

Dates and Locations October 8, 2005 – January 15, 2006, **Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ**
October 11, 2005 – January 22, 2006, **Dahesh Museum of Art, New York, NY**

Exhibition Details This unprecedented exhibition explores the impact of the Greek poet Homer and his epics on the tradition of French painting through works from the legendary collection of the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris. One hundred and thirty paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints bring the Homeric vision to life, and include works by Jacques-Louis David, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Nicolas Poussin, François Rude, Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, and Honoré Daumier. The École des beaux-arts, on the left bank of the Seine, is closed to the public and its treasures are rarely seen. The Dahesh/Princeton showing is the only U.S. presentation of this exhibition, making this a singular experience for anyone drawn to the tales of gods and mortals and to the rich legacy of classical literature in French art.

Homer and the Popular Imagination Millennia after Homer wrote the *Iliad*, the story of Achilles and the Trojan War, and the *Odyssey*, the tale of the Greek leader Odysseus' journey home from Troy, these tales live on. The French obsession with Homer spans hundreds of years, from the first French-language translation of Homer in the early 16th century to what Marcel Proust called the "Homer phenomenon" in the early 20th century. History painting was the loftiest artistic ideal through the late 19th century, and the firsthand study of Homer's poetry was crucial in developing the personal visions of the great masters of the École. The adventures of Homer's heroes continue to appeal to the public imagination through such films as *Troy*, *O Brother Where Art Thou*, and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

History of the École From its founding as the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture in 1648 until the educational reforms of 1968, the École des beaux-arts was the premier art academy in Europe that followed the Greek model of artistic training. Its artistic practices were untouchable even by dramatic social, political, and aesthetic evolution. Rigorous training in drawing and painting was merely preparation for the almost Olympian process of competing in the *Grand Prix* (which became the *Prix de Rome*). This competition entailed three trials, and, for the top artists, nearly three months working in strict isolation. The venerated myths and history of ancient Greece and Rome were the most popular among the assigned subjects of the competition, and the winner was honored with as many as five years of study at the Académie de France à Rome, where he could fully immerse himself in the genius of antiquity. Once back from Italy, students applying to the Academy for membership were required to present a reception piece, which usually remained in the collection of the Louvre or the École des beaux-arts. Over 600 *Grand Prix* and *Prix de Rome* paintings, sculptures, and architectural drawings, as well as gifts from some of the school's masters, are still in the École's collection and preserve a remarkable period of art history.

Venues This exhibition opened at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts in fall 2004. The Dahesh Museum of Art (DMA) and the Princeton University Art Museum (PUAM) have forged a unique alliance to present this exhibition in the United States. It is a natural fit for the DMA's mission of reassessing the role of Europe's academic artists in the context of 19th-century visual culture, and PUAM's commitment to providing an unparalleled educational experience to both students and the public by engaging objects of art as primary sources.

Auxiliary Exhibition PUAM will showcase Jacques-Louis David's *Antiochus and Stratonice*, from the collection of the École des beaux-arts, juxtaposed with a preliminary oil sketch, both of which were created for the *Prix de Rome*. This side-by-side presentation of two works by the greatest artist to have won the *Prix de Rome* will encourage comparisons between the techniques of the oil sketch and a finished academic painting. A brochure by Scott Allan, graduate student in the Department of Art and Archaeology, will accompany the two-picture exhibition.

Programming Both institutions will hold lectures and readings of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. A scholarly symposium on related art historical and literary subjects will take place at Princeton on Sunday, October 9, 2005.

Catalogue A lavishly illustrated 384-page catalogue by Emmanuel Schwartz, curator in chief of the patrimony at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, will be published by Yale University Press, the Dahesh Museum of Art, and the Princeton University Art Museum. This book contains entries for the works and essays by Emmanuel Schwartz entitled *Reading Homer in France* and the administrative and artistic history of the École, as well as thirteen thematic chapters. A preface by George Steiner compares the reception of Homer in England and France. An essay by Philippe Sénéchal, entitled *The Truth in the Folds*, addresses theories of classical drapery in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France.

Organizers This exhibition was organized by Emmanuel Schwartz, curator in chief of the patrimony at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts. It was coordinated at the Dahesh Museum of Art by Roger Diederer, curator, and at the Princeton University Art Museum by Betsy Rosasco, research curator of Later Western art.

Hours and Admission The DMA is open Tuesday - Sunday 11 am - 6 pm; open until 9 pm on the first Thursday of each month. Closed Mondays and federal holidays. Admission is \$9 adults; \$4 students and seniors (62+) with ID; Free to Museum Members and children under 12; Free on *First Thursdays*, 6-9 pm. Visitor information: 212-759-0606 or www.daheshmuseum.org

The PUAM is located in the center of Princeton University campus; hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10 - 5; Sunday 1-5. Closed Monday and major holidays. Visitor information: 609-258-3788, or www.princetonartmuseum.org.

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