Delightful Design
A Florentine etcher who worked in France and Italy, Stefano Della Bella was one of the most accomplished and prolific printmakers of the 17th century. Look how delicately Della Bella frames his imaginary scene: a leopard curls around the feet of a little girl, who in turn cradles a leopard cub, while the arch of the reclining leopard, the curve of the girl's tummy, and the roundness of her face all mirror the swirling forms above. For more Blanton #MuseumFromHome resources, visit blantonmuseum.org/museumfromhome

Image: Stefano Della Bella, Acanthus frieze with young girl holding a leopard cub, from Ornamenti o grottesche [Ornaments or Grotesques], circa 1653, etching, 6 5/8 x 2 9/16 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Isidore Simkowitz in memory of Amy Cecelia Simkowitz-Rogers, 1997
Large fragments of the Ara Pacis — an altar commissioned by the Roman Senate in 13 BC to honor Emperor Augustus and dedicated to Pax, the Roman goddess of peace — were rediscovered in the 16th century. The engraver Agostino Veneziano carefully recorded this decorative frieze from the altar's south side, in which a swan, a lizard, and a songbird all blend seamlessly into a network of acanthus blossoms and palmette leaves. Because the panel Veneziano studied is now missing, this engraving provides valuable documentation about the altar's original appearance, while also serving as inspiration for artists and designers. For more Blanton #MuseumFromHome resources, visit blantonmuseum.org/museumfromhome
These camels, which twist, turn, and descend into curlicues of foliage and fruit, are another example of Della Bella’s incredible artistry, and come from the same series of 12 ornament prints as the little girl with the leopard. Della Bella produced over 1,000 etchings, with subjects ranging from educational playing cards (created to teach the young French Prince Louis XIV), to fanciful inventions such as these, which could inspire architects designing decorations for buildings. For more Blanton #MuseumFromHome resources, visit blantonmuseum.org/museumfromhome

Image: Stefano Della Bella, Acanthus ornament with camels, from Ormanni o grottesche [Ornaments or Grotesques], circa 1653, etching, 6 9/16 x 2 1/2 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Isidore Simkowitz in memory of Amy Cecelia Simkowitz-Rogers, 1997
At the center of this clever title page, which precedes the published works of Leonhard Weiss, the German engraver Lucas Kilian presents a jumble of letters. Can you untangle them to spell out the Latin version of the author’s name: LEONHARDVS WEISSIVS? For more Blanton #MuseumFromHome resources, visit blantonmuseum.org/museumfromhome