SPHINX FINE ART



Baron Josef Berres von Perez (Lemberg 1821 - Vienna 1912)

Kalmyk Wedding

signed (lower left)
oil on canvas
79.5 x 118 cm (29¾ x 46½ in)

Kalmyk Wedding is a lively painting of a group on horseback with the bride and groom in the centre, their heads covered in white head-dresses, both riding side by side. Baron Josef Berres von Perez creates the sense of a festive atmosphere, emphasised by the be-ribboned decoration that the rider at the far left of the group is holding, and by the musical triangle held by the rider wearing red trousers to the centre-left of the work. He has also created a real sense of movement with the bustling group riding at pace *en masse*. In the background are three yurts, traditional dwellings of the Kalmyks, and a large inlet of water.

The Kalmyk people originate from Asia, reaching Europe when Genghis Khan created his Mongol Empire. Kalmykia has existed as an independent nation since the fifteenth century, and is the only Buddhist Republic in Europe. The Kalmyk people originally migrated westward from Central Asia to the lower Volga area in the seventeenth century. They formed a frontier *khanate*, a territory ruled by a Mongol ruler, or Khan, who swore allegiance to Russia in return for protection against Tatar attack. The *khanate* became absorbed into the Russian province of Astrakhan in the eighteenth century. The Kalmyk Autonomous Oblast was established in 1920 and later raised to the status of an Autonomous Republic in 1935. Under Stalin's harsh regime of agricultural collectivisation and enforced deportation, the Kalmyk people severely suffered during the 1930s and 1940s. However, in 1958 they were rehabilitated and since then their culture and Buddhist faith have undergone something of a revival. The province was declared an Independent Republic of the Russian Federation in 1991.

Von Perez was a professional soldier and through his long career he was actively involved in numerous military engagements. At the age of forty five von Perez resigned from his position as Major General of the Austrian Army to become a full-time artist. As part of his studies he travelled frequently to the Volga region and the Caucasus. His enduring interest in painting also led to friendships with several Orientalist painters, such as Bertalan Szekely and Mihaly Munkacsy. Between 1866 and 1869 he studied with Karl Theodor von Piloty at the Munich Academy. He travelled to Hungary on several occasions as well as undertaking an extensive journey to Russia, in particular to the Volga and Caucasus regions. In 1871 he became a member of the Vienna *Künstlerhaus*; the oldest artist

association of Austria.

Exhibitions

Probably exhibited at the Wiener Kuenstlerhaus in 1875 under the title *Kalmyks in the South Russian Steppes*

Literature:

A woodcut of this work has appeared in the periodical *Gartenlaube*, 1880, F. von Boetticher, Malerwerke des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, vol. 1, p. 92.

Artist description:

Joseph Berres, Baron von Perez was a professional soldier until the age of 45 when he resigned as Major General of the Austrian army. Until this point he was actively involved in numerous military engagements.

His long-time interest in painting also led to friendships with several painters, such as Bertalan Szekely and Mihaly Munkacsy. Between 1866-1869 he studied with Karl Theodor von Piloty at the Munich Academy. He travelled to Hungary on several occasions as well as undertaking an extensive journey to Russia, in particular to the Volga- and Caucasus regions. In 1871 he became a member of the Vienna "*Künstlerhaus*".