

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



**Russian School, Nineteenth Century**

## **Three Views of St. Petersburg: Gatchina Palace; The Stock Exchange; Senate Square with the Neva beyond**

gouache on paper

two 28.8 x 42.2 cm (11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 16<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in); one 24.1 x 36.8 cm (9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in) (3)

Senate Square, Gatchina Palace and the Stock Exchange were key locations of nineteenth-century life in St. Petersburg. They are representative of three aspects of life; the Gatchina Palace was the seat of the Imperial family since 1796, the Stock Exchange was where the financial prosperity of Russia was being crafted and Senate Square was the seat of politics after the Senate moved from the Twelve Colleges, in 1763.

The view of Senate Square looks from the south-west corner of the square and so includes the River Neva, the city's vital artery. This orientation meant the exclusion of St. Isaac's cathedral, which was the largest in the city and in the whole of Russia when it was built. Instead the view is of the Neva and the Admiralty, and this focus is further reinforced by the inclusion of the St. Andrew's flag, which since 1712 had been used as a naval ensign. Senate Square was surrounded by St. Isaac's Cathedral, the Russian Admiralty and the Senate and Synod buildings. It was in many ways a rival to the Red Square, Moscow, as the centre of Russia and it can be easily linked with the Capitol, Rome.

The view of the Stock Exchange includes many boats and ships, which was important to reinforce the naval role of St. Petersburg. It also reminds the viewer of the importance of maritime activities to the economy, the hub of which was housed behind them. The Stock Exchange was built between 1805 and 1810 by Jean-François Thomas de Thomon (1760-1813), who clearly drew influence from the Greek temple of Hera at Paestum.

The artist has chosen to depict a view of Gatchina Palace which includes one of the tributaries of the Neva. The Gatchina Palace became the official residence of the Imperial family in 1796. It was passed through a number of hands before Catherine the Great (1729-1796) gave the estate to Count Orlov (1734-1783) who built a castle with 600 rooms and laid out an extensive English landscape park over seven square kilometres, with an adjacent zoo and a horse farm. The Empress took such a great liking to the Gatchina Palace and park that upon Orlov's death in 1783 she bought it from his heirs and

presented it to her son, the future Emperor Paul I (1754-1801). Paul I owned Gatchina for eighteen years and invested many resources in it, as well as using his experience from his travels around Europe to make Gatchina an exemplary residence. During the 1790s, Paul expanded and rebuilt much of the palace, and renovated the palatial interiors in the sumptuous neo-Classical style. Paul graced the park with numerous additions of bridges, gates, and pavilions, such as 'The Isle of Love', 'The Private Garden', 'The Holland Garden' and 'The Labyrinth'. In 1796, after the death of his mother, Paul became Emperor and granted Gatchina the status of Imperial City - official residence of the Russian Emperors.