

# In the Library

## Jost Amman and Sixteenth-Century Woodcut Illustration

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National Gallery of Art





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Jost Amman was born in Zurich in 1539, the son of a noted scholar. Despite opting to train as an artisan, he maintained connections with humanist scholars throughout his career. Little is known of his early years or where he received his training, but by 1561 he had relocated to Nuremberg where he became one of northern Europe's most prolific printmakers and book illustrators of the late sixteenth century.

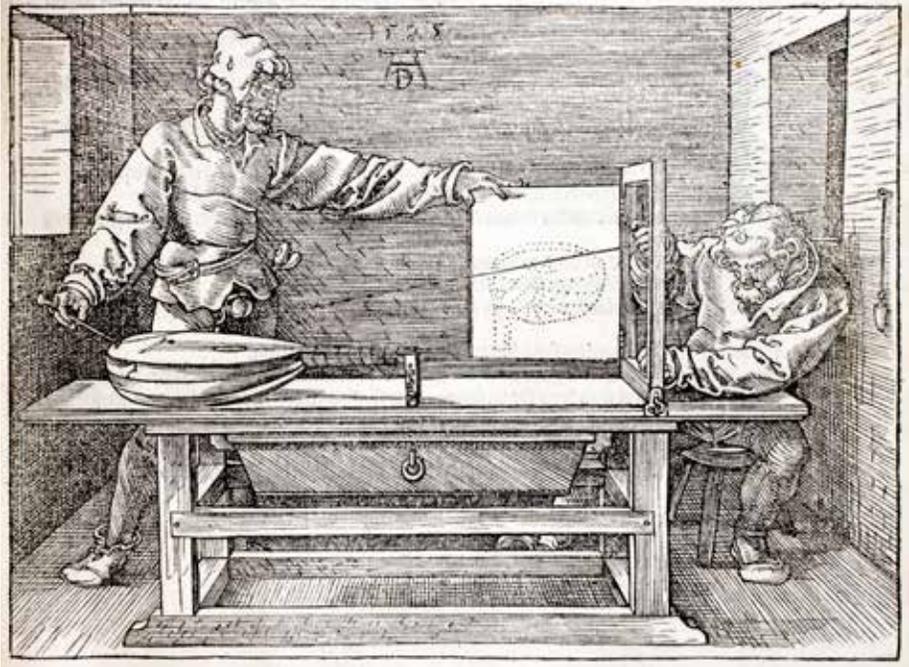
Amman may have trained in the workshop of Virgil Solis (1514–1562), whom Amman essentially replaced as the premier illustrator for Frankfurt publisher Sigmund Feyerabend (1528–1590). Solis had begun illustrations for a bible that would be published in 1564, and Amman may have been an apprentice tasked with cutting the woodblocks for Solis's drawings. Although he maintained his own workshop, Amman became essentially an employee of Feyerabend, one of the most productive publishers of the late sixteenth century. He provided Amman with a majority of his commissions as the two collaborated on at least fifty books.

Little is known of Amman's working methods beyond an anecdote from one of his pupils attesting to the master's prolific work as a draftsman. In addition to the illustrations, he designed other typographic elements in his books including ornamental borders, initial letters, tailpieces, and printer's marks. We know that Amman cut most of his own blocks, at least early on. Later in his career he likely would have overseen the translation of his drawings into woodblocks by others, and we are aware that he had several apprentices. Yet evidence of his financial difficulties raises the possibility that he continued to prepare many of his own blocks.

The books presented in this exhibition show a form of illustration at its apogee in the late Renaissance, although it would decline in the seventeenth century as the baroque took hold. Etching and engraving became most publishers' media of choice for all but the most basic book illustrations. Although Amman's drawings were also printed via copperplate etchings and engravings, his woodcut illustrations were especially popular. This exhibition focuses on Amman's woodcuts, presenting them alongside those of his predecessors such as Solis, Hans Sebald Beham, and Albrecht Dürer, as well as contemporaries like Tobias Stimmer. The aim of the exhibition is to elucidate how Amman's particular combination of precise simplicity and fanciful imagination produced economical woodcuts that served books with a wide variety of purposes.

During his career Amman completed hundreds of designs for dozens of book commissions, from bibles to classics, history to literature, costumes to emblems. Despite enjoying respect among his contemporaries, the quality of Amman's work was criticized after his death in 1591. Yet his prints continued to be copied and re-used, becoming pattern books that influenced artists such as Peter Paul Rubens and Rembrandt van Rijn.

# The Artist's Manual



1

1 Albrecht Dürer, 1471 – 1528, *Unterweisung der Messung*, Nuremberg, 1525, Gift of Robert Erburu

The first book to be illustrated with woodcuts, the 1461 edition of Ulrich Boner's *Der Edelstein*, was printed in Bamberg, Germany, by Albrecht Pfister. Early illustrations were simple, flat depictions without shading or perspective, and composed of chunky, angular lines. Albrecht Dürer is credited with advancing the medium significantly, following his first trip to Italy in 1495. His apocalypse series, published in 1498 and comprising sixteen woodcuts with minimal text, is considered the world's first artists' book, where illustrations take priority rather than supporting the text (see department of prints and drawings, 2006.109.1 – 16). There has been much debate about whether Dürer cut his own blocks, but it is widely accepted that for most of his work, he relied on craftsmen whose work he rigorously supervised. Woodblock cutter, or Formschneider, Hieronymus Andreae (died 1556) was so associated with his craft and sought after that he became known in Nuremberg as Hieronymus Formschneider. It was likely Formschneider who cut the blocks for the two drawings in Dürer's treatise on perspective, shown here. Regardless of whether Dürer cut his own blocks, he obviously understood the medium deeply, which allowed him to provide the cutter with designs that could take better advantage of it than was previously possible. Incorporating dynamic lines, improved perspective, and a hatching system with finer, more contoured lines, his compositions demonstrate a closer relationship with nature and show an increased awareness of the possibilities of activating the white of the paper for a variety of tonal effects.

**2** Hieronymus Rodler, died 1539, *Eyn schön nützlich Büchlin vnd Vnderweisung der Kunst des Messens, mit dem Zirckel, Richtscheidt oder Linial*, Simmern: Hieronymous Rodler, 1531, J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy

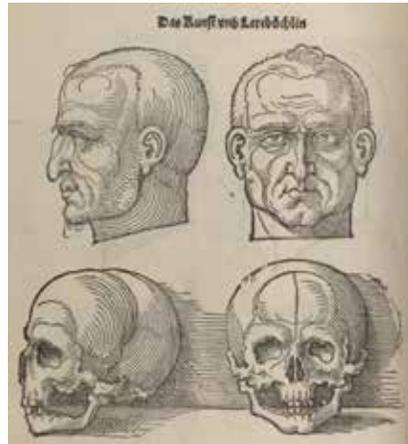
Modeled on Dürer's work, Rodler produced a book on perspective meant to be more practical and easily digested by artists and artisans. The work, including the woodcuts, was probably done by Rodler's patron, Count Johann II of Pfalz-Simmern (1492–1557), who wished to remain anonymous. Not only do the woodcuts illustrate the technical concepts from the text, but they also provide a lively view of life on the castle grounds. Stark architectural views give way to scenes crowded with figures and allusions to music, heraldry, commerce, dress, food, and drink.

**3** Hans Sebald Beham, 1500–1550, *Das Kunst und Lere Büchlin*, Frankfurt: Christian Egenolff, 1552, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Following the publication of Dürer's series of treatises in the 1520s, many German artists and craftsmen began publishing pattern books and trade secrets in the 1530s. One of the earliest model books was Beham's, which he first attempted to publish in Nuremberg in 1528. Dürer's widow prevented it on the grounds of plagiarism, but it eventually appeared in several printings by Egenolff and his heirs in Frankfurt. The 1552 edition shown here is the earliest known version to survive. It is aimed at beginners, illustrating a few basic concepts through clearly devised woodcuts and concise textual descriptions.



2



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4 Heinrich Vogtherr the Elder, 1490 – 1556, Heinrich Vogtherr the Younger, 1513 – 1568, *Ein frembds und wunderbars Kunstbüchlein allen Molern Bildtschnitzern, Goldtschmiden, Steynmetzen, Schreynern, Platnern, Wassen vn[d] Messerschmiden hochnutzlich zu gebrauchen*, Strasburg: Jacob Froelich, 1545, David K. E. Bruce Fund

First printed in 1537 and influenced by the Augsburg school, Vogtherr's pattern book for artists went through several editions in the mid-sixteenth century. Very few examples survive, attesting to the book's heavy use by artists throughout Europe. Rather than systematic textual instruction, the work compiles examples of usable elements that could be copied. Over seven hundred examples of hands, feet, helmets, armor, swords, candelabra, etc. are crammed into just fifty-five pages.

5 Jost Amman, 1539 – 1591, *Kunstbüchlin*, Frankfurt: Johann Feyerabend, 1599, J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy

First published in 1578 under the title *Kunst und Lehrbüchlein*, Amman's manual for artists was quite popular and was re-issued several times. The 1599 edition shown here is the largest compilation, combining the woodcuts from the 1578 edition with selections from several of Amman's other works. With a mere four pages of text and 293 woodcuts, it forms a pattern book that was much copied by artisans and painters alike well into the seventeenth century.



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## The Classics



6

6 Marcus Tullius Cicero, [*De officiis*], *Officia M.T.C. Ein Büch so Marcus Tullius Cicero der Römer zû seynem Sune Marco . . .*, Augsburg: Heynrichen Steyner, 1531, A.W. Mellon New Century Fund

The first German edition of Cicero includes one hundred woodcuts after Hans Weiditz (c. 1495 – 1536) commissioned by Grimm and Wirsung and prepared by an unknown expert woodcutter in 1521 but left unpublished until Steyner acquired the blocks and published them without the supervision of Weiditz. Thirty-three of the woodcuts belong to a set meant to illustrate Petrarch, while the remaining sixty-seven were intended for the Cicero itself. Cicero's moral aphorisms are illustrated with scenes from everyday life, with a range of characters including artists, pilgrims, builders, surgeons, and more. (See also department of prints and drawings, 2011.80.1.)

7 Johannes Posthius, 1537 – 1597, *Iohan. Posthii Germershemii Tetrasticha in Ovidii Metam. lib. XV. quibus accesserunt Vergilij Solis figurae elegantiss*, Frankfurt: Georg Corin, Sigmund Feyerabend, and Wigandi Galli, 1563, J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy

The exact nature of the relationship between Virgil Solis (1514 – 1562) and Amman is unclear. Amman arrived in Nuremberg shortly before Solis's death and likely began work as an assistant to him. Prints by Amman copied after Solis are extant, and Amman completed Solis's commission for biblical illustrations with Feyerabend in 1564. Beyond this, the two artists share a certain stylistic affinity, prioritizing efficiency over grandeur and a minute attention to architectural and costume details. Solis's woodcuts for Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were particularly influential, and Amman may even have been involved in re-cutting the blocks for this posthumous edition of 1563.



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**8** Livy, [*Ab urbe condita*], *Römische Historien, jetzundt mit gantzem Fleiss besichtigt, gebessert vnd gemehret*, Mainz: Juonem Scheffer, 1541, Gift of The Circle of the National Gallery of Art

**9** Livy, [*Ab urbe condita*], *Titi Livii Patavini, Romanae historiae principis, libri omnes, quotquot ad nostram aetatem pervenerunt*, Frankfurt: Georg Corin, Sigmund Feyerabend, and Wigandi Galli, 1568, David K. E. Bruce Fund

**10** Livy, [*Ab urbe condita*], *Von Ankunfft vnnnd Vrsprung des Römischen Reichs*, Strasburg: Theodosius Rihel, 1590, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Shown here are three editions of Livy's Roman history, all illustrated with woodcuts and published in Germany in the sixteenth century. All three show a depiction of the same scene, Theoxena assisting her children to commit suicide to avoid execution by King Philip. The 1541 edition, first published by Schoffer in 1505, is illustrated with more than two hundred woodcuts by unidentified artists, many combining multiple printing blocks, and repeating the same blocks several times to illustrate different military encounters. Mainly because of the copious illustrations, it proved to be popular, coming out in eight editions over the first half of the sixteenth century, but the compositions lack perspectival depth, with thick lines and little expression in the figures. By contrast the 1568 edition illustrated by Amman includes ninety-two woodcuts in a much more refined style. The 1590 edition, first published in 1574, with 131 woodcuts made after drawings by Tobias Stimmer, shows further refinement of the lines and greater spatial depth, but the composition lacks Amman's dynamic narrative flow.

**11** Plutarch, [*Lives*], *Plutarchus, der fürtrefflichst grichisch Historj Schreiber, Von den herrlichsten, löblichsten, namhafftsten Historien, Leben, Handlungen vnd ritterlichen Thaten, der mannlichsten Helden, vnd herrlichsten Mannern*, Frankfurt: Peter Schmid and Sigmund Feyerabend, 1580, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Another classical Roman history, this edition of Plutarch uses forty-five woodcuts by Jost Amman as illustrations, some reused from the 1568 Livy, as well as a few by his contemporary, Tobias Stimmer. Here Hannibal traversing the Alps with his elephants demonstrates Amman's deft economy and ability to work many key details into a small amount of space.





Georg Ruxner, dates unknown, *Thurnierbuch: von Anfang, Ursachen, Vrsprung vnd Herkommen, der Thurnier im Heyligen Römischen Reich Teutscher Nation*, Frankfurt: Sigmund Feyerabend and Simon Hüters, 1566, J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy

## Biblical and Religious Illustration



12

12 Georg Aemilius, 1517–1569, *Imaginvm in Apocalypsi Iohannis descriptio*, Frankfurt: Christian Egenolff, 1540, David K. E. Bruce Fund

The first edition of the Protestant reformer Oemler's Latin verse describing the apocalypse with Hans Sebald Beham's series of twenty-six apocalypse woodcuts, first published the previous year under the title *Typi in Apocalypsi Ioannis Depicti*... (see department of prints and drawings, 2013.68.1). Although much smaller in scale, Beham's series responds to Dürer's series of 1498. Both series emphasize contemplation, but Beham goes for the intimacy of a private devotional rather than the drama invoked by Dürer.



13

13 Jost Amman, 1539–1591, Conrad Wies, dates unknown, *Bibliorum vtriusque Testamenti icones, summo artificio expressae, historias sacras ad vivum exhibentes, & oculis summa cum gratia repraesentantes*, Frankfurt: Georg Corin and Sigmund Feyerabend, 1571, David K. E. Bruce Fund

After completing the illustrations started by Solis for Feyerabend's 1564 bible, Amman executed a complete series of his own for another bible in 1570 (see department of prints and drawings, 2001.54.1). Amman's images proved so popular that they were often re-issued in different forms. In this case, a selection of the woodcuts was combined with Latin verse by a contemporary author. Shown here is one of Amman's apocalypse illustrations corresponding to that of Beham nearby.

14 Johann Lauterbach, 1531–1593, *Enchiridion Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, Frankfurt: Paul Reffeler and Sigmund Feyerabend, 1573, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Amman's biblical woodcuts were also used for this collection of German and Latin verse on biblical subjects intended to help children memorize the contents. Amman's economy provides the perfect visual aid to maintain the student's interest without distracting from the text. This copy includes only books 1–4 (of 6), the complete Old Testament portion.



15

**15** Jost Amman, 1539–1591, *Künstliche und wolgerissene Figuren, der fürnembsten Euangelien, durchs gantze Jar, sampt den Passion und zwölf Aposteln, dergleichen vor nie in Druck aussgangen*, Frankfurt: Johann Feyerabend and Sigmund Feyerabend, 1587, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Amman's second and final suite of woodcuts depicting scenes from the Gospels, this work similarly combines illustration and poetry. In addition to the biblical scenes, an emblematic image of a young man in an elaborate baroque border begins the work. Borders like this were often printed from separate blocks and created by an assistant or apprentice, but Amman was known to design many such borders himself, and occasionally cut the borders and the main subject into the same block. This same print appears in Amman's *Insignia sacrae* of 1579 (cat. 23).

**16** Jost Amman, 1539–1591, *Cleri totius Romanae Ecclesiae subiecti, Seu, Pontificiorvm Ordinvm Omnium Omnino Vtrivsqve Sexvs, Habitvs, Artificiosissimis figuris, quibus Francisci Modii singula octosticha adiecta sunt...*, Frankfurt: Sigmund Feyerabend, 1585, Gift of C. Wesley and Jacqueline Peebles

One hundred and four woodcuts make up this work on the costume and dress of the Roman Catholic clergy, with a prose treatise by François Modius. Also published in a German-language edition in the same year with the title *Ständ vnd Orden* and verse by Philip Lonicer in place of the prose found here, it includes a woodcut device of Sigmund Feyerabend designed by Amman.

**17–18** Johann Wolf, 1537–1600, *Lectiovm memorabilium et reconditarum centenarii XVI*, Lauingen: Leonhardus Rheinmichel, 1600, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Compiled from a variety of sources, this universal history of the Catholic Church uses over four hundred woodcuts from various sources including many from Amman's books on costumes of the clergy (including cat. 16). A series of satirical woodcuts by Jakob Lederlein is included to illustrate numerous scandalous anecdotes about the church, and the series of emblems shown here is by an unknown artist.



16

## History, Heraldry, and Emblems

**19** Johannes Aventinus, 1477 – 1534, *Chronica, darin nit allein dess gar alten Hauss Beyern, Keiser, Könige, Hertzogen, Fürsten, Graffen, Freyerrn Geschlechte, Herkommen, Stañ vnd Geschichte, sondern auch der vralten teutschen Vrsprung, Herkoñen, Sitten . . .*, Frankfurt: Georg Rab, Sigmund Feyerabend, and Weigand Han, 1566

One of Amman's earliest non-biblical commissions for Feyerabend was to produce woodcut illustrations for Aventinus's chronicle of the Germanic peoples, brought out in 1566. In addition to a woodcut portrait of the author on the title page and portraits of a dozen German kings that begin the work, Amman provided seven in-text woodcuts, five of which were later used for the 1568 edition of Livy published by Feyerabend (cat. 7).

**20** Georg Ruxner, dates unknown, *Anfang, vrspru[n]g vnd herko[m]men des Thurniers inn Teutscher nation*, Simmern: Hieronymous Rodler, 1532, David K. E. Bruce Fund

As with the perspective book also published by Rodler (cat. 2), the woodcuts for the first edition of Ruxner's work on heraldry, courtly customs, horsemanship, and knighthood were likely done anonymously by Count Johann II of Pfalz-Simmern (1492 – 1557) and make use of the same techniques, particularly in the large folding plate depicting the first jousting tournament. (See also department of prints and drawings, 2014.119.1.)

**21** Georg Ruxner, dates unknown, *Thurnierbuch: von Anfang, Vrsachen, Vrsprung vnd Herkommen, der Thurnier im Heyligen Römischen Reich Teutscher Nation*, Frankfurt: Sigmund Feyerabend and Simon Hüters, 1566, J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy (see pages 8 – 9)

In 1566 Sigmund Feyerabend produced a new edition of Ruxner with woodcuts by Jost Amman. His large plate illustrating the tournament spreads across two pages and appears twice in the book and again in Feyerabend's later 1578 edition. Despite using a smaller block than Rodler's version, Amman's decision to alter the point of view opens up the composition, creating more space and allowing greater detail in the figures and their various interactions even though they are of a much smaller size.

**22** Pietro Marcello, dates unknown, *De vita, moribus, et rebus gestis omnium ducum Venetorum*, Frankfurt: Paul Reffeler and Sigmund Feyerabend, 1574, David K. E. Bruce Fund

This work of biographies of Venetian rulers includes one hundred and four woodcuts by Jost Amman, of which eighty-four are portraits of doges with their coats of arms providing important heraldic information to enhance the text.



19



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**23** *Insignia sacrae caesareae maiestatis, principum electorum, ac aliquot illustrissimarum, illustrium, nobilium, & aliarum familiarum, formis artificiosissimis expressa*, Frankfurt: Georg Corin and Sigmund Feyerabend, 1579, David K. E. Bruce Fund (back cover)

A German-language edition of this work appeared at the same time and again in 1589 with the title *Stam vnd Wapenbuch hochs vnd niderts Standts . . .*, which translates to “family and coat of arms of high and low rank,” but the works seem to have multiple functions. On one hand it is an emblem book: the illustrations are generally family arms on the versos, and allegories, mythological figures, social types, etc., on the rectos, and the text comprises allegorical interpretations of both by Philipp Lonicer (died 1599). Yet the last quarter of the book is made up of allegorical figures and woodcuts with blank escutcheons like those seen the *Anthologia gnomica* (cat. 24) without text, making it appear to be either an *album amicorum* (autograph book) or a pattern book similar to *Kunstbüchlin* (cat. 5).

**24** Jost Amman, 1539–1591, *Anthologia gnomica*, Frankfurt: Sigmund Feyerabend, 1579, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Issued also in German the same year under the title *Stam oder Gesellenbuch*, this work combines proverbs in Greek and Latin with Amman’s woodcuts. As the escutcheons (shields) are left blank and both the text and woodcuts are set so as to maximize the blank space on the pages, this may have been intended as an *album amicorum* (autograph book). Friends of the book’s owner would sign their names and insert their own coats of arms into the figures representing those traits with which they wanted to associate themselves. Amman’s designs are notable among such works in their focus on the details of the figures and their dress, making it an invaluable resource for the study of period costume as well. (See also department of prints and drawings, 1983.67.1.)



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## Costume and Trades



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**25** Conrad Lautenbach, 1534 – 1585, *Im Frauenzimmer wirt vermeldt von allerley schönen Kleidungen vnnnd Trachten der Weiber*, Frankfurt: Sigmund Feyerabend, 1586, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Published simultaneously in Latin with the title *Gynaceum*, or “ladies’ chamber,” this work comprises 122 woodcuts by Jost Amman and moralistic verse by Conrad Lautenbach encouraging virtuous women to be obedient and chaste. The illustrations provide a social commentary as they include women of all types and stations, from the empress to a Roman streetwalker. Half the series focuses on German-speaking regions, but costumes from Italy, France, Spain, England, Hungary, Turkey, and even one from Peru are also included.



26

**26** Hartmann Schopper, born 1542, *Panoplia omnium illiberalium mechanicarum aut sedentariarum artium genera continens*, Frankfurt: Georg Corin and Sigmund Feyerabend, 1568, David K. E. Bruce Fund (front and inside front cover)

This book includes 132 woodcut prints describing all manner of trades and professions of the late sixteenth century with Latin text by Hartmann Schopper. One hundred twelve of these woodcuts and two others were published by Feyerabend earlier in 1568 with verses in German by Hans Sachs under the title *Eygentliche Beschreibung aller Stände auf Erden*. . . . These illustrations depict figures in a manner that clearly communicates the intricacies of their work processes, and the book would become one of Amman’s most popular, selling well and helping to establish his reputation as a master. Shown here is *Der Reisser*, or draftsman, and there has been speculation that it is a self-portrait by Amman. The following plate, *Der Formschneider* or woodblock cutter, appears to show the same figure, lending credence to the argument that Amman cut his own blocks. (See inside front cover.)

**27** Christoph Weigel, 1654–1725, *Abbildung der gemein-nützlichen Haupt-Stände von denen Regenten und ihren so in Frieden- als-Kriegs-Zeiten zugeordneten Bedienten an biss auf alle Künstler und Handwercker*, Regensburg: for the author, 1698, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Amman's book of trades was so popular that it spawned imitations by artists into the eighteenth century. Weigel's version, published over a century later and including 212 engravings, owes a debt to both Amman and the Dutch artist Jan Luiken (1649–1712). Weigel even commissioned Luiken's son Caspar Luiken (1672–1708) to contribute nearly half of the illustrations here, copied after his father's works, while the rest were engraved by Weigel himself after drawings by Georg Christoph Eimmart. While the illustrations are derivative, Weigel's primary contribution to the genre is the lengthy textual descriptions of each trade and the creation of a hierarchy among them, leaving us a detailed record of German tradesmen's lives at the turn of the eighteenth century.

**28** Jan Luiken, 1649–1712, Caspar Luiken, 1672–1708, *Spiegel van het menselyk bedryf*, Amsterdam: Kornelis Vander Sys, 1718, David K. E. Bruce Fund

In the 1690s Jan Luiken and his son Caspar were the most prolific illustrators in Amsterdam, the center of the publishing world at that time. The fifth edition of a work originally published in 1694 (for the first edition see the department of prints and drawings, 1964.8.1201), the Luikens continued the tradition of the book of trades with a focus on Dutch tradesmen. In addition to the engravings, they composed the text themselves. Like Amman, their illustrations aim to clearly depict several aspects of each trade within a single plate.

**29** *Afbeelding der menschelyke bezigheden*, Amsterdam: Reinier and Josua Ottens, c. 1695, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Such works were good sellers, popular across many classes with individual prints also finding an eager market. Unsurprisingly, not long after the Luikens' book of trades appeared, it was plagiarized. Here an engraved title page has been added and one hundred emblems of occupations are arranged in alphabetical order, each with a quatrain by Anthony Janssen engraved in the plate.



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Checklist of the exhibition *In the Library: Jost Amman and Sixteenth-Century Woodcut Illustration*, September 5, 2017–January 5, 2018. © 2017 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington. Written by Yuri Long.

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