

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



**Boris Dmitrievich Grigoriev (Moscow 1886 - Cagnes-sur-Mer, France 1939)**

## **Cattle at Rest**

signed 'Boris Grigoriev' (lower left)  
gouache on paper  
40 x 55.5 cm (15¾ x 21¾ in)

A serene herd of cattle bask in the warmth of the sun. Their languid movements enhance the tranquil feel of this enjoyable gouache. The skill with which Boris Dmitrievich Grigoriev has depicted the bodies of the animals, in what appears to be one smooth brushstroke, reveals the artist's technical mastery, and seems to anticipate the simplified, silhouetted forms of Picasso's (1881-1973) later group of *Toros* and *Toreros*. Grigoriev expertly conveys a variety of textures, from the arid tufts of grass in the foreground, picked out by the use of a dry brush on the rough surface of the paper, to the muddy furrows of the field, suggested by thick layers of gouache.

The warmth of the palette, in particular the dominance of reds and browns, and the landscape in *Cattle at Rest* suggest that the work perhaps relates to one of Grigoriev's South American trips. Grigoriev travelled to South America in 1928 and again in 1936, visiting Chile, Brazil, the Amazon, Ecuador, Uruguay, Argentina and Cuba. His second trip to South America saw the artist spending more time in Brazil, where he visited the Amazon, and executed numerous gouaches detailing the tropical flora. Works executed during Grigoriev's South American trips were later exhibited in the Lilienfeld Galleries in New York in January 1938.

Grigoriev's works span a series of styles from traditional realism, in line with 'The Wanderers' movement, through to Cubism and Expressionism, then returning to a form of realism in his later career. Grigoriev studied at the Stroganov Institute, Moscow from 1903 to 1907 under Dmitry Shcherbinovsky (1867-1926), and then at the Academy of Arts until 1912 under Dmitry Kardovsky (1866-1943). Whilst at the Academy of Arts, Grigoriev participated in several exhibitions including the 'Fellowship of Independents' and 'World of Art'.

In the early 1920s, whilst living in France, Grigoriev worked on his celebrated cycle *Faces of Russia*. This followed on from his earlier series of portraits, *Rasseia*, of which his *Shepherd of the Hills*, formerly belonging to the Berkshire Museum, is the most celebrated. These works, depicting the

Russian people, concentrated particularly on portraits of peasants, and demonstrate a keen understanding of the psychology of mankind. During this decade, Grigoriev began to exhibit widely, and his fame preceded him wherever he went. With the assistance of the curator Christian Brinton (1870-1942), who widely promoted his works, Grigoriev built up a solid network of clients encompassing a broad group of collectors in Western Europe and America.

In 1927, he moved to Cagnes-sur-Mer where he built a house called *Borisella*, a name derived from the fusion of his own, and that of his wife. Although he continued to travel until his death in 1939, he painted the majority of his later canvases at *Borisella*, including the epic *Visages du Monde*.

#### **Provenance:**

Acquired from the son of the artist by the previous owner.

#### **Artist description:**

Grigoriev was born in Moscow and studied at the Stroganov Art School from 1903 to 1907. Grigoriev went on to study at the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg under Aleksandr Kiselyov, Dmitry Kardovsky and Abram Arkhipov from 1907 to 1912. He began exhibiting his work in 1909 as a member of Union of Impressionists group, and became a member of the World of Art movement in 1913. At that time he also was interesting in literature, writing the novel *Young Rays*.

Grigoriev lived for a time in Paris, where he attended the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. In Paris he was strongly influenced by Paul Cézanne.

After his return to Saint Petersburg in 1913 he became part of the Bohemian scene in St. Petersburg and was close to many artists and writers of the time, such as Sergey Sudeykin, Velimir Khlebnikov and the poet Anna Akhmatova, often painting their portraits.

Grigoriev was also interested in the Russian countryside, its peasants and village life. From 1916 to 1918 he created a series of paintings and graphic works, *Russia (Raseja)*, depicting the poverty and strength of the Russian peasantry and village life. The album was started by Grigoriev's poem *To her stepsons*. The album won a praise from influential art-critic Alexandre Benois. According to Benois, Grigoriev had shown the very essence of Russia in the period before the revolutionary upheaval.

From 1919, Grigoriev travelled and lived abroad in many countries including Finland, Germany, France, USA, Central and South Americas. In 1934 he published his poem *Russia* in the American Russian-language newspaper *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*. The poem was a poetic reflection of his famous *Russia* series of paintings. He also wrote the poem *America* published only in 2003.

Grigoriev died in Cagnes-sur-Mer in 1939.

#### **Collections**

Grigoriev is represented in the following collections: State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg; Gorkii Museum, Moscow and many other private collections, amongst others.