

HISTORY IN ART

Ilya Repin 1844–1930

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1844 – Ilya Repin born in the Russian Empire in what is now Ukraine, in the small village of Chuhuiv. His father is in the military and when away from home, the family struggles to make ends meet, but young Ilya has a talent for art and manages to get apprenticed to a local icon painter.

1863 – Ilya Repin enters Imperial Academy of Arts in St Petersburg.

1871 – Repin graduates from the Academy with a gold medal for his work *Raising Jairus's Daughter*.

1873 – He travels abroad to study art in Italy and Paris. Finds the avant-garde in Paris, including Impressionism, not to his taste.

1876 – Returns to Russia and settles in Moscow. In the next 12 years he produces some of his most famous work. Some focuses on revolutionary movements and the class divide in Russian society, while others look at Russian history and seem supportive of the ruling elite.

1880s – Begins taking portrait commissions, often showing the whole person rather than just the upper body, including several of the writer Leo Tolstoy and one of Tsar Nicholas II. He also paints the poet Taras Shevchenko from his native Ukraine.

1891 – One of his major history paintings, *The Reply of the Zaporozhian Cossacks to Sultan Mahmoud IV*, is bought by Tsar Alexander III for 35,000 roubles, a huge sum at that time.

1895 – Completes one of his greatest history paintings: *Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan*.

1903 – Repin is commissioned by the Tsar and his State Council to paint a huge commemorative work representing the ceremonial meeting of the body in 1901. Paradoxically he is frequently critical of the Tsarist regime in the early 20th century.

1917 – Repin is living in Finland, part of the Russian Empire, when the Bolshevik Revolution takes place. He welcomes the Revolution but when Finland declares independence, he declines an invitation to return to Russia. He has now almost stopped painting, partly because of physical problems with his right hand.

1930 – Repin dies on his estate in Finland and is feted in the Soviet Union as a model for Socialist Realism, which is just being imposed by Stalin on all Soviet artists.