

A CLOSER LOOK

The Statue of Liberty



Paul Joseph Victor Dargaud (French, ca. 1850-1913)

The Statue of Liberty in Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi's Studio, Paris, 1884

Oil on canvas

SBMA, Museum purchase, 19th Century Endowment Funds and Suzette Davidson Art Acquisition Endowment, 2001.36.2.

About the Artist

Paul Joseph Victor Dargaud was a French artist who specialized in painting topographically accurate views of the fashionable boulevards of Paris, France. This painting is one of his best known works of art.

Themes

- Liberty
- US History
- US Government
- Public Monuments

Overview

Paul Joseph Victor Dargaud's painting *The Statue of Liberty in Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi's Studio Paris* commemorates the construction of Bartholdi's colossus *Liberty Enlightening the World*, better known to Americans as the *Statue of Liberty*.

Inspired on a trip to Egypt by the grandeur of the Pyramids and the Sphinx, Bartholdi imagined a monumental statue that would be twice the size of the Sphinx. Because of its size, the statue was modeled in sections. The right arm bearing the torch was the first portion that was completed. It was shipped to the United States in 1876 in time for the nation's centennial. The entire statue was finished in 1883.

Dargaud's view of the dusty workshop represents the state at which the plaster model for the statue's left hand and arm had been completed. Positioning the artwork in the center of the composition, the artist shows visitors of all ages admiring the work-in-progress from various angles.

Research: The Symbolism of the Statue of Liberty

What does this painting tell us about the making of the statue? How can we tell how large it is? Is Dargaud emphasizing the statue as a technical triumph? A symbol? If so, of what?

Like any public monument, the Statue of Liberty was created out of complex political and private agendas. Research the political maneuvering behind the statue's construction and the rise of the Third Republic in France. How did France's agenda for the Statue of Liberty and the United States' interpretation of it differ?



Read: The New Colossus, 1883

Not like the **brazen** giant of Greek fame
 With conquering limbs astride from land to land,
 Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
 A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
 Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
 Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
 Glows worldwide welcome: her mild eyes command
 The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame,
 "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries
 she with silent lips." Give me your tired, your
 poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe
 free,
 The **wretched refuse** of your **teeming** shore,
 Send these, the homeless, **tempest tossed** to me,
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

- Emma Lazarus

*Look up the meaning of the words in **bold** in a dictionary. How do those definitions compare and contrast with the meaning and context of Lazarus' poem?*

Activity: Giving "Liberty" a Voice

In "The New Colossus" the poet Emma Lazarus contrasts the soon to be installed symbol of the United States with what many consider the perfect symbol of the Greek and Roman era, the **Colossus of Rhodes**. Why might she want to draw comparisons with those ancient cultures?

Compare and contrast US attitudes towards freedom and immigration, from 1883 when this was written, and today.

Activity: Re-thinking Monuments

If you were asked to design a new monument for the New York harbor, what would it be? What about a monument for San Francisco harbor or the border between California and Mexico? Describe or draw your monuments.

