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The Essential Line: Drawings from the Dahesh Museum of Art Exhibition Brochure

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The Essential Line

Drawings from the Dahesh Museum of Art

Drawing is not just reproducing contours, it is not just the line; drawing is also the expression, the inner form, the composition, the modelling. Drawing is seven-eighths of what makes up painting.

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867)

Ingres said it all. No other artist did as much as Ingres to establish the tone 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 [1834-1917] was a late pupil) and indirect. Ingres's drawings are widely admired today as miracles 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 act 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 1995 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 1863. 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 *École's* 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, *plein-air* 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 keep 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 Clairin (no. 8) and Fromentin (no. 16, fig. 2), sketching on-site was evidently not only an important *aide-mémoire* 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. 19), and the group study by Friant (no. 15, fig. 3). The artist could also envision a complete composition, represented here by the spare and linear neoclassical 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. Height precedes width.

LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA
British (born in the Netherlands),
1836-1912
1. *First Concept for Reading from Homer*,
ca. 1884-5
Pencil on wove paper
4 1/2 x 9 inches
1997.2

ADOLPHE APPIAN
French, 1818-1898
2. *Italianate Landscape with a River*, 1883
Charcoal on wove paper
7 3/8 x 10 3/4 inches
Signed and dated LR: Appian 1883
Gift of DeCourcy E. McIntosh
2003.52

HENRY PIERCE BONE
British, 1779-1855
3. *The Rape of Europa*
Sepia brush and wash on wove paper
11 x 16 inches
Anonymous gift
2003.53

ROSA BONHEUR
French, 1822-1899
4. *Studies of a Horse and Rider*, 1900
Graphite on white wove paper
11 3/4 x 17 3/4 inches
Signed LR: Rosa Bonheur
1998.2

LÉON-JOSEPH-FLORENTINE
BONNAT
French, 1833-1922
5. *Jacob Wrestling the Angel*, 1876
Pencil and black chalk on paper
20 3/4 x 14 1/2 inches
2002.30

ALEXANDRE CABANEL
French, 1823-1889
6. *Study for The Death of Moses*, ca. 1851
Graphite, pen and brown ink, gray wash,
heightened with white gouache on paper
7 7/8 x 11 inches
1998.11

ALEXANDRE-MARIE COLIN
French, 1798-1873
7. *Bashi-Bazouk*
Charcoal on wove paper
8 1/4 x 5 5/8 inches
Gift of DeCourcy E. McIntosh
2003.24

GEORGES JULES VICTOR CLAIRIN
French, 1843-1919
8. *Figure Studies*
Pencil on wove paper
21 1/4 x 25 3/4 inches
1999.15

THOMAS COUTURE
French, 1815-1879
9. *Portrait of a Man*
Charcoal, heightened with white chalk,
on blue wove paper
24 1/2 x 18 3/16 inches
Signed LR: T.C.
Gift of Mrs. Noah L. Butkin
2003.1

PIERRE-JEAN DAVID D'ANGERS
French, 1788-1856
10. *Study for The Death of Epaminondas*,
after the Battle of Mantinea, 1811
Graphite on laid paper
9 5/16 x 12 1/16 inches
Partial Gift of Shepherd Gallery,
New York
2003.15

PASCAL-ADOLPHE-JEAN
DAGNAN-BOUVERET
French, 1852-1929
11. *Three Studies of a Man's Head*
in Profile:
Top right: *Study after Thorn Puller*
(lo Spinario),
ca. 1892
5 5/8 x 9 inches
Graphite on wove paper
Gift of Mrs. Noah L. Butkin
2003.2
Lower right: *Study for In the Forest*, 1892
Oil on canvas
7 1/2 x 12 inches
Gift of Mrs. Noah L. Butkin
2003.4
Left: *Studies for In the Forest and*
Thorn Puller (lo Spinario), 1892
Red crayon, conté crayon, and
charcoal on laid paper
11 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches
Gift of Mrs. Noah L. Butkin
2003.3

CHARLES DAMOUR
French, born 1813
12. *Flowering Yucca*, 1836
Graphite and body color with pen and
black ink on blue paper
12 x 9 inches
Annotated and dated LR:
Biscari 21 Juin 1836
Gift of DeCourcy E. McIntosh
2003.26

GUSTAVE DORÉ
French, 1832-1883
13. *The Massacre of the Innocents*,
ca. 1869-72
Pen, ink and ink wash heightened with
white gouache on wove paper
22 x 33 inches
1997.40

JEAN-HIPPOLYTE FLANDRIN
French, 1809-1864
14. *Female Nude*
Graphite on light pink wove paper
10 1/8 x 7 13/16 inches
2003.30

ÉMILE FRIANT
French, 1863-1932
15. *Study for La Douleur*, ca. 1898-1899
Charcoal on wove paper
18 1/2 x 16 inches
Signed LR: E Friant
Gift of DeCourcy E. McIntosh
2002.61

EUGÈNE FROMENTIN
French, 1820-1876
16. *Studies of Arab Children*
Charcoal and body color on blue paper
11 1/4 x 18 1/2 inches
Gift of DeCourcy E. McIntosh
2003.36

JEAN JULES ANTOINE
LECOMTE DU NOUÏ
French, 1842-1923
17. *Antiope and Jupiter*, ca. 1889
Pastel and charcoal on brown paper
25 1/2 x 17 inches
Inscribed, signed, and dated LR:
A ses amis G. Des Fossez Lecomte
du NouÏ. 1889
2002.21

18. *Study for the Death of the Virgin*,
ca. 1895
Red chalk, heightened with white on
brown paper
14 1/2 x 17 inches
Gift of DeCourcy E. McIntosh
2001.14

FREDERIC LEIGHTON
English, 1830-1896
19. *Studies for The Bacchante*, ca. 1892
Charcoal and chalk on gray paper
9 11/16 x 12 5/8 inches
1999.6

LÉON-AUGUSTIN LHERMITTE
French, 1844-1925
20. *Lunch at the Cerverie Farm*, 1895
Charcoal and brown pastel on laid paper
17 3/4 x 23 1/2 inches
Signed and dated LR: L. Lhermitte
-1895-
1996.10

FRANÇOIS-JOSEPH NAVEZ
Belgian, 1787-1869
21. *The Body of Christ*, ca. 1813-16
Graphite, charcoal and white highlights
on paper
15 1/4 x 23 1/16 inches
Signed LL: F.J. NAVEZ
2003.6

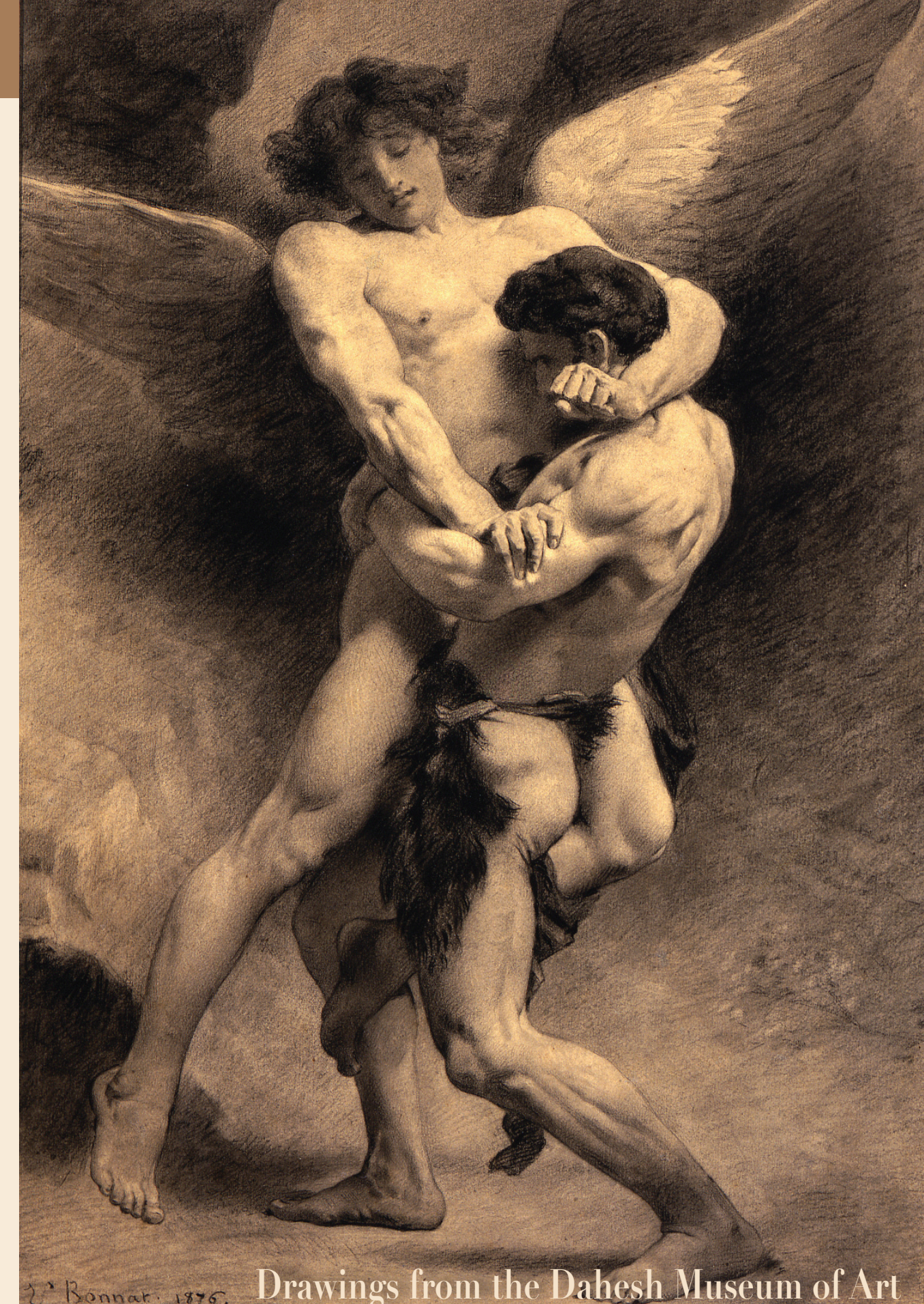
ALEXANDRE RAPIN
French, 1839-1899
22. *Self Portrait*
Graphite on wove paper
12 x 8 inches
Signed LR: A. Rapin
Gift of DeCourcy E. McIntosh
2002.63

THÉODULE AUGUSTIN RIBOT
French, 1823-1891
23. *In the Kitchen*
Graphite and pen and ink on paper
22 1/2 x 34 3/4 inches
1997.39

LÉOPOLD ROBERT
Swiss (active in Italy), 1794-1835
24. *Woman Bringing Provisions to*
Bohemians and Brigands
Graphite and red chalk on laid paper
9 1/4 x 11 1/4 inches
Inscribed LR: femme apportant
des provisions aux bohémiens et
contrebandiers
Gift of DeCourcy E. McIntosh
2003.41

UNKNOWN (German, 19th Century)
25. *A Life Drawing Class at the Academy of Art*,
Munich
Watercolor wash on wove paper
16 7/8 x 12 13/16 inches
Gift of William A. Glaser and Gilberte
Vansintejan Glaser
2005.4

cover:
Léon-Joseph-Florentine Bonnat,
Jacob Wrestling the Angel, 1876



Drawings from the Dahesh Museum of Art



fig. 5: Jean Jules Antoine Lecomte du Nouÿ, *Antiope and Jupiter*, ca. 1889



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 *Antiope and Jupiter* by Lecomte du Nouÿ (no. 17, fig. 5) and Bonnat's *Jacob Wrestling the Angel* (no. 5, cover) are related to finished paintings, but both are also so carefully worked up that they may be related versions of the paintings rather than preliminary studies. Doré is known for his very detailed drawings (no. 13, fig. 6), surely 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 Farmer
Director of Exhibitions
Dahesh Museum of Art



top, fig. 6: Gustav Doré, *The Massacre of the Innocents*, ca. 1869-72
bottom, fig. 4: Alexandre Cabanel, *Study for The Death of Moses*, ca. 1851

Further Reading

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Petherbridge, Deanna. *The Primacy of Drawing: Histories and Theories of Practice*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Zafran, Eric, Robert Rosenblum and Lisa Small. *Fantasy and Faith: The Art of Gustave Doré*. New York and New Haven: Dahesh Museum of Art and Yale University, 2007.



top, fig. 2: Eugène Fromentin, *Studies of Arab Children*
bottom, fig. 3: Émile Friant, *Study for La Douleur*, ca. 1898-1899



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