

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



Russian School, Nineteenth Century

View of the Stock Exchange, St. Petersburg & View of the Dutch Church, St. Petersburg

one indistinctly inscribed and with the inscription 'vue la Bourse de Petersbourg'
pencil and watercolour on paper, with pen and black ink framing lines; pen and grey wash on paper
14.4 x 17.3 cm (5⁵/₈ x 6³/₄ in); 10.5 x 20.5 cm (4¹/₄ x 8¹/₈ in) (2)

In this pair of works, both buildings are similar in architectural style and structure. They offer an example of Greek revival architecture, which predominated as a movement in Northern Europe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the *View of the Stock Exchange, St. Petersburg* one can see that the building stands on the shore of the River Neva; both the river and the building are an essential part of the beauty of the city. Moreover, parts of the building's architecture signify either rivers or maritime endeavours, thus its location seems highly appropriate.

The Stock Exchange was designed by a French architect, Jean-François Thomas de Thomon (1754-1813) and built between 1805 and 1810. It drew heavily for inspiration on the Greek temple of Hera at Paestum. The building is surrounded by forty-four Doric columns and positioned above the portico is a monumental sculpture featuring Neptune, symbolic of maritime commerce. On either side of the Stock Exchange are two Rostral columns which were completed a year after the building was finished. The columns are vast in scale and their style originates from the architectural language of ancient Greece and Rome. On each column there are protruding objects; these are in fact prows and rams symbolising captured ships. At the foot of the columns, there are seated marble figures which represent the most important rivers in Russia. The column nearest the background symbolises the rivers Volga and Dnieper and the other represents the Neva and Volkhov rivers. Both columns were initially intended to serve as beacons as each is topped by a light in the form of a Greek brazier. In the twentieth century, the braziers were replaced by gas torches, which are now lit only on ceremonial occasions taking place within the city. The buildings surrounding the Stock Exchange share its neo-Classical style.

The *View of a Dutch Church* has very different surroundings compared to the *View of the Stock Exchange, St. Petersburg*. The Dutch church is encircled by the streets of St. Petersburg and the artist has portrayed the hustle and bustle of everyday life in the nineteenth century. In the foreground, an aristocratic couple, contrast with the tradesmen to their left. In the middle ground two horse and carriages are depicted; the artist may have been trying to convey a distinction of class.

The building was designed by Pavel Petrovich Jacot (1798-1860) and built on the Nevsky prospect between 1831 and 1834, although it is no longer used for ecclesiastical purposes. The church itself has five Corinthian columns, (characterised by the acanthus leaves which adorn their capitals) guarding the portico, and a frieze above it. Moreover each tree that frames the front of the church is symmetrically in line with each bay. The dome on top of the church was a popular aspect of eighteenth century architecture and an important feature in places of worship, symbolising different aspects of religion. They were thought to be a representation of heaven and that their presence would bring people closer to God.