

1998

# Anthony Panzera: The Big Picture, Life-Size Scrolls and Drawings

University of Richmond Museums

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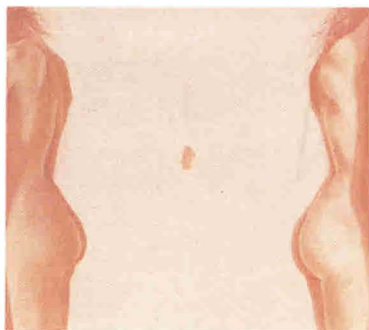
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ANTHONY PANZERA



THE *BIG* PICTURE

LIFE-SIZE SCROLLS & DRAWINGS

Published on the occasion of the exhibition  
*Anthony Panzera:*  
*The Big Picture, Life-Size Scrolls and Drawings*

Bates College Museum of Art, Lewiston, Maine  
October 24 to December 19, 1997

Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond, Virginia  
January 28 to March 6, 1998

The Hickory Museum of Art, North Carolina  
August 8 to November 8, 1998

Front Cover: Detail of *The Arabian Nights*, 1997, sanguine and white chalk on a roll of gray Canson Mi-Tientes paper, 5 x 33 feet (60 x 396 inches), Collection of the artist.

Back Cover: Detail of *Leda and the Swan*, 1994-95, sanguine chalk on a roll of buff Canson Mi-Tientes paper, 5 x 33 feet (60 x 396 inches), Collection of the artist.

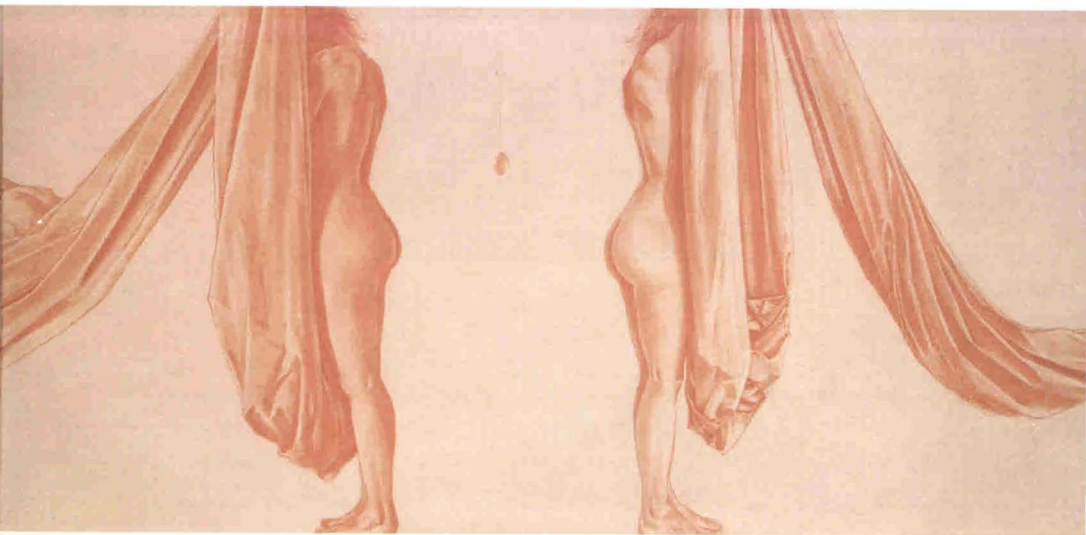
Photographs: Neil Frankel, *The Arabian Nights*; Beth Wesson, *Leda and the Swan*.

William Butler Yeats' poem "Leda and the Swan" (1923), from *The Poems of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Richard J. Finneran, 1983, reprinted by permission of Macmillan Publishing Company, New York.

Exhibition co-organized by Bates College Museum of Art and Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond. Catalogue published by Marsh Art Gallery, George M. Modlin Center for the Arts, University of Richmond, Virginia 23173, and printed by Twill Incorporated, Union, New Jersey.

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## THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

The story of *The Arabian Nights* is based upon a text from a fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript edited by Muhsin Mahdi, and the version related here comes from the 1992 translation by Hussein Haddawy. It is essentially a series of stories and stories within stories collected from countless Persian, Indian, and Arabian sources. They are woven together from one plot to another in a manner which intrigues and compels the reader's interest.

It begins with the idyllic courtly life of the King Shahrayar. Leaving his wife behind, the king sets off on a hunting trip. Upon his return, he learns that his wife and concubines have been unfaithful to him with the palace slaves. In an act of rage and vengeance he kills his wife, concubines, and the slaves involved, and swears he will never allow a woman to be unfaithful to him again. Instead, he will make love to a different woman every night and have her put to death at daybreak.

The daughter of the king's Vizier, Shahrazad, in an effort to save the lives of the other maidens of the kingdom, tells her father that she wishes to spend the night with the king. The Vizier, astonished by his daughter's request, and realizing that he would be the instrument of her death, pleads with her to change her mind. But she remains resolute.

The king was amazed to learn this and said to his Vizier, "How is it that you find it possible to give me your daughter, knowing that I will ask you to put her to death the next morning?" He replied, "I have told her

everything and explained all this to her, but she insists on being with you tonight.” The king was delighted.

At nightfall the Vizier handed Shahrazad over to King Shahrayar. But when the king took her to bed and began to fondle her, she wept, and he asked, “Why are you crying?” She replied, “I have a sister, Dinarzad, and I wish to bid her good-bye before daybreak.” The king sent for Dinarzad, who came and later fell asleep under the bed. As the night wore on, she awoke and waited until the king had satisfied himself with Shahrazad.

As pre-arranged with her sister, Dinarzad cleared her throat to make her presence known and said, “Sister, if you are not sleepy, tell us one of your lovely little tales to while away the night, before I bid you good-bye at daybreak, for I know what will happen to you tomorrow.” Shahrazad turned to King Shahrayar and said, “May I have your permission to tell a story?” He replied yes, and she began to tell her tale.

And it followed that each night Shahrazad would tell a story, each one more intriguing than the last. This was her plan to forestall the king’s practice, save herself, and deliver the other maidens from harm. Exhausted from a night of love and storytelling, Shahrazad would lapse into silence. Then Dinarzad would say to her sister, “What a strange and entertaining story,” and Shahrazad would reply, “But what is this compared to what I shall tell you tomorrow night if the king spares me and lets me live?” For a thousand and one nights the king was thus entertained, and “in the course of time Shahrazad bore him three children and, having learned to trust and love her, he spared her life and kept her as his queen.”

*Anthony Panzera*



## *ACKNOWLEDGMENTS*

We are pleased to present *The Big Picture*, this delightful exhibition of life-size scrolls and drawings by Anthony Panzera.

The successful realization of this exhibition, its presentation at each institution, and the accompanying publication are due to the invaluable contributions of numerous people. First and foremost, our sincere thanks and gratitude are extended to the artist, Anthony Panzera. His enthusiasm and involvement during the planning and preparation of the exhibition and catalogue have made this truly a rewarding experience.

We wish to thank our respective institutions, Bates College and the University of Richmond, for their continuing encouragement and support of the visual arts through our programs and exhibitions. Special thanks go to our staff members who devoted considerable energy throughout this project: William Low and Anthony Shostak at Bates College Museum of Art and Douglas Satteson and Lynda Brown at Marsh Art Gallery.

Anthony Panzera is an artist who draws the figure beautifully, and as we see in this exhibition, with a strong sense of narration. Just as we gather around the storyteller to hear and be transfixed and transported by the tale, now let us gather around Anthony Panzera's epic drawings.

*Genetta McLean*

*Director, Bates College Museum of Art*

*and*

*Richard Waller*

*Director, Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond*

Organizing an exhibition of this size and scale, an effort which began almost three years ago, requires the help of many people. It is not often that an artist has the opportunity to publicly acknowledge those who were instrumental in realizing a project such as this, and I am grateful for this opportunity.

I wish to first thank Genetta McLean and Richard Waller; their enthusiasm and encouragement in showing these over-sized works was gratifying from the very beginning and has continued throughout our collaboration. In addition, I thank Donald Holden and Ephraim Rubenstein who, at the very earliest stages of the project, generously offered both their support and advice. And I want to acknowledge the support of Tom Perryman, director of The Hickory Museum of Art.

My family has always contributed to my efforts over the years as well as to this project. To Guido and Lisa, and her husband Tony, and to my wife Marie, who came up with the exhibition title, I offer my thanks.

The life-size figure drawings and narrative scrolls are integrally dependent on the cooperation of the models who posed for them; three loom prominently in these works. Earliest was Laura Sue Phillips, who worked many long hours. Then there was Danielle Heuler, who contributed much in the way of ideas as well as elegant poses. And last was Ellie Romais, whose help as studio assistant was essential to this exhibition and efforts as model continue to be a source of inspiration. Each of these models is endowed with her own unique form of human grace, and they are the spirit behind these works. To all I offer my gratitude.

*Anthony Panzera*







*Leda and the Swan* (1923)

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push  
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?  
And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there  
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower  
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,  
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,  
Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

— William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

## *LEDA AND THE SWAN*

The story of Leda is found in several sources, and the accounts vary (see Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths*), but the basic theme remains the same. Leda was the daughter of King Thestius of Actolia and the wife of Tyndareus, King of Sparta. One day, the beautiful Leda was bathing by the river Eurotas, and Zeus, upon seeing her from his position on Mount Olympus, was overcome by passion. He turned himself into a swan and ravished her there by the river. That same night her husband also made love to her, and from this double union four children were born.

The accounts of the births vary greatly. Some state that Leda laid an egg from which Helen and Pollux were born and the other two, Castor and Clytemnestra, were delivered by normal birth. Or there were two swan's eggs: Helen and Pollux in one, the immortal children of Zeus, with Castor and Clytemnestra in the second egg, the mortal children of Tyndareus. Still other accounts have Helen alone as the daughter of Zeus and the others the mortal children of Leda and her husband.

All seem to agree that the union was rape rather than love and that this impassioned coupling was the cause of countless tragic consequences. Helen's infamous beauty, inherited from her mother Leda, was the cause of the Trojan War; the Houses of Troy and Atreus were destroyed; Agamemnon died at the hands of his wife Clytemnestra; all of these tragedies and more were attributed to this ill-fated union. Nowhere is the full impact of the story more clearly related than in Yeats' powerful poem.

*Anthony Panzera*

## *LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE*

Anthony Panzera's remarkable series of monumental scrolls and drawings of the nude is impressive in its scale and startling in its immediacy. Large and beautiful, the life-size drawings present a contemporary perspective that carries forward a genre of drawing with a long and rich tradition.

The nude figure is an aesthetic theme of endless variation and can be traced to the very beginnings of art. The desire to depict the human form has been the source of inspiration for much of the world's great art. Panzera's drawings are deeply rooted in traditions which value the nude as the culmination of beauty. The artist's connection with the classical past, particularly the great masters of the Renaissance, is very obvious. Yet the scale and method of presentation of his drawings bring something very original and contemporary to this classical tradition.

The format of these drawings grew out of the artist's experience of working on walls in the fresco process and with his "continuing love affair" with Italian Renaissance frescoes. Working in fresco painting requires the preparation of full-scale cartoons for the wall, and from this process grew the artist's interest in creating finished drawings that are life-size. Fresco painting, as in the works of Giotto and Masaccio, often involved presenting a continuous narrative in depicting stories from the Bible, lives of saints, and other subjects. Combined with this understanding of traditional fresco painting is the artist's long-time appreciation of Japanese scroll paintings that reveal a narration as the scrolls are unrolled.

Remaining very much an artist of our time with modern concerns and an involvement in current issues in art, he brings the tradition forward



in conceptual complexity wherein the life-size nude is imbued as signifier of character, plot, and even denouement of the artist's dramatic sequence of events. Cloaked in the narrative of classical mythology, the figure serves as metaphor for the human condition in our own modern mythology.

His drawings' one-to-one correspondence to the models, as well as the models' contemporary faces and physiques, reveal something very much of our world today. The artist has stated, "The point behind figure drawing, I truly believe, is the transfer of personality and character that takes place. Something of the model moves through me to the paper." From his models the artist creates the figures who are the players on the stage of his drawings. Even his life-size figures on single sheets of paper employ a narrative theme. *The Hibernia Series*, a group of ten drawings, depicts the model at her toilette in various stage of dress. And, of course, his "Adam" and "Eve" are full-length stories.

The scrolls, however, are Panzera's ingenious epics. They have the physical presence equal to the psychological depths of their narratives. From depicting the emotional turmoil of the mortal Leda after her rape by the immortal Zeus, as portrayed in *Leda and the Swan*, to the almost whimsical interaction of the nude model, drapery, and the artist's dog Mia, as seen in *Six Views of Mia*, the thirty-three-foot expanses of these scrolls match the intensity of the aesthetic experience of the drawings.

And so, like Shahrazad in his *The Arabian Nights*, Anthony Panzera is the quintessential storyteller engaging us with "the big picture," his life-sized, life-filled drawings that have stories within stories within stories.

*Genetta McLean and Richard Waller*

## BIOGRAPHY

Born 1941 in Brooklyn, NY.  
Currently Professor of Art, Hunter  
College, City University of New York.  
Resides Mendham, NJ.

### EDUCATION

Independent Study 1975-76, Florence,  
Italy.  
M.F.A. 1967, Southern Illinois  
University, Carbondale.  
B.S. 1963, State University of New York,  
New Paltz.

### SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

1997-98  
*The Big Picture: Life-Size Scrolls and  
Drawings*, Bates College Museum of Art,  
Lewiston, ME; Marsh Art Gallery,  
University of Richmond, VA; and The  
Hickory Museum of Art, NC.  
1992-93  
Janssen Pharmaceutical, Inc., Ethicon  
Corporation, Blue Ash, OH  
1991-92  
*The Leonardo Series*, Virginia Beach  
Center for the Arts (also 1988, The  
Maitland Art Center, FL; 1986, Four Arts  
Institute, Florida State University,  
Tallahassee; 1985, Fine Arts Gallery,  
State University of New York, Selden; and  
1983, Michael C. Rockefeller Art Center,

State University of New York, Fredonia).  
1989-92

*The Leonardo Series*, Marsh Art Gallery,  
University (traveled New York Academy  
of Art, New York; Monmouth College,  
West Long Branch, NJ; The Picker Art  
Gallery, Colgate University, Hamilton,  
NY; The Hickory Museum of Art; and  
Arizona State University, Tempe).

1987

Johnson & Johnson Exhibition Center,  
New Brunswick, NJ

1986

*Drawings*, The Research Foundation,  
City University of New York.

1983

*Drawings*, Rotunda Gallery, Manhattan  
College, Bronx.

*Drawings*, Everson Museum of Art,  
Syracuse, NY.

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1997

*172nd Annual Exhibition*, National  
Academy of Design, New York.

The Century Association, New York.

1996, 1993

*Faculty Exhibition*, Hunter College  
Graduate Building Gallery, New York.

1996

*Confronting Cancer Through Art*, Arthur  
Ross Gallery, University of Pennsylvania,  
Philadelphia.

*Drawing, Thought's Visible Expression*,  
The Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University,  
Hamilton, NY.  
1995  
*100th Anniversary Exhibition of the  
National Society of Mural Painters*, Art  
Students League, New York.  
1994  
*Documentaria Museo*, Museo Civico Taverna,  
Italy.  
*Drawing on Friendship*, Tibor de Nagy  
Gallery, New York.  
1993-94  
*Fresco: A Contemporary Perspective*, Snug  
Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island;  
and Boston College Museum of Art,  
Chestnut Hill.  
1993  
*Contemporary Fresco Painting*, Parsons  
School of Design Gallery, New York.  
1992  
*Master Prints from the Rutgers Center for  
Innovative Printmaking*, The Gallery at  
Bristol-Myers Squibb, Princeton, NJ.  
*New Talent in Charlotte*, Jerald Melberg  
Gallery, Charlotte, NC.  
*Fifth International Drawing Triennial  
Invitational*, The Ministry of Culture and  
Art, Museum Architektury, Warsaw, Poland.  
1989  
*Drawings from Life*, The Research  
Foundation, City University of New York.

1987  
Bayly Art Museum, University of Virginia,  
Charlottesville.  
Nantucket Artists Association, MA.  
1986  
*Religion: Painting and Sculpture*, Tibor de  
Nagy Gallery, New York.  
Review/Preview II, Aljira Arts, Inc.,  
Newark, NJ.  
*1984-85 New Jersey State Council on the Arts  
Recipients*, Printmaking Council of  
New Jersey, Sommerville.  
1985  
*1983-1984 Fellowship Exhibition*,  
Hunterdon Art Center, Clinton, NJ.  
New Jersey Artists: Fifth Biennial, The  
Newark Museum.  
1982  
*The Syracuse Biennial*, Everson Museum of  
Art, Syracuse, NY.  
*Annual Juried Exhibition*, Salmagundi  
Museum of American Art, New York.

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS  
Bates College Museum of Art.  
The Hickory Museum of Art.  
National Academy of Design, New York.  
Rutgers Center for Innovative Printmaking,  
New Brunswick, NJ.  
University Museum, Southern Illinois  
University, Carbondale.  
Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum,  
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

## CHECKLIST

The works are from the collection of the artist. Dimensions are in inches, height precedes width.

### SCROLL DRAWINGS:

#### *Leda and the Swan*

1994-95, sanguine chalk on a roll of buff Canson Mi-Tientes paper, 60 x 396

(Inspired in part by Yeats' poem, the scroll drawing explores the many emotional states Leda must have gone through in her encounter with Zeus.)

#### *Six Views of Mia*

1995, charcoal on a roll of gray Canson Mi-Tientes paper, 60 x 396

(The drawing is about the interrelationships of model, drape, and the artist's dog Mia.)

#### *Alpheus and Arethusa*

1996, sanguine chalk on a roll of buff Canson Mi-Tientes paper, 60 x 396

(The story, told by Ovid, is about a young maiden who is turned into a water spring.)

#### *The Arabian Nights*

1997, sanguine and white chalk on a roll of gray Canson Mi-Tientes paper, 60 x 396

(A young woman keeps her life by telling continuous stories, night after night.)

## LIFE-SIZE DRAWINGS:

#### *Tobey*

1991, charcoal on gray Canson paper, 78 x 44

#### *Bronzino Bill*

1992, charcoal on gray Canson paper, 82 x 47

#### *Study for "Eve"*

1992, charcoal on gray Canson paper, 82 x 46

#### *Study for "Adam"*

1992, charcoal on gray Canson paper, 87 x 48

#### *Study for "Toujours Travallier"*

1996, sanguine chalk on buff Arches paper, 80 x 42

#### *Untitled Study*

##### *(Model with Legs Elevated)*

1997, sanguine chalk on buff Arches paper, 65 x 42

#### *From the "Hibernia Series"*

1994-97, sanguine chalk on buff Arches paper, sizes variable

*Woman with Sheet*, 64 x 42

*Woman with Camisole*, 64 x 42

*Woman Dressing II*, 65 x 42

*Woman with Mirror*, 68 x 42



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