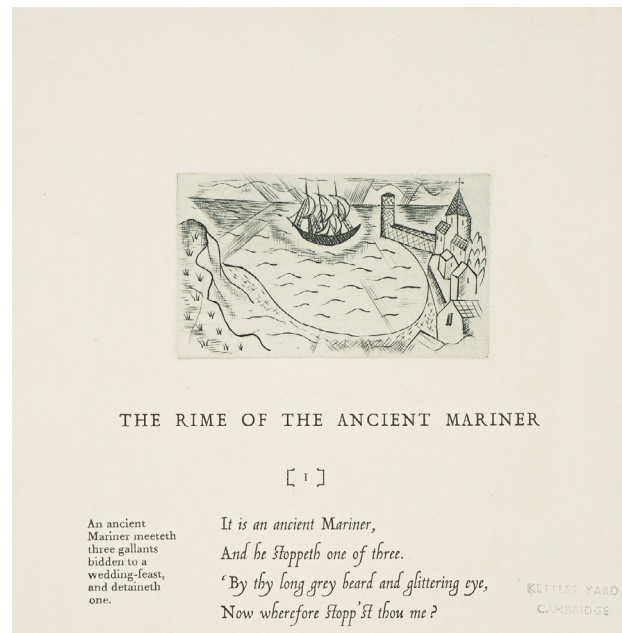


KETTLE'S YARD

'A Painted Ship upon a Painted Ocean': David Jones's Engravings for *The Rime of Ancient Mariner*

by Mark James



David Jones, Headpiece for *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1928. © The Estate of David Jones / Bridgeman Images. Photo: Kettle's Yard

Any visitor to Kettle's Yard will have encountered the graphic works by the Anglo-Welsh artist and poet David Jones (1895-1974) exhibited throughout the house, but they may not know the collection's copy of his beautifully illustrated edition of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* – judged by Thomas Dilworth 'the first important copper-engraved, illustrated book since Blake's *The Book of Job* (1826)'.¹

Jim Ede had first met Jones in the early 1920s, when Ede was a young Assistant at the Tate Gallery, London. Through his position Ede befriended and promoted contemporary artists such as Jones (who was only seven months younger than him), and Jones soon became a regular and welcome visitor to 1 Elm Row, Hampstead, the house which Jim and Helen Ede had moved to in 1924. Indeed, 'Jones would "just wander in unannounced", Jim recalled, and often stayed overnight, sometimes for days. He was the Edes' most constant family friend [...]. The spare bedroom was considered his'.²

A century later, David Jones remains an abiding presence at Kettle's Yard, where his works testify to a friendship of fifty years with both Jim and Helen. One of the more evocative artefacts of the earliest years of that friendship is a copy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* illustrated with Jones's

engravings and inscribed by the artist himself 'for my very dear Jim & Helen'. In 1927 the bookseller and publisher Douglas Cleverdon commissioned Jones to engrave a series of images 'for the work Jones most wanted to illustrate, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*'.³ This had been the teenage Jones's favourite amongst Coleridge's poems – Jones was, after all, the descendant of London mast-makers and shipwrights.⁴

Throughout 1927 and 1928 Jones researched his subject, examining historic ship models in museums, collecting images of sailing ships, and even acquiring a photograph of an albatross. Jones created about 150 to 200 preparatory drawings, and from these he eventually produced ten copper plates, laboriously and painstakingly incising the designs into the copper with a burin before printing proofs on a small press which he had had installed in his studio. The intense and precise process of creating the plates placed a near-intolerable strain upon the engraver's eyes, which led his doctor to recommend that he cease engraving completely, as Jones wrote to Helen Ede on 13 August 1928: 'My eyes have gone worse – they do periodically only this time worse, because of engraving – it's horribly depressing, because everything depends upon them. – it would be so utterly ghastly to have to give up engraving altogether because of one's eyes'.⁵

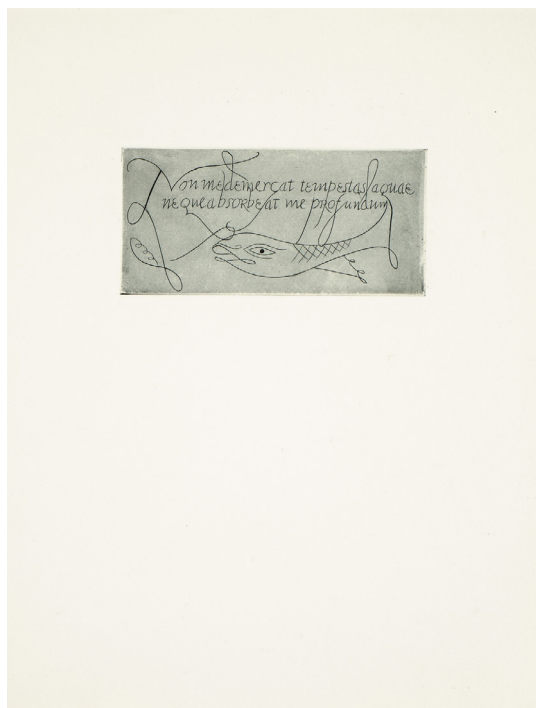
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Happily, by alternating campaigns of engraving with long periods of rest, by January 1929 Jones was able to complete a headpiece, eight full-page illustrations, and a tailpiece to illustrate the edition. (Around this time Jones pulled an edition of 30 sets of proof engravings, one of which was apparently bought by Jim Ede, and Kettle's Yard also holds a variant, unused engraved design for the tailpiece).⁶ With the copper plates completed, the engraved illustrations were printed by Walter L. Colls and the letterpress text by the Fanfare Press, and the volume was published by Cleverdon in an edition of 470 numbered copies later in 1929.

Notably, however, Jones gave the Edes a unique, inscribed exemplar of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. In the Kettle's Yard copy the limitation statement ends with the printed text 'This copy is No.', and Jones has struck through the last word and added a manuscript gift inscription in his clear calligraphic hand, to read 'This copy is for my very dear Jim & Helen David J.'

Footnotes

- ¹ Thomas Dilworth, *David Jones: Engraver, Soldier, Painter, Poet* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2017), p. 114.
- ² Dilworth, p. 108.
- ³ Dilworth, p. 113.
- ⁴ See Dilworth, p. 29.
- ⁵ Letter of 13 August 1928, Kettle's Yard KY/EDE/1/8/1/7.
- ⁶ See Dilworth p. 114 and Laura Freeman, *Ways of Life: Jim Ede and the Kettle's Yard Artists* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2023), p. 88. The alternative design for the tailpiece is Kettle's Yard DJ 11.



David Jones, Tailpiece for *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1928. © The Estate of David Jones / Bridgeman Images. Photo: Kettle's Yard



David Jones, *Albatross in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1929. Kettle's Yard Archive © The Estate of David Jones

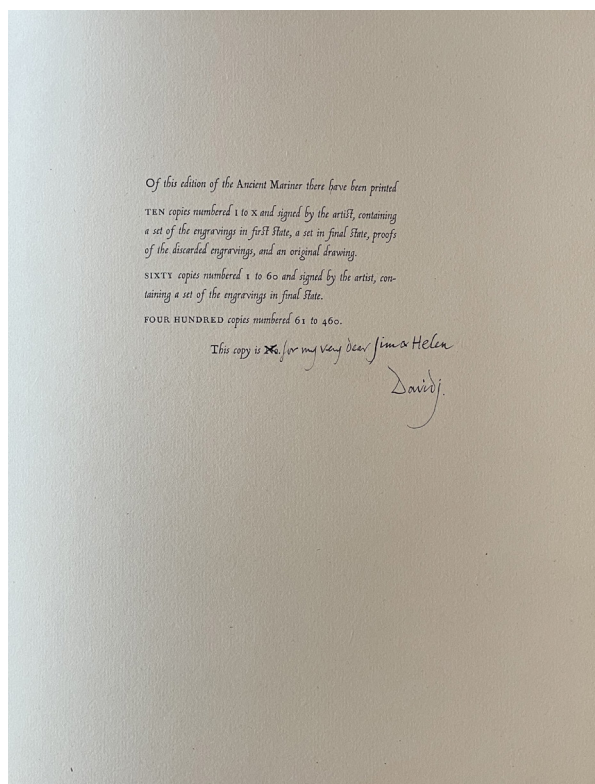
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About Mark James

An alumnus of Goldsmiths College, University of London, Mark James FLS, an antiquarian and rare books specialist, joined Christie's South Kensington in 1993, where he worked primarily in the Book Department. In 1998 he moved to Sotheby's, where he was responsible for the general book sales section, and then in 1999 returned to Christie's as a specialist and later Associate Director in the King Street Book Department. In 2007 Mark joined the antiquarian bookseller Henry Sotheran Ltd as Head of the Travel Book Department, and in 2013 he moved to Bernard Quaritch Ltd as Head of Travel Books.

In 2018 Mark James and his partner Anke Timmermann PhD, FLS co-founded the rare books business Type & Forme, which is a member of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association. Type & Forme issue catalogues on a broad range of subjects, as well as advising private collectors and institutions worldwide. In 2022, following the return of Charles Darwin's evolutionary notebooks to Cambridge University Library, Type & Forme assisted with the authentication of the notebooks.

Mark James was the co-editor of the exhibition catalogue *Women and the Book: ABA Summer Exhibition 2008* and co-curator of the ABA exhibition *New Impressions: Artists' Readings of Books* (2011). He has written on private press books and books by artists for a number of publications, including *The Library*, *The Book Collector*, and *Christie's International Magazine*, and has contributed to programmes about antiquarian books and manuscripts on Radio 4, The World Service, and BBC television.



David Jones, Limitation statement with inscription for *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1928. © The Estate of David Jones / Bridgeman Images. Photo: Kettle's Yard