

GENERATION REVOLUTION

French drawings from the musée Fabre in Montpellier, 1770-1815

MUSÉE
COGNACQ-JAY

16 MARCH
TO 14 JULY 2019

INFORMATIONS
museecognacqjay.paris.fr

PRESS VIEWING : FRIDAY, 15 MARCH, 10.00 – 13.00

From 16 March through 14 July 2019, the Musée Cognacq-Jay explores the choices made by a generation of artists who were in their thirties during the French Revolution. The art world they had known was completely overthrown. How did they adapt? Where did they stand, and what coping strategies did they find? Artists were obliged to profoundly re-examine their practices and their opportunities, reconsidering even their subjects and their stylistic orientation, between Neoclassicism and Pre-Romanticism.

The medium of intimacy par excellence, drawing reflects the richness and diversity of this transitional period. The exhibition brings together a selection of 80 exceptional drawings from the collection of the Musée Fabre in Montpellier. This unique group of drawings, never before shown in Paris, attests the acceleration of history and a prelude to modernity

The decades bridging the 18th and 19th centuries were a period of major political, economic and social upheaval. The art world was by no means spared: royal commissions disappeared, the Académies were suppressed and large projects cancelled.

This exhibition, organised in collaboration with the Musée Fabre in Montpellier, speaks to the renewal of artistic techniques, styles, subjects and sensibilities that emerged from these upheavals. While the birth of a republican patriotic ideal inspired artists to draw from the history of Antiquity, private and picturesque subjects also experienced an unprecedented success.

Focused on drawing, the exhibition presents a corpus of almost a hundred remarkable sheets, assembled by one of David's favourite students, the painter François-Xavier Fabre, who was also a collector, art expert and art dealer. The collection he bequeathed to his native city was the basis for the Cabinet des arts graphiques at the Musée Fabre. The most famous artists of the time: David, Girodet, Vien, Fragonard and Prud'hon clustered around the personality of Fabre.



↑ Affiche : François-Xavier Fabre,
Personnage nu saisissant un cube de pierre,
1789-1792, Musée Fabre

PRESS CONTACT

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The exhibition plan is based on around four thematic sections presenting the different genres practiced by artists of the time, the development of artistic trends and the emergence of individual personalities but also the diversity of graphic techniques employed.

Drawing to learn

Until the end of the Ancien Regime, training at the Royal Academy was a requirement for any artist who hoped to obtain official commissions. Drawing instruction occupied a pre-eminent place in the curriculum and required a mastery of geometry, perspective and anatomy. Figure drawing was considered the most noble exercise (and the most revelatory of youthful potential), so much so that the male nude was known as an 'Academy Figure'. With the coming of the Revolution, the practice of drawing took off in an extraordinary way.

In Praise of the individual

Although historical subjects continued to dominate the hierarchy of genres in painting, representations of daily life and its pleasures attracted an ever more substantial clientele. The portrait and the genre scene, less subject to political shifts and embraced by a growing bourgeoisie, took off in an unprecedented way. Fragonard, for example, made a speciality of these types of painting.

The virtues of History

The hegemony of history painting was exacerbated by the Revolution and took on a moralising role: the nascent Republic seized upon Ancient Rome for its examples of virtue and heroism. Interest in subjects taken from the Bible and Ancient history strengthened the dominance of Neoclassicism. Meanwhile, however, artists were fascinated by other imaginaries: the national past, especially the medieval past, and the Middle-East, revealed by scientific investigations and military campaigns, two points of reference which are at the source of later Neo-Gothic and Orientalism.

Travel and nature

For the artists who chose exile, Italy remained a favoured destination. Attractive above all for its masterpieces of Ancient and Renaissance art, Italy's vast panoramas and striking light effects were also a draw. The French artists sojourning on the peninsula, in particular François-Xavier Fabre and his friends, went off into the countryside looking to immortalise grandiose sites where nature dominates the human figure.

HEAD CURATORS

Michel Hilaire, Director, Musée Fabre

Annick Lemoine, Director, Musée Cognacq-Jay

Rose-Marie Herda-Mousseaux, chief curator for the modern era at the Louvre Abu Dhabi

SCIENTIFIC CURATORS

Benjamin Couilleaux, Curator for cultural heritage, Director Musée Bonnat-Helleu

Florence Hudowicz, Curator for cultural heritage, Curator of drawings and decorative arts, Musée Fabre, Montpellier



↑ Philippe-Auguste Hennequin, *Les Remords d'Oreste*, Musée Fabre



↑ Antoine-Laurent Castellan, *Etude de nuages*, 1815, Musée Fabre

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montpellier 34

EXHIBITION ORGANISED WITH LE MUSÉE FABRE DE MONTPELLIER MÉDITERRANÉE MÉTROPOLE

MUSÉE COGNACQ-JAY

8, rue Elzévir - 75003 Paris

Open every day 10.00 - 18.00

Except Mondays and some public holidays

Full price : 8 € / Reduced rate : 6 €

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