

Louis Welden Hawkins (1849 - 1910)

Le Petit Vent du Nord

Pen and black ink on textured paper, laid down on card.

Signed with the artist's monogram LWH in a circle at the bottom.

376 x 267 mm. (14 3/4 x 10 1/2 in.)

A splendid example of Louis Welden Hawkins's refined draughtsmanship in pen and ink, this drawing is likely to be a design for an advertisement for fans. The particularly Symbolist fascination with the mask as an artistic device (as seen, for example, in the work of Fernand Khnopff) is here balanced by elements and motifs - stylized vegetation and curved lines – derived from the vocabulary of Art Nouveau. From about 1900 onwards Hawkins produced a series of drawings of portrait masks; these were intended as advertising images or magazine illustrations, as well as designs for fans and mirrors, and, occasionally, as illustrations for menus, theatre and concert programmes. Perhaps the best known of Hawkins's mask designs was one created for the goldsmiths Christofle et Cie. and used as an advertisement during the Exposition Universelle of 1900. A similar drawing of a mask by Hawkins is in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, while four other drawings of masks, each with female heads, are in private collections. Also similar to the drawing here exhibited, though not in the form of a mask, is Hawkins's design for another advertisement for the Christofle firm, published in 1901 in the magazine L'oeuvre d'art international, edited by the artist's brother-in-law. It has been noted of these drawings that 'In his masks, Hawkins used Art Nouveau floral motifs as decoration, depicted in two dimensions. This is in contrast with the faces which have acquired volume thanks to shadow effects and have been drawn with very realistic detail....'

The model for this drawing may have been the artist's daughter Jacqueline (b.1892), who posed for a number of her father's works of this period.

Literature:

Gilles Almy, Louis Welden Hawkins peintre (1849-1910), unpublished MA thesis, Université Paris X Nanterre, 1983, no.63 (where dated 1900-1901).

Artist description:

Born in Germany to an English father and an Austrian mother, Louis Welden Hawkins studied at the Académie Julian in Paris between 1873 and 1876, under the painters William Adolphe Bouguereau, Jules Lefebvre and Gustave Boulanger. He entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1876 and made his public debut at the Salon des Artistes Français in 1881, where his painting Les Orphelins won a third-class medal and was purchased by the State for the Musée du Luxembourg. Hawkins exhibited at the Salons of the Societé des Artistes Français between 1881 and 1891, and from 1894 onwards showed his work at the Societé Nationale des Beaux-Arts. He also participated in the exhibitions organized by the Rose + Croix movement in Paris in 1894 and 1895, at La Libre Esthétique in Brussels in 1894, 1896 and 1898, and at the Royal Society of British Artists in London in 1880 and 1881. He exhibited mainly landscapes, sentimental genre scenes and refined portraits, all of which earned him a considerable reputation.

Although Hawkins worked in a range of styles, perhaps the most interesting is a form of refined Symbolism, reflecting the artist's interest in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites and his friendship with writers such as Stephane Mallarmé (who noted of a painting given to him by the artist, 'talisman de longues heures, que nul regard ne peut épuiser'), Paul Adam and Jean Lorrain, as well as painters like Eugène Carrière and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes. Hawkins, who took French nationality in 1895, at the age of forty-six, was also friendly with the painter James A. McNeill Whistler and the sculptor Auguste Rodin, whose portrait he painted. Despite the fact that he worked for his entire career in France, only a handful of paintings by Hawkins are to be found in French museum collections, notably a remarkable portrait in the Musée d'Orsay of the feminist, socialist and journalist Caroline Rémy, known as Séverine. A striking self-portrait by the artist, dated 1906, is in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, which mounted a retrospective exhibition of Hawkins's work in 1993.