

# Major Exhibition Celebrates 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther's 95 Theses

Newly Excavated Objects Offer New Insights into Luther's Personal Life

## 2016 EXHIBITION

**MINNEAPOLIS, OCTOBER 8, 2014**

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) today announced a new partnership with four German institutions—the State Museum of Prehistory in Halle, Luther Memorials Foundation in Saxony-Anhalt, German Historical Museum in Berlin, and Foundation Schloss Friedenstein in Gotha—to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the writing of Martin Luther's 95 theses. "Martin Luther: Art and the Reformation" is the first exhibition in the United States to examine Luther's personal life and explore the impact of the Protestant Reformation through high and low art from the 16th century onward. Objects on view will include religious paintings, miniatures, and sculptures, satirical prints, and important manuscripts. Open in October 2016, the exhibition will also feature Luther's treasured personal possessions. It is made possible through the generous support of the German Federal Foreign Office.

The exhibition will place particular emphasis on Luther's support of art as a tool for worship, teaching, and propaganda. Among the works on view will be paintings by Lucas Cranach the Elder, who was inspired by Luther's preaching to develop didactic paintings that vividly depict the viewer's choice between salvation and damnation. Cranach's narrative paintings illustrate biblical stories in brilliant colors and ravishing—sometimes gory—detail, and his stylized portraits capture the humanist spirit of the age. Additionally, several vandalized objects by other artists will be presented to underscore the intense emotional reaction in the wake of Luther's protest.

A major section of the exhibition devoted to Luther's personal life will feature recent archaeological finds from his boyhood homes in the towns of Eisleben and



Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Martin Luther*, c. 1541  
© Luther Memorials Foundation in Saxony-Anhalt

Mansfeld, as well as his house in Wittenberg, the base for his history-making activities. Excavations, undertaken in 2004 and 2005, uncovered household goods that reveal new information about Luther and his family. A selection of those objects will be displayed for the first time in the United States and offer new insights into Luther's daily life, especially his childhood.

When Luther posted his *Ninety-Five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* on the doors of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, he cracked the foundations of papal authority; his publications sundered them. He further eroded church authority through his translation of the Bible into contemporary German vernacular. Examples of rarely seen 16th-century editions will be on view, as well as a selection of 16th-century publications that demonstrate Luther's intolerance of corruption and his concern for women.

"Minnesota is home to one of the largest Lutheran populations in the nation," said Kaywin Feldman, Director and President of the MIA. "We are honored to host this special exhibition so that all of our visitors can experience the art and objects that were central to the story of the Reformation."

"I am thrilled to collaborate on this groundbreaking exhibition with our German colleagues," said Tom Rassieur, the MIA's John E. Andrus III Curator of Prints. "Their support will make possible the display of the most beautiful and fascinating objects that illuminate both Luther's life and his impact."

The 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of his 95 theses will be observed around the world on October 31, 2017. The Luther House in Wittenberg, Germany, will close in 2016 for major renewals of its permanent exhibition for the Jubilee Year 2017. During the renovation, key works will travel to the MIA for this first-of-its-kind exhibition.

#### KEY OBJECTS ON VIEW WILL INCLUDE:

- Paintings by Lucas Cranach the Elder, including: *Martin Luther* (ca. 1541), lent from the Luther Memorials Foundation in Saxony-Anhalt; *The Death of Holofernes* (1531), lent by the Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha; and *Law and Gospel* (1529), lent by Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha.
- *Old and New Testament*, the so-called *Ortenburg Bible* (1535) lent by the Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum.
- A recreation of Luther's studio, including original furnishings and precious objects in gold and silver.



*Old and New Testament*, the so-called *Ortenburg Bible*, Augsburg 1535  
© Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum



Desiderius Helmschmid, Close helmet in Maximilian type made for Emperor Charles V, c. 1536; © Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum Foundation

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### ABOUT THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS

Home to over 87,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—the MIA links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration. The 2013 fiscal year marked the highest attendance—679,357 visitors—in the nearly 100-year history of the MIA.

General admission to the MIA is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

Museum hours: Sunday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Monday closed. For more information, call (612) 870-3000 or visit [artsmia.org](http://artsmia.org).