

S P H I N X F I N E A R T



Ivan Andreevich Ivanov (Moscow 1812 - St. Petersburg 1848)

Evening Riverscape with Fishermen

signed in Cyrillic and dated '1845' (lower right)

oil on canvas

45 x 58 cm (17³/₄ x 22³/₄ in)

Please note that at the time of the 2004 sale Vladimir Petrov confirmed the authenticity of the present work.

The hazy sunlit sky dominates two thirds of *Evening Riverscape with Fisherman* confining the figures to the bottom of the canvas. The fishermen, dressed in traditional Russian clothes, pull in their nets as the sun goes down. Two men on the left-hand side of the painting appear to gaze at the two groups of men pulling in their nets, both on the land and in the river. Their laid-back expression acts as a contrast to the virile strength exhibited by the working fishermen. The vast expanse of the sky and land, and the golden tone of the painting, recalls seventeenth-century Dutch landscape paintings. Ivan Andreevich Ivanov employed the device of *repoussoir*, which in this instance is the foliage on the immediate right hand side of the painting, to draw the viewer into the scene.

Evening Riverscape with Fisherman is a remarkable example of landscape painting created in Russia in the middle of the nineteenth century. This period is significant because it anticipated the great changes to the countryside which followed. It would be easy to focus on the period of reform in terms of the emancipation of serfs in 1861. However, *Evening Riverscape with Fishermen* represents a quieter moment in history, and Ivanov's work can be seen as a part of a legacy of Russian landscape painting which flourished towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Next to the beautifully executed foliage one sees a fragile wooden fisherman's lookout. Its presence, in some ways, recalls a watch-tower and hence could have a double meaning, serving as a symbol for the state of affairs of the Russian countryside in the middle of the nineteenth century, with the barely visible church in the background acting as an antithesis to it. The long church tower, bathed in sunlight, stands strong and is echoed in the foreground by the mast with a stretched fishing net on it left out to dry. The parallel between these two sky-piercing motifs alludes to the overall biblical feel of the painting.

Although Ivanov's paintings are rare to find, they nevertheless paved the way for the development of Russian landscape painting, which progressed through the nineteenth century. Works by [Ivan Shishkin](#), Alexei Savrasov (1830-97), [Ivan Aivazovsky](#), Isaac Levitan (1860-1900), Abram Arkhipov (1862-1930) and also Arkhip Kuindzhi (1842-1910) exemplify this fruitful period.

Ivanov, renowned as a painter of expanded views, obtained his training in the Imperial Academy of Arts. Later he was made an honourable librarian of the Imperial Public Library. In 1817 he entered the service of the Academy as a supervisor of drawing classes. In 1829 he was elevated to Academician for his work completed on the assigned theme: 'a type of ceremonial entrance hall and stairs in the luxurious buildings' currently located in the Hermitage. His oil paintings, like *Evening Riverscape with Fisherman*, are extremely rare.

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, Sotheby's, London, 1 December 2004, lot 13.

Literature:

Khudozhniki Narodov SSSR, vol. 4, part 1 (1983).

Artist description:

Ivanov was born in Moscow. He trained at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg. In 1817, he entered the service of the Academy as a supervisor of drawing classes. He received several imperial commissions, including four views of Tsarskoe Selo in 1827. He also executed views of St. Petersburg, producing engravings after watercolours by V.S. Sadonikov (1800-1879) in 1830, including part of his panorama of the Nevsky Prospekt, published in St. Petersburg in 1830-35. Ivanov worked in oil, pencil and watercolour, but was mainly an engraver and produced at least thirty-three plates. He received the title of Academician in 1829, and died in St. Petersburg in 1848.