



PROANTIC
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Wilhelm Gross (1883-1974), The Prophet, C. 1955



350 EUR

Signature : Wilhelm Gross (1883-1974)

Period : 20th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Paper

Width : 43 cm

Height : 61 cm

Description

Wilhelm

Gross (1883 Schlawe - 1974 Oranienburg-Eden),
The Prophet, c. 1955. Woodcut on
thin laid paper, 43 cm x 23 cm (depiction), 61 cm
x 43 cm (sheet size), signed

"Dr. Wilh.[elm] Gross" in pencil lower right,
inscribed "Orig.[inal]"

Holzchnitt (Handabdruck)" lower left and
inscribed "Aus der "Ecce homo" Folge"
in the center.

- The wide
margin with traces of pressing due to the
impression, the sitter's left foot
with a small purple stain, otherwise in vibrant
condition.

- The

Dealer

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Burden of the Prophet -

The

large-format woodcut shows a prophet figure that takes up almost the entire height of the sheet. However, instead of seeing something in the distance that is still hidden from our eyes - as is usual in depictions of prophets - the figure has raised his hands in a defensive gesture, as if the prophet is trying to ward off what he has seen. At the same time, however, the position of the arms is an acceptance of the inevitable, which only those who recognize what is to come will have to bear for the time being, which is why the figure in the painting - despite its size - appears almost solitary, alone and exposed to the burden of suffering.

In a manner

reminiscent of the folds of medieval wooden sculptures, the expressive figure is "twitched" in a flash, illustrating the drama of the almost superhuman effort. The visible wooden structures of the background develop a vibrato that further energizes the depiction.

Wilhelm

Groß left the surface of the wood unpolished when he made the block, using the technique of frottage. The woodcut was printed by hand, so that the grain was rubbed through the paper. For Groß, the grown wood structure is an analogy for individuality, each broken in its own way.

The prophet

is a leitmotif in the work of Wilhelm Groß, for whom art itself has a prophetic character: "A beautiful work is [...] a work that appears with prophetic power.

About the

artist

After

deciding to abandon his career as a civil servant

in favor of art, Wilhelm Groß

went to Berlin in 1902, where he studied with the

sculptors Otto Lessing and

August Gaul. After beginning his studies at the

Karlsruhe Art Academy, which he

had to abandon for financial reasons, Groß

returned to Berlin and worked as a

freelance artist thanks to the support of his patron

Eduard Arnhold. From 1904

until World War II, he enjoyed a fruitful artistic

friendship with Max

Beckmann. As a member of the Deutscher

Künstlerbund (DKB), he won the Villa

Romana Prize in 1908, which enabled him to stay

in Florence, where he came into

contact with Ernst Barlach and Max Klinger. The

artist lived in Rome from 1909

to 1911. Called up for World War I, Groß was

released from military service in

1915 for health reasons. His experiences in the

war, though harrowing, were

tantamount to a conversion, and from then on his

art was inspired by his faith.

His self-built studio in Oranienburg-Eden became

a cultural meeting place and, as

the "Strohkirche," a meeting place of the

Confessing Church during

the Nazi era, where Kurt Scharf and Martin

Niemöller held services.

In 1933,

Groß was classified as "half Jewish," which

resulted in a ban on

exhibitions, expulsion from the Reich Chamber of

Culture, and defamation of his

works as "degenerate art. After the end of the

Reign of Terror, Groß was

ordained as a preacher in the province of

Brandenburg and became pastor of the

Sachsenhausen congregation. In 1953, he

received an honorary doctorate from the

Heidelberg Faculty of Theology. The artist responded to Walter Ulbricht's proclamation of the "Ten Commandments of Socialist Morals and Ethics" in 1961 with his last monumental sculpture, which depicts Moses with the Tablets of the Law.

"We should serve the great sculptor God as skilled tools. While working on a cross-bearing Christ in hard oak, I broke half of a valuable tool. Sadly, I put the stump aside and paid no attention to it for years, until one day I picked it up, removed the damaged piece of steel, and had the stump resharpened. Lo and behold, that short, unsightly iron became one of my favorite tools. The Lord works only with broken tools."
- Wilhelm Gross