

FOR THE COLLECTION OF EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN ART
POUR LA COLLECTION D'ART EUROPÉEN ET AMÉRICAIN



WATTS, George Frederic, British (1817-1904)

Time, Death and Judgement / Le Temps, La Mort et le Jugement

Oil on canvas; huile sur toile

74.5 x 51 cm; 29 ¼ x 20 in.

5,304.37 GBP

\$8,625.44



WATTS, George Frederic, British (1817-1904)

Three Studies for the Figure of Death in "Time, Death and Judgement" / Trois études pour la figure de la Mort, pour le tableau « le Temps, la Mort et le Jugement »

Pen and ink; plume et encre

31 x 18 cm; 12 ¼ x 7 in.

5,304.38 GBP

\$8,625.45

Provenance: The artist and thence to his ward Lilian Chapman (née MacIntosh, 1879-1972); Alan B Gately; Purchased by the Gallery at Sotheby's London, 13 July 2010.

Recently purchased at auction as a lot, this oil sketch and pen drawing share a common provenance and provide fresh insight into Watts' *Time, Death and Judgement*, a work produced in many versions including the first non-Canadian masterwork to enter the collection of the NGC. Both works under consideration were unknown to Michael Pantazzi in 2006 when he established a solid chronology for Watts' conception and obsessive reworking of this three-figure theme throughout the last third of the nineteenth century.¹ As Pantazzi explains, the respective chronologies of the various painted versions of *Time, Death and Judgement* are exponentially complicated, since many of the canvases spent long stretches in the studio where they were reworked over the course of years and even decades.

Here is the subject as described in an authorized 1886 publication:

This picture Mr. Watts has promised to present to the National Art Gallery of Canada, which was opened in 1880 by the Marquis of Lorne. The work is unfinished. A replica of it, also in an unfinished state, exists. Time is represented as the type of unchanging youth and vigour, with stony blue eyes, unheeding, undelaying. Hand in hand he advances with Death, who, in a fold of her drapery, bears plucked flowers and buds and withered leaves. Behind them floats Judgment, armed with the avenging fiery sword and the scales—the attributes of Eternal Law—ready to deal out to man the consequences of his actions. The golden sun sets large behind the head of Time, and the crescent moon is seen beside the form of Death. These colossal figures are treated with great breadth and vigour, in a sculpturesque spirit, and convey to the spectator the impression of immutability and firmness. This design has been carried out in mosaic in St. Jude's Church, Whitechapel.

The oil sketch under consideration is contextualized in the following sequence of images.

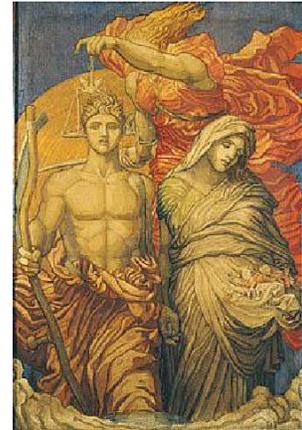
¹ Michael Pantazzi, "The Transformations of 'Time, Death, and Judgement' by George Frederic Watts" in *National Gallery of Canada Review*, vol. 5 (2006), pp. 45-63.



A Anonymous illustrator after George Frederic Watts, *Time, Death, and Judgment* (Ottawa version as it was in 1878), woodcut from *The Magazine of Art*, 1878.



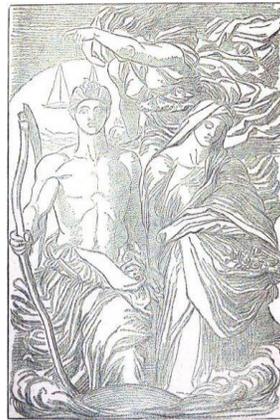
B Anonymous photographer after George Frederic Watts, *Time, Death, and Judgment* (Ottawa version as it was before 1884), photograph from the *Art Journal*, 1896.



C Cecil Schott after George Frederic Watts, *Time, Death, and Judgment: Cartoon for St. Jude's Mosaic* (after the Ottawa version as it was in 1884), 1884, watercolour on paper, 245 168 cm. Private collection



D George Frederic Watts, *Time, Death, and Judgment*, Ricordo of state ca. 1885, oil on canvas, 74.5 x 51 cm.; 29 1/4 x 20 in.



E Anonymous illustrator after George Frederic Watts, *Time, Death, and Judgment* (Ottawa version as it was unfinished in 1866), illustration in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1886.



F George Frederic Watts, *Time, Death, and Judgment*, 1864–86, oil on canvas, 245.4 169.8 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of the artist, London, England, 1886, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee

In chronological order ending with the completed painting (F), these are a woodcut (A) and a seemingly doctored photograph (B) indicating its state before the addition of a [...] cm strip along the top; a 1:1 watercolour cartoon (C) used to produce a mosaic version in 1884; the oil sketch (D) under consideration;

and a printed illustration (E) showing the state of the work in early 1866.² These images relate successive changes to the work including the covering (by Image C) of Time's proper left leg; the disappearance of the strap across Time's shoulder and the transformation of Judgement's sword from a metal blade into a flame (both in Image E); and continual changes in the hair/crown of Time.

The oil sketch under consideration (D) is most likely a *ricordo* documenting the state of the NGC painting ca. 1885. Although apparently not squared for transfer (a mechanistic practice to which Watts may have been opposed on principle) it is a painstaking record of most elements of the composition, closest in most particulars to the mosaic cartoon (C) securely datable to 1884. The most striking difference between cartoon and sketch is the absence of any indication of hair in the latter work. One can surmise that the oil sketch records a state in which the elaborately-stylized hair has been effaced before being reworked into a turban-like headpiece by early 1886 (E) and a more finicky winged confection in the final painting (F).

Though modest in scale and price, this oil sketch which passed from Watts to his ward Lilian MackIntosh makes an invaluable addition to the collection, permitting us to carry out the examination necessary for furthering Pantazzi's researches into the genesis of the work donated in 1886.³ The very existence of such careful records of successive states of the painting is evidence of the work's importance to the artist, and of his peculiar aversion to arriving at a definitive version. The year he sent the work to the NGC Watts arranged to have it known that he "has now completely retired from accepting commissions, that he may the better be able to turn his undivided attention to his many unfinished pictures, precisely as the spirit moves him to paint upon them, and accordingly as he feels in harmony with each special subject."⁴ True to his word, the artist continued to meddle with the painting sent later that year to Ottawa (described as unfinished on p. 24 of the same 1886 publication) and to obsess for decades over two other full-sized versions that he presented to the English nation upon his definitive retirement at the turn of the century.⁵ Watts described the theme in these various

² Images A through C were known to Pantazzi, and discussed by him. Image E is illustrated on p. 23 of M.H. [Marion Harry] Spielmann, "The Works of Mr George F. Watts, R.A., with a Complete Catalogue of his Pictures", *Pall Mall Gazette*, Extra Number 22, 1886, and notes on p. 24 that "[t]his picture Mr. Watts has promised to present to the National Art Gallery of Canada [...]. The work is unfinished. A replica of it, also in an unfinished state, exists."

³ For Lilian ('Lily'), who first visited Watts's house as an orphan of 13, see Veronica Franklin Gould, *G.F. Watts: The Last Great Victorian* (New Haven, Conn: Yale UP, 2004), p. 283 *et passim*. In 1910-12 she is recorded in the Toronto Blue Books as living in that city with her husband Michael Chapman, who was killed in action at Ypres in 1918. Long returned to England, she dies in Surrey in 1972. I am grateful to Michael Pantazzi and Philip Dombowsky for assistance with these biographies. The back of the stretcher bears the inscription "CHAPMAN NOT" in white chalk, along with some untraced inventory numbers.

⁴ M.H. [Marion Harry] Spielmann, "The Works of Mr George F. Watts, R.A., with a Complete Catalogue of his Pictures", *Pall Mall Gazette*, Extra Number 22, 1886, pp.348.

⁵ One version was given to the St. Paul's Cathedral in 1897, and the other to the Tate Gallery in 1900. See Pantazzi 2005, p. 53 and figs 13 and 14.

iterations as “one of several suggestive compositions that I hope to leave behind me in support of my claim to be considered a real artist, and it is only by these that I wish to be known.”⁶ It does not figure among the two pictorial ideas in his oeuvre that he considered to be definitively completed.⁷

⁶ Watts to Charles Rickards, quoted in Mary S. Watts, *George Frederick Watts: The Annals of An Artist's Life*, London 1912, I, p.228.

⁷ See for instance the catalogue describing the large deposit of Watts works at the Birmingham gallery which opened in 1885: “In selecting pictures to send to this exhibition, the artist has chosen those which, he considers, show most distinctly the character, aim, and intention of his work. It is obvious that among these are some which are far from being finished works—some, moreover, which, in all probability, he will continue to retouch and endeavour to improve as long as he is able to work. He has never painted any pictures with a view to their being exhibited, his sole object being to express certain moods of thought and feeling through the language of art. He believes that some of the subjects he has chosen deserve all the labour that can be bestowed upon them, and that, though some of the pictures are unfinished, they show the aim toward which he works sufficiently clearly to make them characteristic examples of his art. The “Paolo and Francesca” and the “Orpheus and Eurydice” are, he considers, finally finished; but “Time, Death, and Judgment,” “Love and Death,” and the “Eve Tempted” he hopes to improve considerably by future work.” *Official Catalogue of the Contents of the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, with Notes upon the Industrial Exhibits*, compiled by Whitworth Wallis and Alfred St. Johnston (Birmingham: Geo. Jones and Son, Printers, [1887?]), p. 181. See also M. H. Spielmann 1886, pp. 14-15: “Mr. Watts's custom of returning to re-paint those works which he sees he can improve by so doing makes us reckon many of them now unfinished, though completed and exhibited many years ago. In the artist's own opinion he has but *two* imaginative works that he considers ‘finished!’ They are ‘Paolo and Francesca’ and ‘Orpheus and Eurydice.’”



Details of Figures (rescaled) from G.F. Watts, *Three Studies for the Figure of Death in 'Time, Death and Judgement,'* ca. 1884-5.



Detail of a Watts, drawing showing study for the drapery of Time in the Brinsley Ford Collection no. RBF542. For complete drawing see Pantazzi 2005, fig. 1.



G.F. Watts, *Study for Time, Death, and Judgment*, ca. 1878-86, orange chalk heightened with white on paper, laid down on canvas, 91.4 71.2 cm. NGC, gift of Dr. Dennis T. Lanigan,



Detail of G.F. Watts, *Red Chalk Study of the Figure of Death for 'Time, Death and Judgement'* 1884. Drawing on the back of a pamphlet, 1884. Watts Gallery, Compton, COMWG2007.582a.

The pen sketch under consideration is the second sketch for the figure of Death to enter the collection, since in 2004 Dennis Lanigan donated a large, highly-finished red chalk drawing of the same subject. Both the triple sketch and the chalk drawing show a woman in elaborate ancient dress. As Douglas Schoenherr has pointed out in his description of the Lanigan drawing, the woman's dress is clearly indebted to Hellenistic examples including a famous colossal statue of a woman from the Mausoleum at Halikarnassos.⁸ In the years since Pantazzi's 2005

⁸ NGC #41435. Douglas E. Schoenherr, *British Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada* (ex. cat., Ottawa, NGC, 2004): 130-31, no. 52, repr. The sculpture was known intimately to Watts, since he was present at key moments of the

article many studies for this composition have recently been published on the web site of the Watts Gallery at Compton. Notable examples include an impressive chalk study for the drapery around the waist of the figure of Time, and the red chalk study for the figure of Death illustrated here.⁹ The latter drawing bears a date of 1884, perhaps due to the content on the pamphlet comprising the recto. If the date can be secured through further research, then would reasonably bring both NGC drawings very close to 1884.

excavation of the site (modern-day Bodrum, Turkey) by his friend Charles Thomas Newton, a curator at the British Museum where it was subsequently deposited. In the Greek original of ca. 350 BC (British Museum GR 1857.12-20.233, 260) the woman wears typical Greek dress, consisting of a short-sleeved *chiton* (tunic) buttoned at the shoulders, and covered by a *himation* (long rectangular mantle) twisting into a mass at her waist, wrapping tightly around her hips and legs, and continuing across her back to fall over her left shoulder. Variants of this kind of twisting drapery are seen in Watts's drawings, which also resonate with the memory of the so-called Three Fates from the Elgin-transported east pediment of the Parthenon.

⁹ The drapery study is COMWG2007.638, purchased by Brinsley Ford from Lilian Chapman. An inscription by Ford on another drawing (COMWG2007.262) reads: "Bought from Mrs Michael Chapman, the adopted daughter of Mrs Watts either early in 1939, or in 1944, or in 1945, when I bought further groups of Watts's studies from her the prices ranged from 5/- for a slight sketch to 30/- for a finished drawing. Brinsley Ford" The Ford collection drawings were acquired by the Watts Gallery in 1999.