

Background of The Morgan Library & Museum's Drawings and Prints Collection

Ranging from preparatory studies and sketches to finished works of art, the nearly ten thousand drawings, albums, and sketchbooks in The Morgan Library & Museum's collection span the fourteenth through twentieth centuries. The primary focus is European drawings executed before 1825, but the Morgan's holdings include a growing number of nineteenth- and twentieth-century works on paper as well as drawings by American artists. In addition to a print collection of British political satires and portraits and about two hundred paintings, sculptures, medieval reliquaries, and ceramics, the Morgan has the largest and most representative collection of Rembrandt etchings in the United States.

In 1909 Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913) established the core of the Morgan's holdings when he purchased a collection of about fifteen hundred old master drawings from the English artist-collector Charles Fairfax Murray (1849–1919). Its strengths—notably sixteenth- and eighteenth-century Italian drawings and Netherlandish drawings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—remain unsurpassed in the United States. Since the founding of the Morgan as a public institution in 1924, the most important factor in the growth of the collection has been the acquisition of individual works and entire collections through gifts and bequests.

Italian drawings comprise about twenty-eight hundred individual sheets as well as drawings in albums and sketchbooks, including works by Raphael (1483–1520), Michelangelo (1475–1564), Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), and Giambattista Tiepolo (1696–1770). French drawings are a major strength, with drawings by Claude Lorrain (1600–1682), Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806), and Antoine Watteau (1684–1721). British drawings number more than one thousand individual sheets as well as albums and sketchbooks. William Hogarth (1697–1764), Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), William Blake (1757–1827), and J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) are only a few of the distinguished draftsmen represented in the collection. The Morgan's holdings include more than seven hundred works by Netherlandish, Dutch, and Flemish artists, such as

Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617), Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), and Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641). German drawings in the collection include masterpieces by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840). American artists represented include John James Audubon (1780–1851), Benjamin West (1738–1820), and John Singer Sargent (1856–1925).

Works by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), Edgar Degas (1834–1917), Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), and Henri Matisse (1869–1954) have strengthened the museum's holdings in works by nineteenth- and twentieth-century draftsmen. The gift of the archives of the influential Pierre Matisse Gallery has added drawings by Alexander Calder (1898–1976), Joan Miró (1893–1983), Yves Tanguy (1900–1955), and other artists associated with the gallery, providing a firm foundation for the future expansion of this part of the Morgan's extensive holdings.