

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Louis Agricol Montagné
(Avignon 1879 – 1960 Paris)

Head study of an Algerian tirailleur and Senegalese tirailleur
Head study of a Senegalese tirailleur and a seated Senegalese tirailleur seen in profile

The first located, dated and signed: *Veyenay (?) Novembre – 1914 / - L. Montagné –*
The second located, dedicated, dated and signed: *Veyenay (?) Novembre – 1914 / au Lt. de Gramont / souvenir amical / - L. Montagné –*
Pencil and watercolour on paper
Each 15.3 x 23.4 cm. (6 x 9 ¼ in.)

Provenance:
Lieutenant de Gramont, by November 1914.



Executed on the battlefields of France during the first winter of World War I, Louis Agricol Montagné's two studies depict four *tirailleurs*, soldiers recruited from the French colonies. Captured by Montagné during a moment of respite, these character studies are a reminder of the crucial role played by colonial soldiers in the French Army from the outset of the Great War.

The Algerian *tirailleurs* (fig. 1), with their distinctive tasselled fez and blue jacket, were formed after the conquest of Algeria in 1830 and fought with distinction in many French 19th-century wars, notably in Crimea and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. However, the scale of the First World War ensured that they were mobilised in greater numbers than ever before, with 190,000 Algerian *tirailleurs* sent to Europe between 1914 and 1918. Fighting in all the major campaigns of the War, including the Marne, Verdun and the Somme, 35,900 Algerian *tirailleurs* lost their lives over the course of four years. The soldier drawn by Montagné, as denoted by the blue tattoo in the centre of his forehead, is a Berber.



Fig. 1, Algerian *tirailleur*, Paris 1913



Fig. 2, Paul Castelnau, Four Senegalese *tirailleurs*, Saint Ulrich, 16 June 1917

Formed in 1857, Senegalese *tirailleurs* (fig. 2) were initially recruited from Senegal and subsequently throughout West Africa and the sub-Saharan regions of the French Empire. Around 200,000 Senegalese *tirailleurs* fought in WWI, 135,000 of them on the European battlefields, with 30,000 dying in battle. Like their Algerian counterparts, the Senegalese *tirailleurs* fought in all the principal encounters and their high moral, maintained even in the face of heavy losses, was often noted. Upwards of 25,000 Senegalese and Algerian *tirailleurs* participated in the allied Occupation of the Rhineland after the war, which resulted in a sustained and racist propaganda campaign in the German press against the French use of colonial troops.

Studying in Paris under Fernand Cormon, Montagné started his career as a frescoist, working at the Gare du Lyon in 1900. He exhibited regularly at the Salon d'automne from 1901 and his success there gained the artist a travel scholarship in 1911. Montagné's role during the First World War is not well-known but he seemed to be active as an artist, as

these studies and other sketches from the war confirm. Returning to his native Avignon in 1920, Montagné served as the director of the École des Beaux-Arts until 1928.