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DRAWINGS BY GERMAN ARTISTS

AND ARTISTS FROM
GERMAN-SPEAKING REGIONS OF EUROPE

IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PRINTS AND DRAWINGS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

*The Fifteenth Century, and the Sixteenth
Century by Artists born before 1530*

VOLUME I: CATALOGUE

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no. A 353, repr.; Winkler, *Dürer*, iii, p. 111, no. 715, repr.; J.H. Whitfield, *OMD*, xiii, no. 51, 1938, p. 33, repr.; R. Schmidt, *Zeitschr. f. Kunsthiss.*, vi, 1939, pp. 103ff., repr.; Panofsky, ii, p. 144, no. 1532; Nuremberg, *Dürer*, 1971, p. 373, no. 667; Rowlands, *Dürer*, p. 32, no. 206; Strauss, iii, p. 1588, no. 1515/61, repr.

Inscribed by a later hand, in brown ink on the left-hand edge, *das sind Schtörch*, and above, in the centre between the two columns, also probably not by the artist but by another hand, Dürer's monogram, with below, 1515 and 15

Evidently the inscription on the left refers to another drawing, now cut off and lost, formerly on the sheet to the left. The fact that the annotator found it necessary to add the identifying remark that the birds in the missing drawing were storks strongly suggests that this design was of a decidedly fanciful kind, probably not unlike those in the surviving part of the sheet.

Panofsky is evidently correct in proposing that the two columns reflect the character of two of the temperaments, that on the left the sanguine and that on the right the saturnine; however, one must reject his assessment of the draughtsmanship being that of a studio hand, in which he was following the Tietzes, who described it as of poor quality. This is a judgement which it is difficult to understand, because the pen-work, as well as the choice of colouring and the handling of the washes, is entirely consistent with similar finished work of the years c. 1515–18, when it is very likely that the present drawing was done. At that time the prime example of this type of drawing is the *Great triumphal car*, dated 1518 in the Albertina, Vienna (inv. no. 15423.D.126; Winkler, *Dürer*, iii, pl. 685). It has been proposed that the vase with handles in the shape of serpents is based on a Chinese Sing or Ming piece (Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Le Moyen Âge fantastique*, Paris, 1981, p. 170, repr. fig. 128) but this identification is not accepted by students of oriental ceramics.

195 Rhinoceros

Pen and brown ink. 27.4 x 42 cm

WM: trident with a small circle (Strauss, vi, p. 329)

PROVENANCE: Sloane bequest, 1753

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(PLATE 132)

LITERATURE: Heller, p. 48; Hausmann, *Naumann's Archiv*, p. 33, no. 1; Hausmann, p. 106, no. 1; Thausing, ii, pp. 124f.; Lippmann, part xxiii, p. 10, no. 257, repr.; Conway, p. 35, no. 643; Pauli, p. 26, no. 725; BM Guide, 1928, p. 24, no. 230; Flechsig, *Dürer*, ii, p. 328; Tietze, ii, p. 114, no. 639, repr.; Winkler, *Dürer*, iii, pp. 64f., no. 625, repr.; Panofsky, ii, p. 131, no. 1347; Rupprich, i, p. 208, no. 57; Winkler, *Leben*, p. 263; Rowlands, *Dürer*, p. 33, no. 211; T.H. Clarke, *Connoisseur*, clxxxiv, 1973, pp. 3ff., repr.; Strauss, iii, p. 1584, no. 1515/57, repr.; BM *Animals in Art*, pp. 127f.; Clarke, *Rhinoceros*, pp. 20, 181, no. 1, repr.; BM *Dürer and Holbein*, pp. 92f., no. 65, repr.

Inscribed by the artist in brown ink along the upper edge, *RHINOCERON 1515* and along the lower edge, *Ite[m] in 153 jor adi i may hat man unserm küng van portigall gen lisabona procht ein sold lebedig tir aws India das nent man Rhinocerate das hab ich dir von Wunders wegen müssen abkunterfet schicken hat ein farb wÿ ein / krot*

*vnd van dicken schaln überleg fast fest vnd ist in d[e]r gros als ein helffant aber nÿdrer vnd ist des helfantz tott feint es hat for[n] awff der nasen ein starck scharff hore[n] und so dz tir an helfant Kumt mit jn zw fechten so hat es for albeg sein / hore[n] an den steinen scharff gewestzt vnd lauff dem helfant mit dem Kopff zwischen dy fordere[n] pein dan reist es den helfant awff wo er am düsten hawt hat vnd erwürgt jn also der helfant fürcht jn ser übell den Rhynocerate dan er erwürgt jn albeg wo er den helfant aukumt dan er ist woll gewapent vnd ser freidig und behent D[a]z tir würt Rhinocero in greco et latino Indico vero gomda', 'In the year 15[1]3 [this should read 1515] on 1 May was brought to our King of Portugal in Lisbon such a living animal from India called a Rhinocerate. Because it is such a marvel I considered that I must send this representation. It has the colour of a toad and is covered all over with thick scales, and in size it is as large as an elephant, but lower, and is the deadly enemy of the elephant. It has on the front of the nose a strong sharp horn: and when this animal comes near the elephant to fight it always first whets its horn on the stones and runs at the elephant with his head between its forelegs. Then it rips the elephant where its skin is thinnest and then gores it. The elephant is greatly afraid of the Rhinocerate; for he always gores it whenever he meets an elephant. For he is well armed, very lively and alert. The animal is called rhinocero in Greek and Latin but in India, gomda'. Inscribed on the *verso*, in the lower left-hand corner, by a later hand in brown ink, *rhinoceros*.*

Dürer has evidently transcribed this account from what was probably a newsletter sent to the artist with the drawing on which no. 195 was based, either by a member of the German mercantile community in Lisbon or – according to Clarke, who based his opinion on that of Donald F. Lach – by the Moravian printer active in Lisbon, Valentim Fernandes. The circumstances surrounding the arrival of the animal in Europe and its fate may be briefly stated (for a detailed account, see Clarke, op. cit., pp. 16–23). This rhinoceros had been presented by the ruler of Gujarat, Sultan Muzafer II, to the governor of Portuguese India, Alfonso d'Albuquerque who despatched it to King Manuel I in Lisbon where it arrived on 20 May 1515. There it was stabled near the Casa du Mina e India. Later in the year, in order to ingratiate himself further with the Pope, Leo X (he had already sent him a famous elephant, Hanno, the previous year), the King sent the animal to Rome via Marseilles, where it was inspected by Francis I of France and his Queen; however, it did not reach the Pope alive, if at all. One account says the beast was drowned and lost at sea, while another states that its carcass was stuffed and delivered to Leo X.

It has been rightly said that Dürer's image, perpetuated by the woodcut that he produced based on the present drawing, which then passed through several editions into the following century, has had such a powerful effect on successive generations of artists that even when in the eighteenth century people became aware of Dürer's inaccuracies they were reluctant to abandon his imaginative view of the animal for a fully accurate observation of it. Considering that Dürer never saw a rhinoceros face to face the drawing is an extraordinary feat.