



The Secret of the Rhino

Art historical hunt for children through the Renaissance
Roads of News and Inspiration in the 16th Century

Description of Ideas
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Kronborg 2021



Fresco with Rhinoceros
Gonzaga Palads i Sabbioneta,
Mantova, Italien 1585

The Secret of the Rhino

Background

500 years ago, the worldview of Europeans expanded in a way comparable to the exploration of outer Space today. First to the west, when Columbus found America, then to the South and East, as Portuguese explorers rounded Cap Horn.

The Silk Road between Europe and the East lost importance because the new merchant ships were faster, safer and more spacious than camel caravans through deserts. "Arabia" lost its international core significance.

From the "New World" Traders and Sailors brought home not only knowledge of foreign Cultures, but also about Europe's own past. Forgotten and repressed knowledge of Antiquity emerged from Sand and Libraries in the East, and provided fertile ground for a rebirth of the art and ideas of the past

By diving into the story of The First Rhino, we get a unique Opportunity to follow the Paths of inspiration through an exciting time, which was later called the Renaissance - "Rebirth".



Section of the Rhinoceros Tapestry Kronborg.
Flemish weaving from between 1523 - 1550
Foto: Henrik Schurmann

The Secret of the Rhino

The Intention of an art history Book for Children

On Kronborg Castle hangs a tapestry, whose central motif is the first rhino that came to Europe on May 20, 1515, as a diplomatic gift from the Sultan of Gujarat in India to King Manuel of Portugal.

Based on the Rhinoceros Tapestry and historical events, the intention of this project is to write a book that gives children (and adults) an appetite to know more about art and nature in the Renaissance.

The rhino was an unknown Animal, possibly related to the Unicorn of the myths. The curiosity was therefore great and the rumor about the Animal spread quickly through Europe.

The rhino was featured in letters, memoirs, poems and military reports. Also in art, the animal left traces. The rhino became a popular motif that can still be seen today in the Vatican's fresco ceiling, Florence's fountains, jeweled prayer books, art prints, paintings and Flemish tapestries.

The book about "The Secret of the Rhino" becomes a chase that leads readers from art treasure to art treasure in an attempt to solve the riddle of the glamorous Rhinos dramatic fate.

The action follows the Paths of Inspiration and News flow from the New World, across the Mediterranean and along Europe's river roads, where curiosity and wealth provided fertile ground for the development of Renaissance art and views of nature. Greatly aided by the new art of printing.

The Secret of the Rhino

The content of the children's book

By following in the footsteps of *The First Rhino*, readers gain a new angle on the Renaissance and the relationship of the time to exotic animals (see Appendix 2. What really happened?)

The book's target group is children aged 5-9 years. The book will be suitable as a reading aloud book and debate at home or in connection with theme weeks for the smaller school classes.

The action is supplemented along the way with pictures and fact boxes that put the past and present in perspective (see Appendix 3. Perspective for the Renaissance).

The book will be approx. 50 pages in approx. A4 format, richly illustrated with drawings and interpretations of contemporary images, ancient charts, photos of works of art, textiles, architecture, furniture art and wildlife especially from the Rhinoceros Research Center, Cambridge UK's image database, (RRC).

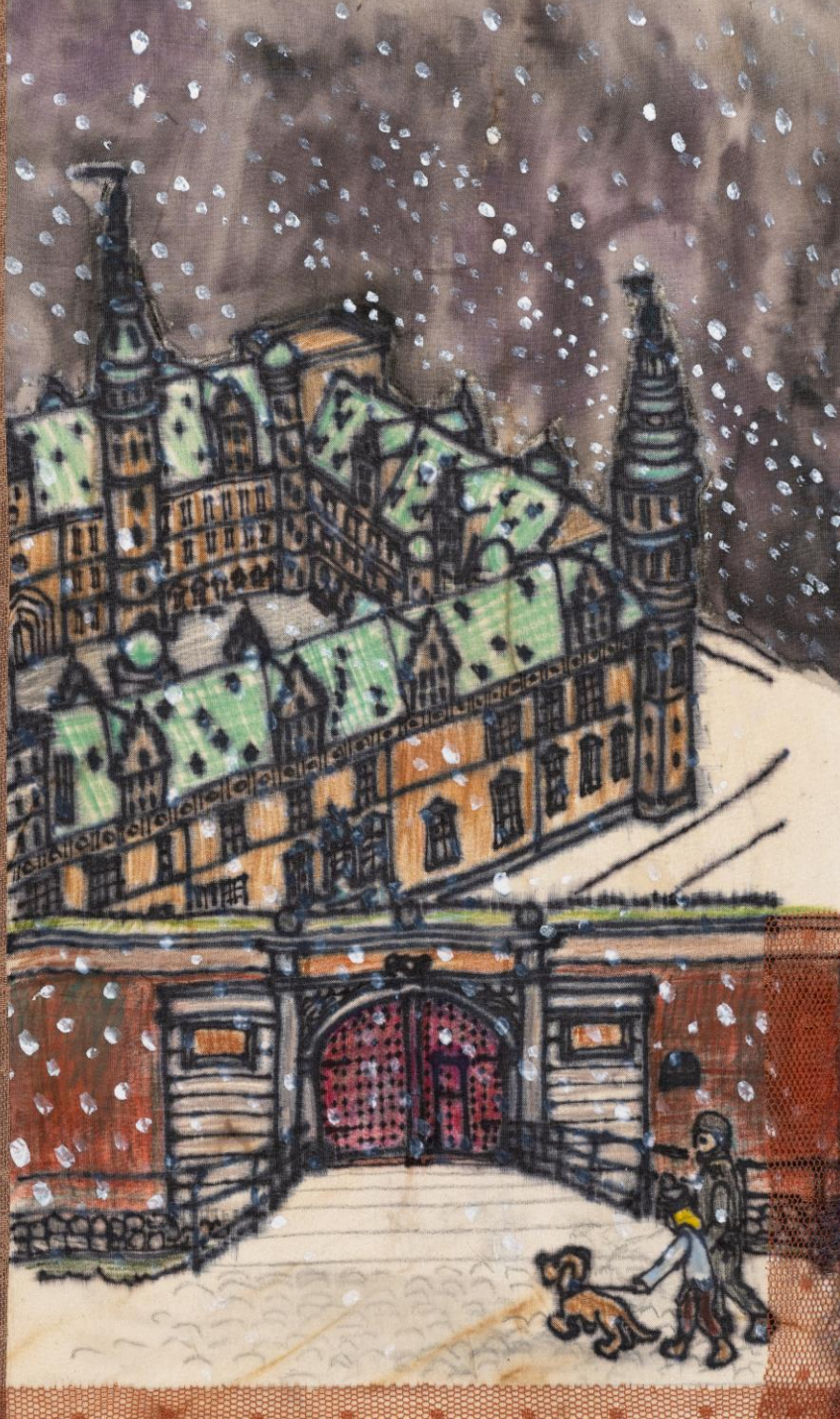
In the long run, the book will be considered as a basis for the development of an educational interactive game, targeted at school classes in connection with themes such as Science and History, Our view of animals, Man at the center and the Renaissance.

Furthermore, the Book is thought to be relevant to children in other EU countries because it emphasizes Europe's position in the world and early cohesion already from the Renaissance.

The following pages in presentation contain:

- *The plot*
- *The 10 selected art treasures (Appendix 1.)*
- *What really happened? (Appendix 2.)*
- *Perspective to the Renaissance (Appendix 3.)*
- *Example of source material (Appendix 4.)*





The Secret of the Rhino

The Plot

At Kronborg Castle, crying is heard every year on the night between the 6th and the 7th of January. The rhino on the Tapestry in the Scottish wing comes alive this night. But why? The crying awakens the other animals on the Tapestry. The Parrot is annoyed, but Jaguar, Pheasant, Foxdog and the Grif decide to help. The Animals have different knowledge and perceptions of what has taken place, but cannot find the pattern at all, and the Rhino itself refuses to talk about past events. Led by the Grif, the animals now decide to seek help.

The girl Frida is with her grandfather on night watch at the castle. As she hesitantly agrees to help the animals, the pattern of the rug turns into jungle and the animals come alive.

Together, the friends whirl back through time in search of solving the riddle of what happened this Night of Destiny 500 years ago. The Animals have in their time made a vow of silence, but the Grif manages to circumvent this by getting the animals to each designate a symbolic art treasure. Based on these symbols, Frida succeeds in piecing together the pieces of the Rhino's life so that everything can end happily.

In addition to conveying art historical knowledge, the book is a tale of courage and curiosity, victories and defeats, betrayal and friendship.



Appendix 1. The 10 selected art treasures

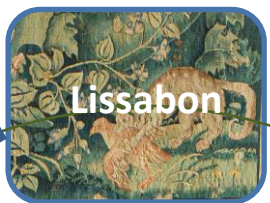
Overview of the selected art Treasures and their historical connection



Indian shield of Rhinoceros skin from the 16th Century



The Rhino at the Tower of Belém



Advertising-painting of objects for art chamber.



Book of Hours with sketch of the Rhino



Paulus Jovius Italian Military history



The Flemish Tapestry of The Rhino



Raphael's fresco in the Vatican "Creation of the animals"



Church chair with carved Burgkmair Rhino



Grotta degli Animali i Medici Villa, Castello, Firenze



Dürer's first woodcut of the Rhino

Appendix 2.1 What really happened?



1514 d. 18 May

In connection with negotiations for the construction of a fortress and trade routes with spices, such as pepper, cinnamon, ginger and gold, the Sultan of Gujarat presents a rhino to the Portuguese ambassador as a diplomatic gift



1515 - January

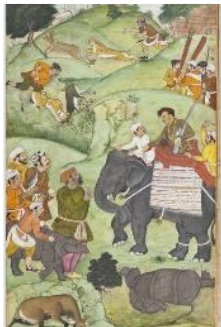
The rhino, Ganda, is sent on from Goa along with animal keeper Ocem, who at the captain's request receives a salary and uniform. The journey south of Cap Horn to Lisbon takes 3 months. Along the way, the rhino feeds on water and hay



1515 d. 20. May

Along with two other naval ships, with exotic goods from India, Ganda arrives in Lisbon - the first rhino since Antiquity. In the Ribeira Palace, the animal is installed in royal stables for exotic animals and trained for battle

Rhino tracks in art



Appendix 2.2 What really happened?



1515 d. 3. June

Two weeks after arrival, King Manuel I. arranges a giant show, *The Battle of Thick Skins*, with reference to texts by Roman Pliny.

Rumors of the Rhino and the fight are spreading across Europe



1515 June

The 13-year-old page Damiao de Gois (1502-1574) sees *The Battle of Thick Skins* and described it since alive in his memoirs (See Appendix 4)



1515 June

The German merchant and book printer, Valentin Fernandes, also watches the fight from the royal lodge. In a newsletter to the merchants of Nuremberg, he reports on the event and the comic outcome of the match. Shortly afterwards, a sketch of The First Rhino is sent from Lisbon to Nuremberg

Rhino tracks in art



Appendix 2.3 What really happened?



1515 July

Along Europe's river roads, the news of the battle reaches two experienced artists, both of whom are connected to Portuguese textile production in Antwerp. They have inspired each other before, now they grab the pen and each draw their own version of the Rhino



1515 Augsburg

Hans Burgkmair (1473–1531) has previously illustrated nature books. His woodcut of the Rhino is realistic and the skin natural. The animal is trapped, a little melancholy, with bound legs. Burgkmair's Rhino is only used in a few places fx. a victory gate for the Emperor and some interior, but soon forgotten



1515 Nuremberg

Albrecht Dürer's (1471 - 1528) Rhinos are more powerful. With armored shield it almost breaks the frame of the picture. He adds an extra horn on the back and uses letter-press to mass-produce the drawing in woodcut and copperplate. Ganda is a news scoop that ensures his prosperity the rest of his life

Rhino tracks in art



Appendix 2.4 What really happened?



1515 July

Eight weeks after the arrival of the Rhino, the news has also reached Rome. The Pope's doctor, Giovanni G. Penni, writes a tribute poem to the animal-loving Pope Leo X. The poem is printed with the first woodcut found by Ganda



1516 January

Hoping to gain a monopoly on trade in India - and as a thank you for the medal of honor: "The Golden Rose", King Manuel I sends a naval ship with precious gifts to Pope Leo X. On board are the Rhino and other exotic animals



1516 January

The ship also houses spices, silk fabrics and animal figures of precious silver from South America. Ganda has been given a green velvet cape with gold fringes, embroidered with golden roses and silver carnations. His nails have been beautifully decorated

Rhino tracks in art



Appendix 2.5 What really happened?



1516 January

The ship gets bad weather and Captain Pina seeks refuge in Marseilles. He requests a residence permit and sends a beautiful white Arabian stallion to the local governor as a thank you



1516 January

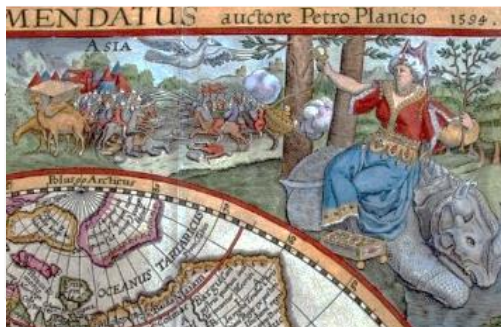
Captain Pina is granted permission for a 3-week stay on the island of If, where the French are building a fortress to defend against the Spanish-Austrian emperor. Ganda is hoisted ashore and allowed to graze



1516 January

French King Francis I and Queen Claude interrupt the pilgrimage and knight with the court for a day to see: "The wonderful animal called 'Reynocorn'". The sight makes an impression and Ganda is outlined in the king's Book of Hours

Rhino tracks in art



Appendix 2.6 What really happened?



1516 January

On the island of If, Ganda is decorated with wreaths of live flowers. A stage is being built where the royals can sit comfortably and watch entertainment where the Rhino and soldiers fight for fun and shoot with oranges instead of cannonballs



1516 d. 7. January

Captain Pina's ship sails from Marseille, but encounters a storm off Genoa. The ship sinks with everything on board near the rocky shore. Rhinos, which were otherwise chained on deck, come free and swim ashore



1516

According to military intelligence, Ganda is a good swimmer. Still, he drowns. Portuguese officers get the animal stuffed and send it on to Rome. In the cover letter, Manuel values the animal at 100,000 on arrival and 200,000 dobras on dispatch

Rhino tracks in art



Appendix 2.7 What really happened?



1518 Rome

Ganda is found in Raphael's fresco in the Vatican, poem, drawing and sculpture in Rome, but not registered in the Pope's gift archive. Pope Leo X is protecting his 10-year-old nephew Aleksandro de Medici and niece Claude in the Vatican after a family feud over the principality of Florence



1530 Paris

Aleksandro de Medici becomes Duke of Florence and chooses Dürer's powerful Rhino as the symbol of the Medici. The animal is also seen in the fountain cave in Villa Medici. When Sister Claude is to marry the French king, the king orders a column with Rhinos in 1: 1 in her honor



Between 1523-50 Flanders

The rhino is woven into a Tapestry. Dürer has visited the Flemish weaving towns and made cartoon for tapestries.

But who ordered it?

The Page Gois still has *The Battle of Thick Skins* in fresh memory. He is now a wealthy Flemish/Portuguese financier and lives close to the weaving town, researchers believe the rug originated from.











Could it be him?

Rhino tracks in art



Appendix 3.1 Perspectives to the Renaissance









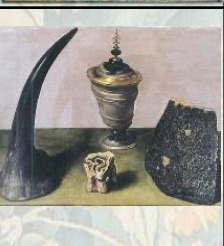

Based on the 10 selected cultural treasures and the plot, the book comes with fact boxes that put past and present in perspective. Here is told about the objects, the Renaissance or relevant natural history. The First Rhino is here seen in a political, economic and ideological perspective - at child level

1.		Why was the Rhino sent to Europe? What IS an Indian Rhino, now do the live and what are they use for before and now. What role did the animal play? Why did the Europeans want to conquer the "New World" and how did it become technically possible? What new trade routes, power struggles and resources did it bring with it (1)? What role did exotic animals come to play in the Renaissance, as a sign of power. And today?	
2.		Why was the Rhino trained for combat? King Manuel's " <i>Battle of Thick Skins</i> " was inspired by the ancient animal sports game. Fact boxes elaborate on the concept of rebirth of Antiquity, Man in center of the Univers, new views of nature and entertainment (in contrast to the religious of the Middle Ages). The Renaissance represented "leisure" and profits for art and entertainment. The princes' taste for the exotic, zoos and rarity cabinets. (Eg Pope's elephant Hanno and Chr. 4th order of 2 elephants).	
3.		Why was the Rhino sent on and who got inspiration from the animal along the way? Fact boxes about the art of printing and its significance in the Renaissance. Princes received exclusive, Books of Hours with illustrations of The Rhino (both in King Manuel, Francis 1's and Emperor Maximilliams). Fact boxes tell how knowledge and interest in science was spread through book printing, maps and charts, where artists and merchants had an important role in news dissemination.	
4		If the Rhino sank with the ship, how could the beast have inspired Roman artists and poets? The renaissance's new views on medicine, dissection and stuffing. Before, myths about i.a. animals passed on in folklore, with the Renaissance came a desire for research and confrontation with myths (eg "fact check" of the Rhinoceros' kinship with Unicorn).	
5		What role did the Rhino play in Rome? Based on Raphael's fresco in the Vatican, fact boxes tell of the development of perspective drawing reflected in Renaissance visual art. How to draw in perspective and what is completely wrong e.g. Kronborg Castle Rhinoceros Tapestry no. 2, compared to Rhinoceros Tapestry no. 1? How do you technically paint and restore a Fresco, and how are the images preserved? How many eggs are used for a picture?	

(1) "The fact that I have experienced so much pain, such hard times and so much death, means that I have lost the desire for pepper on my food ". Quote Portuguese naval office, , Braz de Costa, 1516:

Appendix 3.2 Perspectives to the Renaissance

The 10 selected cultural treasures are assembled as puzzle pieces for a picture of the Renaissance and are supported by the fact boxes

6		<p>Why did the Medici choose the Rhino as a family symbol? The rhino is a symbol of power and strength. Animal symbolism in Renaissance art and heraldry. Fact boxes about the Renaissance's abolition of indoor and outdoor space in architecture on the basis of the Medici Fountain Cave, Florence. Where did the inspiration come from? The styles of antiquity rediscovered in the ruins and libraries of the "New World" lead to the rebirth of Roman and Greek architecture.</p>	
7		<p>Why did the Rhino become a well-known motif? Albrecht Dürer's success with the use of woodcuts and printing for the mass production of art. Comparison of Dürer's and Burgkmair's editions of the rhino, and their different imprints in the story. The hierarchy of the Renaissance is reflected in access to art: Peasants could afford woodcuts, citizens chose the Rhinoceros in copper print, and the nobility paintings or textiles such as the Rhinoceros wallpaper.</p>	
8		<p>But how could the news of the arrival of the Rhinoceros reach Central German artists in just 1 month, when it takes 3 months to ride the stretch? Mapping the spread of art treasures reveals the efficient transport and communication routes of the Renaissance. Fact boxes tell how sea and river systems bound Europe together and led inspiration and news from trading house to trading house from Lisbon over Antwerp and Brussels to Augsburg and Nuremberg and back.</p>	
9		<p>How did the Rhino get on the rug? Facts about textile production in Flanders, where silk from the East and wool from the local area provided ground for production of exclusive tapestries. Well-known Renaissance artists visited Flanders or sent presentations on motifs that were drawn on cartoons and woven. Jungle look with exotic animals and plants inspired by the "New World" became vogue. But how were the rugs used as prestige objects, and how was the procedure of hanging and preserving it?</p>	
10		<p>What role did the new merchant empires of the Renaissance have in relation to the princes? Facts about trading in spices and other exotic goods? How did the Portuguese king finance his large merchant fleet, and what did the merchants get in return? Why was King Manuel busy sending the Rhino to the Pope at a dangerous time of year? Fact boxes tell of the competition between the superpowers Spain and Portugal, and the Pope's division of the "New World".</p>	

Appendix 3.3 Perspectives to the Renaissance

The fact boxes are supplemented by informative small assignments for discussion. Here's an example.

How do we protect our body?

The German city of Nuremberg, where Dürer lived, was known in the Renaissance for making weapons and armor. Try comparing the armor of the Indian Rhino with the armor of Duke Aleksander de Medici and the two artists Dürer and Burgkmair's woodcut of The First Rhino. Can you see the differences and similarities between the reinforcements in the pictures?

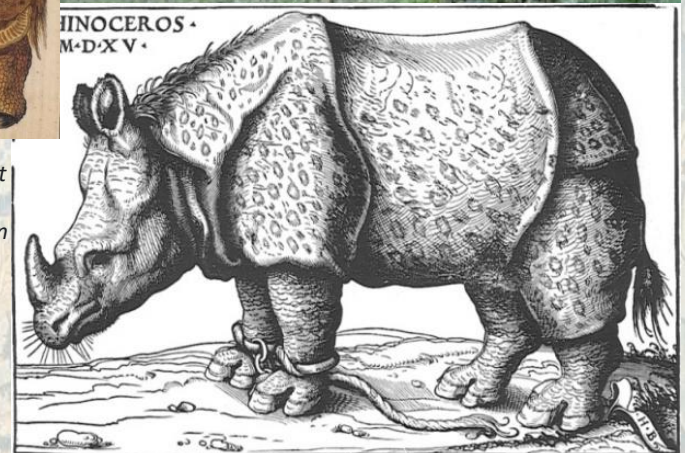


Aleksandro de Medici as Duke in armor.
Portrait of G. Vasari, 1534, Uffizi



Protective suit for
American football

Indian rhino.
Photo: Rhinoceros
Research Center

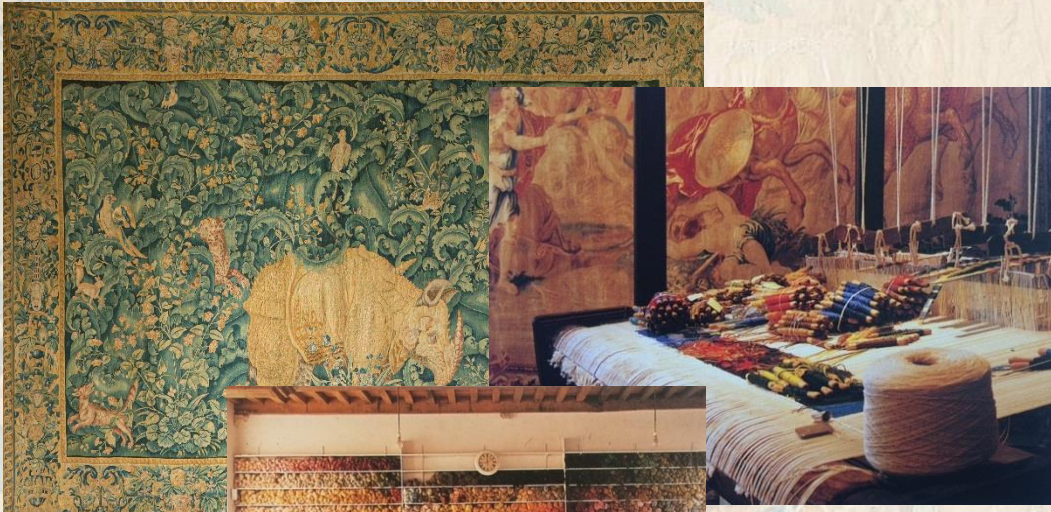


Appendix 3.4 Perspectives to the Renaissance

The fact boxes are supplemented by informative small tasks for discussion. Here's another example.

How much material has been used?

The Rhinoceros Tapestry at Kronborg Castle measures approx. 4 m x 6 m and weighs approximately 32 kg. It was common to use 75% wool and 25% silk yarn, which is equivalent to 8 kg of silk and 24 kg of wool for the rug. But how much is it?



To the right pictures from weaving on the Flemish Royal Manufacture of Tapestries, Museum de Wit, Meuhelen.



The silk used to make the Rhinoceros wallpaper came from China or India, where mulberry trees grow, the leaves of which the silkworms eat before they turn into tits.

How many silkworm cocoons do you think have been used for the tapestry?

10.000, 30.000, **40.000**

The wool used for the Rhinoceros Tapestry comes from Flanders (today Belgium). A good sheep gives approx. 3 kg of raw wool per year, which cleaned of grease and dirt corresponds to 0.6 kg of fine new wool. How many sheep do you think went to weave the rug?

28, 40, 58 får



Each silkworm cocoon contains 1 km Silk thread. Tie the silk threads from the rug together, the thread can reach once around the Earth

Appendix 3.5 Perspectives to the Renaissance

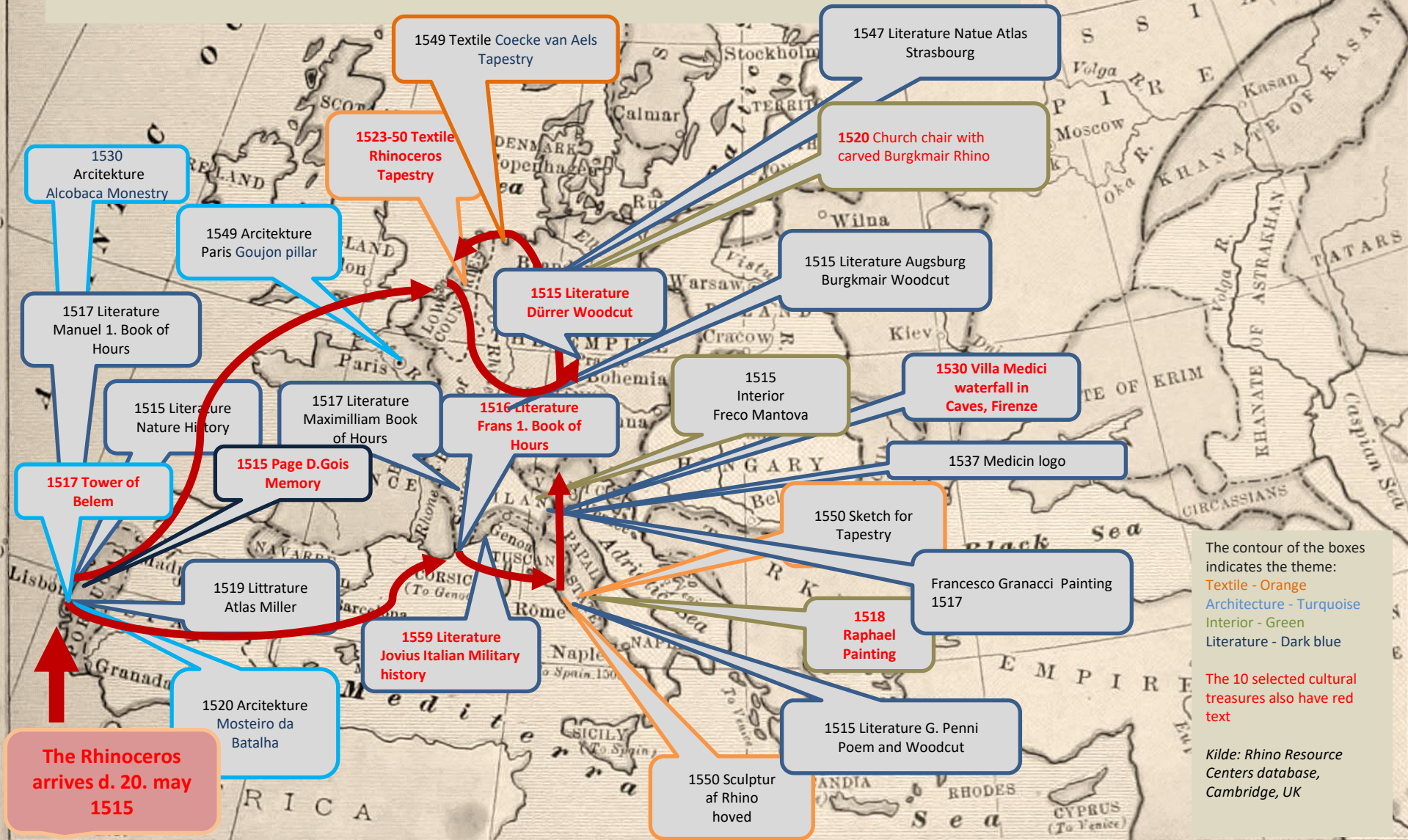
Rhino tracks in Europe

Map of the paths of inspiration 1515 - 1550 (incl. Order and production time) The first known written mention of a rhino is from the ancient Pliny the Elder. After a historic break of a thousand years, Ganda came. First approx. 100 years later, the next rhino came to Madrid. Therefore, specifically, the traces of the Ganda Rhino in art are very clear.

EUROPE
about 1500.

SCALE OF MILES.

0 50 100 200 300 400 500 600 700



The contour of the boxes indicates the theme:
 Textile - Orange
 Architecture - Turquoise
 Interior - Green
 Literature - Dark blue

The 10 selected cultural treasures also have red text

Kilde: Rhino Resource Centers database, Cambridge, UK

Appendix 4. Perspectives to the Renaissance

Example of source material

King Manuel puts the Rhino up against Elephant

Damião de Gois (1502-1574), saw as 13-year-old page at the court: "*The Battle of Thick Skins*", which took place on 3. June 1515 in Lissbon. Here is his description translated:



"King Manuel wanted to see with his own eyes what powers and cunning grips each of the two animals had to defend himself, and attack the other. Therefore, he ordered that they be brought to a fence or courtyard surrounded by walls as high as fortress walls, which lay in front of the Casa de Índia.

First, the rhino was brought in, and as soon as it came in, it was placed behind some curtains hung on a passage between the King's and Queen's seats so that the elephant would not see it.

Shortly after, the elephant came in, and behind it closed the king's guards the gates to the square. When it had happened, the king ordered that one should remove the blankets behind which the rhino was hidden and where it stood with iron chains around the legs (because that's how it always went).

The rhino made signs to the Indian who fit what was holding him in a long rope. It was as if the rhino would say that now would it may be allowed to go where its enemy stood. The Indian could feel the animal begin to pull, so he gave it longer line but kept the end of the rope in his hand. Thus, the rhino began to walk to where the elephant was. It kept its snout down to the ground all the time, snorting out through its nostrils with such great force that dust and small straws lying on the ground rose like a little whirlwind.

When the rhino came out, the elephant was standing with its hind end. When it saw the rhino, it turned around and began to trumpet and move its trunk, as if to say that now it would fight.

But when the rhino wanted to attack it under its belly, the elephant probably realized that it was not old enough to be sure to use its tusks against such a large An enemy; for they still reached no more than three hand-widths out of their mouths.

So the elephant turned around and steered towards a latticed window next to the gate facing the houses by the river bank. It hammered so hard with its head against the iron bars in the lattice (which was probably a good eight inches thick), so that two of the bars came loose.

The opening the elephant made between the two iron bars so that one could get out was so small that a man of normal stature dressed in fur had to make an effort to get through. But the elephant's fear and natural dexterity had made it possible for it to escape.

The Indian driver was thrown to the ground, when the rhino would hurry after the elephant

If he had not held back, the rhino would have broken the window frame between the bars with as much force as one can imagine. When the elephant had thus run away from the square, it ran down towards the stable, where it did not care whether it was men on foot or on horseback. It whizzed past them all. They shouted at each other to take care, and it was like a fight they had no control over or enemies ravaged. The rhino stood strung in the square, it was almost as if it - with the movements it made, would show bystanders that it was sure of victory if the elephant had just waited.

Gois, 1566-1567, parte 4, cap. 18, fols. 25r-25v.

Currently translated from Portuguese by Eva Kvorning

