

The Crucifixion

This crucifixion piece was painted by English painter and print maker, Michael Rothenstein, in 1937. Rothenstein was known to favor print making to painting and rarely produced works with this density of human figures. Here he makes some exceptions for the subject of Christ's crucifixion.

On the subject of sin, penance, and Christ's sacrifice on the cross this piece always springs to mind. Many artists throughout history have focused on the profound suffering inherent in that execution so favored by the Romans, or the divinity of Christ as He ascends above earthly pain to fulfill His divine mission.

Rothenstein instead takes a unique approach, and focuses on the breadth of Jesus' sacrifice. In his version the figures are dressed in contemporary clothing of the day. Slacks, suspenders, suit jackets, and ties replace the tunics, robes, and armor we are used to. Christ's facial hair is much more well kept as would have been suitable for the time, and the sign over the cross of the thief reads in English.

In this way Rothenstein emphasizes the timelessness of the crucifixion. Although we find ourselves so far removed from the event temporally we can never forget its importance, and we can never forget that it could have just as easily happened today as it did over one thousand years ago.

