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GLOBAL

NUREMBERG 1300–1600

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NUREMBERG IN THE GLOBAL NETWORKS OF THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Albrecht Dürer's *Rhinoceros* of 1515 is an icon of global history |**cat. no. 119**|.[1] The story behind this woodcut is so often told as to require a renewed appreciation of just how sensational it was at the time. Rhinoceroses were surrounded by legend in the European imagination, informed mainly by the ancient author Pliny—that is, until Sultan Muzaffar Shah II of Cambay in India gifted a live specimen to Afonso de Albuquerque, the governor of Portuguese India in Goa. Albuquerque then had the two-ton animal and its Indian keeper shipped along the coast of Africa to Lisbon, where the rhinoceros joined the menagerie belonging to King Manuel I of Portugal. The mere existence of this animal served as living proof to Europeans that the tales told about the wonders of faraway India must be true. News of the rhinoceros reached Dürer's hometown of Nuremberg in a letter sent by Valentim Fernandes, a printer from Moravia who was active in Lisbon.[2] After having undergone all its ordeals, the rhinoceros ultimately drowned off the coast of Liguria while being shipped to Rome as a gift to Pope Leo X. But the creature lived on in Dürer's woodcut, which made it probably the most famous example of cultural exchange between India and central Europe in the early modern period. At the same time, Dürer's *Rhinoceros* is emblematic of our exhibition's objective of telling the story of early globalization from the perspective of Nuremberg—an undertaking that hinges on works of art and related objects with demonstrable historical connections to Nuremberg or to persons active there.

Dürer in India

Comparatively little attention has been paid to the reciprocity of the exchange with India, which is traceable in art and artifacts produced there. The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford has a brush drawing of a young man standing isolated and posed in contrapposto, looking into the distance with a sorrowful expression |**fig. 3**|.[3] His curly hair is subtly modeled, and the drapery folds of his robe are skillfully arranged. According to the note written in Persian at the bottom of the sheet, the drawing was created by Abū'l Hasan, in his thirteenth year, "on the 11th day of the spring month in 1009" according to the Islamic calendar—that is, in the spring of 1600 or 1601 in the European system. Abū'l Hasan became one of the favorite miniaturists of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, who ruled over a vast empire on the Indian subcontinent between 1605 and 1627, including large parts of present-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. The model for Abū'l Hasan's drawing is found in Dürer's Engraved Passion of 1511: the figure of Saint John the Evangelist in the *Crucifixion* |**fig. 2**|.[4] It is difficult to say what Abū'l Hasan's intentions might have been in extracting exactly this figure from its Christian iconographic setting.[5] In any case, the model's origin in faraway Europe will almost certainly have played a role.[6] Abū'l Hasan was probably also fascinated by the engraving's artistic quality, which, as Mika Natif has argued, he sought to imitate and perhaps even surpass with his fine brushstrokes.[7] But perhaps he also recognized in Dürer's figure a universal visual formula for the expression of human grief and wished to adopt it for his own purposes.

Works on paper by Dürer and other European artists found their way to India through Christian missionaries and merchants, and as diplomatic gifts.[8] The high regard there for such works is evidenced by the Jahangir Album, one of the most prominent examples of Mughal book illumination |**cat. no. 122; fig. 1**|.[9] The intricate ornamentations of the page borders feature several figures based on European prints, including the same Saint John, a Virgin and Child by Dürer, and other saints.[10] These figures, most of which come from Christian images, surround Persian poems written in exquisite calligraphy. Such an intentionally hybrid, col-

Fig. 1 Leaf with figures after Albrecht Dürer, from the Jahangir Album, India (Agra?), ca. 1608–18, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientalische Handschriften, Libri picturati A 117, fol. 5r |**cat. no. 122.1**|, Photo: Berlin, SBB-PK

1 Schoch, Mende, and Scherbaum 2002, pp. 420–24, cat. no. 241 (Yasmin Doosry); Dackerman 2011; Werner 2015, pp. 81–87, 89–90.
2 On Fernandes, see Pohle 2000, pp. 137–38, 219–27; Hendrich 2007, esp. pp. 169–270; Westermann 2009, pp. 53–54.
3 Exh. cat. New York 2011, p. 74, cat. no. 28 (John Guy).
4 See Grebe 2014, pp. 397–99; Keating 2018, pp. 101–4; Natif 2018, pp. 99–107. On the engraving, see Schoch, Mende, and Scherbaum 2001, vol. 1, pp. 143–44, cat. no. 55 (Anna Scherbaum).
5 See Keating 2018, p. 104.
6 See the essay by Monica Juneja in the present volume.
7 Natif 2018, pp. 101, 106.
8 In the case of Dürer's engraved *Crucifixion*, it is assumed that one or more impressions reached the Mughal court in 1580, in the context of a Jesuit mission. See Bailey 1999, p. 115; Keating 2018, p. 101.
9 See Beach 1965; Rice 2009; Grebe 2014, p. 397.
10 See Saviello 2022, pp. 46–49. Bailey 1999, p. 114.

Fig. 2 Albrecht Dürer, *The Crucifixion*, 1511, GNM, inv. no. StN2081, on long-term loan from the Museen der Stadt Nürnberg, Kunstsammlungen |**cat. no. 122.4**|, Photo: GNM/ Ute Bock

Fig. 3 Abu'l Hasan, *Saint John the Evangelist*, 1600–1601, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, inv. no. EA1978.2597, Photo: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

lage-like combination of differently sourced motifs and aesthetics is characteristic of art produced at Jahangir's court and of the emperor's broad interests.[11] At the Mughal court, the presence of works by Dürer and other Nuremberg printmakers, such as Georg Pencz and Sebald Beham, also highlights Nuremberg's role in the period as a hub for the exchange of goods and information.[12]

Global Networks

The historical precondition for these global exchanges is found in the European expansion that began in the late fifteenth century, with the main efforts being launched from the Iberian Peninsula.[13] Ten years before Dürer's *Rhinoceros* woodcut and nearly a century before Abū'l Hasan's drawing, Augsburg trading houses and the Nuremberg branches of the Welser, Hirschvogel, and Imhoff families invested in the great Portuguese expedition to India of 1505–6, led by Francisco de Almeida |**cat. no. 116**|.[14] What historians once fondly recounted as an adventurous trading voyage was in fact also an early colonial enterprise, involving massacres in the international trading centers of Kilwa Kisiwani and Mombasa on the eastern coast of Africa as well as brutal warfare on the western coast of India.[15]

Since then, Nuremberg merchants could be encountered in Calicut (Kozhikode), Goa, and Kochi. A bustling exchange of raw materials and goods developed along a route leading from Calicut to Nuremberg by way of Lisbon and sometimes Antwerp |**cat. nos. 2, 119–22**|.[16] While the southern German trading firms were primarily interested in India's fabled wealth in spices[17] and jewels,[18] their most important trade goods consisted of metalwork of all kinds.[19] This is impressively documented by the wreck of the *Bom Jesus*, a Portuguese ship that sank off the coast of present-day Namibia in 1533. When it was salvaged in 2008, in an area being drained for diamond mining, its cargo included countless metal export products and semifinished

11 See Natif 2018, pp. 26–67.
12 On Nuremberg's importance as a center of trade, news distribution, and knowledge, see Veit 1960; Exh. cat. Nuremberg 2002.
13 For an overview, see, for example, Exh. cat. Berlin 2007; Jordan Gschwend and Lowe 2015. On the participation of entrepreneurs from Nuremberg and southern Germany in overseas expansion, see Bernecker 2000; Pohle 2000, pp. 51–81; Westermann 2009; Häberlein 2021.
14 Pohle 2000, esp. pp. 122–34, 205–11; Horst 2009; Exh. cat. Frankfurt and Vienna 2023, pp. 138–41, cat. nos. 1.18–1.21 (Heidrun Lange-Krach).
15 See Cipolla 1965; Brühne 1992, pp. 149–51; Erhard and Ramminger 1998; Rothermund 1998, pp. 6–7; Rothermund 2004, pp. 27–28. See also the essay by Elgidius E. B. Ichumbaki and Dominicus Z. Makukula in the present volume.
16 Pohle 2000, pp. 151–56.
17 Eser 2010a.
18 Siebenhüner 2018.
19 On the trades involved in nonferrous metalwork in Nuremberg, see Kröner 2023. See also the instructive essays in Exh. cat. Nuremberg 2002.

goods typical of Nuremberg, such as copper and brass wares, pewter plates, nested weights, clasps, rosary beads, and of course weapons.[20]

The exchange via sea routes between South Asia, Africa, and Europe also involved objects of a more rarefied kind. A particularly splendid example is the mother-of-pearl basin crafted in Gujarat that is now kept in the Green Vault in Dresden. It was shipped to Lisbon and then transported to Nuremberg, where it was set into a mount by the goldsmith Nicolaus Schmidt (d. 1609) and later sold to the princely court of Saxony |**cat. no. 2**|.[21]

Lacunae between Nuremberg, Seville, and the Americas

Whereas Lisbon was the starting point for expeditions to India,[22] early-sixteenth-century Seville developed into a hub for European activities in the Americas.[23] In the person of Lazarus Nürnberger, who hailed not from Nuremberg but from the nearby town of Neustadt an der Aisch, there was a well-connected lobbyist in Seville from 1520 to 1564 who became involved in almost every enterprise pursued by southern Germans in the Americas.[24] In 1517–18, he had traveled to India on behalf of the Hirschvogel family from Nuremberg.[25] Among other things, he traded in cane sugar, gold, jewels, pearls, weapons, and enslaved people, and he later invested in the mining of Mexican silver and Cuban copper.[26] Through all these lines of business, he and his partners were implicated in the violent colonization of the Americas and the brutality of the transatlantic slave trade.

Despite Lazarus Nürnberger's importance to the global history of Nuremberg, he exemplifies the dilemma inherent in this exhibition topic—namely, that many of the relevant stories can now only be reconstructed on the basis of textual sources. Material evidence is often lost or can no longer be assigned to specific contexts or events. This discrepancy poses a challenge to an art- and cultural-historical exhibition such as ours, which aims to make history tangible to visitors through the presence of original works of art. The only known art object that can be associated with Lazarus Nürnberger is a massive iron chest with an elaborate locking mechanism kept in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville. Many of the documents and objects in that archive's holdings come from the Casa de la Contratación de Indias, the institution centrally responsible for organizing enterprises in the Americas. Lazarus Nürnberger sold a chest of this type to the Casa in August 1537.[27] However, because such objects were produced and exported in large numbers, it remains uncertain whether the surviving chest is indeed the one mentioned in the sources. In this way, the figure of Lazarus Nürnberger typifies the many gaps in the material record, all nearly impossible to fill with illustrative objects. In the study of the global history of early modern Nuremberg, these lacunae underscore the major discrepancy between the richness of textual sources and the paucity of related works of art and artifacts.[28]

The story of the young trading assistant Hieronymus Köler of Nuremberg, who participated in a failed venture to Venezuela, illustrates the unscrupulous treatment that Lazarus Nürnberger and other agents of early global capitalism meted out even to their own people. Köler recorded his experiences in a richly illustrated genealogical book |**cat. no. 110**|.[29] When Köler arrived in Seville in 1534, Lazarus Nürnberger took him in and convinced him to join an expedition organized by the Welsers, who were colonizing Venezuela on behalf of the Spanish crown.[30] After an extensive recruitment campaign, the fleet set sail from Sanlúcar de Barrameda. However, their attempts to cross the Atlantic failed because they ignored the onset of dangerous autumn storms. In Köler's report, written after his return, his anger over this failure is palpable, especially with regard to the exploitative

20 Knabe and Noli 2012, concerning Nuremberg esp. pp. 69–92, 153–201; Westermann 2013b; Werz 2015.
21 Weinhold and Witting 2024, vol. 3, pp. 808–11, cat. no. 170 (Theresa Witting).
22 Jordan Gschwend and Lowe 2015; Exh. cat. Lisbon 2017.
23 Elliott 1989, p. 18; Bernecker and Pietschmann 2005, p. 106; O'Flanagan 2008, p. 42.
24 See Kellenbenz and Walter 2001, pp. 19–29.
25 On Nürnberger's voyage to India in 1517–18, see Kroell 1980 (Nürnberger's travelogue on pp. 63–71); Pohle 2000, pp. 211–15.
26 Häberlein 2016, pp. 190–94; Otte 1963–64.
27 Otte 1963–64, pp. 129–30, fig. 1 following p. 132.
28 The memorial shield (*Totenschild*) for Hans Tetzel (cat. no. 108) exemplifies this dilemma. Tetzel ran a copper-mining operation in Cuba that depended on the labor of enslaved people, but no artifacts related to that activity survive. See Jakstat 2024.
29 Méndez Rodríguez 2013; Bräunlein 2018; Rublack 2022, pp. 294–99; Amburger 1931 (including a partial transcription of Köler's report, which omits the section on Venezuela).
30 See Kellenbenz and Walter 2001, p. 23. On the Welsers in Venezuela, see Simmer 2000; Denzer 2005.

Fig. 4 *Hieronymus Köler in Venezuela*, from Hieronymus Köler, *Family Book*, 1560–65, British Library, London, shelf mark Ms 15217, fol. 40v |**cat. no. 110**|, Photo: British Library

conditions of the whole enterprise. He also denounces the Europeans' treatment of the Indigenous population of Venezuela, and he cites Christian missionary activity as a pretext for plundering the natural resources of the Americas and exploiting the peoples there. This demonstrates that in sixteenth-century Nuremberg a clear awareness existed of the injustices committed by Europeans in the process of early colonialism.[31] At the same time, many passages in Köler's text reveal the disparaging attitude he himself held toward the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, even though he had never actually arrived there.[32]

Köler never saw Venezuela with his own eyes. Yet that did not prevent him from having his notions about the place illustrated with images drawn from the imagination. While the miniatures in his family book (*Familienbuch*) appear naive at first glance |**fig. 4**|, they reveal much of what characterized such ventures. One sees conquistadores on horseback and Christian ritual objects of the type brought to New Spain by missionaries. Unlike Dürer, Köler had no intention of offering an authentic representation of Indigenous material culture |**see cat. no. 100**|. He imagined the people of Venezuela in the pictorial tradition of "Wild Men," portraying them as primitive, bearded cave dwellers in loincloths, equipped with clubs, slings, and bows. However, the lintels above the entrances to their caves are shown as being made of gold, and large golden cups are situated in the landscape, some being used by inhabitants to scoop water from the sea. Executed by unknown illuminators, these images embody notions and stereotypes about the Americas that became firmly established in Nuremberg and elsewhere through broadsheets, travelogues, and oral communications |**see cat. nos. 98–100, 105**|.[33]

Dürer's *Rhinoceros* in the Andes

This leads us back to Dürer's *Rhinoceros*, which itself arose within the context of news reports about early colonial enterprises in India. This woodcut was one of Dürer's most commercially successful works, becoming a sought-after commodity that circulated throughout Europe. Indirectly, through the medium of a book illustration, the motif even found its way to the Andes, to the city of Tunja in the present-day Boyacá department of Colombia. The learned scribe and bibliophile

31 The best-known example of a contemporary critique of such colonial practices is the widely read *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* of 1552 by Bartolomé de Las Casas. See Las Casas 1992.
32 Bräunlein 2018, pp. 332–33.
33 On this phenomenon in general, see Falk 1987; Frübis 2001; Kiening 2006; Massing 2016.

Fig. 5 *Rhinoceros*, after 1585, Casa del Escribano, Tunja (Colombia, Departamento Boyacá), Photo: Bibliotheca Hertziana / Creative Commons (CC BY-NC 4.0)

Juan de Vargas lived in Tunja from 1588 to 1622. In the Casa del Escribano, Vargas's former home and now the site of a museum dedicated to colonial history, he commissioned an elaborate program of grotesques to be painted on the ceiling of the large hall on the second floor. The imagery encompasses Vargas's coat of arms; the monograms of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; ancient deities; and animals.[34]

These Mannerist paintings, repeatedly reworked up into the twentieth century, also include a rhinoceros that is unmistakably based on Dürer's work |**fig. 5**|. However, the immediate source was most likely not Dürer's woodcut, but rather a reproduction of it that appeared in the artistic treatise *Varia commensuracion para la escultura y arquitectura*, written by the goldsmith Juan de Arfe and published in Seville in 1585. Several copies of the book can be traced to South America in the period.[35] As Patricia Zalamea puts forth, by including the rhinoceros and other animals and objects from faraway places in the ceiling painting at the Casa del Escribano, Juan de Vargas made an imperial claim, relocating the "peripheral" to what was for him the center of the world.[36] Beginning in Gujarat, on the western coast of India, and leading to Lisbon, Nuremberg, and ultimately Tunja, the curious story of the Indian rhinoceros immortalized in Dürer's woodcut spans the entire world known to Europeans at the time. And in doing so, it broadens the horizons of our exhibition.

34 Palm 1956; Schatz 2002, pp. 123–31, 139–40, 151–57, figs. 8–19; Mejía 2005, pp. 59–93; Zalamea 2019.
35 Palm 1956, p. 67; Schatz 2002, pp. 128–30, 140; Zalamea 2019, p. 173.
36 Zalamea 2019, pp. 188–89.