

DAVID TUNICK, INC.

PRINTS & DRAWINGS

ALBRECHT DÜRER (1471-1528)

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Date: 1498
Series: *The Apocalypse*
Medium: Woodcut
Dimensions: 388 x 280 mm. 15 1/2 x 11 1/8 in.
References: Bartsch 64; Meder 167, proof before text and before the 1498 German edition of the *Apocalypse*, Schoch, Mende, Scherbaum 115
Watermark: Imperial Orb, Meder 53
Provenance: R. M. Light, Santa Barbara; to Agnew's, London (this print included in their history, *Agnew's, 1982-1992*, p. 198, pl. 178); 1991 to Private collection, U.S.A.
Impression: Brilliant, the finest lines printed with sharp clarity
Condition: Excellent, perhaps minimal disturbances to the paper along the bottom edge from an old mount

This impression of *The Four Horsemen*, Dürer's masterpiece woodcut, may be the finest early example in America. It is before the break becomes visible that extends from the bottom border up through the extended shoe of the fallen woman on the ground and before the breaks in the top cloud lines furthest to the right. There does not appear to be another proof impression without text before the break in any American public or private collection. We suggest that the "proof" impressions cited by Meder with the break may be from an edition printed for commercial purposes between the text editions of 1498 and 1511. The ones we have seen, such as at the Metropolitan Museum, are very black and white, showing dramatic contrast, and they are unevenly printed. There are in fact earlier impressions than these with text from the 1498 German and Latin text editions before the break becomes visible, also cited by Meder and by Schoch, Mende, and Scherbaum.

The Imperial Orb watermark is the watermark called for by Meder in early impressions. Its placement in the sheet of our impression is precisely the same as in the better of the two Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, proofs.

"In 1498 Dürer issues the *Apocalypse*, his most passionate set of woodcuts and his first publishing venture. No other work expresses so strongly the premonition of disaster and violence which prevailed everywhere in Northern Europe near the close of the century." (H. Joachim, *Prints 1400-1800*, 1966, p. 18). Dürer's vision of the four Apocalyptic riders galloping over fallen bodies is the best known woodcut in the history of Western art. The furthest back of the four riders surges forward with the power to conquer; the next to take peace from the earth; the third with the scales of Justice; the fourth is Death, with Hell at his flank.