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**THE MORGAN RECEIVES A MAJOR RENOIR DRAWING,
UNSEEN FOR OVER 50 YEARS**

New York, NY, Thursday, November 29, 2018 — The Morgan Library & Museum is proud to announce the recent acquisition of a large-scale study of two figures for Pierre-Auguste Renoir's celebrated canvas, *The Great Bathers* of 1884–87, in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Beginning December 18, 2018, visitors will have the chance to see the monumental drawing in the Gilder Lehrman Hall lobby at the Morgan. The drawing has never been exhibited or reproduced in color. A gift from the estate of prominent philanthropist and long-time Morgan Trustee Drue Heinz (1915–2018), *Bathers* is the first major compositional study by the artist to enter the Morgan's collection, enriching the holdings of drawings by artists associated with the Impressionist movement.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), *Bathers*, 1884-85, red and white chalk, with smudging and blending on wove paper lined to canvas. The Morgan Library & Museum, Bequest of Drue Heinz, 2018.71. Photography by Graham S. Haber.

As Renoir (1841–1919) sought a new direction in his work during the 1880s, he experimented with the classical subject of female bathers. He turned to a seventeenth-century relief sculpture at Versailles, the *Bain des nymphes* by François Girardon (1628–1715), as inspiration for the contemporary scene of three women bathing. Beginning in 1884, Renoir spent nearly three years developing the composition, producing numerous preparatory studies, ranging from small scale sketches to full-scale drawings.

In this study for his painting of modern naiads, the artist explored the pose of the bather in the left foreground of the painting, recoiling as one of her companions splashes her. While the figure appears almost identical in the painted version, Renoir replaced her passive companion by the river bank with a more animated bather, wrapping herself in a sheet.

Among the at least twenty studies for *The Great Bathers*, the Morgan sheet stands out for being one of two full-scale model drawings for the final composition. Executed on paper mounted to canvas, the drawing's condition is remarkable. The surface itself is striking: it retains the original powdery white chalk used for the flesh of the figures and to outline their forms.

"The bold, sensuous lines of this expressive drawing present a different side to the Renoir we know through his paintings," said director of the museum, Colin B. Bailey. "The Morgan's Drawings Department is renowned for its collection of works that illustrate the creative process, and this drawing gives us a glimpse into the mind of a master. We are delighted to share it with visitors soon."

The Morgan Library & Museum

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, the Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, music venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. A century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, and the 2010 refurbishment of the original library, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

The Morgan Library & Museum | 225 Madison Avenue | 212.685.0008 | themorgan.org

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