SARAH COLEGRAVE
FINE ART

Maxwell Armfield - Costume Design for Geranos

Maxwell Ashby Armfield

£3,500



REF: 2884

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Description

MAXWELL ARMFIELD, RWS.
(British 1882-1972)

Costume Design for Geranos

Signed l.l.: MAXWELL ARMFIELD, inscribed u.l.: Costume, PHEONIX CEREMONY/ IAN (?) VALO as DAVID, and further inscribed u.r.: GERANOS
Watercolour and pencil
Framed

37.5 by 31 cm., 14 ¾ by 12 ¼ in.
(frame size 65 by 58 cm., 25 ½ by 23 in.)

Provenance:
The Estate of the late Peter Farley, theatre designer.

The Geranos is the most famous dance of Greek antiquity. Probably Minoan in origin, legend says it was invented by Theseus, who danced it for the first time in Delos after the rescue of seven youths and seven maidens from the Labyrinth.

Born at Ringwood, Hampshire, of Quaker parents, his father being a milling engineer, Armfield studied at the Birmingham School of Art under Arthur Gaskin and Joseph Southall who taught him the tempera technique he was to practice for the rest of his life. In September 1902, after visiting Italy at the suggestion of Gaskin, he went to Paris, enrolling at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere and sharing a studio with three other students – Norman Wilkinson (also from Birmingham), Keith Henderson and the sculptor Gaston Lachaise. Returning to London the following year, he embarked on the series of one-man exhibitions that were henceforth to mark his career, showing first at Robert Ross's Carfax Gallery (1908, 1912) and subsequently at the Leicester Galleries and elsewhere, as well as contributing regularly to the RA, NEAC and RWS.

In 1909 Armfield married the writer Constance Smedley, with whom he was to work closely until her death in 1941. They became involved in theatre producitons when they lived in Minchinhampton and had staged the Gloucestershire Historical Pageant of Progress. This led to the formation of the Cotswold Players, which toured village halls, seeing themselves very much in the medieval tradition of travelling players. In early 1915 they moved to Glebe Place, Chelsea where they founded the Greenleaf Players which involved striking costumes and highly choreographed rhythmic movements. Later that year they took they moved to New York, taking the Green Leaf Players with them where it became part of their intensely active and successful seven-year spell in America.

Armfield was not only a painter but a prolific illustrator and versatile decorative artist, while being deeply involved in theatre, music, teaching and journalism and writing some twenty books, including poetry, accounts of his foreign travels and such textbooks as the much-acclaimed Manual of Tempera Painting (1930). He was also a tireless researcher in occult religions and passionately interested in the formal and philosophical basis of art. Armfield designed his own house at Ibsley, on the edge of the New Forest in Hampshire. During this period, he and Constance helped found the New Forest Group of Painters.

He is represented in the collection of the British Museum and many provincial and overseas galleries.