Public access description

The so-called Raphael Cartoons, of which this drawing was taken, are seven full size designs for tapestries by the great Italian Renaissance artist Raphael (1483-1520). They illustrate passages from the Bible concerning the lives of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. None of them is smaller than ten feet high by thirteen feet wide. They belong to Her Majesty the Queen and have been on loan to this museum since 1865. The earliest print relating to the Raphael Cartoons dates from 1516, the year in which Raphael received final payment for the commission. It inaugurates an extraordinary case study in the history of printmaking, stretching over more than four hundred and fifty years and across a wide range of printmaking techniques.

Sir James Thornhill spent three years at Hampton Court preparing painted copies of the Cartoons. These are sketches in some way connected with the project. One carries an inscription in the artist's handwriting 'This boy Dorigny has omitted in his Print.' This seems to refer to a putto carved on the furthest of the three columns, behind the woman carrying a basket on her head in 'The Healing of the Lame Man'. From this inscription we learn that although Thornhill was studying the Cartoons themselves over an extended period, in order to make painted copies, he was also carefully comparing Dorigny's engravings to the Cartoons.

Descriptive line

Drawing in pen ink and wash by Sir James Thornhill of details copied from the Raphael Cartoons, pasted into a volume; British, 1729-1731

Physical description

Detail of feet in crossed leg position and another foot, in grey-brown wash and brown ink. From the Lame Man Healed by Peter & John.

Dimensions

Height: 18.4 cm sheet, approx, Width: 11.5 cm sheet, approx, Height: 40.9 cm mounted in volume, size, Width: 30 cm mounted in volume, size

Museum number

E.463-1912

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O720791/raphael-cartoons-drawing-thornhill-james-sir/