

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



Russian School, Nineteenth Century

Novodevichy Convent in Spring

signed in Cyrillic and dated '92' (lower right)
pen, ink and watercolour
17.7 x 24.2 cm (7 x 9½ in)

Novodevichy Convent in Moscow is depicted in early spring, perhaps late March, as the large pond has already started melting at the end of the long Russian winter. The convent is one of the most famous architectural symbols of Moscow. Built in 1524 by Tsar Vasili III to commemorate the conquest of Smolensk a decade earlier, the convent was erected as a fortress at a curve of the Moskva River and became one of the key defensive strongholds of the city. Over the centuries, the convent has been central to numerous battles and important events in Moscow's history, among them the occupation by Polish invaders in 1610, the sheltering of members of monarch family and an unsuccessful attempt by Napoleon to destroy it in 1812. Its original structure and design has remained virtually intact since the 17th century. Novodevichy remains active today as a convent of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The current watercolour depicts not only Moscow's famous convent, but shows one of the first examples of street lighting in Russia, developed by the Russian Pavel Yablochkov in 1875. A modern view of the monastery can be seen [here](#).