Gavrilov, Vladimir Nikolaevich

1923 - 1970

Gypsy Girl

Oil on Canvas
117 x 62cm
1959

Signed
**PROVENANCE:**

Family of the Artist

**LITERATURE:**

V. N. Gavrilov, Hudozhnik RSFSR, 1989, Leningrad, illustrated

The Gypsy Girl, 1959, is a fine example of the work of Vladimir Gavrilov, a leading member of the post-war Moscow School, a group of artists who graduated from the Moscow Art Institute and launched their careers in the second half of the 1950s. The beautiful girl has the inky black hair of her race who originally migrated from India and she wears her finest clothes for the portrait including pink ribbons in her hair and a coral necklace.

Among the Moscow School artists are such well-known figures as G. Korzhev, A. Tkachev, V. Ivanov, V. Stozharov, and I. Popov. This was a tight circle of friends not officially united or under any common agenda,
who were taught by the same teachers and were driven by the same desire to capture the beauty of
everyday life and discover new artistic methods. The Gypsy Girl is a bright example of the Moscow School of
painting and of Gavrilov’s unique genius. Gypsys, and in particular beautiful Gypsy Girls such as this one,
were a popular subject for Russian artists at this date and there are also good examples by artists such as
Arkadi Plastov and Aleksandr Gerasimov.

Vladimir Gavrilov graduated from the Moscow State School of Arts in 1956, just over a decade after the end
of World War II, which had devastated the country and its people. After years of hardship young artists
wanted to celebrate each day of peace and were full of creative energy. This time also coincided with the
beginning of Khrushchev’s Thaw, a period of reversal of repression and censorship in the Soviet Union. In
many respects there was a renaissance of Russian art, which had from the 1920s been suppressed and
reduced to a limited number of themes and artistic methods of the so-called ‘official Soviet art’.

In 1954 the seven-year moratorium on Impressionist and Post-impressionist art in the USSR was lifted not
only signaling changes in politics but giving an important opportunity for artists to study the achievements of
these important movements first-hand. Museums like the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg and the
State Fine Art Pushkin Museum in Moscow started to exhibit works from the Shchukin and Morozov
collections, unavailable for viewing during the Stalin regime. Masterpieces of modern art from these
collections certainly were an important source of inspiration for the artists; however Gavrilov also cited Old
Masters such as El Greco, Velasquez, Rembrandt as well as several major Russian artists like Surikov,
Levitan and Vrubel as his great influences at the time.

As for all Moscow School artists Gavrilov's ambitions were to find his own way in art and from the start of his
career he carved out a distinctive style. His works are characterized by thick shimmering layers of paint and
wide, seemingly careless brushstrokes. Gavrilov’s preoccupation with color and its effects is evident in all of
his works. He once admitted he could spend weeks searching for the perfect combination shades of two
neighboring colors, “I am excited by the color, coloring, harmony of colors. There are artists that are
interested in line, rhythm, shape. I am enjoying the most the combination of colors and their unique harmony
found in nature.” (From the conversation between V. Gavrilov and E. Mozhuovskaya, p. 96 V. N, Gavrilov,
Hudozhnik RSFSR, 1989, Leningrad.)

A good example of his complex colouring, and a much loved painting in Russia, is ‘A Fresh Day’ of 1957 in
the Tretyakov Gallery.