

mount reads 'No. 12. Esquisses des portraits', raising the possibility that Fragonard made at least eleven other such copy-sketches of groups of paintings. One can only speculate as to what these lost sheets might have recorded: his small 'Dutch'-style landscapes? His large garden paintings, now divided between Washington and the Banque de France, Paris? Or even his original layout for Madame du Barry's *The progress of love*, painted for Louveciennes and now in the Frick Collection, New York?

<sup>1</sup> See M. Percival: *Fragonard and the Fantasy Figure: Painting the Imagination*, Farnham and Burlington VT 2012.

<sup>2</sup> G. Wildenstein: *The Paintings of Fragonard: Complete Edition*, London 1960, pp.13–15.

<sup>3</sup> C. Sterling: *Portrait of a Man (The Warrior): Jean Honoré Fragonard*, Williamstown MA 1964, n.p.

<sup>4</sup> S. Padiyar: '1769: The leap into freedom' in the catalogue: *Fragonard: The Fantasy Figures*. Edited by Yuriko Jackall, with technical studies by John K. Delaney and Michael Swicklik and essays by Carole Blumenfeld, Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, Jean-Pierre Cuzin, Elodie Kong and Satish Padiyar. 160 pp. incl. 190 col. ills. (National Gallery of Art, Washington, in association with Lund Humphries, London, 2017), \$49.99. ISBN 978-1-84822-238-0. See also M. Sheriff: 'Invention, resemblance, and Fragonard's *Portraits de fantaisie*', *Art Bulletin* 69, 1 (March 1987), pp.77–87.

<sup>5</sup> R. Rand: 'Painted in an hour: Impressionism and eighteenth-century French art', in A. Dumas, ed.: exh. cat. *Inspiring Impressionism: The Impressionists and the Art of the Past*, Denver (Art Museum) 2007, pp.135–55.

<sup>6</sup> Reviewed by Philip Conisbee in this Magazine 130 (1988), pp.319–21.

<sup>7</sup> Y. Jackall, J.K. Delaney and M. Swicklik: "'Portrait of a woman with a book": a newly discovered fantasy figure by Fragonard at the National Gallery of Art, Washington', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE*, 157 (2015), pp.248–53.

<sup>8</sup> C. Blumenfeld: *Une facétie de Fragonard: Les révélations d'un dessin retrouvé*, Montreuil 2013.

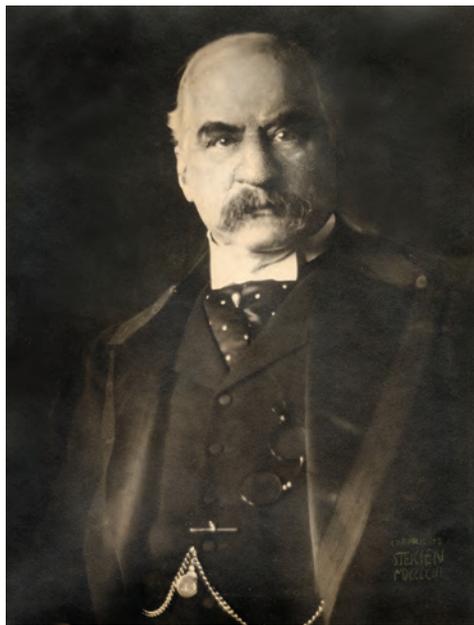
<sup>9</sup> M.-A. Dupuy-Vachey: 'Fragonard's "fantasy figures": prelude to a new understanding', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 157 (2015), pp.241–47.

## J.P. Morgan: mind of the collector

Hartford

by ERIC ZAFRAN

WHEN THE GREAT FINANCIER and collector J.P. Morgan died in 1913 *The Burlington Magazine*, which he had generously supported, published a glowing tribute to 'a great man'. The anonymous writer noted that Morgan 'could see the advantages of scholarship although he himself had nothing of the scholar in his nature. In the world of art quite as much as in the world of finance Mr. Morgan was above everything a man of action. His successful raids upon the private collections of Europe were organized and



89. *J. Pierpont Morgan, Esq.*, by Edward J. Steichen. 1903 (printed 1904). Platinum print, 24.1 by 18.4 cm. (Private collection, courtesy Laurence Miller Gallery, New York; exh. Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford).

carried out with the rapid decisive energy of a great general [. . .] he frequently consulted scholars and experts, but in any case his final decision was emphatically his own, and he never bought what he did not like'.<sup>1</sup>

Morgan had made purchases of rare books and manuscripts as well as sentimental paintings in the 1860s, but it was only on the death of his father, Junius Spencer Morgan, in 1890 and the inheritance of millions of dollars, that at the age of fifty-three he began making major acquisitions of significant works of art. As his wife, Fanny, put it, he could now 'buy anything from a pyramid to the tooth of Mary Magdalen'.<sup>2</sup> His Italian fifteenth-century rock-crystal tooth reliquary, now usually on view in the medieval galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, has been temporarily sent to the **Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford CT**, for the exhibition *Morgan: The Mind of the Collector* (to 31st December). The pyramid never came to New York, but as a devoted 'Egyptomaniac' Morgan visited Egypt several times and supported digs there, accumulating a large collection of Egyptian antiquities, from wall reliefs to mummies.

As a trustee and, from 1904, President of the Metropolitan Museum, Morgan had intended to donate to it much of his collection, so that it would rival the Louvre, but his plans were unfulfilled at the time of his death. In a codicil to his will, written less than three months before he died, he stated: 'It has been my desire and intention to make some disposition of my collections which would render them permanently available for the instruction and pleasure of the American people', adding, 'It would be agreeable to me to have "The Morgan Memorial," which

forms a portion of the Wadsworth Atheneum at Hartford, Connecticut, utilized to effectuate a part of this purpose'.<sup>3</sup> Morgan had been born in Hartford and in January 1910 had attended the opening of the Morgan Memorial Building, dedicated to the memory of his father, to which he presented securities valued at \$250,000 for an endowment.

It therefore fell to his son, J.P. Morgan, Jr., known as 'Jack', to make the arrangements for the dispersal of the over 4,000 works of art that were valued (or undervalued) at a staggering sixty million dollars. An already scheduled exhibition of nearly the whole collection opened at the Metropolitan Museum in February 1914, filling the second floor of the newly opened northern wing. Since there were estate duties to be paid, cash bequests to be satisfied and a business to maintain, Jack sold off portions of the collection to dealers and at auction. Thus Fragonard's well known series of panels *The progress of love* and Rembrandt's *Portrait of Nicolaes Ruts* went to the Frick Collection in New York, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington acquired the Mazarin tapestry. Morgan's favourite painting, Ghirlandaio's *Giovanna Tornabuoni*, was bought by Baron Thyssen and is now in the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, but his books, manuscripts, prints and drawings remained in the Library on Madison Avenue that he had built in 1906.

About forty per cent of the remaining collections, including such famous items as Raphael's *Colonna Altarpiece* and the Negro helmet, was given to the Metropolitan Museum. But, following his father's wishes, Morgan Jr. in 1917 gave to the Wadsworth Atheneum 1,325 works of art, including some ancient and medieval pieces, such as a pair of



90. *Basket of flowers*, Vincennes and Meissen porcelain factories. c.1750. Soft- and hard-paste porcelain, silk, embossed fabric and gilt bronze, height 61 cm. (Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford).

sculpted Greek lions and a massive Roman porphyry bath, as well as a large collection of Sèvres, Meissen and maiolica. Most notably there was a group of *kunstkammer* treasures that, if they do not quite put Hartford in the ranks of Dresden or Vienna, nevertheless make it one of America's greatest collections of such material.

Just as in 1960 the Wadsworth Athenaeum presented an exhibition to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Morgan Memorial Building, so now to mark the centenary of this donation the museum's curator of European decorative arts, Linda Horvitz Roth, has organised this well-chosen exhibition. It draws together just over a hundred works, about forty from the Athenaeum's holdings, with loans mainly from the Morgan Library and the Metropolitan Museum. The exhibition's stated goal is to delve into Morgan's mind and achievement 'with fresh eyes' and 'explore the collection's impact on art scholarship, the art market, and the re-defining of collecting in American and European culture'. Unfortunately, there is no catalogue to carry out this mission, but it is hoped that the papers presented at a two-day symposium in November will be published.

The exhibition, beautifully installed against walls of deep green and purple, touches on almost all the significant areas of Morgan's collecting. From the Morgan Library there are Sumerian cylinder seals, several fine manuscripts (including a leaf from the richly embellished *Gradual* by Silvestro dei Gherarducci that was praised by Vasari), printed books, drawings by Rembrandt and William Blake and autograph letters of George Washington and Mark Twain. Morgan's wonderful collection of ancient glass is represented by the famous 'Morgan cup', lent by the Corning Museum of Glass, NY. Certain types of work were probably too difficult to borrow: of the great tapestry collection, only a fragment (albeit a very important one) of a fourteenth-century German *Crucifixion* is on loan from the Metropolitan Museum. Likewise, there are only a few examples of Morgan's Chinese porcelains, including the 'Morgan ruby vase' (Metropolitan Museum), which is said to have come from the palace collection of the last Qing Empress. The small precious objects that Morgan so loved – watches, snuff boxes, miniatures, Limoges enamels and Renaissance bronzes – all make an appearance, but there are no examples of his fine French eighteenth-century furniture, much of which is now in the Frick.

Of the Athenaeum's own holdings, none is more breathtaking in its brilliance and fragility than a Meissen and Vincennes *Basket of flowers* (Fig.90): it is wonderful to see it here isolated and in the round. Additional examples from the Morgan bequest can, as the wall labels point out, also be found throughout the Athenaeum's permanent collection. Of Morgan's impressive collection of old-master paintings, there are only two to suggest his taste in this area. One is

Goya's brilliant *Don Pedro, Duque de Osma* (c.1790), from the Frick; and the other is the Athenaeum's recently conserved *The Earl of Warwick* by Anthony van Dyck (Fig.91). The painting was published in great detail in one of the richly bound, limited edition catalogues, some of which are included in the

exhibition, that were Morgan's chief evidence of vanity (the first two copies were always sent to the president of the United States and the king of England). The painting's provenance from the Earl of Hardwick and Baron Gustave de Rothschild was proudly stated, but what might have appealed to Morgan



91. Robert Rich, 2nd Earl of Warwick, by Anthony van Dyck. c.1635. Canvas, 222 by 134 cm. (Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford).



92. *Chief Joseph—Nez Perce*, by Edward S. Curtis. 1903. Photogravure, 39.3 by 30 cm. (Special Collections, Auerbach Library, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford).

even more was the subject's connection to his home state of Connecticut. Warwick reputedly helped colonisation by granting the land deed for a portion of the state to one of his companies.<sup>4</sup> This is probably why the painting was retained by Jack Morgan; it was bequeathed by him to the Atheneum in 1944.

The most surprising element in the exhibition is a group of photographs from the monumental set of volumes *The North American Indians* by Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952). They are here because in 1906 J.P. Morgan, on the recommendation of President Theodore Roosevelt, provided Curtis with \$75,000 towards the publication of his work, which eventually appeared in twenty volumes, with 1,500 photographs. One of the most striking images is the careworn face of Chief Joseph-Nez Perce of 1903 (Fig.92), who had led the forced move of his tribe from Idaho to Montana in 1877 and lobbied ceaselessly for the return of their ancestral lands. It makes a nice counterpoint to Edward Steichen's intense photograph of J.P. Morgan (Fig.89) taken in the same year. Steichen captures Morgan's 'tremendous, radiating vitality',<sup>5</sup> which made not only Curtis's image, but also this entire amazing cornucopia of an exhibition, possible

<sup>1</sup> 'Mr. John Pierpont Morgan', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 23 (1913), pp.65–67.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in J. Strouse: *Morgan: American Financier*, New York 1999, p.378.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Charles C. Cunningham in C.C. Cunningham: *The Pierpont Morgan Treasures: Loan Exhibition in Honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Morgan Memorial*, Hartford 1960, p.5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>5</sup> G. Seligman: *Merchants of Art: 1880–1960*, New York 1961, p.33.

## The Western

Denver and Montreal

by DAVID ANFAM

MONUMENT VALLEY DISAPPOINTED this reviewer. Recurrent exposure of the site in the cinema and other media, usually captured from a high vantage point, had amplified it in the imagination and, behind a car's windscreen, diminished it in reality. *The Western: A New Frontier in Art and Film*, at the **Montreal Museum of Fine Arts** (to 28th January 2018) and previously on view at the Denver Art Museum (27th May–10th September), offers an intriguing insight into this slippage between art and life. A highly designed installation at its first venue (where this reviewer saw it), the exhibition encompasses painting, sculpture, photography, film, video and other documentary materials totalling more than 160 items to create an immersive encounter – complemented by a multi-authored catalogue – with a subject simultaneously sprawling and tricky to nail.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it transpires that the 'Western' genre has almost nothing to do with the West per se – at least not in terms of a specific geographical area – and everything to do with the eye of the beholder. It thus joins earlier points of the compass, such as *ultima Thule* and 'The New World', that have exerted a hold on the human mind precisely because they seem, or promise to be, illimitable.

That the exhibition began in Denver is particularly appropriate on two counts. First, the city is perceived as the gateway to the Rockies and beyond. Second, the Denver

Art Museum adjoins one devoted to Clyfford Still – a dyed-in-the-wool Westerner. Furthermore, in 1955 the Denver Art Museum generated what was then only the second-ever treatment to address the American West's impact on art.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the present project rightly takes a different tack. Here, art, conventionally defined, fits within a larger context that is driven less by aesthetic considerations than by an urge to ponder Americanness. Given that the latter construct is again pivotal to the nation's current ideological rhetoric and divisions, *The Western* perforce acquires a tacit subtext that could not be more topical, prompting the spectator to question identities, myths and verities.

Early in the display Frederic Remington's Native American standing aside a precipice amid surroundings tantamount to airy nothingness (cat. no.70; Fig.94) sounded a poignant reminder that the West harboured loss and genocide. Such was the bleak flip side to its presumed Edenic wilderness hymned by Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran and other exponents of the Sublime. Uniting these two polarities is an emptiness that might either wax theological and redemptive, or wane as a paradise lost. The land stretching from Colorado to the Pacific constitutes an ongoing readymade *paysage moralisé*.

A section devoted to the pre-cinematic West presented Buffalo Bill – William F. Cody – as its star turn. The impresario was merely the most famous sign that the Wild West had become spectacle and legend even before it ceased to exist: he inspired a serialised saga in the *New York Weekly* as early as 1869. Bill's painterly counterparts in the exhibition matched his colourfulness – among them Charles Marion Russell's *Free trapper* (no.25),



93. Film still from *The Great Train Robbery*, by Edwin S. Porter. 1903. (Edison Manufacturing Company; exh. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts).