The Drawings Collection

by JACOB BEAN  Assistant Curator in Charge of Drawings

Just over a year ago, in December 1960, the Department of Drawings was set up as a separate curatorial department within the Metropolitan Museum. Now an exhibition of a selection of drawings, purchased for the most part in the course of 1961, opens in the Recent Accessions Room on January 17 to testify to the activity of the new department in its first year. When the Thomas J. Watson Library is completed, probably in 1963, the Department of Drawings will have exhibition, office, and storage space in this new addition to the Museum. Office and proper storage space are much needed, but from the public’s point of view, the projected exhibition galleries for drawings and prints are even more urgently required. The new addition will permit systematic presentation of the Museum’s rich and varied holdings in rooms specially equipped and lit for the display of drawings.

The establishment of a Drawings Department, separate from but working in close collaboration with both the Print Department and the European Paintings Department, does not imply that drawings have been neglected in the past. The Museum’s fine collection testifies to the contrary. However, in a great institution like the Metropolitan the arrangement, exhibition, and acquisition of drawings, particularly those of the major European schools of the past, present problems more than sufficient to warrant the creation of a special department. In America not only scholarly and academic circles, but also a growing and enthusiastic public are increasingly aware of the firsthand testimony to the whole process of artistic creation which drawings can give. First and foremost a reference and study collection open to qualified students, a growing collection of drawings offers the material for uncounted exhibitions, some intended to instruct, others simply to delight. The extreme fragility of old drawings and their unpredictable susceptibility to light precludes the permanent exhibition of the Museum’s finest examples of the art, but the new exhibition galleries will allow for a varied program of changing exhibitions. The permanent collection, conveniently arranged in safe storage rooms, will be easily accessible for consultation in a study room.

The history of the collection of drawings at the Metropolitan goes back to 1880. Ten years after the incorporation of the Museum in 1870, a gift from Cornelius Vanderbilt became the nucleus of the collection. Mr. Vanderbilt had purchased from James Jackson Jarves, pioneer American connoisseur of early fifteenth century Italian painting, a group of over six hundred drawings, and these he gave to the Metropolitan. This collection consists almost entirely of Italian drawings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, extremely uneven in quality, and Albert Ten Eyck Gardner has established that the group once belonged to Alessandro Maggiori, an Italian amateur of the late eighteenth century.

Seven years later, in 1887, one hundred and eighty-one drawings, again largely Italian, came to the Museum as a gift of Cephas G. Thompson. It was not, however, until the first decade of this century that the Metropolitan began to buy drawings. The first major purchases date, in fact, from the appointment of Roger Fry as Curator of Paintings in 1906. Since then the Metropolitan has with regularity acquired drawings on the European and American art markets. If we owe the largest part of the drawings collection to the
The generosity of donors, a number of very important purchases have also been made. In 1917 the Museum was able to acquire in London three magnificent drawings by Correggio and two capital sheets by Leonardo da Vinci. Major individual purchases mark almost every year up to the present, but special mention should be made of two block purchases which have given the Museum exceptional holdings in two specific fields. In 1935 the Metropolitan was able to acquire an album containing fifty extremely important drawings by Francisco Goya which had belonged to Federico de Madrazo and Mariano Fortuny. Two years later the Museum, thanks to the energy and perspicacity of George Blumenthal, then president of the Board of Trustees, purchased the better part of the collection of the Marquis de Biron, and thus acquired a group of sixty-five fine drawings by Giambattista and Domenico Tiepolo, twenty drawings by Guardi and his school, and a good representation of French draftsmanship.

The celebrity of the French impressionists and of the Spanish paintings left to the Museum in 1929 by Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer should not overshadow the importance of the sixty-four drawings that she bequeathed to the Museum at the same time. That the Havemeyer French nineteenth century drawings should be of superb quality can hardly come as a surprise. The seven magnificent Rembrandt drawings she left the Museum are perhaps less expected. Indeed, the Havemeyer Rembrandts are the heart of the Metropolitan’s fine and representative group of drawings by the Dutch master.

Other gifts and bequests that enriched the collection must be mentioned, though the enumeration can hardly be complete: from Harold K. Hochschild and from Alexandrine Sinsheimer came groups of Italian, French, and Flemish drawings; from Grace Rainey Rogers several fine Ingres studies; from Ann Payne Blumenthal a group of French drawings; from Mr. and Mrs. Janos Scholz drawings by Rubens, Rembrandt, and Van Dyck. The collection of drawings left to the Museum in 1949 by the bequest of Alfred Stieglitz brought a remarkable group of seventy-two early twentieth century drawings, strong in Picasso, Matisse, Picabia, and Severini. The Stieglitz bequest rounds out the Museum’s collection and brings it almost up to date as a panorama of the course of European draftsmanship from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries.

The collection at present numbers well over

Fig. 1. Francesco Mazzola, called Parmigianino (1503-1540), Italian. Frieze with Warriors in Classical Costumes. Pen, brown ink, and brown wash, heightened with white gouache. 4 3/8 x 8 3/8 inches
Rogers Fund, 61.161.4
two thousand drawings. A realistic appraisal of what it contains will emphasize the importance of certain holdings. The eighteenth century Venetians, Goya, Rembrandt, and the French masters of the nineteenth century are well and even exceptionally well represented. The earlier Italian schools are present in important examples of Filippino Lippi, Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Barocci. There is also a large and important collection of ornament drawings, the joint responsibility of the Drawings and the Print Departments. But the same realistic appraisal will admit to the inadequate fashion in which certain areas of the history of European draftsmanship are represented. To be sure, only two or three great European drawings collections can pretend to be comprehensive or encyclopedic; and fine drawings are today so rare on the market that selection with such a goal in mind is difficult. However, the Metropolitan can continue to acquire drawings worthy of comparison on grounds of quality with the best material in other departments in the Museum. Perhaps above all it is the Museum’s trust in the continued generosity of collectors which gives us confidence in the growth of the collection of drawings. The year 1961 has brought a number of gifts to the Drawings Department, and given the generosity of the friends of the Metropolitan and the department, 1962 will surely bring more. These gifts will be shown in a special exhibition at a later date.

The showing in the Recent Accessions Room is a selection made from the one hundred and forty-one drawings the Museum has been able to purchase during the past year. The exception is the pair of superb Rubens studies for the woodcut version of The Garden of Love; they were purchased in 1958 at a time when European drawings were the curatorial responsibility of the European Paintings Department, and they testify to the exceptionally high quality of drawing which the Museum has been able to obtain in the recent past. The drawings now on exhibition—and those examples of this exhibition which are reproduced in this Bulletin—require no justificatory comments; they speak for themselves with the directness and simplicity which are the mark of good draftsmanship.

Fig. 2. Pietro da Cortona (1596-1669), Italian. A Zephyr: study for a figure that appears in Cortona’s ceiling fresco of the Sala di Apollo in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence. Black chalk heightened with white chalk. 7¼ x 13¾ inches Whittelsey Fund, 61.129.1
Fig. 3. Michelangelo Anselmi (1491-1554), Italian. David with a Harp: study for a figure in Anselmi’s frescoes in the western apse of Santa Maria della Steccata in Parma. Black chalk on blue paper squared off in black ink. 15¾ x 5¾ inches
Rogers Fund, 61.123.2
Fig. 4. Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone (1484-1539), Italian. Saint Christopher: study for a painting in the church of San Rocco in Venice. Pen, brown ink, and brown wash, heightened with white gouache, on blue paper squared off in red and black chalk. 14⅔ x 9⅜ inches
Whittelsey Fund, 60.135
Fig. 5. Pietro da Cortona (1596-1669), Italian. The Triumph of Nature: preparatory study for an illustration in De Florum Cultura, a text on gardening by a Jesuit, Giovanni Battista Ferrari, published in Rome in 1633. Pen and brown ink, over black chalk. 7 3/4 x 5 3/4 inches Rogers Fund, 61.2.1
Fig. 6. Girolamo Romanino (1484 or 1487-1562), Italian. Study of a Nude Male Figure. Brush and brown wash. 11 1/2 x 6 3/8 inches
Rogers Fund, 61.123.3

Fig. 7. Flaminio Torre (1621-1661), Italian. The Virgin Appearing to Saint Jerome: probably a preparatory study for a picture now in the Galleria Estense at Modena. There is another study for the picture in the Albertina in Vienna. Red chalk on beige paper. 15 1/16 x 5 3/8 inches
Rogers Fund, 61.13
Fig. 8. Paolo Veronese (1528-1588), Italian. Allegory of the Redemption of the World: one of a group of highly finished pictorial studies of allegorical compositions. Other examples are in the Louvre, the Albertina in Vienna, and the Städelisches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt. Pen, black ink, and gray wash, heightened with white gouache, on gray washed paper. 24 5/6 x 16 3/6 inches
Rogers Fund, 61.203

Fig. 9. Francesco Zuccarelli (1702-1788), Italian. Landscape with Figures. Pen, brown ink, and brown wash, heightened with white gouache and gray wash, over black chalk on blue paper. 13 3/6 x 19 3/6 inches
Rogers Fund, 61.57

Fig. 10 (following pages). Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), Flemish. The Garden of Love: one of two drawings by Rubens which served as models for a pair of woodcuts executed by Christoffel Jegher. Pen, brown ink, and blue and green wash, over traces of black chalk. 18 3/4 x 27 3/4 inches
Fletcher Fund, 58.96.1
The Garden of Love, by Rubens
Fig. 11. Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), French. The Entombment. Pen and brown ink. 3⅜ x 6⅜ inches Rogers Fund, 61.123.1

Fig. 12. Claude Gellée, called Le Lorrain (1600-1682), French. Apollo and the Muses on Mount Parnassus: this drawing is signed and dated Rome, 1674, and looks forward to the picture with the same subject now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which is dated 1680. Pen, brown ink, brown wash, and white gouache on blue paper. 9¾ x 12¾ inches Rogers Fund, 61.59
Fig. 13. Simon Vouet (1590-1649), French. Saint Louis: study for the principal figure in the Apotheosis of Saint Louis, a picture which once decorated the high altar of the Jesuit church of Saint-Louis-et-Saint-Paul in Paris. Black chalk heightened with white chalk on beige paper. 15 3/4 x 11 3/4 inches Rogers Fund, 61.132

Fig. 14. Eustache Le Sueur (1617-1655), French. A Monk with Upraised Right Arm. Black and white chalk on gray-brown paper. 16 1/4 x 10 1/8 inches Rogers Fund, 61.162.1
Fig. 15. Jean-Baptiste Deshayes (1729-1765), French. Phryne before the Areopagus. Brush and brown wash over black chalk, heightened with white gouache. 18 11/16 x 23 1/6 inches
Rogers Fund, 61.126

Fig. 16. Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825), French. Study of the Drapery of a Seated Male Figure: a preparatory study for the figure of Crito in David’s early picture The Death of Socrates, now in the Metropolitan Museum. Black chalk and gray wash, heightened with white, squared off in black chalk. 31 3/6 x 16 3/6 inches Rogers Fund, 61.161.1
Fig. 17. Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), French. The Triumph of Genius: design for an allegorical composition. Pen and brown ink over black chalk. 10 3/8 x 13 3/8 inches Rogers Fund, 61.160.1
Fig. 18. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), French. Studies of a Seated Male Nude. Black chalk. 11 3/8 x 14 13/16 inches
Rogers Fund, 61.128

Fig. 19. Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), French. Muley-abd-er-Rhaman, Sultan of Morocco, and His Entourage: study for a picture shown in the Salon of 1845, and now in the museum at Toulouse. Black chalk and lead pencil, squared off in white chalk. 23 7/16 x 19 7/16 inches
Rogers Fund, 61.202
Fig. 21. Jan Lievens (1607-1674), Flemish. Landscape with a Woman Milking. Reed pen and brown ink on India paper. 8⅜ x 14⅛ inches Rogers Fund, 61.137

Fig. 20 (opposite). Bartholomeus Breenbergh (1599-1658), Dutch. Ruined Arches of the Colosseum in Rome. Pen, brown ink, and brown wash. 10 ½ x 7 ¾ inches Rogers Fund, 61.2.4

Fig. 22. Jan Frans van Bloemen (1662-1749), Dutch. Landscape. Brush and tempera on paper. 3 ½ x 9 ½ inches Rogers Fund, 61.20.2