Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Karl GEISER (1898 - 1957)

Head of a Boy with a Cap

Pen and black ink on paper, laid down on a white card.
Stamped with the artist's initials KG in red ink at the lower right.
Stamped F 4 in the lower right margin of the backing card.
97 x 82 mm. (3 7/8 x 3 1/34 in.)

Karl Geiser worked mainly in pen, with a deceptively simple linear technique devoid of shading or hatching. The present sheet, a fine and typical example of the artist's spare draughtsmanship, may be grouped with drawings of the late 1920's and 1930's, such as a pen study of a standing youth named Jean, drawn in Marseille in 1929, in a private Swiss collection, or a small pencil sketch of a boy wearing a cap, dating from the artist's stay in Munich in 1937, that was part of the contents of the artist's studio at the time of his death.

This drawing was part of the collection of some two hundred drawings, of various schools, assembled by the German-born collector Curtis O. Baer (1898-1976). Most of Baer's drawings were acquired after the Second World War, mainly between 1950 and 1960, and several sheets are today in the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Provenance:

Curtis Otto Baer, New Rochelle, New York (Lugt 3366), his mark stamped in at the lower right margin of the backing card
By descent to his son, George M. Baer, Atlanta, Georgia
Thence by descent until 2010.

Artist description:

One of the most significant Swiss sculptors of the 20th century, Karl Geiser received his training in Berne, Munich and Berlin and, apart from brief visits to Paris, Rome and Genoa, worked mainly in Zurich. He enjoyed a successful career, and among his important patrons was the Winterthur collector Georg Reinhardt. As a sculptor, draughtsman and printmaker, Geiser's subject matter was often inspired by children. As one contemporary writer noted, 'The themes of this sculptor are characteristic. Geiser draws, above all, the adolescent. The body of the prepubescent youth, the man-child, all of whose proportions escape any fixed rules, is the dominant element of his art.'

Geiser received a number of public sculptural commissions in Zurich, Berne and Winterthur, notably two sculptural groups of boys and girls for a new school in Berne, completed in 1937 and installed in 1938. As well as working as a draughtsman and printmaker, Geiser was also a passionate photographer. In 1941 an exhibition of 350 of his drawings was held at the Kunsthaus in Zurich, the same year that a large exhibition of his sculptures was mounted at the Kunstmuseum in Winterthur. Geiser suffered from depression throughout his life and died in his studio in 1957, apparently a suicide.