

For immediate release
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FAMED DÜRER PRINT COLLECTION COMES TO MOBIA

RENOWNED GERMAN ARTIST'S MOST FAMOUS IMAGES
DISPLAYED WITHIN BODY OF HIS GRAPHIC ART

NEW YORK, July 22, 2008 – A rare collection of prints by celebrated artist Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528) makes its U.S. debut at the Museum of Biblical Art (MOBIA) beginning July 26. *Albrecht Dürer: Art in Transition* will feature 106 works by the gifted and versatile German artist of the Renaissance period, including three of his most iconic images – *Fall of Man*, *Melencolia I* and *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Dürer is regarded by many scholars as Germany's greatest artist. The exhibition traces his evolution from young printmaker to preeminent master. On loan from Germany's Hessisches Landesmuseum's formidable collection, the prints on display encompass the artist's work from 1495 to 1522 and are arranged according to themes which fascinated Dürer: The Passion of Jesus Christ; The Lives of the Virgin, Christ and the Saints; and Genre, Moralizing and Mythological Scenes.

"Dürer is, without a doubt, one of the greatest artists of the Northern Renaissance," notes Dr. Ena Heller, Executive Director of MOBIA. "The ubiquity of one or two of his images allows us to *believe* we know his work but visitors to MOBIA will get to experience the breadth and depth of style, form and iconography of this innovative artist. The pristine impressions on display illustrate Dürer's stylistic development in response to his trips to Italy and his encounters with the work of Renaissance masters."

Albrecht Dürer: Art in Transition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalog written by Dr. Mechthild Haas, Director of the Graphics Department, Hessisches Landesmuseum.

The exhibition will be on view through September 21 and will then travel to only two other venues in the United States – the Museum of Art, Mobile, Alabama (October 2008) and the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida (January 2009).

Exhibition Overview

Dürer was a pioneering innovator who became a printmaker just a few short decades after Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1450. Printing was, at the time, a relatively new technology. By stretching printmaking's possibilities and bringing them to a new pinnacle, Dürer set a standard that is followed to this day.

Albrecht Dürer displays strikingly dramatic works that capture Germany's dark mood as the 1400s drew to a close and fear of the End Times caught and spread like forest fire. Germany's Christian population awaited the Apocalypse when the century ended in 1500. Dürer depicted witches, during this same period, while hysteria over witchcraft was on the rise. His eerie portrayals of a menacing and relentless Death, with skeletal claws and a grimacing leer, fueled anxiety over vice and immorality. In the 1495 *Young Woman Attacked by Death (The Ravisher)*, Dürer turns a lovers' idyll into a macabre scene of violence. He uses an expressive engraving technique with deeply incised lines to further emphasize the brutality of Death's gruesome surprise assault. Other later works, such as *Coat of Arms with Death's Head* (1503) and *The Night, Death and the Devil* (1513) reprise the same apocalyptic theme years later.

Though Dürer is featured in most every survey of Western art, these exquisite and varied prints hint at the full extent of his complexity, virtuosity and accomplishment. Dürer's solemn renderings of the Holy Family and other religious themes attest to the artist's closely-held spiritual beliefs. Along with the Old and New Testament, he was drawn to investigate great works of literature. His monsters, witches, gods and goddesses are derived from such sources as medieval legends, folktales and ancient Greek myths.

The *Fall of Man*: Two Versions

Upon entering the main gallery, visitors will begin to discover the pictorial innovations that Dürer introduced. The exhibition opens with a pair of images, each depicting Adam and Eve. The first, *Adam and Eve*, 1504, is perhaps Dürer's most frequently reproduced work.

With the figures in the foreground, and a meticulously rendered landscape in the background, it shows the Northern Gothic influence and great attention to detail. The image, though graceful, is motionless and the configuration is static, in keeping with the Northern artistic tradition that had been embraced by Dürer and the generation of artists and printmakers that preceded him.

Just six years later, in *The Expulsion From Paradise*, 1510, Dürer revisited the theme of Adam and Eve, but his approach had undergone a metamorphosis. Having visited Italy and steeped himself in the work of Italian Renaissance painters, Dürer now interpreted the same material with a new fluidity, minimizing the level of detail while introducing action and movement. The two works, which represent the artist's rapid and vivid transformation as he developed, are installed side by side to underscore the change.

The Apocalypse: the First Artist-Designed Book

Dürer was the first artist to design and print his own book. At age 28, in 1498, he published a sequence of woodcuts encompassing 15 images of the Apocalypse, a subject swirling through the air in Germany as the end of the century drew near. Many people lived in the expectation that the year 1500 would bring cataclysm and the Last Judgment. Dürer's work struck a chord. He published two original editions, the first in the Latin text of the Vulgate and the second in German, drawn from the Bible of Anton Koberger, an important 15th century printer in Nuremberg.

Interestingly, Anton Koberger was Dürer's godfather. The exhibition includes a 1483 Koberger Bible, which Dürer would have studied from childhood. His godfather's work must have made a strong impression on the young artist, whose early work was shaped by the late 15th century pictorial paradigm. Visitors will be able to compare his images with his godfather's, to gauge the elder man's influence. Because the worlds of book publishing and printmaking collided at this time, it is entirely possible that Dürer and his godfather published their books on the same press.

The exhibition is organized by the Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany. Tour organized by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC.

About the Curator:

Dr. Mechthild Haas, author of the exhibition catalogue, is a distinguished scholar. Dr. Haas studied art history and philosophy at Tübingen and Hamburg; the topic of her 1989 Magister Artium was Berlin stage set design of the 1920s. Dr. Haas's 1996 dissertation was written on Jean Dubuffet. From 1993-1995, Dr. Haas was a fellow of the Federal State of Hamburg at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in Munich. From 1996-1998 Dr. Haas was an academic intern at the Saarland Museum in Saarbrücken. From 1998-2003 Professor Haas was project assistant at the Saarland Museum in Saarbrücken. Since 2000, Professor Haas has been university instructor on drawings and prints at Gießen University as well as a staff member at the Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt where, in 2006, she became Director of the Graphics Department.

Sponsorship:

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Recommended admission fee to MOBIA is \$7.00 for adults and \$4.00 for students and senior citizens (with ID). Free for members and children under 12.

Museum Hours: Tue., Wed, Fri–Sun: 10:00 AM-6:00 PM; Thurs: 10:00 AM-8:00 PM; Mon: Closed

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