

Abstracts

Alessandra Baroni, Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Rome

Preparatory Sketch or Study After? New Reflections on the Chronology and Function of Stradanus's Drawings at Cooper Hewitt

The group of 143 drawings by Johannes Stradanus housed at Cooper Hewitt—originating from the dismantled album of the Roman Piancastelli collection—constitutes a corpus of fundamental importance, particularly for understanding Stradanus's role as a designer of prints and copperplate illustrations. Thanks to bibliographic and archival research conducted throughout the 20th century—beginning with Michel N. Benisovich in 1956—many of these sheets have been identified as preparatory studies for paintings by Stradanus or as models for prints made after his drawings, dating back to as early as the 1580s. Nonetheless, a significant number of sheets remain whose relationship to known works by Stradanus cannot be firmly established, despite their unquestionable stylistic attribution to the Flemish artist. These drawings also pose chronological challenges, as some clearly derive from compositions Stradanus created much earlier. What, then, was the purpose of these sheets? Were they preparatory drawings for new works or exercises in reworking earlier inventions? Could the 143 sheets have formed part of an album assembled by Stradanus himself? And what might their function have been in relation to the “six Books of Drawings” that Raphael Borghini referred to in 1584 as having been produced by Stradanus? This presentation will address these questions through selected examples, placing particular emphasis on comparisons with Stradanus's finished drawings and examining his working method—shaped by his long-standing collaboration with Giorgio Vasari and the Florentine academic circle between 1554 and 1572.

Karen Bowen, Unaffiliated

Tracing the Distribution of Prints Designed by Johannes Stradanus

Cooper Hewitt's collection of drawings by Johannes Stradanus provides rare, tantalizing glimpses of not simply Stradanus's working process, but also of the essential, often unrecorded means by which his drawings were transformed into prints for international distribution. Inscriptions disclose the underlying thread of Antwerp connections amid significant figures—merchants, engravers, and print publishers—involved in Stradanus's engagement with the European print trade. Moreover, they can be fruitfully combined with annotations on other examples of his drawings and data on the transactions of Philips Galle of Antwerp, his primary publisher. Together, these sources not only clarify how Stradanus's work was published, but also reveal its place within the context of an extensive international trade in prints. In particular: Which were the obvious niches and the lacunas in the market demand for his imagery? Were engravings after his designs sold per piece or at bulk rates? And which compositions stood the test of time and were purchased decades following their original publication? The evidence will demonstrate how specific images and types of transactions documented by Stradanus's drawings at Cooper Hewitt are, in fact, exemplary of general practices in the European print trade on which Stradanus made an indelible mark.

Rhoda Eitel-Porter, Print Quarterly, London

Stradanus and the Artist's Studio

The newly catalogued drawings of Johannes Stradanus at Cooper Hewitt offer a rare window into the early stages of artistic ideation in the late Renaissance. These works, predominantly quick, exploratory compositional sketches, vividly illustrate the overflowing energy and multiplicity of ideas that characterize the artist's creative process. This presentation will examine a series of five drawings at Cooper Hewitt depicting Zeuxis painting Helen, which serve not only as a comment on ideal beauty and artistic invention but also on the studio space itself. These images will be studied in connection with thematically related depictions by Stradanus, such as the craftsmen's workshops of the *Nova Reperta* and the ideal art academy, as well as work by near contemporaries such as Parmigianino. The discussion will be framed by Stradanus's social and institutional connections, particularly his ties to his patron Luigi Alamanni and Florentine academies. Finally, the materiality of these pen sketches will be studied, in particular in comparison to more painterly drawings executed in complex layers on richly toned paper. The analysis will include discussion of paper types, watermarks, formats, and the reuse or rotation of sheets, illustrating how practical considerations influenced artistic development.

Dontay Givens II, New York University, New York

Phantasmagoric Landscapes, Hunting with Jan van der Straet

This paper seeks to explore Jan van der Straet's use of phantasmagoric landscapes, human forms, and metonymic fauna in sketches for hunting scenes set within Africa and the West Indies. Phantasms are, according to Augustine of Hippo, "divers false colors and forms" which "emerge and pour into the mind as upon a mirror." For Augustine, phantasms inhibit one's judgment of reality and lead one astray. However, this paper contends that van der Straet's hunting scenes are not intended to function as deceptive mirrors of reality but, as Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) would call them, *Traumwerck* (dream-works). *Traumwerck* are images that alter how an artist's represents reality, as Dürer writes in a letter to Willibald Pirckheimer, "as if in a sweet dream, [hoping] reality lives up to his thoughts." As a result, van der Straet's hunting scenes are *Traumwerck* which actualize, remember, and distort the boundaries between dreams, literature, and 'ethnographic' information from Africa and the New World. To put it another way: van der Straet's sketches begin with the activation of a synoptic imagination, resulting in a semiotic and semantic approach to representing phantasmic images as natural images, like Maerten de Vos' (1532–1603) *Unicorn* (1572) or *of Cranes & Quails* in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*.

Kate Heard, Royal Collection Trust, Windsor

'Nobile Spectaculum': Stradanus's *Life of the Virgin* Revisited

As Alessandra Baroni has shown, careful examination of Johannes Stradanus's drawings can shed light on the artist's career and working methods. The Print Room at Windsor Castle includes an important group of works by Stradanus, acquired by George III, which have intriguing points of comparison with the recently conserved drawings at Cooper Hewitt. Notable among these are works related to the series of prints of the *Life of the Virgin* which were published by Adriaen Collaert in Antwerp, probably in the 1580s. Preparatory drawings for these prints in both the Windsor and New York collections form different stages of the project, from brief sketches to carefully-worked models for the engravers. Using close examination of the

sheets, and surveying the sources for Stradanus's compositions, this paper will consider the genesis, development, and subsequent history of the Windsor and New York drawings to examine how Stradanus's inventive and endearing designs developed from initial idea to published print.

Heather Hendry, Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts, Philadelphia

Considering Color Change in Iron Gall Ink Drawings: A Case Study in Treatment of Stradanus Drawings

Treatment of unstable iron gall inks by chelating with calcium phytate has become a standard protocol for manuscripts judged to be at risk from the presence of iron (II) ions. At CCAHA, phytating is considered essential if inks with free iron (II) ions will be exposed to moisture during treatment, based on the theory that moisture without chelation will cause iron ion migration that will worsen degradation in the future. However, there is always a warning included that phytate treatment may cause some color change in the inks. This warning is widespread in the literature on calcium phytate treatments and is the main reason that phytate treatment is generally only practiced on documents, not works of art on paper. Conservators and curators are naturally hesitant to alter the color balance of a work of art. But should we assume that the current appearance of a historic ink reflects the artist's intent?

This paper seeks to question and understand the idea of color change in iron gall inks, including the initial oxidation, over long-term aging, and through calcium phytate or other washing treatments. A case study of the examination and treatment of brown and black ink Stradanus drawings dating from the 1590s will be used to examine these questions. This treatment project involved close collaboration with curator Caitlin Condell and conservator Perry Choe to understand, predict, and monitor color changes during aqueous treatments. The results of the close examination of 143 drawings and aqueous treatment of 34 drawings from Cooper Hewitt's collection suggest that a significant part of the color changes that occur during phytate treatment are due to removal of localized yellowing from the underlying paper. Furthermore, iron gall ink is understood to vary in tone based on preparation and change from blue-black to brown over time. Close review of the mixed media present in these drawings suggests that the iron gall ink was originally a black tone. With these considerations in mind, conservators and curators worked together to assess and understand the color changes that could occur during stabilization treatment.

Jamie Kwan, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York City

Assembling Stradanus: Reconstructing Binding Groups in Cooper Hewitt's Collection

With their sketches, inscriptions, and annotations, Cooper Hewitt's holdings of drawings by Stradanus reveal essential information about the artist's working process, especially in relation to his designs for prints. The drawings also offer an abundance of material evidence that hints at their role within Stradanus's workshop and beyond. At one point, the drawings were bound into groups that were later disassembled; the sheets were also laid onto secondary and tertiary supports and cut apart. Looking at the drawings in batches, this paper examines the various binding hole patterns in an attempt to recreate the original groupings. By reconstructing these

binding groups, this paper hopes to illustrate the rich afterlife of the works and offer insight into how the drawings were stored, used, and displayed by the workshop and later collectors.

Zoe Langer, Rare Book School at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville

Lia Markey, Center for Renaissance Studies, Newberry Library, Chicago

Gloria Moorman, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame

Stradanus and Dante

In 1588 Galileo Galilei presented two lectures to the Accademia Fiorentina on the dimensions of Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*. Drawing upon a long-standing tradition in Florence of mapping and measuring the geography of the Commedia, Galileo emphasized the importance of drawings to his interpretation of the poet's vision of the cosmos. This talk uncovers an important episode in this visual history: Stradanus's famous series of drawings of the Commedia from 1587–1590 produced with his patron, the Florentine scholar, Luigi Alamanni. We argue that these drawings, along with a group of single-sheet prints emerging from their collaboration—*Portrait of Dante* (c. 1587), *Lucifer* (c. 1590), and plan of *Hell* in the Accademia della Crusca edition of the Commedia (1595)—were conceived for print in a series. An examination of this visual corpus, privileging the sketches at Cooper Hewitt, reveals how Stradanus's images responded to Galileo's lectures by participating in academic discussions about the architecture of Dante's *Hell* as well as promoting the poem as a text of poetic and cosmographical authority.

Anca-Delia Moldovan, University of Warwick, Coventry

Sketching the Thread: Women and Silk Production in Johannes Stradanus's Drawings

The sixteenth century witnessed a remarkable surge in silk industry across the Italian peninsula, supported both by private and state initiatives and accompanied by a substantial corpus of publications devoted to celebrating and promoting sericulture. Three drawings preserved at Cooper Hewitt depict the historic moment of the introduction of silkworms to the West by emperor Justinian, as well as the key role played by women in all the major operations involved in silk production. These works represent preparatory sketches for two print series designed around the end of the 1580s by the Flemish artist Johannes Stradanus, namely the famous *Nova Reperta* (created in collaboration with the Alterati academic Luigi Alamanni) and the *Vermis sericus* (commissioned by Luigi's sister Costanza Alamanni and her husband Raffaello di Francesco de' Medici). This talk will examine the valuable contribution of these drawings to the understanding of Stradanus's artistic process of creation and the development of his visual narrative, as well as his extraordinary insights into the process of silk manufacturing. These works will be explored in dialogue with other work by sixteenth-century artists, such as Giuseppe Arcimboldo and Domenico Campagnola, who similarly depicted the centrality of women in silk making. The presentation will demonstrate how these drawings bridged domestic and public spheres, rural and urban settings, and generational and social divides, and presented the collaborative work of women, who, like alchemists, transform nature into a major economic industry.

Joana Moura, Independent Researcher

Stradanus's 'Descent from the Cross:' Connecting the Dots Dispersed Across Different Geographies

In her 1997 monograph on Johannes Stradanus, art historian Baroni Vannucci included a black-and white image of a *Descent from the Cross*, whose whereabouts were then unknown, painted by the Flemish artist around 1590. More than 20 years later, the oil on wood resurfaced in the collection of the Grão Vasco National Museum in Viseu, Portugal, following a donation from a private collector. During her research, Moura identified a finished drawing (modello), held in the Department of Prints and Drawings of the Uffizi Galleries, as well as an engraving from a cycle dedicated to the *Passion of Christ*, of which Stradanus is the *inventor*, both clearly related to the painting now in the Portuguese museum. More recently, Moura came across a sketch by Stradanus in the collections of Cooper Hewitt with the same iconography. Drawing on the artist's extensive oeuvre, this presentation explores possible scenarios of the creative process behind this case study.

Rebecca Pollak, Morgan Library, New York

Stradanus drawings at Cooper Hewitt: Workshop Practice, Collecting Histories, and Conservation

Integral to the Stradanus Project at Cooper Hewitt was a conservation survey of the 143 sheets of drawings and inscriptions by the artist, which revealed vital information about the objects' facture, history, and condition. Close study of the paper supports, along with documentation of evidence related to prior sewing or pinning, confirmed that the majority of the drawings were fastened together in various small groups after their creation. The survey also revealed the range of papers and media used by Stradanus, which provide insight into his late 16th century European workshop practice. Examination of the later division of various sheets, as well as multiple campaigns of mounting and lining evident across the collection, elucidated the collecting and conservation histories of these works. After the condition of the drawings were assessed, testing was performed to evaluate methods for lining removal on sheets estimated to have drawings or inscriptions on the verso. The resulting survey proposed potential phases of conservation treatment and rehousing, as well as opportunities for further material analyses.

Julia Siemon, Bard Graduate Center, New York

Stradanus: Word and Image

Recent attention to the Stradanus sheets at Cooper Hewitt has revealed previously unseen images and text, offering possibilities for a reinvigorated study not only of the artist's process, but of his life. This lecture introduces newly visible drawings and inscriptions before considering the various ways that text is used across the sheets. From erudite citations of ancient literature to banal shopping lists, and including overviews of proposed projects, drafts of formal letters, accounts, and aides-memoire, the words that appear on Stradanus's so-called sketchbook pages are rich records of his dynamic engagement with the late Renaissance world. The digitization of the Cooper Hewitt sheets and new transcriptions of the texts they bear provide unprecedented access to Stradanus's curious mind and multiple promising avenues for future research.

Anders Svensson, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

Stradanus's Corrections—A Case Study of the Drawing *The Battle of Marciano I*

This study focuses on the working methods of Johannes Stradanus by investigating the use of additional paper pasted on top of drawings. Specifically, the study presents ways to understand Stradanus's practice of making corrections in his drawings by conducting a case study of the drawing *The Battle of Marciano I* (RCIN 906338), from c. 1569, in the Royal Collection, Stockholm. The study examines the function of the added paper in relation to the composition, discussing whether the added paper was intended as an alternative or as a correction, and how the correction method of using patches of paper pasted on by the artist can be understood in comparison with other means of correcting drawings, such as the use of white. An example of the latter is seen in the drawing *Giovanni de Medici Leading His Troops Across the River Adda, Driving Back the Spanish Forces*, from 1583, in Cooper Hewitt's collection.