

GAVRIL PAVLOVICH KONDRATENKO

(Penza 1854 - 1924)

Landscape at Dusk

signed in Cyrillic (lower right)
oil on canvas
28 x 21.25 cm (11 x 8¾ in)

IN THE STYLE OF THE CONTEMPORARY *PEREDVIZHNIKI* group, or 'The Wanderers', the artistic movement concerned with realism within the context of social change, *Landscape at Dusk* takes the Russian landscape as its subject. Gavril Pavlovich Kondratenko captures a seasonal mood, using realist treatment and detail to convey the atmosphere of a quiet landscape at dusk. The work contains a human interest, established through the muted tones of a darkened village in the distance.

Kondratenko's attention to light and shadow introduces lyrical and subjective elements to the work. Thus the artist positions himself between the influences of realist groups such as The Wanderers, and the Kuindzhi Society, the latter of which he was a member. Founded in 1909 on the initiative and financial support of the artist Arkhip Ivanovich Kuindzhi (1824-1910), who was its honorary chairman, the society's aim was to provide financial support to artists. It was situated at number 17 Gogolya Street (today Malaya Morskaya Street), and enjoyed Tsar Nicholas II's patronage. The society was mainly comprised of Kuindzhi's students, followers, and friends.

Kuindzhi, the founder of the society was a Ukrainian painter active in Russia. Though his use of light and contrasting colour is more stark than that of Kondratenko, similarities can be seen. One example is Kuindzhi's *After the*

Rain, which is comparable to *Landscape at Dusk* in its focus on a dominating sky filled with dense colour, reflected back from the landscape in still pools of water (fig. 1). In his early landscape paintings he often sought to capture seasonal moods, as in *Autumn Mud* (1872, St. Petersburg, Russian Museum), and this influence can be seen in Kondratenko's *Landscape at Dusk*.

Kondratenko took part in many exhibitions as a member of the Kuindzhi Society, primarily as a landscape painter. He was also a member of the St. Petersburg Society of Artists and the Association of Russian Design Painters. He studied at the Imperial Academy of Arts between 1873 and 1882 under Mikhail Konstantinovich Klodt (see inventory), a master of nineteenth-century Russian landscape painting (fig. 2). Klodt was born into an already famous family of Barons von Jürgensburg, an art dynasty that included his father, a noted engraver, an uncle who was a sculptor and his cousin a painter, both of whom were highly accomplished. His love of the Russian landscape and independent spirit led him to be one of the founders in 1868 of the famous Society of Travelling Exhibitions. In looking at his master's work, it becomes more apparent that Kondratenko departed from the Realist school and towards the more lyrical and expressive style of Kuindzhi's school. *Landscape at Dusk* can be seen as a meeting point between these influences.



Arkhip Ivanovich Kuindzhi, *After the Rain*, 1879, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (Figure 1)



Mikhail Konstantinovich Klodt von Jürgensburg, *Cattle Watering*, 1878, Private Collection (Figure 2)



Г. КОНДРАТЕНКО