Devotional Prints
FROM GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS
The publication of a print often entailed a collaborative effort. Prior to the sixteenth century, woodcutters generally aligned themselves with book publishers, who would dictate the subject matter in order to illustrate their volumes. Nevertheless, more entrepreneurial-minded artists like Albrecht Dürer (Fig. 3) broke the mold to produce their own designs and cut independent blocks. While a number of artists included in this exhibition are revered as painters, the sixteenth century saw a surge of printmakers. The Georgia Museum of Art periodically showcases highlights from its permanent collection. In 1983, the museum hosted an exhibition bringing together a selection of prints from collectors and humanists for their descriptive naturalism and meticulous portrayal of quotidian details. A number of prints in this edition effectively transpose biblical episodes and stories of saints into the viewer’s immediate realm of experience by casting them within convincingly rendered contemporary settings. One can also savor the technical achievements of these engravings, etchings, woodcuts, and lithographs from the precision of line to the refinement of modeling with light and shadow, that simulate pictorial qualities.

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Since its founding in 1945, the Georgia Museum of Art has assembled one of the largest collections of European works on paper in the South. Among these works are excellent examples of German, Flemish, and Dutch prints featuring religious subject matter. The museum’s collection in this area continues to grow, with significant works by British printmakers James Prior and Jacques de Gheyn II (Fig. 1), among others, generously donated in recent years by Philip and Joanna Greenspan. This exhibition brings together selected highlights from this group of prints, ranging in date from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century. Works by such artists as Max Beckmann, Schelte Bolswert, Pietro Berengo, Otto Dix, Albrecht Durer, Hendrick Goltzius, Lucas van Leyden, Johann Sadeler I (Fig. 2), and Martin Schongauer.

A number of artists included in this exhibition are revered as painters, the appreciation of their combined talents as designers and printmakers is equally commendable. Widely acclaimed and relatively inexpensive, prints could elicit reflection, meditation, and discussion on various sacred topics. Beyond their spiritual aspect, devotional prints served as visual commentaries on the mysteries, personalities, and remote stories of religious texts. It is not uncommon to find inscriptions, primarily in Latin elegiac couplets, complementing images in order to enrich the viewing experience. In certain cases, religious subjects served as a convenient pretext for the portrayal of saints into the viewer’s immediate realm of experience by casting them within convincingly rendered contemporary settings. One can also savor the technical achievements of these engravings, etchings, woodcuts, and lithographs from the precision of line to the refinement of modeling with light and shadow, that simulate pictorial qualities.

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Fig. 4  Anonymous, Crucifixion with Angels
Receiving the Blood of Christ, no. 2

Fig. 5  Martin Schongauer, Crucifixion with Four Angels, no. 57
patrons and collectors pasted them in books. Rather than masking supposed deficiencies in the design, coloring increased a print’s value and enhanced the effect of the image. As Richard S. Field notes with regard to a crucifixion woodcut, “With the advent of the printed book, such images often accompanied the canon of the Mass, during which the priest and the congregation celebrated Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross—the wafer becoming the flesh of Christ, the wine his blood. The very depiction of the angels Tencent the blood issuing from Christ’s wounds suggests such associations. The painted blood dripping down Christ’s body and spilling over the rim of the chalices, not demarcated by the lines in the woodcut, gives the impression that the image itself is miraculously bleeding. 

Highly expressive, the painted woodcut is nonetheless deliberately archaic in style. This work compares interestingly to an engraving of the crucifixion by Martin Schongauer of Colmar, which, despite being produced about fifteen years earlier, represents a quantum leap forward in terms of technical and visual refinement (Fig. 5). Even without the use of color, the artist captures a sense of pictorial naturalism. His clarity of line and his use of hatching and stippling to create shadows and volume evidence his technical facility. The sculpture-like quality of the figures and the chiseled folds of their drapery betray Schongauer’s admiration of Flemish art, including the paintings of Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–1464). As opposed to the intense reaction of Saint John in the woodcut, Schongauer’s saint is more stoic and contemplative. Furthermore, figure and landscape balance elegantly with the interplay of forms and overlapping planes creating a sense of space. Schongauer’s prints caught the attention of the young Michelangelo, who drew a copy of his Temptation of Saint Anthony.

Lucas van Leyden was another pioneer in the field of engraving. Dürer held his work in such high esteem that in 1521 he visited the artist in Antwerp and exchanged some of his own prints for all of Lucas’s existing graphic works. Lucas’s Visitation (Fig. 6) is a superb rendition of the time-honored subject of the meeting of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. According to the Gospel of Luke (1:36–56), Mary, having heard at the Annunciation that the aged Elizabeth was six months pregnant, journeyed to visit her. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s voice, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and the baby “leaped” for joy in her womb. The silvery tone of the print is achieved through shallow strokes of the burin that make Lucas’s line more delicate, almost in replication of graphite drawing. "Over the course of his career," as David Landau and Peter Parshall observe, “Lucas’s pictorialism evolved towards suppler shading, lighter tones of ink, and more delicate chiaroscuro effects.” Although Lucas’s print is on a diminutive scale, he nevertheless endows his figures with a sense of monumentality. Elizabeth and Mary fill the composition as they stand firmly on the earth against a nondescript, hatched backdrop. Their gentle embrace and Elizabeth’s kiss on Mary’s cheek convey a delicate tenderness.

The Latin inscription underscores the feeling of jubilation at the cousins’ encounter: “When, oh virgin, your clearer voice arose to my ears,/there rose up in my pregnant belly my trimestral child.” Maerten van Heemskerck, who traveled extensively throughout Europe and worked in Haarlem during the latter part of his career, was the first Dutch artist to use the medium of prints professionally, supplying drawings for nearly six hundred prints executed by a series of master
engravers. One of his most emotionally charged series is *The Seven Sufferings of Christ*, which was engraved by Herman Jansz. Muller in 1565. The Georgia Museum of Art owns *The Nailing to the Cross* and *The Crucifixion* (Figs. 8 and 9). In the former Muller expertly translates the brutal energy of Van Heemskerck's design. As one centurion swings a mallet to drive the nail through Christ's feet, the other balances the mighty cross between his legs to absorb the shock of his partner's blows. At the nailing, Christ refused the narcotic of vinegar mixed with gall to dull his pain (Matthew 27:34); hence, Van Heemskerck shows a defiant Christ turning his head away from the centurion who squeezes the liquid from a sponge. The two bound robbers watch helplessly and writhe in agony knowing their fate. There is a heroic muscularity to the figures, derived from Van Heemskerck's study of ancient sculpture and Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel during his trip to Italy from 1532 to 1536/7. The landscape is especially morbid: skeletal remains litter the ground while men swing lifeless from the gallows in the background. Mary swoons, already overcome with grief. Next to her, Veronica holds up her veil with the image of Christ's face miraculously imprinted on it. Each print is replete with iconographic motifs. In *The Crucifixion*, Longinus pierces Christ's side with a lance as Mary Magdalene embraces the cross. Another centurion breaks the legs of the bad thief while the good thief, to Christ's right, looks on with anger. Hadrianus Junius (1511–1575), the great Dutch classical philologist, historian, poet, and physician, wrote Latin verses for these prints that complement their emotional intensity and physical brutality. Notably, his words invoke baptismal references as Christ bleeds for mankind's salvation:

*Stretched on the cross and driven by spikes, everlasting through water's work, he flows afar, a bubbling spring unconcealed.* (Fig. 8)

*A river of water, a fluid of tepid blood, issues forth from the gaping side: that washes, this atones for blame for all.* (Fig. 9)

Junius was enthralled by the printing process. He praised Van Heemskerck as a second Apelles, the famed artist of antiquity, “not only because he apportions his time so carefully that there is no day when he is so occupied that he is not working at some task, and in drawing a line practices his art, but also because he is extraordinarily prolific, producing work of every sort, paintings as well as drawings which are to be made into prints.”

The collaboration between artist and humanist underscores the intellectual dimension of religious prints. Junius worked closely with a number of artists on their projects. For instance, his initials appear next to the Latin inscription on Philips Galle's engraving *The Parable of the Good Shepherd* (1569; Fig. 10), after Pieter
Bruegel the Elder. The work illustrates in lively anecdotal detail Jesus’ parable as recorded in the Gospel of John (10:1-16), while Junius’s inscription provides an interpretive gloss on Jesus’ words:

"Here in safety stable yourselves, men, come under the roofs; With me as shepherd of the sheep, the door lies open wide. Why do you burst through the sides or the roof? That’s the way of wolves And of thieves, whom my sheepfold rejects.

Junius attempts to imitate Christ’s proverbial wit and divine wisdom in his own words. As Erasmus of Rotterdam explains, the intentional obscurity of the parables in the Bible exercise cognitive skills while the veils of figurative language secure their lesson by pleasure: "The parables of the Gospel, if you take them at face value—who would not think that they came from a simple ignorant man? And yet if you crack the nut, you find inside that profound wisdom, truly divine, a touch of something which is like Christ himself." 10

LANDSCAPE AS THE SITE OF DEVOTION

While religious subjects were the main staple for artists, Pieter Bruegel the Elder excelled in the representation of landscapes in both his pictorial and graphic works. He crossed the Alps and traveled throughout Italy for two years. On his return to Antwerp in about 1555, he made designs for a suite of twelve prints, showing both religious and secular subject matter. These prints are known as the Large Landscapes and were engraved and etched by Jan and Lucas van Doetecum and subsequently published by Hieronymus Cock in large numbers and distributed throughout Europe, anticipating a market for landscape imagery. In 1982, the Georgia Museum of Art acquired their engraving of Bruegel’s Saint Jerome in the Desert (Fig. 11). The fourth-century saint, who translated the Greek and Hebrew versions of the Bible into Latin, went into the desert of Chalcis, Syria, to mortify his flesh and cleanse his mind of impure thoughts. There he sought solitary meditation and concentrated on his biblical studies. But Bruegel’s landscape is far from an arid desert setting. Instead, the artist has provided a highly imaginative portrayal of an Alpine landscape.
Walter Gibson observes, the artist exaggerates the horizontal and vertical distances of the terrain, introducing breathtaking descents from the highland in the foreground to the vast plains beyond. Bruegel confronts the viewer with a landscape of epic proportions. Saint Jerome is barely visible in the print, crouched in the lower righthand corner, bowing his head under his wide-brimmed hat as he reads from the Bible. His companion and traditional attribute, a tame lion, rests by his side. Strangely, Jerome has his back turned to the landscape, intent on maintaining a solitary existence. The saint’s meditation on the written word serves as an analogue to the viewer’s rapt scrutiny of the vastness and variety of Bruegel’s landscape.

Artists, like mapmakers, provided viewers a kind of optical journey with their prints. Such is the case with Augustine Hirschvogel, who worked with equal success as an etcher, mathematician, and cartographer. Hirschvogel cast a fascinated eye toward the northern landscape, both for its natural beauty and historical topography. In 1552, he published his Plan of Vienna, together with a treatise outlining his method for making the survey. He excelled in making small-scale engravings valued for their calligraphic freedom and sparseness. For instance, in his Landscape with the Conversion of Saint Paul (Fig. 12), it would be near impossible to find the Roman centurion Saul, who on his way to Damascus converted to Christianity, taking the name Paul, were it not for the divine light blasting him off his horse accompanied by Christ’s words, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). The large tree in the center foreground divides the composition into two zones, one sacred and the other secular. On account of its intimate scale, the print invites scrutiny with a discerning eye. Hirschvogel let the acid bite into the lines he made in the plate to such a degree that they appear even more ragged than usual. The deeply etched lines add a touch of wildness to his scenery, which is populated by snaking rivers and medieval structures. Such images align etching with individual draftsmanship and were valued in many ways beyond their devotional aspect.

The landscapes of Bruegel and Hirschvogel encourage the reinterpretation of a much earlier print, Christ in the Wilderness Attended by Six Angels (Fig. 13), from about 1480–90. The deeply etched lines add a touch of wildness to the scenery, which is populated by snaking rivers and medieval structures. Such images align etching with individual draftsmanship and were valued in many ways beyond their devotional aspect.
The identity of this formidable engraver, known only as Master i.e., remains unclear. Of the fifty-five engravings currently attributed to his hand, thirty-two are copies of Martin Schongauer's prints—suggesting a close relationship between the two. In fact, this print is signed at the lower left with a false Schongauer monogram. According to the Gospel of Mark (1:12–13), Christ retired to the wilderness immediately following his baptism: “And he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.” The print is replete with natural symbolism. A longstanding visual and literary tradition associates the monkey, a rapacious animal and false imitator of God, with Satan, and in this work the creature offers the forbidden fruit in imitation of the biblical serpent: The owl is a carnivorous bird and lover of darkness, and the “ape and owl team” is often associated with damnation. But a fifteenth-century viewer might not have experienced the creatures in this print according to such a narrow iconographic reading. Instead, the monkey in the tree, together with the rabbits frolicking on the ground, calls attention to issues of decorum and artistic license, and by extension the necessity of vigilance against wandering attention. For example, Saint Antoninus (1389–1459), the archbishop of Florence, admonished painters against depicting errors: “Painters are to be blamed when they paint things contrary to our faith . . . to paint curiosities into the stories of saints and in churches, things that do not serve to arouse devotion but laughter and vain thoughts—monkeys and dogs chasing hares and so on, or gratuitously elaborate costumes—this I think unnecessary and vain.”14 The “curiosities” that populate the Master i.e.’s engraving flaunt the artist’s skill in depicting nature’s variety while simultaneously testing the viewer’s ability to concentrate on the devotional subject without being distracted by artifice. The animals, in other words, tempt the viewer as much as they tempt Christ.

GOLZTIUS, BOLSWERT, PONTIUS

In 1978, Eleanor Saunders wrote an extremely useful essay devoted to the engravings by Hendrick Goltzius in the museum’s collection: “Imitation and Invention: Prints by Hendrick Goltzius,” published in the Bulletin of the Georgia Museum of Art. A large part of her text concentrated on Goltzius’s Passion, a series of twelve engravings devoted to Christ’s last days (Fig. 14). The artist dedicated his Passion to Cardinal Federico Borromeo (1564–1631), the great patron of art who founded the Ambrosiana, a Milanese institution dedicated to the reform of sacred art and scholarship.15 Goltzius won a gold chain for his efforts in realizing a natural narrative in the manner of Lucas van Leyden, one emphasizing visual clarity and scriptural and iconographic accuracy. Although the Ambrosiana was founded in 1603, some years after the appearance of Goltzius’s Passion, Borromeo nevertheless was

Fig. 14 Hendrick Goltzius, The Passion: Flagellation of Christ, no. 31

long-committed to bringing the figurative arts in the service of religious history, especially in response to the Counter Reformation’s call for a modification of image use. In 1624, he even published a treatise of art as a tool of religion: De pictura sacra. Goltzius’s imagery seems to anticipate Borromeo’s interest in how artists convey emotions and produce empathy in the viewer. Goltzius’s Saint Matthew (Fig. 15), from the series Christ and the Apostles, reveals the artist’s fetish for hands. The artist’s own right hand was badly burned and subsequently deformed in a childhood accident; and the insistence with which he represents hands is not a coincidence. In 1588, he made an extraordinary drawing in ink of his own crooked right hand, conceived as a trompe-l’oeil engraving (Haarlem, Teylers Museum). The distinctive, sculpturesque hands that appear in Goltzius’s prints serve as an index of artistic creation—a sign of Goltzius’s manual dexterity and precise manner. Several artists in this exhibition were famed for their reproductive engravings in the seventeenth century. Schelte Bolswert’s career as an engraver of Peter Paul Rubens began in the late 1620s. His print after Rubens’s The Return from Egypt (now in Holkham Hall, Norfolk) records the nearly depicted subject of the young Christ at four or five years of age (Fig. 16). Another artist, Paulus Pontius, was a master in the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke and was among the most prominent reproductive engravers after Rubens. He lodged in Rubens’s house from 1624 to 1651, and after Rubens’s death in 1640, he worked for Anthony Van Dyck.
on a number of engraving projects, including his "Iconography" series of portraits. Pontius’s engraving after Van Dyck’s "Lamentation" (ca. 1629) at the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, demonstrates his near-flawless technique (Fig. 17). Subtle light and tonal effects replace color while preserving the sense of richness of the fabrics. Pontius masterfully recreated transitory effects of nature in his engravings. Overall, the poignant mood of Van Dyck’s original painting is conveyed and reverberates in the inscription:

Oh stars, oh heaven’s never violable fires! Establish your lights for your people in darkness. Quenched by a cruel death, the son do we weep, Who once for you, once for me was the light.

Modern Prints

A LOOK BACK AT THE REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation that arose in the early sixteenth century brought about a change in people’s attitude toward images. Reformers challenged the need for religious art, which they felt promoted excessive expenditure and conspicuous consumption, or worse, superstition and idolatry. Many works of art were either censored or destroyed. Although not averse to the efficacy of images, Martin Luther (1483–1546), an Augustinian friar and professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, was nevertheless dismayed by the worldly corruption of the Roman Catholic Church in the granting of indulgences, the abuse of excommunication, and the culture of nepotism. He therefore announced a new “Babylonian Captivity of the Church” in a treatise by that name, accusing the papacy of holding the church hostage on account of its decadence. In 1521, Pope Leo X officially excommunicated Luther from the Roman Catholic Church, but this only spurred on the reformer’s efforts in order to convey the true message of the Word of God and to make it more accessible. Luther translated the New Testament (1522) and the Hebrew Bible (1534) into his native German. The translations fueled the Protestant Reformation, and had a long and illustrious history. Paintings and prints associated with Luther’s movement tend to focus only on those sacraments sanctioned in the Bible. In 1960, Käthe Vogt republished Luther’s translation of the Gospel of Matthew and a look Back at the reformation
commissioned the artist Otto Dix to illustrate it with original lithographs (Fig. 18). Dix had a penchant for portraying religious subjects after World War II, having been a prisoner near Golmar and witness to a number of atrocities. He made more than forty paintings dealing with Christ’s Passion in the years immediately following the war often introducing allegorical commentary related to the tragedies of the Nazi government. Notably, Dix’s art was labeled “degenerate” by the Nazis, and many of his works were destroyed. Dix’s illustrations for the Gospel of Matthew are bold and self-consciously stark, realized in a vernacular style that complements Luther’s translation. One lithograph features Adolf Hitler and a prostitute crowning Christ with thorns. Dix, who suffered personally and professionally under the Nazi regime, more than likely felt an affinity with Luther and his struggles against the pope.1


Beckmann was known for relating biblical subjects to psychological drama and physical torment. Likewise, Beckmann’s contemporaries Max Beckmann because they yearned to revive the eminent status of German art, holding Dürer (Fig. 19) and Lucas Cranach the Elder (Fig. 20), two artists sympathetic to the Protestant Reformation, as models of excellence. Dürer was commissioned the artist Otto Dix to illustrate it with original lithographs (Fig. 18). Dix had a penchant for portraying religious subjects after World War II, having been a prisoner near Golmar and witness to a number of atrocities. He made more than forty paintings dealing with Christ’s Passion in the years immediately following the war often introducing allegorical commentary related to the tragedies of the Nazi government. Notably, Dix’s art was labeled “degenerate” by the Nazis, and many of his works were destroyed. Dix’s illustrations for the Gospel of Matthew are bold and self-consciously stark, realized in a vernacular style that complements Luther’s translation. One lithograph features Adolf Hitler and a prostitute crowning Christ with thorns. Dix, who suffered personally and professionally under the Nazi regime, more than likely felt an affinity with Luther and his struggles against the pope.1


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<td>Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; gift of Alfred H. Holbrook</td>
<td>GMOA 1967.1869</td>
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<td>Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; gift of Alfred H. Holbrook</td>
<td>GMOA 1966.1486</td>
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34. Hendrick Goltzius (Dutch, 1558–1617) | GMOA 1985.13
36. Hendrick Goltzius (Dutch, 1558–1617) | Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; University Purchase
39. Hendrick Goltzius (Dutch, 1558–1617) | Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; gift of Alfred H. Holbrook
40. Mathias Greuter (Flemish, 1564–1638) | Engraving on paper
43. Lucas van Leyden (Dutch, ca. 1494–1533) | The Passion: The Entombment
44. Master i.e. (probably German, active ca. 1480–1500) | gift of Alfred H. Holbrook and Museum Patrons
47. Crispin van de Passe (Dutch, 1564–1637) | gift of Alfred H. Holbrook
48. Paulus Pontius (Flemish, 1603–1658) | Engraving on paper
50. Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669) | Engraving on paper
51. Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669) | The Passion: Christ Carrying the Cross
56. Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669) | The Passion: Christ in the Wilderness Attended by Six Angels
59. Andreas Stock (Flemish, 1580 (?)–1648), after Hendrick Goltzius | Engraving on paper
60. After David Teniers (Flemish, 1610–1690) | Woodcut on paper
61. Johan Wierix (Flemish, ca. 1549–ca. 1615), after Mantuan de Ves | Engraving on paper
HOURS
10 a.m.– 5 p.m. Tue, Thur, Fri, Sat
10 a.m.– 9 p.m. Wed and 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. Sun

Admission is free with a suggested donation of $2

Educational Programs for *Devotional Prints from Germany and the Netherlands*

**GALLERY TALK**
Giancarlo Fiorenza
Thursday, January 24, 2 p.m.

**LECTURE**
“Hugo van der Goes and the Heart of Devotion”
Ellen Konowitz, associate professor, SUNY New Paltz, School of Fine and Performing Arts
February 7, 5:30 p.m.
M. Smith Griffith Auditorium

**GUIDED TOUR**
Sunday, March 2, 3 p.m.

Partial support for the exhibitions and programs at the Georgia Museum of Art is provided by the W. Newton Morris Charitable Foundation, the Friends of the Museum, and the Georgia Council for the Arts through the appropriations of the Georgia General Assembly. The Council is a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. Individuals, foundations, and corporations provide additional support through their gifts to the Arch Foundation and the University of Georgia Foundation.