



**Bernard Boutet de Monvel**

**Standing Figure, Fez**

Circa: c.1918

c.1918

oil on canvas

82.5 x 40.5 cm (32 1/4 x 16 inches)

Signed lower left: BERNARD B DE MONVEL

Bernard Boutet de Monvel was born to a well-known artist and illustrator at the time, Maurice Boutet de Monvel, and raised in both Paris and Nemours. The young Bernard also became a painter and illustrator, training under Luc Olivier Merson for a time. Introduced to engraving by a fellow student, he quickly became an undisputed master of the technique.

Bernard began to show his paintings in Parisian Salons in 1903 and from 1907 his talent became recognized equally well in Europe and the United States, where he was also sending

his work to exhibitions.

In the twenties and thirties he provided illustrations for Harper's Bazaar, the most prestigious and lucrative publications to work for at the time. He continued to have success with his painting and showed at exhibitions around the world. He came to be known for both

landscape and portrait painting, but gradually specialised in portraits and cityscapes while he continued illustrating books and fashion magazines. He also painted elegant still lifes, placing acutely detailed plants on neutral backgrounds. Considered an Art Deco artist by some, Boutet de Monvel didn't categorise himself in this manner. He died in a plane crash in 1949.

Boutet de Monvel travelled extensively, visiting Italy, Chile, the US and Morocco where the present work was painted. Painted in 1918 in Fez, where the squadron V 551 was stationed in which Bernard Boutet de Monvel was an aviator-bomber, this emblematic and major work was among those that the painter brought back from Morocco. It aroused such acclaim in France that it was exhibited in the May 1925 issue of French Vogue (see Fig. 1). Jean Laporte who reproduced it in this issue entitled Visions of Morocco by Bernard Boutet de Monvel and Si Azouaou Mammeri, commented: "This immobile [figure] under his yellowish burnous embodies the soul of Morocco and gives Bernard Boutet de Monvel's art an eloquent idea".

As evidenced by a photograph taken by Bernard Boutet de Monvel himself on the terrace of his house in the Fez medina, it indeed depicts a young Moroccan girl covered with a battaniyya - perhaps one of his servants - that he took as a model for this painting.

The hieratism of this figure, the perfect harmony between the yellow and red ochre of the battaniyya excited Bernard Boutet de Monvel to the point that he made a second composition from this model, entitled Negresse sur une terrasse in Fez. Nevertheless, it was the present painting that he chose to exhibit from May 2 to 23, 1925, under the title Nègresse during the exhibition Le Maroc Peintures et Bas-Reliefs by Bernard Boutet de Monvel at the prestigious Barbazanges gallery in Paris. The same gallery that, among many other masterpieces, exhibited for the first time in 1916 Les demoiselles d'Avignon by Pablo

Picasso. The present work was acquired from the exhibition by the prestigious Hollywood director and actor Ingram Hollywood (1892-1950), who took control of the Victorine studios in Nice in 1925, previously obtained from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Such was his fascination with Arabic culture and civilisation that he converted to Islam in 1933.

Boutet de Monvel, for his part, preserved a smaller replica of this work, a replica that was exhibited in 1951 at the Galliera Museum and in 2001 at the Mona Bismarck Foundation for retrospectives devoted to his work, showing his deep connection and affection for this painting, completed during his time in Fez.

### **Provenance**

Probably Rex Ingram, Hollywood. Acquired from the 1925 exhibition, Paris

His wife, Alice Terry

Probably purchased from the above by Barry Friedman, New York

Acquired from the above around 1985 by Felix Marcilhac

The Collection of Felix Marcilhac to 2014

Private collection to 2024

Acquired from the above.

### **Exhibitions**

Paris, Galerie Barbazanges. Le Maroc Peintures et Bas-Reliefs by Bernard Boutet de Monvel, May 1925, n. 64, not reproduced.

Illustrated in French Vogue, May issue, 1925. Pages 34-35.

### **Literature:**

S-J. Addade, Bernard Boutet de Monvel, at the origins of Art Deco, Paris, 2016

Jean Laporte, Visions of Morocco by Bernard Boutet de Monvel and Si Azouaou

Mammerichi in Vogue, France, May 1, 1925, reproduced p. 34;

Stéphane-Jacques Addade, La parenthèse marocaine de Bernard Boutet de Monvel in Morocco the treasures of the kingdom, exhibition catalog, Paris, Petit-Palais Museum, April - July 1999, p. 235.