

Josef Lebovic Gallery is proud to offer
AN EXCEPTIONAL PAIR OF FRAMED MEZZOTINTS
BY JOHN MARTIN (British, 1789-1854)



***Belshazzar's Feast*, 1832**

Mezzotint with etching, second steel plate, proof before letters, 47.5 x 72.2cm



***The Crucifixion*, 1834**

Mezzotint with etching, state before alterations, 46.7 x 72.5cm

This impression of ***Belshazzar's Feast*** was one of John Martin's most desired images when it was first published. This print is a brilliant impression with rich, black tones and is a proof before letters. Only one other proof of this image in this state is known to exist.

This fine impression of ***The Crucifixion*** is extremely uncommon, as only one or two prints have been seen to date of this early state prior to the plate being altered to include the publisher's name in the dedication. Due to the popularity of Martin's prints, the publisher, Francis Graham Moon purchased this plate from Martin for £1,000 in 1834.

The frames were especially made for these mezzotints and most likely commissioned by Francis Graham Moon. They are beautifully embellished and are in excellent original condition. It is very rare to find John Martin prints in period frames.

Sold as a pair, price on application.



English painter, engraver and illustrator John Martin (1789-1854) was a major figure in the art world of the nineteenth century. His dramatic biblical subjects were visionary and unique in style. Among his admirers were the leading artists, writers and scientists of the day, as well as members of royalty from the King of Belgium to Tsar Nicholas. Many of Martin's prints, including *Belshazzar's Feast*, decorated the household of the Brontës at Haworth.

After achieving fame for his monumental biblical paintings, Martin developed skills in printmaking to make his work more accessible to the public. His mastery of the mezzotint technique grew through his obsessive involvement in every part of the process, including the sale of the work. His illustrations of Milton's *Paradise Lost* earned Martin sums unheard of at the time.

John Martin left a lasting influence on art, illustration, film-making and architecture. His work is widely represented in major international institutions such as the Louvre; the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC; and the Tate Britain, where a major exhibition of his work, *Apocalypse*, is currently on show (until January 2012). Ref: Michael J. Campbell, *John Martin: Visionary Printmaker*, 1992; and Juliet Barker, *The Brontës*, 2010.

***Belshazzar's Feast*, 1832**

Mezzotint with etching, second plate, proof before letters, 47.5 x 72.2cm. *With original period frame from about the 1840s with plaster embellishments reflecting motifs found in the image, such as serpents, stars and a moon.*

John Martin's painting of *Belshazzar's Feast* is known as Martin's most important work, having broken away from the traditional style of historical paintings. At its exhibition, the crowds were so immense they had to be physically restrained. Its success prompted Martin to create the image in mezzotint, based on sketches for the painting, with original variations. There was a huge demand for the prints, and the large number of impressions sold wore the plate down. A second plate was produced and marketed with equal success. In fact, this is now known to be the original plate, completely reworked by Martin. The present impression appears to have been made from this "second plate", after the reworking but before the lettering was added.



The image is an unique vision of the biblical feast of King Belshazzar, set in the Hall of Jupiter, beneath the tower of Babel and the Temple of Belus. In the centre, the prophet Daniel interprets for the king God's words of doom, which appear in the rays of light in the upper left. Ref: C.W. #89, Campbell p90-91, 115.

***The Crucifixion*, 1834**

Mezzotint with etching, state before alterations, text in plate below image, 46.7 x 72.5cm. *With original period frame from about the 1840s with plaster embellishments including a dove, a lamb and crosses.*

Text reads "London. Designed and engraved by John Martin, K.L.B. The Crucifixion. / To His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, the President; and to the other members of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, this plate is with permission dedicated by their most obedient humble servant John Martin. / London. Published by July 1st, 1834 by Francis Graham Moon by Special Appointment, Printseller to the King, 20, Threadneedle Street. Sold also by Hodgson, Boys & Graves, 6 Pall Mall, Ackermann & Co., Strand."



This impression is an exceptionally rare one, as John Martin's name appears in the dedication line without the name of Francis Graham Moon, normally spelled as "Fra's G. Moon."

The Crucifixion is said to be John Martin's finest mezzotint, showing a great mastery of the medium. Martin strived to illustrate the biblical narrative with great attention to detail and to draw the buildings of Jerusalem with historical accuracy. This mezzotint was Martin's first major treatment of the New Testament subject of the crucifixion. Ref: C.W. #91, Campbell p119.

JOSEF LEBOVIC GALLERY Est. 1977. Member of: AAADA, IFPDA, AIPAD

103a Anzac Parade, Kensington (Sydney) NSW • Post: PO Box 93, Kensington NSW 2033, Australia

Tel: (02) 9663 4848 • Fax: (02) 9663 4447 • Intl: (+61-2) • Email: josef@joseflebovicgallery.com • Web: joseflebovicgallery.com