

THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM PRESENTS
*MICHELANGELO, VASARI, AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES:
DRAWINGS FROM THE UFFIZI*

*Major Survey of Italian Renaissance Draftsmanship
Celebrates Artists who Contributed to the Sumptuous Decorations of
Florence's Palazzo Vecchio*

On View Only at the Morgan
January 25 through April 20, 2008

****Press Preview: Thursday, January 24, 10 am until NOON****

New York, NY, December 10, 2007—Nearly eighty masterpieces of Italian Renaissance drawing from Florence's Uffizi Gallery, including a number of rarely seen works, are on view only at The Morgan Library & Museum from January 25 through April 20, 2008.



Pontormo, *Two Studies of Male Figures* (detail): (1521). Black chalk and red chalk, red wash, heightened with white chalk. Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi.

Michelangelo, Vasari, and Their Contemporaries: Drawings from the Uffizi surveys the work of renowned masters who defined Florentine draftsmanship. The exhibition focuses on works by important artists who participated in a major campaign of redecorating the famed Palazzo Vecchio, one of the most impressive buildings in Renaissance Florence and the focal point of artistic activity throughout the sixteenth century.

Under the auspices of Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, (1519–74), this former city hall was transformed by the leading artists of the time into a palatial residence and an icon of Medici Florence. The artist-historian Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) acted as the mastermind and creative director of the complex and varied decorations for the palazzo, choosing as his collaborators the most talented painters in Florence. The exhibition demonstrates how drawing functioned not only as a means of planning the elaborate paintings, frescoes, and tapestries needed for the refurbishment of the palazzo, but also as a tool that facilitated the creative process for Vasari and his contemporaries.

"This exhibition brings together a truly stunning lineup of Florentine masters," said Charles E. Pierce, Jr., director of The Morgan Library & Museum. "Michelangelo, Vasari, Pontormo, Bronzino, the list is one of superlatives. The Morgan is honored to be the only venue for this extraordinary show."

PALAZZO VECCHIO

Palazzo Vecchio was built as the government headquarters of Florence during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. After Duke Cosimo I came to power in 1537 through a series of tense political machinations, the young ruler soon established his authority and significantly expanded Florentine territories and influence. A strong personality with a clear vision for his dukedom, Cosimo I moved his family from the traditional Medici residence to Palazzo Vecchio as a calculated gesture to confirm his identification with the state.

Cosimo I employed the arts as a means of demonstrating his absolute power. His decision to completely renovate and expand the palazzo was designed to exalt his status as sovereign against an extraordinarily prestigious backdrop. Historically, only the most respected artists and intellectuals had been involved with the palazzo's alterations, and Cosimo's campaign was no exception. Florence's leading painters, sculptors, and architects were called upon to demonstrate their talents in the redecoration of the city's historical and symbolic center, simultaneously glorifying their ruler as well as their own artistic endeavors.

THE ARTISTS

The exhibition is divided into three sections highlighting the artists who shaped the nature of Italian Renaissance drawing and contributed to the palazzo's decorations under Duke Cosimo I.

The first section, "The Great Masters," showcases the artists who directly preceded Vasari's intervention in the palazzo and served as great artistic examples for subsequent generations. Michelangelo (1475–1564), who had already sculpted his masterpiece, the statue of David, for the palazzo and competed with Leonardo in the decoration of the palazzo's main hall, was one of the preeminent models for Vasari and his collaborators. His black-chalk masterpiece, the *Bust of a Woman*, one of the so-called Divine Heads, exerted a tremendous influence on Florentine draftsmanship, and his sheet with studies of legs exemplifies his perfect anatomical constructions.

Andrea del Sarto (1486–1531), a guiding force in the history of Italian Renaissance art, also figures prominently in the exhibition with a red chalk *Study of a Male Model*, preparatory for his painting of the *Madonna of the Stairs* from the 1520s, and with a rare compositional study of high drama and emotional intensity, the *Lamentation of Christ*. Additionally, mannerist masters Pontormo (1494–1557), Rosso Fiorentino (1494–1540), Francesco Salviati (1510–1563), and Bronzino (1503–1572) are represented by exquisite examples of their graphic work.

Pontormo's vibrant study of *Seated Male Figures* records his method of studying a live model's movements to exceptional effect, and Rosso's masterful yet highly personal approach to drawing is evident in his *Virgin and Child with Four Saints*, presumably a study for an altarpiece, as well as in the arresting *Female Nude with Arm Raised*, a dispassionate representation of the female form that brazenly counters the established contemporary norm for beauty. Also on view are Bronzino's meticulously rendered preparatory study for one of the nearly life-size figures that adorn the private chapel of Cosimo I's wife Eleonora of Toledo (1522–1562) in the Palazzo Vecchio, and Salviati's great graphic masterpiece, a tapestry design of *The Age of Gold*.

The second section of the exhibition, "Vasari and His Collaborators," focuses on Vasari's own drawings as well as those of his collaborators in the various rooms of the palazzo, in particular the magnificent Salone dei Cinquecento (Hall of the Five Hundred). Under Vasari's direction, artists such as Alessandro Allori (1535–1607), Bernardo Buontalenti (1513–1608), Giovanni Stradanus (1523–1605), Santi di Tito (1536–1603), and Giovan Battista Naldini (1537–1591) collaborated on expansive painted scenes commemorating the duke's military exploits as well as the Medici's illustrious ancestors. Among Vasari's drawings on view is an exceptional compositional study of *The Siege of Milan* for the Room of Leo X and a design for the Salone dei Cinquecento.

The final portion of the exhibition, "The Painters of the Studiolo," will showcase drawings by painters of the celebrated Studiolo of Francesco I de' Medici, Cosimo's heir. Included are studies by late mannerist artists such as Girolamo Macchietti (1535–1592), Maso da San Friano (1531–1571) and Poppi (1544–1597).

The exhibition is organized by special arrangement with the Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale fiorentino and the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi and was conceived by Annamaria Petrioli Tofani, former director of the Uffizi. It will only be shown in New York and is curated by Rhoda Eitel-Porter, Charles W. Engelhard Curator and department head of Drawings and Prints, The Morgan Library & Museum.

This exhibition is made possible by The Alice Tully Foundation, with major support from the Estate of Alex Gordon.

CastleRock Asset Management is the corporate sponsor. Additional assistance is provided by the Joseph F. McCrindle Foundation and the Italian Cultural Institute of New York.

CATALOGUE

Michelangelo, Vasari, and Their Contemporaries: Drawings from the Uffizi is accompanied by a catalogue written by Annamaria Petrioli Tofani with contributions by Rhoda Eitel-Porter.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

A full-day symposium complements the exhibition on Saturday, January 26, 2008, from 11 am to 5 pm. Former director of the Galleria degli Uffizi, Annamaria Petrioli Tofani, delivers the keynote address exploring the defining role of drawing in the work of major Florentine Renaissance artists. The program continues with a series of five brief lectures by leading scholars that examine the work of individual artists represented in the exhibition.

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. Nearly 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

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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.

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