

# DAVID TUNICK, INC.

PRINTS & DRAWINGS

ALBRECHT DÜRER (1471-1528)

*Coat of Arms with a Skull*

Date: 1503  
Medium: Engraving  
Dimensions: 227 x 170 mm. 9 x 6 3/4 in.  
References: Bartsch 101; Meder 98, a (of d); Schoch, Mende, Scherbaum 37  
Watermark: High Crown, Meder 20, 1480-1525  
Provenance: Christie's London (19 November 1994, lot 59); to  
David Tunick, Inc., New York, 1995 to  
Private collection, New York  
Impression: Brilliant  
Condition: Excellent, narrow margins all around

In this imaginative engraving, Dürer combines conventional heraldic imagery with the visual motifs of *Memento mori*, the Dance of Death, and the mystery of love. A wild man, a symbol of Germany's mythic past, accosts a patrician woman in a contemporary Nuremberg dance costume and bridal crown. The skull on this folkloric figure's heraldic shield alludes to his status as a surrogate of Death. The maiden, unable to see this symbol, coyly wraps her hand around the strap that binds the wild man's helmet, mantling, and shield. The angle of the skull on the shield is exactly that of the young woman's head. The imagery serves as a warning against the vanity of earthly status symbols rooted in social hierarchies and the transience of youthful beauty.

This stunning early impression, full of rich contrast, demonstrates Dürer's absolute mastery of the engraving medium. Every detail has been skillfully rendered. Most exquisite is Dürer's attention to texture, particularly the glittering crown, metallic helmet, bony skull, and soft feathers. The quality of the present impression is directly comparable with the extraordinarily beautiful impression in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (ex. coll. Junius Spencer Morgan).