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SALVADOR BARTOLOZZI RUBIO

(MADRID, 1882–MEXICO, 1950)

Tablao Flamenco

1905

INS.: "S. BARTOLOZZI/MADRID, 1905" (BOTTOM RIGHT ANGLE)

OIL AND GOUACHE/PAPER. 530 × 420 MM

Salvador Bartolozzi was born in Madrid in 1882 as a result of the marriage between an Italian, Lucas Bartolozzi and a Spaniard, Obdulia Rubio. Bartolozzi was trained as an artist by his father, who worked in the workshop of casting moulds and reproductions of the School of Fine Arts of San Fernando. His art is concentrated on drawings, but he also probed in scenography, theatre and children's short stories. At the early age of fourteen he publishes his first drawings in the magazine *Nuevo Mundo*, and at nineteen he moves to Paris to complete his training and develop his artistic vocation. He stays five years in the city of the Seine, where he assimilates all the latest European esthetics. He returns to Madrid in 1906 where he soon stands out as a poster artist, while working as an assistant in the die-cast workshop. During these years, he also begins to illustrate for the *Calleja* editorial, where he will become its artistic director in 1915; for *Blanco y Negro* magazine or for *La Esfera*. In those days, he was acquainted with Ramón Gómez de la Serna with whom he founded the gatherings at the Pombo Café, and will become a regular collaborator and draftsman. De la Serna considered that a drawing was the ideal medium to combine literature and art and this is why he was also accompanied by the best drawers as Julio Antonio, Ismael Smith, Romero Calvet..., but among all these artists Bartolozzi will be the only one that will remain in contact

with the author for more than twenty five years. In words of the man of letters, Alfonso Reyes "the format, the density, the material, and the letter, Bartolozzi's drawings (naked and ugly women, masks, cabbalistic bars, and chessboards) all give a distinct air to his books [to Serna's]"¹.

In 1925, he launches a new children's weekly edition, *Pinocchio*, that in a short time surpasses in popularity the short stories created by the Italian creator of the Carlo Collodi character. Pinocchio becomes, thanks to Bartolozzi, the most popular children's character of Spain in the 20's. Due to this successful publication, Bartolozzi creates a new series of children's characters set in Madrid, the *Adventures of Pipa and Pipa* that is issued each week in *Estampa*. Many of these short stories will be successfully adapted into theatre thanks to his couple's collaboration, Magda Donato. However, not only does he dedicate his efforts to the children's world during this time, but also works as a creative designer and set designer for adult theatre. In this way, he will collaborate with García Lorca in *La Zapatera Prodigiosa* or with Miguel de Unamuno in *El Otro*.

After the Civil War he takes refuge in France, where he will remain until 1941, up till the moment in which the Nazi troops invade Paris. Then, he will escape to Mexico where he will continue his career as a writer and draftsman. There as well, he will contact the cartoons world. Bartolozzi dies in the city of Mexico July 9, 1950.



Salvador Bartolozzi,
Cabaret scene,
c. 1900-1905

The actual drawing should be seen as a result of his training during his stay in Paris. In these difficult years of hardship and survival, he managed to make a name for himself in the Parisian literary critique due to his blatant visions, and somewhat under the influence of Goya's *chulos* and flamenco singers. That vision, as observed in our *Tablao Flamenco* drawing, conveys a particular atmosphere which we could denominate as "in a circus show". His drawings in this period have some traits of Toulouse-Lautrec²; they are impregnated by a certain picturesque and sordid air from the after-hour cafes of that era. His figures have a particular grotesque aspect, as revealed by the woman in the centre of the composition, between the *feísmo*, in the manner of Goya, and the French models of Lautrec, Degas or Rops. It perfectly represents the type in which Manuel Abril defines as the "fat heads flashing big false trinkets; of the arrogant obese and grotesque women, *chulonas*, flaunting their huge undulating flesh and boasting about their *cañí* prestige..."³. Likewise, this figure shows the artist's interest for Japanese art, considered as being one of its best interpreters, attracted to both the human figures as for assimilating the technique. For this reason, the woman in the middle of the drawing's composition has a particular aspect between a geisha, thanks to its face smeared in white, and a sumo wrestler. But as we said,

¹ Reyes (1920), p. 9.

² Gómez de la Serna (1948), p. 976.

Bartolozzi not only focuses on human types but also assimilates its technique. It is for that reason that the artist displays the colours on flat surfaces, outlines insistently the contours or plays with the paper's background shade as if this was one more colour in his palette. Therefore, the guitarist's face, the flamenco dancer's arms, or the green waters of the background are not achieved through the use of pigment; rather the actual media of the drawing plays an important part. He assimilates the Japanese style by directly observing the great Japanese masters' prints at exhibitions in Paris that took place in the early 20th century, and indirectly through the works of Degas or Toulouse-Lautrec.

Consequently, the actual drawing perfectly summarizes the painter's stage in Paris, and already reveals all the artistic elements that Bartolozzi will be using throughout the rest of his life. It shows how the artist, "coming from the French Post-modernism, exceeds it by creating a difficult fusion of the cosmopolitan world with the pure and authentic Spanish ways, *lo castizo*; gravitating between the poles of the Japanese style, manifested by pure lines and delicate strokes, and the vigorous reinterpretation of the Goyesque style, an essential influence for the Spanish draftsmen of that time."⁴

³ April (1913), p. 89.

⁴ Vela Cervera (1996), vol. I, p. 46.

