

Georges LEPAPE (Paris 1887 - Bonneval 1971)

Papiers à Lettres "Élite": Maquette for the Logo of the Élite Paper Company

Gouache and pencil.

Signed lepape in pencil at the lower right.

Inlaid within a hand-drawn border in pencil on a sheet of pale blue watermarked Élite paper, with a printed and partially embossed text Papiers à Lettres / "ÉLITE" / velin de rives.

129 x 101 mm. (5 x 4 in.) at greatest dimensions [image]

304 x 234 mm. (12 x 9 1/4 in.) [full sheet]

Although Georges Lepape came to be renowned for his fashion illustrations and magazine covers, and also produced posters, cards, costume and set designs for the theatre and advertisements, such as the present sheet. This drawing was used as a design for the trademark for a brand of writing paper produced in 1925 by the Élite Paper Company in France. This image was used as a maquette for a printed advertisement, as well as for the covers of the boxes in which the letter paper and envelopes were sold.

Referring to Lepape's stylish drawings, William Packer has written that, 'Never seeking to do more than decorate the surface he was given, and appropriately and charmingly indulge his wit, Lepape produced nevertheless, time after time, memorable and striking images that may now be seen to be rather more than mere period pieces, ripe for fashionable revival.'

Artist description:

In 1911 the couturier Paul Poiret selected Georges Lepape, a young graduate of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, to illustrate an album of his fashion designs, entitled Les Choses de Paul Poiret. Lepape's stylish images soon came to the attention of the publishers of high-end fashion magazines. In 1913 he began working for the French publication La Gazette du Bon Ton, founded by Lucien Vogel, and a few years later was hired by the American publisher Condé Nast to provide fashion illustrations for Vogue. The magazine had established a reputation for its stylish cover drawings, the work of some of the leading graphic artists and illustrators of the day. Lepape produced a total of 114 covers for Vogue, the first appearing in October 1916 and the last in May 1939. Some of his cover illustrations were used for two or sometimes three different copies of the magazine, which was published in American, English and French editions. As William Packer has noted of Lepape, 'From the first his covers for Vogue were models of refinement, simplicity and visual wit...Seen as a whole this body of work stands as a splendid and remarkable achievement, a sustained demonstration of graphic resource, invention and technique of a very high order indeed.'

Lepape reached the peak of his success at Vogue during the decade of the 1920s, when he completed over seventy cover designs for the magazine. As the artist's son later recalled, 'the covers Lepape prepared for Vogue were more than a series of ravishing images. They were a succession of surprises, each new one as delightful as the last...Readers looked forward to their next issue of Vogue with all the more pleasure since they knew it would look different every time.' Lepape also drew covers for the magazines Femina, Harper's Bazaar, La Donna, House & Garden and Vanity Fair. Lepape came to be renowned for his fashion illustrations and magazine covers, and also produced posters, cards, costume and set designs for the theatre, as well as advertisements for, among others, Arys and d'Orsay perfumes, Renault cars, Leroy furs and the department stores Galeries Lafayette and Printemps.