A Portly Man

Claud Lovat Fraser

Sold



REF: 375436

Height: 17.5 cm (6.9")

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Width: 11.5 cm (4.5")

Framed Height: 33.5 cm (13.2")

Framed Width: 26 cm (10.2")

Description

CLAUD LOVAT FRASER (1890-1921)

A Portly Man

Watercolour and ink over traces of pencil Framed

17.5 by 11.5 cm., 7 by 4 in. (frame size 33.5 by 26 cm., 13 by 10 in.)

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. In late 1914, despite a history of frail health, Fraser enlisted with the Inns of Court Officer Training Corps and was commissioned to the 14th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry. His wartime sketchbooks (many now in the Bryn Mawr College Library, Pennsylvania, USA) and the drawings he included in his correspondence provide an intimate visual record of the trenches and battlefields of Flanders in this early phase of the war. He was one of few British officers to survive the battle of Loos (September 25-October 8, 1915) and in December 1915 his 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. Fraser 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. Successive Medical Board Reviews continued to find his health unfit for battle through to the end of the war. 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 until 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.

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