

"ST. JEROME", ALBRECHT DÜRER. DRAWINGS FROM THE ALBERTINA MUSEUM

10 MAY – 11 AUGUST 2019

IN THE METICULOUS DIARY that he kept during his visit to Flanders and the Low Countries (July 1520 – July 1521), Dürer tells of the frequent contact that he had with people from the Portuguese Factory in Antwerp, particularly with the secretary Rui Fernandes de Almada, whom he called familiarly by his first name. Over the months, he received various exotic presents that arrived via the trading routes and which greatly thrilled him. In return, the painter gave the secretary presents of his own making: engravings, drawings, paintings. One of them was this small oil painting on oak panel with the representation of *St. Jerome* in meditation, made in just a few weeks, at the beginning of 1521, and offered to the secretary of the Factory as a gift prior to the painter's departure for a short visit to Bruges and Ghent, at the beginning of April.

Marking an essential phase in his work process, the painting was, in his own words, *executed with diligence* and carefully studied in a series of five preparatory drawings: four of which are housed at the Albertina Gallery, in Vienna, and are shown in this exhibition, while the other belongs to the Staatliche Museen, in Berlin. In these sketches, based on his observation of a live model, he carefully drew each of the elements of the composition that he later used in the oil painting on panel, practically to scale: the magnificent head-portrait of an elderly citizen, 93 years of age and yet healthy and strong – according to the precious reference that is recorded on the sheet – the gesture of one of his hands, the lectern with the work books and the skull placed on the table.

In keeping with the process that Dürer had learned from Italian artists during his two visits to Italy (1494-1495 and 1505-1507), the support that he used for his drawings was paper prepared with a warm-coloured grey-violet ground. All the studies were made with Indian ink, applied with a brush, using the fine and knowledgeable lines that he had perfected through his technical expertise as an engraver. These same lines were then highlighted in white tempera, using a technique that perfectly expresses the beautiful effects of artificial and contrasted light, similarly



Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)

Study of an old man's head

1521

Brush, black and gray ink, heightened with white lead on paper with gray-violet ink preparation

Vienna, Albertina Museum, inv. 3167

employed by other great German drawers of his generation. With this demanding procedure, he managed to represent each form and each texture of the human figure or of the objects without sacrificing the unity of each sheet. In them, he managed to fuse the realism and technical brilliance that characterised the art of Northern Europe with the strength of the composition and the conceptual grandeur that distinguished Italian art.



Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)
St. Jerome
 1521
 Oil on oak
 MNAA, inv. 828 Pint



Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)
Studies of arm and hand and of male figure
 1521
 Brush, black ink, heightened with white lead
 on paper with gray-violet ink preparation
 Vienna, Albertina Museum, inv. 3168



Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)
Reading lectern with books and box
 1521
 Brush, black ink, heightened with white lead
 on paper with gray-violet ink preparation
 Vienna, Albertina Museum, inv. 3176



Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)
Skull
 1521
 Brush, black ink, heightened with white lead
 on paper with gray-violet ink preparation
 Vienna, Albertina Museum, inv. 3175

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