



## Baldung, Hans (called Hans Baldung Grien)

Schwäbisch Gmünd (?) 1484/1485 – 1545 Strassburg

### Series of three woodcuts of wild horses in the woods and mountains of Alsace

#### [Strassburg] 1534

THREE PRINTS, woodcuts, printed in black:

- Group of Seven Horses (Stallion approaching a mare with ape, elk and man looking on), tablet inscribed *P. BALDVNG | FECIT | 1534*, sheet 226 × 334 mm. Later, uneven impression with unobtrusive printer's creases, trimmed unevenly into the subject; repaired area along borderline upper right.

REFERENCES Bartsch VII, p.321, no. 57; Hollstein, II, p.140 no. 239; Mende no. 78; Marrow & Shestack no. 84; Bartrum (1995), no. 65

- Group of Six Horses (Ejaculating stallion rejected by mare), signed on a tablet bottom right *BALDVNG | FECIT | 1534*, sheet 230 × 338 mm. Later impression, trimmed slightly unevenly into the subject; lower left corner made-up; flecks of brown ink.

PROVENANCE with Il Calamo, Stampe antiche, Turin, 1994

REFERENCES Bartsch, VII, p.321, no. 58; Hollstein, II, p.140 no. 240; Mende no. 79; Marrow & Shestack no. 85; Bartrum (1995), no. 66

- Group of Eight Horses (Wild horses fighting in a forest clearing), signed on a tablet lying on the ground *BALDVNG 1534*, sheet 214 × 325 mm. Later impression, thread margins, or trimmed along borderline.

PROVENANCE G.T. Clough (1839-1928), his mark (Lugt 1220) on verso – his sale by Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, London, 21-22 March 1921, lot 230 – Swann Galleries, New York, 13 November 1997, lot 3 (\$9200)

REFERENCES Bartsch, VII, p.321, no. 56; Hollstein, II, p.140 no. 238; Mende no. 77; Marrow & Shestack no. 83; Bartrum (1995) no. 67

Uniformly mounted and framed.

**A** SERIES OF THREE WOODCUTS of startling originality and power, studies of equine sexual behaviour, depicting the arousal of the dominant stallion by a mare in heat, his refusal and humiliation, and subsequent battle among bachelors of the herd for dominance. The inclusion of a male spectator, possibly a self-portrait, among the trees in the background of the first scene, together with an ape (a symbol of man's fallen state), establishes an analogy between human and animal behaviour. Taken together, the three prints might be an allegory of frenzied (and ultimately ungratified) human lust.

Since antiquity, horses – both stallions and mares – were equally reputed to be lustful, and the unsaddled horse was equated with libido by sixteenth-century emblematicists. Although the existence of herds of wild horses in the woods and mountains of Alsace is documented in the sixteenth century, no specific visual or literary source for these woodcuts is known, and no satisfactory explanation of the idiosyncratic prints has been offered other than the artist's 'obsession with the inevitability of physical passion and its connection with the frailty of human nature' (Bartrum), which is seen in many of his works, even in his religious scenes.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Giulia Bartrum, *German Renaissance prints, 1490-1550*, catalogue for an exhibition held at the British Museum, 1995 (London 1995), pp.76-78 nos. 65-67 (quotation p.78). Bodo Brinkmann, *Hexenlust und Sündenfall: die seltsamen Phantasien des Hans Baldung Grien*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt am Main, 24 February-13 May 2007 (Petersberg 2007), pp.184-192 and figs. 119-124. There is some doubt about the order in which the prints are to be viewed: Bartrum and Brinkmann place the tumultuous scene which follows the stallion's humiliation last, whereas Hollstein, Mende, Marrow and Shestack, follow the order proposed by Bartsch.  
<sup>2</sup> 'Vilerley herliche vnnnd kunstliche wolgerissene Pferd | mit allem verstand | auff mancherley weiß gestellt umd für gebildet | durch den weyt- berümbten Johan Baldung | zu nutz allen Molern, Goltschmidn, Bildthauweren vnd anderen der kunstliebenden ins Werck gebrocht, dessgleichen vor nie aussgangen. Getruckt zu Basel bey Christoffel van Sichem, Formschneider, 1575' (Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Amerbach-Kabinett). See Mela Escherich, *Hans Baldung-Grien: Bibliographie, 1509-1915* (Strasbourg 1916), p.28 no. 45; *Hans Baldung Grien*, catalogue for an exhibition held at Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, 4 July-27 September 1959 (Karlsruhe 1969), pp.279-280 nos. 78-80; Paul H. Boerlin, *Hans Baldung Grien im Kunstmuseum Basel*, catalogue for an

The earliest impressions presumably were taken in or around 1534, on papers available in Strasbourg. By 1575, the woodblocks were in Basel, in the hands of Christoffel van Sichem (c. 1546-1624), who published them together with a descriptive caption.<sup>2</sup> It is supposed that Van Sichem took the blocks with him to Holland, where he worked from 1598 until his death, and that afterwards they belonged to his son, Christoffel van Sichem the younger (1580-1658). By an unknown route one of the woodblocks entered the Pietro Barelli collection, and survives in the Galleria Estense in Modena.<sup>3</sup>

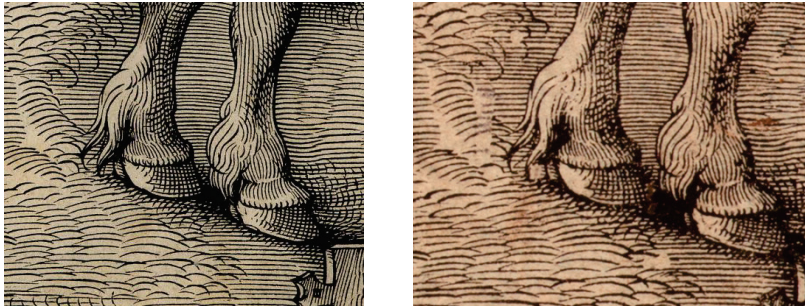
As yet there has been no comprehensive examination of multiple impressions, documenting the progressive deterioration of the woodblocks, and recording paper stocks. Nonetheless, it seems likely that all three impressions offered here were printed in the seventeenth century. We note that early impressions of 'Group of Seven Horses' (H. 239) have no wormhole in the neck of the elk:<sup>4</sup>



'Group of Seven Horses' (H. 239)  
 Left Fig. 1 British Museum impression. Right Fig. 2 Our impression

exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Basel, 8 June-3 September 1978 (Basel 1978), p.80 nos. 97-99; Leonard Wilson Forster, *Christoffel van Sichem in Basel und der frühe deutsche Alexandriner* (Amsterdam 1985), pp.21, 25; Sabine Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545): Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung* (Cologne 2010), pp.234-253 (pp.251-252 on late impressions).  
<sup>3</sup> 'Group of Eight horses' (H. 238); see David Landau, in *I legni incisi della Galleria estense: quattro secoli di stampa nell'Italia settentrionale*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the Chiesa di S. Carlo, Modena, 30 May-29 October 1986 (Modena 1986), p.185 no. 231 and fig. 127. Landau mentions seven 'issues' of the set: 'Le prime tre sono stampate su carte usate prevalentemente a Strasburgo; la quarta, su carta utilizzata a Basilea'; and the last three are presumed to have been printed in Holland in the first half of the seventeenth century. A photograph of the woodblock illustrates David Rosand's review of the exhibition catalogue, in *Print Quarterly* 7 (1990), pp.72-74 (p.73 fig. 64).  
<sup>4</sup> ● London, British Museum, 1895,0122.232 ([image](#)); watermark: crowned shield ([image](#)) ● New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 22.67.58 ([image](#)). Impressions similar to ours (wormhole in the elk's neck) are ● Freiburg, Augustinermuseum, Städtische Museen, Inv. Nr. G 29/17 (Michael Philipp, *Zwischen Himmel und Hölle: Kunst des Mittelalters von der Gotik bis Baldung*

Early impressions of ‘Group of Six Horses’ (H. 240) have no wormholes beside the bucking mare’s hooves:<sup>5</sup>



‘Group of Six Horses’ (H. 240)

Left Fig. 3 British Museum impression. Right Fig. 4 Our impression

Judging by the impression of ‘Group of Eight Horses’ (H. 238) in Modena, that woodblock has suffered the most damage.<sup>6</sup>

REFERENCES Adam Bartsch, *Le Peintre graveur* (Vienna 1803-1821), VII, pp.302-322 and *The Illustrated Bartsch*, 12 (New York 1981), pp.60-62 nos. 56-58 (impressions in New York and Coburg); F.W.H. Hollstein, *German engravings, etchings and woodcuts ca. 1400-1700* (Amsterdam 1954), II, p.140 nos. 238-240; Matthias Mende, *Hans Baldung Grien: Das graphische Werk* (Unterschneidheim 1978), nos. 77-79; James H. Marrow and Alan Shestack, *Hans Baldung Grien: prints & drawings*, catalogue for an exhibition held at National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 25 January-5 April 1981, and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 13 April-14 June 1981 (New Haven 1981), pp.254-256 nos. 83-85

*Grien*, catalogue of an exhibition held in Bucerus Kunst Forum, 19 September 2009-10 January 2010, Munich 2009, pp.233-235 no. 59/1 • New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1984.1203.18 ([image](#)) • Trento, Museo Diocesano Tridentino, inv. 7907, cart. 21/415 (reproduced in *Impressioni ritrovate: antiche stampe su rame e legno dalla collezione vescovile*, edited by Giorgio Marini and Domenica Primerano, Trento 1998, p.55).

<sup>5</sup> • London, British Museum, 1852,0612.111 ([image](#)); watermark ([image](#)) • Los Angeles, LACMA, Los Angeles County Fund, 60.4 ([image](#)). An intermediate impression is • Unlocated (Swann Galleries, New York, 30 October 2013, lot 35, \$18,750; [image](#))

<sup>6</sup> Fondo Estense, a M.1.15; see Ernesto Milano, *Xilografia: dal Quattrocento al Novecento: percorso storico-artistico sui fondi della Biblioteca estense* (Modena 1993), p.128 no. 71 (reproduced). Earlier impressions • London, British Museum, 1895,0122.231 ([image](#)); watermark: crowned shield with three fleur-de-lis and letter P ([image](#)) • New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 33.54.2 ([image](#)) • Unlocated (Swann Galleries, New York, 3 November 2015, lot 302, \$20,000; [image](#)) • Unlocated (Swann Galleries, New York, 29 April 2014, lot 41, \$23,750; [image](#)); watermark: Paschal Lamb, like Briquet 56).