

DAVID TUNICK, INC.

PRINTS & DRAWINGS

ALBRECHT DÜRER (1471-1528)

The Small Horse

Date: 1505
Medium: Engraving
Dimensions: 165 x 108 mm. 6 3/8 x 4 1/4 in.
References: Bartsch 96; Meder 93 a (of d);
Schoch, Mende & Scherbaum 42
Watermark: None visible
Provenance: Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Museen, Berlin, Lugt
1606, and Lugt 2398, mark used for duplicates;
New York print trade; ca. 1990 to
Private collection, New England
Impression: Brilliant
Condition: Excellent, trimmed to and just within the borderline

The horse is perfectly proportioned. He is the culmination of Dürer's study of equine proportion and beauty much the same as the *Adam and Eve* engraving of the preceding year is a compendium of human beauty. "Although Dürer constructed this horse by means of a geometrical schema which was apparently of his own invention, he once again had recourse to Leonardesque models for many of its details: the interior proportions, the modeling, the graceful motif of the raised foreleg, and the porcine head with its short lower jaw and lustrous eyes. To enhance the grace and elegance of this splendid animal even further, Dürer posed it before the heavy masonry of an antique barrel vault. Although the engraving remains primarily a showpiece for the horse, it quite possibly has thematic content as well. The fantastic helmet and winged boots of the classically attired attendant may well be meant to identify him as Perseus or Mercury, and the composition itself, according to Panofsky, admits of a specific allegorical interpretation: 'Animal sensuality restrained by the higher powers of the intellect.' The horse, in medieval and Renaissance symbolism, stands for violent and irrational passion, while the flame bursting from the vase in the background commonly represents 'illuminating reason.'" (*Dürer in America, His Graphic Work*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1971, p. 134.)

The impression is a brilliant example of the German Northern Renaissance.