

BORIS DIMITRIEVICH 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 Dimitrievich 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, see figure 1, 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.'¹ 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.



View of Santiago, Chile (Figure 1)

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 Efimovich 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.

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

