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Reframing Albrecht Dürer

The Appropriation of Art, 1528–1700

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the complexity of the architectural background, developed in order to fill in the space where there are other figures in Dürer's print. There is a deep blue border, depicting putti riding dolphin heads.¹⁰¹

INTERNATIONALIZATION

The final examples to be considered in this section on appropriations of Dürer prints illustrates how we must always bear in mind aspects of geography when considering these copies. The British Museum has in its collection a small diptych that is contained in a silver gilt case (Figure 44). On the left-hand side is a late-sixteenth-century Limoges enamel, which bears a kinship in style to the work of Pierre Reymond, already described above as one who appropriated Dürer's prints. Indeed, the prototype used here is a work from Dürer's *Small Passion*, specifically *Christ Taking Leave of his Mother* (Figure 43), and the imitation is a straightforward and faithful one. On the right-hand side is a depiction of the Ethiopian Saint Abun Gabra Manfus Qeddus, executed as a gilded engraving.¹⁰² The saint is shown with hands raised in prayer, wearing only a devotional scapular, and a robe that has been inscribed with fine lines, 'representing the belief that the Saint was clothed only in his own hair'.¹⁰³ Inscriptions testify to the identity of the saint. The work has not been dated with certainty, and only the range of sixteenth–nineteenth century is given – regardless, it is noteworthy indeed that a print by Dürer has been appropriated in an African context.

Also testament to the internationalization of Dürer is an appropriation that harkens from early modern India (Figure 46). The source is Dürer's engraving of the *Crucifixion* from 1511 (Figure 45). A careful study in brush and black ink with wash by Abu'l Hasan (1588 – after 1618) is demonstrative of the diversity of artists associated with the reception of Dürer (Figure 46). Hasan was the leading painter at the court of Emperor Jahangir in India, he specialized in miniatures and made his copy after Dürer's print in 1601, when he was still a child.¹⁰⁴ The drawing exemplifies how far the works of Dürer had travelled and the varied instructional uses they served.

Any discussion of the appropriation of Dürer's prints would be incomplete without acknowledgement of the most internationally received and widely dispersed of his entire print oeuvre, the *Rhinoceros* of 1515 (Figure 49). It is ironic that Albrecht Dürer's most widely distributed image of an exotic animal depicts a subject that he had never seen. Typically, Dürer's independent animal and plant studies are imbued with a rich sense of realism and were drawn from life. His sketch of a baboon, a lynx and a chamois in a garden in Brussels in 1521 indicate not only his interest in exotic animals, but also that he sought out opportunities to draw them. His studies of hares, beetles and various birds have been noted in the history of art for their veracity of detail and as a turning point in the history of scientific illustration (and will be discussed in the section on drawings). In Dürer's 'zoo' the rhinoceros remains unique and unlike his other animal studies for two key reasons. First, the

extraordinary and bizarre details of the rhinoceros' appearance are suggestive of embellishment and fanciful creation on the part of the artist, unusual in the context of Dürer's other more faithful depictions of animals. And secondly, despite the creation of other more 'realistic' depictions of the rhinoceros, it was Dürer's print that became a point of reference for naturalists and the public alike, accepted as a true likeness of a rhinoceros, with attempts to replace it doomed to failure.

How do we know that Dürer did not see the animal? There is a wealth of detail surrounding the rhinoceros that arrived in Lisbon, Portugal on 20 May 1515, the first rhinoceros to reach Europe alive since the third century.¹⁰⁵ As was often the case with exotic creatures, the rhinoceros played an important role in court diplomacy and pageantry. Albuquerque, governor of Portuguese India had received the rhinoceros as a gift from Sultan Muzafar II, ruler of Gujarat. The governor in turn sent the animal, along with a cargo of spices, to his king in Portugal, Dom Manuel I, a ruler known (like so many others) for his exotic tastes. Shipped from the region of Cambaia in north-west India, one of the farthest of Portuguese colonies, it is remarkable that the rhinoceros survived the journey – the novelty of this event, and the anticipation and excitement felt at the court and amongst citizens of Lisbon cannot be underestimated.

How did Dürer come to depict the creature? The source for Dürer's image has been documented as a sketch by Valentine Ferdinand, a Moravian printer who was present in Lisbon when the animal was shipped there.¹⁰⁶ The usual claim is that a newsletter including the sketch by Ferdinand came into the possession of Dürer shortly after the arrival of the rhinoceros. Dürer then executed a drawing in brown ink after the image on which he included Ferdinand's original inscription that begins with the statement 'in the year 1515 there was brought to our king at Lisbon such a living-beast ... on account of its wonderfulness I thought myself obliged to send you a representation of it' (Figure 48). Dürer then created his woodcut, including Ferdinand's inscription, though slightly changed in an attempt to lend the image an air of authenticity, stating 'They call it a rhinoceros. It is represented here in its complete form.' It seems likely that Dürer intended for the print to have a wide distribution, since he used a wood block instead of a copper plate, thus allowing for a maximum number of impressions to be made.

This print, obviously intended for public consumption, widely distributed, and the only animal study that Dürer inscribed in such a manner, has also been described as the most idiosyncratic of his oeuvre. The rhinoceros appears to be dressed in a suit of armour and is covered in peculiar scales, with a variety of patterned plates covering its body, and a tiny dorsal horn that points to the letter 'r' in the rhinoceros label. Erwin Panofsky famously characterized the woodcut as follows: 'Dürer stylized the creature, bizarre in itself, into a combination of scales, laminae and shells, suggesting a fantastically shaped and patterned suit of armor.'¹⁰⁷ In the eighteenth century the naturalist James Parsons complained of Dürer's depiction because it was 'adorned with

scales, scallops and other fictitious forms'.¹⁰⁸ In short, Dürer's rhinoceros has appeared to many commentators as far removed from 'the real thing'.

Why did Dürer, an artist who was obviously given over to realism in his studies of nature, create this depiction based on the work of another artist and inscribe it as he did? As Colin Eisler points out, Dürer's print 'is really a broadside, a journalistic scoop of a major event'.¹⁰⁹ As noted earlier, the excitement surrounding the arrival of the rhinoceros in Lisbon cannot be underestimated, largely because the rhinoceros was an unknown entity on European shores.

Dürer's idea of the rhinoceros remained a reference point for centuries to come. The wood block went into eight printings, seven of them posthumous. Two printings from the original wood block occurred in 1540 and 1550. In the seventeenth century the wood block came into the possession of Hendrick Hondius, a Dutch map printer, who prepared an additional wood block. The result is that numerous reproductions of the image as a print exist. Further, the sixteenth century was the burgeoning age of printed natural history texts, and a new emphasis was laid on the inclusion of images. Dürer's rhinoceros appeared in numerous natural histories, perhaps most significantly the Swiss doctor Conrad Gessner (1516–65) included the rhinoceros in his three-volume *Historiae Animalium* of 1555–58 (Figure 51), a text that is widely considered to be the beginning of modern zoology.¹¹⁰ In the seventeenth century Dürer's rhinoceros was included in zoological atlases. There is a notable dependence on not only the rhinoceros but also the other animals in Dürer's zoo in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographiae* (1544). Indeed, writing in 1938 the art historian F. Winkler stated that school books had only then given up using Dürer's image of the rhinoceros in favour of more 'naturalistic' depictions.¹¹¹

The invincibility of Dürer's rhinoceros in art and science persisted from the time of its inception despite the concurrent creation of other more 'naturalistic' depictions. One of these was a version by Hans Burgkmair, a friend of Dürer's, who also produced a woodcut of the rhinoceros that had arrived in Lisbon in 1515. Working in Augsburg, the relationship between Burgkmair's and Dürer's woodcuts is uncertain, although it is likely that Burgkmair had access to the same drawing as Dürer. What is certain is that Burgkmair's woodcut did not experience the same mass appeal as Dürer's – it survives in a single copy in the Albertina. Burgkmair's animal is decidedly less fanciful than Dürer's. There is no dorsal horn or armour, the skin sags less than gracefully, and the rhinoceros has none of the majestic and regal air of Dürer's. Instead it is shown with chains around its forelegs and sunken eyes. In 1579 the Flemish engraver Phillip Galle depicted another rhinoceros in a deeply naturalistic manner. Again, there is only one copy in existence.

Further attesting to the popularity of the print, and the manner in which Dürer had become *the* artist to appropriate in the seventeenth century, is the inclusion of the rhino in works by Pieter Coecke van Aelst (Figure 50), Joseph Boillot (Figure 52), John Dunstall (Figure 53) and Jan Griffier (Figure 54). The rhinoceros moves in these images from an imagined woodland

setting, to being a decorative column, to a fight with his purported enemy the elephant, and back into a sober zoological treatise. The rhinoceros and its influence is especially demonstrative of the international and incredibly diffuse reception that Dürer's prints underwent not only during the so-called Dürer-Renaissance, but also with artists and scientists well into the nineteenth century.

Appropriations of Dürer Drawings

For the use of Dürer drawings as source material, the court of Rudolf II in Prague is especially significant. Given the abundance of works by Dürer at the court of Rudolf II, the artists who worked there had ample opportunity to see, paraphrase and quote from Dürer's work. Indeed, the *Kunstammer* in Prague housed the largest collection of works by Dürer ever assimilated: this accounts in part for why artists at Rudolf's court would have made such extensive use of Dürer's art. The inventories from Prague show that the collection was maintained in an orderly, systematic and encyclopaedic fashion.¹¹² It is possible that the inventory was used as a sort of location guide for indicating where, amongst the vast array of items, works by a particular artist could be found. In the 1607 inventory, a number of entries relate to Dürer. Very clear distinctions are made between works known to be originals, and works known to be imitations. For example, one item is stated as a copy by Hans Hoffmann. In another entry, Aegedius Sadeler is named as a Dürer imitator. Imitative works by both of these artists will be considered in this section.¹¹³ Interest in Dürer's drawings at the court can be documented not only through inventories, but also through the array of artistic appropriations (in like fashion to the section above on prints). This places greater emphasis on the collector, since drawings were only beginning to be seen as collector's items in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; to view a drawing was arguably more difficult than a print.

FIGURATIVE DRAWINGS

Motifs from the drawings were incorporated into other media. One example is the use of Dürer's drawing *Death of Lucretia* (1508), on blue paper, which can be traced through provenance research to the Prague court (Figure 55). In a bronze medal, measuring 52 mm, and created c.1580, an unidentified artist of the RudolFINE court quoted Dürer by including the head of his *Lucretia*, as well as the Dürer monogram and a date of 1508 (Figure 56). This imitative work was created in Prague when the drawing could be found in the collection there, that is between 1576 and 1612.¹¹⁴

It is especially telling when more than one artist used the same drawing as a source. This is indicative of a strong interest in the original, or perhaps a continued competition toward improving upon the image. Another example