

FACT SHEET

- Exhibition:** *Studying Nature: Oil Sketches from the Thaw Collection*
- Press Preview:** Thursday, January 22, 2009, 10 a.m. until noon
- Dates:** January 23 through August 30, 2009
- Summary:** The fresh, immediate quality of plein-air oil sketches, the majority of which are executed on paper adhered to canvas, places them both literally and conceptually between paintings and drawings. The selection of 40 works on view is from the collection formed by Eugene and Clare Thaw. Assembled over the past fourteen years and numbering more than 130 objects, the collection chronicles the history of a practice that became prevalent during the late eighteenth century and remained vital until the dawn of Impressionism. Pioneered by neoclassical practitioners, making sketches in oil quickly became part of the pedagogical system in France and was an essential element of artistic activity both at home and abroad for Scandinavian, Belgian, German, and Swiss artists as well as being employed by certain British and Italian painters. These intimately scaled sketches, by some of the most skilled contributors to the genre, reveal artists exploring subject matter, experimenting with technique, and venturing into nature to study individual motifs, scenic vistas, and meteorological phenomena.
- Content:** The exhibition includes oil sketches beginning with the late-eighteenth-century pioneers, such as Pierre-Henri Valenciennes (1750–1819), Simon Denis (1755–1813), and Francois-Marius Granet (1775–1849), with strong representation of nineteenth-century practitioners, including Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796–1875) and John Constable (1776–1837), and concludes with the late stages of the oil sketch concurrent with the dawn of Impressionism, with works by Eugène Isabey (1803–1886) and Charles-François Daubigny (1817–1878). The show features works by French, British, German, Belgian, Scandinavian, and Italian artists working in both their native lands and abroad.
- Organization and Sponsors:** *Studying Nature: Oil Sketches from the Thaw Collection* is organized by Jennifer Tonkovich, Curator, Drawings and Prints, The Morgan Library & Museum.
- This exhibition is supported by the Morgan's Franklin Jasper Walls Fund.
- Education and Programs:** A full-day symposium coincides with the exhibition *Studying Nature: Oil Sketches from the Thaw Collection*, which explores the development of the oil sketch in artistic practice beginning in the late eighteenth century and its complex function in the creative process. Through a series of lectures, leading scholars will present new research in the field.
- Saturday, January 24, 11 AM to 4 PM**
- Introductory remarks, Charlotte Gere, independent scholar
 - *Manipulating Paint: The Shorthand of Plein Air Technique*, Ann Hoenigswald, Senior Conservator of Paintings, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

- *Addressing the Outdoors: The Media of Open-Air Sketching*, John Gage, former professor, Cambridge University
- *What Happened to Claude's Oil Studies?* Richard Rand, Senior Curator, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts
- *Two Series of Studies in Oil on Paper Numbered by Their Authors: Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes and Simon Denis*, Genevieve Lacambre, former curator, Louvre, Paris
- *The Closson/Schelfhout Affair: A Question of Attribution*, Xavier Bray, Assistant Curator of 17th- and 18th-century European Paintings, National Gallery, London
- *Painting on the Normandy Coast in the 1860s: The Decline of the Oil Sketch?* John House, Walter Annenberg Professor, Courtauld Institute of Art, London

Tickets: \$25 for Non-Members; \$20 for Members; free with student ID. Reservation required (tickets@themorgan.org).

This symposium is sponsored by the Morgan's Franklin Jasper Walls Lecture Fund.

A children's painting workshop with artist Ben Moore will take place on Saturday, March 14 at 2 p.m. Appropriate for ages 6 through 12.

For more information on these and other public programs, please contact the Education department at (212) 590-0333.

About the Morgan:

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, musical and performing arts venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. A century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its new campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan reaffirms its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4,000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

Hours & Location:

Tuesday to Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Closed Mondays and Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

Admission:

Adults \$12; children (under 16) \$8; seniors (65 and over) \$8; students (with current ID) \$8; free to members and children 12 and under (must be accompanied by an adult). Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission to the McKim rooms is without charge during the following times: Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m.; Friday, 7 to 9 p.m.; Sunday, 4 to 6 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.

For further information please contact Sandra Ho, Communications and Marketing department, (212) 590-0311, or at media@themorgan.org.