

Leonardo – Dürer

Renaissance master drawings on colored ground

7 March until 9 June 2025

In the *Libro dell'Arte*, the famous treatise on painting, Cennino Cennini described drawing in light and dark on colored backgrounds around 1400 as “il principio e la porta del colorire”, the beginning and the gateway to painting. A century later, Leonardo would perfect the technique in his grandiose studies of nature. Albrecht Dürer followed his example with sheets such as the *Praying Hands*, one of the most famous works in the art of drawing. With Leonardo's and Dürer's works, the study in *chiaroscuro* was finally recognized as a highly artificial art genre.

While the *chiaroscuro* drawing had a firm place in the work process in Italy, it was favored north of the Alps for delicate scenic depictions from the mid-15th century onwards. These were never design drawings, but precious showpieces. Outstanding examples of this are sheets by Albrecht Altdorfer, Hans Baldung Grien and finally Dürer's famous *Green Passion*. The many subjects from history, mythology and popular beliefs alone demonstrate that the artists were targeting the desires of a new, educated clientele.

The ALBERTINA Museum's exhibition uses carefully selected works from its own holdings and top-class loans from international collections to illustrate the functions of color ground drawings in the South and the North, the expressive possibilities the technique offered artists and the links to contemporary printmaking. It will offer visitors a special aesthetic pleasure and reveal to laymen and connoisseurs alike how master draughtsmen such as Leonardo and Dürer pushed the door to painting wide open and crossed the threshold to art for art's sake.

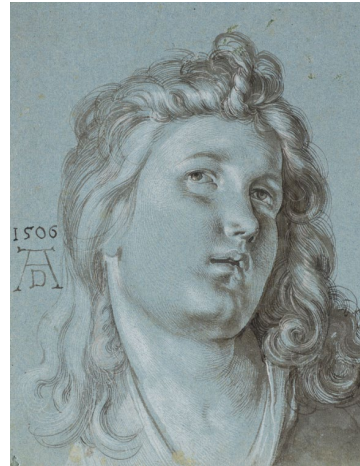
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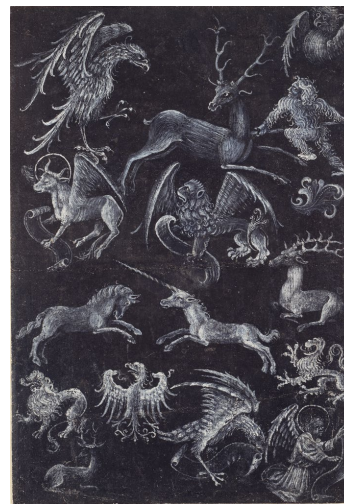
Leonardo da Vinci
Half-figure of an apostle, 1493-1495
Silverpoint, brown pen, on blue primed paper
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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Albrecht Dürer
Head of the angel playing a lute (Detail from
„Rosenkranzfest“), 1506
Brush in gray and black, gray wash, heightened with
opaque white, on blue paper
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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Hans Baldung Grien (Schwäbisch Gmünd 1484/85–
1545 Straßburg)
New Year's greetings with three witches, 1514
Pen and brush in black and white opaque paint on
brown primed paper
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Oberrheinischer Meister
Sample sheet with evangelist symbols, various
animals and wild man, around 1430-1440
Brush in white on black primed paper
Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum, Inv. 638 Z
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ALBERTINA



Leonardo da Vinci
Standing male nude, 1503–1506
Red chalk, pen and brown ink on red prepared paper
Windsor Castle, London, RCIN 912594
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Antonio Pisano, referred to as Pisanello
Allegory of the Luxuria (recto), around 1426
Pen and brown ink, traces of metalpoint or black chalk
on reddened paper
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Raffaello
Study of the Bridgewater Madonna (recto), around
1506–1507
Metalpoint and pen on brownish primed paper
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