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## An Exhibition of Passion and Resurrection Etchings

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## An Exhibition of Passion and Resurrection Etchings

by Patrick Pye

Exhibited at the Marian Library: March 18 - April 26, 1996.

This exhibit presents twenty-three etchings by Patrick Pye. They are part of a collection of etchings by the same artist owned by the Marian Library / International Marian Research Institute. The etchings presented in our gallery have been selected to highlight the presence of Christ the Redeemer in our lives, especially the meaning of his Passion and Resurrection.

### Vita Brevis

The first three etchings (#1-3) show some personal features of the artist's life. His self-portrait as anti-hero (#1) and a taste of Ireland's soft (#2, Bouquet) and stark (#3, Atlantic Island) beauty. Patrick Pye was born of English/Irish parents at Winchester in 1929, the year of the Wall Street crash. His mother, a music teacher, returned to Dublin in 1932; since then Dublin has been his home. He began painting at school under the sculptor Oisín Kelly. He attended the National College of Art in Dublin, and in 1957 won the Mainie Jellet Scholarship for painting in Ireland. Under this sponsorship he traveled extensively in Europe. It was the prevailing influence of Romanesque Catalan art, seen at the National Museum in Barcelona, that finally turned his attention to Christian iconography. Pye studied stained glass in Maastricht under Albert Troost and has done many windows for churches in Ireland and England. In 1973 he took up etching at the Graphic Studio Dublin where he has continued to work at this medium ever since. He has done important commissions for schools, churches and banks. He was elected to Aosdána in 1981 and to the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1991. His publications include *Apples & Angels* (Veritas, Dublin 1980) and *The Time Gatherer* (Four Courts Press, Dublin 1991), a study of the sacred theme in the work of El Greco.



The theme of this exhibit recalls the famous prayer attributed to St. Patrick (c. 390 - c. 461): "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me...." The leitmotif of the Pye etchings is expressed in Abraham's Sacrifice (#4 - see above) of which the artist once said: "The only way that I have been able to come to terms with it is through the perceptions of the inner dialogue of prophecy and fulfillment of the two Testaments, Old and New."

The whole exhibit ought to be read as counterpoint of this etching. We are led into Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection by some of the key stations of his early existence (*Annunciation*, *The Word Within* [#6 - at right], *Adoration of the Child Jesus*), his journeying with people (*Mary and Martha*) and the *Transfiguration* (#9), a second leitmotif of this exhibit.

An attempt to make "a contemporary equivalent to the icons of this theme in old Russia," the *Transfiguration* connects with Abraham's Sacrifice and transcends it, pointing toward the Resurrection as ultimate answer to human tragedy and senseless agony. The bulk of the series deal with the Passion event (#10-19), contemplating its various facets, "graphically" suffering with the *Servant of the Servants* (#14) and at the same time gravely rejoicing in the new life flowing from Jesus' heart (#15, *The Heart of Christ for Us*). Etchings #20-22 celebrate the victory over suffering and death, especially expressed in *The Redeemer* (#21) and *The Maid of Israel* (#22). The latter is a summary of human existence and meaning. It portrays the unknown "Maid announced to by the angel in the mists of the world," and her personal fulfillment as "Queen of Heaven enthroned in glory."

### Etchings



The twenty-three etchings were all handprinted at the Graphic Studio Dublin either by the artist or by Stephen Lawlor, his colleague and a printer by profession. Most of them are worked with a steel needle on copper plate with a wax ground. Submerged in a bath of nitric acid, the acid bites into the copper wherever the needle has removed the "ground." For printing, the plate is covered with etching ink which is then gently wiped away leaving the ink in the intaglio lines.

#### Artist's Statement

"The believer (artist or not) finds himself born into an age of unbelief. We cannot find in this disposition anything other than the sickness of the age. We cannot, however, put our heads into the sack of our own belief as though all were well with the world, as if unbelief were someone else's problem. We must suffer this sickness ourselves in such a way that the infidel (our neighbour) realizes that it is his own. The artist suffers this sickness in a special way. Everywhere the language appropriate to the faith has been whittled away. There are no longer the words to talk of spiritual things; indeed, the absence of the words has become a habit that people no longer notice. In this Rouault seems to me to be the exemplar for our generation of artists. He brought the faith to this point: where does man suffer? We have to begin again by pointing to that area in man where, in his solitude and pain, he becomes aware of the "disrelation" in his own self. Men will naturally work to dull the pain and

we can expect men to call it "morbid" and "anti-life," but the believer will work to keep the pain awake, to kindle the spark of desire that is concealed therein. I do not know if this is what I do - or even worry at my failure to do it. I recognise it as what waits to be done. This is our tuning fork."

Patrick Pye, *Apples & Angels*, Dublin 1980

## Works Displayed

1. *Artist in Winter*
2. *Bouquet*
3. *Atlantic Island*
4. *Abraham's Sacrifice*
5. *The Angel on the Stair*
6. *The Word Within*
7. *Adoration of the Child Jesus*
8. *Mary and Martha*
9. *Transfiguration*
10. *Mob*
11. *Nailing to the Cross*
12. *The Crucifixion*
13. *By the Cross*
14. *Servant of the Servants*
15. *The Heart of Christ for Us*
16. *Deposition*
17. *Legend*
18. *Mater Dolorosa*
19. *The Entombment*
20. *The Pentecost of St John*
21. *The Redeemer*
22. *The Maid of Israel*
23. *Soldier and Cross*



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