An Arts and Crafts block printed hand spun and woven wool crepe textile by Raymond Duncan (American, 1874 - 1966)

£5,600



REF: 6045

Height: 200 cm (78.7")

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Width: 98 cm (38.6")

Description

Organic natural dyes with a central field of grid form in yellow ochre, interspersed with trees, within a classical style striped border of blues and pink, and darker pink/brown trim. The yarn hand spun and loomed most probably by Duncan himself in his Paris atelier.

Signed in capitals. France, circa 1920s

Condition: Two small stains to the bottom left and one to the top centre. The signature slightly faded

Raymond Duncan was a dancer, artist, ceramicist, carpenter and textile designer. Often working with his sister, the internationally acclaimed dancer Isadora Duncan, from the age of 17 he developed his own philosophies, based on his theory of movement ('kinematics').

He and his Greek wife, Penelope (the daughter of a Greek poet), lived for a time in a classical villa outside Athens, where no one was allowed to enter in modern dress. Indeed, they both dressed in Classical attire at home and abroad (which caused some consternation in 1907 Berlin).

After a tour of the US for performances of classical plays and lectures on folk music, weaving and dancing, they moved to Paris in 1911 and founded a school, the Akademia, where they offered courses in dance, arts and crafts.

Raymond Duncan wrote poetry, plays and articles promoting his philosophy of 'actionalism', later opening another school in London. His aim was a 'complete technique of living', synthesising work, the arts and physical movement to create harmony in life. He printed his books on his own printing press, using a typeface he designed himself.

He spent much of the First World War years in Albania, helping refugees from the Balkan War, before returning to his atelier in Paris.

Duncan was a purist who lived to the highest standards of craftsmanship. Making fine wool crepe was a labour intensive process of high-twist spinning and specialist weaving to achieve its distinctive crinkled texture. The resultant fine gauze was valued for its excellent drape and spring, enhanced by the beauty of the subtle vegetable dyes.

Raymond Duncan's work, now rare, is in public and private collections worldwide, including The Met, New York (object numbers: 67.126; 1990.152; 2005.507) and The Art Institute of Chicago (object numbers: 1981.38; 1991.180).

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