

THE  
GUY LADRIÈRE  
COLLECTION  
OF GEMS  
AND RINGS

DIANA SCARISBRICK,  
CLAUDIA WAGNER  
AND JOHN BOARDMAN

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PWP

## Sardonyx cameo, brown/white/brown

39 x 30 x 7

Publ.: Tassie no. 15722 (from the collection of Mr Martyn).

An Indian rhinoceros, carved from the brown layer of the stone, standing facing left, against a white background. The animal has long ears and almost no horn.

[J. Warren] The cameo is a Renaissance revival of a fashion during the 13th century, in particular during the South Italian Staufen period, for the carving of images of animals into the brown layer, with the white providing the background. One of the best surviving examples is the so-called panther cameo in Aachen dated to the 12th–13th century (Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum (inv. KK 848). M. Fansa and K. Ermete (eds), *Kaiser Friedrich II (1194–1250). Welt und Kultur des Mittelmeerraums*, exh. Landesmuseum für Natur und Mensch, Oldenburg (Mainz am Rhein 2008), 377, no. V.14). This animal, now believed to be a lioness, has the fur marked by incised dots, similar to those on the hide of the rhinoceros.

The general pose of the rhinoceros, but facing left instead of right, is derived from Albrecht Dürer's celebrated woodcut print of the Indian rhinoceros, which was brought to Portugal in 1515, causing a stir throughout Europe (Bartsch 136; F.H.W. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts, ca. 1450–1700* (in progress, Amsterdam 1949–); T.H. Clarke, *The Rhinoceros from Dürer to Stubbs, 1515–1799* (London 1986), 16–27; G. Bartrum, *Albrecht Dürer and his Legacy. The Graphic Work of a Renaissance Artist*, exh., British Museum (London 2002), nos. 243–4). Dürer's depiction of the Portuguese rhinoceros, which he never saw at first hand and which must therefore have been based on a sketch by another hand sent to Nuremberg, is not entirely accurate.

The cameo is, however, a relatively accurate, if schematic, image of an Indian rhinoceros (*rhinoceros unicornis*), the distinguishing long ears suggesting it may be a female. The animal's horn is notably short. It very probably depicts an identifiable animal, the celebrated 'Madrid' rhinoceros (Clarke, *loc. cit.*, 28–35). (I am especially grateful to Almudena Pérez de Tudela for much help with references and advice on the story of the *abada*.) This was the second Indian rhinoceros to reach Europe, arriving into Lisbon in 1577. Its arrival caused a sensation, the animal, generally described as the *bada* or *abada*, quickly being named the 'Marvel of Lisbon'. A

number of drawings were commissioned of the rhinoceros, by King Sebastian himself (*Elfenbeine* 150) and by the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon, Juan de Silva, who sent at least one drawing to the Spanish court (A. Jordan Gschwend and A. Pérez de Tudela, 'Exotica Habsburgica. La Casa de Austria y las colecciones exóticas en el Renacimiento temprano' in *Oriente en Palacio. Tesoros asiáticos en las colecciones reales españolas*, exh. Palacio del Oriente (Madrid 2003), 31, 37 no. 51). Juan de Silva also had drawings made for Benito Arias Montano, librarian of the Escorial, and two drawings of the *abada* were among the goods given to the Escorial by Philip II in 1593 ('1,504. Otro carton con una *Abada* por la una parte, y por la otra una *Choba*. 1,505. Otro cartón de la *Abada* retrarada al naturale por la una parte, y por la otra unos *Animales*.' Fr. J. Zarco Cuevas (ed.), *Inventario de las alhajas, relicarios, estatuas, pinturas, tapices y otros objetos de valor y curiosidad donados por el rey don Felipe II al Monasterio de El Escorial. Años de 1571 a 1598* (Madrid 1930), 188).

A fierce competition broke out over the future of the animal. Juan de Silva hoped that it might be presented to King Philip II for his menagerie at Aranjuez, while Hans Khevenhüller, the Holy Roman Emperor's representative at the Spanish court, was desperate to obtain the animal so that it could be sent to his master the Emperor Rudolf II in Prague. The *abada* was in fact, before the king's death at the battle of Alcazarquivir, promised by King Sebastian of Portugal to Pope Gregory XIII (A. Pérez de Tudela and A. Jordan Gschwend, 'Renaissance Menageries. Exotic Animals and Pets at the Habsburg Courts in Iberia and Central Europe', in K.A.E. Enkel and P.J. Smith (eds), *Early Modern Zoology. The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts* (Leiden/Boston 2007), 445). In the end the matter was resolved with Spain's peaceful annexation of Portugal in 1580, which allowed King Philip to take possession of the rhinoceros as well as of an elephant, which had also been sent from India to Lisbon. In 1582 Khevenhüller accompanied the Empress Maria of Austria to Lisbon, where they took the opportunity to see the *abada*. Khevenhüller wrote to Rudolf that the rhinoceros was very fierce and had killed a man the other day in front of the royal palace in Lisbon, and that the horn had to be kept shortened to prevent it from harming more people. The *abada* was also blind in at least one eye.

In February 1583 the rhinoceros and the elephant were taken to Madrid, and in October they were brought to the Escorial, the elephant entering the building by the grand staircase, while the rhinoceros remained in the gardens. In 1584 the *abada* was back in Madrid, when it

was seen on 29 January by Adam Hochreiter, the chamberlain of Archduke Ferdinand II of Tirol, who was on a mission to the Iberian peninsula to seek *exotica* for his master's collections at Ambras. Hochreiter had a drawing made by a local artist (*Elfenbeine* 150–1, no. 63) and added the following note in his travel diary: 'On 29 January 1584 I have seen here in Madrid a young elephant, as well as another large animal called a rhinoceros, in Spanish *La Abada*. The drawing of it here was painted in my presence. This animal does humans no harm, but is fierce towards horses, donkeys and other beasts.' It is not known how long the *abada* survived, lodged in the centre of Madrid in the street that is still called today the calle de la Abada. The rhinoceros was dead by 1601, when its bones were recorded as lying in a garden near the royal palace. Khevenhüller still hoped to acquire its remnants for Emperor Rudolf and indeed in 1604 succeeded in sending to Prague 144 bones of the *abada* together with its cut-down horn, as well as bones from the elephant. Remains of the rhinoceros may be recorded in the 1621 inventory of the Prague *Kunstammer* (H. Zimmermann, 'Das Inventar der Prager Schatz- und Kunstammer vom 6. Dezember 1621', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 25 (1905), II, p. XXIX, no. 407 '... etliche schlechte gebeiner'; no. 414 '... ein stückerl haut von einem rinocero').

There are two important differences between the rhinoceros as depicted in the cameo and in the drawing made on the spot for Adam Hochreiter, which may be presumed to be an accurate depiction of the animal. The horn in the Hochreiter drawing has been clearly sliced off, while the animal also appears to have no tail, unlike in the cameo, although this may simply reflect the angle from which the drawing was made. However, a beautiful drawing of the rhinoceros made for Rudolf II, along with one of the elephant, in an album of natural history drawings in Vienna dated c. 1585–90 (Clarke, *loc. cit.*, 35, pl. IV and 33, fig. 15; A. Pérez de Tudela and A. Jordan Gschwend, 'Luxury Goods for Royal Collectors: Exotica, Princely Gifts and Rare Animals exchanged between the Iberian Courts and Central Europe in the Renaissance (1560–1612)', in Helmut Trnek and Sabine Haag (eds.), *Exotica. Portugals Entdeckungen im Spiegel fürstlicher Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Renaissance. Die Beiträge des am 19. und 20. Mai 2000 vom Kunsthistorischen Museum Wien veranstalteten Symposiums*, *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 3 (Mainz 2001); the rhinoceros 59, fig. 14, the elephant 58, fig. 13), is much closer to the cameo, showing the animal with a vestigial horn of about the same size. It also repeats an anatomical peculiarity, the

lack of the horizontal fold of skin that divides the rear quarters of the Indian rhinoceros into two parts, and which is in fact present in Hochreiter's drawing made on the spot. Perhaps both the Vienna drawing and the cameo were based on another image, which incorporated this anatomical error.

The good quality of the carving of the cameo would suggest it is the work of a skilled stone carver, and if it does, as is likely, depict the Madrid rhinoceros, then one potential candidate would be the Italian gem-engraver, sculptor and goldsmith Jacopo da Trezzo, who arrived in Madrid in around 1559 and spent the remainder of his career there (for Jacopo da Trezzo, see especially J. Babelon, *Jacopo da Trezzo et la Construction del'Escorial* (Bordeaux/Paris 1922); Attwood 2003, I, 113–14). Although best known today as a medallist, Jacopo da Trezzo was most famous in his own lifetime as a carver of gemstones, Vasari relating that 'the great Catholic king Philip of Spain keeps him in his service with many rewards and much honour, for his skill in carving [gemstones] in intaglio and in relief, and he has no equal as a portraitist from life' ('il gran re Filippo cattolico di Spagna lo tenga appresso di sè con premiallo ed onorallo per le virtù sue nello intaglio in cavo e di rilievo della medesima professione, che non ha pari per far ritratti di natural ...' Vasari/Milanesi, V, 388). Jacopo worked not only for the royal family but was also on close terms with key members of the Spanish court, including Hans Khevenhüller, who took such a close interest in the fate of the *abada*, and who was portrayed in a medal by Jacopo da Trezzo (Babelon, *loc. cit.*, 209–12, pl. X) as well as in a superb cameo (Private Collection; R. Distelberger, *Die Kunst des Steinschnitts. Prunkgefäße, Kameen und Commessi aus der Kunstammer, exh.*, *Kunsthistorisches Museum* (Vienna 2002) 133–4, no. 51), and who owned gems carved by him. In February 1577 Khevenhüller wrote to Rudolf II that Jacopo da Trezzo, the 'most important jeweller' in Madrid, was at that time actually living in the ambassador's house (D. Ritter von Schönherr, 'Urkunden und Regesten aus dem K.K. Statthalterei-Archiv in Innsbruck (Fortsetzung)', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 14 (1893) II. Theil, no. 10674; Babelon, *loc. cit.*, 39).

Tassie made a cast of what would seem to be the same cameo (Tassie no. 15722), which Raspe recorded as in the collection of 'Mr Martyn' (of London) and as depicting 'a bear'.

Probably Spain, c. 1582–4. Perhaps by Jacopo da Trezzo, c. 1514–89

# ANIMALS

