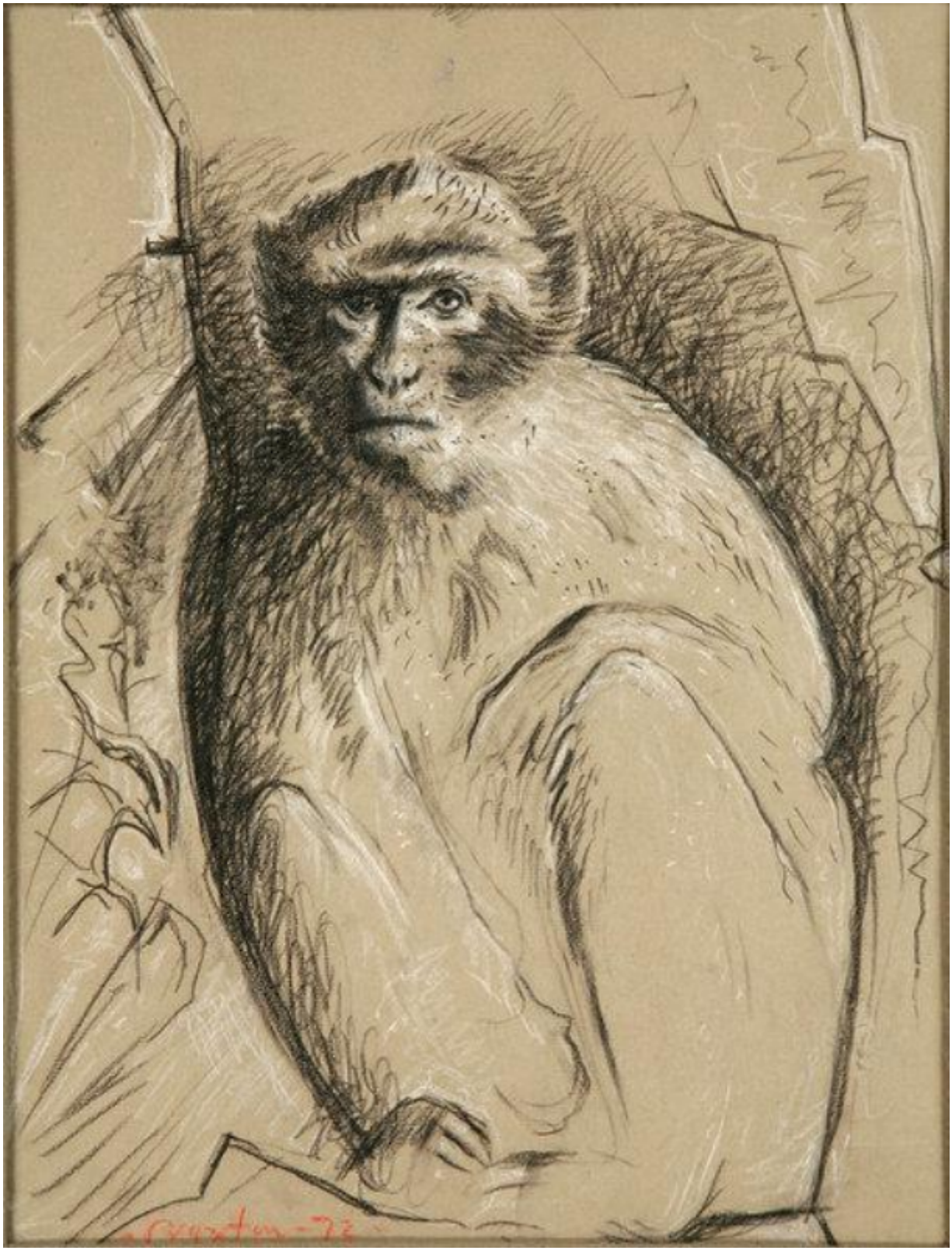
Barbary Ape

John Craxton RA

Sold



Howgego Historic & Modern
07974 149 912
lucy@howgegohistoricandmodern.com howgegohistoricandmodern.com

REF: 10661

Height: 37 cm (14.6")

Width: 28.5 cm (11.2")

Description

JOHN CRAXTON, R.A.,(British B.1922)
Barbary Ape
Signed and dated 72
Drawn during the artist's exile in Gibraltar
Charcoal and white chalk
Sheet Width 28.50 cm., 11.25 in., Height 37.00 cm., 14.50 in
Floated in a hand carved, Bolognese frame
Frame Width 50 cm., 19 ¾ in., Height 59 cm. 23 ¼ in.,

JOHN CRAXTON (b.1922)

John Craxton, son of composer and musician Harold Craxton, was born in London in 1922. He began to paint at aged nine at Betteshanger School and exhibited in a schools group at the Bloomsbury Gallery at age ten. He studied life drawing at L'Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris during 1939 until the outbreak of World War II forced him to return to London, completing his studies at Westminster School of Art and Central School of Art. Between 1941 and 1942, after being rejected for military service, Craxton studied drawing at Goldsmith's College of Art, London and shared a house with Lucian Freud, where they both had studios.

In 1943 Craxton visited Pembrokeshire with the arts patron Peter Watson and Graham Sutherland, the latter and Craxton were to become the forerunners of the Neo-romantic movement. Craxton's work at this time was heavily influenced by the English Romantics Samuel Palmer and William Blake and Sutherland himself, as Craxton stated he had learnt from Sutherland 'how to look at landscape:…his way of scrutinizing landscape showed me…how to discover myself'. In 1944 Craxton had his first solo show at the Leicester Galleries.

After the war Craxton travelled extensively through Europe, becoming increasingly aware of the works of avant-garde artists such as Picasso and Matisse and as such his work took on a more formal structure. In 1946 he made his first trip to Greece and worked with Lucian Freud there, with whom he had a joint show in 1947 at the London Gallery. In 1948 he visited Crete for the first time, an important junction in his career and life, as in 1960 he rented a house in Hania, Crete, which subsequently became his home and his work began to incorporate Byzantine influences. Craxton's subject matter shifted away from neo-Romanticism, taking inspiration from Crete's everyday village life and landscape to create portraits of villagers, sailors, girls and shepherds and depictions of animals such as the goats, wild cats and probably the Barbary Ape depicted here. Craxton moved to Crete permanently in 1970 and now divides his time between London and Crete.

In 1951 Craxton designed the sets and costumes for the Royal Ballet's production of Daphnis and Chloë at Covent Garden, using his neo-Romanticism and knowledge of Greece to influence his designs. As Craxton states 'Frederick Ashton wanted a painter who knew Greece. He hadn't been there but he wanted to make the first Mediterranean ballet.' Craxton helped restage the ballet for the Athens Festival in 1966. A major retrospective show of Craxton's work was held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1967 and in 1968 he created the costumes and scenery for the Royal Opera House's production of Igor Stravinsky's Apollo.

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Between 1971-4 Craxton worked on Landscape with the Elements, a commissioned Memorial tapestry for Tom Cott...

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