



## Paul Cadmus: The Male Nude

By Justin Spring

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One of the most accomplished artists of the twentieth century, Paul Cadmus is best known for his provocative satires of American life. He first gained national recognition in 1934 when his bawdy painting "The Fleet's In!" was barred from a Public Works of Art exhibition in Washington, D.C. For more than six decades following, Cadmus led a career as a meticulous craftsman devoted to Renaissance-era traditions of figurative realism. But his drawings of the male nude, which always formed the heart of his work, were often overlooked. Here for the first time in one volume are seventy of Cadmus's most stunning tributes to the male form. Cadmus continued to produce these works up until his death at age ninety-four, and this volume includes many drawings that have never been seen before. The artist's most frequent model was his lifelong partner Jon Anderson, and the drawings offer up not just an elegant fluency and technical virtuosity but also a tender emotional resonance. Introducing each era of the artist's career is an illustrated essay by respected critic and writer Justin Spring, placing Cadmus in the context of the rich history of the male nude. Paul Cadmus reminds us-- poignantly, eloquently, humbly-- of the sincere beauty of the male form and of humanity itself with each masterful rendering. As Guy Davenport wrote in "The Drawings of Paul Cadmus," "His drawings of male nudes are of bodies, but of achieved, perfected bodies that serve as symbols, as in ancient Greece, of a perfect unity of spirit and flesh, mind and body. For Cadmus the body" is "the person."

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## Paul Cadmus: The Male Nude By Justin Spring Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #872386 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Universe
- Published on: 2002-11-09
- Released on: 2002-11-09
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.30" h x 1.00" w x 10.80" l, 3.46 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 160 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Coming off the success of *Fairfield Porter: A Life in Art*, a wonderfully judicious biography of the iconoclastic mid-20th century figurative painter, Spring, a critic and journalist, returns to introduce six decades of determined realist Cadmus's Apollonian drawings, comprising a recent exhibition at New York's DC Moore gallery. Cadmus, who died in 1999 at 94, studied academic drawing beginning at age 15, and Spring convincingly links him to artists ranging from Carracci and Ingres to Alta-Tadema, Eakins and Cadmus's contemporary and lover Jared French. In a biographical narrative drawing on Cadmus's letters, artist's statements and unpublished interviews, Spring does an excellent job in delineating the context Cadmus created for himself, as an artist not so much opposed to the abstraction dominant for most of his career as indifferent to it. The 70 drawings here—done in chalk, crayon, pencil and watercolor, pencil and charcoal, and egg tempera, and often on hand-toned paper—speak for themselves: their lines are classically confident and fluid in a way that acknowledges but does not seek to stress the figures' homoerotic allure, and their depiction of well-sculpted men in a variety of poses reveals a variety of affects, from contemplative to fearful to exultant. Many of the post-1962 drawings feature Cadmus's life partner Jon Anderson, whose gaze at the viewer in a 1967 drawing is even and open. Spring's care and feeling in presenting the drawings for the first time as a coherent body of work (apart from Cadmus's paintings) will make this book attractive to anyone with an interest in 20th century art and culture. 120 illustrations, 70 in full color.

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From [Booklist](#)

Abstraction gets the most ink whenever modern art is the subject, but surely another vital modernist development was the revival of the male nude. Paul Cadmus (1904-99), saw men's bodies erotically, for he was an uncloseted, though very private, homosexual. Still, his male nudes, mostly in his drawings, aren't pornographic. In them eroticism appears as affection and delight--attitudes informed by Cadmus' lifelong admiration for the sculptural nudes of Renaissance art, whose sinuous postures and musculature he emulated. Spring's marvelously fluent, biographically organized discussion of Cadmus' nude drawings argues that they are his best work. Given the satire and didacticism of Cadmus' better-known, painstakingly executed, brilliantly colorful egg-tempera paintings, which one associate characterized as "statements," and also the technical brio yet loving delicacy of texture of the drawings, Spring carries the day on this point. Surely Cadmus' highly traditional nudes are also modern because of their eroticism and, perhaps, timelessness, because of their tenderness and wonder. *Ray Olson*

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Review

"[Cadmus paints] the male body with more sensuality than any American artist of his generation-- and ours."--Richard Goldstein, *The Village Voice*

"Mr. Cadmus was, at the time of his death, a senior exemplar of a vital if submerged academic realist tradition in American painting, one that has meandered in various guises from Thomas Eakins to Ivan Albright and Reginald Marsh and has resurfaced, again transformed, in the work of younger painters today."--Holland Cotter, *New York Times*

"Paul Cadmus occupies a singular place in twentieth century American art, both for his satirical, unvarnished depictions of American life and his academically inspired drawings, particularly of male nudes."--Stephen May, *Artnews*

-- Review

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