A Short History of the French Guards

Claud Lovat Fraser

Sold



REF: 109277

Height: 57.15 cm (22.5")

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Width: 31.75 cm (12.5")

Description

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. He was one of the few British officers to survive the battle of Loos (September 25-October 8, 1915). In December 1915, Frasers battalion was the first to withstand a German gas attack. In the excitement and confusion of the event, he neglected to put on his gas mask until he had emerged from his bunker and was dispatched to England for a short sick leave. He was promoted to captain in January 1916, but by late February he was home on leave again, suffering from the effects of gas and shellshock after a battle at the Ypres Salient. While recovering, Fraser occupied himself with plans for a pictorial history of the Grenadier Guards that was never published and a number of amusing and sometimes moving watercolours recording the incidents and uniforms of the front. Successive Medical Board Reviews continued to find his health unfit for battle and Fraser instead served the Army as a clerk upon the completion of his sick leave in August 1916. He worked in the War Office on visual propaganda from October 1916 through late April 1917 and at the Army Record Office at Hounslow until his discharge in March 1919. 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. A workaholic, Fraser died of exhaustion and his weakened heart whilst staying with his friend Paul Nash at Dymchurch, Kent in 1921.