Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



George BARBIER (1882 - 1932)

La tasse de thé: Séraphine en rose et noir

Pen and black ink and grey wash and watercolour, over a pencil underdrawing.
Signed and dated GEORGE / BARBIER / 1925 at the right centre.
Variously inscribed and titled cg 1029 / Juliette / Séraphine / ref. / Taille / "La tasse de thé / Séraphine en rose et noir" on the verso.
263 x 204 mm. (10 3/8 x 8 in.)

Drawn in 1925, the present sheet is a costume study, probably for a theatrical production. As the critic Edmond Jaloux noted of such drawings by the artist, 'George Barbier is one of the most valuable and most significant artists of our time, so rich in all kinds of talent and original ideas. When our age is past…it will take just a few drawings of Barbier to revive the taste and spirit of our time…When I look at Barbier's costumes for the stage, I see the characters of those magical stories come to life before me and tempt my imagination.' Similar dresses are found in a number of Barbier's drawings of costume designs.

Artist description:

A painter and illustrator, George Barbier studied in Nantes before entering the studio of Jean-Paul Laurens at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. At the beginning of his career he signed some of his work under the pseudonym 'Larry' or 'Edward William Larry'. Barbier first came to public attention with an exhibition of around ninety drawings at the Galerie L'Art Moderne in Paris in 1911. One of the foremost illustrators of the Art Deco movement, Barbier provided fashion plates for some of the leading couturiers of the period, notably Paul Poiret, Jeanne Lanvin and Madeleine Vionnet. As the artist was described in 1929: 'George Barbier combines tact with precision; he prefers (a rare thing nowadays) a taste for singularity and grace of character; he never seeks to force attention but to tame pleasure; he always knows how to keep himself at an equal distance from mechanical pastiche and arbitrary misrepresentation…he almost seems working outside of the modern world, in the silent and protected

security of a boudoir-cum-workshop, a cabinet d'amateur and a library.' Characterized by a refinement and elegance which epitomized the Art Deco era, much of Barbier's work took the form of fashion illustrations for such magazines as La Gazette du Bon Ton (for which he also wrote), Fémina, Costumes parisiens, Vogue, La Vie Parisienne and the Journal des Dames et des Modes, as well as the annual Modes et manières d'aujourd'hui for 1914. Often inspired by the costumes of ancient Greece or 18th century France, he also produced designs for stage sets and theatre costumes, including for the Folies Bergère, as well as for fabrics, fans and wallpaper.

As the scholar and collector Gordon Ray has noted of George Barbier, 'By epitomizing the more refined fantasies of the Parisian world of pleasure during the [1920s], he became the most haunting of Art Deco artists…Recognized as one of the master decorators of the time, he found his services in demand in many fields…Barbier was a supreme decorative designer, whose art centered on the human figure, displayed in a thousand settings and costumes.' As well as illustrating his own book Le bonheur du jour, ou les graces à la mode, a study of fashion and manners on which he worked from 1920 to 1924, Barbier drew a large number of book illustrations for works by Théophile Gautier, Paul Verlaine, Pierre Louÿs and Charles Baudelaire, among others. In later years he designed advertisements for Cartier, Renault and other companies. As the novelist and critic Edmond Jaloux noted of the artist, 'George Barbier is one of the most valuable and most significant artists of our time, so rich in all kinds of talent and original ideas. When our age is past…it will take just a few drawings of Barbier to revive the taste and spirit of our time.' Barbier died at the age of fifty, at the peak of his career. In recent years, there have been important exhibitions of the artist's work in Venice in 2008-2009 and Toronto in 2013.