

Drawing

Excellence on Paper, From Colonial to Contemporary

We visit the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), in Philadelphia, where curator Robert Cozzolino discusses the special appeal and significance of nine of the museum's most compelling works on paper.

BY AUSTIN R. WILLIAMS

7 *Like Father Like Son* by Paul LaMantia

1968, mixed media, 31½ x 41½. Gift of Ruth Horwich in memory of Don Baum and A. James Speyer.

Like Father Like Son is from a series of drawings that Chicago-based artist Paul LaMantia (1938–) made in the late 1960s. “The way these drawings deal with issues such as interfamily relationships, personal identity and states of being is extraordinarily raw and vulnerable,” Cozzolino says. “I have admired this body of work for a long time and feel it is a revelation in the midst of the late 1960s. It feels as though all of the angst of the period converged in Paul’s approach to dealing with his own state of mind and relationships. To me this is what we mean by ‘the personal is political.’”

LaMantia was classically trained, but he found inspiration in unconventional sources. “Rather than studying Renaissance paintings and Western art, he would go to the Field Museum in Chicago and draw from anthropological artifacts such as masks,” Cozzolino says. “He wanted to get what he saw as the ferocity and emotion that he felt was being expressed in those items. This drew the attention of Jean Dubuffet, who found a kindred spirit in LaMantia.”

