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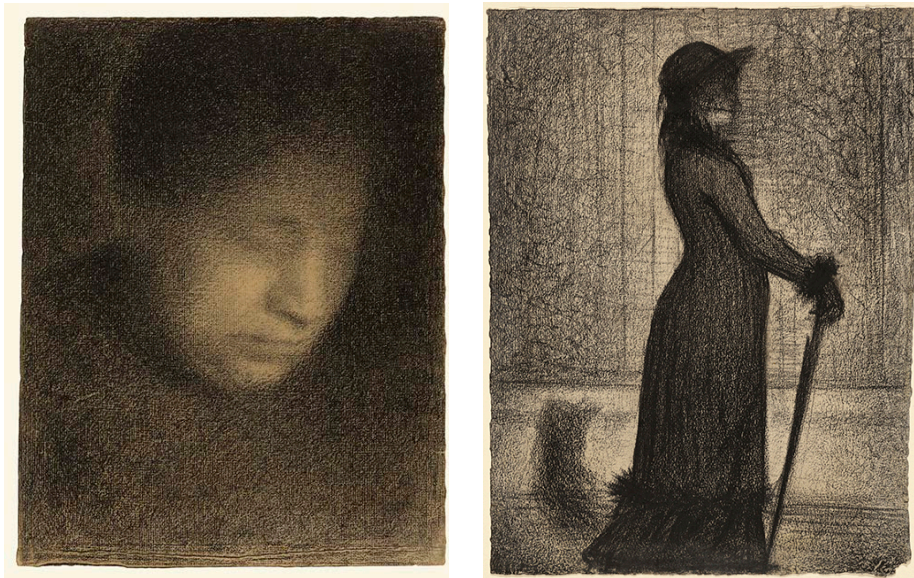
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J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM PRESENTS
Noir: The Romance of Black in 19th-Century French Drawings and Prints

**The manufacture of tonal drawing media fueled
the exploration of dark subject matter in 19th century France.**

February 9 –May 15, 2016
At the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center



Right: *Madame Seurat, the Artist's Mother* (Madame Seurat, mère), about 1882 – 1883. Georges Seurat. Conté crayon. 12 x 9 3/16 in. 2002.51. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Left: *Woman Strolling* (Une élégante), about 1884. Georges Seurat (French, 1859 - 1891) Conté crayon, fixed. 12 1/2 x 9 7/16 in. 2000.30. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

LOS ANGELES – At the height of the Industrial Revolution (in the mid-19th century), artists in France exploited newly available man-made tonal drawing materials such as charcoal, fabricated black chalk, and conte crayon. Inspired by these black media, they also explored the depths of blackness in its manifold imaginative and narrative associations. Bringing together works from the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, and loans from public and private collections in the greater Los Angeles area and San Francisco, the exhibition *Noir: The Romance of Black in 19th Century French Drawings and Prints*, on view February 9 through May 15, 2016 at the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center, examines how artists championed these new, dark subjects.

"Black may today be the non-color of choice on the fashion-conscious contemporary art scene, but the enthusiasm with things dark and mysterious is certainly not new," says Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "Artists were deeply engaged with the darker

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areas of pictorial and psychological space already in the 19th century, fueled by romantic interest in the spiritual, subconscious and even occult realms of being and experience—themes that have resurfaced in the later 20th and 21st centuries. Cutting across the usual divide between audiences for 'old master' and 'modern' art, I have no doubt that *Noir* will be extremely popular with visitors of all ages. We live in an age that reifies revolutionary thinking. This exhibition is that—both in concept and in visualization—and will surprise and delight in its relevance to much contemporary art practice today."

In conjunction with the dark and disturbing literary imagery of writers such as Edgar Allen Poe and Gustave Flaubert, avant-garde artists in France explored shadowy, often nocturnal or crepuscular realms in which forms variously emerged and sunk back into the darkness. "The meanings and significance of the color black played a large role as artists searched for a new world of subject matter," says Lee Hendrix, Senior Curator of Drawings and curator of the exhibition. "These developments had strong beginnings in the art of Romanticism, when artists looked at the darkest recesses of the human condition. The uninhibited artistic investigation of evil, cruelty, and death gave rise to dark imagery of unprecedented power."

As the brutal realities of the Industrial Revolution and political repression encroached upon urban and country life, many French artists retreated into the interior, unfettered, immaterial world of the psyche. Black was associated with nocturnal, phantasmagoric dreams and the dark expanse of the cosmos.

French artists made black prints and drawings with increasing interest in the properties and effects of their materials. Specific materials were utilized to represent the world of shadows, including conte crayon, a somewhat harder and less erasable medium, which could on its own, without an array of tools, produce a wide range of effects from fine, light lines to dense, opaque shading.

Charcoal and black chalk were used to portray the rusticity of rural existence and the gritty, shadowy spaces of urban life. The somber reality of the mostly working-class figures that formed the Realists' subject matter could be palpably evoked by the thick deposits rendered with the blending, hatching, and wetting of chalk and charcoal, or with the textured, choppy lines drawn on lithographic stone.

By about 1860, landscape emerged as a primary subject for creative printmakers, especially etchers. Around the same time, artists increasingly turned to charcoal as a drawing medium with impressive properties and working methods all its own. Charcoal, with its floating, powdery qualities, was perfectly suited to capture landscape scenes in all their ethereal effects – dappled sunlight, placid water, feathery leaves. Many of the artists who specialized in charcoal landscapes also made landscape etchings remarkably similar in style to their



Apparition, about 1880 – 1890. Odilon Redon (French, 1840 - 1916). Vine charcoal, powdered vine charcoal with stumping and yellow pastel, fixed from the recto and verso. 20 11/16 x 14 11/16 in. 2013.38. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

drawings. The exhibition includes a video of drawing-related techniques that were pioneered during the late 1800s and also the dark materials that were developed such as, charcoal, conte crayon and lithographic stone.

The 19th-century artist Odilon Redon used the floating quality of charcoal to draw inchoate cosmic landscapes and aqueous environments populated by fish-insect-humanoid hybrids. Employing black lithographic crayon, he could render equivalents of his so-called *noir* drawings as lithographic prints. Other artists such as Rodolphe Bresdin and Henri Fantin-Latour also translated their black drawings of fantasies, dreams, and music into the equally graphic print medium of lithography.

"Many of the artists involved have melted into relative obscurity although they were immensely popular in their own time," adds Hendrix. "As it turns out there are superb holdings of drawings and prints by these artists in public and private collections in the Los Angeles area, never before surveyed." The exhibition includes loans from the Getty Research Institute, the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Pomona College Museum of Art, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, the Norton Simon Art Foundation, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, and local private collectors.

Noir: The Romance of Black in 19th-Century French Drawings and Prints will be on view February 9 through May 15, 2016. Programs related to the exhibition include a lecture on February 18, 2016 by Lee Hendrix, *Black Drawing in 19th Century France: The Modernist Trajectory*. A lavishly illustrated scholarly catalogue, with essays by Hendrix and other contributors, accompanies the exhibition. Additional lectures and programming can be found at getty.edu/360.

PRESS PREVIEW: A press preview for the exhibition will be held on Monday, February 8, 2016 from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Please reply to vtate@getty.edu or (310) 440-6861 to RSVP. The press preview will include a curator guided tour. Opening night reception to follow.

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The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that includes the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs serve a varied audience from two locations: the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades.

The J. Paul Getty Museum collects Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts to 1900, as well as photographs from around the world to the present day. The Museum's mission is to display and interpret its collections, and present important loan exhibitions and publications for the enjoyment and education of visitors locally and internationally. This is supported by an active program of research, conservation, and public programs that seek to deepen our knowledge of and connection to works of art.

Visiting the Getty Center

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