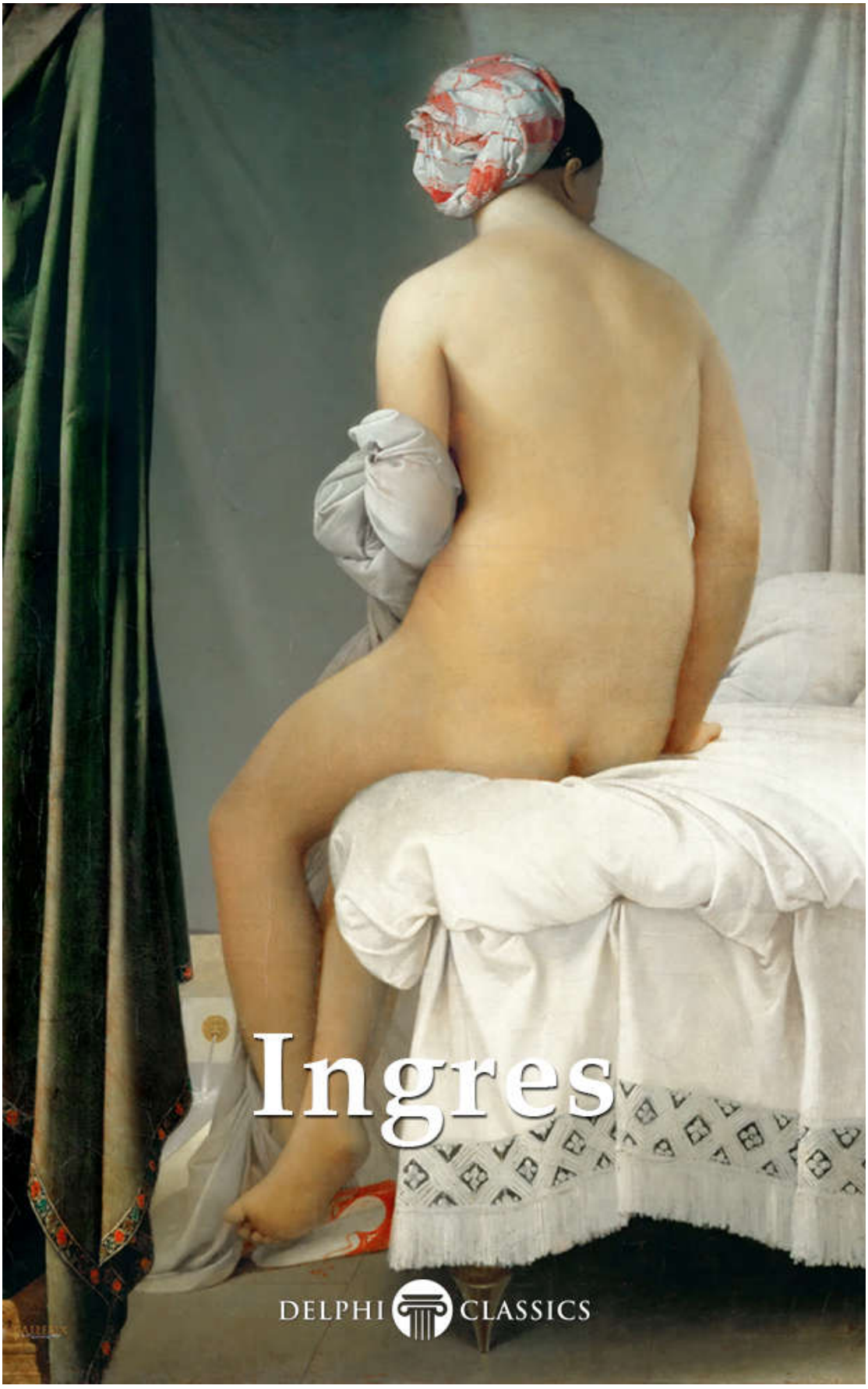
Ingres
DELPHI CLASSICS

Masters of Art

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres

(1780-1867)

Contents

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres by Emilia Francis Strong Dilke
Ingres by A. J. Finberg

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Masters of Art Series

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres

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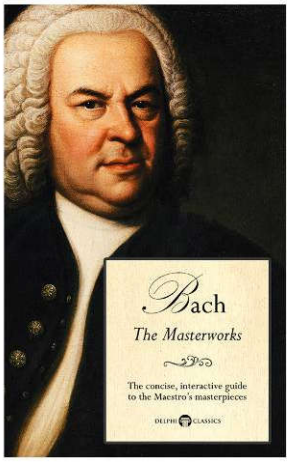

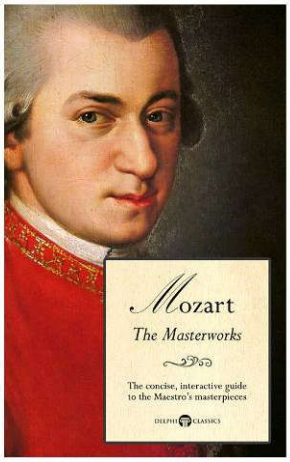

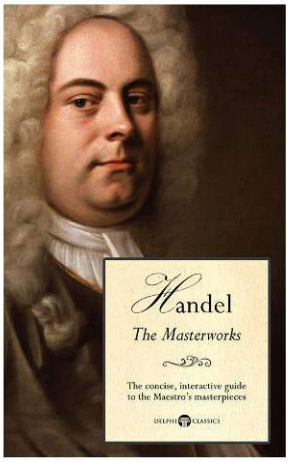

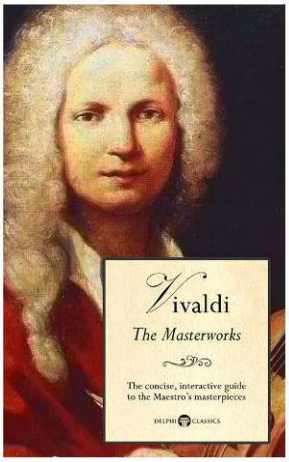

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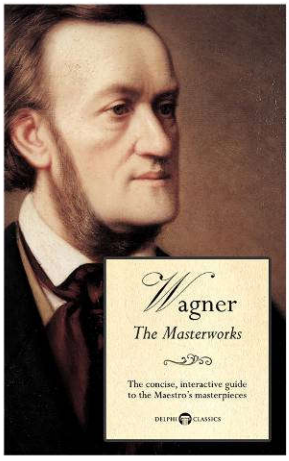
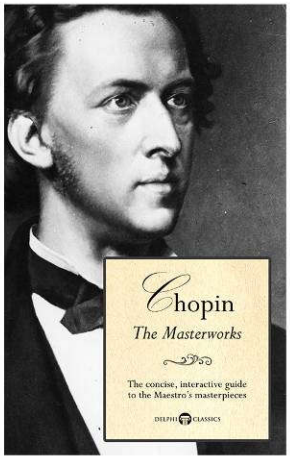
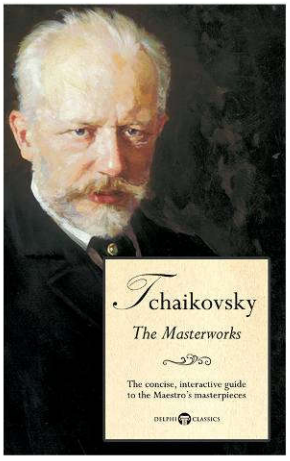
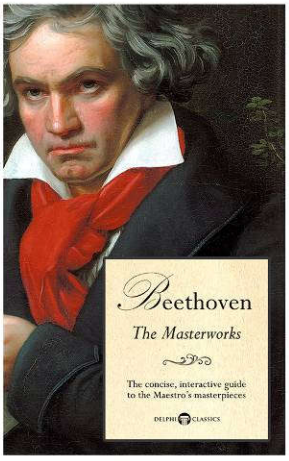






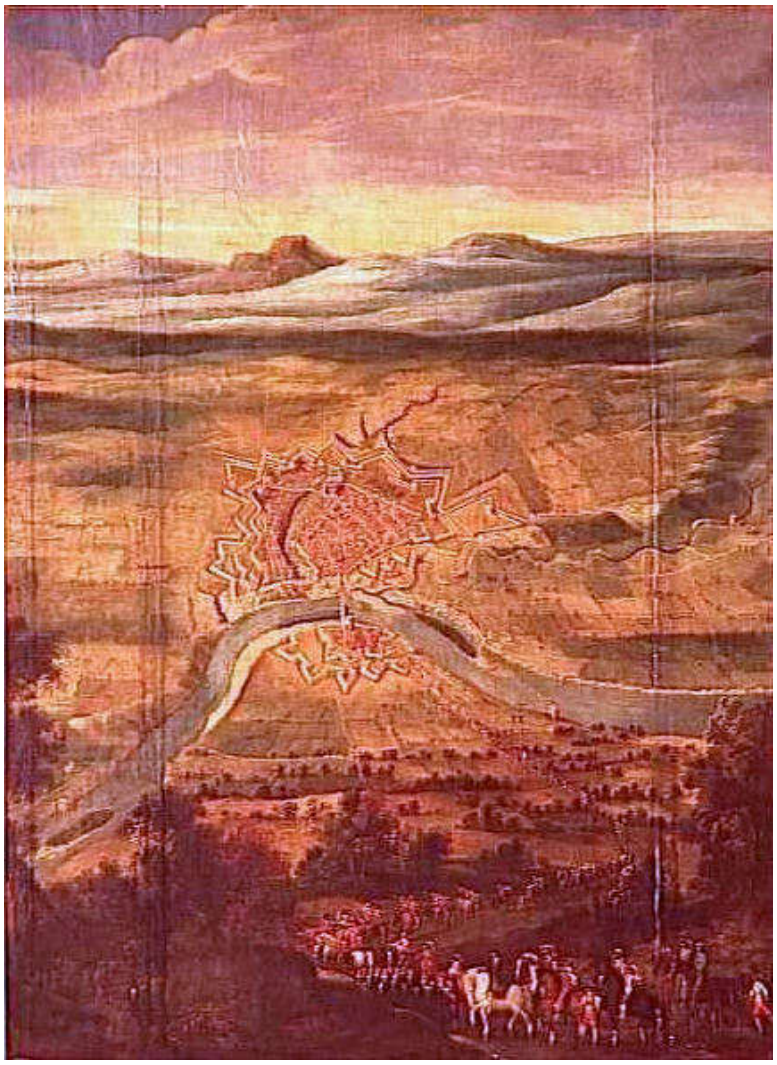


Explore the series so far…

The Highlights

Montauban, a commune in the Tarn-et-Garonne department in the Occitanie region of southern France — Ingres' birthplace

La Place Nationale, central Montauban



Montauban, 21 August 1629, Château de Richelieu

The Musée Ingres is located on the site of a castle of the Counts of Toulouse and was once the residence of the bishops of Montauban. It comprises many of Ingres' paintings and several sculptures by Antoine Bourdelle, another native of Montauban.

Self Portrait, 1822, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

The Highlights

In this section, a sample of Ingres' most celebrated works is provided, with concise introductions, special 'detail' reproductions and additional biographical images.

The Envoys of Agamemnon (1801)

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, the most celebrated exponent of the Neoclassical style of art, was born in Montauban, Tarn-et-Garonne, France. He was the first of seven children to Jean-Marie-Joseph Ingres (1755–1814), who was a successful jack-of-all-trades in the arts —noted as a painter of miniatures, sculptor, decorative stonemason and amateur musician —and Anne Moulet (1758–1817), the daughter of a master wigmaker. The young Ingres received early encouragement and instruction in drawing and music form his father, producing his first known drawing, a study after an antique cast, in 1789. He attended the local school École des Frères de l'Éducation Chrétienne, but his learning was disrupted by the turmoil of the French Revolution, as the closing of the school in 1791 marked the end of his conventional education. Throughout his career, the deficiency of schooling would remain a source of insecurity for Ingres.

In 1791 his father took him to Toulouse, where he was enrolled in the Académie Royale de Peinture, Sculpture et Architecture. He studied under the sculptor Jean-Pierre Vigan, the landscape painter Jean Briant and the Neoclassical painter Guillaume-Joseph Roques (1757–1847). The latter artist's veneration of Raphael would become a decisive influence on Ingres. From the outset, he was a prodigiously gifted scholar, winning prizes in several disciplines, including composition, "figure and antique" and life studies. He was determined to be a history painter, which at the time was considered the highest level of painting, according to the hierarchy of artists established by the Royal Academy under Louis XIV. This opinion would continue well into the nineteenth century. Ingres was not content producing portraits and illustrations of real life as his father had done, instead he aspired to lofty representations of the heroes of history and mythology, wishing to rival the importance of literature and philosophy.

By March 1797 the Academy awarded Ingres first prize in drawing and in the August of that year he traveled to Paris to study in the studio of Jacques-Louis David, Europe's leading painter of the revolutionary period. Ingres remained in David's studio for four years, being heavily influenced in his approach to art. Neoclassicism flourished in France during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. David championed a style of rigorous contours, sculpted forms and polished surfaces, wherein history paintings of the most austere and classical tales served as moral exemplars. David had painted in the service of royalty, radical revolutionaries and the Emperor Napoleon. Although his political allegiances shifted over time, he remained faithful to the tenets of Neoclassicism, which he transmitted to a generation of students, including Anne Louis Girodet-Trioson, François Gérard, Antoine Jean Gros and, of course, his greatest student of all, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres.

During his time in David's studio, Étienne-Jean Delécluze, a fellow student that later became an art critic, described Ingres as a student:

> "He was distinguished not just by the candor of his character and his disposition to work alone ... he was one of the most studious ... he took little part in the all the turbulent follies around him, and he studied with more perseverance than most of his co-disciples ... All of the qualities which characterize today the talent of this artist, the finesse of contour, the true and profound sentiment of the form, and a modelling with extraordinary correctness and firmness, could already be seen in his early studies. While several of his comrades and David himself

signalled a tendency toward exaggeration in his studies, everyone was struck by his grand compositions and recognized his talent."

By October 1799, Ingres was admitted to the painting department of the École des Beaux-Arts and for the next two years he won the grand prize of figure painting for his paintings of male torsos. This was followed by his first attempt for the Prix de Rome, the highest prize of the Academy, which entitled the winner to four years of residence at the Académie de France in Rome. Although he came second, in 1801 he secured the top prize with *The Envoys of Agamemnon*, housed today in the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts.

Recognised as the artist's first great work, it represents a scene from Homer's *Iliad*, in which Achilles refuses to listen to the envoys sent by Agamemnon, urging him to rejoin the Greek army in the Trojan War. The topic assigned to the artists competing for the Prix de Rome that year was the warriors' procession toward battle; however, Ingres opted for a much more psychological interpretation of the subject. As would become a recurring feature of his work, he places emphasis on a moment of psychological drama, rather than the more popular choice of physical action. The canvas demonstrates Ingres' mastery of the human figure in classical history painting, belying his tender age of twenty. Naturally, it echoes the Neoclassical style of David, as well as new influences from the sculptor John Flaxman (1755-1826), a leading figure of British Neoclassicism, who had just enjoyed his first Parisian exhibition.

Of especial note is the manner in which the figures give a statuary appearance, as though presented upon a stage, recalling David's masterpiece *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* (1799). Also reminiscent of classical statues, Ingres' figures signal a conventional approach to ideal beauty. Ulysses is based upon the antique statue of the Athenian general Phocion, while Patroclus is borrowed from a classical marble of Ganymede, instilling ancient gravitas into the scene. Ingres' classical figures reveal a precise understanding of living anatomy, with numerous realistic observations. Note the sunburned hands and the muscles showing advanced age in the older figures. The figures of the envoys, in the right section of the painting, are represented as muscular and solid forms. The figure to the far right stands dramatically poised, as though bracing for a blow, the powerful use of *chiaroscuro* across his back and cloak accentuating his imposing frame. These are the true figures of the heroic past, calling for action and defying delay.

However, the two main figures to the left, Achilles and his beloved cousin Patroclus are depicted in a contrasting manner. They appear as mobile, vivid and graceful figures, recalling the forms of Olympian athletes, as depicted on Greek vases. They take the form of delicate bas-relief figures, prepared to wait and think the matter through. A hint of laughter on their lips, they appear to find the envoys amusing in their haste. A notable feature is the striking white cloak of Achilles, its complex pattern of folds allowing the artist to show off his virtuoso brushwork. These two figures represent the world of calm thought and collected reasoning; should they stay or should they war?

Regardless of its many borrowings from older masters, *The Envoys of Agamemnon* is an impressive achievement for any student. It sent a loud challenge throughout the French art world's establishment, announcing a new and incredibly talented individual, with the hint of a new and emerging approach to the Neoclassical style.

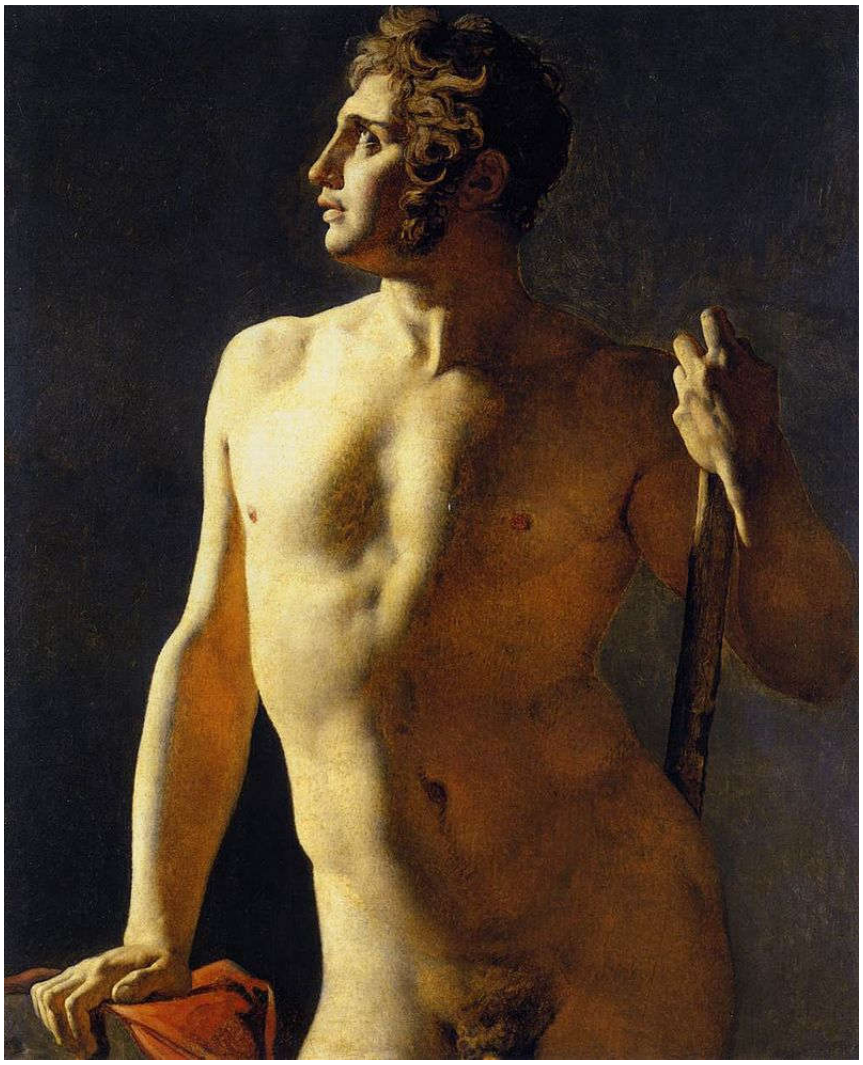
Detail

Detail

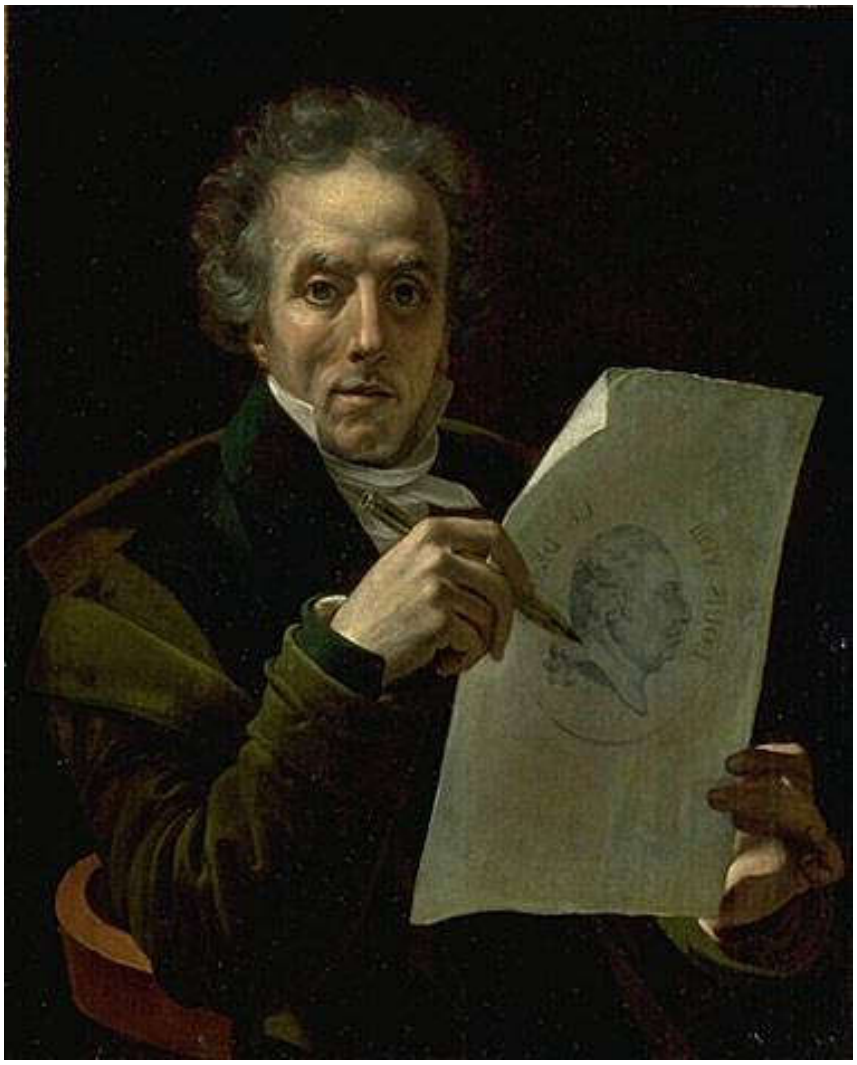
Detail

Detail

Detail



Ingres' early painting 'Male Torso', Montauban, Musée Ingres, 1800



Self portrait of Guillaume-Joseph Roques designing the portrait of Louis XVIII, 1815–1817. Roques was Ingres' first great teacher of painting.

'The Intervention of the Sabine Women' by Jacques-Louis David, 1799, concerning the legendary episode from the founding of Rome. Works such as this large canvas demonstrate David's early influence on Ingres' history paintings.

Jacques-Louis David's 1800 portrait of his pupil Ingres

End of Sample