

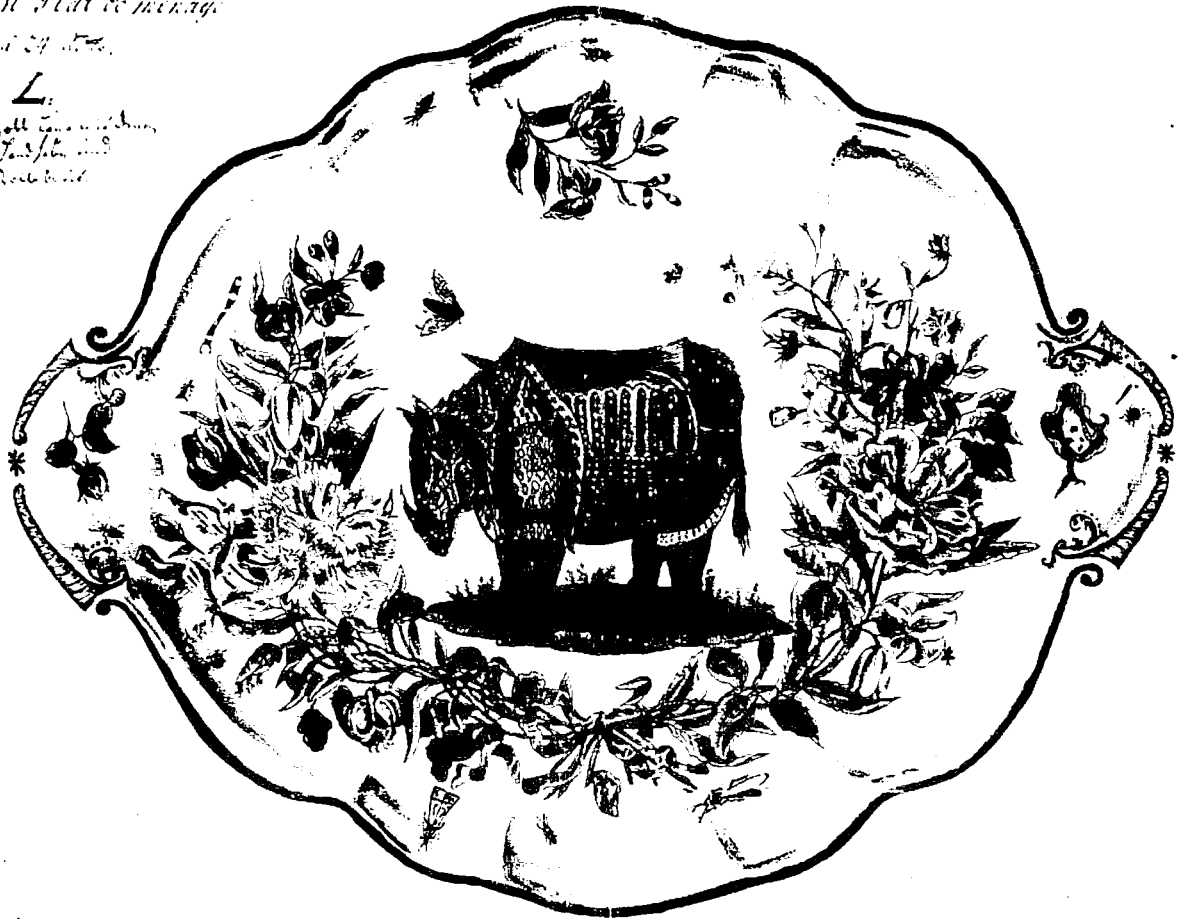
The Iconography of the Rhinoceros from Dürer to Stubbs

Part I: Dürer's Ganda

T. H. Clarke

Ein Plat de ménage
i. 27. 1745.

L.
18. Soll eine...
19. Soll eine...



In July, 1497, a Portuguese fleet sailed from Lisbon commanded by Vasco da Gama and with its arrival in Calicut ten months later the Europeans had finally reached India by sea. In 1511 Alfonso de Albuquerque took Malacca and by 1513 the Portuguese had reached China. It is within the context of this Portuguese conquest of the East in the spring of 1514 that diplomatic negotiations with Muzaffar, King of Cambaia, were engaged by Albuquerque from his headquarters at Goa whence he despatched certain presents, mostly vessels of silver, in return for which he personally was given a 'monstrous beast' called in the Guzurat language a *ganda*.¹ The rhinoceros, to use its European name, wintered at Surat, arrived in Goa on September

15, 1514, and left for Portugal as a present to King Manuel in a fleet which sailed from Cochin early in January, 1515. The route to Europe then passed between Madagascar and the mainland of Africa. A young German resident in Lisbon, Valentin Ferdinand, records the arrival of the rhinoceros in Lisbon on May 20.²

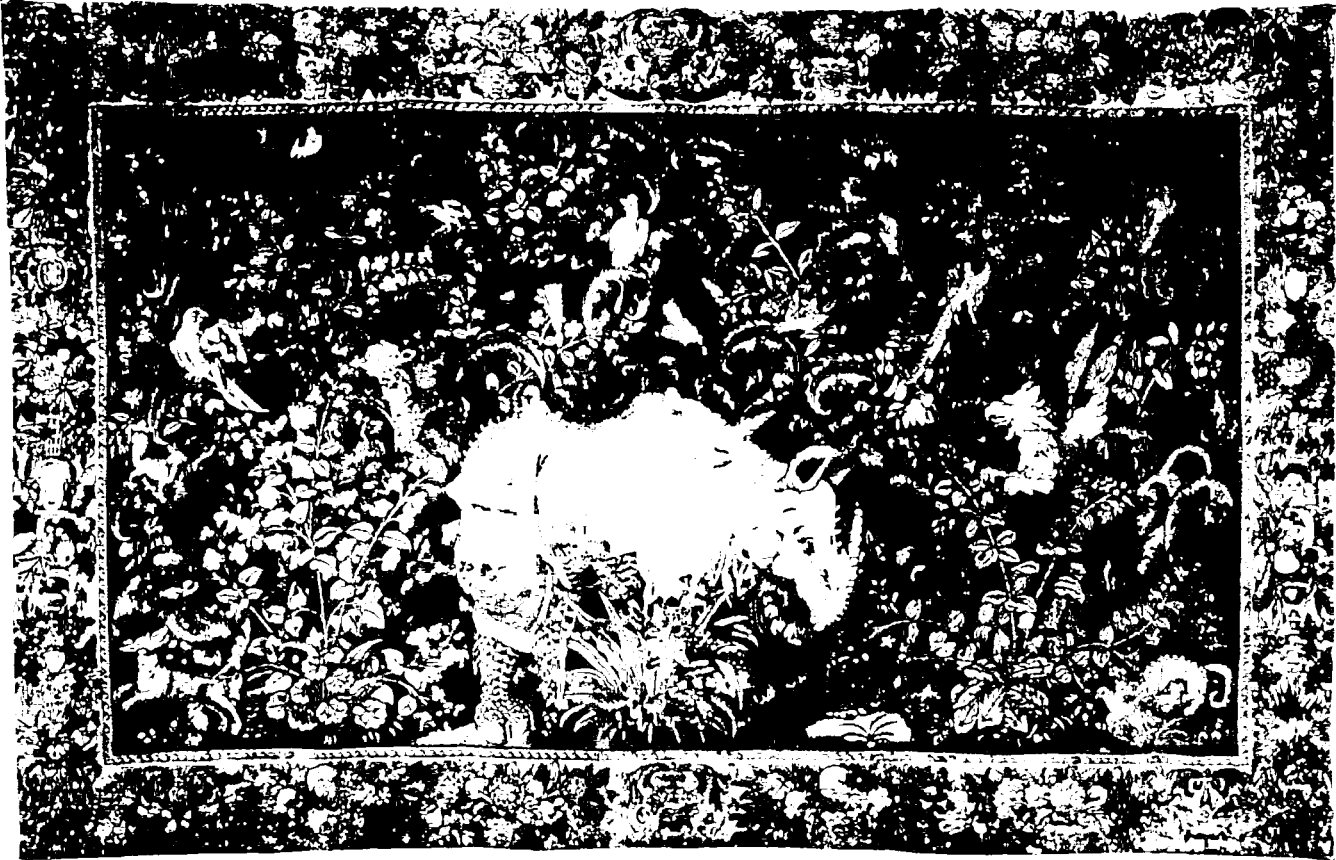
So begins the improbable story of the rhinoceros in Europe. Although, as a modern writer³ has observed 'aesthetically, one fully realises, the rhinoceros has missed the bus', yet it seems worthwhile to trace, however briefly, in this and a succeeding article the impact of this exotic and unlikely animal on European art. The two-horned African rhinoceros had been

Colour
Watercolour
drawing of the dish
of the Plat de Ménage
in the Meissen dinner
service at Alnwick
Castle, German. c.
1745. *The Duke of
Northumberland.*

3. Woodcut of 1548
by Enea Vico,
after Dürer.



4. Mid-16th century
Tapestry 'à feuilles
d'aristoloché',
manufactured at
Grammont, Low
Countries.
Krönborg Castle,
Elsinore, Denmark.



dating too from a woodcut of the same date, 1515, by Burgkmair, but this less fanciful animal never had a chance against Dürer's. Not only did the latter's run into a number of editions but at once his version of the rhinoceros, usually unacknowledged, passed into zoological literature. This aspect of the Dürer rhinoceros has been amusingly and brilliantly covered by the late P. J. Cole. He shows how Gesner (1551), Thevet (1575), Johnson (1650) and many others plagiarized the Dürer woodcut, until finally he 'expires not in a magnificent and learned folio with hand-coloured plates, but in an unremembered shabby compilation by a hack writer to which the author did not even put his name' in 1769.¹¹

But it was in the visual arts as well as in zoological works that Dürer's rhinoceros had a quasi-monopoly for nearly 250 years; from 1515 until the 1740s, when another live animal – there had been others in between that passed unhonoured – became a European sensation. Meanwhile it is the purpose of this article to draw attention to a haphazard assortment of Dürer's 'ganda' arranged chronologically and in a variety of materials and techniques; this selection is subjective and of course incomplete.¹²

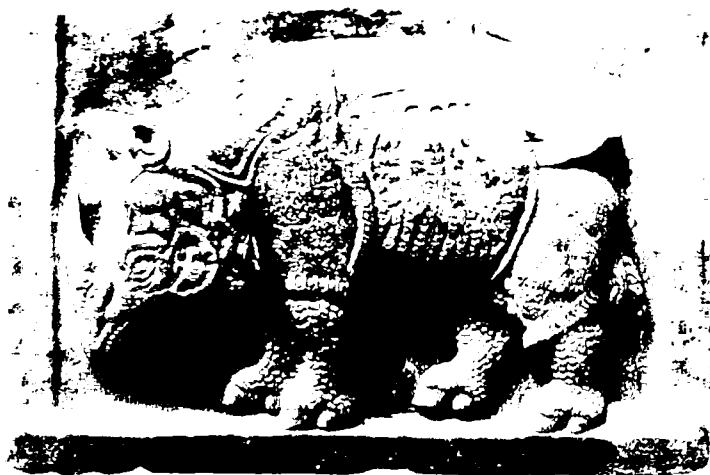
First then is another woodcut¹³ of 1548 by Enea Vico (No. 3) that is virtually a copy of the Dürer woodcut except that it is in reverse and that Vico has completed the hairs on the tail which Dürer omitted, possibly because his boxwood block was too small. Next and of roughly the same date there is the magnificent tapestry at Krönborg Castle Denmark (No. 4), of the type known from the decoration as *feuilles-de-choux* (cabbage leaves) or more recently as *feuilles d'aristoloche* and given to a factory at Grammont in the Low Countries.¹⁴ Its nasal horn is like a thick stick of barley sugar, or as though cut out of cardboard, and the writhen horn on its back has increased in size, but it is clearly Dürer's animal.

The next two representations are both in low relief, one in stone, the other in bronze and both in Italy. The marble relief (No. 5) now in the *Deposito dei Frammenti* at the *Museo Archeologico in Naples* is part of the Borgia collection of classical antiquities, left to the museum as such and published by Otto Keller (in *Die Antike Tierwelt*, 1909), as a 'Pompeian relief', presumably of the 1st century AD.¹⁵ But it is, of course, derived from Dürer's rhinoceros, not directly from the woodcut but possibly from Vico's version (No. 3), since not only is it facing the right way but it also has the large spiral horn on the withers and the complete tail already noticed; but the relief is squatter and because of the relative intractability of the material, marble, less detailed.

The second relief is on one of the west doors of Pisa cathedral (No. 6) completed c. 1600 to replace those destroyed by fire in 1595.¹⁶ The rhinoceros faces this time to the right and is placed at the bottom of the central door. Probably by the sculptor, Angelo Scalani, to whom payment was made for the eight animals on the right door, including 'uno rinoceronte', the pachyderm in nearly full relief stands armoured and placid facing a palm tree – the first association of rhino and palm tree, together a vision of Cathay and to

be found frequently at a later date, on the Wrightsman snuff box (No. 15) for example – with, in the left background, the favourite subject of the fight between an elephant and a rhinoceros. Except for the size of the spiral horn, the rest could be derived from Dürer's woodcut direct, but an intermediary source is more likely, one that has not so far been traced. But the animal combat in the background, the *Tierhatz*, so common an ingredient of German as well as Italian art, might well be derived from Thevet's cut in his *La Cosmographie Universelle* of 1575.¹⁷

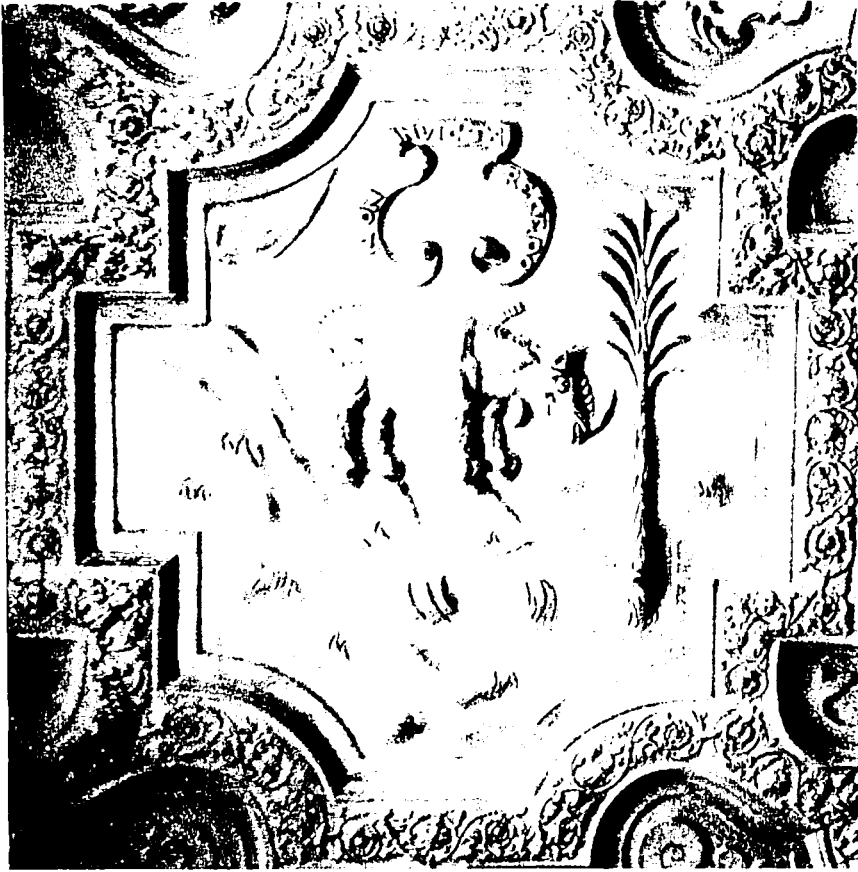
By this time the rhinoceros had acquired a symbolic as well as a zoological character like its team-mate the unicorn, an animal with a greater right to existence because there were in treasuries and cabinets of anti-



5. Marble relief, Italian, sixteenth century, Museo Nazionale, Naples.

6. Bronze relief on one of the west doors of Pisa Cathedral, probably by Angelo Scalani, c. 1600.

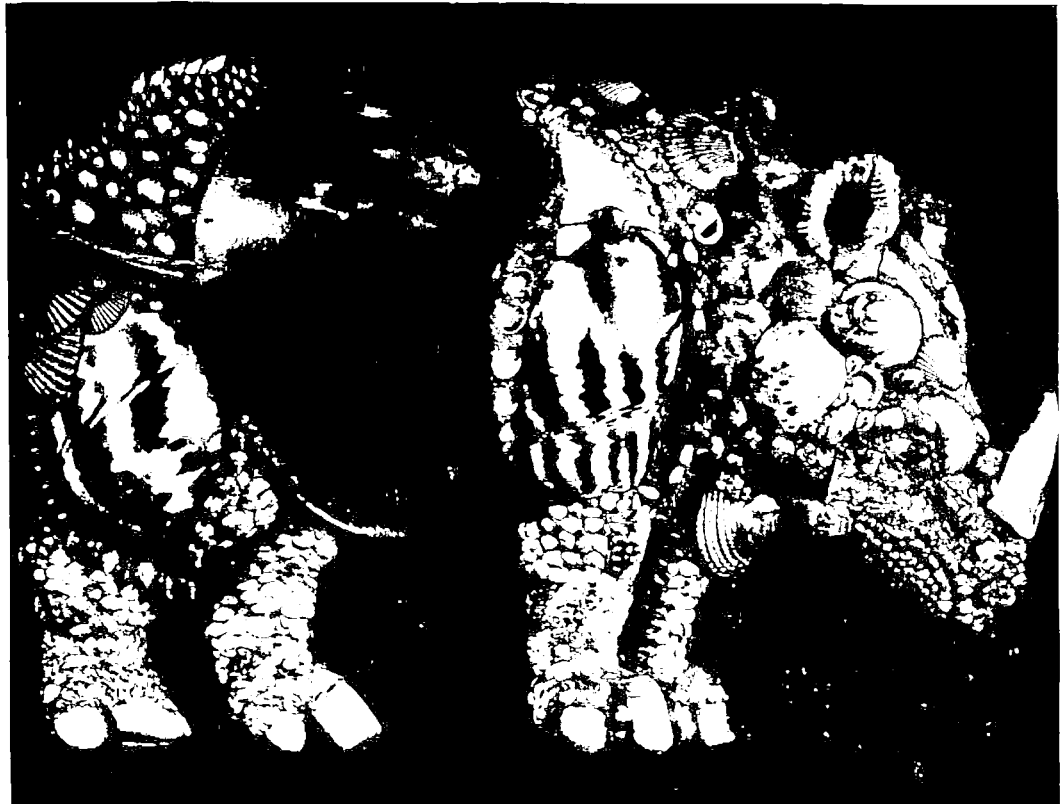




7. Detail of the plaster ceiling in the Long Gallery at Blickling Hall, Norfolk, c. 1625. National Trust.

quity so many more unicorn than rhinoceros horns. From Italy to England the cult of the *ganda* spread. On the ceiling of Blickling Hall, Norfolk, is to be seen in white plaster, a strange beast (No. 7) derived from Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britannia or a garden of heroic devices adorned with emblems and impreses of sundry natures newly devised, moralized and published* in 1612. It is a long way from Dürer in the broadly notched dorsal horn and in the general coarseness of the engraving which was faithfully followed by the plasterer. Note too the recurrence of the palm tree motif. This, perhaps, is the earliest example of the rhinoceros used decoratively in England apart from printed books, and dates from the late 1620s.¹⁸

Closer to the Dürer woodcut and one of the most remarkable objects to have been invented for a cabinet of curiosities is the relief in the castle at Pommerfelden, home of the Schönborn family (No. 8); made of shells, the body formed of a single tortoiseshell (probably an allusion to the inscription on the Dürer woodcut that says that the skin of the rhinoceros resembles a speckled tortoiseshell), legs and head and hindquarters of a variety of shells and the tongue of two rows of corals. Arcimboldeque in inspiration, it is dated to the first half of the seventeenth century and has at least since an inventory of 1732 been associated with an ebony cabinet of c. 1650 containing a collection of shells, kept oddly enough in the prince's bedroom.¹⁹ In gilt-bronze and perhaps towards the middle of the seventeenth century are a pair of small figures, (No. 9) also, it would seem, German, the markings exaggeratedly in relief, mounts perhaps from a cabinet designed



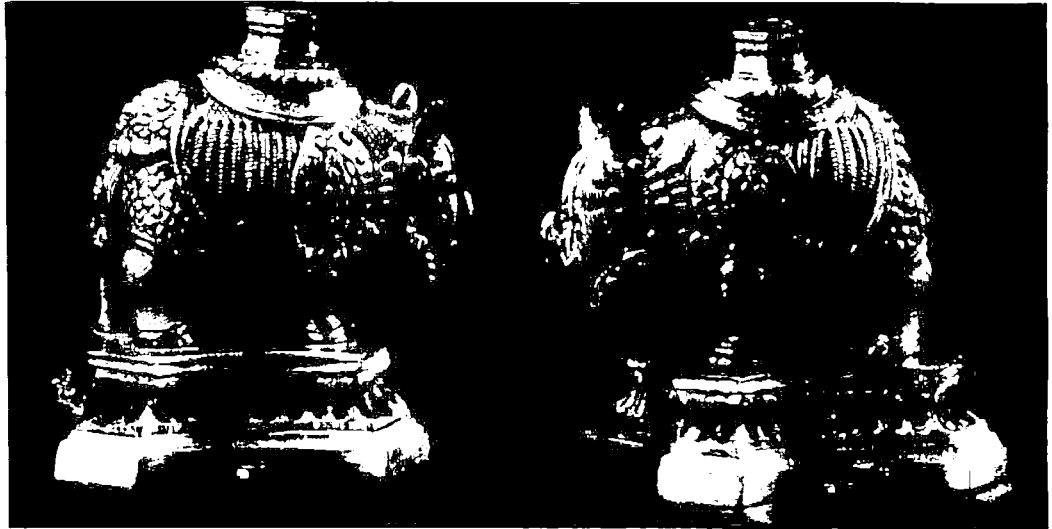
8. Relief in sea-shells and tortoiseshell at Schloss Pommerfelden, near Bamberg, first half seventeenth century. Graf Schönborn.

for a *Kunstammer*.

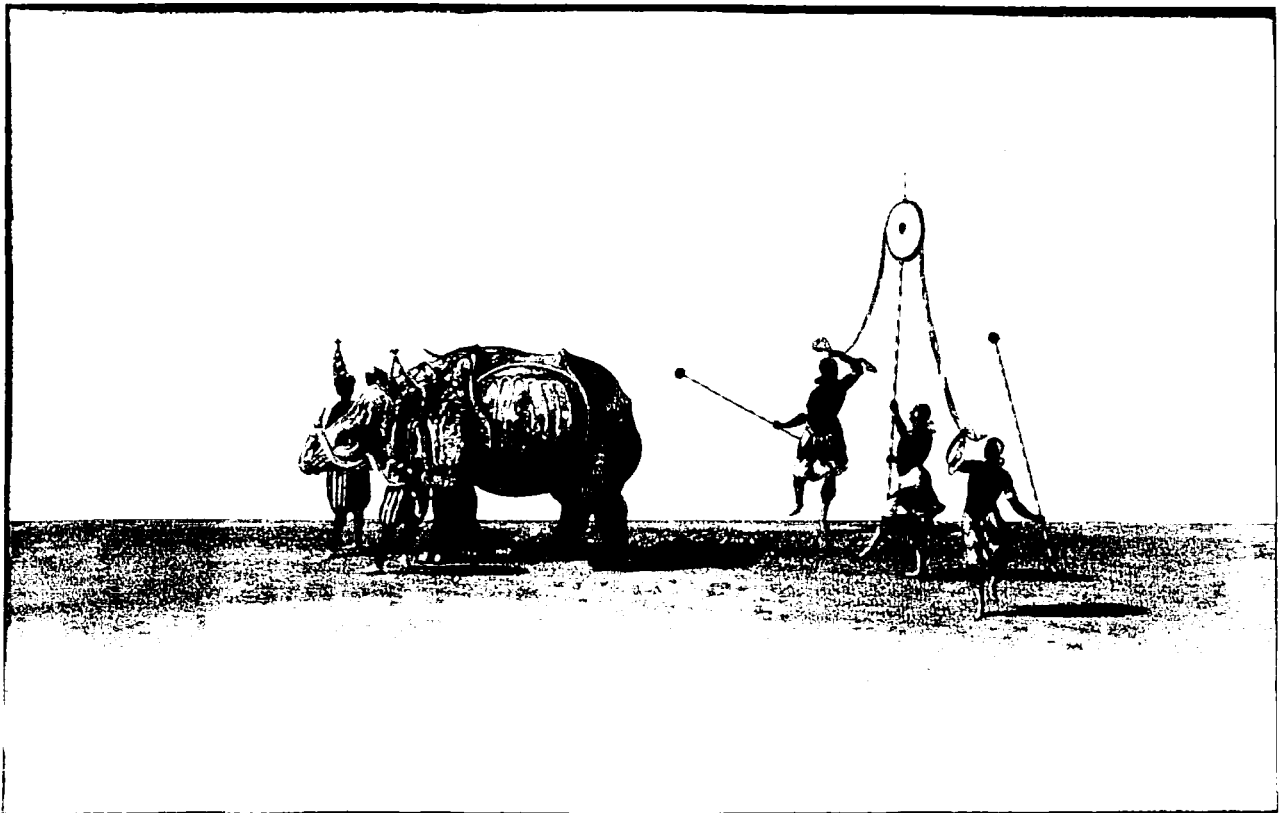
We must now move on sixty years or more to the court of Augustus the Strong (1670-1733) at Dresden. It is to the pleasure-loving Saxon monarch that we owe one of the few representations of Dürer's *ganda* in the round and of life-size. There is preserved in the *Kupferstich Kabinett* at Dresden a coloured drawing of a rhinoceros (No. 10) led by two false orientals who have attached to its horn a sort of bridle of some thin material, followed by three unlikely blackamoors dancing Morris-like around a portable maypole. The

attendants are glancing unconcernedly at the dancers and no wonder, for the animal they lead is, alas, not alive but a dummy made of wood and painted paper. It is in fact part of an elaborate procession, a pair to an elephant, made for court festivities of Augustus the Strong in 1709.²⁰ It was natural, then, that the rhinoceros, paired again with the elephant, should have been one of the earlier animals modelled for his Japanese Palace in Meissen porcelain. The modeller was Johann Gottlieb Kirchner,²¹ predecessor of the great Kaendler, and the date of the white figures is 1731. They were of

9. A pair of miniature gilt-bronze rhinoceroses, German, mid-seventeenth century, *Paul Wallraf*.



10. Drawing of a dummy Panzermashorn (rhinoceros), German, early eighteenth century, *Kupferstich-Kabinett, Dresden*.



11. Meissen
rhinoceros modelled
by Kirchner for the
Japanese Palace,
Dresden, 1731.
*Musée National de
Céramique, Sèvres.*



unusually large size, (106 × 68 cm.) a remarkable technical achievement and also of considerable impact as works of art. Of eight ordered, four only appear to have been delivered.²² Two are still in the Dresden collections, one in white, one with traces of cold painting, a third, illustrated here (No. 11), was acquired by the Musée Nationale de Céramique at Sèvres in 1837 as part of an exchange, together with several other large white animals and birds also from those models of Kirchner and Kaendler for the Japanese Palace.²³ The direct source of design seems to be the watercolour (No. 10) rather than the Dürer woodcut, note the length of the dorsal horn and the central fluted armour-plating degenerating into a pattern of flattened ovals.

The drawing (colour p. 2) here first published is of even greater interest to the Meissen scholar than to the rhinoceros iconographer, for it is one of the very few contemporary drawings of Meissen wares to have survived. It is one of a series of twenty-two watercolour drawings for, or more likely after, a magni-

ficent porcelain dinner service, both drawings and Meissen porcelain the property of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle. Most of the service is richly painted with animals after the engravings of the Augsburg animal artist, Johann Elias Ridinger, but two pieces are derived from Dürer, though differing slightly from each other. The first (No. 12) is the original of the watercolour shown in the colour illustration, a large, flat, shaped centre dish or *Plat de Ménage*, the rather dumpy creature somewhat awed by the rich swags of almost botanical garden flowers, the *Holzschmittblumen* or woodcut flowers that were a feature of Meissen factory decoration around 1740. The watercolour gives us the cost, twenty-four Reichstaler, and the size, eighteen zoll or inches wide and twenty-four broad. Of even greater interest to the student of English porcelain is the fact that another large circular Meissen dish (No. 13), in the same Alnwick service, also has a rhinoceros, this time flanked by more naturalistic flowers, the *deutsche Blumen* of the text books and that, of this dish, there is a replica in

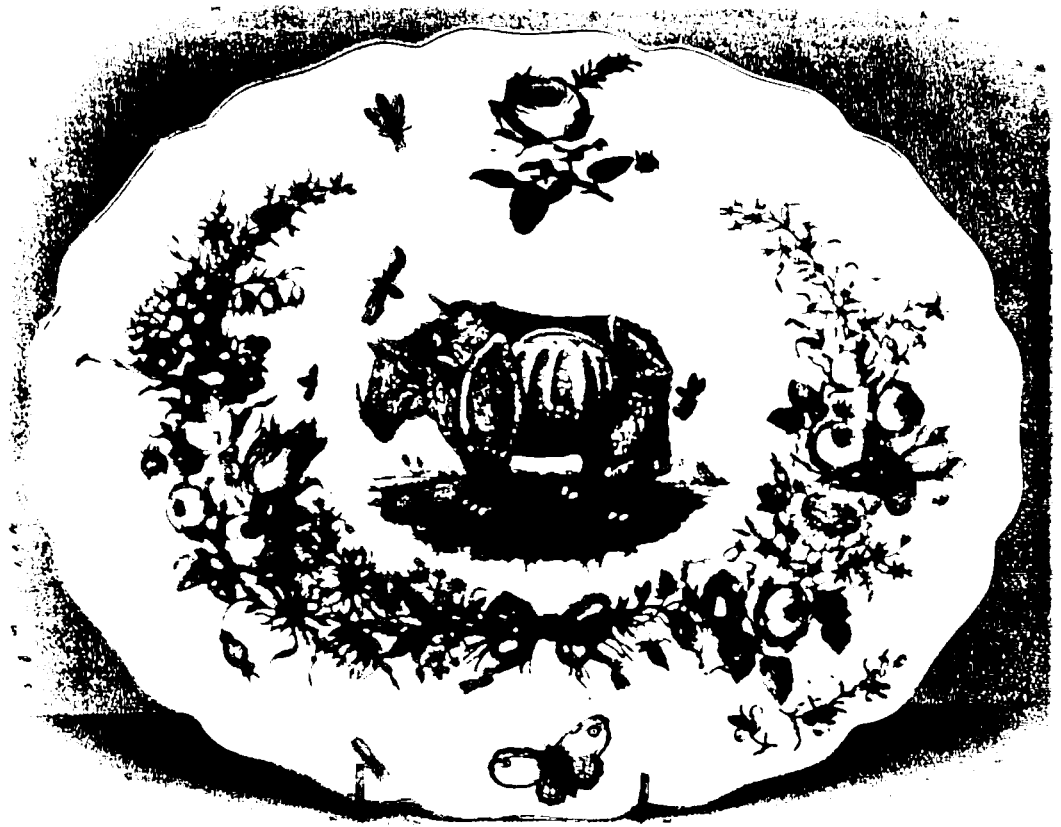
12. Meissen porcelain dish for the Plat de Ménage in the Alnwick Castle service, c. 1740. *The Duke of Northumberland.*



13. Meissen dish from the Alnwick Castle service. *The Duke of Northumberland.*



14. Chelsea dish,
copied from No. 13,
red anchor period,
c. 1755.
Irwin Untermyer
Collection, New York.



Chelsea porcelain of the red anchor period (but of oblong and not circular form, thus recalling the *Plat de Ménage*) in the collection of Judge Untermyer in New York (No. 14). Not only is the rhinoceros exactly copied but also every flower, two roses²⁴ and a tulip to the left, for example, and a single rose spray in the rim above, is exactly mimicked, which means that the Meissen original must have been available in London about 1755 for Chelsea paintersto have copied; and this is of importance in the history of the Northumberland service, about which the Meissen archives are silent.

That Chelsea took the pains so elaborately to prolong the existence of the Dürer rhinoceros to 1755 is a tribute to Dürer's genius. for, as the next article will show, by 1755 the armour-plated animal with the scaly legs and writhen horn on its withers had been superseded by the Leyden rhinoceros. Oudry in 1749 and Longhi in 1751 had each painted a rhinoceros from life and engravings had already appeared in 1747; but old ideas die hard. Rhinoceros and palm tree are to be seen again on the Wrightsman snuff box in silver and gold piqué on dark shell, mounted in 1768/9 (No. 15), although the plaque itself had evidently been made earlier. Nonetheless, the fact that it was worth remounting so late was in itself a victory for Dürer, or perhaps a deliberate snub to the new scientific approach to natural history exemplified by Buffon.²⁵

More exactly dateable, to 1749 at latest, is the Louis XV clock, No. 16, with a dial signed Etienne Lenoir à

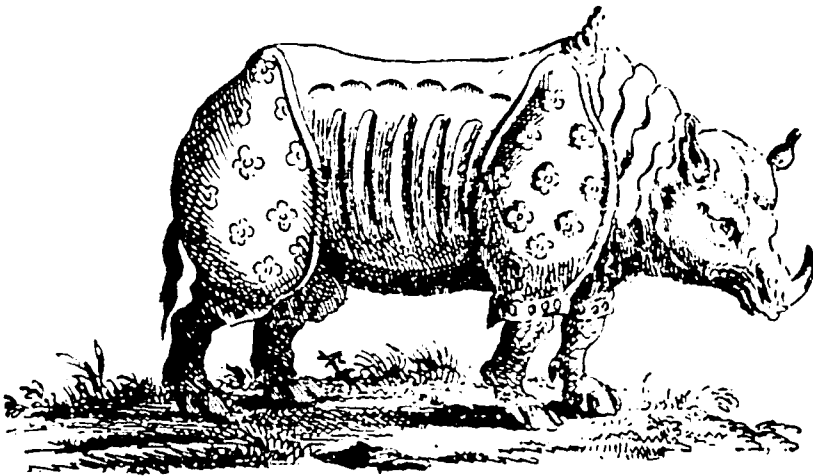
Paris. Each of the eight separate pieces that form this extravaganza has the poinçon of a 'C' below a crown which was a punch used only between 1745 and 1749.²⁶ We are a long way from Dürer. Even the horn on its nose is now writhen to match the lengthened dorsal one: the folds of skin on the neck have become almost a ruff while the markings on its back have been smoothed out, the scaly legs remaining. Since, as will be shown in the next article, a live rhinoceros was the rage of Paris in the summer of 1749 and since the Parisian dealers were nothing if not up-to-date this clock should be dated to 1748 or a year or so earlier.



16. Louis XV ormolu clock, with the pignon of the crowned 'C', c. 1748.

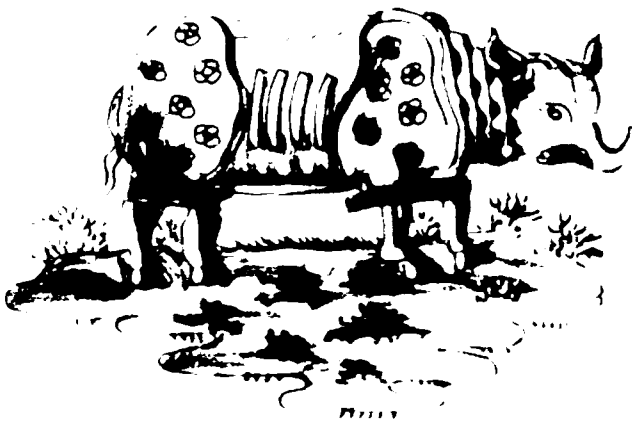


15. Louis XV gold snuff box, the lid piqué.
Wrightsmen Collection.



17. *The Ladies' Amusement*, 1762.

18. Liverpool delft tile, c. 1765. City Art Gallery, Bristol.



Finally to show the utter degradation to which Dürer's noble beast had fallen it is worth glancing for a moment at the figure in the *Ladies' Amusement* of 1762 (No. 17) and at a Liverpool delftware²⁷ tile (No. 18) (in the Art Gallery, Bristol) which it inspired, if that is the right word. The characteristic dorsal horn has dropped off, the head is nearer a pig or elephant's, but the Dürer original nonetheless can be traced, but only just, in the marking of the rib cage and the discs on the plates of hide on either side. It is difficult to recognise what Topsell in 1607 had once described in *The Historic of foure-footed Beasts* as 'the second wonder of nature . . . a beast in every way admirable, both for the outward shape, quantity and greatness and also for the inward courage, disposition and mildness'.

The second part of these *Notes Towards the Iconography of the Rhinoceros* follows in a subsequent issue.

NOTES

1. Called Gomda by Dürer in his drawing (No. 1); other Hindu equivalents are Genda, Gaimda and Gomela.
2. The story of the Lisbon rhinoceros was first told in any detail by Campbell Dodgson in the *Dürer Society's* fourth portfolio of 1902, and repeated in an abridged form in the same author's *Catalogue of the Early German Woodcuts in the British Museum*, 1903, Vol. 1, p. 307. Loisel's three-volume *Histoire des Ménageries*, Paris 1912, is as usual invaluable, particularly on details of the royal menageries in Portugal. A fascinating small volume of 50 pages is A. Fontoura da Costa's *Deanbulations of the Rhinoceros (Ganda) of Muzafar, King of Cambaia, from 1514 to 1516*, published in an individual English by the Portuguese Republic Colonial Office in 1937, useful particularly on the Indian end of the story, but to be used with caution on artistic matters. The final word is again with Campbell Dodgson in an article, 'The Story of Dürer's Ganda' in *The Romance of Fine Prints* published by the Print Society, Kansas City in 1938.
3. Peter Fleming in *My aunt's rhinoceros: a digression*, 1956.
4. 'On the 11th of September, 1868 the first living African Rhinoceros that had been brought to Europe since the days of the Roman Amphitheatre arrived in the Society's Gardens, where it still remains in excellent health and condition'; from a paper by R. L. Sclater read in 1875 and printed in the *Transactions of the Zoological Society of London*, Vol. IX, Part XI, p. 655.
5. 'Thus the nose-horned beast of India, lumpish and gross and mud wallowing, looms always just behind the unicorn, related to it as fact to dream, as actuality to the ideal, as Sancho Panza to Don Quixote,' writes Odell Shepard in *The Lore of the Unicorn*, London, 1920, a great book much neglected but essential for an understanding of the rhinoceros's impact in the West, as is Richard Ettinghausen's monograph, *The Unicorn*, Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers No. 3, which despite its title is largely concerned with the rhinoceros (in Arabic *karkadann*).

6. See Loisel, *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 217; the elephant/rhinoceros fight was in 1515, not 1517, a mistake repeated by Joan Barclay Lloyd in *African Animals in Renaissance Literature and Art*, 1971. Dürer errs the other way, giving the date 1513 in the woodcut inscription.
7. Joan Barclay Lloyd, *op.cit.*, p. 47 has an entertaining description of this celebrated elephant called Hanno, at whose death in 1516 Pope Leo X commissioned a monument from Raphael. A drawing of this beast by Giulio Romano formed lot 22 in Sotheby's sale of the Ellesmere Collection, part 2, December 5, 1972.
8. Enquiries at the Vatican have failed to bring to light the stuffed rhino, so far, but it is possible that it still survives, if that is the proper word. An elephant presented to Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria, was stuffed on its death in the 1550s, and was preserved at the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich until the last war.
9. 'The Graphic Work of Albrecht Dürer', British Museum 1971, Nos. 211 and 212. Campbell Dodgson mentions eight editions of the woodcut, the second after Dürer's death, in 1540, the third c. 1545-50, the last two printed in Holland, c. 1620.
10. F. J. Cole, 'The History of Albrecht Dürer's Rhinoceros in Zoological Literature' in *Science, Medicine and History: Essays on the Evolution of Scientific Thought and Medical Practice written in honour of Charles Singer*, Oxford University Press, 1933, Vol. 1, p. 334 *et seq.*
11. F. J. Cole, *ibid.*, p. 334. The 'hack writer' was T. Boreman, *A Description of three hundred animals*, 10th edition, London 1769.
12. Lack of space forbids the inclusion, for example, of Jean Goujon's design of an obelisk on the back of a rhino for Henry II's triumphal entry into Paris in 1549 or the remarkable ceiling painting of about 1600 in the House of the Scribe in the town of Tunja, Colombia, South America, for which see E. W. Palm, an article on 'Dürer's Ganda and a XVI Century Apotheosis of Hercules at Tunja' in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, November 1956, p. 65 *et seq.*
13. Bartsch XV 305 47. Enea Vico, 1520-1570, was born in Parma, apprenticed in Rome, mentioned by Vasari, moved to Florence in 1545, where this woodcut must have had some considerable influence. There is a rhinoceros amongst the animals in various coloured stones in the grotto of the Medici villa at Castello, from the 1560s. The head of the beast appears on the Florentine fountain in the Piazza Pretorio in Palermo, commissioned from Tribolo in 1560, completed by the minor sculptor Camilliani and exported in 1573. See John Pope-Hennessy, *Italian High Renaissance and Baroque Sculpture*, Vol. III, p. 117 and fig. 168.
14. See Dario Boscara, *Les Belles Heures de la Tapisserie*, 1972.
15. See Sir William Gowers in 'Early Rhinoceros in Europe', *Country Life*, February 1952.
16. See John Pope-Hennessy, *op. cit.*, Catalogue, pp. 88-90.
17. F. J. Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 343, fig. 8. The most curious print of the traditional fight between the elephant and the rhinoceros is a Dutch mezzotint of 1686 by P. van den Berghe, purporting to portray 'from the life' the two animals 'recently arrived in London from the East Indies', but in fact, as far as the rhino is concerned it is a crude rehash of the Dürer print. There was a rhinoceros in London in 1684; this will be dealt with in the second part of this article.
18. See *Blickling Hall*, National Trust, 2nd edition, 1970, pp. 7-8. The rhinoceros was used emblematically in the arms granted to the Society of Apothecaries in 1617, and is therefore well-known on English delftware pill-slabs. The grant reads: 'for their Crest upon a Wreath of their colours, a Rhynoceros, proper . . .'
19. I wish to thank Graf Schönborn and Herr Wilhelm Schmidt for allowing reproduction of No. 8 and for detailed information on its history. The shell relief was loaned to the exhibition 'Aufgang der Neuzeit' at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, in 1952, catalogue p. 16; again in 1971 to the Munich exhibition, *Düerer-Renaissance*, No. 11, and in 1972 to *Bayern. Kunst und Kultur*, No. 803. See also Eugen von Philippovitch, *Kuriositäten/Antiquitäten*, 1966, p. 460. The 1732 inventory lists the relief as being in the prince's bedroom and describes it as 'ein Rhinoceros von muschel formiret nebst etlichen Meer muscheln und Mineralblühe besetzt'.
20. The drawing of the elephant shown at Zurich in 1971, No. 234 in the exhibition 'Kunstschätze aus Dresden' is by Johann Gottlieb Schoene, that of the rhinoceros unattributed. See also Sponcel, *Kabinetttstücke der Meissner Porzellanmanufaktur*, 1912, p. 68.
21. Kirchner was chief modeller from April 29, 1727 until April 1728, and again from June 1730 until March 31 1733.
22. In a list of December 13 1731 there is mention of '1 Rhinocerus . . . in thon poussiret und noch ausgeformet werden muss', ('a rhinoceros modelled in clay and the moulds still to be made'). By August 18 1732 '2 Renoceri' were already in 'rohe porcellaine' ('unfired porcelain'), while by 1734 '4 Rinoceros' priced at 172 reichsthaler each had been delivered, with four more to come, but these had not been completed in 1735. See Sponcel, *ibid.*, pp. 52, 54, 56 and 57; and Karl Berling, *Das Meissner Porzellan und seine Geschichte*, 1900, p. 184.
23. The Kirchner rhinoceros or Panzermashorn was part of a consignment of 57 pieces exchanged in 1837 by Dresden for porcelain from the Sèvres factory (information kindly given by M. Fourest, Conservateur of the Musée National de Céramique at Sèvres). For the white example now at the Zwinger in Dresden see F. H. Hofmann, *Porzellan*, 1932., fig. 272 and Albiker, *Die Meissner Porzellanmanufaktur*, 1935, pl. I, fig. 2 and 1959 edition, fig. 2.
24. See Yvonne Hackenbroch, *Chelsea and other English Potcelain in the Irwin Untermyer Collection*, 1956, pl. 17, fig. 48. The Dürer derivation is there noted, but the intermediary is not Francis Barlow as suggested; it is the Alnwick service, unknown when the Untermyer catalogue was written.
25. The brilliant 'hair' technique in silver and two tones of gold make this snuff box, with its distinguished history, one of the most desirable of rhinocerotid artefacts. For a detailed account, see Francis Watson in *The Wrightsman Collection*, Vol. III, pp. 170-3, where all relevant material is noted.
26. See Pierre Verlet, 'A Note on the Poinçon of the crowned "C"', *Apollon*, xxvi, No. 151, July 1937, pp. 22-3.
27. See Anthony Ray, *English Delftware Tiles*, 1973, pl. 36, No. 359.