

H. H. RUMBLER



MELCHIOR LORCK
(Flensburg ca. 1526/27 - after 1583)

The Mole.

Engraving 7.1 x 10.6 cm

Bartsch 5; Harbeck pp. 33-34; Hollstein 18; Fischer 1548.3

Excellent impression of this extremely rare print.

With the commonly trimmed lower edge. The corners left above and below minimally trimmed, otherwise with the fully visible platemark or with extremely fine margins beyond it. With isolated pale brown flecks. Pristine.

This iconographically singular depiction of a mole dates from 1548, when the artist, then just 21 years old, was engaged in peregrinations through southern Germany. The meaning of the image – which shows a mole lying on a riverbank before the backdrop of a village that is set below an elevated fortress, itself under construction – is disclosed by a Latin verse that has been appended to the lower edge of the composition: it is an emblem of the futility of human action and striving in the absence of genuine faith:

As quickly as a feeding mole becomes forgetful, so your prayers are followed by futility, oh godless one!

Provenance

Provenance: H. S. Theobald (Lugt 1375)

H. G. Gutekunst, Stuttgart, auction 68, 1910, no. 437

Sotheby's, London, auction of December 6, 2001, no. 53

Private collection, Germany