



MACCONNAL - MASON

ESTABLISHED 1893



Charles Spencelayh (1865 - 1958)

Ancient Lights

Signed, lower right: C.SPENCELAYH; also signed and inscribed as titled, on the reverse

Oil on panel

13½ x 10¼ in – 34.3 x 26 cm

Artist description:

The youngest of eleven children and son of Henry Spencelayh, an engineer and iron and brass founder, the painting talent of Charles Spencelayh was evident from an early age. As a child he made copies of old masters, which he sold to dealers for 7s. 6d. each. In 1885 he enrolled at the National Art Training School (later renamed the Royal College of Art) in South Kensington where he won a prize for figure drawing; the disciplined study there suited him and was influential upon his work for the rest of his life.

He continued his studies in Paris where he exhibited at the Paris Salon.

Spencelayh became famous for his figure subjects, portraits and genre scenes. When painting, a new picture would be considered long and hard before a design was sketched, and then in his studio he would effectively build a 'set' employing a model for the principal character. A picture could take months to complete, but he painted with very little monetary appreciation. He achieved great popularity during his lifetime, although he was not accepted in artistic circles. His son, Vernon Spencelayh (b.1891), once commented, "Dad went his own way and ignored any advice from other artists. In fact, he was an isolationist".

He exhibited at the Royal Academy 1912-1958 where he showed thirty paintings, the Royal Institute of Oil Painters, the Royal Society of Miniature Painters and several commercial galleries. He was a Vice President of the British Watercolour Society and a member of the Birmingham Society of Art. Although Sir Alfred J. Munnings (1879-1959), when President of the Royal Academy, recommended that he should be accepted as an Honorary Academician, this honour was never, in fact, accorded to him.

Spencelayh had the support of several influential collectors, which included Queen Mary and Mr. Levy, who loaned Spencelayh family a residence when they were in Manchester. During his lifetime, perhaps his greatest admirer was Queen Mary. She commissioned for her celebrated Dolls House, a postage size portrait of her husband, George V and the Royal thank you note became one of Spencelayh's most treasured possessions.

His works can be found in museums in: Bradford, City Art Gallery; London, the Tate Gallery; Manchester, City Art Gallery; Preston, the Harris Museum and Art Gallery.