Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Edwin PENNY (1930 -)

A European Green Woodpecker on a Branch
Watercolour.

Signed Edwin Penny at the lower left.

Inscribed GREEN WOODPECKER on the verso.

557 x 416 mm. (21 7/8 x 16 3/8 in.)

Artist description:

Born in Bristol in 1930, the ornithological watercolourist Edwin Penny studied at the Bath College of Art from the age of thirteen, and was later enrolled in the Royal West of England Academy. In 1947 he began an apprenticeship as a lithographic artist with a local printing company, and between 1951 and 1953, during his period of National Service, served with the Royal Tank Regiment. He travelled with the Regiment to Hong Kong, and there was able to admire first-hand the art of Chinese watercolour painting, which was to be a significant influence on his later career. In Hong Kong Penny entered a government art competition – the only European artist to do so – and won, with a watercolour landscape. His prize was a six-month course of tuition with a Chinese artist, and the lasting influence of the Oriental tradition is apparent in much of his work. Unlike the illustrations of earlier ornithological artists whose work he admired, such as James Audubon and Archibald Thorburn, who situated their birds in a landscape setting, Penny often preferred to place his birds against a plain or simple background. He only worked in watercolour, and painted largely from memory, based on long hours of direct observation of birds. He never relied on photographs; as he once noted, 'If I could photograph birds that well, I wouldn't have to paint them.' Penny has been represented by Frost & Reed Galleries throughout his career, and enjoyed solo exhibitions in Bristol, London and New York.