

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Oreste Cortazzo (Rome 1836 - Paris 1910)

A Parisian Boulevard at Night, with a Newspaper Vendor

Engraved wood block.

102 x 82 x 23 mm. (4 x 3 1/4 x 7/8 in.)

This engraved wood block was used for an illustrated edition of Guy de Maupassant's 'Yvette', a collection of short stories published in Paris in 1902, with illustrations by Cortazzo engraved by G. Lemoine. Maupassant's story 'Yvette' was first published in *Le Figaro* of August-September 1884, and was reprinted as a book the following year. Cortazzo's image was used to illustrate the beginning of the story, which sets the scene as the two friends Jean de Servigny and Léon Saval leave the *Café Riche* and walk along the streets of Paris:

'A restless crowd was moving along the boulevard, that throng peculiar to summer nights, drinking, chatting, and flowing like a river, filled with a sense of comfort and joy. Here and there a cafe threw a flood of light upon a knot of patrons drinking at little tables on the sidewalk, which were covered with bottles and glasses, hindering the passing of the hurrying multitude. On the pavement the cabs with their red, blue, or green lights dashed by, showing for a second, in the glimmer, the thin shadow of the horse, the raised profile of the coachman, and the dark box of the carriage.'

Literature:

Guy de Maupassant, *Yvette*, Paris, 1902, p.9.

Artist description:

Born in Italy, Oreste Cortazzo was a pupil of Léon Bonnat and spent most of his career in France as a

painter of historical and genre scenes, many of which were produced on commission for the art dealer Adolphe Goupil. He exhibited infrequently at the Salons between 1874 and 1885, and also at the Exposition Universelle in 1878 and again in 1889, where he showed four paintings and received an honourable mention. His sentimental narrative compositions were likely influenced by the rise of photography in the second half of the 19th century. Cortazzo also worked as a printmaker and book illustrator; among the books he illustrated were Eugène Muller's *La Mionette*, published in 1885, and Guy de Maupassant's *Yvette*, published in 1902. Together with Lodovico Marchetti and Lucio Rossi, Cortazzo also provided drawings for a lavish illustrated edition of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, published in London around 1900.