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HISTORIC + MODERN

Theodosia Middlemore (1861-1944) : Melsetter House crewelwork & silk curtains, set of 6

£15,000

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REF: 11919

Height: 299 cm (117.7")

Width: 618 cm (243.3")

Description

RECENTLY PURCHASED, MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW OR BY REQUEST, photos taken with iphone

A rare set of six silk curtains made by the embroiderer Theodosia Middlemore worked in natural dyed crewel wool in large leaf patterns inset into the central section of three panels, faced with braid and the bottom edge with two rows of fringe.

ARTIST : Theodosia Middlemore (1861-1944) embroidered work for May Morris, such as the Fruit Garden portiere in the V&A collection and the Melsetter House Embroideries now in National Museums Scotland. She was also a patron of May Morris.

RELATED : The Melsetter House Embroideries, National Museums Scotland, Ref K.2014.47.2. These embroideries were created for Theodosia Middlemore for her home, Melsetter House in Orkney. She and her husband were important patrons within the Arts and Crafts movement and Melsetter was built by the leading Arts and Crafts architect W. R. Lethaby. The house was one of the most important commissions of its day and was furnished with a combination of furniture designed by the architect and purchased from Morris & Company. Theodosia was a close friend of May Morris and the hangings, designed by May, were worked jointly by May and Theodosia. Textiles actually worked by May Morris are extremely rare. Worked in natural dyed crewel wool on hand-spun and hand-woven linen, the wools are thought to be Orcadian as May and Theodosia are known to have spun and dyed local wool at Melsetter. The hangings have only recently become known outside the family, having been passed down the generations until now.

'Fruit Garden' portière or hanging of plain weave silk with embroidery in silk, designed by May Morris in 1885, worked by Theodosia Middlemore, England, 1894. &A Musuem No CIRC206&A-1965. Sometimes known as 'The Orchard' after the poem 'The Flowering Orchard' by William Morris, published in 1891. An extract is embroidered onto the hanging: 'Lo waneth the Summer the apple boughs fade Yet fair still my garden twixt sunlight & shade' signed and dated: 'Theodosia/1894' Silk taffeta ground embroidered with coloured silk. Worked in darning stitch, stem stitch, herringbone stitch, buttonhole stitch, pistil stitch and laid work a long strip of blue tape sewn with metal rings and beige cord.

PROVENANCE : Theodosia (1861-1944) was married to Thomas Middlemore, brother of Sir John Middlemore, 1st Bt. (1844-1924), who bought Melsetter Estate in 1898. Sir John employed William Lethaby to rebuild the house and it is believed May Morris visited the house. MELSETTER HOUSE - Melsetter House's roots date back to 1738 when an L-shaped two storey laird's house was built here. But in its current form it dates back to 1898. Thomas Middlemore inherited a fortune made in Birmingham in the manufacture of leather bicycle seats and chose to move to Orkney with his wife, Theodesia Mackay, a renowned embroiderer and weaver. Both were disciples of William Morris and they brought in the architect William Lethaby to turn the existing house into something altogether different.
What emerged was a three storey country mansion built around a paved courtyard, complete with walled gardens. The south wing of Melsetter House incorporated the original 17...

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