decade in Soviet art is characterised by conflict: a serious polemic regarding the nature of art and its independent value, irrespective of politics, erupts **within** artists' studios, whilst the concept of "Impressionism" within this context becomes more significant than just a trend in painting in the second half of the 20th century.

This controversy ended in the 1940s when Sergey Gerasimov, the leading ideologue of picturesque art, was forced to leave his post as Rector of the Art Institute.

Impressionism, however, proved surprisingly tenacious: The experience of impressionism was "eradicated" by the brilliantly talented creators of the revolutionary avant-garde. It was rejected by the very gifted initiators of the "youthful" retrospectivism of the 1970s, severely criticised both at the time of the creation of "socialist realism" (i.e. in the 1920s and 1930s) and, even more threateningly, even fiercely so, in the early 1940s and 1950s, albeit with slightly different motivations.

Landscape painting emerged from the shadows during the "thaw" of the mid-1950s and early 1960s. It is in this genre that the search for a more flexible, emotional and diverse artistic language takes place. It is no coincidence that many artists and young people who later became famous started their creative path at this time, within the framework of the traditional landscape: the

Tkachev brothers, Vladimir Gavrilov, Valentin Sidorov and others. Nevertheless, the genre of the lyrical landscape did not flourish for long. It became a poetic generalisation of all that a careful close-up study of nature could provide, and nature itself seemed to be spiritualised, marked by inner life.

A special charm is hidden in Varvara Glazunova's landscapes from the Tomás Collection. It is striking that the sense of transparency, lightness and luminosity is preserved in all her works over the span of half a century, from the mid-1940s to the 1990s. Learned within the walls of the Surikov Institute under Sergey Gerasimov, the artist carried the lessons of plein air painting throughout her life, preserving the emotion of the sun's rays in her works.

Some artists moved radically away from social genre paintings in the 1950s. Aleksandr Fomkin, a classmate of Viktor Ivanov, Geliy Korzhev and Pyotr Ossovsky at the Moscow High School of Art, was admitted to the Moscow Art Institute on the recommendation of Sergey Gerasimov and without an entrance examination. Although his diploma work "I. N. Kramskoy and V. V. Stasov, in the studio of I. Repin", aroused great interest among teachers and students, he unexpectedly he devoted himself entirely to landscape painting after 1955. The works from this period in the Dolores Tomás Collection enable us to speak of the artist's lyrical talent, with a compositional and rhythmic structure that inspires the idea of perfect execution in the immediate moment of the impression.

The second half of the 1950s saw a "thaw" in painting, not only in terms of landscapes in Soviet painting, but also with respect to the domestic genre. The early years following N. S. Khrushchev's rise to power saw a poetic rehabilitation of the ordinary: the domestic and family world of everyday life. This took place not only in the visual arts, but also in journalism, literature and film. This phenomenon is sometimes known as 'Soviet Biedermeier' due of the similarity of motifs and simple plots to mid-19th century German painting.

The Collection is undoubtedly notable for the genre paintings of Vladimir Zakharkin, who, with impeccable execution, was able to convey in his images all of the touching naturalness of everyday lives. A perfect example of this is the Self-portrait in the Collection.

Another outstanding master of the Surikovka was Pavel Khaikin, focusing on genre landscapes and a love of teaching.

In the works of this period, Aleksandr Chervonenko and his wife Nadezhda Chernikova became true representatives of genre painting. Despite having lived

through the terrible episodes of the Great Patriotic War in Volgograd, their work became the everyday life of its peoples. Each painting tells a story, whether in the warm and cheerful summer harvests or in the romantic thaws of winter. The impulsiveness of the performance becomes an expression of artistic freedom, exuding hope and joy.

Another survivor and active participant in the famous battle of Stalingrad was the great master and outstanding artist of the Volzhsky School, Vasily Strigin. His works in the Collection, from 1950 to 1960, show the artistic journey from his pre-revolutionary period to his final works of much more advanced subject matter and execution, created in the plain air style. Strigin's desire is to permanently convey his life and times through his brushes, turning his work into a permanent story. This does not prevent the Collection from including a very significant chapter of his works, within Socialist Realism.

A major part of the master's legacy can be found in the Dolores Tomás Collection.

The real discovery of the Collection is the work of Valentina Sologub. A series of her "plain air" works present the viewer with an artist of outstanding plastic and painterly talent.

The 1960s' Cultural Revolution and the revival of the "hard style" ended in the persecution of the so-called "formalists", the apotheosis of which was the visit of the country's leader, N. S. Khrushchev, to the exhibition "30 Years of the Moscow Artists' Union" at the Manege in 1962 and the destruction of one of the sections of the exhibition. The consequences of this event affected all artists.

The victims unfortunately included Vadim Velichko, **a brilliant and original master** who was refused acceptance into the "Artists' Union". This meant that he was deprived of work as a painter and the opportunity to receive official commissions, having found the opportunity to earn his living in the field of illustration.

The Collection includes a large number of his works, including landscapes, figures, still lifes, etc., the execution of these being utterly personal, courageous and unequivocal.

The Tretyakov Museum took a keen interest in Vadim Velichko's work and

this now forms part of the Museum's Collection.

There are many works in the Collection by artists who started out in the vein of the "hard style", though went on to represent a new period, the "70s". Among these is Valentina Ivanova, a graduate of the Surikov Art Institute in Moscow, where she studied at the "Monumental Workshop" of K. A. Tutevol, the founder of which was the famous artist Aleksandr Deyneka. Her works show a transition from realism to another artistic language, with an interest in framing, unusual angles and a desire for linearity.

The story of the artist Vladimir Zhuk, whose official subject of work was industrial scenes, is characteristic. For some time, he even headed the "Industry" section at the Moscow Artists' Union. Landscapes are, however, his true love. The Surikov Collection includes works from the early period, very few of which have survived given that most were destroyed by fire in the early 1970s. The majority of his landscapes show the coexistence of drama, peace with momentum and, in each case, an appropriate pictorial intonation and plastic novelty to express the author's intention.

In spite of the upheavals in the country's artistic life, not only did the Impressionist branch of the development of painting refuse to fade away, it even received a new impetus. One of the most brilliant artists who consolidated himself in these positions was Aron Bukh (1923-2006), a student of Konstantin Yuon and Vasily Baksheev. He took away the freedom of style by developing his own creative form. The Dolores Tomás Collection presents the most complete and important body of work by this artist - some 600 belonging to various genres - still lifes, portraits, landscapes and nudes, created using a variety of techniques. The artistic career of Bukh, who began exhibiting in the late 1940s, is astonishing. Already in 1960 he was known for his energetic way of painting, distinguishing himself from other artists. Very few works from that period have however survived. Following a successful solo exhibition in 1984, the artist burned his works due to the non-existence of an art market.

The distinctive features of Bukh's painting are expression, texture, the free overlapping of colours and the brilliance of their varied combinations. On occasions he used a broad brush, or worked without the aid of this, applying the paint to the canvas directly with his fingers or a pad. Originality distinguished his life.

Representing the history of 20th century Russian Soviet painting in its development, the Collection certainly deserves considerable attention and

study. The works collected by Dolores Tomás over more than a quarter of a century reveal the true picture of Russian painting of the post-war period in all its originality and uniqueness.

Filmmakers use the term "extrovert nature"; when the sun sets at dusk and there are only a few minutes left to shoot the necessary scene, as the last rays fall to the ground. Dolores Tomás managed to capture this "extrovert nature" of Russian painting, to listen to the "voices" of the masters and to preserve their works, passing them on to new generations.

DONATION - November 2017

58 Works

In August 2017, at the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Spain, an agreement was signed regarding the donation of 58 works from the Russian Paintings Collection owned by Ms. Dolores Tomás.

This agreement was signed by Ms. Tomás, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Mr. Yuri Korchagin, the representative of the Ministry of Culture of Russia, Ms. V. L. Zhuravlyova and the Cultural Attaché in Spain, Ms. Ana D. Ermachenkova. Mr. Korchagin expressed his gratitude to Ms. Tomás for her great contribution to the preservation and dissemination of the national cultural heritage.

In 2000, the Spanish Ministry of Culture presented for the first time, in the former Museum of Contemporary Art, almost 200 works by the Soviet artists that make up this Collection, under the title "Russia, 20th Century".

From there on, the paintings began to travel to museums in Spain and abroad, with significant catalogues being published on each occasion.

This project, conceived and carried out by Ms. Dolores Tomás and the Surikov Foundation opened the doors to Soviet painting, unknown to European spectators until that time. Thus invariably enjoyed the support of the Russian Embassy in Spain, showing considerable interest in the legacy of this Collection representing a recovery of works unknown until then.

These works, in the custody of the Surikov Foundation, had not previously been

exhibited in her country. It is, however, even more remarkable that Ms. Tomas decided to share her discoveries and return 58 of these works to Russia, specially selected by the experts of the Tretyakov Museum.

The solemn handover ceremony was held on November 23, 2017 at the Tretyakov Museum, where all the donated works were exhibited, with the works of the masters Vadim Velichko and Aron Bukh becoming part of its collection. The remainder went to the "Rosizo" State Collection and to the Volgograd and Nizhny Novgorod Museums.

The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Culture Vladimir Aristarkhov, the Managing Director of the Tretyakov Gallery, Zelfira Tregulova, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain, Ignacio Ibanez, the Managing Director of the "Rosizo", Sergei Perov, the Director of the Nizhny Novgorod Museum, Roman Zhukarin and the Director of the Volgograd Fine Arts Museum, Varvara Ozerin.

The works donated were destined for the following museums: Tretyakov Gallery, Rosizo State Collection, Nizhny Novgorod Fine Arts and Volgograd Fine Arts Museums.

The works donated to the Russian Federation were produced by the masters Vasily Martynov, Aron Bukh, Vadim Velichko, Fedor Andrianov, Aleksandr Danilichev, Lidia Nefedova, Vladimir Zakharkin, Valery Skuridin, Vladimir Stroev, Anton Yastrazhembsky, Aleksei Borodin, Pyotr Litvinsky, Vasili Strigin, Antonina Sologub, Pavel Khaikin, Nikolay Khristoliubov, Georgy Ivanovsky, Nadezhda Chernikova, Alexander Chervonenko, Aleksandr Fomkin, Valentina Ivanova, Skubko Mykhail, Varvara Glazunova, Mykhail Utkin, Vladimir Zhuk, Vasily Tulin, Vladimir Oettinger, Sergei Chirkov, Oleg Leonov, Kerop Sogomonian, Ivan Kozlov, Boris Puskov, Mykhail Pyshta, Zoshim Laurente, Leonid Mironov, Viktor Patrin, Aleksei Potapov, Aleksei Saksonov and Jona Feigin.

In her response, Dolores Tomás said: ***"I have always felt great love for Russian culture, for its great masters whom I have known personally and will always carry in my heart, and I am delighted at the initiative to donate these works from the Collection to Russia, so that they can form part of its great museums.***

The purpose of the Surikov Foundation is to make these paintings known to the rest of the world".

It should be noted that the foundation is named after the major Russian painter Vasily Surikov, creator of large-scale historical works, as is the most reputable School of Fine Arts, the state "Surikov Institute".

At the end of 2018, Ms. Tomás was awarded the "Pushkin Medal" for outstanding merit in the field of culture, art and literature, for her invaluable contribution to the study and preservation of the cultural heritage and mutual enrichment of our cultures.

PUSHKIN MEDAL AWARD

November 2018

The ceremony took place in the Palacio de Viana, in the presence of the Ambassadors of Russia and the Kingdom of Spain and the respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs Messrs. Sergei Lavrov and José Borrell.

Having been assembled over more than 25 years and comprising almost 4,000 works, the Collection reflects authentic history and customs, spanning the USSR, post-Soviet and renewed Russia periods. It includes works by more than 180 artists, representing the best Schools of Fine Arts of our vast country.

Many of the painters were awarded significant mentions such as "People's Artist", "Emeritus of Russia" or "Honoured Artist of Russia" during their lifetimes, the highest recognition in the life of a painter in Soviet times. To this day, the works are housed in numerous museums and collections renowned in both Russia and abroad.

In the 1980s Ms. Tomás met Piotr Litvinsky (since 1987 Vice-Rector of the Russian Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in Moscow) and Ilya Glazunov at the San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid.

On her first trip to Moscow she managed to visit Litvinsky's studio and was surprised to discover that he, even as Rector of the largest Art Institute, preserved his lifetime's work without having exhibited.

Given that the main emphasis of the exhibitions they had participated in so far had been on avant-garde art, with such significant masters as Larionov, Goncharova, Kandinsky, Chagall, Malevich, Popova, etc. as standard-bearers, she wished to carry out further research into post-revolutionary Russian painting.

On the following trip, she visited Litvinsky's studio again and acquired the first works for the future Collection. She met other famous masters who graduated from the Institute of Fine Arts named after V. I. Surikov, among them Aleksandr

Danilichev, Aleksandr Fomkin, Nikolay Khristolyubov... Visiting their studios, she saw that some of the paintings created during their lifetimes were unknown to the general public. This encouraged her to initiate a research project to seek out and systematise the works of undeservedly forgotten artists. Thus began her long, impassioned 25-year project across the Soviet Union and later post-Soviet Russia, from the far west to the Chukchi peninsula and from north to south through its various republics.

On these numerous trips she became acquainted with art schools in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Yoshkar-Olá, Samara, Volgograd, Tuxla, Astrakhan, Central Asia..... simultaneously enriching her Collection. Full of enthusiasm, the future creator of the Surikov Foundation was acquiring and restoring paintings that opened for her the pages of the lives of ordinary people, their history and the beauty of Russian nature.

Each of the artists she met opened the door for her to meet other masters and even the families of some of those that had already disappeared.

By the mid-1990s, a Collection had already been created that brought together the most significant masters, representing numerous genres.