Harbour

Christopher Wood (1901-1930)

REF:

Description

Watercolour, pastel and pencil“Painted by my son, Christopher Wood” inscribed verso by Clare Wood (Mother) Also, an old Lefevre Gallery label, verso24 x 31 cms (9 x 12 ins)
Provenance: Lefevre Gallery, LondonKatharine Church, thence by family descentSale Catalogue entry assisted by Robert Upstone who has written a Catalogue Raisonne on the artist.
Christopher Wood was born in Knowsley, near Liverpool to parents Dr Lucius and Clare Wood. He was educated at Marlborough College, Wiltshire and went on to Liverpool University to briefly study medicine and architecture. It was here that he met Augustus John who encouraged him to become an artist.Alphonse Kahn, a French collector, invited Wood to Paris in 1920 where he trained at the Academie Julien from 1921. He met Picasso, Jean Cocteau, Georges Aurin and Diaghilev who became friends in his artistic circle. In the early summer of the same year, he met Jose Antonio Gandarillas Huici, a Chilean diplomat, a married homosexual, 14 years his senior with whom Wood was to have a relationship with throughout his short life. This relationship was to survive other affairs with Jeanne Bourgoint, his plans to elope with and marry heiress Meraud Guinness (scuppered by her parents) and Russian emgree, Frosca Munster. Wood was bisexual which caused inner strife during his lifetime. Gandarillas, led a glamorous life, often funded by gambling and Wood was introduced by him to a vibrant and decadent social scene in Paris plus to the opium drug. The hallucinogenic aspect of the drug added many surrealistic images to Wood’s work and some of his greatest works may have resulted from his addiction but so too was his demise, after withdrawal symptoms caused him deep paranoia and ultimate suicide. He wrote to gallery owner Lucy Wertheim that opium was “the only resource of quietness which takes my mind…out of that awful turmoil of ideas and colours that go on in my busy head”. Christopher Wood attracted friends and devotees wherever he went. He was handsome, charismatic and talented and as a young man living life to the full within the Parisian social scene, he “decided to try to be the greatest painter that has ever lived”.From 1922 to 1924, Wood travelled extensively throughout Europe and North Africa. In 1926 he created designs for Constant Lambert’s Romeo & Juliet for Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, but they were never used. In the same year he became a member of The London Group and the Seven and Five Society when he met Ben & Winifred Nicholson who were to become great friends, in addition to influencing his work. They exhibited together in 1927 and spent time painting in Cumberland and Cornwall.Christopher Wood was much influenced by post-Impressionism and modernism, but it was in 1928 that a visit to St Ives was to carve his style in primitivism, an extension of his enthusiasm for Gaughin’s work. He drew unashamedly from Cezanne, Picasso, Van Gogh, Henri Rousseau and the Fauvists, but it was at this time that he developed his trademark in an individual naïve style. It is said that he went for a walk through the streets of St Ives with Ben Nicholson and peering through an open door, they spotted pictures of “d...