



MIR

## 'PRINT!'

**THE FIRST PAGES OF A REVOLUTION**

**AN INTERACTIVE EXHIBITION**

**FROM 4 JUNE TO 31 OCTOBER 2017**

The Gutenberg Revolution was at least as influential as the invention of the Internet. It was the lightning development of printing in the 15th century that enabled the rapid spread of the Reformation a century later. In fact, the **movement led by Luther and his contemporaries** has been described by some as the **first large-scale media campaign** in history. 'Printing is the greatest and most extraordinary act of Divine Grace', Luther is reported to have said. The reformer from Wittenberg was a phenomenally successful author himself: an estimated **300,000 copies of his writings were circulated between 1517 and 1520**, and in the 30 final years of his life around **3,700 editions of his works** were published.

Although the printing press greatly benefited the Reformation, other intellectual and cultural movements also took advantage of this important invention, radically transforming people's relationship to education, science, literature and religion.

### **An interactive exhibition**

To mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation this year, the International Museum of the Reformation (MIR) in Geneva is organising an interactive exhibition exploring the fascinating connection between a great idea and the objects that enable it to thrive independently from its originator.

The Reformation found in Gutenberg the ideal agent for its ambitious programme: to **rediscover the sources of the Christian Bible**, which, in its view, had been obscured by a thousand years of ecclesiastical tradition. Tens of thousands of Bibles entered circulation thanks to the printing press, enabling laypeople to read the word of God in their own language. By making knowledge more easily accessible, printing and translation favoured the emergence of new ideas and the **rise of a more independent, entrepreneurial and democratic social class**.

**PRINT! The first pages of a revolution** will bring this incredible story to life in a highly original way. Over 128 days, from 4 June to 31 October 2017, a purpose-built replica of a Gutenberg press, placed inside a spectacular glass cube, will be used to print **a contemporary French translation of the Bible, *La Bible des écrivains*** (Bayard 2000), utilising techniques and formats familiar to 16th-century printers. This version of the Bible includes **essays by famous French authors**, such as Frédéric Boyer, Jean Echenoz, Emmanuel Carrère and Marie Ndiaye. The MIR will produce a single copy, beautifully illustrated with works of art created for the occasion by famous international artists. Visitors will be invited to participate in the production of this unique 500th anniversary Bible, modelled on its wildly popular 16th-century predecessors.

Many of these famous works will be on display at the MIR in a space devoted to the history of printing, the second great revolution after the invention of writing and before that of the Internet. First editions of **Luther's 95 theses**, the **New Testament in French of 1524**, **Erasmus's masterpiece *In Praise of Folly***, the Catholic Church's *Index of Prohibited Books*, and **Montaigne's *Essays***, among others, will attest to the profound upheavals in the arts, sciences and religion at the time.

Anonymous visitors and famous guests alike will be able to engage with the exhibition by helping to produce this unique Bible, making it a truly collective endeavour. Illustrations by well-known artists of the time will be woven into the design of the exhibition in order to evoke the multi-faceted world that gave rise to the Gutenberg press and the priceless 16th-century books on display. Finally, a **lecture series** will round out five months of activities centred on the **first pages of a revolution**, of which the Reformation was an essential chapter.

[mir.ch](http://mir.ch)

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