

*Metamorphosis and Malice:
Pontormo's Three Monochrome Paintings from Renaissance Florence and Related Works*

August 3–December 17, 2023
Bowdoin College Museum of Art | Brunswick, Maine

Exhibition Labels

This exhibition brings together three rare monochromatic paintings by Jacopo Carucci, also known as Jacopo da Pontormo (1494–1557), from the collections of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, the Samek Art Museum at Bucknell University, and a private lender. It explores how Pontormo and his contemporaries engaged with themes of the supernatural, violence, and the destabilizing force of unchecked desire. These artists gravitated towards scenes from the Old and New Testaments, as well as works by the Roman poet Ovid, during a historical moment characterized by dramatic social and political change on the Italian peninsula.

A leading painter in sixteenth-

*Metamorphosis and Malice:
Pontormo's Three Monochrome Paintings from Renaissance Florence and Related Works*

ARTIST UNIDENTIFIED

*Metamorphosis and Malice:
Pontormo's Three Monochrome Paintings from Renaissance Florence and Related Works*

MARCANTONIO RAIMONDI
Italian, 1480–1534

*Metamorphosis and Malice:
Pontormo's Three Monochrome Paintings from Renaissance Florence and Related Works*

Bowdoin College Museum of Art; gift of Judith Keenan
2007.22.11

Artists in sixteenth-century Italy frequently depicted scenes of violent conflict, both from the Bible and classical antiquity, often pitting young and idealized male heroes against brutish and monstrous antagonists. Art patrons enthusiastically commissioned such scenes to convey a sense of masculine power and martial prowess. In Scultori's interpretation of Giulio Romano's fresco in Mantua, the young man David draws his arm back to behead his fallen enemy, the Philistine giant Goliath, whom he has subdued with his slingshot. Notably, the tale of David and Goliath carries deep resonance in Florentine politics, as a potent symbol for civic duty and governance employed by both the Medici and the Republic of Florence alike. In this representation of the Old Testament narrative, the hero straddles

*Metamorphosis and Malice:
Pontormo's Three Monochrome Paintings from Renaissance Florence and Related Works*

1811.72

Credited as the first Italian artist to employ multi-block woodcuts to achieve the effect of chiaroscuro ("light and dark") in prints, Ugo da Carpi was one of the most important printmakers of his era. He created this print in 1518, which represents the biblical story of the death of Ananias, following a famous tapestry cartoon (preparatory drawing) by Raphael. In 1515, Pope Leo X had commissioned the tapestry for the Vatican's Sistine Chapel. It draws on a passage from the New Testament in which Christ's apostles persuaded various families to sell part of their property and distribute the funds to the poor. Ananias secretly withheld some of the proceeds from a field he had sold, even though he falsely claimed to have donated the entire amount. Rebuked for his deceitfulness by Peter, who gestures from atop the altar stairs, Ananias falls dead. Ananias is depicted at center left on the ground amidst a shouting and gesturing crowd.

JACOPO DA PONTORMO
Italian, 1494–1557

*Metamorphosis and Malice:
Pontormo's Three Monochrome Paintings from Renaissance Florence and Related Works*

Widely recognized as a leading printmaker of his era, Dutch artist Hendrick Goltzius created some of his most admired engravings during the 1580s, including this series inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Goltzius originally planned to make some 300 images referencing stories from all fifteen books. However, he was only able to realize the forty scenes from Books I and II, as well as several others from Books III and IV. Like Pontormo, Goltzius also depicted the story of Daphne and Apollo, in addition to numerous other accounts of supernatural bodily transformation, including the tale of Pan's pursuit of Syrinx, who is changed into a reed; the tale of Phaeton's sisters, who are transformed into poplar trees; and Cygnus, who becomes a swan. Throughout the series, as in the original myths, stories of love are often fraught with violence enacted against women.

Since the twelfth century, Limoges, a city in central France, has been a center for enamel production. Made by melting powdered glass to a base of metal or ceramic, enamel is characterized by its smooth vitreous surface. In the mid-