

Italian Drawings from the Permanent CollectionI.

Introduction

The period represented here, the fourteenth through the eighteenth centuries, spans the growth and waning of a tradition in which drawings were primarily used for the preparation of paintings, sculptures, or buildings and were rarely finished for presentation or for sale. Preparatory functions were predominant through a succession of stylistic movements: the Gothic, the Classical, the Mannerist, the Baroque and the Rococo. Already in the seventeenth century and increasingly in the eighteenth the sale of finished drawings became a central consideration for the artist. In the nineteenth the design of paintings directly on the canvas and of sculptures directly in wax or clay restricted the use of preparatory drawings to artists of academic training and conviction.

In fifteenth century Italy, radical changes in the nature of painting, sculpture, and architecture led to new methods of design. In the middle ages drawings consisted of tightly controlled line images in vellum model-books or of the preparatory underdrawings of illuminations and paintings. A fresco, for example, was designed in red pigment on the wall itself. Figures and details were taken from the traditional stockpile in the model-books. During the fifteenth century artists took a new interest in the direct observation of nature, the study of antique monuments, and in mathematically constructed systems of perspective. These required a rapid, portable and correctable medium, so that the artist's visual impression could be recorded on the spot and later refined, elaborated, and combined into a rationally organized finished design. The simple method of drawing on paper was sufficiently versatile for all the specialized functions demanded by the new art: sketches from life, studies of antique and modern artworks, figure studies of individuals and of groups, compositional studies, finished *modelli* of a composition, and full-size cartoons used to transfer the image onto the final support.

This exhibition also documents the historical succession of drawing materials. The introduction of movable type printing in the fifteenth century created an increased demand for paper in the West. Its new abundance made it comparatively inexpensive. A variety of tools and media were adapted for drawing. A metal stylus would leave a delicate line on a sheet prepared with an abrasive colored preparation. Ink could be applied with either a brush or with a pen cut from a quill or a reed. Highlights could be added with liquid white applied with a brush. Black and red chalk, which allowed easier corrections, were introduced in the late fifteenth century and became widely used for

Exhibition text labels

preparatory drawings in the sixteenth, when metalpoint virtually disappeared and ink became more usual in finished drawings. In general the choice was governed by efficiency within the requirements of the function of the drawing, but in the seventeenth century some artists experimented with media. Federigo Barocci, for example, used colored chalks and gouache in his preparatory drawings, and Benedetto Castiglione developed oily pigments like that used in the *Feast of Terminus* in this gallery. The eighteenth century artists represented here relied on the classic ink and chalk techniques established in the sixteenth century, but applied them more and more to finished drawings, for which there was an increasing demand.

II.

Regional Styles

Over the centuries the regions of Italy, particularly the city-states within them, developed radical differences of custom, dialect, and culture. Not only political separatism, but, geography, climate, and economy have kept these local traditions distinct—a condition that persists today in local dialects and in the distinctive architecture and topography of the old towns.

Similar divergences are inherent in Italian art and are especially noteworthy during the period covered by this exhibition—from the late fourteenth through the eighteenth. The artists of each region and of each city passed on local traditions which reflect not only the technique and manner peculiar to the workshop, but the mode of seeing, sense of space and temperament of the people. Vasari early distinguished the colorism of the Venetian painters from the linear technique (“disegno”) of the Florentines. In later years this awareness was reinforced by the founding of local academies in cities such as Florence, Bologna, and Rome and in the tendency of early biographers of artists to approach their writings as a subtopic of local history.

In drawings regional styles are apparent in the character of the draughtsman’s line as well as in the way he used the lines to interpret space, volume, and surface qualities. Bernhard Degenhardt has shown that these styles could be distinguished scientifically by the character of the draughtsman’s line. Konrad Oberhuber has more recently carried these distinctions over to what the lines represent: space, volume, and surface qualities.

Francesco Lorenzi (1727-1787), a Veronese follower of Giambattista

Exhibition text labels

Tiepolo, recorded in an inscription on the first leaf of the sketchbook displayed in this gallery, his full consciousness of the various regional styles, and his somewhat overambitious will to overcome them through eclecticism. The visitor who compares Lorenzi's sketchbook with the fifteenth century Veronese Madonna and Child in Gallery I will nonetheless recognize a kinship in the treatment of line in both and, through it, the endurance of the local style. The different treatment of line and space in the Venetian, Bolognese, and Roman landscapes on view in the galleries is also discernible.

The drawings in their regional groups embody the vividly contrasting mentalities, appetites, and vision of the diverse peoples of Italy. In addition to the beauty of the drawings, we hope that you will be exhilarated by the sense of intimacy that they provide with the people who created them. For this human contact is one of the finer pleasures afforded by Old Master drawings.

References: Bernhard Degenhardt, "Zur Graphologie der Handzeichnung. Die Strichbildung als stetige Erscheinung innerhalb der italienischen Kunstkreis," *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, I (1937) pp. 223ff. Konrad Oberhuber and Dean Walker, *Sixteenth Century Drawings from the Collection of Janos Scholz*, Washington D. C., The National Gallery of Art, 1973, Introduction, pp. ix ff.

III

Vasari on Drawing

By the sixteenth century drawing had become so essential to the making of a work of art that Giorgio Vasari, could say in the introduction to his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (Second Edition, 1568):

"Because drawing, father of our three arts, architecture, sculpture, and painting, proceeding from the intellect, extracts from many things a universal judgment, like a form or an idea of all the things in nature, who is most specific in her measurements. This applies not only to human beings or animal bodies, but also to plants. Also in buildings and sculptures and paintings it knows the proportion that the whole has with the parts, and which the parts have among themselves and with the whole altogether. And because from this knowledge a certain concept or judgment is born, so that there takes form in the mind that thing which later, expressed with the hands, is called drawing. One can conclude that that drawing is none other than a visible expression and declaration of the concept which one has in the spirit and of that which one has imagined in the mind and built in thought. And

Exhibition text labels

from this the proverb of the Greeks is born: 'from the claw the lion,' when a clever man one day, seeing carved in a rock only the claw of a lion, grasped with his intellect from the measure and form the parts of the whole animal and the the whole altogether, as if he had it present and before his eyes."

In his life of Titian, Vasari discusses drawing from a practical standpoint and also expresses his Florentine preference for *diseño* (draughtsmanship) over Venetian *colorito* (color):

"...it is necessary for whomever wants to arrange the components [of a picture] well and to make inventions coherent, that he must first put them on paper in several different ways to see how the whole works together. Since thought cannot see or imagine inventions perfectly in itself if it does not open up and show its concept to the physical eyes which help it to make a sound judgment of that concept. It is also necessary to make a serious study of nudes in order to understand them well: and this is not accomplished, nor can it be, without putting things on paper; and keeping, the whole time one is painting, people before one, either nude or clothed, is no minor enslavement. Hence, when one has developed a hand by drawing on paper, one becomes able to carry on with drawing and painting with more facility; and, thus practicing in art. one develops style and perfect judgment, eliminating that labor and difficulty with which paintings are executed [without drawings]. Not to mention the fact that, by drawing on paper one succeeds in filling the mind with beautiful conceits, and learns to create mentally all the things in nature, without having to keep them before one, or having appear through the beauty of colors the laboriousness which comes from not knowing how to draw, as in the style which Venetian painters practised for many years: Giorgione, Palma [the Elder], Pordenone, and others who never saw Rome or any other works of full perfection."

Reference Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori ed architettori*, ed. G. Milanesi, Florence, 1906, vol. I, p. 168; vol. II, p. 427

Francesco Lorenzi Verona 1723 - Verona 1787 A Sketchbook Various media, mostly Black and red chalk heightened with white John L. Severance Fund

52.223

Francesco Lorenzi, a Veronese follower of the Venetian painter, G. B. Tiepolo, wrote on the first leaf of this sketchbook a statement that shows his awareness of the regional styles, which by this time had been clearly distinguished by artists and patrons alike: 26 December 1760 After attempts, renewed attempts,

Exhibition text labels

and reflections, I have fixed my manner as it will always be. When it is composed of various figures with an attractive light in the middle ground and a contrast of strong shadows in the foreground, achieved with a “dirty” mass, and behind this a bright field -- in this way we shall have united the Bolognese manner, the Roman, and the Venetian, not omitting anywhere the Neapolitan[...].

Florence

Model-books and Sketchbooks

This case and the next two contain pages taken from drawing-books. Other leaves from the same books are dispersed among European and American collections. In present-day terminology a distinction is made between model-books and sketchbooks. The surviving pages show characteristics of both. The model-book was used in the medieval workshop as a storehouse of copies of life-studies and of traditional motifs; it was also used as a source of ideas for finished works as well as for the training of apprentices. The sketchbook was an innovation of the late middle ages--in other words, a random, cumulative collection of drawings from life, preparatory studies, and direct copies of other works, in other words a daily record of workshop activity. The need to copy and preserve models remained as important to artists as the record of daily studies. As we see here, and even in the eighteenth century sketchbook by Lorenzi in Gallery D, the functions of the model-book and the sketchbook overlapped.

The sheet by Parri Spinelli bears on its verso model-book studies of ships and marine battles. Such drawings were collected in a book as a repertory of sources to be used when a painting called for such scenes. On the recto there is an adaptation of Giotto's famous mosaic on the façade of the old basilica of St. Peter in Rome. Another sheet by the same hand (now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York) is a more literal copy of Giotto's composition. The Cleveland drawing could therefore represent the artist's adaptation of his model for an independent work.

The page from the workshop of Benozzo Gozzoli in the second case, although later, is even closer to the medieval model-book in function. The single head on the verso and the angel on the recto appear to be copies from other works. The head below the angel either a study from life or a direct copy of one.

The page by the Sieneese Mannerist Domenico Beccafumi in the third case,

Exhibition text labels

on the other hand, is characteristic of a sketchbook. This and other sheets from the book are life-studies and show all the immediacy of direct observation.

The pink study sheet by Raphael to the left of the Beccafumi is also a sketchbook page and is typical in its accumulation of studies from life and experiments in free invention.

Perugino in FlorenceThe Umbrian painter Pietro Perugino kept a workshop in Florence for part of his career, and many of his most important panels and frescoes were executed there. The present drawing is related to the *Madonna Enthroned with St. John the Baptist and St. Sebastian*, an altarpiece painted for the Church of San Domenico in Fiesole (a nearby town), now in the Uffizi Galleries in Florence.

Pietro Vannucci, called Il PeruginoCittà della Pieve ca. 1445 - Fontignano, near Perugia 1523St. SebastianMetalpoint, brush and brown wash on prepared paperDudley P. Allen Fund
58.411Ex collections: Count Moriz von Fries, Vienna (Lugt 2903); The Prince of Liechtenstein

Raphael in Florence Raphael came from Urbino in the Marches to join Perugino's workshop at Perugia as an apprentice. He went to Florence in the winter of 1504/05 and worked there until the end of 1508, when Pope Julius II summoned him to work in the Vatican Palace. Raphael spent the rest of his career in Rome. The present drawing comes from the so-called Pink Sketchbook. This and other sheets from it contain studies for the great series of madonnas that Raphael painted during his stay in Florence. It is a vivid document of Raphael's absorption of Florentine plasticity, roundness, and analytical rendering of the human form. In Florence, the greatest artistic center in Italy, the twenty-one year old Raphael entered his artistic maturity and was prepared for his monumental achievements as painter, architect, and archaeologist in the papal court at Rome.

Raffaello Sanzio Urbino 1483 - Rome 1520 Sketchbook Page with Studies for a Madonna and Child Metalpoint on prepared paper Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund
78.37 Ex collections: Cavaliere Benvenuti, Florence; The Grand Duke of Tuscany; Emperor Charles of Austria; S. von Licht (Lugt Supplement 789b); Edwin Czeczowiczka, Vienna; R. von Hirsch, Basel and Frankfurt