

**FRAGONARD AND THE FRENCH TRADITION
AT THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM**

New York, NY, September 13, 2006 – Jean-Honoré Fragonard’s (1732–1806) brilliant accomplishments as a draftsman in the context of eighteenth-century French art are the subject of a new exhibition, *Fragonard and the French Tradition*, at The Morgan Library & Museum. The show, which marks the two-hundredth anniversary of Fragonard’s death, will be on view from October 13, 2006, through January 7, 2007.

The press preview for this exhibition is scheduled for Wednesday, October 11, 2006, from 9 a.m. until noon.



Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Interior of a Park: The Gardens of the Villa d'Este*, Thaw Collection: 1997.85.

Through a selection of approximately forty drawings, taken almost entirely from the Morgan’s collection, by the artist and his compatriots, *Fragonard and the French Tradition* chronicles how Fragonard emerged from the academic tradition of his mentors François Boucher (1703–1770) and Charles-Joseph Natoire (1700–1777) to establish himself as an artist with a distinct style. His expert command of the brush yielded some of the most masterful and painterly drawings of the century, and his late drawings in graphite and wash are so freely improvised as to border on abstraction.

A favorite artist of Pierpont Morgan, Fragonard is well represented among the drawings in the collection formed by Charles Fairfax Murray and acquired by Morgan in 1909. Fragonard has remained popular among later collectors, and The Morgan Library & Museum has an outstanding group of twenty of his drawings.

Largely independent of the Académie Royale, Fragonard explored a wide variety of subjects and helped to define the rococo aesthetic. His draftsmanship challenged the traditional role of drawing in the creative

process. Rapidly drawn *premières pensées* were treated as finished drawings, and highly finished replicas served as further explorations of painted subjects rather than as preparatory models.

“This show provides the Morgan the opportunity to display its extensive and splendid holdings of drawings by Fragonard and his contemporaries. These are some of the finest sheets from this fertile period of draftsmanship,” said Charles E. Pierce, Jr., Director of The Morgan Library & Museum.

The juxtaposition of Fragonard’s drawings with those by his contemporaries, especially Hubert Robert (1733–1808), reveals Fragonard’s independent approach to nature, portraiture, and historical subjects. His individualism becomes even more evident through contrast with sheets by his most earnest follower, François-André Vincent (1746–1816), whose drawings exhibit both the appeal and inimitable quality of Fragonard’s style. Drawings by Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805), which reflect the emerging trend of emotionally charged genre scenes, and Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), which mark the rise of neoclassicism on the eve of the French Revolution, demonstrate the shift in popular taste away from Fragonard.



Jean Honoré Fragonard, *Portrait of a Neapolitan Girl*, 1774, Thaw Collection: 2001.60.

Fragonard and the French Tradition is organized by Jennifer Tonkovich, Associate Curator of Drawings and Prints, The Morgan Library & Museum.

Concurrently on view with this show in the Morgan Stanley West Gallery is *Mozart at 250: A Celebration*. The exhibition marks the two-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) and traces Mozart’s brief life through manuscripts, letters, and first editions of his works. *Mozart at 250* begins with the manuscripts of his earliest surviving compositions—four short keyboard works composed by Mozart at age five and written down by his father, Leopold—followed by his earliest dated letters, to his mother and sister, written when he was thirteen. Also on view are manuscripts of the two earliest Mozart symphonies in the repertoires of major orchestras today—those in G Minor, K. 183, and A, K. 201—composed in Salzburg in the early 1770s. The autograph manuscript of Mozart’s celebrated “Haffner” Symphony, K. 385, is shown in the velvet and silver case in which it was housed when it was presented to King Ludwig II of Bavaria in 1865. The exhibition ends with the exceedingly rare first edition of the Requiem, K. 626, left incomplete at Mozart’s death.

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 and performing arts 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 reaffirms 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

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 Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day.

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 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.

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