The Queen of Hearts

Claud Lovat Fraser

Sold



REF: 375227

Height: 47.5 cm (18.7")

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Width: 32 cm (12.6")

Framed Height: 72 cm (28.3")

Framed Width: 53 cm (20.9")

Description

CLAUD LOVAT FRASER (1890-1921)

The Queen of Hearts

Signed, variously inscribed and dated: “NURSERY RHYMES” BALLET/JNY 1921 COLISEUM/ DESIGN FOR DRESS/MME: KARSAVINA/AS “QUEEN OF HEARTS”/Claud Fraser Jany 1921 Pen and ink, watercolour and bodycolour on grey washed paper

47.5 by 32 cm.; 18 by 12 in. (frame size 72 by 53 cm., 28 by 21 in.)

Provenance: Fine Art Society, London, 1975; Phillips, Edinburgh, 19 December 1980, lot 1765.

Claud Lovat Fraser was born in London and educated at Charterhouse. Initially intending to join the family firm of solicitors he gave up his legal studies in order to attend the Westminster School of Art. His love of literature and theatre led him to concentrate his artistic output on theatrical design and highly original book illustrations and publications. His passion for the work of Jacobean and eighteenth century playwrights was encouraged by his friends Edward Gordon Craig and Herbert Beerbohm Tree who also introduced him to the world of theatrical costume and set design. Despite a history of frail health he volunteered for the army in 1914 and served with distinction at the Battle of Loos and in the Ypres Salient. In February 1916 he was sent to hospital suffering from shell shock and gas and was never to return to the front. At this time he produced a number of amusing and sometimes moving watercolours recording the incidents and uniforms of the front. After the war he worked with extreme energy holding a number of exhibitions and most importantly producing his revolutionary designs for the costumes and sets for Nigel Playfair’s important productions of As You Like It and The Beggar’s Opera. In 1920 the great Russian ballerina Tamara Karsavina approached Lovat Fraser asking him to design a ballet for her on the theme of Nursery Rhymes to be produced at the London Coliseum. The present work is one of the three costume designs he made of Karsavina. The others being Little Jumping Joan (collection of Victoria & Albert Museum, London) and the Blackbird (private collection.) As the ballet was part of a vaudeville programme it was not possible to use scenery so Lovat designed a huge semi-circular emerald green curtain which enclosed the stage with slits cut for entrances. Shortly after the ballet was completed Lovat began work on a Leicester Galleries show, designs for Lord Dunsany’s play If and a new ballet for Karsavina called Divertissement. At the end of May he when to the cottage he shared with Paul and Margaret Nash in Dymchurch, Kent. Whilst there his weakened heart and over work brought on a fatal illness.

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