



Albrecht Dürer

Picture Study

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Self-Portrait at 26

Albrecht Dürer, 1498



1488
Dicitur quod hunc manum scriptum
fuit per hunc Joannem de...
Albertus...
A

382

972

Young Hare
Albrecht Dürer, 1502



Adoration of the Magi
Albrecht Dürer, 1504



Praying Hands
Albrecht Dürer, 1508



Great Piece of Turf

Albrecht Dürer, 1503



Saint Michael Fighting the Dragon

Albrecht Dürer, 1498



Albrecht Dürer

ARTIST BIO NOTES

These notes are provided to aid the teacher's own background research on the artist and his or her works. This is not meant to be presented to students as a list of facts and dates. When you first introduce the artist, tell students where the artist fits into the timeline of history, and where the artist lived and worked. Add a few more details with each new picture, but the information you share should be short and simple unless your students ask questions or wish to know more. Keep the main focus of your Picture Study time on observation and narration of the details of the picture.

Note: if a footnote appears with a fact that is not a direct quote, the fact comes from ONE source only.

LIFE AND CHARACTER

- ◆ 1471-1528
- ◆ Born in Nuremberg, Germany – “one of the strongest artistic and commercial centers in Europe”¹
- ◆ 1494, married Agnes Frey. No children.
- ◆ In Germany during the time of the Reformation. Supported Luther.
- ◆ Died in Nuremberg.
- ◆ Artistically and intellectually gifted. Described in several biographies as a “genius.”

CAREER

- ◆ Age 13, painted an impressive self-portrait before his apprenticeship with the painter
- ◆ Apprentice to his father, a goldsmith. Later, apprentice to Michael Wohlgemut, a local painter and woodcut illustrator, for four years. Travelled to gain more

¹ http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/durr/hd_durr.htm

experience in art after his apprenticeship.

- ◆ 1494, opened his own workshop in Nuremberg. Travelled to Italy for the first time soon after.
- ◆ Official court artist to the Holy Roman Emperors Maximilian I and Charles V

ART STYLE AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- ◆ Varied body of work: portraits, landscapes, Madonnas, woodcuts, copper engravings
- ◆ Talented in various techniques: drawing, painting, printing
- ◆ Mostly religious figures in his art, but also included landscapes, animals, and exotic animals in works.
- ◆ His woodcuts: strong emotion, crowded composition²
- ◆ Influences of Italian art are in his works after his trips to Italy. He was influenced especially by one Italian artist in painting the human body with an aim at geometric perfection. His woodcuts, in contrast, retained Gothic elements longer than his other works.
- ◆ Especially praised by his contemporaries for his graphic art³
- ◆ Popularity evidenced in the number of pupils and imitators he had after his death.
- ◆ One of the greatest German Renaissance artists
- ◆ “First and probably greatest artistic impact was in the medium of printmaking”; elevated it as an art form more than others⁴
- ◆ *Great Piece of Turf* “became known as one of the most accurate depictions of the natural world that an artist had ever produced.”⁵
- ◆ Self-Portrait at 26 reflects the “aristocratic ideal” of the Renaissance. Dürer

2 <http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/bio/d/durer/biograph.html>

3 http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/articles/a/albrecht_d%C3%BCrer_1471-1528.aspx

4 http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/durr/hd_durr.htm

5 <http://www.strangescience.net/durer.htm>

paints himself handsomely, in fine clothing, with more dynamic background than traditional self-portraits.⁶

PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE IN ART AND MATHEMATICS

- ◆ Keenly interested in the art being produced in Italy during the Italian Renaissance, visiting Italy twice.
- ◆ Published writings in the fields of art and science
- ◆ Sought to use science and math to bring logic and structure into his works (his quote: "the new art must be based upon science - in particular, upon mathematics, as the most exact, logical, and graphically constructive of the sciences."⁷)
- ◆ Interested in mathematics. Studied Euclid's Geometry. Sought out wisdom from mathematicians. Incorporated the mathematical theory of proportion into his paintings of the human body beginning around 1500. His second trip into Italy was more to study mathematics than art.
- ◆ 1525, published a work about his treatise on mathematical proportions - "the first mathematics book published in German (if one discounts an earlier commercial arithmetic book) and places Dürer as one of the most important of the Renaissance mathematicians."⁸

ARTIST BIO LINKS

http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/articles/a/albrecht_d%C3%BCrer_1471-1528.aspx (very brief)

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/durr/hd_durr.htm (good abbreviated biography)

<http://www.strangescience.net/durer.htm> (possible for younger readers, interesting details)

<http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/bio/d/durer/biograph.html> (good detail on works, long)

<http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/Biographies/Durer.html> (great historical detail, very long)

6 <http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/bio/d/durer/biograph.html>

7 <http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/Biographies/Durer.html>

8 <http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/Biographies/Durer.html>

PICTURE SOURCES

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Selbstportr%C3%A4t,_by_Albrecht_D%C3%BCrer,_from_Prado_in_Google_Earth.jpg

<http://www.the-athenaeum.org/art/full.php?ID=23619>

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Albrecht_D%C3%BCrer_005.jpg

<http://abodeofhorus.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/durerhands1508.gif>

<http://wellntruly.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/albrecht-ducc88rer-great-piece-of-turf.jpg>

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:D%C3%BCrer_-_Michaels_Kampf_mit_dem_Drachen.jpg