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EDMUND DVLAC

CATALOGUE
OF AN EXHIBITION OF HIS
WATER-COLOVR DRAWINGS
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
* MARTIN BIRNBAUM *



SCOTT & FOWLES
590 FIFTH AVE. NEW YORK

DEC 27 1916



EDMUND DULAC

FROM A CAMERA PORTRAIT BY HOPPÉ, LONDON

Gift

D20. N48
Sc03d88
(1916)

CATALOGUE
OF AN
EXHIBITION OF WATER-COLOUR
DRAWINGS AND OTHER
ORIGINAL WORKS
BY
EDMUND DULAC

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY MARTIN BIRNBAUM

New York (City) Scott & Fowles co.

SCOTT & FOWLES
590 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK CITY
1916
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EDMUND DULAC

AN APPRECIATION

IF Edmund Dulac had had any voice in the matter he would have chosen some dream city of the Orient for his birthplace, a Persian princess for his mother and an artist of the Ming Dynasty for his father. These would have bestowed upon him racial instincts for the arts he loves best, and Dulac is always trying to convince himself and his friends that, although he is a naturalized Englishman, born in Toulouse, he is actually descended from those mysterious Saracens who overran the ancient centre of Languedoc, several centuries ago. Perhaps his theory is correct. It offers, at any rate, a simple explanation for the fact, that besides being English and French, his art is of Persia, India or China as the occasion demands, as well as for the cleverness with which he can seriously impersonate an oriental gentleman, and for the uncanny way in which his pet chow and Siamese cat understand him.

Dulac does not recall a time when he did not paint, and although he began, like the im-

mortal Aubrey Beardsley, as a musician, his holidays were spent copying Japanese prints which he first saw in a collection brought to Toulouse from the East, by a cultivated merchant. Stage fright at an annual conservatory examination ended his musical career and then, conforming to his family's wishes, he began the study of law at the university. Art, however, meant more to him than codes or pandects, and in 1901, when he was nineteen years old, he decided to become a painter.

The school in which he began his studies was badly organized, and the pupils were left more or less to themselves. Dulac won the offered prizes with ease, and a municipal scholarship, though never paid, served as an excuse for going to Paris in 1903. Arriving at the capital, he was enrolled for six months at the Julian Academy, but he actually studied there for only three or four weeks. Like most of the students he was obliged to earn his living, and he began his professional career as an artist by making covers and magazine illustrations. England was the most lucrative field for such work, and Dulac drifted to London where in 1907 a group of his water colour drawings were used to illustrate the *Arabian Nights*. The instantaneous success of this book led to

further orders, and ever since he has been delighting us each year with a new sheaf of works, remarkable for their beauty of composition, delicacy of clear, limpid colour, and conciseness of drawing.

Shakespeare's *Tempest*, the *Rubaiyat*, the *Sleeping Beauty*, the *Tales of Poe* and *Hans Christian Anderson*, *Princess Badoura* and *Sinbad* are the principal works down to 1915. At first, Rackam was his rival, one indeed, whose drawing seemed to have a more personal inspiration. Dulac's talents, however, developed very rapidly. He soon showed distinctive originality, and the debt which he owed to the English artist soon became negligible. Dulac had from the very beginning finer imaginative powers, and each group of drawings disclosed greater technical achievements and an unsurpassed versatility. The daintiest draughtsmanship, a delicious humour, an amazing feeling for design, and a positive genius for rich radiant colour as applied to the pages of a book, were all coupled with the power to grasp an author's meaning, and to embody it most happily with the glamour or piquancy which pertained to the various literary works themselves. Indeed, he has frequently added a vein of high poetry

to the poetic originals. He should, however, be regarded not as an illustrator, but as an original painter, who uses line merely as an accessory, and each of these little iridescent miniatures which seem to be made of opal dust on mother of pearl, satisfies the demand which Delacroix made upon all paintings,—they are colour feasts for the eye.

It may have been his friendship with the celebrated connoisseurs Ricketts and Shannon, that led Dulac to a renewed and closer acquaintance with those Oriental and Greek primitives, which he had already learned to love in his youth, and during the last few years, he has been steeping himself in Eastern art and folk lore. These studies removed any obstacles to his further development that may have existed. Persian miniatures especially have fascinated him, and it will be noticed that he has discarded all attempts at modelling by means of shading, and has wisely adopted the eastern convention of flat colours. We can recall only one other artist, Marcus Behmer, who can enter into so complete a sympathy with oriental subjects, and "Marcotino" as the German artist is affectionately known, does not possess Dulac's flare for superb colour. After all, the fan-

tasies which Scheherazade wove for her august lord beside the scented fountains, need a jewelled commentator, and Dulac alone possesses the necessary gifts. The tremendous advance which his art has recently made becomes obvious, if we compare the early paintings for, let us say Poe's Tales, with the recent plates in his Red Cross gift book. "The development should have been even more rapid" Dulac tells us, "but all the drawings for a particular book must be more or less in the same spirit and at the same level, and the nature of such work does not allow progress to go beyond the step forward made with the first illustration of a series." In the "Fairy Book of the Allies" (1916), however, each story means a new racial tradition and a wholly different inspiration, and the result is a unique commentary on the artist's resourcefulness and wonderful power of assimilation. In each painting he magically develops what appears superficially to be a new style, peculiarly appropriate to the nationality of the particular story, but ever remaining Dulac's own. It would be too much to expect to find him guiltless of the charge of borrowing, but the critics who are not satisfied unless they are tracing influences, will be faced here by a

novel problem. Surely no other artist has, within the limits of a single volume, exhausted not only the hues of the rainbow, but so many regions of the earth. Japan's rhythm and refinement, Servia's barbaric patterns, the white snows and passionate ringing colours of Russia, French grace, languorous Italian beauty, Belgian quaintness, and wholesome English charm, are all to be found here. His surfaces are like choice old ivory, and everywhere we come upon those superb azure tonalities, heavenly blue skies and reflecting waters, which a wit has described as "bleu du lac."

The production of the delightful works partially enumerated above has, however, not satisfied Dulac's ambition, and he has found time to wander in other alluring fields. He has made excellent cartoons for Gobelin tapestries, which were sympathetically executed by Leo Belmonte, and his caricatures and little statuettes have furnished London with its most amusing sensation. In one of these caricatures Orpen is seen looking through a telescope to find Glyn Philpot, "a new star rising in the sky,"—and some one pointed out that Dulac might well have substituted his own portrait for Philpot's and have Max

Beerbohm occupying Orpen's place. Max has hitherto been the only begetter of such chefs-d'oeuvres but he will now have to look to his laurels. It is quite true that no master can equal Max's 'Tennyson reading his verses to Queen Victoria,' or write essays like 'More.' Such masterpieces have justly earned him a claim to inimitability, but Dulac, though only a newcomer in the field, has already won rare triumphs. We are credibly informed that when Her Majesty, Queen Mary, first came upon the little figurine of Sir Claude Phillips, not only her gravity, but that of her dignified ladies in waiting, was for an appreciable space of time seriously upset. It is our national misfortune, that Charles Ricketts, the owner of this priceless possession, would not permit it, or its companion, 'Mrs. Gibson the collector of Conder fans,' to run submarine risks. For the time being, therefor, they fittingly repose among the Greek marbles, Leonardos, Rodins, Watteaus and Daumiers, in the famous studio on Lansdowne Road. Mr. Edmund Davis, who has enriched the Luxembourg with a splendid collection of Modern English art, is another fortunate collector. He owns an entire group of drawings and caricatures, among which

the most notable are, 'Mestrovic carving the colossal toe of some Serbian Hero,' and Ricketts-and-Shannon,—the heavenly twins, as Robert Ross calls them,—in which Dulac has so cleverly mingled the spirit of Indian Art and English humour. We must not be ungrateful, however, for we have a drawing of the late Lord Kitchener showing his passion for blue china, and the unapproachable Sargent in Belgravia, among other good caricatures. All of these are done from memory, and the same is virtually true of such serious portraits as that of the Japanese actor Mr. Michio Itow, and Madame A.

Stage settings and costumes constitute still another departure. Dulac began by creating some fantastic rococo designs for Beecham's production of Bach's "Phoebus and Pan," in which the chorus was garbed in 18th century style, whereas the principals, remarkable for their bizarre coiffures, appeared in pseudo-classical costumes. This artistic diversion was followed by the setting for Maud Allan of an Egyptian legend entitled 'Khamma,' written by the gifted dancer and W. L. Courtney of the Fortnightly Review, with music for an orchestra of ninety men by Claude Dubussy, who has since collaborated in a

similar way with Bakst. This important work will have its premiere in New York City this Spring. Finally he has designed a series of masks, settings and costumes for William Butler Yeats' symbolical play, entitled "At the Hawk's Well" or "Waters of Immortality," a poetical drama, modelled upon the Noh stage tradition of aristocratic Japan. The properties devised by Dulac are so simple that the actors can bring them in a single cab, and perform during their leisure hours in any drawing room. Mr. Yeats, in his still unpublished preface, tells us what a stirring adventure it would be "for a poet and an artist working together, to create once more heroic or grotesque types, that keeping always an appropriate distance from life, would seem images of those profound emotions that exist only in solitude and in silence." It would seem that in Dulac he found an artist who could not only enter into the spirit of his poetry, but who was moreover familiar with the ancient theatrical traditions of the Romans, and of those consummate Japanese masters who hundreds of years ago moulded masks for various types of tragic character. "What could be more suitable," asks the poet, "than that Cuchulain, let us

say, a half super-natural, legendary person should show to us a face, not made before the looking glass by some leading player,—there too we have many quarrels,—but moulded by some distinguished artist?" How well Dulac has done his share of the work we can judge by two of his beautiful masks in this exhibition, and it is to be hoped that since Michio Itow, the leading actor in the original cast is now in the United States, a performance of the play itself may be made possible. Dulac's costumes will then be seen, and it will clearly be realized how swiftly, both in his work for the theater and in the exquisite paintings, Dulac is arriving at one of his artistic goals,—“a satisfactory synthesis for the communication of Emotion through Character.” Another aim seems to be, to prove his capacity to excel in many media, and he has already done various things so successfully and poetically, that if he were to return to his native city, the judges of the famous Languedoc Floral Games, which take place in Toulouse each Spring and in which only poets contend, would surely award the sprig of golden amaranth to Edmund Dulac.

MARTIN BIRNBAUM

CATALOGUE

- 1 A Portrait in oil of Mr. Michio Itow,
in 18th Century Samurai Costume

INSPIRED BY THE WORKS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

- 2 To the River
3 For Helen
4 The Conqueror Worm
5 Annabel Lee
6 To One in Paradise
7 The City in the Sea
8 The Valley of Unrest
9 The Haunted Palace

SHAKESPEARE'S TEMPEST

- 10 Ariel:—"All prisoners, sir
In the line-grove which weather-fends
your cell;" (Act V, Scene 1)
11 "On the bat's back I do fly after Sum-
mer merrily" (Act V, Scene 1)
12 Drawing for "The Tempest"
Lent by Mrs. Payne Whitney
13 Ferdinand and Miranda
13a The Wreck
Lent by Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney

- 14 "There be three things which are too wonderful for me, Yea, four which I know not" (Proverbs, chap. xxx. 18)
- 15 "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies" (Proverbs, Chaps. xxxi. 10)
- 16 The Capture of Camaralzaman (The Princess Badoura)

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

- 17 A dwarf with seven league boots, brings the news of the accident to the Fairy Hippolyta
- 18 The Prince beheld the loveliest vision he had ever seen

SINBAD THE SAILOR

- 19 The episode of the whale
- 20 The episode of the old man of the sea
- 21 The episode of the Rokh
- 22 The episode of the Snake

CINDERELLA

- 23 Cinderella drives to the Ball

BLUE BEARD

- 24 There in a row, hung the bodies of seven
dead women

THE STORY OF THE THREE CALENDARS

- 25 The Porter and the Ladies
26 The Princess burns the Efrite to death

THE SLEEPER AWAKENED

- 27 Abu-l-Hasan entertains the strangers
with dancing and music
28 The bridge at Baghdad where Abu-l-
Hasan awaits strangers
Lent by J. T. Spaulding, Esq'r.

ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP

- 29 Aladdin and the Efrite
30 The Lady Bedr-el-Budur at her bath
31 The Sultan and his Vizier looking for
Aladdin's Magic Palace
32 The Lady Bedr-el-Budur and the wicked
Magician

FAIRY TALES OF THE ALLIES

- 33 White Caroline and Black Caroline (A Flemish Tale)
- 34 Bashtchelik carries away the Queen (A Serbian Tale)
- 35 Snegorotchka (A Russian Tale)
- 36 The Fire Bird (A Russian Tale)
- 37 The Hind of the Wood (A French Tale)
- 38 Urashima Taro (A Japanese Tale)
- 39 The Seven Conquerors of the Queen of the Mississippi (A Belgian Tale)
- 40 The Green Serpent (A French Tale)
- 41 The Fire Bird (A Russian Tale)
- 42 Bashtschelik (A Serbian Tale)
- 43 The Friar and the Boy (An English Tale) Lent by James G. Heaslet, Esq'r.
- 44 The Blue Bird (A French Tale)
- 45 The Serpent Prince (Italian Tale)
- 46 The Buried Moon (English Tale) Lent by James G. Heaslet, Esq'r.
- 47 Ivan and the Chestnut Horse (Russian Tale)
-
- 48 Portrait of a Lady

CHARACTERS AND SETTINGS FOR W. B. YEATS'
PLAY "AT THE HAWK'S WELL," OR
"WATERS OF IMMORTALITY"

- 49 The Hawk (Guardian of the Well)
- 50 The Old Man
- 51 The Young Man
- 52 A Musician
- 53 The Mask for the Old Man
- 54 The Design for the Same
- 55 The Mask for the Young Man
- 56 The Design for the Same
- 57 The Screen

DRAWINGS AND SETTINGS FOR "KHAMMA"

(Lent by Miss Maud Allan)

- 58 Costume for Khamma
- 59 Design for Poster
- 60 High Priests and Attendants
- 61 The Crowd
- 62 Setting for the Play



- 63 Design for Book plate (Lent by Mrs. Payne Whitney)
- 64 Water-colour drawing for the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam (Lent by Mrs. Payne Whitney)

- 65 An old French Song
66 An Arab Concert, Tunis (Lent by Mr.
C. H. Pepper)

CARICATURES

- 67 Mr. John Sargent somewhere in Bel-
gravia
68 Lord Kitchener shows emotion
69 Lord Curzon at the Zoo. "Should old ac-
quaintance be forgot "

