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NINETY LANDSCAPE DRAWINGS BY CLAUDE LORRAIN TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 20 YEARS

Large-scale Exhibition, at the Clark from February 4 through April 29, 2007, also Features Thirteen Major Paintings from International Collections

For Immediate Release

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WILLIAMSTOWN, MA- *Claude Lorrain—The Painter as Draftsman: Drawings from the British Museum*, on view at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute from February 4 through April 29, 2007, showcases 90 drawings and etchings by the great 17th-century French landscape artist from this incomparable collection. The works on paper are joined by 13 oil paintings from international public museum collections. This is the first time the British Museum, which owns approximately 500, or nearly half, of the extant Claude drawings, has lent such a large group of Claude drawings to the United States.

Organized by Richard Rand, senior curator at the Clark, in association with the British Museum, the major presentation incorporates works by Claude (1604/5–1682) from all stages of his career and traces his direct response to the topography and atmospheric effects characteristic of the Roman countryside. *Claude Lorrain*, which debuted in San Francisco at the Legion of Honor in October 2006, is the first exhibition in the United States to focus specifically on the artist's drawings and working methods and place the objects within the historical, cultural, and artistic contexts of 17th-century Rome, his adopted home.

"*Claude Lorrain* presents a comprehensive study of Claude's considerable accomplishments as a draftsman and provides remarkable new insights into his creative process," said Michael Conforti, director of the Clark. "We are thrilled to work with the British Museum to bring these masterpieces from its world-famous collection of Claude drawings to the United States for the first time."

The exhibition ranges from his earliest known sketches to his final compositions and includes the famous *Liber Veritatis* drawings. These works on paper enhance the understanding of the role of direct observation and notation of the natural world in the evolution of Claude's art. The selection explores his processes, from first sketches to completed paintings, along with masterfully executed drawings created as independent works of art.

Claude spent his working career in Rome, the 17th-century convergence point of Europe's most inventive artists. There, he was part of a revolutionary reappraisal of the artistic relationship between nature and artifice. He established a new landscape format—the classical landscape—a paradigm that remained in practice until the

ascendancy of the Impressionists in the 19th century. While he sought classical calm, order, and harmony in his paintings, the basis for this new response to nature and natural phenomena came through direct and prolonged observation of the landscape itself. Sketching outdoors, with his landscape/subject in front of him, as Claude did was considered novel at the time. His drawings reveal this intimate relationship with nature and illustrate the foundation of baroque illusionism.

Claude Lorrain explores five themes. An **introductory section** on the theme of the artist in nature presents examples of Claude's four main drawing types: sketches from nature, studies for paintings, etchings, and drawings for the *Liber Veritatis*, which Claude produced as a record of his paintings.

The **second section** features many of his nature drawings, which were often made *en plein air*. These works range from detailed studies, with minutely articulated details, to his other responses to nature, such as the rapid ink-and-wash creations. These evoke the effects of shade and shadow rather than aiming to identify a specific location.

The **third section** shows how Claude embraced the modern world while still evoking the Arcadian past. Many idyllic and pastoral scenes that include ancient Roman ruins are on view. He frequently explored this poetic subject, combining a backdrop of naturalism with ancient figures and buildings and delicate atmospheric effects to create a poignant, classical spirit.

The preparatory studies in the **fourth section** reveal Claude as a maker of pictures. Equally important, these studies demonstrate that his fully realized composition drawings display a pictorial and conceptual beauty as powerful as both his nature studies and his finished paintings. In these drawings, he explores formal elements such as setting, lighting, and narrative. Several examples track this process from his initial conception to the finished painting to the final drawing recording that painting in his *Liber Veritatis*.

The **final section** of the exhibition showcases the artist's later works, demonstrating his increasingly idealized treatment of the landscape and how strongly he was influenced by classical literary works, such as *The Aeneid*. Claude is universally recognized for his unique contributions to the landscape genre that only had emerged in the early 17th century. By blending natural observation, evocative atmosphere, and classical construction, he raised the stature of landscape painting from being simply a backdrop in the rendering of human activity to a noble subject in its own right.

Claude Lorrain—The Painter as Draftsman: Drawings from the British Museum was organized by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in association with the British Museum. It is supported in part by the Parnassus Foundation, courtesy of Jane and Raphael Bernstein, by the National Endowment for the Arts, and by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue written by Richard Rand, senior curator at the Clark, with contributions from Antony Griffiths and Colleen M. Perry. Co-published by the Clark and Yale University Press, the catalogue contains 232 pages, with 137 color plates.

Support for the catalogue has been provided by the Parnassus Foundation, courtesy of Jane and Raphael Bernstein, and Palm Beach | America's International Fine Art & Antique Fair's Museum Publication Grant Program.

The Clark

Set amidst 140 bucolic acres in the picturesque Berkshires, the Clark is one of the few major art museums in the United States that also serves as a leading international center for research and higher education. In addition to its extraordinary collections, the Clark organizes groundbreaking special exhibitions that advance new scholarship and presents an array of public and educational programs. The Clark's research and academic programs include an international fellowship program and regular conferences, symposia, and colloquia. The Clark, together with Williams College, sponsors one of the nation's leading master's programs in art history and encompasses one of the most comprehensive art history libraries in the world. Its Fellows and Conference Programs draw university and museum professionals from around the world.

The Berkshires, a region of rolling hills in western Massachusetts, have been a haven for cultural activity since the first half of the 19th century. The Berkshires are home to a wealth of cultural institutions that in addition to the Clark include: Tanglewood, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, MASS MoCA, the Norman Rockwell Museum, Williams College Museum of Art, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival, among many others. For more information, visit www.clarkart.edu or call 413-458-2303.

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