



# ARCHIVED PRESS RELEASE

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# THE FRICK COLLECTION

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***THE FIRST EXHIBITION OF DRAWINGS BY JEAN-BAPTISTE GREUZE OPENS  
IN MAY 2002 AND IS ACCOMPANIED BY LONG-AWAITED CATALOGUE***

## **Greuze the Draftsman**

***The Frick Collection, New York***

*May 14 through August 4, 2002*

***J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles***

*September 10 through December 1, 2002*

This touring exhibition is the first devoted exclusively to the drawings of **Jean-Baptiste Greuze** (1725-1805), the remarkable French eighteenth-century painter and draftsman. Indeed, while countless exhibitions have presented the works of other great French artists such as Watteau, Boucher, and Fragonard, Greuze has been accorded only one comprehensive show of any sort since his death in 1805. Nonetheless, his work has enthralled connoisseurs during and since his lifetime. While most of his paintings have long ago entered public collections, his drawings are actively sought today by collectors both public and private. Curated by **Edgar Munhall**, this long-awaited and unprecedented exhibition brings together at each of its two venues approximately seventy works on paper culled from international collections such as The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; Musée du Louvre, Paris; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon; Amsterdam's Historisch Museum; the Albertina, Vienna; the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington; The Art Institute of Chicago; and others (a total of ninety-five works on paper are on loan and featured in the catalogue, with some drawings on view at only one venue, but an equal number presented both in New York and Los Angeles). The works were chosen to demonstrate the

full range of Greuze's graphic oeuvre in pen and ink, brush with tinted washes and watercolor, and colored chalks and pastels. Included are preparatory studies for his major paintings as well as independent drawings executed for discriminating connoisseurs.

*Greuze the Draftsman* was organized by The Frick Collection, in association with the J. Paul Getty Museum and has been made possible through the generosity of Michel David-Weill, The Florence Gould Foundation, the Isaacson-Draper Foundation, Joseph Koerner, Melvin R. Seiden, Diane A. Nixon, Jean A. Bonna, Mrs. Russell B. Aitken, W. Mark Brady, the Strong-Cuevas Foundation, James Fairfax, The Helen Clay Frick Foundation, Stephen K. Scher, and The Honorable W. J. P. Curley with the Achelis and Bodman Foundations, with additional support from the Fellows of The Frick Collection.

According to **Edgar Munhall, Curator of The Frick Collection from 1965 to 1999, and now Curator Emeritus**, "This artist's drawings have an immediate appeal that is irresistible. Never labored in their execution, they make the viewer feel as if he is looking at something created only moments before. Children are recorded as real people, women offer their attractions boldly, men look up in terror, dogs bark. It is the real world in all of its varied manifestations that Greuze captured in his endless catalogue of life. Had he lived a hundred years later, he would have been called a realist; had he lived two hundred years later, he would have been a great filmmaker."

Adds Director Samuel Sachs II, "We are thrilled to have had the opportunity to continue working together with Edgar Munhall, before and after his retirement, on this exciting project. Indeed, to our delight, the exhibition has kept a cherished colleague very much in our midst at The Frick Collection. He is uniquely qualified as the leading Greuze scholar to have organized this presentation and its accompanying catalogue, which represent the climax of decades of critical thought and research. He presents for us a subject of great beauty that has long needed illumination, and we are proud to share *Greuze the Draftsman* with the public."

## **THE EXHIBITION TRAVELS TO LOS ANGELES IN FALL 2002**

Following its debut in New York in the spring of 2002, *Greuze the Draftsman* travels to Los Angeles where it will be on view from September 10 through December 1, 2002, at the J. Paul Getty Museum. Concurrent at the Getty will be a presentation of paintings by the artist, including loans from The Frick Collection, The State Hermitage Museum, and other institutions.

## THE ARTIST AND HIS CAREER

Born in Burgundy to a family of modest means, Jean-Baptiste Greuze began his training as an artist in nearby Lyon. He relocated to Paris in 1750 and worked unnoticed until 1755, when he was accepted as an associate member of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, a powerful and august organization. He made his public debut amid enthusiastic praise that year in the organization's biennial exhibition, the Salon, and, shortly thereafter, jumped at the chance to tour Italy. There he remained until 1757, at which point he returned to Paris to present the major drawings and paintings executed during his stay in Rome. The exhibition at The Frick Collection features many works from this important period of his development, among them *Standing Man, Study for 'Italians Playing le Jeu de la main chaude.'* It is a vigorous figural work related to a major drawing of this subject that was completed by Greuze in 1756 and shown the following year at the Paris Salon.

The next ten years were probably the most successful of the artist's career, as the absorbing dramas of daily life that he depicted in drawings and paintings proved fascinating to a public tired of the mythological concoctions of François Boucher and others. Greuze's moralizing subjects astutely reflected contemporary ideas about the structure of society, the notions of education, and the new politics. From his earlier debut at the Salon of 1755 and onward, critics paid increasing attention to Greuze's drawings, praising him for their execution as well as their range of subject matter. Among the voices to register admiration for his work at this time was that of philosopher-turned-art-critic Denis Diderot, who referred to Greuze in a Salon review during the 1760s as "a man of genius." Indeed, Diderot extolled the artist's talents across Europe, thereby playing a crucial role in the development of Greuze's career.

This productive decade is represented in the exhibition by a great body of works relating to critically acclaimed Salon entries. For example, in the 1761 exhibition, Greuze presented the painting *A Marriage Contract*, which was commissioned by the brother of Madame de Pompadour, the Marquis de Marigny, Directeur-Général des Bâtiments (this canvas subsequently entered the collection of Louis XVI and is now at the Louvre). This seminal work, which received high praise from Diderot and others, depicts the ceremony of *promesses de mariage*, the registration of a civil marriage contract before a notary, alluding perhaps to the artist's own marriage in 1759. Greuze created a large number of studies in developing the final composition, and visitors will have the opportunity to examine several of them together, including one that may have been a *modello* presented to the Marquis for approval. Also on view will be a full-

length figure drawing of the bride standing, which suggests the artist's exploration of the details of her attire and form -- and most particularly the positioning of her arms, which drew favorable commentary in the final work. In the related *Head of a Girl with Eyes Downcast*, Greuze breathes life into the complex emotions of the bride's face, while *Head of an Old Man* reveals those of her father on the same solemn occasion. A sheet corresponding to the figure of the notary is also included in the exhibition, but may represent a later, independent composition executed after the painting was completed. Edgar Munhall comments of this striking work, "the care and bravura of the technique raise this depiction of *The Notary* above the genre of the preparatory study. It possesses the beauty and importance of those presentation drawings by Greuze that have always attracted connoisseurs."

During this period, Greuze was also at work on *The Beloved Mother*, a painting suggestive of a genre scene. It was actually a group portrait of one of the richest families in France and commissioned by its principal male subject, the Marquis Jean-Joseph de Laborde. At the Salon of 1765, Greuze exhibited a pastel study of the head of a woman that probably relates to the final version of this work. It is a breathtaking pastel that will illustrate to visitors the artist's uncanny ability to imitate living flesh on paper, which was much remarked upon by critics and connoisseurs viewing the sheet for the first time. Diderot, in fact, didn't stop there, and in his own notes about the work revealed himself deeply affected by this female subject, who seems to swoon. Visitors to *Greuze the Draftsman* can compare this masterful and compelling image with several other sheets connected with the final painting, from early preparatory studies to a version that was likely executed as a model for an engraver several years later.

Despite the support of critics and enthusiasm of patrons, difficulties lay ahead for the artist, provoked in large part by Greuze himself. Highly sensitive and phenomenally egocentric, Greuze was appalled when the Academy refused him the right to exhibit at the Salon of 1767 because he had yet to submit the painting they had expected to receive, as a matter of course, following his election to their membership some twelve years before. He was further agitated by the response to his submission of 1769. Greuze had decided to enter the grand arena of history painting and, that year, submitted the work *Septimus Severus Reproaching Caracalla*. The nature of this unexpected and unannounced work shocked the Academy's members, who humiliated Greuze by not admitting him into their ranks as a history painter, but only in the less-esteemed field of genre painting, which he had hoped to abandon. Subsequent criticism of this painting enraged the artist further, and he dissociated himself with the Academy permanently. A number of studies in the Frick's exhibition relate to the artist's experimentation in the 1760s with historical and classical themes, among them *The Funeral of Patroklos*, *River God*, and *The Arrest of Sabinus*.

Despite his frustrations during this discouraging period, which exhibition curator Edgar Munhall refers to as the “Crisis of 1765-67”, Greuze remained totally obsessed with his art and continued to work in his studio in the Louvre for the next thirty-five years. In fact, he arranged his own exhibitions there, which just happened to coincide in date with those the Academy held nearby.

Among the moving works of this late period that are represented in *Greuze the Draftsman* are studies and drawings related to masterpieces of his old age such as the majestic pendants *The Father’s Curse: The Ungrateful Son* and *The Father’s Curse: The Punished Son*. In these domestic scenes, he returned to the theme of family discord, and portrayed it in an expressionistic, intensified manner. The exhibition addresses this important pair of dark, decidedly violent works by presenting several related drawings together. Visitors may compare his exploration of the theme in two sheets dated 1765, the earliest surviving renditions of the compositions, to later versions and figure studies made as Greuze approached the task of executing the final pair of canvases over ten years later.

For several years more, Greuze was able to continue selling major paintings and drawings to wealthy collectors. Among such works may be the two pastels *Portrait of Baptiste aîné* and *Portrait of Madame Baptiste aîné*, which appear to date to the very end of the eighteenth century according to their clothing and hairstyles. Recent additions to the holdings of The Frick Collection, these vivid works depict the celebrated actor and his wife. During these years, Greuze also made a fortune by selling reproductive prints to people of more ordinary means. Indeed, as mentioned above, several works in the exhibition represent drawings made after paintings, sheets that would serve as models for engravings and identified as such for the first time. Finally, with the turmoil of the Revolution, this lucrative period ended for Greuze. The artist, as with so many of his peers, faced the sudden instability of the art market. With his vitality sapped in old age, he experienced hard times. Yet, he presented works once again at the Salon (although the Academy dissolved during the Revolution, these exhibitions resumed and were open to all artists) in 1800, 1801, and 1804, shortly before he died in 1805 in his studio at the Louvre.

## **AN EXCEPTIONAL GATHERING OF WORKS ON LOAN FROM THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG**

One particular group of works in the exhibition deserves special attention, those relating to an unprecedented loan from The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. These drawings represent an aspect of the artist’s career that will be explored through this exhibition for the first time in English: the enthusiasm felt by members of the Court of Catherine the Great for the work of Greuze. Indeed, his work was held in high esteem by many in the circle of the Empress, among them Ivan Ivanovitch Betskoy, a

prominent dignitary and an avid collector. He purchased a large number of drawings by Greuze, perhaps following a stay in Paris, and eventually gave them to the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, which he headed for over thirty years. They were part of a large transfer of drawings and paintings intended to aid the students in their work. Count Betskoy had been a participant in French literary and art circles through which he was also well acquainted with Diderot, who may have recommended the purchase of these works, which are now in the collection of The State Hermitage Museum. Edgar Munhall has selected twenty-two of them for inclusion in the exhibition, with half going to each venue. Among the loans on view in New York will be the study of the *Standing Man* of 1756 (mentioned earlier), *Head of a Woman Seen from Above*, *A Family Scene*, *Seated Woman Holding a Child*, *Study for 'The Dry Nurses'*, and *A Woman Dressing Her Hair*. These sheets present an extraordinary viewing opportunity for the public, not only because they have seldom left St. Petersburg, but also because they offer insight on the profound admiration that prominent collectors have felt for the work of this great artist during his own lifetime – and today.

## **MUCH-NEEDED PUBLICATION FILLS A VOID**

A fully illustrated catalogue, produced by Merrell Publishers, London, in association with The Frick Collection, accompanies the exhibition. **It represents the first comprehensive publication ever devoted to Greuze's work as a draftsman** and one of the only books on this artist since the catalogue of the exhibition *Jean-Baptiste Greuze/1725-1805*, organized by Edgar Munhall in 1976 for the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT, and the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon. *Greuze the Draftsman* includes a comprehensive introduction and summary biography of the artist by Munhall, as well as in-depth entries on ninety-five works, all of which are reproduced in color – many with additional comparative illustrations. The catalogue also features an essay by Irina Novosselskaya, Head of the Department of European Art of The State Hermitage Museum, recounting for the first time in English the history of that institution's important ensemble of 125 drawings by Greuze, of which thirty-three are reproduced. The exhibition and book will introduce the artist in terms of his greatest achievements to a public unfamiliar with his work as well to as established connoisseurs. The catalogue (284 pages, 350 illustrations, 115 in color) will be available in hardcover for \$75 (ISBN 1 85894 158 X) and in softcover for \$49.95 (ISBN 1 85894 15 9 8) through the Museum Shop of The Frick Collection or by calling (212) 288-0700.

## FREE PUBLIC LECTURE

**Date:** Wednesday, May 22, 2002, 5:30pm  
**Speaker:** Edgar Munhall, exhibition curator  
**Title:** Making the Exhibition *Greuze the Draftsman*

The behind-the-scenes timeline required for developing an exhibition, from conception to installation, is an extremely long one, and the many steps involved in creating such a presentation are seldom apparent to museum visitors. This interesting process, particularly complex when such a large group of international lenders is involved, will be recounted in this lecture by the exhibition's organizer Edgar Munhall, Curator Emeritus of The Frick Collection. There is no charge for this lecture, and seating is unreserved.

### BASIC INFORMATION

**General Information Phone:** (212) 288-0700

**Website:** [www.frick.org](http://www.frick.org)

**E-mail:** [info@frick.org](mailto:info@frick.org)

**Where:** 1 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street, near Fifth Avenue.

**Hours:** 10am to 6pm Tuesdays through Saturdays, and from 1pm to 6pm Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, December 24, and December 25. Limited hours (1 to 6pm) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

**Admission:** \$10 (students and senior citizens, \$5)

**PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection, and those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult.**

**Subway:** #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68<sup>th</sup> Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72<sup>nd</sup> Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70<sup>th</sup> Street

**Tour Information:** included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide INFORM® Audio Tour of the permanent collection, provided by Acoustiguide. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

**Museum Shop:** the shop closes at 5:45pm, and is open otherwise the same days and hours as the Museum.

**Group Visits:** Please call (212) 288-0700 for details and to make reservations.

**Public Programs:** A calendar of events is published regularly and is available upon request.

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For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Manager of Media Relations & Marketing, or Stephanie Ruggiero, Media Relations & Marketing Coordinator

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