

# BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **Blanton Museum to Present *After Michelangelo, Past Picasso:* *Leo Steinberg's Library of Prints***



*Exhibition includes exceptional works spanning 500 years of printmaking,  
drawn from the collection of a noted art historian and critic*

AUSTIN, TX—December 15, 2020—The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin will present *After Michelangelo, Past Picasso: Leo Steinberg's Library of Prints* as a major exhibition from February 7, 2021 to May 9, 2021. The exhibition is drawn from acclaimed art historian and art critic Leo Steinberg's collection of approximately 3,500 prints, which was acquired by the Blanton in 2002. *After Michelangelo, Past Picasso* is the first exhibition to examine the impact of Steinberg's personal print collection on his scholarship and art criticism.

"The Blanton is honored to present *After Michelangelo, Past Picasso: Leo Steinberg's Library of Prints*," said Blanton director Simone Wicha. "The Blanton's prints and drawings program is a core focus for the museum, from our Paper Vault exhibition series to our print study room. Borne from this program, *After Michelangelo, Past Picasso* offers a look at exceptional prints by artists from Michelangelo's time to Picasso and beyond, through the lens of a major figure in the history of art, Leo Steinberg. The incisive and expansive research into a key body of the museum's collection of prints and drawings will shed new light on Steinberg and his impact on the field, while also educating and engaging with this important story of printmaking."

Leo Steinberg was an art historian and art critic who wrote extensively on Renaissance art as well as 20th-century artists including Jasper Johns and Pablo Picasso. These interests intersected in his own collection, which he began amassing as a part-time art history professor in the 1960s. His collection reflects the history of European printmaking from the 15th to the 20th centuries. The works he collected also served as an inspiration and resource for his own scholarship and critical writing. Akin to books on a

shelf, Steinberg considered his prints a visual library that he drew from in his writing practice. This exhibition will be the first to trace the relationship between Steinberg’s legendary output as a scholar and critic to his personal collection of prints.

“Getty is delighted to have supported this exhibition and book project through our Paper Project initiative,” says Joan Weinstein, Director of the Getty Foundation. “Prints and drawings collections are often the largest and most complex holdings in museums that require great expertise and care. The Paper Project allows curators such as Holly Borham to dig deep into their collections, complete compelling new scholarship, and inspire visitors to learn more about the history of prints. *After Michelangelo, Past Picasso: Leo Steinberg’s Library of Prints* does just that, introducing audiences to the collection of one of the most discerning art historians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to the fascinating techniques and processes of printmaking.”

*After Michelangelo, Past Picasso: Leo Steinberg’s Library of Prints* includes around 200 prints that illuminate how the scholar, critic, and writer used his collection in his work and how he developed the collection over time. The exhibition is organized into sections on printmaking techniques, the foundational role of prints in art production, highlights of European printmaking, and prints that relate to Steinberg’s groundbreaking contributions to Renaissance and 20th-century scholarship.

“Leo Steinberg was an artistic polymath—he was simultaneously an artist, a scholar, a critic, and a collector of art,” said exhibition curator Holly Borham, Blanton assistant curator of prints and drawings. “For many involved in the arts, these roles are often separate, but for Steinberg they were deeply connected. *After Michelangelo, Past Picasso* brings these threads of Steinberg’s collecting, writing, research, and artistic training together. Steinberg’s discerning eye and visual curiosity led him to collect prints, a medium that had often been ignored by art historians. And in turn, his prints led to many scholarly discoveries that impacted the field of art history. This exhibition and subsequent book will be the first to put Steinberg’s collection in dialogue with his scholarship, while telling a compelling story for the public about the history of an artistic genre that had previously been underestimated.”



The first section, “The Language of Prints,” begins with an introduction to different types of printmaking, including woodcuts, engravings, etchings, and lithographs -- with key examples by artists including Marcantonio Raimondi, Hendrick Goltzius, and Henri Matisse. This section will also introduce Leo Steinberg to audiences through primary source material displayed alongside his collection, such as

Steinberg's own drawings and his ledgers for recording his print purchases, which he kept in spiral bound notebooks.



“The Circulating Lifeblood of Ideas” references Steinberg’s career-long contention that prints allowed viewers, scholars, and critics to see artists’ inspirations and process in a way other mediums cannot. Steinberg investigated how painters, printmakers, tapestry weavers, and other craftspeople often looked at prints to generate new works of art. To illustrate crucial links in these transformations, reproductions of artworks from other museum collections are included beside original works from the Blanton’s. This section includes examples of works that were used to transfer figures through tracing, pricking, or squaring, as well as works that show other evidence of their physical use in artists’ workshops.



The next section, “Highlights of European Printmaking,” showcases highlights and milestones of printmaking drawn from Steinberg’s collection, which spans the late 15th through the 20th centuries. Key works include early woodcuts and engravings that demonstrate printmaking’s relationship to both book production and metalwork, several French Renaissance rarities, an impressive array of Dutch Mannerist prints, etchings from Rembrandt and his contemporaries, and prints from the circle of Peter Paul Rubens. The section also includes architectural prints from the 16th through 18th centuries; superlative 17th-century French engravings and etchings, evocative landscapes from Claude Lorrain, Samuel Palmer, and Francis Seymour Hayden; and 20th-century works by Henri Matisse, George Grosz, Käthe Kollwitz, Joan Miró, Josef Albers, and Ray Johnson.



“Steinberg’s Scholarship” focuses on the writer’s groundbreaking scholarly contributions through prints after Leonardo and Michelangelo and by Picasso. Steinberg deployed his collection of copies after Leonardo’s *Last Supper* and Michelangelo’s drawings, sculptures, and frescoes both to discern the original artist’s intentions and to understand how the works were received in the past. This section also illustrates how Steinberg used his print collection as a library of body language, analyzing poses and gestures by figures across works, which he deployed most controversially in his publication, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*. Works by Picasso, Jasper Johns, and other 20<sup>th</sup>-century artists are also included; Steinberg often wrote about the art of his time in dialogue with major critics such as Clement Greenberg. The last work in the exhibition is *The Line of Fate*, a photo series by contemporary artist Tacita Dean, documenting Steinberg’s hands in the process of writing.

*After Michelangelo, Past Picasso* will be accompanied by a special Curator Audio Tour narrated by Borham. Featuring several audio stops at key works in the exhibition, the tour will include behind-the-scenes curator commentary and other additional information to help visitors to engage with the exhibition. Additional programming for the exhibition will include a virtual day-long symposium and two online *Curated Conversations*.

A book will be published after the exhibition closes, and will include a biography of Leo Steinberg and essays by Holly Borham, Blanton assistant curator of prints and drawings; Peter Parshall, former curator of Old Master prints at the National Gallery of Art; and Jonathan Bober, Curator and Head of the Department of Old Master prints at the National Gallery of Art.

Major funding for this exhibition and the accompanying catalogue is provided by the Getty Foundation through The Paper Project, with additional support from Leslie Shaunty and Robert Topp, the Scurlock Foundation Exhibition Endowment, and the IFPDA Foundation.

# Getty Foundation

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## **About the Blanton Museum of Art**

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art holds the largest public collection in Central Texas with around 19,000 objects. Recognized as the home of Ellsworth Kelly’s *Austin*, its major collecting areas are modern and contemporary American and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings,

and prints and drawings. The Blanton offers thought-provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.

### **Prints and Drawings at the Blanton**

The Blanton is a leader in collecting, exhibiting, and researching works on paper. Its collection of more than 15,000 prints and drawings represent the trajectory of printmaking history from the Renaissance to present day, with particular strengths in the history of European printmaking and modern and contemporary Latin American works on paper. The Julia Mathews Wilkinson Center for Prints and Drawings is the home for works on paper at the Blanton and houses the collection and the H-E-B Print Study Room. The H-E-B study room is one of the most active in the country and is made regularly open to the public for pop-up print exhibitions. In addition to major exhibitions focused on printed materials, the Blanton's Paper Vault exhibition program hosts three to four exhibitions of works on paper drawn from the collection or campus collections a year.

Images:

Giorgio Ghisi, *The Prophet Jeremiah*, after Michelangelo, early 1570s, (detail) 11 13/16 x 17 in., engraving, Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, The Leo Steinberg Collection, 2002

Pablo Picasso, *Seated Girl*, frontispiece to *Recordant el Doctor Reventós*, 1951, (detail), engraving and drypoint, 11 7/16 x 9 1/16 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, The Leo Steinberg Collection, 2002 © 2020 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Hendrick Goltzius, *The Farnese Hercules*, circa 1591-1592, engraving, 16 5/8 x 11 15/16 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, The Leo Steinberg Collection, 2002

Jasper Johns, *Ale Cans*, 1964, color lithograph from seven stones, 22 13/16 x 17 11/16 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, The Leo Steinberg Collection, 2002

Paolo Toschi, *Descent from the Cross* after a painting by Daniele da Volterra, 1843, engraving, 32 5/16 x 22 13/16 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, The Leo Steinberg Collection, 2002

Currier and Ives, *Descent from the Cross* after an engraving by Paolo Toschi after a painting by Daniele da Volterra and after an engraving by Louise Desplaces after a painting by Jean Jouvenet, circa 1856, color lithograph, 14 11/16 x 10 9/16 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, The Leo Steinberg Collection, 2002

Marcantonio Raimondi and Agostino de Musi called Agostino Veneziano, *Lo Stregozzo [The Witches' Procession]* after a drawing by Raphael or Giulio Romano, 1520s, engraving, 11 13/16 x 24 13/16 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, The Leo Steinberg Collection, 2002

Raphael Morghen, *Last Supper* after the fresco by Leonardo da Vinci, 1800, etching and engraving, 25 13/16 x 40 11/16 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, The Leo Steinberg Collection, 2002