

oeuvre, such as the sphere as a symbol of chance or fate from *Nemesis* (lot 26), the scales from *Sol Iustitiae* (lot 1), and the skull and the hour-glass, which appear as memento mori on the other two of the so-called 'Master Prints': *Knight, Death and the Devil* and *Saint Jerome in his Study* (lots 44 and 45).



In the 16th century, the melancholic temperament was associated with genius and the pursuit of knowledge. If *Saint Jerome* and *Melencolia I* are indeed companion pieces, and *Saint Jerome* represents the knowledge of texts, then *Melencolia I* stands for a different, new kind of knowledge - that of empirical, applied science. The ruler, the scale and the pair of compasses are all measuring devices, instruments for the examination of nature. For Dürer, the observation and comprehension of the natural world was the basis of art. Considering that the artists of the Renaissance, with Leonardo and Dürer as prime examples, saw themselves as artists as well as scientists, then *Melencolia I* might be described as a secret self-portrait.

Knight, Death and the Devil (estimate: \$500,000-700,000) –pictured left, 1513, depicts a knight in armor on his magnificent charger making his way through a rocky gorge. Two figures stand by the wayside, as if emerging from the rocks; King Death with snakes

winding through his crown, astride an old mare, holding an hourglass; and a monstrous devil standing on his hooves, holding a pike. Countless attempts have been made to identify the central figure, which Dürer simply referred to as *der Reuther* ('the rider'). Suggestions have included emperor, pope, heretic, Germanic hero and local patrician. None of the potential candidates, either historical or mythological, have been substantiated. The knight as robber baron - a genuine threat in the days of Dürer - is lacking visual evidence. Whatever his true identity, Dürer's rider is clearly cast in the heroic mold, a model of courage and moral strength, the Christian Knight, who does not fear Death or the Devil.

Dated 1514, *Saint Jerome in his Study* (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) was engraved one year after *Knight, Death and the Devil* (lot 44), and like the earlier print it is full of reminders of death: the human skull on the window ledge, the crucifix on the desk, the candle and the hour glass, while the fly whisk can be read as a reference to the devil. Together with *Melencolia I* (lot 42) these three engravings have long been known as the 'Master Prints'.



The term is appropriate as with these prints Dürer undoubtedly reached the height of his capacities as an



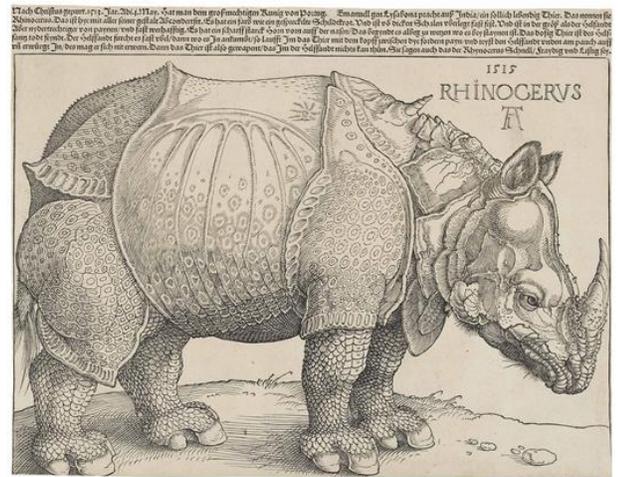


engraver. Aside from their technical excellence, the prints are also connected by their near-identical format and their concentration on a single figure in a highly complex, richly symbolic environment. If, as has been suggested, they represent the three different modes of virtuous living, *Saint Jerome* depicts the lonely, quiet life of the man of letters.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (estimate: \$120,000-180,000) – pictured left, is arguably the most dramatic and dynamic of all of Dürer's compositions. Standing before this work, the viewer witnesses the four horsemen as they burst out of heaven, one after the other, and thunder over the earth. The mouth of hell opens up below, devouring a 'lord of the earth' - perhaps a bishop or king. Everything conveys a sense of violence and rupture. Erwin Panofsky observed that the three horses in the air are shown at different intervals of their galloping movement, thereby creating the impression of time and continuity, not unlike Eadweard Muybridge's

photographic recordings of bodies in motion almost five hundred years later.

The Rhinoceros (estimate: \$100,000-150,000) – pictured right, was cut in 1515, the year that the first rhinoceros was seen in Europe since Antiquity. Having never seen a rhinoceros, Dürer learned of it from a sketch and description sent by Valentin Ferdinand, a Moravian printer who had settled in Lisbon, to a friend in Nuremberg. Dürer's depiction, which might pass for a terrible war machine, had tremendous impact. The woodblock was printed in no fewer than eight editions, seven of which were posthumous. Around 1620 it was printed in Amsterdam together with a tone block, producing a chiaroscuro woodcut like the portrait of *Ulrich Varnbüler* (lot 61). *The Rhinoceros* served as the model for illustrations of the species as late as the end of the eighteenth century. Although presumably printed in fairly large numbers very few survive to this day, and impressions from the first edition are exceptionally rare.



PRESS CONTACT: Rebecca Riegelhaupt | +1 212 636 2680 | riegelhaupt@christies.com

[Please click here for the complete eCatalogue.](#)



About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2012 that totaled £2.2 billion/\$3.5 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £413.4 million/\$661.5 million in the first half of 2012, an increase of 53% on the previous year.

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

###

Images available on request

Visit Christie's Website at www.christies.com

Complete catalogue available online at www.christies.com or via the Christie's iPhone app

FOLLOW CHRISTIE'S ON:

