

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Pietro Giacomo Palmieri (1737 - 1804)

Landscape with Figures in a Storm

Pen and brown ink.

Signed Palmerius. in et fecit at the lower left.

325 x 403 mm. (12 3/4 x 15 7/8 in.)

ACQUIRED BY THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

A gifted draughtsman, Palmieri often signed his work with the Latinized form of his name 'Palmerius', as in the present sheet. As the scholar Giuseppe Delogu noted, in one of the earliest studies of Palmieri's graphic manner, 'this versatile artist's importance does not lie in his vigorous, facile and masterly copperplates; it is rather in his drawings – whether preparatory designs for engravings or ones of simple narrative and illustrative character – that he is best shown to be a close observer, an artist of inventive mind, an accurate draughtsman with absolute mastery of line and technique. These works manifest a picturesque freedom, a lightness of touch that stand diametrically opposed to the dry, graphical and calligraphic effect of Palmieri's copperplate engravings.'

This drawing belongs with a group of spirited landscapes in pen and ink by Palmieri - intended as finished works of art for sale - that are clearly inspired by the draughtsmanship of Guercino. That such drawings were greatly admired by the artist's contemporaries in France is seen in the words of the French draughtsman and engraver Jean-Georges Wille, who noted in his journal of January 1775 that, 'M. Palmieri, Italien, m'a fait deux dessins, un peu dans le goût du Guerchin. Je les lui ay payés un louis pièce.' Palmieri also produced landscape drawings in the manner of other 17th century artists active in Italy, such as Claude Lorrain and the Dutch Italianate artists Jan Both and Karel Dujardin. He seems to have sold many of these drawings to French aristocrats visiting Italy, as souvenirs of their travels. As Agnes Mongan and Paul Sachs have noted of such drawings by Palmieri, 'The fact that the drawings were in the grand manner of the previous century gave evidence of the excellence and cultivation of the taste of those who purchased them.'

Stylistically comparable landscape drawings by Palmieri in the manner of Guercino include examples in the Louvre, the Uffizi, the National Gallery of Scotland, and elsewhere.

Provenance:

Émile Louis Dominique Calando, Paris (Lugt 837)
His son, Émile Pierre Victor Calando, Paris and Grasse

His sale, Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 17-18 March 1927, lot 184 ('Palmerius (XVIIe siècle)...Le coup de vent. Plume. – Monture ancienne. Signé en bas à gauche: Palmerius in. et fecit. H. 325 – L. 405.')

Private collection, Paris.

Artist description:

Active as both a painter and printmaker, Pietro Giacomo Palmieri was a pupil of Ercole Graziani at the Accademia Clementina in Bologna. His earliest known works are a series of landscape prints, after his own designs and those by other artists, which were published in 1760. Palmieri soon established a reputation as an engraver, working in a manner that reflected the influence and inspiration, in terms of both style and composition, of such 17th century masters as Jacques Callot, Stefano Della Bella, Salvator Rosa and Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione. Similar stylistic tendencies can also be found in his drawings. Palmieri was a member of the academies of Bologna and Parma, and taught at the latter. He spent some years in Paris in the 1770's, and also visited England, Spain and Switzerland before settling in Turin in 1778. There he worked for the Savoy court, both as an artist – in 1781 he was named draughtsman to Vittorio Amedeo III of Savoy - and as curator of the Royal collection of drawings. In 1802 he was appointed a professor of drawing at the academy in Turin.