

# Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



**Sir William Orpen (1878 - 1931)**

## **The three blind men (Arabian nights)**

Black, white and red chalk with wash over pencil

Signed and dated I.I.: Orpen 1901 and inscribed I.r.: The three blind men watched by the thief

34 x 49 cm (13 x 19 in.)

This drawing dates to a series of early works Orpen made as a recent graduate from the Slade School of Art, London in 1899. At this time, Orpen turned extensively to literature as a source for ideas, such as Heinrich Heine's *Florentine Nights*, Max Beerbohm's *The Happy Hypocrite*, Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Refugees* and Oscar Wilde's *The Fisherman and His Soul*. For the current work, Orpen has taken the story of 'The Three Blind Men', deceived by a wicked thief, from *Arabian Nights*, which provided Orpen with many subjects between 1899 and 1904. It is probable he has portrayed himself as the thief, a practice found in his early works when after leaving the Slade access to models and financial freedom was limited. Here, Orpen has created a work charged with drama, achieved through his use of chiaroscuro, bold composition and brilliant drawing technique.

## **Provenance**

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- Robert Dunthorne & Son, London;
- Private collection since 1971