

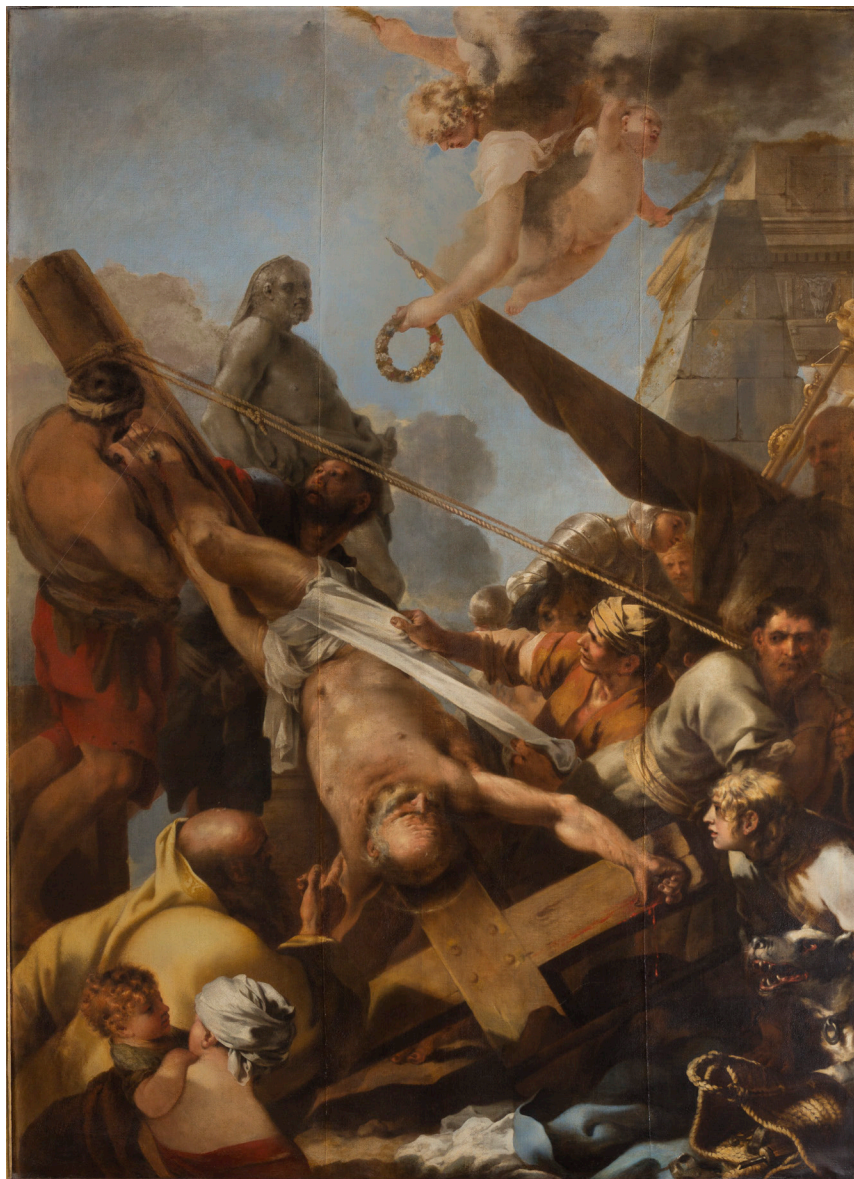
Sébastien Bourdon

Montpellier 1616–1671 Paris

Crucifixion of St. Peter

c. 1643

Much of Bourdon's extraordinary life and career was shaped by his family's adherence to the Protestant faith. He was trained first by his father, a master painter in Montpellier, before departing for an apprenticeship in Paris around 1622, just prior to the invasion of Montpellier by royal troops deployed to reassert authority in rebellious Protestant cities. In the early 1630s, after passing through Bordeaux and Toulouse as a member of the Protestant forces, he headed for Italy, where he is recorded in Rome in 1634. During his time there, Bourdon befriended many members of the circle of Dutch genre painters known as the Bamboccianti and worked for an Italian dealer who specialized in copies after the Old Masters. After being denounced as a heretic, Bourdon fled Rome for Paris in 1637. He achieved success with his first commissions upon his return to the French



Brown ink and brown wash over graphite on off-white antique laid paper

218 x 154 mm

Watermark: None

Inscriptions: Verso, lower right, brown ink: *par M. Bourdon tableau du May.*

Provenance: Possibly sale, Paris, 18 April 1803, possibly lot 139; Antoine-François, Comte Andréossy, Paris; his sale, Paris, 13–16 April 1764, lot 748; Charles-Philippe, Marquis de Chennevières-Pointel, Paris and Bellême (his mark, L.2072, lower left); his sale, Drouot, Paris, 4–7 April 1900, part of lot 51; Henri Baderou, Paris (as of 1959); Germain Seligman, New York; Seiden and de Cuevas, Inc., New York; Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, The Melvin R. Seiden Fund and Louise Haskell Daly Fund, 1984.583

Fig. 1
Sébastien Bourdon, *Crucifixion of St. Peter*



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Nicolas Poussin

Les Andelys 1594–1665 Rome

Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro

c. 1647

Together with Claude, Le Brun, and Vouet, Poussin can be considered one of the four greatest artists of seventeenth-century France. In spite of his later renown, there are still innumerable unanswered questions about his early life and training; however, tradition suggests that he may have studied with such Late Mannerist artists as Ferdinand Elle, Georges Lallemant, and Quentin Varin. Following at least one failed attempt at the journey, Poussin arrived in Rome in 1624. Except for a brief return to France (1640–42), he would remain in the Eternal City for the rest of his life. During his long career, he became increasingly attached to an ascetic way of life and a rigorously disciplined, Italianate approach to art and art theory that became the model for the new Académie.

Rediscovered in New England in the late 1970s, this austere and powerful drawing is the most definitive composition in a series that includes several other studies. Pierre Rosenberg and Louis-Antoine Prat, coauthors of the most recent monograph on the artist’s drawings, have convincingly argued that the series was produced over a period of about ten years (c. 1637–47).¹ The other drawings are in the RISD Museum of Art, Providence; the Musée du Louvre, Paris (Fig. 1);² the Pushkin Museum, Moscow; the Krugier-Poniatowski Collection, Geneva; and the Royal Library, Windsor Castle, which conserves three studies on two sheets (Fig. 2).³ A related drawing of doubtful attribution is in the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.⁴ All of the studies were likely executed in preparation for a lost painting, possibly commissioned by the banker Jean Pointel and known today through an engraving by Antoine Trouvain (Fig. 3).⁵ Because of its quality and pristine condition, the Harvard sheet is among the most important drawings by the master discovered since World War II. As renowned Poussin scholar Anthony Blunt noted when he first published it, *Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro* “is a brilliant example of Poussin’s drawing style in the late [1640s], with a combination of vigorous drawing and

Brown ink and brown wash on cream antique laid paper, partial framing lines in red chalk and brown ink, laid down on cream antique laid paper

185 × 255 mm

Watermark: None

Inscriptions: Verso, center, black chalk: 188

Provenance: Thomas Dimsdale, London (his mark, L.2426, mount, verso); Sir Thomas Lawrence, London (his mark, L.2445, lower left); Alan M. Stone, Northampton; Seiden and de Cuevas, Inc., New York; Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, The Melvin R. Seiden Fund and Louise Haskell Daly Fund, 1984.580



Fig. 1
Nicolas Poussin, *Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro*



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bold washes—particularly in the dramatically rendered sky—and the use of the point of the brush to model the forms of the drapery and the features of the landscape.”⁶

The subject is taken from the Book of Exodus (2:16–22). After being driven out of Egypt and wandering through the desert, Moses happens upon the seven daughters of Jethro of Midian, who are barred by neighboring shepherds from watering their flock. Moses drives away the shepherds, and Jethro rewards the prophet by offering one of his daughters as a wife. The Windsor drawing (Fig. 2) reveals an early stage in the development of the composition, one that focuses on the confusing flurry of fighting and fleeing. It was followed chronologically by the Louvre study (Fig. 1), astonishingly executed with just the point of the brush, which Poussin used to arrange the figures across the foreground in a frieze-like manner. Final details concerning the precise scale and placement of the protagonists appear to be resolved in the Harvard drawing. Here, the volumes are realized by sparsely placed pen lines and strokes of the brush together with an active use of the reserved white of the sheet, which stands out in stark contrast to the rich areas of wash around the figures. This positive utilization of the blank portions of the sheet set against passages of varying densities of brown wash extends into the landscape, which is most expansive in the Harvard version of the composition.⁷ The deliberate counterbalance between the composed, columnar females on the left and the unruly group of men fighting at right is underscored by the rigid architecture at left and the more violent contrasts of lights and darks in the tortured sky and terrain opposite. In short, the viewer is offered a choice between order and chaos. Each of the seven women watches the action at right. Moreover, the motif of the raised arm—from the woman supporting a vase on her head, to Moses preparing to strike, to the fallen shepherd attempting to defend himself—not only enables the viewer to “read” the

Charles de La Fosse

Paris 1636–1716 Paris

Studies for the Arms and Legs of Bacchus and Ariadne

c. 1698

La Fosse was one of the most brilliant and successful students of Le Brun (cats. 30–32). The young artist completed his studies with three years in Italy, where he admired Venetian and other northern Italian masters as much as he esteemed Raphael and the antique. After returning to Paris in 1663, he received important royal commissions for paintings at Marly, Meudon, Versailles, and the Grand Trianon; together with other projects from prominent noble patrons and religious communities, this work occupied him for the next two decades. In the late 1680s and early 1690s, he traveled twice to London to decorate the city palace and country seat of Ralph, first Duke of Montagu, former British ambassador to France. Later distinctions include painting the dome of the Invalides, his decorations for the homes of renowned collector Pierre Crozat, and his elevation to the posts of director and chancellor of the Académie.¹ Although he had kept a safe distance from the earlier debates at the institution concerning line versus color, he was a close friend of Roger de Piles, defender of the colorists, and La Fosse’s sympathy for the works of Rubens and northern Italian painters revealed itself in his canvases. This tendency toward softness and color is also evident in his drawings, where he often experimented with a painterly use of gouache, colored papers, and the mixture of several colors of chalk and pastel.

La Fosse produced this elegant study of limbs to perfect the gestures and positions of arms and legs in his *Bacchus and Ariadne* of 1699 (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon; Fig. 1).² This large canvas depicting the Olympian god of wine and his wife was commissioned by Louis XIV for his pleasure palace, the Château de Marly, where it was placed in the salon of the royal pavilion. It was one of a series of canvases depicting allegories of the four seasons; the other three were produced by Louis de Boullogne, Antoine Coypel, and Jean Jouvenet.³ La Fosse’s canvas represented autumn, the



Black, red, and white chalk on tan antique laid paper

225 × 388 mm

Watermark: None

Inscriptions: Verso, center, brown ink: 416 [underlined]

Provenance: Monsieur Lepingle, Le Havre; Galerie Talabardon, Paris; Harvard Art Museums/ Fogg Museum, Purchase in honor of Agnes Mongan’s 90th Birthday through the generosity of Mark Rudkin, Phyllis Hattis, David Daniels, Jean Massengale, Kathryn and William Robinson, Sheldon and Leena Peck, David Leventhal, Melvin R. Seiden, Beverly and John Jacoby, and Robert Erburu through the Ahmanson Foundation, 1995.³⁰



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season associated with the grape harvest. Depicting Ariadne’s arms and legs as well as Bacchus’s proper right arm, the limbs from the drawing are the same in the painting, though Ariadne’s legs are crossed the opposite way. The Harvard drawing is similar in both media and technique to La Fosse’s *Study of Arms and a Hand* (Fig. 2).⁴ Now in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, that sheet was produced as a study for an earlier painting, *Diana and Her Nymphs* (1688), commissioned for the bedroom of Louis XIV at the Grand Trianon.

Although he remained an acolyte of Poussin and Le Brun, coloristic tendencies are also evident in La Fosse’s drawings, particularly his subtle blend of black, red, and white chalk, a manner often referred to as *trois crayons*. This type of study undoubtedly formed a bond between La Fosse and Watteau (cats. 53–55), his younger colleague from Valenciennes, who would fully master the technique a decade later. It should come as no surprise that La Fosse enthusiastically supported Watteau’s entry into the Académie in 1712.⁵