

Basic Detail Report



No. 20 "Duff"

Date

c1917

Primary Maker

Sir Frank William Brangwyn

Medium

Lithograph on paper

Dimensions

54.6 x 38.2 cm

Description

This planographic print (lithograph) is part of a series entitled 'The Great War: Britain's Efforts And Ideals shown in a series of lithographic prints: 'Making Sailors' series. There are a total of six lithographs in this particular series, and in total there are ten series. The lithographs are

numbered as if the entire ten series are one, so this print is number 20. The scene, presumably below deck on a ship, shows a group of young sailors sitting on benches, spoons at the ready, eagerly watching a sailor approaching them with a bowl containing a large plum duff. In the background behind and above the sailors is a circular aperture. A Welsh painter, etcher and designer of furniture. Born in Bruges, Belgium, on 13 May 1867. His father was a church architect. When he was eight, Brangwyn and his family moved to London. From 1882, he spent two years working in William Morris's workshop; his childhood experience of his father's workshop for ecclesiastical furnishings in Bruges may well have appealed to Morris's artistic doctrine. Subsequent to this enlightened training, Brangwyn travelled to Paris where he became an active champion of the blossoming Art Nouveau movement. He experimented introducing the sinuous lines characteristic of Art Nouveau into his paintings of galleons and shipping scenes. He specialised in painting large mural cycles, such as those for the Royal Exchange (1906), for Skinners Hall (1909) and even for the Empress of Britain (a Royal Mail liner), which later sank, taking Brangwyn's murals with her. In 1919 he was elected a Royal Academician, having exhibited regularly there since 1885. Knighted in 1941, he died in Ditchling, Sussex, on 11 June 1956, having bequeathed most of his works to the City of Bruges, where they remain on display in a museum bearing his name. The sea was vital for the transportation of goods and manpower and, as a result, battleships acted as a significant deterrent. Recruitment campaigns calling for men to join the Royal Navy were widespread and highlighting the opportunity for travel was an additional incentive to those seeking adventure. Frank Brangwyn had great sympathy for the ordinary person and in these lithographs the sailors are portrayed with great dignity. Youthful Ambition is a masterful drawing of a young boy on shore looking longingly at battleships slowly emerging from the misty

distance. Using only a few spare lines, Brangwyn skillfully suggests the wet surface of the quayside while the boy's stance is charmingly suggestive of a confident young boy impatient to be older. In the drawing Duff Brangwyn highlights the comradery among the sailors as they eagerly await a reminder of home, a traditional duff boiled pudding from the north of England. The tough, physical nature of life out in stormy seas is also emphasised in these drawings. The Look-out with both man and big guns in a vigilant state of alert is a reminder of the ever-present threat posed by the enemy at sea.