

UNUSUAL 18th-CENTURY FIGURES

"The greatest part of mankind would have no knowledge of a God, if the worship which is paid him, was not attended with some external signs. The more dark and confused their ideas have been of the supreme Being, the more absurd and extravagant have been these signs of their adoration."

Jean Frédéric Bernard,

introduction to CÉRÉMONIES ET COUTUMES RELIGIEUSES DE TOUS LES PEUPLES DU MONDE.

Printing press based on Gutenberg's prototype

Designed and built in 2017 by Yverdon-les-Bains cabinetmaker Pierre-Yves Schenker for the exhibition *PRINT! The first pages of a revolution* organised at MIR on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, this Gutenberg-inspired printing press is 3 metres tall and weighs 400 kilos. It is made of oak, with a walnut screw and a lever made of ash. It differs from its 16th-century ancestors by its height, giving it a more slender appearance, and by the use of full-page nyloprint plates rather than the movable type used in the past. That aside, the press is an exact reproduction, with a marble at the back for inking, a plank that slides under the screw press, an inked plate, and a tympan which folds down on the type tray with the frisket covering the part of the paper that is not to be printed on. This printing press was used in 2017 to print a 760-page copy of the Bible, with the participation of 15,000 visitors and four contemporary artists. In 2018, it was used again to print copies of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the United Nations Office in Geneva. A similar model was also used at the 2017 Frankfurt Book Fair for the opening of the French pavilion, an event attended by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron.



Illustrations from the 500th anniversary Bible

John Armleder (1948) is a Swiss artist.

Marc Bauer (1975) is a Swiss artist.

Vidya Gastaldon (1974) is a French-Swiss artist.

Mai-Thu Perret (1976) is a Swiss artist of French and Vietnamese descent.

Curation: MIR

Exhibition design: Stéphane Kläfiger, Aubonne

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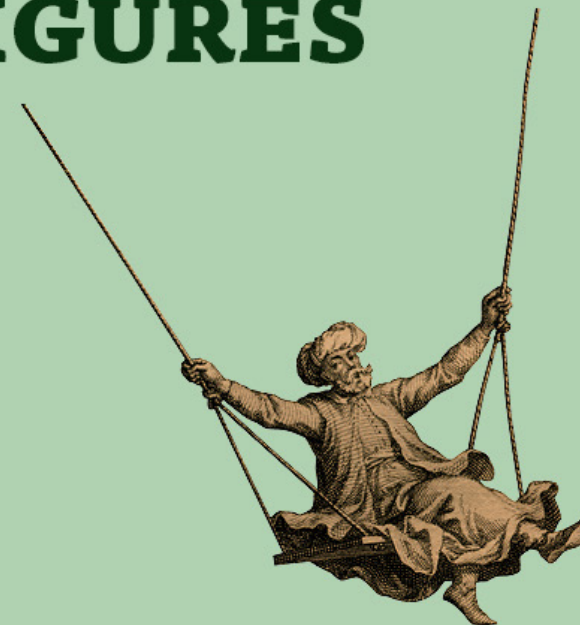
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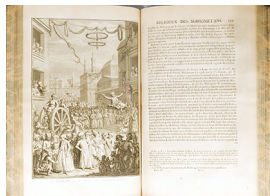
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Picture of the Principal Religions of the World, engraving by Bernard Picart, on the left of the title page of the first volume of CÉRÉMONIES ET COUTUMES RELIGIEUSES DE TOUS LES PEUPLES DU MONDE (The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World). Even though the engraver Picart appears explicitly, the author Jean Frédéric Bernard is never mentioned, presumably because as the publisher of the volumes, he wished to avoid the appearance of self-publication.



BAIRAM or Passover for MOHAMMEDANS. This Muslim festival, similar to the Christian New Year or Easter, is an opportunity for lively rejoicing: "They extend swings in the streets, and one flutters in the air sitting on a wooden seat in the middle of the swing that men lead with more or less violence, depending on the will of the one who sits there."



The PROCESSION with PALMS on PALM-SUNDAY and The PROCESSION of the HOLY SACRAMENT on CORPUS CHRISTI Day. These images illustrate a lengthy discussion of Roman Catholic ceremonies, in which the author maintains his critical stance, as in this passage on Palm Sunday: "By the blessing of the branches, we are taught that all our thoughts, desires, and faculties, ought to be offered to God, formed according to his Spirit, and actuated by the impulse of his Grace. But this mystical interpretation is a little forced."



The NUPTIAL CEREMONY of the PEOPLE of JAVA. Both scenes depict a typical S-shaped procession, a pattern often used by Picart. The groom is seen meeting the bride to bring her to his home, a rather traditional scenario. What is less so was the attitude of some of the inhabitants of the island, who, the author writes on the facing page, "carried all such as were infirm and incapable of working, either thro' Age or Sickness, to the publick Market, and there sold them to the Anthropophagi."



FUNERAL CEREMONY of the native peoples living near the ORINOCO River and of the Brazilians. "The People who inhabit the Banks of Orinoco, hang up the carcasses of their dead in their huts, and adorn them with feathers and necklaces, after the flesh is rotted off." Although, as in this passage, the author emphasises the aspects of these religious ceremonies in the Americas most likely to impress the reader, his spirit of tolerance leads him to specify four lines below that "the Savages have their decorums as well as we."



Confucius, as it is to be seen in the public colleges of the Chinese

"The Chinese tell us, that a celestial harmony was heard at the nativity of Confucius; that the stars themselves descended upon earth, or at least came very near it, doubtless with no other Intent than to testify their joy and wonder on that miraculous occasion. As soon as he was born, two dragons came to watch over him, and protect him from all harms. This prodigy bears some affinity to that of the serpents, which accompanied young Hercules as he lay in his cradle."

Ancient figure of a Roman priest

"In several monuments which remain from the ancient Romans, the Priest at the Altar always has with him a young boy dressed in white, which the Controversists are keen to compare with the Deacon serving at the Altar."

A Muscovite Bishop in his ordinary habit

"The highest qualifications of their inferior Clergy, and which are absolutely necessary to all such as make their application to their Bishops for their admission to Holy Orders, are, that they make themselves masters of singing and reading distinctly their office; that they live in credit and reputation amongst their neighbours; that they have a clear and musical voice; and are capable of pronouncing, with all the energy and vigour imaginable, twelve, or fifteen times together in a breath, *Hospodi pomuli*, that is, 'Lord have mercy upon us'."

Preaching Quakeress

"On their outward exercises of devotions, I observe that some are in a deep meditation, others in an extasy of contemplation, whilst some one of them, man or woman, rises up either with a sedate and composed motion, or in a kind of transport, as if acted by an irresistible power, and often with sighs, groans and tears. This variety of behaviour is caused, as they pretend, by the impression of the spirit, which often dictates to the *man or woman preacher*, sermons two or three hours long, after a deep and fullen silence of an equal duration has stupified those enthusiasts."

Isis with a cow's head suckling Horus

"Both the one and the other intended by these emblematical Idols to represent the force of Nature, her power, fruitfulness, and activity. Isis therefore amongst the Egyptians, Ceres and Cybele amongst the Romans, and the Puzza of the Chinese may be looked upon as one and the same Deity, which either produces, or is the cause of the production of all things, and in short is Nature herself."

A Chinese begging friar

"A mendicant monk is here depicted, dressed in a coat of many colours, and with a hat as large as an umbrella. These mendicant monks sit in the streets and roads cross-legged, tinkling a little bell with a stick, till the people relieve them."

Different clothing of the Dervish

"The rule of the Dervishes is to be patient, humble, reserved, charitable. They must observe silence in front of their Superiors and they usually have their eyes downcast, their heads bending over their stomachs and their bodies half bent. Besides this, they wear on their bodies shirts from the thickest cloth that can be found: but others even more rigid don't wear any and put directly on their flesh a smock brown coat that goes below the fat of the leg."

A Jogi who keeps a peacock from a principle of devotion

"Some penitents do a very meritorious action in feeding a peacock for *Brama's* sake, to whom that bird is sacred; others, who are ever exposed to the burning rays of the Sun, observe the same piety with regard to other birds, and carry their charity so far, as to let them perch upon their heads."

