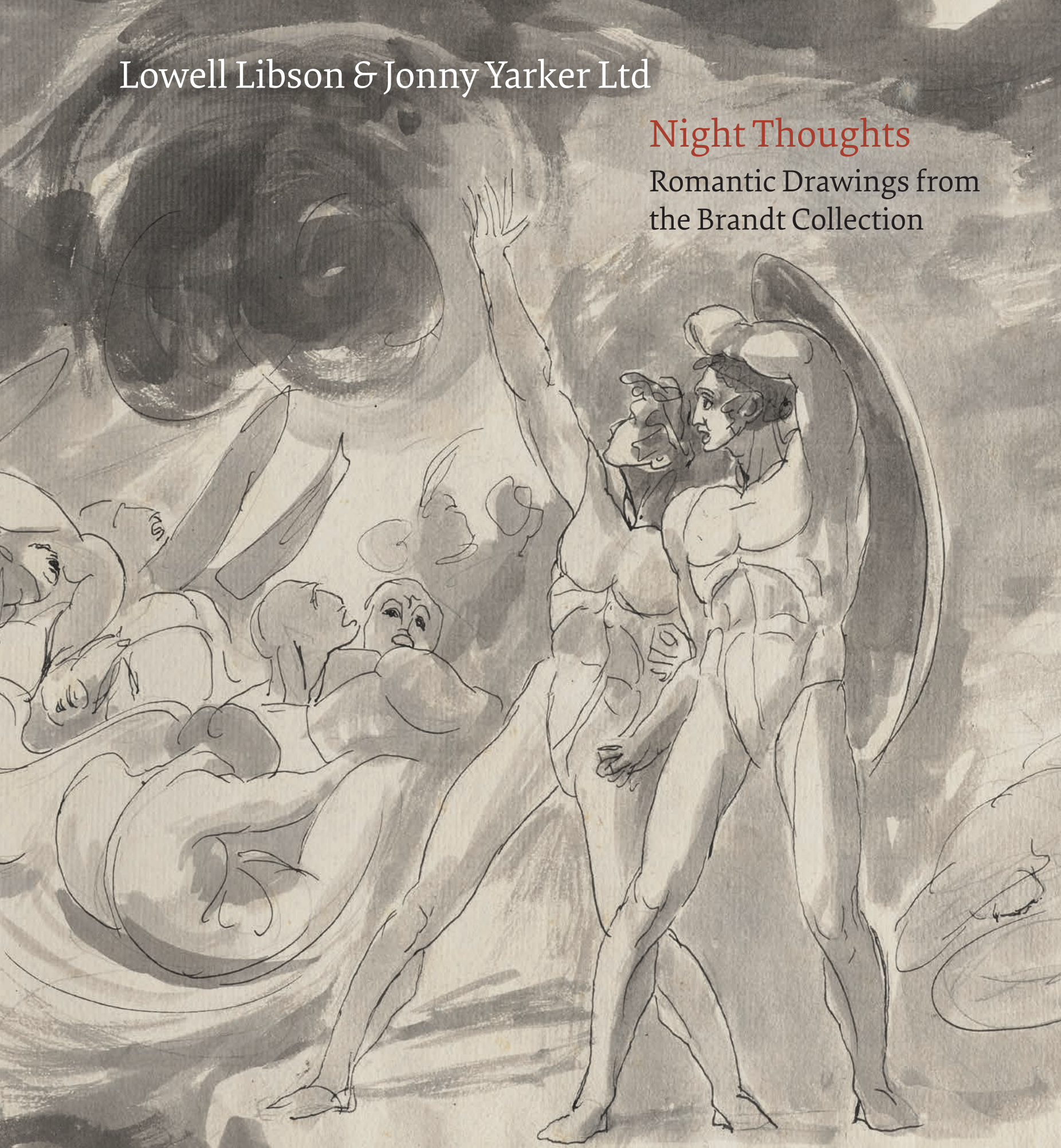


Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd

Night Thoughts

Romantic Drawings from
the Brandt Collection



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LONDON 2023



WALTER BRANDT, PIONEER COLLECTOR

This catalogue of drawings is a representative sample of the magnificent group of British romantic drawing formed in the decades after the Second World War by Walter Brandt. The romantic drawings represent, in turn, only one small seam in a far larger collection of British drawings dating from seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century.

The scion of a successful German banking family established in Britain since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Brandt did not begin collecting until the 1940s. Initially buying contemporary art by artists including John Piper and Henry Moore, Brandt became increasingly interested in earlier drawings. The collection that he formed of works by British draughtsman in the period 1650–1850, was one of the finest, and certainly the most extensive amassed in the post-war period. Brandt was part of a highly competitive and erudite circle of collectors who all pursued earlier British material, including Sir Bruce Ingram, Paul Oppé, Randall Davies, Gilbert Davis and Leonard Duke. It was this group of collectors who gave energy to the market, formed an appreciative audience for scholarship and lent widely to exhibitions. The sociability of this world led Duke to describe the pursuit of drawings as ‘the urban field sport of collecting’ seeing himself in friendly rivalry with other collectors.

Brandt stands out for the breadth and quality of the collection he formed. This is all the more remarkable given that Brandt assembled the collection over a relatively short period. A meticulous record keeper, Brandt’s activities can be traced through his neat leather-bound ledgers and later system of index cards devised by Jack Naimaster. It

is apparent that he began buying in earnest towards the end of the 1950s and then acquired drawings almost continuously until his death in 1978. The rapidity with which the collection grew is remarkable. The drawings in this catalogue, for example, were all acquired in a seven-year period between 1963 and 1970.

Whilst Brandt’s collecting was omnivorous, encompassing drawings of almost every sort made in the period, certain groups have long been admired. Brandt was a pioneering collector of neo-classical and romantic drawings, a fact recognised by the number of sheets he lent to an exhibition curated by David Irwin at Ickworth House in 1969 *British neo-classical art*. Brandt’s accumulation of the boldly worked, monochrome sheets of Romney, Fuseli, Flaxman, John Hamilton Mortimer and the so-called Master of the Giants, in part reflects opportunity. In 1966, for example, a large number of Romney drawings were sold by The Royal Institution of Cornwall at Christie’s. But evidence of Brandt’s sensitive and refined eye is demonstrated by the exceptional quality of the works from the so-called de Pass album he eventually acquired. It is also telling that not all these sheets were purchased at the Christie’s sale, many were bought in the subsequent months and years from dealers who shared Brandt’s taste, particularly Christopher Powney, then working from a gallery at 1 Berkeley Square and Alister Matthews in Bournemouth.

Brandt would form the largest group of drawings from the so-called Master of the Giants album. The title was given to a group of works extracted from an album and included in an exhibition mounted by the Cork Street dealers Rowland, Browse

and Delbanco entitled *Aspects of British Romanticism* in 1949. Brandt did not acquire a single sheet directly from the show, rather he gradually bought drawings from the group as they reappeared on the market. This included several of the strongest, which he bought from the Clifford Street gallery of Jeremy Maas in 1961 for £90, drawings Maas had, in-turn, acquired from Leonard Duke. Brandt’s ledgers show that he would have to wait until 1970 to acquire Duke’s prize sheet from the group, the splendid drawing of *A Hero on a Bier*, from Sotheby’s where he was forced to pay £420. In ‘the urban field sport of collecting’ patience and tenacity were rewarded.

Brandt had an outstanding eye and a particular sensitivity for the pioneering works of British romanticism, not just the familiar names, but graphically inventive figures such as William Young Ottley. The collection has been partly depleted since Brandt’s death, but with the exception of Thomas Lawrence’s grand drawing of *Satan summoning his Legions*, now in the Louvre, the romantic drawings have remained together. This makes the publication of this catalogue of singular importance; it is hoped that it will contribute to reviving interest in the area and in Walter Brandt’s role as a pioneering figure in the collecting and appreciation of British romantic drawing.



NIGHT THOUGHTS

ROMANTIC DRAWING IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

*'Romney was gifted with peculiar powers for historical and ideal painting, so his heart and soul were engaged in the pursuit of it, whenever he could extricate himself from the important business of portrait painting. It was his delight by day and study by night, for this his food and rest were often neglected.'*¹

In this description of George Romney, the sculptor John Flaxman tells us that he undertook his lucrative business as a society portraitist by day, reserving his pursuit of history painting to night. This gives a nocturnal context for the mass of bold ink designs of historical and literary subjects Romney produced in the decades after his return from Italy. Flaxman's evocation of the frustrated creative, missing meals and sleep to work, may feel like a romantic cliché, but it evidently has its basis in fact and points to a crucial element in the evolution of romantic art in Britain. Namely that it was the product of leisure hours, made by a new generation of painters who had sufficient education and employment to spend their evenings in pursuit of new artistic ideas and ideals.

Romney's great graphic projects were rarely preparatory for anything, they amounted to ends in and of themselves. As Romney's friend George Cumberland noted, 'he was constantly projecting great undertakings for the honour of his art, and at the same time involving himself in new engagements to render them impracticable.'² Romney's design for a painting of *John Howard Visiting the Lazaretto* remained on paper, elaborated in a series of increasingly frantic and abstracted designs. Romney's great sequence of historical cartoons, 'were', Flaxman expressed 'examples of the sublime and the terrible, at the time perfectly new in English art', but they remained cartoons, never materialising on canvas.³ In fact, the boldest and most potent projects of British romanticism, the great bodies of restless drawings produced by Henry Fuseli, Romney, Flaxman and even the elusive 'Master of the Giants', rarely evolved

beyond the page. This reflects, in part, the conditions of the market. Romney could earn a small fortune as a portraitist, but would undoubtedly have struggled to sell large and complex historical machines. But it also points to certain qualities of the best romantic drawings of the period, graphically daring, rapidly worked and with an originality that would never have translated into paint. The best romantic drawings were night thoughts, spontaneous compositions made as meditations on a specific passage in Milton or Shakespeare, away from the apparatus of the studio, the confines of the academy or expectations of the exhibition.

This catalogue brings together a small selection of works by a closely connected group of British artists made in the last decades of the eighteenth century. All monochrome, worked in either black ink or graphite, the drawings point to the private ambition of British artists in the decades after the foundation of the Royal Academy. This was the generation that had come of age drawing. Whilst artist-led academies had operated in Britain since the Restoration, it was not until 1768 and the foundation of the Royal Academy Schools that academic training was put on a formal footing. Before this date, artists had learnt their art in the studios of their master, relying on a prescribed diet of copying and drapery painting. As Joshua Reynolds complained: 'not having the advantage of an early academical education, I never had facility of drawing the naked figure, which an artist ought to have. It appeared to me too late, when I went to Italy and began to feel my own deficiencies, to endeavour to acquire that readiness of invention which I observed others to possess.'⁴ Succeeding

Richard Morton Paye *Self-portrait of the Artist engraving* [detail]

Oil on canvas · 28 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches · 733 × 603 mm · 1783
© National Trust Images / John Hammond

generations could spend their evenings drawing first in the antique academy, before graduating to the living model. In part to accommodate artists' busy schedules – both students and academicians – the life academy was only open in the evening, ensuring that drawing became a lifelong nocturnal pursuit.

This association of drawing with the evening was underlined by the quotidian realities of most professional painting practices. Throughout the eighteenth century most painters would still work out compositions directly on the canvas; no facility 'drawing the naked figure' was needed to be a portraitist, for example. But with the end of the professional day, artists

could retire and indulge 'that readiness of invention', so envied by Reynolds. Take Thomas Gainsborough, for example, an artist who produced a remarkable body of landscape drawings throughout the latter half of his professional career. These drawings are rarely preparatory for oils, and never of actual places, they were exercises in ideal landscape – landscapes of the mind, in fact – and they functioned as autonomous works of art. The contemporary evidence suggests that these drawings were produced after the working day, when the family were at leisure. W.H. Pyne, Henry Angelo and William Jackson all left descriptions of watching Gainsborough draw at night and his daughter, Margaret, later noted that

George Romney Group portrait of *The Hon Charles Greville, William Hayley, George Romney and Emma Hart*

Pen and brown ink, with grey wash over graphite
14 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 20 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches · 367 × 525 mm · c.1782
© The Trustees of the British Museum



William Young Ottley *Portrait sketch of John Flaxman modelling a relief*

Grey wash, brown ink and black chalk over pencil
3 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches · 94 × 74 mm · c.1800
© The Trustees of the British Museum



he was forced to abandon the practice: 'he thought he did not sleep so well after having applied to drawing in the evening not being able to divest himself of the ideas which occupied his mind.'⁵

Whilst Gainsborough restlessly drew imagined landscapes, the artists in this catalogue all used their 'facility in drawing the naked figure' to invent an ever-varying series of historical and literary designs. These works entailed a familiarity with the texts being illustrated, pointing to ambitious levels of literary engagement. By the 1770s reading, like drawing, had an association with the evening. Both Flaxman and William Blake were supported early in their careers by the Reverend Anthony Mathew

and his wife, Harriet. George Cunningham credits Harriet Mathew with encouraging Flaxman's interest in ancient texts: 'Mrs Mathew read Homer, and commented on the pictorial beauty of his poetry, while Flaxman sat beside her embodying such passages as caught his fancy. Those juvenile productions still exist and are touched, and that not slightly, with the quiet loveliness and serene vigour manifested long afterwards in his famous illustrations to the same poet.'⁶ All the artists represented in this catalogue were closely associated with literary figures. J.T. Smith records that the Mathews' house, 27 Rathbone Place, 'was then frequented by most of the literary and talented people of the day.'⁷ And it was the Mathews, with Flaxman's assistance, who helped Blake to publish his *Poetical Sketches* in 1783.

The relationships between poets, patrons and painters proved crucial to the development of British romanticism. Blake's illustrated books were fostered by a chain of literary and artistic friends from Flaxman to the poet and patron William Hayley. It was Hayley, in turn, who encouraged Romney and Flaxman to treat certain subject matter, often with the vague promise that he would help works to be engraved and published. In the 1790s the publisher Josiah Boydell commissioned Hayley to produce a life of Milton to be included in a new edition of Milton's works, a project which was to include illustrations by Romney. The project had a rival in the form of William Cowper's edited edition of Milton's poetical works, published by Joseph Johnson and illustrated by Henry Fuseli. It is apparent that both Romney and Fuseli considered their contributions to these projects as far more than mere illustrators. In the biography of his father, George Romney, the Reverend John Romney specifically observed that in his father's copy of Milton: 'which he was in the habit of studying, all the most striking and

picturesque passages are marked, or underlined, by him; so that it may be regarded as a valuable printer's book.⁸

Milton provided the ideal romantic anti-hero, Satan. It is no accident that this catalogue should contain treatments of Satan by both Romney and Fuseli. Contemporaries explicitly interpreted *Paradise Lost* in aesthetic terms. Edmund Burke, for example, writing in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, called *Paradise Lost* the finest example of 'heightening, or of setting terrible things.'⁹ In Milton's description of Death, says Burke, it 'is astonishing with what a gloomy pomp, with what a significant and expressive uncertainty of strokes and colouring he has finished the portrait of the king of terrors. The other shape, if shape it might be called that shape had non Distinguishable ... Black he stood as night: Fierce as ten furies: terrible as hell ... in this description all is dark, uncertain, confused, terrible, and sublime to the last degree.'¹⁰ That these debates were absorbed by artists is clear. Flaxman, it should be remembered, specifically described Romney's 'Liverpool Cartoons' as 'examples of the sublime and the terrible at the time perfectly new in English art.'

But what precisely was visually new about these works. One answer undoubtedly lies in the response to earlier art. Fuseli, Romney, Flaxman, Ottley and Prince Hoare, identified in this catalogue as the artist most probably responsible for the drawings from the so-called 'Master of the Giants Album', all spent formative periods studying in Rome. They formed part of an ever-changing community of European artists who studied in the city, socialised and exchanged new ideas. Amongst these new ideas was a heightened, dramatic response to the prescribed diet of antiquities and earlier painters which had traditionally formed the basis for study on the European

Grand Tour, as well as a broad receptiveness to art that had not.

This took British romantic drawing in a number of directions. In the best of the sheets from the Master of the Giants album, Hoare, who was living and working in Rome in the Summer of 1779 when the drawings were made, uses an expressive vocabulary of exaggerated gestures, simplified forms and boldly applied wash to convey the imaginative and intensely emotional character of the frequently obscure subject matter. The study of antique art, especially reliefs and vase painting, encouraged Hoare to develop this simplified style, stressing outline and limiting the dramatic action to a few boldly worked figures confined to a shallow, undefined space. Whilst the approach to the swollen, reticulated nudes who populate his drawings, points to a careful study of Michelangelo and his late sixteenth-century followers, particularly Baccio Bandinelli. Fuseli and Romney famously developed a similar mix of classical economy and Michaelangesque *terribilità*, combined with a greater precision of dramatic power.

It was the linearity which was represented such a radical departure. In Romney's grand drawing of *Satan Surveying the Fallen Angels*, Romney's captures the roiling mass in a series of fluid pen strokes. As Romney's son succinctly noted: 'he knew how to unite Grecian grace with Etruscan simplicity.' Flaxman took this linearity further in his great sequence of outline illustrations to Homeric texts. But what marks out the work of Flaxman and William Young Ottley was their wide-ranging interests, absorbing influences from far beyond the Hellenistic or even Etruscan worlds. Flaxman's design of *Hannah Presenting Samuel to Eli* shows his receptiveness to the elegant linearity of medieval art. Ottley's visual diet was still more precocious; he is still viewed as one of the foundational figures in the revival of interest in early Italian painting, forming

important working relationships with the Dutch artist David-Pierre Humbert de Superville and the French antiquarian Jean Baptiste Seroux d'Agincourt.

In this way the nocturnal experiments of a small group of British artists suggested a quiet revolution on paper, pointing the way for the development of European art in the following century.

NOTES

1. William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney Esq.*, London, 1809, p.309.
2. George Cumberland, 'Memoirs of Mr George Romney', *European Magazine*, vol.43 (June 1803), p.423
3. William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney Esq.*, London, 1809, p.309.
4. Edward Malone, *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Knight; Late President of the Royal Academy*, London, 1801, vol.I, p.xlix.
5. Ed. John Hayes, *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, New Haven and London, 2001, p.17.
6. Allan Cunningham, *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, London, 1830, vol.III, p.281.
7. J.T. Smith, *Nollkens and his Times: Comprehending a life of that celebrated sculptor; and memoirs of several contemporary artists ...*, London, 1828, vol.II, p.455.
8. William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney Esq.*, London, 1809, p.246.
9. Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, London, 1757, p.44.
10. Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, London, 1757, pp.44-45.

CATALOGUE



GERARD DE LAIRESSE

Pen and ink
 10⁵/₈ × 8³/₈ inches · 272 × 214 mm
 Inscribed on the book: 'Studies from nature'
 Drawn in 1778

COLLECTIONS

Sir George Beaumont (1753–1827);
 Cyril Fry, March 1967;
 W A Brandt;
 by descent to 2023

LITERATURE

Ed. Benedict Nicholson, *John Hamilton Mortimer ARA 1740–1779*, exh. cat., Eastbourne (Towner Art Gallery), 1968, cat. no.31, p.27;
 John Sunderland, 'John Hamilton Mortimer His Life and Works', *The Walpole Society*, vol. LII, 1988, cat. no.140.8a, pp.188–189;
 Felicity Owen and David Blaney Brown, *Collector of Genius: A Life of Sir George Beaumont*, New Haven and London, 1988, p.19

EXHIBITED

Eastbourne, Towner Art Gallery, London, Kenwood House, *John Hamilton Mortimer ARA 1740–1779*, 1968, cat. no.31

ENGRAVED

Etched by Mortimer and published 8 December 1778, to form part of a volume of fifteen prints dedicated to Sir Joshua Reynolds

This characteristic drawing was made by John Hamilton Mortimer in relation to the etched portrait he published of Gérard de Lairesse for part of a volume of fifteen etchings dedicated to Sir Joshua Reynolds printed in 1778. This drawing, which is orientated in the same direction as the etching, is unlikely to have been preparatory, but was probably made as part of a group of sheets Mortimer prepared for the young collector Sir George Beaumont. As Owen and Blaney Brown note in their extensive biography of Beaumont 'the drawings, formerly kept in an album, are fine and characteristic examples of Mortimer's sharp, sinewy manner in pen and ink. They include two remarkably portentous and significant works, companion portraits of a capricious and emotive character, both of artists – the one the young Salvator Rosa and the other the aged Gérard de Lairesse. They were among the first European representations of artists of earlier times and their interest for Beaumont must have been partly art historical.'¹

Mortimer's decision to pair imagined portraits of Rosa and Lairesse has been interpreted as subtle criticism of Sir Joshua Reynolds and his approach to teaching art at the Royal Academy. Gérard de Lairesse was a Dutch painter and art theorist, he is best remembered for his treatises on painting and drawing, *Grondieginge Ter Teekenkonst* (1701) and *Groot Schilderboek* (1707). These texts were published in a single English text, *The Art of Painting*, in 1738 and re-issued in 1778, the year of publication of Mortimer's etchings dedicated to Reynolds. Lairesse had congenital syphilis, which caused him to go blind in around 1690, he therefore turned to writing only after he had lost his ability



John Hamilton Mortimer *Salvator Rosa*
 Black ink on off-white antique laid paper
 11 × 8³/₈ inches · 278 × 207 mm
 Signed: black ink, on book: JH Mortimer/1776 · 1776
 Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Alvin Whitley Fund





John Hamilton Mortimer *Gérard de Lairesse*
 Etching · 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches · 295 × 200 mm
 Lettered below: 'Publish'd Decr. 8, 1778 by I. Mortimer'
 Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd

to practice as a painter. Mortimer's drawing clearly shows the blind Lairesse, leaning on his crutch, feeling his way amidst a barren landscape, away from the apparatus of his trade (palette, brushes, folio of drawings inscribed 'studies after nature' and easel). This depiction contrasts strongly with Mortimer's evocation of the vigorous Salvator Rosa, dressed as a banditto and seated reading with his left hand clutched to his heart. The implicit contrast is between the anti-academic with the academic, the romantic with the classic, the painter of feeling and the theorist is clear. Later commentators have suggested that Mortimer can be identified as the man of feeling, in contrast to the great theorist Reynolds, whose first Seven Discourses were also published in 1778.²

Mortimer's drawings of Lairesse and Rosa were included in the album of drawings he sold, or possibly gave, to the young Sir George Beaumont, the drawing of Rosa is now in the collection of the Harvard Art Museums. Both drawings differ from the finished etchings. Mortimer's treatment of Lairesse shows a difference in the treatment of the foreground and still life, in the etching Mortimer includes a roll of prints of Banditti on the plinth and inscribes the portfolio simply 'Studies'. Benedict Nicholson's identification of this drawing, and its pendant, as two of the first known works in European art of an artist making portraits of other artists of an earlier age, positions this sheet as the progenitor of an important European Romantic trope.

NOTES

1. Felicity Owen and David Blaney Brown, *Collector of Genius: A Life of Sir George Beaumont*, New Haven and London, 1988, p.19.
2. John Sunderland, 'John Hamilton Mortimer His Life and Works', *The Walpole Society*, vol.LII, 1988, p.94.



GEORGE ROMNEY 1734–1802

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

Pen, ink and black chalk on laid paper
14⁷/₈ × 9³/₄ inches · 378 × 248 mm
Drawn c.1780

COLLECTIONS

Elizabeth Romney (1814–1893), granddaughter of the artist;
Romney sale, Christie's 24–25 May 1894;
Alfred de Pass (1861–1952) [Lugt 108a];
Royal Institution of Cornwall, Truro, the gift of the above in 1928;
Royal Institution of Cornwall sale, Christie's, 22 February 1966;
Alistair Matthews;
W A Brandt, acquired from the above 26 April 1966;
by descent to 2023

EXHIBITED:

Sudbury, Suffolk, Gainsborough's House,
Neo-Classical Drawings, 10 September –
23 October 1893, cat. no.21.



George Romney *Orpheus and Eurydice*
Black chalk · 49⁷/₈ × 39³/₄ inches · 1263 × 1008 mm
1775–1785
Presented to the Walker Art Gallery
by the Liverpool Royal Institution in 1948
National Museums Liverpool

This bold wash drawing of two figures almost certainly relates to George Romney's restless interest in a design he had conceived for one of the so-called Liverpool Cartoons, the large-scale black chalk compositions which Romney was working on in the years after his trip to Rome. As was typical in Romney's career, he revisited the poses of the key figures in the design, playing with elements of the composition as he arrived at the best illustration of the text. Romney's decision to treat this subject was partly inspired by a commission from Edward Thurlow, the Lord Chancellor, to paint in 1780 the final parting of Orpheus and Eurydice as described in Book IV of Virgil's *Georgics*.¹ Despite the distinguished nature of the patron, Romney never completed the oil painting. William Hayley, Romney's earliest biographer, attributed this failure to the fact that: 'the ideas of the peer, and those of the painter were so different concerning the mode of treating it on canvas, that Romney despaired of pleasing a patron whose fancy appeared to him very far from being in harmony with his own.'² The diverging view of Romney and Thurlow may account, in part, for this grand figure study. Romney was evidently experimenting with how best to capture the physical and psychological action of the text.

Drawn with remarkable fluency in black chalk and then worked up in pen and ink, finely articulated with the brush in both liquid strokes of black ink and dryer passages, this large-scale figure study was almost certainly developed from one of Romney's Liverpool Cartoons. Writing in his contribution to William Hayley's biography, John Flaxman noted that Romney's 'cartoons ... were examples of the sublime and the

terrible, at the time perfectly new in English art ... As Romney was gifted with peculiar powers for historical and ideal painting, so his heart and soul were engaged in the pursuit of it, whenever he could extricate himself from the importance business of portrait painting. It was his delight by day and study by night.'³ This complex sheet conveys something of Romney's restless nocturnal study.

In a shift of emphasis from the two large-scale cartoons, this study seems to focus on the dramatic moment 'she cries, what hath undone the wretched wife, and thee, Orpheus?' Romney has emphasised the moment Eurydice cries out, showing her in profile, mouth open; adding two profile studies in black chalk on the left-hand margin. Orpheus is shown restraining his wife as she is dragged back to the Underworld by the Furies, his face etched with disbelief at the consequences of his actions. It was Orpheus, not trusting that Eurydice was following him out of the Underworld, who looked back and thereby forfeited her life. The dynamism of the action is heightened by Romney's sophisticated layering of media, the initial black chalk under-drawing emphasised with rapid pen and ink lines is then animated with liquid black wash, applied with the brush. The emphasis on the psychological drama of the moment confirms Flaxman's observation that Romney was the master of 'the sublime and terrible'.

NOTES

1. Alex Kidson, *George Romney A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings*, New Haven and London, 2015, vol.III, cat.1789, p.824.
2. William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney Esq.*, London, 1809, p.309.
3. Quoted in Alex Kidson, *George Romney: 1734–1809*, exh. cat. London (National Portrait Gallery), 2002, p.135.



GEORGE ROMNEY 1734–1802

SATAN SURVEYING THE FALLEN ANGELS

Pen, ink and wash on laid paper
14 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 20 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches · 372 × 530mm
Inscribed verso: 'No 166'
Drawn c.1790

COLLECTIONS

Elizabeth Romney (1814–1893), granddaughter of the artist;
Romney sale, Christie's 24–25 May 1894;
Alfred de Pass (1861–1952) [Lugt 108a];
Royal Institution of Cornwall, Truro, the gift of the above in 1928;
Royal Institution of Cornwall sale, Christie's, 22 February 1966;
Christopher Powney;
W A Brandt, acquired from the above 22 April 1966;
by descent to 2023

EXHIBITED

Ickworth (The National Trust), *British Neo-Classical Art*, 18 May–20 July 1969, cat. no.90.

This richly inked drawing points to Romney's abiding interest in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The heroic male figures at the heart of the composition almost certainly depict Satan and one of his lieutenants, Mammon or Beelzebub; Romney habitually showed Satan as an athlete carrying a large shield, as here. The drawing can be related to a number of sketchbook pages and a large highly worked sheet preserved in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Romney was a prolific draughtsman throughout his career, frequently revisiting his historical works, altering elements and compositional dynamics to produce the most compelling design. Romney's historical work was largely separate from his portraiture. John Flaxman observed that Romney 'was gifted with peculiar powers for historical and ideal painting, so his heart and soul were engaged in the pursuit of it, whenever he could extricate himself from the important business of portrait painting. It was his delight

by day and study by night.'¹ This intensity of engagement with his historical texts is underscored by Romney's son, in his biography, where he specifically observed that in his father's copy of Milton: 'which he was in the habit of studying, all the most striking and picturesque passages are marked, or underlined, by him; so that it may be regarded as a valuable printer's book.'²

By the 1790s Romney was at the height of his powers as a painter. Romney combined his prodigious portrait practice with a relentless campaign of drawing, making hundreds of studies for historical compositions, many of which never came to fruition. This drawing dates from about 1790 at the moment Romney's friend and biographer, William Hayley was commissioned by John and Josiah Boydell to write a new biography of Milton for a projected illustrated edition of Milton's works; a follow-up to their Shakespeare Gallery.



George Romney
Satan arousing the Rebel Angels
Pencil · 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches · 135 × 165 mm · c.1790
Lowell Libson Ltd



The Boydell's scheme emerged as a rival project to one announced slightly earlier by the publisher Joseph Johnson to publish a new edition of Milton's poems, with illustrations from Henry Fuseli. Unlike Fuseli, Romney was not commissioned to produce a series of illustrations to Milton, but he was clearly preoccupied with Milton and his work. In a letter to Hayley in 1791 Romney remarks 'I have made a large composition from Milton, and I wish to keep my mind fixt to that work as much as possible.' Whilst this letter may not relate specifically to this drawing, it suggests the level of engagement Romney had with Milton's text.

In the present grandly worked drawing Romney develops the motif of Satan's first words to the fallen angels. *Paradise Lost* begins in *media res*, Satan and the rebel angels having been defeated. Romney seems to have taken as his subject the moment after Satan has emerged from the fiery sea and stands regarding his fallen army - 'thick as Autumnal leaves' - it is a pivotal point, before Satan makes his rousing speech to the rebel angels. It is actually a moment that had been specifically suggested by Hayley as one ideal to be painted. Hayley in his own *Poetical Epistle to an Eminent Painter* published in 1778 and addressed to Romney had specifically suggested *Paradise Lost* as a possible subject-matter.

'Let Milton's self, conductor of the way,
Lead thy congenial spirit to portray
In Colours, like his verse, sublimely strong,
The scenes that blaze in his immortal song.'

Hayley goes on to suggest a possible subject for Romney:

'Let thy bold Pencil more sublimely true,
Present his Arch Apostate to our view,
In worthier Semblance of infernal Pow'r,
And proudly standing like stately tow'r,
While his infernal mandate bids awake
His Legions, slumbering on the burning lake'³

Romney specifically shows Satan with: 'his ponderous shield, Ethereal temper, massy, large and round, Behind him cast; the broad circumference Hung on his shoulders like the moon', taking in the realities of his new domain. Romney shows Satan as a heroic athlete (as Hayley's 'stately tow'r'), Beelzebub standing next to him, arm stretched towards the darkness above them.

Worked rapidly in sweeping pen and ink lines, Romney has captured the broiling mass of fallen angels writhing in the fiery sea. This tumult of cursorily drawn histrionic figures with hollow, mask-like features contrast deliberately with the purposeful athletic form of Satan. Romney has elaborated and animated the sheet with rapid and expressive pools of black ink wash, imparting a frenzied kineticism to the scene.

NOTES

1. William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney Esq.*, London, 1809, p.309.
2. William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney Esq.*, London, 1809, p.246.
3. William Hayley, *A Poetical Epistle to an Eminent Painter*, London, 1778, pp.44-45.



PRINCE HOARE 1755-1834

A DOUBLE SIDED DRAWING

RECTO

A FEMALE FIGURE
pen and ink with grey wash

VERSO

A STUDY OF A SAILOR LEANING
ON AN ANCHOR
pencil, pen and ink with grey wash

8¼ × 6 inches · 210 × 152 mm

Drawn c.1779

COLLECTIONS

P.&D. Colnaghi & Co.;
W A Brandt, acquired from the above
25 April 1962;
by descent to 2023

This expressive double-sided drawing was made by Prince Hoare and dates from the 1770s, the decade he was working in Rome. On the verso is a drawing of a male nude leaning against an anchor, the reticulated lines of his musculature and exaggerated scale mark this out as the work of the so-called Master of the Giants. Whilst there is no evidence that this particular sheet belonged to the album that formed the focus of a famous exhibition at Roland, Browse and Delbanco in 1949, the drawing does add weight to the attribution of the contents of the album to Prince Hoare.



Hoare was born in Bath in 1755, the son of the hugely successful portrait painter and founder of the Royal Academy, William Hoare. Having studied under his father, Hoare won a premium at the Society of Arts in 1772 and entered the Royal Academy Schools in 1773. In 1776 Hoare left for Rome where he entered the international circle of artists working around Henry Fuseli, including the Swedish sculptor Tobias Sergel who became a friend and correspondent. A gregarious, talented and cosmopolitan figure Hoare all but abandoned art on his return from Britain, becoming a successful playwright instead. The liquid study of a dramatic female figure on the verso of this sheet instantly recalls Sergel's Roman sketches. Drawn in pen, ink and brush, this liquid sheet has a decidedly theatrical quality. The limpid cast shadow is drawn deftly with the brush and appears almost like a blot. Alexander Cozens was a good friend and correspondent of Hoare's father, William, and they would undoubtedly have been aware of Cozens's famed technique for beginning compositions.

The highly theatrical hairstyle, with its trailing locks, is reminiscent of Henry Fuseli's fascination with fantastical female hair. Hoare and Fuseli became close friends in Rome and evidently worked and socialised together and one can discern in Hoare's expressive style his intimacy with Fuseli. Hoare's wealth, according to Northcote writing from Rome 'he has an independent fortune of two or three hundred a year', meant that he largely remained an amateur artist. Something of this rawness remains apparent in his drawings which are idiosyncratically unacademic.



PRINCE HOARE 1755-1834

A HERO BORNE ON A BIER, FROM THE MASTER OF THE GIANTS ALBUM

Pen ink and wash, heightened with white gouache on paper, with a contemporary patch of paper
15 x 22¼ inches · 380 x 565 mm
Inscribed '22' on the verso
Drawn in 1779

COLLECTIONS

Roland, Browse and Delbanco, 1949;
Bought from the above by L. G. Duke for 16 guineas;
Sotheby's, 5 March 1970, lot.100, (£420);
W A Brandt acquired from the above;
by descent to 2023

This remarkably bold sheet comes from an album of drawings made in Rome in 1779. The album has stimulated periodic debate amongst scholars over the last forty years and the drawings have been variously attributed to James Jefferys and Prince Hoare. Executed in a distinctive manner, they are now recognised as exemplary of the violent imagination of British neo-classicism and widely regarded as some of the most graphically advanced works made in late eighteenth-century Europe.

This drawing belongs to a group, which comprise some twenty large sheets and a similar number of smaller sheets, which have been known since they were extracted from an album and exhibited by the London dealers Roland, Browse and Delbanco in 1949. Made in Rome and demonstrating a close interest in sculpture as well as Italian printmaking, they seem to have been drawn

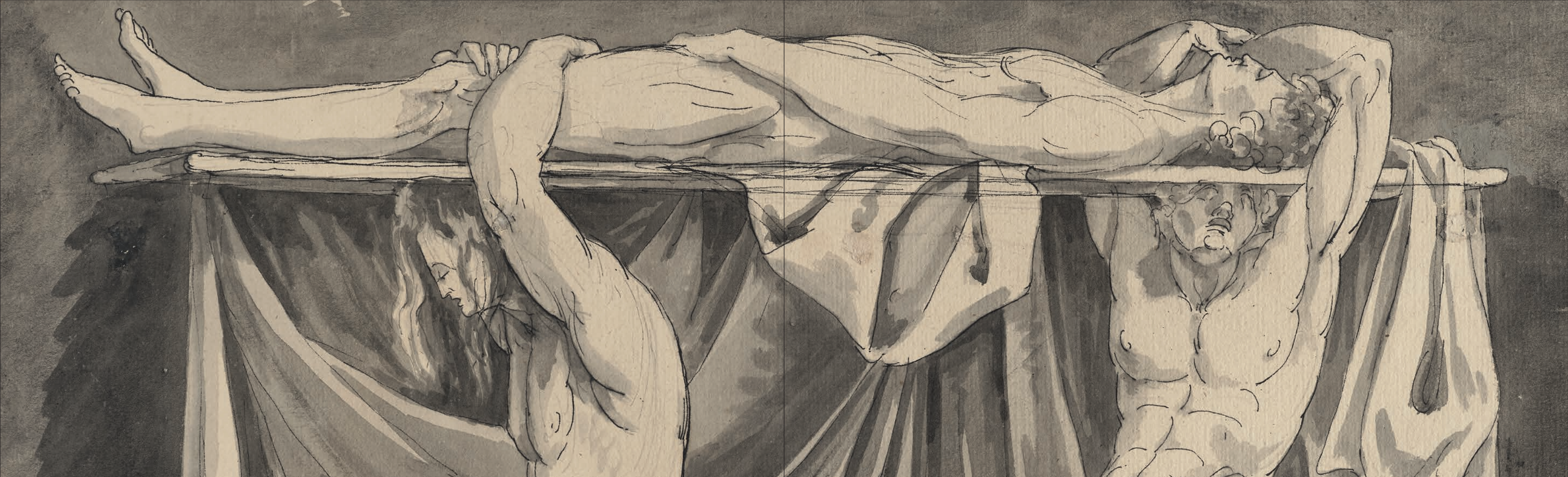
by a member of the international circle of artists who worked close to the Swiss painter Henry Fuseli. Various attempts have been made to identify the hand, who was christened by Roland, Browse and Delbanco: 'The Master of the Giants' on account of the colossal, heroic figures with attenuated limbs which characterise the majority of the sheets.

In the early 1950s both the collector Leonard Duke, who owned the present sheet, and the great Fuseli scholar, Frederick Antal, suggested that the album might be the work of the painter and sculptor Prince Hoare. Whilst Hoare is not universally accepted as the author, the present drawing corresponds closely to Hoare's surviving work. Hoare arrived in Rome in 1776 and quickly established himself amongst artistic circles in the city, he is recorded living in the Strada Felice along with William Pars,

Prince Hoare *Master of the Giants* -
Apollo and Daphne

Pen and black ink with grey washes and graphite
14⅞ x 21 inches · 359 x 533 mm · 1779
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection





Alexander Day and James Nevay. Hoare became particularly close friends with James Northcote, who recorded their frequent trips to draw in the Sistine Chapel. Both Hoare and Northcote were friends and followers of Fuseli. Fuseli arrived in Rome in 1770 and shortly afterwards began to produce highly inventive interpretations of literary subjects. In common with the sculptors Johan Tobias Sergel and Thomas Banks, Fuseli found in the prescribed diet of Raphael and Michelangelo, not classical harmony but vast, swollen heroic bodies engaged in violent actions, ingredients he recast to form a distinctive visual language. It was a language adopted by a circle of young painters and sculptors then studying in Rome.

Both Northcote and Hoare copied a number of Fuseli's Roman sheets – Hoare's drawing after *The Death of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester* survives in the British Museum and a copy of one of Fuseli's five-point sketches is preserved at Yale – and both began producing compositions in a similar style. The geographic proximity of the painters, their personal intimacy and stylistic similarities has caused difficulties in working out questions of attribution for later scholars. We are afforded an idea of Hoare's work from an autograph sketchbook from his Grand Tour consisting of over a hundred studies preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. These drawings offer further support for the attribution of the

present sheet, given the handling of wash and expressive exaggeration of hands are comparable in both.

This fluidly worked sheet ranks as one of the grandest of the drawings from the Master of the Giants Album. As with so many of Fuseli's boldest drawings, the present sheet shows impressive, muscular figures in action. The taut physique of the figures carrying the bier capture the dramatically overblown qualities of late Roman sculpture which Fuseli so admired. The precise subject of the present sheet is unclear, although the youth and noble bearing of the corpse suggest it depicts a hero slain in battle. This iconographical ambiguity marks many of the sheets from

the album. The obscure subject-matter lies at the heart of the appeal of many of the sheets in the Master of the Giants Album, whatever the precise source, it is used by Hoare to create a dynamic image which allows him to play with a boldly arranged group of highly sculptural figures. Hoare revels in the license to distort, exaggerate and stylise showing the lead pall-bearer with impossibly attenuated limbs. It is in these grandly exaggerated figures we find the essence of the British response to the prescribed Grand Tour diet of the antique and high Renaissance classicism, which would fuel the creativity of such artists as William Blake in the following generation.

JOHN FLAXMAN 1755–1826

HANNAH PRESENTING SAMUEL TO ELI

Pen, ink and wash on paper
13³/₈ × 18¹/₂ inches · 340 × 470 mm
Drawn c.1783

COLLECTIONS

Fine Art Society;
W A Brandt, acquired from the above April 1966 (£266);
by descent to 2023

LITERATURE

David Irwin, *John Flaxman 1755–1826: Sculptor, Illustrator, Designer*, London, 1979, p.14

This monumental monochrome drawing was made by John Flaxman in 1783. Previously unknown and unpublished, the sheet belongs to a group of large, finished drawings made before Flaxman travelled to Italy. Highly sculptural in feel, the composition depicts an episode from the Old Testament, Hannah presenting her son Samuel to the prophet Eli and ranks as one of Flaxman's most ambitious early works.

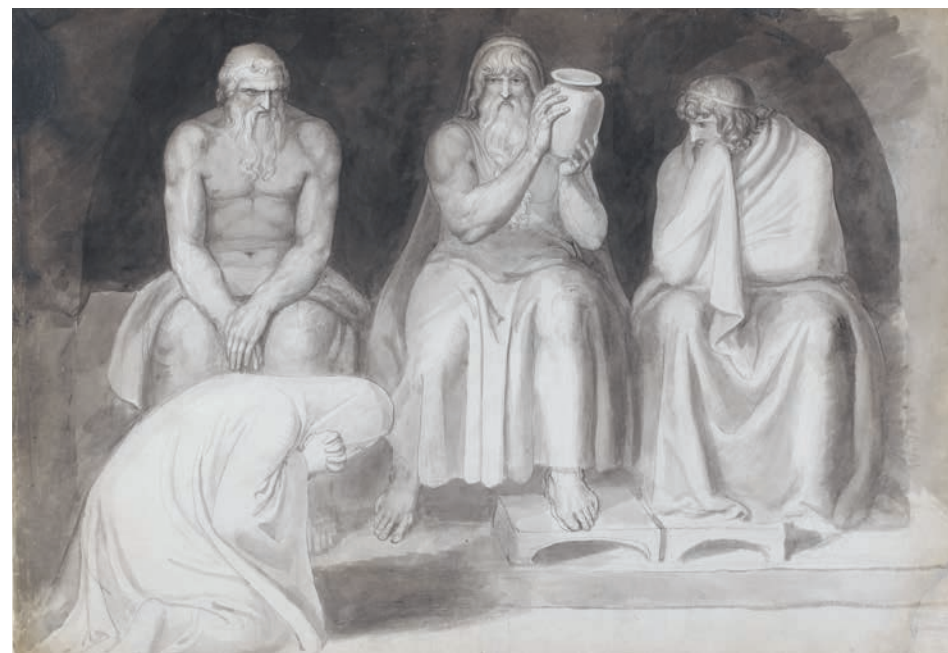
Flaxman was the son of a professional sculptor and he received his earliest education in his father's Covent Garden shop and studio. Flaxman's early prodigious talents as a draughtsman attracted the attention of two of his father's professional contacts, George Romney and Josiah Wedgwood, both of whom became important supporters. In 1770 Flaxman entered the Royal Academy schools, where, according to an early biographer, Allan Cunningham:

*'he was known at the academy as an assiduous and enthusiastic student ... his chief companions were Blake and Stothard: in the wild works of the former he saw much poetic elevation ... with Blake, in particular, he loved to dream and muse, and give shape, and sometimes colour, to those thick-coming fancies in which they both partook.'*¹

Whilst Cunningham's chronology is a little confused, Blake did not enter the Academy schools until 1779, the friendship between the two artists in the early 1780s was of profound importance for both men. Flaxman's most compelling finished drawings in this decade share certain stylistic qualities with those by Blake of the same date. Flaxman and Blake were both supported by the Reverend Anthony Mathew and his wife, Harriet. J.T. Smith records that the Mathews' house, 27 Rathbone Place, 'was then frequented by most of the literary and talented people of the day.'² The Mathews, with Flaxman's assistance, helped Blake to publish his *Poetical Sketches* in 1783 and Cunningham credits Harriet Mathew with encouraging Flaxman's interest in ancient texts: 'Mrs Mathew read Homer, and commented on the pictorial beauty of his poetry, while Flaxman sat beside her embodying such passages as caught his fancy. Those juvenile productions still exist and are touched, and that not slightly, with the quiet loveliness and serene vigour manifested long afterwards in his famous illustrations to the same poet.'³

Blake and Flaxman shared an interest in the gothic. Blake had been apprenticed to the engraver James Basire who sent Blake to Westminster Abbey to make drawings of the medieval monuments and wall paintings. As Benjamin Heath Malkin noted the sculpture filling the abbey 'appeared as miracles of art,

John Flaxman *A soul appearing before the Judges of Hades*
19¹/₄ × 27³/₈ inches · 490 × 697 mm
Graphite, pen and ink and grey wash on laid paper, laid down · c.1783
© Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge





William Blake *Tiriel Supporting the Dying Myratana and Cursing His Sons*

Pen and black ink with grey wash and watercolour
c.1786–1789 · 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches · 187 × 273 mm
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection,
B1977.14.4150.



to his Gothicised imagination.' Flaxman in turn, seems to have assiduously studied medieval art. Smith notes that in gratitude for all the support he had received from the Mathew family, Flaxman 'decorated the back parlour of their house, which was their library, with models, (I think they were in putty and sand,) of figures in niches, in the Gothic manner; and Oram painted the window in imitation of stained-glass; the bookcases, tables, and chairs, were also ornamented to accord with the appearance of those of antiquity.'⁴

The present work belongs to a small group of large-scale drawings made by Flaxman in the early 1780s. They do not appear to have been commissioned or form any coherent iconographic scheme, but they demonstrate Flaxman's remarkable powers as a designer, each showing a series of monumental figures, drawn in Flaxman's characteristic assured ink line and modelled in wash. The present drawing depicts a scene from the Book of Samuel, Hannah is seen presenting her infant son Samuel to the priest Eli to be brought up as a Nazarite.

This was a subject which had been treated by both Benjamin West in 1778 and John Singleton Copley in a painting completed in 1780. But Flaxman's treatment of the subject is radically different; Flaxman presents the four main characters in a frieze-like arrangement. Eli stands in profile one hand holding that of the infant Samuel, his other raised to the sky, a gesture that foreshadows Samuel's portentous communications with God. It is to the young Samuel that God speaks, informing him that Eli and his children will be punished for their poor behaviour. Hannah stands apart, in the centre of the composition, Flaxman renders her as an elegant gothic Madonna with delicately elongated fingers, on the right is her husband, Elkanah shown with a highly sculptural cloak drawn about him. Flaxman's precise, sinuous pen work and delicate washes rendering the four figures like a series of freestanding statues in a niche.

These grand monochrome studies recall the work of Blake at the same moment. In the mid-1780s Blake was working on illustrating the first of his prophetic books,

Tiriel and it is clear that Blake was drawing on similar source material. The *Tiriel* illustrations adopt the same frieze-like format and marmoreal draperies, reminiscent of medieval sculpture. But whilst Blake's designs contain a certain awkwardness, Flaxman's mastery of pen ink means that this composition is full of his characteristic 'quiet loveliness and serene vigour' noted by Cunningham. Flaxman's sheet also demonstrates his power as a designer, each figure mutely conveying the essence of the story of Samuel.

NOTES

1. Allan Cunningham, *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, London, 1830, vol.III, p.283.
2. J.T. Smith, *Nollkens and his Times: Comprehending a life of that celebrated sculptor; and memoirs of several contemporary artists ...*, London, 1828, vol.II, p.455.
3. Allan Cunningham, *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, London, 1830, vol.III, p.281.
4. J. T. Smith, *A Book for a Rainy Day*, London, 1845, p.83.

MATER DOLOROSA

Ink and wash on paper
19¾ × 11½ inches · 500 × 285 mm
Inscribed on the verso: 'No 102'
Drawn 1776

COLLECTIONS

Elizabeth Romney (1814 – 1893), grand-daughter of the artist;
Romney sale, Christie's, 24 – 25 May 1894 (unknown part lot);
Alfred de Pass (1861–1952) [Lugt 108a];
Royal Institution of Cornwall, Truro, the gift of the above in 1928;
Royal Institution of Cornwall sale, Christie's, 22 February 1966 (part of lot 38) bought by Matthews;
Alastair Matthews,
W.A Brandt, acquired from the above April 1966;
by descent to 2023

LITERATURE

Alex Kidson, *George Romney 1734–1802*, exhibition catalogue, London, 2002, p.110;
Alex Kidson, *George Romney: A complete catalogue of his paintings*, New Haven and London, 2015, vol. III, p.821

EXHIBITED

Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, London, National Portrait Gallery and San Marino, The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens, *George Romney 1734–1802*, 2002, no.53

This grand, richly inked drawing was made by George Romney in preparation for one of the most ambitious commissions of his career, a proposed altarpiece of the *Mater Dolorosa* for the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge. The project offered Romney the opportunity to experiment on paper, producing emotionally charged historic compositions in brown ink on a large scale.

In the winter of 1775, following his return from Rome, Romney took over the lease on Francis Cotes's spacious studio, fashionably located at No. 24 Cavendish Square, London. The move was a bold one – Romney set himself up in direct competition with the leading portrait painters in the capital, Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough. Romney's friends helped initiate the artist's rapid ascent as one of the most notable portrait painters in the capital. In 1776, the dramatist Richard Cumberland, a prominent early patron, dedicated his *Ode to the Sun* to the artist, praising him as 'among the first of his profession.' Dr Johnson attributed Romney's rise in popularity to Cumberland's poem. The first commissions for portraits were made by significant figures in London society: Sir George Warren; Charles Lennox, 3rd Duke of Richmond and George Greville, 2nd Earl of Warwick. Within a brief time, Romney's rooms were crowded with wealthy patrons accompanied by family members and friends, which in turn generated further commissions.

Romney's greatest ambition, however, was to be a history painter; in the words of his friend John Flaxman: 'His heart and soul were engaged in the pursuit ... of historical and ideal painting.' Thomas Orde, later the 1st Lord Bolton, who had purchased

a pair of allegorical paintings, *Mirth* and *Melancholy*, at the Society of Artists in 1770, attempted to secure a commission for a history subject for Romney in 1776. According to John Romney's memoirs of his father, Orde expressed the desire to present an altarpiece for the chapel of his alma mater, King's College, Cambridge. He desired a painting 'of a solemn but splendid effect' and suggested the theme of a *Mater Dolorosa*, the image of Mary mourning at the cross. The idea was that Romney would produce a grand, standing figure personifying grief, much in the manner of Orde's *Melancholy*. As was his habit with his most stimulating commissions, Romney produced multiple drawn studies as he prepared to undertake the final painting. In the end Orde's project was pre-empted by Frederick Howard, 5th Earl of Carlisle, who donated a *Deposition* thought to be by Daniele da Volterra (now attributed to Girolamo Siciolante de Sermoneta). According to John Romney, his father's altarpiece 'was in a state of great forwardness' when this happened. Romney lost the fee of 100 guineas and the prestige of having his work in such a prestigious location.

As Alex Kidson has noted, Romney's surviving drawings for this project are surprisingly various. Romney's method was to settle on a compositional motif and then repeat it continually, but in the case of this commission, the surviving drawings show a considerable degree of variation in the conceptualisation. It was possibly a combination of the high-profile location of the painting and the subject-matter which caused Romney to experiment more than normal. The present sheet is one of





the grandest and most fully realised of the drawings made for this project and shows how Romney tried to adapt the language of patrician portraiture for historical work. Romney shows the Virgin full length, standing in a landscape, leaning on a plinth, which, on closer inspection is Christ's cross. On the verso is another study which shows the Virgin standing in profile with arms outstretched before her, almost like a sleepwalking Lady Macbeth; staining from the folds of her robe are visible in the top of the sheet.

Executed with astonishing confidence, this boldly worked ink drawing shows Romney's mastery as a draughtsman. The drawing's emphasis on the plaintive expression and gesture of the Virgin suggests his skill at evoking emotion. In his description of the Virgin's robes, Romney gave form to the mournful tone of his subject with heavy, descending lines that pool at the bottom, giving the Virgin a statuesque quality. Preserved in outstanding condition, this richly inked drawing remained in Romney's studio at his death before passing to his son. It is one of the largest and most outstanding sheets by Romney to remain in a private collection.



George Romney *Mater Dolorosa*
Brown ink, pen and wash, with graphite
underdrawing
19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 11 $\frac{9}{16}$ inches · 501 x 293 mm 1776
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Dudley P. Allen
Fund 1970.338

HENRY FUSELI 1741-1825

SATAN SUMMONING HIS LEGIONS

Black chalk
11¾ × 7¼ inches · 298 × 184 mm
Dated and inscribed: 'M.G.S.12.16 ar ate'

COLLECTIONS

Maas Gallery;
W A Brandt, acquired from the above 4 March
1963 (£367.10);
by descent to 2023

LITERATURE

Gert Schiff, *Johann Heinrich Fussli*, Zurich, 1973,
vol. I, cat. no.1726

EXHIBITED

London, Maas Gallery, *Exhibition of Early English
Water-colours*, 1963, no.37, reproduced;
Ickworth (The National Trust), *British
Neo-Classical Art*, 18 May-20 July 1969, cat.
no.92;
London, Tate Gallery, *Henry Fuseli 1741-1825*,
1975, cat. no.207

This bold drawing was made by Fuseli towards the end of his life and celebrates his enduring interest in the works of John Milton. Fuseli was not only a hugely significant painter, designer and writer, he was, as Professor of Painting and from 1804 Keeper of the Royal Academy, a hugely important teacher, whose vision and ideas impacted a generation of British painters from Thomas Lawrence to William Blake. Fuseli was widely read and a polyglot, deploying the full force of his erudition in the conception of his designs. This remarkable sheet shows Satan summoning his

legions from the entrance of a great cave, inscribed with initials indicating it was made at Margate Sands in December 1816, this powerful drawing is therefore a late expression of Fuseli's enduring interest in the subject.

Fuseli was born in Zurich, he initially trained to be a Zwinglian minister, but left Switzerland after he exposed corruption by a city magistrate. Fuseli spent time in Berlin, where he was immersed in the world of the German enlightenment, before travelling to London in 1764 with the British diplomat Sir Andrew Mitchell. In London Fuseli met



William Blake *The Fertilization
of Egypt, after Fuseli*

Pen and grey ink and grey wash
7⅞ × 5⅞ inches · 194 × 150 mm · c.1791
© The Trustees of the British
Museum



an influential circle of friends and future patrons and was exposed to the world of the London theatre. He described seeing Garrick perform Shakespeare as like ‘an operation for cataract’, introducing him to the power of the texts as performed. In May 1770 Fuseli arrived in Rome, having been encouraged to travel to Italy by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Rome provided Fuseli with not only a diverse circle of fellow artists, but a remarkable source book for his subsequent work as a historical painter in the form of the heroic figures of Michelangelo and late antique sculpture.

In 1791 the radical publisher Joseph Johnson, Fuseli’s closest friend and supporter, issued proposals for a magnificent edition of Milton’s complete poems supervised by William Cowper and embellished with thirty plates executed by eminent engravers such as Francesco Bartolozzi, William Sharp, Thomas Holloway and William Blake. Fuseli was to be the only painter involved. After a myriad of setbacks, Fuseli eventually showed a cycle of forty-one paintings devoted to Milton’s life and works in 1799. The whole scheme was a financial disaster and no plates were engraved to sell to subscribers. Fuseli sought to rectify this blunder with the eleven large plates retrospectively engraved by Moses Haughton after the most sublime of the *Milton Gallery* paintings (in particular, the *Lazar House*) and jointly published as ‘from the Royal Academy’ between 1803 and 1813.

The heroic figure of Satan was at the heart of Fuseli’s interest in Milton. Fuseli conceived him as Apollo-like, muscle-bound and energetic, the epitome of a fallen angel. In the present drawing Fuseli reprises the motif of showing the muscled back of Satan, legs and arms outstretched summoning his legions from some unseen void. It was a pose that Fuseli had first experimented with in Italy, making a spirited ink copy of Andrea del Sarto’s *Beheading of St John*

the Baptist from the cloister of the Scalzo, Florence. It is a pose which appears frequently in Fuseli’s treatment of Satan, including the print *Satan Summoning his Legions* used to illustrate Book 1 of *Paradise Lost* and published in 1803, engraved by Peltro Tomkins. The motif is such a powerful one that Fuseli used it in his depiction of the God Anubis which he used as the illustration of *The Fertilization of Egypt* from Erasmus Darwin’s *The Botanic Garden*, 1791. Fuseli’s design was engraved by the young William Blake who would go on to adapt the idea – a muscle bound figure seen legs and arms apart, from behind – in his great depiction of *the Great Red Dragon* (Brooklyn Museum). As such this extraordinarily bold drawing, made at the end of Fuseli’s career, sits in a remarkable visual lineage and stands as one of the most dramatic of Fuseli’s conceptions of Satan.

WILLIAM BLAKE 1757–1827

A DOUBLE-SIDED SHEET OF NUDE STUDIES

RECTO
MEN THROWING SOMERSAULTS, MAKING HANDSTANDS AND RECLINING, WITH DETAILED STUDIES OF LIMBS

VERSO
STUDIES OF A KNEELING MAN, A TORSO SEEN FROM ABOVE, A HEAD AND LIMBS

Pencil
9⅞ × 7⅞ inches · 232 × 187 mm
Drawn c.1810

COLLECTIONS
William Michael Rossetti (1829–1919), by 1863; Helen Maria Maddox (Rossetti) Angelli (1879–1969), daughter of the above; Maas Gallery; W A Brandt, acquired from the above 3 January 1963 (£450); by descent to 2023

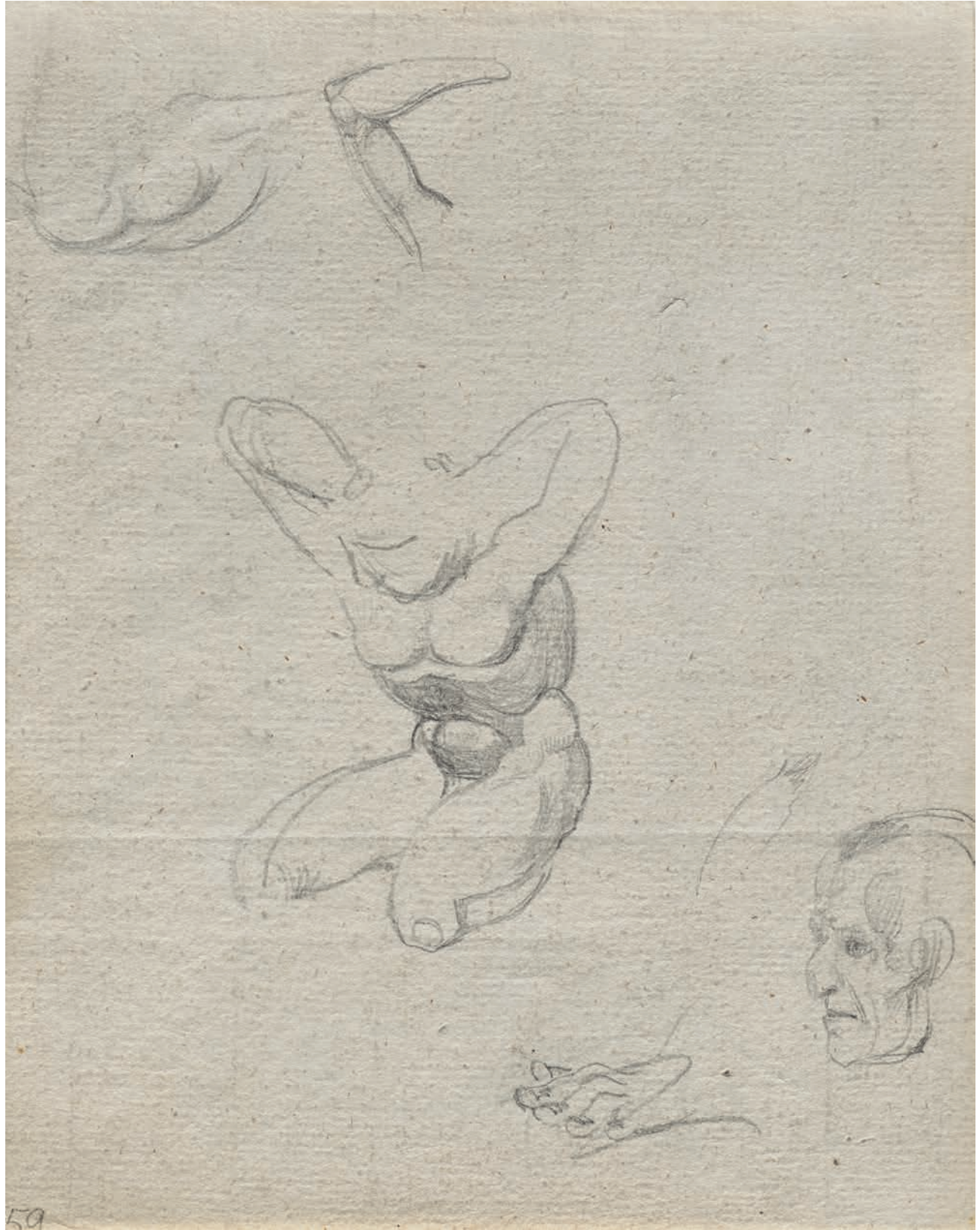
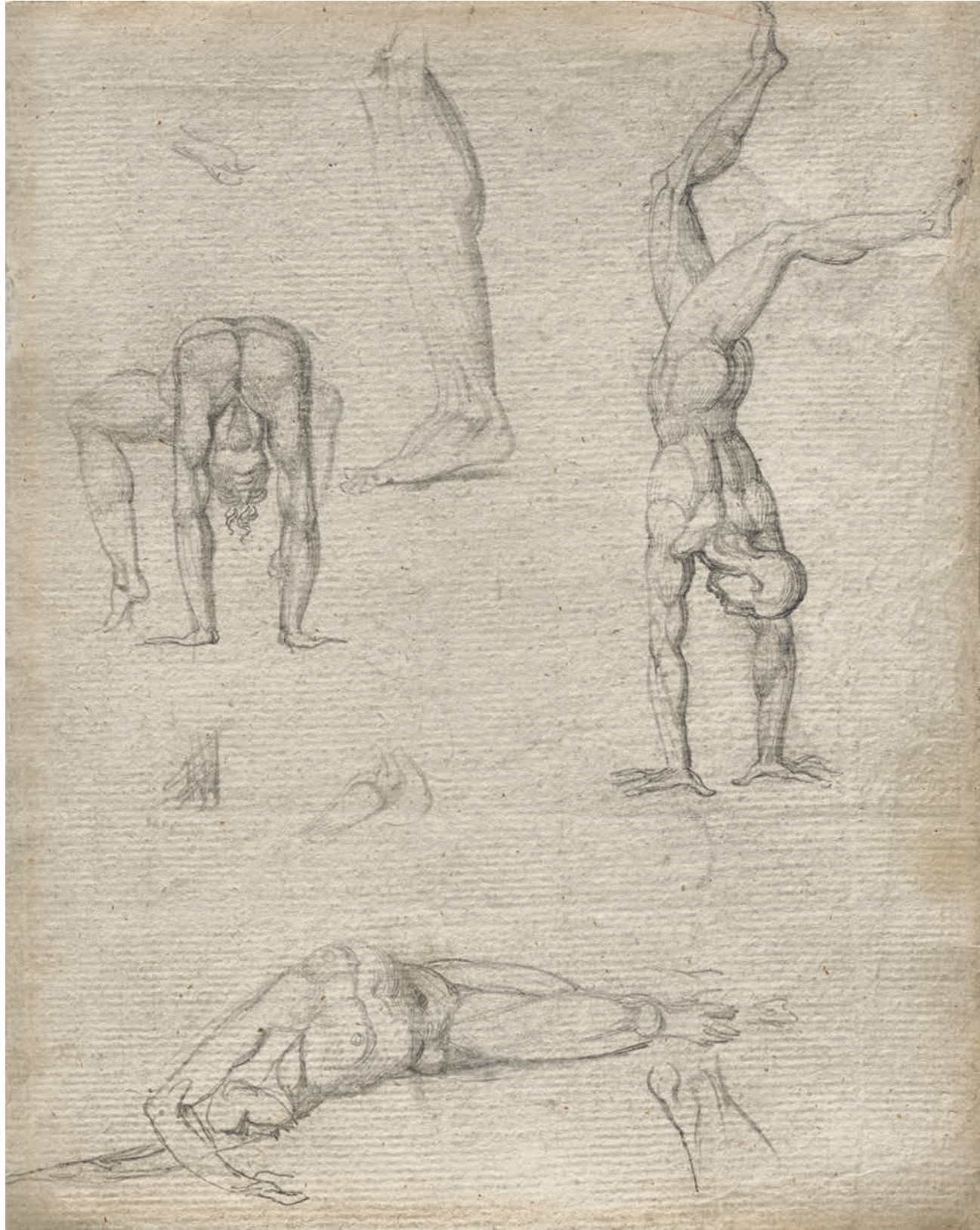
LITERATURE
Alexander Gilchrist, ‘Life of William Blake’, London, 1863, p.252, William Michael Rossetti, *Annotated Catalogue of Blake’s Pictures and Drawings*, list 2 ‘Uncoloured Works’ cat. no.148; Alexander Gilchrist, ‘Life of William Blake’, New and Enlarged edition, London, 1880, p.272, William Michael Rossetti *Annotated Catalogue of Blake’s Pictures and Drawings*, list 2 ‘Uncoloured Works’ cat. no.177; Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, New Haven and London, 1981, vol.1, p.449, no.595, vol. 11, pl 835 & 835

EXHIBITED
London, Burlington Fine Arts Club, *Exhibition of the works of William Blake*, 1876, no.155 as ‘Various Studies of the Figure’ (Lent by W.M. Rossetti); London, Maas Gallery, *Early English Watercolours*, 1963, no.39 (as by Fuseli)

This double-sided drawing by William Blake shows him playing with acrobatic, nude figures, making unusual, heavily worked anatomical studies which undoubtedly informed his great graphic projects. Originally recorded in the collection of William Michael Rossetti, this unusual sheet offers a fascinating and rare insight into Blake’s working practices. The dynamic figures, although not directly related to surviving designs by Blake, show the inventive poses he was interested in developing. The figure shown standing on his hands, for example, recalls Blake’s design for the title-page of his illustrations to *The Grave* of 1806. Meticulously articulated and boldly drawn, these preparatory studies point both to Blake’s inventiveness and his care in capturing the anatomy of the figures he used in his designs; the segmented musculature apparent in the hand-standing figure recalls an écorché model. The figure shown balancing on legs and hands, head thrown back to reveal the underside of the chin and neck, is a distinctly Blakean type, as is the kneeling figure on the verso, hands clamped behind neck in a prostrate pose. This figure in particular, with its compact, powerful torso recalls figures such as the devil from Blake’s 1805 watercolour *The Devil Rebuked*; *The Burial of Moses*, now in the Harvard Art Museums. Blake was a remarkably economic draughtsman who rarely wasted a sheet of paper, as a consequence even the slightest figure study often found itself developed into a finished design. This drawing is therefore unusual in showing Blake developing complex poses that seem never to have been reused.

Preserved in excellent condition and on the market for the first time since 1963 this exceptionally rare drawing offers important

insights into the artistic method of one of the most remarkable figures of early nineteenth-century British art. First recorded in the collection of William Michael Rossetti who was responsible, along with his brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti, of completing Alexander Gilchrist’s *Life of William Blake* for publication in 1863.



THE BATTLE OF THE ANGELS

Pen, ink and wash on two pieces of laid paper
15 × 9 7/8 inches · 380 × 250 mm
Drawn c.1795

COLLECTIONS

Christopher Powney;
W A Brandt, acquired from the above
3 January 1970;
by descent to 2023

This highly dynamic sheet by William Young Ottley was drawn whilst he was living in Italy in the 1790s. It appears to be a previously unpublished finished study for Ottley's only exhibited oil, *The Battle of the Angels*, shown at the Royal Academy in 1823 (no.233). As Hugh Brigstocke has noted, whilst the painting was not shown until Ottley was long back from the Continent: 'there is clear evidence that it was initially conceived by Ottley in Italy, as his response to Cimabue in the upper church at Assisi, Signorelli at Orvieto and Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*, and that it became a persistent obsession.'¹ A related preparatory study of the central figure of St Michael following the same pose is bound into a copy of Ottley's designs for his *Twelve Stories of the Life of Christ* which were engraved and published by Tommaso Piroli in Rome in 1796.² The complex and richly worked drawing gives a sense of Ottley's remarkable powers as a designer, executed when he was steeped in all the materials which would make him such a pioneering figure in the scholarship of Italian art in the following decades.

Ottley was born at Dunstan Park, near Thatcham, the seat of his mother's father, Sir William Young. Unusually for someone of his background, Ottley entered the Royal Academy Schools in 1788. He set off for Italy in 1791, remaining for eight years. His friendship with John Flaxman probably dates from this period; several of his drawings of sculpture from the Cathedral at Orvieto are included in one of Flaxman's Italian sketch-books. It may have been Flaxman who introduced Ottley to Tommaso Piroli, who later engraved two series of aquatints for Ottley as well as many of the plates for *The Most Eminent Masters of the Early Florentine School* published by Ottley in 1826 with a dedication to John

Flaxman. Ottley is viewed as one of the foundational figures in the revival of interest in early Italian painting, forming important working relationships with the Dutch artist David-Pierre Humbert de Superville and the French antiquarian Jean Baptiste Seroux d'Agincourt.

It seems likely that this vigorous drawing relates to the chiaroscuro painting Ottley eventually showed at the Royal Academy in 1823 which was accompanied by lines from *The Book of Revelation* ('And there was war in Heaven'). At the centre of the composition Ottley places the figure of Michael the archangel sword raised, around him are ranged legions of angels and fallen angels in combat. The densely worked design sees Ottley cover the sheet in a rich pattern of ink, creating a sense of horror vacui, alleviated only by the stark geometry of the figure of St Michael. Figures of the battling angels recall the scenes of aerial combat from Signorelli's frescos in Orvieto cathedral, whilst the bold outlining and geometric approach to figures points to Ottley's scientific work in recording Italian frescos in linear engravings. The care with which Ottley has composed this richly worked sheet is evident in its construction. The heavily foreshortened figure at the bottom of the drawing and fallen angel to the left are drawn on a separate piece of paper that has been skilfully let into the sheet.

This rare drawing by Ottley offers powerful evidence for his skills as a designer and powers as an artist, it also offers a valuable insight into the British role in reviving interest in early Italian art. Ottley left Italy in 1799, devoting much of his remaining life to writing. In 1833 he became Keeper of the Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, a post he held until his death in 1836.

NOTES

1. Hugh Brigstocke, 'William Young Ottley in Italy', in *The Walpole Society*, vol.LXXII, 2010, p.349.
2. New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, *Twelve Stories of the Life of Christ*, Folio A 2010 17, f.23r.





RIENZI

Pencil, ink and wash

11 × 5 inches · 228 × 138 mm

Inscribed on the drawing:

'Tis rumoured yet his spell had pow'r

To summon to that ruin'd tower

Spirits, that to his eye of flame

Rome's arm'd avengers - nightly came:

Metellus - either Scipio - there -

And either Brutus wav'd in air

His blade - 'mid these, Rienzi stood,

And grasp'd each dagger dark with blood.'

Accompanied by a letter from John Flaxman

addressed to William Sotheby and dated 1826

COLLECTIONS

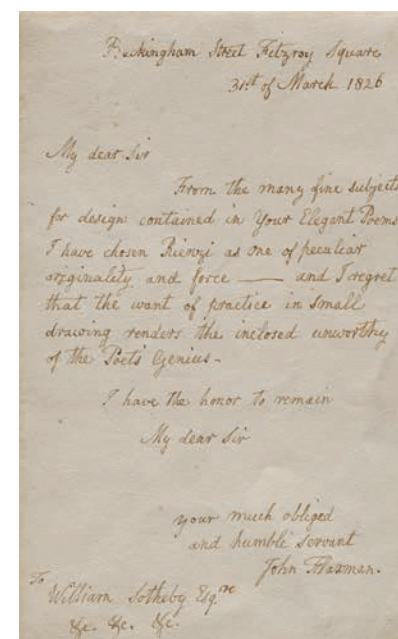
William Sotheby (1757-1833);

Fry Gallery;

W A Brandt, acquired from the above

11 December 1968;

By descent to 2023



Letter from John Flaxman addressed to William Sotheby and dated 1826

7½ × 4½ inches · 190 × 115 mm

This captivating illustration was made by John Flaxman at the behest of the poet William Sotheby, illustrating eight lines from Sotheby's own poem *On the Ruined Palace of Rienzi* published in 1825. Sotheby was a distinguished poet, translator and literary patron, supporting a number of young writers, including Scott and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Sotheby, wrote Byron, 'has imitated everybody, and occasionally surpassed his models.' Although his poems and plays were held in high esteem by his friends, he is chiefly remembered for his translations of Virgil and Christoph Martin Wieland, and for his literary friendships. In 1816 Sotheby travelled to Italy and on his return published impressions of his journey in *Farewell to Italy* and *Occasional Poems*. *On the Ruined Palace of Rienzi* describes Sotheby's thoughts at contemplating the so-called Casa di Rienzi, now known as the Casa dei Crescenzi, an eleventh-century tower on the Forum Boarium. The association with Cola di Rienzi, the fourteenth-century Roman politician, made it a site of great romantic interest.

Sotheby evidently sent Flaxman a copy of his 1825 publication, *Poems*, asking him to illustrate some lines; the letter which accompanies this drawing, makes it clear that the choice of a verse from *On the Ruined Palace of Rienzi* came directly from Flaxman. By the early nineteenth century, Rienzi had become an important romantic hero. Having convened a parliament on the Capitol in 1347, he was declared tribune. Petrarch celebrated his just rule, specifically comparing him to Camillus, Brutus and Romulus. Rienzi aspired to unify Italy and limit the temporal power of the Papacy, policies which led to his eventual downfall. Flaxman

shows an eerie nocturnal scene with Rienzi silhouetted between the shades of Roman Republican politicians ('Rome's arm'd avengers'). Flaxman shows Rienzi as a man of destiny, reflecting the contemporary fascination with a figure celebrated by Petrarch. Byron praises Rienzi in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* ('The friend of Petrarch - hope of Italy - Rienzi! Last of Romans!') published in 1818 and Rienzi was increasingly celebrated during the nineteenth century, forming the subject of a novel by Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1835 which, in turn, formed the basis for an opera by Richard Wagner. This richly worked drawing, made the year Flaxman died, celebrates one of the abiding themes of his work: a heroic figure assailed by the supernatural, as such it is also a quintessential romantic motif.

Buckingham Street, Fitzroy Square

31st of March 1826

My dear Sir

From the many fine subjects

for design contained in your *Elegant Poems*

I have chosen Rienzi as one of peculiar

originality and force - and I regret

that the want of practice in small

drawing renders the inclosed unworthy

of the Poet's Genius -

I have the honor to remain

My dear Sir

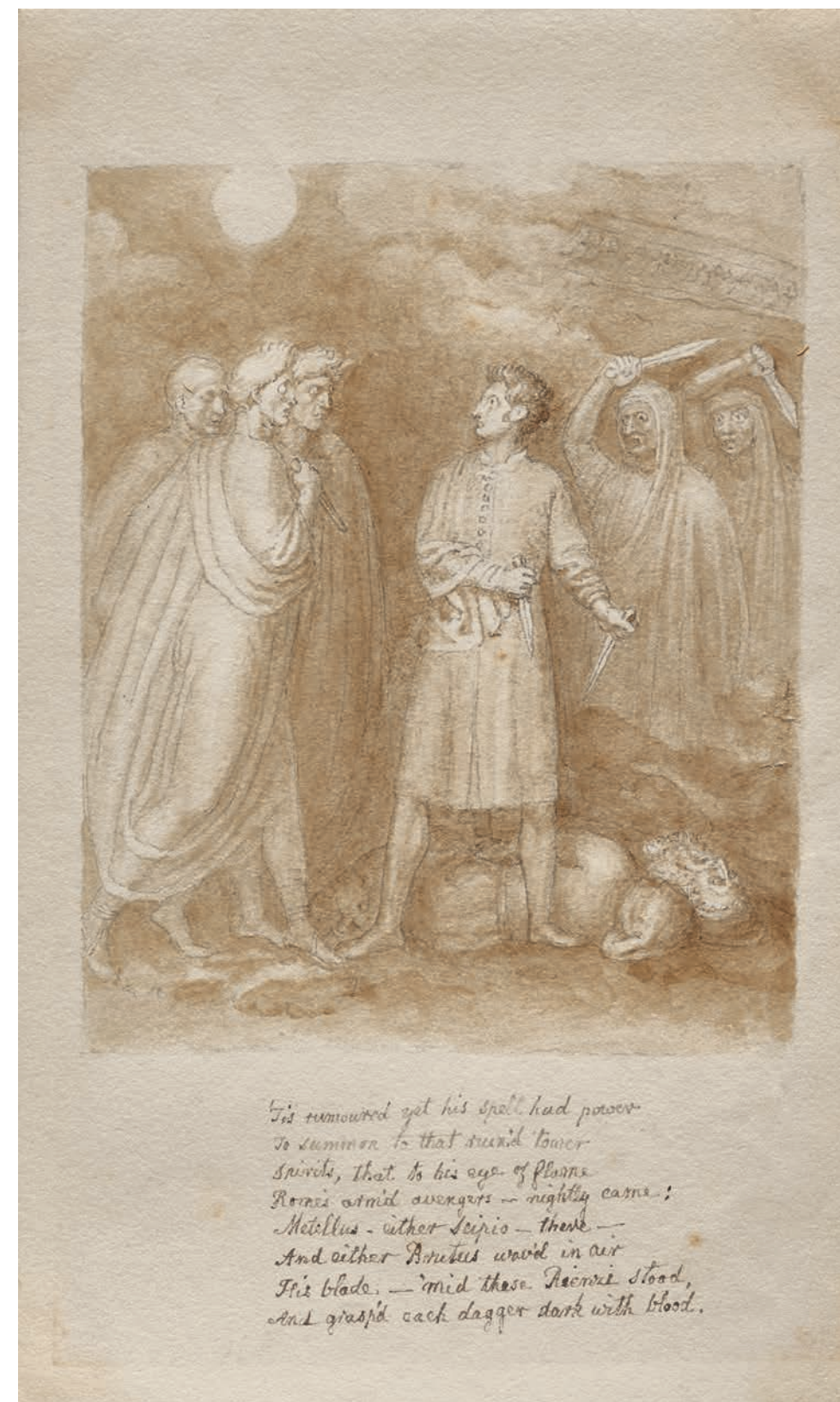
Your much obliged

And humble servant

John Flaxman

To William Sotheby Esqr

&c. &c. &c.



'Tis rumoured yet his spell had power
To summon to that ruin'd tower
Spirits, that to his eye of flame
Rome's arm'd avengers - nightly came:
Metellus - either Scipio - there -
And either Brutus wav'd in air
His blade - 'mid these, Rienzi stood,
And grasp'd each dagger dark with blood.



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Cover: George Romney 1734-1802 *Satan*
Surveying the Fallen Angels [detail] see pp.18-21.
Frontispiece: John Flaxman 1755-1826 *Hannah*
Presenting Samuel to Eli [detail] see pp.28-31.

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