

My favourite painting Tug Rice

St George and the Dragon by Leonhard Beck



Tug Rice is a New York City-based artist who has worked with Halcyon Days and The Ritz London

‘This remarkable painting enthralled me when I saw it in Vienna. The lush and vibrant colours made me question my preconceived notions about the so-called “dark ages”—offering instead a gleaming, Technicolor version of the Christian legend of St George slaying a dragon. The almost illustrative quality of the subject calls to mind the picture books of castles and knights I devoured as a child. In contrast with the violent action in the foreground, Beck’s dreamy interpretation on the whole makes this a tranquil scene that is easy on the eyes and worthy of multiple viewings.’



St George and the Dragon, about 1515, oil on panel, 53¼in by 45¼in, by Leonhard Beck (1480–1542), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria

Charlotte Mullins comments on *St George and the Dragon*

THIS minutely detailed work was painted in about 1515 by Leonhard Beck when he was working for the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I in Augsburg, Germany. Beck painted St George as a wealthy knight who sits astride his plumed and armoured horse, his arm raised and wielding a sword to deliver the final blow. The dragon—which looks more like a large lizard—has been holding a princess captive. She looks down on the scene from a nearby path in a meticulously painted

landscape. It seems St George’s rescue attempt is well under way—the dragon already has a broken lance driven through its scaly neck. It writhes on its back, dead offspring and skulls littering the ground by its tail. Behind this scene we see St George again, this time from the rear, trotting away as the princess walks free. Beyond the action, we see neatly ordered fields, a walled city and distant blue mountains.

This painting occupies the intersection between medieval illumination, with its

jewelled colours and compressed narratives, and northern Renaissance naturalism. Although the trees, grasses and plants show great observational skill, there is also an otherworldly quality to this work, as if it were a page from a medieval Book of Hours composed of many separate evenly lit scenes. Beck was one of the most prolific woodcut designers of his generation and he worked alongside many other artists at the court of Maximilian I, including Albrecht Dürer. 🐉