

KARL&FABER

Albrecht Dürer

Lot 162

Adam and Eve



Low estimate :	€ 150,000
High estimate :	€ 200,000
VAT on hammer price :	7 %
Buyers premium incl. VAT :	27 %
VAT over buyers premium :	7 %

Artist

Albrecht Dürer

Engraving on laid paper, watermark Bull's Head with Triangle and Flower (Meder 62). (1504). 24.5 x 19.2 cm (sheet).

Further information

Bartsch 1; Meder 1 III a (of d); Schoch/Mende/Scherbaum 39 III a (of III d).

Provenance

Ernst Friedrich Oppermann (1827–Berlin–1888), with the collector's stamp verso. (Lugt 887, - this print cited); Private collection, USA.

A very fine, rich, luminous impression, printing very sharply, with great clarity, intense contrasts and considerable inky relief. Albrecht Dürer's Adam and Eve reflects Dürer's profound study of classical antiquity and his assimilation of Italian proportion theory—particularly through his exposure to the works of Leonardo da Vinci and antique sculpture—while simultaneously maintaining a characteristically Northern emphasis on meticulous detail and symbolic richness. The two nude figures are presented in classical contrapposto, set against a shallow, densely wooded backdrop. The confined pictorial space underscores their corporeality while alluding to Eden as an enclosed yet precarious realm. This print marks the first fully developed representation of the male and female nude together in German printmaking, deliberately echoing ancient prototypes such as the Apollo Belvedere and the Venus Pudica, in an effort to render ideal human form. Dürer's figures are informed not only by direct anatomical observation but also by proportional systems he would later articulate in his theoretical treatises. The composition is replete with iconographic elements that foreshadow the impending Fall: the serpent, coiled around the Tree of Knowledge, hands Eve the forbidden fruit, while a parrot—symbol of the Virgin birth—and a collection of animals including elk, cat, ox, and rabbit, function as personifications of the four humours. This reference to humoral theory situates the image within a contemporary understanding of human nature as a fragile equilibrium soon to be disrupted by sin. The fig branch modestly covering Adam, as well as the overall interplay between physical idealisation and moral tension, underscore the paradox between divine command and earthly beauty. Technically, the engraving reveals Dürer's unmatched mastery of line, his nuanced modulation of light and shadow, and his capacity to suggest sculptural volume through purely graphic means. The intricate rendering of flora, the compositional harmony, and the density of symbolic content elevate this print to a masterwork not only within the German Renaissance, but within the broader canon of European print history. The lower right corner rounded. A tiny tear approx. 2-3 mm long on the lower edge; a small restored paper defect on the upper left edge. A tiny brown spot on the tree trunk. Otherwise in very good

condition. Rare in this exceptional print quality!