Emmett & White
ANTIQUES & INTERIORS

Quentin Bell Glazed Pottery Figural Group

£3,950

Emmett & White Ltd
Cross House, Waterloo Square, Alfriston, East Sussex BN26 5UD
01323 870 595 • info@emmettandwhite.com • emmettandwhite.com

REF: 7710

Height: 27 cm (10.6")

Width: 17 cm (6.7")

Depth: 19 cm (7.5")

Description

A compelling glazed pottery figural group by Quentin Bell (1910-1996), depicting two women in a moment of quiet but unmistakable drama. One figure sits, composed yet seemingly withdrawn, while the other stands close beside her. The arrangement creates an intense psychological exchange through posture, gesture, and proximity alone. The subject may represent Elektra and her mother, Queen Clytemnestra, giving the composition a powerful connection to Classical tragedy.

If this identification is correct, the work evokes one of the most charged relationships in Greek myth. Clytemnestra, wife of Agamemnon, became the focus of a devastating conflict of loyalty, grief, revenge, and maternal authority; Elektra, her daughter, stands in opposition to her. Bell does not offer a literal theatrical scene, but instead distils the narrative into a poised and intimate confrontation. The figures' closeness becomes the source of the drama, allowing the viewer to sense the unresolved emotional tension between them.

Bell's ceramic work is admired for its expressive modelling, individuality, and often literary or mythological sensibility. Here, the hand-modelled forms retain a lively, tactile quality beneath the glaze, which lends depth and subtle variation to the surface. The treatment feels both sculptural and painterly: light moves across the contours, drawing attention to the figures' faces, drapery, and carefully judged relationship in space.

Quentin Bell was a British artist, potter, writer, and art historian, closely connected to the enduring cultural legacy of the Bloomsbury Group. The son of Vanessa Bell and Clive Bell, and nephew of Virginia Woolf, he grew up within one of the most influential artistic and intellectual circles of the 20th century. Alongside his work as an artist and ceramicist, he became a respected academic and author, most notably writing the acclaimed 'Virginia Woolf: A Biography.

Signed within the glaze and acquired from the private collection of a renowned collector, this is an unusual and evocative example of British studio pottery. It would make a distinctive focal point on a console, bookcase, mantelpiece, or display plinth, where its narrative force and richly modelled surface can be appreciated from every angle.

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