The Museum opened on February 8 along the sides of the balcony overlooking the Great Hall an exhibition of drawings from its own collections. Here may be seen a brilliant group of seven pencil portraits by Ingres which were bequeathed by Grace Rainey Rogers and are now shown by the Museum for the first time. Six of them, ranging in date from 1809 to 1820, were drawn during the artist's first stay in Rome and are highly finished portraits. The seventh is a sketch for the magnificent oil portrait of Bertin painted in 1832—a sketch of astounding power and authority. The story of Ingres's struggles, which culminated in the triumphant co-ordination of mind and hand seen in this drawing and in the painted portrait, now in the Louvre, is told by the artist's friend and pupil Amaury-Duval in his charming book of memoirs, L'Atelier d'Ingres.

By 1832 Ingres, who had returned from Rome eight years before, was established in Paris with a position of distinction as an artist and teacher. To him at this time came Louis François Bertin to have his portrait painted—a man in his late sixties, with a fine head, strong features, and a forceful yet kindly expression. He was owner and publisher of the influential Journal des Débats, in whose pages literary and artistic talent was welcomed and encouraged, and was himself a great admirer of the arts and a warm friend to artists.

Ingres was enthusiastic about the commission and went to work with a will. There were innumerable sittings, sketches were made and the painting begun. There is a drawing in the Ingres Museum at Montauban which shows Bertin standing, leaning his right arm on a pedestal, probably the pose in which Ingres first tried to paint him. That this sketch gave the artist trouble is indicated by the much rubbed drawing of the head inserted in the paper where another must have been cut out. Perhaps Ingres was too anxious—perhaps his early dissatisfaction with the sketch unnerved him. In any case, after many days had been spent upon it, Ingres in despair was obliged to confess to Bertin that all their time had been wasted, that the portrait was past reclaim and would have to be commenced anew. Something of Ingres's mental and nervous distress may be read in Bertin's soothing reply as reported by Amaury-Duval: "My dear Ingres, do not worry about me, above all, do not torment yourself in this way. You want to begin my portrait all over again? Do so at your leisure. You will never tire me and as long as you need me I will be at your command." They agreed to a breathing spell before trying again, and one day during this period Ingres observed Bertin seated, leaning slightly forward in his chair with his hands outspread on his knees, engrossed in conversation. Instantly the artist was filled with confidence and took the first opportunity to whisper to Bertin: "Come pose tomorrow. Your portrait is done." The sittings were resumed, and within the month one of the artist's most successful portraits was completed.

The absolute assurance expressed in those whispered words to Bertin when Ingres hit upon the final pose is richly revealed in our drawing. The solidity of the body, the alertness of the posture, are sketched with rapidity and vigor, the breadth and ease of the drawing serving to emphasize the strength and character of the sitter. The paper is in two pieces, joined above Bertin's shoulders, cutting through the face just below the mouth. Whether Ingres had trouble again with the head, whether in his interest in the pose he placed the body too high on the paper, leaving insufficient room for the head, or whether he joined the paper before he commenced, to make a large enough piece for his sketch, we do not know. We do know that the head is not worked over but is boldly and spontaneously drawn, a remarkable portrait of a forceful personality.
Study for the Portrait of Louis François Bertin (1766-1841), by J. A. D. Ingres. Drawn in 1832. H. 13¾, w. 13½ inches. This sketch and the drawings by Ingres illustrated on the following pages were all bequeathed to the Museum by Grace Rainey Rogers in 1943. A photograph of the painting of Bertin and a facsimile reproduction of Ingres’s earlier sketch for it, discussed in the accompanying article, are shown with our study in the current exhibition of drawings.
Portrait of a Lady Seated, by J. A. D. Ingres. Dated 1814. H. 16\(\frac{3}{4}\)\,w. 8\(\frac{3}{4}\) inches. From the collection of Henry Lapauze
Portrait of Madame Guillon-Lethière and her daughter, by J. A. D. Ingres. Drawn about 1815. H. 11\(\frac{7}{8}\) in., w. 8\(\frac{3}{4}\) inches. From the collection of the Marquis de Biron.
Portrait of Ursin Auguste Vatinelle (1798-1881), by J. A. D. Ingres. Dated 1820. H. 7\(\frac{3}{4}\)\, in., w. 5\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches. If we read the somewhat illegible date on this drawing correctly, it portrays the painter Vatinelle at the age of twenty-two. It is more freely drawn than those of earlier date in this group.
Portrait of Merry Joseph Blondel (1781-1853), by J. A. D. Ingres. Dated 1809. H. 7½, w. 5¾ inches. This handsome young French painter was a fellow student of Ingres's at the French Academy in Rome. He is shown here with the Villa Medici, headquarters of the Academy, in the background.