

74 Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528)

Nemesis, c.1501–2

Engraving. 335 × 233 mm

Bartsch VII.91.77

It is not known where Dürer learned to engrave, but, as the son of a Nuremberg goldsmith, it is very probable that he acquired some instruction in his father's workshop. After his apprenticeship to the Nuremberg painter Wolgemut, Dürer travelled extensively in his youth. With the intention of becoming Schongauer's pupil, he visited Colmar only to find that he had died in 1491. Dürer's earliest engravings were made in Nuremberg shortly after returning from his first trip to Venice in 1495. This famous print demonstrates Dürer's complete mastery of engraving by the turn of the sixteenth century. Its unusual subject reveals Dürer's familiarity with the learned interests of the Nuremberg humanists led by his close friend Willibald Pirckheimer. *Nemesis*, the Greek goddess of retribution, appears here as a winged naked woman, who, turning the ball of fortune with her feet, with one hand offers a covered cup to the just and with the other grips a bridle to hold back human pride. The terrestrial world is represented by the amazingly detailed bird's-eye view spread below the goddess's feet; this mountain landscape has been identified as a view of Klausen in the South Tyrol.

Like print connoisseurs of all periods, Malcolm, who owned sixty-five Dürer engravings, especially prized the brilliant clarity of the early impressions. This one is particularly choice because it was printed before a scratch below the bridge accidentally appeared on the plate shortly after the very first proofs were taken.

1895-9-15-346. Malcolm collection