

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Jean-Adrien MERCIER (Angers 1899 - Paris 1995)

Two Women in a Cemetery in Rabat, Morocco

Gouache and watercolour, over an underdrawing in pencil, within a black ink border.

Signed and dated Jean A. Mercier – 5 – 22 – at the upper right, and inscribed Rabat at the upper left. Further dedicated, signed and dated by the artist a Madame Lecocq bien(?) affectueusement / souvenir de Maroc - Jean A. Mercier / - 5 - 22 - on the old backing sheet.

Also inscribed (in a different hand) appartient a Madame Lecocq on the old backing sheet.
192 x 245 mm. (7 5/8 x 9 5/8 in.)

The present sheet is dated May 1922, when Mercier was twenty-three years old. It is interesting to note that the young artist was visiting Morocco only a decade or so after the country had been opened up to foreign visitors. Unlike Tunisia or Algeria, Morocco remained largely closed to foreigners throughout the 19th century, until it was declared a French and Spanish protectorate in 1912. The French decided to move the capital from Fez to Rabat, a port town dominated by Barbary pirates since the 17th century. This drawing appears to depict a small cemetery on the Atlantic coast of Rabat, just north of the Kasbah des Oudaïas and to the north and east of the larger Cimitière As-Shouhada.

Provenance:

Given by the artist to a Mme. Lecocq, according to the inscription on the old backing sheet.

Artist description:

Active as a poster artist, illustrator and graphic designer, Jean-Adrien Mercier received his training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in his native Angers, transferring to the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1921. He began his career in 1924 as a designer of publicity and cinema posters, a field in which he was to remain active throughout his life and for which he remains best known. Between 1925 and 1942 Mercier designed more than 120 cinema posters for films by such eminent directors as Jean Renoir, Abel Gance and Sacha Guitry. He also produced numerous commercial posters, notably for the Cointreau brand, for whom he worked for some forty years, eventually becoming the artistic director of the firm. At the end of the 1930's Mercier began producing illustrations for children's books and fairy tales, and also undertook a prolific career as an illustrator. As well as designs for calendars, book covers and so forth, Mercier also received the commission for the decoration of the children's playroom on the transatlantic ship France, painted in 1961, and also designed the ship's menus.