

## AT NEW GALLERY, 19th CENTURY WORKS

By JOHN RUSSELL

There is a new gallery in town, and its inaugural exhibition of drawings is giving great pleasure to visitors who know that in spite of its universal popularity, the French 19th century in many of its aspects is still one of the great undiscovered periods in European art.

The gallery in question is called Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, and it can be found at 125 East 62d Street. (The location is owed to a friendly association with Wheelock Whitney, the scholar and dealer who has been in business for some years at 123 East 62d.) Nched in a town house that looks impregnably private, Hazlitt has no shingle. But visitors who step down below street level and ring the bell will find themselves in an understated interior that has none of the high-gloss, hard-sell, drop-dead atmosphere of a newborn New York gallery.

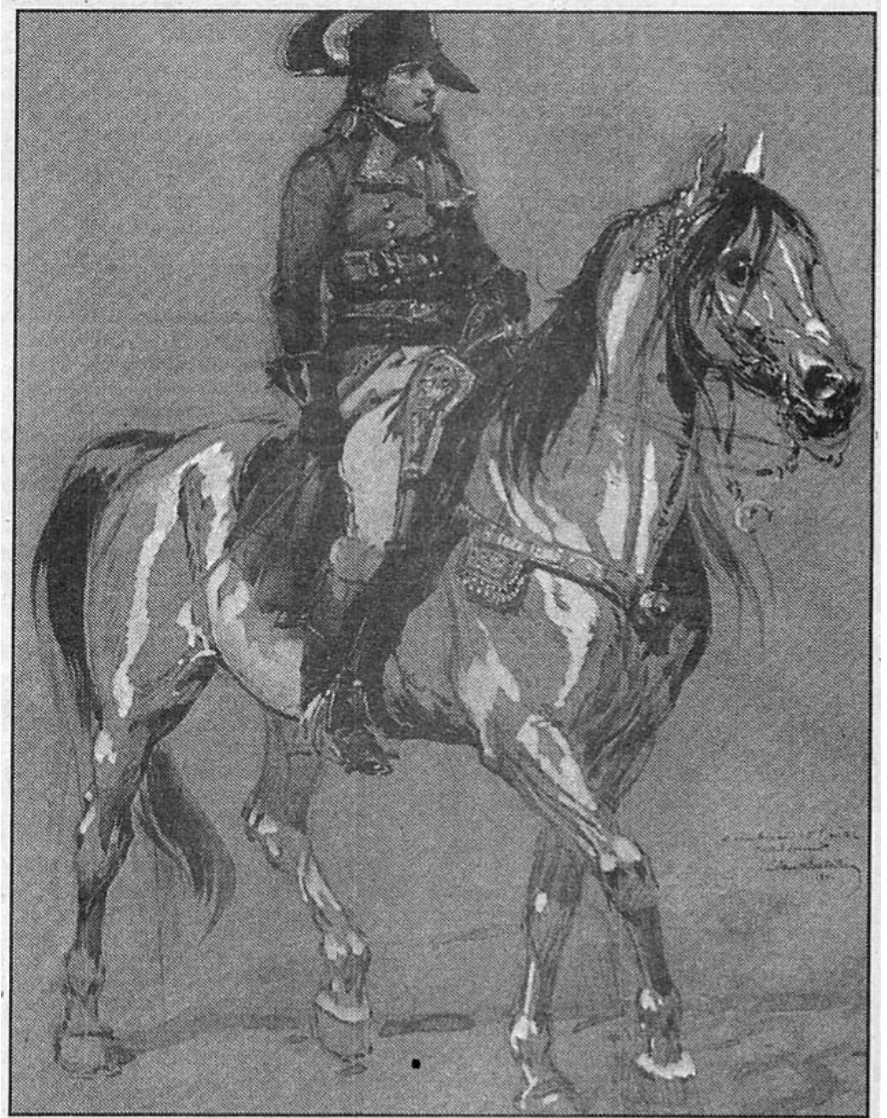
There is a reason for that. Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox is a London gallery founded 40 years ago by a young dealer called Jack Baer. His ambition was to rank one day in quality, if not necessarily in size, with the two great Old Master galleries that faced each other on opposite sides of Bond Street in London: Thomas Agnew & Sons, and P. & D. Colnaghi. Both had been in business since way back in the 19th century, and visitors were welcomed as connoisseurs, neighbors and friends rather than as customers. Agnew's had (and still has) an unrivaled English country-house connection, and in Colnaghi's even the newcomer might hope to hear the words "Do come again. Just treat this place like a club."

As with the college lawns in Oxford and Cambridge, that kind of thing takes a long time to perfect. But when Jack Baer opened the gallery in 1948 that he named after William Hazlitt, the great English essayist who also excelled as a writer on art, he kept the example in mind.

He began small, and he began quietly. But his exhibitions showed care, and thought, and knowledge, and belief. He took on Stefanie Maison, a seasoned professional with a fine eye for drawings of every sort. In 1973 he bought Gooden & Fox, a firm long active in London.

He prospered, in part because he had the unmistakable good manners of an earlier day, and in part because he had very good work to put on the wall. (From one recent exhibition, he sold a major painting to the National Gallery in London and another to the Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth.)

It is in keeping with the gallery's policy that the inaugural show, "19th-Century French Drawings," cuts a wide swath and is full of discreet surprises. Even where the artists are as well known as Géricault, Ingres and Redon, we see them in a new light. Ingres's drawing of a church in Rome has the kind of unemphatic perfection of which he alone, since the Dutch master Saenredam in the 17th century, has had the secret. The Géricault double-sided sheet of military notations is the epitome of the concentrated attention that he gave to every aspect of a soldier's professional turnout. Redon's portrait in pastels has the kind of monumentality that is not, often found in the work of that quintessential dreamer. Dreams in plenty can be found in the image, but when it came to the Sitter — the wife of a friend and patron of Redon's — he opened his eyes wide and worked in pastel as a sculptor works in marble.



Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox

Elsewhere, the gamut ranges from the moon-pale shoulders of the young mother in a majestic drawing by Pierre-Paul Prud'hon to the impressive but rather totalitarian design for a big-city church by the visionary architect Etienne-Louis Boullée. Victor Hugo is there, in his capacity as draftsman, and for once he is in top form, with a related poem written out in his own hand on the back of the sheet. The castle, the coming of night, the solitary shepherd with his flock:

all are touched in with none of the manic exaggeration into which Hugo often allowed himself to fall.

Other surprises include the portrait of Félicien Rops by Paul Mathey (1844-1929). Rops is known today mainly as a late 19th-century print-maker and illustrator who pitched his tent on the frontiers of pornography, and never tired of that location. But in Mathey's portrait of him, Rops looks like a fresh-faced, personable, unspoiled and still young man who had never had, a filthy thought, let alone set, it down on paper.

Edouard Detaille (1846-1912) is famous for the plain, sober and minutely detailed scenes of military life that in no way glorify the notion of war. As a war reporter, he set a high standard of truth. Yet his portrait of Napoleon on horseback in the present show is by contrast a piece of outspoken patriotic bravura in which personal experience had naturally played no part.

Detaille here lives with legend, and gives it his best shot.

Georges de Feure. Feure fans today are few, save among enthusiasts for Art Nouveau as it was promoted by Gustave Bing in Paris in 1900. Feure at that time was a key figure, in demand for everything from complete rooms designed in their every detail to jugs, vases, pitchers, candy-boxes, rugs, wall coverings, ink pots, chocolate pots and stained-glass windows.

He also found time to draw, and the present show includes two gouaches of well-dressed visitors at the races at Chantilly, near Paris. Needless to say, they are turned out in the height of Art Nouveau fashion. For that, and for his dandified way with landscape, they are well worth a look.

The show "19th-Century French Drawings" remains at Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, 125 East 62d Street, through