

Exhibition: *Renaissance and Reformation: German Art in the Age of Dürer and Cranach*

On View: November 20, 2016–March 26, 2017

Location: Resnick Pavilion



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(Los Angeles—September 19, 2016) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is pleased to present *Renaissance and Reformation: German Art in the Age of Dürer and Cranach*. Coinciding with the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the exhibition brings to Los Angeles some of the greatest achievements of German Renaissance art. As the only U.S. venue of the exhibition, LACMA offers a unique opportunity to view masterpieces of this period, which have rarely been displayed outside of Germany.

The period under consideration (1460–1580) was marked by conflicts, civil wars, and complex relationships with neighboring countries, but it also witnessed a flourishing of many states and cities, reflected in the skills of their craftsmen. Additionally, the era was characterized by profound changes in thought, philosophy, science, and religion, spearheaded by Martin Luther’s writings, which in turn transformed the work of many artists of the day such as Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach, Hans Holbein, Mathias Grünewald, Tilman Riemenschneider, and Peter Vischer. These revolutionary ideas and innovations played a transformational role in the development of modern Western societies.

Organized with the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, and the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen München, and made possible by the German Foreign Office, the exhibition comprises over 100 objects, including paintings, drawings, sculptures, arms and armor, as well as decorative arts.

“Renaissance and Reformation—organized in cooperation with these three German institutions—provides a rare opportunity to view works by artists not typically represented in

local collections in Los Angeles,” said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director.

“The exhibition brings together some of the finest works by the greatest artists, painters, sculptors, and craftsmen of the period,” says J. Patrice Marandel, the Robert H. Ahmanson Chief Curator of European Art at LACMA. “We are very pleased to present the show on the momentous occasion of the Reformation’s 500th anniversary.”

Renaissance and Reformation is designed by Frederick Fisher and Partners.

Exhibition Background

The 1517 publication of Martin Luther’s Ninety-five Theses set in motion one of the greatest movements of ideas in European history. What began as a challenge to the Church for the practice of selling “indulgences,” or vouchers for reduced time in Purgatory, developed into a religious and political movement that reshaped the Western Christian world.

Luther’s Reformation, while considered from a strictly theological viewpoint, should also be studied within the complex political realities of early 16th-century Europe that includes struggles for power from various sides: the German princes, the House of Habsburg, and the Roman Catholic Church. It can also be viewed as one of the early manifestations of the broad movements of ideas and reconsiderations of the world’s order that define the Renaissance. The Reformation’s insistence upon the individual is also a trait that will be at the center of many humanist writers’ works later in the century.

Artists were affected by such changes. The structure of their profession was changing as the Church lost ground along with its sponsorship of artists. Some hinted in their works at a new attitude toward the divine. Others embraced neutral forms, such as the portrait, and gave it a new dimension.

Exhibition Organization

Renaissance and Reformation is arranged in five major thematic sections which explore the fundamental changes that took place in art and society during the Reformation.

Traditional Imagery and Devotion illustrates the changes to visual language brought about by the Reformation. From altarpieces via depictions of the saints to the iconography of Christ’s Passion, the themes and modes of representation explored in these works highlight the differences that set the conflicting religious doctrines apart. Some artists accepted commissions both from Protestant clients and those who adhered to the “old faith,” meaning that their works often carried political implications. Over time, objects of religious veneration

gave way to works of sculpture intended for aesthetic value—a transformation that can be observed with particular clarity among the sculptural pieces represented in this section.

Propaganda and Polemics illustrates the extent to which developments in art, media, and politics were intertwined. The Reformation was the first movement to use propaganda techniques to foster its cause. Using words and images, the supporters of the new Faith benefited from the fairly recent invention of the moveable type by Johannes Gutenberg to produce numerous and inexpensive broadsheets. Those who could not read received the message from explicit images. Polemics were both religious and political, and the images used by the reformers were often crude, even vulgar, but could at the same time be easily understood by the masses. The Church and the Pope in particular, were the most frequent targets. Literally demonized, they were presented as the representatives not of God, but of Satan himself. Printmaking techniques such as woodcut and copperplate engraving developed apace and spawned further copies of images. Alongside book printing, they played a vital role in disseminating reformatory ideas—not least as part of the propaganda campaigns that accompanied hotly fought polemical disputes.

Arms and Armor: The Splendor of the Saxon Court explores the political dimensions of the Reformation, while illustrating the extraordinary cultural significance of the princely states embroiled in the conflict raging between emergent religious factions. Objects from the royal art treasuries recall the era's exquisite craftsmanship, and feature weapons and armor that lend a glimpse into life at the royal court. Armor was particularly praised. Most of the armor presented in this section were made for jousting or worn in ceremonies. Immensely costly, these were considered works of art in themselves. Arms, such as pistols or daggers, were often ambassadorial gifts and were admired both for their functionality and refinement of execution. The art of the Dresden court exemplifies a Protestant principality's efforts to project an image befitting the high prestige it enjoyed and the political influence it wielded within the Holy Roman Empire.

Landscapes, historical scenes, and figures from ancient mythology—the themes explored in **Humanism and Reality**—attest to new and transformed ways of looking at the world, incorporating both idealized visions of classical antiquity and fastidious observations of nature and people. Here, the focus is upon delicate drawings by Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach, Hans Beham, Hans Schüpfelin, and Albrecht Altdorfer, as well as a number of other artists. These rare works provide a glimpse of each artist's hand. Furthermore, they serve as an expression of European Renaissance art and the heightened autonomy it accorded both artist and artwork alike.

Portraiture enjoyed great favor in European painting from the 15th century onward. As religious paintings were less in demand, commissions for individual portraits increased and the studios adapted themselves to the new demand. Furthermore, the insistence of the new Faith on the individual found an echo in the art of portraiture. Most sitters were prominent members of the new church or belonged to the upper echelons of society: wealthy merchants or civic leaders, among others. Portraits range from intense studies such as those painted by Dürer, whose sitters are often set in shallow spaces, inspiring the viewer to concentrate on their gaze, to figures represented against finely detailed landscapes. All, however, are meant to convey not only the exact features of the subjects but also their social rank and moral qualities. Particularly sensitive are the drawn portraits. Whether executed as studies for prints or as free-standing works of art, German artists often used a combination of techniques and crayons to render their subjects with surprising likeness. Their delicate approach to the medium remains one of the most spectacular achievements of the German Renaissance.

Catalogue

Renaissance and Reformation German Art in the Age of Dürer and Cranach

\$49.95 | hardcover with jacket

Stephanie Buck, Julien Chapuis, Stephan Kemperdick, Michael Roth, Jeffrey Chipps Smith, and Dirk Syndram. Edited by Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, and Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen München.

Featuring more than 100 outstanding paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, and treasures of the Age of the Reformation, this publication comprises masterpieces by Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach the Elder and Lucas Cranach the Younger, Hans Holbein the Elder and Hans Holbein the Younger, Matthias Grünewald, and Tilman Riemenschneider, among others. By placing these works in their historical context, this beautifully illustrated book uses art as a prism through which to consider the religious, social, and political upheavals of the time. The volume includes insightful texts that discuss the key themes in the exhibition. Biographies of the artists, an extensive bibliography and a glossary of central terms concerning the German Reformation, make this a comprehensive study of a fascinating period in European art history.

Programming

Berlin Philharmonic Concert

Friday, November 18, 2016 | 12 pm

Bing Theater | Free, tickets required

Members of the world-renowned Berlin Philharmonic will perform in conjunction with *Renaissance and Reformation: German Art in the Age of Dürer and Cranach*.

Opening lecture featuring Jeffrey Chipps Smith, University of Texas at Austin: “Beauty and Conflict in German Renaissance Art”

Sunday, November 20, 2016 | 1 pm

Bing Theater | Free admission, no reservations

Kay Fortson Chair in European Art at the University of Texas at Austin, Dr. Smith is an acknowledged expert in German and Netherlandish art, 1400–1700, and a leading authority on the life and work of Albrecht Dürer. He contributed one of the essays in the exhibition. Recipient of many awards and prizes, Dr. Smith earned his PhD degree in art history from Columbia University and did his undergraduate study at Duke University.

Sundays Live

Sunday, November 27, 2016 | 6 pm

Bing Theater | Free admission, no reservations

LACMA's weekly chamber music series will celebrate music from the time of the Reformation. The musicians will be assembled by USC Thornton School of Music faculty member Jason Yoshida, who has performed at LACMA before. Yoshida specializes in solo and continuo performance on lutes and historical guitars. He received international recognition for his CD *Mozart Encomium* featuring the world premiere recording of Scheidler's virtuosic *Variations on a theme by Mozart* for Baroque lute.

Andell Family Sundays

Sundays, January 8, 15, 22, 29, 2017 | 12:30 pm

Zev Yaroslavsky Plaza | Free, with general admission

LACMA's acclaimed family program will focus on German art in the age of the Renaissance and Reformation during every Sunday in January. Drop in anytime between 12:30 and 3:30 pm, and make, look at, and talk about art. This weekly family event features artist-led workshops and friendly gallery tours and activities thematically based on the special exhibition *Renaissance and Reformation*. Special focus will be on themes of portraiture, arms and armor, drawings, and bookmaking. Create memories together and have fun!

Stefan Goldmann performance

Saturday, February 4, 2017 | 8 pm

Resnick Pavilion | Ticket information to come

Addressing the unique constellation of qualities as embodied in Reformation art, German composer and musician Stefan Goldmann will prepare an electroacoustic concert to be performed in the exhibition. The performance will mirror the paintings' exploration of radical structure and tender expression with modern musical means. With a background in techno, Goldmann is transforming core features of electronic music, such as grid, loop, sampling, and vinyl culture, into intricate works with wider implications. Goldmann has found application for

his challenging concepts in his work with ensembles, choreographers, and improvising musicians as well as for film and site-specific formats, with commissions from MaerzMusik Berlin, the Honen-In Temple in Kyoto, and the BASF Cultural Program.

Credit: This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, and the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen München, and made possible by the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany.

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About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography, in addition to representing Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection that includes more than 130,000 objects dating from antiquity to the present, encompassing the geographic world and nearly the entire history of art. Among the museum's strengths are its holdings of Asian art; Latin American art, ranging from masterpieces from the Ancient Americas to works by leading modern and contemporary artists; and Islamic art, of which LACMA hosts one of the most significant collections in the world. A museum of international stature as well as a vital part of Southern California, LACMA shares its vast collections through exhibitions, public programs, and research facilities that attract over one million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions through digital initiatives such as online collections, scholarly catalogues, and interactive engagement. LACMA is located in Hancock Park, 30 acres situated at the center of Los Angeles, which also contains the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum and the forthcoming Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. Situated halfway between the ocean and downtown, LACMA is at the heart of Los Angeles.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. lacma.org

Image captions:

(Left) Lucas Cranach the Elder (Workshop of), *Portrait of Martin Luther*, 1532, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister/Hans-Peter Klut
(Center, left) Peter von Speyer the Elder, *Armor of the Duke August von Sachsen at the Battle of Mühlberg*, 1546, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Rüstkammer, photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Rüstkammer/Elke Estel, Hans-Peter Klut

(Center, right) Hans Schwarz, *Death and the Maiden*, c. 1520, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung, photo © bpk, Berlin/Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung/Reinhard Saczewski/Art Resource, NY

(Right) Albrecht Dürer, *Mary as the Mother of Sorrows*, 1495/1498, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek München, photo © Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen München/Sibylle Forster

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