Rocher St Michel D’Aiguilhe

Albert Rutherston

£1,600



REF: 2522

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Description

ALBERT RUTHERSTON, RWS

Rocher St Michel D’Aiguilhe

Signed and dated l.l.: Albert R 1914 Watercolour and bodycolour Framed

35.5 by 25 cm., 14 by 9 ¾ in. (frame size 65.5 by 53.5 cm., 25 ¾ by 21 in.)

The artist and by descent to Gloria, Countess Bathurst.

St Michel d’Aiguilhe (St Michael of the Needle) is a chapel in Aiguilhe, near Le Pey-enVelay, France. Bishop Godescalc of Le Puy-en-Velay had the chapel built to celebrate his return from the pilgrimage of St James in 951. The chapel is dedicated to the Archangel Michael, the patron of mountaintops and other high places. It is reached by 268 steps carved into the rock.

Born Albert Daniel Rothenstein, he was the youngest of the six children of Moritz and Bertha Rothenstein, German-Jewish immigrants who had settled in Bradford, Yorkshire in the 1860s. He and his siblings proved to be a hugely talented and artistic family, his elder brother became Sir William Rotherstein (1872-1945), the artist and director of the Royal College of Art; two of his other siblings, Charles Rutherston and Emily Hesslein, both accumulated major modern British and French art collections and his nephew Sir John Rothenstein was direct of the Tate Gallery.

He was educated at Bradford Grammar School before moving to London in 1898 to study at the Slade School of Art where he became close friends with Augustus John and William Orpen. He met Walter Sickert during a painting holiday in France in 1900 and by introducing Sickert to Spencer Gove became instrumental in the beginning of the Camden Town Group. He was one of Sickert’s most frequent companions and was one of the original members of the Fitzroy Street Group

Rutherston had a sociable and attractive personality, he frequently travelled abroad with other artists including Max Beerbohm, Spencer Gore, Walter Russell and Edna Clarke Hall. It was Clarke Hall who introduced him to watercolour painting and in 1910, while in Grasse on the France Riviera with the artist Gerald Chowne, he tried his hand at watercolour painting on silk, a technique most famously used by his friend Charles Conder. These watercolours led to his first solo exhibition at the Carfax Gallery in October1910.

In 1911 he collaborated with the English dramatist and director, Harley Granville-Barker, to design costumes for Granville-Barker’s innovative production of Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale, performed at the Savoy Theatre in 1912.

At the outbreak of World War I he was initially assigned a desk job with the Engineers’ War Service Register at the Board of Trade and from October 1916 he served with the Northamptonshire Regiment in Egypt and Palestine. At this time he he anglicised his surname to Rutherston as a declaration of patriotism to the country of his birth.

Following the war he returned to his artistic career and married the actress, Marjory Holman. He took a number of teaching posts, starting at Camberwell School of Art and later becoming Ruskin Master of Drawing in 1929. At the same time his own work flourished when he was recruited as an illustrator by the Curwen Press along with Claud Lovat Fraser and Paul Nash. In 1938 he largel...