

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Carlo Bossoli (Davesco 1815 - Turin 1884)

The Neptune Fountain and the Paseo del Prado, Madrid

Watercolour and gouache.
Signed C. Bossoli at the lower left.
256 x 458 mm. (10 1/8 x 18 in.)

Carlo Bossoli made a long trip to Spain and Morocco in 1851, and this splendid watercolour is likely to date from this year or shortly thereafter. Another view of Madrid, depicting the Plaza Mayor and almost certainly of the same date, shares the same Russian provenance as the present sheet. Apart from Madrid, Bossoli is also known to have visited a number of other cities in Spain in 1851, and in later years produced spirited watercolour and gouache drawings of Seville and Cadiz, as well as views of the Escorial, Burgos, Aranjuez and Barcelona. Some of these views may have been commissioned by the Spanish-born Empress Eugénie, wife of Napoléon III, who is listed in Bossoli's account book as the purchaser of eleven 'vedute della Spagna' in 1858.

The present sheet is one of four highly finished drawings in gouache and watercolour by Bossoli that were once part of the collection of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna of Russia (1798-1860), born Princess Charlotte of Prussia and the wife of Tsar Nicholas I. The other three watercolours were views of the Royal Palace in Berlin, the Plaza Mayor in Madrid and the colonnade of the summer palace at Sanssouci, near Berlin. The set of four watercolours by Bossoli were presented as gifts to a British diplomat shortly before or after the Dowager Empress's death in 1860. They remained in the possession of the diplomat's family for the next 130 years before being dispersed at auction in 1990.

Provenance:

The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, St. Petersburg and Tsarskoye Selo
Given by her to a British diplomat c.1860
Thence by descent until 1990
Anonymous sale, London, Sotheby's, 28 November 1990, lot 8
Guillermo de Osma Galería, Madrid, in 1997
Private collection, Spain.

Exhibitions

Madrid, Guillermo de Osma Galería, La España Romántica 1830-1860, 1997, no.39

Artist description:

Arguably the foremost topographical artist in Europe in the second half of the 19th century, Carlo

Bossoli was born near Lugano in Switzerland and grew up in Odessa in the southern Ukraine. As a young artist of considerable ability, he came to the attention of the Countess Vorontsov, wife of the governor of the province, and by the age of eighteen was selling his drawings of urban and landscape views. He travelled extensively around the Crimea, particularly in the early 1840's, and produced a large number of drawings, watercolours and gouaches of everyday life and views of the main sites and cities there. Bossoli and his family returned to Europe in 1843, eventually settling in Milan. In 1850 he made his first visit to England and Scotland, and the following year visited Spain and Morocco.

By 1853 Bossoli had settled in Turin, where he lived for the remainder of his career. With the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854, however, Bossoli decided to travel to London, where his knowledge of the Crimea stood him in very good stead. The immense interest on the part of the British public for views of Sebastopol, Balaklava, Inkermann and the other battlegrounds mentioned in news reports encouraged Bossoli to produce a series of fifty-two Crimean views which were reproduced as lithographs for a lavish volume entitled *The Beautiful Scenery and Chief Places of Interest Throughout the Crimea from Paintings by Carlo Bossoli*, published in London in 1856. Among the many avid collectors of Bossoli's watercolours of Crimean views were Queen Victoria and the Duke of Wellington.

Bossoli exhibited his works at the Royal Academy between 1855 and 1859, and in 1857 undertook his longest journey yet, travelling through France, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Russia, Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Switzerland. Each of his travels resulted in drawings and watercolours of the cities and sites that he visited. Between 1859 and 1861 he produced a splendid series of over a hundred gouaches illustrating the contemporaneous military campaign for the independence of Italy, commissioned by Prince Eugenio di Savoia-Carignano; all but ten of these are now in the collection of the Museo Nazionale del Risorgimento in Turin. Bossoli died of a heart attack in Turin in 1884.