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## The Significance of Blue Paper for Figure Studies in 16th-century Venice and 17th-Century Amsterdam

The material of handmade blue paper exists as a support for drawings throughout international public and private collections. However, it has received relatively little attention in art historical scholarship to date. Through its inherent tonality, blue paper is a particularly efficient and effective means to render figures and figural compositions, which serve to inform the colouristic details of paintings. Combined with the friable materials of black chalk and/or charcoal and white heightening, blue paper enables artists to capture the tonal complexities of the human body in space. This research explores the use of blue paper for figure studies by artists working in mid-sixteenth-century Venice and mid-seventeenth-century Amsterdam. Close examination of the material support of a selection of drawings by artists working in Venice and Amsterdam, including members of the Veronese and Tintoretto family workshops, and by Jacob Backer (1609–1651), Govert Flinck (1615–1660), and Jacob van Loo (1614–1670), demonstrate the significance of the use of blue paper for figure studies in these two entrepôts. The drawings examined in this presentation are those that were studied in person when Alexa McCarthy was a Research Fellow during the summer of 2021 at the German Center for Art History, DFK Paris. In addition, the presentation will include drawings examined first-hand at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, where the material was studied together with conservators. Considering what lies beneath the surface of the drawings, this presentation sheds new light on questions of function, practice, and stylistic development through the use of blue paper.

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