

prints of the same quality to the collection. It includes an extensive biography of Decker and his circle and a solid account of his cultural and aesthetic interests. An essay by Decker himself defines his notion of art: 'L'art, pour moi, est inséparable de la beauté' (Art, for me, is inseparable from beauty), which reveals a traditional taste, although his possessions included a watercolour by Rodin and a Picasso drawing. The essays are followed by a chronology of Decker and his collection; a survey of the latter, which now comprises 79 prints including those bought with his endowment; a study of the watermarks; notices on some collecting institutions and collectors such as Samuel Josefowitz (1921–2015) and Otto Schäfer (1919–2009), who had previously owned some of the prints; a selection of documents; and a list of Decker's publications. A bibliography referencing numerous manuscript sources and an index conclude the publication. All the works but two are reproduced in original size and outstanding high-resolution quality.

Decker's career began in 1910 with medical studies which led to various posts culminating in Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Lausanne University in 1946. He began seriously collecting only in that year, after he met the German collector and print dealer Alfred Strölin (1871–1955), who had been hospitalized in 1945 under his care. Another friend, and former patient, was William Cuendet (1886–1958), a pastor from the county of Vaud and print collector. At his death in 1967 Decker bequeathed his collection to the canton of Vaud and in 1969 it was transferred to the Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire de Lausanne. From there it went to the print cabinet of the Musée de l'Elysée, also in Lausanne, in 1980 and in 1989 to the new Cabinet cantonal des estampes of the Musée Jenisch Vevey. The first exhibition with a catalogue of the prints by Dürer and Rembrandt was shown at the museum in 1991 (reviewed in *Print Quarterly*, ix, 1992, p. 63). The current publication includes the numerous prints added since.

Decker's appreciation of the prints by Dürer and Rembrandt is linked to technical mastery – not surprising for a master of the scalpel – and anatomical knowledge. His advice to his students, 'Pensez au geste suivant' (Think about the next gesture), is as valid for a surgeon as for a printmaker. Not all subject matter pleased Decker and he avoided the *Four Witches*, the *Great Fortune* and the *Dream of the Doctor*, which he considered ugly, probably because of anatomical flaws in the nudes. As he wrote to his friend, the writer Charles-François Landry in a peremptory statement: 'J'aime la beauté, Monsieur, la laideur me dégoûte' (I love beauty, Monsieur, ugliness disgusts me). 'For Rembrandt', he wrote:

the historical interest does not exist: he took up printmaking at a time when the techniques were already mastered. I only looked for subject matter showing Rembrandt's dramatic imagination. I

PIERRE DECKER, SURGEON, AND COLLECTING IN LAUSANNE. Decker (1892–1967) combined a prestigious professional career with an interest in two groundbreaking printmakers, Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and Rembrandt (1606–69). What makes his collection special is that his intaglio prints – and the one wood-cut, Dürer's *Last Supper* of 1523 – now in the Musée Jenisch Vevey, are the artists' greatest works in impressions of the highest quality (fig. 123). The collection includes 35 works by Dürer, sixteen by Rembrandt and Cranach's sole engraving of *Luther as an Augustinian Monk*. To celebrate the publication of Gilles Monney, Camille Noverraz and Vincent Barras's extensive study of the collector

and his collection, *Pierre Decker: Médecin et collectionneur*, the Cabinet cantonal des estampes of the Musée Jenisch Vevey organized the exhibition 'Dürer et Rembrandt. La collection Pierre Decker' (2 March–30 May 2021, Lausanne, Éditions BHMS, 2021, 240 pp., 120 ill., €45).

The book is divided into the collection formed during Decker's lifetime, the collector's medical career, and the Fonds Pierre Decker, which he endowed in his will to add



123. Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I*, 1514, 239 x 186 mm (Vevey, Musée Jenisch Vevey, Fonds Decker).

dismissed all the little scribbled figures, his self-portraits in masquerade costumes ... Obviously, I dismissed the dreadful academies of Rembrandt, even worse than those of Dürer reflecting the old topos that Rembrandt painted the bodies as they are rather than how they should be. This is confirmed by the artist Pietro Sarto:

In his home, I saw prestigious Dürers and very beautiful Rembrandts. He spoiled my pleasure with his considerations. He hated Rembrandt's nudes and, to illustrate his assertions, he showed me in a book the faults of anatomy; he took pleasure in diagnosing phlegmon here, scoliosis there.

Decker's first identified purchase, on 7 November 1946 from Alfred Strölin, was the drypoint *Clump of Trees with a Vista*, probably Rembrandt's final landscape print, of 1652. An interesting and little known figure, Strölin was a cousin of Richard Gutekunst (1870–1960) of the Gutekunst & Klipstein gallery in Berne which later

became Galerie Kornfeld. Thirteen prints came from Strölin. The source of the remaining 38 is unknown, although possibilities are explored by comparison with fellow print collectors such as Strölin, Cuendet and Alexis Forel (1852–1922); the latter two, like Decker, were also major donors to the Cabinet cantonal. Collecting is a central focus of the book, and even if the sellers of most prints owned by Decker are unidentified, a good number have prestigious provenances, which are tracked here. The focus then shifts to doctors collecting prints, in particular Francis Seymour Haden (Decker owned Rembrandt's *Jews in a Synagogue* of 1648 from his collection) and Johan Catharinus Justus Bierens de Haan. Other important collections made by medical doctors from Vevey include that of Edouard de Cérenville (1843–1915) and his son René (1975–1968) – mainly of drawings – and the print collection of Henri Rossier (1835–1928) and his descendants, which included 321 portrait engravings by Robert Nanteuil now also on



124. Rembrandt, *Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple*, 1635, 138 x 169 mm (Vevey, Musée Jenisch Vevey, Fonds Decker).

deposit at the Musée Jenisch. The final chapter covers acquisitions made after Decker's death – six Dürers, fourteen Rembrandts and seven 'documentary works', including the copperplate of Rembrandt's *Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple*, of 1635 (for the print, fig. 124). The interesting discussion of over-restored prints by the Schweidler family of restorers is a lesson to all! Based on archival work and serious research, this exemplary book is not only a major contribution to Decker and his collection, but also on print collecting networks and collecting in and around Vevey in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. JEAN MICHEL MASSING