

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Karl Arnold (1883 - 1953)

Mickey Mouse (Micky-Maus)

Pen and black ink and pale blue-green wash.
Signed with initials and dated KA31 at the lower right.
240 x 231 mm. (9 1/2 x 9 1/8 in.) [image]
391 x 344 mm. (15 3/8 x 13 1/2 in.) [sheet]

A drawing for an illustration published in the 26th January 1931 issue of *Simplicissimus*, accompanied by the caption 'Unerhört, dieses Biest stellt unser aller Prominenz in den Schatten!' ('Outrageous, this beast steals the limelight from all of our celebrities!'). Among the celebrities depicted in the drawing may be recognized the film stars Tallulah Bankhead, Wallace Beery, Charlie Chaplin and Adolphe Menjou. Also depicted is the German actor Otto Gebühr in the guise of Frederick II, King of Prussia; a role he portrayed in fifteen German films between 1920 and 1942.

Published in Germany, *Simplicissimus* was one of the most important satirical magazines of the first half of the 20th century, and enjoyed an international reputation. The magazine was founded in Munich in 1896 by the publisher Albert Langen, who envisioned an illustrated satirical weekly for a German audience, along the lines of *Punch* in England or *L'assiette au beurre*, *Le Rire* or *Gil Blas illustré* in France. *Simplicissimus* soon became especially renowned for its artwork, with artists from all over Europe contributing drawings for its pages, all of which were reproduced to a very high standard. By 1904 the magazine's circulation was in excess of 65,000 copies a week, but after the First World War the magazine began to focus more on social than political commentary. With the rise to power of Hitler and the Nazi party in 1933, the magazine lost much of its edge, becoming largely a propaganda outlet, and it ceased publication in September 1944.

Karl Arnold was one of the most significant contributors to *Simplicissimus*. His first drawing was published in the magazine in 1907, but it was not until 1917 that his work began to appear regularly in its pages. By this time Arnold was a staff artist, with a share in the profits of the magazine, and he can be credited with shaping its 'look' during the 1920's and 1930's. Arnold remained closely associated with the magazine until its closure.

Provenance:

Fischer Fine Art, London, in 1978
Ralph Esmerian, New York.

Exhibitions

London, Fischer Fine Art, Karl Arnold 1883-1953, 1978, no.35.

Artist description:

One of the leading caricaturists and illustrators of the first half of the 20th century in Germany, Karl Arnold studied drawing in his native Neustadt before entering the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich in 1901, where he trained under the artists Karl Raupp, Ludwig Löffitz and Franz von Stuck, and where among his fellow students were Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee. In 1907 Arnold contributed his first illustration to the satirical magazine *Simplicissimus*, with which he was to be closely associated for much of his later career. Arnold spent some months in Paris between 1910 and 1911 from where he continued to contribute illustrations for *Simplicissimus* and its rival, the art and literary journal *Jugend*. In 1913 Arnold was, along with Kandinsky and Alexej von Jawlensky, one of the founders of the *Neue Münchener Sezession* (New Munich Secession) group, and contributed to its first exhibition, held the following year. Between 1934 and 1936 he served as the director of *Simplicissimus*, and in 1936 engaged in an exclusive contract as a cartoonist for the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. Beset by illness and following a stroke in 1943, Arnold produced very little work before his death in 1953, not long after being appointed an honorary member of the Academy in Munich. Arnold's graphic work began to be recognized again in the 1970's, with a retrospective of his drawings and caricatures held in Berlin and elsewhere in 1975 and an exhibition dedicated to *Simplicissimus* at the Haus der Kunst in Munich in 1977. As has been noted of Arnold's illustrations, 'His unique quality as an artist is the brilliant characterisation of types and the extraordinarily telling conjunction of picture and caption.'