



Photo credit: www.musee-reforme.ch

Print!

The First Pages of a Revolution

by Shirley Suckow

The Gutenberg Revolution was at least as powerful as that of the internet today. 500 years ago, the reformer Martin Luther rebelled against his church, penning 95 theses criticizing the sale of indulgences in exchange for salvation. Thanks to the printing press, this dispute within the Church had unexpectedly far-reaching repercussions that resulted in the birth of the Reformation. Without the lightning speed development of printing, the Reformation would not have known the expansion that it did in the 16th century. This movement, started by Luther and his peers, can be called the first “press campaign” in history. According to Wittenberg, also a reformer, “Printing is the greatest and most extraordinary act of Divine Grace.” He had good reason to say that, as his editorial tracts were phenomenally successful. More than 30,000 copies of his writings came off the press between 1517 and 1520 and almost 3,700 different editions of his works were printed during the last 30 years of his life.

The Reformation was not the only beneficiary of this invention; many new ideas and cultural movements also benefited modifying the relationship to education, science, literature and religion.

To commemorate this 500-year anniversary, The International Museum of the Reformation in Geneva has organized a spectacular interactive exhibition to show how the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg became a vector for new ideas. It helped the reformers to print and diffuse tens of thousands of new editions of the Bible which allowed each population to read it in its own language.

The exhibition “Print! First Pages of the Revolution” helps to relive this amazing adventure. During the 130 days of the exhibition, a specially built reproduction of the Gutenberg printing press, measuring 3 meters tall, will be used to handprint the pages of a single large-format copy of the Bible in the 16th century style. In addition it will be used to print the poster of the exhibition and seventeen best sellers of the 16th century.

Four contemporary artists, John Armleder, Marc Bauer, Vidya Gastaldon and Mai-Thu Perret enliven this event with different interpretations of the roles played by the great illustrators of the Renaissance, Lucas Cranach and Hans Holbein. The contemporary artists will create their works on the printing press. ◇



Photo: Atelier Schenker



Photo: Bible polyglot from Antwerp(c) Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny, Geneva

Musée International de la Réforme
(located next to the Cathedral of Saint Pierre)
4, rue du Cloître, 1204 Genève
Tél: 41 22 310 24 31
info@mir.ch

Bus 36: stop Cathedral
Buses 2,7,10: stop Molard
Tram 12: stop Molard
Parking Saint-Antoine/Mont Blanc
Handicap Access: Boutique

Open Tuesday through Sunday from 10:00 to 17:00
Exhibition dates: June 4 thru October 31, 2017