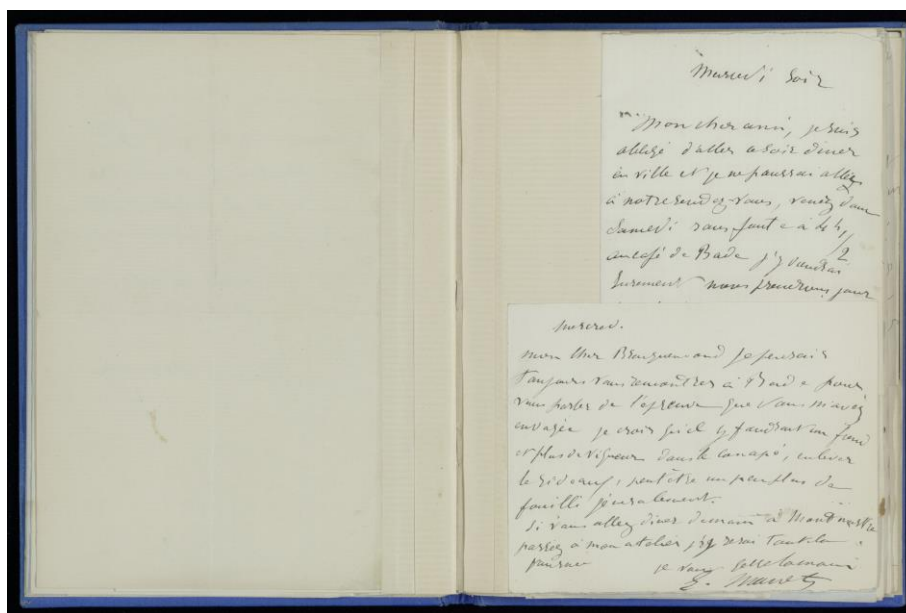


Fondation Custodia Acquires Previously Unknown Letters from Édouard Manet

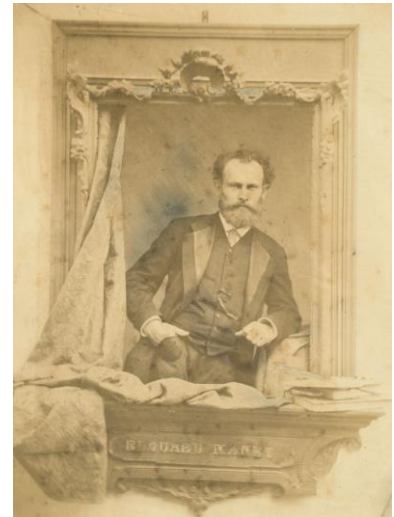


Letters from Édouard Manet to Félix Bracquemond: two undated short notes.
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris (acquired 2016)

Paris, 24 January 2017 – With the generous support of Jean-Luc Baroni, the Fondation Custodia has been able to acquire a series of letters written by Édouard Manet (1832-1883) to his friend, the painter and engraver Félix Bracquemond (1833-1914).

Until the correspondence surfaced at a sale in Paris in June 2016, its existence was known only through the publication of nine of the letters in *Le Figaro* of 29 September 1923 (reissued, with a critical commentary, by Jean-Paul Bouillon in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* of 1983). The correspondence proved, however, to be much more extensive than that: forty-three letters and notes from Manet, one from his wife, the Dutch-born Suzanne Leenhoff, and one from his brother Eugène, mounted on strips of paper and bound – in no particular order – in a small volume, possibly on the instructions of a collector. If this hypothesis is correct, the letters were no longer in the possession of Bracquemond's heirs as early as 1937 (the year the binder, Franz Osterman, died).

Closer study of the letters – mostly brief messages and appointments, very few of them dated – will undoubtedly shed new light on the relations between the two artists and their long collaboration. Bracquemond and Manet probably met around 1860, at a time when Manet was beginning to take an interest in the potential of printmaking for disseminating his work. Etching was an obvious choice: the technique had just come back into fashion among artists and art lovers – and before long among the public at large thanks to the activities of the new ‘Société des Aquafortistes’. It was strongly recommended as a technique by the poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire, because it was ‘freer’ than traditional burin engraving.



Bracquemond, himself a keen etcher, certainly encouraged his friend’s interest in etching and without doubt helped Manet to master the technique, particularly with advice on biting and printing – subjects that are often discussed in the letters. In 1862, with Bracquemond’s help, Manet published his first set of etchings under the title *8 Gravures à l’eau-forte par Édouard Manet*. In May of that year, he and Bracquemond were among the founding members of the ‘Société des Aquafortistes’. In the first of the Société’s monthly editions (which were always five etchings) the first and the fourth prints were by Bracquemond and Manet respectively, and the others by Daubigny, Legros and Ribot. The following year, in October 1863, Manet supplied his second and last etching for the Société, after his portrait of the dancer Lola de Valence.



These projects must have significantly increased Manet’s workload alongside his concentrated efforts on the large canvases for the Salon and for his exhibitions in the Martinet gallery – including the two paintings he recorded in his two etchings for the Société. Many of the letters relate to appointments in his studio or at artists’ cafés like the café de Bade and le Guerbois, or invitations to dine with him and his wife or at his mother’s. All the indications are that for many years the two artists frequently met and talked. In 1880 Manet, already ill and taking a lengthy course of treatment at Bellevue to the south of Paris, sent Bracquemond two of his now famous letters adorned with delicate watercolour sketches – missives that were, regrettably, separated from his other letters to the engraver at an early stage.



The strong bond between the two friends emerges perhaps most clearly from the two longer letters in which Manet, writing from Arcachon – where, awaiting the end of the Commune, he tried to recover from the privations he suffered during the Siege of Paris in 1870 – poured his heart out to Bracquemond about the country's political situation.

This fascinating and touching correspondence has found a natural home in the Fondation Custodia. This foundation in Paris was set up in 1947 by the Dutch collector and art historian Frits Lugt (1884-1970) and his wife Jacoba Klever. It is renowned first and foremost for its magnificent collection of Old Master drawings and prints, but it also manages a unique collection of letters written by artists, collectors and art historians from the fifteenth century to the present day, which is now estimated to contain some 50 000 items and is still being expanded. There are two letters by Rembrandt (of the seven by the artist that are known) and others by Dürer, Titian, Michelangelo, Rubens, Van Dyck, Poussin, Ingres, Delacroix, Courbet, Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh and Gauguin. The collection also includes extensive correspondences that have survived intact, such as the Fantin-Latour archives or the nearly hundred letters that Piet Mondrian wrote to the architect J. J. P. Oud. The Fondation Custodia already held thirty letters by Manet, including one of those illuminated with small watercolours dating from 1880, in this case written to another engraver and friend, Henri Guérard (1846-1897). There are also a great many documents, photographs, newspaper articles and cuttings, and letters from members of the family, particularly Suzanne Manet.

Jean-Paul Bouillon, a Bracquemond specialist, is working on a critical edition of the recently acquired letters. The first volume of the scholarly edition of letters written by Italian artists, with material from artists working in Tuscany and Rome, is to be published before long. Researchers and others with an interest may study the collection on weekday mornings by appointment. The Fondation is currently preparing the digitisation of its holdings. The aim is to make all the documents accessible on an internet database in due course.



Practical Information:

LOCATION

Fondation Custodia

121, rue de Lille · 75007 Paris · France

www.fondationcustodia.fr

ACCESS BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Metro: Assemblée Nationale (line 12) or Invalides (lines 8 and 13, RER C)

Bus 63, 73, 83, 84, 94: Assemblée Nationale

STUDY ROOM

Opening Hours: Monday · Friday from 10 am to 1 pm

By appointment only: turgot@fondationcustodia.fr

LIBRARY

Opening Hours: Monday · Friday from 2 to 6 pm

biblio@fondationcustodia.fr

EXHIBITIONS

Opening Hours: Tuesday · Sunday from 12 to 6 pm

On show from 4 February to 7 May 2017:

* *Drawings for Paintings in the Age of Rembrandt*

* *Reading Traces. Three centuries of drawing in Germany*

Contacts:

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Gaëlle de Bernède

gaelledebenede@gmail.com

Tel. : +33 (0)1 75 43 46 80

PRESS CONTACT NETHERLANDS AND BELGIUM

Noepy Testa

noepy@entesta.nl

Tel. : +31 (0)6 29 14 10 54

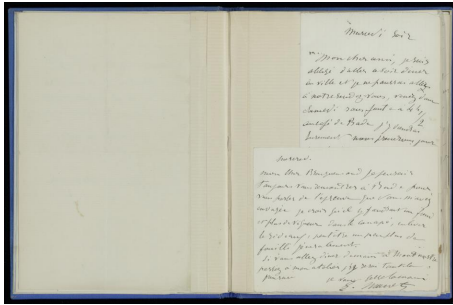
DIRECTOR FONDATION CUSTODIA

Ger Luijten

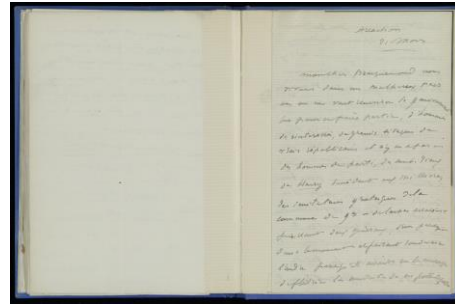
coll.lugt@fondationcustodia.fr

Tel. +33 (0)1 47 05 75 19

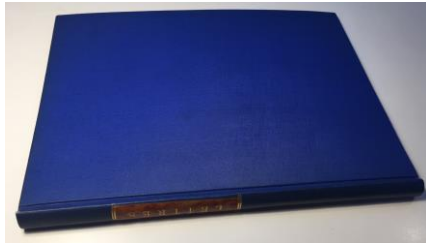
Images Available to the Press



1. Letters from Édouard Manet to Félix Bracquemond: two undated short notes
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris
(acquired 2016)



2. Letters from Édouard Manet to Félix Bracquemond:
letter written in Arcachon, 21 March [1871]
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris
(acquired 2016)



3. Letters from Édouard Manet to Félix Bracquemond: the album
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris
(acquired 2016)



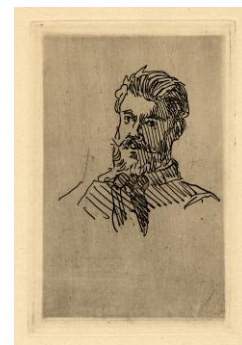
4. Adolphe Dallemagne, *Portrait of Édouard Manet*, c. 1866
Unpublished photograph, approx. 22 x 16.5 cm
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



5. J.M. Lopez, *Portrait of Édouard Manet*, c. 1874
Unpublished photograph,
approx. 8.5 x 5.5 cm
Fondation Custodia, Collection
Frits Lugt, Paris



6. Félix Bracquemond, after a
photograph by Anatole Godet,
Portrait of Édouard Manet, 1867
Etching, 16 x 11.9 cm
British Museum, London



7. Édouard Manet, *Portrait of Félix Bracquemond*, 1865
Aquatint, 17.2 x 11.3 cm
British Museum, London