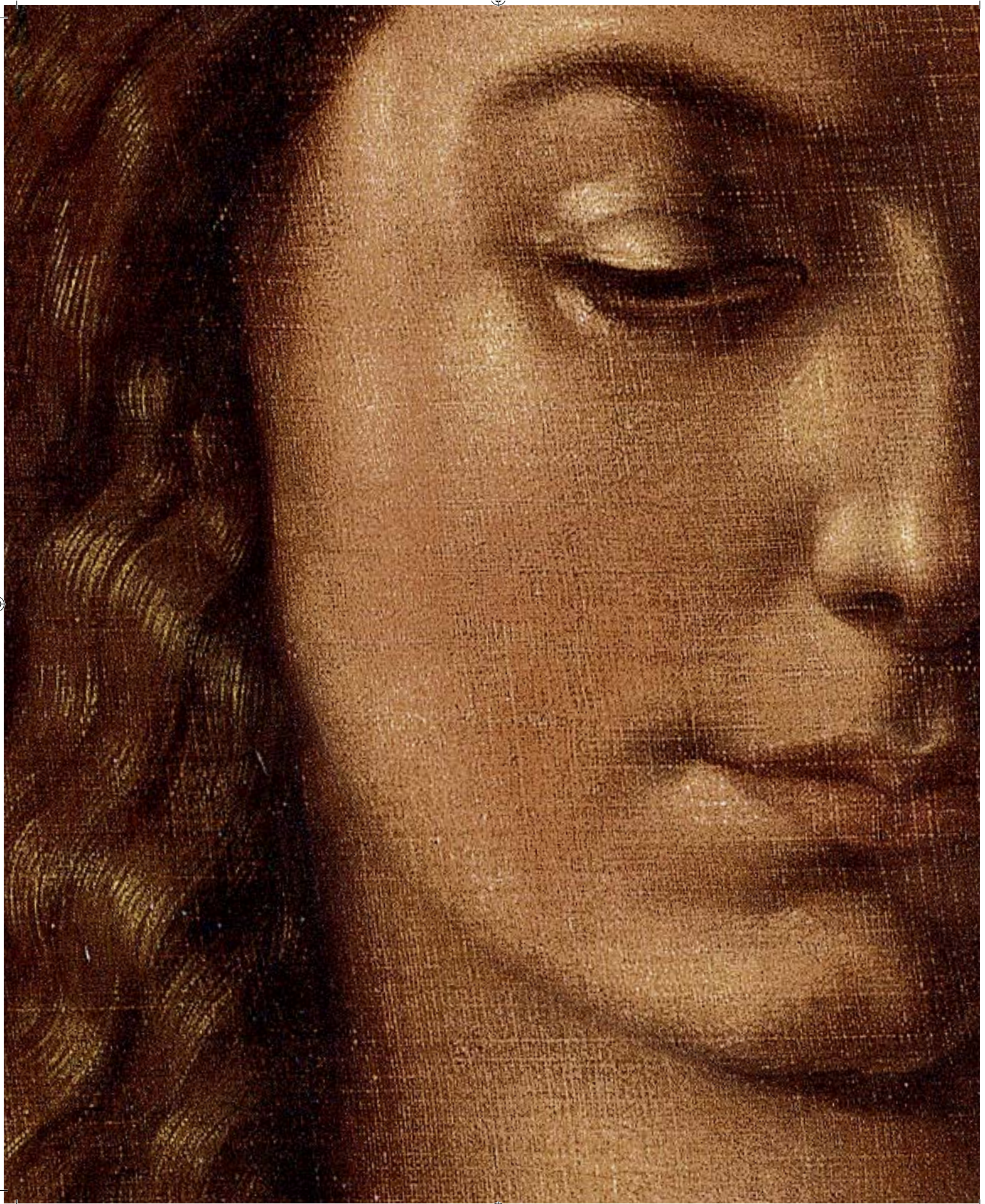


Albrecht Dürer





Albrecht Dürer

HIS ART IN CONTEXT

Edited by Jochen Sander

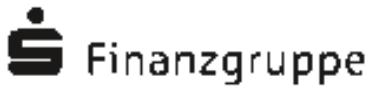
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This catalog has been published in conjunction with the exhibition *Albrecht Dürer: His Art in Context*

Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main
October 23, 2013–February 2, 2014

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GRAPHIC IMPLEMENTATION

Stefan Schmid DESIGN, Stuttgart

TYPESETTING

Vornehm Mediengestaltung, Munich

PRE-PRESS AND REPRO

Repro Ludwig, Zell am See

PRODUCTION PRESTEL

Cilly Klotz

PRINTING AND BINDING

Firmengruppe APPL, Wemding

PAPER

Luxo Art Samt

TYPEFACES

Freight Sans, Freight Display

OVERALL PRODUCTION

Prestel Verlag, Munich
A member of Verlagsgruppe
Random House GmbH

Neumarkter Strasse 28
81673 Munich
Tel. +49 (0)89 4136-0
Fax +49 (0)89 4136-2335

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Prestel Publishing Ltd.
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900 Broadway, Suite 603
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www.prestel.com

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Prestel Verlag, Munich · London · New York
and the authors

Library of Congress Control Number is available;
British Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data:
a catalog record for this book is available from
the British Library; Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
holds a record of this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographical
data can be found under: <http://www.dnb.de>

TRADE EDITIONS

ISBN 978-3-7913-5318-0 (German)
ISBN 978-3-7913-5317-3 (English)

MUSEUM EDITIONS

ISBN 978-3-941399-30-3 (German)
ISBN 978-3-941399-31-0 (English)



Verlagsgruppe Random House FSC® N001967
The FSC-certified paper Luxo Art Samt was
produced by Sappi, Ehing

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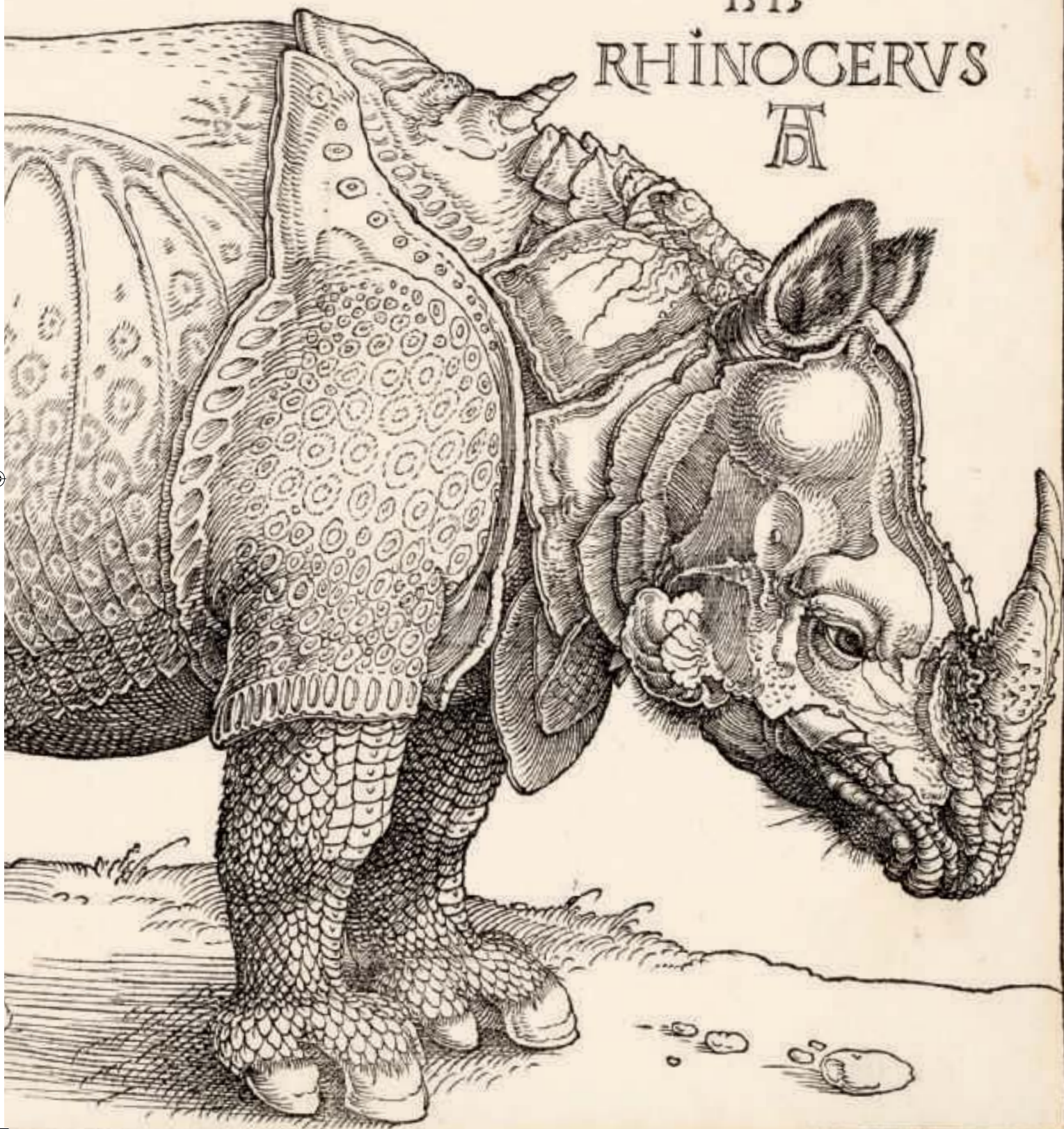
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mächtigen König von Portugall Emanuel gen Lysabona pracht auß India/ ein sollich lebendig Thier. Das nennen sie ein farb wie ein gespreckelte Schildkrot. Vnd ist vß dicken Schalen vberlegt fast fest. Vnd ist in der groß als der Helffande harff starck Horn vorn auff der nase/ Das begyndt es alweg zu werzen wo es bey staynen ist. Das doßig Thier ist des Helff kumbe/ so laufft Im das Thier mit dem kopff zwischen dyc södern payn/ vnd reyßt den Helffande vnden am pauch auff gewapent/ das Im der Helffande nichts kan thun. Sie sagen auch das der Rhynocerus Schnell/ Fraydig vnd Listig sey.

1515

RHINOCERVS

TA



Conjoined Twins, a Monstrous Pig, and a Rhinoceros. Dürer's Broadsheets

At Easter 1496, two sows “grown onto each other at the top and with only one head between them” went on show in Nuremberg.¹ The display of two piglets sharing the same head attracted so much notice that even Heinrich Deichsler deemed it worthy of inclusion in his *Nuremberg Chronicle*, where the event is sandwiched between a tempest, the visit of Electors Frederick and John of Saxony, and a performance by a troupe of artistes involving a three-headed “hydra.” Whether it was a mistake or willful exaggeration that led him to describe the creature as having twelve legs, it is impossible to say, but his report is remarkable nonetheless. We cannot know for sure whether Albrecht Dürer saw the piglets himself, but it is surely not by chance that he published an engraving of a conjoined pig that very same year (cat. no. 12.1). The business-savvy Dürer doubtless hoped to cash in on the widespread interest in “monsters.” Yet to dismiss Dürer’s relatively small print as little more than a spin-off from the public display of a zoological curiosity hardly does it justice for it is actually a remarkable work of art on its own merits. Besides being an early example of the artist’s readiness to adapt his output to the changing demands of the market, it also attests to his involvement in current—thoroughly scholarly—discourse. And because of the engraving’s proximity to popular culture, it enables us to reconstruct what, to Dürer’s mind, was most important about his art.

While freak shows of “monsters” might sound suspiciously like blatant sensationalism to us, among Dürer’s contemporaries, they were about far more than just weird and fantastical natural phenomena. Such *monstra*—a word that since the Middle Ages has tended to be etymologically linked to *monstrare* (to show), and only occasionally to *monitus* (a caution or divine warning)²—were in fact central to how the world was perceived and interpreted. News of them spread through the medium of print greatly added to their weight.³ The Romans already believed in omens and portents, as anyone who had read Pliny the Elder would have known. St. Augustine integrated such deviations from the natural order in the Christian understanding of the Creation in a way that was to have an enduring influence on the medieval worldview. Everything had a meaning, and exceptional events and phenomena all the more so; this meaning, moreover, was self-evident to anyone with a knowledge of Scripture and capable of drawing of analogies. Of the

four levels of exegesis, two were especially relevant to divination: one was the moral level aimed at bringing about an immediate change of behavior, and the other the eschatological level, which saw all such abnormal events as portending the rapidly approaching end of the world. While Dürer himself avoided reading too much into movements of the heavenly bodies,⁴ the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (cat. no. 3.5) is full of dire warnings modeled on those of the Revelation of St. John. The Apocalypse, the *Chronicle* tells us, will be ushered in by the fall of great cities destroyed by fire, flood, and strife, by famines and plagues, and by “miraculous forms and signs in the heavens that will arouse great fear [...] among men.”⁵ Thus “monstrous” births and astronomical phenomena were just as much constants of the historical narrative of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* as was the succession of popes, emperors, and councils. They were a form of commentary and confirmation that a given situation was not good, whether they were linked to heresy, an unsatisfactory political situation, or an incipient conflict.⁶ Comets and eclipses warned of calamity, of plague, war, or inflation;⁷ or they could portend the death of an individual.⁸ In addition to astronomical phenomena, *monstra* such as a four-footed child or conjoined twins were also correlated with political unrest or the Turkish menace.⁹ And thanks to the eschatological connotations of such omens, the reader leafing through the *Nuremberg Chronicle* was constantly reminded that he or she was already living in the Sixth Age, and hence the penultimate Age of the World. The book guarantees continuity by “hereafter leaving several pages empty” for the description of “more stories or future things.”¹⁰ Such “future things” might include still more “miraculous signs,” of course, which is why Hartmann Schedel pasted a copy of the broadsheet that had inspired Albrecht Dürer’s engraving (fig. 68) into his own copy of the *Chronicle*.¹¹

That broadsheet was the work of the Basel legal scholar and humanist Sebastian Brant, who on 1 March 1496 was sent a pair of conjoined piglets with two bodies but only one head that had been born in Landser, just south of Mulhouse, in Alsace. Perhaps this “gift” was intended as a joke or as a challenge, for Brant responded immediately—with a broadsheet. As skeptical of miracles and ignorant of astrology as he had proved himself to be in his *Ship of Fools* of 1494, he was certainly no intellectual lightweight and had authored several

serious broadsheets of political import.¹² In 1492, for example, he interpreted the meteorite that came down in Ensisheim in Alsace as a sign of impending calamity for the French, with whom Emperor Maximilian was engaged in an ongoing conflict over territory and marriage alliances.¹³ The “thunder stone” became so famous that Maximilian himself came to see it. No less closely bound up with what was happening in the political arena were the conjoined twins born near Worms during the Diet of Worms in 1495, who, remarkably, lived to be ten years old. The girls were joined at the head, which led Brant to interpret them as divine confirmation of Maximilian’s unification of the principalities and imperial domains.¹⁴ The broadsheet featured a woodcut showing the twins standing in front of the city gate at Worms. As is evident from a comparison with a later broadsheet by Brant (cat. no. 12.2), this was the iconographical template for the *Landser Sow* (fig. 68) and hence a way of lending the work additional political weight. The broadsheet in Latin and German lists all the dire consequences that the birth of the conjoined piglets ostensibly portended, from human folly to the threat posed by the French, the Turks, peasant uprisings, and even the Antichrist. Only the author’s casual remark that since the pig had died within hours of its birth, it could scarcely be read as an omen for absolutely everything, pricks the bubble, unmasking the text—until now a fine balance of jocularity and gravity—as satire.¹⁵

Few people understood Brant’s rather learned brand of wit and doubtless many of those who set eyes on his broadsheet on the *Landser sow* would have read it at face value, that is to say, as a bona fide interpretation of a miraculous sign. The anonymous author of another broadsheet on a monstrous hare (cat. no. 12.3), for example, praises Brant as one who warns against disaster, as in the story of the *Landser sow*, which, “printed far and wide,” told readers “what it means/namely the destruction of land and people.” With a circulation of 1,000 or more, these broadsheets are rightly regarded as “precursors of modern mass communications.”¹⁶ They were available at trade fairs and from booksellers but were distributed mainly by independent, itinerant salesmen who roamed the country peddling their wares.¹⁷ Nor should their dissemination through mercantile channels be underestimated. In other words, it cannot be ruled out that news of the monstrous pig really did travel all the way from Basel to Nuremberg between March and early April 1496, although whether the piglets that went on show in Nuremberg were the same as the “sow” of Brant’s broadsheet, or merely a replication, remains a matter of speculation.¹⁸ Whereas broadsheets in Latin presupposed an educated readership, those written in German were aimed at a wider audience made up of craftsmen and others who could at least read.¹⁹ The inclusion of illustrations, however, made them attractive even to the illiterate, or at least provided them with something to talk about. As a fast, interpretative news medium, illustrated broadsheets were symptomatic of the early modern era, in which not just the printed book, but also mass media such as prints revolutionized the market.

In view of Dürer’s close ties to book printing, which initially at least provided the design for broadsheets in general, it is hardly surprising that he should have been active in this area as well. As early as 1496, he produced a woodcut for a scholarly treatise on an astrological constellation as the cause of syphilis. This was followed in 1510 by three broadsheets of poems that were entirely his own work, as vouchsafed by his monogram: one a meditation on the Passion, one an admonition to convert in the face of death, and one a poem for the reader’s moral edification.²⁰ Dürer may also have planned another broadsheet on the conjoined twins of Ertingen (cat. nos. 12.4–5) two years later. But his

greatest success was undoubtedly his *Rhinoceros* (cat. no. 12.8), which was not only soon copied and adapted, but would influence people’s image of what rhinoceroses actually looked like right up to the nineteenth century. How this work came about is an excellent example of early modern communications. In the second half of 1515, the merchants of Nuremberg received a letter from their contact in Lisbon telling them of a sensational event in that city, namely, the arrival of an Indian rhinoceros sent to King Manuel I of Portugal as a gift from the sultan of Gujarat. Dürer was certainly quick to hear the news and probably saw a picture of the extraordinary beast as well. The drawing he made in preparation for the woodcut at any rate quotes a letter written by one who found the “Rhynocerate” so remarkable, that he “had to send you a depiction if only for the wonder of it.”²¹ The report must have circulated throughout Europe, for less than two months after the animal had arrived in Lisbon, a small-format broadsheet illustrated with a rather crudely drawn picture of a rhinoceros was published in Rome (fig. 69).²² Dürer’s decision to publish a woodcut of the creature was thus a response to the widespread interest in this animal, which after all had not been seen in Europe since antiquity. It would be easy to dismiss this as early Renaissance tabloid journalism²³ in which the image took the place of today’s screaming headlines. The illustration certainly had priority, being significantly larger than the explanatory text preceding it. In fact, the picture is no longer just an illustration, but rather the actual vehicle of information in its own right. The eye-catching layout of Dürer’s broadsheet—at least to those wishing to consider the *Rhinoceros* in this context—made it a highly successful, if extreme, example of a nascent genre still in its experimental phase.²⁴ The comparison also reveals something else, however: by “silhouetting” the rhinoceros against a pale, neutral background but at the same time sketching in the ground on which it is standing so as to create an illusion of depth, Dürer was in fact complying with broadsheet conventions (cf. cat. nos. 12.5–7). Yet as an artist—the monogram makes it clear that the animal is his own creation—he far exceeds the usual standards of the genre. However his model might have looked, we can be sure that the artist who drew it did not vary the modeling of the horn, armor plating, scales, and skin the way Dürer does, nor would he have used the play of light and shade to create a “bodyscape,” or singled out the individual hairs on the creature’s snout. The fact that one of the hind legs is lagging behind, moreover, is a way of lending the creature a certain animal dynamism, despite its bulk.

Dürer’s efforts to outshine his models by investing his own works with an imaginary verisimilitude are especially evident in his drawing of *The Siamese Twins of Ertingen* (cat. no. 12.4). Walking on an imaginary surface, the little girls appear to be looking at each other intently—perhaps even talking to each other. Here, too, the standing pose is fully in keeping with the broadsheet tradition since the *Twins of Worms* and the *Landser Sow*; even the interaction can be read as an attempt to match comparable illustrations (cat. nos. 12.5–6). How a print made after Dürer’s Oxford drawing might have looked nevertheless remains open to speculation; it would certainly have far surpassed his other broadsheets measured in terms of vitality. His intention of artistically ennobling popular themes is borne out by the *Monstrous Pig of Landser* (cat. no. 12.1), for which his choice of the engraving as medium meant greater precision but a lower circulation. Instead of crude woodcut illustrations, Dürer delivered a collector’s piece. He even worked from a mirror image of the city gate of Landser so as to lend his work “authenticity”—at least for those familiar with Brant’s broadsheet. Only the dead piglets were transformed, becoming a living creature endowed



Fig. 68 Broadsheet of the Monstrous Pig of Landser (detail), colored, pasted into Hartmann Schedel's copy of the Nuremberg Chronicle, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München

with two bodies, eight legs, four ears, and two tongues, but standing quite “naturally” and open-eyed in the landscape.

- 1 Deichsler 1961, p. 586.
- 2 By Isidor von Sevilla, for example; cf. Ewinkel 1995, pp. 61–62, and for a useful introduction to what follows, pp. 59–69.
- 3 Cf. Klingebiel 1999, p. 19.
- 4 In his own family history he reports seeing a “Rain of Crosses” in 1503 as well as a comet; Rupprich, I, p. 36; Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Strauss, no. 1503/15); exh. cat. Nuremberg 2012, pp. 268–69, no. 5.
- 5 Schedel 1493, fol. CCLIX recto.
- 6 Ibid., fol. CLVII recto, CLXX recto, CLXXXIX recto, CLXXXIX recto, CCXVII verso, CCXLII verso.
- 7 Ibid., fol. CLXXXVI recto, CXCVI recto, CCXX recto, CCXXV recto.
- 8 Ibid., fol. CLXVII verso, CCXIII verso, CCXXII verso.
- 9 Ibid., fol. CCXII recto, CLI recto.
- 10 Ibid., fol. CCLVIII verso.
- 11 Cf. exh. cat. Munich 1990, pp. 282–83, no. 98.
- 12 Cf. Wuttke 1974, esp. pp. 274–80.
- 13 For more on this, cf. Wuttke 1976, pp. 142–53. That this was the astronomical phenomenon that Dürer was referring to on the verso of his London *St. Jerome* (cat. no. 2.26), where it serves as an apocalyptic sign of atonement, is a hypothesis that has not yet been fully refuted, cf. Anzelewsky, p. 129, no. 15. All the sources describe the stone as triangular, which is more or less how it looks on Brant's broadsheet (Wuttke 1976, fig. 1; cf. the illustration in Schedel 1493, fol. 257 recto), though not in Dürer's painting. The painting is nevertheless in keeping with the iconographic tradition for meteorites to the extent that the mysterious object appears to be radiating beams

of light or heat, even if these are not pointing straight out, but are rather explosive in character.

- 14 Wuttke 1977, esp. pp. 219–29.
- 15 Sack 1997, pp. 23–148, esp. 50–51; among those who continue to read it at face value is Wuttke 1994, pp. 108–15.
- 16 Schilling 1990, p. 26; for more on their circulation, *ibid.*, p. 25, cf. Wuttke 1976, p. 153.
- 17 Schilling 1990, pp. 27–29.
- 18 Cf. Wuttke 1994, pp. 114–15.
- 19 *Ibid.*, pp. 41–44.
- 20 Schoch, Mende & Scherbaum, II, pp. 38–41, no. 103, pp. 158–67, nos. 148–50; on the texts and their context, cf. Sahn 2002, pp. 104–14.
- 21 London, The British Museum, Strauss, no. 1515/57; inscription quoted after exh. cat. London 1993, I, p. 91, no. 195. The term “abkunferfet” (depiction) does not have to imply a hand-drawn sketch on the part of Valentin Ferdinand, as some scholars assume; it may also refer to a duplicated, perhaps even printed, work. How else can we account for the appearance of several different images as far afield as Italy and Germany within such a short period of time, if not by assuming a common source?
- 22 Published by De Matos 1960. On the various sources and the channels by which they were disseminated, cf. Bedini 1997, pp. 111–24; cf. also Fontoura da Costa 1937; Walter 1989; Monson 2004.
- 23 Thomas Eser, quoted in “Millionen-Poker um Dürers seltene Druck-Grafiken,” in *Nürnberg Nachrichten*, 31 January 2013, p. 3.
- 24 Cf. Schilling 1990, pp. 53–56.

— 12.1 12.2 12.3 —

ALBRECHT DÜRER

THE MONSTROUS PIG OF LANDSER 1496, engraving, 121 x 127 mm,

monogrammed, Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum, Graphische Sammlung, inv. no. 31409, state: c (according to Schoch, Mende & Scherbaum)

SEBASTIAN BRANT AND ANONYMOUS ARTIST

**BROADSHEET ON THE TWO-HEADED GOOSE AND SIX-FOOTED PIGLETS
OF GUGENHEIM** DE MONSTROSO ANSERE ATQUE PORCELLIS, BASEL: J[OHANN] B[ERGMANN VON OLPE, AFTER 3 APR. 1496], 1496

woodcut and typography, 464 x 290 mm (sheet size), Leipzig, Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek, sign. B⁶-Ink. 159 Fig. p. 300

ANONYMOUS AUTHOR AND COPY AFTER NIKLAS NIEVERGALT

BROADSHEET ON A MONSTROUS HARE IN DEM IAR NACH CHRISTUS GEPURDT

M. CCCCC. V AUF DEN SONTAG IUBILATE [...], OPPENHEIM: [JACOB KÖBEL] [CA. 1505] typography and colored woodcut,

370 x 230 mm (sheet size), Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, sign. Einbl. I, 40 Fig. p. 301

Around 1500, the omens seemed to multiply. This, at any rate, must have been the impression given by the broadsheets flowing from Sebastian Brant's pen. A doctor of law in Basel, Brant had interpreted the meteorite of 1492 as portending disaster for the French (see p. 296). He then went on to describe nineteen other extraordinary natural phenomena,¹ which he likewise correlated with current affairs, often in line with the policies of Maximilian I. The spring of 1496 apparently saw an increase in the number of monstrous births. The creature known as the "monstrous pig of Landser" (see pp. 295–96) was born on 1 March, while a goose with two heads and four legs, and a piglet (possibly two) with six legs were discovered in Gugenheim near Strasbourg on 3 April. Having been commissioned by Albrecht of Bavaria, the bishop of Strasbourg, to make a drawing of the Gugenheim discovery, Brant produced a broadsheet (cat. no. 12.2) illustrated with a woodcut that tells us a lot about the tensions then prevailing: the resemblance between the goose in the middle and the double-headed eagle of the Hapsburg coat of arms is certainly not a

product of chance; Brant was clearly using the goose to symbolize an imperiled empire. For whereas the birth of conjoined twins during the Diet of Worms six months previously had been read as a metaphor of political unity, the "monstrous pig of Landser" had so undermined that interpretation that the two-headed goose seemed positively menacing and a clear warning of imminent division.²

The exact role played by Brant's political allegory for Albrecht Dürer has so far proved impossible to reconstruct. His *Monstrous Pig of Landser* (cat. no. 12.1), which clearly grew out of the woodcut of Brant's earlier broadsheet (fig. 68), defies any obvious interpretation—except as work of art in its own right. As the plate features only the "AD" monogram but no explanatory text, it could have been intended as a starting point for a scholarly discussion of *monstra*—or of art and nature, for that matter.

Dürer's print is scarcely larger than the woodcuts illustrating Brant's broadsheets. Although not a broadsheet itself, it was to have a lasting impact on the genre: Dürer's decision to present the piglet as alive, fully grown, and standing as if it were the most natural thing in the world might have inspired the painter Niklas Nievergalt of Worms. While the anonymous author of the broadsheet describing a monstrous hare (cat. no. 12.3)

clearly took Sebastian Brant as his model (cf. p. 296), Nievergalt, it seems, was more impressed by Dürer's narrative approach. Even the creature's discovery by a farmer out in the field can be traced back to his—now-lost—woodcut illustration.³ Nievergalt also followed Dürer in his efforts to render the anatomical peculiarities of the monstrous hare in as much detail and with as much vitality as possible. APS

1 Wuttke 1994, p. 107; on Brant: Wilhelmi 2002.

2 Cf. Wuttke 1994, p. 117.

3 Faust, Barthelmess & Stopp 1998–2010, II, pp. 358–59, no. 333; cf. Hess 1994, p. 47, fig. 40.

Literature

12.1 Schoch, Mende & Scherbaum, I, pp. 43–44, no. 8 (with earlier literature); exh. cat. Nuremberg 2012, p. 319, no. 40; Schmitt 2012, p. 170 12.2 GW 5037; ISTC ib01096700; Wuttke 1994, pp. 115–21; Faust, Barthelmess & Stopp 1998–2010, II, pp. 3–4, no. 155.2 12.3 Schilling 1990, pp. 15, 333, no. 137; Hess 1994, p. 47 (with earlier literature); Faust, Barthelmess & Stopp 1998–2010, II, pp. 360–61, no. 334.



— 12.4 12.5 12.6 12.7 —

ALBRECHT DÜRER

THE SIAMESE TWINS OF ERTINGEN 1512, pen in black ink, 158x209 mm,

signed and inscribed: "It[em] do man czalt noch Christ gepurt 1512 jor, do ist ein solch frucht jm Peyrlant geporen worden, wy oben im gemell angezeigt ist, jn der herren van Werdenberg land jn eim dorff, Ertingen genant zw negst pey Riedlingen, awff denn zwenzigstn dag des hewmand. Vnd sy würden getawft, das eine hawbt nant man Elspett, das ander Margrett", Oxford, The Ashmolean Museum, inv. no. WA1855.102

ANONYMOUS

BROADSHEET ON THE BIRTH OF THE SIAMESE TWINS OF ERTINGEN

ON 20 JULY 1512 ANNO DOMINI MILLESIMO QUINGENTESIMO DUODECIMO DIE MARTIS VICESIMA ME[N]SIS

JULIJ MANE CIRCITER QUARTAM HORAM MONSTRUM HOC [...], NO PLACE: 1511/12 woodcut and typography, 260x100 mm (sheet size),
Erlangen, Graphische Sammlung der Universität, sign. A IV 3 Fig. p.304

BROADSHEET ON THE BIRTH OF SIAMESE TWINS IN WITTERWEILER

ON 11 MAY 1511 WUNDERBARLICHE GEBURT UFF SO[N]TAG JUBILATE DEN XI. TAG MAIJ [...], NO PLACE: 1511/12 woodcut and typography,
240x151 mm (sheet size), Erlangen, Graphische Sammlung der Universität, sign. A IV 2 Fig. p.304

ANONYMOUS AUTHOR AND WOLF TRAUT

BROADSHEET ON THE BIRTH OF SIAMESE TWINS IN SPALT NEAR NUREMBERG

ON 18 DECEMBER 1511 ZU WISSEN. EIN WUNDERLICHS UN[N] ERSCHROCKENLICH DING [...], NO PLACE: [AFTER 1511]

woodcut and typography, 300x195 mm (sheet size), Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, sign. Einbl. VIII, 19 Fig. p.305

The conjoined twins born in Ertingen in Upper Swabia on 20 July 1512 were baptized Elizabeth and Margaret. Four different broadsheets on the subject have survived,¹ indicating that the birth was a major event at the time. All four publications agree that since the sisters seemed to be smiling at each other in a friendly way, they could not possibly portend anything calamitous.² The anonymous authors thus contradict Sebastian Brant, who took the view that twins conjoined at the head pointed to unity, whereas “monsters” with two heads were a sign of impending conflict.³ The cordiality of the girls, whose names were soon conflated to “Els-gret,” is clearly apparent in the illustrations provided (cat. no. 12.5). That it was also very much in keeping with prevailing conventions is evident from the woodcut showing the conjoined twins born in Witterweiler in Alsace the year

before (cat. no. 12.6) and from illustrations in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (cf. cat. no. 3.5).⁴ The iconography of the Ertingen twins is unusual inasmuch as they are shown from both front and back. One broadsheet, whose author insists that the girls’ mother allowed him to view the girls from behind as well, even has a flap pasted into it, which, being printed on both sides, allows the reader to see the twins from both sides.⁵

Albrecht Dürer incorporated both the intimacy between the two girls and the view of them from two different angles into his Oxford drawing of “Elspett” and “Margrett”—a work that is greatly enhanced by the artful suggestion of naturalness (cat. no. 12.4). The girls’ baby fat, umbilical cord, and comparatively large heads identify them as newborns. Yet the pair is shown not just standing but actually walking—to judge from the view of

them from behind. The layout of the work, with the monogram and date in the middle, the meandering tendril serving as a frame, and an inscription of several lines in length whose contents are very much in keeping with most other such broadsheets, indicates that Dürer intended to have it printed.⁶ Dürer’s consummate draftsmanship and imagination enabled him to create in this work a touching, deeply human monument to the conjoined twins.

Wolf Traut’s depiction of the “Janus-headed” birth in Spalt (cat. no. 12.7) looks monumental by comparison. Traut, a Nuremberg-based illustrator, achieves this effect not just by drawing heavily on other iconographic conventions—including, surprisingly, those applicable to paintings of saints⁷—but also by virtue of the format chosen. Dürer, too, relied on size in much the same way in his later *Rhinoceros* (cat. no. 12.8). APS



1 Cf. Littger 2003.

2 Ibid., pp. 77–78.

3 Wuttke 1974, p. 283.

4 Schedel 1493, fol. CLI recto (not in the Latin edition) and CCXVII recto.

5 London, The British Museum; cf. exh. cat. London 2002, pp. 182–83, no. 124.

6 The text talks of a “gemell”—a word that can mean many things ranging from a picture, drawing, woodcut, or engraving; see the article headed “Gemäl” in DWB, V, col. 3159–3160.

7 A good comparison is the illustration of St. Francis standing in a landscape, also attributed to Traut, in *Die Legend des heyligen vatters Francisci*, Nuremberg: Hieronymus Hölzel, 1512, frontispiece and fol. Aiiij verso.

Literature

12.4 Strauss, no. 1512/8; Rupprich, I, p. 207; exh. cat. London 2002, p. 182, no. 123 (with earlier literature); Spinks 2009, pp. 42–49 12.5 Exh. cat. Erlangen 1999, p. 151; Littger 2003, esp. pp. 75, 77–78, 84, fig. 4; Spinks 2009, pp. 49–50 12.6 Exh. cat. Erlangen 1999, p. 150 12.7 Geisberg/Strauss 1974, IV, p. 1371, no. G.1419; Ewinkel 1995, p. 303, fig. 13; Spinks 2009, pp. 49–52.



12.5 ANONYMOUS BROADSHEET ON THE BIRTH OF THE SIAMESE TWINS OF ERTINGEN ON 20 JULY 1512



12.6 ANONYMOUS BROADSHEET ON THE BIRTH OF SIAMESE TWINS IN WITTERWEILER ON 11 MAY 1511



Zu wissen. Ein wunderbarlich vñ erschrockenlich ding das in der yeit Als man zalt nach Christi vnfers herren gepurt/
 Junffterhundert vñd Aylff Jar. Am zwilf tag des Christmonden. in dem tag des heyligen Wandald bischoff.
 in der Stat Spalt genant. Vñ meyl von Nürnberg vñdter gewoissen der herrschung des hochwürdigen herren
 herren Gasaid bischoff zu Eystet. von einer stam von einu hyrren geboren solches kyndt. Ein hant geb. mit zweyen
 angsichten. Drey hant. Zwo gestruckt auß vñlicher seyten personlich eyne. Vñ die driten zwischen den schultr. in des
 rucks. Einem coepen byf auff die zwo fremlich scham außseyden seyten mit vier menschlichen eynen vñ fuessen. War
 dassig gesehen durch den würdigen herren Heinrichen von Porsperg. Der selbigen yeit obgenant Stat Spalt Pfarrer.
 Auch hat vñ dimer des durchleuchtigen hochgeborn fursten vñ herren herren Friderichs Marggrauen zu Brandenburg.
 Nach herren Johan Zuer daselbst. genel im psarboff vñd ander vil mer die dyse wundtverlütige Creatur ge-
 hen haden. abtanderseyt in aller gestalt wie es gepoien ist in obgenant Stat.

ALBRECHT DÜRER

THE RHINOCEROS 1515, woodcut and typography.

239 x 298 mm, Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum, Graphische Sammlung, inv. no. 31588, state: 1a (according to Schoch, Mende & Scherbaum)

It was from “India,” so the introductory text on this woodcut tells us, that “the mighty King of Portugal, Manuel of Lisbon,” received the gift of a living creature “called the rhinoceros.” The specification of both month and year, May 1513, appears to vouch for the authenticity of the story, encouraging us to lend it just as much credence as we would any other broadsheet (cf. cat. nos. 12.3–7). The date is nevertheless incorrect, as the rhinoceros is known to have arrived in Lisbon on 20 May 1515, the year in which Dürer published his woodcut. The relaying of this exciting piece of news from Lisbon to Nuremberg via mercantile channels was thus much faster than Dürer himself was aware, which naturally increased the risk of misunderstandings.¹ Far more important than the explanatory text is the image itself showing a rhinoceros in profile against a neutral, landscape-like background. By allowing the tail, feet, and horn to

touch the frame, Dürer underscores the sheer bulk of this exotic beast, which, according to the inscription, should be imagined as “the size of an elephant.” Dürer’s rendering of the creature’s body with its armor plating, scaly legs, and horns conjures up associations with reptiles such as crocodiles and tortoises. The text also describes characteristics that the woodcut cannot convey, or only to a limited extent. These include its color (“like a speckled tortoise”), the feel of the armor plating (it is “almost entirely covered with thick scales”), and the animosity that ostensibly exists between the rhinoceros and the elephant—a whimsical detail taken from Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*. The rhinoceros belonging to the king of Portugal was the first of its kind to set foot in Europe since antiquity. Tragically, it drowned when the ship carrying it from Lisbon to Rome as a gift from Manuel I to the pope was wrecked in a storm. Dürer must

have had some model for his woodcut, even if only a drawing or a print, such as the title illustration of an Italian broadsheet (fig. 69).² Comparing these two works is very revealing and shows us what Dürer’s imagination was capable of, especially when fired by his awareness of the artistic scope afforded by the woodcut. APS

- 1 Dürer’s preparatory drawing with the copy of a letter contains the same mistake, London, The British Museum (Strauss, no. 1515/57).
- 2 Establishing “filiations” among the seven other pictures of rhinoceroses that are contemporaneous with Dürer’s print is no easy task (for an overview of these, see Walter 1989, pp. 275–76.). The shackled forelegs are a distinctive feature to be found in the woodcut produced by Hans Burgkmair, who drew heavily on Dürer’s composition but at the same time produced a creature with a softer, more pliant hide, and only one horn. These adaptations attest to the way in which the two artists vied to produce the more authentic work; Vienna, Albertina.

Literature

Schoch, Mende & Scherbaum, II, pp. 420–24, no. 241 (with earlier literature); exh. cat. Bilbao & Frankfurt 2007–08, pp. 204–05, no. 146.

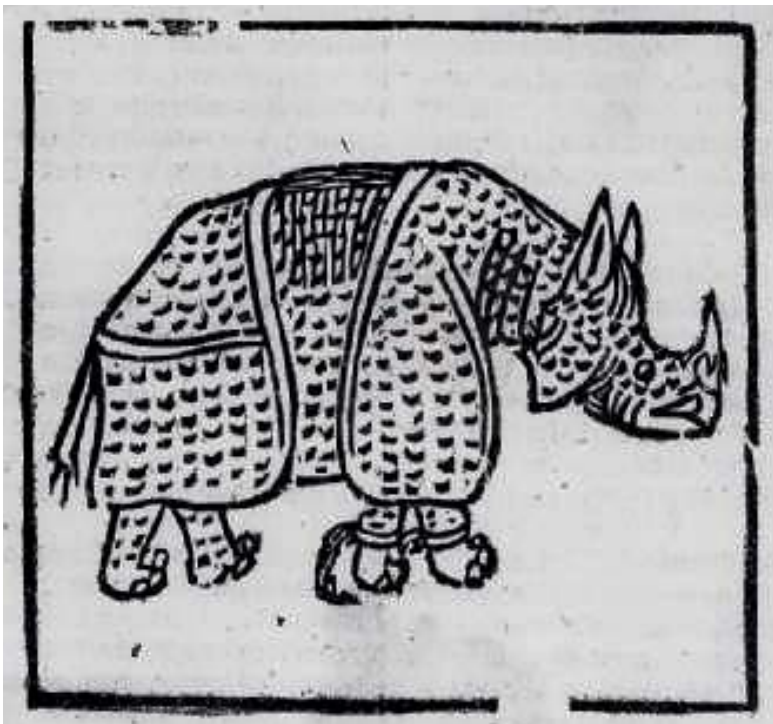


Fig. 69 Title woodcut by Giovanni Giacomo Penni, *Forma e natura e costumi de lo Rhinocerothe*, Rome: Stephano Guilireti, 1515

Nach Chiffas Bericht 1711. Im Jahr 1711. Hat man in dem großmüthigen König von Portugal Emanuel von Lysabon gebracht ein sollich lebendig Thier. Das nennt sie Rhinoceros. Das ist bey uns alle Jahr zu sehen. Es hat ein Jahr nur ein geschicktes Schilder. Von ei vñ einem Schilte vñ einem schilte fast ist. Das ist in der groß aller Gelfande Thier vñ dinsten von paxen vñ fast noch 1711. Es hat ein schilte glantz. Das vñ ein schilte. Das dinsten es allig in wem wo es sey stamm ist. Das dinsten Thier ist der Gelfe fangt die fende. Der Gelfande fende es fast vñ dinsten wo es in ankunfts Luufft. Im das Thier mit dem Kopf zwischen die fenden paxen vñ nyst der Gelfande vñ dinsten am panch auff vñ dinsten. In der mag es sich mit einem. Dann das Thier ist also gemacht das in der Gelfand dinsten kan thun. Sie folgen auch das der Rhinoceros Schilte, fangt vñ dinsten ist.

