

ALBRECHT DÜRER

Germany, 1471–1528

***The Life of the Virgin Mary Series*, 1502-**

1505

Woodcut

Purchase, 1930

Presenting the essential stations of the Virgin Mary's life and destiny, there are a total of eighteen engravings in this series. In this particular rotation (first of a series of three), you will see narratives relating to the early stages regarding Mary's life.

ALBRECHT DÜRER

Germany, 1471–1528

***The Angel Appears To Joachim*, ca.**

1503-1504

Woodcut

Purchase, 1930 (6053)

In this scene we see an angel appearing before Joachim, Mary's father, delivering him the news that his wife, Anne, will bear a child. This is a miraculous occurrence, not only because an angel is delivering this message but also because Joachim and Anne are an elderly couple. Joachim falls to his knees to receive the message while the apparition shocks three onlookers who are just behind them.

ALBRECHT DÜRER

Germany, 1471–1528

The Birth of the Virgin, ca. 1504-1505

Woodcut

Purchase, 1930 (6048)

At first glance this engraving appears to be a complicated composition. An arch frames the overall scene with the angel presiding over the event, indicating the significance of what is taking place below. Saint Anne, just have given birth, is in bed tended to by her attendants. The group of three women in the left foreground are in the presence of a child; however, this is not Mary. Upon closer examination, you will notice that Mary is in fact in the right foreground, being washed. Only her head and right arm are visible.

ALBRECHT DÜRER

Germany, 1471–1528

The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, ca. 1502-1503

Woodcut

Purchase, 1930 (6049)

In this etching Dürer uses architectural elements to guide the viewer's eye through the scene. One is immediately drawn to the center pillar where you see young Mary hurrying up the Temple steps toward a group of elders. Right behind her are her parents and relatives seeing her off to her new life. Framed by an arch and two pillars in the left foreground are vendors selling temple offerings.

ALBRECHT DÜRER

Germany, 1471–1528

Betrothal of the Virgin, ca. 1504-1505

Woodcut

Purchase, 1930 (6050)

The next significant event in Mary's life is her betrothal to Joseph, who was selected by God to be her husband. According to the apocryphal stories, Mary's suitors were to present a rod to the high priest of the Temple. When Joseph presented his rod and it bloomed, he was identified as the man to wed Mary.

Dürer again uses architectural elements to draw the viewer's eye to the key event. Joseph, Mary and the Priest are framed by the arch directing the viewer's gaze to the matrimony and by doing so, Dürer incorporates the viewer as witnesses to this event.