Oliver Messel - Costume Design for Rashomon, 1959

Oliver Messel

Sold



Sarah Colegrave Fine Art
London & Oxfordshire
+44 (0)77 7594 3722 sarah@sarahcolegrave.co.uk

Description

OLIVER MESSEL
(1904-1978)

The Medium – Costume Design for Peter Glenville's Rashomon, Performed at the Music Box, New York, 1959

Signed l.r.: Oliver Messel and inscribed u.r.: The Medium
Watercolour and chalks over traces of pencil
Framed

36 by 23 cm., 14 ¼ by 9 in.
(frame size 59 by 45 cm., 23 ¼ by 17 ¾ in.)

Provenance:
Wright Hepburn Gallery, London

Messel won a Tony Antoinette Award for his set for Rashomon, a play by Fay and Michael Kanin, directed by Peter Glenville and performed at the Music Box Theatre, New York, in 1959. Although a box office failure, the play was critically acclaimed. Brooks Atkinson praised Messel's atmospheric set: "… Oliver Messel's settings, represented the decaying Rashomon gate and a barbaric bamboo jungle are like the illustrations for a macabre legend. Rashomon is an incantation of thing far away and long since forgotten." (New York Times, 28 January 1959). Messel was also nominated for a Tony award for his costume designs in the production.

Born in London, Messel was the grandson of the illustrator Linley Sambourne. After Eton he studied art at the Slade School of Art and by the early 1930s had established himself as one of Britain's principal stage designers. Initially working for the Cochran Revues, he went on to design for many theatrical, operatic, ballet and film productions. His books included Stage Designs and Costumes, 1933; Designs for A Midsummer Night's Dream, 1957 and Delightful Food, 1958. He exhibited at the Leicester Galleries and Redfern Gallery and also designed interiors and gardens of the Dorchester Hotel, Flaxley Abbey, Gloucestershire and elsewhere as well as several houses and grounds in Barbados and Mustique. The Victoria & Albert Museum hold the majority of his design archives.