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# The Art Museum

A collection of science is gathered primarily in the interests of the real, a collection of art in the interest of the ideal. The former is a panorama of fact, the latter a paradise of fancy. In the former we learn, in the latter we admire. A museum of science is in essence a school; a museum of art is in essence a temple. Minerva presides over the one, sacred to the reason; Apollo over the other, sacred to the imagination.

—Benjamin Ives Gilman, 1908<sup>1</sup>

The National Gallery [in London] enables people to feel in one way or another that the collection is for them, and that they belong there. It's a place where ordinary people and rich patrons alike can touch base and feel they are part of a lively, learning community, a place where they can know that they are not alone.

—a visitor's letter to the gallery director, 2003<sup>2</sup>

The moment of personal awe taken from the aura of genuine art rarely, if ever, occurs in the realm of entertainment, because art is aimed at individuals and entertainment focuses on collectives.

—Timothy W. Luke, 2002<sup>3</sup>

Love of beauty is a basic human trait that goes back to our earliest days on Earth. The primitive Ice Age artists who created the vigorous bison and bulls, fleet horses, graceful deer, and other animals of the Lascaux

or Altamira caves may have been appealing to supernatural powers to grant them good hunting and fertility or observing some since-lost traditional rites, but at the same time they took delight in combining line and color so as to please the human eye. Thus, it was natural that humankind collect and treasure paintings, sculptures, and other art objects. The ancient civilizations, whether Middle Eastern, Oriental, African, pre-Columbian American, Greek, or Roman, put on display their finest productions in temples or palace treasuries. Even during the Dark Ages in Western Europe, the artistic tradition was kept alive, chiefly in cathedrals, castles, and monasteries. This chapter, as conceived by Edward Alexander, reflects a broad definition of "art" museums and his approach to their histories through biographies, and it retains his classifications. More recently, some of the museums described here would be categorized as "universal collection" museums for their collections range from paintings to Egyptian mummies. See the index to find information on specific museums.

### European Collectors and Patrons

The collector was the force that made the art museum possible. Usually a prince, nobleman, high clergyman, rich merchant, or banker, he purchased or commissioned paintings, sculptures, and other beautiful and useful objects. As his collection grew, connoisseurship became his passion, and he added or discarded pieces, ever seeking the highest quality.

Jean de France, duc de Berry and brother of the French king Charles V, was a great medieval collector. At his death in 1416, he possessed a fine library, some of its bindings adorned with jewels and precious stones. His collection also included handsomely illuminated manuscripts, antique gold and silver coins, cameos and intaglios, rich embroideries and fabrics, sculptures, panel paintings, and miniatures. He could not resist curiosities, and he had a menagerie and a cabinet that contained ostrich eggs, shells, polar bear skins, and reputed antidotes against poison, such as bezoars—the concretions formed in the stomachs of wild goats—and unicorn horns (actually narwhal tusks).<sup>4</sup>

The coming of the Renaissance made Italy the center of the art world. Members of the Medici family in Florence were shrewd businessmen and bankers who for two centuries ruled city and state, erected handsome buildings, established a great library, and accumulated fabulous

hoards of art objects. They tried to acquire the finest products of the Greek and Roman past, and sculptures and other antiquities, whether found above or below ground, henceforth became important collectors' items. The Medici (Riccardi) Palace in the 15th century was in a sense a private museum. The other Italian states competed with Florence in collecting art, and the popes gradually made Rome preeminent. It was a virtual museum city, and soon archaeologists were unearthing its buried treasures. Sixtus IV in 1471 established a Capitoline Museum to house ancient statuary; he also forbade the exportation of antiquities from the city. Julius II obtained many rarities, including the *Apollo Belvedere* and *Laocoon*. Leo X filled the Cortile Garden near the Vatican with statues and in 1515 made Raphael his superintendent of antiquities. A dozen years later, Rome fell to a Lutheran army, and for a time leadership in art collecting moved elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the most renowned collector of the first half of the 17th century was Charles I of England. As Prince of Wales, he had visited the Spanish court and sat for Diego Velazquez. About 1627 he made an astonishing coup by purchasing for some eighty thousand pounds the collection that the Gonzaga family had accumulated at Mantua for more than a century. On the advice of Rubens, he bought Raphael's seven original cartoons for the Acts of the Apostles tapestries. At its height, Charles's collection contained 1,387 pictures and 399 sculptures, with works by Raphael, Correggio, Tintoretto, Titian, Leonardo, and many other Italian, German, and Flemish masters. He was also a patron of Rubens and Van Dyck. As the Reverend Mr. William Gilpin justly said: "Charles was a scholar, a man of taste, a gentleman and a Christian; he was everything but a king. The art of reigning was the only art of which he was ignorant." Two of Charles's friends and associates were also collectors—discerning Thomas Howard, earl of Arundel, and flamboyant George Francis Villiers, duke of Buckingham. But all their holdings were largely dissipated when Buckingham was assassinated, Arundel exiled to the continent, and Charles beheaded. The Puritan Parliament in the 1650s, by private sale and public auction, disposed of most of Charles's choice treasures, and many of them made their way into the possession of the king of France.<sup>6</sup>

The French royal art collection began to grow when the Queen Mother Marie de Medici called Rubens to Paris in 1622 to depict the most glorious scenes from her life in twenty-one great pictures. Two French prime ministers were passionate lovers of art and contended that a great collection was a valuable symbol of royal authority. Cardinal Richelieu not only helped his king acquire Italian and French art,

but also constructed in Paris the Palais Cardinal (today the Palais Royal) to house his own jewels and religious plate, five hundred paintings, fifty statues, bronzes, historical tapestries, textiles, furniture, and Chinese lacquers and ceramics. He left the palace and collection to the king. Richelieu's secretary and successor, Cardinal Mazarin, was a knowing connoisseur, but had some miserly attributes; he used to let his jewels flow through his hands. He feared rival collector, Queen Christina of Sweden, and begged his business manager, Jean Baptiste Colbert, to "keep that crazy woman out of my cabinets . . . for one could so easily take some of my small paintings." When near death, Mazarin paced about his collection in his nightshirt, grieving: "I must leave all this. What trouble I had to acquire these things! I'll never see them again where I'm going." He left 546 paintings, the cream of which Louis XIV purchased. The Cologne banker Everhard Jabach, sole supplier of buff leather to royal armies, had a passion for drawings, but, during a financial crisis, sold the king 101 paintings and 5,542 drawings. Colbert himself, a skillful administrator, deserves great credit for building the royal art collection.<sup>7</sup>

The Habsburgs, as Holy Roman Emperors, could draw on the German and Italian states, Spain, and the Low Countries. Rudolph II, one of the greatest connoisseurs of his day, had a magnificent collection in his Hradcany Castle in Prague. This mentally ill emperor hid his paintings from public view. During the Thirty Years War, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, emulating the Roman conquerors and foreshadowing Napoleon, captured Prague and removed many of Rudolph's treasures to Stockholm. Gustavus's daughter, Queen Christina, in 1654 renounced her throne and took most of the finest Habsburg paintings with her when she embraced Catholicism and settled in Rome. In Spain, the Habsburgs acquired Italian, German, Flemish, and Spanish paintings for their palaces at the Prado, Escorial, and Alcazar. Charles V and Philip II had Titian as their court painter and art adviser, and Philip IV had Rubens and Velazquez. Archduke Leopold-Wilhelm at Brussels built an admirable collection of paintings (which he later took to Vienna) with David Teniers the Younger as keeper and adviser.<sup>8</sup>

During the 18th century, the tide of collecting shifted to England. Her commercial empire brought the profits that enabled her nobility to build great country houses and allowed titled young Englishmen to take the Grand Tour to the continent and Italy. The stately homes of England fused the best of architecture, landscape design, paintings and sculpture, and rich furnishings into a unified, artistic style. London outstripped Amsterdam as an art market and threatened the su-

premacy of Paris. On the continent, Saint Petersburg joined the list of great art centers. Peter the Great acquired some art, including the gold jewelry found in prehistoric Siberian tombs, but Catherine the Great was a compulsive collector, "a glutton," as she called herself. Represented at all important auctions and frequently buying collections en bloc, by 1785 she owned 2,658 paintings and, in order to house them, had begun building the Hermitage (1767) on the banks of the Neva in Saint Petersburg.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, during the 15th to 18th centuries, hundreds of rich and powerful collectors gathered and preserved objects that today are found in the great art museums of the Western World. In addition to paintings and sculpture, they amassed the "exotic" and mysterious, reflecting their fascination with what it means to be human. The flow of art objects from their creators through different ownerships to their present resting places has created many exciting chapters in the history of art museums.

## The Earliest Museums

During the 17th and 18th centuries, private collections slowly developed into museums. Before that time, collectors had occasionally allowed visitors to see their treasures; the Medici, for example, did so at least as early as the 16th century. The arrangements usually were privately made and often required a large tip to a servant.<sup>10</sup> In Rome in 1773 Pope Clement XIV opened the Pio-Clementine Museum; it contained the Vatican collection largely as we know it today.<sup>11</sup> The famed Farnese collection accumulated by Cardinal Farnese (later Pope Paul III) was left to Charles of Bourbon, king of the Two Sicilies, in 1735 and formed the core of the National Museum in Naples; that museum also received much rich material excavated at Herculaneum and Pompeii.<sup>12</sup> The Uffizi Palace at Florence in 1743 secured the Medici collection of paintings under the will of Anna Maria Ludovica, the daughter of Cosimo III. By 1795 the Uffizi had become a true art gallery, with the paintings arranged by schools.<sup>13</sup>

The Habsburg collection in Vienna under Emperor Charles VI in the 1720s had been given elaborate frames and ordered according to overall symmetry and color, with individual paintings cut down or enlarged in size to conform to the arrangement. About 1776 the painter Rosa began to reinstall the collection in the Belevvedere Palace. He

called in Chretien de Mechel from Basel, who restored the paintings to their original sizes in simple frames, arranged them chronologically according to schools, and produced a catalog. In 1781 the public was admitted three times a week to view the collection.<sup>14</sup>

France was slow to show the royal holdings of pictures. Under Louis XIV, the gardens of Versailles were open to the public, and one could easily visit the palace and its paintings if equipped with a plumed hat and sword, which could be rented from the caretaker. Louis XV in 1750 exhibited 110 paintings and drawings in Paris at the Luxembourg Palace, to which the public was admitted twice a week. There was a constant agitation among the intellectuals of the Enlightenment to open a permanent picture gallery, and the Palace of the Louvre was usually suggested as the appropriate place. Diderot, in his *Encyclopedie* (1765), stated that the Louvre ought to rival the famed Mouseion of Alexandria.

Louis XVI in 1774 appointed Count d'Angiviller director general of Public Buildings. D'Angiviller moved at once to prepare the royal collection for exhibition and eventually chose for this purpose the great gallery of the Louvre that paralleled the Seine. He had the paintings cleaned, repaired, and reframed, filled in gaps—especially of the Flemish and Dutch schools—and appointed the painter Hubert Robert keeper of the royal collection. The count created a commission of experts on museum problems. The commission prescribed overhead lighting and, for fire protection, that brick and iron be used wherever possible, as well as fire-resistant walls and a lightning conductor, an innovation popular in that day. But d'Angiviller was indecisive in carrying out the recommendations, and the gallery was not yet open when the French Revolution started.<sup>15</sup>

There were other scattered prototype museums. Basel probably had the first university art collection; in 1661 the city bought the Amerbach Cabinet that contained some excellent Holbeins; they were exhibited a decade later in the university library.<sup>16</sup> German collections were opened at Dusseldorf, Munich, Kassel, and Dresden about 1750.<sup>17</sup> In 1683, the collection of the Tradescants became the first English museum in its own building, the Ashmolean, at Oxford University, but it was composed chiefly of natural history specimens with little art.<sup>18</sup> Sir Hans Sloane's collection, opened as the British Museum in 1759, contained some miniatures, drawings, and archaeological objects, but was devoted chiefly to natural history. The radical John Wilkes tried to join a national gallery to the British Museum in 1777 with the Walpole Collection from Houghton Hall as a nucleus, but Parliament refused, and the collection went to Catherine the Great.<sup>19</sup>

## Revolution and the Louvre

The Palace of the Louvre in Paris, opened to the public during the Revolution, may be regarded as the first great national art museum. The cataclysm of revolution destroyed some art objects, which, of course, could be considered hated symbols of the aristocratic regime, but fortunately the leaders who overthrew the old order argued that the nation's art belonged to all the people of the new society created under the democratic ideals of liberty, equality, and brotherhood. The Louvre was to be the capstone of a system of museums to serve the common man and woman of the new Republic.

The National Museum, a "Monument Dedicated to the Love and Study of the Arts," was opened at the Louvre on August 10, 1793, the first anniversary of the fall of the monarchy. Its Grande Galerie exhibited 537 paintings on the walls and 184 art objects on tables in the middle of the hall. Most of these artworks came from the royal palaces, from churches and religious orders, and a scattering from the émigrés. In the new decade, in the ten-day period that had replaced the week, the museum reserved five days for artists and copyists, two for cleaning, and three for the general public. So popular were the public days that the crowds of visitors attracted swarms of enterprising prostitutes, and streetlights had to be installed at the approaches.

The pictures were hung frame to frame from floor to ceiling by schools (which were organized by French, Italian, and Northern (Dutch and Flemish) paintings) but within the schools, according to the old miscellaneous principle, there were no labels, so that the museum was a confusing labyrinth for the untutored visitor. Windows from two sides lighted the hall, and on bright days pictures were exposed to too much sunlight. Fortunately, Hubert Robert, former keeper of the royal collection, was respected in the new order and managed to maintain tolerable standards of housekeeping and conservation. The Louvre was in such bad structural condition that it had to be closed in May 1796, not to open fully again until July 14, 1801. The Grande Galerie was then more rationally arranged on a chronological principle; a few years later, marble columns and statues divided the long vista of the gallery, and overhead lighting was obtained.<sup>20</sup>

The victorious revolutionary armies brought art treasures to France. Many masterpieces were requisitioned from Antwerp, Brussels, and other cities when Belgium was overrun in 1794. The radical artist Luc Barbier, one of the requisitioning commissioners, melodramatically justified

this pillage of "the immortal works left us by the brush of Rubens, Van Dyck and other founders of the Flemish school" because "it is in the bosom of free folk that the works of celebrated men should remain; the tears of slaves are unworthy of their glory."<sup>21</sup>

General Bonaparte's Italian campaign of 1796–1797 was even more successful in adding to the French national collections of the Louvre, the Bibliotheque Nationale, and the Jardin des Plantes. He took a commission of scholars with him—a mathematician, a chemist, a botanist, two painters, a sculptor, and an archaeologist—to appropriate "goods of artistic and scientific nature" that included books, paintings, scientific instruments, typefaces, wild animals, and natural curiosities from all over Italy. In July 1798 a triumphal procession brought the loot of the campaign to Paris, enormous chariots bearing the paintings in huge packing cases, labeled with large letters, and massive carts transporting statues decked with laurel wreaths, flowers, and flags. There were exotic animals in cages and camels led by their keepers. Military detachments, members of the Institut de France, museum administrators, art professors, and typesetters marched in the parade. The vehicles formed a circle on the Champs de Mars three lines deep around a monument to Liberty, amid the thundering cheers of the packed spectators. Among the choicest items were the famed four Bronze Horses from Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice; they were placed above the Arc de Triomphe of the Carrousel in the Tuilleries Gardens. The Louvre received the *Apollo Belvedere*, *Laocoon*, *Dying Gaul*, Raphael's *Transfiguration*, and Correggio's *Saint Jerome*.<sup>22</sup>

One blessing may have arisen from this seizure of art by the French armies. Many of the paintings were in bad repair, not having been treated since their creation. In a conservation workshop in the Louvre, staff knew how to clean and restore paintings and understood the rebacking process that had been perfected in Italy and France about fifty years earlier. At any rate, the French authorities used conservation partially to justify their confiscation of the paintings.<sup>23</sup>

### Napoleon and National Glory

Shortly before Napoleon decided to invade Egypt in 1798, he met Baron Dominique Vivant-Denon at a party.<sup>24</sup> Denon was a charmer, a favorite of Madame de Pompadour. He had held diplomatic posts in Russia at the Court of Catherine the Great, in Switzerland, and at

Naples. Napoleon and Denon became close friends, and Denon, though in his fifties, went on the Egyptian campaign. His scholarship helped Napoleon choose superb museum objects, including the Rosetta stone that was afterward captured on its way to France by Lord Nelson and sent to the British Museum. Denon also aroused general admiration by his reckless coolness under fire. In 1800 Napoleon visited the Louvre for the first time and soon insisted that Denon be placed in charge of the museums of France and of all artistic services. In 1803 the Louvre became the Musée Napoleon, a name it retained until the emperor's downfall.

Napoleon and Denon, between them, devised a comprehensive museum system for France and her conquered satellites. Denon always sought the greatest masterpieces for the Louvre, but Napoleon made the final decisions, based on political expediency. As early as 1800, he had agreed to place paintings in the provincial cities of France that then included Brussels, Mainz, and Geneva. Eventually twenty-two cities benefited from the distribution of 1,508 paintings. Several museums were planned for Italian cities, though only the Brera Gallery in Milan, opened in 1809, was successfully organized; it received confiscations from throughout northern Italy.

Sometimes, reaction against French looting led to the establishment of museums. Thus, Louis Napoleon, king of Holland, founded the Koninklijk Museum (forerunner of the present Rijksmuseum) at Amsterdam in 1808. In Madrid, Joseph Bonaparte, king of Spain, worked with the artist Goya to keep the finest Spanish paintings from the clutches of Napoleon and Denon; later, in 1819, the collection was installed in the Prado and opened to the public. In 1813 Wellington captured paintings from the royal collection taken by Joseph on his flight from Spain. The duke offered to return them, but the Spanish government gave the 165 paintings to him. Today they repose in London as the Wellington Museum at Apsley House.<sup>25</sup>

But those who live by the sword and the requisition shall perish by the sword and the requisition. When Napoleon was finally defeated at Waterloo in 1815, the paintings and art objects he had seized began to flow back to their previous owners. Not all of them returned; Denon's conveniently poor memory of their location saved a few for the Louvre, and most of those taken from churches and monasteries remained in France. But in all, the French museums gave up 2,065 pictures and 130 sculptures, including, of course, the Bronze Horses, *Apollo Belvedere*, and *Laocoon*. With tears of frustration in their eyes, the French people saw many treasures leave the acknowledged art capital of the world.

Never again would so many masterpieces of painting and sculpture be on view in a single institution. Napoleon indeed had made great art and the museum symbols of national glory. This concept would be taken to the extreme in the 20th century with Hitler and Goering looting the national collections as revenge for the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles. They didn't stop with museum collections; they added those of private citizens.<sup>26</sup>

### A Golden Age for Art Museums

The violent and democratizing changes in European life brought about by both political and industrial revolution were accompanied by a steady growth of public art museums, and the 19th century sometimes is considered the museum's golden age. Parallel with growing nationalism, nearly every country in Western Europe built a comprehensive collection of masterpiece art that extended from ancient times to the present. Usually a royal collection formed its nucleus, but often the determined efforts of industrial and commercial leaders with able museum directors resulted in a museum taking its place as an important element of urban centers.

In France the Louvre enjoyed rapid growth and soon filled the gaps in its galleries left by the return of the Napoleonic additions. In the international competition for archaeological discoveries, the Louvre got thousands of Greek vases and bronzes, the best Egyptian collection outside Cairo, and such striking individual masterpieces as the Venus de Milo and the Nike from Samothrace. Napoleon III completed the Louvre complex so as to provide badly needed exhibition, storage, and administrative space. He acquired a rich collection of paintings and art objects from the Marquis Campana in Rome, for a time shown as the Musée Napoleon III. Just before the fall of the empire in 1869, Dr. Louis La Caze of Paris left the Louvre the greatest gift it had ever received—802 paintings, of which he wished 302 distributed in the provinces. Public funds and private gifts—the organization called Friends of the Louvre was formed in 1897—continued to add to its comprehensive holdings.<sup>27</sup>

Great Britain did not establish its National Gallery in London until 1824. For forty years, efforts had been made to secure an art museum for the nation, and in the end the Royal Academy (1768) and the British

Institution (1805) marshaled enough sentiment to carry the day. The National Gallery was unusual in that it did not grow from a royal collection. The fact that thirty-eight great pictures collected by John Julius Angerstein were up for sale triggered the establishment of the gallery; Sir George Beaumont, himself a collector of note, persuaded the prime minister, Lord Dover, to have the nation pay fifty-seven thousand pounds for the Angerstein pictures. Soon, the present building of the National Gallery was under construction at Trafalgar Square, to be opened by Queen Victoria in 1838. Its very location at Trafalgar Square ("the very gangway of London") represented the founders' interests in making its galleries available to all London's citizens. The gallery admitted the public four days per week, but the rooms were often dark because no artificial light was provided; on two days, not more than fifty students were allowed to copy the pictures. The gallery also closed on Sundays and for six weeks each year for cleaning purposes. Until after World War I, the pictures were crowded together from floor to ceiling. All in all, British collectors and artists generously supported the National Gallery, which today represents a comprehensive history of European painting.<sup>28</sup> The British royal family's vast collections, which are purported to be among the finest collections in "private" hands, are exhibited in Buckingham Palace, allowing it to add "gallery" to its many descriptors.

In Germany, the Hohenzollerns of Prussia backed the creation of one of the world's greatest museum centers in Berlin on a peninsula formed by the Spree and Kupfergraben rivers. This Museum Island, as it was called, contained five museums: the Altes Museum (1830) built around the antiquities and modern painting collections of an eccentric English connoisseur, Edward Solly; the Neues Museum (1855) with Egyptian collections, antique ceramics, and national antiquities; the Nationalgalerie (1876) for modern German art; and the Kaiser Friedrich Museum of Western Art (1904), now the Bode Museum. Most impressive of all was a group of monumental buildings (1907–1930) that contained the Pergamon Museum, with its Great Altar of Pergamon, one wing devoted to the Museum of German Art and another to the Near East Museum. Covered footbridges connected many of the buildings of the island complex. Dr. Wilhelm von Bode joined the staff of the museums in 1872 and served for fifty years, after 1905 as general director.<sup>29</sup> A learned art historian with encyclopedic knowledge of the art market and great diplomatic and administrative talent, he raised the Berlin museums to the high levels attained by those of Paris and London.

The rise of Hitler brought several disasters to the Museum Island. Ludwig Justi, the long-respected director of the Nationalgalerie, was dismissed though he refused to leave and was named director of the art library, "degenerate" modern art was removed and in some cases destroyed, and many Jewish staff members were discharged. World War II attacks greatly damaged the Museum Island buildings and 1,353 paintings were lost. Under the leadership of the occupying Soviet Union, other objects were moved "east" and vanished from public view. The partition of Berlin after the war made the Museum Island a cultural showcase for East Berlin, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and its chief sponsor, the Soviet Union. The GDR focused its attention and resources on restoring the island to its former glory as evidence of its rightful place in European culture. Justi came back to the Museum Island as director in 1948. The Kaiser Friedrich Museum was fittingly renamed the Bode Museum. Work on the Pergamon Museum, Nationalgalerie, and Altes Museum moved forward. With the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the island assumed its rightful place at the center of Germany's artistic culture. The moving of the national capital to Berlin a decade later added to the island's importance. Today, while restoration projects still continue, the Bode Museum's world-class paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts reveal the primacy of its Western European art collection. The island's archaeological treasures of the Facade of the Kassite Temple of Uruk (c. 1415 BC), the Processional Way, Ishtar Gate, the Old Palace Throne Room of Babylon (c. 580 BC), the Great Altar of Pergamon (180–160 BC), the Market Gate of Miletus (c. AD 165), the Facade of the Mshatta Desert Palace (743–744), and the Prayer Niche from the Maydan Mosque of Kashan (1226) provide visitors an even larger context for the Museum Island's reflection of man's commitment to artistic expression.

Munich, to the south, is another city filled with museums. King Louis I of Bavaria planned to make it a second Rome. The Glyptothek (1830) contains the Aeginetal pediments from the Temple of Aphaia; the Alte Pinakothek (1836), a rich collection of old masters; and the Neue Pinakothek (1853), the Schack Gallery, and New State Gallery, more modern art. The Bavarian National Museum (1867) has historical paintings, decorative art, and period rooms, and the Residence, the former palace opened as a museum in 1920 and restored to its elegance after World War II damage, possesses a rich treasury of exquisitely jeweled pieces. Although Dresden suffered the worst air raids of World War II, its extensive museum holdings, initiated in the 18th century by Augustus the Strong, king of Poland and the elector of Saxony, have

been magnificently reinstalled. The Zwinger Palace contains the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, one of the world's preeminent painting collections, an armory, a porcelain collection; the Albertinum contains the incomparable Green Vault treasury of jeweled and precious objects, and the Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, a rich collection of romantic German painting.<sup>30</sup>

Catherine the Great's huge collection in the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg was more properly housed in a great palace built by Czar Nicholas I in the 1840s. The Berlin museum director and art historian Gustav Waagen was called in to arrange the pictures and prepare a catalog (1863). Visitors were allowed, but up until 1866, they needed to wear full dress, on the theory that they were visiting the czar and only incidentally the museum. The czars continued to collect great masterpieces, and the coming of the 1917 revolution gave the new Soviet Union control of rich private art collections from throughout the old empire. Museums, historical monuments, and art treasures were nationalized. Some old masters were sold to raise much-needed funds for economic necessities, but the Hermitage remains one of the greatest art museums of the world. Its ornate galleries are replete with a comprehensive painting collection; significant impressionist and postimpressionist works; Scythian goldwork; Greek vases obtained from sites on the northern Black Sea coast; Oriental, Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Near East, and Russian antiquities.<sup>31</sup>

A specialized form of art museum collected and exhibited modern art, as, for example, the Luxembourg Palace (1818) in Paris, superseded by the National Museum of Modern Art (1937) that later moved to the Centre Georges Pompidou, or Beaubourg, in 1977; the Neue Pinakothek (1853) in Munich; the Nationalgalerie (1876) in Berlin; and the National Gallery of British Art (1897) in London, known today as Tate Britain Gallery with its annex south of the Thames, Tate Modern, opened in 2000.<sup>32</sup>

Another specialized museum was devoted to the decorative arts—architecture, furniture, metalwork, ceramics, glass, textiles, and the like. The Great Exhibition at South Kensington in London, the first true world's fair, in 1851 was enormously successful, and the profits (some 186,000 pounds) were used to acquire land for a group of museums in the South Kensington area. One of them finally evolved into the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1909. In France, a world's fair at Paris in 1855 inaugurated a similar interest in the decorative arts, and the Central Society of Decorative Arts established a museum in 1882, later moved to the Marsan Pavilion of the Louvre. Berlin and Vienna also had such museums.<sup>33</sup>

## American Models

The earliest progenitors of the American Art Museum displayed portraits of historical figures (or events) as part of their historical or natural science focus. Pierre Eugene du Simitiere and Charles Willson Peale had portraits in their Philadelphia collections in the 1780s, but regarded them more as historical documents than as works of art. So also did the early historical societies, though the New-York Historical Society (1804) had secured the Luman Reed and Thomas J. Bryan collections of American paintings and European old masters by the 1860s. The society planned a museum of antiquities, science, and art, but failed to raise the necessary funds. The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1805) in Philadelphia not only conducted an art school and held annual exhibitions, but also acquired an outstanding collection of American paintings and sculpture. The Boston Athenaeum (1807), though essentially a library, collected paintings and sculptures that it later turned over to the newly established Museum of Fine Arts. In 1832 Yale built the pioneer American college gallery to house the historical paintings of Colonel John Trumbull. Perhaps the first true and continuing art museum in the country was the Wadsworth Atheneum (1842) at Hartford, Connecticut, which displayed about eighty works by Trumbull, Thomas Cole, and other Americans.<sup>34</sup>

The year 1870 was a landmark year for American art museums, with the establishment of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Within the decade, the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, the Pennsylvania (now Philadelphia) Museum of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago opened for public visitation. Other leading encyclopedic art collections in the United States today include the Detroit Institute of Art (1885), Brooklyn Museum (1893), in Ohio, the Toledo Art Museum (1901) and Cleveland Museum of Art (1913), and the National Gallery of Art (1937) in Washington, D.C. By the year 2000 there were thirty-five hundred art museums in the United States, half of which were established after 1970.<sup>35</sup> The combination of private beneficence, city maintenance, and federal tax laws that encouraged private support produced some of the greatest art museums of the world.

An examination of the Metropolitan and the Museum of Fine Arts reveals the chief forces in the development of comprehensive American art museums. The purposes of the Metropolitan, expressed in Joseph C. Choate's dedication speech of 1880, were to gather together a more or less complete collection of objects illustrative of the history of art in all

its branches, from the earliest beginnings to the present time, which should serve not only for the instruction and entertainment of the people, but also show to the students and artisans of every branch of industry, in the high and acknowledged standards of form and color, what the past has accomplished for them to imitate and exceed.<sup>36</sup>

The Metropolitan was greatly influenced by the South Kensington (today the Victoria and Albert) Museum in London, as also was the Museum of Fine Arts, one of whose founders wrote: "The designer needs a museum of art, as the man of letters needs a library, or the botanist a herbarium." Both museums agreed that few masterpieces were available to them, and in the field of sculpture, they began to gather plaster casts of famed originals. A delay in the arrival by sea of fifty cases of casts and an amusing debate about the placement of fig leaves on nude statues accompanied the opening of the Museum of Fine Arts, and in 1883 the first large money bequest to the Metropolitan was earmarked for the purchase of architectural casts.<sup>37</sup>

The Metropolitan Museum and the American Museum of Natural History were responsible for a partnership arrangement between city government and a private board of trustees that has been followed by nearly one hundred American museums, though not by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which operated primarily on private support for nearly a century. The two New York museums in 1871 planned to erect a building together and secured the signatures of the owners of more than half of the real estate of the city on a petition asking the state legislature to authorize the city to tax itself five hundred thousand dollars for this purpose. The two boards sent emissaries to visit William Marcy Tweed, the city's representative in Albany. Impressed by the standing of the petitioners, "Boss" Tweed had Peter Barr Sweeney, the city chamberlain, reputed to be the brains of the Tweed Ring, work out a compromise under which the city agreed to erect and take title to the building (and later to maintain it), and the trustees would own and control the collections. As it turned out, the two museums built separate structures, but an important pattern of museum organization had been established.<sup>38</sup>

The Metropolitan and the Museum of Fine Arts have helped define the scope of a comprehensive art museum. General Louis P. di Cesnola, who became the first director of the Metropolitan in 1879, had been the U.S. consul on the island of Cyprus; he sold to the Metropolitan two collections of classical antiquities he had excavated and also sold a smaller accumulation to the Boston museum. J. P. Morgan became president of the Metropolitan in 1904, and by the time of his death in 1913,

the museum had acquired important Greek art, made numerous archaeological expeditions to Egypt, secured an outstanding collection of armor, and received the Benjamin Altman bequest of about two thousand masterpiece paintings and Chinese porcelains valued at 15 million dollars. Morgan himself shocked the Metropolitan by failing to leave it his own collection, perhaps the greatest assembled in modern times, though his son eventually donated about 40 percent of its treasures.<sup>39</sup>

In 1924 the president of the Metropolitan, Robert W. de Forest, and Mrs. de Forest gave the museum its American Wing, which housed colonial and federal period rooms and a distinguished collection of decorative arts. The American Wing has had great influence upon both art and history museums, and this kind of collection reached new heights with the opening of the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum in Delaware in 1951. In 1938 the Metropolitan also added to its exhibits the Cloisters, on a lofty site in Fort Tryon Park facing the Hudson River. George Gray Barnard, the sculptor, had begun this collection of architectural elements and sculpture from medieval cloisters, and John D. Rockefeller Jr. presented the park to the city and paid for erecting, furnishing, and endowing the Cloisters. During World War II, a great collection of musical instruments, acquired as early as 1889, was rejuvenated and beautifully displayed at the Metropolitan; in 1946 the Metropolitan absorbed the ten-year-old Museum of Costume Art and installed it as the Costume Institute with sixteen thousand items dating from 1690. Since 1975, the Metropolitan has carried out major expansions of its building leading to what director Philippe de Montebello calls "museums within the Museum." These expansions began with the Temple of Dendur from Egypt (1978); a wing for the Robert Lehman Collection of three thousand paintings, tapestries, and bronzes; enlarging the American Wing (1980); adding the Michael Rockefeller collection of Asia and Oceania (1982); opening the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing for modern artworks (1987); and most recently opening the Henry R. Kravis Wing of sculpture and decorative arts. The museum has been well described as "a sort of cultural coral reef, always growing and changing."<sup>40</sup>

The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston did not have the great wealthy patrons of the Metropolitan but had a host of devoted, well-to-do collectors who worked with knowledgeable curators to build a strong collection. Its Oriental art is the most remarkable of its holdings and is one of the finest collections in the world. Edward S. Morse and Ernest Fenollosa of Salem and Dr. William Sturgis Bigelow of Boston in the

1870s and 1880s journeyed to Japan to collect ceramics, statuary, and paintings that eventually went to the museum, and Chinese, Korean, Indian, and other Near and Far Eastern art found an appreciative home there. The museum also acquired Egyptian materials, mainly through Harvard-Boston archaeological expeditions, and was for a time the leading purchaser of Greek, Roman, and Etruscan antiquities. In addition to a comprehensive collection of European and American paintings, the museum's holdings of textiles, American decorative arts, and prints are of high quality. Its building on the Fenway, opened in 1908, was planned with great care and constituted a noble experiment in trying to separate the more popular display of outstanding masterpieces from study collections accessible to scholars. Today, an effort is underway to expand the museum's footprint, adding an east wing for American art; expanding the education facilities, including increased auditorium space; and renovating the European galleries, visitors' services, and conservation laboratories. In all, the projected price tag is 425 million dollars to be sought from both public and private funds.<sup>41</sup>

What of a National Art Gallery in the United States? James Smithsonian's bequest to the nation in 1846 encompassed both a national collection of art and a research library. As the Smithsonian Institution took shape in Washington these elements of Smithsonian's vision became secondary to its science interests. In the 1920s when Pittsburgh financier and art collector Andrew W. Mellon joined the Coolidge administration as treasury secretary, Mr. Mellon's chagrin at the lack of a national art gallery in Washington inspired a personal crusade to build a gallery comparable to those in European capitals. Over the next two decades, in addition to building his own private collection to the highest artistic standards, Mellon developed and pursued the creation of a national gallery in Washington. The U.S. National Gallery of Art emerged from America's own "princely" collections, those of major industrialists. But, based on Mellon's insistence that no collection, including his own, be maintained as a separate entity within the gallery's collections, the National Gallery of Art, not the Mellon Art Museum, opened in 1941 as a true gift to the nation.<sup>42</sup>

In the 1930s New York City emerged as an important center for modern art with three museums; first, the Museum of Modern Art, familiarly known as MOMA (1929). Founded by Miss Lizzie Bliss, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr., and Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan, it hired a dynamic director, Alfred H. Barr Jr. He sold New Yorkers on French postimpressionism (Cezanne, Seurat, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, and others) and on Bauhaus modernism, bringing together the visual

arts, including architecture, industrial design, film, photography, graphics, and typography. At about the same time, Mrs. Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, assisted by the energetic and witty Mrs. Juliana Force, crowned their efforts to assist America's militantly modern painters by establishing the Whitney Museum of American Art (1930). Still another aspect of modern art—this one glorifying the abstract art of Vasily Kandinsky and others—was served with the opening of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1939), financed by Guggenheim and directed by Hilla Rebay, baroness von Ehrenwiesen. These three museums have been responsible for the enthusiasm of Americans for modern art. Their leadership continues to this day, with the Guggenheim's museums around the world (Soho in New York City, Las Vegas, Bilbao, Berlin, and in the planning stages, Rio de Janeiro) and the Whitney's influential biennial exhibitions that reflect the latest trends in contemporary art. In 2000 MOMA became the sole corporate member of P.S. (Public School) 1 Contemporary Art Center, founded in 1971 in Long Island City, to broaden its opportunities to support contemporary artists. P.S. 1 has rejuvenated the 19th-century school building and its vast spaces provide contemporary artists with intriguing spaces to show, construct, and build their works (in all dimensions, including sound). These three creative institutions remind one of Gertrude Stein's alleged remark that a museum can either be a museum or be modern, but it cannot be both.<sup>43</sup>

Today, many American art museums that focus on modern and contemporary art often are identified as art centers, suggesting that their interest in art may include not only paintings, video projections, and sculpture, but also performances with or without musical elements. An Internet search of "art centers" resulted in more than 105 million replies. However, both the Walker Art Center (1929) in Minneapolis and the Cincinnati Art Center (1939) are two examples of institutions that hold permanent collections. The Cincinnati's new building even includes an "Unmuseum" that provides educational programming aimed at young people from five to twelve years old. Another form of art museum emerging in the 21st century is one that allows for large-scale, even multimedia installations in nontraditional spaces. MASS-MOCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) inhabits more than twenty-five buildings along the streets and industrial alleys of North Adams, Massachusetts, transforming a dying industrial town into an innovative center for the arts (of all stripes). The Dia Foundation was founded in 1974 to play a role among visual arts organizations nationally and internationally by initiating, supporting, presenting,

and preserving art projects, and by serving as a locus for interdisciplinary art and criticism. Dia presents its permanent collection at Dia: Beacon Riggio Galleries, in Beacon, New York, and supports long-term, site-specific projects in venues across the United States.<sup>44</sup>

## Educational Purpose

In addition to the physical expression of national power and dominance, European art museums following the French Revolution served the public through their displays of beauty to "inspire and uplift" the lower classes. Public hours were expected. "The Louvre, once the palace of kings, was reorganized as a museum of the people, to be open to everyone free of charge."<sup>45</sup> The concept of *Liberte, Egalite, and Fraternite* extended to the Louvre's galleries, which were brimming with Napoleon's war booty, physical manifestations of French dominance. As the 19th century progressed, museums gained value not only as storehouses for artistic masterpieces but also as promoters of design exemplars to inform commerce and, in today's terminology, influence "product" development. These attitudes extended across the Atlantic to influence American art museums.

The charter or constitution of nearly every American art museum puts emphasis upon its educational aims—often specialized teaching for artists, craftsmen, and industrial designers but always, general instruction for the public. In the 1870s the contemplation of art was sometimes considered a means of fighting vice and crime by providing "attractive entertainment of an innocent and improving character." Classes for artists and craftsmen and lecture series for the public were established and comprehensive educational programs with emphasis upon co-operation with the public schools soon followed. Henry Watson Kent, appointed assistant secretary of the Metropolitan Museum in 1905, brought order and efficiency to its total operation, but was especially devoted to the educational program. Soon made supervisor of education, Kent organized gallery lectures, a lantern-slide collection, publications including a bulletin, programs for visiting school groups, traveling exhibitions to schools, Saturday morning story hours (sometimes with costumed clowns), and radio programs for disabled children.<sup>46</sup>

The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, in carrying out its aim "of offering instruction in the Fine Arts," promptly opened a School of

Drawing and Painting in 1876, and then its secretary, Benjamin Ives Gilman, starting in 1906, established a lecture room, published a handbook, and appointed a docent who would take groups of ten persons on one-hour interpretive tours every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning. On Thursday afternoons curators and visiting scholars would hold conferences to discuss the collections, and storytelling sessions were provided for disadvantaged children. The nationwide study of art museum programs (1973–1976) that culminated in *The Art Museum as Educator* revealed a wide variety of education programs in art museums all across the United States with strong commitments to children and school students. Almost thirty years later, a national survey of 135 art museums (2003) reveals that more than 80 percent of respondents offer education programs, and plan on increasing them.<sup>47</sup>

## Challenges

### Art Museum Purpose(s)

American art museums have developed differing and sometimes conflicting philosophies about their aims. Benjamin Ives Gilman of Boston insisted that art museums differ from science and history museums in that their collections exist to allow their viewers to experience beauty rather than to convey information. This aesthetic emphasis in a sense meant “art for art’s sake,” not education. John Cotton Dana of Newark had a very different idea—to emphasize art in the everyday activities of the community, to make immigrant and minority groups as well as factory workers proud of their culture and their products, to show how even everyday household wares could be well designed; in short, to define the museum as an instrument for community betterment. One should notice that each of these museum innovators with their differing points of view still advocates for education as a basic museum purpose. Gilman, though insistent that art objects in themselves were aesthetic rather than educational, organized the first museum docents, offered lectures about art and artists, and generally offered programs for the public that today are part of standard offerings for museum education departments. Such discussions continue today: a fine example of the “arguments” and “perspectives” alive in art museums is revealed in *Whose Muse? Art Museums and Public Trust*, published in 2004.

### Art Centers

The spread of community art centers throughout the United States has stretched the definition of the art museum to include institutions that focus on art instruction from crafts to traditional watercolor painting or photography. Many of these community institutions were founded in the 1930s thanks to Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration. In the 1970s these art centers often developed as elements of urban revitalization projects taking over unused buildings such as schools and, in Alexandria, Virginia, a torpedo factory, abandoned since the end of World War II. Organized by volunteer groups interested in art instruction (and frequently led by females), these centers do not generally care for collections, though in addition to classes they do offer public exhibitions based on juried competitions or visiting artists.

### Art and Architecture

In the 19th century many U.S. cities built museums to house their artistic treasures to impress citizens and visitors with the community’s culture. Often these buildings resembled banks, reflecting a commitment to protecting the objects. With the opening of the 21st-century building styles, Victoria Newhouse argues: “Art as entertainment is contested by many together with the related trend toward ever more spectacular museum architecture. While the latter suits some art, it does not suit all art, and in today’s wide variety of museums there is often a lack of harmony between container and contents. The need to coordinate this relationship is all too often ignored—by those commissioning new museums, those renovating and/or expanding existing museums, and those in charge of museum programming.”<sup>48</sup>

### Art Collections

With the collapse of the Soviet empire and increased access to records relating to the Nazi era (1933–1945), holocaust victims (and families of victims) are seeking restoration of art objects once in their possession and expropriated by the Nazis. The American Association of Art Museum Directors reports that “among the 14 million objects held by American art museums in public trust, museum researchers have identified approximately one thousand works, which, though not necessarily stolen by the Nazis, require further study into their

ownership during the Nazi period." This search for "lost" art has challenged museum record-keeping systems, forced art museums to address issues of the provenance of collections, and especially threatened international exhibitions where museums are fearful of confiscation of artworks lacking proper documentation.

Winter 2006 marked a change in attitude within the art museum community toward ancient archaeological collections. The Metropolitan Museum, in concert with the Italian government, crafted an agreement to return to Italy objects long on view at the museum, but subject to skeptical provenance. The *Euponeius krater*, mentioned in chapter 8, will be returned to Italy in 2008 in exchange for long-term loans for other ancient objects. Metropolitan director Philippe de Montebello "has conceded that, on occasion, in the past the museum had received artifacts that may have been obtained in an 'improper' way. . . . We're no longer in an era where you ask no questions, now we look before we buy; the world has changed."<sup>49</sup>

### Deaccessions

"Deaccession" is the term used by the museum profession to describe the reduction of a museum's collections by sale, auction, or trade with other museums. The American Association of Museums' Code of Ethics requires income from collections sales to be restricted to acquisition or direct care of collections within the museum's mission. In the world of art museums, especially those with modern art collections, deaccessioning has created calls for more transparency of a museum's collecting policies. Recently, both the Guggenheim and the Museum of Modern Art have faced public outcries over their disposal of artworks, once featured as primary elements to the collections.<sup>50</sup>

### Blockbusters

Blockbuster exhibitions have become central to the financial support for U.S. art museums, especially those in large urban centers. They not only attract visitors and increase admissions income and museum shop sales, but they also allow for "cross marketing" to increase tourism citywide. For example, the 1996 Cezanne retrospective exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art attracted more than half a million people in three months. It stimulated "package tours to the city" that included discount airfares, hotel rooms, and even restaurant meals. The city's

tourism office estimated that the exhibition had an economic impact on the city of 86.5 million dollars. A larger issue is one of balance for the museum to ensure that these exhibitions reflect the museum's core mission. Philippe de Montebello says, "the competitive hyperactivity of most museum programs is no longer the glow of health but the flush of fever."<sup>51</sup>

### Controversies

Art museum exhibitions reflect interpretive, in addition to financial, choices. How do today's art museums balance scholarship, educational purpose—whether in the Gilman or Dana mode—and public service? In the early 1990s, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art's *The West as America: Interpreting Images of the Frontier* and in 2000 the Brooklyn Museum of Art's *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* each "challenged" visitors and raised questions about the museums' roles as public institutions. Each of these exhibitions created controversy from both their interpretive choices and their sources for funding, affecting future art museum exhibition planning. They leave us with the questions, especially in the United States of "who decides?" along with "who funds?"

### Art That Shocks

In 19th-century Paris, the group of artists that came to be known (and loved) as impressionists challenged the "academy's" standards. Today artists such as Andres Serrano, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Judy Chicago have challenged artistic "norms," offended some exhibition visitors, and more significantly caused public calls for greater controls on the use of federal funds to support art (and artists). Museum director Franklin Robinson reminds us of the role of contemporary artists: "Contemporary artists, by the very nature of what they do, make new things, they push the accepted boundaries of art. They redefine that simple, immensely complex world and challenge our preconceptions of what it means. That process of redefinition is often a shock: what we had come to expect of 'art' and 'artists'—and 'museums'—is sometimes turned on its head. A museum that seemed to be a bastion of tradition, a safe haven, a protector and preserver of the past, suddenly becomes a proponent of the new and the radical."<sup>52</sup>

## Evaluation

How do art museums measure their success? Is it by attendance numbers, sales at their gift shops, or the amount of public funds contributed to art museums? Michael Kimmelman in the *New York Times* suggests: "The question should not be how many people visit museums, but how valuable are their visits? . . . [M]useums are equal opportunity elitists. But museums have not yet learned how to measure precisely the *quality* of the experience they offer." Measuring success is not just a task for professional evaluators, but of concern to directors and boards of trustees as they create exhibitions, develop programs, and seek funding.<sup>53</sup>

*difficulties in evaluation of art organizations*

## Notes

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