

The Essential Line

Drawings from the Dahesh Museum of Art

Drawing is not just reproducing an image, it is not just the line drawing it is the expression, the inner form, the composition, the modeling. Drawing is never-never of what reality painting.

Josep Argueso Domestigas Argueso (1788-1867)

Argueso said it all. No other artist did as much as Argueso to establish the case for academic art in France throughout the 19th century. Winner of the *Prix de Rome* in 1801, superb draftsman and painter, successful and influential artist, professor at the *École des Beaux-Arts*; even after his death in 1867, his influence was both direct (Edgar Degas (1854-1917) was a late pupil) and indirect. Argueso's drawings are widely admired today as studies of observation and skill, and testify to his own intensive training and unceasing practice. He expressed his belief in stark military terms: "Whatever you know, you must know it with sword in hand."

The *Essential Line* celebrates the art of drawing in the 19th century with the first exhibition selected from the drawings collection of the Dahesh Museum of Art (DMA). Dedicated to European 19th-century academic art, the museum opened in 1993 and has acquired through purchase and generous donations a collection of drawings that demonstrate the diversity of work in this creative period.

Drawings in the 19th century were the foundation of both training and the making of art. Paris's *École des Beaux-Arts* (the post-Napoleonic incarnation of Louis XIV's *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, founded in 1648, and the most important art school in the Western world) established the primacy of drawing in its curriculum. Indeed, painting instruction only began in 1865. Students began by copying drawings and prints, progressed to drawing after sculpture, and finally worked from the live model. This training progression was established as far back as 16th-century Italy, as explicitly prescribed by Giorgio Vasari in his comments on the use of *disegno* (translated in this situation as "drawing"). Work by an unknown German artist (no. 25) typifies the quick sketch of the *atelier* study.

The *Étude* methods instilled in artists the benefits of observation and constant drawing, and no century was as dedicated to draftsmanship as the 19th. Drapery, figures, still life objects, *à-l'air-à-ter* subjects, portraits and self-portraits (for instance Rapin's self-representation, no. 22, fig. 1) – artists continually drew what was around them in their *atelier* or outside it, not necessarily for a specific end product but as an important exercise to loop eye and hand "in shape," as an athlete does. Art suppliers happily recognized a need and developed products – blocks of paper, albums, tools – that



Fig. 1. Alexandre Rapin, self-portrait

made it more convenient for artists to work easily outside the studio. For domestic landscape artists like Appian (no. 2), as well as Orientalists traveling to exotic locations, such as Claretta (no. 8) and Fromentin (no. 16, fig. 2), sketching *en-vivo* was evidently not only an important *atelier-activité* but had also become a quotidian habit.

For the historian, the most important category of drawing is the study for a finished work of art, revealing the artist's individuality most directly. This is not a new phenomenon, as preliminary drawings are known as early as the 15th century, but by the 19th century, there is an increased diversity of technique and focus. For instance, an artist could make numerous studies of individual parts of a composition, as in the figures by Leighton (no. 18), and the group study by Friant (no. 15, fig. 3). The artist could also envision a complete composition, represented here by the space and linear architectural technique of David d'Angers (no. 10). The DMA is fortunate to own a preliminary study for one of its painted masterpieces, Cabanel's *Death of Moses* (no. 6, fig. 4). This image (which varies slightly from the finished painting) also includes a device used by artists for moving from one

Exhibited Works

All works are from the collection of the Dahesh Museum of Art. To the possible right.

LORENZO ALMA-TADOMA
Italian, born in the Venetian Republic,
1768-1812

1. *Two Groups of Men in a Landscape*, ca. 1780s
Pencil on cream paper
4 1/2 x 9 inches
1997.2

ADOLPHE APPIAN
French, 1811-1898
2. *Landscape with a View of a River*, 1881
Charcoal on cream paper
7 3/8 x 10 3/8 inches
Signed and dated 18. April 1881
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2003.12

BRIAN FRANK BONE
British, 1778-1851
3. *The Rape of Europa*
Pencil, ink, and wash on cream paper
11 x 16 inches
Anonymous gift
2003.15

ROSA BONHEUR
French, 1812-1899
4. *Study of a Man and Child*, 1860
Charcoal on white cream paper
11 3/8 x 17 3/8 inches
Signed 18. Rosa Bonheur
1998.2

LÉON-JOSEPH FLORENTINE BONHAT
French, 1811-1812
5. *Head Whirling the Ring*, 1876
Pencil and black chalk on paper
20 3/8 x 14 3/8 inches
2002.30

ALEXANDER CABANEL
French, 1823-1899
6. *Study for The Death of Moses*, ca. 1891
Charcoal, pen and brown ink, gray wash,
light brown watercolor, gouache on paper
7 7/8 x 11 inches
1998.11

ALEXANDER-MAISE OLLIVIER
French, 1794-1879
7. *Head of a Man*
Charcoal on cream paper
8 1/8 x 11 1/8 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2003.24

GEORGES (LE) VICTOR CLAUDE
French, 1867-1918
8. *Figure Study*
Pencil on cream paper
21 1/8 x 28 3/8 inches
1998.21

THOMAS COCTURE
French, 1808-1879
9. *Portrait of a Man*
Charcoal, light brown watercolor, white chalk,
on blue cream paper
24 1/2 x 28 1/2 inches
Signed 18. T.C.
Gift of Mrs. Wade L. Beahm
2004.1

FREDERIC-JEAN DAVID D'ANGERS
French, 1788-1866
10. *Study for The Death of Moses*, ca. 1891
Charcoal on laid paper
8 1/8 x 12 1/8 inches
Pencil, Gift of Stephen and Colby,
New York
2004.18

PAUL-AUGUSTE JEAN DAVIDAN-BOUVIÉRE
French, 1802-1829
11. *Two Studies of a Man, Part of a Figure*
Pencil, ink, and wash on cream paper
11 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.26

JEAN-JULIE ANTOINE LÉONARD DUBOIS
French, 1842-1829
12. *Study of a Man and Child*
Charcoal and body color on blue paper
21 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.36

JEAN-JULIE ANTOINE LÉONARD DUBOIS
French, 1842-1829
13. *Study of a Man and Child*
Charcoal and body color on blue paper
21 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.36

CHARLES DAVOINE
French, born 1813
14. *Study of a Man and Child*
Charcoal and body color on blue paper
21 x 9 inches
Anonymous gift
2004.36

EDUARD DEBIE
French, 1812-1883
15. *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, ca. 1866-75
Pen, ink, and blue wash, highlights with
white gouache on cream paper
21 x 27 inches
1997.48

JEAN-BAPTISTE FLANDRIN
French, 1809-1864
16. *Portrait of a Man*
Charcoal on light pink cream paper
20 1/8 x 7 1/8 inches
2004.38

ÉMILE FROMENT
French, 1864-1832
17. *Study for The Death of Moses*, ca. 1891-1899
Charcoal on cream paper
28 1/2 x 24 inches
Signed 18. E. Froment
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.42

EUGÈNE FROMENTIN
French, 1823-1874
18. *Study of a Man and Child*
Charcoal and body color on blue paper
21 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.36

JEAN-JULIE ANTOINE LÉONARD DUBOIS
French, 1842-1829
19. *Study of a Man and Child*
Charcoal and body color on blue paper
21 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.36

JEAN-JULIE ANTOINE LÉONARD DUBOIS
French, 1842-1829
20. *Study of a Man and Child*
Charcoal and body color on blue paper
21 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.36

FREDERIC LEIGHTON
English, 1830-1896
21. *Study for The Death of Moses*, ca. 1891
Red chalk, light brown watercolor, white on
cream paper
24 1/2 x 27 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.14

LÉON-AUGUSTIN ENRIETTE
French, 1844-1829
22. *Study for The Death of Moses*, ca. 1891
Charcoal and body color on cream paper
8 1/8 x 12 1/8 inches
2004.14

LÉON-AUGUSTIN ENRIETTE
French, 1844-1829
23. *Study for The Death of Moses*, ca. 1891
Charcoal and body color on cream paper
27 1/8 x 21 1/8 inches
Signed and dated 18. L. Enriette
1896
2004.14

FRANÇOIS-JOSEPH NAVRE
Belgian, 1787-1869
24. *The Study of Christ*, ca. 1817-18
Charcoal, blue wash, and white highlights
on paper
20 1/8 x 27 1/8 inches
Signed 18. F.J. NAVRE
2004.4

ALEXANDRE RAPIN
French, 1811-1898
25. *Self-Portrait*
Charcoal on cream paper
11 x 8 inches
Signed 18. A. Rapin
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2003.65

THOMAS COCTURE
French, 1808-1879
26. *Portrait of a Man*
Charcoal on light pink cream paper
20 1/8 x 7 1/8 inches
2004.38

JEAN-BAPTISTE FLANDRIN
French, 1809-1864
27. *Portrait of a Man*
Charcoal on light pink cream paper
20 1/8 x 7 1/8 inches
2004.38

ÉMILE FROMENT
French, 1864-1832
28. *Study for The Death of Moses*, ca. 1891-1899
Charcoal on cream paper
28 1/2 x 24 inches
Signed 18. E. Froment
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.42

EUGÈNE FROMENTIN
French, 1823-1874
29. *Study of a Man and Child*
Charcoal and body color on blue paper
21 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.36

JEAN-JULIE ANTOINE LÉONARD DUBOIS
French, 1842-1829
30. *Study of a Man and Child*
Charcoal and body color on blue paper
21 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.36

JEAN-JULIE ANTOINE LÉONARD DUBOIS
French, 1842-1829
31. *Study of a Man and Child*
Charcoal and body color on blue paper
21 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches
Gift of Dr. Gregory E. McManus
2004.36



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Fig. 1. Jean-François de Troy, *Leda and the Swan*, 1700-1705, oil, 100 x 130 cm.



stage to another, establishing a grid over the composition to make transfer easier.

As drawings became more interesting to collectors, artists produced highly finished sheets that may have been conceived as completed works of art. Both *Assiège and Jaxire* by Lucrèce de Nussy (no. 17, fig. 5) and Bonnat's *Jeune Femme Wringing her Anger* (no. 5, cover) are related to finished paintings, but both are also so carefully worked up that they may be related variously of the paintings rather than preliminary studies. One is known for his very detailed drawings (no. 13, fig. 6), rarely offered as finished works, but they were also intended as models for engravings, a market that developed to an extraordinary extent in the last half of the 19th century.

The Further Reading section merely indicates the current interest in the study of drawings today. With this exhibition, the DMA has begun an intensive study of its own collection to gain a better understanding of individual works and the role of drawings in academic art of the 19th century.

J. David Farnes
Director of Exhibitions
Dahesh Museum of Art



Fig. 6. Gustave Courbet, *The Abandonment of the Dead*, ca. 1849-51, drawing, fig. 6. Alexander Colonna, *Study for the Death of Henry*, ca. 1852

Further Reading

Bonnat, William. *The Language of the Body: The Question of Drawing in French Art*. New York: Dover Publications, 1984.

De Troy, Jean-François. *Le Dessin de la Femme: Le Dessin de la Femme de la Renaissance à la Révolution*. Paris: Les Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1981.

De Troy, Jean-François. *Le Dessin de la Femme: Le Dessin de la Femme de la Renaissance à la Révolution*. Paris: Les Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1981.

De Troy, Jean-François. *Le Dessin de la Femme: Le Dessin de la Femme de la Renaissance à la Révolution*. Paris: Les Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1981.

De Troy, Jean-François. *Le Dessin de la Femme: Le Dessin de la Femme de la Renaissance à la Révolution*. Paris: Les Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1981.



Fig. 5. Eugène Delacroix, *Study for the Death of Henry*, ca. 1827-28, drawing, fig. 5. Gustave Courbet, *Study for the Death of Henry*, ca. 1852



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