



Frank Brangwyn

*Drawings from the Collection of
Father Jerome Esser*



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1 – *Man on Plinth*, study for Venice Biennale (A1337), 1905,
Black and white chalk on paper mounted on card, squared,
19 ¾ x 15 in. (50.2 x 37.8 cm)
Literature: *The Studio*, Vol 40, April 1907, p187

‘To Work is to Pray’: Works on Paper by Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956)¹

By Sacha Llewellyn & Paul Liss

“He showed men at work – lifting, carrying, tending powerful machines, mining, ploughing, sailing ships. The beauty and dignity he found in their movements and translated into his pictures made them a testimony that ‘to work is to pray’.”

‘Grand Old Man of Catholic Artists’, (Obituary of Brangwyn), *The Catholic Herald*, 15 June 1956.

During his lifetime Brangwyn made large donations of his works to museums in the United Kingdom and abroad, including the Victoria & Albert Museum, the British Museum, the William Morris Gallery, the Albertina in Vienna and the Gruuthuse in Bruges. As a result of this munificence, substantial drawings by Brangwyn, especially his celebrated large sheets in red and black chalk, only rarely appear on the market.

The endless extant sketches that he made on the backs of envelopes, letterheads and scraps of paper are evidence that for Brangwyn drawing was a compulsion. In her forthcoming *catalogue raisonné*, Dr. Libby Horner has recorded over three thousand drawings by Brangwyn.



2 – Jerome Esser
Portrait of Brangwyn and his niece, (Z4987),
Signed and dated,
Pencil on paper,
9 ½ x 13 ⅝ in. (24.1 x 34.6 cm)

Milestones in the collecting of Brangwyn drawings include the Christie's sale of William de Bellerroche's collection (1961), and Edgar Horn's sale of Edgar Peacock's collection (2000). The recent discovery of works belonging to Brangwyn's admirer, Father Jerome Esser, presented in this catalogue, marks a further watershed for collectors.²

The drawings that became Esser's collection, which have lain hidden for over half a century, were made up of works that Brangwyn, with characteristic modesty, had left in his studio with a written instruction, 'most of this lot destroy'. Never intended for presentation, they explore and resolve alternative compositions and the relation of figures to each other and to the space they occupy. Esser, himself a gifted artist, would have appreciated these sheets, complete with folds, scuffs and splodges of paint, as true working drawings. Brangwyn himself believed that 'sketches show the most intimate side of an artist's career ... [studies] are usually the best thing an artist does.'³

It is surprising to learn that, other than as an apprentice to William Morris (1882), Brangwyn had no formal artistic training. While his near contemporaries Augustus John (1878-1961) and William Orpen (1878-1931) arguably had greater technical facility, Brangwyn's vigorous approach to drawing and directness of observation place him amongst the greatest draughtsman of Twentieth Century British art. As the art critic T. W. Earp constated, 'It is in the drawings ... that the key to Brangwyn's greatness is to be found'.⁴ In 1952, Gerald Kelly (1879-1972) made the apt, but unlikely comparison between Brangwyn's drawings and cricket:

'Besides loving painting, I have very much loved watching cricket. There were great cricketers in the old days, and one of the finest of them was Archie MacLaren. When he drove through the covers it was a most majestic and splendid thing to see. Brangwyn's drawings give me exactly the same thrill'.⁵

1 All works in this catalogue, unless otherwise stated, are from the collection of Father Jerome Esser.

2 Father Jerome Esser was a Belgian Catholic priest and painter. He was a member of the Premonstratensian Order of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1931, he became the first resident priest of the newly formed Parish of Stainforth, Yorkshire, a position he retained until his death in 1948.

3 Letter from Brangwyn to William de Bellerroche, 15 May 1936.

4 'Brangwyn Art at Academy', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 October 1952.

5 Sir Gerald Kelly PRA, Preface, Exhibition of Works by Sir Frank Brangwyn, Diploma Gallery, Royal Academy of Arts, 1952.



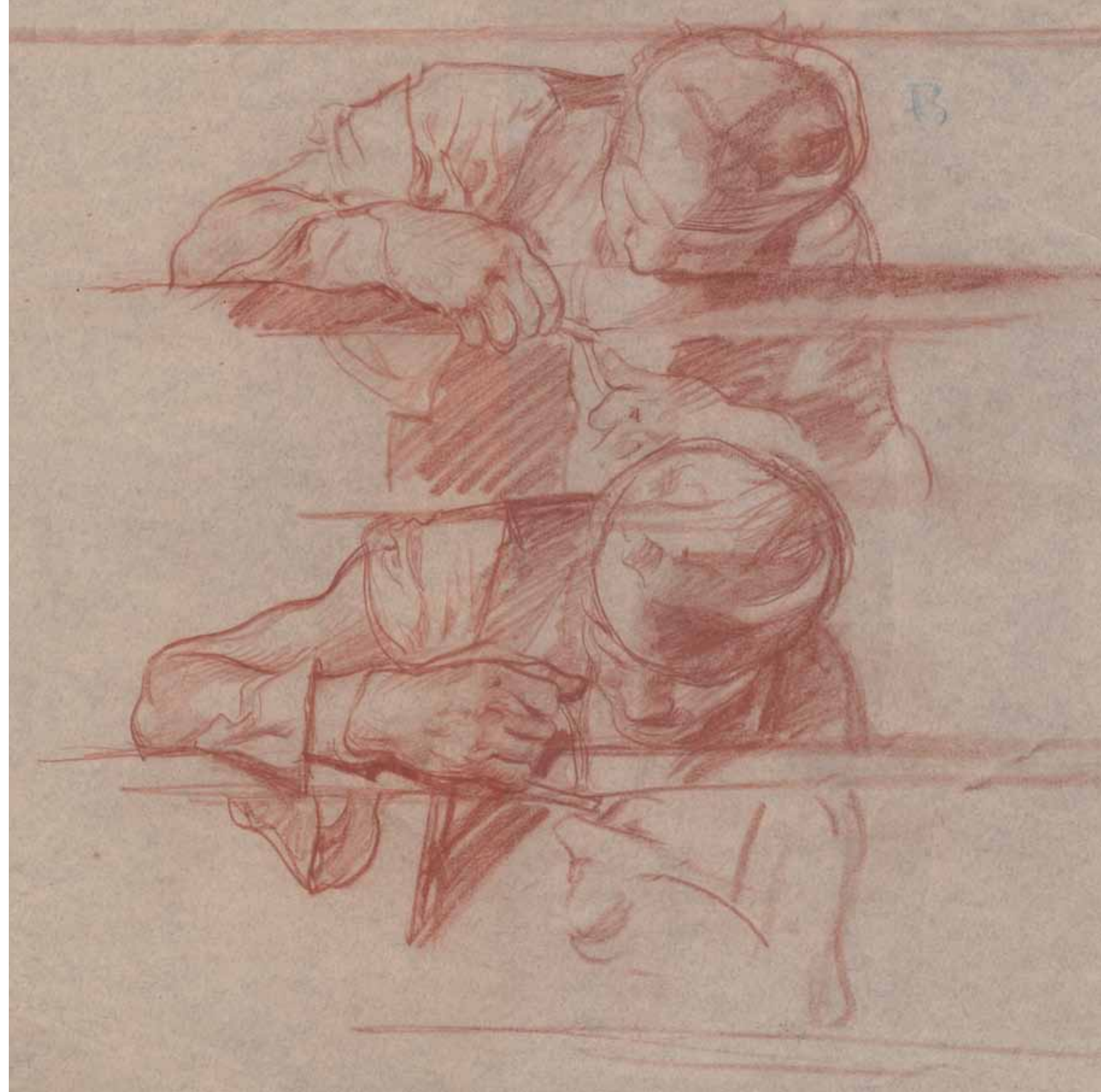
3 – Study for *Harmony*, Skinners (M1139), c.1908,
Black chalk and wash with red chalk highlights on paper, 21 x 17 in. (53.3 x 43 cm)
Provenance: Count William de Bellerroche; Private collection Canada



4 – Study for *Exodus* (O283), c.1918,
Charcoal and coloured chalks on paper, 22 x 50 in. (56 x 127 cm)
Provenance: acquired directly from Brangwyn by Raymond Sheppard c.1950; Private collection Canada



5 – *Man Playing Flute*, study for panel 3, Skinners (M1139),
Red chalk on paper, squared, 11 x 15 3/8 in. (28 x 39 cm)



6 – *Man Cutting* (D4989), signed with initials in blue,
Red chalk on paper, 12 1/2 x 16 1/2 in. (32 x 42 cm)



7 – *Man Carrying Child on His Back* (D4907),
Red chalk on paper, 15 x 9 ½ in. (38 x 24 cm)



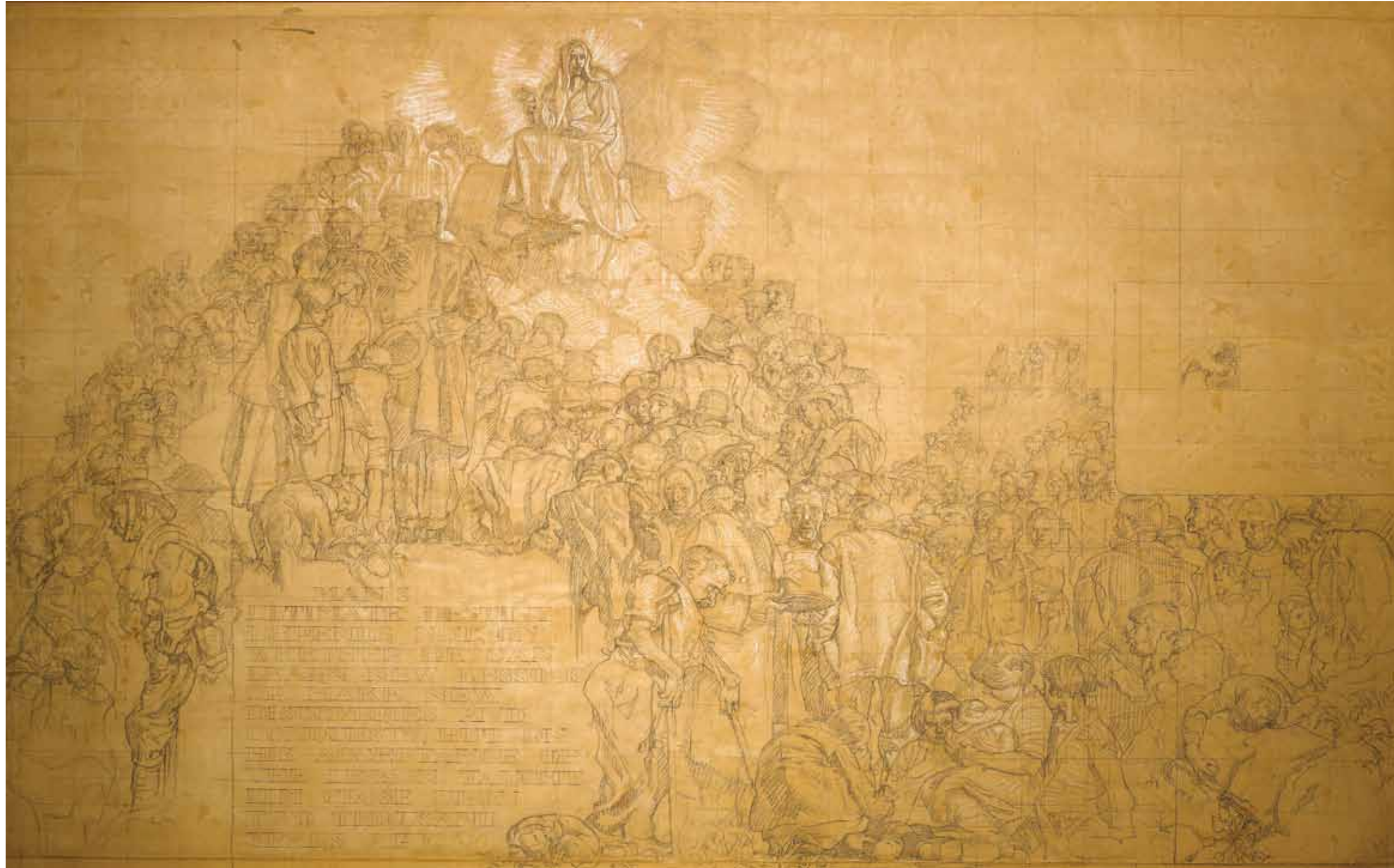
8 – *Study of Figure with Vessel*, study for Venice Biennale 1905 (D4994),
Black chalk with highlights in white and touches of blue on paper, squared in pencil, 12 x 14 ½ in. (30.5 x 37 cm)



10 – Study for *The Chairing of Edmund Burke in 1774* (O2620), 1919-1921,
Signed with monogram, inscribed in pencil 'coll WdeB' and numbered '0' and '23'
Red chalk on paper, 15 ½ x 7 in. (39.4 x 17.8 cm)
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche



9 – *Loot* (P1491), working proof,
Signed with initials,
Pencil, black and beige chalk over lithograph, 17 x 21 ¼ in. (43.5 x 54 cm)
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche



12 – Study for *Man's Ultimate Destiny* (M1110), c.1932,
 Various inscriptions including 'HEADS', 'Woman [?]', 'JOE', 'De Luca', 'Molt'.
 Pencil, black and white chalk on grey paper,
 15 x 21 5/8 in. (38 x 55 cm),

11 – Study for *Man's Ultimate Destiny* (M1110), c. 1932,
 Pencil on buff coloured tracing paper, squared, with highlights in white chalk,
 60 x 84 in. (152.4 x 213.4 cm)
 Provenance: Sir Donald Sinden

Picasso and Matisse were originally offered this 1932 commission for the Rockefeller Center murals; Brangwyn, José Maria Sert and Diego Rivera were subsequently appointed to carry out the scheme.



13 – *Man with Bowl on Head* (D4995),
Signed with initials in pencil,
Red chalk on paper, 15 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (39 x 21 cm)

This drawing is similar to *Study of a Man* (D3909)
dated 1913 in the collection of Birmingham City
Art Gallery.



14 – *Studies for Man Playing Guitar* (D4993),
Black chalk on brown paper, 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (38.7 x 54 cm)



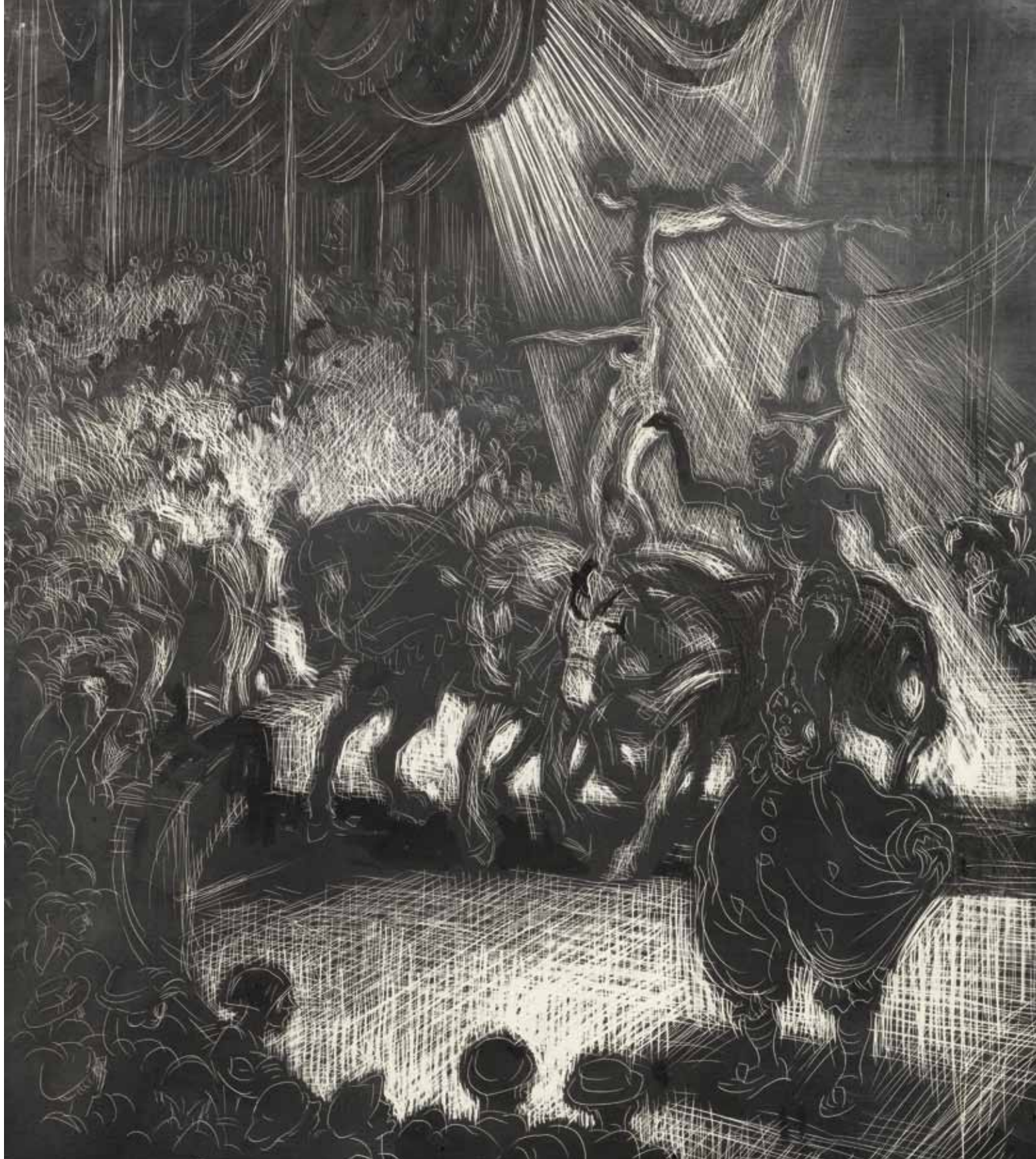
15 – *Studies of a Guard*, study for Panel 2, Skinners (M1139),
Black and white chalk on brown paper, 10 ¼ x 14 ½ in. (26 x 36.8 cm)



16 – *Attendant with Stave*, study for panel 4, Skinners (M1139),
Black chalk on brown paper, 19 x 13 in. (48 x 32.7 cm)



17 – *Allegory of War and Industry* (D3059),
Pencil on paper, squared, 12 ¼ x 9 in. (31 x 23 cm)
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche

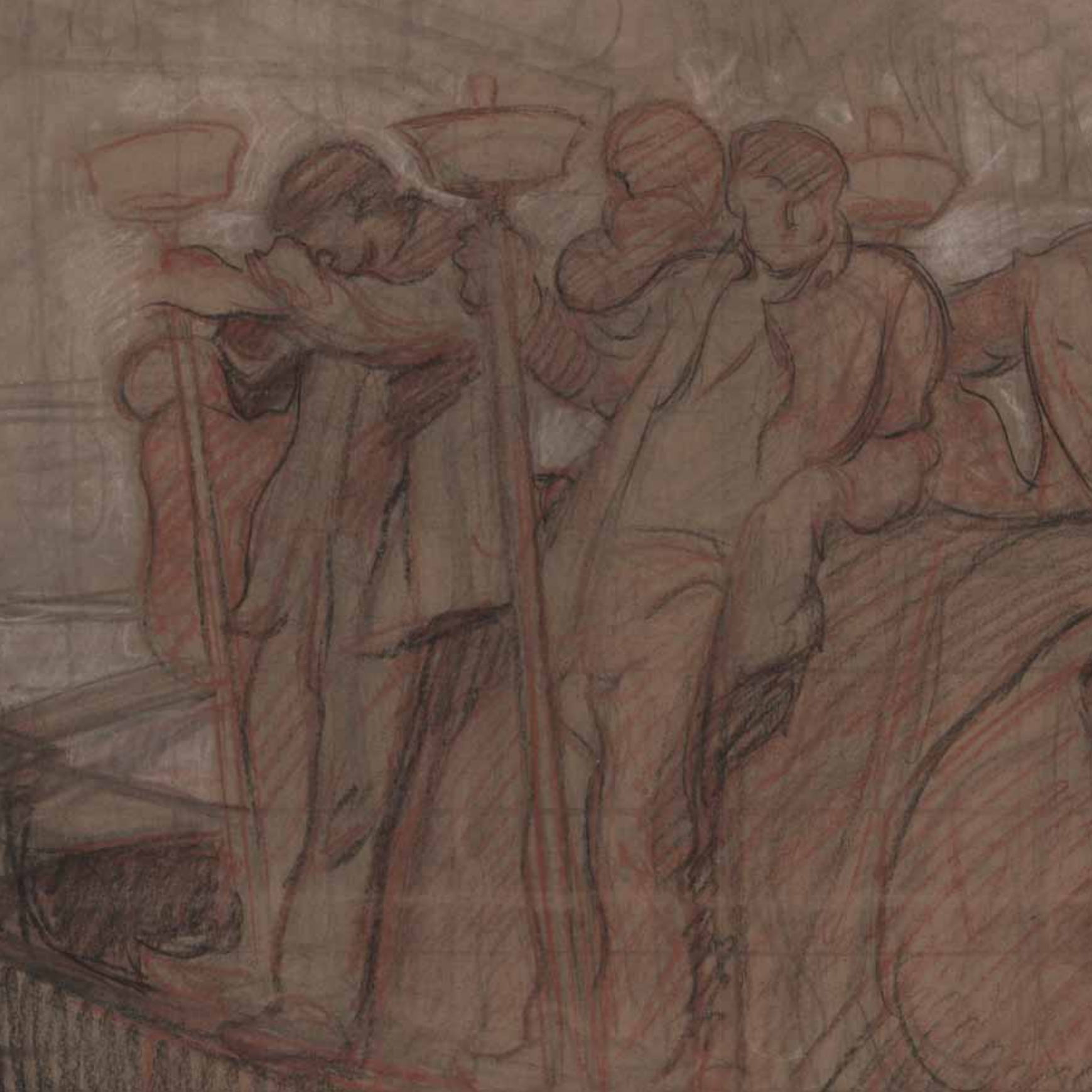


18 – *At the Circus* (D1545), c.1930,
Pen and ink with scratching out on card primed with gesso,
18 ⅛ x 15 ⅝ in. (46 x 39.5 cm)
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche



20 – *Courtier*, study for Panel 2, Skinners (M1139),
Signed with monogram,
Black and white chalk on brown paper,
13 x 10 in. (33 x 25.5 cm)

19 – *Boy with Globe*, study for panel 5, Skinners (M1139),
Signed with monogram,
Pencil, red and white chalk on coloured paper, 15 x 21 in. (38 x 53 cm)



21 – *Study for Venetian Funeral* (O239),
Black, red and white chalk on coloured paper, squared in pencil,
14 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (37.5 x 54.5 cm)



22 – *Study for Venetian Funeral* (O239),
Black, red and white chalk on brown paper, squared in pencil,
14 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 22 in. (37 x 56 cm) Left: detail

23 – *Preliminary Ideas 1*,
Study for Rockefeller Center (M1110),
Inscribed: 'Dance/Music',
Pencil and white chalk on brown paper,
14 3/8 x 19 1/4 in. (36.5 x 49 cm),



24 – *Preliminary Ideas 2*,
Study for Rockefeller Center (M1110),
Inscribed: 'return from front', 'Cave',
'boat', 'Fish', 'Fight', 'making earth pot',
'woman milking cow', 'birds', 'barter',
'Family life'.
Pencil and black chalk on paper,
13 x 19 1/4 in. (33 x 49 cm),

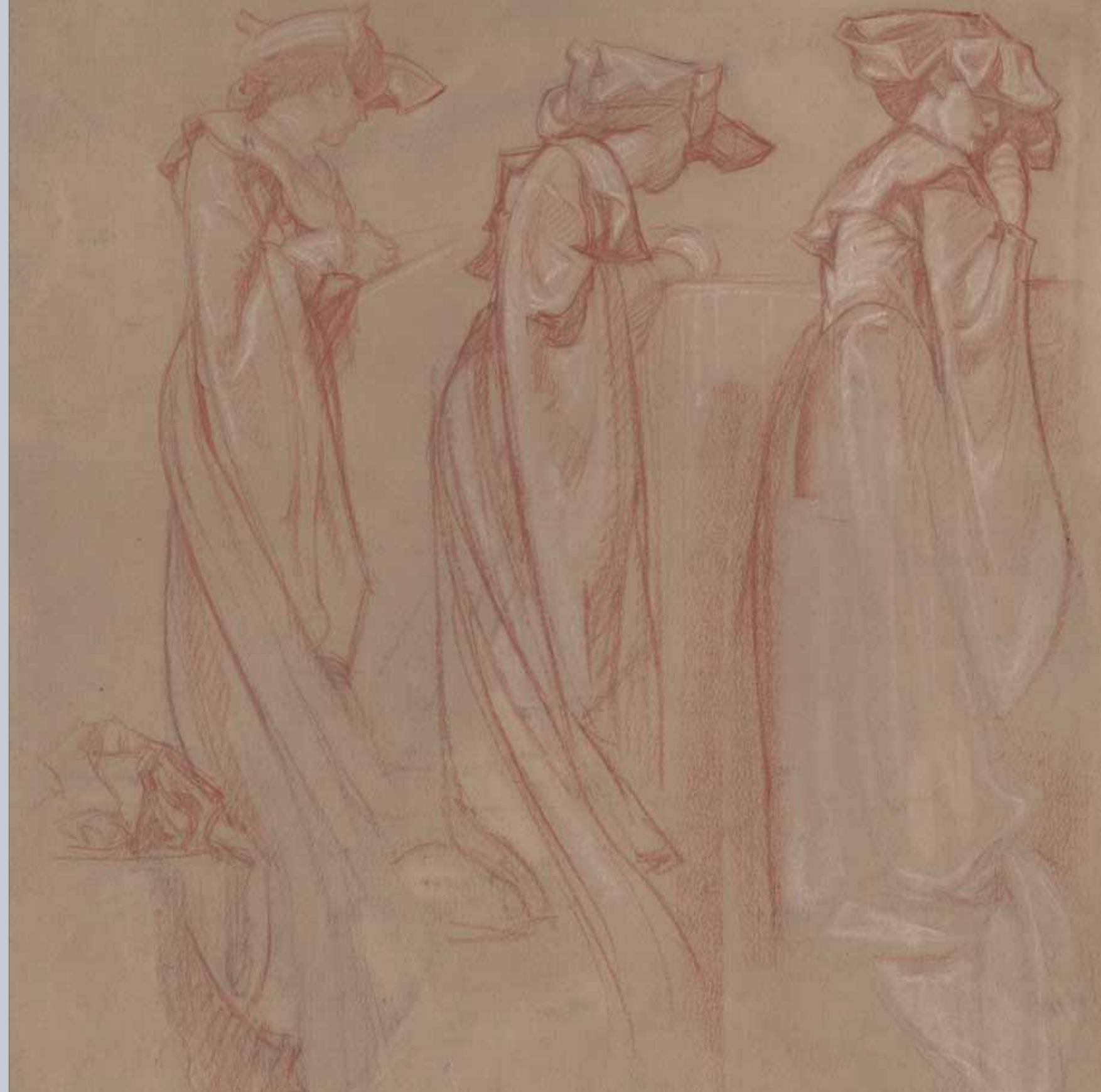


25 – *A Trader*,
Study for Selfridges (M2157),
Black chalk on paper, 16 3/8 x 10 in. (41.5 x 25 cm)

Harry Gordon Selfridge, nicknamed 'Mile a Minute Harry', brought American ideas on commerce and advertising to the British retail business. For his Oxford Street emporium, he commissioned Brangwyn to create a decoration in mosaic for the interior of a dome designed by Sir John Burnet. The huge dome, 70ft (21 metres) in diameter and 130ft (40 metres) above the ground, was to be tiled in mosaic, the subject being, appropriately enough, 'Trade of the World'. Brangwyn designed the top of the dome as an inverted globe upon which he noted various countries, together with flora and fauna of those areas, whilst the lower parts were filled with exotically dressed people and traders, each figure measuring some 16-17ft (5 metres) high. Unfortunately the mosaics were never executed because, apparently, the London County Council feared that the excessive weight might damage the underground railway.



26 – *Reading the Torah* (D3636), c.1930, signed with monogram,
Sanguine on cream paper, 12 ½ x 8 ⅛ in. (31.7 x 20.5 cm)
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche



27 – *Study of Three Women Praying* (D4997),
Pencil, red and white chalk on coloured paper, 14 ⅜ x 12 ¾ in. (36.5 x 32.5 cm)



29 – *Study of Figure with Vessel*, study for Venice Biennale 1905 (A1337),
Black and white chalk on grey paper, 12 ¼ x 10 ½ in. (31 x 26.7 cm)

28 – *Working Men*, study for Lloyd's Register of Shipping (M2619),
Pencil, red & white chalk and colour on paper, squared, 16 ½ x 19 ½ in. (42 x 49.5 cm)



30 – *Male Labourer Carrying Basket*,
Study for Venice Biennale 1905 (A1337),
Red chalk on cream paper,
17 x 9 ¼ in. (43.3 x 23.4 cm)



31 – *Studies of a Kneeling and Seated Man* (D4996), signed with initials,
Pencil and wash on paper, 9 ¾ x 11 ¾ in. (23.8 x 29.7 cm)



32 – *Figure study*, Study for St Aidan (M1108), signed with initials,
Pencil and red chalk on paper, 13 x 9 1/2 in. (33 x 24 cm)



33 – *Portrait of Jerome Esser?* (D4998), signed with initials,
Inscribed: "FB to Jerome Esser",
Black and red chalk on paper, 42 x 34.4 cm)



34 – *Man Singing*, study for Christ's Hospital, panel 7 (M1109),
signed with initials,
Red chalk on paper, 17 ½ x 11 in. (44.2 x 28 cm)



35 – *Chorister*, study for Christ's Hospital, panel 14 (M1109),
Black chalk and a bit of blue watercolour on paper,
squared in pencil, 20 ¼ x 14 ⅛ in. (51.5 x 36 cm)



36 – *Studies for St Amand and St Eloi* – windows in the Abbey St André, Bruges (G1866), Coloured chalk on paper, squared in pencil, 20 ½ x 15 ¾ in. (52.5 x 40 cm)



37 – Study for central panel of Nativity window, St Mary the Virgin, Bucklebury, Berkshire (G2237), Gouache on paper, 19 ⅝ x 18 in. (50 x 46 cm) Following pages: detail





38 – *Rabbi Reading* (E2502), 1934,
 From *L'Ombre de la croix*,
 Inscribed: *Frank Brangwyn to William Belleruche*
 Pen and ink over etched base on paper, 5 ½ x 5 in. (14 x 13 cm)
 Provenance: Count William de Belleruche

39 – Stained-Glass design for right-hand light of the Nativity window, Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Bucklebury, Berkshire (G2237), c.1917,
 Watercolour, gouache and black ink over charcoal on buff coloured paper, 63 x 16 ½ in. (160 x 42 cm),
 Provenance: Count William de Belleruche,
 Literature: L. Horner, *Frank Brangwyn: Stained Glass. A catalogue raisonné*, 2011, p42.





40 – *Study of Man Carrying Rifle*,
Study for Jefferson City (M1135),
Red chalk on buff paper,
14 1/8 x 8 in. (36 x 20 cm)



41 – *Man with Shell*,
Study for Selfridge (M2157),
Inscribed: monogram m.l.,
inscribed: 'Shell', 'Merman Selfridge
Dome' plus N.B...
Black and red chalk on paper, squared,
16 1/2 x 15 1/2 in. (42 x 39.5 cm)



42 – *Study of a Monk, full length three-quarter view*,
Study for St Aidan (M1108),
Signed with initials,
Pencil, black and white chalk on brown paper,
22 ¼ x 11 ¾ in. (56.5 x 29 cm)



43 – *Courtiers*, study for Cuyahoga
Court House, USA (M1142),
Signed with initials,
Black, red and white chalk on paper,
22 ¾ x 18 in. (57.5 x 45.5 cm)

The subject of this mural was
King John signing the Magna Carta in 1215



LISS FINE ART

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Founded in 1991 by Paul Liss and Sacha Llewellyn, Liss Fine Art specialises in the unsung heroes and heroines of British art from 1880 to 1980. During the last 20 years Liss Fine Art has worked in association with museums to develop a series of in-depth exhibitions to encourage the reappraisal of some of the lesser known figures of 20th century British Art.

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