Unpainted Masterpieces: The Drawings of Edward Burne-Jones

Author(s): Debra N. Mancoff

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# Unpainted Masterpieces:

# The Drawings of Edward Burne-Jones

**Debra N. Mancoff**

*School of the Art Institute of Chicago*

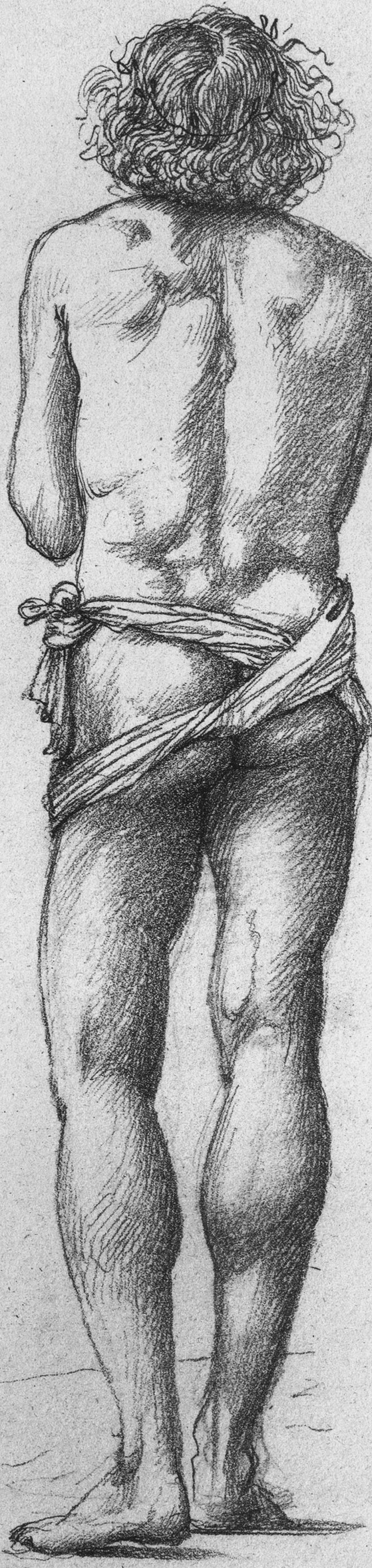
On an 1869 visit to Edward Burne-Jones's home, the American educator Charles Eliot Norton marveled at the number of unfinished pieces in the artist's studio, noting that the commodious room had "a pleasant look of work about it, and a general air of appropriate disorder."[1] Paintings and sketches were everywhere, perched on easels, leaning against the wall, and stacked in piles across the floor. Always deliberate, Burne-Jones took time with his art, first laying down what he called "the bones of a picture," which he followed by layer after layer of paint.[2] Norton also observed that "Jones's lively imagination is continually designing more than he can execute. His fancy creates a hundred pictures for one that his hand can paint."[3] Some works sat untouched for years before completion. Burne-Jones despaired of his studio habits, complaining that "my rooms are so full of work—too full—and I have begun so much that . . . I shall never complete it." In one caricature (fig. 2), the artist even portrayed himself as a bedraggled figure seated on a crate in front of a forest of canvasses that he described as "unpainted masterpieces."[4]

Among his friends and family, Burne-Jones was known for another type of "unpainted masterpiece." From his youth, he made swift sketches that appeared effortless in contrast to his carefully crafted paintings and allowed him to work out ideas and refine details. But he also drew outside the studio, and his contemporaries remarked at his uncanny ability to do so while fully engaged in other activities. The painter W. Graham Robertson recalled:

> Once, while talking to me, he took up a little pocketbook and sketched absently as he carried on the conversation. As I left him he gave me the book, which contained the careful drawing of a sleeve and falling draperies, a half-fledged bird, a cat with a tail erect stalking the same, a fat baby, and a highly imaginative drawing of Noah's ark with rain and rainbow complete.[5]

To Burne-Jones, these random images reflected his fleeting visual thoughts. Rather than recording what he saw, he sketched whatever came to mind, whether a winsome face, a graceful gesture, or a droll notion. He once compared an artist's sketch to an autobiography, explaining that "you get very close to the personality of a man when you've got a study of his."[6] While

FIGURE 1. Edward Burne-Jones (English, 1833–1898). *Back View of Male Nude* (detail), 1873/74. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.3 x 17.8 cm (9 15/16 x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1137.



drawing, Burne-Jones felt released both from the demands of his rigorous technique and from critical scrutiny. Putting pencil to paper, he unleashed his most intimate thoughts—his initial ideas, his passion for beauty, his flights of fancy—and inscribed them with fluid confidence.

The Burne-Jones drawings in the Art Institute of Chicago elucidate the mind and method of the artist at a crucial point in his career. Most of these, which include cartoons for stained glass and a sketchbook containing thirty-nine drawings in pencil, date from the 1870s, a decade during which he reformed his aesthetic ideals and began to paint some of his most representative works. Little is known about the sketchbook, which D. Edmund Brooks, a Minneapolis art dealer, purchased from the artist's son Philip in 1913 and sold to the Art Institute six years later.[7] Sixteen of the drawings bear subject inscriptions in Philip's hand, and all but eleven of them can be linked to specific projects. While these works provide valuable insight into Burne-Jones's artistic process, they are equally compelling in the way they confirm his elusive mission to express "a beautiful romantic dream of something that never was, never will be—in a light better than any light ever shone, in a land that no one can define or remember—only desire."[8]

The constant and almost compulsive need to draw can be traced to Burne-Jones's childhood. Within a week of his birth, his mother died, and his father, a Birmingham frame maker, grieved for years. Looking back at his youth, Burne-Jones claimed never to have been disconsolate: "Unmothered, with a sad papa, without sister or brother, always alone, I was never unhappy, because I was always drawing."[9] Although family friends remarked on the boy's precocious talent, and he amazed his schoolmates with the prodigious sketches that covered his exercise books, art lessons played only a minor role in Burne-Jones's early education. He later studied theology at Oxford, where he met his lifelong friend and collaborator William Morris, with whom he pursued a mutual fascination with the essays of John Ruskin, the art of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and medieval authors, most notably Geoffrey Chaucer, whose interpretations of classical tales inspired their later interest in the epics of Homer and Greek mythology.

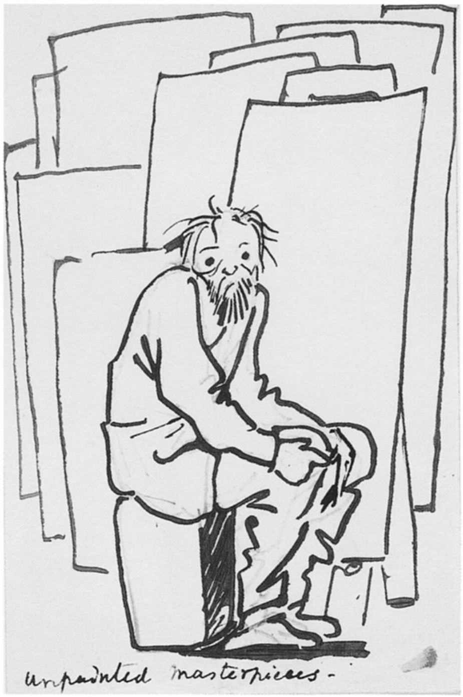


FIGURE 2. Edward Burne-Jones. *Self Caricature: Unpainted Masterpieces,* c. 1890. Pen and ink; 17.6 x 10.7 cm (6 7/8 x 4 1/4 in.). Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.

Burne-Jones undertook his first professional commission in 1854, producing at least eighty-eight pencil and ink designs for the book *The Fairy Family*.[10] The tight, precisely detailed style of his illustrations reflects his admiration for the Pre-Raphaelite poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In 1856 Burne-Jones left Oxford without his degree and headed for London, where Rossetti took him under his wing, helping him secure work designing stained glass. Burne-Jones was slow to take up painting, but his drawing in pen and ink grew increasingly skillful and densely decorative, and Rossetti, pleased with the results, declared them "marvels of finish and imaginative detail, unequalled by anything unless perhaps Albert Dürer's finest works."[11]

By the next decade, Burne-Jones began to follow a more independent path. Two trips to Italy ignited his interest in the lyric potential of color, and upon his return to the studio, painting in watercolor and oil took dominance over drawing in pen and ink. From this point forward he regarded drawing as a preliminary stage of work and adopted his deliberate method of constructing a painting. He began with a rough sketch of a composition and then refined it through countless pencil drawings, often from models, making minor adjustments to details of posture, gesture, and draperies. These were then enlarged to scale on brown paper, and he executed a preliminary cartoon in pastel or watercolor to test the general effect. When he was satisfied, a studio assistant transferred the design onto canvas, sketching lightly in burnt sienna or raw umber. Then Burne-Jones would begin to paint.[12] Although he attracted little critical attention from the art world during the 1860s, he provided designs for Morris's decorative arts firm and exhibited work at the Old Water-Colour Society, an association that he joined in 1863.[13]

In 1870 public reaction to the male nude in his watercolor *Phyllis and Demophoön* (1870; Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery) prompted the Old Water-Colour Society to ask him to either clothe the figure or remove the painting altogether.[14] Burne-Jones took the work off the wall and, at the close of the exhibition, resigned from the group. For the next seven years, he retreated into the studio and refused invitations to exhibit. While out of the public eye, he lacked neither work nor motivation. He made two more journeys to Italy, enjoyed commissions from sympathetic patrons, and provided Morris's firm with sketches for stained glass, book illuminations, and tapestries, becoming its foremost contributor. Later in life, Burne-Jones described this time of self-imposed isolation from the art world as "the seven blissfullest years of work that I ever had; no fuss, no publicity, no teasing about exhibiting, no getting pictures done against time."[15]

The Art Institute sketchbook offers a glimpse of the artist's creative process, as well as a significant change in his ideal of physical beauty, during these "seven blissfullest years." Although a letter of authenticity written by Philip Burne-Jones dates the drawings between 1873 and 1877, the chronology of his father's studio activity reveals that he executed many of them earlier. Among these are six sketches related to Burne-Jones's unfinished *Story of Troy*,which he began in the summer of 1870, after his resignation from the Old Water-Colour Society.[16] For more than a decade, he and Morris had been intrigued with the saga of the Trojan War. In 1857 Morris outlined a cycle of poems called *Scenes from the Fall of Troy* and a few years later conceived a plan to have Burne-Jones embellish the hall and front staircase of his new home, the Red House, with Trojan-themed murals.[17] Neither project was completed, but the idea of Troy continued to allure the members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle. Burne-Jones's wife, Georgiana, recalled that when Rossetti read his new poem "Troy Town" in 1868, it "sounded like a challenge to the world."[18] Two years later, Burne-Jones took up that challenge in earnest.

*The Story of Troy* (fig. 3) featured several qualities that would distinguish Burne-Jones's mature and late work. The artist conceived the project as an ensemble of ten separate panels inserted into an elaborate structure patterned after a Renaissance altarpiece. Grand in scale and complexity, it was his most

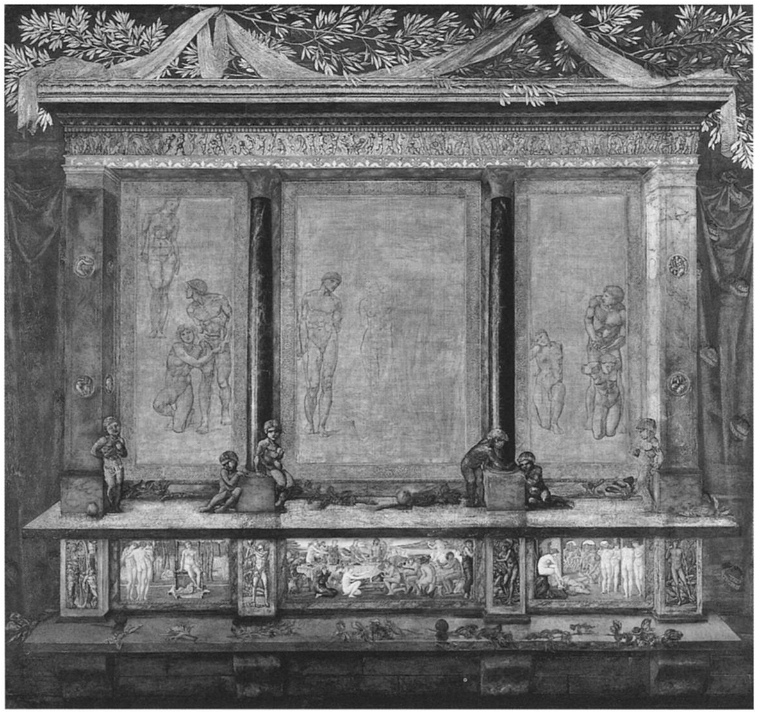


FIGURE 3. Edward Burne-Jones. *The Story of Troy*, 1870–98. Oil on canvas; 275 x 298 cm (108 x 117 7/8 in.). Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.

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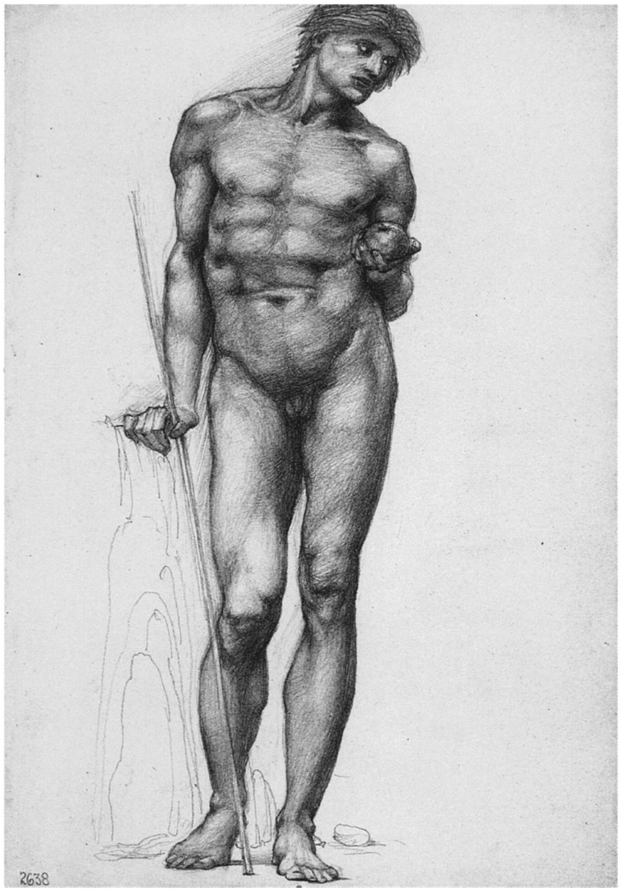

FIGURE 4. Edward Burne-Jones. *Study of a Male Nude for the Central Panel of "The Story of Troy,"* 1871/72. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.4 x 17.8 cm (10 x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1168.

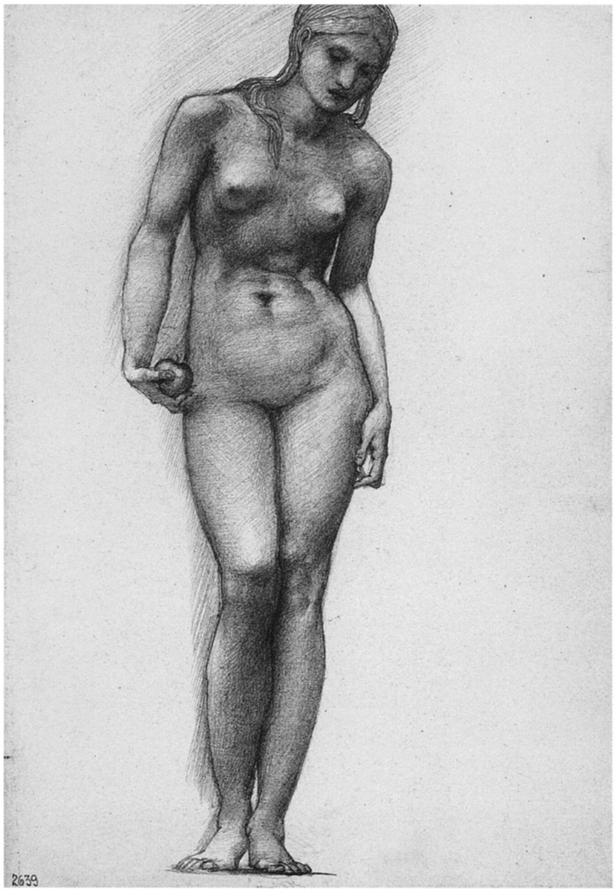

FIGURE 5. Edward Burne-Jones. *Study of a Female Nude for the Left Panel of "The Story of Troy,"* 1871/72. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.4 x 17.8 cm (10 x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1169.

ambitious plan to date, reflecting his ongoing fascination with extended narrative. Rather than illustrating specific textual sources, Burne-Jones presented a pictorial interpretation of the tragedy, evoking key events such as the Judgment of Paris on the central panel and offering symbolic commentary through images like *Venus Concordia* and *Venus Discordia*, which appear on the predella, or lower structure, of the triptych.[19] The work never advanced beyond a preliminary stage, although Burne-Jones's studio assistant T. M. Rooke carried out the figure outlines on the main panels and, in the winter of 1871–72, painted the *Venus* panels.[20]

Three drawings in the Art Institute sketchbook—all nude studies—can be linked directly to the intital outlines drawn by Rooke and illustrate Burne-Jones's habit of establishing the positions of figures within a complex composition by approaching them one by one, in isolation. These are a sketch of Paris, who holds the golden apple and leans on his shepherd's staff in the left portion of the central panel (fig. 4); one of Venus holding the golden apple while presiding over Helen's abduction in the upper left corner of the left panel (fig. 5); and another of Paris in the lower right corner of the same panel (fig. 6). The physical grandeur of these figures marks the emergence, in Burne-Jones's work, of a new way of representing the human body. On his third trip to Italy, in 1871, the artist visited Rome for the first time. Enthralled with Michelangelo's frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, he purchased a pair of opera glasses and studied the works from a vantage point on the floor, lying on his back on his

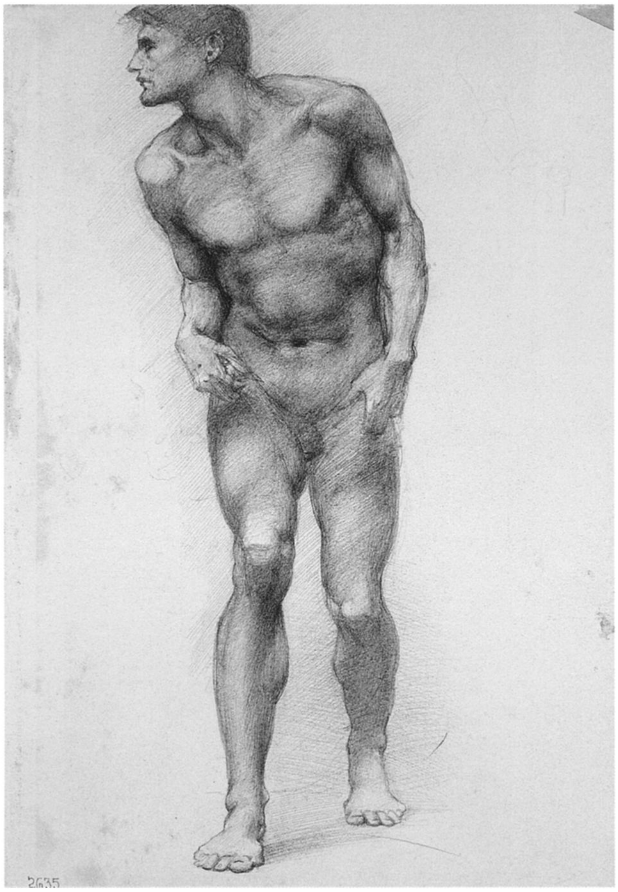

FIGURE 6. Edward Burne-Jones. *Study of a Male Nude for the Left Panel of "The Story of Troy,"* 1871/72. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.4 x 17.8 cm (10 x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1165.

railway rug.[21] When he returned to the studio, his drawing reflected what he had seen: once lithe and attenuated, his figures became weighty and muscular, with an expressive force of gesture that echos the monumental quality of Michelangelo's examples. In line with Burne-Jones's studio practice, Rooke would have made his delineations from highly developed sketches, suggesting that Burne-Jones produced these early drawings after returning from Italy at the end of September 1871 and before Rooke completed his outline work in 1872.

The two male nudes display the massive proportions—broad torso, heavy shoulders, thickly sculpted arms—that became characteristic of Burne-Jones's depiction of the male form from this time forward. He enjoyed modeling these powerful figures, telling Rooke, "A woman's shape is best in repose, but the fine thing about a man is that he is such a splendid machine, so you can put him in motion, and make as many knobs and joints and muscles about him as you can."[22] Although the first figure of Paris (fig. 4) is still, the forward thrust of the head and the muscular twist of the torso, which are forced by an exaggerated shift of posture, evoke the coiled energy of suppressed motion. There is a tense beauty in this form, but the second study of Paris (fig. 6) is heavy and lumbering. Its posture was transferred to the canvas without adjustment, suggesting that Burne-Jones wanted to express Paris's abduction of Helen through his brute physicality—he roughly restrains her while she falls to her knees, clinging to his waist.

The drawing of Venus (fig. 5) demonstrates the lyric beauty more typical of Burne-Jones's approach. The artist lightly sketched the figure's contour in pencil, reinforcing it in heavier strokes. He coaxed the musculature into three-dimensions with softly modulated shading, while firmly articulating the details of face, fingers, and toes. This study recalls Sandro Botticelli's serene, statuesque depictions of the goddess. Burne-Jones had first begun to admire the Florentine master during his first Italian journey, in 1859, and after his third trip he included him, with Michelangelo, among the painters "I care for most."[23] He felt a profound sympathy with Botticelli's aesthetic, and late in life he teasingly told Rooke, "Botticelli and I would get on together," but "Michelangelo would sniff contemptuously at me."[24]

The Art Institute's sketchbook also contains a number of drawings associated with *The Mirror of Venus*. These, which include ten studies directly linked to the later version of the painting (fig. 7), testify to the artist's pursuit of beauty through perfection, which manifested itself in a tendency to rework on both the level of individual elements and entire compositions. The subjects of the sketches—arms, feet, heads, and spills of drapery—record his intense attention to detail. Burne-Jones pursued his motif on sheet after sheet, seeking to transfer the elusive refinement of an image from his imagination onto paper. Other sketchbooks, filled with only a few repeated forms such as striding legs and fluttering banners, reveal that this was a regular aspect of his practice.[25] These drawings are

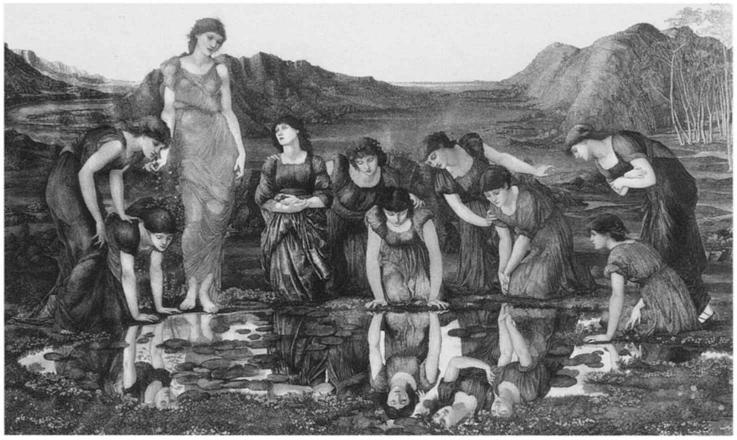

FIGURE 7. Edward Burne-Jones. *The Mirror of Venus*, 1873–76. Oil on canvas; 120 x 199.9 cm (47 1/4 x 78 11/16 in.). Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Museum, Lisbon.

lightly done in pencil, with fine hatched and looping lines that suggest a swift touch. Of such works, the art historian T. Martin Wood remarked, "Often these studies end abruptly . . . owing to a feeling that he had extracted what he was in search of, and the protraction of the minute study would no longer give him pleasure."[26]

Burne-Jones painted *The Mirror of Venus* twice between the years 1867 and 1877.[27] The subject is an invention upon several lines from "The Hill of Venus," a poem written by William Morris as part of *The Earthly Paradise*, an epic, twenty-four-part cycle published from 1868 to 1870. As early as 1865, Morris proposed that Burne-Jones draw designs to be reproduced as woodcut illustrations for a deluxe folio edition of the work. The artist made more than one hundred sketches for the project, including twenty for "The Hill of Venus."[28] Morris abandoned the project, but Burne-Jones developed several of these subjects into paintings.[29] One was *The Mirror of Venus*, which portrays nine young women gathered around the edge of a glassy pond, gazing at their comely reflections. Without disturbing them, Venus appears, awakening them to their own beauty. Burne-Jones may have begun the first canvas as early as 1867; it was incomplete when he started the second, larger variant in 1873. It was in the 1870s that he began to indulge fully his compulsion to create another rendition of a work even while the first was still in progress, enlarging the scale, refining the details, and adjusting nuances of tonality without significantly altering the composition. The later version of *The Mirror of Venus* captures this practice perfectly. While the composition is the same, the tonal harmonies are warmer and more varied, and the figures are fuller bodied and more sensuous, echoing the voluptuous proportions Burne-Jones adopted after his third trip to Italy. Water lilies glide over the surface of the pond, and the landscape—barren in the initial painting—offers a promise of lush spring growth.

It is the voluminous folds of the drapery, more than any other feature, that link the studies in the Art Institute sketchbook to the second version of *The Mirror of Venus*. The garments in the earlier painting are

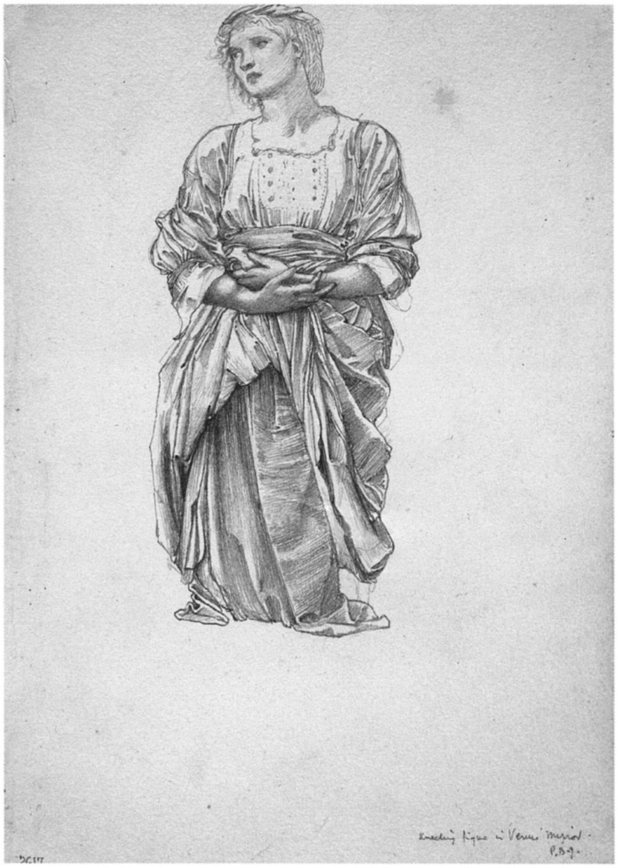
Kneeling figure in Venus' mirror ·
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Figure 8. Edward Burne-Jones. *Study of a Kneeling Figure for "The Mirror of Venus,"* 1873. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.3 x 17.8 cm (9 15/16 x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1147.

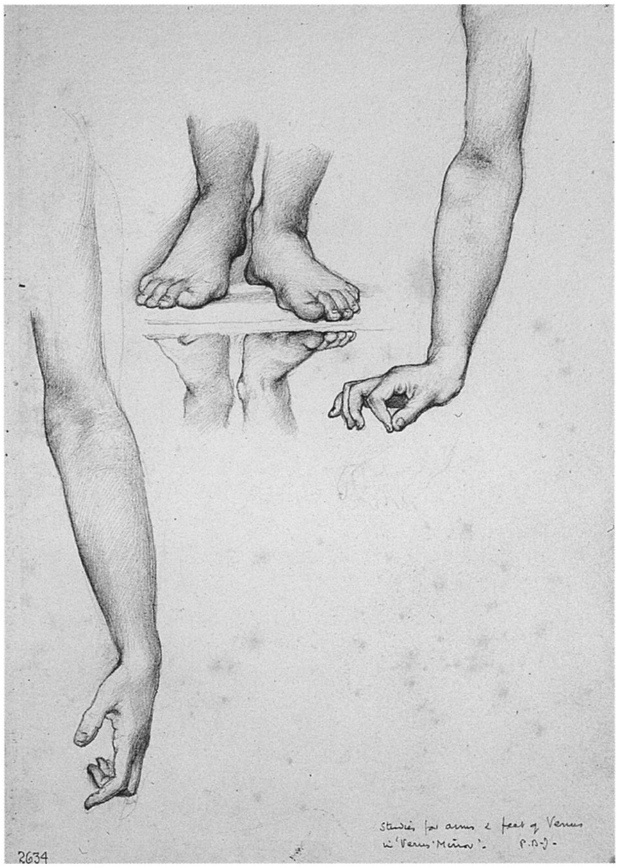
Studies for arms & feet of Venus
in 'Venus Mirror'. E.B.J.
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Figure 9. Edward Burne-Jones. *Study for Arms and Feet of Venus for "The Mirror of Venus,"* 1873. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.3 x 17.8 cm (9 $^{15}/_{16}$ x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1164.

articulated by narrow, vertical pleats and slide smoothly over the women's slender bodies. In the second version, the fabric is more abundant and free, flowing over the figures' rounder limbs and fuller forms. One drawing in the museum's sketchbook (fig. 8), for example, depicts a kneeling woman who gathers the folds of her overskirt in her hands, causing the excess fabric to undulate over her hips.[30] Burne-Jones's precise rendering of the hand gestures and the costume contours reveals that this figure is well resolved; she appears in the second variant of the painting on Venus's left.

Another study of Venus's arms and feet (fig. 9) calls attention to the similar treatment in the sketch of the goddess for *The Story of Troy* (fig. 5) and suggests the extent to which Burne-Jones re-employed design approaches that he particularly favored.[31] On the left side, the placement of the arm is nearly identical—Burne-Jones repeated even the complicated play of thumb and fingers. The handling of the right arm displays the same soft gradations that the artist used to model form in the *Troy* studies. The feet, too, echo the stance of the *Troy Venus*—the body's weight is centered on the left foot, allowing the right to rise slightly on its ball. But it is the presence of the reflection, however, that allows us to identify this unmistakably as a preliminary study for *The Mirror of Venus*, not *The Story of Troy*. In fact, the firm contours and deft, light lines of these sketches seem more assured than those of the *Troy* drawings, indicating that the artist had already decided where to place the figures and was now working out the fine points. It seems reasonable to speculate that he made these sketches after the *Troy* studies, most likely in 1873, when he began the second version of *The Mirror of Venus*.[32]

Two of the sketchbook's other studies (figs. 10–11), representing the standing figure of Saint Mark, offer a glimpse into another area of Burne-Jones's activity in the 1870s—his work designing stained glass. While he conceived his first set of stained-glass panels in 1856, he worked closely with Morris in the years that followed, creating ensembles to decorate private homes and public spaces, most notably churches. The years of his withdrawal from the art world were the most active for this type of work; more than 270 designs can be dated between the years 1872 and 1878.[33] Burne-Jones drew these cartoons with ease, typically working freehand to scale in charcoal. His wife recalled that he found the work relaxing, fondly remembering the "soft scraping sound of the charcoal" in the evenings after dinner, when he would draw among family and friends.[34]

Burne-Jones executed these drawings of Saint Mark as part of a large undertaking for Morris's firm, an eleven-part program for the nave and transepts of the chapel at Jesus College, Cambridge. Between 1872 and 1876, he made more than fifty-five designs for this project. The sketchbook studies reveal that, prior to his rapid execution of the cartoons, the artist prepared his hand and eye with deliberate, attentive studies of the figure in pencil, drawn from a model in the studio.[35] The draped study (fig. 10) is very close to the final design for the window: the

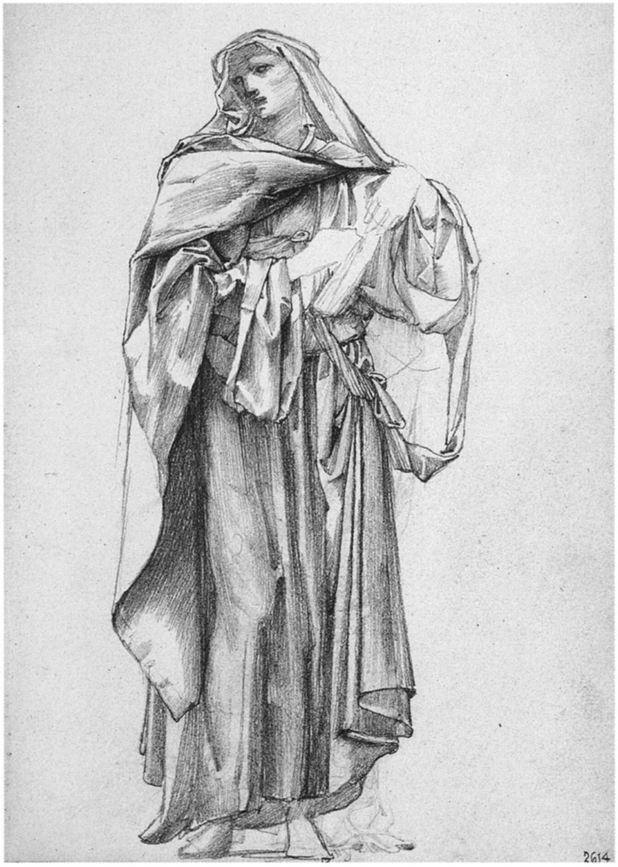

FIGURE 10. Edward Burne-Jones. *Draped Study of Saint Mark*, 1873/74. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.4 x 17.8 cm (10 x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1144.

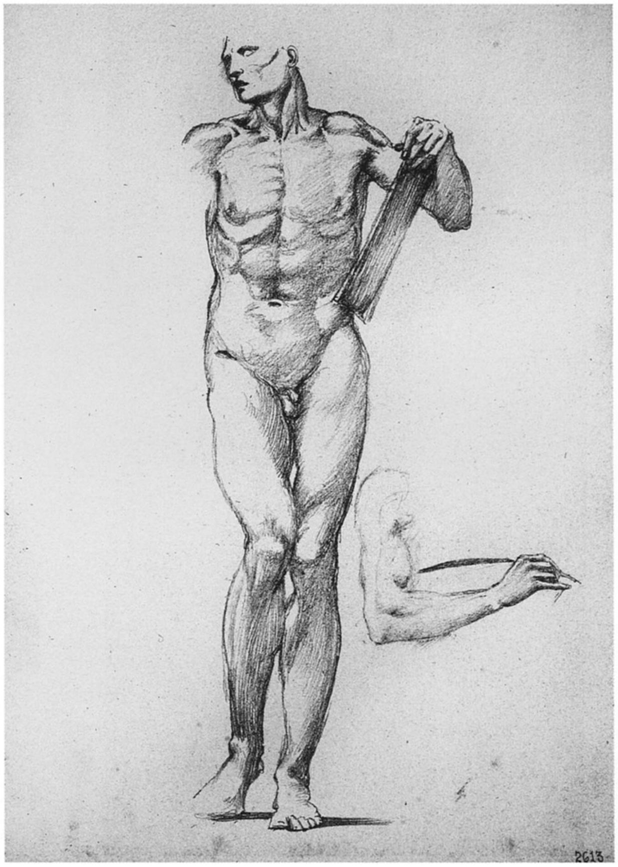

FIGURE 11. Edward Burne-Jones. *Nude Study of Saint Mark*, 1873/74. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.3 x 17.8 cm (9 15/16 x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1143.

heavy garments are nearly identical in their twists and folds, as is the angle at which the saint steadies a book on his hip. But in the drawing, the head is slightly less turned, the neck shorter, and the hands and feet simply roughed in. In this particular sketch, it is the clothing, rather than the details of the body, that captured Burne-Jones's attention.

The nude study (fig. 11), however, suggests that he had resolved the nuances of the position before clothing his figure. In this sheet, he established the head's sharp incline and rendered the exaggerated tendons of the twisting neck. Although he ultimately swathed the figure in robes, Burne-Jones carefully delineated the muscular torque of its broad torso and the strain of the shifting weight on its powerful legs. He evidently was uncertain about the position of the right arm and hand, since the drawing stops abruptly at the turn of the right shoulder, and a rough sketch of the arm, clumsily handled, appears in the lower right. In September 1873, in his account book for his work with Morris, Burne-Jones wrote that he had finished the cartoon for the related Saint Matthew window, writing: "hastily executed I admit but altogether a bold conception."[36] The finished Saint Mark window was installed in the Jesus College chapel in 1874, which suggests that the Art Institute's drawings were likely made during the winter of 1873–74.

A delicately rendered male nude in the sketchbook (fig. 1) suggests the ways in which Burne-Jones regularly translated motifs from his Morris designs into his paintings. With his soft, fine hair, which curls around a fillet of leaves, and the twisted length of fabric crossing his hips, the figure is linked to a series of sketches that Burne-Jones produced for an embroidered "tapestry frieze" entitled

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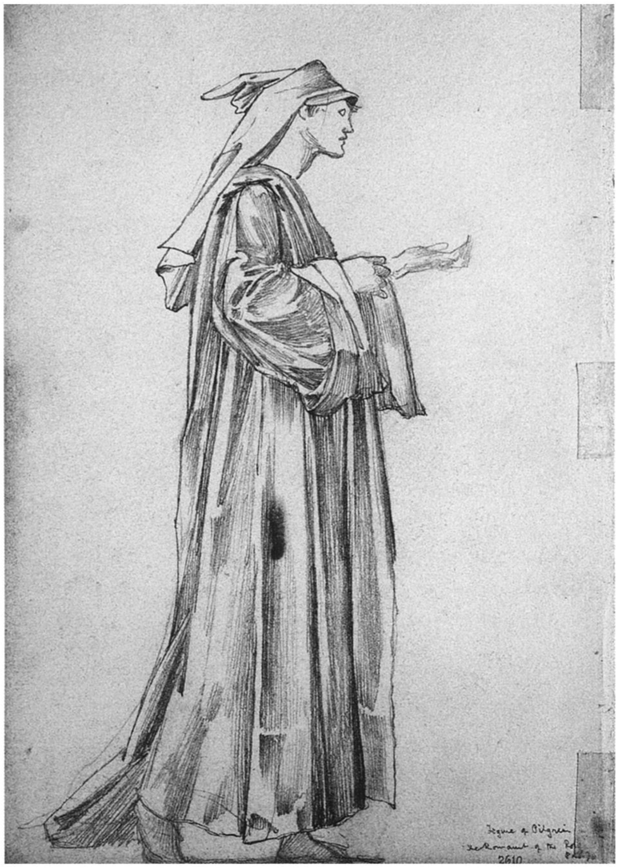

FIGURE 12. Edward Burne-Jones. *Study of the Pilgrim for "The Pilgrim at the Gate of Idleness,"* 1874/77. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.3 x 17.8 cm (9 15/16 x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1140.

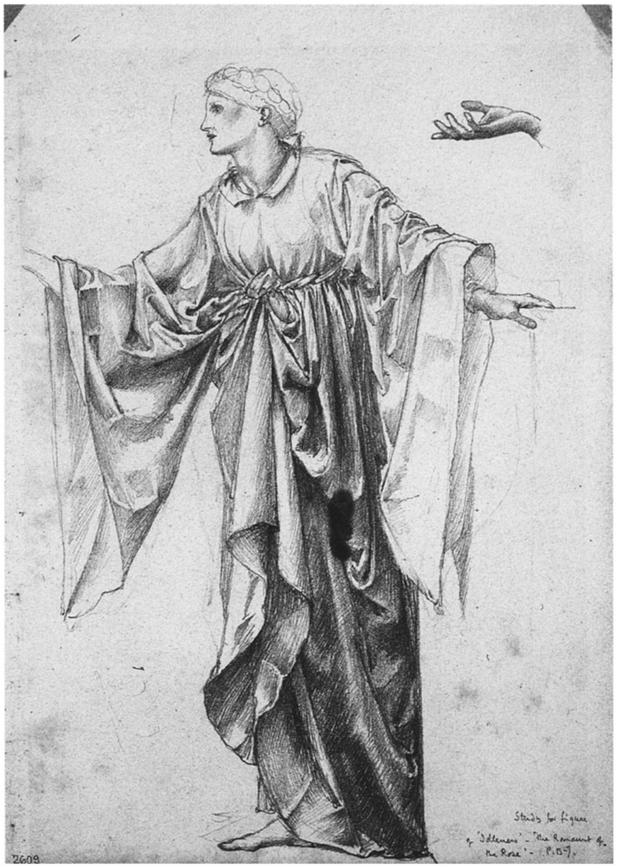

FIGURE 13. Edward Burne-Jones. *Study of Idleness for "The Pilgrim at the Gate of Idleness,"* 1874/77. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.3 x 17.8 cm (9 15/16 x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1139.

*The Pilgrim in the Garden of Idleness*. That work was based on an episode in Chaucer's *Romaunt de Rose* in which a pilgrim, searching for his heart's desire, encounters the incarnations of life's falsehoods and miseries just before the personifications of Love and Beauty lead him to the object of his quest. Burne-Jones created the ensemble for Routon Grange, a house built for the Yorkshire industrialist Isaac Lowthian Bell and decorated by Morris's firm.[37] Although the male nude does not appear in any finished decorative design or painting, the sketchbook also contains a set of four drawings for a canvas completed nearly a decade later, *The Pilgrim at the Gate of Idleness* (fig. 14), which depicts the stately figure of Idleness welcoming the weary Pilgrim into her garden on the penultimate stop on his journey. These include a study for the Pilgrim (fig. 12) and another of Idleness (fig. 13),

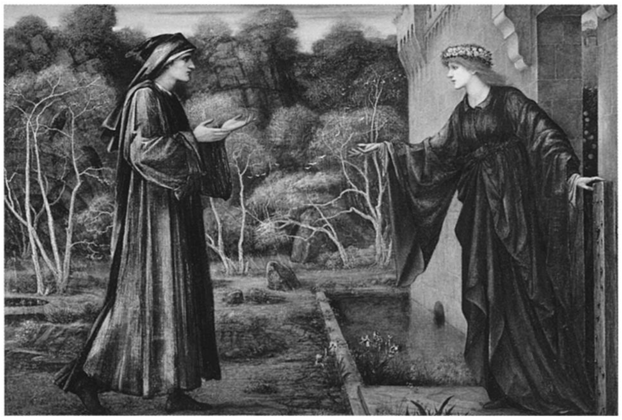

FIGURE 14. Edward Burne-Jones. *The Pilgrim at the Gate of Idleness*, 1884. Oil on canvas; 96.5 x 130.8 cm (38 x 51 1/2 in.). Dallas Museum of Art, Foundation for the Arts Collection, Mrs. John B. O'Hara Fund.

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which anticipate very closely the positions and gestures of the figures in the finished painting; like those in the sketches created for the earlier tapestry frieze, however, they are more attenuated and wear sweeter expressions.[38]

An unfinished figure (fig. 15) in the Art Institute sketchbook may mark the first appearance of Cupid drawing his bow, a motif that Burne-Jones employed both in his decorative designs and his paintings for the duration of his career. The artist included an image of Cupid as a handsome young archer in the predella of *The Story of Troy*; after that, he used the figure repeatedly, with subtle variations. For example, he depicted Cupid with his head tilted downward and his bow pointed toward the earth, in the central panel of the triptych *Pyramus and Thisbe* (1872–76; Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Birkenhead).[39] He also used the figure as the key image in *Cupid's Hunting Fields*, which he painted three times between 1880 and 1885. The last of these is a stunningly finished watercolor heightened with gold, now in the Art Institute's collection (fig. 16).[40] In the sketchbook drawing, Cupid's position varies slightly from these later depictions; his left arm, which holds the bow, pushes forward and away from his body, and the left knee is raised and bent at an acute angle. But the figure itself is fragmentary and lightly rendered, as if the artist intended to capture a fleeting idea, more suggestive than descriptive, so as not to lose it.

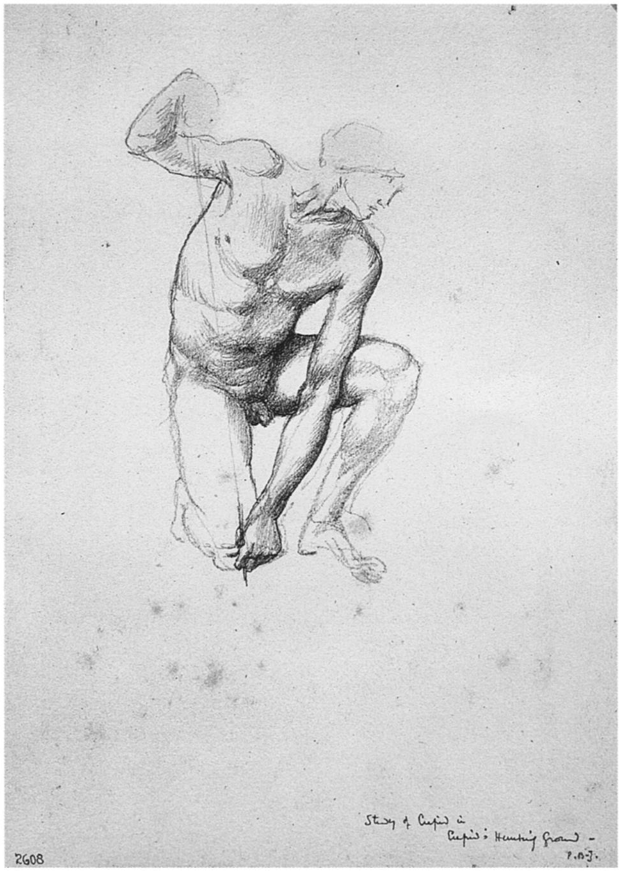

FIGURE 15. Edward Burne-Jones. *Nude Study of Cupid*. 1871/77. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 25.2 x 17.8 cm (9 15/16 x 7 in.). Ida E. S. Noyes Fund, 1920.1138.

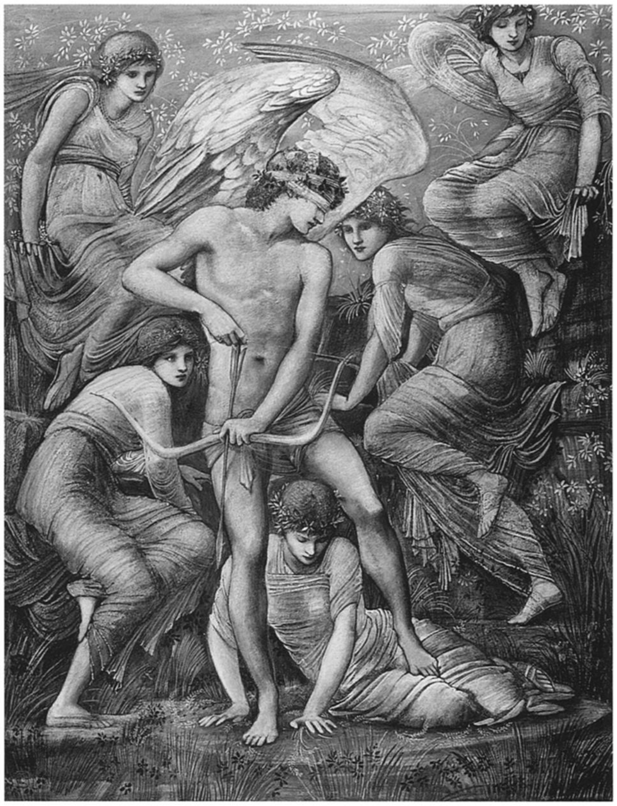

FIGURE 16. Edward Burne-Jones. *Cupid's Hunting Fields*, 1885. Gouache touched with gold on wove paper; 99.5 x 76.9 cm (38 7/8 x 30 1/4 in.). Robert Alexander Waller Memorial Collection, 1924.576.

While it chronicles seven years of work, the Art Institute's sketchbook represents the creative process and aesthetic ideals that Burne-Jones followed to the end of his career. In 1877 the artist emerged from this period of isolation, earning resounding acclaim for eight works in the premier exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery, London. His critical reputation was transformed: as his wife observed, "he belonged to the world in a sense that he had never done before, for his existence became widely known and his name famous."[41] But his studio practice did not change, and he continued to start more works than he could ever finish. Of all Burne-Jones's "unpainted masterpieces," the one that troubled him most was the grand-scale oil *The Sleep of Arthur in Avalon* (1881–98; Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico).[42] He began the canvas in 1881, on commission from George Howard for his library in Naworth Castle, Cumberland, but the project grew so large and complex that by 1885 Burne-Jones asked Howard if he would accept a simpler composition. A longtime friend, Howard realized the significance of the work to Burne-Jones and released him from his obligation.[43] The artist never regarded the painting as finished; he was working on it the day before he died.

One element of the plan that he did ultimately abandon was a pair of panels intended to flank the central composition, which were painted but never used.[44] These depicted hill fairies, mystical sprites that climbed the cliffs above Arthur's citadel. Burne-Jones executed preparatory drawings for the panels in 1885, after he had come to his agreement with Howard.[45] An undated, half-length pencil study of a male nude, now in the Art Institute (fig. 17), can be firmly identified as one of them. While the sketch itself is heavily worked and rubbed, as if the desired effect eluded Burne-Jones, the figure's flying hair and wild gaze capture the otherworldly atmosphere he hoped that the panels would evoke. Burne-Jones disliked it when a drawing appeared labored; this one must have displeased him, but he used the figure at the top of the right panel nevertheless. Looking back at his work, he told Rooke, "There's no drawing that I consider perfect."[46] But the *Hill Fairy* drawing—like the others we have examined—bears witness to his relentless struggle to find that perfection, sketching in pencil before taking up his brush.

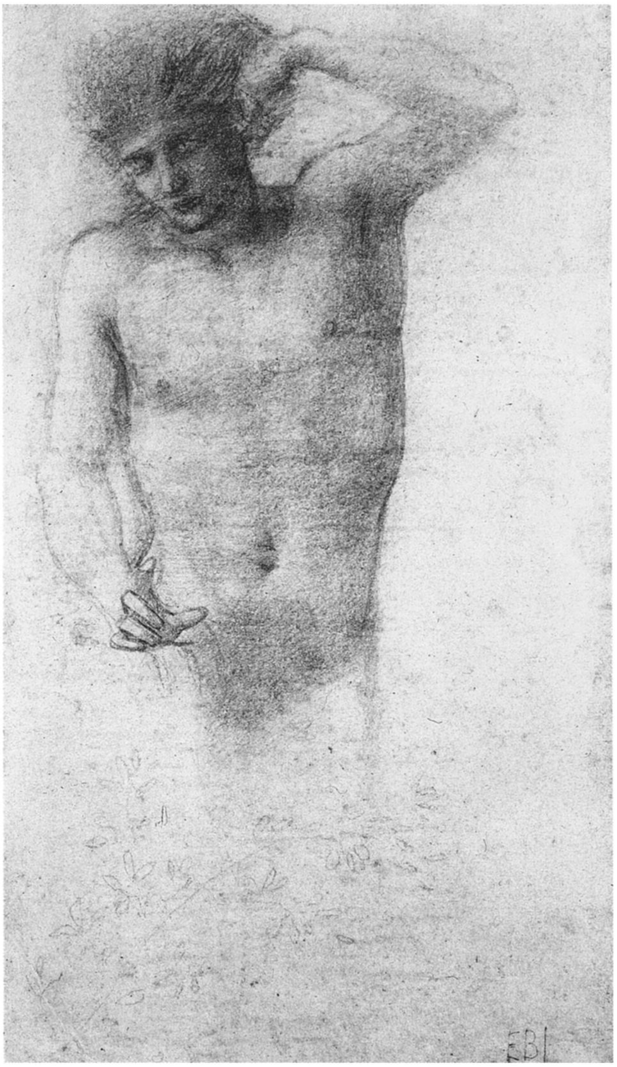

FIGURE 17. Edward Burne-Jones. *Study of a Male Nude for "Hill Fairies,"* c. 1885. Graphite on ivory wove paper; 22 x 12.3 cm (8 5/8 x 4 7/8 in.). Charles C. Cunningham Bequest, 1980.412.

American Workers and White Racial Formation in the Antebellum United States," chap. 7 in *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (Verso, 1999).

15. For more on Evans and his career, see Nannette Maciejunes, *A New Variety, Try One: De Scott Evans or S. S. David*, exh. cat. (Columbus Museum of Art, 1985).

16. For a full discussion of *My Passport* and the impact of federal laws on trompe l'oeil artists who painted currency, see Bruce W. Chambers, *Old Money: American Trompe l'Oeil Images of Currency*, exh. cat. (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1988).

17. Paul Staiti, "Illusionism, Trompe l'Oeil, and the Perils of Viewership," in Bolger et al. (note 12), p. 32.

18. See *Daily Local News*, West Chester, Penn., Oct. 24, 1887.

19. David Lubin, "Permanent Objects in a Fast-Changing World: Harnett's Still Lifes as a Hold on the Past," in Bolger et al. (note 12), pp. 52–53. Not until 1890 was a memorial or decoration day recognized by all the northern states, and not by the former Confederate states until after World War I. Memorial Day did not become a federal holiday until 1971.

20. A fascination with the past also marked mid-century literature. In "Young Goodman Brown" (1846) and *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Nathaniel Hawthorne explored the Puritan roots of American culture, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "The Old Clock on the Stairs" (1860) took as its subject the pendulum of eternity.

21. For more on *The Old Violin* (1886; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), see Bolger et al. (note 12), esp. p. 196, pl. 37.

22. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter," in *Nathaniel Hawthorne's Tales: Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Criticism*, ed. James McIntosh (W. W. Norton, 1987), p. 199.

### Mancoff, *Unpainted Masterpieces: The Drawings of Edward Burne-Jones*, pp. 44–55.

I would like to thank my research assistant Elizabeth Shingleton for her kind help.

1. Charles Eliot Norton to G. W. Curtis, June 20, 1869, in *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, ed. Sara Norton and M. A. De Wolfe Howe (London: Constable, 1913), vol. 1, p. 346. Norton, Professor of Fine Arts at Harvard University and one of the earliest American advocates of Pre-Raphaelite art, was originally introduced to Burne-Jones in 1856 by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The two men maintained their friendship through correspondence for the rest of Burne-Jones's lifetime.

2. Conversation between Edward Burne-Jones and his studio assistant T. M. Rooke, June 13, 1896; see T. M. Rooke, "Notes of Conversations Among the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," National Art Library Manuscript Collection, Victorian and Albert Museum, London, vol. 2, p. 237.

3. Norton and Howe (note 1), p. 346.

4. Undated letter, as quoted in Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* (Macmillan, 1904), vol. 2, p. 107. For more on *Unpainted Masterpieces*, see Stephen Wildman and John Christian, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, exh. cat. (Metropolitan Museum of Art/Harry N. Abrams, 1998), p. 332, cat. 169.

5. W. Graham Robertson, *Letters to Katie* (Macmillan, 1925), pp. viii–ix. Georgiana Burne-Jones offered a similar recollection from one of her husband's schoolmates, revealing that this was a lifelong habit; Burne-Jones (note 4), vol. 1, p. 38.

6. As told to Rooke on Nov. 28, 1895; Rooke (note 2), vol. 1, p. 60.

7. While Philip Burne-Jones's original letter of authenticity has been lost, a transcription resides in the Art Institute's Department of Prints and Drawings. The sketchbook remained in the Burne-Jones family until Brooks purchased it along with another, which the Minneapolis Institute of Arts acquired in 1915. The Art Institute's sketchbook has been long neglected by scholars, but two studies exist: George S. Hellman, "From a Burne-Jones Sketchbook," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 141 (Nov. 1920), pp. 769–74; and Kathleen Elizabeth Alexander, "A Sketchbook by Sir Edward Burne-Jones" (M.A. thesis, Northwestern University, 1980).

8. Burne-Jones, as quoted in *Exhibition of Drawings and Studies by Sir Edward Burne-Jones*, exh. cat. (London: Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1899), p. vii.

9. As quoted in Burne-Jones (note 4), vol. 1, p. 8.

10. *The Fairy Family* (Longmans, 1857) was compiled and edited by Archibald Maclaren; for examples of Burne-Jones's work on the publication, see *Pre-Raphaelite and Other Masters: The Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection*, exh. cat. (Royal Academy of Arts, 2003), p. 64, cats. 30 a–g; and Wildman and Christian (note 4), pp. 55–56, cats. 1–3.

11. *The Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. Oswald Doughty and John Robert Wahl (Clarendon Press, 1965), vol. 1, p. 319. Examples of this decorative style in pen and ink on vellum include *Going to Battle* (1858; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) and *Sir Galahad* (1859; Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass.); for illustrations of these works, see Debra N. Mancoff, *Burne-Jones* (Pomegranate, 1998), p. 23, fig. 9; p. 27, fig. 10.

12. This method was described by the artist's son, who asserted that his father "preferred to conquer his first difficulties" before he approached the canvas to avoid any "subsequent correction, which, however carefully erased, might possibly one day assert its presence." Philip Burne-Jones, "Notes on Some Unfinished Works of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, BT, by his Son," *Magazine of Art* 23 (1900/01), pp. 159–60.

13. Morris's firm was initially founded as Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Company in 1861. Morris bought out his partners and reorganized it as Morris and Company in 1875. Morris and Company remained in active business until 1940.

14. For an illustration of *Phyllis and Demophoön*, see Mancoff (note 11), p. 56, pl. 18.

15. Burne-Jones (note 4), vol. 1, p. 13.

16. His wife suggested that he began the project before 1872; see ibid., vol. 1, p. 308.

17. See Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (Knopf, 1995), pp. 147, 190. MacCarthy noted that Morris picked up and abandoned the planned twelve-part cycle several times and only finished six scenes, which were published by his daughter May in the last volume of his *Collected Works* (Longmans, Green, 1915).

18. Burne-Jones (note 4), vol. 2, p. 5.

19. The Venus panels flank a depiction of the Feast of Peleus and are separated by four small allegories on the theme *Amor Vincit Omnia*: *Fortune*, *Fame Over Throwing Fortune*, *Oblivion Conquering Fame*, and *Love Subduing Oblivion*.

20. For more on this, see Wildman and Christian (note 4), pp. 152–53. In 1873 Frank Lathrop, a young American painter, executed the central panel of the predella from a larger version by Burne-Jones; for an illustration of the latter (1872–81), now in the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, see Wildman and Christian (note 4), p. 153, cat. 51.

21. Burne-Jones (note 4), vol. 2, pp. 25–26.

22. As told to Rooke; see Rooke (note 2), vol. 1, p. 121. This entry is simply dated "two years back."

23. As quoted in Burne-Jones (note 4), vol. 1, p. 26.

24. As told to Rooke; see Rooke (note 2), vol. 1, p. 11.

25. For example one sketchbook (1943.1815.16) in the collection of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, contains mostly banners and nude sketches, while another (1943.1815.15) is almost completely devoted to drapery.

26. T. Martin Wood, *The Drawings of Sir Edward Burne-Jones* (London: George Newnes, 1907), p. 2.

27. For an illustration of the first version (1867–77; Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection, England), see *Pre-Raphaelite and Other Masters* (note 10), p. 83, cat. 48.

28. Burne-Jones's interpretation of the subject is more an invention upon these lines than an imitative illustration: "Or in the stream the maids would stare, / nor know why they were made so fair; / Their yellow locks, their bosoms white, / Their limbs well wrought for all delight." William Morris, "The Hill of Venus," from *The Earthly Paradise* (Kelmscott Press, 1897), vol. 8, p. 31. For more on the project, see Joseph R. Dunlap, *The Book That Never Was* (New York: Oriole Editions, 1971).

29. These paintings include, among others, several versions of *Cupid Finding Psyche* (1865; Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, and Manchester City Art Galleries) and *Cupid Delivering Psyche* (1867; Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford). For illustrations of these works, see Wildman and

Christian (note 4), pp. 121–22, cats. 37–39.

30. The Art Institute sketchbook also holds another very similar study of the same figure (1920.1148); two other studies (1920.53–54) depict the spill of fabric around the knees of the figure fourth from the left and the resulting reflection on the water's surface. All of these works remain unpublished.

31. The sketchbook also holds another, similar study of the goddess's arms and feet (1920.1163) that has yet to be published.

32. The second version of *The Mirror of Venus* was featured in a group of eight works that Burne-Jones sent to the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, marking his return to the Victorian art world. His works caused a sensation, prompting Henry James to call him "the lion of the exhibition." See Henry James, "The Galaxy" (1877), in *The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts by Henry James*, ed. John L. Sweeny (University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 144.

33. Alan Crawford speculated that during this time Burne-Jones drew as many as one cartoon every eight and a half days. (By the end of his career, he had produced 650 designs for Morris's firm alone.) See Alan Crawford, "Burne-Jones as a Decorative Artist," in Wildman and Christian (note 4), p. 12. The Art Institute holds two cartoons from this period, *Timotheus Episcopus (Dabit Tibi)* (1912.1675) and *Samuel Propheta (Lequere Domini)* (1912.1676). For more on these, see A. C. Sewter, "Notes on Some Burne-Jones Designs for Stained Glass in American Collections," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 5 (1970), p. 77–81.

34. Georgiana Burne-Jones noted that her husband worked on full-size cartoons on strainers while standing, even in the company of his family: "His drawing at home in the evening never separated him from us, for he heard everything that went on and talked also." See Burne-Jones (note 4), vol. 2, pp. 5–6.

35. A similar pair of drawings for the Saint Matthew window (Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery) suggests that Burne-Jones prepared for his swift production of cartoons by repeatedly drawing a figure until it was fully realized in his mind; these sketches are published in Wildman and Christian (note 4), p. 13, figs. 10–11. For illustrations of the cartoon of the Saint Mark window (Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery) and of the finished window itself, see A. C. Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and His Circle* (Yale University Press, 1974), vol. 1, pl. 435–36.

36. As quoted in Sewter (note 35), vol. 2, p. 43. Burne-Jones reported that he worked on the cartoons for the Saint Mark window between February and May 1874.

37. The painting is inscribed "EBJ 1874 1884"; see Wildman and Christian (note 4), p. 184.

38. See, for example, the highly finished pencil drawings for the figures of *Love and Beauty* (1874; Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection, England) and for *Largesse and Richesse* (1874; Collection Susan L. Burden), reproduced respectively in *Pre-Raphaelite and Other Masters* (note 10), p. 66, cat. 31; and Wildman and Christian (note 4), p. 181, cat. 73. For an illustration of the tapestry frieze (1874–82; William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow), see Wildman and Christian (note 4), pp. 180–81, cat. 72.

39. *Pyramus and Thisbe* is discussed in Wildman and Christian (note 4), p. 256. For illustrations of other works featuring the image of Cupid drawing his bow, all in ibid., see *Laus Veneris* (1873–78; Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne), p. 167, cat. 63; *The Passing of Venus: Painted Fan* (c. 1880; private collection), p. 234, cat. 99; *The Passing of Venus: Design for Tapestry* (1898; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), p. 234, cat. 100; and *The Passing of Venus Tapestry* (1922–26; Detroit Institute of Arts), pp. 234–35, cat. 101.

40. The other two versions of *Cupid's Hunting Fields* are a monochrome oil painting (1880; Victoria and Albert Museum, London), illustrated in Stephen Wildman, *Waking Dreams: The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites from the Delaware Art Museum* (Alexandria, Va.: Art Services International, 2004), p. 124, fig. 35; and a panel heightened with gold and gesso (c. 1882; Delaware Art Museum), reproduced in Jeanette M. Toohey, *Pre-Raphaelites: The Samuel and Mary Bancroft Collection of the Delaware Art Museum* (Delaware Art Museum, 1995), p. 35.

41. Burne-Jones (note 4) vol. 2, p. 75.

42. The painting is reproduced in Mancoff (note 11), pp. 120–24, pl. 54.

43. For a full account of the commission, see Debra N. Mancoff, "Infinite Rest: Sleep, Death, and Awakening in the Late Works of Edward Burne-Jones," in Joe Law and Linda K. Hughes, *Biographical Passages: Essays in Victorian and Modernist Biography* (University of Missouri Press, 2000), pp. 116–21.

44. The *Hill Fairy* panels are unlocated. For an illustration of the panels, see Bill Waters, *Burne-Jones: A Quest for Love: Works by Sir Edward Burne-Jones BT and Related Works by Contemporary Artists* (London: Peter Nahum, 1993), p. 25, cat. 25.

45. Studies for the *Hill Fairies* include two unpublished drawings, both dated 1885, in the collection of the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass. (1942.21, 1942.18); and a drawing in an unidentified private collection, illustrated in Mancoff (note 11), p. 119, fig. 36.

46. As told to Rooke; see Rooke (note 2), vol. 1, p. 187.

**Nickel, *From the Manor House to the Asylum: The George Cowper Album*, pp. 56–67.**

1. See Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians: Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold, General Gordon* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1918).

2. The album was one of three Victorian scrapbooks that the Art Institute acquired in December 1960 from the San Francisco bookseller David Magee; the total price was $95. No supporting documentation accompanied these items; Magee died in 1977, so tracing their provenance before San Francisco is difficult at best.

3. References to the Cowpers, and especially to Anne de Grey, show up regularly in the letters and diaries of prominent Victorians. The Countess Granville described her as "one of the most delightful girls I ever met with, a fine, open-hearted, unaffected creature, very clever and full of talents." Harriet, Countess Granville, Nov. 6, 1828, quoted in *Who Was Who in Britain*, pp. 486–87, Media Microfilm Collection, New York Public Library. See also Lady St. Helier, *Memories of Fifty Years*, 1909. pp. 91–92, quoted in ibid.

4. These works are still known as the Cowper Madonna and the Panshanger Madonna, respectively.

5. Harriet, Countess Granville (note 3).

6. He founded the field of reaction kinetics, which endeavors to describe the rate of change in a chemical reaction.

7. The larger significance of these structures, with their extensive encompassing land holdings, would not have been lost on an educated viewer in the mid-nineteenth century. The country house was then the hub of an economic system in which the relationship between the lord and the workers on his estate became increasingly critical, as estate tenants began to realize political clout for the first time. For more, see John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

8. See, for example, *The Haystack* and *The Ladder*, pls. 10 and 14 in William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (1844–46; repr., Da Capo Press, 1969). Curiously, in his text for *The Ladder*, Talbot described photography's talent for making portraits of living individuals and groups—in particular, family groups—and remarked on its value at producing records of the English nobility, had it existed a century earlier.

9. In the Protestant tradition, cleanliness was next to godliness, and a well-swept threshold indicated the pious domesticity of the household within. The bridle symbolized restraint of the passions, and the lantern (to the right of the open door) represented truth. See Mike Weaver, "Diogenes with a Camera," in *Henry Fox Talbot: Selected Texts and Bibliography*, ed. Mike Weaver (Oxford: Clio Press, 1992), pp. 1–25.

10. Talbot (note 8), n.p.; *The Open Door* appears as pl. 6.

11. A third Talbot print, *St. Mary, Oxford*, is also to be found in the album.

12. The club's members included the photographers Frederick Scott Archer, Hugh Welch Diamond, Robert Hunt, and the painter Sir William Newton.

13. For more on these groups, see Grace Seiberling with Carolyn Bloore, *Amateurs, Photography, and the Mid-Victorian Imagination* (University of Chicago Press, 1986).

14. In an effort to keep photography within the bounds of educated amateurs like himself, Talbot had patented his positive-negative process, extending it to include newer versions such as the calotype. Fenton was part of increasingly vocal sect of calotypists who came to feel Talbot's patent restrictions were interfering with the medium's natural development. For more on