

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



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

## **The Andes, Chile**

signed 'Boris Grigoriev' (lower right)  
pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper  
34.3 x 50.3 cm (13½ x 19¾ in)

The present watercolour relates to a group of around 300 gouaches based on Boris Dmitrievich Grigoriev's trips to Latin America of 1928 and 1936. The monumental Andes mountains loom over the city below, dominating virtually the entire surface of this energetic work on paper. Grigoriev handles the watercolour with exceptional accuracy, creating the forms of the Andes in fluid, seamless strokes, which are contrasted with the considerable detailing applied to the edifices below. *The Andes, Chile* is enlivened by a rich, broad palette which softens the landscape, and makes this majestic mountainous region particularly enticing to the viewer. Although the exact location of the present watercolour is not known, the contrast of the Andes with the city below is reminiscent of Chile's capital Santiago, where Grigoriev and his wife lived for a while.

His reputation preceding him, Grigoriev was invited by the Chilean government to teach at the Academy of Arts in Santiago in 1928. That same year, a retrospective of Grigoriev's paintings was mounted at the Museo de Bellas Artes in Santiago, and included his famous portrait of the writer Maxim Gorky (1868-1936). Several of the works in the exhibition had already been shown in Europe, and were brought to Chile by Grigoriev, who was known for travelling with his paintings. Grigoriev's impact on the country saw him hailed as one of the first modernist painters in Chile. The Latin American artist Guillermo Facio Heberquer (1889-1935) provided the following insight into the artist's lifestyle and outlook: 'If Grigoriev had been born in Buenos Aires, we would see him every day strolling along Florida Street. He is a sensual, materialist painter, completely disengaged from the world and from humanity. No worldly or even other-worldly anxiety disturbs his sleep. No ideals upset his digestion.'<sup>1</sup> A later exhibition of South American landscapes by the 'gran pintor ruso' was mounted in the Lilienfeld Galleries in New York in January 1938, two years after Grigoriev returned from his second trip.

Grigoriev was born in Moscow and studied at the Stroganov Art School from 1903 to 1907. He went on to study at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, from 1907 to 1912, under Aleksandr Kiselyov (1838-1911), Dmitry Kardovsky (1866-1943) and Abram Arkhipov (1862-1930). As a member

of Union of Impressionists group he began exhibiting his work in 1909, and became a member of the World of Art movement in 1913.

Grigoriev moved to Paris for a brief period, where his work was influenced by Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), returning to St. Petersburg in 1913. From 1916 to 1918 Grigoriev created a series of paintings and graphic works based on the Russian peasant, entitled his 'Rasseia' series, which was well received. From 1919 onwards, Grigoriev travelled and lived in numerous countries including Finland, Germany, France, U.S.A., Central and South Americas. He died in Cagnes-sur-Mer in 1939.

<sup>1</sup> Frank, P., *Los Artistas del Pueblo: Prints and Workers' Culture in Buenos Aires 1917-1935*, p. 222.

### **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.