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LOVIS CORINTH

1858 Tapiau, East Prussia - Zandvoort, Netherlands 1925

Self-Portrait

Black chalk on wove

Signed and dated lower right: *Januar 1924 Lovis Corinth.*

500 x 310 mm

PROVENANCE: Allan Frumkin, Chicago – Thence by descent

Lovis Corinth was a talented history, genre and landscape painter. He was also an accomplished portraitist, producing numerous portraits of family members and close friends as well as a large number of self-portraits. In his work he set out to attain a level of perception beyond pure representation. His artistic achievement is based on an intensely personal meditation on ageing and dying, and how life shapes the individual's appearance and outlook. As he grew older these themes assumed ever greater importance.

Corinth suffered a stroke on 19 December 1911. His left hand was partially paralysed and his right hand subject to intermittent tremors. He became increasingly preoccupied with the threat of senility and death and this despair infuses his late writings.¹ Nonetheless, he went on to produce an important group of self-portraits using the genre as a vehicle to express his self-observation. After the stroke his own facial features served him as a veritable laboratory of perpetual painterly experimentation. He would tirelessly scrutinise his own physiognomy in the mirror and recorded what he saw with increasingly vehement, frenzied near-abstraction as the years advanced.²

Joachim Heusinger von Waldegg has written: *In their immediacy and spontaneity, his self-portraits are the crystallization of a transient mood or situation, a mirror of visual perception. Compared with the self-portraits in oil, there is greater emphasis on the constant flux and changeability of facial expression and the textural qualities of the powerfully emphasized head, often almost over proportioned (in relation to the body) and emphatically modelled in starkly juxtaposed areas of light and dark. The medium itself be it chalk, pencil, etching needle or watercolour, is of secondary importance. Of prime concern is the gradually achieved definition of physiognomic characteristics – 'Gesichtslandschaften'.*³

This drawing has an interesting provenance. Its former owner was Allan Frumkin (1927-2002), a leading American gallerist who introduced Corinth's work to the American art world and promoted it in the late 1950s and 1960s.

¹ Lovis Corinth, *Selbstbiographie*, Leipzig 1926, p.185.

² Mathias Mühling, 'Krankheit und Genie. Muster der Künstlerselbstdarstellungen in der Moderne', in *Ich, Lovis Corinth. Die Selbstbildnisse*, exhib. cat., Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg 2004, p. 72.

³ Joachim Heusinger von Waldegg, 'Tradition und Aktualität – Über Corinths Selbstbildnisse und einige andere Motive' in Felix Zdenek (ed.), *Lovis Corinth 1858-1925*, Cologne 1985, pp. 59 ff.