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**STUDYING NATURE:  
OIL SKETCHES FROM THE THAW COLLECTION**  
*On View at The Morgan Library & Museum January 23 through August 30, 2009*

**Exhibition Focuses on the Artistry and Technique of the Sketch by Practitioners such as Valenciennes, Corot, and Constable**

**\*\* Press Preview: Thursday, January 22, 2009 10 a.m. until noon \*\***

**New York, NY, November 19, 2008**—Intimately scaled sketches made in oils and executed in nature are the subject of a new exhibition on view at The Morgan Library & Museum from January 23 through August 30, 2009. *Studying Nature: Oil Sketches from the Thaw Collection* presents more than twenty works drawn from the collection of Eugene V. and Clare Thaw, which chronicles the history of the genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



Jean-Michel Cels, *Clouds and Blue Sky*, ca. 1838-42, oil on brown paper, mounted on card, The Thaw Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum. Photography by Schecter Lee.

The fresh and immediate quality of many of these sketches, the majority of which are executed on paper adhered to canvas, places them both literally and conceptually in between paintings and drawings. The complex circumstances of their creation and function has proved a fertile field of inquiry. The works showcase aspects of the role of the oil sketch in pedagogy and practice. The approach to natural motifs, such as still-life subjects, is seen in the closely detailed studies of branches, logs, and individual trees. The effort to capture ephemeral effects is evident in studies of clouds and storms, sunrises and sunsets, and waterfalls and fountains.

“These sketches are superb windows into the world of the artist at work,” said William M. Griswold, director of The Morgan Library & Museum. “In them, one can almost feel the artist searching for just the right form and just the right palette. We are deeply grateful to Gene and Clare Thaw for sharing these works with the Morgan and for allowing us to present some of the best examples to the art-loving public.”

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.

Among the works on view is Jean-Michel Cels's *Clouds and Blue Sky*, one of a group of eight studies of clouds and sky that Cels executed between 1838 and 1842, and John Constable's *Hampstead Heath with Bathers* (ca. 1821–22), a study of the sky emphasizing cloud morphology and weather effects. Using a distinctive palette of dark and light greens and gray with pink accents, Corot executed *The Hills of Genzano* while working outdoors during the summer of 1826; he later reprised the same view in a deliberately constructed composition with a rider and peasants. Such works reveal the wide range of technique and function of the landscape oil sketch during this period.

*Studying Nature: Oil Sketches from the Thaw Collection* is organized by Jennifer Tonkovich, Curator, Drawings and Prints, The Morgan Library & Museum.

The exhibition and related programs are made possible by the Franklin Jasper Walls Lecture Fund.



This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Concurrently on view in the Morgan Stanley West Gallery is *The Thaw Collection of Master Drawings: Acquisitions Since 2002*. The exhibition presents recently acquired drawings from the spectacular private holdings of the Thaw collection. The show features more than eighty impressive works that have been added to the Thaw collection since 2002, many of them important modern drawings by artists such as Jackson Pollock, Georgia O'Keeffe, Robert Motherwell, Ellsworth Kelly, Agnes Martin, Jim Dine, and David Smith, among others. The exhibition covers a tremendous range of draftsmanship from Renaissance artists such as Federico Barocci to contemporary artists such as David Hockney.

*The Thaw Collection of Master Drawings: Acquisitions Since 2002* is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue that includes a foreword by Morgan director William M. Griswold, a preface by Eugene V. Thaw, and a collection overview by Morgan drawings department head Rhoda Eitel-Porter.

This exhibition is made possible through the generosity of Melvin R. Seiden and Donna and Bill Acquavella. Additional generous support is provided by the Janine Luke and Melvin R. Seiden Fund for Exhibitions and Publications.

### **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

*Studying Nature: New Research on Landscape Oil Sketches*

A full-day symposium coincides with the exhibition *Studying Nature: Oil Sketches from the Thaw Collection* (January 23 through May 3), 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. Families will have a brief tour of the exhibition and receive step-by-step instruction as they create their own small landscape paintings. Appropriate for ages 6 through 12.

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

### **THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM**

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 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 newly

renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

### **General Information**

The Morgan Library & Museum

225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405

212.685.0008

[www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org)

### **Hours**

Tuesday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; extended Friday hours, 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 Monday, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. The Morgan closes at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve.

### **Admission**

\$12 for adults; \$8 for students, seniors (65 and over), and children (under 16); free to Members and children, 12 and under accompanied by an adult. Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.

### **Current and Upcoming Exhibitions**

<i>Drawing Babar: Early Drafts and Watercolors</i>	Through January 4, 2009
<i>John Milton’s Paradise Lost</i>	Through January 2, 2009
<i>Protecting the Word: Bookbindings of the Morgan</i>	December 5, 2008, through March 29, 2009
<i>The Thaw Collection of Master Drawings</i>	January 23 through May 3, 2009
<i>On the Money: Cartoons for The New Yorker</i>	January 23 through May 24, 2009
<i>Studying Nature: Oil Sketches from the Thaw Collection</i>	January 23 through May 30, 2009
<i>Recent Acquisitions, 2004–2009</i>	April 17 through August 9, 2009
<i>The Modern Stage: Set Designs 1900–1970</i>	May 22 through August 16, 2009