



PRESS RELEASE

from

THE FRICK COLLECTION

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ANDREA DEL SARTO: THE RENAISSANCE WORKSHOP IN ACTION

FIRST MAJOR U.S. MONOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION ON THE ARTIST

October 7, 2015, through January 10, 2016



Andrea del Sarto (1486–1530), *Study for the Head of Julius Caesar*, ca. 1520, red chalk, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, partial and promised gift of Mr. and Mrs. David M. Tobey; © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY

Andrea d’Agnolo (1486–1530), called Andrea del Sarto after his father’s profession as a tailor (*sarto*), transformed sixteenth-century Florence through his art and that of the artists he trained. Through his large and prolific workshop, one of the most significant of the age, he enriched his native city with portraits, altarpieces, and fresco paintings. Drawings were at the core of his creative process. Produced primarily in red and black chalks, his vibrant figure studies, energetic compositional drawings, and masterful head studies display the range of his talents as a draftsman and the complex roles that drawing played in developing his paintings. This autumn, The Frick Collection celebrates the Italian master with *Andrea del Sarto: The Renaissance Workshop in Action*, the first major U.S. monographic exhibition devoted to his art, centering on his working process. This exhibition was organized with the J. Paul Getty



Portrait of a Young Man, ca. 1517–18, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London; © The National Gallery, London

Museum, Los Angeles, where it has run as a summer show. In New York, the presentation will feature forty-five drawings and three paintings from international collections and will offer an unprecedented look inside the creative production of one of the most influential figures in Italian Renaissance art. To be shown in the Oval Room and in the lower-level galleries, the exhibition was coordinated at the Frick by Associate Curator Aimee Ng and is accompanied by a substantial catalogue as well as a series of public programs. Principal funding for the exhibition in New York is generously provided by Gilbert and Ildiko Butler.

Major local funding is also provided by the Robert H. Smith Family Foundation, The Christian Humann Foundation, and Andrea Woodner, with additional funding from Helen-Mae and Seymour Askin, Diane Allen Nixon, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Victor Thaw, David and Julie Tobey, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Jon and Barbara Landau, and Margot and Jerry Bogert.

A DEFINING ARTIST OF THE RENAISSANCE

Andrea spent the majority of his career in Florence, where he was born in 1486 and died of the plague forty-four years later. According to Giorgio Vasari, his former pupil and the author of the *Lives of the Artists*, he trained first under a goldsmith, then with artist Andrea di Salvi Barile before moving on to the studio of Piero di Cosimo, who was well known for his imaginative and eccentric style. By 1510, Andrea was practicing as an independent master, executing fresco paintings at major public sites. His workshop became the most highly esteemed in Florence, attracting talented young artists including Jacopo Pontormo, Rosso Fiorentino, and Vasari.

The artist was a contemporary of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo, and a number of sixteenth-century texts name him among the defining artists of the Renaissance. In subsequent centuries, however, his status and the popularity of his art waned. This decline may be attributed in part to the somewhat derisive biography written by Vasari. While praising Andrea's art as "senza errori (without errors)," Vasari also criticizes him as weak, lacking boldness in his person and art. He even suggests that Andrea would have surpassed Raphael in his accomplishments had it not been for Andrea's excessive love for his wife, which, Vasari claims, led to missed opportunities and caused him to use her features repeatedly in his art (a practice Vasari frowned on). Although recent documentary investigation of Andrea and his family has proven Vasari's characterization to be inaccurate, it persisted for centuries.

THE ROLE OF DRAWINGS IN DEL SARTO'S WORKSHOP

Almost two hundred drawings by Andrea's hand are known today. While it is notoriously difficult to reconstruct the inner workings of Renaissance workshops—the delegation of work, specifics of training, and involvement of the master—it is certain that, in Andrea's as in others, assistants relied on the master's designs when executing painting projects. Drawings were therefore the heart of the workshop. The forty-five autograph drawings included in the Frick's exhibition span the entirety of Andrea's career. Compositional sheets, figural studies, and detailed drawings of heads, hands, and other body parts trace the creative process of the artist who moved from working on paper to canvas or panel and back again. His sequence of production of drawings was complex, and he often reused drawings for more than one project. Andrea seems to have produced drawings and cartoons (full-scale drawings used to transfer designs to a panel or canvas) almost exclusively in preparation for paintings. His drawings reveal his analytic and imaginative strengths and show his experimental approach to chalk as a medium, exploiting the effects of wetting the tip of the chalk before applying it to the paper, going over a broad area of chalk with a wet brush, stumping (rubbing with an instrument), and combining black and red chinks on the same sheet.

The exquisite *Study for the Head of Julius Caesar* (page 1) is an example of his most refined application of chalk. Combining hatching and rubbing, possibly using the wetted tip of a sharpened piece of chalk, the artist marshals the medium to create nuances of light and shade and expressive contours, establishing the virility and strength of the figure through an elegant classical profile. The drawing prepares the head of Julius Caesar in Andrea's monumental fresco *Tribute to Caesar* at the Villa Medici in Poggio a Caiano, and its highly finished state attests to the enormous amount of preparation that Andrea invested in the painting, which includes over two dozen figures. Several other preparatory sheets for this project survive (two more are in the exhibition) and show the range of drawings, from rough to highly worked, with which he worked to achieve his final production.

RARE COMPOSITIONAL STUDIES INCLUDED



Composition Study for the Birth of Saint John the Baptist, ca. 1526, red chalk, British Museum, London; © The Trustees of the British Museum

In comparison to figural studies, relatively few of Andrea's compositional sheets survive. These drawings, which map the placement of figures in space, document him thinking through the challenges of pictorial storytelling. The *Composition Study for the Birth of Saint John the Baptist* prepares a fresco in Florence's Chiostro dello Scalzo, which takes its name from the ritualistic barefoot ("scalzo") processions of the resident brotherhood of St. John the Baptist. Considered one of the major narrative fresco cycles of the Renaissance in Florence, the decorative program and twelve scenes for this commission illustrating the life of the saint engaged Andrea off and on for about fifteen years, probably between 1510 and 1526. This sheet, the only compositional study related to the cycle known to survive, depicts the episode described in Luke 1:59-64, in which the newborn's father, Zacharias (shown at far right), who had been struck mute for his disbelief, names his son. Unable to speak, he writes on a tablet "His name is John," the name decreed to him by the angel Gabriel, and immediately regains his voice. Exploring the possibilities of achieving narrative legibility through graceful and varied forms, Andrea altered many aspects of the drawn composition in the painting. Most obviously, in the fresco he has swathed the long, slender bodies in drapery, following the Renaissance convention of depicting figures nude (or partially nude) in preparatory sketches. The figures' interactions have also been modified in minute but powerful ways: for example, while in the drawing Elizabeth (in bed) faces the nurse in order to receive her son, in the fresco she turns to address the miraculous event of his naming.

VIBRANT FIGURAL STUDIES

The *Birth of the Baptist* compositional study was certainly accompanied by now-lost drawings studying individual figures, similar to that of the *Study of a Kneeling Figure with a Sketch of a Face*, which was produced in preparation for the altarpiece known as the *Panciatichi Assumption* (Palazzo Pitti, Florence). This vibrant sheet offers a view inside Andrea's workshop, in which his studio assistants, called *garzoni*, often served as ready models. Like the figures in the *Composition Study for the Birth of Saint John the Baptist*, this figure (which becomes an apostle in the altarpiece) is drawn unclothed despite its being a study for a heavily draped figure. Careful articulation of musculature reveals Andrea's power of observation and suggests that he wanted to understand the anatomical mechanics of a pose even if the final figure was to be clothed. At the same time, he is selective in his focus: here, he concentrates on the back, buttocks, and right arm and leg, leaving unarticulated the left hand, feet, and face. By capturing live models in this way, he activates his paintings, infusing his sacred and secular dramas with a deeply human character.



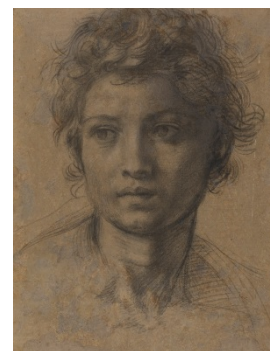
Study of a Kneeling Figure with a Sketch of a Face, 1522–26, red and black chalks, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



Studies of Hands, ca. 1527, red chalk, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY

If the *Study of a Kneeling Figure with a Sketch of a Face* neglects hands and feet, other sheets make them their sole focus. With meticulous attention to the folds, bulges, and pull of skin over bone, *Studies of Hands* with its masterful play of highlight, shadow, and reflected light, evokes Vasari's praise of Andrea as a *pittore senza errori*, a faultless painter. Here he depicts what are most likely the hands of a saint, with a book in one hand and an unidentifiable attribute in the other. Although its connection to a painting has not been firmly established (perhaps because the project it prepared was destroyed or abandoned before completion), the drawing clearly was valued within the workshop as an exemplary study of human hands, as evidenced by the very fact of its survival.

Andrea's most arresting graphic expressions are his head studies, which seem to probe beyond the physical body to its emotional core. Much more than presenting likeness, Andrea's head studies explore the expressiveness of the human face in sometimes breathtaking complexity. In the *Study for the Head of Saint John the Baptist*, for example, Andrea endows the face of his model with a combination of youthfulness and gravity. One wonders about the identity of this adolescent, whose disheveled hair the artist renders playfully and whose cleft chin was so carefully observed. The boy's askance look and slightly furrowed brow seem to betray the self-consciousness of one instructed to pose for an artist who visually devours his features.



Study for the Head of Saint John the Baptist, ca. 1523, black chalk, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Woodner Collection

REUNITING PAINTINGS WITH RELATED DRAWINGS



Saint John the Baptist, ca. 1523, oil on panel, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, Florence; by permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo

The exhibition offers the rare opportunity to see related works together, some for the first time in centuries. One such instance is the reunion, in the Frick's Oval Room, of the *Study for the Head of Saint John the Baptist* with the finished work, at left, from the Palazzo Pitti. Surrounded by darkness evocative of the desert where he sought solitude, the saint is depicted with a camel skin tied over his shoulders and around his hips. A bright red cloak highlights his luminous flesh. His sensuous torso—which recalls Michelangelo's *David*, perhaps Florence's most famous torso—reminds us that carnal desire was central to the saint's story and the cause of his martyrdom. King Herod's wife, Herodias, scorned by the Baptist, schemed with her daughter Salomé to seduce the king and bring about John's death. When viewing the painting together with its head study, which shares the same scale, the human aspect of the picture emerges; the drawing prompts us to remember that

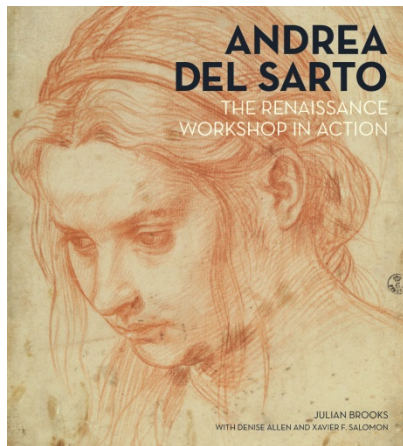
the idealized sacred figure in the painting was based on a body of flesh and blood. Andrea modified the face he studied on paper, lifting the saint's gaze upward, as if John were addressing the divine over the earthly. As Denise Allen suggests in the catalogue to the exhibition, the artist presents the Baptist as he is described at the opening of the Gospel of John: as witness to the light of Christ.

A suite of drawings that explore a figure looking over his shoulder prepares Andrea's most famous portrait, the *Portrait of a Young Man* from the National Gallery in London (illustrated on page 1). Long believed to be a self-portrait, it has evaded definite identification. The sitter holds what appears to be an open book, a common attribute that may refer to his intellect, humanist interests, or profession. In the *Study of a Young Man*—one of two related drawings in the exhibition—a small but forceful impression of red chalk representing the sitter's left eye conveys the intensity of his gaze. Energetic strokes of chalk establish his confidence as he turns to confront the viewer's eye. The kinetic pose echoes Andrea's swift handling of chalk. In the painting, the sitter's garments are a tour de force of painterly effects, the blue fabric of his sleeve rippling as he rests his elbow on the arm of a chair and his white *camicia* (undershirt) bunching up around the neckline of the vest, bringing to mind Andrea's name, *del Sarto*, "of the tailor." His monogram (two As, for Andrea d'Agnolo) appears in the field at left, eye level to the subject. If the sitter's identity remains elusive, the artist makes his own name known.



Study of a Young Man (verso), ca. 1517–18, red chalk, Galleria degli Uffizi, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Florence; by permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo

PUBLICATION



This lavishly illustrated book, by Getty Publications, reveals Andrea del Sarto's dazzling inventiveness and creative process, presenting fifty core drawings on paper together with a handful of paintings. The first publication to focus on Andrea's working practice through a close examination of his art from the world's major collections, this volume analyzes new studies of his panel underdrawings as well. The depth and breadth of its research make this book an important contribution to the study of Andrea and Florentine Renaissance workshop practice. Authors are Julian Brooks, curator in the Department of Drawings at the J. Paul Getty Museum; Denise Allen, former curator of Renaissance paintings and sculpture at The Frick Collection, New York (now at The Metropolitan Museum of Art); and Xavier F. Salomon, the Frick's Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator. The book (ISBN 978-1-60606-438-2, hardcover, 9 1/2 x 11 3/4 inches, 264 pages, 123 color and 9 black and white illustrations, \$59.00, members \$53.10) is available in the Museum Shop or can be ordered through the Frick's Web site (www.frick.org) and by phone at 212.547.6848.

INTERACT



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BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: 212.288.0700

Web site: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

App: frick.org/app

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue

Museum Hours: open six days a week: 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. **Limited hours** (11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection.

Admission: \$20; senior citizens \$15; students \$10; "pay what you wish" on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

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

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

Shop: the shop is open the same days as the Museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

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.

261, July 29, 2015 (revised August 6, 2015)

For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Associate Director of Media Relations & Marketing or Alexis Light, Manager of Media Relations & Marketing; Phone: 212.547.0710; E-mail: mediarelations@frick.org