

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



Fedor Federovich Gorschelt (Munich 1829 - Munich 1871)

Barge Haulers

signed and dated 'T. Gorschelt/1869' (lower right)
pencil and watercolour on paper laid on paper
19 x 40.3 cm (7½ x 15⅞ in)

Barge Haulers is one of Gorschelt's later works, executed in 1869, one year before the Franco-Prussian war broke out. Gorschelt's great skill as a draughtsman is demonstrated in his portrayal of this group of horses and their strenuous efforts at pulling the barge. The work focuses on these magnificent animals and their arduous task. The barge itself is partially obscured by the mist or fog hanging over the landscape. Urged onward by their Tatar or Cossack riders, the labours of the group of horses are worthy of both our admiration and sympathy. Gorschelt's *Barge Haulers* can be compared to a work by [Ilya Yefimovich Repin](#), *Barge Haulers on the Volga*. The two works bear some similarity in terms of composition, with the barge-haulers themselves placed in the foreground and the barge further back and therefore less dominant; this is further mirrored in the muted colour and tone. Gorschelt's has far more urgency and speed, with the riders taking control of their horses and leaving the physical work to them, unlike Repin's haunting social commentary where the 'freed' serfs are literally killing themselves to do the same job done in Gorschelt's version by packhorses.

Gorschelt was born on the 16th March 1829. This German-Russian painter later became known as Fedor Federovich Gorschelt or Gorscheld in Russia. Gorschelt was a renowned horse and battle artist, and an outstanding Orientalist painter. He trained under Michael Echter (1812-1879), Hermann Anschutz (1802-1880) and [Albrecht Adam \(1786-1862\)](#), the famous German painter of battles and horses. Adam's influence led the young artist, in whose house he had a studio from the 1850s, towards equine painting. Adam himself participated in the Austrian campaign of 1809, and stayed for a time in Vienna, where he captured the attention of Napoleon's (1769-1821) stepson Eugène de Beauharnais (1781-1824) and was appointed his court painter. Most of Adam's subsequent works deal with Napoleon's Russian campaign. In 1815 Adam moved to Munich, where he was engaged by the Emperors and Kings of Bavaria and Austria. Here he was frequently visited by Gorschelt.

Early in his career Gorschelt showed a strong interest in Russian and Oriental subjects such as *Arab on Horseback*, (1853, Munich, Neue Pinakothek) and in hunting-scenes, such as *Chamois Escaping from Predators* (1852). While still based in Munich, he produced his first paintings on subjects taken from Egypt and the Caucasus. In 1853 he travelled to Spain and Algiers; sketches made on this journey formed the basis of many much later works, such as *Evening in the El Kantarah Oasis* and *Nomad Caravan*, bought by King William I of Wurtemberg (1781-1864). In 1858 he travelled via Odessa,

Sevastopol and Kerch to Tbilisi, observing the progress and conduct of the Crimean War (1853-56).

While travelling with the Russian Army under General Vrefsky, he painted works for Princess Gagarin and Baroness Vrefsky, six watercolours for Empress Maria of Russia (1847-1928), and witnessed at first hand the fights of the mountain people from the Caucasus rebelling against the Russians.

He was accepted as a volunteer to the staff of General Baryatinski and took part in all the campaigns of the Russian troops between 1858 and 1863. Gorschelt was elected Academician of the Imperial Academy of Arts in 1860 for some of his works executed during that time. In 1861 he travelled widely in the Caucasus visiting Baku, Erevan and Tbilisi, where he painted *Parade of the Tsar and his Entourage* (1862). He went to St. Petersburg in 1863 and then back to his native Munich, bringing many drawings, studies and sketches with him. In 1865 he painted the *Taking of Shamy*, which includes forty portraits, and in 1866 the *Storming of an Entrenchment on Mount Gunib*. In 1870 he produced studies of Strasbourg under siege from the Prussian Army. Gorschelt died in Munich in 1871.