

Joachim Jacoby and Martin Sonnabend, eds. *Raphael: Drawings*.

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The Städel Museum in Frankfurt boasts the largest collection of Raphael drawings in Germany (some eleven sheets), credit for which belongs to its second *Inspektor*, the artist and scholar Johann David Passavant (1787–1861). Abandoning his early calling as a painter, Passavant hunted down drawings for his new institution and went on to author the first monograph on Raphael. His worshipful efforts as a slavishly imitative Raphaellesque painter are little acclaimed, but his important scholarly and curatorial contributions, charted here in Martin Sonnabend's informative essay "Raphael, Passavant and the Städel'sches Kunstinstitut," have long been acknowledged.

Frankfurt's holdings are modest compared with the much larger concentrations of Raphael drawings in British and French collections, but as Joachim Jacoby narrates in his panoramic "Raphael: Draughtsman and Storyteller" and in the substantive catalogue entries, these signal examples span the entire two decades of the artist's activity and align with some of his major commissions: the youthful altarpieces done for Perugia; the Madonnas and Holy Families that testify to his success in Florence (a city not lacking in native-born talent); and the *grands projets* undertaken for his demanding patrons Julius II and Leo X and their banker, Agostino Chigi, that chart his meteoric ascent in Rome. Not a full survey of Raphael as a draftsman, the catalogue instead focuses on three categories carved from the myriad genres and modes of representation to which he turned his prodigious talents. Each is represented by a signal example or core group of drawings from the Städel, which provide the boundaries of the present investigation.

These chapter categories are: "Woman and Child: The Mother of God and the Redeemer" (an alternative to the conventional nomenclature Madonna and Child,

the iconic subject synonymous with Raphael in the early literature); “Narrative without Plot,” comprising the grand poetic, theological, and historical tableaux — primarily the Vatican *stanze* frescoes — for which no precise literary sources or established iconographic tradition existed; and “History Painting.” Closely related to the first two, this third category encompasses multifigured narrative scenes (including the Virgin and Christ) having a textual source, be it sacred or secular. (Raphael as a composer of such scenes is discussed in an essay by Henry Keazor.) A fourth section, effectively a minimonograph, focuses on a single commission, the chapel Raphael designed for Agostino Chigi around 1511/12, in S. Maria della Pace. The three components of that decoration — frescoed prophets and sibyls, an unrealized altarpiece of the *Resurrection*, and, presumably, bronze reliefs depicting the *Descent into Limbo* and the *Incredulity of Thomas* — fall into the latter thematic categories, but considering them as elements of a *gesamtkunstwerk* allows for a full appreciation of the extraordinary breadth, intelligence, and spiritual resonance of Raphael’s creative powers. The Chigi Chapel drawings also testify to the variety of graphic media Raphael employed, and to the central importance of figure drawing in his practice. This project is, then, a microcosm.

Raphael’s extraordinary facility as a draftsman is evident in the fluid way he exploited the expressive qualities of his chosen medium. Pen and ink, or the more challenging silverpoint, often enhanced by flourishes of white heightening or pools of wash to suggest light and shadow, were frequently used for exploratory figure and composition studies (e.g., cat. nos. 5, 13, 18, 19). Red chalk was favored for describing drapery; subtly modeled anatomy; the warm tonality of human flesh; and enveloping, atmospheric space (e.g., nos. 28, 38). And black chalk was employed in figure and composition studies (here, the glorious group for the soldiers in the aborted Chigi Chapel *Resurrection*, nos. 44–48) where the intention was to render dramatic shadow, plastic forms, and an anatomical materiality closer to polished marble than supple flesh. In the painting, such figures would have been seen in cool, silvery moonlight — a pictorial effect black chalk most expressively approximated.

The literature on Raphael drawings is vast and his career as a draftsman has been treated in numerous publications. There is no obvious need of another encyclopedic investigation, and specialists exhausted by the circular attribution debates that invariably besiege discussions of the production of Raphael and his workshop can only be grateful that *Raphael: Drawings*, partly because of its circumscribed parameters, avoids this fraught terrain. That said, this reviewer ventures a few divergent opinions. *Justinian Receiving the Pandects* (cat. no. 22) is anomalous in its careful, labored, and partial ink contours and broad, unmodulated passages of pale wash. The corresponding fresco, which has a different surface appearance than the other *storie* of the Stanza della Segnatura, has been ascribed to Lorenzo Lotto; someone other than Raphael may well have been responsible for the drawing as well (as is the case with the verso). Cat. no. 35, a study of a papal procession, is problematic: although long and often uncritically associated with the Sala di Costantino, the generic subject does not self-evidently relate to the narratives of that room, while the extensive, un-descriptive use of color is exceptional. And

despite the careful explanation offered to account for the unusual aspect of the *Incredulity of Thomas* (cat. no. 42), an alternative possibility is that the drawing is not by Raphael and not preparatory for the relief, but derivative.

The foregoing remarks have referred to the judicious focus that is a virtue of this generously illustrated and well-translated publication, which selectively explores Raphael's draftsmanship. Its parts cohere to demonstrate — and with a focus and graceful economy — the fundamental role, both creative and practical, inventive and utilitarian, of drawing in his artistic process.

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