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?

1 See M. Percival: Fragonard and the Fantasy Figure: Painting the Imagination, Farham and Burlington VT 2012.

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 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’.

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’. 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 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’.

The progress of love and Rembrandt’s Portrait of Nicolaes Rust went to the Frick Collection in New York, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington acquired the Mazarin tapestry. Morgan’s favourite painting, Ghiroldio’s Giovanna Tornabuo, 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 Neogoli 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 reviewers.
sculpted Greek lions and a massive Roman porphyry bath, as well as a large collection of Sévres, Meissen and maiolica. Most notably there was a group of kunstкамmer 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 Atheneum 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 Atheneum’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 redefining 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 Atheneum’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 Atheneum’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 Atheneum’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
EXHIBITIONS

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.1 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 polarities that might either wax theological and redemptive, or wane polarities is an emptiness that might either wane


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.2 This is probably why the painting was retained by Jack Morgan; it was bequeathed to him by 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 President Roosevelt, provided Curtis with $75,000 to create an immersive encounter — complemented by a multi-authored catalogue — with a subject simultaneously sprawling and tricky to nail.1 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


4. Ibid., p.6.