

Hovhannes Aivazovsky: Lord of the Seas
200th Anniversary of Birth
by Igor Grigorian



Perforation Error

Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky (Hovhannes Ayvazyan) was born on July 29, 1817 in the ancient city of Theodosia on the Crimean peninsula to Armenian parents. His father Konstantin (Gevorg) was an Armenian merchant from the Polish region of Galicia whose family immigrated there from Turkish Armenia in the 18th century. He left Galicia for Moldavia, later to Bukovina, prior to settling in Theodosia and marrying Ivan's mother Ripsime, a Theodosia Armenian.



Karim Fountain and the House (right) where Aivazovsky Was Born.

Divided back picture postcard posted in 1914. Publisher I. Wassermann #24 in series printed in Theodosia, Russian Empire. Most of his postcards bear inscription "Do not duplicate", which was a rare occasion at the times. Only two have been seen within last 10 years.

Their small house stood on an elevation and had an unobstructed view of the sea. The sea, the sky above it and picturesque landscape of Crimea strongly affected his future life. The sea, gentle at times, rampant at others, changing color from crystal clear turquoise at calm to deep black at storm, always attracted the young boy.



Crimea. Bay at Yalta



Crimea. Sea view



Crimea. Sea view with palm trees



Crimea. Yalta. Sea View



Crimea. Yalta. The Swallow Nest

The plague of 1812 ruined his father's business, and the family had to work hard to make ends meet. Young Hovhannes would paint his first works on the wall of the houses of Theodosia, until Jacob Koch, a Theodosian architect, introduced the beginning artist to paper and pencils. He was the first to notice the young talent, and was giving Aivazovsky art supplies ever since.

In 1833 Aivazovsky is admitted to Saint Petersburg's Imperial Academy of Arts, all expenses paid. In September of 1937, for his painting *The Calm Sea* he was awarded Large Gold Medal.



The Calm Sea, 1837.



Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts, established

An unusual decision was made by the Academy - he was graduated two years ahead of his class and received an Imperial grant to advance his skills in Europe. First, he returned to Crimea and spent two extremely fruitful years working in his birth place, then traveled to Italy and other European cities, where his painting received immeasurable public attention, favorable critique and top honors.

A passing acquaintance with Great Russian poet Pushkin greatly influenced the artist. Through the rest of his life Aivazovsky would measure his images on the canvas with high poetry of Pushkin. Some of his paintings seem to be illustrations to Pushkin's verses.

*Farewell, free element, o Sea!
For one last time I watched your tide
Roll azure waves in front of me
And shine in beauty full of pride.*



Divided back picture postcard posted in 1902 from St. Petersburg. Publisher unknown

*One lofty crag, a glorious tomb...
There stately memories dwelled on
And plunged in sleep of cold and gloom:
There faded great Napoleon.*



*Napoleon on the Island of Saint Helen, 1897.
Aivazovsky Art Gallery, Theodosia, Russia.*

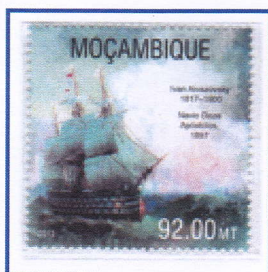


*Pushkin on the Black Sea Shore, 1897
Odessa Art Museum, Ukraine.*

So romantic was his art that it seems the artist was singing songs to the sea. Three distinct states of the sea can be traced in the paintings of the Master: calm sea, tempest on sea and sea in the wartime.

SONG TO THE CALM SEA

*A lone white sail shows for an instance
In bright-blue brilliance of sea haze.
Below the sail are sky-blue currents,
Above are golden rays of sun...*



*Ship Twelve Apostles, circa 1897.
Aivazovsky National Gallery,
Theodosia, Russia.*



*Crimea, circa 1852.
State Museum Peterhof,
St. Petersburg, Russia*



Ocean (detail), circa 1896.



*Sunrise Over Shores of Crimea, circa 1895.
Postal stationery posted from Kishinev in 2015*



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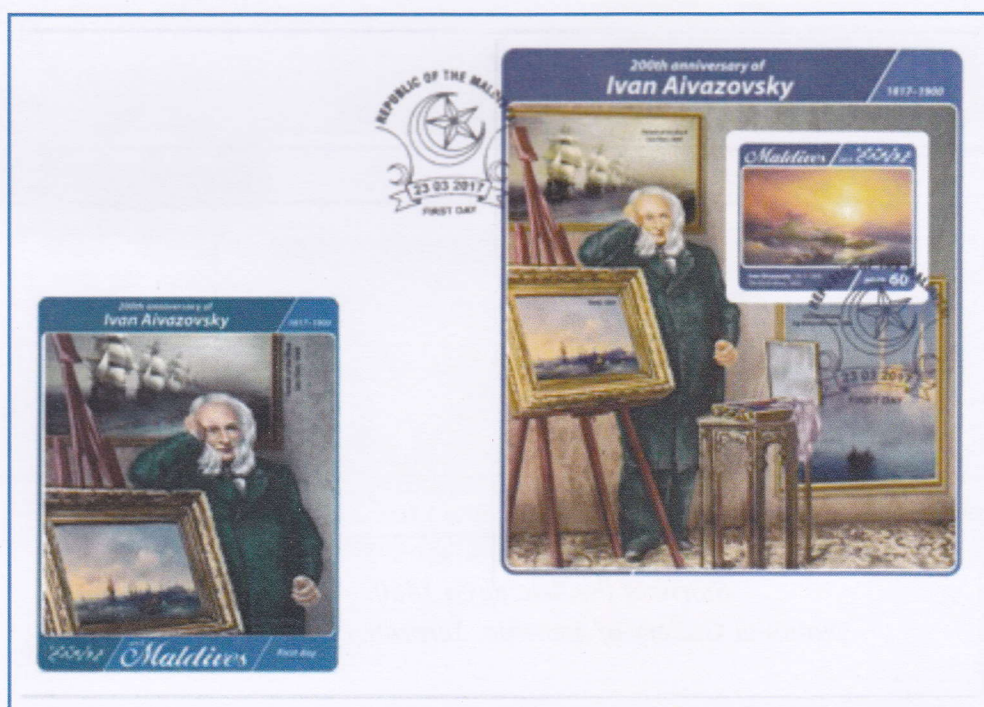


Right: Towers on the Rock near Bosphorus, circa 1859



ROARING SONG TO THE TEMPEST

*The waves break fast, the wind is clipping,
The mast is creaking as it sways...
And yet for storm it begs, the rebel,
As if in storm lurked calm and peace!*



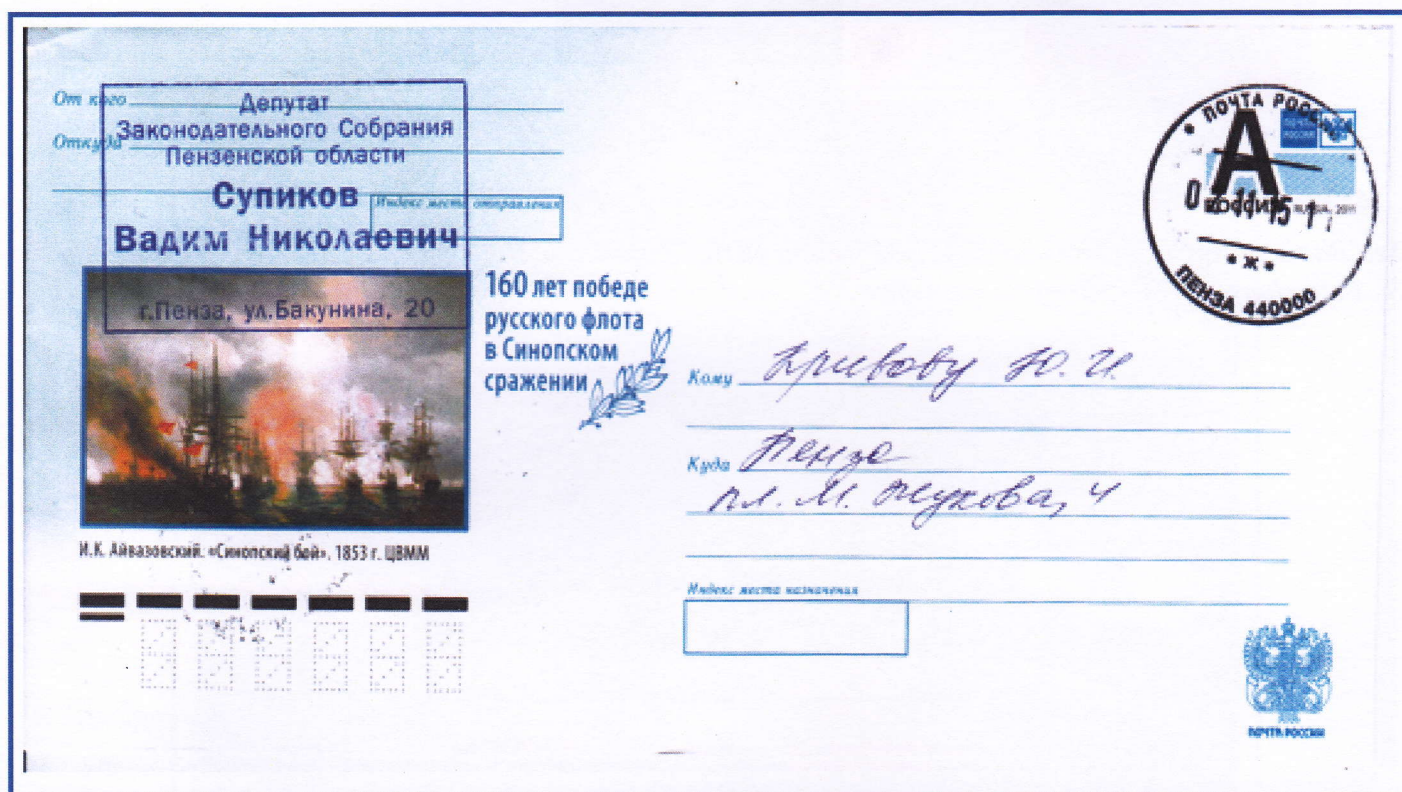
This souvenir sheet from the Central African Republic incorporates three different paintings: (1) on the stamp – *Shipwreck near the Rocks*, 1870, in private collection; (2) on the left side of the salvage – *The Great Flood*, 1864, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg; (3) on the right side of the salvage – *Chaos (The Creation)*, 1841, Mekhitarian Order Museum, San Lazzaro Island.



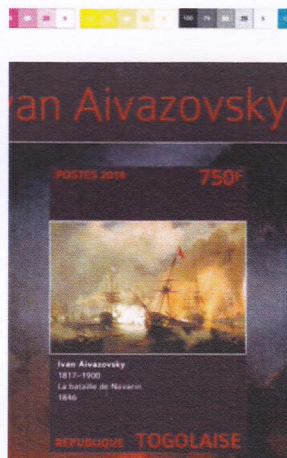
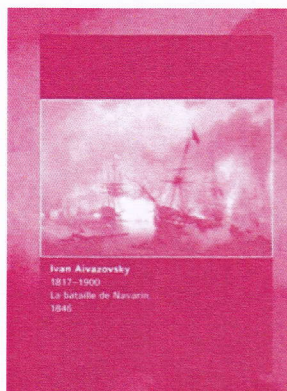
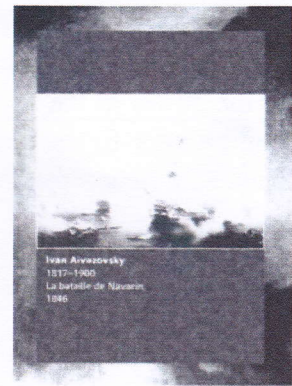
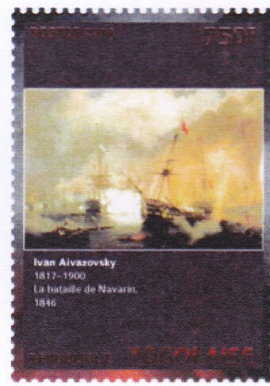
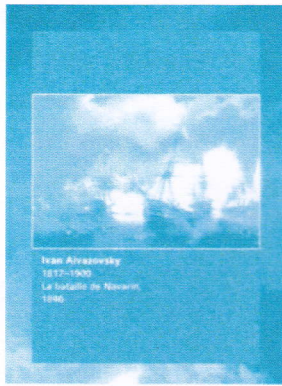
Storm at the Sea, circa 1850.
National Gallery of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia

SINISTER SONG TO THE SEA IN WARTIME

Aivazovsky was never a free-lance artist - he was on the Imperial Service. He would be sent "on assignments" where he would quickly draw scenes from the battlefields, infusing in them patriotic spirit and faith in the power of the Russian fleet. During the Crimean War Aivazovsky was not always able to be present at the battlefields, but he carefully collected the stories of eyewitnesses and restored on the canvas the eyewitness's accounts.



Battle of Sinop, circa 1853. The Central Naval Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia
Postal stationery mailed in 2015 from Penza, Russia



Sea Battle at Navarino on October 2, 1827, circa 1846. Dzerzhinsky High Marine Engineering College, St. Petersburg, Russia. Original stamp from SS, progressive and full color proofs, Togo.



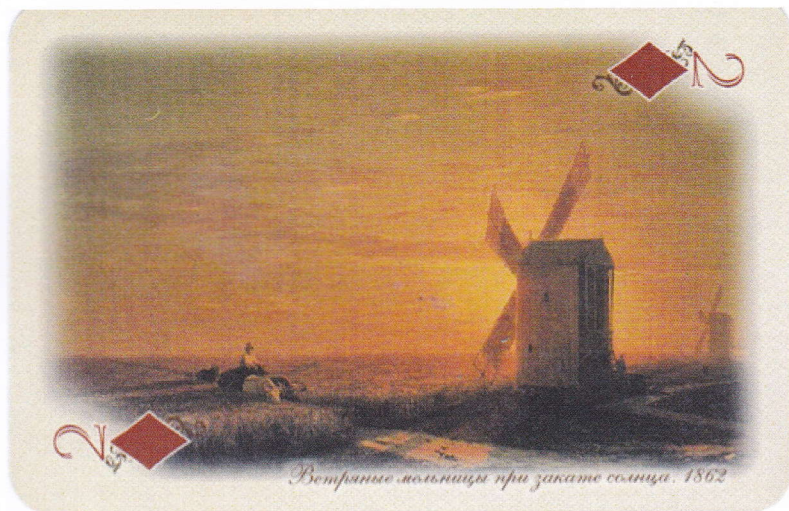
The Battle in the Chios Channel, circa 1848. Aivazovsky Art Gallery, Theodosia, Russia.

AIVAZOVSKY LESS SEA

Although he is mostly known for his seascapes, Aivazovsky's works also depict various aspects of everyday life by portraying ordinary people engaged in common activities, as well as landscapes. His intensive travels benefited this field of his art greatly.



View of the Big Cascade and Great Palace, 1837. Peterhof State Museum-Reserve, St. Petersburg, Russia.



Windmills in the Ukrainian Steppe at Sunset, 1862. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.



Windmill on the Sea Coast, 1837. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia. Lithograph postcard designed by A. Pompeev, editor – Galleria Printing House, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Aivazovsky was on good terms with Sarkis from the famous house of Balian of Constantinople. Sarkis showed one of the painter's works to the Sultan, and the latter ordered the master several paintings. In short period of time the master painted around 20 masterpieces with the views of Istanbul and the sea. In spite of the fact that Aivazovsky threw all his Turkish orders and medals in the sea upon learning about atrocities against Armenians, several of his works are still exhibited in the President's Palace in Turkey.



Coffee House by Ortakoy Mosque, 1846. Peterhof Palace Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.



Boat Ride by Kumkapi in Constantinople, 1846. Peterhof Palace Museum St. Petersburg,

And yet another facet of his talent revealed itself in brilliantly accomplished portraits. Although quite a number of portraits are known to belong to the brush of the Master, only two (besides self-portraits) are depicted on the stamps.



Portrait of Artist's Wife Anna Bournazian, 1882. Aivazovsky Art Gallery, Theodosia, Russia.



Portrait of Loris-Melikov, 1888. State Literature Museum, Moscow, Russia.



Self-portrait, 1874. Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy. Privately prepared maxicard,



Self-portrait, 1892. Aivazovsky Art Gallery, Theodosia,

From over 6,000 paintings kept in 12 galleries around the world only 75 carry the Armenian theme. When in 1890 he showed the large-scale painting "The Descent of Noah from Ararat", his depiction of the biblical mount literally lit by divine light, at the salon of Paul Durand-Ruel in Paris, he told his countrymen gathered there: "Here it is, our Armenia." Five years later the artist gave this painting as a gift to an Armenian school in New Nakhichevan (now one of the city districts of Rostov-on-Don) at a ceremony witnessed by the 15-year-old future artist, Martiros Saryan; 25 years later, during the devastation of the Civil War, Saryan accidentally found the picture in the school's ruins, saved it and brought it to Yerevan.



*Noah's Descent from Mt. Ararat, 1889
National Gallery Of Armenia, Yerevan*



*Baptism of the
Armenian
People, 1892
National Gallery
of Armenia,
Yerevan.*



Cachet of the issued by HayPost FDC - George Byron Visiting Mkhitarists on the Island of San Lazzaro, 1899. National Gallery of Armenia, Yerevan.

He was born mortal - has left on himself immortal memory, - these are the words inscribed on his tombstone.



***Aivazovsky's grave and the Armenian Church. Theodosia.
Divided back picture postcard. Publisher I. Wassermann, #10 in series, printed
in Theodosia. Russian Empire. Only five copies have been reported so far.***

Many were his paintings; he left over 6,000 masterpieces behind. Numerous galleries all over the world consider it an honor to display his works. Auction prices on his works skyrocket. Interest in his life and oeuvre is unquenchable.

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