Emmett & White
ANTIQUES & INTERIORS

Eric Gill, 'The Slaughter of the Innocents', 1914/1929

£175

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REF: 4390

Height: 39 cm (15.4")

Width: 31.5 cm (12.4")

Description

A powerful early wood engraving by Eric Gill (1882-1940), *The Slaughter of the Innocents* was designed in 1914 and printed from the original woodblock by Douglas Cleverdon in 1929, on thin cream wove paper. This compelling impression brings together Gill's distinctive command of line, profound religious subject matter, and the enduring vitality of printing from the artist's original block.

The work depicts the Biblical massacre ordered by King Herod, distilled by Gill into a tightly composed scene of violence, grief, and maternal anguish. With remarkable economy, the artist creates an image of extraordinary emotional force. The sharply cut black-and-white design, concentrated figures, and direct handling of the subject exemplify Gill's ability to fuse the visual language of medieval woodcut and stone carving with a modern, intensely personal sensibility.

Gill first produced the design for a 1914 catalogue cover for an exhibition in aid of Belgian refugees, lending the image a poignant contemporary resonance. The block was subsequently used for an illustration in H. D. C. Pepler's *Nisi Dominus* of 1919 and, a decade later, was printed by Douglas Cleverdon as Plate 2 in *Engravings by Eric Gill*. This 1929 impression therefore represents an important later printing from the original block, retaining the immediacy and authority of Gill's original design.

Eric Gill was one of the most influential British artists, sculptors, letter-cutters, and typographers of the early 20th century. Best known for typefaces including Gill Sans and Perpetua, he was equally significant as a printmaker, whose wood engravings remain admired for their formal clarity, spiritual intensity, and exceptional craftsmanship.

A fine and moving example of Gill's graphic work, of particular interest to collectors of British modernism, private-press printing, religious art, and 20th-century wood engraving.

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