



VENETIAN SCHOOL

(c. 1620)

Fantastical animal, probably a Leucrota

watercolour

242 x 545 mm

Four other watercolours in the same format and style are in a private collection in London. There is some similarity with between these monsters and that in 'Perseus Rescuing Andromeda' by Joachim Wtewael in the Louvre, dated to 1611. However, John Ayers of the Victoria and Albert Museum also thought they may have been copied from Chinese models - such as a sculpture or a lacquer screen.

This beast depicted in this drawing is most likely a Leucrota. The medieval bestiary tradition, following Pliny the Elder, describes the Leucrota as an animal which lives in India, can imitate human speech, and is formed by the mating of a hyena and a lioness. It is the size of an ass, has the chest and legs of a lion, but with cloven hooves, and an extremely wide mouth, which stretches from ear to ear.