

## **The Large Cat, Princeton University Art Museum**

Renowned for his close observations of nature, Visscher engraved one of the most famous portrayals of the cat in Western art. The large tabby appears to be sunning itself, but its protracted front paws and alert ears may indicate that it is lying in wait for prey. The mouse, attempting to creep around the cat, seems paralyzed by the ambiguous posture of his enemy: is the cat lazing indulgently or covertly crouching for attack? While the interpretation remains open, Visscher perhaps refers to a biblical verse stating that idle souls suffer hunger.

## **Art Institute Chicago**

Cornelis Visscher's engraving is one of the softest, most tactile renditions of a cat ever printed. The breathless mouse sneaking by the corner grate seems barely present in contrast, so light and ghostly is its fur. In a culture where cats were domestic staples (as dispatchers of vermin) rather than treasured pets, Visscher created a particularly memorable portrait.