SARAH COLEGRAVE
FINE ART

Royal Flying Corps in Action over the Trenches

Norman Gregory Arnold

Sold

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REF: 119743

Height: 91.44 cm (36")

Width: 67.31 cm (26.5")

Description

Arnold was born in Leigh, Lancashire on 19 September 1892. He served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War and between 1918 and 1919 was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum to create a series of watercolours showing the aerial action of the war. The Imperial War Museum's RAF sub-section was instigated by the artist Richard Carline, partly to follow his interest in aerial landscape and partly to withdraw his wounded brother, Sydney, from active service with the air corps. Carline drew up a series of suitable subjects to be covered and divided these between himself, Sydney and Arnold. With Richard Carline focussing on aerial landscapes and Sydney concentrating on air operations on all fronts, Arnold was left with "technical" subjects such as depicting types of aircraft, flying methods and combat tactics, as well as representing famous incidents, such as The Last Flight of Captain Ball, VC, DSO, MC, 17 May 1917 (collection of Imperial War Museum). This very much fell into line with the thinking of RAF sub-section chairman, Lieutenant-Colonel A C Maclean, who insisted that the artists employed should all be serving with the RAF and that the emphasis of the art scheme should be with accurate representations of aircraft and tactics rather than with artistic expression. With his first hand experience of aerial warfare Arnold was in a position to produce a remarkable series of technically accurate watercolours of the Royal Flying Corps in action during the First World War. The majority of these works are in the collection of the Imperial War Museum. After the war Arnold entered the film industry and was looked upon as one of the ablest art directors in the country. He was employed initially by First Players Lasky at their studios in Islington and was said to be responsible for hiring Alfred Hitchock. In later years he worked for British Lion, Warner Brothers and Ealing Studios among many others, being art director on 154 films. We are grateful to Richard Slocombe of the Imperial War Museum for his kind assistance in cataloguing this picture.

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