

Albrecht Dürer

and his Legacy

The Graphic Work of a
Renaissance Artist

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with contributions by
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Dürer's Rhinoceros

The striking originality of so many of Dürer's images has manifested itself in a deep and prolonged influence on generations of artists. Painters and craftsmen frequently referred to his prints as a supply of ideas rather as textile designers would use a pattern book. A few of his images, such as his Christ-like *Self-portrait* of 1500 (fig. 1 p. 10) and the *Praying Hands* (cat. no. 108), went way beyond such visual quotations and took on an iconic status all of their own. His woodcut of *The Rhinoceros* of 1515, cat. no. 243, one of the great images of European art, also falls into this category.¹

In common with many of his contemporaries who were absorbed with the discoveries made during an age of exploration, Dürer was obsessed with the exotic.² His wide-ranging taste is documented here in his drawing of another unusual animal, *Head of a Walrus*, cat. no. 153, and is also recorded in his Netherlands diary. Unlike elephants, which were known in small herds in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Europe,³ no rhinoceros had been seen alive in Europe since the third century AD. The large size and aggressive appearance of this specimen, which Dürer recorded in long inscriptions on both the print and the preparatory drawing, must have added to its instant newsworthiness. Hans Burgkmair, Dürer's contemporary who worked for the Emperor Maximilian in Augsburg, also designed a woodcut of the so-called 'Lashon' rhinoceros in 1515, which has survived in a unique impression in Vienna.⁴ In stance and proportions the creature is similar to that of Dürer's woodcut, but its front legs are tethered and it has a much milder demeanour. The detail is less stylized and its skin does not bear the resemblance to embossed armour-plating that is the hallmark of Dürer's animal. It is difficult to say which woodcut appeared first, and it is possible that both were designed on the basis of similar news reports without either artist necessarily being aware of the other's print. But ultimately it was the strength of Dürer's design that ensured that it was remembered by posterity, and various examples of its re-appearance are described here.

As T.H. Clarke makes clear in his fascinating book on the rhinoceros in art, it is the distinctive ornamentation of Dürer's animal that is endlessly repeated in artistic representations of the rhinoceros long after further specimens had been paraded in various European cities and provided opportunities to make a more life-like record of the creature. Friedrich Winkler noted in 1938 that German schoolbooks had only just given up using the Dürer woodcut as a valid image of the creature.⁵ In Britain Dürer's rhinoceros first made an appearance in the seventeenth-century armorial bearings of the Society of Apothecaries,⁶ and continued to crop up at regular intervals until at least the 1920s, where it is seen in a wood-engraving by Reginald Savage (died 1937) lumbering through a fence in pursuit of a peacock with a mourning woman and apocalyptic clouds in the background.⁷ The image was particularly well loved in the decorative arts (see cat. nos 251, 254),⁸ and it also travelled as far as the Middle East. A small version of Dürer's rhinoceros appears in a textile pattern book by John Dunstall, published in London in 1661, which is known to have been circulating in Isfahan owing to the survival of a Persian pen and ink copy of c. 1665 of a page from the book with flowers on it.⁹ The drawing has been pricked through to be transferred as a textile design, and it seems possible that the book was used as a source of inspiration in factories set up by the East India Company in Iran for textiles destined for the English market.¹⁰

- 1 This point is the starting point of T. B. Clarke's book about the rhinoceros in art, *The Rhinoceros from Durer to Stubbs 1515-1709*, London, 1986, abbreviated here as 'Clarke'.
- 2 The impact of the costumes, manners and customs of the New World has been the subject of much literature, particularly in 1992, the quinqucentenary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus; see J. M. Massing in *Civis* 1402, p. 300, no. 216.
- 3 See S. Ottermann, *Die Schicksale des Elefanten*, Frankfurt, 1982, pp. 97ff.
- 4 Vienna, Albertina; Bartsch VII, p. 222, 79.
- 5 See Winkler 625.
- 6 A delaware dragar made in Lanfeth, c. 1650-60, with the arms of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries is in the British Museum; see Clarke, pl. 60. The arms are seen on the outside of the Society of Apothecaries' Hall in Blackfriars Lane, built in 1668; see J. Lang, *Pride without Prejudice: the Story of London's Gilds and Livery Companies*, London, 1975, p. 19.
- 7 Used as an illustration to the poem 'Behemoth' published in the *Dial* (London, British Museum, 1924-25-30). The animal 'Behemoth' described in Job 40: 15-24 is probably a hippopotamus, but, like Savage, the poet James Thomson (1634-82) also associated it with Dürer's creature: 'Behold! in plaited mail, / Behemoth rears his head' ('The Seasons: Summer', 700, 710).
- 8 Dürer's rhinoceros is also found on staff-boxes, like that by Louis Bancel, Paris, of 1788-9 in the Weyman Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; see F. J. B. Watson and C. C. Dauterman, *The Bingham Collection*, vol. III, New York, 1970, pp. 170-73, no. 19.
- 9 See J. Dunstall, *A Book of Flowers, Fruits, Birds, Beasts, Fles and Bones*, London, 1661 (London, British Library, 432.k.1 (3) and 14); see Clarke, pp. 81-2; the drawn copy is in the British Museum, Oriental Antiquaries 1920.9-c7.0271 (41).
- 10 See S. Carby, 'Fungui Saz: The Impact of Europe on Safari Painting', *Silk and Stone: The Art of Asia*, Third Half Annual, London, 1996, p. 53, ill. 14-15.

RHINOCERON



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The Rhinoceros, 1515

Pen and brown ink, 274 × 429 mm

Inscribed by the artist: 'RHINOCERON 1515' [RHINOCERON 1515] with four lines of text underneath. 'In the year 1515 [this should read 1515] on 1 May was brought to our King of Portugal in Lisbon such a living creature ... The animal is called rhinocero in Greek and Latin but in India, gonda' (*ficu*) in 1515 [sic] ad 1. 1515 hat men aucto king van portugal gen. lachona precht ein sold lebendig ... D[ur]er ein auct Rhinoceros in greco et latino Indian vero gonda).

Lit: Winkler 625; Strauss 1215/57; Clarke pp. 20ff.; Rowlands 195; D. Eichberger in *Dürer and his Culture*, pp. 166.

London, British Museum, Sloane 3218-161

This is Dürer's study for the woodcut, cat. no. 243. Dürer never saw the animal himself, and it is assumed that he knew a description in a Portuguese newsletter that was sent to Nuremberg, and that

this was accompanied by some sort of sketch that Dürer worked up into his drawing. The beast is thought to be a now extinct species of Indian rhinoceros (see p. 31) but in any case was the first rhinoceros to reach Europe alive since the third century AD and caused a great stir. It had been presented by the ruler of Gujarat, Sultan Muzaffar II, to the governor of Portuguese India, Afonso d'Albuquerque, who sent it on to King Manuel I in Lisbon, where it arrived on 20 May 1515. The king determined to put to the test Pliny the Elder's description of a natural animosity between the rhinoceros and the elephant, and arranged a fight to take place between the recent arrival and one of his elephants on 3 June 1515. The elephant fled. Later in the year the king despatched the animal as a gift to Pope Leo X in Rome, but, after breaking the journey at Marseilles, where it was seen by King Francis I of France and his

queen, it drowned when the ship sank. One account states that its carcass was retrieved and stuffed on arrival in Italy.

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The Rhinoceros, 1515

Woodcut, 248 × 317 mm

The print has five lines of text: 'On 1 May 1513 [this should read 1515] was brought from India to the great and powerful king Emanuel of Portugal at Lisbon a live animal called a rhinoceros. His form is here represented. It has the colour of a speckled tortoise and it is covered with thick scales. It is like an elephant in size, but lower on its legs and almost invulnerable. It has a strong sharp horn on its nose, which it sharpens on stones. The striped animal is the elephant's deadly enemy. The elephant is very frightened of it, as, when they meet, it runs with its head down between its front legs and pokes the stomach of the elephant and thrusts it, and the elephant cannot fend it off. Because the animal is so well armed, there is nothing that

the elephant can do to it. It is also said that the rhinoceros is fast, lively and cunning.' (*Nach Christi report. 1513. Jan. Ad. 1. May. Hat man den grönwichtigen König von Portugal beschreiben lassen. Inhabens prächt. aus India ein sollich lebendig Thier. Das nennet sie Rhinoceros* ...)

Lit. Bartsch 136; Dodgson I, p. 307, 125; Hollstein 273 (Meder 1); Rowlands 1971, 212; Clarke, pp. 16ff.; Bartram 35; Schoff II, 241
London, British Museum, 1895-5-22-714.
Presented by William Mitchell

Dürer's famous woodcut closely follows his preparatory drawing for it, cat. no. 242. The text, translated in full here, is also closely based on Dürer's inscription underneath the drawing. This impression comes from the first edition of 1515, which was the only one to be printed in Dürer's lifetime.

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The Rhinoceros, 1515

Woodcut, this impression with an additional blue-grey tone block printed after 1620, 213 × 298 mm

Lit. Bartsch 136; Dodgson I, p. 307, 125b; Hollstein 273 (Meder 7); Clarke, pp. 20ff.
London, British Museum, 1915-10-15-110

This is an impression of the seventh edition of Dürer's print, when the block

was in the possession of the Antwerp publisher, Willem Janssen. By the early seventeenth century the block was very damaged: the border lines have chipped, there are numerous worm-holes, and the horizontal crack across the legs of the animal is very pronounced. In order to smarten up its appearance and create a more pictorial image, Janssen reissued the block with the addition of a new tone block printed in a variety of colours, olive-green and dark green, as well as blue-grey.

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Anonymous, Flemish, after Dürer

Rhinoceros, mid-16th century

Published by Hans Liufkinck (-1518-73), Antwerp

Woodcut with hand colouring, with six lines of French text, the border, widened with additional pieces of paper at each side, and the verso decorated with inked impressions of flowers and leaves; 212 × 296 mm

Lit. Meder 273, copy b
London, British Museum, 1928-3-19-98.
Transferred from the British Library,
Department of Manuscripts, 1928 (Sloane 2220, fol. 19)

The inscription is a French translation of the one on Dürer's original woodcut, cat. no. 243, and includes the erroneous date of 1513 which is also seen on Dürer's drawing. The print was originally in an album in the possession of Sir Hans Sloane, the antiquarian and naturalist whose collection formed the foundation bequest to the British Museum in 1753. The album, which seems originally to have been assembled in the sixteenth century, contained prints of various unusual animals, a number of which, like the present sheet, have been decorated with impressions of flowers and plants.

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Enea Vico (1523-67) after Dürer

Rhinoceros, 1548

Engraving, 205 × 295 mm

Lit. Bartsch XV, p. 105, 47; Clarke, p. 110
London, British Museum, 1847-3-18-75

This print is the earliest engraved single sheet copy of Dürer's creature. Enea Vico was an engraver and book illustrator from Parma who was working in Rome during the 1540s where he



was much influenced by Marcantonio Raimondi (see cat. no. 201). This print was probably used as the basis for a marble stone relief of the rhinoceros carved in Italy in c.1550, which during the nineteenth century was assumed to be a classical relief from Pompeii until the connection with Dürer was established in the early twentieth century (Naples, Museo Nazionale;

see Clarke, p. 113). Dürer's creature was also etched by a later Italian print-maker, Annino Tempesta (1555–1630), who worked alongside Stradanus under Giorgio Vasari in the decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. It is represented in his series of *Battling Animals* (Bartsch XVII, p. 161, 916).



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Attributed to Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502–50)

Woodland Scene with Animals, including Dürer's Rhinoceros, c.1550

Pen and brown ink with grey wash, squared for transfer, 284 × 320 mm

Inscribed in a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century hand: P. V. Aelst fecit 1540

Lit. A.E. Popham, *Catalogue of Drawings by Dutch and Flemish Artists... in the British Museum*, London, 1932, p. 25, no. 32; J. Szablowski, ed., *The Flemish Tapestries at Watford Castle in Great Britain*, 1973, pp. 254, 257; Clarke, pp. 83–5, 196, no. 25. London, British Museum, 1900.6.13.1

This drawing is a design for a tapestry that has not survived, although a similar type of tapestry produced in Brussels in c.1610, in which the rhinoceros is at the centre of a woodland glade with a variety of animals, is illustrated by Clarke (fig. 56). Dürer's rhinoceros played an important part in Flemish tapestries of 'animal parks' (*parcs sauvages*), which represented woodland subjects such as this, sometimes with a hunting scene in the background. They were particularly fashionable during the second half of the sixteenth century.



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Joseph Boillot (1550–1605)

Rhinoceros and an Elephant in the Form of a Term, 1592*From Nourissier Portraits et figures de termes pour user et l'architecture*, Langres, Johann des Prey, 1592

Woodcut, 320 × 210 mm (sheet)

Lit. Clavier, p. 158

London, The British Museum, 1972 U. 466
Transferred from the British Library, 1989

Each print in this extraordinary book, which contains a mixture of woodcuts and etchings, shows different creatures locked in combat and contorted into the form of a term. Sixteenth-century post-Renaissance architecture is renowned for its imaginative interpretation of nature, often employing shells and plants, but this must be one of the most bizarre examples. Anthony Blunt described the book as 'one of the most astonishing documents about provincial Mannerism at this period'. A German translation of the book was published in 1604.

The armour-plated rhinoceros is clearly derived from Dürer's creature. He appears to be very contented with his superior position above the elephant. A description of the animosity between the two animals on the opposite page reflects Pliny's account, which came to form part of the enduring nature of this image.



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Francis Barlow (1626–1704)

A Rhinoceros Fighting an Elephant, 1684Pen and brown ink and grey wash over black chalk, indented for transfer, 243 × 336 mm
Signed F. Barlow: 1684

Lit: W. S. Sparrow in *Apollo*, January 1934, pp. 22ff.; *Drawings from the Witt Collection*, edn. cat., Arts Council of Great Britain, London, Peterborough and York, 1953, no. 1, Clarke, pp. 39–40.

London, Courtauld Institute Gallery, RW 4376. Bequeathed by Sir Robert Witt, 1952.

Barlow was an English painter and draughtsman who is best known for his paintings and drawings of birds and animals. Barlow drew this in preparation for a mezzotint, cat. no. 250, which was made on the occasion of the arrival in London of a rhinoceros in 1684, only the third of the species to come to Europe since the 'Lisbon' rhinoceros represented by Dürer in 1515. The press of the time announced: 'A Very strange Beast called a Rhynoceros, lately brought from the East-Indies, being the first that ever was in England, is daily to be seen at the Bell Savage Inn on Ludgate-Hill, from Nine a Clock in the Morning till Eight at Night' (*The London Gazette*, 16 October 1684). John Evelyn (1620–1706) gave a lively description of the beast in his diary.

The Rhinoceros... resembled a huge enormous swine... but what was the most wonderful, was the extraordinary bulke and Circumference of her body, which... could not be lesse than 20 foote in compass: she had a set of most dreadful teeth, which were extraordinarily broad, & deepe in her Throat, ... in my opinion nothing was so extravagant as the Skin of the beast, which hung downe on her haunches, both behind and before her knees, loose like so much Coach leather. [See E. S. de Beer, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, Oxford, 1955, vol. IV, pp. 389–90.]

The inscription on the related print informs us that the image was drawn 'after life', so it is indeed curious that an animal artist as talented as Barlow was unable to resist following the decorative armour-plated image of Dürer's rhinoceros, and did not try to portray the loose leathery look so vividly described by John Evelyn.



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Jan Griffier (c. 1645–1718) after Francis Barlow (1626–1704)

A True Representation of... the Elephant, and the Rhinoceros, 1684

Mezzotint, 232 × 320 mm

Lit: Clarke, pp. 39–40

The Hon. Christopher Lennox-Boyd

The preparatory study for this print, drawn in reverse, is described under cat. no. 249. The rhinoceros is shown goring the elephant in the stomach, as Dürer related in his description of the animal's method of attack (see cat. no. 243).

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Delft

Rhinoceros in a Chinese Landscape, late 17th century

Tin-glazed earthenware moulded hexapodal vase with globular body and short neck, painted in two tones of blue, unmarked, 550 mm in height

Lit: Clarke, cat. pl. XVI, p. 184.

Private Collection

In the central register of this exceptionally large vase a Chinese figure is riding a

rhinoceros and holding an umbrella between two figures with bowls of flowers in their arms; in front is a Chinese man on a dromedary and behind him a warrior on a galloping horse holding a flag; on the other side are two Chinese men seated between trees and bamboo and a Chinese figure riding a tortoise towards a spotted animal with a bushy tail. The scene continues with a Chinese couple standing by rocks near a tree and a bamboo plant. Around the shoulder is a design of large and small lappets enclosing flowers; a variant of this design is painted at the base of the vase and a further variant encircles the foot.

The shape of the vase is derived from a late Ming jar and cover. Over one hundred vases of related form were found in the Hatcher shipwreck of 1642–3, which was recovered from the South China Sea in 1983 (see C. Sheaf and R. Kilburn, *The Hatcher Porcelain Cargoes – The Complete Record*, Oxford, 1988). The painted scene recalls a sixteenth-century Chinese subject known as the 'Procession of the Successful Mandarin' with servants bearing gifts including *peying*, or miniature gardens in a dish, although Dürer's rhinoceros, its body covered



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with scales except on the ribcage, is of course an imaginary inclusion in such a scene. The decorative subjects were no doubt derived from Dutch travel books on China of the 1660s and 1670s. AD

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Meissen

Rhinoceros Surrounded with Flowers and Insects, c. 1748–50

Hard-paste porcelain moulded oval centre-piece (*plat de service*), painted with naturalistic flowers and insects (so-called *Halbschüsselblumen* or *unbrütierte deutsche Blumen*); the rhinoceros in black, brown and blue; centre of dish rubbed, presumably where the support for the basket (see below) once stood; rim thickly gilt, 457 × 357 mm

Marked with crossed swords painted in underglaze-blue, impressed 25

Lit: T. H. Clarke, 'Das Northumberland Service aus Meissener Porzellan / The Northumberland Service of Meissen Porcelain', *Keramos* 70, Oct. 1975, p. 36, fig. 57; T. H. Clarke, 'The Rhinoceros in European Ceramics', *Keramos-Friends der Schöpfung*, No. 1076, Table 3, no. 8; *Porcelain*, no. 380; T. H. Clarke, 'Pachyderms among the Peonies, the Northumberland Service at Alnwick Castle', *Country Life*, CLXXVIII, 4601, 24 Oct. 1985, p. 1278, fig. 2; Clarke, pp. 98, 177, n. 11

Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, inv. 12655/31

'This most unusual dish, one of only three known, is part of a dinner and dessert service presented by Augustus, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland (ruled 1733–63) to Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams, British envoy in Dresden between 1747 and 1755 (with an interval in Berlin in 1750–51). The services came to England some time after December 1748 and were displayed by Henry Holland in the library at Holland House, London. Some pieces were copied by artists from the Chelsea porcelain factory in summer 1751 (see T. H. Clarke, 'Sir Charles Hanbury Williams and the Chelsea Factory', *Transactions of the English Ceramic Circle*, vol. 13, part 2, 1988, pp. 110–20).

No record of the acquisition of the services by the Duke of Northumberland



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has come to light, but the first duke subscribed to a raffle in 1756, 'for the Dresden porcelaine', run by a Mr Richard Gaven (letter from Mr Richard Gaven, 6 March 1756, in folder 'Miscellaneous Round Table', Miss Room, Alnwick Castle). Elements of the services are recorded in the inventories taken at Syon House, Middlesex, and Northumberland House, London, in 1847, and documents suggest that they were sent to Alnwick in 1866.

The rhinoceros, crudely painted here and said in the album, cat. no. 253, to be 'after life', is also painted on a deep plate with lobed rim in the service (Clarke, 'Rhinoceros', Table 4, fig. 9). The stylized markings on the animal in both images clearly stem from Dürer's woodcut and also resemble the remarkable large Meissen statue of a rhinoceros (105 cm in length) produced by J.G. Kirchner in 1733–4 (Clarke, fig. 70).

The watercolours in the album describing the service, cat. no. 253, show that the dish was used as a tray and had a pierced basket in the centre with an elaborate stem to hold lemons, presumably for dressing meat, fish or salads

(two such *Zitronenkerben* are now in the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; see Clarke, 'Northumberland Service', p. 18, fig. 13); this was surrounded by a set of four cruets: a wet mustard pot (now in the Ernst-Schneider-Stiftung, Schloss Lustheim, near Munich; illus. Clarke, 'Northumberland Service', figs 14a–c), an oil cruet, a sugar box with pierced domed cover, and a vinegar pot, each pointed with animals. AD

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Anonymous, German

The Centrepiece of the Northumberland Service of Meissen Porcelain, c. 1750

Watercolour in a nineteenth-century bound album, gilt with the arms of the Dukes of Northumberland, 370 × 482 mm (sheet)

Inscribed: *Ein Plat de service / à 24 Thaler / 1 Kr. / 18 Zoll lang mit dem / Hanthein und / 14 Zoll breit*

Lit. T.H. Clarke, 'The Northumberland Service and Meissen Porcelain / The Northumberland Service of Meissen Porcelain', *Keramik* 30, Oct. 1978, p. 36,

no. 46; T.H. Clarke, 'The Rhinoceros in European Ceramics', *Keramik - Freunde der Science*, no. 89, Nov. 1978, Table 3, no. 3; Clarke, p. 98; T.H. Clarke, 'Sir Charles Hothby Williams and the Chelsea Factory', *Transactions of the English Ceramic Circle*, vol. 13, part 2, 1985, pl. 58a

Collection of the Duke of Northumberland

The pages in the album are entitled 'The Grand Service for the Table of (Misnia) Dresden Porcelain Embellished with Paintings in Miniature. Every different Piece being adorn'd with the Representations of divers Animals, Flowers, & Insects, and contain the following Particulars...' A precise description of the form and decoration of the pieces with accompanying watercolour drawings identifies the function of the 'Large Dish with Handles', and the drawing is inscribed with its measurements and price of 24 Thalers (for a discussion on the prices see Clarke, 'Northumberland Service', p. 83). The nature of these inscriptions and the presence of a descriptive list in English indicate that the drawings were produced with the intention of advertising the sale of the service to an English buyer. AD

