

# OSBORNE SAMUEL

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART

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ELISABETH FRINK (1930-1993)



**Standing Group, 1983**

Bronze

33 x 27.3 x 27.3 cms

(12.97 x 10.73 in)

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P.O.A.

Signed and numbered from the edition of 8

Maquette for the monumental *Dorset Martyrs*, Dorchester, UK (Public commission to commemorate Catholic martyrs who died for their beliefs in the 16th and 17th centuries)

Provenance: Waddington Galleries, London (exhibition label on base of bronze)

Chesil Gallery, Portland, Dorset, 1991

Private collection, USA, 1991 (purchased from the above) and thence by descent

Literature: Elisabeth Frink, "Sculpture 1984", published by Harp Vale Books, no. 277, illustrated page 197

The triangular formation displays a gowned and hooded figure as a possible hangman or representative of death about to end the lives of two victims. These victims could be anyone but are martyrs to the Catholic faith. These three powerful figures reflect the executions occurring in the 16th and 17th Centuries. Frink would have been familiar with this troubled history of the Church because she was brought up a Catholic and educated at a convent, as well as living in Dorset since the mid 1970s. Frink's earlier work 'Walking Madonna', Salisbury Cathedral, 1981, shows her interest with religious icons. Furthermore her support to Amnesty International reflected single or group works where the subject could be a political prisoner.

Frink's work shows a reference to Rodin's concern with unfinished textured surfaces, which create tension. In addition, Rodin's 'Burghers of Calais' 1895, may have influenced 'Martyrs' by placing an artwork in a group in a public space. Another inspiration would be the work of Giacometti's visual imagery and slender figures.

The Reformation changes were slow in Dorset because many of the wealthy land-owning families were Catholic. One of these families, the Arundells of Chideock had a castle where the famous Jesuit priest, John Cornelius found shelter. He became Chaplain to the Arundells in 1584, and in 1594 was executed for High Treason against Elizabeth 1.

The final installation of the Dorset Martyrs monument in 1986 is on the site where the old gallows once stood, next to the walled town of Dorchester by Icon Way and South Walks.

It is interesting to note there are differences between the maquette and the final monument. In the maquette both victims have their hands held together in front and the hangman is standing with his hands by his side. Whilst in the monument one victim has crossed hands in front, the other has crossed hands at the back and the hangman is striding forward with a slightly lifted left arm.