

Noah Ledesma

Professor Robert Schumacher

Art 033A Beginning Drawing

17 December 2018

Albrecht Dürer and his Drawing Style

Albrecht Dürer was a draughtsman, painter, printmaker, and theorist widely believed to be the greatest German artist of the Renaissance (Ruhmer, 2018.) His elegantly designed woodblock prints revitalized the artistic techniques of printmaking in Europe (Noble), although it is uncertain what role Dürer had in the cutting of the blocks themselves (“Dürer and the Woodcut”, 2015).

Dürer was also one of the earliest masters of linear perspective. He learned from the Italian masters of the Renaissance, like Luca Pacioli, Piero della Francesca, and Leonardo da Vinci, and though he “made no innovations in these areas, he is notable as the first Northern European to treat matters of visual representation in a scientific way, and with understanding of Euclidean principles.” He even wrote about his techniques for achieving linear perspective in his work the *Four Books on Measurement* (“Dürer and Perspective”, 2018).

His drawing style can be described as meticulous, scientific, and heavily influenced by the classical revival of the Renaissance. His many trips to Italy greatly developed his artistic abilities in depicting realism, accurately illustrating the human anatomy, capturing emotion and atmosphere, and demonstrating his mastery of classic ideals and themes (Ruhmer, 2018.) Indeed, the Italian Renaissance left a lasting impression on his work.

Dürer's scientific approach to art is best demonstrated by the illustrations in his *Four Books on Measurement*.

(One illustration) shows apparatus for drawing a classic set-piece, a foreshortened lute. A pointer is attached to a thread running through a pulley on the wall. The thread represents a ray of light passing through the picture plane to the theoretical eye-point denoted by the pulley. As one man fixes key points on the lute, his assistant records the vertical and horizontal coordinates of the thread as it passes through the frame, and plots each new point to create a drawing. ("Dürer and Perspective", 2018).

This piece shows Dürer's dedication to the methodical depiction of space in a two-dimensional medium, which can also be found in other works of his, such as *Saint Jerome in His Study* and *Melencolia*.

Another characteristic of Dürer's drawing style is his use of chiaroscuro. In *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, he makes heavy use of cross contour lines to define the various three-dimensional forms of the artwork, notably the horsemen's torsos, legs, and their steeds. By varying the space between the lines, Dürer effectively creates the illusion of shadow, light, and space in an otherwise flat print.

A final hallmark of Dürer's style is his tendency towards horror vacui. Many of his woodblock prints betray his compulsion to fill every would-be empty space in his artwork with some object, animal, person, or other creature. This is especially noticeable in his engraving *Adam and Eve*; the forest ground is littered by mammals like the mouse, rabbit, and cat, while the moose and bull fill the area around Adam and Eve's legs, spaces which otherwise would have been empty.



Albrecht Dürer

Page from Four Books of Measurement

1525

Woodcut on paper

11 5/16 x 7 15/16 x 1 3/16 in. (28.8 x 20.2 x 3 cm)

The British Library



Albrecht Dürer

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

1498

Woodcut

15-1/4 x 11-7/16 inches (38.8 x 29.1 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Albrecht Dürer

Adam and Eve

1504

Engraving

25.1 x 20 cm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Works Cited

Dürer and Perspective. (2018, December 12). Retrieved from

<https://trinitycollegelibrarycambridge.wordpress.com/2014/05/26/durer-and-perspective/>

Dürer and the Woodcut. (2015, December 02). Retrieved from

<https://www.themorgan.org/blog/dürer-and-woodcut>

Noble, B. J. (n.d.). Albrecht Dürer. Retrieved from

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/renaissance-reformation/northern/durer/a/albrecht-drer>

Ruhmer, E. (2018, September 27). Albrecht Dürer. Retrieved from

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Albrecht-Durer-German-artist>