

PRESS RELEASE

FANTASY AND PASSION: DRAWING FROM CARRACCI TO BERNINI

10 OCTOBER 2024 – 12 JANUARY 2025

Städel Museum, Exhibition Hall of the Department of Prints and Drawings

Press Preview: Wednesday, 9 October 2024, 11 am

Frankfurt, 5 September 2024. The Städel Museum presents the great masters of Italian Baroque draughtsmanship. For the brothers Agostino and Annibale Carracci, Guercino, Stefano della Bella and Gian Lorenzo Bernini, drawing was a central component of their artistic work. In their drawings, they not only laid the foundations for their paintings, sculptures or prints, but also demonstrated the independence of the medium. Executed with pen and brush or black or red chalk, the sheets are sketches, studies or precisely rendered individual works. They impress with their sweeping lines, their dramatic chiaroscuro and their extraordinary expressiveness. From 10 October 2024 to 12 January 2025, the Städel Museum will be showing 90 of these remarkable Italian Baroque drawings from its own collection in an exhibition parallel to the Frankfurt Book Fair with Italy as this year's Guest of Honour, inviting visitors to an intimate encounter with the artistic drawings of a bygone era.

The scholarly analysis of the drawings was made possible by the generous support of the Gabriele Busch-Hauck Foundation in Frankfurt. This multi-year research project has produced a wealth of new information on individual artists and their working methods, the subjects depicted and the techniques used, as well as on contemporary and later collectors.

The 17th century was a time of change in Italy. Baroque art emphasized movement and dynamism, contrasts and the play of light and shadow. These characteristics can be seen not only in the paintings and sculptures, but also in the drawings of the period. The artists studied individual motifs, figural groups, postures, draperies and sequences of movement. They drew from nature, developed complex pictorial narratives and created designs for large-format works. The emotional spectrum of their depictions ranges from delicate and introspective to ecstatic, expressive and sometimes cruel. The works on paper were often the basis for paintings, sculptures or prints and refer to the exchange between artists and patrons. They are therefore

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not only an expression of individual artistic creativity, but also a reflection of larger cultural contexts.

Philipp Demandt, Director of the Städel Museum, on the exhibition: “Our museum founder Johann Friedrich Städel was a passionate collector of drawings—more than 4,600 drawings became part of the museum’s holdings. A large proportion of the Italian Baroque drawings presented in the exhibition come from his collection. The holdings were expanded through further acquisitions and donations, especially after 1900. Thanks to the generous support of the Gabriele Busch-Hauck Foundation in Frankfurt, we have been able to carry out scholarly analyses of 90 drawings, clarifying questions of authorship, working methods, technique and range of subjects. Just in time for Italy’s appearance as Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair, we are delighted to be able to present this selection of outstanding works of Italian Baroque draughtsmanship to the public.”

Astrid Reuter, Head of Prints and Drawings before 1800 at the Städel Museum, explains: “The fascination of the art of drawing lies in the diversity of its expressive possibilities. Visitors witness a creative process that ranges from the casual sketch to the fully elaborated work. The handling of chalk, pen and brush reveals the certainty of artistic realization, but also reveals hesitation, rejection and new beginnings. The selection of Italian Baroque drawings presented here is based on a wide range of expertise to which many colleagues from Germany and abroad have contributed. With this project, the Städel Museum once again proves itself to be a lively place for viewing, exchange and research.”

Focal Points of the Exhibition

The exhibition is conceived as a tour through the main geographical centres of Baroque draughtsmanship in Italy. Bologna and Rome, the two most important centres of Italian art, are represented with numerous works, followed by Florence, while Genoa, the Marches and Naples are represented with only a few examples. Not included is Venice, to which an exhibition was dedicated in 2006–07: *From Titian to Tiepolo. Venetian Drawings of the 15th to 18th Centuries from the Städel Museum’s Collection of Prints and Drawings*. The open exhibition architecture allows for an inspiring dialogue between the different schools and a comparison of the artistic forms of expression, techniques and subjects.

Bologna is considered one of the most important centres of Italian Baroque art. It was here that the brothers Annibale (1560–1609) and Agostino (1557–1602) Carracci and their cousin Ludovico (1555–1619) worked, initiating a reform of art with their Accademia degli Incamminati (Academy of the Progressives). In contrast to the

mannerisms of the contemporary art at the time, they sought greater truthfulness and placed the study of nature at the centre of their activities. In Agostino Carracci's *Studies of St Jerome* (c. 1600–02), the viewer can literally observe the artist searching for a compositional solution. The saint's muscular body is depicted in three different devotional poses. In *Amor, Playing the Flute, and Silen in an Arcadian Landscape* (c. 1597–1600) by Annibale Carracci, the light effect of midday heat and cooling shade is so impressively depicted that it is almost palpable. The young Amor plays his panpipe, lost in thought, while Silen, sitting opposite him, has hung his instrument on a branch and seems to be listening. Along with the Carraccis, Guercino (1591–1666) was one of the most prolific draughtsmen in Bologna. His sensitive art of expression was particularly appreciated by Johann Friedrich Städel, as evidenced by the large number of works he acquired that were once attributed to the artist.

The size and beauty of the city of **Rome** was a testament to the papal supremacy in the world. In the 17th century, enormous sums were invested in the construction and decoration of churches and palaces, and the best artists were commissioned to create the works of art. The city was one vast building site. Architects, painters and sculptors from many countries and all over Italy flocked to the art metropolis. One of the most outstanding artists of the period was Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), a native of Naples who rose to fame through the patronage of the ruling Barberini family. His *Portrait of a Man in Three-Quarter Profile to the Right* (c. 1635) shows a self-confident young man whose finely modelled facial features on the brown-coloured paper testify to great clarity and seriousness. This portrait makes it clear that Bernini, who is known today primarily as a sculptor and architect, was also an accomplished draughtsman.

Just as successful as Bernini was the Tuscan artist Pietro da Cortona (1596?–1669). The wide influence of his art, with its emphasis on pathos and movement, can be seen in the work of many artists in his circle. Andrea Sacchi (1599–1661) and Carlo Maratti (1625–1713), who was trained by him, focussed on the simplicity and clarity of the classical art tradition. These artists also found a wide following. A work by Guiseppe Passeri (1654–1714), one of Maratti's favourite pupils, deserves special mention: *Two Saints, St Andrew and a Knight Saint, Crowned by an Angel as a Martyr*. The sheet impresses with its painterly effect, enhanced by the red colouring of the paper and the painterly execution of the motif with the brush. Above the drawing is a grid of lines, a so-called squaring, which was used to transfer the composition into the painting. It shows that the artist considered the composition to be complete.

In **Florence**, the art of drawing gained great importance as early as the 16th century under the influence of Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574). He was one of the founders of the first academy—the Accademia del Disegno—which laid the foundations for the training of artists in Rome, Paris and other places. Supported by the influential Medici family, artists such as Jacopo da Empoli (1551–1640) and Stefano della Bella (1610–1664) created masterful works. Among the particularly sensitive works is Cristofano Allori's (1577–1621) *Study of a Boy Wearing a Workman's Hat* (c. 1600), whose open and slightly questioning gaze immediately captivates the viewer.

The **Marche region** in northern Italy shows a wide range of artistic influences and, with Urbino, already had an important centre of art during the Renaissance. It is represented in our selection by only one artist: Filippo Bellini, whose exclusively religious works are characterized by their clear structure, expressive gestures and emotional urgency.

In the 17th century, the Republic of **Genoa** was known as “La Superba”. Great palaces were built here, and the city's art experienced a lively exchange with other European regions. The works of Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (1609–1664), peaceful scenes of the harmonious coexistence of humans and animals in nature, bear witness to Genoa's productive art scene. His composition *Woman with a Child Riding on a Donkey, a Young Man Walking Alongside* (c. 1635–40) is only at first glance reminiscent of the Holy Family on the Flight into Egypt; it lacks any specific religious allusion. Castiglione used an unconventional technique: he moistened the brush with linseed oil before dipping it into the pigment. This produced a special effect on the paper, as the edges of the strokes were slightly blurred, and the varying transparency and opacity of the brushwork created a special sense of depth.

Under the rule of the Spanish viceroys, **Naples** developed into the third largest city in Europe in the 17th century. The Spaniard Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652), who came to Naples in 1616 and was appointed court painter to the Spanish governor, left his mark on the art scene. Some of the most important Neapolitan painters of the time trained in his workshop. Salvator Rosa (1615–1673) was one of the most unconventional artistic personalities. He was a passionate draughtsman whose inexhaustible imagination comes to life in countless sketches.

The Collection of Prints and Drawings

The Stadel Museum's Collection of Prints and Drawings contains over 100,000 drawings and prints from the late Middle Ages to the present day. The high quality of the works makes it one of the most important collections of its kind in Germany.

Alongside works by Dürer, Raphael and Rembrandt, highlights include Nazarene drawings, French prints from the 18th and 19th centuries, works by Max Beckmann and German Expressionism around Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, as well as American art after 1945. The collection's holdings are presented in special exhibitions or in the Study Hall during special opening hours.

FANTASY AND PASSION: DRAWING FROM CARRACCI TO BERNINI

Exhibition: Fantasy and Passion: Drawing from Carracci to Bernini

Curator: Astrid Reuter (Head of Prints and Drawings before 1800, Städel Museum)

Exhibition Dates: 10 October 2024 – 12 January 2025

Press Preview: Tuesday, 9 October 2024, 11 am

Information: [staedelmuseum.de](https://www.staedelmuseum.de)

Visitor Services and Guides Tours: +49 (0)69 605098-200, info@staedelmuseum.de

Location: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

Tickets: Tue – Fri: €16, reduced €14, Sat, Sun + holidays €18, reduced €16; every Tuesday from 3 pm €9; free admission for children under 12. Groups of 10 or more (non-concession adults): €16 per person. All groups are required to book their visit in advance by contacting us at +49 (0)69-605098-200 or info@staedelmuseum.de.

Catalogue: The exhibition will be accompanied by a German-language catalogue, published by Michael Imhof Verlag, with a foreword by Philipp Demandt and texts by Stefania Girometti, Sonja Brink, Carel van Tuyl van Serooskerken and Jutta Keddies. 304 pages, €39.90 (museum edition).

Supported by: Gabriele Busch-Hauck Foundation

@staedelmuseum on social media: #staedel on Instagram / YouTube / TikTok / Facebook / LinkedIn / STÄDEL STORIES: even more stories and background information about the collection and the special exhibitions to read, see, and hear at stories.staedelmuseum.de.