Joseph Southall - Cymon and Iphigenia

Joseph Edward Southall

Sold



REF: JS15

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Description

JOSEPH SOUTHALL, RWS, NEAC, RBSA(1861-1944)
Cymon and Iphigenia, 1942
Signed with monogram in gold and dated l.l.: JES / 1942 and inscribed by the artist in pencil (verso) Formalin all over and further inscribed (verso) CYMON AND IPHIGENIA EGG, painting begun 18.v.1942 Finished 26.ix 1942Tempera on board
33 by 46.5 cm., 13 by 18 ¼ in.
Exhibited:London, New English Art Club, winter 1942, no.246.
The fourteenth century story collection by Giovanni Boccaccio known as The Decameron was a perhaps unsurprising source for an artist who had held a lifelong interest in medieval and Renaissance Italian culture. Southall had used the collection as an inspiration for his earlier tempera painting Sigismonda Drinking the Poison of 1896-8 (Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery (acc.1948P49)) and would have also been aware of the story of Cymon and Iphigenia from earlier versions by Reynolds, Millais and Leighton. In the story Cymon, the boorish son of a nobleman, encounters the sleeping Iphigenia by a fountain. As well as awakening his desire, the meeting moves him to improve his own character in order to prove his worthiness to her. Southall’s Cymon and Iphigenia is one of the artist’s last significant mythological subject pictures, finished in the middle of the second world war, two years before his death. Despite the late date, the picture is evidence of the artist’s enduring genius in his use of the tempera medium and of the decorative Romantic style that he had made so much his own.