

♦ “ANIMAL LOVERS ARE INFORMED” ♦

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ALL ANIMAL LOVERS IN LEIPZIG ARE INFORMED

That now has arrived a Living RHINOCEROS, which many people believe to be the Behemoth as described in the book of Job, chapter 40, verse 10. It is worth seeing to all those who come to visit it. It is the first animal of this species which has come to this town; it is about 8 years old, and therefore still a calf, as it will continue to grow for many years, because these animals can reach an age of 100 years. It is almost 5000 pounds in weight, and much larger and heavier than in 1741, when it was brought from Bengal to Holland by Captain DOUWEMOUT, only about 3 years old at the time. It was caught in Asia, in the dominions of the Great Mogul, in the region of Asem, which is some 4000 miles distant from here. This wonderful animal is dark-brown, has no hairs just like the elephant, except for some hairs at the end of the tail; it has a horn on the nose, with which it can plough the ground much faster than a farmer with a plough; it can walk fast, and also swims and dives in the water like a duck; the head is pointed in the front, the ears are like those of a donkey, and the eyes are very small compared to the size of the animal, and only allow it to look sideways; the skin looks as if it is covered with shells, which lay a hand breadth over each other, about two inches thick; the feet are short and thick, like those of an elephant, with three hoofs. The animal is an archenemy of the elephant, and when the two species meet, the rhinoceros tries to hit it with its horn under the belly and kill it in that fashion. For daily nourishment, it eats 60 pounds of hay and 20 pounds of bread, and it drinks 14 buckets of water. It is tame as a lamb, because it was only one month old when it was caught with snares . . . When the animal was very young, it walked around the dining room, when ladies and gentlemen were eating, as a curiosity. The animal secretes some potion, which has cured many people from the falling sickness.

The animal can be seen from 9 am to 12 noon, and again from 2 pm to 6 pm in the afternoon. Persons of rank can pay according to their desire, while others pay 1 Gulden or 4 Groschen, according to the view. [A] woodcut can be bought at the same place for 1 Groschen. Also available are large engravings for half a guilder while the small engravings with the Indian cost 2 Groschen.

All are advised that the animal will stay only 10 or 12 days in this town.

1747¹

THE ARRIVAL OF AN INDIAN RHINOCEROS (*RHINOCEROS UNICORNIS*) in the Dutch port of Rotterdam in July 1741 was a pivotal moment in the European empirical encounter with an almost mythical beast (fig. 1). No rhinoceros had been seen on the Continent within living memory, indeed not since the sixteenth century, when two such animals reached the Iberian peninsula, the first in 1515 and the second in 1579.² Until the appearance of the “Dutch” rhinoceros, the species was little known except to naturalists, chiefly by means of written report and the presence of rhino horns, either left in their original state or carved and mounted, in *wunderkammer* (cabinet of curiosities) collections (fig. 2). For the majority of Europeans, the creature, along with the biblical behemoth and the fabulous unicorn, existed almost entirely in the realm of the imagination. From the moment of its disembarkation, it was a wonder to all who beheld it.

The Dutch rhinoceros’s long life span in captivity (from 1738 to 1758) and extensive travels around Europe and across the Channel to England, during which it was seen by thousands, did much to dispel the animal’s unfamiliarity. Advertisements as well as commemorative prints and medals bore its likeness to an even wider audience so that, while the creature remained an astonishingly exotic phenomenon, it became famous—and very popular with the public. Thanks to the survival of these souvenirs, along with contemporary scientific and artistic studies, the story of this rhinoceros is well documented.³

The adjacent excerpt, taken from a German advertisement printed to announce the animal’s pending arrival in Leipzig, recounts the history of this particular rhinoceros and provides some facts regarding its appearance, diet, and temperament. The anonymous author of the text clearly took pains to portray this foreigner in agrarian terms that would be familiar to prospective viewers, describing its “ears like those of a donkey,” the horn on its nose that could “plough the ground much faster than a farmer,” and its temperament



FIGURE 2
Artist unknown, *Horn, Tooth, Vessel, and Skin of Rhinceros*, ca. 1580–90. Oil on parchment, 40.5 × 30 cm (16 × 11 7/8 in.). Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Picture Archives, Cod. Min. 129, fol. 10. Photo: © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.

as “tame as a lamb.” Other characteristics required more inventive imagery; its skin, for instance, looked “as if it is covered with shells,” while its feet were “short and thick, like those of an elephant.” The author was informed about rhino lore and communicated his erudition readily. The reputed enmity between the rhino and the elephant derived ultimately from the ancient Roman historian and naturalist Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23–79), whose tale of the animals’ combat in his *Natural History* (*Naturalis historia*) was passed down through the literary and scientific press until the eighteenth century, while the supposed medicinal benefits of rhinoceros horn and secretions against epilepsy and poison derived from traditional Eastern folklore, transmitted through travelogues like the 1719 publication by Peter Kolb on the Cape of Good Hope (*Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*). Some of the author’s statements, however, were entirely novel, such as the report that the rhino dove “in the water like a duck,” as well as erroneous, as in the comment that said it could “reach an age of 100 years.”

In addition to providing a detailed narrative about this rhino’s capture in the northeastern Indian province of Assam, its early captivity in Bengal, and subsequent transport by a Dutch East India Company cargo vessel to Holland, the text also reveals the secondhand knowledge of sixteenth-century humanists and naturalists, who repeatedly cited or plagiarized the ancient sources on the subject to imbue their publications with credibility and authority. Pliny’s work, reprinted in twenty-five editions before 1500, was readily available and those Europeans fortunate enough to confront the rare living specimen commonly annotated their portrayals of the beast with the Roman’s account of its ferocity.⁴ It is telling that an eyewitness, upon viewing the renowned “Lisbon” rhinoceros in 1515, enhanced his very brief physical description with a much longer summary of the classic animal fight:

In the year 1513 [sic] upon the 1st day of May there was brought to our King at Lisbon such a living Beast from the East-Indies that is called Rhinocerate: Therefore on account of its Wonderfulness I thought myself obliged to send you the Representation of it. It hath the Color of a Toad and is close covered with thick Scales in Size like an Elephant, but lower, and is the Elephant’s deadly Enemy; it hath on the fore part of its Nose a strong sharp Horn; and, when this Beast comes near the Elephant to fight him, he always first whets his Horn upon the Stones; and runs at the Elephant with his Head between his fore Legs; then rips up the Elephant where he hath the thinnest Skin, and so gores him: The Elephant is terribly afraid of the Rhinocerate; for he gores him always, where-ever he meets an Elephant; for he is well armed, and is very alert and nimble. The Beast is called Rhinocero in Greek and Latin; but, in Indian, Gomba.

1515⁵

Given that the passage originally accompanied a life sketch of the rhinoceros, it would not have been necessary to further elaborate the verbal description of what the eye saw and the pen drew. A Moravian printer, Valentim Fernandes, who was working in Lisbon between 1495 and 1518, sent both sketch and text to the merchant community in Nuremberg, where it reached in turn an artist living there, Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). The same words captioned Dürer’s own pen-and-ink drawing (now in the British Museum, London) and most editions of his 1515 wood-block print that immortalized the animal (fig. 3). As Dürer did not personally see the male Indian rhinoceros before its demise in January 1516, when the ship carrying it to Italy

Nach Christi geburt/ 1513. Jar/ Abt 1. Mañ. Hat man dem groſſen mechtigen Kñig Emanuel von Portugal/ gen Lyſabona außs India pracht/
 ein ſolch lebendig Thier. Das nennen ſie Rhinocerus/ Das iſt hie mit all ſeiner geſtalt Abconderet. Es hat ein farb wie ein geſpreckelte Schildkrot/ Vnd iſt von dicken Schalen vber/
 lege ſehr feſt. Vnd iſt in der gröſſe als der Heſſfande/ aber niderlicher von Baynen/ vnd ſehr wehrhaſſig. Es hat ein ſcharpff/ ſtark Horn vorn auff der Naſen/ das begundt es zu wegen
 wo es bey ſtaven iſt/ Das da ein Sieg Thier iſt/ des Heſſfanden Todtſeynde. Der Heſſfande fürcht es ſo vbel/ dann wo es Ihn antompt/ ſo laufft Ihm das Thier mit dem Kopff
 zwaiſchen die fordem Bayn/ vnd reißt den Heſſfanden unten am Bauch auff/ vnd erwürgt ihn/ des mag er ſich nit erwehnen. Dann das Thier iſt also gewapnet/ das ihm der Heſſfande nichts
 thun kan. Sie ſagen auch/ daß der Rhinocerus/ Schnell/ Fraydig/ vnd auch Liſtig ſey.

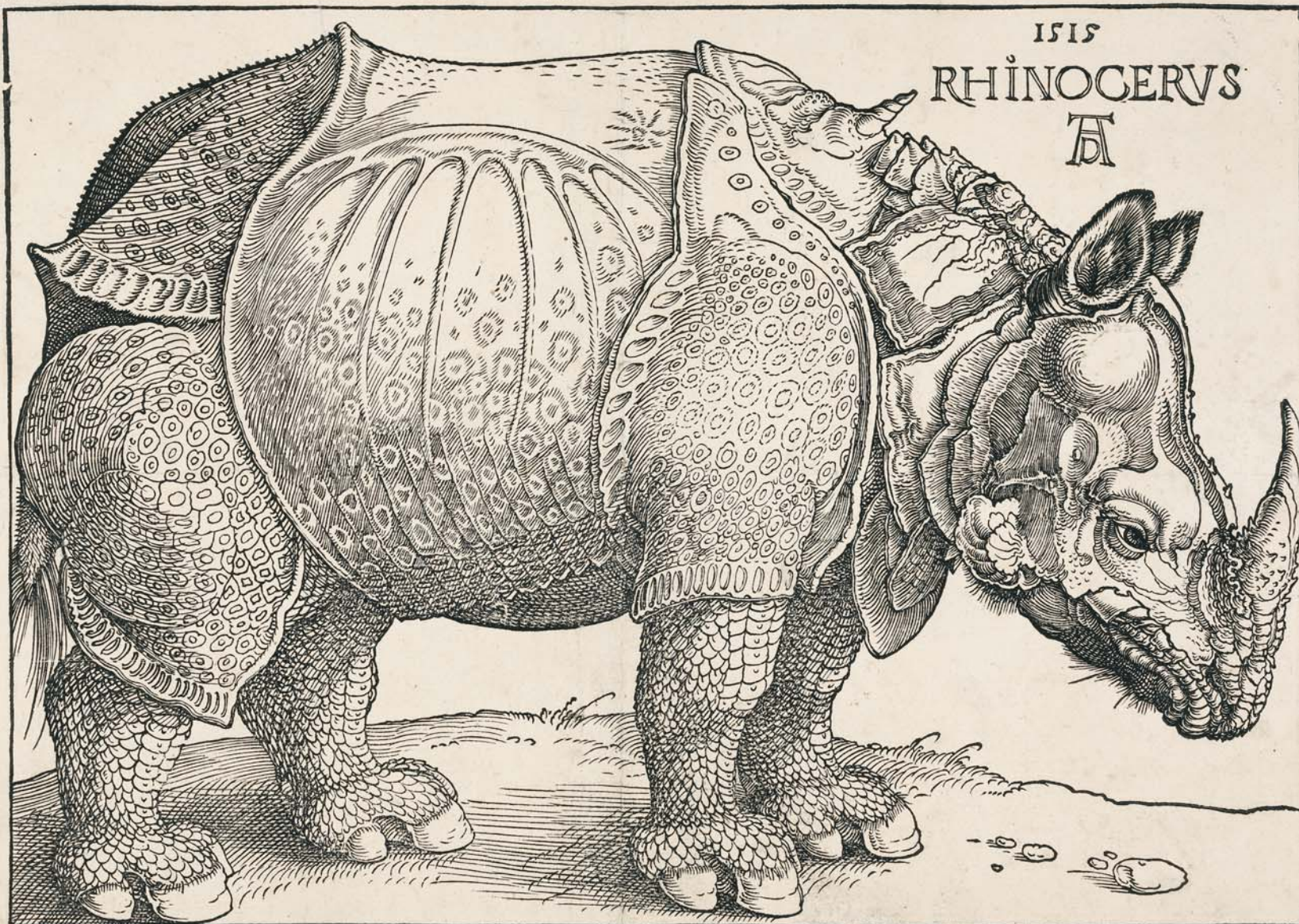


FIGURE 3

Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471–1528), *Rhinoceros*, 1515. Wood-block print, 21.4 × 29.8 cm (8⅜ × 11¾ in.).
 London, The British Museum, inv. 1895-1-22-7 14. Photo: © Copyright The Trustees of The British Museum.

sank during a storm in the Ligurian Sea, the lost sketch from which he drew inspiration must have been a fairly accurate rendering of the creature, except for some distinctive anomalies. The most unusual features of Dürer's rhino are its armorlike hide, the reptilian scales on its legs, and the extra "dorsal" horn protruding from its spine just above the shoulders. It is difficult to know whether these idiosyncrasies were the invention of Dürer himself or his source. Some historians have speculated that perhaps the Lisbon rhino had been dressed in ceremonial parade armor, which would account for the unnatural plating encasing the beast's torso; another explanation might be found in the fact that Dürer lived next to the armorers' quarter and provided designs for that craft, so it would not be entirely surprising if his rendering reflected this interest.

Dürer's image of the Lisbon rhinoceros long outlived both the animal and the artist. Distribution of the print, issued in five editions before 1600 and two more in the next century, reached far and wide. It became the dominant representation of the creature as generations of artists, miniaturists,

engravers, sculptors, armorers, tapestry designers, and embroiderers copied and interpreted its form in paint, ink, stone, metal, earthenware, porcelain, leather, papier-mâché, and wool, as well as exotic materials such as tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl, and ivory. The power of the image rested not only in the novelty and exoticism of the rhinoceros but also in its remote origin in the distant East. The rhinoceros came to be associated with allegories of the Four Continents, representing either Asia or Africa, or even America. Some of the rare, luxurious materials used by artists and craftsmen to portray the creature were appropriately suggestive of its foreignness (fig. 4). The thick skin of the rhino, its sharp horn, and its reputed antidotal properties against poison and disease were also taken to allude to the virtues of strength, health, and invincibility. Soon after 1515, rhinos appeared as emblems on armor and princely devices and as figural symbols in scientific, medical, and anatomical books.

The persistence of Dürer's influential image endured even after the arrival of the Dutch rhinoceros and its long perambulations across Europe during the decades of the mid-eighteenth century. Perversely, promoters of the living animal continued to use Dürer's rhino literally as their poster child. Unlike the fierce beasts of Pliny and Dürer, however, the tame and docile Dutch rhinoceros permitted acute observation over prolonged periods so that all ranks of spectators, from members of royalty to local citizenry and children, from learned doctors and naturalists to court artists, could and did see it up close and personally. Growing up before the public, the rhino endeared itself to the crowds of visitors as it increased in size. Repeated weighings and measurements at almost every tour stop recorded its continued growth and good health despite the stress of captivity and travel. A female, the rhino eventually acquired its own identity and the name *Jungfer Clara* (Miss Clara), while in the German town of Würzburg in August 1748.

Proper animal husbandry for the "wild" rhinoceros was a challenge to shippers and importers (the care of Indian elephants, in contrast, was better understood, as these domesticated creatures usually arrived with their trained keepers, or mahouts).⁶ Of the eight or so Indian rhinos that reached the European continent and England between 1515 and 1799, the Dutch rhinoceros had the second longest life span in captivity. Douwe Mout van der Meer, a retired Dutch East India Company captain, obtained her in 1740 from Jan Albert Sichterman, the company's director of the Bengal region,



FIGURE 4
Rhinoceros, Meissen porcelain manufactory (modeled by Johann Gottlieb Kirchner [German, 1706–after 1738]), ca. 1731. Hard-paste porcelain with oil paint, 68 × 109.5 cm (26¾ × 43⅞ in.).
Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Porzellansammlung, inv. N=256-W.

who had received the baby rhino as a gift in 1738. From its infancy, the animal was accustomed to humans, roaming within the Sichterman residence (near present-day Calcutta) until the age of two years, by which time she had grown too large to visit the house without causing damage. Her familiarity with humans and trust in her handlers must have eased somewhat the nerve-racking complexities of transporting such a large and cumbersome beast during the seven-month sea voyage around Africa. Aboard ship, an ointment probably shielded her skin from the marine air and salt water, much as mud served a protective purpose in the animal's natural habitat. While in transit and after landing, Douwe Mout van der Meer provided an herbivore's diet consisting mainly of hay, bread, orange peels, and freshwater, sometimes substituted by or supplemented with beer.⁷ And to ensure her good health, according to the prevailing veterinary wisdom of the period, it seems that he blew tobacco smoke for her to inhale as a prophylactic.⁸ Upon arrival, the captain leased a stable and pasture in Amsterdam and/or Leiden to provide housing for her in a climate much cooler and milder than her tropical birthplace. It was not until after a period of several years' adjustment (and, undoubtedly, an accumulation of capital from showing the animal in Holland) that he began touring her farther afield. The first report of the Dutch rhino abroad was in Hamburg in 1744 when one wonders whether news of the animal might have first reached Duke Christian Ludwig II at the nearby court of Schwerin, who was later to acquire her life-size portrait. From that point forward, it seems that transportation was arranged over water when possible and over land when necessary, in a specially constructed enclosed, sturdy carriage drawn by six pairs of oxen or twenty horses.⁹

Many of the quotidian details about Clara's care, diet, and public viewings are drawn from a small collection of paintings portraying stops during her Italian itinerary, especially in the early months of 1751 when she was in the Veneto region. The subjects of these scenes and the circumstances surrounding their commission attest to the intense local interest in the animal. The painter of the principal canvas, Pietro Longhi (1702–1785), depicted the rhinoceros in its booth at Carnival time in Venice, after she had sheared her horn by rubbing against the boards of her enclosure in Rome the previous year (fig. 5). The booth is a substantial structure, seemingly covered and enclosed, with tiered viewing for visitors. A notice nailed to the right provides the following information:

*A true portrait of a rhinoceros conducted to Venice in the year 1751,
painted by the hand of Pietro Longhi at the commission of Our Most
Honored, Giovanni Grimani dei Servi, Venetian patrician.*
1751¹⁰

The visitors, said to be Grimani family members, are flanked on the left by the animal's handler, who holds up the shed horn, and on the right by, presumably, Douwe Mout van der Meer, who smokes a pipe. Clara, with her stubby nose, stands placidly, chewing hay. True to life, the artist included piles of her dung. The second painting (fig. 6), attributed to the circle of Pietro Longhi and showing another tour stop from about the same period, illustrates a pen set inside a stable, paved with stones, with its door and window open to the fresh air. Clara's snout has a pale nub, suggesting new growth, while the old horn is displayed on a shelf on the rear stable wall. Within the low-walled pen is a handler who fills a half-cask with clean water, while a good supply of both hay and loaves of bread rest on the floor to the right. Douwe Mout van der Meer appears again as the red-coated figure among the cluster of visitors; he gestures with a cane. The rhino's sturdy, enclosed, wooden carriage has been pulled into the stable, behind the pen.

More than just a crowd-pleaser, the Dutch rhinoceros was of the greatest interest to contemporary men of science, or what was then called natural philosophy. The animal's presence, first in Holland and then abroad, drew doctors and students who relied on empirical observation coupled with knowledge and reason to understand the laws of nature. The eighteenth-century discovery of—or encounters with—living rhino specimens required that the animal be first studied methodically and then fitted into the perceived order of the natural world, under the expanding classification of quadrupeds, four-legged terrestrial animals. In keeping with Enlightenment principles, notes on the physical characteristics of the creature, along with reports on the strengths and weaknesses of its five senses, its agility, temperament, behavior, diet, life cycle, and reproduction were balanced against a thorough review of the related literature from antiquity to modern times and an inventory of preserved horns among the known natural history collections. The personal observations of these scientists made new contributions to the field, as did the artistic renderings that illustrated their publications. Two of the earliest life portraits of the Dutch rhinoceros, produced as engravings in Amsterdam by Jan Wandelaar (1690–1759) in



FIGURE 5
Pietro Longhi (Italian, 1702–1785), *The Rhinoceros*, ca. 1751. Oil on canvas, 62 × 50 cm (24³/₈ × 19⁵/₈ in.). Venice, Museo del Settecento Veneziano, Ca' Rezzonico, inv. 1312.



FIGURE 6
 School of Pietro Longhi, *The Rhinoceros in Its Booth*,
 ca. 1751. Oil on canvas, 56 × 72 cm (22 × 28³/₈ in.).
 Vicenza, Banca Intesa Collection, inv. A.A.-00088A-C/BI.
 Photo: © Banca Intesa Collection.

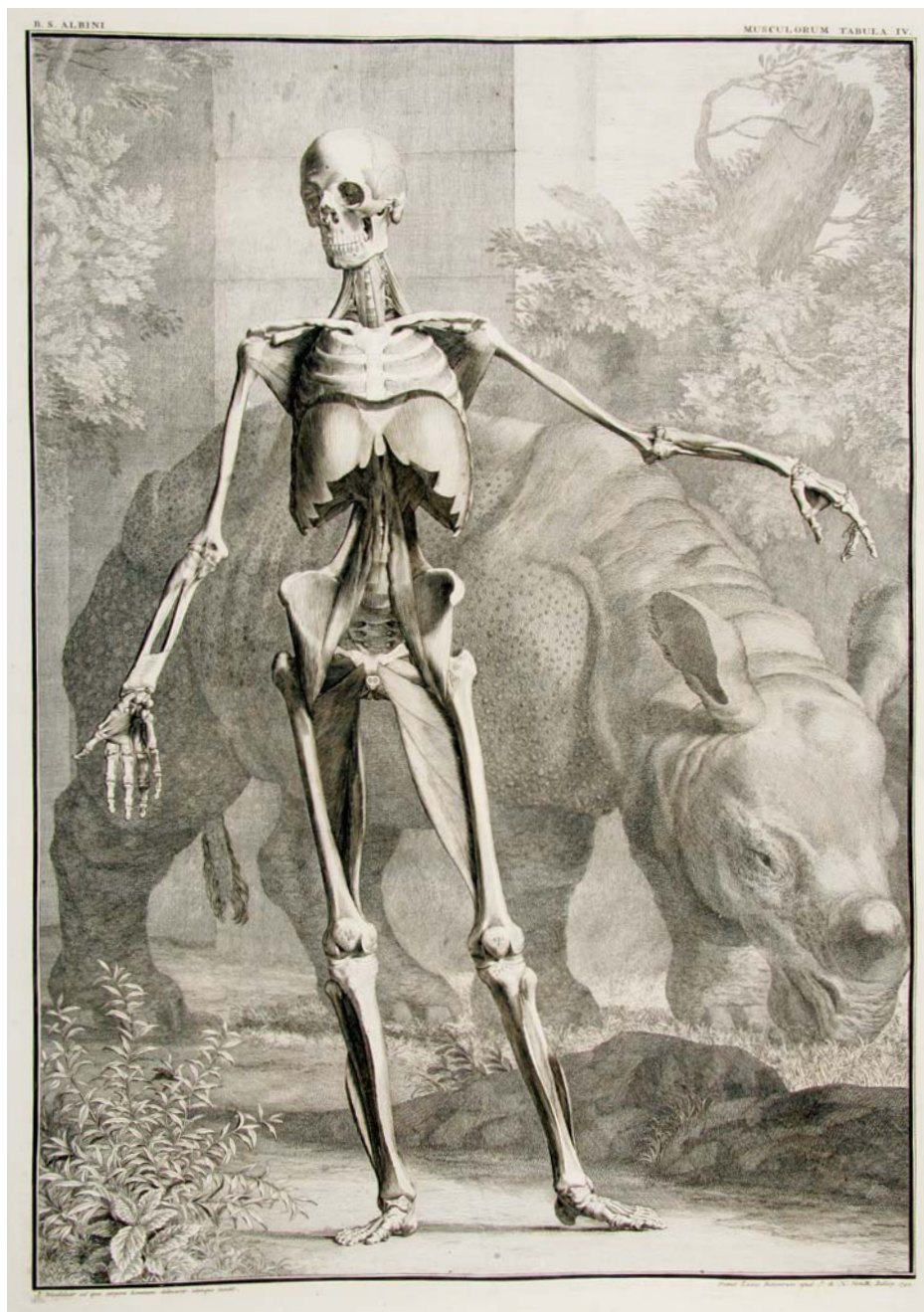


FIGURE 7
Jan Wandelaar (Dutch, 1690–1759), *Human Skeleton with a Young Rhinoceros* from *Tabulae sceleti et musculorum corporis*, 1747. Etching, 76.8 × 54.6 cm (30¼ × 21½ in.). Los Angeles, University of California, Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library, History and Special Collections Division, inv. 485502.

1742, are best understood in this context of art in the service of Enlightenment science.¹¹ They show the animal naturalistically, standing in a confined, open-air enclosure. In both the frontal and posterior three-quarter views, the rhino appears incongruously behind a human skeleton similarly portrayed standing in frontal and back poses, extending its arms as if to make an introduction between the viewer and the animal. Representing the latest developments in scientific research, these engraved sheets (fig. 7) appeared soon after as plates in a 1747 book on human anatomy, *Tabulae sceleti et musculorum corporis humani*, written by the famed Leiden university professor Bernhard Siegfried Albinus.

Milestones and minutia, such as the simple act of yawning, from the life of the Dutch rhinoceros on its travels were captured by artists (fig. 8). Apparently no aspect of this wondrous creature was beneath consideration. Images made over time collectively chronicled the growth of the rhino's horn from its stubby beginnings to its loss in June 1750 and slow regrowth.¹² But no rendering conveyed the sheer scale and presence of the animal as did the life-size portrait by Jean-Baptiste Oudry, "painter of the hunt" to the French king Louis XV (plate 11). Oudry had extended opportunities to view the rhino locally, in Versailles during the month of January 1749 and in Paris from the following February to April.¹³ Working from sketches, he completed at least one finished drawing on blue paper and then executed a full-size painting for the Salon of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, which was held from August to October 1750 (when it might have been seen by Prince Friedrich of Mecklenburg, who was in Paris that summer). Oudry's unparalleled portrait communicates the impressive volume and mass of the rhino, the folds and textures of its thick skin, the sensitivity of its prehensile upper lip, the alert tension of its ears held upright, and its three-toed, padded hooves. The canvas dwarfed viewers attending the Salon (located in a gallery of the Louvre), much as the Dutch rhinoceros had done in life when shown at the fair of Saint Germain (held annually from February 3 to Palm Sunday in Paris, on the left bank of the river Seine). Oudry was artistic director of two tapestry manufactories, and his knowledge of tapestry design, particularly of the Old and New Indies series (*Anciennes et nouvelles Indies*), which included woven versions of Dürer's rhinoceros, undoubtedly taught him about the power of large-size imagery and gave him the assurance to execute the subject at this scale.¹⁴ No other portrayal of the



FIGURE 8
Johann Elias Ridinger (German, 1698–1767), *Rhinoceros Resting on Its Side*,
1748. Graphite on blue paper, 26.3 × 42.5 cm (10³/₈ × 16³/₄ in.). London,
Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, inv. D1952.RW.2164.



FIGURE 9

Rhinoceros Mounted with a Chinoiserie Figure. Porcelain: Meissen porcelain manufactory (modeled by Johann Joachim Kändler [German, 1706–1775]), ca. 1735–48; mounts: French (Paris), ca. 1750. Hard-paste porcelain with polychrome decoration and gilding; gilt-bronze mounts, 27 × 35 × 22 cm (10⁵/₈ × 13³/₄ × 8⁵/₈ in.). Frankfurt, Museum für Angewandte Kunst, inv. 12335.

rhinoceros embodied, to this extent, the essential empirical experience demanded by Enlightenment principles.

The arrival of the Dutch rhinoceros in Paris in 1749 coincided with the printing of the first three volumes of a monumental encyclopedia of natural history by France's greatest contemporary naturalist, mathematician, biologist, and cosmologist, Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon. Buffon's remarkable *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière: avec la description du cabinet de roi* (a work of thirty-six volumes printed over nearly forty years (1749–88), with eight additional volumes published after his death by his colleague, the comte de Lacépède) rivaled the other seminal publication of the Enlightenment, the seventeen-volume *Encyclopédie* of Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert (printed from 1751 to 1765). The *Histoire naturelle* was comprehensive and profusely illustrated with engravings, some 1,500 of them after drawings by Jacques de Sève (d. 1795) based on life studies of animals and birds in the royal menagerie at Versailles or on stuffed specimens

preserved in the royal collection (*cabinet du roi*) and the botanical garden in Paris, the Jardin des plantes, of which Buffon was director. Although the entry on the rhinoceros did not appear until the eleventh volume, printed in 1764, it included direct observations, dating back to 1749, by Buffon's respected collaborator on quadrupeds, Louis-Jean Marie Daubenton, in addition to an extensive summary of rhinocerot literature and two illustrative plates. The full, side view of the rhino, standing in an open landscape, was engraved by Jean-Charles Baquoy (1721–1777) from the 1750 intermediary drawing, showing a narrower horn, by de Sève after either one of Oudry's life studies or his painting shown at the Salon in that year (see fig. B, page 143).¹⁵ As it is probable that the engraving was ready in advance of the 1764 publication, individual loose prints could have been available earlier.¹⁶ The lucid writing style of Buffon appealed to a wide readership beyond the scientific community, and his work was popularly discussed in literary salons. The extensive distribution of this serial publication and its translation into other languages (an English edition came out as early as 1781), ensured that Oudry's version of the Dutch rhinoceros, drawn from life, also reached a large audience and eventually supplanted the pervasive iconic image of Dürer.

Between 1744 and 1758 the Dutch rhinoceros, or Clara, as she came to be affectionately called, traveled as far as Copenhagen in the north, Warsaw in the east, and Naples in the south. During the years 1746–48, she made a whirlwind tour of the German states, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Swiss cantons, stopping in Hanover, Berlin, Breslau, Vienna, Munich, Regensburg, Freiberg, Dresden, Leipzig, Kassel, Frankfurt-am-Main, Mannheim, Bern, Zurich, Basel, Strasbourg, Stuttgart, Augsburg, Nuremberg, Würzburg, and Ansbach. She also reached the Italian peninsula (1749–51) and went to England on three occasions, in 1751–52, again in 1756, and a last time, dying there, in 1758. Despite Clara's public visibility, she remained an exotic phenomenon. Artists and *marchands-merciers* (dealers who commissioned and sold luxury goods) attempted to render her presence naturalistically yet were challenged in depicting her natural habitat, a location to which they had never traveled. Two- and three-dimensional representations situated her in strange landscapes suggestive of her remote birthplace. Consequently, portrayals of Clara sometimes mixed an Enlightenment interest in naturalism with inventive fantasy. Inspired by travelogues describing the topography, flora, fauna, inhabitants, and customs of the East, such as Johannes Nieuhof's

1668 account of the Dutch East India Company's 1665–67 trade mission to China (*Legatio batavica ad magnum Tartariae*), Clara was portrayed against palm trees and sometimes in the presence of chinoiserie figures (fig. 9). Historically, until about 1600, rhinos were sent as tribute or diplomatic gifts to both the Chinese and Persian courts, where they were kept in animal parks, menageries, and stables.¹⁷ Seventeenth-century European travelers to the Persian city of Esfahan and to the Ottoman capital, Istanbul, reported seeing specimens of the animal in both locations, so it was fitting that small porcelain sculptures of Clara were also modeled with a Turkish rider on her back. Just as Dürer's rhino became part of the emblematic vocabulary representing paradoxically two—even three—of the Four Continents, so, too, did Clara become associated with both chinoiserie and *turquerie*.

In the winter and spring of 1749, when Clara visited the two centers of French patrician culture and plebeian fashion, Versailles and Paris, the German critic and writer Baron Friedrich Melchior von Grimm wrote to Diderot: "All Paris, so easily inebriated by small objects, is now busy with a kind of animal called the rhinoceros."¹⁸ Rhino-mania, and specifically Clara-mania, overtook both cities. She reigned in interiors, in the streets, in fashionable attire and accessories. Whimsical elements of interior decor included her likeness among other exotic animals and costumed figures in "pilasters" embroidered with colored glass beads, so that she sparkled in the candlelight (fig. 10). Sophisticated clock movements and musical mechanisms were mounted together with small, finely cast and chased patinated bronze sculptures of Clara, thereby joining the current technology in time-keeping with the latest research in the study of quadrupeds (fig. 11). Coiffures and even horse harnesses alluded to the animal, with curling feathers as the horn and colorful pendant ribbons as the tail. Dresses and ribbons *à la rhinocéros* adorned women of fashion, while snuffboxes, decorated with Dürer's rhino in miniature, slipped into the pockets of gentlemen.¹⁹ The rich materials and superior craftsmanship of these surviving pieces indicate that they were created expressly for the luxury goods market and that they were purchased by the wealthiest members of society. For instance, a 1765 state portrait by Laurent Pécheux (1729–1821) depicted Maria-Luisa Bourbon-Parma, a granddaughter of Louis XV and the future queen of Spain, at about the age of fourteen, standing in a formal interior next to a marble topped, gilt-wood console table that supports a clock mounted on a



FIGURE 10
Maker unknown, *Beaded Panel* (detail), ca. 1755. Multicolored glass beads on a textile support, 390 × 50 cm (12 ft. 9½ × 19⅞ in.). Paris, Bernard Steinitz.

bronze figure of a rhinoceros. The actual clock, whose enamel dial bore the name of the Parisian clockmaker Le Roy, was listed in the 1805 inventory of the Palazzo Pitti, Florence, undoubtedly having been acquired by Louise-Elizabeth de Bourbon, Madame Infante, daughter of Louis XV and later duchesse de Parme, during one of her famed Parisian shopping sprees in 1749 and 1752–54. Its present location is unknown, although a near contemporary elephant clock survives from that collection.²⁰

Clara earned mention, as well, in the Republic of Letters as correspondence about her appeared in the press.²¹ As early as February 13, 1749, a letter from the librarian at the Sorbonne, Abbé Jean Baptiste Ladvocat, reported that the creature's tongue was as soft as velvet and that its voice sounded like a wheezing cow, surely comments drawn from direct sensory experience of the docile rhino. His informative letter/pamphlet, some thirty pages in length, could be purchased at the animal's booth at the fair of Saint Germain.²² But other literature, contemporary poetry and memoirs of the period, revealed the mania's satirical nature and its incorporation of amorous or sexual innuendo. Foremost among the latter was the 1750 poem titled *Le Rhinocéros*. *Poème en prose divisé en six chants*, in which a cuckold imagines himself, during a nightmare triggered by his wife's infidelities, as an erotic rhinoceros. The poem's frontispiece bore a banner inscribed *Le Rhinoceros, Tragedie du temps* (The Rhinoceros, a Tragedy of the Times) above a papier-mâché model of Dürer's antiquated beast (representing a kind of Trojan horse by which his wife brought home her lovers) alongside a portrayal of the husband, whose head has been transformed into that of a rhinoceros.²³ The comic and bawdy Giacomo Casanova (1725–1798), on the other hand, recounted in his memoirs how a certain noblewoman mistook a burly human, collecting admission money at the rhino's enclosure, for the animal itself.²⁴

For all her celebrity, Clara's death in England on April 14, 1758, went relatively unmarked by history. The only apparent announcement seems to have been in the form of two separate editions of a print showing Clara in the foreground of an arid landscape, captioned with the standard texts in German and French and further inscribed with a simple, supplemental sentence reporting her demise in London on that day. These engravings, printed in Germany and circulated after her death, must have met a posthumous demand for commemorative images. Other than this presumed acknowledgment of loss, there was no other notice of her death, not from commentators of the day or from the community of naturalists nor from Douwe



FIGURE 11
Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain (French, 1719–1791) and François Viger (French, 1704–1784), *Rhinoceros Musical Clock*, ca. 1750. Patinated and gilt bronze, enameled copper, glass, and wood veneered with tortoiseshell, clock: 58 × 40 × 18 cm (22 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.); base: 23.5 × 50 × 25 cm (9 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.). Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des objets d'art. Gift of Monsieur and Madame René Grog-Carven, 1973, inv. OA 10540. Photo: © Jean-Gilles Berizzi/Réunion des musées nationaux/Art Resource, New York.

Mout van der Meer himself. Inexplicably, no record of Clara's 1758 sojourn across the Channel survives in the papers of James Parsons, the leading English rhinocerotist authority at that time.²⁵ There is no indication that her body was donated to science, dissected, or preserved, as was the case with her near contemporary, a male Indian rhinoceros, longtime resident of the royal menagerie at Versailles from 1770 to 1793, whose preserved skin and skeleton were placed in the Musée d'histoire naturelle, Paris (where they remain today).²⁶

Despite the quiet disappearance of the Dutch rhinoceros from the public parade, the animal left an indelible mark on eighteenth-century European society, science, art, and literature. Until her arrival in Holland and her subsequent, prolonged tours across the Continent, the rhinoceros was almost a mythical creature, the plated and horned beast of Dürer's imagination. Clara, however, changed forever that perception. She was a gentle giant whose larger-than-life presence fascinated and delighted all, from the learned doctors of natural philosophy to the common citizenry. Her imprint on contemporary culture was recorded through the numerous painted portraits, life drawings, engraved profiles, ceramic and metal sculptures, prose and scientific reports. Yet, for all her familiarity in visual and printed forms, she remained a living wonder in the Age of Enlightenment. ♦

Notes

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1. Translation of the German text accompanying a woodcut sold in Regensburg, Germany, in 1747, as quoted in Rookmaaker and Monson 2000, p. 318.
2. Two Indian rhinos did reach London in 1684 and in 1739, but neither came to the Continent.
3. Ridley 2004, pp. 53–63.
4. There has been some debate as to whether Pliny's account referenced the one-horned Indian rhinoceros or a double-horned species, most likely the African black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*), as both were known to the ancient Romans. Chronicles of the ferocity of the double-horned beast survive from the period. For instance, *Liber de spectaculis martialis* (A.D. 40–102) recorded a combat that took place in the Roman Coliseum in the year A.D. 80 in which a double-horned rhinoceros tossed a heavy bear.
5. Translated in 1743 by James Parsons, quoted by Clarke 1986, p. 20.
6. Ridley 2004, pp. 1–13.
7. Given that the single-stomach digestive tract of the rhinoceros is most similar to that of the horse, among all the domesticated animals, Clara's diet of mostly grass hay was not inappropriate. In the wild, the Indian rhinoceros consumes a mix of grasses, shrubs, and forbs or weeds.
8. On the medicinal use of tobacco smoke in eighteenth-century veterinary practice, see <http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/spe/art/print/exhibits/drydrunk/herbals.htm>.
9. Ridley 2004, pp. 45, 109–10, 125–28.
10. *Art in the Eighteenth Century: The Glory of Venice*, exh. cat. (London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1994), p. 281 and no. 182, p. 463. Translation by the author.
11. Ridley 2004, pp. 18–25.
12. The horn of the Indian rhinoceros is composed of compacted keratin (a tough, fibrous, insoluble protein that makes up skin, hair, and nails). Poor enclosure design is one of the primary reasons why captive rhinos shear, shed, or wear down their horns, as they catch their noses under lateral crossbars on gates and fences or abrade their horns on enclosure walls. See Murray E. Fowler and R. Eric Miller, *Zoo and Wild Animal Medicine* (Saint Louis, 2003), pp. 558–69.
13. T. H. Clarke, "Two Rhinoceros Drawings Re-attributed," *Burlington Magazine* 127 (October 1984), pp. 623–29.
14. Charissa Bremer-David, *French Tapestries and Textiles in the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Los Angeles, 1997), pp. 10–19.
15. Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet de roi* (Paris, 1764), vol. 11, p. 181.
16. A brief entry on the rhinoceros and an illustrative plate, derivative of the Oudry/de Sève model that appeared in Buffon's work, appeared in Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (1765), vol. 14, p. 251.
17. L. C. Rookmaaker, *The Rhinoceros in Captivity: A List of 2439 Rhinoceroses Kept from Roman Times to 1994* (The Hague, 1998).
18. Maurice Tourneux, *Correspondence Littéraire, Philosophique et Critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, etc.*, vol. 1, *Nouvelles Littéraires 1747–1755* (Paris, 1877), nouvelle XLIII, pp. 272–73. Translation by the author.
19. Clarke 1986, fig. 95 and n. 95, p. 202.
20. This clock was inspired by an elephant that reached Paris around 1760. See Chiara Briganti, "Documents sur les arts à la cour de Parme au XVIIIème siècle," *Antologia di Belle Arti* 4 (1977), pp. 380–401. The elephant clock is presently in the collection of the Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.
21. The term Republic of Letters (*La République des Lettres*), used by Buffon and others during the Age of Enlightenment, referred to the communication of ideas and information between philosophers and other intellectuals by means of personal and public correspondence.
22. Robbins 2002, p. 95 and n. 99, p. 268.
23. Detlef Heikamp quotes J. B. Guiard de Servigné's 1750 poem *Le Rhinocéros* in "Seltene Nashörner in Martin Sperlich's Nashorngalerie und anderswo," *Schlösser Gärten Berlin: Festschrift für Martin Sperlich zum 60. Geburtstag 1979* (Berlin, 1980), pp. 301–25.
24. Giacomo Casanova, *Memoirs of My Life*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1966), vol. 3, p. 164.
25. L. C. Rookmaaker, "Two Collections of Rhinoceros Plates Compiled by James Douglas and James Parsons in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History* 9 (November 1978), pp. 17–38.
26. Ridley 2004, pp. 214–16.