



American Federation of Arts

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AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS ANNOUNCES THE DRAWINGS OF FRANÇOIS BOUCHER THE FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION OF THE ARTIST'S DRAWINGS IN MORE THAN 25 YEARS TO OPEN AT THE FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK, OCTOBER 8–DECEMBER 14, 2003, FOLLOWED BY A TOUR TO THE KIMBELL ART MUSEUM, FORT WORTH, JANUARY 17–APRIL 18, 2004

New York, NY (June 4, 2003) — Organized by the American Federation of Arts (AFA) and scheduled to coincide with the 300th anniversary of the birth of the French painter and draftsman François Boucher (1703–1770), ***The Drawings of François Boucher*** will be the first comprehensive exhibition of the artist's drawings in over twenty-five years. Curated by British art historian Alastair Laing, the exhibition includes ninety-one sheets (seventy-five to eighty of which will be shown at each venue) from museums and private collections in the United States, Canada, South America, and throughout Europe. Many of these works have never before traveled to the United States. *The Drawings of François Boucher* will premiere at the Frick Collection, New York (October 8–December 14, 2003), after which it will be on view at the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas (January 17–April 18, 2004).

The exhibition is organized by the American Federation of Arts, and made possible, in part, by grants from the Fino Family Foundation, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and the Pfizer Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Benefactors Circle of the AFA. Presentation of the exhibition in New York, which will be coordinated for the Frick by Chief Curator Colin B. Bailey, is made possible through a major grant from The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation with additional support from Jean A. Bonna and the Fellows of The Frick Collection.

During a period when draftsmanship was practiced primarily as an academic exercise, Boucher was one of the few artists who continuously drew for his own edification. He was also one of the first artists to cultivate important collectors for his drawings, exploiting the developing taste in Europe and elsewhere for drawings as autonomous works of art. Throughout his life he remained committed to drawing as a vital element in the process of painting, as studies both for and after his painted compositions. Remarkably prolific, he is thought to have produced more than ten thousand drawings during the course of his career, often employing his wife and children as sitters.

The exhibition will reveal the artist's extraordinary technique and style, as well as the wide variety of his subject matter, including figural studies and nudes, which reveal an intensive study of the human form; mythological and biblical scenes; portraits; landscapes, which he often embellished with imaginary structures; animals; intimate interior decorative schemes, and designs for Beauvais tapestries.

In speaking of the exhibition, guest curator Laing commented: "The 300th anniversary of Boucher's birth is the long overdue occasion to stage the first ever comprehensive exhibition of Boucher's drawings, selected from collections worldwide. His drawings have a spontaneity and an inexhaustible variety that give them a much greater appeal for contemporary taste than many of his paintings. The Frick Collection and the Kimbell Art Museum, both of which contain important ensembles of Boucher's paintings, are ideal showcases for his drawings, and I am delighted that they will be presenting what should be a stunning show."

Published by the AFA in association with Scala Publishers Ltd., the fully illustrated exhibition catalogue features entries that reassess the dating of many of Boucher's drawings, trace their history of ownership, discuss the relationship between drawings and specific paintings, and reveal other new research. Included will be an essay by Alastair Laing that explores Boucher's development as a draftsman, through his range of subjects, his contemporary appeal, and his innovations in the medium; and a foreword by Pierre Rosenberg,

former director of the Musée du Louvre, Paris, that discusses Boucher's place among the great French draftsmen of his time.

Alastair Laing studied history, and then the history of art, at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and the Courtauld Institute. Since his doctoral studies of South German Rococo stucco and writing the sections on South Germany, Austria, and Bohemia in Anthony Blunt's *Baroque & Rococo Architecture* (1978), his principal field of study has been eighteenth-century French art, on which he has written numerous articles, reviews, and catalogue entries. Laing has been Adviser on Paintings and Sculpture to the National Trust since 1986. Soon after taking up his post with the National Trust, he co-organized the exhibition *Beatrix Potter* (Victoria & Albert Museum, London, and the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, 1987–88). He also was the co-curator and principal catalogue author of the exhibition *François Boucher* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Detroit Institute of Arts; and Grand Palais, Paris, 1986–87). He wrote the catalogue of the exhibition *In Trust for the Nation* (National Gallery, London, 1995), a thematic cross-section of the paintings collections in houses belonging to the National Trust. He is currently preparing for publication his contribution to the *Catalogue of Decorative Drawings from the Collection of Edmond de Rothschild at Waddesdon Manor* and the first volumes of the *Catalogue of Miniatures in Houses Belonging to the National Trust* (with Richard Walker).

For nearly a hundred years, the AFA has originated and developed art exhibitions in partnership with museums in the United States and abroad. The AFA also publishes exhibition catalogues and offers educational and professional development programs for museum professionals and the general public. Current AFA exhibitions include *Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from The British Museum*; *Debating American Modernism: Stieglitz, Duchamp, and the New York Avant-Garde*; *Millet to Matisse: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century French Painting from Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow*; and *An International Legacy: Selections from Carnegie Museum of Art*. For additional information visit the AFA's Web site at www.afaweb.org.