



## **No. 11 "The Re-birth of the Arts" [From 'The Great War: Britain's Efforts And Ideals shown in a series of lithographic prints: 'The Ideals' series]**

### **Date**

1917

### **Primary Maker**

Charles Haslewood Shannon

### **Medium**

Lithograph on paper

### **Dimensions**

68.6 x 43.2 cm

### **Description**

This is a two colour planographic print (lithograph) on paper, and is part of a series entitled 'The Great War: Britain's Efforts And Ideals shown in a series of lithographic prints: 'The Ideals' 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 11. This print depicts a nude angel, with a golden halo around her head, standing amid ruins; a corpse can be seen on the ground to the right. She holds up a golden branch. Charles Shannon was a painter, printmaker and collector whose life is inseparable from that of Charles Ricketts. They met in 1882, when both were still in their teens, on the wood engraving course at the City and Guilds Technical Art School at Lambeth and became friends and life-long companions. Shannon was closely involved in Ricketts' book illustration and publishing projects in the 1890s, but his orientation was primarily towards the fine arts. He took up lithography in 1888 as an independent printmaking form rather than an illustrative medium and by the 1890s was the leading British lithographer. Amid chaos and destruction, Charles Shannon has shown the Arts personified as a nude winged female figure, holding aloft a laurel branch. Her golden halo is the only element of colour in an otherwise desolate setting. The outbreak of World War One resulted in a severe disruption of the art market making it difficult for less well established artists to make a living. According to Henry Tonks, then Professor at the Slade School of Art, many artists had to resort to the Artists' Benevolent Fund to help them get by. The State patronage of artists through the development of the Official War Artists scheme served a number of purposes: to provide a public record of the unprecedented events taking place at home and abroad to provide a way for artists to contribute to the war effort; and by producing work which

could serve a propaganda purpose. A large number of artists joined the army as soldiers, not just for financial reasons but because they felt it was their duty. For some, too, war could provide striking subject matter and heightened emotions which artists like Christopher Nevinson felt were necessary for great art. In the army, having an artistic bent often resulted in being asked to do jobs such as making technical drawings or painting figures which would be used for target practice. At other times, sculptors skillfully made flesh coloured masks for those with terrible injuries. After the war the Imperial War Museum in London was established in 1920 and has today a substantial collection of art related to the First World War and to subsequent conflicts. Shannon's lithograph *The Rebirth of the Arts* was exhibited at The Fine Arts Society in 1917 along with the other lithographs in the *Efforts and Ideals* series commissioned by the British Ministry of Information. The series was also reproduced in the press, made available in limited editions and donated to 'all the great museums of the Allied countries.'<sup>14</sup>As a propaganda exercise the series was deemed a great success, particularly in America where it was observed that they 'put up British prestige.'