



# The Rhinoceros

**Date**  
1515 (printed c. 1620)

**Primary Maker**  
Albrecht Dürer

**Medium**  
Woodcut

**Description**  
Over the course of his long and prolific career, Albrecht Dürer made approximately 250 woodcuts in addition to paintings, drawings, engravings, and etchings. His reputation was established with the publication of The Apocalypse in 1498—the

first book in the Western tradition to be illustrated as well as published by the artist, containing fifteen large woodcuts depicting the Revelation of Saint John the Divine—and continued to grow as his prints spread throughout Europe. Dürer was naturally inquisitive and pursued experiments in and research on a number of subjects, including perspective and anatomy. In addition to such works as the Apocalypse, he published the books On Measurement, On Fortification, and On Human Proportion. The present woodcut depicts a one-horned Indian rhinoceros. Although the ancient Romans had been familiar with both the African and the Indian rhinoceros, it was not until 1515, with the publication of this print, that most Europeans became aware of the animal's existence. On May 20, 1515, an actual rhinoceros had arrived in Portugal—a gift from Sultan Muzafar II of Cambay (Gujarat) to the governor of Portuguese India and the first member of its species to reach Europe alive since the third century. In a show of political diplomacy, the animal was regifted first to the king of Portugal, then to Pope Leo X. On its way to Rome, the rhinoceros died when the ship on which it was being transported sank in a storm. Dürer never saw the peripatetic rhinoceros and likely based his woodcut on an image and textual description that appeared on a broadsheet in Lisbon, although he exaggerated certain features, such as the animal's armor-like hide, and added a spiral horn emerging from its back to reinforce its exoticism. Although anatomically incorrect, Dürer's depiction became so iconic that it influenced popular opinion and artistic depictions of the rhinoceros for hundreds of years. Omar S. Pound, Class of 1951, the son of the artist Dorothy Shakespear and the poet Ezra Pound, Class of 1905, H1939, was a generous donor to the Emerson Gallery. Over the years, he gave the College numerous Old Master and Japanese prints along with works of British modernism, many of which had been passed down in his family. This particular print was donated in 1994. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017) from the 6th edition

**Dimensions**  
Sheet (trimmed within block): 8 11/16 x 11 7/8 in. (22.1 x 30.2 cm)