

Love Among The Butterflies Study (Ode to Margaret Fountaine) -
Framed

Chloe McCarrick

£595



REF: 4088

Height: 22.8 cm (9")

Width: 18.5 cm (7.3")

Depth: 4 cm (1.6")

Description

Cyanotype, handmade paper cut collage

Inspiration

This artwork was inspired by Victorian lepidopterist Margaret Fountaine. Described as a natural-born hunter: whether it was love, adventure or butterflies, her pursuit was relentless and her energy legendary. She emerged from an unremarkable Victorian upbringing with an extraordinary drive to self determination which defined her entire life.

Unconventional by nature, Fountaine was never cowed by society's strictures, or by what was expected, this provided her with many exciting opportunities. The price of her freedom was high but she never regretted her choices. A passionate lover and fearless individualist, her life was founded on the idiosyncratic determination to pursue her own path irrespective of convention.

Born South Acre- Norwich 1862, Margaret Fountain's life-story is remarkable, as voracious collector of butterflies as she was of beaux. An adventurous woman with zest and verve, she ranks highly among the world's finest naturalists. Fountaine's insatiable desire for travel took her to some of the loneliest and most beautiful places in the world. In later life she endured considerable hardship and sorrow, yet her energy and adventurous spirit rarely faltered. She was an outstanding woman by the standards of any age, and her diaries are a fascinating record of a wild and fearless life lived.

Her world provided us with a magical glimpse into the splendours and idiosyncrasies of an era before passports. Nurturing a growing interest in butterflies, she travelled all over the world- from English cathedral towns to the borders of Tibet- butterfly net in hand. Wearing a crumpled man's shirt with outsized pockets and a long skirt covered with the same, all filled with an assortment of glass jars and small boxes, the lady was a mystery.

She intended to leave her mark on the world- The main body of Margaret's work was her superb collection of 22,000 butterflies and exquisite painted artworks and sketches of chrysalids and caterpillars were already publicly available at the Castle Museum and The Natural History Museum.

Her private diaries on the other hand were kept secret, sealed inside a box for a hundred years, they were no ordinary documents. She decreed the 'Story Of My Life' must only be opened on April 15th 1978- They were opened two days late on the 17th (the appointed day was on a Saturday) at Norwich Castle Museum. She was concerned that her colourful personal life might detract from a serious consideration of her work, and she was right. For even when an edited version of her diaries were published in the 1980's, it was her passionate love life that caught the imagination.

She was presented as an eccentric Victorian with an indiscriminate passion for men. Although the readers of her journals have been captivated by her unorthodox private life, her importance as a butterfly collector has rarely been acknowledged. One of the most remarkable aspects of Fountaine is the degree to which her unconventional life has universal appeal to many women now. She was amazing for the times she lived in and remains so to this day. Any woman travelling alone will relate to the astonishing adventures Margaret survived, and any woman who has ever battl...