

Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Eric Henri Kennington (London 1888 - Reading 1960)

T.E. Lawrence

Painted plaster

42 cm high

Conceived in 1926-27

Cast in gilded brass in an edition of 2 or 3, cast in bronze in an edition of 6.

Two plaster casts made circa 1926.

T.E. Lawrence (1888-1935) was a lieutenant colonel during the First World War, fighting at Aqaba in Jordan, with the Arabs against the Ottoman Turks. The Arab and British armies forced the Ottoman army to withdraw from the territory, thus protecting the Suez Canal and earning T.E. Lawrence the title 'Lawrence of Arabia'. This was later used as the title of the 1962 film about his life, directed by David Lean, featuring Peter O'Toole as Lawrence. In 1922 Lawrence published the account of his experience during the war in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and a posthumous edition of this book was published in 1935 with a cast of the present work illustrated on its frontispiece.

Lawrence sat for the modelling of the bust in November - December 1926, and Kennington created it in three hour-long sittings. In a letter to Kennington on 15 February 1927, the month of the Leicester Galleries exhibition, Lawrence wrote to the artist about the bust. He expressed his admiration for it, 'It's amazing: and very curious ... Yours is magnificent; there is no other word for it. It represents not me, but my top-moments, those few seconds in which I succeed in thinking myself right out of things ... The face and neck are treated with a dry precision and strength and confidence very unusual in recent sculpture: in any portrait sculpture ... It hangs together as a most convincing portrait of a person very sure of himself' (see D. Garnett (ed.), *The Letters of T.E. Lawrence*, London, 1938, pp. 507-508).

There are an additional 6 bronze casts of this bust - one is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London, and another in the collection of Tate Gallery, London. A further cast of the bronze bust

was unveiled by Lord Halifax, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral, London, on 29 January 1936, shortly after Lawrence's death. It remains there today, facing Nelson's Sarcophagus. There is another bronze bust in the entrance of the chapel at Jesus College, Oxford, where Lawrence was educated between 1907 and 1910, and another at Clouds Hill, Dorset, Lawrence's cottage, now run by the National Trust.

Provenance

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- Catherine Kennington, the artist's daughter

Exhibitions

Exhibited:

- London, Leicester Galleries, Paintings, pastels, drawings and woodcuts illustrating T.E. Lawrence's book 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom', February 1927, no. 81, gilded brass cast exhibited.
- London, Picture Hire Limited, Eric Kennington, April 1936, no. 15, bronze cast exhibited (£500): this exhibition travelled to Rusholme, Manchester, Platt Hall, June - July 1936; and Oxford, September - October 1936.
- London, National Portrait Gallery, T.E. Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia, December 1988 - March 1989, no. 275, bronze cast exhibited.

Literature:

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- T.E. Lawrence, The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, London, 1935, another cast illustrated on the frontispiece.
- C. Grosvenor, An Iconography: The Portraits of T.E. Lawrence, Pasadena, 1988, pp. 73-75, bronze cast illustrated.
- J. Wilson, exhibition catalogue, T.E. Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia, London, National Portrait Gallery, 1988, p. 199, bronze cast illustrated.
- J. Black, The Sculpture of Eric Kennington, Much Hadham, 2002, pp. 38-40, 89, no. 21, fig. 22, bronze cast illustrated.