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## Albrecht Dürer's material world 30 June 2023 – 10 March 2024

Albrecht Dürer's material world is the first major exhibition of the Whitworth's outstanding Dürer collection in over half a century.



**Albrecht Dürer's material world** is a collaborative, international and co-curated research and exhibition project which offers a new perspective on Dürer as an intense observer of the 16<sup>th</sup> century worlds of manufacture, design and trade that fill his graphic art.

Woodcuts, etchings and engravings from the Whitworth's collection are juxtaposed with a range of objects from Dürer's time, including armour and measuring instruments, books and textiles. The exhibition of over 100 objects and works on paper highlights the ingenuity and skill with which Dürer, a leading figure of Europe's print revolution, represented his material world.

Situated at the heart of Europe, Nuremberg in the late 15th century was one of the most important cities there. It was also home to Albrecht Dürer who would become the iconic artist of the German Renaissance. Dürer was part of a network of skilled craftspeople and artists, humanists, entrepreneurs, and civic and religious leaders. His prints were among the most important and technically sophisticated objects created in the city. His engravings, etchings and woodcuts overflow with objects that come from Nuremberg's world of trade, manufacture and design; the 'real' world of objects was depicted by Dürer with an incredible precision. Except for research on the metal trades, the relationship of Dürer's prints to the wide range of highly skilled crafts and technical developments remains for the most part little understood. The complex meanings of material culture in his time also remain little explored.

# the Whitworth

The exhibition and accompanying publication (Manchester University Press) draw on the expertise of a team of Manchester-based and international researchers who have been examining Dürer's art from the perspective of material culture studies for over five years. The team comprises established Dürer scholars, art historians and historians of material culture: The University of Manchester scholars Edward H. Wouk, Sasha Handley, Stefan Hanß and the Whitworth Curator (Historic Fine Art) Imogen Holmes-Roe are joined by Australian and European researchers Jennifer Spinks, Matthew S. Champion, Dagmar Eichberger and Charles Zika. Together, they have planned an exhibition that will throw new light on Dürer's interface with the material Renaissance.

The Whitworth has augmented the exhibition with key loans from the British Museum, Ashmolean Museum, Royal Armouries, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, National Museums Scotland, Manchester Museum, Manchester Art Gallery, Chetham's Library and John Rylands Research Institute and Library.

**Imogen Holmes Roe, Curator (Historic Fine Art) at the Whitworth**, said: "*Albrecht Dürer's material world* represents a landmark for the Whitworth's Historic Fine Art collection. As a university gallery, the collaborative nature of the project is allowing us to juxtapose new research into Dürer's art with the Whitworth's internationally renowned print collection. For visitors, this ambitious exhibition will be the first time they have encountered such a rich collection of the artist's graphic works together with objects from his time. Together they allow us to appreciate his wider engagement with the material and sensory world around him.

Alongside this, the exhibition's catalogue brings new perspective to the history of collecting Dürer's art in the north west of England and to the role that local collectors played in amassing what are today celebrated as some of the world's greatest public print collections."

**Edward H. Wouk, speaking for the project team including fellow Manchester academics Sasha Handley and Stefan Hanß**, said: "This exhibition of the Whitworth's collection of Dürer's prints shines a new light on the artist as a central figure in what scholars now describe as a 'material Renaissance' - an early modern flourishing of creativity and consumerism defined by unprecedented technical and artistic ingenuity. We have set Dürer's prints in dialogue with objects from his time, ranging from a humble pair of scissors to astounding examples of Nuremberg metalwork, to examine how his graphic art was profoundly shaped by this world of manufacture and craft. Our international team of researchers used cutting-edge microscopic imaging and technical analysis to investigate Dürer's attention to materials and craft, whilst also carrying out new research into the values his society imputed to the affective objects they created, sold, consumed, and represented in their art.

Our research looks anew at Dürer's travels, his humanist network, his family's historic involvement in metallurgical trade, and his own reflections on what it meant to be an artist in early modern Europe during an age of global expansion.

The result is a highly innovative and interactive exhibition that will not only draw visitors into Dürer's material world but also prompt them to think about how his radical experiments in the medium of print, new to his time, might resonate in an age when digital media are again making us think about our relationship to the emotional lives of objects in our world."

# the Whitworth

Poppy Bowers, Interim Head of Exhibitions at the Whitworth said: "This is a significant moment as we prepare to open the first major exhibition of the Whitworth's outstanding collection of Dürer's woodcuts, etchings, and engravings in over fifty years. It is done in a way that captures all that is distinctive in how exhibitions are created here. A collaborative endeavour, Albrecht Dürer's material world re-situates art within wider social and sensory networks through an ability to bridge disciplines and reveal new ways of looking. Not unlike Dürer himself, the exhibition is propelled by a deep-seated curiosity for the material and emotional conditions that shape our lives."

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**Notes to editors:**

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[The German History Society](#)

[The Australian Research Council](#)

[The Friends of the Whitworth](#)

Image: Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), *Landscape with a Cannon*, 1518

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For further information about the research project <https://www.duerersmaterialworld.org/>

#AlbrechtDürersMaterialWorld #AlbrechtDürer #TheWhitworth

## About the Whitworth

The Whitworth is proudly part of The University of Manchester, operating as a convening space between the University and the people of the city. It was founded in 1889 as The Whitworth Institute and Park in memory of the industrialist Sir Joseph Whitworth for "the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester" and continues this mission today in new contexts. In 2015 the gallery undertook a £17 million redevelopment by architects MUMA, which doubled the public space, creating new facilities to house the collection of over 55,000 works of art, textiles, and wallpaper. Along with expanded gallery spaces, a study centre, learning studio, and collections care centre, the gallery reconnected with its park, with communal gardens and outdoor programmes. The gallery is driven by a mission to work with communities to use art for positive social change, and actively address what matters most in people's lives. This new vision has been developed as part of an international dialogue about how to evolve and adapt museums to a constantly changing world. This work is underpinned by three key concepts: learning together, through making and doing; creating a place of care, consideration, and community; taking action.

[www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth)

**Gallery opening times:** Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm, Thursday late opening until 9pm

With thanks for our official paint sponsor Little Greene.