



Press release

Exhibition

October 18, 2017–January 29, 2018

Rotonde Sully

# Drawing in the Open Air

## Variations in Drawing from Nature in the First Half of the 19th Century

This exhibition showcases the heterogeneity of French “from the motif” or “from nature” drawing in the first half of the 19th century, with a particular focus on leading figures of French art (Delacroix, Corot, Chassériau, Valenciennes and Daubigny), as well as lesser-known individuals such as the engraver Bléry.

Organized with special support from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the cooperation of the Musée d'Orsay, the exhibition puts on display over 100 drawings and etchings, and some thirty sketchbooks—the “plein-air” painter’s quintessential tool.

The practice of drawing “en plein air” or “in the open air”, “from the motif”, first recorded in 17th-century France (and Europe), became common in the 18th century, and was considered an integral part of every young artist’s training in the 19th. The constantly evolving art movement eventually came to be seen as exceptionally important in the history of drawing. The meaning of expressions such as “from nature”, “after nature” and “from the motif” was fluid, vague: just as easily referring to observational and scientific drawings, as to studies, students’ practice drawings, architectural surveys, military sketches, drawings from memory, travel notes or the faint outlines of a fleeting impression.

Drawings from nature gradually came to be viewed as artworks in their own right; finished pieces with their own justification and purpose. This change in perception led to the 1861 publication of Charles Daubigny’s *Voyage en bateau*, a collection of rapid sketches depicting his outings on the rivers Seine and Oise aboard his studio-boat the *Botin*, which provided an ideal setting for drawing from nature.

The line between the studio and the outdoors was not always clear, with artists often swinging back and forth between the two. A prime example of this vague state: the work of landscape painter Corot. While his subject matter was significantly different to that of “plein-air” artists, he shared their preoccupation with color, which could either be applied directly “from the motif”, or reworked at the studio with the help of notes taken on site.

**Curator:** Marie-Pierre Salé, in collaboration with Exhibition Officer Hélène Grollemund, Musée du Louvre Department of Prints and Drawings.

**Related work:** Exhibition catalogue, co-published by Musée du Louvre Editions and Liénart Editions. Approximately 210 pages, 220 illustrations, €29.

**Presentation of the exhibition (in French):** Louvre Auditorium, November 8, 2017 at 12:30 p.m.



François Marius Granet, *View from Granet's Window* © RMN -Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Thierry Le Mage



Achille Bénouville, *View of Frascati*, Musée du Louvre © Musée du Louvre, département des Arts graphiques

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(BnF)

**Opening hours:** every day (except Tuesday) from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Night opening until 9:45 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays.

**Admission:** €15 (permanent collections + exhibitions)

**Online ticket sales:** [www.ticketlouvre.fr](http://www.ticketlouvre.fr)

**Further information:** [www.louvre.fr/en](http://www.louvre.fr/en)

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