

Press Release

SCOTTISH
NATIONAL
GALLERY



Sir Peter Paul Rubens, *Copy of the Figure of 'Prudence' after Raphael's fresco of 'The Virtues'*, Scottish National Gallery

RED CHALK: RAPHAEL TO RAMSAY

18 February – 10 June 2012

SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH2 2EL

Telephone 0131 624 6200

PRESS VIEW: 11.30 am – 1.00 pm, 16 FEBRUARY 2012

www.nationalgalleries.org

Admission free

This spring, a fascinating new exhibition at the Scottish National Gallery will explore the versatile and beautiful drawing medium of red chalk. Comprising some 35 works from the Gallery's world-class collection, *Red Chalk: Raphael to Ramsay* will showcase a diverse range of exquisite drawings by distinguished artists, such as Peter Paul Rubens, Salvator Rosa, Jean-Antoine Watteau, Francois Boucher and David Allan. The display will feature works which, due to their delicate nature are rarely on show, as well as a number of drawings being exhibited for the first time.

Red chalk was first used for drawing on paper in late-15th century Italy. Chalk is a naturally occurring mineral, quarried directly from the earth then cut into drawing sticks which can be hand-held or chipped into a point and set into a holder. Drawing chalk can also be made, using ground up natural chalk mixed with water to form a paste then rolled into drawing sticks. This display will highlight the ways in which artists have, over the centuries, exploited the unique nature of red chalk to produce an array of dazzling and distinctive effects that cannot be achieved with any other drawing medium.

The earliest drawing on display, and a highlight of the show, will be Raphael's *Study of a Kneeling Nude*. This beautiful life-study was made in about 1518 and is a preparatory drawing for one of a series of Raphael's painted frescos. The delicately drawn figure reveals not only the artist's phenomenal skill as a draughtsman, but also his meticulous preparation for each composition.

Rosa's powerful and arresting mid-17th century drawing, *Head of a Bearded Man*, is a fantastic example of red chalk being used to produce a highly expressive finished drawing, intended as a piece of art in its own right. A sheet of figurative studies by the influential Baroque draughtsman Pompeo Girolamo Batoni (1708–87), reveals the incredible precision and control that can be achieved with red chalk, whilst Rubens' *Four Women Harvesting* from c.1630 demonstrates how effectively chalk can be used for rapid sketching, with the simplest and most minimal strokes.

Red chalk experienced a surge in popularity with French artists in the 18th century. Drawings in the display by Watteau and Boucher will showcase how the medium was used by artists of the Rococo period to produce highly decorative and elegant drawings. Studies by Fragonard and Hubert will also provide superb examples of red chalk being chosen as a useful medium for highly evocative depictions of the landscape.

Other highlights will include a preparatory study by Guercino for his monumental oil painting of *Erminia Finding the Wounded Tancred* (currently displayed in the main gallery), and the Scottish portrait painter Allan Ramsay's iconic drawing from 1776 of his second wife, Margaret Lindsay. The show will also include works by artists David Allan, William Delacour and Archibald Skirving to illustrate how the medium was adopted in Scotland.

Whether used to draw a detailed study from nature, a summary sketch or a highly polished finished drawing, red chalk is an enduringly popular, richly expressive and unique medium for draughtsmen. *Red Chalk: Raphael to Ramsay* will showcase the breadth and variety of the Gallery's drawings collection whilst providing a wonderful opportunity to see beautiful and accomplished drawings by a selection of our most admired artists.

**For further information and images, please call the Press Office on 0131 624 6247/
325/ 332/ 314**

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