

Aivazovsky Ivan

Aivazovsky Ivan Konstantinovich

(1817, Feodosia — 1900, Feodosia)

The name of Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky is among the most famous figures of 19th century art and his works became a part of golden fund of romanticism painting heritage. I. K. Aivazovsky was born in Armenian family of broken merchant. His passion for painting developed from the childhood. He was growing in Feodosia and the most bright impressions were connected with the sea, and may be due to this fact he devoted all his works to sea reproduction. In 1833 I. Aivazovsky entered St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts where he was an apprentice of landscape painter M. N. Vorobiev. Decisive role in artistic formation of the future painter belonged to arrival of famous French marine painter F. Tanner to St. Petersburg.

In 1836 F. Tanner took the young man as an assistant and taught him the methods of his technique. In autumn of the same year I. Aivazovsky already got a big golden medal and the title of the painter for the pictures exposed in academic exhibition. Giving up many material benefits promised by St. Petersburg in 1938 the painter returned to Feodosia where he found relative independence and freedom of artwork – the things that many painters could only dream of.

In Feodosia the artist founded his personal studio. Obtaining experience he mainly painted from nature and completed unfinished work in studio. In 1838 the painter followed the Great Russian naval commanders M. Lazarev, V. Kornilov and P. Nakhimov during the landing operation in Subashi that later was reflected in his famous picture “Landing in Subashi”. In 1840-44 I. Aivazovsky worked a lot in Italy. He also visited Germany, France, Spain, Holland and England. In 1844 the painter returned to St. Petersburg where he was granted a title of academician and artist of the Main Naval Staff that allowed him in the next year to visit Turkey, Greece, Asia Minor together with the expedition of navigator and geographer F. Litke and accumulate new impressions. Later the painter visited Caucasus, Egypt, Nice, Florence, America. In 1846 the painter left for Feodosia where he built up a new studio and worked till the end of his life. His art and his glory gave him an opportunity to live in any cities of the world but he was devoted to his Feodosia.

As a result of his artistic and public activity Feodosia took the way of economic and cultural development more quickly than other Crimean cities. During Crimean war in 1853-56 I. Aivazovsky visited occupied Sevastopol and painted a number of battle pieces needed by inspiration. These pictures truly and accurately depicted the victories of legendary feats of sailors and naval commanders. In such a way the painter stepped away from his previous decorative convention. It was during this period when his realistic skill strengthened.

1860-70s brought new trends to the art. Historism and later realism replaced romanticism with its esthetics of bright effects. During this period the art of I. Aivazovski was severely criticized but despite this fact the painter did not change his techniques and plots. In 1880-90s when ideas of romanticism sounded with new strength the art of I. Aivazovsky attracted attention again. The world eternity and greatness became the central subject of his seascapes.

In his early works I. Aivazovsky has already combined view accuracy with classic grounds construction and intense color palette effects needed with light. Lyric nature perception combined with filigree skills while reproducing the peculiarities of light quickly moved I. Aivazovsky to the group of the first class masters of realistic landscape. He developed many techniques for reproduction of nasty sea and stormy sky, bright sun set and soft shine of the moon rising above the sea. He studied the sea; he knew all its conditions and painted it easily. It was contributed by improvisation art technique adopted by him from his first steps in art. This technique in combination with a number of specific gift features that I. Aivazovsky was endowed with by nature allowed him to work with freedom and simplicity astonishing his contemporaries. He managed to achieve the level of skill and expressiveness of his works that made him first class painter of seascape painters. The sea was constantly attracting Aivazovsky. Its sound, fresh sea breeze raised in creative imagination the images full of fight spirit and courageous resistance. Marine elements evoked in the painter emotions that probably gripped antic artists when they created and immortal image of victorious gods. In the process of work he was always in that happy creative mood that supported in him the confidence that his best picture is the one he is painting at the moment.

During his life there were over 120 exhibitions of his pictures arranged not only in Russia but also in many other countries of the world. In 1887 he was granted by the title of an honorable member of the Academy of Fine Arts. He was also a member of Stuttgart, Florentine and Roman academies. The legacy of I. Aivazovsky is the whole artistic encyclopedia of the sea and of his different moods. The artist painted over 6 thousand of pictures that were exhibited in almost all museums in Russia, in the biggest museums of Europe and the USA and in numerous private collections. Especially full legacy of the painter is represented in his native city in Feodosia gallery named after him. He was not only a painter but I. Aivazovsky is also well-known as a generous patron. The marine painter did a lot for improvement of the native city. He supported construction of port in Feodosia, archaeological museum,

railroad and water-supply. Studio of I. Aivazovsky in Feodosia is also significant as a center of arts. It was visited by such famous Russian painters as L. Lagorio, A. Kuindzhi, K. Bogaievskiy, M. Alisov and many others.



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Ship at anchor

61x48,5 cm

1895

The canvas “Ship at Anchor” from the collection belongs to the late period of I. Aivazovsky’s creative work. Night seascapes are a recurring theme that runs through all of the painter’s oeuvre. With remarkable subtlety, he was able to capture the effects of moonlight — the moon itself surrounded by light, transparent clouds or emerging from behind dark, wind-torn ones.

The night scenes depicted by Aivazovsky are among the most poetic representations of nature in fine art. The artist found precise means to convey the grandeur, power, and beauty of the nocturnal sea. As in the present canvas, in many of Aivazovsky’s works a dominant role in the composition is given to the sky, which he rendered with the same mastery as the elements of the sea. The aerial expanse, the movement of air, the variety of cloud formations, their rapid drift at night or before sunset — all these often form the emotional core of his paintings.

In “Ship at Anchor”, a wave has just broken against the sandy shore. The foaming masses of water rush swiftly back to the sea, carrying with them clumps of mud, sand, and pebbles, while the next wave rises to meet them. To intensify the sense of movement, Aivazovsky places the horizon very low. Far from the shore, a ship with furled sails lies at anchor. The moonlight envelops its dark outline in a serene glow. This motif is typical of the painter’s late cycle of the 1880s, when he was preoccupied with creating idealized visions of the sea’s elemental forces. All these canvases are, in essence, variations on a single theme, differing only in detail.

The restrained yet expressive palette, the absence of overt dramatic effects, and the clarity of composition together produce a profoundly truthful image of the nocturnal sea surf.