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**MAJOR EXHIBITION OF FRENCH DRAWINGS TO OPEN
OCTOBER 2 AT THE MORGAN**

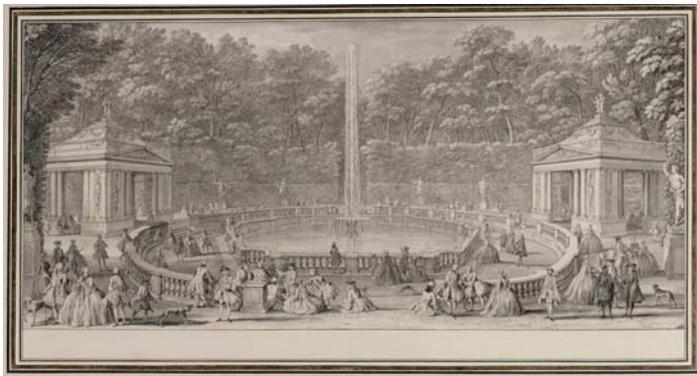
ROCOCO AND REVOLUTION: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH DRAWINGS
HIGHLIGHTS ERA OF GREAT ARTISTIC CHANGE

Show Includes such Masters as Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard, and David

****Press Preview: Thursday, October 1, 2009, 10 a.m. until noon****

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New York, NY, July 30, 2009—Few eras in French history witnessed the same degree of radical social and political changes as those of the eighteenth century. The efflorescence of the ancien régime and its eventual downfall provide the backdrop to a period of remarkable artistic vitality and variety that subtly chronicled the many changes taking place in France.



Jacques Rigaud, *Les Dômes*, black chalk, pen and gray ink, gray wash. Purchased on the Lois and Walter C. Baker Fund; 2007.89.

It is this dynamic period in French art history that is the subject of *Rococo and Revolution: Eighteenth-Century French Drawings*. On view from October 2, 2009, through January 10, 2010, the show features more than eighty exceptional drawings almost exclusively from the Morgan's renowned holdings from this era. Artists represented in the exhibition include Antoine Watteau, Jacques-Louis David, François Boucher, Jean-Honoré

Fragonard, Claude Gillot, Nicolas Lancret, Hubert Robert, Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, Anne-Louis Girodet, and Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, among others.

The royal court and wealthy Parisian merchants defined the artistic sensibility of the century's early decades. This exuberant style, called Rococo, eventually assimilated the burgeoning classicism of the Enlightenment. Later, with the triumph of "reason" and the stirrings of the Revolution, a more formally austere Neoclassicism developed.

The Rococo initially flourished during the waning years of the reign of Louis XIV (r. 1661–1715), and serves as a starting point for the exhibition. Works by artists active at the French Academy in Rome during its greatest years, coinciding with the rule of Louis XV (r. 1715–1774), document drawing's robust role in artistic practice during mid-century. The exhibition concludes with works executed during the last decades of the ancien régime, under Louis XVI (r. 1774–1792), and the onset of the Revolution, as artists embraced the rigorous Neoclassical style. Contextually, the exhibition also touches on concurrent developments in Parisian patronage, fashion, theater, and literature.

"The Morgan's collection of eighteenth-century French drawings is truly remarkable for its quality and depth," said William M. Griswold, director of the Morgan. "This survey offers some of the finest works in the collection, distinctive as individual sheets of superb quality and reflective as a whole of changes in tone, temperament, and subject matter, as French art and society moved in dramatic new directions."

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS



Antoine Watteau, *Seated Young Woman*, ca. 1716, black, red, and white chalk. Purchased by Pierpont Morgan, 1911:1, 278a.

During the opening years of the eighteenth century, academic traditions yielded increasingly to a preference for spontaneity, charm, and subjects that celebrated the pleasures of love and everyday life. The first and greatest master of this new sensibility, later dubbed the Rococo, was Antoine Watteau (1684–1721).

Among the several Watteau drawings in the exhibition is a drawing of a seated young woman executed in *trois crayons*—a technique revived by the artist that would remain popular throughout the eighteenth century in which red, black, and white chalks are used to produce images of striking vivacity and immediacy.

The exhibition also includes a lively pair of chalk figure studies by Nicolas Lancret (1690–1743), Watteau's closest contemporary.

François Boucher (1703–1770), who succeeded Watteau as the most fashionable Rococo painter, was a prolific draftsman, once boasting that he had produced some 10,000 drawings. He favored a drawing style that emphasized sinuous contours, exploiting Watteau's technique of using multiple chalks. Boucher's technique and mastery of a variety of media are seen to brilliant advantage in *Adoration of the Shepherds*, a richly worked, tender Nativity scene; *Four Heads of Cherubim*, a quintessential study of cherubic heads for a

painting; *Thatched Mill Cottage and Shed with Two Trees at the Edge of a Stream*, a picturesque landscape; and the sumptuously decorative *Design for Frontispiece*.

Drawings by Boucher's contemporary and rival—and a key figure at the French Academy in Rome—Charles Joseph Natoire (1700–1777), include a dynamic figure study of a *Camel Driver*, and a pair of sheets depicting the picturesque views from the upper and lower portions of the cascade at the Villa Aldobrandinini, Frascati.

Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806), Boucher's and Natoire's protégé, was the last great artist of the ancien régime. His works are notable for their engaging subject matter and seemingly effortless execution. Two attractive red chalk drawings of a young woman seated in a garden are from a series of sketches he produced of fashionably dressed young women. Two lush landscape drawings by Fragonard—one in gouache, *Interior of a Park: The Gardens of the Villa d'Este* and the other in brown ink washes, *Landscape, with Flock and Trees*—document his expert command of the brush and knowledge of the old masters.

The exhibition also includes several exceptional landscape studies by Fragonard's close friend and sketching companion, Hubert Robert (1733–1808). Among these works is an extraordinary sketchbook from Robert's sojourn in Rome, containing several drawings depicting both actual monuments and architectural fantasies.

Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (1724–1780) worked almost exclusively as a draftsman and printmaker and was the great “society reporter” of pre-Revolutionary Paris. The show includes his small, vivid sketch of a demonstration in the Hôtel des Monnaies by the chemist Balthasar Georges Sage. Also by Saint-Aubin is a lively drawing of a ballet dancer dressed as Momus, the god of banter, holding a scroll advertising costume designs for a ball at the royal residence of St. Cloud.



Gabriel Jacques de Saint-Aubin, *Momus*, 1752, red and black chalk, with touches of white chalk. Purchased as the gift of the Fellows: 1954.9.

The Enlightenment informed literature and the fine arts throughout the century. One of the most influential thinkers was Denis Diderot (1713–1784), author of the *Encyclopédie*. He was an advocate of rationalism and embraced the resurgence of classical history themes. In his reviews of the annual exhibitions known as the Salon, he reserved highest praise for the work of Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805), whose life-size portrait of the philosopher is included in the show.

Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), whose deft diplomacy enabled him to survive the Revolution and its aftermath, was France's preeminent Neoclassical artist. David broke away from the Romanticism of his early

works to define the new austere Classicism, both formally and iconographically. The exhibition features an album by David containing eighty-three sketches, ranging from studies of antique sculpture to Italian landscapes, which was assembled in his studio by his sons. David's sketches were an important source of inspiration for his paintings and document his close study of art and nature. A drawing of a quintessential Revolutionary subject, the Roman Brutus sentencing his sons to death, exemplifies the artist's paradigmatic Neoclassical style.

David's influence on eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century draftsmanship was profound. Among his many pupils and followers was Anne-Louis Girodet (1767–1824). Girodet's luminous and dramatic scene *Phaedra Confesses Her Love for Hippolytus to Oenone* was produced as an illustration to a volume of Racine's classical themed plays, which were revived and embraced by the Neoclassicists.



Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, *Empress Josephine*, black chalk, stumped in some areas, heightened with white, on blue paper. Bequest of Therese Kuhn Straus in memory of her husband, Hubert N. Straus: 1977.58.

The turbulent years of the Revolution (1789–1799), the heroic years of the First Empire (1804–1815), and the corresponding shift in patronage are reflected in the work of Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758–1823). Prud'hon's close association with Napoleon and Josephine is evident from his numerous portraits of members of the imperial household throughout his career. Prud'hon's sensitive portrait of a pensive Josephine and a depiction of the lush garden at her home at Malmaison are among the works produced for the empress during this period.

HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION

Begun in the early 1900s by Pierpont Morgan, the Morgan's collection of French drawings is regarded as one of the finest and most carefully selected in America. The largest number of drawings are from the eighteenth century—the golden age of French draftsmanship. There are also rare examples from the fifteenth century; a large group of drawings by French Mannerists of the sixteenth century; important works by the great seventeenth-century Classicists, above all Poussin and Claude; and works by many of the major artists of the nineteenth century, from Ingres to Cézanne.

Rococo and Revolution: Eighteenth-Century French Drawings is organized by Cara Dufour Denison, Curator Emerita, Department of Drawings and Prints at The Morgan Library & Museum.

This exhibition is made possible by a generous gift from an anonymous donor. Additional support was provided by Nancy Schwartz, Mr. and Mrs. James M. Vaughn, Jr., and Stephen A. Geiger.



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PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Panel Discussion

Glamour and Guillotine: Fashion, Theater, and Decorative Arts in Eighteenth-Century France

Join us for a lively discussion on life and culture in eighteenth-century France. Participants include Harold Koda, The Costume Institute, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ian Wardropper, Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Caroline Weber, Department of French and Romance Philology, Barnard College and Columbia University.

Thursday, November 12, 6:30 PM*

Tickets: \$15 for Non-Members; \$10 for Members

*The exhibition *Rococo and Revolution: Eighteenth-Century French Drawings* will be open at 5:30 PM especially for lecture attendees.

Film

Ridicule

(1996, 102 minutes)

Director: Patrice Leconte

The decadence of Louis XVI's court—a world in which witty repartee and malicious intrigue rule—is richly brought to life in this critically acclaimed film.

Friday, November 6, 7 PM

Free with Morgan admission

Adult Workshop

Tracing, Hatching, Stumping: A Storyline in Drawing

Gain unique insight into master drawings through this workshop that explores the historical media and techniques featured in the exhibition *Rococo and Revolution: Eighteenth-Century French Drawings*. After introducing the art of some of eighteenth-century France's most gifted draftsmen, Andrew Gerndt, School of Visual Arts, will demonstrate their techniques in red, black, and white chalk, ink, and pastel. This will be followed by a hands-on experimentation with these media.

Friday, December 11, 6:30-8:30 PM

Tickets: \$15 for Non-Members; \$10 for Members

Gallery Talk

Eighteenth-Century French Artists in Rome

Elizabeth Nogrady, Moore Curatorial Fellow, Department of Drawings and Prints, The Morgan Library & Museum

Friday, November 13, 7 PM

Free admission

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. More than 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

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. 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.