

(Introduction as you enter McCormick)

Delacroix and the Matter of Finish: An Introduction

Eugene Delacroix (1798 - 1863) is considered one of the most important and influential artists of the 19th century. He almost single-handedly shifted the course of art away from the restrained classicism that had prevailed in the French school since the end of the 18th century and towards a new kind of painting known as Romanticism. Emulating his idol, the 17th-century Flemish painter Peter-Paul Rubens, Delacroix loaded his brush with brilliant hues, choosing subjects from a wide variety of sources--whether from the Bible, Greek and Roman mythology and history, or more contemporary literary sources, such as Dante or Shakespeare--to elicit an impassioned response. This is the first monographic exhibition of the paintings of Delacroix to take place on the West coast.

Our selection of some forty-five paintings and works on paper presents an overview of the artist's career, while also thematizing the issue of finish, as understood in a variety of senses. In order to crank out the public decorations commissioned by the State to cover the walls and ceilings of large interiors, the artist was forced to rely on studio assistants, without whom he could never have produced such a prodigious amount of work. However, this often meant that while pictorial ideas started with the artist, much of the monumental compositions were executed by these assistants and only 'finished' by the master. Delacroix was also criticized throughout his career for an inability to fully realize his ideas. His exhibited paintings were frequently condemned as mere sketches; brilliant but incomplete. However, Delacroix's willingness to forego detail and capture the beholder's imagination through suggestive form and the immediacy of expressive color also made him the hero of subsequent cutting-edge artists, such as Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Paul Cézanne, Paul Signac, and Pablo Picasso.

Eugène Delacroix

Milton Dictating Paradise Lost to his Daughters, ca.1827-28

Oil on canvas

Kunsthaus Zürich, Gift of the Canton of Zürich (1988/28)

If the relatively dark palette of this early work is uncharacteristic of Delacroix's mature colorism, the subject is typical of the artist's Romantic appetite for all things British. This imaginary portrait of Milton, whose *Paradise Lost* is visually signaled through Raphael's *Expulsion of Adam and Eve* prominently displayed in the background, was exhibited at the same Salon as the controversial *Death of Sardanapalus* (illus.). That now revered masterpiece was likewise inspired by a British poet, Delacroix's literary Romantic counterpart, Lord Byron (1788-1824).



Eugène Delacroix, *The Death of Sardanapalus*, 1827. Oil on canvas, 392 × 496 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris (RF 2346)

Pierre Petit

French, 1831-1909

Eugène Delacroix, seen from the front at half-length, ca. 1862

Albumin print

Collection of Gerald Incandela

This photograph was taken the year before the artist's death. The original format was probably rectangular, but the print has been cut to fit a finely wrought period frame. The artist, as in all of the photographic portraits that have survived, is shown as a distinguished gentleman rather than in artist's working attire. The photographer captures the intensity of the artist, as communicated by his steady gaze, prominent forehead, and strong chin. Delacroix's gauntness probably reflects his weakened state of health (it is now thought that he suffered from tuberculosis), which incapacitated him intermittently throughout his maturity and eventually brought about his demise on August 13, 1863 at the age of 65.

(Text panel on the life of Delacroix next to Gerald's photograph)

Ironically, the enduring rumor that Delacroix was actually the illegitimate son of the famed diplomat, Talleyrand (1754-1838) is probably a romantic myth. Certainly, there is no concrete proof of such a sensational secret father, and the artist, who wrote copiously both in his journals and in correspondence with family and friends, never mentioned any connection to the famed politician. Any innuendo that such an aristocratic connection might explain the many public commissions he received from the State should certainly be dismissed. Rather, Delacroix's success should be attributed to his careful cultivation of the mechanisms at his disposal to promote his art. The controversy he may have incurred through shocking submissions to the juried annual Salon, such as the Byronic *Death of Sardanapalus* (1827) -- a phantasm of sadistic violence, showing the Assyrian emperor calmly watching the destruction of his possessions and people at his own command -- were also balanced by more traditional themes. The early success Delacroix won with *The Bark of Dante* (1822, illus), for example, which was immediately purchased by the State, eventually led to a whole succession of public projects, including the decoration of large rooms at Versailles, in the Bourbon Palace, and in the Luxembourg Palace.

Born at the end of the 18th century and witness, therefore to the successive political upheavals that followed the 1789 French Revolution, Delacroix lived in a post-Enlightenment age of disillusionment. However, even though his *Liberty on the Barricades* (1830, illus) has become one of the most iconic images of revolution in modernity, Delacroix himself remained unmoved by radical populism, often lamenting the loss of classical values he associated with the *ancien régime*. His first and all-consuming commitment was to his art, which he pursued obsessively. A life-long bachelor, the artist counted, among other cultural luminaries, the composer Frédéric Chopin and the novelist and poet, George Sand as his closest friends, and was known as a deeply learned and witty conversationalist. Soon after his death, Delacroix was apotheosized by the next wave of cutting-edge artists, who admired his innovations as a colorist, tireless draftsman, and Romantic individualist – an artist brave enough to defy academic conventions for the sake of the free play of the Imagination.



Left: Eugène Delacroix, *The Bark of Dante*, 1822. Oil on canvas, 189 cm × 246 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris

Right: Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1831. Oil on canvas, 260 × 325 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris (RF 129)

Delacroix and the Matter of Finish: When is a Sketch More than a Sketch?

One of the more perplexing consequences of Delacroix's unorthodox working methods is a lingering ambiguity as to how to assess the status of certain paintings, which may appear to be sketches (that is, preliminary studies meant to culminate in a subsequent, fully realized version), but may or may not actually be preparatory works. Academically trained artists used compositional studies, whether drawings or oil sketches, both to develop the overall composition, as well to refine individual elements. Such studies were expected to be somewhat loosely executed or fragmentary, while the final painting exhibited a much higher degree of resolution. Emulating earlier celebrated colorists, such as Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), Delacroix developed an unorthodox style of gestural brushwork, rapidly applied, that often registered negatively with some critics as a lack of technical skill.

A second ambiguity is the result of Delacroix's collaboration with a fleet of students, who often made small-scale copies of Delacroix's oil sketches, the function of which remains unknown. For such, often unsigned paintings, authorship can be unclear, with certain paintings passed off incorrectly as by the hand of the master by unscrupulous

dealers. This is the first exhibition to invite comparison between paintings known to be by Delacroix with those of his best-known students, in order to demonstrate clear differences in hand. There is also the difficulty of knowing how to assess the authorship of collaborative works when we know that the vast majority of pigment was applied by students, with the master retouching the work afterward.

Third, over the course of his career, Delacroix's technique became increasingly fluid, at times so abbreviated as to verge on abstraction. Specialists have occasionally classified certain late works as sketches, when in fact, they may have been left intentionally indeterminate for expressive purposes. Indeed, the very sketch-like quality that was condemned by Delacroix's harshest critics is the quality for which he is most admired today, as he anticipated the kind of expressive use of color and gestural brushwork that would become the dominant mode of later modernism.

Eugène Delacroix

Nereid, copy after Rubens, ca. 1822

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Basel, Gift of friends in memory of Prof. Friedrich Rintelen 1933. (inv. 1602)

Delacroix initially studied in the studio of Nicolas-Narcisse Guérin (1744-1833), a student of Jacques-Louis David and a celebrated neoclassicist – an artist whose somber palette and sculptural bodies would have been deemed inimical to a Romantic aesthetic. This large-scale study after one of the writhing sea nymphs in an allegorical painting from the monumental series celebrating the life of Marie de Medici (illus.) is eloquent testimony to Delacroix's obsession with Peter-Paul Rubens, whose brilliant effects he attempted to emulate. Delacroix was particularly attracted to artists like Rubens and Michelangelo, who were willing to distort the body for expressive purposes. Here his fascination seems to be with Rubens' ability to condense multiple aspects of the figure (her backside, near profile, and three-quarters points of view), while effectively communicating the muscular torsion of the Nereid's body, as she lumbers through the water.



Peter Paul Rubens, *The Disembarkation at Marseilles*, ca. 1622-25. Oil on canvas, 394 x 295 cm. Musée du Louvre.

Eugène Delacroix

Andromeda, 1852

Oil on canvas

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum purchase funded by Mr. and Mrs. Raymond H. Goodrich, by exchange (85.1)

Andromeda was the daughter of King Cepheus, who was told by a sage that only the sacrifice of his daughter would appease the wrath of Poseidon, god of the seas. The King's wife had the temerity to proclaim their daughter to be even more beautiful than Poseidon's own (the Nereids). Eventually, Andromeda will be rescued by the hero, Perseus from the sea monster yet to appear; but Delacroix has chosen to focus on Andromeda's extreme vulnerability, as she waits in trepidation for her doom.

This painting was done during the 1850s, when the artist's brushwork had become even looser and his use of strategic contrasts of complementary hues, even more fiery.

Eugène Delacroix

The Justice of Trajan, reduced copy, ca. 1858

Oil on canvas

Honolulu Museum of Art Purchase, 1941 (4954)

This is a smaller rendition of a monumental canvas, now preserved in Rouen and first exhibited at the Salon of 1840. It was inspired by an episode from Dante's inferno: a widow throws herself on the ground in front of the Emperor's rearing horse and begs him to seek vengeance for the death of her son, rather than pursuing yet another military conquest far from home. Trajan replies: "Be at peace/ I must obey this sanctified law/ I will do my duty before I leave/ Justice demands it and compassion requires it."

The oblique angle of the emperor's procession places us as though in the path of the marching army and from a low viewpoint, a favorite device that the artist repeats in other compositions to create a compelling identification between depicted actors and the viewer. Delacroix included the Rouen prime version of this subject in his self-curated selection of works for the Universal Exposition of 1855.

Eugène Delacroix

The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople, presentation sketch, 1839-40

Oil on canvas

Collins Fine Art, Ltd., New York

In 1838, Delacroix was commissioned by King Louis-Philippe to paint a monumental canvas of this subject to decorate one of the halls at the Château of Versailles. For the 1840 Salon, Delacroix described the historical episode of the Crusades he has chosen to depict as follows: "Baldwin, count of Flanders, was in command of the French who had mounted an assault from the land side, and the aged doge Dandolo, leader of the

Venetians, had attacked the port with his ships; the leaders move through the diverse sectors of the city, and weeping families beg for mercy as they pass.”

This dazzling oil sketch retains all of the verve and brilliance of hue for which the artist was celebrated, while the large canvas for which it was an advanced study, now preserved at the Louvre, has sunken in tonality. It is therefore a precious record of the artist’s intended palette. This is its first public exhibition since its recent discovery. Edgar Degas deeply admired this composition and emulated the weeping woman at the lower right corner repeatedly in his own work (illus.).



Edgar Degas, *Woman at Her Toilette*, ca. 1900/05. Pastel on tracing paper, 75 x 72.5 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, Mr. and Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson Collection, 1937.1033

Eugène Delacroix

Justinian Drafting His Laws, oil sketch, 1826

Oil on canvas

Les Arts décoratifs, Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris (inv. 27987)

This preparatory oil sketch, along with the related charcoal figure study which once belonged to the Barbizon School painter, Camille Corot, are the only hints we have of the final painting, commissioned as part of the decorative scheme for the Chamber of State at the Louvre, and destroyed by fire during the Commune in May 1871. The look of the final composition is otherwise only known through a black-and-white photograph (illus. detail). This painting would have complemented three other portraits of legislators, assigned to other artists. The Emperor is shown dictating the revised version of Roman law that would become the foundation for later Byzantine law. The now destroyed final painting was exhibited at the Salon of 1827, when the controversial *Death of Sardanapalus* made the young painter the target of a tidal wave of hostile criticism.



Detail, Photograph of the Delacroix installation at the Universal Exposition of 1855, plate 13 of the Album of the Exposition. Courtesy George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography and Film

Eugène Delacroix

Justinian Drafting His Laws, figure study, ca. 1826

Charcoal on paper

Les Arts décoratifs, Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris (inv. 32622)

The Last Words of Marcus Aurelius: Variations on a Theme

In 1845, Delacroix was 50 years old and at the height of his artistic powers. At the Salon that year, he chose to exhibit multiple canvases inspired by a variety of sources: *Mary Magdalene in the Wilderness* from the New Testament, *The Cumean Sibyl*, inspired by a story from the Iliad, and the visionary *Sultan of Morocco*, purportedly a portrait based on an event the artist witnessed during his voyage to North Africa in the company of the French Ambassador, the Count de Mornay in 1832 (presented here in facsimile to convey a sense of its actual scale). He also chose to exhibit the equally monumental *Last Words of Marcus Aurelius* (also presented here in facsimile and to scale), a subject from Roman history, whose precise origins we have identified in the 1800 French translation of the life of the stoic Emperor, that accompanied his famed *Meditations* and that Delacroix must have known.

This is the first exhibition to reunite some of the extant works produced by Delacroix in connection with the canvas now preserved in Lyon, several exhibited for the first time. In the artist's own words, he sought to represent the following: "The perverse inclinations of his son, Commodus, having already been manifested, in a dying voice, the emperor pleads the case for the youthfulness of his son to some of his friends, who were Stoic philosophers like himself. But their mournful attitude clearly shows that these urgings are

in vain and anticipates the dark future of the Roman Empire.” As predicted, Commodus turns out to be every bit as dissolute as Marcus Aurelius was virtuous, undoing his father’s advancement of political consensus as the necessary foundation for imperial Roman rule.



Left : Eugène Delacroix, *Moulay Abd-er-Rahman, sultan du Maroc, sortant de son palais de Meknes, entouré de sa garde et de ses principaux officiers*, 1845. Oil on canvas, 384 x 343 cm. Toulouse, musée des Augustins. Photo Daniel Martin.
Right: Eugène Delacroix, *The Last Words of Marcus Aurelius*, 1844. Oil on canvas, 256 x 337.5 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon (A-2928)

Eugène Delacroix
The Last Words of Marcus Aurelius, oil sketch, 1843
Oil on canvas
Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts (inv. B 1041)

This is a preparatory, “first-idea” oil sketch, probably one of the earlier conceptions of the whole composition. While the general placement of the figures will remain largely unchanged, the physiognomic types will continue to evolve and the range of hues has not yet been determined.

Eugène Delacroix
The Last Words of Marcus Aurelius drawing, ca. 1844
Black chalk on paper
Private Collection

This pencil sketch, which recently resurfaced on the art market, corresponds fairly closely to the Lyon oil sketch. It may have been used by Delacroix’s student- collaborator, Louis de Planet, for proportionate transfer of the composition to the larger, monumental Lyon canvas.

Pierre Andrieu? after Eugène Delacroix
French, 1821–1892
The Last Words of Marcus Aurelius, n.d.
Oil on canvas
Collection of John S. Newberry IV

The function of this loosely painted copy after the Lyon prime version remains unclear. While it is signed, conservation analysis suggests that the signature (at lower left) was added some time after the painting's execution. When evaluated by the late Lee Johnson, the most renowned Delacroix expert, he thought it was likely a student work, possibly by Pierre Andrieu. In this context, the loose, sketch-like brushwork does not signal its preparatory nature. It is likely a quick copy to capture the seminal compositional elements and disposition of hues. Could this painting have been lightly retouched by the master, and then signed, as a way of declaring his authorship, at least of the idea, if not its material execution?

Eugène Delacroix
The Last Words of Marcus Aurelius, n.d.
Oil on canvas
The van Asch van Wyck Trust

This painting is a new addition to the oeuvre and published in association with this exhibition for the first time. While unsigned, we believe it is unquestionably by the hand of Delacroix. A variation, rather than a straightforward repetition of the Lyon monumental version, in this easel-sized painting, Delacroix subtly reinterprets the subject, softening Commodus's effeminate features and playing up his youthful beauty. Overall, there is a tighter focus on just four figures, instead of all nine. In comparison to the more theatrically lit prime version, the scene seems to be suffused by the rosy light of dawn, perhaps in response to the art critic, Charles Baudelaire, who commented upon the poetry of Delacroix's symbolic idea of Commodus as the rising sun of the future.

Réflexions morales de l'empereur Marc Antonin
Traduites par Dacier
Edition ornée de figures dessinées par Moreau la jeune
Paris: Didot, 1800
Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library, Yale University

Displayed here is a copy of the 1800 edition of the French translation of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* (a much revered series of pithy recommendations for leading a disciplined life, as defined through resignation to our inescapable mortality, and still recommended reading today). It is opened to the illustrative engraving by Moreau the younger that we believe inspired Delacroix's earliest ideas for *The Last Words of Marcus Aurelius*. An additional engraving (illus.) also provides a clue to Delacroix's interlinking of the seemingly disparate subjects of the *Marcus Aurelius* and *The Sultan of Morocco*, at

which he was at work simultaneously, and which he chose to exhibit at the same Salon of 1845. For Delacroix, the Sultan was the modern-day equivalent of Marcus Aurelius, whose famed equestrian portrait and gesture of clemency he cites in the majestic canvas, reproduced in facsimile to the right (or left).

Delacroix and the Critics: A Love-Hate Relationship

The annual, juried Salon was one of the primary means by which Delacroix first garnered critical attention, ultimately snagging important state commissions to decorate churches, palaces, and administrative buildings. While Delacroix was frequently attacked by defenders of Neoclassicism, such as the obstreperous Étienne Delécluze, he was also championed by influential critics such as the celebrated Charles Baudelaire and the always admiring Théophile Gauthier. Delécluze, defender of Delacroix's academic rival, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), attacked the former's faulty anatomy and inconsistent handling of perspective, and above all, lamented Delacroix's inability to finish his ideas, exhibiting what he considered to be little more than mere sketches. On the other hand, Baudelaire, who would also become the exponent of Manet and the Impressionists, praised Delacroix's unmatched chromatic range, recognizing, as he put it "how difficult it is to model in color."

Certainly, Delacroix recognized the power of notoriety, whether negative or positive, and remained largely unscathed by critical misapprehension of his art. Even the early drubbing he received as the author of the contentious *Death of Sardanapalus* in 1827 left him unmoved, crowned as he was as the upstart, "patented leader" of Romanticism, a title that he dismissed as meaningless. Patronage by royalty continued unabated, as did important State commissions, including the decorations of the Salon du Roi of the Palais Bourbon in 1833, the Library cupola and half dome of the Palais du Luxembourg in 1840, and the Salon de la Paix in the Hôtel de Ville in 1851. Delacroix's one-man show at the Universal Exposition in 1855 earned him a gold medal, and the prestigious title of Commander of the Legion of Honor.

Eugène Delacroix

The Entombment, 1847-1849

Oil on canvas

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Mr. Henry R. Luce (1964.42)

This is an easel-sized version of a subject that Delacroix exhibited at the Salon of 1849, which he also chose to exhibit at the 1855 Universal Exposition. Possibly inspired in part by Rembrandt's nocturnal renditions of this scene from the Passions of Christ, Delacroix expertly distributes touches of green throughout the canvas to counterbalance the explosion of reds that seems to vibrate in the image. The chromatic brilliance of canvases like this one was later claimed by Paul Signac as the precursor to divisionism, in which juxtaposed small touches of pure, complementary hues were allowed to mix optically in the eye of the beholder. As quoted by Signac in an essay, first published in 1899,

Delacroix wrote, “It is good that the touches should not be blended materially. They blend naturally with one another at a distance required by the law of sympathy which has associated them together. The color thus obtained has greater energy and freshness.”

Eugène Delacroix

The Disciples at Emmaus, 1853

Oil on canvas

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mrs. Watson B. Dickerman (50.106)

This intimately scaled painting was exhibited at the Salon of 1853 and, as usual, garnered both positive and negative commentary. Critics quickly recognized echoes of Rembrandt in the humble simplicity of this interior night-time scene, dramatically illuminated by the blazing halo of the risen Christ, whom only a few disciples have recognized. But even the usually sympathetic critic Théophile Gauthier conceded that it was little more than a sketch, while Étienne Delécluze lamented the exaggeration of color and drawing at the expense of any resemblance to reality. Nevertheless, Delacroix readily found private collectors eager to acquire religious subjects like this one, which he produced in greater numbers throughout the 1850s.

Eugène Delacroix

Lycurgus Consulting the Pythia, ca. 1840s

Oil on canvas

University of Michigan Museum of Art, Museum Purchase (1968/2.75)

Delacroix initially developed this composition in conjunction with the decoration of the library in the Palais de Bourbon. In antiquity, Lycurgus was credited with establishing Spartan law. He traveled to Delphi to consult the oracle as to the durability of the laws he was about to propagate. As narrated by the ancient author Herodotus, 1.65.3, “As soon as he entered the great hall of the temple, the Pythian priestess said to him: ‘So you have arrived at my rich temple, Lycurgus, you who are dear to Zeus and to all who have their homes on Olympus! I ask myself whether I shall call you a god or a man in my prophecy, but I think rather that you are a god, Lycurgus.’” The public decorations often spun off multiple variations such as this one, which Delacroix would then sell as independent works of art.

Delacroix and his ‘Students’

One of the central paradoxes of Delacroix’s artistic process was his reliance on a fleet of student-collaborators in order to advance work on large-scale projects, whether single canvases or entire decorative cycles. Not unlike his hero, Rubens, Delacroix considered the technical contribution of such students unthreatening to his ownership of the compositional idea and would often sign collaborative productions, such as the Lyon version of *The Last Words of Marcus Aurelius*, as though entirely of his own authorship.

We know from both the artist and his student, Louis de Planet that the latter roughed out the composition and his master then went over the principal figures, literally finishing the painting. Part of the difficulty of this traditional scenario of production is the premium that was increasingly placed on Delacroix's complex sense of color and on his inimitable touch. Both of these qualities were never successfully imparted by Delacroix to his student-collaborators, as the student copies displayed here clearly attest.

After Delacroix's death in 1863, many so-called student-copies passed onto the market, where they were sometimes subsequently sold as by the hand of the master. Indeed, art historians have recovered evidence of deliberate fraud in the case of at least one student, while in other instances, sincere confusion has resulted in the misattribution of student works to Delacroix. This exhibition is the first to invite close comparison between copies indubitably produced by two of the best known students and by Delacroix.

Eugène Delacroix

Christ on the Sea of Galilee, ca. 1841

Oil on canvas

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust through exchange of the gifts of the Friends of Art, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Parker, and Durand-Ruel Galleries; and the bequest of John K. Havemeyer (89-16)

This theme was one of the most popular produced by Delacroix and his studio and exists in more than a dozen versions. The story is intended to underscore the importance of Christian faith, even in the face of seeming doom: Christ sleeps unperturbed, while his disciples rise up in alarm at the impending storm. When they awake him, he miraculously calms the seas and asks "Where is your faith?"

This painting was categorized, we think inaccurately, as a preparatory sketch when it was sold in the artist's estate sale in 1864. Rather it is a relatively late work, probably done in the 1850s, when Delacroix developed an even looser, more spontaneous brushwork and an audacious use of complementary hues. Rapidly applied pigment expertly captures the sensation of wind-blown movement, while areas of vivid red and green or blue and orange generate a dynamic tension that contrasts expressively with the cool stillness of Christ's periwinkle blue robe.

Pierre Andrieu, after Eugène Delacroix

French, 1821–1892

Christ on the Lake of Gennesaret, n.d.

Oil on paper mounted on masonite

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Bequest of Josiah Bradley (03.741)

Pierre Andrieu (1821-1892) was one of Delacroix's most trusted assistants. He collaborated with Delacroix from 1850 to 1861 and had a hand in the decorations for the Palais Bourbon, the Galerie d'Apollon at the Louvre, the Hôtel de Ville, and the church

of Saint Sulpice. The degree of esteem in which he was held by Delacroix is attested by the paintings associated with these collaborations that were in the possession of his student after his death. Andrieu never developed his own artistic identity and seemed to remain content with his role as Delacroix's trusted assistant.

The function of these small-scale copies remains unclear. We know from Delacroix's *Journals* that he frequently asked his students to replicate compositions that had proven popular with collectors or works that had sold and of which he wanted to retain a visual record. While largely corresponding in particulars of palette and figural organization, this copy clearly demonstrates Andrieu's inability to reproduce Delacroix's virtuosic touch which is everywhere apparent in the masterful original.

Eugène Delacroix
The Massacre at Chios, 1824
Oil on canvas
Musée du Louvre, Paris (3823)

With the exhibition of this painting in 1824, Delacroix earned the critical recognition for which he yearned, as the leader of a new kind of painting, which would be dubbed Romanticism and seen as a clear departure from the reigning Neoclassical tradition. The subject, plucked from recent events, as opposed to ancient history, offered the pathetic spectacle of a people savagely decimated, first by insurgents from the island of Samos, and then by Turkish forces, reportedly reducing the native population of some 90,000 to just 900. Like the slightly older artists who he greatly admired, Théodore Géricault (1791-1824) and Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1835), Delacroix produced countless studies in preparation for this monumental canvas. The deft synthesis of allusions to earlier works of art and studies done from life is in itself consistent with an academic working method. However, the asymmetry of the composition and the actual ambivalence of the subject as a pitiless representation of the horrors of war, along with the artist's unusual painterly technique made it a ringing statement for a bold new direction for modern art. This painting, while controversial, was largely admired for its daring. It was immediately purchased by the State. Its significance to the artist in later years is signaled by its inclusion in the selection of works he chose to exhibit in his retrospective at the Universal Exposition of 1855. He also had his students copy the painting, as a useful exercise and also, perhaps, as a means of facilitating its reproduction in a smaller-scaled print.

Louis de Planet, after Eugène Delacroix
French, 1814-1875
The Massacre at Chios, reduced copy, ca. 1842
Oil on canvas
Musée du Vieux-Toulouse (inv. 33.2.3)

According to Planet's diary, Delacroix was so pleased with this reduced replica of his youthful masterpiece that he wanted it to be the basis for a reproductive lithograph (a

project that was never brought to fruition). However, Delacroix's recorded criticisms of this copy do ring true: "The two women at the right are very good; the children too; the tone overall is a little more yellow than in the original; the landscape in the background is a little heavy." Certainly, neither this copy, nor Andrieu's retain the power of one of Delacroix's earliest Salon sensations.

(Bio label to accompany this work)

Louis de Planet was born into an established family in Toulouse. He grew up with the expectation of becoming a lawyer and tending to his family's assets. However, he gave up law and was allowed to study art, much to his delight. Strangely, his first master was a student of Delacroix's rival, Ingres. How or why he was led to enroll in Delacroix's studio in 1838 to become one of his most devoted pupils remains a mystery. Planet was a close collaborator from 1841 to 1844. He continued to paint and exhibit at the annual Salon until 1863, the year of Delacroix's death. Although he was noticed positively by Baudelaire, his own career never took off. He spent the last decades of his life, promoting the reputation of his former master.



Louis de Planet, *Self-Portrait*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 82 x 64 cm. Toulouse, Musée des Augustins (46-4-1)

Pierre Andrieu, after Eugène Delacroix
French 1821-1892
The Massacre at Chios, reduced copy, ca. 1850
Oil on canvas
Musée du Vieux-Toulouse (inv. 58.9.1)

On January 16, 1850, Delacroix wrote to Andrieu, asking him to undertake this copy, which had been requested by a client. "I thought this might be agreeable for you to undertake, although the fee is not very much, that is to say 500 francs. See if you can manage this along with everything else you're working on right now."

The Late Works

During the final two decades of his life, Delacroix enjoyed tremendous popular and critical celebrity. In this period, he continued to receive state commissions to decorate such edifices as the Galerie d'Apollon at the Louvre, the Hôtel de Ville, and the church of Saint Sulpice, murals which were completed with the considerable help of assistants and students. At the same time, Delacroix also produced a prodigious number of easel-sized paintings, many of which return to themes and compositions of his earlier years, as well as replicate sections from the official commissions.

Unlike the decorative murals which exhibit a more polished execution, the intimate easel paintings reveal increasingly fluid brushwork. This sketch-like aesthetic was a deliberate “unfinished,” meant to appeal to the viewer’s imagination. As Delacroix noted in his *Journal* in 1853, compared to the sketch, more finished work “limits the effect on the imagination, which is wont to delight in vagueness, and roams about readily embracing vast objects on the basis of slight hints.”

Delacroix kept many of these paintings in his possession until his death on August 13, 1863. When they were revealed at his posthumous estate sale in February 1864, the public delighted in these “sketches,” and the sale was met with astounding success. Most recently, these late easel paintings—which were greatly admired by Claude Monet, Paul Signac, and Paul Cézanne—were the focus of *Delacroix: The Late Work*, an exhibition held in Paris and Philadelphia celebrating the bicentenary of the artist’s birth.

Eugène Delacroix

Winter: Juno and Aeolus, oil sketch, 1856

Oil on canvas

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum Purchase

This oil sketch was done as a preparatory step for one of four decorative panels commissioned for a private home, organized around the theme of the four seasons. Echoing earlier Rococo masters, Delacroix summons the idea of winter through the mythological story of the Roman goddess Juno, who is shown commanding the god of the winds, Aeolus, to unleash violent storms intended to destroy the Trojan warrior Aeneas and his ships.

Unlike the corresponding large-scale version, this sketch is entirely by Delacroix, and exhibits a painterly freedom not found in the labored surface of the “finished” painting (illus.), on which he collaborated with his student, Pierre Andrieu.



Eugène Delacroix, *Winter: Juno and Aeolus*, 1856-1863. Oil on canvas, 196 x 166 cm. Collection MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand (70/1952)

Pierre Andrieu, after Eugène Delacroix

French, 1821-1892

Winter: Juno Beseeking Aeolus to Destroy the Fleet, n.d.

Oil on paperboard

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, William Sturgis Bigelow Collection (21.1452)

Delacroix's preparatory sketches for the Four Seasons remained in the artist's possession until his death. Afterward, the oil sketch for *Winter* was purchased by his most faithful student, Pierre Andrieu, who worked with Delacroix on the large-scale canvases which are now preserved at the Museu de Arte, São Paulo. Comparison between Delacroix's canvas and this so-called 'sketch-copy' by Andrieu, dramatizes the gulf that separates the master from his assistants, and highlights Delacroix's inability (and perhaps, even refusal) to teach his students how to emulate his fiery palette and virtuoso brushwork.

Eugène Delacroix

Spring: Orpheus and Eurydice, oil sketch, 1862

Oil on canvas

Musée Fabre, Montpellier Agglomération (inv. 868.1.42)

In his allegory for *Spring*, Delacroix chose to represent the moment when Orpheus loses his recent bride, Eurydice, to a fatal snake bite while gathering flowers. Delacroix pantomimes the expressive anguish of the tragedy through the figures' outflung arms, a favorite device of the artist. A blue-robed attendant gestures with one arm in horror toward the venomous snake, described with a quick flourish of blue pigment at lower right, while in the distance, and left barely suggested, the silhouette of Orpheus gesticulates wildly as he races toward Eurydice.

In the final decorative cycle, *Spring* and *Winter* were meant to hang opposite each other, and Delacroix visually balanced these canvases through their complimentary compositional S-curves and sloping planes of action.

Eugène Delacroix

The Fanatics of Tangier, 1857

Oil on canvas

Collection Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchase, 1962 (62.5)

Although Delacroix may have seen this celebration, known as *moussem*, during his last days in Morocco in 1832, he did not paint the scene until many years later. Delacroix organized the composition along an oblique diagonal to give the sensation that the centralized group of figures are about to spill past and engulf the viewer. The tangle of gesticulating limbs and strategic placement of vivid reds and greens throughout the composition enhance the impression of spiritual frenzy and gives a hallucinatory quality to Delacroix's remembered experience. This painting owes a strong debt to Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (illus), which it emulates in the orientation and pacing of the figures across the pictorial field.



Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1520–23. Oil on canvas, 176.5 cm x 191 cm. National Gallery, London.

Eugène Delacroix

St. Sebastian with St. Irene and Attendant, 1858

Oil on canvas

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Paul Rodman Mabury Collection (39.12.7)

The martyrdom of Saint Sebastian was a subject made popular during the Renaissance, and Delacroix painted the scene almost ten times. He exhibited this particular version at the Salon of 1859 where, notwithstanding some critics decrying the loose execution, it was well-received. The critic Théophile Gautier commented trenchantly on the truthfulness of Irene's demeanor, flinching at the pain she is about to inflict while setting herself firmly at the clinical necessity of removing the foreign body. Gautier saw this resolute gesture mirrored in Delacroix's brushwork: expressive at the expense of overall form, but more truthful.

Eugène Delacroix

Hercules and Alcestis, 1862

Oil on cardboard

The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., Acquired 1940 (0485)

Delacroix first depicted *Hercules and Alcestis* in his decorations for the Salon de La Paix that depicted the life of Hercules. Although these paintings were destroyed during the political revolt known as the Commune in 1871, we know their compositions through repetitions like this one, made years after the first version was completed.

Delacroix frequently compounded literary, historical, and mythological references, and the subject of Hercules and Alcestis, which originates in Euripides' tragedy, could also allude to *Sonnet 23* by English Poet John Milton, a writer whose work Delacroix admired and treated in painting as early as 1827.

“Me thought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.”

-John Milton (1608-1674), *Sonnet 23*, lines 1-4, 1673

The Voyage to Morocco: Forgetting in Order to Remember

In 1832, Delacroix traveled to North Africa with Count Charles de Mornay (1803-1878), who had been sent by the French king, Louis Philippe, on a diplomatic mission to appease the sultan of Morocco following the recent French conquest of Algeria. During his six months abroad, Delacroix filled at least seven sketchbooks with drawings and notes, recording the people, architecture, events, and effects of light and color which astounded him.

Despite the profuse amount of carefully observed details chronicled in the sketchbooks, Delacroix painted many of his most powerful North African scenes years after his excursion. As he recorded in his *Journal* in October 1853:

“I began to make something tolerable of my African journey only when I had so far forgotten the trivial details as to recall in my pictures just the striking and poetic side of the subject; up to that time, I had been haunted by the passion for accuracy that most people mistake for truth.”

For all their feeling of direct observation, Delacroix's scenes of North Africa are entirely unlike the Orientalist images of contemporaries such as Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), whose polished, photographic-like depictions based on painstaking archival research achieve the illusion of documentary depiction (illus.). Instead, the vibrancy of light and life that Delacroix witnessed provided Romantic fodder to his imaginative renderings which seek to capture the essence of his experience, often through a synthesis of time and place: Morocco and France, antiquity and the present, and classical and contemporary art.



Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Carpet Merchant*, c. 1887, oil on canvas, Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Eugène Delacroix

Collision of Moorish Horsemen, 1843-44

Oil on canvas

The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland (37.6)

During the journey from Tangier to Meknes, Delacroix witnessed the *course de poudre*, a military exercise in which riders launch their horses toward each other at full speed and then abruptly halt after firing their rifles. The horse was a Romantic symbol of the passions, and Delacroix frequently depicted the spirit, energy, and majesty of the animal, particularly in his Orientalist works. Delacroix's reconstitution of the event focuses on the wildly violent confrontation of two horses amidst the *course*, here reinforced by the rebellious energy and movement of the brush, and the tense compacting created by the torsion of the horses' diagonal thrust.

Eugène Delacroix

Arab Rider, ca. 1854

Oil on panel

Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid (inv. 125 [1972.20])

Delacroix painted Moroccan subjects throughout his life, and though many, such as *Collision of Arab Horsemen*, depict recorded places and events, others, like *Arab Rider*, have no direct relationship to Delacroix's North African experience. Free of obvious anecdote, this diminutive painting emphasizes the physical, almost spiritual, union between horse and rider. Loose skeins of rapidly applied pigment in luminous shades of pink, orange, and gold masterfully evoke the shimmering quality of light at the close of day.

Eugène Delacroix

View of Tangier from the Seashore, 1856-58

Oil on canvas

Lent by The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Bequest of Mrs. Erasmus C. Lindley in memory of her father, James J. Hill (49.4)

Presented at an 1860 exhibition on the Boulevard des Italiens, this painting inspired rhapsodic praise from critics including Théophile Gautier and Zacharie Astruc. Like many of Delacroix's Moroccan works made in his Paris studio, this scene is a synthesis of disparate places and experiences. It combines the remembered Tangier landscape, assisted by drawings and watercolors from an album of studies made during his North African experience, with an anecdotal figural group observed in the resort town of Fécamp located off the northern coast of France.

Delacroix and Shakespeare

As an urbane dandy in 19th-century Paris, Delacroix expressed his anglophilia not only in his style of dress but also in his taste in theater. On a visit to London in 1825, Delacroix had the opportunity to see several of Shakespeare's plays, including *Richard III*, *The Tempest*, *Henry VI*, and *Othello*. When Charles Kemble brought his Shakespearean troupe to Paris in 1827, Delacroix made a point of attending several performances, including a production of *Hamlet*. In addition to depicting these Shakespearean plays, Delacroix also treated scenes from *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

As evidenced by his *Journals*, Delacroix was an accomplished writer himself, and throughout his life he maintained a close connection with the written word. Many of his major canvases, including *The Death of Sardanapalus* and *The Justice of Trajan*, are based in literary works, and Delacroix frequently drew from Dante, Milton, Goethe, and Byron for his compositions. However, it was in what he called Shakespeare's "nonchalant execution" that Delacroix seemed to find particular kinship with the British playwright. Both the writer and the artist employed expressive exaggeration—Shakespeare in his characters' actions and emotions, Delacroix in his painterly color and bending of space—in order to try and reflect the essence, rather than exactitude, of life.

Eugène Delacroix

Desdemona Cursed by her Father, ca. 1852

Oil on cradled panel

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Laura L. Barnes (67.24.22)

Delacroix's inspiration for this painting probably came from remembered performances of *Othello*—Delacroix had also seen Rossini's operatic version in Paris in 1821, and he frequently conflated the two—rather than from Shakespeare's text. Brabantio's violent rejection of Desdemona for her secret marriage to the Moor, Othello, is highly theatrical. The artist communicates the heartbreak of filial rejection through the strong diagonal of

Desdemona's lunging form, which is countered by the line of her father's upraised right arm. Their swirling clothing further enhances the sense of turmoil, while vivid reds and greens energize the composition, especially as set off by the golden wall behind them.

This painting had been demoted to a student work some years ago. However, the painterly surface and expressive tension of the jewel-toned palette are simply too refined to be by anyone but Delacroix.

Eugène Delacroix

Hamlet, suite of 16 lithographs

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Alfred Moir Endowment Fund, 2013.5.1-16

Of all of Shakespeare's works, *Hamlet* took particular hold of Delacroix's imagination, and he returned to the play continuously in drawings, paintings, and lithographs. Unlike earlier depictions of the play, Delacroix's *Hamlet* suite is unique in that it concentrates on climactic moments of intense emotion rather than attempting to illustrate the narrative in its entirety. Typical of a Romantic interest in states of mind, Delacroix portrays Hamlet as alternately ambivalent, desperate, haughty, annoyed, cunning, indecisive, and enraged. While the captions record well-known passages of the play and suggest a straightforward account of a single moment, Delacroix nuances the psychological complexity of the characters through exaggerated gestures and facial expressions, to pantomime the multifaceted emotions introduced through fragments of theatrical oratory. Delacroix's unconventional approach to literary illustration was initially poorly received by critics, and it was only posthumously that the suite was recognized for its distinctive originality.

Delacroix began his series of *Hamlet* lithographs in 1834, and returned to them intermittently until 1843, when they were initially published. The first edition, issued at Delacroix's personal expense, consisted of only thirteen images. After Delacroix's death, the lithographic stones were sold to Paul Meurice (1820–1905). In addition to the thirteen published plates, the lot included three stones that Delacroix did not utilize for the first edition: *Hamlet and Ophelia*, *Ophelia's Song*, and *Hamlet and Laertes in Ophelia's Grave*. Meurice had the set reissued, incorporating the three previously unpublished scenes into a second edition in 1864.

(To be included in the Hamlet Room)

Delacroix and Lithography

The *Hamlet* suite represents an extraordinary achievement in the relatively new medium (lithography was invented in 1798 by Alois Senefelder). Unlike more traditional printing techniques, the process of lithography allows the artist to draw with a greasy crayon directly on the surface of the printing stone, typically limestone. The stone is then treated with a combination of acid and water, which, when submitted to ink, repels the ink in all places of the stone not touched by the crayon. The ink is transferred to the printed page

when the stone is pressed against the paper support. Not only did lithography represent a quicker and less expensive printing process, but the technique of drawing directly on the stone allowed artists to achieve greater tonal gradations, less easily accomplished by the more linear techniques of engraving. For the *Hamlet* suite, Delacroix utilized the entire stone to create sensual harmonies and rich contrasts of light and dark.

Eugène Delacroix
The Queen Tries to Console Hamlet (act 1, sc. 2), 1834
Lithograph

Caption: “Good Hamlet, cast thy knighted colour off, and let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.”

This scene represents Hamlet’s entrance into the play. The young prince’s first lines reflect his concern that his uncle Claudius, now the king through marriage to Hamlet’s mother, Queen Gertrude, is only interested in taking possession of the castle and his inheritance. Thinking that her son is upset merely by his father’s passing, Gertrude seeks to console Hamlet, reminding him that “all that lives must die,” and encouraging his loyalty to king and country. Delacroix hints at Hamlet’s suspicions through his sidelong glance at Claudius.

Eugène Delacroix
Hamlet Tries to Follow his Father’s Ghost (act 1, sc. 4), 1835
Lithograph

Caption: “Still am I call’d. Unhand me, gentlemen. By heaven, I’ll make a ghost of him that lets me.”

After Hamlet’s friend Horatio informs Hamlet of the ghostly appearance of the late king during the past night’s watch, the young prince decides to wait with the guards on the chance of the ghost’s reappearance. Once again, the apparition appears and silently beckons to Hamlet. Fearful that the ghost intends Hamlet harm, his companions urge him not to follow. Hamlet, stretching across the composition in a sharp diagonal that parallels the craggy cliffs of the background, rebuffs Horatio and Marcellus, who unsuccessfully attempt to restrain him.

Eugène Delacroix
The Ghost on the Terrace (act 1, sc. 5), 1843
Lithograph

Caption: “I am thy father’s spirit...Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purg’d away.”

Alone, the ghost reveals himself to Hamlet as the spirit of his father and discloses the cause of his death: the villain Claudius poured poison into his ear as he slept. The ghost exhorts Hamlet to seek revenge, since Claudius has corrupted Denmark and the Queen. This startling encounter initiates the main plot of the play: Hamlet's dilemma as to how best to seek vengeance. The prince's conflicted feelings are communicated through the swirling cloak that seems to pull him forward to action, while the rest of his body leans away from the apparition and the decree.

Eugène Delacroix
Polonius and Hamlet (act 2, sc. 2), n.d.
Lithograph

Caption: "What do you read, my lord?...Words, words, words."

Polonius, Claudius' counselor, attempts to converse with Hamlet, in order to test his theory that the young prince's apparent madness is caused by love for his daughter, Ophelia. Though Hamlet's responses seem irrational and appear to validate Polonius' concerns, Hamlet is in fact feigning madness, and his responses are craftily barbed statements about Polonius' age and intelligence.

Eugène Delacroix
Hamlet and Ophelia (act 3, sc. 1), n.d.
Lithograph

Caption: "We are arrant knaves all, believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery."

At the end of Hamlet's famous "to be, or not to be" soliloquy, Ophelia enters and, following Polonius' orders, announces to Hamlet that she wishes to return the letters, poems, and tokens of love he has given her. In a rage, Hamlet denies that he has ever loved her. He then denounces Ophelia, women, and humankind in general, and urges her to enter a nunnery rather than be a "breeder of sinners." Hamlet's knitted brow betrays his conflicted emotions, anguished as he is at having to outwardly reject the downcast Ophelia.

Eugène Delacroix
Hamlet has the Actors Play the Scene of his Father's Poisoning (act 3, sc. 2), 1835
Lithograph

Caption: "Tis a knavish piece of work, but what o' that? Your Majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not...He poisons him i'th' garden for his estate... The story is extant, and written in very choice Italian"

To test the ghost's story, Hamlet recreates the act of his father's poisoning as a play. In this critical scene, Delacroix exaggerates the emotions of the protagonists almost to the point of caricature. With a devilish gleam in his eyes, Hamlet casually gestures to the play as he lies in the lap of the despairing Ophelia, who appears as lost in her own world. Behind her, Polonius pays no heed to the play and seems to have experienced an epiphany. While the King appears untroubled by the performance, Gertrude pulls away, mouth agape and aghast. Privy to Hamlet's scheme, Horatio watches the crowd for signs of guilt, with his hand pensively at his chin.

Eugène Delacroix
Hamlet and Guildenstern (act 3, sc. 2), n.d.
Lithograph

Caption: "Will you play upon this pipe?—My lord, I cannot...--I beseech you."

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two of Hamlet's school friends from Wittenberg, were sent for by Claudius to spy on the young prince. Unlike Horatio, they are not privy to his affected madness, and they ask Hamlet about his erratic behavior and the theatrical performance that has caused his mother and Claudius much anguish. In reply, Hamlet accuses the duplicitous pair of trying to play him like a pipe.

Eugène Delacroix
Hamlet Attempts to Kill the King (act 3, sc. 3), 1843
Lithograph

Caption: "Now might I do it pat, now he is praying...And am I, then, reveng'd, to take him in the purging of his soul...No...That his soul may be as damn'd and black as Hell, whereto it goes...My words fly up, my thoughts remain below."

Shaken by Hamlet's theatrical recreation of his crime, Claudius expresses his guilt, though he remains unwilling to give up that which he has gained by the murder, namely the throne and the Queen. Now sure of Claudius's fratricide, Hamlet enters, determined to conclude his oath of revenge. Finding Claudius repenting in prayer, Hamlet hesitates in drawing his sword, and resolves to kill Claudius only when he is sinning, to ensure that his soul does not go to Heaven.

Eugène Delacroix
The Murder of Polonius (act 3, sc. 4), n.d.
Lithograph

Caption: "How now? A rat!"

Trying to uncover the cause of Hamlet's irrational behavior, Polonius hides behind a curtain in order to eavesdrop on the Queen's conversation with her son. The confrontation becomes heated when Gertrude accuses Hamlet of offending his father and Hamlet retorts the same—that she has offended his father by marrying his brother. Feeling threatened, the Queen cries out and Polonius calls for help, revealing his hiding place. Delacroix communicates the suspense of the moment—will Hamlet act or not?—through Hamlet's wild eyes and disheveled hair.

Eugène Delacroix
Hamlet and the Corpse of Polonius (act 3, sc. 4), 1835
Lithograph

Caption: "Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell."

Believing the "rat" to be Claudius, Hamlet thrusts his sword through the arras. Pulling back the folds, Hamlet realizes that he has not exacted his revenge but instead has killed the unseen and largely innocent Polonius. With his mouth curving into a slight smile, Hamlet mocks the final "silence" of Polonius, regretful only that he still must avenge his father. The repercussions of this rash act of mistaken identity set the dramatic conclusion in motion.

Eugène Delacroix
Hamlet and the Queen (act 3, sc. 4), 1834
Lithograph

Caption: "O speak to me no more. These words like daggers enter my ears. No more, sweet Hamlet!"

After Hamlet has killed Polonius, he begins to rail against Claudius. Hamlet extolls the virtues of his father against his uncle, while forcing his mother to study his portrait. Collapsed into Hamlet's arms in guilt, the Queen pleads with Hamlet to cease speaking, now that she has seen into her heart, tainted with "black and grained spots."

Eugène Delacroix
Ophelia's Song (act 4, sc. 5), 1834
Lithograph

Caption: "At his head a grass-green turf. At his heels a stone."

Horatio encourages the Queen to visit Ophelia who, adorned with flowers and singing incoherent verses, has gone mad from grief. However, the Queen, wringing her hands in anguish, is reluctant to witness Ophelia's bereavement, knowing the true cause of Polonius' death and the origin of these unraveling events.

Eugène Delacroix

Death of Ophelia (act 4, sc. 7), 1843

Lithograph

Caption: “Till that her garments, heavy with their drink, Pull’d the poor wretch...”

While the rest of Delacroix’s *Hamlet* lithographs depict staged moments of the play, the scene of Ophelia’s tragic death is not actually performed. Gertrude merely relays the message to Horatio and Laertes that Ophelia has drowned in the river. Thus, this inventive composition represents a unique interpretation of Shakespeare’s play, originating with Delacroix and not taken from the stage.

Delacroix viewed this composition as a particular success and reproduced it in at least three paintings. The compelling figure of the outstretched, dying Ophelia would also later resurface, decontextualized from her literary source, in the works of such Modernist masters as Paul Cézanne and Aristide Maillol, both of whom revered Delacroix as the artistic ‘father’ of the avant-garde.

Eugène Delacroix

Hamlet and Horatio with the Grave Diggers (act 5, sc. 1), 1843

Lithograph

Caption: “This same skull, sir, was Yorick’s skull, the King’s jester...Alas, poor Yorick!”

In the cemetery, Hamlet and Horatio pensively watch as gravediggers excavate old skeletons. When one gravedigger reveals that the previous occupant of the grave was Yorick, whom the prince knew as a young man, Hamlet comes to the sobering realization that all men eventually turn to dust.

Delacroix experimented with the scene of Hamlet contemplating the skull in six painted versions and two lithographs. In his first lithograph of the scene (illus.), made the year after he saw *Hamlet* performed, Delacroix depicted Hamlet holding the skull with Ophelia’s funeral procession in the background. In this later version, Delacroix omitted the procession, enlarged the figures, and placed the skull at the center of the composition, compelling the viewer, like Hamlet, to contemplate our shared, final destination.



Eugène Delacroix, *Hamlet Contemplating Yorick's Skull*, 1828. Lithograph, 26.8 x 36 cm. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Eugène Delacroix

Hamlet and Laertes in Ophelia's Grave (act 5, sc. 1), 1843

Lithograph

Noticing an approaching funeral procession, Hamlet and Horatio furtively steal into the background. When Laertes, overcome with emotion, jumps into the grave to hold his sister in his arms once more, Hamlet realizes that it is Ophelia who has died and for whom the grave was being prepared. Hamlet then reveals himself and leaps into the grave to fight Laertes, declaring that he loved Ophelia more than forty thousand brothers could.

Eugène Delacroix

Hamlet's Death (act 5, sc. 2), 1843

Lithograph

Caption: "Horatio, I am dead... Report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied... This quarry cries on havoc. O proud Death... that thou so many princes at a shot so bloodily hast struck!"

In the final, tragic scene, Gertrude, Laertes, and Hamlet are all poisoned: the Queen drinks from a goblet of tainted wine, and Hamlet and Laertes are both mortally wounded by Laertes sword, dipped in poison by the perfidious Claudius. Learning of this treachery, Hamlet runs his rapier through Claudius, finally avenging his father. With his last breath, Hamlet seeks absolution from Laertes and encourages Horatio, the only member of the group still standing, to tell his story so that he may be exonerated. In the background, Delacroix dramatically includes the vacant throne, bereft of a King through the deaths of Claudius, Hamlet, and Laertes.