



Collecting Spanish Art:
Spain's Golden Age and
America's Gilded Age

EDITED BY INGE REIST AND JOSÉ LUIS COLOMER

In addition, James—the most widely-read and influential authors of America's Gilded Age—helped to move collecting into the zone of what Thorstein Veblen defined in 1899 as "conspicuous consumption."⁵ It is difficult to determine which of these two forces—art as a marker of individual status and prestige, or the idea of art collecting as a civic or patriotic activity—carried more weight, but, starting in the 1890s, they combined to help spawn America's growing and seemingly insatiable appetite for Europe's old-master pictures. This demand terrified Europe, as Hy Mayer's 1910 cartoon "The Flight of the Old Masters" (fig. 1), followed by the 1911 *The New York Times* article, "How We Strip Europe of Her Treasures of Art" readily suggest (fig. 2). It also served to bridge the Atlantic and establish a close linkage between the United States and those European countries from where many of its citizens originated.⁶

But where does Spain fit into this picture? Why would American collectors, especially in the absence of large-scale Spanish immigration to the United States, seek to appropriate the art and the culture of a country whose traditional image in America, influenced as it was by Black Legend themes, was something less than positive? The essays in this volume are certain to provide answers to these overarching questions, in addition to new and detailed information about the reasons why individual collectors developed a taste for old-master painting. My aim here is rather more general, as I wish to explore some of the historical factors contributing to what I shall call the "Spanish turn" in American collecting, that is, the growing fascination for works by the Spanish old masters, especially Velázquez, El Greco, and Goya.

There is, of course, a pre-history here. Thanks to the work of Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, M. Elizabeth Boone, and other scholars, we know that a handful of Americans during the early part of the nineteenth century had developed a taste for Spanish pictures.⁷ In 1816, for example, Richard W. Meade, the former American consul in Cádiz, returned to this country with an alleged Murillo, a now-lost *Caritas Romana*, together with works attributed to Sánchez Cotán.⁸ We also know that William Walters of Baltimore purchased a Madonna attributed to Murillo at an auction sale in 1855, although this was the only Spanish picture he ever bought.⁹ (It is still in the collection of the Walters Art Museum.) Another American collector with a passing interest in Spanish artists was Thomas J. Bryan (1800–1870). A longtime resident of Paris, Bryan assembled a somewhat rag-tag collection of pictures designed, as he put it, to demonstrate "the progress of European art."¹⁰ His holdings included works attributed to Murillo and

⁵ I refer, of course, to VEBLEN 1899.

⁶ Hy Mayer's cartoon originally appeared in the "Impressions of the Passing Show" in Magazine section of *The New York Times* on 27 Feb. 1910, the article in *The New York Times*, 19 Feb. 1911, part V, p. 9. America's growing interest in European old-master pictures is explored in GENNARI SANTORI 2003.

⁷ STRATTON 1993 and BOONE 2007.

⁸ For Richard Meade see BOONE 2007, p. 40.

⁹ JOHNSTON 1999, pp. 12, 238. The Murillo in question turned out to be a copy.

¹⁰ For Bryan's collection, see NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1915 and WHITE 1853.

HOW WE STRIP EUROPE OF HER TREASURES OF ART

The Nations, in a Panic, Adopt Measures to Protect Them Against the Merciless American Raiders.



Portrait by Rembrandt of the Duke, Baskin, thought from Europe by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

FOR a long time Europe has been the scene of a steady and increasing exodus of her treasures of art. The nations, in a panic, adopt measures to protect them against the merciless American raiders. The nations, in a panic, adopt measures to protect them against the merciless American raiders. The nations, in a panic, adopt measures to protect them against the merciless American raiders.



The Kind of Thing J. Pierpont Morgan Picks Up on Each European Tour—Part of His European Collection.

Spain's last great treasure—the Duke of Baskin's portrait by Rembrandt—has been sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Duke of Baskin's portrait by Rembrandt has been sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Duke of Baskin's portrait by Rembrandt has been sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Portrait by Rembrandt of the Duke, Baskin, thought from Europe by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Portrait by Rembrandt of the Duke, Baskin, thought from Europe by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Portrait by Rembrandt of the Duke, Baskin, thought from Europe by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Portrait by Rembrandt of the Duke, Baskin, thought from Europe by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Portrait by Rembrandt of the Duke, Baskin, thought from Europe by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Portrait by Rembrandt of the Duke, Baskin, thought from Europe by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Portrait by Rembrandt of the Duke, Baskin, thought from Europe by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Portrait by Rembrandt of the Duke, Baskin, thought from Europe by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Velázquez, among the latter a portrait of the Infanta Margarita he had purchased from Meade (New-York Historical Society). Then there was the New York silver magnate Louis Durr, whose collection of several hundred paintings also included works then ascribed to Velázquez and Murillo. Both the Bryan and Durr collections eventually found their way to the New-York Historical Society, where, according to an article that appeared in *The New York Times* in 1877, they were all but ignored owing to America's "indifference" to old-master art.¹¹

"Indifference" is a word especially applicable to virtually the whole of what was then known as the Spanish School, with the possible exception of Murillo. The travel writer H. Willis Baxley seemingly summarized the American consensus when, following a visit to the Prado in 1872, he expressed passing admiration for Murillo, criticized Velázquez ("He was a copyist, not a creator"), and went on to describe this artist's *Los borrachos*, as "a vulgar carousel, a triumph of drunkenness."¹²

Nineteenth-century American thinking about Spanish art was further conditioned by John Ruskin's ideas about the "organic" unity linking individual artists with the society they inhabited, particularly his notion that great art could only flourish in republican as opposed to aristocratic and autocratic regimes. One influential American art critic who wrote in this same vein was James Jackson Jarves (1818–1888), a connoisseur and collector of medieval Italian painting, whose collection is now housed in the Yale University Art Gallery. Jarves's Ruskinian ideas first emerged in his *The Art Idea*, where he maintained that the art of a particular society reflected what he termed the "underlying spirit of the times."¹³ Subsequently, in *Art Thoughts* (1871), he emphasized that "art itself is less dependent on blood or climate than on intellectual influences."¹⁴ In keeping with this premise, Jarves used *Art Thoughts* to reduce the entire Spanish School to what he called "the lowest ascetic standard, scarcely one grade above fetishism" and then to dismiss its importance as anything worthy of serious study:

We need not look for the poetical or imaginative in Spanish art; seldom for very refined treatment, and never for any intellectual elevation above the actual life out of which it drew its restricted stock-motives. What could be expected of painting in a country where masked inquisitors visited every studio and either destroyed and daubed over any details that did not accord with their fanatical scruples. . . . There are admirable points in Spanish painting, but it is not a school of popular value or interest. Besides its two chief names [Velázquez and Murillo] it has no reputation beyond its own locality. The fixed purpose of its priest-ridden work was to stultify the human intellect and make life a burden instead of a blessing.¹⁵

¹¹ "The Fine Arts in America," *The New York Times*, 22 Oct. 1877, 4.

¹² BAXLEY 1875, pp. 2, 9, 311.

¹³ JARVES 1960, p. xvi. For Ruskin's influence in the United States, see STEIN 1967.

¹⁴ JARVES 1871, p. 74.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1871, p. 75.

Jarves's wholesale dismissal of Spanish art went further than most, but he was by no means alone. Most Americans of his era, especially those of Protestant background, found it difficult to separate Spain's long history with the evils of the Inquisition. This certainly was the view espoused by the former American diplomat John Hay in his 1871 book *Castilian Days*, where, following a description of the Spanish paintings on view in the Prado, he observed that: "there is the dim suggestion of the faggot and the rack among many Spanish masters."¹⁶ Such ideas also helped to shape the tastes of American collectors when, toward the latter part of the century, they first set their sights on old-master pictures. These collectors—William Walters is a good example—looked primarily to Italy, France, England, and the Netherlands, as these were countries whose artists represented the magic and the luster of cultures that Americans sought to appropriate as part of their own. In contrast, the old masters of Spain—a country whose heritage was tainted by that cluster of anti-Spanish thinking I have grouped elsewhere under the rubric of Prescott's Paradigm—attracted only minimal attention.¹⁷ In New York, for example, the one collector regularly on the lookout for Spanish paintings was William H. Aspinwall (1807–1875), a prominent merchant with important investments in both East and West Indies and especially Panama. Aspinwall acquired what he thought was a genuine Murillo—an *Immaculate Conception*, now in the Detroit Institute of Art—in 1857 and subsequently purchased two other canvases attributed to this artist, and more unusually, a pair of male portraits then identified as the work of Velázquez.¹⁸ Otherwise, the U.S. market for works by Spain's old masters was virtually nil.

Starting in the 1880s, however, a counter current emerged, one that gradually began to see both Spain and its artists in a new, different, and generally more positive light. As we shall see, old animosities did not disappear overnight. From the 1870s onward, the number of Americans visiting, and even more importantly, writing about Spain, registered a dramatic increase, owing partly to improvements in transportation, and, of equal importance, Spain's political stability following the restoration of Bourbon monarchy in 1875. Make no mistake: most Americans who journeyed to Spain were less interested in its artists than in visiting a country they perceived as quintessentially picturesque, a place where they could catch a glimpse of gypsy dancers, peasants garbed in traditional dress, quaint courtyards, along with such architectural wonders as the Alhambra in Granada and the Giralda in Seville. These tourists included a growing number

¹⁶ HAY 1871, p. 130. For Hay as statesman and writer, see SEARS 1914.

¹⁷ KAGAN 1996, and reprinted, in a somewhat revised version as the appendix in KAGAN 2002.

¹⁸ The arrival of Aspinwall's "Murillo" in New York merited headline news in *The New York Times* ["Mr. Aspinwall's Murillo," 4 Jan. 1858, 5] and an article in *Harper's Weekly* ["Mr. Aspinwall's Murillo," 30 Jan. 1858, 77ad]. With the exception of the *Immaculate Conception* attributed to Murillo and now in Detroit, Aspinwall bequeathed the bulk of his collection to his son-in-law, James Renwick. In 1895 Renwick gave his collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but the authenticity of most of old-master pictures was challenged soon after this gift was announced. Articles relevant to this particular controversy include "Gifts to the Museum," *The New York Times*, 2 July 1895, 5, and "A Delicate Position," *The New York Times*, 5 July 1895, 4.



6. William H. Rau (1855–1920),
Mr. Henry C. Gibson's Art Gallery,
ca. 1880. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Academy of the Fine Arts, Archives

artists": Raimundo Madrazo, Martín Rico, José Villegas, Eduardo Zamacois, and Mariano Fortuny.³¹ These were the artists who were missing in the official Spanish display, and their work is visible in a series of photographs of Gibson's Philadelphia home, taken shortly after the Centennial.³² From these photographs it

³¹ "Nuestra escuela española, tan desconocida o erróneamente comprendida en este país está sin embargo y por dichosa excepción representada en escogidos y bellisimos ejemplares de los artistas siguientes. . ." My translation. *Curiosidad*.

³² Thirteen photographs by William Rau, which appear to be from an incomplete set of at least eighteen, are in the Archives of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. An additional four photographs, which show some of the works hung in a different arrangement and may have been taken by a different photographer, are reproduced in [SHELDON] 1883. I greatly appreciate the assistance of Cheryl Leibold in gaining access to the material in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Archives.



7. William H. Rau (1855–1920),
Mr. Henry C. Gibson's Art Gallery,
ca. 1880. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Academy of the Fine Arts, Archives

becomes evident that Gibson arranged his paintings for size and aesthetic impact, rather than by genre or national school, for Spanish paintings are combined with an international grouping of works by American, Austrian, Belgian, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, and even Polish painters. Italian artist Gaetano Chierici's popular genre subject of a boy scaring his sister with a mask, for example, hangs to the left of an arched doorway, paired with a Venetian landscape by Martín Rico on the right (fig. 6).

Turning left upon entry, the visitor saw Emil van Marcke's monumental landscape with cows, *The Herd*. Gibson was fond of landscape and animal painting in the Barbizon mode, and he counted works by Auguste and Rosa Bonheur, Jules Breton, Camille Corot, Charles-François Daubigny, Jean-François Millet, as well as van Marcke among the prizes of his collection. Gibson's Spanish guest was also able to view and admire paintings by some of the most sought-after French academics of the time: Alexandre Cabanel, Édouard Detaille, Jean-Léon Gérôme, and Ernest Meissonier. When American art critic Edward

Strahan surveyed Gibson's collection for his book *The Art Treasures of America*, he astutely observed, "the general impression of the Gibson gallery is that it is the most fastidiously chosen, in a taste at once catholic and careful, in this country; perhaps we have no other that would yield the same number of pictures of so great a pecuniary value."³³

By signaling the pecuniary value of Gibson's collection, Strahan suggested a primary motivation for the amassing of art by Gilded Age Americans. Such "catholic and careful" groupings of aesthetically displayed paintings rarely conveyed a conceptualized theme, intellectual pursuit, professional interest, or national identity, but manifested instead their owner's elevated position in society. Some Gilded Age collectors purchased works to add a fashionable name or national school that might otherwise be missing. Gibson, fairly typical for the period, purchased some of his art objects during trips to Europe, but rarely made the effort to meet the artists who created them. He bought things he liked, usually purchasing through dealers or at auction, and he sold them when they failed to keep his interest or when something he preferred became available.³⁴

Among the Spanish paintings in Gibson's gallery were, in addition to the landscape by Rico, a *Scene in a Spanish Wineshop* by José Jiménez Aranda, *Dancing the Jaleo in the Palace of Pilate, Seville* by Raimundo Madrazo, *Spanish Recreations* by José Villegas, and three works by Eduardo Zamacois, two watercolors of men in eighteenth-century dress, known as *Contemplation* and *On the Lookout*, and a small oil painting of a middle-aged man looking with dismay into a mirror adorned with animal antlers, humorously titled *Revelation (or A Pair of Horns)*.³⁵ The most valuable of Gibson's Spanish paintings was Mariano Fortuny's diminutive *Council House, Granada*, which hangs in one of the vintage photographs immediately below Thomas Couture's grand allegory, *The Thorny Path* (fig. 7).

Fortuny's *Council House* is a very different kind of Spanish painting than those sent to the Centennial Exhibition by Spain's National Museum (fig. 8). Painted six years after Lorenzo Vallés's *Doña Juana de Castilla*, Fortuny's work is much smaller in size, its intimacy reinforced by the inclusion of family members and friends. Among the inhabitants of the sun-drenched plaza are Fortuny's wife Cecilia Madrazo, their two children María Luisa and Mariano, and his good friend Martín Rico. Considered by some scholars to be from Fortuny's best period, painted in Granada and completed in Rome at a time that the artist was freeing himself from the demands of his dealer Goupil, its contemporary subject and leisurely air were undoubtedly more appealing to a wealthy businessman in need of relaxation than the somber monumentality and suggestions of political strife found in Vallés's Spanish history lesson.³⁶

³³STRAHAN 1880, 1: 80.

³⁴GOODYEAR AND DISKANT 1974, n.p. Gibson's purchase records, if they still exist, are currently unlocated.

³⁵The painting was thus titled when sold by Goupil to Knoedler; see ROGLÁN 2005B, 354.

³⁶MARTÍNEZ PELÁEZ 2005. Martínez points out that preparatory drawings for the canvas fail to prove that the painting includes Fortuny's family.



William Hood Stewart (1820–1897) also from Philadelphia, assisted Gibson in acquiring Fortuny's *Council House* in 1872.³⁷ In contrast to Gibson, Stewart developed a deep relationship with Spanish art and culture. An American who expatriated to Paris at the end of the Civil War, Stewart had made his money from a sugar plantation in Cuba and possessed through his connection to this Caribbean colony a tangible link to Spain. Stewart began collecting Spanish art in 1867, and he made a point of befriending the Spanish painters in France. He had little respect for Gibson, apparently agreeing to broker the acquisition out of friendship with the artist rather than the collector; when

8. Mariano Fortuny y Marsal (1838–1874), *Council House, Granada*, 1872. Oil on panel, 35 x 48.4 cm. Colección Junta de Andalucía, on deposit at the Museo de Bellas Artes de Granada

³⁷A letter from Fortuny to Stewart, dated from Rome in Dec. 1872, states "Je finis le tableau pour M. Gibson, et je n'ai rien commencé de nouveau, car je désire d'abord terminer ce que j'ai rapporté d'Espagne." DAVILLIER 1875, 91. Stewart claims to have assisted with the acquisition in "Reminiscences and Notes," from *Life of Fortuny; with His Works and Correspondence* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1885), 212. See also JOHNSTON 1971.



9. Ignacio León y Escosura (1834–1901),
Auction Sale in Clinton Hall, New York,
1876. Oil on canvas, 56.8 x 80.3 cm.
New York, The Metropolitan Museum
of Art

3. John Singer Sargent (1856–1925),
Portrait of Isabella Stewart Gardner, 1888.
Oil on canvas, 190 x 80 cm. Boston,
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum



the studio of John Singer Sargent to see his controversial *Madame X*.²¹ Gardner was far from scandalized. She was impressed by the beauty and dramatic air of Sargent's subject, Virginie Avegno, an American married to a French banker, and her admiration continued throughout her life: when a sketch by Sargent of Virginie relaxing after a dinner party entered the Paris art market in 1919, she arranged to buy it.²²

Gardner immediately engaged Sargent to paint her portrait, but the artist was unable to schedule her sittings until January 1888. The portrait (fig. 3) debuted on the 30th of that month at the St. Botolph Club and provoked a stir. Writers for the *Boston Herald* and *Town Topics* commented at length on the revealing cut of Gardner's dress, and the timing was unfortunate. *Town Topics* recently had featured an article on the novelist Francis Marion Crawford (1854–1909) that revived malicious rumors concerning his former friendship with Mrs. Gardner, which had ended abruptly in 1883.²³ Unflattering comments regarding his wife's attraction to young artistic men were brought to Mr. Gardner's attention and enraged, he withdrew the portrait from the exhibition. It was never exhibited again during his lifetime.

To remove themselves from the fray, the Gardners embarked on a journey to Spain. Although not as exotic as their previous destinations (the couple had toured the Near East in 1874–75 and Asia in 1883–84), late nineteenth-century Spain was an infrequently visited and often misunderstood country. Bandits still raided travelers on rural roads and accommodations were not luxurious. Mr. Gardner's impressions of the country were noted laconically in his pocket diary: his assessments of certain cities were confined to "hotel dirty" or "hotel awful."²⁴ But if Mrs. Gardner was inconvenienced at any time, she did not complain. She was intrigued by Spain's comparative isolation. As she noted to her friend and adviser Bernard Berenson (1865–1959) on her second trip to Spain in 1906, "I like countries when Americans aren't in them."²⁵

The Gardners in Spain

The Gardners most likely chose Spain on Sargent's recommendation. The artist had lived with the couple for weeks while he was at work on his portrait of Mrs. Gardner and his attraction to the country must have impressed his patrons. Sargent first visited Spain in 1868, when he was twelve years of age and he and his sisters were roaming Europe with their famously restless parents.²⁶ He returned to Spain in 1879, after he had spent five years in the Paris studio of

²¹ THARP 1965, 121. *Madame X* (*Madame Pierre Gautreau*), ca. 1883–84, is in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (16.53).

²² *Ibid.*, 123.

²³ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

²⁵ ISG to BB, July 1906, BERENSON AND GARDNER 1987, 379.

²⁶ BOONE 2007, 115.



Henry Clay Frick's Galerie Espagnole

SUSAN GRACE GALASSI*

IN 1899, the coke and steel industrialist Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919) bought his first major work by an old master—the *Portrait of a Young Artist* by Rembrandt (now assigned to the circle of the artist)—and over the next twenty years, with the help of Charles Carstairs and Roland Knoedler of M. Knoedler & Co. and other advisers, he formed a superlative collection of European old master paintings from the early Renaissance to the end of the nineteenth century, along with sculpture, decorative art objects, and works on paper. Frick's Spanish purchases include works by such great painters as El Greco, Velázquez, and Goya, minor nineteenth-century artists like Luis Jiménez y Aranda and Francisco Domingo y Marqués, and other European artists who treated quintessentially Spanish themes. The majority of these were part of the bequest of one hundred and thirty-one paintings that would form the core of The Frick Collection. Others remained at Frick's Pittsburgh house, Clayton—now the Frick Art & Historical Center—or descended through the Frick family.

1. El Greco (DoménikosTheotokópoulos) (1541–1614), *St. Jerome*, 1590–1600. Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 95.3 cm. New York, The Frick Collection

* I would like to thank Inge Reist, Director of the Center for the History of Collecting at the Frick Art Reference Library, and José Luis Colomer, Director of the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica in Madrid, for their invitation to participate in the symposium and contribute to this publication. Esmée Quodbach, Assistant Director of the Center for the History of Collecting, and a co-organizer of the symposium, gave the text the benefit of her excellent editing. I am grateful to Sally Brazil, Chief of the Frick Archives, and archivists Julie Ludwig and Susan Chore who so generously guided me through the relevant files, as well as Lydia Dufour, former Chief of Public Services. I thank Colin Bailey, Associate Director, and Peter Jay Sharp, Chief Curator of The Frick Collection for his generous support. Pablo Pérez d'Ors, Andrew W. Mellon Predoctoral Fellow at The Frick Collection, discussed the material with me and provided valuable assistance in research; Joanna Sheers, Curatorial Assistant, gave the text her customary meticulous care and offered valuable suggestions in shaping it. Thanks are due as well to Caitlin Henningsen, Curatorial Assistant, and Charlotte Healey, intern. To the honoree of the symposium and this publication, Jonathan Brown, I owe my deepest thanks for his guidance in the world of Spanish art at The Frick Collection, and for the pleasure of collaboration on several projects.

After Frick's death, the Trustees of The Frick Collection added two more Spanish works, both by Goya: *The Anglers*, a pen-and-ink drawing bought from the Oppenheimer collection in 1936, and an oil portrait, *Don Pedro, Duque de Osuna*, acquired in 1943 (see Jiménez-Blanco fig. 9). The Spanish school in The Frick Collection bears Henry Clay Frick's stamp almost entirely.

While the market for English, Dutch, Italian, and French art was well established in the United States by the turn of the century, it was only slowly getting underway for Spanish painting and decorative art when Frick and his compatriots joined their European counterparts in the chase. In Spain, the iconic masters—Velázquez, Goya, and El Greco—were celebrated in large nationalistic exhibitions at the Prado and elsewhere in Madrid between 1899 and 1902, and many of their works were just coming on the market at comparatively low prices. Opportunity, combined with Frick's insistence on the highest standards and willingness to take greater risks in this developing field, resulted in his acquiring the three paintings by El Greco, three by Goya, and one by Velázquez that form part of the collection today. Other works purchased by Frick during the same years, namely a pair of Flemish tapestries with scenes from *Don Quixote*, Manet's *Bullfight*, and Jacques Jonghelinck's bust of the Duke of Alba, may be considered honorary members of his Spanish collection. Although the smallest of the major European schools represented in the museum as a whole, the Spanish group contains three of the major masterpieces in the Frick, which are among the very finest examples of these artists' work in North America: El Greco's *St. Jerome* (fig. 1), Goya's *The Forge* (fig. 2), and Velázquez's *King Philip IV of Spain* (see Colomer fig. 8).

Henry Clay Frick's Spanish adventure began in 1893, with a two-week trip to Spain as part of a two-month whirlwind European tour. Perhaps conceived along the lines of a Grand Tour for himself and his family, the journey was also a means of recuperating from the devastating events of the previous year: the tragic loss of two of his four children (six-year-old Martha and a few-month-old Henry Clay Frick, Jr.); the Homestead Strike for which Frick bore most of the blame for the death of ten steelworkers and Pinkerton guards and wounding of many others in an armed conflict with the Pennsylvania state militia, and the assassination attempt on his life which followed.¹ The party included Frick and his wife, Adelaide Childs Frick, her sister, the Fricks' children, Helen and Childs (ages five and ten), a nurse, and Childs Frick's tutor, Clyde Augustus Duniway, as well as friends Mr. and Mrs. Philander Knox and their fourteen-year old daughter. They sailed from New York on March 4 on the steamship *Kaiser Wilhelm*, landing at Gibraltar. According to Mrs. Frick's travel diary, after visiting Gibraltar and Tangiers, they proceeded to Spain, where they stopped at Granada, Seville, Córdoba, and Madrid. Mr. Duniway's comment in his diary that in Seville they "saw their first Murillos" suggests a prior interest in this artist.² They continued on to Bordeaux, Nice, Genoa, Rome, Naples, Florence, Venice and Switzerland, and sailed home from Liverpool in early May. While most of their stops were part of the traditional Grand Tour, Spain was still off

¹ For additional biographical details, see HARVEY 1928.

² With thanks to Martha Symington Sanger for sharing information about the Frick family's first European trip from a diary kept by Childs Frick's tutor, Clyde Augustus Duniway.



2. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), *The Forge*, c. 1815–20. Oil on canvas, 181.6 x 125.1 cm. New York, The Frick Collection

the beaten track for Americans, even art-loving travelers. Frick was nearly a decade ahead of Louisine and Henry O. Havemeyer, who made their first trip to the peninsula in 1901. With their purchase in 1897 of Goya's portraits of Bartolomé Sureda y Miserol and Thérèse-Louise de Sureda of circa 1803–4, however, they brought the first works by this artist to the United States (see Jiménez-Blanco figs. 3, 4).³ The acquisition was a turning point in the couple's collecting, heralding their interest in Spanish art that would influence many of their compatriots.

³ On the Havemeyers' collecting, see TINTEROW 1993.

and attracted by “what can be called the Spanish idiom,” that is, by the work of the Spanish masters. Goya’s art embodies, perhaps more than that of any other artist, the principles that made apparent Spanish art’s divergence from the art of the rest of Europe.

Elizabeth Boone has pointed out several historical reasons that underlie the discovery of the so-called Spanish school in the United States that took place at a later date than in such European countries as France and England.² Between 1820 and 1840 English and French Romantics found in Spanish art the anticlassical, free model that legitimized their aesthetic goals. However, the true knowledge and appreciation of Spanish culture by American collectors and artists arrived only later on, between 1860 and 1920, and it is this chronological frame that accounts for the special nuances of this cultural approximation.

Although it can be said that the prestige of the Spanish painters of the *Siglo de Oro* (the Golden Century) had already been established among the most progressive cultural and economic American elites during the early years of the Gilded Age, in 1898 the Spanish-American War opened a new perspective on Spanish art for collectors and artists. At that moment, Spanish culture unfolded before them, with all its richness and shortcomings, so that they could admire the country’s brilliant past while being conscious of the present rivalry. Indeed, the opposite poles of admiration and contempt, of attraction and disgust, that marked the way Spain was perceived by Americans in the nineteenth century, especially around 1898, were part of the cultural backdrop in which the great American art collections emerged.³

All of these ideas may apply to the Spanish school as a totality, and should be borne in mind as one tries to pinpoint the moment at the end of the nineteenth century when a fashion for collecting Goya began. At that time, the tastes for Murillo, partly inherited from England, and then for Velázquez, partly inherited from France, were already well established in the United States. Now, within this general frame, what was it that made Goya special? What set him apart from his fellow Spanish painters? Why did only some collectors dare to choose Goya of all the Spanish painters?

Velázquez was, of course, a dissident from classicism in many respects, but his art nonetheless conveys a kind of sober, silent elegance even when—especially when—it depicts unusual subjects, such as dwarfs or jesters. But Goya showed an entirely new and different approach. As Fred Licht explained, in Goya’s art one could find the “origins of the modern temper.”⁴

In terms of form, Goya stood for independence and breaking away from the norm—no wonder that the few collectors who were pioneers in purchasing Goya purchased El Greco, too. For this reason, works by Goya were seen, especially during the first years of the twentieth century, as harbingers of modern movements in art, from Impressionism to Expressionism. The most sensitive collectors, the ones who were prone to feel the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times, could not help but look at Goya and his art with empathy. These collectors

² BOONE 1998, 15–17.

³ JIMÉNEZ-BLANCO AND MACK 2004.

⁴ LICHT 1983.



regarded Goya as a soul mate of the modern artists they loved, as their companion in their search for artistic freedom.

The reasons for the appeal of Goya’s art went beyond formal questions, however. The collectors who admired the modern quality of his daring brushstrokes and compositions probably felt very close to Goya because of content as well. This proximity, then, had to do not only with Goya’s attitude toward art, but also with his attitude toward life. Goya cared for the problems of his own times, and showed his solidarity with people in a completely new manner, apart from any sentimentalism, making apparent a genuine concern for the social and political advancement of his country. He was able to record in his oils and engravings the main collective issues that marked his lifetime as well as that of his fellow countrymen—as we see dramatically displayed in his painting *El dos de mayo de 1808 en Madrid* of 1814 (fig. 1). He was also able to express all the loneliness, the fears and anxieties of individuals—as shown in the print *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* (fig. 2). Both of these abilities, inseparable as the two sides of the same coin, made him truly modern.

1. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), *The 2nd of May 1808 in Madrid: the charge of the Mamelukes*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 268 x 347 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

2. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), *Los Caprichos*, No. 43: *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* (*The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*), 1799. Etching and aquatint, 21.7 x 15.2 cm.



Louisine Havemeyer

All of the above factors might have played a part in the irresistible attraction that Louisine Elder Havemeyer (1855–1929) felt for Goya. According to multiple sources, she acted as a true pioneer in the appreciation of Goya's art in the United States—something she was especially proud of, and something that probably happened because of the advice of the American Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt (1844–1926).⁵ When reading Louisine Havemeyer's memoir, *From*

⁵ See "The last words: The Henry O. Havemeyers," in SAARINEN 1958, 144–73; TINTEROW 1993; JIMÉNEZ-BLANCO AND MACK 2007.

Sixteen to Sixty, one has the impression that she, too, was a compassionate person.⁶ In spite of her privileged position, Mrs. Havemeyer, much like Goya, experienced personal hardships and was concerned with the political progress of her country. Both Mrs. Havemeyer and Goya were active in pursuing their objectives for a better world. Goya showed his ideal of an enlightened Spain through his series of cartoons depicting a civilized ideal population both at leisure and at work, and also through his portraits of intellectuals, such as *Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos* (1798, Museo del Prado, Madrid), *El Conde de Floridablanca* (1783, Banco de España, Madrid), or *Leandro Fernández de Moratín* (1799, Museo de la Real Academia de San Fernando, Madrid), whom he identified with a better, modern Spain. Goya also showed his psychological and social awareness in his incisive series of prints, such as the *Caprichos* or the *Disparates*, in which he sought to establish a diagnosis to better treat the disease of a backward, unindustrialized country.

Louisine, in turn, after enduring a depression—a trait she shared with Goya—played a very active role in trying to expand democracy in her own country through her activities as a suffragette. This did not prevent her from adding to the art collections that she and her husband had assembled. In fact, as she recalled in her 1922 article "The Suffrage Torch. Memoirs of a Militant," she managed to link her interest in art with the issue of women's rights by organizing benefit exhibitions to favor the cause of suffragism at Knoedler's Art Gallery in 1912 and 1915.⁷

The vision of Goya as a pioneer might have been very appealing to Louisine, as she liked to see herself as one, too. In her memoirs *Sixteen to Sixty*, she presents herself as a collector opening new markets in America—not only for Goya and El Greco, but also for Degas and the French Impressionists. In "The Suffrage Torch. Memoirs of a Militant," she embraces the role of an early champion in the field of suffragism. She thus defined herself as a pioneer both in the field of art collecting and in the field of civil rights.

The Havemeyers made their first trip to Spain in 1901.⁸ Some years earlier, in 1897, they had already acquired a pair of portraits by Goya: *Bar tolomé Sureda y Miserol* and *Thérèse Louise de Sureda* (ca. 1803–1804), their best Goya purchase, from Durand-Ruel (figs. 3, 4). According to Gary Tinterow, they bought these two oils because they felt empathy with the sitters. Sureda, a young engineer who returned to Madrid after having worked in London, was appointed to direct the royal furnishing factory. The collectors saw in him a sincere, informal person, "confident of his place among his peers," in Tinterow's words.⁹ Thérèse Sureda is "erect and proud, with the almost audacious stare of a Maja, the kind of impudent regard Manet used in paintings

⁶ HAVEMEYER 1993.

⁷ Louisine Havemeyer, "The Suffrage Torch. Memoirs of a Militant," New York, *Scribner's Magazine*, May 1922.

⁸ See HAVEMEYER 1993, 130–79; STEIN 1993, 227–32.

⁹ TINTEROW 1993, 14.

3. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), *Bartolomé Sureda y Miserol*, ca. 1805. Oil on canvas, 119 x 79 cm. Washington, D.C., The National Gallery of Art



like *Mlle V. in the Costume of an Espada*, which the Havemeyers would buy the next year.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the most remarkable feature of these two portraits in the context of the Havemeyer's collecting is their authenticity. Of the fifteen Goyas that the Havemeyers bought, only four are still accepted as

¹⁰ Ibid., 13–14.



4. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), *Thérèse Louise de Sureda*, ca. 1805. Oil on canvas, 119 x 79 cm. Washington, D.C., The National Gallery of Art

autograph works.¹¹ The other two works generally accepted are *Young Lady Wearing a Mantilla and a Basquiña* (also known as *La bella librera [The Bookseller's Wife]*, now, together with the portraits of the Suredas, in the National Gallery of Art, Washington) and *Doña Narcisca Barañana de Goicoechea*

¹¹ Ibid.; IVES AND STEIN 1995.

10. Robert Motherwell (1915–1991), *Elegy to the Spanish Republic no. 132*, 1975–85. Acrylic on canvas, 244.2 x 305.6 cm. London, Tate Gallery



Thus Henri recognized in Goya the quality that, many decades later, Fred Licht emphasized in Goya to characterize his figure as “the origin of the modern temper in art”: his ability to make his art embody “the new power and tragedy unleashed by the individual confrontation with the vastness of the universe, unaided by the intercession of traditional religious faith,” but also his determination to “express revolution in revolutionary terms.”⁴⁰

Many years later, in the period after the Second World War, the group of New York artists we usually call the New York School, turned their eyes to the Spanish tradition. Such was the case with Robert Motherwell (1915–1991), a great admirer of García Lorca and Spanish culture. He produced a series of paintings entitled *Elegy to the Spanish Republic* (fig. 10), in which he evoked not only the death of democracy in Spain with the Civil War, but also the darkness of some passages of Spanish history and culture as a metaphor. The blackest of Goya’s oeuvre—dark not only in the sense of color, as we can see in *The Dog* (fig. 11) or in *Duel with Cudgels* (both in Museo del Prado, Madrid), plenty of color although part of the *Black Paintings* series—was evoked there, thus becoming both an artistic and an ethical example, the paradigm of the artist’s concern with moral values.

But some other artists of Motherwell’s generation, such as Phillip Guston (1913–1980), found the same inspiring qualities in images from the Spanish tradition, and especially in Goya’s art, to denounce the moral wasteland of the

⁴⁰ LICHT 1983, 274, 18.

11. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), *Dog half-submerged*, ca. 1821–23. Mixed media, 131 x 79 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado



present. For Guston, Goya’s anticlassicism was synonymous with free expression, and his allusions to the prevailing darkness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Spain, had an obvious and ironic parallel in the hooded heads that Guston himself painted in the late sixties, which denounced both the American present and the Spanish past.

Coda

The art of Goya, being multifaceted and polysemic, provided answers to different quests and sensibilities. The way in which Goya’s art was regarded by three main collectors in New York around the turn of the century shows how the appreciation of his art evolved from the image of an unorthodox, pioneering, and politically committed artist, as Louisine Havemeyer saw him; to the embodiment of Spanish character, as for Huntington; and finally to a great master as was the case for Frick. This evolution took place in a little more than a decade. In their turn, painters such as Henri, Motherwell, and Guston started their own “collecting” of Goya through their interpretation of images and artistic ideas. What they saw in Goya was what they were hoping to achieve in their own art: freedom and ethics.