



Albrecht
DÜRER



forty engravings
and woodcuts



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AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY · NOVEMBER 1961

Cover: ST CHRISTOPHER (13)

FOREWORD

THIS EXHIBITION is devoted to the graphic art of Albrecht Dürer. All the prints come from New Zealand collections and we are most grateful to the owners for making this exhibition possible.

The catalogue has been prepared by the Director, and the introduction written by W. S. Auburn, Honorary Curator of Prints.

Auckland, October, 1961

P. A. TOMORY

INTRODUCTION

ALBRECHT DURER was born in Nuremberg on 21 May 1471, the third of the eighteen children of Albrecht and Barbara Dürer. His father was a goldsmith, an immigrant from Hungary.

Young Albrecht served an early apprenticeship in his father's workshop, which made him familiar with the tools of the trade. At this time the engraving of intricate designs on gold, silver and copper was a highly developed art which was practised in the flourishing centres of trade and at the courts of Europe.

The techniques of engraving on metal for ornamental purposes and of engraving on a highly polished copper plate for the purpose of reproduction on paper are the same in principle: both use the same tools, the most important of which is the graver, or burin. Like most engravers of the fifteenth century Dürer graduated to his art from the goldsmith's workshop.

Albrecht Dürer was justly acclaimed for his draughtsmanship and for his paintings. Amongst his whole artistic output it was his engravings and woodcuts which made him the most famous, most envied and most frequently copied artist of his time. His artistic development was favoured by the time and place of his birth; Nuremberg was one of the most prosperous and progressive cities in Germany. It was a centre of the recently established printing industry. Anton Koberger, a leading publisher, was Dürer's godfather. He published two monumental volumes, the *Schatzbehalter*, and HARTMANN SCHEDEL's *World Chronicle*. The latter was illustrated by over 600 woodcuts from the workshop of two Nuremberg masters, Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff.

The employment of artists as illustrators of printed books gave them a new sphere of influence, spreading faithful reproductions of their work over areas far beyond their own community. The two main media used for illustration were the woodcut and the line engraving; this explains their emergence and popularity at the end of the fifteenth century.

At the age of fifteen Albrecht Dürer entered the workshop of Michael Wolgemut. During the three years Dürer spent with him he became familiar with the technique of woodcutting. At the end of his apprenticeship with Wolgemut, Dürer left his home town to travel and

to see other artists at work. We know that he visited Colmar, Strasburg and Basel, where he produced a woodcut for the title page of a religious work on St Hieronymus. This was so successful that three other publishers asked Dürer to work for them. It was the beginning of a lifelong devotion to this new branch of artistic expression. Apart from two visits to Italy and one to the Netherlands, Dürer worked in his native town of Nuremberg, where he was to produce more than one hundred engravings and two hundred and fifty woodcuts, in addition to a large number of paintings and drawings.

Albrecht Dürer died in Nuremberg on 6 April 1528. The epitaph on his gravestone was composed by his lifelong friend, Willibald Pirckheimer: *Quicquid Alberti Dureri mortale fuit, sub hoc conditur tumulo.* (Whatever was mortal of Albrecht Dürer is covered by this tomb.)

W. S. AUBURN

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

- type 20 is
- 1471 Born Nuremberg
 - 1486 Commenced apprenticeship with Wolgemut
 - 1490 Completed apprenticeship
 - 1492 In Colmar
 - 1492-3 In Strasburg
 - 1494 Returned to Nuremberg. Married Agnes Frey
 - 1494-5 Visited Italy; Venice, Padua, Mantua, Cremona
 - 1505-7 Second visit to Italy; Venice, Florence(?)
 - 1520-21 Visit to Netherlands
 - 1526 Completed his last engravings
 - 1528 Died in Nuremberg

NOTE: The prints are catalogued according to their date of issue.

The catalogue has been compiled largely from the following sources:

- (B)
- Bartsch^(B): *Peintre-Graveur*, Vienna 1803
 - Klassiker der Kunst: *Albrecht Dürer*, 1904
 - Dodgson: *Albrecht Dürer Engravings*, London 1926
 - Panofsky: *Albrecht Dürer*, Princeton 1955
- N.O. includes (B)

THE CATALOGUE

1 THE PRODIGAL SON

Engraving 248 x 191 : B 28 : c1496/7

Early impression showing perpendicular scratches on sky and across swine. A drawing of the whole composition is in the British Museum. The farmyard scene here is connected with an earlier woodcut of the artist which appeared in Sebastian Brant's *Das Narrenschiff* (Basel 1494). The other related woodcuts appear in the *Speculum Humane Salvatianis* editions of Richel (Basel 1476) and Drach (Speyer 1478). But Dürer is the first to set the scene in a farmyard. This print was highly admired and copied in Italy and was much praised by Vasari.

2 SAMSON AND THE LION

Woodcut 382 x 277 · B 2 · c1497/98

This woodcut, although it incorporates passages from Dürer's illustratory period in Basel — particularly von Steyn's *Ritter vom Turn...* (1493) — is vastly different in technique. Due to Dürer's first Italian visit, he wished to transform the stiff Northern woodcut method into one which would express the full organic naturalism of the Renaissance. Hence the woodcut here expresses like an engraving the fully modelled forms and the variations of light and shade.

It seems probable that Dürer may have been inspired by an engraving *Hercules and the Nemeän Lion*, attributed now to Antonio da Brescia but derived from an original by Mantegna.

3 MARTYRDOM OF ST CATHERINE

Woodcut 394 x 283 · B 120 · c1497/8

Another woodcut in the new technique referred to in No 2. As an example of Dürer's influence on his contemporaries, this print, in reverse, was used by Lucas Cranach the Elder, almost in toto, for his painting of the same subject (Private Collection, Budapest) — (Fenyö, *Burlington Magazine* xcvi p68, 1955).

4 HERCULES

Engraving 317 x 221 · B 73 II · c1500

Dürer refers to 'Der Hercules' in his Journal of his visit to the Netherlands. The composition is based partly on

his own drawing *Death of Orpheus* (Hamburg) which is itself derived from an anonymous Italian print: on Mantegna's engraving *Battle of Sea Gods*, and on his own drawing after Pollaiuolo's *Battle of the Nudes* (Uffizi). In essence, the engraving demonstrates the Italian influence on Dürer.

There have been several interpretations of the subject. Panofsky suggests that this is not one of the 'Labours', but Hercules deciding between Pleasure and Virtue: the action shows Hercules hesitating before he sides with Virtue. The story is first recorded by Xenophon. The old title, *The Effects of Jealousy*, therefore cannot be sustained.

5 NEMESIS (OR THE GREAT FORTUNE)

Engraving 333 x 229 · B 77 · c1501/2

Collection · Martin Folkes 1756

This is not one of the earliest impressions as it has a deep scratch beneath the bridge.

The subject was suggested to the artist by a poem, 'Manto' by Politian, printed by Aldus in Venice in 1498. The poet equates Nemesis with Fortune. The figure, seen in pure profile, is based on Vitruvius's Canon of proportions, which Dürer had learned of in 1500. But the face is from life, and Panofsky (p85) suggests that it is modelled from Crescentia Pirckheimer, the wife of his life-long friend. The landscape has been identified with the small Tyrolean town of Klausen or Chiuso. The goblet and bridle which the goddess carries are symbols of favour and castigation. The figure is based on an earlier engraving, of 1497 or before, of *Fortune* (B 78).

6 THE WITCH

Engraving 115 x 71 · B 67 · c1505

The witch riding backwards on a goat indicates a perverted world.

7 ST GEORGE ON HORSEBACK

Engraving 109 x 83 · B 111

The original 1505 has been altered to 1508.

Panofsky suggests that this was the artist's attempt to fuse the qualities of the *Large Horse* and the *Small Horse*. In subject it is related to the *St George on Foot*, which

as Dodgson points out includes the banner of the Order of St George, with which the Emperor Maximilian was closely connected—he was crowned at Trent in the presence of the Knights of St George, January 1508.

Panofsky explains the changed date as being caused by Dürer's absence in Venice—the print being left unfinished in 1505 and completed on his return in 1508.

THE LARGE PASSION 1511

This series was issued in 1511 with the *Apocalypse* and the *Life of the Virgin*. However, the plates were made at different times. Seven of the eleven woodcuts were made before 1500 (*vide* Nos 8 and 10) and were circulated as single prints. The other four, including the *Betrayal* (No 9) and the *Resurrection* (No 11), were made in 1510. Finally in 1511 the frontispiece was made and the whole issued in book form with a commentary in Latin verse by Benedict Schwelbe.

8 AGONY IN THE GARDEN

Woodcut 391 x 279 · B 6 · c1497

This early woodcut was to form the basis of one of Dürer's few etchings—*The Agony in the Garden* of 1515.

9 BETRAYAL OF CHRIST

Woodcut 394 x 280 · B 7 · 1510

The woodcuts of this year show the new development of running straight hatching across convex forms in shadow—e.g. St Peter's raised arm. This method introduced a tonality of black on grey, rather than the black-white of the earlier woodcuts. Here, therefore, the woodcut approaches the tonal variety of the engraving.

The composition reversed is freely based on the drawing of the same subject belonging to the *Green Passion* (Albertina, Vienna) dated 1504.

10 ECCO HOMO

Woodcut 394 x 282 · B 9 · c1498

It is worth noting that Dürer here still maintains the medieval confusion between Islamic and Classical paganism, for the crowd is dressed as Turks.

11 THE RESURRECTION

Woodcut 390 x 277 · B 15 · c1510

Here, Dürer did not follow the usual interpretation of Christ stepping from the tomb, but combines the Resurrection with the Ascension, an interpretation which the artist borrowed from Italy.

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12 ST JOHN BEFORE GOD AND THE ELDERS

Woodcut 388 x 276 · B 63 · 1497

This work belongs to the Apocalypse series, issued first in 1498 and in a second edition with a new frontispiece in 1511. The whole work of fourteen cuts took two years to prepare, this being one of the first to be made. The series as a whole reflects the influence of Mantegna.

13 ST CHRISTOPHER

Woodcut 212 x 211 · B 103 · 1511

It is interesting to see Dürer recalling this plate on a sheet of St Christopher drawings which he made for the painter Joachim Patenir in 1521. The lower left figure, reversed, follows particularly the flying draperies of this plate.

THE ENGRAVED PASSION 1513

This series was published in 1513, while the dates of the individual plates, which were not all made in narrative order, range from 1507 to 1512. The issue was made without a text and obviously directed towards the connoisseur. The whole series reflects Dürer's Italian journeys—and the influence of Mantegna is particularly marked. In technique also, Dürer achieves a high point in the combination of both graphic and pictorial qualities. His method of finely graded hatching and cross-hatching produced a tonal density never achieved before.

Of all Dürer's work, this series had probably the greatest influence, especially in Italy.

14 THE MAN OF SORROWS

Engraving 118 x 74 · B 3 · 1509

This plate is the frontispiece; the subject is a Man of Sorrows according to St Bridget.

15 THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

Engraving 118 x 72 · B 4 · 1508

This plate, the *Betrayal*, and *Christ before Pilate*, are based on similar subjects in the *Green Passion*, 1504 (Albertina, Vienna).

16 THE BETRAYAL OF CHRIST

Engraving 117 x 74 · B 5 · 1508

17 CHRIST BEFORE CAIAPHAS

Engraving 117 x 74 · B 6 · 1512

18 CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

Engraving 117 x 74 · B 7 · 1512

19 THE SCOURGING OF CHRIST

Engraving 116 x 74 · B 8 · 1512

20 CHRIST CROWNED WITH THORNS

Engraving 117 x 74 · B 9 · 1512 (the 5 has been altered)

21 CHRIST SHOWN TO THE PEOPLE

Engraving 115 x 74 · B 10 · 1512

22 PILATE WASHING HIS HANDS

Engraving 116 x 71 · B 11 · 1512

23 CHRIST BEARING THE CROSS

Engraving 116 x 74 · B 12 · 1512

Dürer here uses the Italian interpretation of Christ walking upright with the cross — contrary to the Northern preference for a stumbling Christ.

24 CRUCIFIXION

Engraving 118 x 75 · B 13 · 1511

Usually referred to as the Small Plate, to distinguish it from another of 1508 showing the marked influence of Grunewald.

25 THE DEPOSITION

Engraving 116 x 71 · B 14 · 1507

26 THE ENTOMBMENT

Engraving 117 x 75 · B 15 · 1512

The setting here is not unlike that in the Mantegna workshop engraving, *Entombment with Three Birds*.

27 CHRIST IN LIMBO

Engraving 115 x 74 · B 16 · 1512

This again seems a free adaptation of Mantegna's engravings *Virtus Deserta* and *The Descent into Limbo*.

28 THE RESURRECTION

Engraving 117 x 75 · B 17 · 1512

The figure of Christ is modelled on the Apollo Belvedere.

29 SS PETER AND JOHN HEALING A CRIPPLE

Engraving 116 x 73 · B 18 · 1513

In subject this plate is unconnected with the Passion. It is believed that it may have been added to make up the sixteen plates for a 'whole page' printing — or that Dürer intended to follow the Passion with a series on The Acts of the Apostles.

Mackelvie collection

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30 MADONNA SEATED BY A WALL

Engraving 147 x 100 · B 40 · 1514

Panofsky considers this engraving to be the 'acme of perfection' in Dürer's engraved art.

31 VIRGIN AND CHILD ON A CRESCENT

Engraving 118 x 75 · B 33 · 1514

Dürer made four engravings of this subject, with variations: B 30 (1498), B 31 (1508), and B 32 (1516). The crescent is the moon, the symbol of perpetual chastity — from the passage in Revelation: 'A woman clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet. . .'

32 MELENCHOLIA I

Engraving 240 x 187 · B 74 II · 1514

There are two states — the first where the nine on the numerical table is reversed, the second where the nine is corrected.

This print has been the subject of a great deal of research. In brief, medieval medicine defined four temperaments or humours: Choler (yellow gall); Phlegm; Blood; Melancholy (black gall). One of these humours was predominant in each individual and determined his personality — i.e. as choleric, phlegmatic, sanguine, melancholic. The last was the least desired temperament as in excess it led to insanity. However, Marsilio Ficino, a Florentine Neoplatonist, has reinterpreted the humour in the light of Aristotle's statement that 'All lively outstanding men, whether distinguished in philosophy, in statecraft, in poetry or in the arts, are melancholics', and of Plato's theory of 'divine frenzy'. Thus melancholy became equated with the sublime attainments of intellectual activity. Furthermore, Saturn, the melancholic planet and god of the earth, was also associated with stone and wood, and thus with the science of solid Geometry; and besides the *furor melancholicus* was the Saturnian inspiration producing men of genius in the fine arts, such as painting and architecture. Thus Dürer's *Melancholia* is a spiritual self portrait. The brooding female figure, the instruments of geometry, the infant of inspiration, provide a profound allegory of the humanist artist of the European Renaissance.

33 VENERATION OF THE HOLY COAT OF TRIER

TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF ST LEOPOLD

Woodcut 112 x 159 · B 138 · c1512/13

This woodcut is a small part of the enormous Arch of Maximilian, which, made from 192 separate blocks, measured 11.5 x 9.75 feet. The whole was completed in 1515. This block is to be found at the lower half of the left hand turret and is one of the few illustrative blocks ascribed to Dürer, who was general overseer of the work. Maximilian I, who was involved in both the episodes depicted, commissioned this work, which was largely a monumental eulogy of himself.

34 THE VIRGIN CROWNED BY TWO ANGELS

Engraving 114 x 98 · B 39 · 1518

A pen drawing in reverse is in the British Museum, and an early study (Vienna) adapted for the *Cloak of the Madonna*. Between 1514 and 1519, Dürer made only two etchings — for between 1515 and 1518 he worked for the only time in etching.

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35 THE VIRGIN SUCKLING THE CHILD

Engraving 116 x 74 · B 36 · 1519

A pen and ink study in reverse is in Vienna.

This engraving marks the appearance of a new style in a critical year for Dürer. His most important patron, Maximilian I, died; Dürer was considerably distressed. He then turned to the teachings of Luther, '... the Christian man who has helped me out of great anxieties.' The new style, which replaced the 'decorative' one employed as recently as the previous year (No 34), was more concerned with volume than line: the subject here fills the plate in a massive way. Similarly, the *Peasants at Market* (No 36) differs from the earlier works in this *genre*.

36 PEASANTS AT MARKET

Engraving 117 x 74 · B 89 · 1519

This is the last of a subject which Dürer had engraved as early as 1497, and was probably intended for the popular market. From 1519, having joined the cause of Luther, Dürer ceased to use secular subjects—except those concerned with science, travel, or portraits.

37 ST SIMON

Engraving 117 x 73 · B 49 · 1523

This print and the *St Bartholomew* are additions to the series of Apostles of 1514. Neither of these later apostles have the nimbus. They were also prepared from larger studies in metal point. Panofsky refers to this late style as 'corrugated'—i.e. the contrast of the flat planes to the complex folds of the drapery.

38 ST BARTHOLOMEW

Engraving 121 x 76 · B 47 · 1523

Dodgson refers to a drawing (Albertina L 581) which, in reverse, agrees with the engraving, except that the apostle carries another attribute.

A *St Philip* was also made this same year, but not issued until 1526.

39 PORTRAIT OF CARDINAL ALBRECHT OF BRANDENBURG
(The Large Cardinal)

Engraving 176 x 130 · B 103 · 1523

Based on a silver-point drawing (Panofsky 1004), this portrait and Melanchthon are the first engraved portraits where Dürer employed the profile – other than in heads after Italian models or for medals. An earlier portrait of the cardinal is a three-quarter view and is dated 1519. Panofsky suggests that Dürer adopted the profile as more dignity and authority could thus be given to a heavy-jowled face than in any other view.

40 PHILIPP MELANCHTHON

Engraving 175 x 128 · B 105 · 1526

A pen drawing is in the Horne Museum, Florence, and the plate is in the Gotha Museum.

Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560) was the noted humanist and close friend of Luther and Dürer.

List of Lenders

Dr W. S. Auburn · Auckland 8, 11, 12, 13

The Robert MacDougall Art Gallery · Christchurch 9

The National Gallery · Wellington

(Ilott Collection) 1, 4, 5, 31, 32, 37

(Monrad Collection) 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 30, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39,
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The Auckland City Art Gallery 14-29, 33