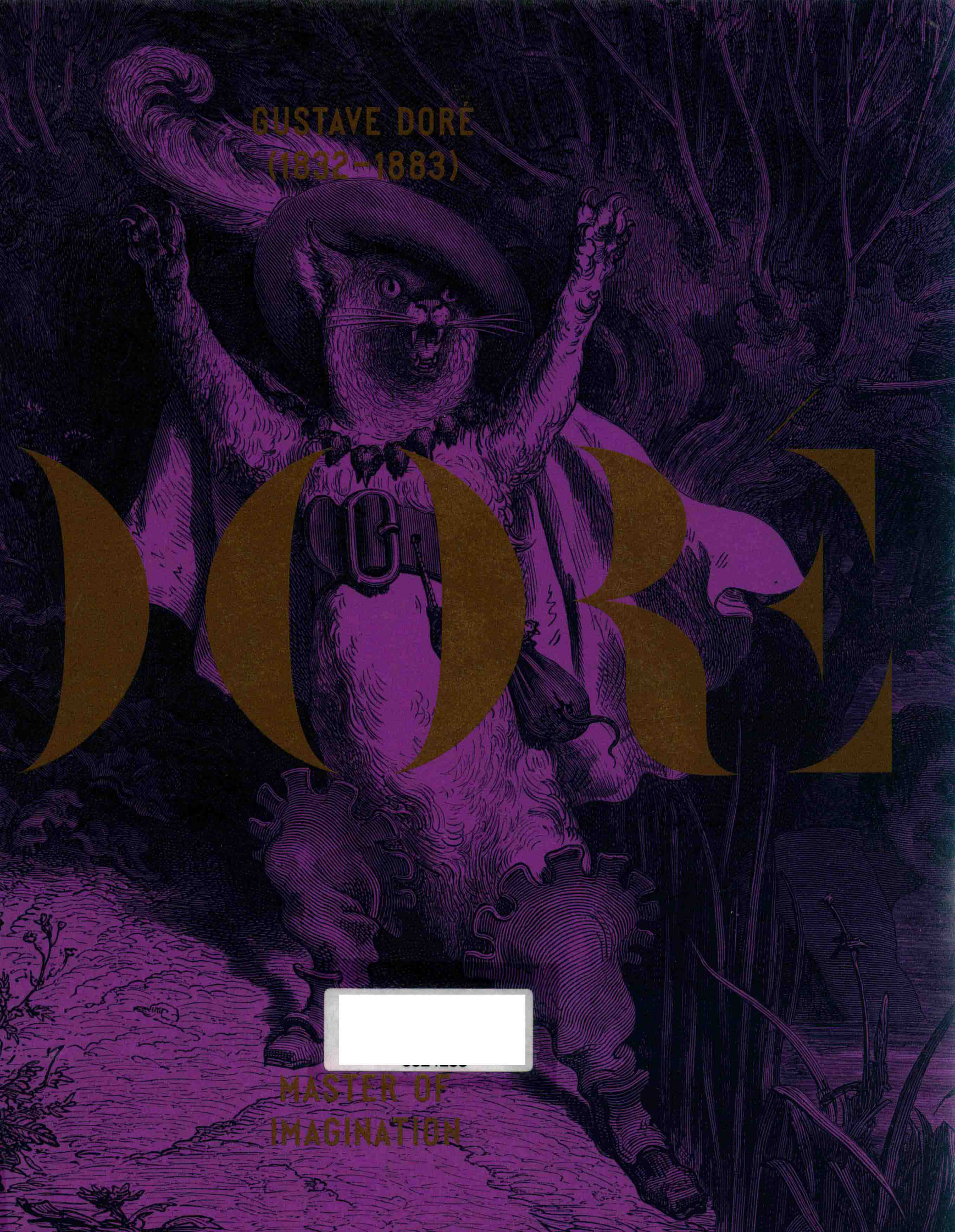


GUSTAVE DORÉ  
(1832-1883)



MASTER OF  
IMAGINATION



# **DORÉ**

## **MASTER OF IMAGINATION**

Edited by Philippe Kaenel

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DORE

This catalogue was published on the occasion of the exhibition  
*Gustave Doré (1832–1883): Master of Imagination*

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13 June – 14 September 2014

Exhibition organized by the Musée d'Orsay, Paris,  
and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa  
In partnership with the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris  
And with the special support of the Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg



National Gallery of Canada  
Musée des beaux-arts du Canada



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Philippe Kaenel, Professor of Art History, Université de Lausanne

#### Contributing curators

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Paul Lang, Deputy Director and Chief Curator, National Gallery of Canada

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**MORE**

**MASTER OF IMAGINATION**

Edited by Philippe Kaenel

The Musée d'Orsay and the National Gallery of Canada would like to express profound gratitude to all the institutions and collections who, through their generous support, helped make this exhibition possible.

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And those who wish to remain anonymous.



Many people have contributed in vital ways to the production of this exhibition and its catalogue, and I offer them my heartfelt thanks.

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In the United States, I have been able to count on the knowledge of North America's two foremost experts on Doré, Eric Zafran and Dan Malan. In addition, a number of American collections, public and private, have been made available to me by curators and collectors, among them John Bidwell, David G. Christie, Alvin L. Clark Jr., Martha Clawson, Richard L. Feigen, Christine Gervais, Amy Gilman, Jane Glaubinger, Jan Howard, Simon Kelly, Valérie Lagier, Larry Nichols, Maureen O'Brien, Shelley Paine, Brenda Rix, George Shackelford, Patrick Shaw Cable, Judith Tannenbaum, Lea Whiteside and Mary Zuber.

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And, last but not least, my sincere gratitude goes to the entire team in the exhibitions and publications departments of the Musée d'Orsay and their Canadian colleagues: it has been a pleasure to work with such accommodating and professional

Philippe Kaenel, Professor of Art History, Université de Lausanne

At the Musée d'Orsay, we would like to extend particular thanks to all those who have contributed toward the realization of this exhibition. First, we are grateful to Guy Cogeval, President of the Musée d'Orsay and Musée de l'Orangerie public establishment, who enthusiastically supported the project from the outset and subsequently made it possible.

Presenting and publishing the protean work of Gustave Doré has been a challenge, and special gratitude is due to all those who have helped make this complex exhibition a reality. Our warm thanks go to Hélène Flon, Head of Exhibitions; Ingrid Fersing, Exhibition Manager, whose consistently good-humoured dedication has been vital to the project; Annie Dufour, Head of Publications, source of the spirit of this catalogue; the endlessly patient Julia Hugot, Réka Krasznai and Jean-Claude Pierront of the Publications department; Patrice Schmidt of the Photography department; Odile Michel of the Copyright department; the Musée d'Orsay's outstanding installation team; Nadia Leriche and Cyrille Lebrun of the Design department; and Amélie Hardivillier, Marie Dussaussoy, Coralie David and Sébastien Caucat of the Communications department.

Following the Paris showing of the exhibition, the painting *Christ Leaving the Praetorium*, which belongs to the Musée des beaux-arts in Nantes, will be placed on deposit at the Musée d'Orsay. This has been made possible by Blandine Chavanne, and we offer our sincere thanks to her and to Cyrille Sciama.

We are also most grateful to Sylvain Bellenger, Claire Bernardi, Laurence des Cars, Michaël Chkroun, Nathalie Crinière, Roger Diederer, Jacques Fisher, Charles Janoray, Leïla Jarbouai, Anne Lebas, Nadine Lehn, Ségolène Le Men, Anne Pingot, Bruno Roman, Olivier Trebosc and Marie-Paule Vial.

Édouard Papet, Chief Curator, Musée d'Orsay

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Paul Lang, Deputy Director and Chief Curator, National Gallery of Canada  
Erika Dolphin, Assistant Curator to the Chief Curator, National Gallery of Canada





1 *After Dinner at Saulsay* c. 1854  
 Preparatory drawing for a fan  
 after an illustration for  
*Œuvres de Rabelais* [Works of Rabelais]  
 Wax crayon heightened with gouache and  
 watercolour on wove paper; 29.2×58.5 cm  
 Private collection

# GUSTAVE DORÉ, DREAM MACHINE

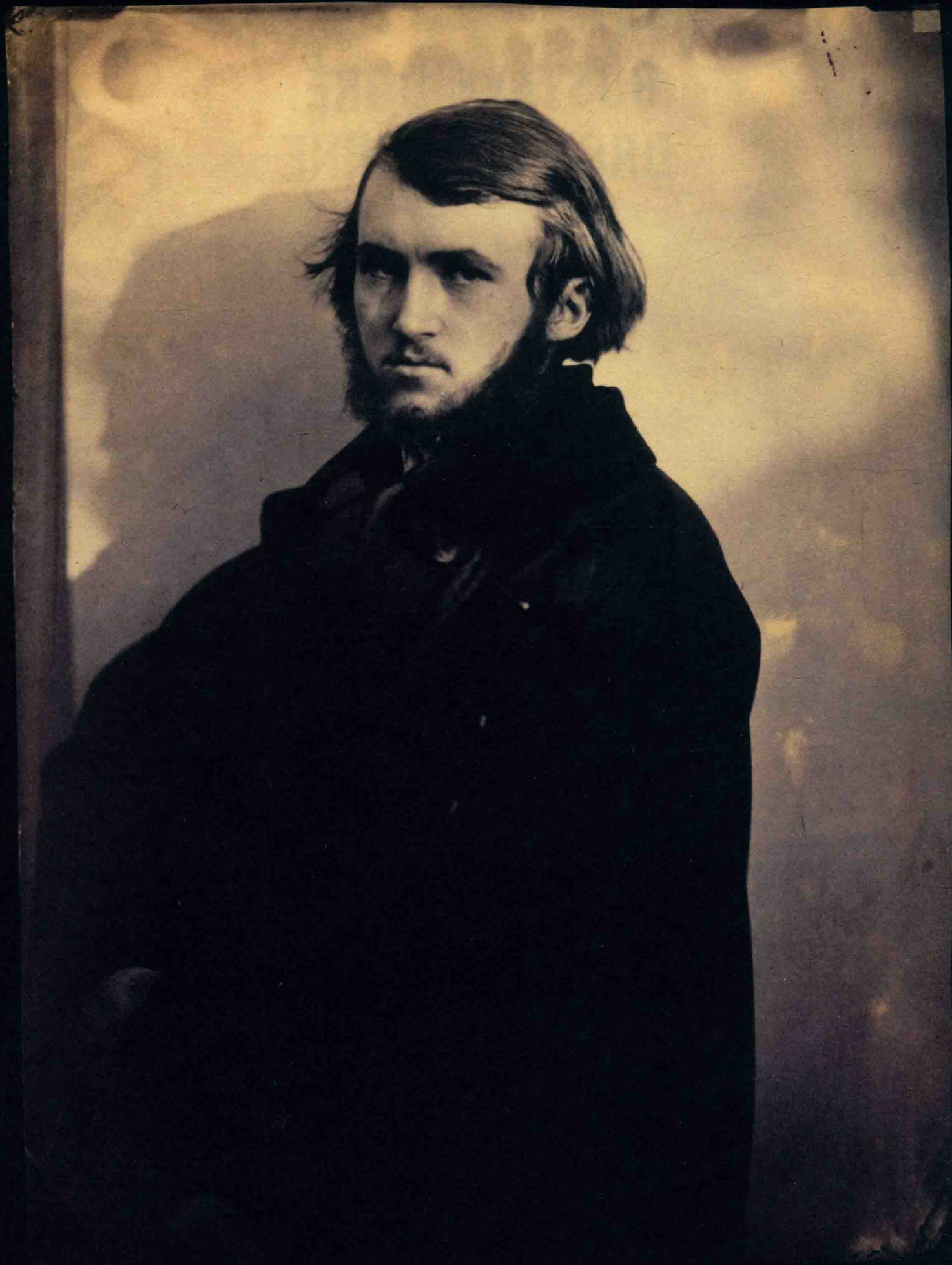
"It will be noted, sadly, that to his reputation as bad draftsman and bad painter, Mr. Gustave Doré has added that of bad sculptor. What possible benefit will this bring him?" This acerbic remark, made by Jules-Antoine Castagnary in 1877, undoubtedly summarized the view of many of Doré's contemporaries – despite their appreciation of his extraordinarily well-known illustrations. Doré's reputation as a prolific illustrator in fact caused him considerable anguish, for he became trapped by it, and his attempt to switch to the practice of "serious" painting and sculpture was ill received by a critical milieu often suspicious of protean talent. Doré was seen then – as he still is today – as the most illustrious of illustrators, an exceptional artist who gained virtually instant fame on both sides of the Atlantic. During his lifetime and after his death his illustration work was disseminated on an unprecedented international scale, and many of his images for the Bible and Dante's *Inferno* are engraved forever in collective memory. Possessed of a fantastical and phantasmagorical imagination, Doré seems to have recognized no creative limits: he was a precociously talented draftsman, a brilliant cartoonist mentored by Charles Philippon (discoverer of Daumier and editor of *Le Charivari*, Louis Philippe's nightmare), a designer of comic wallpaper, and an indefatigable and a daring exploiter of large formats, which he adapted with unfailing technical skill to the vast range of his artistic vocabulary. Doré's one wish was to be a painter and, later, a sculptor. In practising these forms, he tended toward drama and theatricality, the spectacular effect, often employing intense lighting to isolate a single element – a figure in a crowd or the flank of a storm-washed Scottish mountain. He was a keen musician, but also an acrobat who once made a sensational entrance to a party walking on his hands. And he was a scintillating conversationalist, both in society and when receiving visitors to his studio, who were numerous. A protégé of the Second Empire and increasingly depressed after the death of his mother in 1879, Doré inclined toward a dark vision that, winding like a common thread through the visual frenzy, culminated in the unrelenting grisaille of *The Enigma* (fig. 152). But he was a genuine humorist, too, in his illustrations and even in his sculpture – a realm not often enlivened by the light-hearted wit that emanates from *Frolic* (*Leapfrog*) (fig. 207). Doré seems to have been constantly searching, permanently embarked on a headlong quest for new boundaries to breach. Nothing escaped his inquisitive gaze, the hand ever ready to capture a drama, a sky or a pose, to re-explore an imaginary world teeming with stories and legends. The result was historical and religious paintings, but also landscapes, which some see – from the simple sketches to the monumental canvases – as among the most remarkable of the mid-nineteenth century. A literary imagination coupled with what Théophile

Gautier described as a "visionary eye" enabled Doré to rival the legendary illustrated editions of Jean de La Fontaine's *Fables* produced by Oudry and Cochin during the eighteenth century. The visual force that propelled his creativity was supported by an extraordinary capacity for work, allowing him to manage many projects simultaneously and to produce, for example, not one but two versions of *Christ Leaving the Praetorium* (figs. 162, 163). His boundless energy found expression in an aesthetic of abundance: endless crowds, swarms, masses of figures swirling and tumbling; forests that are tangled and reminiscent of those of Albrecht Altdorfer; and the bizarre vase known as *The Vine*, with its delirious whirlwind of neo-eighteenth-century putti who seem to foreshadow, in their overwrought way, the contortedly falling bodies of Auguste Rodin's *Gates of Hell*. By turns the last of the Romantics and the precursor of a highly literary form of Symbolism, Doré formed a bridge between his century's two extremes. In his illustrations for *London: A Pilgrimage* he offered a very sombre view of the English capital, portraying it as a lunatic city torn between opulence and poverty and creating indelibly graphic images that would serve as a source of inspiration to cinema and comic art alike. Doré can in fact be seen as the father of the modern comic strip, and from 1930 to 1960 his work provided Walt Disney with a crucial wellspring of ideas. The exhibition has been granted a number of outstanding loans, from both private and public collections. Notable among the latter are the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain in Strasbourg and the Musée des beaux-arts in Nantes, and we acknowledge their generosity here with gratitude. Once the Paris showing of the exhibition is over, *Christ Leaving the Praetorium* will remain on deposit at the Musée d'Orsay during the renovation work being undertaken at the Musée des beaux-arts in Nantes, thus allowing the Paris public to enjoy for a while longer this expression of the talent of a major artist from the latter half of the nineteenth century. The accomplishment of our ambitious project is the product of a close collaboration between Philippe Kaenel, Professor at the Université de Lausanne and a foremost specialist on Doré's work, Édouard Papet, Chief Curator at the Musée d'Orsay, and Paul Lang, Deputy Director and Chief Curator at the National Gallery of Canada, in Ottawa. In our view the North American showing, at the home of Canada's foremost collection, represents an essential stage in the reassessment of the prodigious Gustave Doré.

Guy Cogeval  
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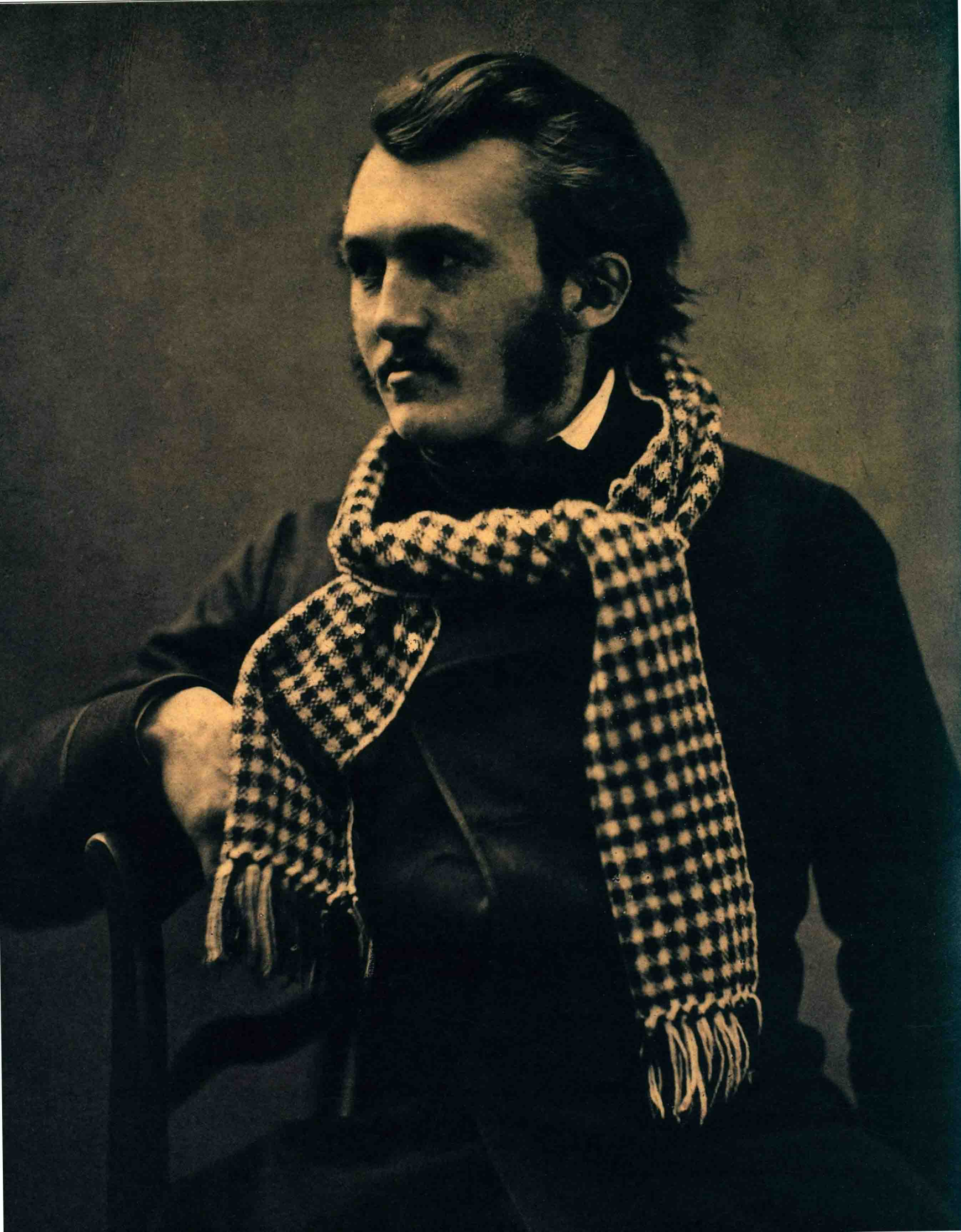
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# An Artist's Life

**"HOW MANY BOOKS ONE MUST ILLUSTRATE  
TO BECOME ILLUSTRIOUS ONESELF!"<sup>1</sup>**

**PHILIPPE KAENEL**



## ANECDOTES AND PORTRAITS

Three accounts of three different episodes combine to offer a vivid picture of the simultaneously singular and archetypical artistic legend of Gustave Doré. In June 1840 a major public celebration was held in Strasbourg to mark the erection of a statue of Johannes Gutenberg. An important part of the fête was a grand procession featuring several of the city's guilds, including the printers and glass-stainers. A few days after the event, the young Doré suggested to his schoolmates that they re-enact the Gutenberg fête. He organized everything, decorated the chariots and assumed leadership of the glass-stainers. As his childhood friend Arthur Kratz recollected: "He was the quaintest sight I ever set eyes on . . . I can see him now, perched on his car, with his extraordinary hat, his fantastic garments . . . quickly making his sketches, which he distributed to the applauding throng . . . Years rolled on, and I had almost forgotten the circumstance, when Gustave himself recalled it to me one day whilst we were talking over our school days . . . 'I should not be likely to forget my first appearance in public as an artist. Besides, that was the time when you all told me I should make a great painter.'"<sup>2</sup> Here was the model for the kind of artistic recognition Doré dreamed of achieving in Paris: putting himself on display while bestowing his works upon an admiring public.

The artist's first biographer, René Delorme, is the source of the second anecdote. One day around 1879, when Doré's artistic convictions and confidence as a painter had been seriously undermined, he confided in the writer: "I might have expected it. Long ago it was predicted to me that painting would be the despair of my life. I was only as high as that" – lifting his hand less than three feet from the floor – "when the prophecy was uttered; and since then it has been but too terribly realized."<sup>3</sup> Doré went on to recount the story of his first box of oil paints, a gift he had taken with him on a family trip to the region of Ain. At first light of dawn, he daubed the feathers of a chicken in green, transforming it into a beast that struck terror into the hearts of the villagers. Once he had confessed to the crime, an old woman who had been even more frightened than the rest "cried out with a prophetic voice, 'You have made the world weep. In its turn it will make you shed bitter tears over your painting!'"<sup>4</sup> Finally, Paul Lacroix, a friend of the Doré family, told how the young man had been cut to the quick in 1853 when, returning to his native Alsace after an absence of some years, his compatriots failed to welcome him as a celebrated artist and a hero.<sup>5</sup> For the first time, the exhilarating experience of the Gutenberg fête was lacking. Doré's susceptibility, as precocious as it was intense ("a mere nothing coming from a friend would hurt his feelings"),<sup>6</sup> developed over the years into a persecution complex that was nourished by the continuing frustration of his desire to be recognized as a painter or sculptor, not "merely" an illustrator. The artist's own declarations, accounts from his contemporaries, anecdotes told by family and friends, and the opinions of critics combined to transform the life and work of Gustave

Doré into a case study of "biographical formulas" that "record typical events, on the one hand, and thereby shape the typical fate of a particular professional class, on the other hand. The practitioner of the vocation to some extent submits to this typical fate or destiny."<sup>7</sup> Doré's "destiny" was the result of the structural and hierarchical relations that existed between publishing and art, which determined the technical, aesthetic and thematic choices of an artist whose particular predispositions and character traits (sensitivity, exhibitionism, hyperactivity) were amplified by his contemporaries.

The process began when the young Doré moved to Paris in the fall of 1847 to pursue his studies. Aged fifteen, he was hesitating between two paths to social success. "Here I am, in contact with Gavarni, Jullien, Bellangé, Cham, Daumier, Bertall, Marcassat, Roqueplan, Hubert, etc. Here I am, or so you imagine, definitively launched on a career in the arts. But you'd be wrong: you must believe that despite the enthusiasm these men inspire in me, I have not lost sight of the honourable and positive avenue of the École polytechnique . . . I shall one day be happy to consider art as a second string to my bow, and I would prefer to be dependent on the government than the public."<sup>8</sup> It had indeed been the wish of Doré's father, Pierre Louis Christophe, that all three of his sons – Ernest, Gustave and Émile – attend the École polytechnique. But, prompted by the precocious success of his middle child, he signed an exclusive three-year contract with Charles Philippon, a leading figure of the French illustrated press who would later become a patron of Doré the painter. Théophile Gautier called the youthful Gustave a "kid genius," and as one of his biographers notes "it was said of him, 'Doré is always a child.'" But, she continues, "it would have been more correct to say 'he became too soon a man.'"<sup>9</sup> It would be even more correct to say that after the sudden death of his father on 4 May 1849 he was both child and man, for it was he who became the breadwinner, supporting the family with his work as a caricaturist and illustrator. Intriguingly, the picture of his father he executed from memory (Bourg-en-Bresse, Musée du monastère royal de Brou) could be mistaken for a self-portrait. According to psychoanalysis, the child (and adolescent) is shaped by the influence of both mother and father, figures of desire and power. Alexandrine Marie Anne Doré, born into a well-to-do family called Pluchart, encouraged in her son an admiration of his own talent: "Madame Doré was more than ever enchanted with Gustave when he was about nine years old," recalled Paul Lacroix. "It pleased her fancy to imagine him a genius."<sup>10</sup> She remained a figure of authority throughout

— 1 Note in Doré's hand on a portrait given to a friend, cited in Blanchard Jerrold, *Life of Gustave Doré* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1891), p. 262. 2 Arthur Kratz, Doré's childhood friend, quoted in Blanche Roosevelt, *Life and Reminiscences of Gustave Doré* (New York: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1885), pp. 29–32. 3 Quoted in René Delorme, *Gustave Doré: Peintre, sculpteur, dessinateur et graveur* (Paris: Ludovic Baschet, 1879), p. 70 and ff. 4 Ibid. English translation of passages referenced here and in previous note taken from Roosevelt, op. cit., pp. 326–329. 5 Roosevelt, op. cit., pp. 128–129. See also the letter from Madame Doré to Paul Lacroix from 1854 (ibid., p. 138). 6 Ibid., p. 28. 7 Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment*, trans. Alastair Laing (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 132. 8 Letter from Gustave Doré to Albert de la Boulaye, 9 November 1847, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain (MAMCS), Strasbourg, Documentation Gustave Doré. 9 Roosevelt, op. cit., p. 283. 10 Quoted in ibid., p. 36.