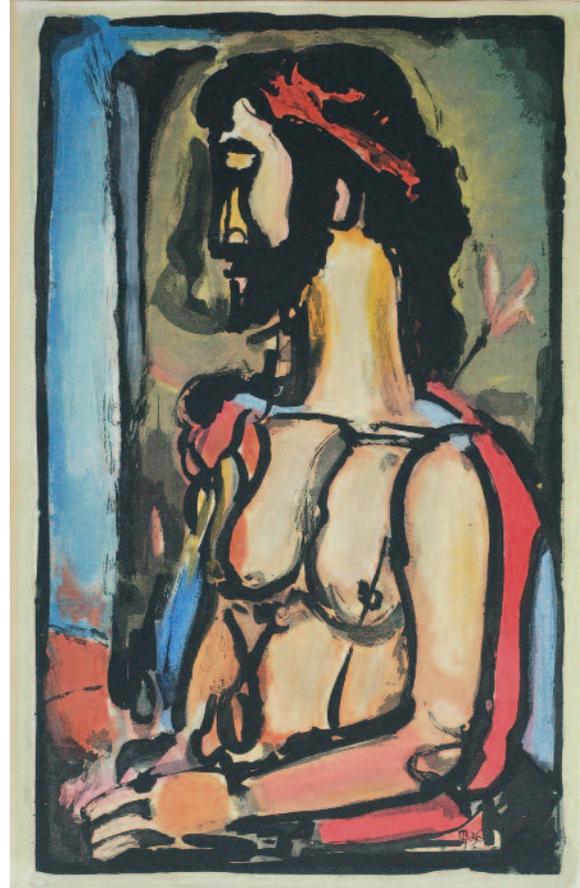


ECCE HOMO BEHOLD THE MAN

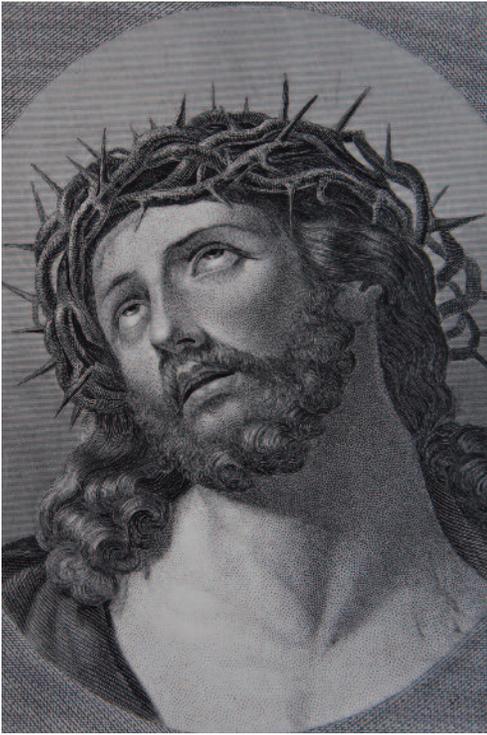


by Sandra Bowden and Sarah Colago

ECCE HOMO is Latin for “behold the man.” This declaration refers to the presentation of Christ by the Roman ruler, Pontius Pilate, before the Jewish mob as described in John 19. Jesus, who had been falsely accused by the high priests and elders, was beaten, mockingly dressed as a king with both a crown of thorns and a purple robe, and then presented to the mob. “When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Behold the man!” As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”

“But Pilate answered, ‘You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.’” Pilate, whether from fear or self-preservation, declared that although he found no basis for the death of Jesus, he would hand him over to be crucified. Max Beckmann’s *Ecce Homo* captures an intense moment when Pilate, portrayed as an evil character with an extended jaw and baldhead, speaks to Jesus. We can only imagine the conversation.

The earliest depictions of the *Ecce Homo* scene appear in the ninth and tenth centuries in the Syrian-Byzantine art. Many high-ranking Jewish officials attended the questioning of Jesus, but to remain ceremonially clean, they did not wish to enter the house of the Roman ruler. Therefore, historians believe Pilate had to bring Jesus outside of his house to present him to the crowd.



Ecce Homo, by Guido Reni



○ Sacred Head, by Bruce Herman



Ecce Homo, by Cornelius Cort

The early Syrian-Byzantine artists often pictured Jesus, crowned in thorns and wearing a purple robe outside of Pilate's palace. Bonfils' photograph, *Ecce Homo*, provides the physical setting on the Jerusalem street where this took place over 2000 years ago just inside the St. Stephen's Gate.

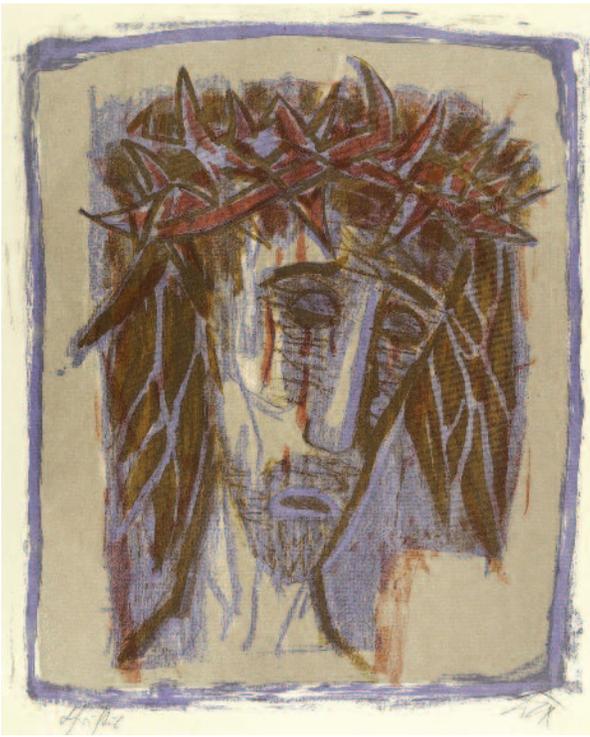
Two pieces in this show by Jacques Callot and Cornelius Cort show Christ being presented by Pilate to the crowd of people in the street. Otto Dix's *Ecce Homo* imagines the crowd seething with anger, pointing fingers and taunting Jesus.

In contrast to these early Christian artists who depicted the presentation in its entirety, many 15th century artists began to portray a wounded Jesus alone with a focus on the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Historians surmise that this image, although preceding the actual *ecce homo* scene, became almost a symbolic remembrance of the event. This idea developed around 1400 in Burgundy and then spread in popularity to Northern Europe.

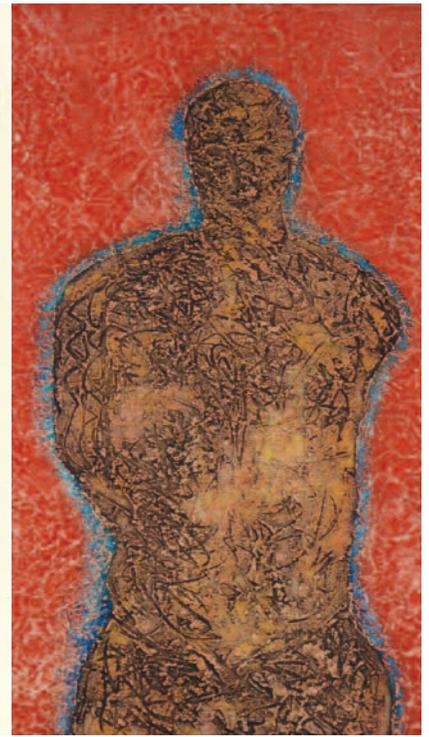
In the tradition of their predecessors the 20th century French artists, Michel Ciry and Georges Rouault, portray Christ bare-chested with a robe slung over his



Ecce Homo, by Michele Ciry



Christus, by Otto Dix



Ecce Homo, by Ralph Hall

shoulders. Christ was crowned with thorns and clothed with a purple robe in a defiant and hostile way.

Bruce Herman's *O Sacred Head* shows the jarring and ironic coronation as almost too difficult to comprehend. Jesus accepts the crown, for he is the one true ultimate King and should rightfully be crowned, but this is a crown of thorns symbolizing that Jesus took on the sins of the world. He wears the purple robe and is clothed as royalty, but he also walked to Calvary with the bloody scourged back. The motif of the lone suffering Christ enables the viewer to identify personally with the events of the Passion.

The *Ecce Homo* scene has three main characters who represent the struggles within each of us — Pilate, the mob, and Jesus. As we view this show, we are reminded that we have the option to be any of the three. Sometimes we respond like the mob of Jewish officials, who were so blinded by their self-centeredness that they could not recognize the Messiah. Other times we act like Pontius Pilate whose ambivalent nature and inability to use his power for truth resulted in the death of Jesus. Or, we can be like Jesus, who while we were yet sinners suffered the ultimate rejection and followed

his Father's will. He utterly submitted himself to God's will and this is what he requires of us.

Although the Jewish mob and the soldiers intended to humiliate and condemn Jesus, God meant it for good. In the *Ecce Homo* narrative there is a jarring juxtaposition: through the suffering Jesus, salvation is given to creation; through the kingship of Jesus, hope is given to creation. The *Ecce Homo* scene summons us to live with this tension, the suffering and triumph of Christ. Christians are called to deny themselves and take up their cross within the hope of the resurrection. We are called to participate in the sufferings of Christ and to live in the kingship of Christ. ■

ECCE HOMO BEHOLD THE MAN

1. Christ before Pilate

Max Beckmann (1884–1950)
Germany
Lithograph
1956
15¹/₈ x 11³/₄"

2. Christ Shown to the People

Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
France
Etching, 1618
From *The Passion*, one of 7
prints in the suite
4¹/₄ x 8¹/₄"

3. Ecce Homo

Michele Ciry
France
Etching, 1950s
19 1/2 x 9"

4. Christ Reviled

Tyrus Clutter
United States
Etching, 2006
7 x 5"

5. Ecce Homo

Cornelis Cort (1533–1578)
Netherlands
Etching and engraving, 1602
12 x 8³/₈"

6. Christus

Otto Dix (1881–1969)
Germany
Lithograph, 1957
19 x 15¹/₂"

7. Ecce Homo (Behold the Man)

Otto Dix (1881–1969)
Lithograph, 1960
14 x 11"

8. Ecce Homo

Hubertus Giebe (1953–)
Germany
Lithograph, 1996
30 x 22"

9. Ecce Homo

Ralph Hall
United States
Collagraph, 1984
18³/₈ x 13¹/₄ "

10. O Sacred Head

Bruce Herman (1953–)
American
Etching, 1993
18³/₄ x 24"

11. Christ Couronné (Christ Crowned)

Guido Reni (1575–1642)
France
Steel Engraving, 1800s
11 x 8"

12. Christ

Odilon Redon (1840–1916)
France
Lithograph, 1887
13 x 10⁵/₈"

13. Ecce Homo

George Rouault (1871–1958)
France
Aquatint Montval laid paper, 1939
12 x 8³/₈"

14. Koph (Head of Christ)

Karl Schmidt-Rotluff (1884–1976)
German
Woodcut , 1918
5 x 3¹/₂"

15. Ecce Homo

Unknown artist
France
Paper Lace , 1870
4⁵/₈ x 2¹/₄"

16. Head of Christ

Artist Unknown
Spanish/Bolivian, Holquin school
Oil on panel, 1680–1820 ?
16 x 12¹/₂"

17. Man of Sorrows and Mater Dolorosa

Unknown artist
Germany
Woodcut, 1524
3³/₁₆ x 2¹/₄"

18. Ecce Homo

George Rouault (1871–1958)
France
Aquatint Montval laid paper, 1936
12⁹/₁₆ x 8¹/₄"

19. Ecce Homo

Felix Bonfils (1831–1885)
France
Black and White photograph, 1890
11 x 8¹/₂"