

Basic Detail Report



Allegory of the Hope for Gain

Date

ca. 1610

Primary Maker

Willem van Swanenburgh

Medium

Engravings on laid paper

Description

This is a set of four engravings, each approx. 8 3/4 x 6 1/2 inches. The set of four prints chart the unfortunate progress of a man - actually Everyman - who has been foolishly blinded by his desires for the things of this world. As a result, he neglects his spiritual duties, investing all

his hope in material things, and is ultimately and inevitably betrayed by death and the devil. PRINT NO. 1...the man's soul is corrupted by the devil, who paints vain and alluring images of power, riches and lust on a human heart, while a young woman binds his ankle with rope, shackling him to the devil's work. (The text beneath the print explains that the devil fills man's heart with worthless things, and in this way Desire - the woman - secretly gets man in her power.) PRINT NO.2...Desire (now represented by a blindfolded Cupid) pulls man along by the rope, urging him to climb the cliff of ambition and win the worldly prizes beyond (money bags, a king's crown, etc.) (The accompanying text says the essentially the same thing.) PRINT NO.3...the man's misguided hope for material gain is literally represented as a statue of Hope with her anchor, which the man and the devil work to place atop the pile of money and other treasures he has amassed with the devil's help. (The text suggest that once man has acquired money and wealth, he begins to place his hope upon it.) The print literally represents that truism. PRINT NO.4... the tragic results of the man's misspent life are made clear as Death, rushing through the door, frightens him into releasing the statue as the sack of money topples over. The broken hourglass at the lower right symbolizes that time has run out for the man and his soul. (the text states that as death approaches the man, his betrayed by his vain hope.) In each print the man grows successively older. Thus Swanenburgh conflates the idea of the vain search for worldly goods with the four ages of man.

Dimensions

8 3/4 x 6 1/2 in. (22.2 x 16.5 cm) Overall, Frame: 30 x 25 5/8 in. (76.2 x 65.1 cm)