SARAH COLEGRAVE
FINE ART

Ernest Howard Shepard - World War I Field Gun

Ernest Howard Shepard

Sold



REF:

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Description

ERNEST HOWARD SHEPARD(1879-1976)
Field Gun in Action
Inscribed l.r.: 600 ydsWatercolour on the reverse of a World War I military range target sheet (with bullet holes)Framed
14 by 21.5 cm.; 5 ½ by 8 ½ in.(frame size 31 by 37 cm., 12 ¼ by 14 ½ in.
Shepard was born in St John's Wood, the son of an architect and amateur painter and the grandson of the watercolour artist William Lee. He was educated at St John's Wood Preparatory School, Colet Court School and St Paul's. He studied art at Heatherley's, winning a scholarship to the Royal Academy Schools in 1897. He lived in Glebe Place, Chelsea before moving to Shamley Green near Guildford in 1904. At this time he worked as a cartoonist and illustrator for the Graphic, Illustrated London News, Printer's Pie, London Opinion, Nash's, Odd Volume, Pears Annual and The Sketch. He was first published in Punch in 1907 and thereafter became a regular contributor.
Although the inscription on the reverse suggests this dramatic study dates to World War II it does in fact date to Shepard's distinguished service in the Great War. In his mid-thirties, when World War I broke out in 1914, Shepard received a commission as a second lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery, an arm of the Royal Artillery. He was assigned to the 105th Siege Battery, which crossed to France in May 1916 and went into action at the Battle of the Somme. By the autumn of 1916 Shepard had started working for the Intelligence Department, sketching the combat area within the view of his battery position. On 16 February 1917, he was made an acting captain whilst second-in-command of his battery, and briefly served as an acting major in late April and early May of that year during the Battle of Arras, before reverting to acting captain. He was promoted to substantive lieutenant on 1 July 1917. Whilst acting as captain, he was awarded the Military Cross. His citation read:
"For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. As forward Observation Officer he continued to observe and send back valuable information, in spite of heavy shell and machine gun fire. His courage and coolness were conspicuous."
Late in 1917, the 105th Siege Battery participated in the final stages of the Battle of Passchendaele where it came under heavy fire and suffered a number of casualties. At the end of the year, it was sent to help retrieve a disastrous situation on the Italian Front, travelling by rail via Verona before coming into action at the Montello Hill. Shepard missed the Second Battle of the Piave River in April 1918, being on leave in England (where he was invested with him MC by King Geroge V) and where he was attending a gunnery course. Back in Italy with his battery for the victory at Vittorio Veneto. After the Armistice of Villa Giusti in November 1918, Shepard was promoted to acting major in command of the battery, and given the duty of administering captured enemy guns. Demobilisation began at Christmas 1918 and the 105th Siege Battery was disbanded in March 1919. Throughout the war he was a regular contributor of ill...