SPHINX FINE ART



Adolf Baumgartner-Stoiloff (Linz 1850 - Vienna 1924)

Running from the Wolves
signed 'C. Stoiloff' (lower left)
oil on canvas
80 x 106.8 cm (31½ x 42 in)

This is a lively depiction of a typically Russian winter scene: a small sleigh, drawn by six frightened horses, speeds along in a flurry of snow in an attempt to escape the wolves that are hard on its heels. The sleigh and horses occupy almost the entire field of the composition: the white horse nearest to the viewer and which turns its head in panic towards us, blends in with the white snow and blizzard-filled sky, in a white whirlwind. The other, darker animals provide the landscape with a sense of depth within the churning snowy mass and give relief to the composition.

Adolf Baumgartner-Stoiloff explores, within a quasi-monochrome palette, the difference in texture between the crisp snow underfoot, the clouds and blizzard in the sky, and the powdery, snow-laden trees in the forest. The snow, trampled by the terrified horses, and raised by the blades of the sleigh, is highlighted with small, sharp strokes of black paint, which emphasise its crispness. The sky itself resembles a snow-drift, with an infinite variety of pale shades of white and grey: Baumgartner-Stoiloff uses oil like watercolour in this section of his work, creating almost the effect of a wash. The frontier between the clouds and trees is defined solely by the forest's slightly darker tonality, and the more defined shapes. The grey frothy masses are highlighted with light touches of white; few trunks are visible in the swirling blizzard, and the forest itself melts rapidly into the snowy distance.

The forest and snow-storm concealed the predatory wolves from the eyes of the travellers until the moment was ripe for the attack: their onslaught has visibly startled and terrified the horses, which attempt to career off in different directions, and are barely held in check by their harness and the driver, who is astride one of them. Of the pursuing wolves, one has been shot by the passenger in the sleigh, and is depicted in the act of falling to the hoary ground. The anatomical imprecision of Baumgartner-Stoiloff's depiction of the wolves and the sketchy treatment of the figures emphasise the fact that the main focus of the work is the study of horses. This focus is a common trait in many of his works, such as *Russian Caravan Racing in the Snow.* Indeed Baumgartner-Stoiloff was renowned particularly as a

horse painter.

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Artist description:

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