

NORTON SIMON MUSEUM FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fragonard's Enterprise: The Artist and the Literature of Travel

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Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum presents *Fragonard's Enterprise: The Artist and the Literature of Travel*, an exhibition that presents 60 drawings created by a young Jean-Honoré Fragonard (French, 1732–1806) during his first and most important stay in Italy in the mid-18th century. These exquisite works document Fragonard's voyage to see the great artistic treasures of Florence, Bologna, and Padua, among other cities. *Fragonard's Enterprise* explores the excitement of this expedition, the documentary and practical value of the drawings, and their history following publication, especially as they were treasured by later collectors.



Before Fragonard ascended to the ranks of one of the 18th century's most popular painters, he studied at the French Academy in Rome, where he practiced the fundamental art of drawing as a method to hone his skills and to establish his own unique style. In Rome, he encountered his first patron, Jean-Claude Richard de Saint-Non (1727–1791). A passionate advocate of the arts, Saint-Non was an eager participant in the Grand Tour, the educational pilgrimage to Italy then in vogue throughout Europe. His voyage, made from 1759 to 1761, inspired him to chronicle this experience for an audience that shared his fascination with the peninsula. Saint-Non invited the young Fragonard to join in his tour through Italy's illustrious cities. In exchange, Fragonard was tasked with making copies after the important paintings and monuments to be seen in the churches and palazzi. The black chalk drawings Fragonard produced for his sponsor served as source material for Saint-Non's engravings and aquatints, which were published in suites, and in his illustrated travel book *Voyage pittoresque de Naples et de Sicile* (1781–86). These immensely popular publications served as barometers of taste for the arts, and as beloved reminders of the masterpieces visited.

Image: Study After Ludovico Carracci: Group of Three Seated Women (from the Cloister of San Michele in Bosco), Bologna, 1760-61
Jean-Honoré Fragonard (French, 1732-1806), Black chalk on paper, 17-3/4 x 13 in. (45.1 x 33.0 cm), The Norton Simon Foundation

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Enthusiasm for classical antiquity and Neapolitan Baroque painting drew many tourists to Naples. Saint-Non enjoyed multiple visits to the city, and during Fragonard's visit in March 1761, he created inspired copies after the masterpieces he visited in private and public spaces. Occasionally he combined subjects from different locations on one sheet of paper. *St. Luke Surrounded by Angels*, for example, was copied from a fresco by Giovanni Lanfranco in the Church of the Holy Apostles. On the same sheet, Fragonard flanked Luke's figure with two prophets that caught his attention at the Certosa di San Martino, painted by the Spaniard Jusepe de Ribera. The result of this imaginative pastiche is so fluid that few would suspect it was a combination drawing.

With its sunlit canals and magnificent architecture, Venice proved irresistible to the Grand Tourist. Fragonard and Saint-Non passed more than a month there. Inspired by Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese, the French artist produced lively, free-spirited copies, as evidenced in his *Study after Paolo Veronese's Adoration of the Magi*, 1582, from the Church of San Nicolò della Lattuga ai Frari. Fragonard shifted Veronese's vertical format to a horizontal one, and deemphasized the architecture to concentrate on the rhythmic interweaving of the figures that he must have admired in the original.

Fragonard's Enterprise: The Artist and the Literature of Travel is organized by Curator Gloria Williams Sander. A series of events will be offered in conjunction with the exhibition. Information can be found at nortonsimon.org/events.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two temporary exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Tuesday. **Admission:** General admission is \$12 for adults and \$9 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 5 to 8 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.