

Master Drawings

Old Master and Nineteenth-Century Drawings at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

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Old Master and Nineteenth-Century Drawings at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

William W. Robinson

Harvard's Fogg Art Museum holds one of the nation's preeminent collections of old master and nineteenth-century drawings. Having accessioned its founding gift in 1898, the Fogg's drawing collection recently marked its centenary, which provides an opportunity to examine its development and consider Harvard's role in fostering the appreciation of drawings in the United States. During the first half of the twentieth century, the Fogg's associate director Paul J. Sachs led the way in promoting an interest in European drawings in this country. Like Sachs, Charles Ryskamp has done more than any other person of his generation to further the taste for drawings in America, and it is a privilege to contribute to an issue of this journal dedicated to him.

Every major American collection, with the exception of the J. Paul Getty's in Los Angeles, reflects to some significant degree the taste of generous donors who have presented drawings to the museum. Because of a chronic shortage of acquisition funds, in the Fogg's case curatorial purchases have played a minor part in the growth of the drawing department's holdings, which have depended almost entirely on gifts and bequests from benefactors—most, though not all, of them Harvard alumni.

The department's founding benefactress—and the first of several notable female donors—was Belinda Lull Randall (1816–1897). Shortly before her death she presented to the fledgling Fogg Museum some 575 drawings and 15,000 prints she had inherited from her brother, John Witt Randall (1813–1892), of the Harvard class of 1834. John Witt Randall, who

had acquired most of his holdings by 1860, ranks among the pioneer American collectors of European drawings. While of exceptional documentary significance as an intact collection formed in Boston before the Civil War, the Randall drawings are generally disappointing when judged by their artistic quality. German works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by such artists as Johann Georg Bergmüller, Adrian Zingg, Johann Christian Klengel, Franz and Ferdinand Kobell, Franz Horny, and Ludwig Richter account for the only noteworthy group.¹

British and American drawings and watercolors were the principal focus of the acquisitions of the first three decades of the twentieth century. Many of the works accessioned during this period reflect the admiration of Charles Eliot Norton, Harvard's first professor of fine arts, for the achievements of J.M.W. Turner and John Ruskin. Exemplary watercolors as well as large groups of sketches and studies by these two artists entered the collection in the early years of the century. In another important development, between 1929 and 1937, the department accessioned some 360 drawings and watercolors and thirty-five sketchbooks from the estate of John Singer Sargent, the gifts of his heirs, Emily Sargent and Mrs. Francis Ormond.²

With the bequest of Charles Alexander Loeser (1864–1928), which arrived in 1932, the Fogg received its first important old master drawings. Loeser was the son of the proprietor of a prosperous Brooklyn department store. After graduating from Harvard College in 1886, he spent most of the rest of his life in Florence. An early proponent of Giovanni Morelli's "scientific"

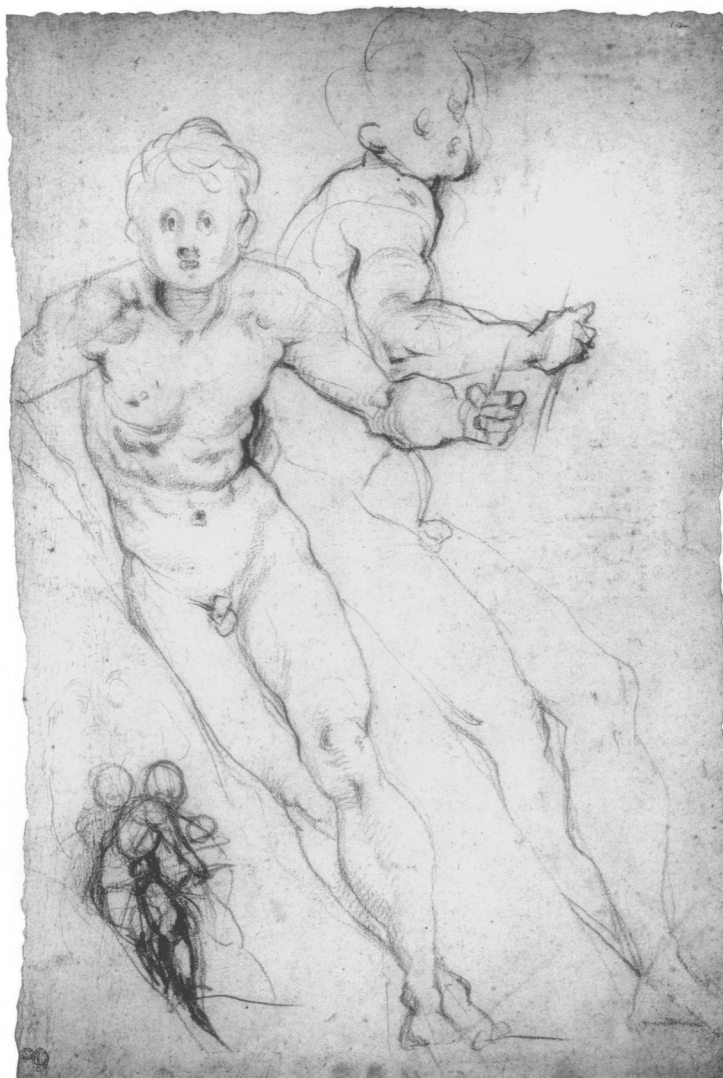


Figure 1 JACOPO CARRUCCI, called IL PONTORMO.
Two Studies of a Nude Youth.
Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Art Museums, Fogg Art
Museum, Bequest of Charles A. Loeser.

connoisseurship, Loeser worked on a series of facsimile publications of drawings in the Uffizi Gallery, and he also arranged exhibitions there.³ Of the 262 works in the Loeser bequest, the great majority are Italian. In addition to a spectacular sheet of studies by Pontormo (Fig. 1),⁴ some of the highlights include superb examples by Filippino Lippi, Vittore Carpaccio, Michelangelo, Parmigianino, Guercino, and Canaletto. A few choice Northern sheets, including two by

Rembrandt and one by Dürer, also came with the Loeser collection.⁵

The pivotal event in the department's history was the receipt in 1943 of the Grenville L. Winthrop bequest, which elevated the stature of the collection to one of international prominence. Winthrop graduated from Harvard College in 1886, the same year as Loeser.⁶ He took a law degree and practiced in New York until 1896, but after the death of his wife in

Figure 2 JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES.
Portrait of Mrs. George Vesey and
Her Daughter Elizabeth Vesey, later
Lady Colthurst.
Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Art
Museums, Fogg Art Museum, Bequest of
Grenville L. Winthrop.



1900, he settled into a life increasingly devoted to his collections of Chinese art and European and American paintings and drawings. Around 1914 Winthrop began to focus his purchases of drawings on the nineteenth century. Virtually all the roughly 700 drawings in his bequest date from the period 1790 to 1914. Furthermore, the great majority belong to only three national schools, the British (260), French (225), and American (136), with no other school represented by more than about twenty sheets. Precisely because Winthrop so rigorously circumscribed the scope of his collecting, he accumulated comprehensive groups of works by his favorite draftsmen. His bequest laid the foundation for the significant concentrations of drawings by individual nineteenth-century artists that are a distinctive feature of the Fogg's collection and greatly enhance its potential as an instrument for uni-

versity teaching and research.

The department's signature will always be its fifty-seven drawings by Ingres, the finest group outside France, of which thirty-six come from the Winthrop collection. In addition to a varied selection of his celebrated portraits (Fig. 2),⁷ they include a wide spectrum of figure studies, watercolors, studies of drapery and hands, compositional designs and copies after other artists.⁸ No less precious are the two sketchbooks in which Jacques-Louis David systematically elaborated the poses of most of the principal figures in his masterpiece, *The Coronation of Napoleon*, and a large composition study for David's *Oath of the Tennis Court*.⁹ The Winthrop bequest also provided the backbone of the Fogg's superb groups of drawings by Théodore Géricault, Gustave Courbet, Gustave Moreau, Edgar Degas, and Georges Seurat.



Figure 3 EDWARD BURNE-JONES. *Sir Galahad*.
Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Art Museums, Fogg Art
Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop.

Turning to the British school, the department's fifty-seven watercolors and drawings by William Blake and its fifty-five sheets by Aubrey Beardsley rank among the most important holdings of works by those artists outside Great Britain. Nearly all the Blakes and more than half of the Beardsleys were gifts from Winthrop. An album containing all 111 finished drawings by John Flaxman for his celebrated series of illustrations for Dante's *Divine Comedy* formed the centerpiece of the dozen items by the British sculptor in Winthrop's collection. That the Fogg boasts the country's premier collection of Pre-Raphaelite works on paper—including forty-seven sheets and four sketchbooks by Sir Edward Burne-Jones (Fig. 3)¹⁰ and twenty-two drawings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti—is also thanks to Winthrop.¹¹

Although best known as a collector of the French and British schools, Winthrop owned superb American drawings. His nine Winslow Homer watercolors anchor the Fogg's outstanding group of twenty-four, and he also acquired the work of Sargent, J.A.M. Whistler,



Figure 4 JEAN-ANTOINE WATTEAU. *Six Studies of Heads*.
Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Art Museums, Fogg Art
Museum, Bequest of Meta and Paul J. Sachs.

and John La Farge in depth.

If Winthrop's gift derives distinction from its concentration on a limited period and on three national schools, the collection formed by Paul J. Sachs (1878–1965) incorporates works from six centuries and represents a much broader range of European and American draftsmen. Sachs' generous taste entertained the styles of artists as diverse as Boucher and Menzel, Perugino and Henry Moore, and Rubens and Ben Shahn. He donated or bequeathed some 480 drawings to Harvard, with particular strengths in Italian old masters and the French school from Clouet to Matisse. It is the individual masterworks in the Sachs collection, such as Watteau's *Six Studies of Heads* (Fig. 4),¹² that embody the breadth of his interests and the ideal of quality that he strove to exemplify. Merely a few artists are represented by more than a couple of sheets. In addition to Picasso (eleven), Ingres (six), and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (six), they include Sachs' favorite draftsman, Degas. His eighteen works by Degas form the basis of the department's fine selection of



Figure 5 NICOLAS POUSSIN. *Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro*.

Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Art Museums, Fogg Art Museum, The Melvin R. Seiden Fund and Louise Haskell Daly Fund.

thirty-three of the artist's drawings and pastels.¹³

Other generous benefactions enriched the collection in the period after World War II. Between 1954 and 1961, Charles E. Dunlap made a series of gifts that brought to the department exquisite sheets by Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Ingres, and other French eighteenth- and nineteenth-century draftsmen. A superb group of French drawings dating from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries by Fragonard, Hubert Robert, and Seurat, among others, arrived in 1978 as the gift of Therese Kuhn Straus. That same year Frances L. Hofer bequeathed 234 drawings collected by her husband Philip, founder of the Department of Printing and Graphic Arts in Harvard's Houghton Library. The Hofers' eclectic gift added exceptional works by artists ranging from Fra Bartolommeo to Andrew Wyeth, including brilliant examples by Francisco Goya, Thomas Gainsborough, and Lambert Doomer.¹⁴

Not long after he became curator in 1975, Konrad Oberhuber began to work with Melvin R. Seiden and Vermeer Associates, who continue to support the acquisition of old master drawings. The first major accession that resulted from this partnership was the purchase in 1984 of a group of seventeenth-century French drawings that, added to the existing collection, produced the most comprehensive representation in America of the draftsmanship of this period (Fig. 5).¹⁵ Vermeer Associates later contributed to the purchase of German nineteenth-century drawings and Renaissance works by Paolo Veronese, Correggio, Maarten van Heemskerck, and Polidoro da Caravaggio.

In 1999 Maida and George Abrams, whose private collection of drawings by Dutch and Flemish masters is the finest of its kind in the world, presented 110 works dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Reflecting the depth of the Abrams' holdings, the gift includes masterworks by major draftsmen such



Figure 6 WILLEM BUYTEWECH. Standing Man, his Right Hand on his Hip.
Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Art Museums, Fogg Art Museum, Promised Gift of The Maida and George Abrams Collection.

as Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Rembrandt, Jacques de Gheyn II, and Hendrick Goltzius, as well as scores of drawings by the gifted secondary and minor masters whose contributions are so essential to this period. Combined with the older permanent holdings, the Maida and George Abrams Collection provided the museum with a resource for teaching, exhibition, and research in seventeenth-century Dutch art commensurate with its holdings in the French and Italian schools. Genre and figure drawings, such as the trenchant ink-and-wash study of a fashionable swell sketched around 1615 by Willem Buytewech (Fig. 6),¹⁶ works by Rembrandt and his school, and an extraordinary selection of landscapes by artists ranging from Abraham Bloemaert to Cornelis Vroom to Jacob van Ruisdael are particular strengths in this field.¹⁷

Today the Fogg's pre-twentieth century holdings number more than 7,000 items. Works by American artists—some 2,300 sheets—constitute a third of the total. The French school, with around 1,650 works, is next, followed by the British and Italian (each about 1,050). The remainder is distributed among the German (465), Dutch (460), Flemish (135), Spanish (124), and other European schools.

During the four decades from the end of World War I to the 1960s, the Fogg's collection and the two officials most responsible for its growth played a crucial role in stimulating an interest in drawings in the United States. Today, when drawings figure prominently in scholarly research and exhibitions, and museums and private collectors compete for them at seven-digit prices, we can scarcely imagine they were ever less than universally esteemed. It was only around 1920, as Fogg curator Agnes Mongan later recalled, that a serious regard for drawings of all kinds began to evolve in this country. The Fogg's associate director Paul J. Sachs contributed more than any other individual to this development. "That an interest in drawings has spread throughout the United States," Mongan wrote in 1959, "is largely due to the contagious enthusiasm, deep knowledge, and great generosity of one man, Paul J. Sachs. As a collector he has, with his unflinching eye for quality, gathered together a collection now internationally known. As a university professor and museum director he has spread

his influence far and wide through a long generation of students, many of whom are today's most eager collectors and most active curators."¹⁸

The son and nephew of the founders of Goldman Sachs, Paul Joseph Sachs graduated from Harvard College in the class of 1900 and went to work in the family investment banking business in New York City. In September 1915, at thirty-seven years of age, he joined the Fogg's staff, retiring as associate director in 1944 and as professor in Harvard's Fine Arts Department in 1948. During his New York years, Sachs had collected prints. While traveling through Europe in 1915 in preparation for his museum career, he met Léon Bonnat and studied the French painter's fabulous old master and nineteenth-century drawings. Bonnat, Sachs wrote later, "influenced me by his example to move from Prints into the more hazardous and exciting field of Master Drawings."¹⁹ Converted by his encounter with Bonnat's treasures, Sachs launched himself on a career as a collector and teacher.

A photograph in the Fogg's archives shows Professor Sachs with the 1943-44 class of "Museum Work and Museum Problems," the graduate course through which he propagated his enthusiasm for drawings along with his peerless knowledge of the museum profession.²⁰ While the study of drawings was not the primary focus of the year-long seminar in museum management, a lecture entitled "Research on Old Master Drawings" figured in the curriculum, and Sachs' emphasis on visual training and frequent reference to his own collection must have whetted the participants' appetites. Among the dozen students in the photograph of the 1943-44 class are Jacob Bean, Felice Stampfle, and William Lieberman, the future drawing curators of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Pierpont Morgan Library, and the Museum of Modern Art.²¹ From the early 1930s on, the lecture on old master drawings was delivered by the indefatigable Mongan, a 1929 graduate of the museum course. An outstanding scholar in the field of old master and nineteenth-century drawings, Mongan (1905-1996) had charge of the Fogg's collection from about 1930 until her retirement in 1975. Her bibliography runs to 131 items, many focused on French draftsmen ranging from François Clouet to Ingres. *Drawings in*

the Fogg Museum of Art, the book she and Sachs published in 1940, established a new standard for museum catalogues of drawings. An inspiring teacher whose former students number several curators and university scholars specializing in drawings, she also organized innumerable exhibitions of works from private collections and solo shows devoted to artists ranging from Giambattista Tiepolo to Ingres to Andrew Wyeth.

Through the museum course, his prodigious correspondence, and sustained personal contacts, Sachs imparted his love of drawings to, as Mongan put it, "a long generation" of collectors, museum curators, and directors. Those he encouraged included curator-collectors such as Winslow Ames, Henry McIlhenny, and Philip Hofer, as well as men with substantial fortunes like John Nicholas Brown, Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., Herbert Straus, and Robert Lehman. A self-described "one-man employment agency,"²² Sachs lived to see former students curate all the major American drawing collections, except Chicago's, and direct the Metropolitan Museum, the National Gallery, the Wadsworth Atheneum, and the art museums of Boston, Cleveland, Toledo, and Smith College. He also played a part in the foundation of the Museum of Modern Art, nominated and advised Alfred Barr, its first director, trained its longtime curators of drawings and photography, donated its first drawing — a portrait by George Grosz — and saw its main gallery for prints and drawings named in his honor.

Without Sachs' ceaseless efforts as teacher, collector, and proselytizer, the meteoric development after 1960 of American institutional and private holdings of drawings would not have occurred — or at least not at the same velocity. The students he trained at Harvard in the 1930s and 1940s became the generation of collectors, curators, and directors that established the field across the country during the fifties and sixties. For students like Jacob Bean, Felice Stampfle, Winslow Ames, and Philip Hofer, the Fogg collection, too, offered a model to emulate or surpass.

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1. Much of this account of the Fogg collection's development has been adapted from my essay "The Drawing Collection at 100," in J. Cuno et al., *Harvard's Art Museums. 100 Years of Collecting*, Cambridge, MA, and New York, 1996, pp. 202-207. On the Randall collection, see my forthcoming article "John Witt Randall. An Early American Collector of Later German Drawings," in *Master Drawings*, 39, June 2001.
2. On the Fogg's Sargent drawings, see M. Stewart and K. Schaubert, eds., *Sargent at Harvard (Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin*, vol. 7, no. 1), pp. 7-38, and the website *Sargent at Harvard (www.artmuseums.harvard.edu/sargent_atharvard/archive.html)*.
3. K. Oberhuber, "Charles Loeser as a Collector of Drawings," *Apollo*, June 1978, pp. 464-66; K. Oberhuber, ed., *Old Master Drawings. Selections from the Charles A. Loeser Bequest*, Cambridge, MA, 1979.
4. Inv. no. 1932.324. Black and red chalk; 435 x 285 mm. J. Bober in A. Mongan, K. Oberhuber, and J. Bober, *The Famous Italian Drawings in the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge*, Milan, 1988, no. 25.
5. Many of these drawings are discussed in Oberhuber, 1979.
6. On Winthrop, see D. Gillerman, G. McKim and J. Mertens, *Grenville L. Winthrop. Retrospective for a Collector*, exh. cat., Fogg Museum of Art, Cambridge, MA, 1969, and Cuno et al., 1996, pp. 28-31.
7. Inv. no. 1943.854. Graphite, with some white gouache; 299 x 224 mm. Signed and dated, *Ingres Del. Rome 1816*. M.B. Cohn and S.L. Siegfried, *Works by J.-A.-D. Ingres in the Collection of the Fogg Art Museum*, Cambridge, MA, 1980, no. 19; A. Mongan, *David to Corot. French Drawings in the Fogg Art Museum*, Cambridge and London, 1996, no. 221.
8. The Fogg's Ingres drawings are catalogued by Cohn and Siegfried, 1980, and by Mongan, 1996, pp. 197-242.
9. Mongan, 1996, pp. 53-114.
10. Inv. no. 1943.672. Black ink on vellum; 156 x 192 mm. S. Wildman and J. Christian, *Edward Burne-Jones. Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1998, under no. 6.
11. M. Wadsworth, H. Willard, E. Evans, A. Mongan, and M. Gilman, *Paintings and Drawings of the Pre-Raphaelites and their Circle*, exh. cat., Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA, 1946.
12. Inv. no. 1965.336. Red, black, and white chalk; 222 x 217 mm. A. Wintermute, *Watteau and His World. French Drawing from 1700 to 1750*, exh. cat., Frick Collection, New York, and National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1999-2000, no. 21.
13. On Sachs and his collection, see A. Mongan, *Memorial Exhibition. Works from the Collection of Paul J. Sachs (1878-1965) Given and Bequeathed to the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts*, exh. cat., Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA, 1965-66.
14. On the drawings in the Hofer bequest, see K. Oberhuber and W. W. Robinson, eds., *Master Drawings and Watercolors. The Hofer Collection*, exh. cat., Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, MA, 1984.
15. Inv. no. 1984.580. Brown ink and brown wash; 186 x 255 mm. A.L. Clark, Jr., in Cuno et al., 1996, pp. 214-15.
16. Inv. no. 25.1998.14. Brown ink and brown wash, over traces of black chalk; 277 x 87 mm. W. W. Robinson and P. Schatborn, *Seventeenth-Century Dutch Drawings. A Selection from the Maida and George Abrams Collection*, exh. cat., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and elsewhere, 1991-92, no.14.
17. W. W. Robinson, "Abrams Dutch Drawings Given to the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass.," *Apollo*, 150, December 1999, pp. 14-16.
18. *French Drawings from American Collections. Clouet to Matisse*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1959, p. 23.
19. M. B. Cohn, *Turner Ruskin Norton Winthrop (Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin*, vol., 2, no. 1, 1993), p. 47.
20. This photograph was reproduced in Agnes Mongan's article, "Recollections of French Drawings from Clouet to Matisse," *Master Drawings*, 28, 1990, p. 259, fig. 2.
21. For the museum course and Sachs's career, see S. A. Duncan, *Paul J. Sachs and the Museum Course at Harvard*, MA Thesis, Tufts University, 1996.
22. Duncan, 1996, p. 94.