



The Apparition, ca. 1880–1890, Odilon Redon (French, 1840–1960). Charcoal and powdered charcoal with stumping and yellow pastel on brown wove paper. The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2013.38

The exhibition *Noir: The Romance of Black in 19th-century French Drawings and Prints* (2016), illustrated the wide range of materials and techniques employed by artists of the period to create drawings that are both dark in physical appearance and subject matter. Among the artists included in the exhibition were Georges Seurat and Odilon Redon as well as less familiar figures like Rodolphe Bresdin and Maxime Lalanne. The works of these artists, deceptively simple in appearance, represent complex mixtures of black media including charcoals of varying hardnesses, assorted crayons, natural and fabricated chalks, ink, and pastel. These multifaceted drawings warrant the close study and intimate viewing that was encouraged throughout the exhibition.

Responding to the exhibition’s emphasis on materiality, drawings conservators Michelle Sullivan and Nancy Yocco worked closely with curatorial and scientific staff to better understand the drawings in the exhibition from a technical standpoint and communicate this information in an accessible way. For the catalog accompanying the exhibition, Michelle and Nancy co-authored an essay that highlights four drawings, and details their construction step-by-step. They also created an illustrated technical glossary for the catalog that distinguishes various black drawing media used by the noir artists and the various manipulations—scraping, blending, and removing media—utilized to achieve a wide range of visual effects. Michelle and Nancy also worked with curatorial staff to draft technique-focused gallery didactics and organize a related display of materials for the exhibition.

Research continued beyond the exhibition, in collaboration with staff at the Getty Conservation Institute. Working with scientists Nathan Daly, Lynn Lee, and Karen Trentelman, methods of non-destructive analysis—high-power digital microscopy, macro X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy scanning (mXRF), and Raman spectroscopy—were used to characterize and describe black drawing media with greater accuracy, a historically challenging task for curators and conservators alike. The results of this analytical study have been disseminated in the following publications:

Daly, N., M. Sullivan, L. Lee, J. Delaney, and K. Trentelman. 2019. “Odilon Redon’s Noir Drawings: Characterization of Materials and Methods Using Noninvasive Imaging and Spectroscopies.” In *Heritage Science*. Springer International Publishing.

Daly, N., M. Sullivan, L. Lee, and K. Trentelman. 2018. “Multivariate Analysis of Raman Spectra of Carbonaceous Black Drawing Media for In Situ Identification of Historic Artist Materials.” In *Journal of Raman Spectroscopy*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.



Castle Overlooking a River, 1860s–70s, Maxime Lalanne (French, 1827–1886). Charcoal with stumping, lifting, and dry brush, fixed, on laid paper. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Gift of Richard A. Simms, 99.GF.54