

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Giuseppe Bernardino BISON (Palmanova 1762 - Milan 1844)

Three Figures in a Moonlit Landscape

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, over a black chalk underdrawing.

Signed(?) with a monogram B on the verso.

Further inscribed 'acheté salle de ventes Fievez à Bruxelles 1919 / signature F. Goya / Goya y Lucientès (François) 1746-1828'. on the verso.

Further inscribed 'contrebandiers dans le montagne' on the verso.

217 x 294 mm. (8 1/2 x 11 1/2 in.)

As a draughtsman, Bison's preferred medium was pen and ink, usually combined with rich tonal washes, of which this drawing is a particularly fine example. In its bold and spirited use of brown washes to depict the night sky, the present sheet may be compared with such drawings as *A Goddess on her Chariot* in an Italian private collection.

Moonlit scenes are, nevertheless, somewhat unusual in Bison's drawn oeuvre. Another such example is a *Landscape with Monumental Sculptures in a Park* in the Cleveland Museum of Art, which has been tentatively related to Bison's set designs for a production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the Teatro Nuovo in Milan in 1842.

Exhibitions

New York and London, Jean-Luc Baroni Ltd., *Master Drawings and Oil Sketches*, 2004, no.47.

Artist description:

One of the last and most delightful exponents of the 18th century vedute tradition, Giuseppe Bernardino Bison received his artistic training in the studio of Anton Maria Zanetti in Venice. The early part of his

career was spent working as a decorative fresco painter at villas and palaces around the Veneto. Around 1800 he settled in Trieste, where among his more important works were the decoration of the Palazzo Carciotti, painted around 1805, and the Palazzo della Vecchia Borsa, completed three years later. In 1831 Bison moved to Milan, where he worked for the remainder of his career, and where he was particularly active as a scenographer, producing stage designs for the Teatro alla Scala and other theatres. He painted a large number of views of Venice, often inspired by engravings after Canaletto's paintings, as well as numerous small landscapes in both oil and tempera, intended for sale to collectors. Although his career lasted well into the 19th century, his style invariably retains something of the flavour of the previous century; indeed, his work has been aptly described by one recent scholar as 'a last late flowering of the Venetian Settecento'.

Bison was an accomplished and prolific draughtsman, with an oeuvre of charming genre studies and landscapes in pen and ink wash or gouache. His earliest works show the influence of Giambattista Tiepolo and Francesco Guardi, while his later drawings tend towards Neoclassicism. His drawings encompass a wide and varied range of subjects, from religious narratives to genre scenes, capricci, and stage and ornament designs. Few of Bison's many drawings, however, were done as preparatory studies for paintings, and he seems to have produced a large number of his drawings as independent works of art for sale; this is certainly true of his pastoral landscapes in gouache. Significant groups of drawings by Bison are today in the collections of the Castello Sforzesco in Milan, the Musei Civici in Trieste and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York.