AN EXHIBITION OF FRENCH DRAWINGS

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The Museum's French drawings are at present being shown on the balcony of the Great Hall. They range in date from the sixteenth to the twentieth century and include, besides the most notable examples in the collection, a number that have been infrequently shown and a small group of new acquisitions.

Inevitably in any exhibition of French drawings from the Museum's collection the nineteenth century steals the show. Here may be seen well-known and outstanding works by such artists as Ingres, Daumier, Millet, Guys, Renoir, Degas. Less familiar to many will be Ingres's black chalk study of drapery; Millet's Repos des Cantonnières; Corot's drawing of trees, dated 1838; the swift pencil notes for a ceiling decoration by Delacroix; Puvis de Chavannes's pen-and-ink drawing Sleep. Of this subject, inspired by lines in Virgil's Aeneid, Puvis made a large painting now in the Museum of Lille and a smaller replica owned by this Museum.

Among Degas's work not only the brilliant and finished drawings of ballet dancers from the Havemeyer collection are shown but also a group of nine sketches bought by the Museum from the Degas sale in 1918. Three of the latter are delicate pencil sketches of Edouard Manet and two broadly executed studies for the portrait of Duranty painted in 1879. One of these shows the bookshelves in the writer's study, the other a powerful portrait of Duranty himself seated behind his table.

Among the nineteenth- and twentieth-century drawings are a number of recent purchases, some of which are illustrated in the following pages. These include a sheet of sketches by Géricault probably drawn on the artist's trip to Italy in 1816 and 1817, a portrait of a man by Chassériau—the Museum's only example of this artist's work—and a brushed ink drawing of a man on crutches by Manet. The simplicity of Manet's sketch is particularly striking. The briefest of notations serve to suggest the whole bulky body of the man leaning heavily forward on hands that are indicated by a few casual strokes. According to Moreau-Nélaton this man was a familiar figure in the street overlooked by the studio Manet occupied from 1872 to 1878. From this vantage point Manet painted three views of the rue Mosnier stretching out before him, one in which a group of road-menders occupies the foreground, the other two showing the street bright with flags for the celebration of a national fête on June 30, 1878. In the left foreground of one view we see our man, back towards us, hobbling along on his one leg and his pair of crutches. The drawing is said to have been made for the musician Cabaner, a friend of Manet's, who wrote a musical score on the theme of the “Homme aux Bequilles” of the painting. However that may be, the drawing remained in Manet's hands, for it was photographed by Lochard in 1883, exhibited at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in January 1884 less than a year after the artist's death, and included in the sale of the contents of his studio the following February.

Other drawings of this period that are being shown for the first time are a landscape by Signac, a study of a nude by Bonnard, a sketch by Pissarro for his painting of the church at Eragny, a strangely helmeted head of a woman by Redon, and two bright and delicate water colors, one, by Boudin, showing a group of figures on a beach, the other of a young lady with a parasol by Berthe Morisot.

This exhibition will continue through March with some changes from time to time to give visitors an opportunity to become familiar with the Museum's entire collection of French drawings.
A Man on Crutches, by Édouard Manet (1832-1883). Ink, drawn about 1878, Dick Fund, 1948
Sheet of sketches by Théodore Géricault (1791-1824). Pen and bister and pencil, drawn about 1816 or 1817. Rogers Fund, 1946
Portrait of a Man, by Théodore Chassériau (1819-1856). Pencil, dated 1838. Rogers Fund, 1946