



# *What's Mine Is Yours*

## Private Collectors and Public Patronage in the United States

Essays in Honor of Inge Reist

edited by  
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# Part I: The Early Years



# Robert Gilmor, Jr., of Baltimore and His “beautiful museum for science, literature and the arts”

Lance Humphries

ROBERT Gilmor, Jr., of Baltimore (fig. 1) was one of the most important art collectors in the history of collecting in the United States, and his efforts before the Civil War were some of the most extraordinary achievements in the country.<sup>1</sup> Like many collections assembled by members of his generation, and many others after the Civil War, Gilmor’s was dispersed after his death, despite his own interest in keeping it together to demonstrate not only his achievement, but also to serve as a building block for the encouragement of the arts in the newly formed United States. At the time of Gilmor’s death, noted scientist Benjamin Silliman (1779–1864) commented that the “treasures of his richly endowed mansion made it a beautiful museum for science, literature and the arts.”<sup>2</sup> Silliman’s recognition was significant considering his elevated position in American cultural life. However, within months, Gilmor’s life’s work would begin to unravel.

Gilmor witnessed many events in the development of American culture throughout his more than fifty years of art collecting and patronage, and he articulated many insights on that development, which he helped shape by his own activities. His long-documented career as a collector, and his travels and connections up and down the East Coast, gave him ample opportunity to witness the formation of a number of well-known private collections in his day, and their typical dispersal. Despite Gilmor’s inability to enshrine his collection in a permanent home, not only these perceptions, but the

Fig. 1. Sir Thomas Lawrence (English, 1769–1830), *Robert Gilmor, Jr.* (1774–1848), 1818–20. Oil on canvas, 77.8 × 64.8 cm. Private collection.

<sup>1</sup> The present essay is drawn from material first assembled in Humphries 1998, which includes a monographic study of Gilmor’s collecting as well as a catalogue of his various fine art collections. Most of the topics discussed below are handled in greater detail in this earlier study.

<sup>2</sup> [Benjamin Silliman], “Death of Robert Gilmor, Esq., of Baltimore,” as found under “Miscellaneous Intelligence,” *American Journal of Science and Arts* 7 (May 1849): 142.



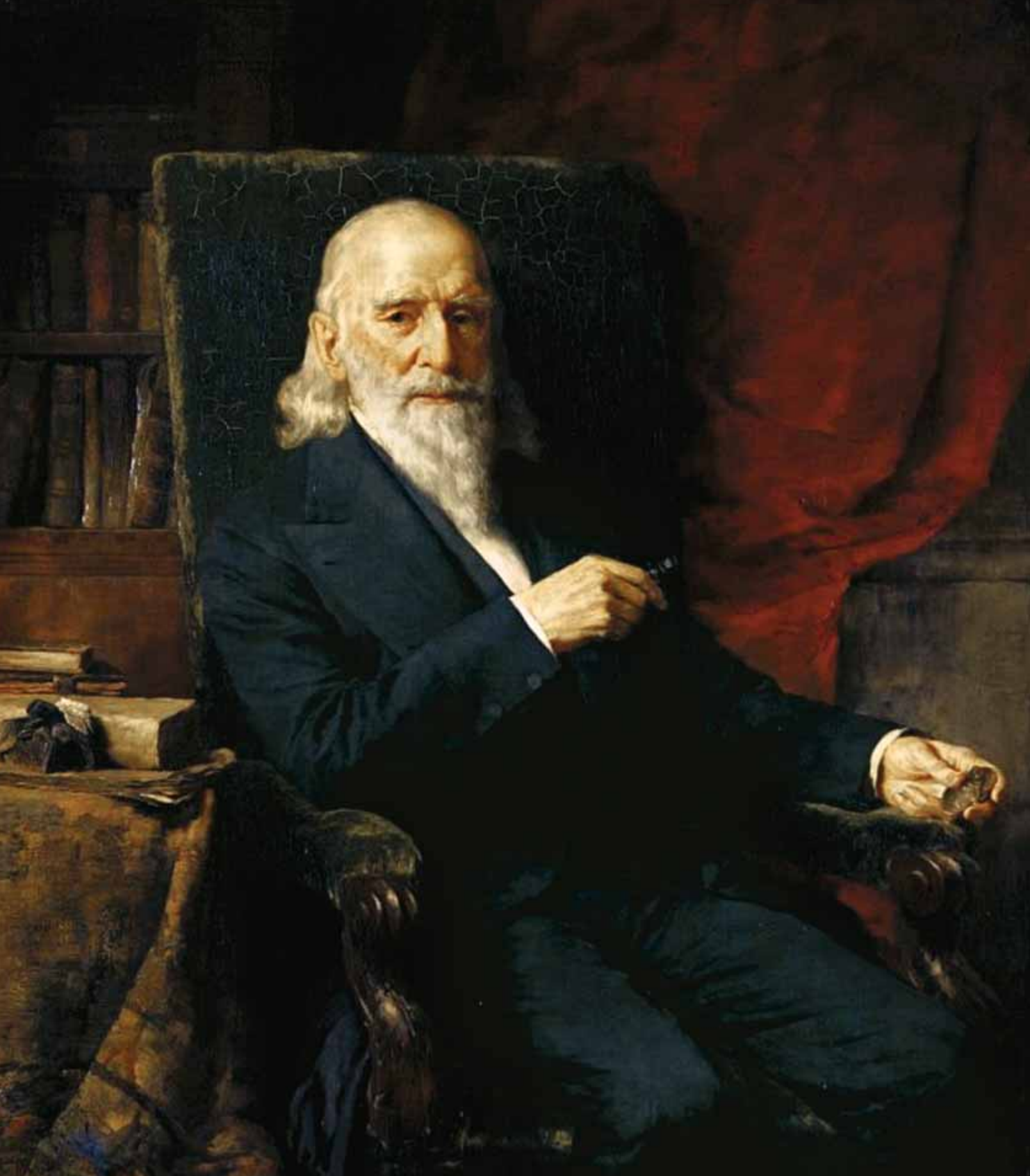
history of his collection, elucidate the development of art collections and museums in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America.

Gilmor was the eldest son of Robert Gilmor I (1748–1822), who emigrated from Scotland to the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland in 1767. Arriving with a cargo of goods which he sold at a profit, the elder Gilmor embarked on other business ventures. In 1771, he married Louisa Airey (1745–1827), and the couple had two sons and two daughters who survived to adulthood. Business interests encouraged the elder Gilmor to relocate his family to the booming new town of Baltimore in 1778. His business skills brought him into the sphere of William Bingham (1752–1804) in Philadelphia, one of the wealthiest men in late eighteenth-century America. Forming a new trading house under the name of Bingham, Inglis & Gilmor, Gilmor I sailed to Europe in 1782 with his wife and four children, a nurse, and a slave maid. He stopped first in Paris, where John Adams gave him a letter of introduction to Wilhelm and Jan Willink of Amsterdam, the bankers of the United States. While in Amsterdam, he corresponded with John (1730–1816) and Francis Baring (1740–1810), of the House of Baring in London, and Henry Hope (1735–1811) of Hope and Co. in Amsterdam (and later of London as well). Thus, by the mid-1780s Gilmor was connected to the business circle of some of the richest merchants in Europe. His stay in Amsterdam was, however, short-lived, because with the death of Samuel Inglis in 1783 the partnership was dissolved. In 1784, Gilmor went to London to set up a new partnership with Bingham, and returned to Baltimore with his family. His two years in Europe had placed him at the pinnacle of Anglo-American mercantile wealth.<sup>3</sup>

These business connections remained important to the elder Gilmor's success and certainly influenced his own interest in art collecting and fine living. While his own art collection appears to have been modest, the elder Gilmor's European peers collected and lived lavishly, particularly the Barings and the Hopes. For the United States, Bingham had extraordinary riches as well, and in the city of Philadelphia he owned a "splendid" mansion, according to architect Charles Bulfinch (1763–1844), who described it as a "palace in my opinion far too rich for any man in this country."<sup>4</sup> Bingham is best known for his famous art commission, a full-length portrait of

<sup>3</sup> I address Gilmor's parentage and the British connections discussed below and their art collecting in Humphries 2014. Gilmor assembled several manuscripts regarding his father and family, which he later published; see Gilmor 1840.

<sup>4</sup> Bulfinch, as quoted in Alberts 1969, 163.





# Two Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia Collectors: Isaac Lea and Henry Charles Lea

Richard L. Kagan

IN 1872, at the dawn of the Gilded Age, the art critic Earl Shinn (1838–1886), writing under the pseudonym Edward Strahan, published his “Private Art Collections of Philadelphia” in the popular journal *Lippincott’s Magazine*. Divided into installments, the series surveyed nine different collections, including those of Henry C. Gibson (1830–1891), A[dolph] E[dward] Borie (1809–1880), and Henry Charles Carey (1793–1879). In many ways, these collections were almost identical, as their owners expressed a marked preference for works by contemporary artists, especially those with a realist bent. There were also a few outliers, collections that only merited a brief comment in the series’ final installment, evidently because their contents were only of marginal interest to Shinn. One belonged to the well-known naturalist Isaac Lea (fig. 1). Shinn referred to it as a “gallery of old masters purchased long ago in Europe by Mr. Isaac Lea,” adding, “There is not an expert in America whose opinion on the authenticity of the works would be of any great value.”<sup>1</sup>

The enigmatic character of these remarks speaks to Shinn’s doubts about the quality of some of the pictures in Lea’s collection. It also alludes to Shinn’s artistic preferences. Born in Philadelphia, schooled at the city’s Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and later at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Shinn preferred work by contemporary artists, a bias that helps to explain his dismissal of Lea’s collection of Old Masters. This essay attempts to address this

Fig. 1. Bernard Albrecht Uhle (American, born Germany, 1847–1930), *Isaac Lea (1792–1886)*, ca. 1884–85. Oil on canvas mounted on wood, 128.5 × 108 cm. Washington, DC, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; transfer from the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

<sup>1</sup> S[trahan] 1872, 710.



Fig. 2. Unknown photographer; Isaac Lea House, 1622 Locust Street, Philadelphia. Front parlor; 1890. Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Lea's next recorded purchases of paintings occurred in the course of his trip to Europe in 1832. Accompanied by his wife and two sons, Matthew, aged nine, and Henry Charles, aged seven, Lea's itinerary included visits to London, Oxford, Paris, Brussels, and Antwerp, as well as a short cruise down the Rhine. His travel journal indicates that, in addition to attending a scientific meeting in Oxford and visiting various collections of natural history, Lea also found time for art, and together with Frances made certain to visit museums and private art galleries in London, Paris, and other cities, occasionally commenting in his journal about the quality of the pictures he saw. That most of these comments were limited to Old Master pictures offers yet another clue to the character of his artistic taste. As for the actual acquisition of pictures, save for one painting he purchased in London for his business partner Edward



# Jonathan Sturges: Peerless Promoter of American Art

Christine Isabelle Oaklander

THE history of New York City art patron Jonathan Sturges (1802–1874; fig. 1) has captivated me since the mid-1980s. Assisting with a 1990 exhibition to reconstitute the private art gallery of his business partner Luman Reed (1785–1836; fig. 2) at the New-York Historical Society, I was intrigued by Asher B. Durand's portraits of Reed and Sturges, presenting men of charm, intelligence, and quiet humor.<sup>1</sup> As research progressed, I learned that after Reed's death Sturges assumed his mantle of business leader and patron to rising artists Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, and William Sidney Mount, expanding those relationships and becoming a sustained and generous promoter of American art.<sup>2</sup> Reed has been written about many times since his sudden death curtailed a remarkable period of encouragement for the arts.<sup>3</sup> Sturges was the leading wholesale grocer in New York after Reed's death and one of the foremost patrons in the New York art world for almost forty years, cosponsoring the city's first art museum and promoting the careers of many American artists.<sup>4</sup> Although a host of older and recent art-historical publications mention Sturges in passing, most scholars are largely unaware of the full extent of his contributions. This is particularly true at the New-York Historical Society, where he spearheaded the transformation of a private library and de facto gentlemen's club into a public museum. I hope this essay, building on my prior scholarship and publications about Sturges, helps fill out the record.<sup>5</sup>

Fig. 1. Asher B. Durand (American, 1796–1886), *Jonathan Sturges*, ca. 1835. Oil on canvas, 77.5 × 63.5 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This essay would not have been possible without the support of Mary Rousseau (1916–2015), great-granddaughter of Jonathan Sturges, who welcomed me to "The Cottage," countless times and shared the Sturges archives with much pride and without reservation. Her daughters, Zan, Wendy, Lenie, and Polly, have also been extraordinarily kind.

<sup>1</sup> The seminal publication on Reed is Foshay 1990.

<sup>2</sup> George Barker, Reed's nephew and business partner, wrote a fascinating and informative unpublished biography of his uncle, held by the Patricia Klingenstein Library, New-York Historical Society. Surprisingly, this important source has not been utilized by scholars, who for a first-hand account rely on the woefully incomplete autobiography by Mary Pemberton Cady Sturges (see Sturges 1894).

<sup>3</sup> Scholars believe Reed first started collecting around 1830, although no definitive supporting documentation is





Fig. 8. Henry Inman (American, 1801–1846), *News Boy*, 1841. Oil on canvas, 77 × 63.8 cm. Andover, MA, Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy.

<sup>56</sup> Highlights of the wall-to-wall painting display were Albert Bierstadt's *Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* (1863); Frederic Church's *Niagara* (1857) and *Heart of the Andes* (1859); and Emanuel Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851). Today, three of the four masterpieces are held by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. For an engraving of the exhibition interior, see *Harper's Weekly*, April 16, 1864, vol. 8, no. 38, 244.

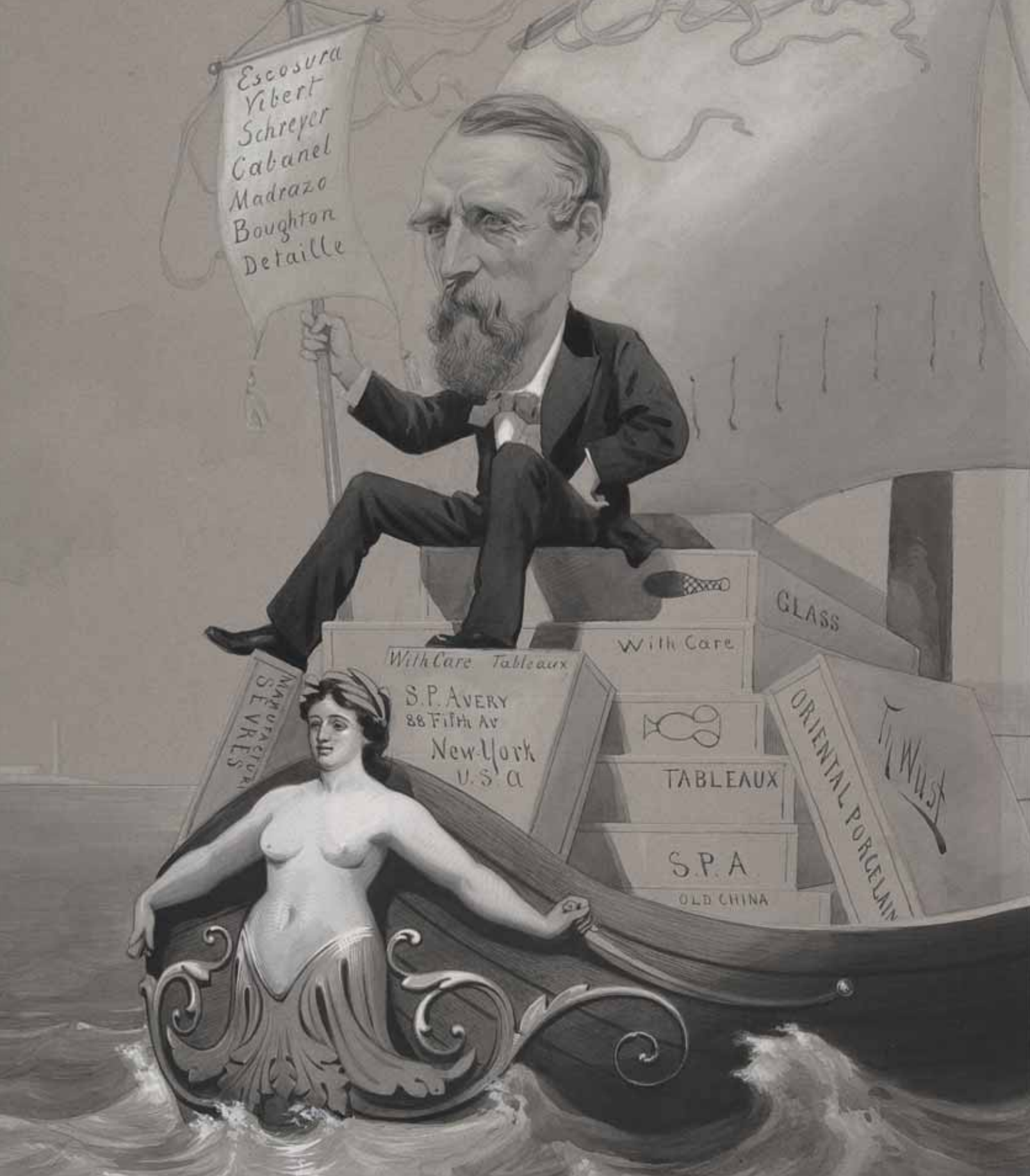
<sup>57</sup> *Metropolitan Fair* 1864, 6, 7.

Although Sturges's sustained attempts to establish a permanent public museum in New York had modest success with the New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts and the New-York Historical Society, toward the end of his life he helped found The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and several of his best artworks entered that great institution. The two most famous of these are Thomas Cole's *View on the Catskill – Early Autumn* and Asher B. Durand's *In the Woods* (see figs. 5 and 4, respectively). Initial discussions toward establishing an art museum based on the National Gallery in London took place in meetings of the Union League Club's art committee. The club was founded in 1863 by Republicans: New Yorkers staunchly loyal to the Union and opposed to slavery. Sturges was one of sixty-six founders and the second president. Although the Union League was politically based, it was also a social club made up of many merchants who belonged to the Century Association

and promoted American art. In 1864, the members were leaders in organizing the Metropolitan Fair, installed in tents and buildings at Union Square in Manhattan, exhibiting and selling objects of art, craft, industry, agriculture, science, and history. All proceeds from sales of art and entry tickets benefited the United States Sanitary Commission, provider of medical supplies and services to Union troops. Both Mary Sturges and her daughter Virginia Sturges Osborn were prime movers in the art exhibition, which was the Fair's most popular feature; Mary was chair of the women's art committee, working closely with artist and family friend John F. Kensett, overall chair of the show. The stunning installation featured some four hundred loans and donations from leading collectors and artists.<sup>56</sup> She also served on the Executive Committee of the Ladies Association for the entire fair. Jonathan was First Vice President of the Gentlemen's Association, gathering items, including royal autographs, for exhibition and sale.<sup>57</sup> He loaned to the art exhibition Henry Inman's *News Boy* (fig. 8) and



Part II:  
The Gilded Age  
and Beyond



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ORIENTAL PORCELAIN

T. W. WUST

# Samuel P. Avery and the First Collection of Asian Porcelains at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Leanne Zalewski

ART dealer Samuel Putnam Avery (1822–1904) left numerous legacies. He instigated the founding of the Print Department at the New York Public Library, and, aside from his large donation of 17,775 prints, he gave paintings, prints, and books to a variety of institutions, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration, and the Grolier Club. Avery also curated exhibitions at the New York Public Library, the Metropolitan Museum, the Grolier Club, and the Union League Club, and worked to establish a European painting collection for the Metropolitan Museum via his clients. With his wife, Mary Ogden Avery (1825–1911), Avery also founded the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University in 1890 as a memorial to one of their sons, architect Henry Ogden Avery (1852–1890). Less known is Avery's effort to bring a collection of Asian art, particularly Chinese ceramics, to the New York public.<sup>1</sup>

The Avery collection of porcelains, which The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired in 1879, was its first collection of Asian art.<sup>2</sup> Avery intended to assemble a study collection of Asian art for the public, as he had done with his print collection.<sup>3</sup> His concern was for the public's benefit, rather than for his personal gain. However, he sold his Asian collection rather than donating it to the Metropolitan Museum. Prior to its sale, he lent a portion of his Asian holdings

Fig. 1. Theodore Wust (American, born Germany, 1853?–1915), *Samuel P. Avery Transporting His Treasures across the Sea*, ca. 1875–80. Graphite, ink and gouache on gray paper; sheet: 40.9 × 26.7 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

I thank Sarah White, Library Technician, Central Connecticut State University, who coordinated numerous loans to facilitate my research.

<sup>1</sup> The most extensive study on Avery's Asian collection to date is Peng 2018. See also brief mentions in St. Clair 2016, 132; Meyer and Brys 2015, 285.

<sup>2</sup> Although the brief history of the department on the museum's website does not mention Avery, Maxwell Hearn, Douglas Dillon Chairman of the Department of Asian Art, briefly acknowledged Avery's collection in a special issue of *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* published to celebrate the department's centennial. See "History of Asian Art at the Met," [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org); Hearn 2015, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Zalewski 2019.

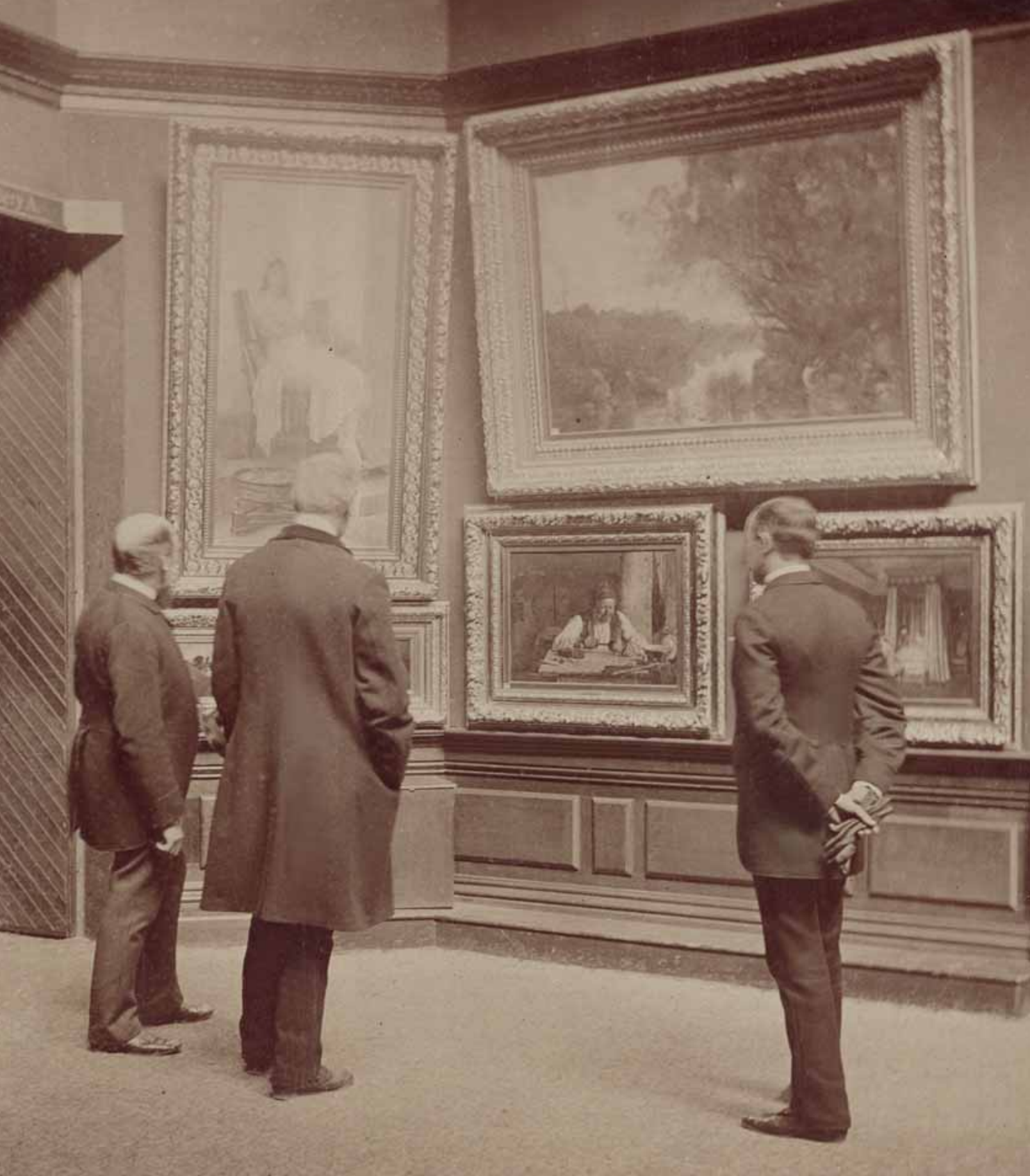


According to the ancient tale, King Wen of the Zhou sought the wise scholar Jiang Taigong, whose aid would help Wen's son overthrow the Shang. The king met Jiang when he was fishing. The porcelain shows Jiang, known for his unusual fishing methods, seated on the bank of a river. Wen walks along the river nearby, carrying an axe over his shoulder.

Avery also acquired two rare fragments of the famed "Porcelain Pagoda" in Nanjing. One fragment, a doorframe tile, features an elephant (fig. 6), while another tile depicts the supernatural female being Apsara (79.2.790). White, green, yellow, and brown color the

Fig. 6. *Door Frame Tile from the "Porcelain Pagoda"*, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), Yongle period (1403–24). Glazed stoneware, 23.5 cm; w. 33 cm; d. 15.2 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.







# Lost Intentions: Mary J. Morgan's Art "Treasures"

Samantha Deutch

ON the evening of March 3, 1886, at 7:30, auctioneer Thomas Kirby (1846–1924) commenced what would be a \$1.2 million record-setting sale, dispersing the art collection formed by the late Mary Jane Morgan (1823–1885).<sup>1</sup> With a total of 2,628 lots, the auction would take place over a period of thirteen days. Its record would not be broken for another twenty-four years, when, in 1910, the Chicago financier Charles Yerkes's (1837–1905) paintings sold for roughly \$1.7 million.<sup>2</sup> One of New York City's wealthiest women, Morgan had amassed her "treasures" in the seven years following the death of her husband, the iron, shipping, and railroad magnate Charles Morgan (1795–1878).<sup>3</sup> Conducted by the American Art Association, the sale took place at Chickering Hall, a concert hall with a seating capacity exceeding one thousand. An account from the first evening mentioned "a crowd in front of Chickering Hall long before the doors were thrown open"; the hall filled quickly, some were turned away, and "a hundred or more people stood patiently for three hours until the last picture was sold"; it was "an opera audience in street dress . . . an audience that represented money."<sup>4</sup> Included among the attendees were familiar figures, such as Baltimore's William T. Walters (1820–1894) and New York's Henry G. Marquand (1819–1902) and William Rockefeller (1841–1922).<sup>5</sup>

In the weeks before the sale's start, an estimated one hundred thousand people from across the United States, Canada, and Europe

Installation photograph of Mary Jane Morgan's collection at the American Art Association Galleries (detail of fig. 1), 1886. 21.5 × 27.9 cm. Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art.

This essay is dedicated to Inge Reist, and it commemorates our time together at the Frick Art Reference Library and beyond. I began my research on Mary Morgan during my first week at the Frick, and I have continued ever since. I wish to thank Ellen Prokop, Esmée Quodbach, and Louisa Wood Ruby for their encouragement and helpful input on earlier drafts of this chapter. My special thanks to Margaret Laster for her kind counsel and invaluable feedback in writing this essay.

<sup>1</sup> See sale cat. *Catalogue of the Art Collection Formed by the Late Mrs. Mary J. Morgan* (New York: American Art Association), March 3–15, 1886 (hereafter *Sale Morgan 1886*). For Morgan and her sale, see Towner 1970, 80–114; Norton 1984, 13, 25; Boas 1998, 262–68; Nash 1999; Macleod 2008, 45–54; and Ott 2008, *passim*. My research for the present



Fig. 4. "View of the Picture Gallery."  
From *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and  
Collection, described by Edward Strahan*,  
vol. 4 (Boston: G. Barrie, 1883–84).

<sup>56</sup> For the quotation, see "A Noted Art  
Lover Dead," *The Sun* (New York),  
July 5, 1885; for the catalogue, see  
Morgan 1884.

<sup>57</sup> See "Some of the Art Attractions of  
New York," in *National Academy Notes  
Including the Complete Catalogue of the  
Spring Exhibition*, no. 5 (1885), 168.

began hosting "art receptions at her home," and she had a catalogue printed, *Mrs. Morgan's Collection of Paintings*, to accompany her visitors on their tours of her residence.<sup>56</sup> The booklet contained an index of the artists represented, along with a list of where each of their works hung. Morgan's collection became a New York art attraction, along with other famous collections, such as those of railroad magnate and industrialist William H. Vanderbilt (1821–1885; fig. 4) and Catharine Lorillard Wolfe (1828–1887; see Laster fig. 1), the first female benefactor of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>57</sup> Given that Morgan's catalogue was formatted similarly to those Vanderbilt had printed for his



# From Private to Public: Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Bequest of 1887

Margaret R. Laster

IN 1887, New York's fledgling Metropolitan Museum of Art found itself the recipient of an historic bequest: the gift of an entire private collection encompassing more than 140 paintings and works on paper, the first donation of its kind to an institution not yet two decades in existence. This collection – designated “for the enjoyment and recreation of all who may frequent its rooms, and also with a view to the education and cultivation of the public taste for the fine arts” – was to be housed in a fireproof gallery bearing the name of its late donor, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe (fig. 1), according to the crucial clause in the will delineating the gift.<sup>1</sup> While others had mandated specific accommodations for their donations to the Metropolitan Museum, none had approached the scale of this bequest, nor had they provided the addition of major funds (in this case \$200,000) for upkeep and future acquisitions.<sup>2</sup> For a museum that had begun its life empty of all art, this acquisition of works by some of the most prominent contemporaneous European artists would have been considered a coup. One writer at the time went so far as to speculate that these new holdings would “undoubtedly do away in good measure with the necessity of any further loan exhibitions.”<sup>3</sup>

Strikingly, the identity of the donor, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, was as noteworthy as the scope of the bequest itself.<sup>4</sup> To be sure, there were other prominent female collectors in New York and elsewhere in the country, but Wolfe's landmark benefaction was unique in an

Fig. 1. Alexandre Cabanel (French, 1823–1889), *Catharine Lorillard Wolfe* (1828–1887) (cropped), 1876. Oil on canvas, 171.5 × 108.6 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This essay is dedicated to Inge Reist for her unparalleled contribution to the study of the history of collecting and, as well, for her steadfast support and encouragement of my scholarship. Thanks as well to the Center for the History of Collecting at the Frick Art Reference Library for the invitation to participate in this volume in her honor.

<sup>1</sup> Will of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, dated March 24, 1885, proved May 31, 1887, New York (County) Surrogate's Court, Record of Wills, Liber 39, Clause 6, 122.

<sup>2</sup> See also John Taylor Johnston and Luigi P. di Cesnola, “To the Members of the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” *Annual Report of the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 18 (1887): 383; “Bequests of Miss Wolfe,” *New York Tribune*, April 10, 1887, 1.

<sup>3</sup> “New-York's Art Treasures: A Rapidly Growing Institution,” *New York Tribune*, April 17, 1887, 13.





It may well have been a desire to ensure that her money remain under her own management that fueled Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's choice to stay single, although we need to remember that Lorillard wills, dating back to the empowering clauses initiated by her maternal grandfather, Pierre Lorillard II, incorporated provisions to safeguard the financial security of the women in his extended family.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, in her will, Wolfe specified that the money her female beneficiaries would receive be protected from their husbands' interference.<sup>31</sup> What is significant in Wolfe's case is that she did not *need* to marry to be able to acquire, display, and later donate works of art; remaining single allowed her to preserve her own sovereignty and exert full agency over her life.

Fig. 3. Unknown photographer, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe House, 13 Madison Avenue, New York, May 1903. Photograph. The New-York Historical Society.

<sup>30</sup> Dunkak 1995, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Will of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, as cited in note 1 above, clause 20, 132.





# A Philadelphia Story: John Graver Johnson and His Gift to the City

Esmée Quodbach

IN the spring of 1917, the City of Philadelphia received an exceptional gift: the art collection that had been amassed by one of its most distinguished citizens, the lawyer John Graver Johnson (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> One of the largest and most varied collections of its time, it encompassed some 1,500 works of art: in addition to 1,279 paintings and 51 sculptures, there were about 150 other objects, including textiles and furniture.<sup>2</sup> “The leisure moments of my life have been spent in making this collection,” Johnson wrote in his will. “I have lived my life in this City, I want the collection to have its home here.”<sup>3</sup> Among Johnson’s paintings were a number of first-rate Old Masters, including early Flemish pictures such as Rogier van der Weyden’s diptych *Crucifixion, with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist Mourning* (see fig. 2); Italian works such as Sandro Botticelli’s four predella panels depicting scenes from Mary Magdalene’s life (ca. 1484); as well as a significant selection of seventeenth-century Dutch pieces, including Pieter Saenredam’s *Interior of Saint Bavo, Haarlem* (1631). In addition, the collection included notable nineteenth-century paintings, among these Édouard Manet’s *Battle of the USS “Kearsarge” and the CSS “Alabama”* (see fig. 3) and James McNeill Whistler’s *Purple and Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks* (both 1864). Together with his collection, Johnson had bequeathed his residence to the City of Philadelphia, stipulating that appropriate accommodations be made so that it could serve as a public gallery for his art, “unless some extraordinary situation shall arise, making it exceedingly injudicious.”<sup>4</sup>

Fig. 1. John G. Johnson, Philadelphia, 1911 (cropped). George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Collection. Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia.

<sup>1</sup> For Johnson as a collector, see, for example, Saarinen 1958, 92–117; Minty 2003, 195–216; Strehlke 2004, 1–19; Quodbach 2020. See also Bertha Adams, “John G. Johnson (1841–1917),” in *An Enduring Legacy: The Philadelphia Museum of Art and Its Benefactors*, digital resource, originally posted February 2013; last revised September 2014 (hereafter Adams 2013/14), available on the website of the Philadelphia Museum of Art (hereafter PMA), where a wealth of additional information on Johnson and his collection can be found. See, for example, the digital scholarly publication *The John G. Johnson Collection: A History and Selected Works*, edited by Christopher D. M. Atkins and authored by Atkins, Jennifer A. Thompson, Carl Brandon Strehlke, and Mark S. Tucker. This publication also includes a “John G. Johnson Timeline” by Thompson, with

Johnson was “a man of potent integrity and originality, one of the most distinctive figures America has produced in our time,” according to his friend Frank Jewett Mather (1868–1953), a critic and professor of art at Princeton University.<sup>5</sup> Johnson not only stood out among the art collectors of America’s Gilded Age, he was also commonly regarded as the leading corporate lawyer of his day. His legal career had been long and remarkable: he had handled some 10,000 court cases, including 2,000 appeals in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and he had argued 168 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.<sup>6</sup> Two American presidents – James Garfield and Grover Cleveland – had invited Johnson to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court, and one – William McKinley – had asked him to serve as his attorney general, but Johnson declined. “It is a proverb among financiers and lawyers that John G. Johnson’s opinion is tantamount to a judicial decision,” wrote *The New York Times* in 1914.<sup>7</sup>

Johnson’s accomplishments, both as a lawyer and an art collector, are all the more extraordinary in light of his background. He was born in 1841, in Chestnut Hill, then a village just outside Philadelphia, as the eldest of the three sons of David Johnson (1814–1859), a blacksmith, and Elizabeth Graver (1820–1912), a milliner. A son of poor parents, young Johnson “made good use of the opportunities American life offers to the competent and industrious,” as *The New York Times* later wrote.<sup>8</sup> At age twelve, he started attending Philadelphia’s prestigious Central High School, a public school that offered boys of the city’s lower and middle classes an excellent education and thus an opportunity to improve their circumstances. Interestingly, Central High students were required to take drawing classes and follow an art curriculum designed by the portrait painter and museum keeper Rembrandt Peale – perhaps this helps to explain the exceptional number of the school’s alumni of Johnson’s generation who would go on to become artists and art collectors.<sup>9</sup> As Johnson wrote years later, “Those of us who have been educated in art by object-lessons, year after year have seen the old idols fall and new ones arise. Art gives us real delight only when the eye derives pleasure from what is really worthy.”<sup>10</sup>

Chief among the other collectors who attended Central High School are three of the era’s major transit magnates: Peter A. B. Widener (1834–1915), whose collection is now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC; his business partner William Lukens Elkins (1832–1903), many of whose paintings are now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art;

contributions by Strehlke and Emily Rice (published March 1, 2018; hereafter Timeline Thompson 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Brief descriptions and further information on works in the John G. Johnson Collection, including updated attributions, are available on the PMA’s website. A partial digital catalogue is available as part of the online scholarly publication *The John G. Johnson Collection*; see previous note.

<sup>3</sup> As cited in Roberts and Roberts 1959, 134. A digital office copy of Johnson’s will and codicil (object no. JGJ\_B032\_F002\_001\_004) from the John G. Johnson Archives is available on the PMA’s website, as part of the John G. Johnson Papers.

<sup>4</sup> As quoted in Timeline Thompson 2018 (as cited in note 1), entry for the year 1917.

<sup>5</sup> Mather 1917, 467.

<sup>6</sup> For Johnson’s legal career, see, for example, Winkelman 1942.

<sup>7</sup> “Greatest of Lawyers, Yet Comparatively Unknown,” *The New York Times*, June 21, 1914.

<sup>8</sup> “John G. Johnson, Noted Lawyer, Dies,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 1917.

<sup>9</sup> Timeline Thompson 2018 (as cited in note 1), entry for the year 1853.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson 1892b, 3.





About this time, a gas station had opened in close proximity to the Johnson house museum, creating another addition to the fire hazard. Perhaps not surprisingly, the museum's building was deemed unsafe, and in 1933 the entire Johnson Collection was transferred to the Pennsylvania Museum of Art as an extended loan (fig. 10). For more than six decades, a selection of Johnson paintings was





# Frick's Consolation Prize: Anthony van Dyck's Portraits of Frans Snyders and Margareta de Vos and Their Sale by Colnaghi and Knoedler in 1909

Jeremy Howard

ON April 5, 1911, Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919; see fig. 9) received an unctuous letter from the New York dealer Louis Ehrich (1849–1911), thanking the collector for allowing him and his son to “examine your princely collection.”<sup>1</sup> After praising Frick’s “rare taste and good judgment,” Ehrich proceeded to discuss what he regarded as the greatest highlights of his collection. “There is no nobler Rembrandt in existence than your ‘Earl of Ilchester Portrait.’ Your Velazquez Philip IV is, in color, the most attractive Velazquez I know. Your smaller Greco I should rather own for my personal gratification than any other Greco I have seen,” he wrote. Having praised George Romney’s *Lady Hamilton as “Nature”* as “one of the most joyous pictures ever painted,” Ehrich then came to Anthony van Dyck’s portrait pendants *Frans Snyders* and *Margareta de Vos* (figs. 1 and 2), which were “the most satisfying Van Dycks I can think of.” After expatiating on some of the other beautiful paintings in the collection, Ehrich concluded by expressing the wish that Frick would “give me some opportunity of return by occasionally dropping in on our galleries of older art,” evidently hoping that Frick might be tempted to add to his collection some choice paintings from Ehrich’s emporium.

Ehrich’s comments on the Van Dycks were probably motivated largely by an obsequious desire to get into Frick’s good graces, but it is interesting that he should have singled out the Snyders and De Vos portraits for special praise. It tells us a good deal about the general love of Gilded Age collectors for the paintings of Van Dyck,

Fig. 1. Anthony van Dyck (Flemish, 1599–1641), *Frans Snyders*, ca. 1620. Oil on canvas, 142.5 × 105.4 cm. New York, The Frick Collection.

<sup>1</sup> Louis Ehrich to Henry Clay Frick, April 5, 1911, Bill Book No. 2, p. 59 (Container ID 310700004006), Art Collecting of Henry Clay Frick, The Frick Collection / Art Reference Library Archives (hereafter FCA).



Fig. 9. B. L. H. Dabbs (English, active 1860s–1890s), Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919), 1898. New York, The Frick Collection.

Carstairs hoped to mollify Frick by appealing to his public-spirit-  
edness over the Holbein affair, he was to be disappointed: two blis-  
tering telegrams were dispatched from “Friction” – the collector’s  
appropriately named telegraphic address – “CONSIDER HAVE BEEN  
TRIFLED WITH. NO AUTHORITY EXTEND OPTION WHICH EXPIRED  
YESTERDAY.”<sup>69</sup> This was followed by another telegram, clearly aimed  
at Colnaghi: “REGRET FAILURE THOUGHT YOUR PARTNERS MIGHT  
HAVE TAKEN LIBERTIES.”<sup>70</sup> But fortunately the storm blew over, and  
Frick seems to have been pacified by the prospect of alternative  
acquisitions. He might have lost a Holbein, but he had recently ac-  
quired a former Colnaghi and Knoedler painting, Turner’s *Mortlake*

following the passage of this amend-  
ment. This was an event of enormous  
significance to the transatlantic art  
trade, because prior to 1909 there was  
a 20 percent duty payable on imported  
works of art under the so-called Ding-  
ley Act, imposed by the 1897 United  
States Revenue Act. This led in many  
cases to smuggling or underdeclara-  
tion of paintings, which, for example,  
would enter the United States as “Cir-  
cle of Raphael” and then be upgraded  
once duty had been paid. Isabella  
Stewart Gardner was fined on more  
than one occasion for attempting to  
evade import duty.

<sup>69</sup> Frick to Carstairs, June 1, 1909, file for  
Holbein’s *Christina, Duchess of Milan*  
(Container ID 3107300004350), FCA.

<sup>70</sup> Undated copy of cable to Carstairs, file  
for Holbein’s *Christina, Duchess of*  
*Milan* (Container ID 3107300004350),  
FCA.

# Part III: The Twentieth Century





# Michael Friedsam, Benjamin Altman, and the Private Collecting and Public Dispersal of Paintings

Margaret Iacono

Collecting paintings gets you. . . . It gets into your blood. It becomes a mania, a disease. You try to shake it off. You tell yourself that you simply can't and mustn't buy a single more specimen. But you see something very choice – and – well, you first buy it and then do the worrying.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Michael H. Friedsam, 1924

AS these words suggest, even a “merchant prince” like American Michael Friedsam (1860–1931) could fall prey to art’s siren call.<sup>2</sup> This sentiment was surely understood by Friedsam’s professional mentor and cousin, department store magnate Benjamin Altman (1840–1913), founder of B. Altman & Co. in New York and one of America’s greatest collectors. Friedsam began his tenure at B. Altman & Co. as a clerk, eventually becoming president of the retailing powerhouse. Like Altman, Friedsam amassed an enormous ensemble of objects that ranged greatly in terms of chronology, geography, and media.<sup>3</sup> Friedsam’s collection, of disparate quality, has been historically overshadowed by Altman’s; nevertheless, an examination of Friedsam’s paintings reveals a core of masterpieces that occasionally surpass Altman’s in certain genres. A native New Yorker and prominent philanthropist, Friedsam decreed that his collection should reside – intact – at The Metropolitan Museum of Art or another New York organization or institution.

Jean Bellegambe (French and Netherlandish, ca. 1470–1534/36), *Le Cellier Altarpiece* (detail of fig. 1), 1509. Oil on wood, shaped top: central panel 101.6 × 61 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

All of the artworks mentioned in this essay are part of the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>1</sup> Michael Friedsam, as quoted in B. C. Forbes’s *Forbes* column “Young Men in The Tampa Tribune,” September 9, 1924, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Friedsam’s birth year has been published as 1858 and ca. 1860; however, Friedsam lists his birthdate as February 10, 1864, on a 1922 United States passport application. See AncestryLibrary.com – U.S. Passport Applications, 1795–1925.

<sup>3</sup> Friedsam’s diverse collection included paintings, sculptures, an enormous array of decorative art in various media, and books. For a comprehensive description, see “List of Objects Recommended for Acceptance, dated March 21, 1932, and

Fig. 5. Adriaen Brouwer (Flemish, 1605/6–1638), *The Smokers*, ca. 1636. Oil on wood, 46.4 × 36.8 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 6. Johannes Vermeer (Dutch, 1632–1675), *Allegory of the Catholic Faith*, ca. 1670–72. Oil on canvas, 114.3 × 88.9 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Upon his acquiring three Dutch Golden Age pictures – Hals’s *Portrait of a Man*,<sup>44</sup> Nicolaes Maes’s *Lacemaker*, and Pieter de Hooch’s *Maid servant* – from Kleinberger’s in 1917, one newspaper remarked that Friedsam’s assemblage of paintings was “becoming one of the choicest collections in America.”<sup>45</sup> His eminent ensemble of seventeenth-century Northern works was further enriched two years later when he bought Adriaen Brouwer’s *Smokers* (fig. 5) from Kleinberger’s, a Flemish work that demonstrates his taste for “low subjects.” Like Altman, Friedsam admired Rembrandt, but although his bequest included four paintings ascribed to him, curators at the Metropolitan admitted in 1932 they “present certain problems for the specialized connoisseur.”<sup>46</sup> Of these, only *Bellona*, bought from Duveen in 1924, remains attributed to the master. Friedsam’s 1928 purchase of Vermeer’s *Allegory of the Catholic Faith* from Kleinberger’s (fig. 6) garnered considerable press and echoed

<sup>44</sup> This painting is in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum.

<sup>45</sup> “Friedsam Acquires Old Dutch Masters,” *New York Herald*, February 24, 1917, 5.

<sup>46</sup> See *Metropolitan Museum of Art* 1932b, 42–49.





# Collecting without Issue: New York and Chicago

Neil Harris

ART collecting can be multigenerational. Absent the favor of royal families or titled nobility, American museums have long benefited from domestic dynasties enriching their holdings. The Mellons in Washington, DC, the Rockefellers, Morgans, and Havemeyers in New York, the Potter Palmers in Chicago, the Wideners in Philadelphia, the Walters in Baltimore, the Scripps-Booth-Whitcombs in Detroit – all come to mind, and there are certainly many others. Honoring the memory and sustaining the practices of ancestor collectors goes back centuries and spans cultures. And even when the children or grandchildren of collectors are not active hunters and gatherers in their own rights, their money continues to burnish ancestral legacies.

A surprisingly large and prominent set of American museum benefactors, however, were not the progenitors of other major collectors, nor indeed of anyone else. Childless, they bestowed their wealth, their art, or both, on institutions that had managed to gain their favor – or at least their attention. They constitute a group that has received almost no attention from historians as a distinct category, and form a tempting target of inquiry. Broad personal variations make donors and collectors notoriously difficult to describe or analyze collectively. Individual biography dominates the literature, documenting the life histories that supply the means, motives, tastes, and opportunities to collect. Efforts to move beyond individual collectors are usually characterized by focus on

Fig. 1. Roman, Late Republican, wall painting from Room H of the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale (cropped), ca. 50–40 B.C. Fresco, 186.7 × 186.7 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



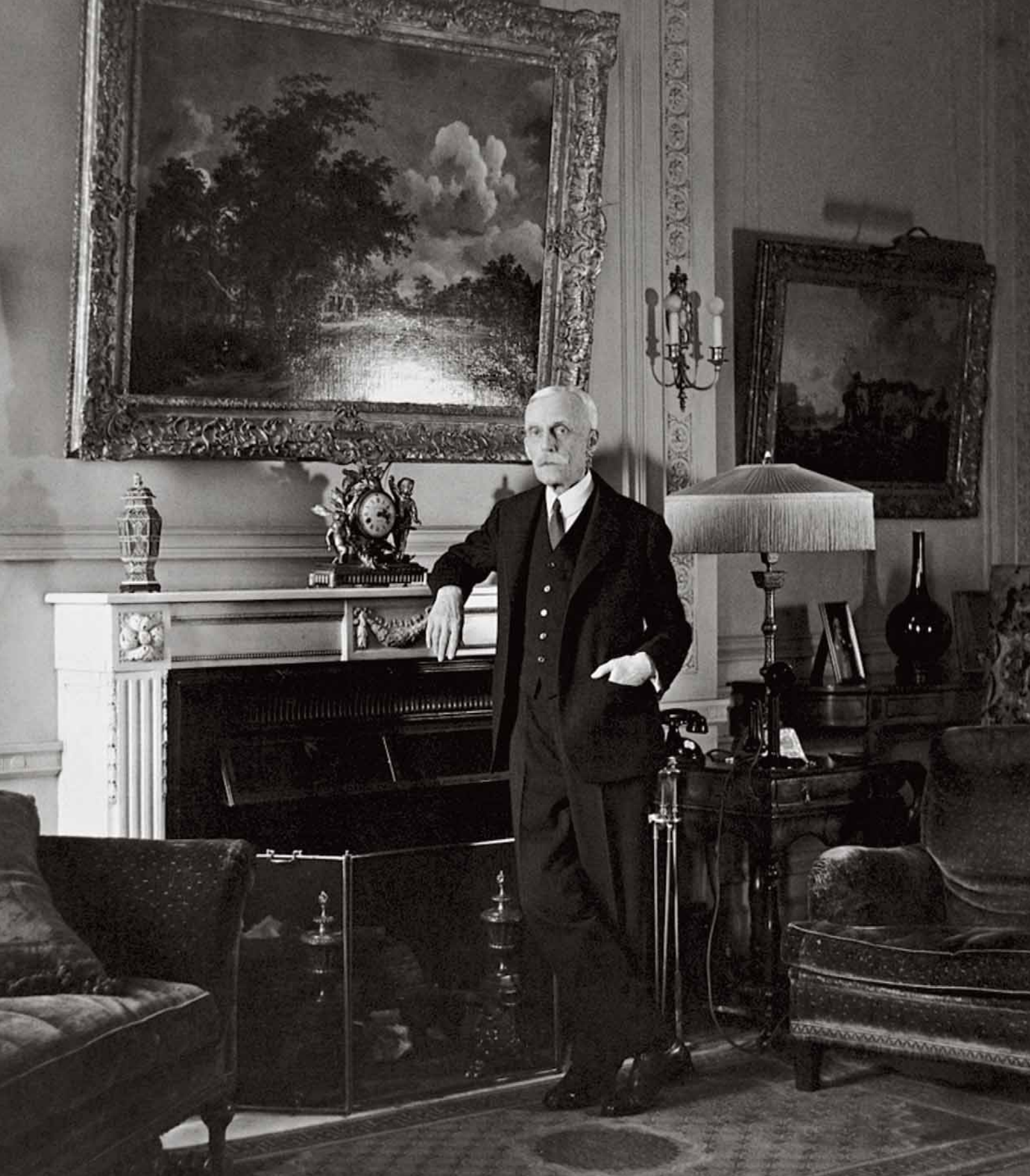


Fig. 4. Paul Cézanne (French, 1839–1906), *The Bay of Marseille, Seen from L'Estaque*, ca. 1885. Oil on canvas, 80.2 × 100.6 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago.

library.<sup>41</sup> Ryerson occasionally sent his latest purchases directly to the museum rather than to his own home. While reliant upon dealers, he did extensive research and formed his own judgments. After the death of his wife Carrie, six years after his own, the remaining Ryerson holdings entered the museum.

The wealth inherited by Hutchinson and Ryerson, their relatively early retirement from active business, and the absence of any children permitted them to lavish an extraordinary amount of time on philanthropic institutions, and invited a high degree of influence in the shaping of Art Institute policies. Unlike some of their New

<sup>41</sup> See <https://artic.edu/Homer/resource/1526>. For the Ryerson Library gift, see Brown 2008. Ryerson gave \$50,000 to build the library.



# Not All in the Name: Andrew Mellon's National Gallery

David Alan Brown

IMAGINE how Andrew W. Mellon (1855–1937) would feel upon seeing the National Gallery of Art today. Of course, the institution he founded at the age of eighty-two in 1937 has, with the passage of time, changed dramatically.<sup>1</sup> But in some respects the Gallery has remained true to its origins. Above all, Mellon's foresight in believing that his collection would attract additional donations has been amply borne out, so much so that the 126 paintings and 22 sculptures in his original gift have grown to over 153,455 works in a variety of media, including drawings, prints, photographs, and video. Modern and contemporary art is displayed in the East Building, constructed with funds supplied by the founder's children in the 1970s on an adjacent plot of land that Mellon set aside for future use.

Born the son of a banker in the industrial mecca of Pittsburgh in 1855, Mellon was not a “robber baron” but a financier who invested in multiple enterprises, including new technologies like aluminum.<sup>2</sup> As a young man, his interest in art was piqued by his lifelong friend and business partner Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919; see Howard fig. 9), with whom he traveled to Europe looking at museums. The somewhat older Frick became Mellon's guide in collecting, with both men turning from what was then contemporary art to pursue the Old Masters. Improving his holdings, Mellon began to purchase, mainly from Knoedler's, English portraits and Dutch landscapes (fig. 1), which suited his taste. In forming his collection, he proceeded

Fig. 1. Andrew W. Mellon in his apartment at 1785 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC, with *A View on a High Road* by Meindert Hobbema hanging above the fireplace mantel. Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art.

<sup>1</sup> The best account of the Gallery's history is Kopper 2016. Gallery handbooks, some by Maygene Daniels, are also informative. For this essay, focusing on one aspect of the story, I have been helped by Kathleen Williams, Chief of Gallery Archives. My thanks go to her and to Kurt Helfrich for guiding me through the research materials in their care. Laura Pavona kindly provided the photo images and captions, and Shannon Morelli made photocopies from the Archives' albums of newspaper clippings.

<sup>2</sup> Cannadine 2006 offers an exemplary portrait. For Mellon's role in founding the Gallery, see also National Gallery of Art 2016.





Fig. 2. Raphael (Italian, 1483–1520; Raffaello Sanzio or Santi), *The Alba Madonna*, ca. 1510. Oil on panel transferred to canvas, 94.5 cm (diameter). Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art.

Mellon persevered, writing to President Franklin Roosevelt in 1936 to offer the nation his collection and the funds to construct a gallery. Without referring to the tax trial, Mellon advised the president that “I have been acquiring important and rare paintings and sculpture with the idea that ultimately they would become the property of the people of the United States and be made available to them in a national art gallery. . . . Such a gallery would be for the use and benefit of the general public, and it is my hope it may attract gifts from other citizens who may in the future desire to contribute works of the highest quality to form a great national collection.” In order to attract these additional gifts from other donors, Mellon stipulated that the institution should not bear his name but be known as the National Gallery of Art.<sup>6</sup>

“Every man wants to connect his life with something he thinks of as eternal,” Mellon is quoted as saying.<sup>7</sup> For collectors like him that “something eternal” was works of art that remained of lasting value.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 47–48, and Cannadine 2006, 559–60. Mellon was commemorated, nevertheless, in the form of two named monuments, the first a portrait relief placed in the ground floor lobby and the second a fountain erected in his honor opposite that entrance to the Gallery in 1952.

<sup>7</sup> Kopper 2016, 27.





# Edsel and Eleanor Ford: A Son and Spouse, a Wife and Widow, as Collectors and Patrons

David Cannadine

THE name of Edsel Ford (1893–1943) is largely forgotten today, but he was the only child of Henry (1863–1947) and Clara Ford (1866–1950), and, as their son and heir, he lived a life that became in some ways very lucky and exceptionally privileged (fig. 1). He was born in Detroit in November 1893, when his father was working as the chief engineer with the Edison Illuminating Company. But Henry was determined to create a self-propelled vehicle with an internal combustion engine fueled by gasoline, and after several false starts he eventually made such a car and pioneered the mass production of automobiles. By 1927, his Ford Motor Company had sold more than fifteen million Model T's, a record that would remain unsurpassed for almost half a century. As a result, Henry Ford soon became one of the richest men in the world, and also a household name: partly because the Model T transformed the lives of millions of people in the United States and far beyond, by making them independently mobile, and enabling them to drive when and where they pleased, and partly because he was a consummate self-promoter and incorrigible self-publicist.

Edsel (fig. 2) grew up tinkering with cars with his father. He was educated at the Hotchkiss School in Connecticut and the Detroit University School, and, from an early age, Henry groomed him to be his successor. In 1916, Edsel married Eleanor Hudson Clay (1896–1976; see fig. 1), and they produced four children: Henry II (1917–1987), Benson (1919–1978), Josephine (1923–2005), and

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (Italian, 1571–1610), *Martha and Mary Magdalene (The Conversion of the Magdalene)* (detail of fig. 8), ca. 1598. Oil and tempera on canvas, 100 × 134.5 cm. Detroit Institute of Arts.



Fig. 9. Bamileke (African), *Night Society Mask*, nineteenth/twentieth century. Wood, 90.8 × 54 × 37.8 cm. Detroit Institute of Arts.

Eleanor Ford died in 1976, in her eighty-first year, and more than three decades since Edsel had predeceased her. With her passing an era ended, both in the history of Detroit and in the history of the dynasty into which she had married, so happily, so sadly, and so influentially. Never again would one woman in the city or in the family be known by common consent as “the Mrs. Ford.” As befitted her sense of public generosity and civic obligation, which had become so marked during her widowhood, her bequests were princely and altruistic. During her last months, and sensing that her life was drawing to its close, she had made a daily habit of studying the art that still adorned the house she and Edsel had created together at Gaukler Pointe, walking from painting to painting and “renewing with each an experience which never failed to thrill her.” She also pondered, and discussed with her children and others, what should happen to the house and its contents on her death. “Where once there were many extraordinary residences,” she wrote in her will, “mine is the last to remain, for the changes in our manner of living, taxes, and new at-

titudes have resulted in the demolition of all the others.” Accordingly, she intended that in the future it should be “used for the benefit of the public,” and to that end she endowed the Gaukler Pointe mansion with fifteen million dollars, so as to preserve it in perfect condition for the people of Detroit.<sup>31</sup> Lovingly restored, and supported by an endowment that today approaches \$100 million, the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House, as it is now known, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2016, which was, appropriately, the hundredth anniversary of Edsel and Eleanor’s marriage.

Eleanor also left many of her pictures to the Detroit Institute of the Arts, including the portrait of Edsel by Diego Rivera, Benozzo

<sup>31</sup> Frederick J. Cummings, speech to antiquarians, May 6, 1979, Edsel and Eleanor Ford: Biography Files, Detroit Institute of Arts Research Library & Archives.







# How Solomon and Irene Guggenheim Collected and How the Guggenheim Museum Began

Vivian Endicott Barnett

PRIVATE collections have been the nucleus of many American museums in the twentieth century, from the Museum of Modern Art to the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, all in New York. Of course, we cannot forget the earlier generation – Henry Clay Frick (see Howard fig. 9) and Isabella Stewart Gardner – who collected Old Masters and founded museums, in New York and Boston, respectively. More recently, the Neue Galerie in New York, The Menil Collection in Houston, Texas, The Broad in Los Angeles, and Glenstone in Potomac, Maryland, trace their origins to private collectors. The story of the Museum of Non-Objective Painting, which became the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, has been told by Joan Lukach, Karole Vail, Sigrid Faltin, and several Guggenheim curators.<sup>1</sup> They have all focused on Solomon Guggenheim's advisors, Hilla Rebay (1890–1967; see fig. 3) and Rudolf Bauer (1889–1953), who played essential roles in his acquisition of nonobjective paintings. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to determine who actually acquired a work of art and for whom it was purchased. However, long before Rebay and Bauer entered the picture, Solomon and Irene Guggenheim acquired works of art which conformed to a more traditional taste and which resembled quite closely what their family and friends favored.

Solomon R. Guggenheim (fig. 1) was an American businessman who made a fortune in mining and smelting, as had his father. He

Fig. 1. Hilla Rebay (German, 1890–1967), *Solomon R. Guggenheim*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 152.4 × 101.6 cm. New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

It is an honor to contribute an essay to this festschrift for Inge Reist, whom I greatly miss at the Frick. I am grateful to Esmée Quodbach and Samantha Deutch of the Center, and the collectors' grandson, Peter Lawson-Johnston, for their essential assistance. The staff of the Guggenheim has been most helpful, especially Sarah Austrian, Tracey Bashkoff, Tali Han, and the staff of the Library and Archives, and the Photography Department, as well as the Licensing Department.

<sup>1</sup> Lukach 1983; Vail 2005; Faltin 2005; and Vail 2009.



On November 11, 1929, Rebay wrote to Bauer: "If there were no Mrs. G. it would be easier for him, but her art friends are against our art. . . . Buy the Chagall or Mrs. G. will become jealous of my influence on him, I must be careful."<sup>29</sup> Bauer soon acquired Chagall's *Paris through the Window* (*Paris par la fenêtre*, 1913; fig. 7), probably from Galerie Der Sturm in Berlin. In December 1936,

Fig. 7. Marc Chagall (Russian and French, born Russia, 1887–1985), *Paris through the Window* (*Paris par la fenêtre*), 1913. Oil on canvas, 136 × 141.9 cm. New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.