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**ART INSTITUTE EXHIBITION REVEALS UNCONVENTIONAL WAYS IN WHICH  
RENAISSANCE EUROPE USED AND ALTERED PRINTED IMAGES**  
**More Than 100 Rare Prints and Printed Objects on Display in *Altered and Adorned***  
**On View April 30–July 10, 2011**

Today's scrapbookers weren't the first to abuse paper products—Renaissance print owners were regular vandals who cut, pasted, adored, and adorned their personal print collections, the same ones that are stored in museum vaults today. The exhibition ***Altered and Adorned: Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life***—on view **April 30 through July 10, 2011**, at the Art Institute of Chicago—takes a long-overdue look at these well-handled works, demonstrating how their condition today reflects their various uses and functions in the past. Filling the museum's **Jean and Steven Goldman Prints and Drawings Galleries in the Richard and Mary L. Gray Wing (Galleries 124–127)**, *Altered and Adorned* features more than 100 rare and never-before-seen printed objects and objects with printed components from the Art Institute's permanent collection, as well as a selection of treasures from other Chicago institutions.



*Altered and Adorned* investigates the ways in which woodcuts, engravings, and etchings functioned in European society from the late 15th through early 17th centuries. The exhibition reveals a radically different approach to prints in these centuries. Today, Renaissance prints are

prized for their aesthetic importance: the least compromised by time and previous collectors the better. Modern-day viewers are thus used to seeing prints in artificially isolated states, matted in low-light galleries or kept between protective layers of glassine in acid-free solander boxes. But, contrary to popular assumptions, seemingly unused prints of this sort are very rare. Rather, because they were inexpensive and readily available, early prints were not regarded as sacrosanct artworks; many exhibit obvious marks of physical intervention by their users. Even comparatively clean impressions preserved in long-forgotten albums usually bear traces of folding, inscribing, pasting, stamping, or trimming (though such clues may stay hidden on their blank versos). In addition, early prints were not made to last, so their papers and inks have darkened or faded and accumulated stains and tears.

Taking an innovative art historical approach, *Altered and Adorned* focuses on Renaissance prints as they were used, embracing their imperfections and drawing on a wide range of little-seen examples from the Art Institute's collection. Exploring the initial functions and original contexts of these prints and printed objects, the exhibition reconstructs the various ways in which owners saw, handled, and used them on a daily basis. Bringing together prints, books, scientific instruments, and additional items at the intersection of prints and other media, *Altered and Adorned* unearths artworks with printed paper components from the Art Institute as well as from the Loyola University Museum of Art, the Adler Planetarium and Museum, and private collectors. The works exhibited include extremely rare survivors, such as two exceptional 15th-century devotional woodcuts in their original contexts: a French Nativity pasted into an armored traveling coffer and a Man of Sorrows on a book board. Other items range from wallpaper, bookplates, overstuffed print albums, festive printed fans and headdresses, and portable pocket sundials with printed faces to pop-up anatomy broadsheets with myriad flaps for the organs. *Altered and Adorned* also offers a new perspective on all early prints, for even the seemingly pristine impressions traditionally valued by collectors were in fact used during the Renaissance. For example, Hans Burgkmair's *Equestrian Portrait of the Emperor Maximilian I*, a woodcut printed in black and gold on vellum, became a presentation copy at the center of a diplomatic printing competition.

Not yet considered "art" in the modern sense, these versatile printed images belonged to the fabric of ordinary existence at every level of society. *Altered and Adorned* offers a chance to rediscover the limitless possibilities of this most pervasive and powerful medium.

*Altered and Adorned: Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life* is accompanied by a 112-page comprehensive, full color, hardcover catalogue—with more than 95 illustrations—by Suzanne Karr Schmidt, exhibition curator and Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow, with a technical essay by associate paper conservator Kimberly Nichols. Published by the Art Institute of Chicago and distributed by Yale University Press, the catalogue is available in the Museum Shop of the Art Institute of Chicago for \$35.

*Altered and Adorned: Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life* is organized by the Art Institute of Chicago and curated by Suzanne Karr Schmidt, exhibition curator and Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow. Generous support is provided by members of the Exhibitions Trust: Goldman Sachs, Kenneth and Anne Griffin, Thomas and Margot Pritzker, the Earl and Brenda Shapiro Foundation, Donna and Howard Stone, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Sullivan, and an anonymous donor.

**Image Credit:** The Master of the Very Small Hours of Anne of Brittany (Master of the Unicorn Hunt). *The Nativity*, in coffer, c. 1490. George F. Harding Deaccessions Fund; Restricted gift of Mr. and Mrs. William Vance; The Amanda S. Johnson and Marion J. Livingston Fund.

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10:00 am–5:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

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Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

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