Woodcut

Place of origin: Germany (made)

Date: 1527 - 1550 (made)

Artist/Maker: Beham, Sebald, born 1500 - died 1550 (artist)
Unknown (artist)

Materials and Techniques: Chiaroscuro (colour) woodcut from two blocks on paper

Museum number: 29892

Gallery location: Prints & Drawings Study Room, level C, case EW, shelf 122

Public access description

This print is a copy of a black line woodcut made in about 1527 by Hans Sebald Beham to which a colour block has been added to make a chiaroscuro print. Chiaroscuro refers to rendering light and shade in images and came also to refer to woodcuts printed from two or more colour blocks creating tone and highlights. Beham did not make a chiaroscuro print of this work himself. After the technique's invention a tone block was sometimes added to earlier line prints, in this case via a copy. Notice the misregister between the colour and line block visible to the left of Adam's shoulder.

The technique developed in Germany through an experimental exchange of prints between Hans Burgkmair and Lucas Cranach in about 1507 and 1508 initiated in a letter by Conrad Peutinger, court adviser to Emperor Maximilian I. Both artists were looking to create prints for their patrons to rival chiaroscuro drawing. Cranach's 'St George' for Elector Frederick of Saxony, and Burgkmair's pair, of 'St George' and 'Maximilian I on Horseback', were printed in several different ways, first using hand-coloured paper for the background and gold flocking or gold and silver inks for the highlights. In later attempts tone blocks provided both the colour background and highlights. Within this exchange it is not clear who introduced the first tone block. In Germany the technique achieved complexity in works by Hans Burgkmair, Hans Baldung and Hans Wachtlin.

Descriptive line

Anonymous copy after Hans Sebald Beham, chiaroscuro woodcut from two blocks of Adam and Eve; Germany, 1527-1550.

Physical description

Set against a wooded backdrop, Adam and Eve stand either side of an apple tree, the snake wrapped around the trunk. Eve takes an apple from the snake's mouth. The apple tree is topped by a skull. In front of the backdrop of trees is a parrot and a stag. A lizard is just about to climb up the apple tree trunk. Overall colour, red-orange

Dimensions

Height: 13.8 in, Width: 10.3 in

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URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O949088/woodcut-beham-sebald/