Public access description

Object Type
This print is an etching, produced by biting lines in a metal plate with acid to hold ink. The lines on the plate are filled with ink, which is then printed onto paper.

People
Wendel Dietterlin was born in Pfullendorf on Lake Constance but later became a citizen of the Protestant city of Strasbourg, where he lived for much of his life. He belonged to the local guild of artists, decorators and painters and was chiefly a mural and fresco painter, although none of his work of this kind survives. Dietterlin is remembered for publishing a large and very influential series of architectural prints, which this etching is taken from. He died before he was 50, having mentioned in the dedication to his book that he was suffering a long and painful illness and that he thought life was miserable and dreary but that art was a source of pleasure and grace.

Subjects Depicted
In the title the author explains that his examples of the use of the five orders of architecture include windows, chimneys, door frames, portals, fountains, tombs and monuments. Some of them are very fanciful and demonstrate the artist's powerful and playful imagination. The masonry in and around the empty niches either side of this doorway is rusticated (cut in large blocks separated by deep joints). Rustication usually only occurs in the Tuscan or Doric orders, but the massiveness, sophistication and richness of this example means it cannot be Tuscan and therefore must be Doric.

Publishing
Dietterlin began publishing prints relating to the five orders of architecture in 1593 in Stuttgart, where he was painting a ceiling for Duke Ludwig VI of Württemberg. He published further plates in 1594 and an enlarged definitive edition in Nuremburg in 1598. Each book was had a parallel text in Latin and French, with separate editions in German. These prints were very influential among architects and craftsmen, who used them as design sources. Copies of the book have become scarce as they would often have been used literally until they fell apart. Some of the plates were published separately from 1617 and the original plates were reprinted in 1655.

Descriptive line
Design for a Chimneypiece

Physical description
Etching

Museum number
28766:23

Object history note
Designed by Wendel Dietterlin (born in Pullendorf, Germany, 1550, died in Strasbourg, France, 1599)

Wendel Dietterlin, 'Architectura von austeilung symetrica und proportion der funff seulen', Nuremburg, 1598

Wendel Dietterlin was trained as a painter in Strasbourg. His Architectura, published from 1593, was a virtuoso and extreme pattern book of strapwork grotesque designs for windows, fountains, monuments and so on, arranged by the five orders of architecture. Architectura circulated widely in England and was a major source of inspiration for designers of ornament around 1600 [from departmental notes].

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O81644/architectura-von-austeilung-symetrica-und-etching-dietterlin-i-wendel/