An Airship over Dover by Norman Wilkinson

Norman Wilkinson

Sold



REF: 83915

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Height: 27.93 cm (11")

Width: 40.62 cm (16")

Description

A watercolour and gouache on board painting of a non-rigid airship on the Kent coast by Norman Wilkinson.

The illustration is signed 'Norman Wilkinson 1918 Dover' and below, to the bottom right is annotated 'U.S & (or 8). RNAS. 'B' Class Airship 1918'. A label to the back of the board, which is maybe later, is simply noted with 'Dover S.S. Airship, R.N.A.S 1918 NW.' Wilkinson's notes to the picture do not align with the information known today but this is not uncommon for some of his pictures. This was either artistic licence for the purpose of the illustration or clerical error.

The USA were late to the manufacturing of airships and so quickly attempted to play catch up with Britain, France and Germany when it looked like they would enter World War I. When they did join the war in April 1917, a number of their air crew operated French and British airship in Europe. The development of the US B Class airship was heavily influenced by the design of the British SS Airships. As the airship illustrated has British insignia, perhaps Wilkinson was alluding to the co-operation between the British and Americans.

As you would expect from Wilkinson, the airship is well painted. The yellow gondola, which is obviously the converted fuselage of a plane as was common practice, is shown in good detail. The two man crew, engine, propeller and bomb below can all be clearly seen. The dirigible's envelope above with tail fins, insignia and cables are all clearly visible. The background scene is more quickly painted with a lighting mast set on top of the white cliffs and a simple wash for the sky and sea. Dated 1918.

Later framed in a period frame.

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