

10-23-2009

## Indulgence Prints

Amy Morris

*University of Nebraska at Omaha*, [ammorris@unomaha.edu](mailto:ammorris@unomaha.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/artarthistfacpub>

Please take our feedback survey at: [https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE](https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE)

---

### Recommended Citation

Morris, A. (2009, October 23). Indulgence Prints. In L.J. Taylor (Ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Pilgrimage*, pg 277. Brill. <https://brill.com/edcollbook/title/11562>

This Monograph is brought to you for free and open access by the Art and Art History Program at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art and Art History Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).

## Indulgence Handbills

Amy Morris

The advent of printmaking in the fifteenth century gave rise to a popular genre of images, commonly referred to as indulgence prints, which were among the souvenirs available at religious shrines. One type of included standard devotional imagery, such as the Vera Icon, Mass of St Gregory, Virgin on the Half Moon, or the arma Christi, combined with written prayers and other conditions for obtaining → indulgence. Despite the primacy of the image it was only through sincere contrition and recitation of the prayers specified that indulgence was granted. The money earned from the sale of these prints contributed toward the building or rebuilding of a particular religious shrine or some other specific cause. The Vera Icon, in particular, had a direct connection to one of the seven most important pilgrimage destinations in → Rome, Santa Croce in Jerusalem, because it copied their famous mosaic icon of Christ. In an effort to attract more pilgrims to their church, in the fifteenth century, the Carthusian at Santa Croce hired Israhel van Meckenem, a well-known printmaker, to make an engraving of their icon. The amount of indulgence available not only varied from image to image but grew enormously at the end of the fifteenth century. While say the prayer attached to the Mass of St Gregory once earned 20,000 days by the end of the century, the number rose to 45, 000.

Not all indulgence prints depicted standardized devotional themes, but rather they were tailored to the particular site at which they were sold. For the popular pilgrimage church at Einsiedeln in Switzerland, Master E. S. created three different versions of the Madonna of → Einsiedeln. These prints were part of a campaign to raise money after the original church burnt to the ground in 1465. Central to the fundraising efforts of the Benedictines at Einsiedeln was the plenary indulgence they claimed had been granted to the church in the tenth century. Master E. S.'s print emphasized the indulgence available at Einsiedeln by including the papa coat-of-arms and the name of the prayer recited by pilgrims to receive full remission of their sins. The table hanging on the outside of the church in the print also suggests prayer and the text of the indulgence. The existence of different versions of the Madonna of

Einsiendeln reflects the range of economic levels represented at pilgrimage destinations and the desire to cater to all of them. Only wealthy pilgrims could have afforded the larger and more elaborate version of the print. Another popular pilgrimage site commemorated in indulgence prints was Regensburg. Almost overnight Regensburg became one of the most popular pilgrimage destinations in Europe when its famous cult image of the Virgin, the Schöne Maria, reportedly healed a worker who suffered a disastrous fall in the destruction of the town's synagogue. The popularity of Regensburg provided printmakers with unimagined opportunities. Albrecht Altdörfer designed at least seven different prints of the Schöne Maria between 1519 and 1521. By advertising the pilgrimage, the indulgence prints contributed to Regensburg's economic growth.

### **Bibliography**

Landau, David, and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1994)

Lewis, Flora, 'Rewarding Devotion: indulgences and the Promotion of Images,' *Studies in Church History* 28 (1990): 178-194

Parshall, Peter, and Rainer Schoch, *Origins of European Printmaking* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2005)

Van Os, Henk, *The Art of Devotion* (Princeton, NJ, 1994)

Ringbom, Sixten, *Icon to Narrative* (Doornspijk, 1984)