

## **Rusty Fears 5 – Final Sale of the Remaining Works of E. Cutler**

### **Content Warnings:**

- Supernatural compulsion
- Scopophobia
- Death & murder
- Discussions of: isolation & mental deterioration
- Mentions of: cultural appropriation, spiders, religion & faith, blood, rot, suicide
- SFX: low continuous drone, high pitched tones

### **[Show Theme – Intro]**

Final Sale of the Remaining Works of E. Cutler by Cormack Baldwin, read by

Imogen Harris

### **Virgin and Child Tapestry- 2011**

**Material: Egyptian Cotton, Silk, Gold**

**Bidding Starts: \$2500**

A classic Cutler style piece, depicting the Virgin Mary and the child Christ. Fine gold embroidery encircles the heads of the holy figures, set upon a field of azure silk. The cotton that makes up the subjects is comparatively matte, lending an air of humanity to the pair. Though the surrounding color complements their pale skin and blonde hair, they seem out of place against

the luster, a mix of human and divine, both and neither at once. The thinness of the fabric makes it seem almost as if the two are breathing.

This piece may have been Cutler's favorite. He toured it widely at art galleries, but refused to sell it for fear that the buyer would not truly appreciate his mastery. The high price reflects the desire for a keen and knowledgeable buyer. While Cutler and his contributions to the world of high-end weaving will be missed, we at his estate are dedicated to ensuring that each piece not sold in life finds its proper place now that he has gone to rest.

### **Ravenstail "Opened Box of Daylight" Hanging- 2016**

**Material: Merino Wool, Qiviut**

**Bidding Starts: \$500**

Unlike traditional Tlingit "Box of Daylight" designs, Cutler's inspired work reimagines the simple geometry of concentric rectangles to show the lids of the "boxes" propped open. Qiviut provides a unique bordering around white merino. A thin line of qiviut, hand-dyed a deep, sunset red, waits in the center of the smallest box. Though its black wool containers are open, it hesitates, stuck in a moment of darkness before it joins the surrounding tapestry.

The choice of technique is unusual for Cutler, though can be understood in the context of the cultural exploration, as it were, of his later years. The

hanging did earn Cutler criticism given his lack of connection with the culture, as well as how much he stood to profit from his work. He replied with signature wit, arguing that his critics were hypocrites who couldn't "buy so much as a potholder off me".

The intent of the piece was certainly to honor both the art form and culture. However, this criticism, and backlash from his response, may have contributed to Cutler's difficulty in selling the piece. After a few gallery showings, he retired the piece soon before himself retiring from the public eye to work on what he termed "self-based projects".

**Geometric Rug- 2019**

**Material: Carpet Wool**

**Bidding Starts: \$800**

A prime example of Cutler's later works. Harsh lines frame four diamonds of red, black, and gray, patterned like a bloodshot eye. Black lines break into ever-smaller repetitions to connect the framing lines and ever-watching eyes. Though the fineness of the thread would allow for the sloping shapes Cutler tended to prefer, the design remains resolutely geometric. Its symmetry and repetition become dizzying, like a fractal viewed too long.

While Cutler experimented number of cultures in his career, it is difficult to place this piece geographically. To the untrained eye, it may resemble the weavings of the American Southwest, but its symmetry is radial, not bilateral. Perhaps its resemblance to certain central Asian styles is intentional, or perhaps it is entirely of Cutler's own making.

The motivation of this piece is likewise unclear. Cutler himself never showed it, as it came some two years after he was last seen outside his Vermont home. Instead, a member of the family was the one to bring it to an artist's market, along with several smaller pieces of Cutler's. The other items sold quickly, but the rug was ignored, even as the seller began offering it for free. The family member explained that she "just wanted to get it away from him," but refused to elaborate as to why. Whether she returned this piece to him despite her comments or if he reproduced it later on is uncertain.

Regardless of its meaning or purpose, the rug remains entrancing. Its countless branches draw the viewer to those eyes again and again. Feverish desire for an end builds as the viewer traces the same paths, but relief never arrives. It is a sense that you, like Cutler, are on the verge of a breakthrough.

**The Missing Piece, Art Tapestry- Date Unknown**

**Material: Silk, Material Unknown**

**Bidding Starts: \$1300**

A brilliant art piece, showing an almost humanoid form torn roughly from what appears to be a mandala design, as divorced from culture and origin as the rug previously auctioned. Ribbons of silk drape in the empty space left by the figure, occasionally moving in an unfelt draft like the limbs of a spider that does not quite know it has died. The symmetry of the mandala is destroyed by the missing space, the form of which implies the figure has stepped out, one arm outstretched. A kaleidoscope of thread slouches and unravels without the support of the weave. Dripping from the frayed edges is a viscous, black substance that at first glance appears to be paint. However, it remains moist, not tacky. Its purpose may be found in the symbolism of the piece, or what can be determined without Cutler's insight.

The choice of imagery is striking here. Though the mandala is not strictly Buddhist, at the beginning the design does seem reminiscent of tantric mandalas. As the piece continues and the figure splits from the weave, the pattern grows more angular and fractures into lines so small some are a mere thread thick. Still, it can be understood to be a mandala of some type. An odd choice, as while Cutler was no stranger to religious imagery, he himself was not religious. Of course, nor was Cutler a stranger to dabbling in things he did not understand.

Without a clear culture or style to attribute it to, we are forced to make overarching assumptions as to the meaning of the piece. If the mandala is to represent wholeness, the symbolism of removing a piece is clear. If, however, it is to represent the self, as many cultures attributed to it, then what of the thing torn from it? Is it a fragment of himself, a part so hated that he himself sought to destroy it as it broke free? Or is it its own self, something Cutler maligned despite his role in its creation?

Many questions arise from this piece, but let us keep to answers. Our focus is the substance that anoints the ragged edges. It is opaque in places and merely pigments areas over which it is smeared. Its consistency is like that of blood, though unlike blood it does not dry. Perhaps the fluid is representative of such, the exit unwilling, the outstretched hand not offered, but torn, and the remaining tapestry a gaping wound that refuses to heal.

Yet there is no evidence of the figure. A successful escape, but not one without cost.

**Portrait of a Man(?)- Date Unknown**

**Material: Egyptian Cotton, Silk, Substance Unknown**

**Bidding Starts: \$1,200**

A return to Cutler classic. While not as vibrant as the “Virgin and Child” piece, exquisite detailing can be made out on closer inspection. The figure stands left-of-center, partially obscured by a door that is richly embroidered in imitation of swirling carvings. Like the “Virgin and Child”, the figure is framed in light, but here it is muted, as if coming from some distance. Perhaps due to this backlighting, the subject is cast entirely in black silk apart from its eyes, which gleam from the stygian surroundings with pearl-like iridescence. No pupil has been added, either in the weave or embroidered afterwards. In fact, the figure is entirely without detail. It seems out of place against the matte cotton background, a “Virgin and Child” in reverse.

The simplicity of the figure renders it impossible to identify. The door can be recognized as the antique oak door to Cutler’s weaving room, but there is no evidence of anyone visiting Cutler in the months leading up to his death. Both the front and back doors remained locked up to the time of Cutler’s death, which was only detected by neighbors after the stench of rotting meat began emanating from the house. If the figure is to represent anyone at all, it must either be from memory or someone who had been in the house with him at the time. Given the ruling of his death as a suicide, it is possible that Cutler’s mental state had deteriorated to such a point that the thing is an expression of a hallucination.

This theory is not without evidence within the piece. As it continues, the initially certain weave becomes more and more disordered, until at the bottom dropped strands hang like prisoners at the gallows. The light of the doorway combines with its frame. The shaded and embroidered door dissolves into a mass of unintelligible colors, embroidery floss shoved roughly through in parts as if to parody the details above. The only thing that remains consistent throughout the piece is the figure.

Unlike most of Cutler's tapestries, the figure's form is indefinite. Strands of black continue well past its apparent boundaries, sometimes woven in with silk and sometimes applied afterwards in what appears to be the same substance as on "The Missing Piece". Its purpose in the tapestry is again unclear, though it is spread in the shape of a spindling hand near the figure's face, as if to suggest a loving touch.

**Fabric Shears- Date Unknown**

**Material: Stainless-steel, Blood, Substance Unknown**

**Bidding Starts: \$75**

A pair of stainless-steel fabric shears, used to make clean cuts through even the most reluctant matter. Uncharacteristic of Cutler, these are unadorned, their utility rendering them invisible. Viscous black circles the

handle and oozes between the hinge, too large for a hand yet distinguished into trailing fingers in a mockery of human anatomy. A crust of dried blood coats the blades and renders them unusable. The source can be deduced given the state of Cutler's body. Thirteen wounds may seem excessive to us, but for someone like Cutler it can only be the destructive answer to his creative fervor in life.

Let the bidding begin.

**[Show Theme – Outro]**

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