Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



George BARBIER (Nantes 1882 - Paris 1932)

L'Île Mystérieuse: A Fabric Design for Bianchini Férier

Pen and black ink and gouache, over an underdrawing in pencil, with framing lines in pencil.

Signed, dated and inscribed *George Barbier . 1919* / *8 – L'Ile Mysterieuse* in blue ink in the lower left margin.

Stamped *14927* twice, once in the upper margin and once on the verso.

Dated and inscribed *16.10.19* / *L'Ile Mysterieuse* in pencil on the verso.

167 x 261 mm. (6 1/2 x 10 1/4 in.) [image]

244 x 305 mm. (9 5/8 x 12 in.) [sheet]

The silk weaving manufactory of Bianchini-Férier was founded in Lyon in 1888 by the designer Charles Bianchini and the financier François Férier, and the following year won a silver medal at the Exposition Universelle in Paris. Known for its innovative fabrics in bright colours, the firm became highly successful and soon expanded, opening offices in Paris, London, Brussels and, in 1909, New York. It also began working with such fashion designers as Poiret, Lanvin, Vionnet, Worth and Jean Patou. Bianchini-Férier also employed several artists and illustrators - notably George Barbier, Robert Bonfils, Paul Iribe, Alberto-Fabio Lorenzi and Charles Martin - to create designs for its textiles. Perhaps most famously, in 1912 the firm signed a contract with Raoul Dufy, who produced some four thousand designs for Bianchini-Férier fabrics until 1928. After the Second World War Bianchini-Férier continued to work closely with fashion designers, including Chanel, Cristóbal Balenciaga, Hubert de Givenchy, Christian Dior, Nina Ricci and Yves Saint-Laurent, among many others.

Drawn on the 16th of October 1919, the present sheet served as a design (no.14927) for a Bianchini-Férier textile entitled *L'Île Mystérieuse*, and a swatch of the related fabric is sold with this work.

Artist description:

A painter and illustrator, George Barbier studied in Nantes before entering the studio of Jean-Paul Laurens at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. At the beginning of his career he signed some of his work under the pseudonym 'Larry' or 'Edward William Larry'. Barbier first came to public attention with an exhibition of around ninety drawings at the Galerie L'Art Moderne in Paris in 1911. One of the foremost illustrators of the Art Deco movement, Barbier provided fashion plates for some of the leading

couturiers of the period, notably Paul Poiret, Jeanne Lanvin and Madeleine Vionnet. As the artist was described in 1929: 'George Barbier combines tact with precision; he prefers (a rare thing nowadays) a taste for singularity and grace of character; he never seeks to force attention but to tame pleasure; he always knows how to keep himself at an equal distance from mechanical pastiche and arbitrary misrepresentation…he almost seems working outside of the modern world, in the silent and protected security of a boudoir-cum-workshop, a cabinet d'amateur and a library.' Characterized by a refinement and elegance which epitomized the Art Deco era, much of Barbier's work took the form of fashion illustrations for such magazines as La Gazette du Bon Ton (for which he also wrote), Fémina, Costumes parisiens, Vogue, La Vie Parisienne and the Journal des Dames et des Modes, as well as the annual Modes et manières d'aujourd'hui for 1914. Often inspired by the costumes of ancient Greece or 18th century France, he also produced designs for stage sets and theatre costumes, including for the Folies Bergère, as well as for fabrics, fans and wallpaper.

As the scholar and collector Gordon Ray has noted of George Barbier, 'By epitomizing the more refined fantasies of the Parisian world of pleasure during the [1920s], he became the most haunting of Art Deco artists…Recognized as one of the master decorators of the time, he found his services in demand in many fields…Barbier was a supreme decorative designer, whose art centered on the human figure, displayed in a thousand settings and costumes.' As well as illustrating his own book Le bonheur du jour, ou les graces à la mode, a study of fashion and manners on which he worked from 1920 to 1924, Barbier drew a large number of book illustrations for works by Théophile Gautier, Paul Verlaine, Pierre Louÿs and Charles Baudelaire, among others. In later years he designed advertisements for Cartier, Renault and other companies. As the novelist and critic Edmond Jaloux noted of the artist, 'George Barbier is one of the most valuable and most significant artists of our time, so rich in all kinds of talent and original ideas. When our age is past…it will take just a few drawings of Barbier to revive the taste and spirit of our time.' Barbier died at the age of fifty, at the peak of his career. In recent years, there have been important exhibitions of the artist's work in Venice in 2008-2009 and Toronto in 2013.