

Dante Gabriel Rossetti:

An Inventory of His Art Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

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| Creator: | Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 1828-1882 |
| Title: | Dante Gabriel Rossetti Art Collection |
| Dates: | circa 1860s-1880s |
| Extent: | 4 framed items, 1 box, 1 sculpture |
| Abstract: | The Dante Gabriel Rossetti Art Collection consists of pastel and chalk drawings, ink drawings, and a plaster death mask of Rossetti. |
| Call Number: | Art Collection AR-00230 |
| Language: | English |
| Access: | Open for research. Please note that a minimum of 24 hours notice is required to pull art materials to the Ransom Center's Reading and Viewing Room. Some materials may be restricted from viewing. To make an appointment or to reserve Art Collection materials, please contact the Center's staff at art@hrc.utexas.edu . Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials. |
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Administrative Information

Preferred Citation Dante Gabriel Rossetti Art Collection (AR-00230). Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

Acquisition: Gift and purchases, 1960-1967

Processed by: Lauren Algee, 2010; Jill Morena, 2018

Repository: [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)

Biographical Sketch

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was an English poet and painter, born in London in 1828, the son of a professor of Italian. Rossetti was a precocious, charismatic, but ill-disciplined student. He studied at King's College School, Henry Sass's Drawing Academy in Bloomsbury (starting in 1841), and finally at the Antique School of the Royal Academy, from 1845 to 1848, which he left for a brief period of study under Ford Madox Brown. Barely five months later, Rossetti left Brown and established himself in the studio of William Holman Hunt, also a Royal Academy student. Writing absorbed much of Rossetti's time, including translations of Dante, whose work was a lifelong inspiration.

With Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, Rossetti formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in September 1848. The group derived its name from a desire to revert to a tradition of simplicity and realism that was found in early Italian art; they aimed to achieve a high degree of fidelity in reproducing nature and detail. Rossetti devised the Brotherhood's magazine, *The Germ*, chiefly devoted to the nature of art, which lasted only four issues. The original Brotherhood also ceased to exist by 1852, though their style lived on.

In 1850, Rossetti painted his first subject from the works of Dante. Rossetti's enthusiasm for Dante, Robert Browning's poetry, Arthurian romance, biblical subjects, and archaic legends and medieval lore is also reflected in his imaginative watercolors of the 1850s. Rossetti's interest in Arthurian subjects was fuelled by his mentorship of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, who joined him in decorating the Oxford Union in 1857. As a member of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., Rossetti executed designs for stained glass. While he did not favor book illustration, his designs during this period also broadened his artistic audience.

In 1859, Rossetti abandoned Pre-Raphaelite principles to paint *Bocca baciata*, a bust portrait of his mistress Fanny Cornforth, which became a prototype for many of his popular later paintings featuring beautiful women in exotic surroundings under fanciful titles. After the suicide of his wife and pupil Elizabeth Siddal in 1862, he lived in great style, with a menagerie of animals, in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. From 1868 until the mid-1870s, Rossetti conducted an affair with Jane Burden, the wife of William Morris, which, along with harsh criticism of his poetry, may have contributed to Rossetti's 1872 suicide attempt and subsequent depression and paranoia. Jane Morris remained his principal muse until his death in 1882.

Sources:

Rodgers, David. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com> (accessed 27 April 2010).

Surtees, Virginia. Rossetti: (1) Dante Gabriel Rossetti. *Grove Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com> (accessed 13 April 2010).

Scope and Contents

The Dante Gabriel Rossetti Art Collection consists of pastel drawings, ink drawings, and a plaster death mask of Rossetti by Brucciani. Some of the pieces are studies for later works, including the drawings for stained glass panels of the story of St. George and the Dragon, executed by Morris & Co. All of the works date to the late 1800s. The Collection is divided into two series, I. Works by Rossetti and II. Works by Others. The works are listed by medium and chronologically by date. Titles are taken from Virginia Surtees's *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882): a catalogue raisonné*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. Additional descriptions may follow titles to further elucidate.

Related Material

The Ransom Center holds manuscripts and letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Manuscript Collection MS-3624), as well as those of his sister, Christina Georgina Rossetti (Manuscript Collection MS-3623). Both of these collections have been digitized and are available to view online in the Ransom Center's Digital Collections. The Center also has in its holdings a book of verse by Rossetti's sister, Christina Rossetti (*Verses*. London: Privately printed, 1847) with original illustrations drawn into the book in pencil by her brother.

Index Terms

People

Morris, Jane, 1839-1914.

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 1828-1882.

Organizations

Morris & Co. (London, England).

Subjects

Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321.

Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321. Inferno.

Dragons--1860-1870.

Lilith (Semitic mythology).

Mary Magdalene, Saint.

Portraits--1860-1890.

Pre-Raphaelites.

Document Types

Chalk drawings.

Charcoal drawings.

Death masks.

Pastels (visual works).

Pen and ink drawings.

Series I. Works by Rossetti, 1861-1875

Accession Number: 65.504 Lady Lilith, circa 1867. Woman in three-quarter view holding mirror and combing her hair. Original model was Fanny Cornforth; Alexa Wilding's face was later substituted. Colored chalk on paper, 85 x 93.8 cm (framed). **Container**
Screen
Storage

Accession Number: 67.36 La Pia de' Tolomei, circa 1870-1873. Study of Jane Burden Morris. She is seated in three-quarter view, facing left, hands in lap. Colored pastel on paper, 96.8 x 117 cm (framed).

Accession Number: 65.378 Mary Magdalene, circa 1874. Bust portrait of Alexa Wilding, looking upward with a bronze container in her left hand. Colored chalk on paper, 88.9 x 73.7 cm (framed).

Accession Number: 65.98 Dante's Dream at the Time of the Death of Beatrice, 1874. Preliminary drawing of Dante. The model is Mr. Wilding in full-length profile wearing a long gown and pointed cap. Charcoal on paper, 106.7 x 76.2 cm (framed). **Location**
Screen
Storage

Accession Number: 65.210.1 The Story of St. George and the Dragon: The Skulls Brought to the King, circa 1861. Ink, wash and pencil on paper, 48.8 x 55.5 cm. **Location**
Rossetti,
D. G.,
Box 1

Accession Number: 65.210.2 The Story of St. George and the Dragon: The Princess Sabra Drawing the Lot, circa 1861. Ink, wash and pencil on paper, 49.5 x 55.5 cm.

Accession Number: 65.210.3 The Story of St. George and the Dragon: The Princess Sabra Taken to the Dragon, circa 1861. Ink, wash and pencil on paper, 49 x 61.4 cm.

Accession Number: 65.210.4 The Story of St. George and the Dragon: St. George and the Dragon, circa 1861. Ink, wash and pencil on paper, 50.5 x 62.4 cm.

Accession Number: 65.210.5 The Story of St. George and the Dragon: The Return of the Princess, circa 1861. Ink, wash and pencil on paper, 49.2 x 62 cm.

Accession Number: 65.210.6 The Story of St. George and the Dragon: The Wedding of St. George, circa 1861. Ink, wash and pencil on paper, 49.1 x 62.2 cm.

Series II. Works by Others, 1882

Accession Number: 66.35 Brucciani, Domenico. D. Rossetti, 1882. Death mask.
Plaster, 21.5 x 30 x 16 cm.

Location
Sculpture
Storage