

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



Musical Automaton Rhinoceros Clock

James Cox (British, ca. 1723–1800)

Date ca. 1765–72

Medium Case: gilt bronze, silver enamel, and paste jewels Pedestal: white marble and agate

Dimensions 15 9/16 × 8 3/8 × 3 1/2 in. (39.5 × 21.3 × 8.9 cm)

Credit Line Gift of Alexis Gregory, 2021

Accession Number 2021.6.02

Currently On View

Second Floor, Room 23, Clocks and Watches Room

Commentary The "rhinoceros mania" began in Europe when a rhinoceros from India named Miss Clara was brought by the Dutch East India Company to Rotterdam in 1741 and exhibited in several cities until her death in London in 1758. Standing on a white marble pedestal and carrying a musical clock on its back, this rhinoceros figure is modeled after a celebrated print by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). The animal supports a small edifice that includes a clock and jeweled flowers. The chime mechanism, concealed on the back of the rhinoceros, strikes every half hour and can play two different tunes. The clock and its pendant may have been part of a more complex automaton that is described in Cox's catalogue in 1774.

Collection History London, March and October 1779 (?); Maurice- Yves Sandoz (1892--1958), Rome (Vigna Pepoli); Rudigier-Ruckert Gallery, Munich; purchased by Alexis Gregory, 2004; Gift to The Frick Collection, 2021