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EST. 1817

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**Albrecht Dürer** (Nuremberg 1471-1528)

*The Crucifixion, (Large Passion)*

Signed by the artist in monogram (lower centre):  
'AD'

Woodcut on laid paper

15¼ x 10<sup>15/16</sup> in. (390 x 278mm.)

c.1498, from the 1511 Latin text edition



## Provenance

Private collection, America.

## Comparative Literature

Adam von Bartsch, 1757-1821. *The Illustrated Bartsch*. vol 10, New York, no. 8

Joseph Meder, *Dürer-Katalog: Ein Handbuch über Albrecht Dürers Stiche, Radierungen, Holzschnitte, deren Zustände, Ausgaben und Wasserzeichen*, Vienna 1932, p. 126, no. 120.

F.W.H. Hollstein, *German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts, c.1400-1700*, Volume VII, Amsterdam, 1954, no. 120.

W.L. Strauss, *The Intaglio Prints of Albrecht Dürer*, New York, 1977, p. 218, no. 37.

R. Schoch, M. Mende and A. Scherbaum, *Albrecht Dürer. Das Druckgraphische Werk. Band I: Kupferstiche, Eisenradierungen und Kaltnadelblätter*, Munich, London, New York, 2001, p. 250, no. A3

The *Crucifixion* formed part of a series of 12 woodcuts Dürer made of the Passion story that became known as the *Large Passion*, undertaken between 1496-1511. 1496 to 1498 was a remarkably productive time for the young Dürer: not only was he crafting his masterpiece *Apocalypse* series, but also was simultaneously creating the most dramatic compositions of the *Large Passion*: *Agony in the Garden*, *Flagellation of Christ*, *Ecce Homo*, *The Bearing of the Cross*, *The Crucifixion*, *The Lamentation* and *The Entombment*. The similarities in the power and grandeur of composition, and clarity of line between the *Apocalypse* and these earlier *Passion* sheets are evident. After his second journey to Italy (1505–1507) the artist finished his work on the series in 1511, at almost the same time as his *Life of the Virgin* cycle. That same year the

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*Passion* was published in Nuremberg with a title page and a poem by the Benedictine theologian and friend of Willibald Pirckheimer, Benedictus Chelidonius. The images were printed with the Latin text on the reverse. This followed the format of Dürer's first published book, the *Apocalypse*, which was also reprinted in 1511 with Latin text, replacing the original German of the 1498 edition. In fact, there was even a combined edition of the *Large Passion* alongside the Latin *Apocalypse* and the *Life of the Virgin* published in 1511. These books were innovative, highly sophisticated products for humanist devotion aiming at intellectual and wealthy clients. The subject of the Passion was especially popular in Dürer's native Germany in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Dürer himself had a lifelong fascination with the subject of the Passion, portraying it five different times over his life - a sixth version remained unfinished owing to his death.

This sheet serves as a fascinating insight into a crucial moment in Dürer's career, as he began to advance stylistically. We see him expertly synthesise late Gothic conventions in the wealth of detail and expressive black lines, with new innovations such as strong emotions, naturalism and human treatment of the subject, thus elevating this series above earlier depictions of the Passion. This is especially evident when compared to earlier depictions of the Pasion, namely Martin Schongauer's *Passion* of 1473-1489. Dürer was strongly influenced by Schongauer's *Passion*, and his later *Road to Calvary* (1485-91). Dürer was particularly inspired by the ambitious and complex scale of Schongauer's *Road to Calvary* which is likewise characterised by a densely crowded scene, but added greater dynamism in his own series and compresses the space around his figures even further. The present sheet is a very strong impression from the 1511 Latin text edition, printed before the woodblock was damaged with a 30mm crack extending up from the bottom border to the hem of the Virgin's garment and two small gaps below the monogram.

This Passion series by Dürer was highly influential and inspired many artists after the German Master. Notable masterpieces inspired by Dürer's Passion Cycle include works by Raphael, in particular his *Spasimo di Sicilia* (1515), which draws heavily from Dürer's *Christ Carrying the Cross* in this series, and the Italian master's *Deposition* (1507), which looks to Dürer's *Entombment* print. Lucas van Leyden continually referenced Dürer's Large Passion series in his own engravings, adopting greater emotional intensity through contorted gestures and expressive faces inspired by Dürer's prints. This is particularly evident in Leyden's *Golgotha* of 1517. As Peter van den Brink notes in his essay on van Oostanen's *Crucifixion* in the upcoming Agnews catalogue, Dürer's crucifixion also played an important role in Oostanen's development of the subject.