

**Report on the content of the Museum Ludwig
archives
concerning the painting
Rusalka (1908)
by Natalia Goncharova**

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Location and date of the report: Museum Ludwig, Cologne, February 2017

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 *Rusalka* is of the artist's studio and it was part of Goncharova's estate until her death in 1962. On her death it passed to Mikhail Larionov. It was probably inherited by Alexandra Tomilina-Larionova, Mikhail's second wife¹ and his widow, on Mikhail 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. *Rusalka* was part of the gallery's collection until 1979. It was acquired by Peter and Irene Ludwig and was part of the Ludwig collection in Aachen since 1979. In December 2011 it 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 *Rusalka* (comp. figure 1) which was issued by "Madam A. Larionov" (Alexandra Tomilina-Larionova). It certifies the authenticity of the painting *Rusalka*. 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 (Mikhail Larionov's widow and second wife)
until 1979	Cologne, Gallery Gmurzynska (Köln, Galerie 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 painting's exhibition history and bibliography, see:

<https://www.kulturelles-erbe-koeln.de/documents/obj/05020006>

¹ Mikhail 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, K., Kozlov, G. and Hochfiel, S. 'The Strange, Illegal Journey of the Larionov-Goncharova Archive', *ARTnews*, March (1997), pp. 80-85, esp. pp. 80, 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 Larionov, 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



Natalia Gontcharowa
"Nu au bord de l'eau"
Öl auf Leinwand
74 x 104 cm
1908

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

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



Plate 1. Natalia Goncharova, *Rusalka*, 1908, collection Museum Ludwig: Inv. Nr. ML 1304. Verso, visible light.

Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, Patrick Schwarz, rba_d050881_02, www.kulturelles-erbe-koeln.de/documents/obj/05020006

The painting has been lined (no original material is visible).

2. Art historical information: a few notes

The influence of Expressionism is visible in Goncharova's early dated painting *Rusalka* (Ruhrberg 1986: 104).⁴ The painting *Rusalka* also often titled as "*Sitzender Akt am Ufer*" refers to the Russian folk tale "Rusalka". The fairy tale of the mermaid called Rusalka is about love, and this story ends with the death of the beloved prince. Referring to the expression of the water nymph, Goncharova describes the tragic end of this story (Scheps 1995: 26).⁵ In fact, this painting shows a female nude as an uncommon underwater presentation in art history (Weiss 1993: 10).⁶ It also shows fishes swimming around the woman's body, the nude with her weightless and widespread hair and the dominance of green colour. In old catalogues it is mentioned that Goncharova painted a "*Rusalka*", which probably refers to the painting of the Ludwig collection (Weiss 1993: 121; Scheps 1995: 26).

⁴ Ruhrberg, K. *Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert. Das Museum Ludwig – Köln*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta (1986), p. 104.

⁵ *Unser Jahrhundert. Menschenbilder – Bilderwelten*. [exhibition catalogue, 9 July to 8 October 1995, Museum Ludwig, Cologne], Scheps, M. (ed.) Munich: Prestel (1995), p. 26.

⁶ *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), p. 10.

Rough translation of the following German text into English: „Auf das russische Volksmärchen >Rusalka<, die Wassernymphe, bezieht sich das Gemälde von Gontscharowa aus dem Jahr 1908, das lange Zeit als >Sitzender Akt am Ufer< betitelt wurde. Tatsächlich handelt es sich aber eindeutig um eine der seltenen Unterwasserdarstellungen in der Kunstgeschichte“ (Weiss 1993: 121).