

Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Eric Henri Kennington (London 1888 - Reading 1960)

Sagall Singh

Chalk on brown paper

60 x 43 cm 1918

This portrait of a young Indian officer was drawn by Eric Henri Kennington while in France in 1918. A work of great artistic clarity and sensitivity, with a remarkable handling of the chalk, it also serves as an evocative reminder of the part played by the Indian states in the First World War.

Little information on the life and career of Sagall Singh can be gleaned, although he was probably a member of the Jodhpur Lancers (Imperial Service), which was part of the 4th Cavalry Division. The Jodhpur Lancers were commanded by Sir Pratap Singh, Regent-Maharaja of Jodhpur, and were one of several regiments of lancers provided by the Indian states to assist the allied forces during the First World War. Sagall Singh does not appear in any of the Imperial State Forces army lists for this date, although it is possible that he was a trooper not an officer, thus explaining his omission. It is likewise possible that the forename was stated incorrectly when exhibited later in 1939; Sagall was a very unusual name at this date, and 'Saigal' or even 'Sagat' would seem more likely. A possible alternative identification could be Sagat Singh, son of Sir Pratap Singh, a distinguished officer who was later awarded the Military Cross following the capture of Haifa in 1918.

Kennington was in his own words, '[...] quite obsessed with Indians of all sorts' ; in September 1917

and then between December 1917 and January 1918 he drew several members of the Jodhpur Lancers.

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Kennington enlisted as a private in the 1st battalion 13th London Regiment, also known as the 'Kensingtons'. The battalion fought first in France and then Belgium where Kennington was badly wounded, bringing an end to his military career. Returning to his art, Kennington spent the second half of 1915 painting *The Kensingtons at Laventie*, an intense autobiographical glimpse of life on the front line, and one of Kennington's most distinguished wartime paintings.

Kennington was employed as an Official War Artist in 1917 and asked to produce six drawings on the theme of *Making Soldiers*. These drawings, along with a number of others on the same theme by different artists, were reproduced as lithographs and exhibited at several locations around the country. The overwhelming public response to Kennington's depictions of soldiers ensured his quick passage out to the front line in France in August 1917, and a few months later he undertook the present work.

Provenance

Provenance:

- The artist's estate, 1960
- Gillian Jason Gallery, London, 1985
- Private collection, UK, until 2015

Exhibitions

Exhibited:

- Exhibition of Contemporary British Art, British Council, Northern Capitals, 1939