

SOKRAT MAKSIMOVICH VOROBIEV

(St Petersburg 1817 - Turmont Kovno Province, Lithuania 1888)

View of the Entrance to the Andronikov Monastery, Moscow

watercolour and pencil on paper
37.2 x 54 cm (14 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ in)

IN THIS WORK, SOKRAT MAKSIMOVICH VOROBIEV depicts the view of the entrance to the Saviour of Andronikov Monastery. Although the Monastery is depicted to the right of the image, it is still the focal point of the piece and its walls draw the viewer's eye to the main structure of the building. Despite the monastery's location in Moscow, the landscape is particularly rural, almost rustic, and the artist has tried to convey the hustle and bustle of everyday life of the city. Vorobiev utilises a monochromatic palette, making the most of watercolour and pencil, a highly popular medium for capturing topographical subject matter. Moreover, the grandeur of the building in the background is juxtaposed with the more simple architectural structure of the monastery. One can see from the photo of the gate today that Vorobiev has altered the layout of the gate, in order to give a more panoramic view of the entrance (fig. 1).

The monastery was named after its first prior, Andronik, a disciple of St. Sergius. Located within the grounds of the monastery is the church consecrated to the Icon of the Saviour, which is considered to be the earliest surviving monument in Moscow. 'The structure of the monastery is thought to be the most ornamental to be found in Muscovy. It has also been suggested that this design, with an octagon of *kokoshniki*, serving as a visual transition from the central cube to the drum is a prototype for Moscow's tower churches in the 16th Century.'¹ The monastery is also famous for being the place where Andrei Rublev (c.1360-1427/30), considered the greatest medieval Russian painter of Orthodox icons and frescoes, spent the last years of his life; the monastery contains his last work.

Vorobiev was the son of a renowned painter, Maxim Nikiforovich Vorobiev (1787-1855). At the age of sixteen, Vorobiev joined the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg where he studied landscape and perspective painting. In the summer of 1838, he won a gold medal for his painting, *View of the Manor Fall Count AH Benkendorf near Revel*. In 1839 he went abroad. In Italy, he lived and worked in Rome and its environs. He also travelled to Naples and then to Sicily, where he settled in Palermo. Whilst in Sicily, Vorobiev was commissioned to create an album of Italian views by Emperor Nicholas I (1716-1855), which like the present work often feature figures milling about a notable building or monument.



Photograph of the Entrance to the Saviour of Andronikov Monastery today (Figure 1)

In 1846, the artist decided to return to Russia and in that same year he was elected an academician for art and knowledge in landscape painting. A year later he travelled to Italy once more, and to various other European countries including France, Germany and Switzerland. After three years abroad, Vorobiev returned to St. Petersburg and in 1852 created a series of paintings depicting the suburbs of St. Petersburg, and participated in a number of exhibitions.

Following the death of his father in 1855, Vorobiev became a professor at the Academy where he continued to take his father's classes specialising in landscape painting. Although he subsequently abandoned teaching in 1872, he taught and influenced many well known masters of landscape in the second half of the nineteenth century, such as Ivan Ivanovich Shishkin (see inventory), Julius Sergius von Klever (1850-1924), and Arseny Ivanovich Meschersky (see inventory). Vorobiev was one of the leading masters of landscape painting during the mid-nineteenth century; the majority of his later work comprises views of the western provinces of Russia.

¹ Brumfield, W.C., *Landmarks of Russian Architecture: A Photographic Survey*, (Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, Amsterdam, 1997), p. 67.

