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Stones to Stains: The Drawings of Victor Hugo
On View September 27, 2018 – December 30, 2018



(Los Angeles, CA)— Widely recognized as a preeminent figure in the literary, social, political, and cultural life of nineteenth century France, Victor Hugo (1802-1885) was also an accomplished draftsman and produced a lesser known but remarkable body of works on paper. The Hammer Museum presents *Stones to Stains: The Drawings of Victor Hugo*, a landmark exhibition that sheds new light on Hugo’s experimental and enigmatic drawing practice, and includes more than 75 drawings and photographs spanning the duration of his career. The first American exhibition devoted to his graphic work in nearly 20 years, *Stones to Stains: The Drawings of Victor Hugo* is on view from September 27 through December 30, 2018.

The works in the exhibition are drawn from major European and American public and private collections, including the Maisons de Victor Hugo, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and the Musée d’Orsay in Paris; the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm; the Art Institute of Chicago; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Morgan Library in New York.

“This exhibition pulls back the curtain on what was a largely private endeavor for the artist,” said Cynthia Burlingham, cocurator of the exhibition, deputy director of curatorial affairs, and director of the UCLA Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts. “Victor Hugo’s extraordinary drawings are characterized by his spontaneous approach, and his exploration of the possibilities of simple materials such as pen, ink, and paper.” Although over 3,000 sheets by Hugo have survived, they were rarely seen in public during his lifetime. Many were produced during his extended exile on the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey between 1852 and 1870, during the repressive government of Napoléon III in France.

Image captions (L-R): Victor Hugo, *Ma Destinée* (My destiny), 1867. Brown ink and wash and white gouache on paper. 6 3/4 × 10 3/8 in. (17.2 × 26.4 cm). Maisons de Victor Hugo, Paris / Guernesey. MVHP.D.927 © Maisons de Victor Hugo, Paris / Guernesey / Roger-Viollet; Victor Hugo, *Taches avec empreintes de doigts* (Abstract composition with fingerprints), ca. 1864–65. Brown ink and wash on paper. 10 1/4 × 7 11/16 in. (26 × 19.5 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France. NAF 13345, fol. 28 © Bibliothèque nationale de France; Victor Hugo, *Planète* (Planet), ca. 1854. Brown ink and wash over charcoal with touches of white gouache on paper. 12 1/8 × 14 9/16 in. (30.8 × 37 cm). Collection of David Lachenmann.

"I believe there is no more vital time than now to feature the work of a man who was a deeply committed social and political activist on the one hand, and a dreamer and idealist on the other," remarked Allegra Pesenti, cocurator of the exhibition and associate director and senior curator of the Grunwald Center. "Hugo's haunting compositions will have a particular resonance today among our visitors and the community of artists in Los Angeles."

"We are thrilled to mount *Stones to Stains: The Drawings of Victor Hugo*, and to introduce a new generation to Victor Hugo's less recognized, but vital contributions. A drawing exhibition of this size and scope underscores the Hammer's continuing commitment to the study of historical and contemporary works on paper," added Hammer Director Ann Philbin.

The title of the exhibition, *Stones to Stains*, alludes to the development of the artist's idiosyncratic form of draftsmanship and its relationship to the transformative properties of water. With its ceding and receding movement, the violence of its waves or the inexorable flow of drops, the persistence of water eventually erases or envelops all in its path, including the seemingly unassailable density of stone. In Hugo's ink and wash drawings, we witness a phenomenon similar to that of water's effect on stone.

The drawings vacillate between the depiction of landscapes and architecture and the rendering of abstract forms and *taches* (stains). He often relinquished his compositions to chance by soaking or turning the paper, allowing the ink to pool into shapes. He also added to the complexity of his compositions with the use of stencil and collage, and by making impressions of various materials such as lace, leaves, or even his own fingertips.

Stones to Stains will be accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue with essays by the curators Cynthia Burlingham and Allegra Pesenti, independent scholar Florian Rodari, and a chronology by Matthieu Vahanian, curatorial assistant at the Grunwald Center. Related programming in Los Angeles will include lectures, concerts, and screenings with the support of the Center for European and Russian Studies at UCLA.

This exhibition benefits from exceptional loans from the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Maisons de Victor Hugo.

The exhibition is curated by Cynthia Burlingham, deputy director, curatorial affairs and Allegra Pesenti, associate director and senior curator, Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Hammer Museum, in collaboration with independent scholar Florian Rodari.

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ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM

The Hammer Museum offers exhibitions and collections that span classic to contemporary art, as well as programs that spark meaningful encounters with art and ideas. Through a wide-ranging, international exhibition program and the biennial, Made in L.A., the Hammer highlights contemporary art since the 1960s, especially the work of emerging and under recognized artists. The exhibitions, permanent collections, and nearly 300 public programs annually—including film screenings, lectures, symposia, readings, music performances, and workshops for families—are all free to the public. The Hammer is a public arts institution of the UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture. The Hammer is a public arts institution of the School of the Arts and Architecture at UCLA.

HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and programs at the Hammer Museum is free, made possible through the generosity of benefactors Erika J. Glazer and Brenda R. Potter. Hours: Tuesday–Friday 11 a.m.–8 p.m., Saturday & Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Mondays and national holidays. Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Boulevard at Westwood, Los Angeles. Onsite parking \$6 (maximum 3 hours) or \$6 flat rate after 6 p.m. Visit hammer.ucla.edu for details or call 310-443-7000.