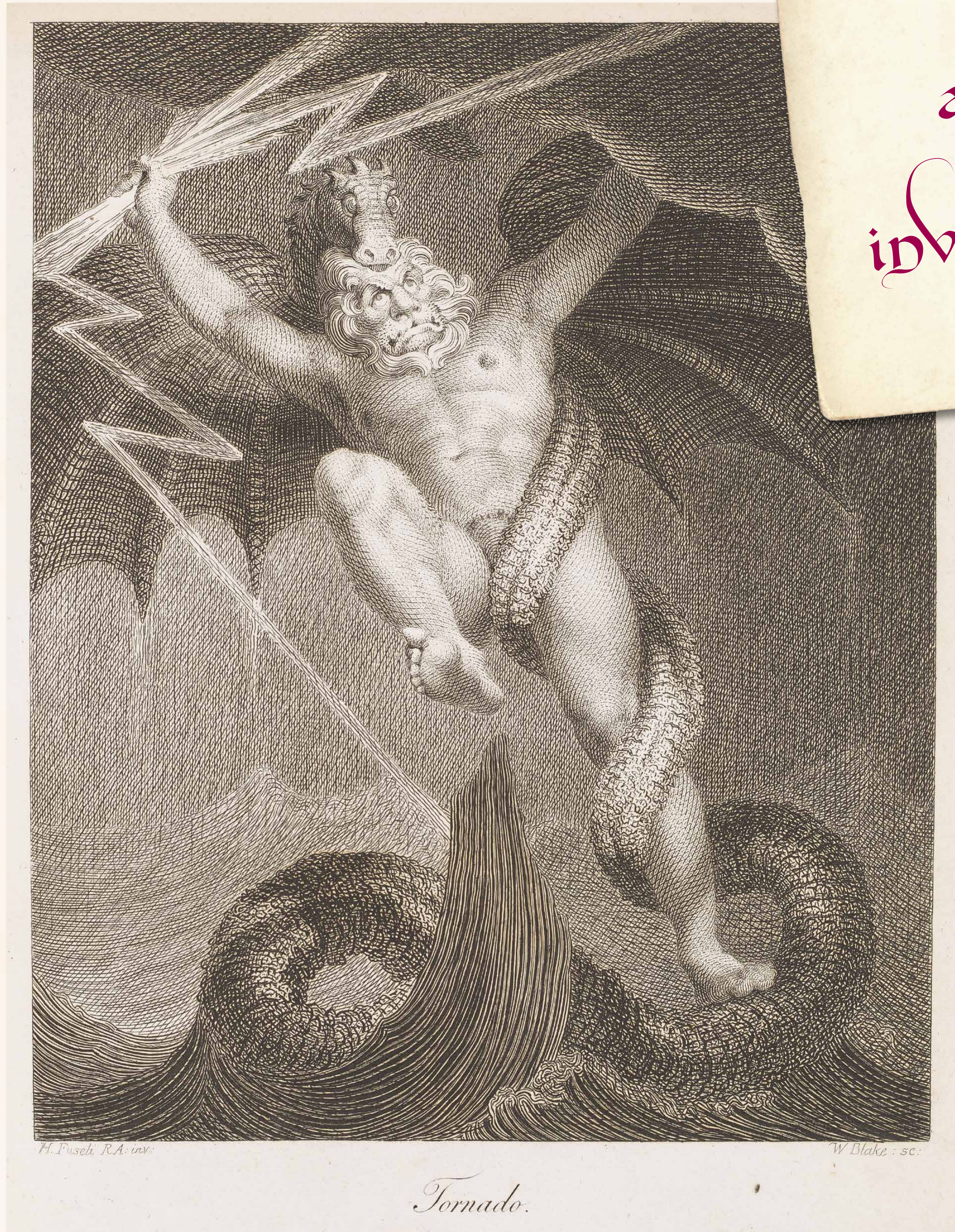


The Romantic era was
a time of innovation,
invention and imagination.



Tornado. Engraving by William Blake after Henry Fuseli RA. From *The botanic garden: A poem, in two parts: with philosophical notes* by Erasmus Darwin, 3rd edition (1795). Special Collection Oversize, PR3396.A66.D95

Romanticism, a cultural and intellectual movement centred on ideas of individuality, emotion and creativity, shaped every aspect of British society during the period 1780 to 1840.

This was a time of political and intellectual turbulence, as the French Revolution and its aftermath highlighted both the possibilities and the dangers of a new political order in Europe. The Romantic era was characterized by a reaction against the eighteenth-century Enlightenment idealisation of reason, turning instead to the imagination. It was the time of William Blake and Lord Byron, Mary Shelley and William Wordsworth – writers and artists who produced fresh visions of the world. It was also, however, a period when imaginative fantasy was accompanied by a fascination with the natural world – the facts as well as the fantasies of our exhibition. The new technologies developed

by visionary engineers such as Richard Arkwright transformed the landscape, part of the economic and social transfiguration of Britain during the Industrial Revolution. Scientists combined empirical observation of material reality with a sense of the power of the imagination. Explorers travelled across the world on voyages of discovery and colonisation, making the real and imagined lands beyond Europe central to the Romantic imagination, and setting in train the geo-political movements that produced the British Empire of the nineteenth century. The seismic developments of the Romantic era, and above all its concern with democracy, creativity and the power of the individual, laid the foundations for our world today.

The exhibition has been jointly curated by a team from the School of English (Professor Lynda Pratt, Dr Máire ní Fhlathúin, Johnny Cammish, Colette Davies, Ruby Hawley-Sibbett, Jodie Marley, Amy Wilcockson and Dr Charlotte May) and Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham.

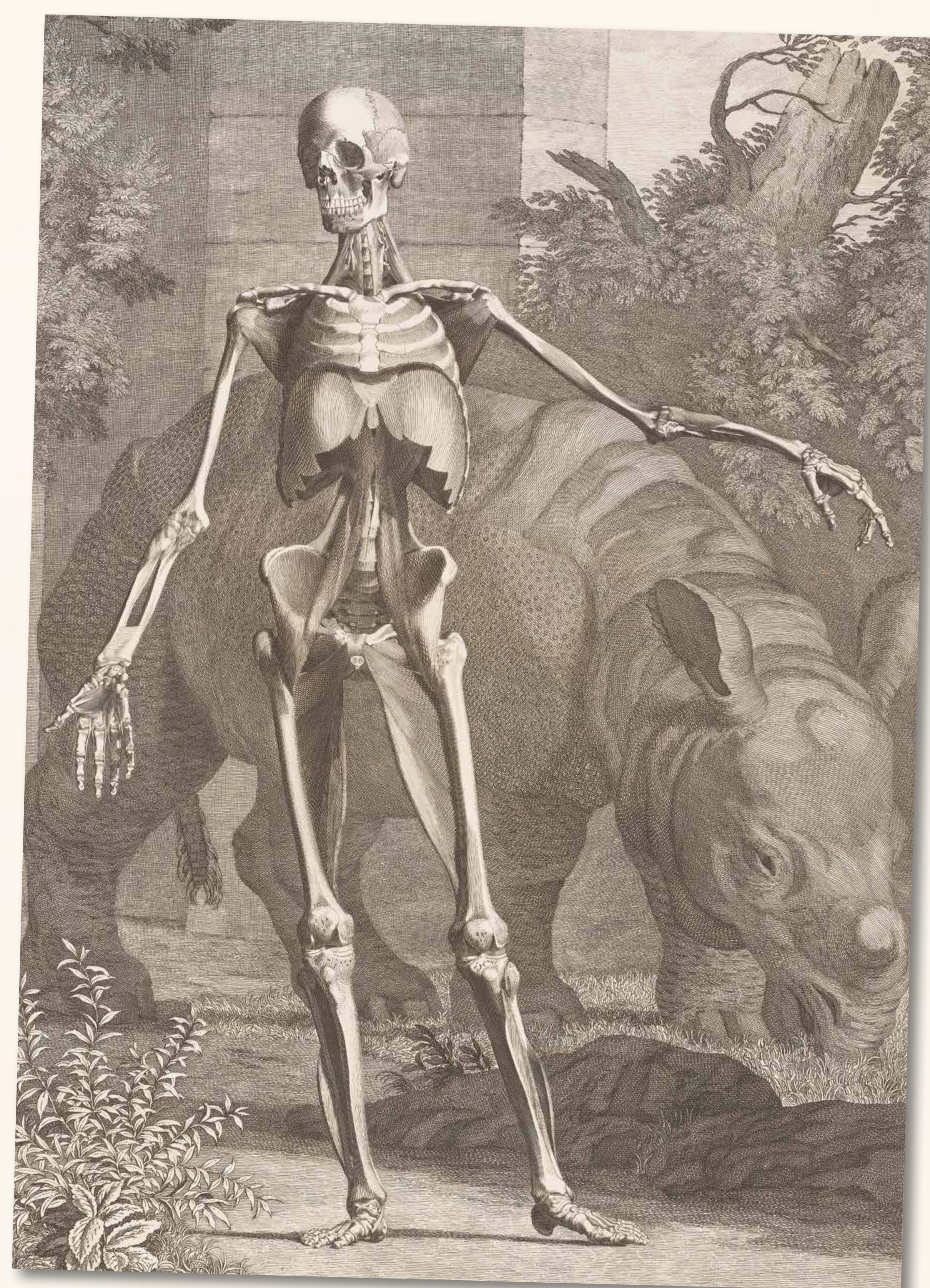


Table of the human skeleton from *Tables of the skeleton and muscles of the human body* by Bernhard Siegfried Albinus (1749). Nottingham Medico-Chirurgical Society Library Oversize XX, WE17 ALB