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Major Exhibition Reveals Jacopo Tintoretto's Drawing Practice and Impact on Venetian Art at National Gallery of Art, March 24 through June 9, 2019



**Tintoretto(?) and Workshop**

***Study of Michelangelo's Samson and the Philistines (recto and verso), c. 1560–1570***

charcoal and black chalk with white opaque watercolor on blue paper

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Thaw Collection

Washington, DC—The first exhibition in 40 years to focus specifically on Venetian Renaissance artist Jacopo Tintoretto's (1518/1519–1594) work as a draftsman, ***Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice*** offers new ideas about his artistic evolution, working procedure, and workshop practice. In celebration of the 500th anniversary of Tintoretto's birth, the exhibition presents approximately 80 of the finest examples from some two dozen public and private collections. These stunning works reveal the sources of Tintoretto's style, from Titian to Andrea Schiavone, and illustrate the approaches of his major contemporaries, like Veronese and Jacopo Bassano. The exhibition traces the complex

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development of Tintoretto's draftsmanship—his early studies in preparation for paintings, studies he and his workshop made of heroic figure types of the antique and Michelangelo, and the rich interpretation of Tintoretto's own work by followers, including his son, Domenico Tintoretto; Palma Giovane; and El Greco. The exhibition is on view at the National Gallery of Art from March 24 through June 9, 2019.

"The dramatic canvases of Tintoretto, with their depictions of powerful and expressive human forms, are some of the most distinctive of the Italian Renaissance. Tintoretto's drawings, however, have received less attention as a distinctive category in his oeuvre," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The first exhibition since 1956 to focus on the drawing practice of this major artist, ***Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice*** will offer a new perspective on Tintoretto's evolution as a draftsman, his individuality as an artist, and his influence on a generation of painters in northern Italy."

## **Tintoretto 500**

In celebration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of the Venetian Renaissance master Jacopo Tintoretto, the Gallery will present three exhibitions that explore the artist's own achievement as a painter and draftsman, as well as influences and innovations of other great printmakers in Venice in the 16th century. Coorganized with the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia with the special cooperation of the Gallerie dell'Accademia, [\*\*\*Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice\*\*\*](#) (March 24–July 7, 2019), the first retrospective of the artist in North America, will feature nearly 50 paintings and more than a dozen works on paper spanning the artist's entire career, ranging from regal portraits of Venetian aristocrats to religious and mythological narrative scenes. [\*\*\*Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice\*\*\*](#) (March 24–June 9, 2019) offers new ideas about his artistic evolution, working procedure, and workshop practice in approximately 80 of the finest examples from some two dozen public and private collections. The exhibition is organized by the Morgan Library & Museum, New York, where it is on view through January 6, 2019. [\*\*\*Venetian Prints in the Time of Tintoretto\*\*\*](#) (March 24–June 9, 2019) will present some 30 prints, from critical sources for Tintoretto's artistic formation to striking graphic responses to the expressiveness of Tintoretto's style. Drawn principally from the Gallery's permanent collection, this exhibition can only be seen in Washington and includes etchings by Schiavone, superb engravings by Agostino Carracci, and Giuseppe Scolari's extraordinary woodcuts.

## **Exhibition Organization and Support**

The exhibition is organized by the Morgan Library & Museum, New York, where it is on view through January 6, 2019.

## **About the Exhibition**

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Organized across seven sections, ***Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice*** places Tintoretto's distinctive figure drawings alongside works by his contemporaries, such as Titian, Veronese, and Bassano, as well as by younger artists—Domenico Tintoretto, Palma Giovane, and others—working in Venice during the late 16th century, whose drawing style was influenced by his own. Tintoretto's distinctive figure drawings form the core of the exhibition, which includes preparatory drawings in addition to a group of studies after sculptures by Michelangelo, among others, that document the teaching practice in his workshop. A final section of the exhibition presents a particularly engaging group of drawings—always connected with Tintoretto and his followers—that has recently been proposed as the work of the young El Greco dating from his time in Venice.

### **The Venetian School of Drawing and Tintoretto's Early Works**

Since the 16th century, Venetian artists adopted a broad range of techniques, media, and methods of drawing, including pen and ink, black and white chalk on blue paper, colored chalks, and brush drawings. Tintoretto's experimental manner evolved in the context of these rich, diverse means of design, and he was equally fascinated by the works of artists like Giovanni Antonio Pordenone and Schiavone, who presented alternate artistic paths. While many of Tintoretto's early drawings have been lost, those that remain show his evolution from an early experimental mode of drawing to life study and figure drawings.

### **Highlights in Tintoretto's Career, and the Evolution of His Drawing Practice**

The most important moment in Tintoretto's career was the unveiling of his *Miracle of the Slave* (1548) in 1548, a work of a monumentality, drama, and richness unseen in his painting at that point. During the late 1550s, Tintoretto also created two massive paintings for the church of the Madonna dell'Orto, the *Last Judgment* (1560–1562) and *Making of the Golden Calf* (c. 1562–1565). These highlighted Tintoretto's abilities and soon led to commissions at the Palazzo Ducale and the Scuola Grande di San Marco. A few years later, Tintoretto began painting the Scuola di San Rocco, a project that would occupy him on and off for the rest of his career. Although there are no extant drawings directly related to the *Miracle of the Slave*, the exhibition includes studies connected with each of these other projects.

The most familiar of Tintoretto's drawings are the numerous studies after Michelangelo's sculpture *Samson and the Philistines* (c. 1550), as well as those in the Medici Chapel. A group of these studies is included in the exhibition, along with a cast of the *Samson and the Philistines* on which they are based. Although traditionally believed to be Tintoretto's own youthful studies, ***Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice*** argues that these sculpture drawings are exercises that were used to teach his assistants how to convey drama, meaning, and sculptural presence of the human form.

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In later years, Tintoretto's workload increased to such a degree that his paintings were designed by him but executed by the workshop. His later figure drawings tend to be more simplified and abstracted than his earlier studies of live models, and they frequently adopt exaggerated musculature that was perhaps intended to emphasize form for the workshop assistants executing the paintings.

### **Tintoretto's Influence on the Next Generation**

Tintoretto's son Domenico (1560–1635), trained in the family workshop in the 1570s, eventually became his father's primary assistant and artistic heir. In his early years, he demonstrated a talent for naturalistic observation in both drawing and painting, as well as a notable portraitist. Domenico was arguably at his best when making studies of a model, such as his remarkable series of drawings after a female nude. Later in his career, however—and particularly after his father Jacopo's death—Domenico abandoned his interest in anatomical structure and three-dimensional space that had always characterized Jacopo's work, although he essentially continued his working methods.

Jacopo Palma's (c. 1548–1628) works show a summary of the distinctive local traditions of drawing in Tintoretto's Venice and, in many ways, he became Tintoretto's truest artistic heir. During the campaign to redecorate the Palazzo Ducale after the fire of 1577, Palma was closely associated with Tintoretto and his workshop, and after Tintoretto's death, it was Palma rather than Domenico Tintoretto who became the leading painter in Venice. Palma's drawings refer not only to the chalk drawings of Titian and Tintoretto but also to the pen drawings of Veronese and the compositional studies of Schiavone and the Tintoretto family. Palma's *Christ Carried to the Tomb* (1607/1620), for example, captures the spiritual intensity of Titian's late devotional painting as well as the urgent energy of Tintoretto's, and is drawn in a painterly technique parallel akin to that of Schiavone or Domenico Tintoretto.

Some of the most intriguing drawings in the exhibition are the early works of Domenikos Theotokopoulos, El Greco (c. 1541–1614), done during his years in Italy. They have the same heightened emotion seen in El Greco's paintings, with dramatic lighting depicting crowds of figures with their heads clustered together. Long considered the work of an unknown artist in Tintoretto's circle, these drawings are comparable to the few later drawings believed to be by El Greco, and several also include his characteristic handwriting.

### **Exhibition Curators**

The exhibition is curated by John Marciari, the Charles W. Engelhard Curator and head of the department of drawings and prints at the Morgan Library & Museum. The exhibition is coordinated in Washington by Jonathan Bober, Andrew W. Mellon Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings, National Gallery of Art.

### **Related Activities for Tintoretto 500**

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## Concert

Parthenia with Ryland Angel, countertenor

March 17, 3:30 p.m.

West Building, West Garden Court

## Lecture

*Introduction to the Exhibition—Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*

March 24, 2:00 p.m.

East Building Auditorium

Robert Echols, independent scholar, and Frederick Ilchman, chair of the Art of Europe department and Mrs. Russell W. Baker Curator of Paintings, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

A signing of the exhibition catalog follows.

## Exhibition Catalog

The exhibition is accompanied by a 240-page, fully illustrated catalog written by Marciari that offers an overview of the drawings of Jacopo Tintoretto, one of the most celebrated artists of the Italian Renaissance. *Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice* is a comprehensive account of Tintoretto's work as a draftsman and includes discussion of drawings by his closest Venetian contemporaries.

Published by Paul Holberton Publishing, London, the catalog begins with a discussion intended to illuminate Tintoretto's sources and his originality, as well as to explore the historiographical and critical questions that have framed all previous discussion of Tintoretto's graphic work. Subsequent chapters explore Tintoretto's evolution as a draftsman and the role that drawings played in his artistic practice—both preparatory drawings for his paintings and the many studies after sculptures by Michelangelo and others—thus examining the use of drawings within the studio as well as teaching practices in the workshop. Later chapters focus on the changes to Tintoretto's style as he undertook ever-larger commissions and accordingly began to manage a growing number of assistants, with special attention paid to Domenico Tintoretto, Palma Giovane, and other artists whose drawing style was influenced by their time working with the master.

The catalog is available for purchase in the West Building and East Building Shops; [shop.nga.gov](http://shop.nga.gov); (800) 697-9350 (phone); (202) 789-3047 (fax); or [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

## Press Contact:

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## General Information

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The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt), Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ngadc](http://www.twitter.com/ngadc), and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

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[Exhibition Checklist](#) (PDF 250 kb)

Curator Biography:

[Jonathan Bober](#)

Related Exhibition Press Releases:

[Venetian Prints in the Time of Tintoretto](#)

[Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice](#)

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[Exhibition Page](#)

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