

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Frank BRANGWYN (Bruges 1867 - Ditchling, Sussex 1956)

A Hilltop Castle at Sunset

Watercolour over a pencil underdrawing; the sheet folded over at the bottom.

A sketch of a tree in black chalk on the verso.

Signed with initials FB at the lower right, and again on the overlap.

Inscribed white(?) stalks on the overlap.

Further inscribed laib coll on the overlap.

Inscribed (by the artist) to follow cut on the verso.

Further inscribed 3. William de Belleroy Collection on the verso.

171 x 358 mm. (6 3/4 x 14 1/8 in.) [image]

219 x 359 mm. (8 5/8 x 14 1/8 in.) [sheet]

This vibrant watercolour sketch belonged to William de Belleroy (1913-1969), a friend of the artist for twenty-six years, who wrote a number of books about Brangwyn, including *Brangwyn Talks*, published in 1944, and *Brangwyn's Pilgrimage: The Life Story of an Artist*, published in 1948. Belleroy owned a large number of works by Brangwyn, including more than eighty watercolours, and also promoted his work tirelessly. He organized several exhibitions of the artist's work, notably the retrospective exhibition held at the Royal Academy in 1952; the first to be devoted to a living artist. As Sir Gerald Kelly, the President of the Royal Academy, referred to him in a letter of that year, 'Count de Belleroy, whose love of Brangwyn passes many men's understanding.'

Provenance:

Count William de Belleroy, Brighton

Possibly his sale ('The Collection of Works by Sir Frank Brangwyn, R.A. formed by Count William de Belleroy (First Portion)'), London, Christie's, 18 July 1961

Robert Kime and Piers von Westenholz, London.

Literature:

Possibly Cyril G. E. Bunt, *The Water-Colours of Sir Frank Brangwyn R.A.*, Leigh-on-Sea, 1958, p.31, no.51 ('Barnard Castle, Yorkshire. 9 1/4 x 14 in. In the possession of Count William de Belleroy').

Artist description:

Frank Brangwyn's use of watercolour was to last his entire career; his earliest known work in the

medium dates from 1878, when he was just eleven years old, while the latest is dated 1955, the year before his death. His numerous watercolours were mainly devoted to landscapes and townscapes, and were generally more subdued in tonality than his oil paintings and murals, and are less dominated by figures. Brangwyn made sketching trips to Italy (especially Venice), France, Belgium and Spain; the last in the company of Arthur Melville, whose watercolour style was to influence his own. Many of his watercolours are actually works of mixed media, enlivened with the addition of touches of gouache, tempera, pencil, chalk, pastel or pen and ink, and are often very large in scale. Brangwyn only rarely exhibited his watercolours, which seem to have been done, for the most part, purely for his own pleasure.

In a brief review of an exhibition of Brangwyn's watercolours in 1934, a critic noted of him that 'He is English, perhaps in the skill with which he handles water-colours, but he is far from being readily related to the so-called English Tradition. He is not as realistic as Constable, nor as romantic as Turner, nor as "flat" as Cotman, nor as atmospheric as Cox, nor as architectural as Roberts, nor as delicate as Steer. He is one thing that none of these water-colourists ever were: primarily decorative...every water-colour here strikes the spectator at a distance.' Another scholar has noted of Brangwyn that 'The variety and excellence of his water-colours gives them the right to be considered entirely upon their own high merits, as great works of art carried out in a medium which is more difficult, more exacting, more spontaneous and more revealing than any other.'