Fundación Arte y Mecenazgo

CÍRCULO ARTE Y MECENAZGO

THE BIRTH OF THE METROPOLITAN: A CASE OF PARTHENOGENESIS

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The Birth of the Metropolitan: a case of Parthenogenesis

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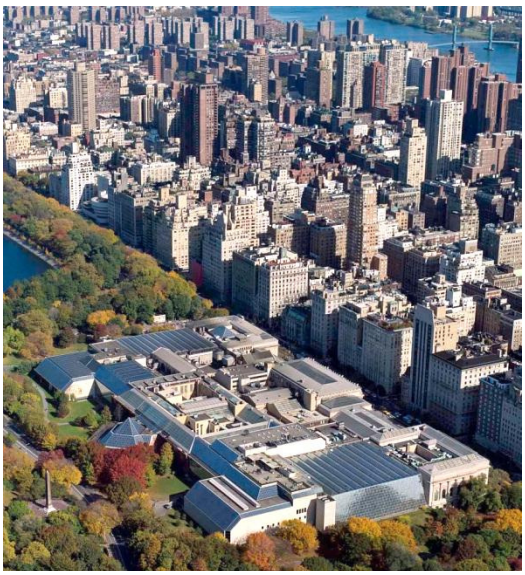
In this conference I will concentrate on the role of the Metropolitan based on the purposes of the Fundación Arte y Mecenazgo. Therefore I will speak about collectionism and patronage, which remain the main motors behind the growth of the Metropolitan, from the beginning up until the present day.

The Metropolitan was born in 1869 when a group of public spirited men -I say men because there were no women at the time in those positions- met to discuss establishing a museum of art. There were no collections to nationalize, as happened in so many places in Europe, there were no palaces to convert into museums, and in the arts there was no solid tradition upon which to build. The result being there was no munificent patron to count upon; there was neither a king nor a prince, and certainly there was no state interested in a museum. In the end this proved to be a good thing as the museum and its management were not beholden to a single patron, a single will, or if you prefer, to a single whim or a single caprice. The Met was born, essentially, of an idea and an ideal. And as it turned out a large number of donors with a level of public spiritedness that one could equate, if you will, with the power of a conquering army, or with the power of pillaging crusaders, or revolutionary "spoliation". Such was the power of public spiritedness at the Met.



Metropolitan Museum of Art, Nueva York

It was the time of the Civil War, which had ended in 1865. The time of the gilded age; a sweet and sour moment with so many great fortunes being built in a more or less ethical manner. The fortunes grew out of the rail road, banking, oil, tobacco… Important family names rose: the Carnegie's, the Mellon's, the Frick's, the Rockefeller's and so forth; so a very large number of extremely wealthy people. In terms of collecting, with the exception of two: Jarves and

Bryan, who collected Early Renaissance pictures; there were essentially no collectors, except of native art. By native art I don't mean Indian art but the Hudson River School of American painters. There were almost no collectors of European art, so among the key reasons to create a museum, was to offer models for the native painters and sculptors to study. If you recall, when the Louvre was created, in 1793, one of the primary reasons was to encourage artists by providing great works of art to study.

New York in 1865

Briefly, and historically, the history of museums is of course a history of collections. As first are collections and then they become museums when they are opened to the public and organized for maximum clarity. Initially access is very limited, restricted to fellow princes and artists; a very small elite. One must not forget that until the end of the XVIII century most people were illiterate.

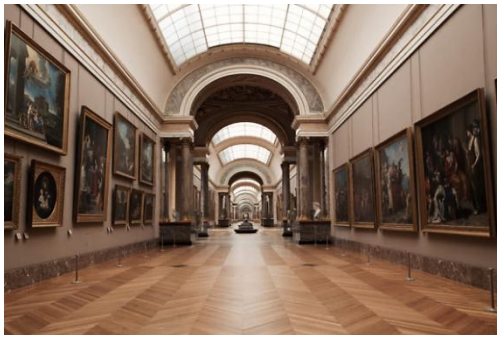
One important museological fact, that has to do with patronage and collectionism, occurs at the Palazzo Pitti and the Uffizi Gallery, when in 1737 Maria Luisa of Medici bequeaths her entire collection to the city of Florence. She could have divided it amongst the heirs but did not. She wanted to keep the

collection together, out of a civic sense of duty which parallels what happened later in New York.

Uffizzi, Florence

Palazzo Pitti, Florence

The Louvre is the truly national, major, encyclopedic museum, or so it claims to be. Of course it is not because Asian art is at the Musée Guimet. It is, however, an important museum of European art, and of antiquities including not only Greek and Roman art but also Egyptian art. Unlike the Prado in Madrid, for example, which has the collections of the kings of Spain, primarily of Philip the Second and Philip the Fourth, so there were no spoliations in the end, for royalty gave the collections in Spain; in France, as you know, it cost the rulers their heads for the collections to enter the Louvre. However, many museums in Europe copied the Grand Gallery of the Louvre, including the Prado which has its own Grand Gallery too.



Musée du Louvre, Paris

Doria Pamphili, Roma

The nineteenth century is the time of the establishment of museums. Museums are born both conceptually and physically. Great architects, such as Schinckel in the Altes Museum leave their landmarks. In Spain as a result of, shall we say

delicately, the Napoleonic Wars, we assisted to the birth of the Prado. In Germany the Berlin Museums are established along didactic lines.

Museo del Prado, Madrid

Altes Museum, Berlin

Oddly enough, England did not have a National Gallery until quite late, 1831 to be precise. The result of which is that many great collections such as that of the great art collector, and Prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, were sold to Catharine the Great. But what is interesting is how strong was national pride in the museum. For a country as rich as England it was considered a national crime not to have a National Gallery. In New York, in 1865, people fell the same way. Not to have a museum was a national crime.

National Gallery, London

The interesting thing was the language that was used. This is the language that was used in England:

"*Truly, for a country with such power and wealth as England, to not have an Art Museum is a national crime.*"- Anonymous

This is the language that was used in New York:

"If all countries in Europe*, even third rank ones, can have museums, surely the richest country in the world should have at least one*"- *William Cullen Bryant 1870*

It is amazing how quickly after Central Park was created (which makes the city of New York habitable) the Metropolitan nestled itself on the edge of the park. It is now nearly 200.000 m² filled with outstanding works of art.

The whole rhetoric around the time of the creation of the Met is very interesting. I have highlighted a couple of them: investment and vice. After the civil war, the

city of New York became a nest of corruption. And in a certain sense the museum of art was meant to be not only for the education of artist, but also a kind of redemption for society was to have a moral effect on people, as many at the time said the working man would become a better man as a result of seeing works of art.

"La ciudad de América que sea la primera en tener una gran galería de arte se convertirá en la Florencia de este continente, logrando así conseguir la reputación y el dinero suficiente para convencer a quienes calculan sus finanzas con minuciosidad, que no hay mejor inversión." - Jarves, 1864

"*El crecimiento explosivo de la población en una ciudad trae vicios. El museo debe resistir las tentaciones proporcionando alternativas de entretenimiento que sean de carácter inocente y enriquecedor".* - W. C. Bryant

A wonderful language arises, as is portrayed here in the words of Joseph H. Choate, in nineteenth century florid language:

"*Think of it, ye millionaires of many markets -what glory may yet be yours, if you only listen to our advice, to convert pork into porcelain, grain and produce in to priceless pottery, the rude ore of commerce into sculptured marble, and railroad shares and mining stocks--things which perish without the using, and which in the next financial panic shall surely shrivel like parched scrolls- into the glorified canvas of the world's masters, that shall adorn these walls for centuries. The race of Wall Street is to hunt the philosopher's stone, to convert all baser things into gold, which is but dross; but ours is the higher ambition to convert your useless gold into things of living beauty that shall be a joy to a whole people for a thousand years.*" - Joseph H. Choate

It was, indeed, enormously effective because the message of transforming the gold into great works of art occurred at an astounding speed. With a great many people receiving nothing in exchange, except a sense of civic and national pride. Already New Yorkers considered themselves the cultural capital of America and they continue to do so.

I indicated that initially collectors in America collected mostly American works. One of the Met's founders, William Blodgett was one of the few to collect old masters and he facilitated this purchase by the Met in 1871.

Jordaens

Van Dyck

These filled the first rented house in downtown Manhattan, very similar to the first tiny house of the National Gallery in London. There are interesting similarities in the growth of both institutions at either side of the Atlantic.

Metropolitan's first rented Building, 1872

First building London's National Gallery

So a few works of art enter, and people like Henry James, the American writer, note that the collection is interesting but there are no master pieces.

"*Certainly one cannot describe the collection of art as brilliant, for it has no examples of top quality art of a great genius, one may say, however, that within its limits, the unity and continuity fail not to be a source of income for European students who have been denied opportunities."* -Henry James 1972

Unlike Blodgett, most Americans tend to collect academic painters such as Cabanel or Bouguereau. One of the biggest gifts of such works came from Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, the heiress of the Lorillard family.

Cabanel, *The Birth of Venus*

Cabanel, *Catherine Llorilard Wolfe*,1876

Certainly the most astute collector in the early years was the financier Henry Marquand, who left a number of fabulous pictures to the Met including one of its five paintings by Vermeer. The Met has five paintings by him, the Frik collection in New York has three more paintings by Vermeer, which means that with a total of 8, New York City has almost 20% of his work, as only 35 pictures are attributed to him. But what is important about the gift of Henry Marquand, which I have also highlighted in the quote, is: "*Without any conditions*".

"*I am convinced that this works will be of better use for the public than if they were in private hands, therefore I offer them to the Metropolitan* ***without any conditions.***"- Henry Marquand

The gift was utterly free; it was given to the museum to do what it wished. It could be hanged wherever. His name did not need to be emblazoned in the gallery. It was one of the most generous and independent gifts in the history of the museums.

Vermeer, *Woman with a Water Jug,* Gift of Henry Marquand, 1889

Some collectors were really quite advanced in their taste. One was Theodore M. Davis, who gave the Met the first two Manet's ever to enter a public museum.

Manet. Gifts in 1889 of Theodore Davis.

Before that, French state had refused the offer of the painter Caillebotte, a collection of impressionists. So those were the first two Manet's to enter the collection. But, while the Metropolitan accepted them, the Metropolitan was not really ready for them. This is what the catalogue said:

"*Manet is an eccentric realist of arguable achievements, founder of the impressionist school*" –Metropolitan Catalogue, 1903

So, Mr. Davis might have been offended, but it was too late, he had already given the paintings and signed the deed of gift.

The other important event in the History of the Metropolitan was the gift of a gentleman by the name of Jacob Rogers. And here what is important is that this is a gift which was restricted. But it was restricted to how museums want all gifts to be restricted, which is acquisitions of works of art. This is what museums are for: they are containers, containers for works of art. One can build lots of buildings, wanting people to come, but if one doesn't have a great collection it cannot be a great museum.

"Los ingresos del fondo sólo deben ser usados para la adquisición de obras de arte de gran interés para el museo. La base de dicho fondo no debe ser usado, disminuido o perjudicado con cualquier objetivo en absoluto". – Jacob Rogers

The six million dollars that Rogers gave in 1903, in nominal terms, and with interest are equivalent to well over 100 million today. But the other interesting lesson here, which should be headed by all who seek private donors, is that Mr. Rogers was somebody totally unknown to the Met, to the director and to the trustees. Once a year, he would call upon the director (this is very early in 1903) who thank God, agreed to meet him. He would come in, give him a check and walk out. He did this for years. And then one day, his will was opened and there was this great gift. Clearly it is important to be courteous to everyone if you are in the business of fund raising or soliciting gifts.

A few of the results of the Rogers' gift are major purchases. I will show you two only because they are interesting from another point of view. One is a Renoir, the other is a Manet.

Renoir, *Mme Charpentier*, 1878.
Purchased in 1907.

Monet, *Terrasse à Sainte-Adresse*, 1867.
Purchased in 1967.

This is because the Met, which owns about four hundred pictures -pretty good ones- by impressionists and post-impressionists, acquired by purchase fewer than a half a dozen in its entire history. One other is a Bazille bought a few years ago. Otherwise, all of the impressionist or post-impressionists in the Met are gifts or bequests. Overall 90% of the collections of the Met are gifts or bequests, not curatorial purchases.

Then comes a major event, in 1917, the ability to deduct certain value from tax. This had a larger influence than one would imagine. I say this because I have heard too many people say how generous Americans are. They are indeed generous, but if you were to take away the tax deductions, I can assure you that the number of gifts would fall like a stone. I know this for a fact, because a few years ago the tax deduction was cut for a time, and the number of gifts chopped sharply. So the connection of what the government has to do to encourage gifts is intimately related to its fiscal policy.

As the collection grew, so did the building. Another event which is worth noting, due to its deeper significance than it may seem, is the change of the steps from how they were in 1969 -when I was young curator at the museum- to the steps in 1970, when my predecessor, Tom Hoving, opened them up, and turned them into splayed steps.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1871

Metropolitan
Museum of Art, 2015

This is not just an architectural statement; it is an important social statement. It means "*acogida*". It means that you are welcoming people to the museum, that you are open. It's like the Jansonists Christ versus the regular Catholic Christ; the first one is restrictive and has his arms pointing upwards in a narrow "v", whilst the latter is wide open and welcoming.

1969

1970

The next important thing is where the works came from, which naturally was Europe. There were complains that people like J.P. Morgan were using the almighty dollar to despoil Europe of all of its treasures. And so there were many cartoons attacking Morgan, portraying him as a greedy man.

Morgan buying for the Met, a German view.

In order to defend themselves, against such attacks, one of the founders of the Met, Professor Comfort, wrote:

"*The artist is cosmopolitan. He belongs to an era. He belongs to no nation. A great artist is a citizen of the world, and everyone has the right to see him as his countryman. Homer is the poet, not only for the Greeks, but of all history and all nations. Beethoven is a musician, not of Germany, but of all countries in the world.*" - Professor George Comfort

This view could be used to counter today's issue of national patrimony and restitution. It doesn't affect you in Spain so much. But it is relevant in the US and much of Western Europe that are targeted by THE source countries, those rich in archeological sites, for the return of many antiquities. The Met's return of the Greek vase, the Euphronius Crater to Italy is one such restitution.

Euphronios crater and other vases, 5th c BC, returned to Rome

PdeM with Euphronios crater, chased by the carabinieri, 2005

I will say, in the light of the events in Iraq a few days ago, that I think one should be grateful for the imperialist practices of museums in Europe. If there are great Assyrian works of art left to see in the British Museum, the Louvre, or the Met, it's because they were taken out of their country of origin, and principally out of the region of Nineveh or Mosul.

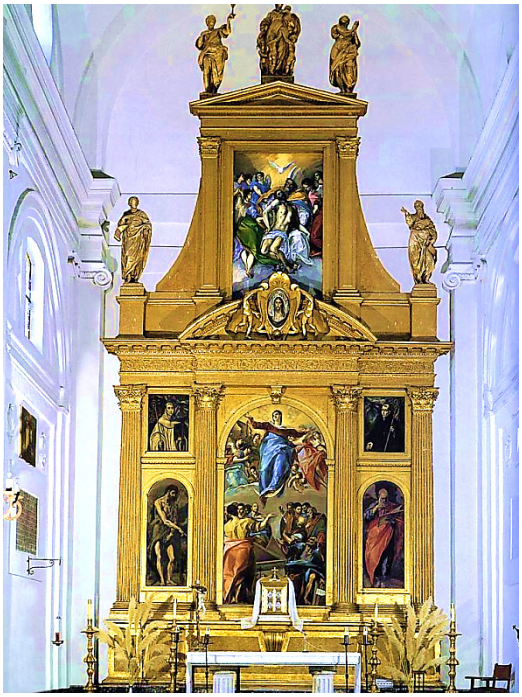
In the early XX century, amongst the great collectors was Benjamin Altman. He left his substantial collection with conditions, the main one being that it was exposed together. However it is a very heteroclitic collection, consisting of Italian as well as Dutch pictures and sculptures, is difficult to show together without interrupting the flow of the galleries. Fortunately we were able to negotiate with the Altman Foundation for the collection to be commingled with the rest of the collection.

Benjamin Altman collection on 5th Avenue

Another great collection, that includes works from all periods, is the Havemeyer Collection, which was left, this time, with no conditions which is fortunate as there are works as disparate as Islamic Tiles, Rembrandt, Degas and El Greco. As was the case throughout Europe earlier on with, for example, Velázquez, as curator to Philip IV, the Havemeyer had the painter Marie Cassat as their advisor. She advised Mrs. Havemeyer to buy "The Great Assumption" by "El Greco", which was part of the great "*retablo*" (altarpiece) in Toledo now replaced by copies. The picture, however, is in the Art Institute of Chicago, because Mrs. Havemeyer's apartment's ceiling was little bit too low. So it didn't

make it into the Metropolitan because New York City's apartments have very low ceilings.

El Greco, *The Great Assumption*, in AIC



Santo Domingo el Antiguo, Toledo

Robert Lehman and his father Philip also created a great collection. You can see how it was presented on 54th Street in the photo below, with the sofas in the middle. Unlike the Havemeyer he wanted his collection kept together, and it is in a separate wing of the museum, towards central park. Of course in a museum setting you have to remove the sofas, and you have to do things a little more professionally, but it still maintained the flavor, and Mr. Lehman would not complain if he saw the collection as it is today.

Robert Lehman Collection on 54th street

Robert Lehman Collection in the Met

On the other hand there is a problem with a gift that is as restricted as that of Lehman's. Part of the Lehman gift is a picture by Sassetta, which is part of a single altarpiece. In the paintings galleries of the Met on the 2nd floor, there is another picture which is part of the same altarpiece. In a rational museum they would be shown together. At the Met they are in two different parts of the

museum because of donor restriction. So we always encourage donors not to have many restrictions on their gifts.

Giovanni di Paolo, predellas from the same altarpiece. On the left, bought in 1906; on the right, Lehman, 1975.

Lehman is not the only such example at the Met. The Linsky Collection, also has to be shown as a unit, with the result that this time, a Crivelli altarpiece is dismembered and shown in 2 parts of the museum. Also, you may think, visiting the Metropolitan paintings collection, that we have no "*bodegones*" (still live) by important Spanish painters. But yes we do, we have a very fine large "*bodegón*" in the Linsky Collection, one floor down from the main paintings galleries. So restrictions in collections are not in the public interest.

Purchased in 1905 | Linsky Collection | Purchased in 1905

Crivelli poliptico, Metropolitan Museum

Luis Meléndez, *La merienda*, 1771. Linsky Collection.

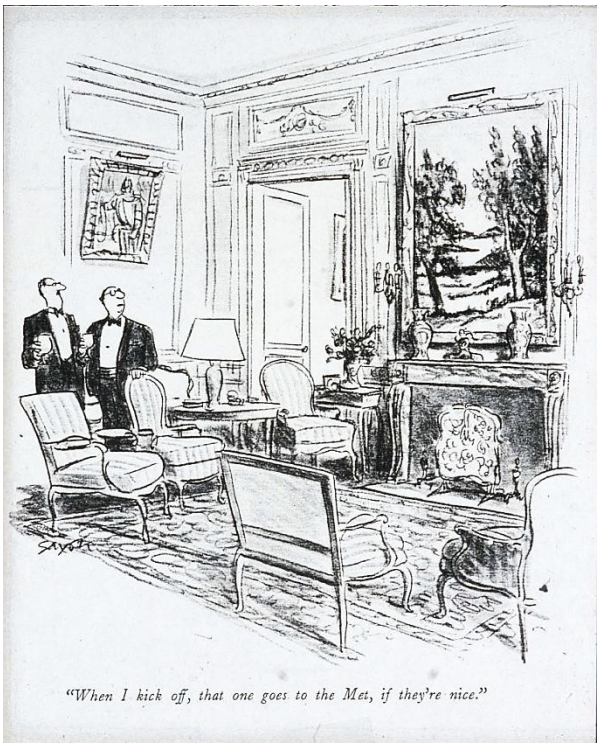
Closer to our time, a collection with few restrictions and one of the greatest, was donated by one of the most wonderful ladies one can ever meet. She is still alive, age 95. She is Mrs. Jayne Wrightsman, who gave all of those wonderful 18th Century French rooms, those typical American period rooms, where the museum recreates what America in a sense lacks, country houses and "*chateaux*". The only restriction, and it is not a problematic one, is that the pictures cannot be lent.

Charles and Jayne Wrightsman Collection

J L David, *Lavoisier and his Wife*, 1788.

From Palais Paar, Vienna.

A curator is an Art Historian, but he is also charged with collector courtship. He, or she, must be perpetually courteous, kind and solicitous of people with collections. The acquisition of collections may well be one of the reasons why good curators get fat. They have meal, after meal, courting collectors until someday the collection ends up at the museum hopefully.



"When I kick off, that one goes to the Met, if they're nice"

I should mention here that there was a time in the sixties and seventies, when museums were the prime acquisitors of works of art. When "Juan de Pareja", or, "Aristotle contemplating the bust of Homer" came up for sale, all of the speculation was around which museum was going to buy it. Would it be the Louvre, or The National Gallery, or Cleveland –which was a very rich museum- or the Met? Today, if these pictures were in the market, one would ask: who is the hedge fund manager who would buy it? Or who is the Chinese or the Emirati who would buy it? Now museums are practically out of that market, which is why they are so dependent on public-spirited collectors.

Velázquez, *Juan de Pareja*

Rembrandt, *Aristotle contemplating the bust of Homer.*

The "Madonna with child" painted by Duccio, was the last major acquisition of my Directorship. This should give you an idea of some of the flexibility that American museums have, which they owe to not being state institutions, answering only to a board of trustees with whom the Director establishes a culture of trust. There were several unrestricted funds that could be used for different fields: Egyptian, Roman, Greek, drawings, prints, European paintings, American… As an encyclopedic museum, we have to buy in all fields. In this one case I said to the "Met's" curators in all eighteen departments, that we were going to buy this picture because it was the last Duccio that could ever come in the market. It is not part of a large altarpiece, it is an independent picture, and it has always been considered one of his finest pictures. Also the Louvre, the only other major museum without a Duccio, was after it. So we made a substantial offer, over 40 million. All the curators of the Met applauded the decision. They thought it was an outstanding work of art, they understood, and were happy for the institution.



Duccio, *Madonna and child*, ca 1300 purchased in 2004

Some of you may have known Jack and Natasha Gelman. They were highly caloric for me. There were lots of meals, wonderful meals, they were lovely people. As you know he was the owner of a great modern collection, which the Met desired very much, and so it proved a long courtship. They did give with a condition, that all the work should be shown together, but I insisted that they include the option that some pictures could be moved for short periods to other galleries to fit into a needed narrative.

Jacques and Natasha Gelman

Gelman Collection at Met, 1986

One of my longest courtship was with ambassador and Mrs. Annenberg. Here you can see the interior of their house in California, and the galleries as they were shown.

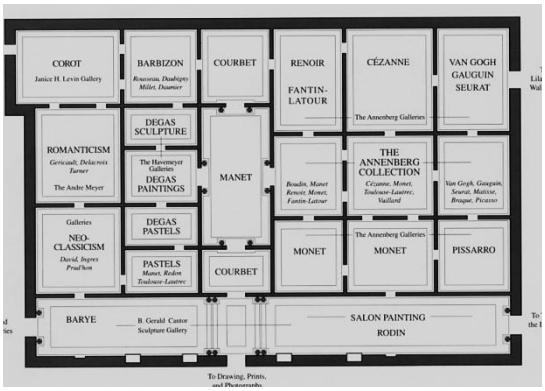
Walter and Lee Annenberg

Annenberg Collection in Sunnylands, California

Here too there was the condition that the collection be kept together, but it was an instance that didn't hamper the presentation very much, as the collection is installed in the midst of the Met's Impressionist collection. And aside from the name of the gallery wall and the labels one is hardly aware that 3 rooms are devoted to a single collection.

Annenberg Colelction at Metropolitan

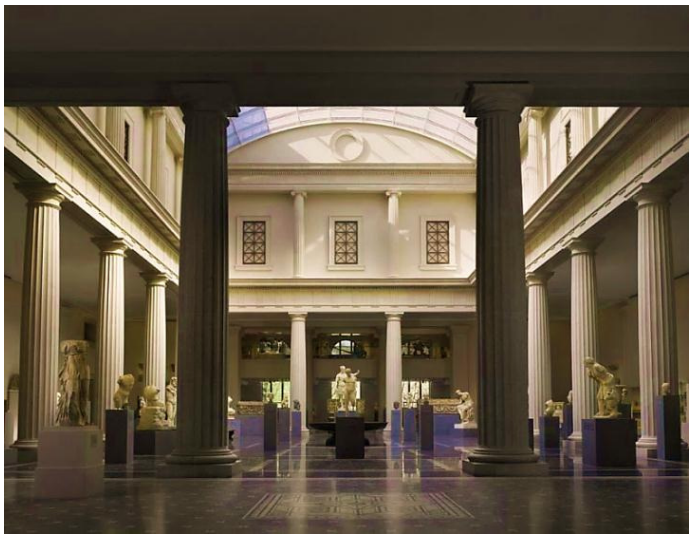
However, the Annenberg were courted by other museums so we went all out to impress them with the advantages of the Met. We build an enormous model which brought to their house in California. Each of their pictures was hang to scale in the model. There is nothing like seeing something in three dimension, physical, not digital, but a real thing. It worked, we got the collection. Mr. Annenberg's accompanied the gift with this statement: "The reason why I give it to the Metropolitan is that I want strength to strength". So the only change in the physical nature of the galleries is that the central one, which is oval, and was based on the Frik Collection, didn't work architecturally for us, so it ended up being a rectangular gallery. However, that proved not to be a big problem.



Model of new galleries

Frick Collection

Finally, I want to mention Shelby White again, who was a great collector of antiquities along with her husband Leon Levy. This time the issue was money, funds we would use to build he Greek and Roman Court. Since a gift made over several years is, in the end, worth less than the first stated amount, we agreed on a smaller sum, given all at once, for the Museum to use and invest. We also re-defined "perpetuity" to the 75 years- this then allows for raising new funds in the future for necessary renovations- those were precedents that are now increasingly followed in America.



Leon Levy and Shelby White Court

What do you get in exchange for a gift aside from a tax deduction? You get credit not only on labels but on all printed materials such as catalogues. In the US at least you can also make your gift "in honor of someone".

Then there is the whole issue of satisfaction. Have you ever seen anybody more satisfied, happier, at having given a great gift than Leonard Lauder in this photograph? Many of you had the pleasure of hearing him speak at the Fundación Arte y Mecenazgo in Madrid two years ago, right after giving more than eighty cubist pictures to the Met. To me this photograph exemplifies the wonderful relationship between donor and institution.

Leonard Lauder at the Metropolitan Museum

Thank you very much.

[CaixaForum Barcelona and Madrid, March 2nd and 3th 2015]

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO

Director Emeritus, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Fiske Kimball Professor, Institute of Fine Arts, NYU

In 2008, Philippe de Montebello retired after 31 years as the longest-serving director in the Metropolitan Museum's 140-year-long history.

In 2008 the curators of the Metropolitan paid homage to Mr. de Montebello by mounting a tribute exhibition of some 300 works that entered the collections during his tenure, The Philippe de Montebello Years: Curators Celebrate Three Decades of Acquisitions.

Following his retirement, Mr. de Montebello became the first scholar in residence at the Prado Museum in Madrid, and he launched a new academic career as Professor in the History and Culture of Museums at the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University;

Mr.de Montebello is the television co-host of the Emmy Award winning WNET/PBS weekly series NYCArts.

In 2008 Mr. de Montebello was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris for a 4 year term and in 2012 he was elected Honorary Trustee of the Prado Museum in Madrid.

In 2012 he was elected to the French Académie des Beaux Arts.

Mr. de Montebello was born in Paris and after the baccalauréat he attended Harvard College and the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU. With the exception of four years as director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, he has spent his entire career at the Metropolitan, first as curator in the Department of European Paintings and later as the Museum's Chief Curator and then, from 1977 until 2008 as its Director.

In 2003 President G.W. Bush awarded Mr. de Montebello the National Medal of the Arts and in 2009, President Barack Obama awarded him the National Medal of the Humanities. Mr. de Montebello is only the fourth person to have received both these awards.

Mr. de Montebello is an Officier de la Légion d'Honneur and among others, he has an honorary degree from Harvard University.

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