

**Report on the content of the Museum Ludwig
archives**

on concerning the painting

Still Life with Tiger Skin (1908)

by Natalia Goncharova

Author of the report: Verena Franken

Report editors: Jilleen Nadolny and Petra Mandt

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1. Provenance

There are a few notes on the painting's provenance which are listed in the archive of the Museum Ludwig (comp. table 1). The painting *Still Life with Tiger Skin* is of the artist's studio. On Goncharova's death it passed to Michail Larionov. It was probably inherited by Alexandra Tomilina-Larionova, Michail's second wife¹ and his widow, on Michail Larionov's death in 1964 and became part of Alexandra Tomilina-Larionova's private collection in Paris.² There is no information listed when the painting was acquired by the Gallery Gmurzynska which was located in Cologne that time³. *Still Life with Tiger Skin* was part of the gallery's collection until 1976. It was acquired by Peter and Irene Ludwig in 1979 and became part of the Ludwig collection in Aachen. Between 1979 and 2011 it was loaned to the Museum Ludwig in Cologne. In December 2011 *Still Life with Tiger Skin* was donated as artistic legacy to the Museum Ludwig in Cologne after Irene Ludwig's death in 2010 (28th November 2010). There is a photo certificate available for the painting *Still Life with Tiger Skin* (comp. figure 1) which was issued by "Madam A. Larionow" (Alexandra Tomilina-Larionova). It certifies the authenticity of the painting *Still Life with Tiger Skin*. It was written in 1978 and contains the following text: "*Je certifie que le tableau reproduit au verso est une peinture originale de Nathalie GONTCHAROVA provenant de l'atelier de l'artiste/ A. Larionov/ Paris, le 16 novembre 1978*".

table 1: listing of the painting's provenance.

until 1962	Paris, artist's studio/ estate of the artist (Natalia Goncharova)
probably after Larionov's death in 1964	Paris, private collection of Alexandra Tomilina-Larionova (Michail Larionov's widow and second wife)
until 1979	Cologne, Galerie Gmurzynska (Gallery Gmurzynska)
since 1979	Aachen, collection Ludwig (collection of Peter and Irene Ludwig) 1979-2011: loan to the Museum Ludwig in Cologne
since 20.12.2011	Donation/ artistic legacy to the Museum Ludwig, Cologne

References in general for the paintings exhibition history and bibliography, see:

< <https://www.kulturelles-erbe-koeln.de/documents/obj/05020005>

¹ Michail Larionov and Alexandra Tomilina married in 1963 and she became Ms. Tomilina-Larionova "Tomilina, who had been his mistress for more than 30 years, moved into his apartment on the rue Jacques-Callot, and in May 1963 they were married." (Akinsha et al. 1997: 80).

Akinsha, K., Kozlov, G. and Hochfiel, S. 'The Strange, Illegal Journey of the Larionov-Goncharova Archive', *ARTnews*, March (1997), pp. 80-85, esp. p. 82.

² Generally it is known that "on her death in the early 1990s, Madame Tomilina-Larionov left the entire collection of works in her possession to the Soviet State "Tomilina's property consisted of the archive and the art collection of her husband, Mikhail Larionow, and his first wife, Natalia Goncharova." (Akinsha et al. 1997: 80). "Tomilina's estate had two parts. The first consisted primarily of the extensive Larionov-Goncharova archive. In addition to the archive, there were some artworks. All these things were kept in Tomilina's apartment. The second part of the estate consisted entirely of artworks: more than 600 paintings and works on paper, including some of the most important canvases by both artists. These were kept in an art-storage warehouse in Paris." (Akinsha et al. 1997: 82).

³ Founded in 1965 in Cologne, Germany Gallery Gmurzynska is now located in Switzerland.

Photo certificate

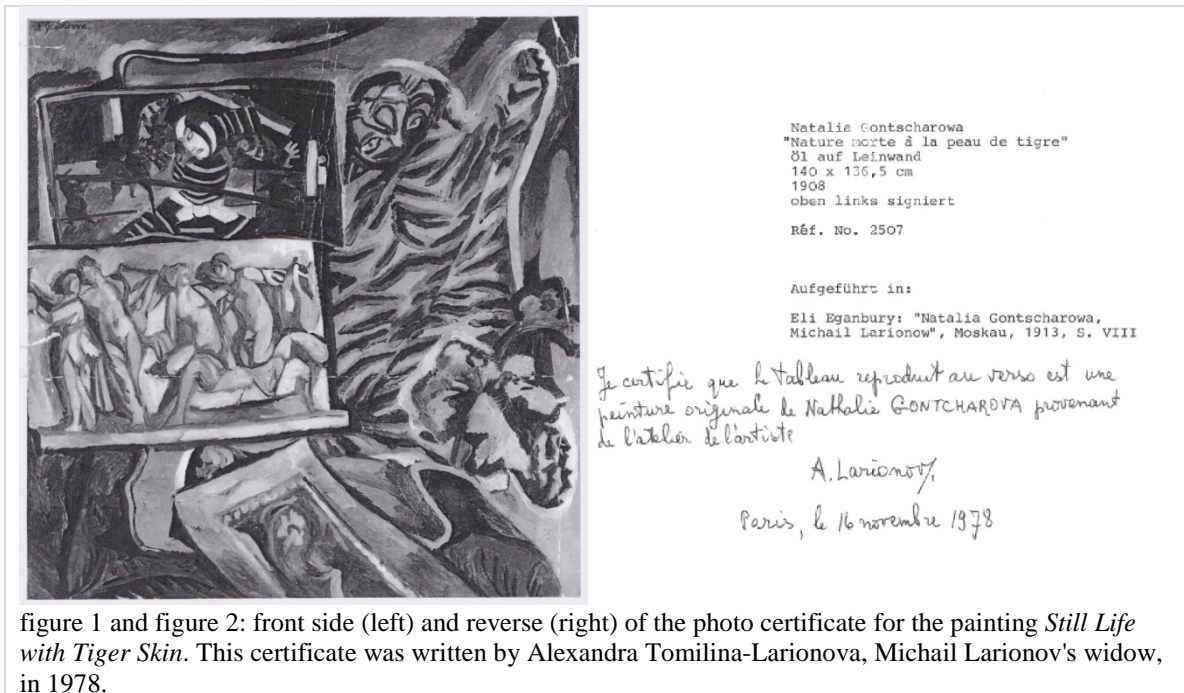


figure 1 and figure 2: front side (left) and reverse (right) of the photo certificate for the painting *Still Life with Tiger Skin*. This certificate was written by Alexandra Tomilina-Larionova, Michail Larionov's widow, in 1978.



Plate 1. Natalia Goncharova, *Still Life with Tiger Skin*, 1908, collection Museum Ludwig: Inv. Nr. ML 1305. Verso, visible light.

Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, Patrick Schwarz, rba_d050884_02, www.kulturelles-erbe-koeln.de/documents/obj/05020005

The painting has been lined (no further information visible).

2. Art historical information: a few notes

The painting *Still life with Tiger Skin* is a powerful demonstration of the mingling of the old Russian artistic tradition with a method of presentation which is still Expressionist in its glowing colour and light brushwork (Ruhrberg 1986: 104).⁴ It is an example of a programmatic still-life painting. Rendered in the warm, luminous hues of Fauvism, it is a composition of extraordinary power. It also contains a striking contrast between a Japanese kabuki play with a sword-wielding samurai warrior and a sarcophagus relief from classical antiquity. Thus, it contains two images from quite different cultural contexts. Greek art is used to evoke enlightenment and rationalism. The tiger skin, in contrast, stands for the primeval vitality that many artists in the early years of the century associated with primitive art and non-European cultures (Weiss 1993: 10, 121).⁵

Still life with Tiger Skin must be counted among Gontcharova`s most exuberant works in terms of color heightened by reds and gold, which ultimately refers the viewer to the common heritage of icon, broadsheet and Japanese prints as the cultural/historical context for her own work. It also places her within the Jack of Diamond`s milieu of 1910, because her facture and her merging of foreground media with backgrounds so closely resembles still life compositions by Mashkov, Lentulov, and Konchalovskii completed during the same period. (Sharp°,2006: 182)⁶

⁴ Ruhrberg, K. *Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert. Das Museum Ludwig – Köln*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta (1986), p. 104. Rough translation of the following German text into English: „Gontscharowas „Stilleben mit Tigerfell“, zwei Jahre früher gemalt, zeigt auf eine kraftvolle Weise die Verschmelzung altrussischer Kunsttraditionen mit einer noch expressionistischen Vortragsweise in leuchtender Farbgebung bei lockerer Pinselührung unter Verzicht auf dramatisierende, splittirige Deformationen.“

⁵ *Von Malewitsch bis Kabakov: Russische Avantgarde im 20. Jahrhundert. Die Sammlung Ludwig* [exhibition catalogue, 16 October 1993 to 2 January 1994, Josef-Haubrich- Kunsthalle], Weiss, E. (ed.), Munich: Prestel (1993), pp. 10, 121.

Rough translation of the following German texts into English: „Ein für diese Zeit programmatisches Bild ist auch das >Stilleben mit Tigerfell< von Gontscharowa, eine in den warmen, leuchtenden Tönen fauvistischen Kolorits angelegte Komposition von außerordentlicher Kraft. Auffallend ist hier die Gegenüberstellung zweier völlig unterschiedlichen Kulturkreisen wurzelnder bildnerischer Vorstellungen, und zwar in Form eines japanischen Kabuki mit einem kämpfenden Samurai und eines Sarkophagreliefs der klassischen Antike.“ (Weiss 1993: 10). „...Die griechische Kunst und damit die europäische Tradition im Allgemeinen wird als aufgeklärte, extrem rational ausgerichtete Doktrin erachtet. Das Tigerfell in der Komposition hingegen suggeriert die urwüchsige Kraft und Vitalität...“ (Weiss 1993: 121).

⁶ Sharpe, J.A. *Russian Modernism between East and West. Natal'ia Goncharova and the Moscow Avant-Garde*, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge (2006) p.182.