

A detailed woodcut illustration in a dark, monochromatic style. In the foreground, a man wearing a turban and a heavy, patterned robe is shown in profile, looking towards the right. He is seated at a table covered with various items, including what appears to be a book or a stack of papers. In the background, a large window with a grid of panes is visible. A bright, circular object, possibly a glowing orb or a large gemstone, is positioned in the center of the window. The object is surrounded by a radiating pattern of lines, suggesting light or energy. The overall scene is set in a dark, interior space, possibly a study or a library.

RARE PRINTS

No.3 – October 2016



Rembrandt. f. 1674.

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Jacques VILLON

La Partie d'échecs - 1904

Martin SCHONGAUER

(vers 1445/1450 - 1491)

Ecce Homo [Christ shown to the People] - c. 1480

Engraving, 161 x 112 mm. Bartsch 15, Lehrs 25.

Very fine impression printed on laid paper with watermark (small bull's head and St. Anthony's Cross, similar to Briquet 15.156 but with a longer vertical line).

Generally in very fine condition. Three tiny skinning of the paper. 1 mm margin all around the borderline. Signature in ink bottom *verso*: *P. Davidsohn* (Lugt 654) and number 778 in pencil in the lower right corner.

Provenance: Paul Davidsohn collection. Paul Davidsohn was a collector and merchant; born in Poland in 1839, he lived first in London, then in Vienna and Berlin. The catalogue for his print collection, sold by Boerner in 1920-1921, contained over ten thousand old master prints from the 15th to the 18th century, divided into over 6000 lots. The impression we are selling has the number 778 on the back, corresponding to its number in the catalogue:

'778. *Das Ecce homo*. B. 15. Abdruck von größter Schönheit und tadelloser Erhaltung. Auf Papier mit dem kleinen Ochsenkopf. Mit Rand um die Darstellung.' [Impression of the highest beauty in perfect condition. Printed on paper with Small bull's head watermark. With margins all around the subject.] (C. G. Boerner, *Sammlung Paul Davidsohn*, Grunewald-Berlin: *Kupferstiche Alter Meister*, Leipzig, 1920-21, vol. 3, p. 75).

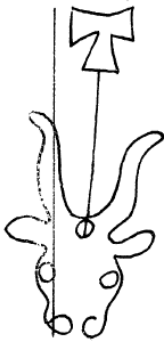
This impression is indeed of very good quality. The lines that crisscross dark areas are strong and well mark the contrasts between light and shadows. The scratches on the copperplate are the same that can be seen on early impressions in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum and in Vienna's Albertina Museum, and without the scratch on the child's cheek which is seen on later impressions.

Ecce Homo belongs to a series of twelve plates on *The Passion of Christ*. Experts disagree on the exact timeline of works engraved by Schongauer in Colmar between 1470 and 1487 (Lehrs, pp. 120-121). In the catalogue for the exhibition *Martin Schongauer, maître de la gravure rhénane* (1991), *The Passion of Christ* is deemed to belong to the first mature phase of the artist, between 1475 and 1480 (p. 94). The Colmar Unterlinden Museum catalogue estimates that *The Passion* belongs to "later" works, "exhibiting the highest degree of mastery, both in the use of contrasts between light and shadow, and in the way the represented space is organised." (p. 363)



Lehrs lists five different watermarks found on *Ecce Homo* impressions, one of which is a "small bull's head with St. Anthony's cross" (p. 139). The watermark on this impression represents a small bull's head with a circle on the forehead, surmounted by a vertical line topped with a St. Anthony's cross. A similar watermark with a shorter vertical line is listed by Briquet under n° 15.156 (Briquet, *Les Filigranes*, vol. 4, p. 759). Variants of the watermark with "small bull's head topped with St. Anthony cross" are frequently found on engravings by Schongauer: the catalogue of the Petit Palais exhibition *Martin Schongauer* (1991) lists six, out of twenty-three watermarks found in the Dutuit collection (pp. 262-264). "The geographical distribution of papers bearing this mark, and their abundance in books printed in Strasbourg and mainly Basel between 1485 and 1530, makes it highly probable that they were made around Basel." (Briquet, *Les Filigranes*, vol. 4, p. 751).

References: Max Lehrs, *Martin Schongauer, Nachbildung seiner Kupferstiche*, Berlin, 1914, pp. 138-139; *Martin Schongauer, maître de la gravure rhénane*, Dutuit collection exhibition catalogue, November 1991, Petit Palais, Paris-Musées, 1991; *Le Beau Martin, Gravures et dessins de Martin Schongauer*, Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, 1991; Briquet, *Les Filigranes*, 1907; C. G. Boerner, *Sammlung Paul Davidsohn*, Grunewald-Berlin : Kupferstiche Alter Meister, Leipzig, 1920-21.

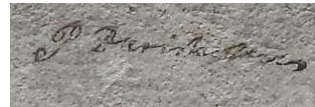


15156

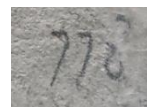
Briquet



Our impression



Paul Davidsohn (Lugt 654)



C.G. Boerner,
Catalogue 1920-21, no.778



Albrecht DÜRER

(1471 - 1528)

The Four Avenging Angels - 1498

Woodcut, 392 x 282 mm. Meder 171, Strauss 49. Impression from the original edition of 1498, with Latin text verso, before the correction of *super montez* into *sup montem*; before the wormholes appearing in the Latin edition of 1511 on the horse's mane and in the clouds.

Superb impression trimmed on the borderline. Without watermark as usual in the 1498 Latin edition (Meder, p. 152). Two very small losses along the left border, a tiny surface scratch without loss at the left of the Angel playing the trumpet. Two tiny skinning of the paper and a few stains, in particular along the left and upper edges. Otherwise in good condition.

Dürer started work on this series of 15 plates for the *Apocalypse* (*Die heimlich offenbarung iohannis, Apocalipsis cu figuris*) in 1494-1495 during his trip to Italy. The series was first published by Dürer in 1498 in two simultaneous editions, in Latin and in German, with a text on the back of each plate. Proof impressions without any text on the back do exist for some plates, but none for the *Four Avenging Angels* according to Meder.

The Four Avenging Angels of the Euphrates is the eighth plate in the *Apocalypse* series. It illustrates two consecutive episodes in Chapter 9 of the *Apocalypse of John* (verses 13-21), corresponding to the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets: the well of the chasm opens, letting out monstrous locusts that harass mankind for five months, and the four angels are set free with a mission to kill one third of humanity. Dürer emphasised the second episode, occupying the lower half of the plate, while the locusts in the first episode only occupy a central band under the altar, and provide a visual transition between Heaven and Earth. The frenetical slaughter perpetrated by the four angels echoes the ride of the *Four Riders of the Apocalypse*, unleashed against one fourth of humanity when the first four seals are opened. The dynamic composition, highlighting the arms of the avenging angels and the swords they brandish, emphasises the relentless punishment inflicted on mankind: men and women of all ranks fall pell-mell under the blows (a woman, a soldier, a pope and an emperor can be seen amongst the bodies). Panofsky observed that the upper and lower half of the woodblock were of unequal quality: the upper part, with a rigid classical effect, might have, according to him, been engraved by Dürer in 1496, while the lower part, with its complex composition showcasing a very high level of technical mastery, might date to 1497.



REMBRANDT HARMENSZOOM VAN RIJN

(1606 - 1669)

A Scholar in his Study – 'Faust' - c. 1652

Etching and drypoint, 210 x 160 mm. Bartsch 270, Hind 260, Biörklund and Barnard 52-4, New Hollstein 270, I/VII.

Impression of the 1st state (of 7), before the posthumous rework.

Superb impression printed on heavy oatmeal paper, with strong contrasts within the shadows and much burr in particular on the chin, the clothes and the watch of the sitter.

Impression trimmed at the subject. In excellent condition, without any defect. Collectors' marks *verso*: August Artaria (Lugt 33) and André Hachette (Lugt 132).

Provenance:

- Collection of August Artaria (1807-1893). The publishing house Artaria & Co. was founded in Vienna in 1769 by Carlo Artaria (1747-1808). He published wood engravings and geographical maps and from 1778 was the first to print sheet music. August Artaria, his grandson, directed the company from 1842. His collection of old master prints, sold in Vienna in 1896, numbered 1190 items. In his work *Les Marques de collection*, published 1921, Frits Lugt wrote under number L.33: " Superb series of prints by Rembrandt, numbering 606 items, almost complete, remarkably rich with proofs in different states, this wealth having already been mentioned by Rovinski (p. XLV, note 2) and Dutuit (supplement to vol. II, p. XVIII)." In *À travers cinq siècles de gravures* (1903), Gustave Bourcard listed eleven impressions of 'Faust' in the first state that were sold at public auctions, one of which was the impression in the Artaria sale, "with a lot of burr" (pp. 170-171).

- Collection of André-Jean Hachette (1873-1952): *Collection de Mr. A. Hachette* sold in Paris in 1953 (expert: M. Rousseau), numbering 83 items.

After 1647, Rembrandt printed some proofs on oriental papers made in Japan and imported from Dutch Indies. 'This love of experiment was to characterise his print output in the following years' (Erik Hinterding). The paper known as *oatmeal paper* was an heavy paper made from the pulp residues. 'This paper was originally used for making cartridge cases for firearms, and for that reason is also known as cartridge paper in English' (E. Hinterding). Rembrandt used it in particular for proofs of *Jan Asselijn, painter* (NH 236), *A Scholar in his study - 'Faust'* (NH 270) and *St Jerome reading in an Italian Landscape* (NH 275).



The texture and the blond color of the oatmeal paper provide our proof with a warm tone, which emphasizes the shadows and gives the light a supernatural appearance which especially fits the subject.

Impressions of the 1st state of *'Faust'* printed by Rembrandt on *oatmeal paper* are particularly sought after. In 2013, the New Hollstein catalogue listed 8 impressions on oatmeal paper, in Boston (Museum of Fine Arts), Hamburg (Hamburger Kunsthalle), Londres (British Museum), New York (Metropolitan Museum), Norwich (Norwich Castle Museum), Rotterdam (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen), Vienne (Albertina) (New Hollstein, 2013, Text II, p. 215).

'Faust' is present in the 1679 inventory by Clément de Jonghe under the title "practiseerende alchimist". The figure of the scholar surprised by a mysterious apparition in his study has traditionally been described as *'Faust'*, the 16th century German alchemist and astrologist. He was also identified alternately as a disciple of the religious sect of Faustus Socinus, or as a Jewish Kabbalah scholar. This last version is the one advocated by Deni McIntosh McHenry in his article examining the print's several interpretations (McIntosh McHenry, 1989).

References: Frits Lugt, *Les Marques de collections de dessins & d'estampes*, website, Fondation Custodia, 2016 : nos. L.33 and L.132; Auction's sales catalogues: *Estampes de Rembrandt et de Dürer...*, Mai 6-13, 1896, Vienne (Artaria & Co.); *Collection de Mr. A. Hachette. Choix d'estampes anciennes des écoles allemande et flamande*, 1953, 11 juin 1953, Paris (M. Rousseau); G. Bourcard, *À travers cinq siècles de gravures, 1350-1903*, Rapilly, Paris, 1903; Erik Hinterding and Jaco Rutgers, *New Hollstein, Rembrandt*, 7 vols, 2013; Erik Hinterding: *Rembrandt as an etcher. Vol 1: The practice of production and distribution*, 2006, pp. 112-114: « Special and oriental types of paper »; *Rembrandt's "Faust in His Study" Reconsidered: A Record of Jewish Patronage and Mysticism in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam*, Deni McIntosh McHenry, Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, (Spring, 1989), pp. 9-19.



Oatmeal paper (verso)



Collector's marks:

- August Artaria (L.33)
- André-Jean Hachette (L.132)



REMBRANDT HARMENSZOOM VAN RIJN

(1606 - 1669)

The Virgin and Child with the Cat and the Snake - 1654

Etching, 95 x 144 mm. Bartsch 63, Biörklund and Barnard 54-C, Hind 275, New Hollstein 278, I/IV.

Impression of the 1st state (of 4), before the posthumous rework.

Very fine impression, printed on laid paper with watermark (foolscap with seven pointed collar), with burr and wiped marks in the foreground, above the date and the chair.

Impression in superb condition; a very tiny rusted point in the left margin, a small stain in the bottom corner of the left margin. Small margins (sheet: 130 x 150 mm).

The Virgin and Child with the Cat and the Snake is the third of six etchings that Rembrandt made on the childhood of Christ in 1654: *Christ returning from the Temple with his parents* (NH 276), *The Flight into Egypt: crossing a Brook* (NH 277), *The Virgin and Child with the Cat and the Snake* (NH 278), *The Adoration of the Shepherds: with the Lamp* (NH 279), *The Circumcision in the Stable* (NH 280), *Christ seated disputing with the Doctors* (NH 281).

The six plates in this series are etched in the same style, with a similar drawing technique using an abundance of parallel strokes and preferring a full frontal view. Except the first plate, all other plates have the same format.



Ludolf BAKHUIZEN

(1630 - 1708)

Series of ten Seascapes - 1701

Etching, each around 177 x 237 mm, except for Hollstein 1: 195 x 257 mm.
Bartsch 1 to 10, Hollstein 1 to 10, 3rd state (of 3).

Complete series of 10 etchings, as usual with the title page *D'Y Stroom en Zeegezichten geteekent en geetst door LUDOLF BAKHUIZEN, Anno 1701 In Amsterdam* and the mezzotint portrait of Bakhuizen by J. Gole.

Impressions of the final state, the numbers erased, printed on laid paper with watermark (Amsterdam's coat of arms, name of a papermaker and date 1751).

Generally in excellent condition. A few pale foxmarks. Binding holes in the left margins. Full untrimmed margins (sheets: 325 x 415 mm).

Marine landscapes are a favourite genre of Bakhuizen's. In 1701 he etched this series of ten plates, representing harbours and rivers, among which the bay of the IJ in Amsterdam and the Maas in Rotterdam. The view of Amsterdam is allegorical and symbolises the commercial and maritime power of the city in the 17th century: the Dutch city is personified in the form of a goddess in arms, riding on Neptune's triumphal chariot. The prints that follow in the series represent familiar scenes in harbours or along rivers and contain a plethora of boats, yachts, hulks, longboats, being pushed into the water and launched, sailing or being careened.



J. Bakhuizen fecit et esc: cum Privilegio auct. Hollandicae et West-Frisiae.

Zoo bouwt men hier aan 't Scheepvrk v
De Moerbalk van den Staat en Steden,
Ten besten van 't gemeen, en Leeden
Van de Indiaansche Maatschappij:
Zoo brengt men peertien, wyd van't een in't ander Landt;
Daar Kristus Leer geleert, gestuict werd, en geplont.
Jadolf Bakhuizen.

Charles MERYON

(1821 - 1868)

La Morgue [The Mortuary] - 1854

Etching and drypoint, 230 x 207 mm. Delteil 36, Schneiderman 42, VII/VII.
Impression of the final state with the inscription added on the house in the centre of the plate: IMAGERIE RELIGIEUSE EXPORTATION. Edition of twenty impressions (according to a proof in British Museum annotated by Meryon and inscribed 'Bon à tirer'); copperplate then cancelled by Meryon. Schneiderman notes that the date 1850 added bottom below the title is probably the date of the preparatory drawing.

Very fine impression printed on old laid paper with an indistinct watermark. Excellent condition. Full margins (sheet: 245 x 355 mm).

A "sinister, moving, extraordinary" work according to L. Delteil, *La Morgue* is the nineteenth plate out of twenty-two in the series *Suite des Eaux fortes sur Paris* [A Series of Etchings of Paris], published by Meryon between 1852 and 1854.

"In the eyes of a few connoisseurs," Philippe Burty writes, "this piece is perhaps the most remarkable in all his œuvre. It would have been impossible to make this group of houses more moving; they are in reality very far from producing such a profound impression on one's soul. The bizarre tiered arrangement of the roofs, the colliding angles, the blinding light that makes the contrast of darker masses all the more striking, the monument, taking, under the artist's chisel, the vague aspect of an ancient tomb, all offer the mind an unspeakable enigma to which the figures give the sinister key; the crowd, huddled along the parapet, watches a tragedy unfold on the embankment: a corpse has just been fished out of the Seine; a small girl is sobbing; a distraught, frenzied woman falls backwards, choked by despair; the police sergeant orders the mariners to take to the Mortuary the poor wreck, a product of blackest poverty or debauchery." ("L'œuvre de Charles Meryon", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 5, n° 15, 1863, p. 83).

Even though he etches the buildings and the embankment in minute detail, Meryon is acknowledged to be less worried about the faithfulness of representation than by the general impression he wants to produce. But this impression should not be the result of artifice, it must emanate directly from the contrasting lights and shadows on the façades of the houses, with their rows of dark windows, from the tiered lines of the roofs, with their chimneys shooting up into the sky like Gothic spires, and from the squat building of the Mortuary, with the crematorium chimneys coughing up a heavy smoke that struggles with rising in the air. The tragic scene of the body being fished out of the water under



LA MORGUE.
1850.

A. DELATRE IMP. R. J. JACQUES VOB.

the gaze of onlookers leaning on the parapet reinforces the macabre feeling of the whole place. Burty justly writes: "The city, the street, the building, had been until then confined to playing the banal part of the background, but become here animated with the latent life of a collective being." (*Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 5, n° 14, 1863, p. 523). However this "latent life" is condemned to a sad destiny: the buildings would soon be demolished. Baudelaire was an admirer of the *Eaux fortes sur Paris* and offered to write "the philosophical reveries of a Parisian *flâneur*" to accompany the etchings. But Meryon was not a fan of "poetical meditations in prose" and replied curtly that it was important to stick to a strict description of the prints and the places they represented:

"One has to write: on the right, this can be seen; on the left, that can be seen. One has to research and take notes from old books. One has to say: this building originally had twelve windows, but the artist only represented six; and, finally, one has to go up to the Hôtel de Ville to ask about the exact year of the demolitions." Baudelaire added: "M. Meryon talks and talks, gazing up to the ceiling, listening not a whit to one's observations." (Letter to M. Poulet-Malassis, 16 February 1860, quoted in *Le Peintre-graveur illustré*, vol. 2, *Charles Meryon*, by L. Delteil).

The mortuary and the buildings sketched by Meryon were situated at the beginning of the Quai du Marché neuf, where the Préfecture de Paris now stands. At the same time that he added the title in the 5th state, Meryon engraved on a façade to the left: HOTEL DES TROIS BALANCES MEUBLE and on another one to the right: SABRA – DENTISTE DU PEUPLE. The *Hôtel des trois balances* did indeed stand at number 6, Quai du Marché neuf. As for Sabra, "the people's dentist", he owed his reputation to his affordable prices, and he moved to the other side of the boulevard, at the corner of Quai des Orfèvres, in the 1860s after the buildings of the Quai du Marché neuf were demolished.

Meryon modified the copperplate for *The Mortuary* in 1863. The 7th and last state bears an additional inscription: IMAGERIE RELIGIEUSE EXPORTATION [Religious images for export]. This is probably the publishing house of Charles-Eugène Glémarec, specialising in popular images engraved in wood, which was established in 1847 at number 30, Quai du Marché neuf. A photograph of the mortuary and of the houses on the Quai, taken by Henri Le Secq in 1855, testifies to the sheer number of inscriptions covering the façades of the buildings at the time.

References: P. Burty, « L'œuvre de Charles Meryon », in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 5, n°14 et n°15, 1863, pp. 76-88; Loÿs Delteil, *Le Peintre-graveur illustré*, vol. 2, *Charles Meryon*, 1907; C. Geoffroy, *Charles Meryon*, H. Floury, 1926; R. Schneiderman, *The Catalogue raisonné of the Prints of Charles Meryon*, Garton & Co., 1990; Gallica: Avril Frères, *Plan d'expropriation pour la construction de la préfecture de police et du marché aux fleurs*.

DES TROIS BALANÇES MEUBLE

FRIGERIE RELIGIEUSE EXPORTATION



Rodolphe BRES DIN

(1822 - 1885)

Le Chevalier et la Mort [The Knight and Death] - 1866

Etching, 179 x 250 mm. Van Gelder 120, 1st state (of 3), Préaud 138, 1st state (of 3).

Very scarce proof of the 1st state (of 3), before further work, mainly in roulette. Superb impression, with strong contrasts, printed on white *chine appliqué* on heavy wove paper. Generally in very fine condition. A few pale foxmarks in the margins. Pin holes in the corners of the wove sheet. Wove paper sheet trimmed a few millimeters outside the platemark (sheet: 185 x 255 mm).

Dirk Van Gelder lists 3 impressions of this state: one in the New York Public Library, printed on light grey *chine appliqué*; another one in Rotterdam on white *chine appliqué*; and one last one in Winterthur on white *chine appliqué*. Maxime Préaud mentions two other impressions: one on heavy white wove paper, described by Arsène Bonafous-Murat in 1992 in his catalogue *Rodolphe Bresdin* (no. 54), and one on white wove paper, described by André Candillier in 1998 (no. 21). A sixth impression on heavy wove paper, from the H. M. Petiet collection, was sold by Piasa on 5th December 2013.

Le Chevalier et la Mort was presented in 1866 at the exhibition organised by the Société des Amis des Arts de Bordeaux, under the title *Une Vieille légende* [An Old Legend]. It hasn't been possible to identify this "old legend". We can surmise that the narrative elements, the Knight raising his arm in front of Death, an apparition behind him, a barge (possibly Charon's?) on the bank and the hanged man at the top of the castle, all belong to a fable that Bresdin might have read, since we know, thanks to Odilon Redon, that he was an avid reader. But these "narrative" elements are also regular occurrences in Bresdin's œuvre: the Knight, Death represented as a skeleton holding an hourglass, the boat, the fortified castle, the rocky landscape, the perching owl, strange small beings in the mountains, and even the pecking birds, all people his mental universe and often figure in his engravings: *Le Lac aux montagnes* [Mountain lake] (c. 1849), *La Comédie de la Mort* [The Comedy of Death] (1854), *Les Chasseurs surpris par la Mort* [Hunters surprised by Death] (1857), *La Baigneuse et la Mort* [Young Woman Bathing and Death] (1857), *Le Cavalier oriental dans les montagnes* [Eastern Rider in the Mountains] (1866), *Le Retour du Chevalier* [The Knight's Return] (1871), *Paysage rocheux* [Rocky Landscape] (1880).

The title chosen by Bresdin, *Une Vieille légende*, might not refer to a specific fable then, but to the narrative style of the engraving itself. The title *Le Chevalier et la Mort* is Van Gelder's.



Rodolphe BRES DIN

(1822 - 1885)

Le Repos en Égypte à l'âne bâté - 1871

[The Rest On The Flight Into Egypt With A Saddled Donkey]

Lithograph transferred from an etching, 230 x 199 mm. Van Gelder 138, REPORT SUR PIERRE i/II.

Impression from the 1st state (of 2) of the lithography transferred from an impression of the 1st state (of 2) of the etching.

Very fine impression printed on ochre *chine appliqué* on heavy wove paper. Impression in superb condition. Pin holes in the corners of the wove sheet. Small margins (sheet: 258 x 225 mm). The chine appliqué sheet is slightly smaller than the image, as is often the case on lifetime impressions.

No impression of the 1st state of the etching is known. Bresdin had the transfer lithograph, taken from an impression of this first state, printed in Paris in 1873 in Lemer cier's workshop. An invoice from Lemer cier, reproduced in Van Gelder's catalogue raisonné, indicates a print run of 110 copies, but only some very rare copies remain, according to Van Gelder:

“Bresdin probably took with him to Canada a hundred copies of each of the seven etchings [that is, of the transfer lithographs printed by Lemer cier]. The remaining ten copies of each print he might have sold or given away to friends as gifts before he left. This explains why some copies of the print runs made in 1873 still exist, between three and nine depending on the works, even though the hundreds of copies taken to Canada (nine hundred including the two lithographs [*The Good Samaritan* and *The Comedy of Death*, reprinted at roughly the same time by Lemer cier]) have all been destroyed.” (Dirk van Gelder, *Rodolphe Bresdin*, La Haye, 1976: vol. I, Appendice V, *Les reports sur pierre de huit eaux-fortes de Bresdin*, p. 176).

Bresdin reworked the stone in 1878 with lithographic ink and drypoint: he added plants and foliage and darkened the rocky landscape behind the donkey. Lemer cier took care of the print run for this second state, 50 copies, in 1880. Bresdin also reworked the copperplate for the etching, adding to the vegetation and amplifying it to the point of obscuring the rocky landscape.



Henri-Gabriel IBELS

(1867 - 1936)

Au cirque, le clown [At the Circus] - 1893

Lithograph, 490 x 260 mm. Boyer & Cate 37.

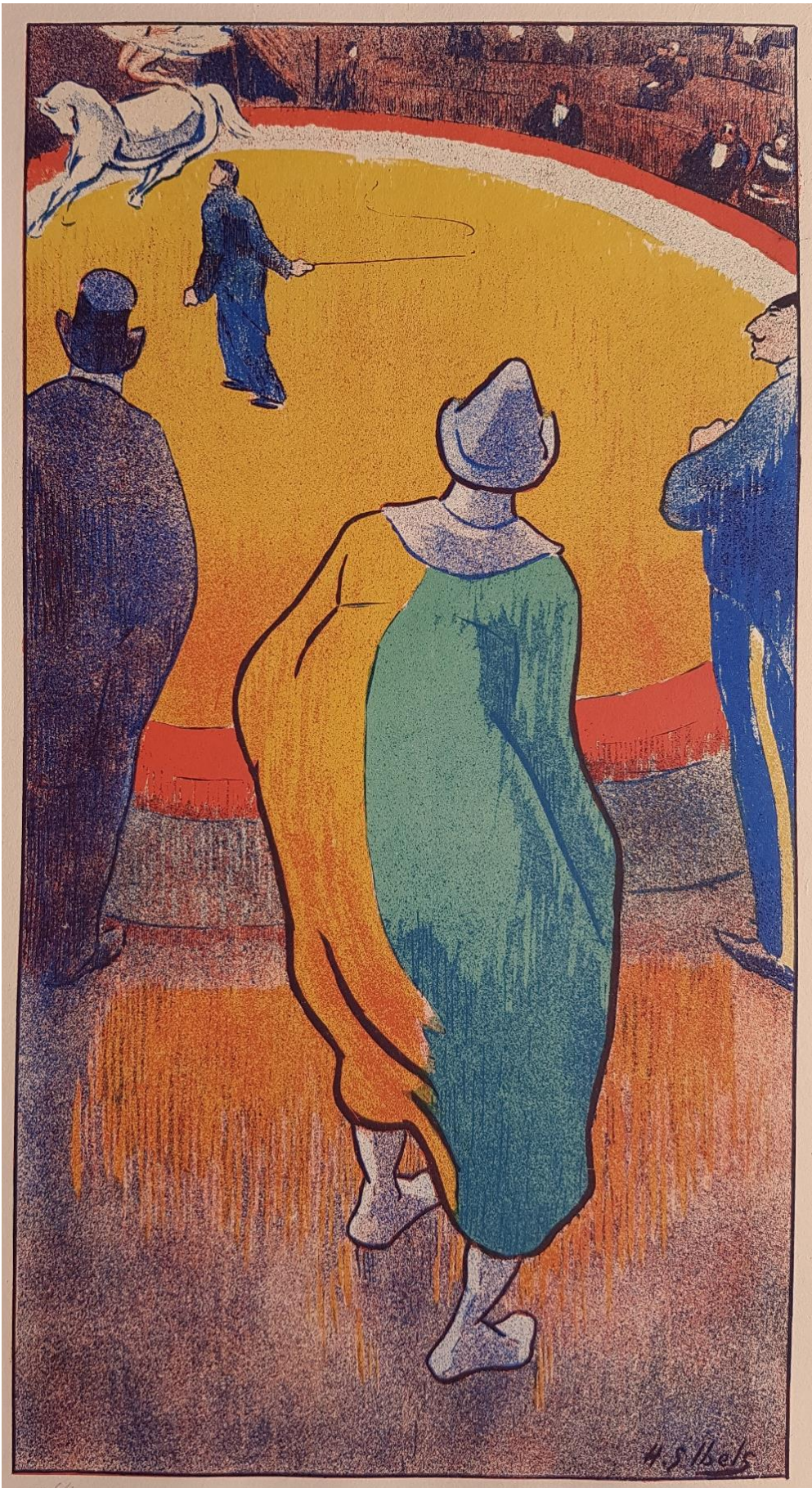
Fine impression on wove paper numbered 64 in pencil, unsigned as usual; blindstamp of *L'Estampe originale* bottom right (Lugt 819). Sheet: 585 x 410 mm. Published in the first Album of *L'Estampe originale*. Edition of 100 copies.

Henri-Gabriel Ibels is one of the founding members of the Nabi group of artists. From 1891 to 1899, he contributed to several journals and newspapers in which he published captioned sketches representing typical characters. He also drew posters, theatre programmes, music sheet covers and numerous lithographs on the theme of concerts and performances: at the theatre, the music hall, the circus. In the journal *La Plume* for 15th January 1893, the critic Charles Saunier notes, regarding a series of lithographs representing Pierrot and Colombina:

"The characters and their elegant gestures are delineated with a unique line (...) M. Ibels is constantly preoccupied with making a good use of the resources offered by the processes he uses." (quoted in A-M. Sauvage's « Henri-Gabriel Ibels », *Nouvelles de l'Estampe*, no. 129, p. 28).

In the same year the first album of *L'Estampe originale* was published, with a cover by Toulouse-Lautrec. The album contained the lithograph *Au cirque, le clown*, as well as Bonnard's *La Petite blanchisseuse* [The Little Laundry Girl], Ranson's *Tigre dans les jungles* [Tiger in the Jungle] and Roussel's *L'Éducation du chien* [Training the Dog]. In 1893, *L'Estampe originale* published again *Le Café concert* [The Music Hall], a series of 22 lithographs by Ibels and Toulouse-Lautrec.

The lithograph *Au cirque, le clown* is a masterful synthesis of Ibels' pictorial and social preoccupations. The high-angle perspective, the clown's shapeless, two-colour costume, taking up most of the foreground, the contrasting bright colours, the synthetism, make this one of the Nabi period's most modern works.



The framing and the arrangement of the picture play a crucial part here. Ibels placed the horse and the circus-rider (only the lower half of her body is visible) at the tip of the arc formed by the ring banks in the upper left corner; the right side of the ring, which the horse and rider have just left, is deliberately empty. In this way Ibels not only recreates movement but he also invites us to complete the scene by imagining what the circus audience might have seen; thus we find ourselves in « sympathy » with the clown leaning on one hip: we share his interest and his worried attention. This unusual composition accentuated by the stark contrast between the colours is not only formal audacity on Ibels' part: his aesthetic search is here at the service of his humanist sensitivity, the same sensitivity that is to be found in the less ambitious drawings published regularly by the "journalist Nabi".



Jacques VILLON

(1875 - 1963)

La Partie d'échecs [The Game of chess] - 1904

Drypoint, 300 x 390 mm. Ginestet and Pouillon 9, undescribed state.

State proof only with drypoint, with the signature and date added. A few strokes erased, the girl's dress made narrower at the height of the waist. Before the aquatint.

Very fine impression printed on laid paper with strong wiped highlights; signed in pencil. Full margins (sheet: 440 x 610 mm). In very good condition. Two vertical printing creases in the center of the image.

Ginestet and Pouillon list "11 impressions with aquatint, two of which done in colours and one on Japan paper." They also mention that "one impression of the drypoint before aquatint, in olive green, has been described by Goldschmidt; another impression of the drypoint before aquatint, in black, with some reworks, is in the Museum of Modern Art." However, the print in the Museum of Modern Art bears no date or signature: it was in fact made before the aquatint. As for the "reworks", these are strokes placed at the height of the belt on the dress which have been in fact later erased by Villon.

This impression of the drypoint before aquatint is an intermediary state between the impression at the MoMA and the print run of 11 impressions with aquatint: Villon signed and dated the plate, and he made the girl's dress narrower by erasing some of the strokes. For this impression, he inked the plate so that there would be a stark contrast between the light coming from the window and partly illuminating the background, and the shadow in which the room, the chessplayers and the chessboard find themselves, while only the chesspieces and squares are lit, focusing the attention of the two players. The contrast between light and shadow expresses the opposition between the deep focus of the players and the intensity of the game. In the next state on the contrary, the whole room is bathed in light falling on the chessboard, and on the young boy's torso and face; two shapeless black shadows seem to float next to the two players, suggesting the tension of the game.



La Partie d'échecs, engraved in 1904, represents a young Marcel Duchamp, at seventeen, with his then fifteen-year-old sister, Suzanne. Marcel Duchamp had just left Rouen in October, to join in Paris his brother Gaston (who had taken the name Jacques Villon). This drypoint is one of the first testimonies we have of Marcel Duchamp's passion for chess.

Three years later, Duchamp would himself paint three pictures on the same theme: *La Partie d'échecs* [The Game of Chess], 1910, *Les Joueurs d'échecs* [Chess players], 1911, and *Portrait de joueurs d'échecs* [Portrait of Chess Players], 1912. Villon would also go on to make another Cubist etching in 1920 on the theme of chess: *L'Échiquier* [The Chessboard].

Chess wasn't just a hobby for Marcel Duchamp; he regularly competed in tournaments before the Second World War. In one scene from René Clair's movie, *Entr'acte* (with a script by Picabia, score by Erik Satie), he can be seen in 1924 playing chess with Man Ray. Photographs of Duchamp after the war often show him in front of a chessboard.

Duchamp tried several times to explain his interest for chess, by drawing a parallel between the game and his aesthetic preoccupations:

"... I found similarities between painting and chess. In reality, when you play a game of chess, it is as if you were sketching something, or as if you were building the mechanism by which you will win or lose. The competitive side of the game is of no importance, but the game itself is very, very plastic and this is probably what drawn me to it." (James Johnson Sweeney, « Entretien Marcel Duchamp – James Johnson Sweeney », 1955, in *Duchamp du signe*, Flammarion, 1975, p. 183 – translated from French by us).

Jacques Villon's print, showing a young Marcel Duchamp concentrating on the game, is proof of the budding passion.





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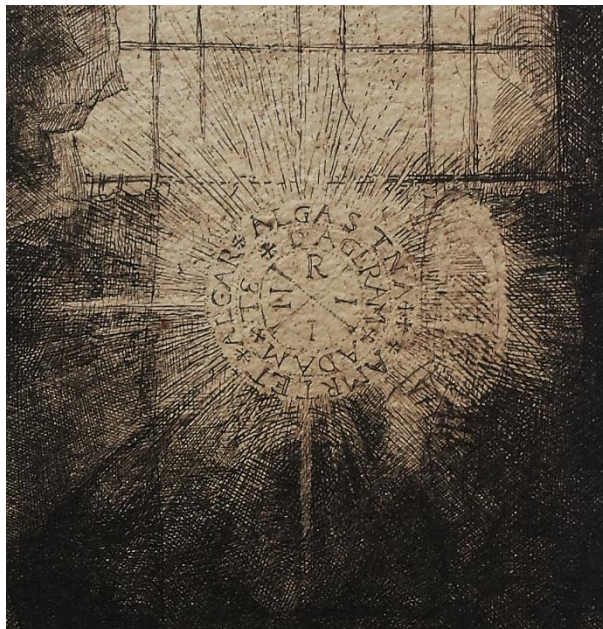
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