



RA GALLERY

Piotr Belousov

(1912 - 1989)

Zagorsk. Lavra

1944

signed and dated 44 lower left, signed with initials and dated 44 lower right
oil on canvas
62.5 x 90 cm

Price on request

Provenance:

Artist, Leningrad
Bought directly from the above by Roy Miles
Roy Miles gallery, London
Private Collection, UK

Literature:

Russian paintings, The Winter Show, 1st-22nd December 1988,
Roy Miles Fine Paintings, exhibition catalog,
N 36, Zagorsk Monastery, illustrated p. 19

Peter Petrovich Belousov (1987) Exhibition catalogue. Leningrad:
Iskusstvo. Listed p. 17

Exhibitions:

Personal exhibition of Peter Petrovich Belousov in Leningrad, 1987



The painting 'Zagorsk, Lavra' was created by Piotr Petrovich Belousov, who was a member of the Leningrad branch of the Union of Soviet artists, which is not surprising, as he was one of the brightest representatives of the Leningrad school of painting, which originated in the early 1930s. Belousov studied under I. I. Brodsky, M. D. Bernstein, P. S. Naumov, A. M. Lubimov, V. S. Serov and graduated with honours from the Leningrad Institute of painting, sculpture and architecture named after I. E. Repin in 1939. Undoubtedly, the influence of Brodsky is reflected in 'Zagorsk, Lavra' to the greatest extent as Brodsky has argued that 'the drawing should not be separated from the painting'. This lesson of his distinguished teacher Belousov learned for life and tirelessly proved this approach in his works, where, as in 'Zagorsk, Lavra', gave the leading role to the drawing, was attentive to detail and made a thorough analysis of the colour scheme. The painting was finished in 1944 which makes it the creation of the artist's mature period, when the personal style had already been formed, and technical skills had reached the highest level. Thus, while working on the picture, Belousov had the opportunity to express his true talent to the fullest. During this productive stage of his career, the artist was teaching at the Leningrad Institute of painting, sculpture and architecture, where later, in 1956, he headed the Department of Drawing, and in 1961, received the status of Professor.

Even though Piotr Belousov is widely known as a master of works on Lenin and revolutionary themes, and Even though Piotr Belousov is widely known as a master of works on Lenin and revolutionary themes, and can rightly be called a virtuoso in the genre of portrait, 'Zagorsk, Lavra' opens another, less known to the inexperienced viewer side of the artist, namely, shows him as a subtle observer of the urban landscape. Indeed, the urban landscape was one of the most important genres for Belousov, as evidenced by the many filigree etchings, engravings, and paintings, both with native

places and views of those unknown lands, where the artist travelled in a twist of fate, such as evacuation to Samarkand during 1943-1944. Back in the early 1930s, young artists of Leningrad, especially under the influence of the local creative association "Circle of artists", turned their attention to the landscape genre, which until then had some secondary importance in comparison with monumental paintings on historical themes. Landscape genre served as a means for artists to express their impressions of reality, changed by global political events, or, in other words, a way of reflection, reaction to what was happening around. Back in the 1920s and 1930s, for many artists, the "sharpness of expression" came to the fore instead of the semantic content of the picture. Thus, now when the works were released from connection with literature or history, they could be available to the viewer with any level of erudition. These trends are also felt in the 'Zagorsk, Lavra', where the meaning is expressed in the visual form of the image, in its style: clear, restrained, simple in its best manifestation. The painting communicates the "lightness" of execution, a kind of ease, the softness of hues and lines, delicate texture. It captivates the viewer with its own language of undertones, which imbues the painting with a poetic distinctiveness and lyrical characteristics. Looking at the pictures of Belousov's contemporaries, it seems that the landscape in Russian art has become the most suitable genre to reflect the spirit of the era. Undoubtedly, the siege of Leningrad left a powerful impression in the work of not only Belousov but also many other notable artists who survived this tragic event. The search for and reflection of spiritual power was more relevant than ever for the artistic tasks of that period. However, even since the XIX century, a landscape which contains the image of a church has been deeply embedded into the works of Russian artists. Speaking not only as an architectural object but also, above all, giving a unique lyricism to the Russian landscape, the Orthodox Church is abundantly represented in the Russian works of the XX century even considering the fact of complicated relationships between the Soviet government and religion. Despite the breadth of views, taken over from his teacher Brodsky, who taught to look at art as not in the narrow gap, but as in a fully open window, Piotr Belousov still always remained faithful to the traditions of the Russian academic school, which makes him a classic of Soviet painting.

Another notorious Russian artist, Konstantin Fyodorovich Yuon, was using the images of Sergiev Posad in his works. Belousov also adopted this theme in a few of his works, both in paintings and etchings. A pupil of I. I. Levitan, a talented master of Russian lyrical landscape, V. I. Sokolov, has also devoted his works to the architectural monuments of the Lavra. However, Belousov's work is entirely unlike any artworks of Yuon or coloured auto-lithographs of Sokolov. The town of Sergiev Posad was previously known as Zagorsk, on the territory of which is located the Trinity-Sergius Lavra, along with several monasteries and museums. The Trinity-Sergius Lavra is one of the largest monasteries of the Russian Orthodox Church with a long and rich history. Many people describe this place as the spiritual centre of Orthodox Russia for numerous reasons. First of all, the relics of the great Saint of Russia, St. Sergius of Radonezh are kept there; a magnificent white stone Trinity Cathedral is built on the site of a wooden Church by Patriarch Nikon in 1422; as well as the Uspensky Cathedral, which was established in 1585 by order of the infamous Ivan the Terrible modelled on the Uspensky Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin, and the most eye-catching the Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh with a Refectory containing an ancient wooden iconostasis, which beauty presumably surpasses any other iconostasis in Russia. There are beautiful paintings of famous painters Andrei Rublev and Daniel Black inside the Trinity Cathedral. No wonder this place has attracted artists. Belousov worked on the painting after returning from evacuation, at the end of the



blockade in January 1944. In the artist's monograph of 1959, art historian Semyon Georgievich Ivensky wrote: "The fascination with the motives of Russian landscape and architecture was not accidental. The artist has long been away from his native nature, which he understood and deeply loved, and now, being in Zagorsk, admired the monuments of ancient architecture and the surrounding generous nature of the Moscow region". Despite the fact, that the period of Belousov's stay in Zagorsk was not long, because in June of the same year, the Academy has returned to Leningrad, the artist painted in Zagorsk several large oil paintings, sketches, and created a number of drawings, on the basis of which he subsequently did large engravings on cardboard, dedicated to the landscape of Zagorsk and monuments of the ancient Trinity-Sergius Posad (Ivensky, 1959, p.20). It is quite understandable that the urban landscape has captured the artist's attention at that moment because the experienced hardships and challenges have forced to take a fresh look at the surroundings and appreciate them anew. 'Zagorsk, Lavra' draws the viewer's attention to the snow-covered, blue domes of the Lavra, small figures of people, so tiny in comparison with the monumental architectural structures and mighty trees, bizarre patterns formed by sprawling branches, bending under the weight of snow, overcast sky, indistinguishable in colour from the ground, a light haze that envelops distant objects, blurring the contours of their borders. The colour palette is filled with a 'watercolour feeling', translucent, silver, soft, pastel hues. Everything in this work articulates peace and tranquillity, creating an atmosphere of spirituality, Holiness and silence that is characteristic of the city, which was captured by the spell of snowfall.

