

Masterworks from the Renaissance to the early 19th Century Conservation at the Honolulu Museum of Art

In 2009, with the assistance of Pace Art Conservation in Honolulu, the Williamstown Art Conservation Center in Massachusetts, and a score of generous donors, the Honolulu Museum of Art embarked on a three-year project to conserve a selection of Old Master paintings and drawings from the permanent collection. The paintings underwent extensive cleaning and meticulous inpainting to restore their original pigmentation, composition, and surface detail, and they were relined, restretched, revarnished, and reframed to ensure their structural integrity. The drawings were bathed, flattened, touched up, and repaired to reduce residue from environmental particulates, to minimize discoloration due to overexposure to light, to mitigate damage from contact with acidic mats and mounts, and to mend creases and tears due to improper housing; they were then mounted, matted, and secured for storage and exhibition.

These rarely seen masterworks are now on view for the first time since undergoing conservation. Paintings by notable exponents of the Dutch and Italian Baroque—including Jan van Goyen and Marcantonio Franceschini—are joined by a selection of master drawings dating from the 16th through the early 19th century, which together offer an overview of the Museum's significant holdings in this area. From life studies by such Italian Baroque artists as Giovanni Panini and Andrea Sacchi (for whom drawing served as a cornerstone of academic practice and a vehicle for designing large-scale commissions) to landscapes and genre scenes of the Dutch and Italian schools (which routinely conceptualized drawings as discrete and intimate artworks) the examples displayed here demonstrate the rich diversity of the draftsman's craft. They also establish drawing as the basis for the creative act: whether the lingering trace of a nascent idea or a work of art in itself, drawing offers the most direct and immediate evidence of the hand—and mind—of the artist.