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Discovering the Trecento: American Mayericks in the market.

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Who, where, why, and why not?

A quick survey of American collections reveals how few fourteenth-century works migrated across the Atlantic, even after the rediscovery of the "primitives". While sales to Bode in Berlin, Courajod in Paris, and Robinson and Eastlake in England were robust, Americans lagged far behind. Why is that? Taking cues from the 1996 exhibition catalogue about patterns of collecting medieval art in America, I will explore the question of American ambivalence toward art in general, and toward the Middle Ages in particular.

The nineteenth century witnessed an increasing proliferation of Italian «Primitives» available for sale to collectors. Already during the first half of the century some individuals took advantage of the wealth of early Italian art «dumped» on the market after the upheavals of the Napoleonic wars¹. In addition, beginning around the middle of the century, the economic changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, which impelled many among the impoverished nobility to sell portions of their family patrimony, and the destruction of historic centers due to urban renewal during the Risorgimento and its aftermath, led to the enormous availability of trecento and quattrocento works of art and artifacts. Before long, shrewd dealers, such as Stefano Bardini, began promoting the sale of early Renaissance art and artifacts, finding, restoring and marketing authentic, altered, and even fake objects to a ready foreign market². Throughout the second half of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, Anglo-American visitors and expatriates in Italy found the landscape, people and places enchanting (and its prices for accommodations and services incredibly cheap), and came to see the Tuscan Renaissance as embodying a golden age. But while sales to Bode in Berlin, Couraiod in Paris, and Robinson and Eastlake in England were robust, sales to Americans, especially of fourteenth-century art, lagged far behind.

What were the factors that contributed to the reluctance of American collectors to embrace this developing interest in early Italian art? In fact, Americans were decidedly ambivalent not only toward early Renaissance art but toward

European art in general³. If Henry Cole, director of the South Kensington Museum, could comment in 1867 that he hoped evening openings of public museums would serve as «a powerful antidote to the gin palace», Americans remained wary of the potentially harmful effect of art on public morals. This was a legacy of Puritan prejudice, which also resulted in violent anti-Catholicism (see figs. 1, 2), and thus most art closely connected with it. Catholics were held to be hopelessly superstitious and bound by theatrical and irrational ritual that blinded them to the basic message of Christ⁴, characteristics, it was felt, that were reflected in their art. Moreover, Americans tended to mistrust an art originating from periods not only of dominant Catholicism and papal power, but of feudal political systems—so contrary to the democratic ideals of the nation they were attempting to forge. Related to this were powerful anti-immigration sentiments, largely directed against the Catholic Irish, who were—in the eyes of natives—endemically impoverished, uneducated, crude, and even criminal. Also working against an appreciation of early Italian art was a vision of "progress", one that embedded the Trecento in the dark ages from which only later Renaissance, and especially cinquecento works had emerged. (This attitude was shared by some Europeans: Charles Eastlake in 1857 arguing to the trustees of the National Gallery in London for the acquisition of a painting by Margaritone d'Arezzo [fig. 3], apologized for its lack of artistic merit: «The unsightly specimen of Maragaritone and the earliest Tuscan painters were selected solely for their historical importance, and as showing the true beginnings from which, through nearly two centuries and a half, Italian art slowly advanced to the period of Raphael and his contemporaries)»⁵. Finally, in addition to anti-Catholic prejudice, mistrust of Europeans and their feudal history, and the limiting concept of "progress" in art, it was believed, more generally, that America had to support its own contemporary artists rather than imported Old Masters. A writer in the magazine *The Crayon*, reviewing James Jackson Jarves' book, *Art* Hints, insisted that "Art is not to be carried to America at all, but if genuine, must spring up in it, fed by the manifestations of Beauty in Nature itself [...] without reference to any previous Art. We do not believe that all the pictures in Europe ever made an artist one whit greater». The anonymous writer continued, «The study of the grand galleries has made shallow critics and mannered artists, and always will do so»⁶. Not surprisingly, from a European point of view—and there was some truth to this—Americans were provincial, culturally undeveloped, and burdened by quite limited education, at least when it came to European history and art. But this was soon to change.

Despite these prevailing attitudes, there were a few bold collectors who went against the tide of American taste. This paper will discuss three mavericks of the

mid- to late nineteenth century and two of the early twentieth century: Thomas Jefferson Bryan (1802-70), James Jackson Jarves (1818-88), and Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924), followed by John G. Johnson (1841-1917) and Helen Clay Frick (1888-1984), focusing only on some of her earliest acquisitions. Gardner's purchases were made with the help of Bernard Berenson (1865-1959) while Jarves, Gardner and Berenson himself were influenced by Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908), the first art history professor in the United States, who taught at Harvard University. These individuals set the stage for the major twentieth-century collectors, so that today the United States has outstanding trecento works of art in almost every major museum.

Before turning our attention to this group of American pioneers of taste, it is worth commenting that amidst the widespread disdain for or total disregard of fourteenth-century Italian art even in Europe during the early nineteenth century (which privileged classical and High Renaissance art to the exclusion of any other), there were a few British and European writers, thinkers, collectors and artists who found themselves drawn to Early Italian paintings—perhaps in part because they were available and they were inexpensive! This small group of innovative commentators and collectors include William Roscoe (1753-1831), who actually owned a number of «Primitives» (including Simone Martini's Christ in the *Temple*)⁷, Alexis-François Artaud de Montor (historian, and translator of Dante) (1772-1849), who acquired an extensive collection of twelfth- to fifteenth-century paintings very cheaply during the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars⁸, and Edward Solly (1776-1844), who purchased works ranging from Byzantine to Gothic and trecento-quattrocento paintings: Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, Lippo Memmi, Botticelli, Fra Filippo and Filippino Lippi and others9. Another early collector was William Young Ottley (1771-1836), who in 1823 expressed the belief that Giotto has never been surpassed¹⁰. Other people who responded positively to the «primitive» painters early on were Lady Maria Graham Calcott (1785-1842), who began a monograph on the Arena Chapel in 1833 illustrated by her husband¹¹, and the sculptor and draughtsman John Flaxman (1755-1826), who "discovered" Cimabue, Giotto, Orcagna and others¹². Another important early collector was Alexis François Rio (1797-1874), author of a historical study, The Poetry of Christian Art, which influenced John Ruskin (1785-1864), Lord Lindsey (1812-80) and Anna Jameson (1794-1860)¹³. These individuals heralded the re-evaluation of early Italian paintings not only by the first European, but also the first American collectors who, in turn, left a legacy that opened the eyes of the major twentieth-century art historians, connoisseurs, collectors and curators.

The prevailing taste among Americans of the period is reflected in some

typical responses to early Italian paintings seen in Europe or brought to the United States by the earliest collectors of gold ground paintings. References to Giotto's immediate predecessors called their figures mere *«ligneous daubs»*¹⁴. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his notes of 1858 while in Italy wrote: «Cimabue and Giotto might certainly be dismissed, henceforth and forever, without any detriment to the cause of good art.» Elsewhere he wrote regarding a Madonna by Cimabue, «[...] it would relieve my mind and spirit if the picture were borne out of the church [a mistaken reference to the carrying of Duccio's *Maestà* into Siena Cathedral] [...] and reverently burnt»¹⁵.

Yet, our pioneering collectors decidedly went against the tide - not always for reasons with which we would agree today. Thomas Jefferson Bryan (fig. 4) returned to the United States after thirty years in Europe, having purchased 230 paintings, many of them from Artaud de Montor, the latter having presciently swooped up hordes of paintings left to languish after the Napoleonic wars¹⁶. To both Artaud and Bryan, the works were of interest because they illustrated the rise and progress of the great schools of painting. Their importance, thus, was purely historical, not aesthetic. And although Bryan offered his paintings as donations to his native city of Philadelphia for a national museum, the offer was rejected. The works were then exhibited to the public in 1852 in his New York house. Among the paintings displayed there was a Nardo di Cione (which he believed was by Guido da Siena; fig. 5). In his catalogue Bryan refers to Guido and to Cimabue as «the first to raise the art of painting from the depths to which it sunk in the dark ages»¹⁷. The contents of the exhibition were finally donated to the New York Historical Society in 1864 and the rest of his collection bequeathed upon his death; there they languished in obscurity and were eventually auctioned off, some as late as 1995¹⁸.

A key player in the gradual changes that developed in the artistic and cultural taste of Americans was Charles Eliot Norton (fig. 6). Norton had visited Paris in 1850 and then settled in Florence in 1852. In 1857 he visited the Art-Treasures Exhibition in Manchester, England, where among Italian, Dutch, Flemish and British paintings, were shown quite a number of fourteenth-century Italian gold ground paintings. Elizabeth Pergam has demonstrated how transformational that exhibit was not only for the British public but also for American visitors. A surprising number of Italian paintings exhibited in Manchester ended up in American collections, although initially few were of the fourteenth century¹⁹. Norton, in fact, published a review of the exhibition in the first issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*²⁰.

Norton was probably the most influential American thinker regarding the role of art in society during the second half of the nineteenth century. A failed but

reasonably well-to-do businessman, during trips to India and Europe he embarked on a guest to educate himself in the cultural traditions that Americans in general (and certainly the Boston mercantile and Brahmin class to which he belonged) sorely lacked. An avid reader, a philologist, a translator of Dante (there was a Dante cult in the United States well before anything else dating to the Trecento was valued), and highly sensitive to visual stimulation, Norton gradually increased his experience with and knowledge of Italian art, in particular painting. But his initial response to Giotto when he first visited the Arena Chapel was lukewarm, hardly a notch above that of the American public regarding early Italian painting, a response probably connected to his anti-Catholic sentiments. He wrote once that «priests, the princes and the churches [in Rome] all alike, [are] untouched by the sacred genius of the place», and in an outburst of temper he confided to James Russell Lowell that he could «roast a Franciscan with pleasure and it would need only a tolerable opportunity to make me stab a Cardinal in the dark»²¹. To him the Church was un-American. His lectures at Harvard, however, were to have an enormous impact on some of the attendees, which first included James Jackson Jarves, and later Bernard Berenson and Isabella Stewart Gardner, who may even have met the young Berenson in the lecture hall.

The most important American collector of mid-century, as it turned out, was James Jackson Jarves (fig. 7), who amassed a substantial group of early Italian paintings (figs 8-11)²². Under the influence of John Ruskin and especially of Norton, Jarves slowly educated himself and wrote extensively about his "adventures" in his search for Italian paintings. But he found himself facing a challenge: How to make Catholic art appealing to a predominantly Protestant audience? Jarves's extensive writings promoted the idea that the republic of late medieval Florence could serve as a source of inspiration for the United States, and the civic patronage of the republic were models to be followed by contemporary Americans. He emphasized a generic religious sentiment purified of Catholic ritual, and he denied or downplayed the ruling class's role in art patronage in republican Florence. In Art Studies (1861)²³ Jarves argued that while Catholicism is «elaborated priestcraft», nevertheless «gold still shines through». And he made a very relevant analogy: «As the mud of California rivers conceals the rich treasures imbedded in it, here and there sparkling into light, so do the artifices and audacities of papacy [bring to light] the Word brought by Jesus into the world»²⁴. He tried in every way to translate the patronage and achievements of Florentines of the Renaissance into analogous potential characteristics of Americans: In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, he wrote, «Florence was a thoroughly earnest, democratic commonwealth, the political life blood of which was interpenetrated with the

spirit of labor and trade; thrifty and parsimonious in private, but lavish beyond modern conceptions, upon art [...]»²⁵. Contemporary merchant princes should model themselves on those of the Renaissance and become modern Rucellais and Medicis.

When Jarves showed his collection in a New York gallery hoping to attract a buyer to establish a public art collection, the New York Times of November 20, 1860, commented on these «queer, quaint pictures in fantastic frames [...] with backgrounds of gold, [that] were painted long, long years ago, when Art was in its infancy and Venice was still in the hands of the Doges. Many of their figures in their angularity look as though they might have been drawn by Egyptian or Chinese artists [...]»²⁶. Although the author of the *Times* article concluded that the works were nevertheless worthy of viewing because on the walls «[y]ou have a framed history of Art, in its dawn and progress», the New York Daily Tribune that same day ridiculed the exhibition, commenting that the public would not be blameworthy if they are «more amused than edified» by the «weak and fettered images» in the Jarves collection²⁷. Nor was the public at all prepared to respect these works. Jarves complained rather bitterly that visitors «sometimes injure pictures by handling or touching with the points of parasols, eye-glasses, etc [...] »²⁸. Jarves commented that he had even been forced to glass over one of his most valuable Old Masters, Sano di Pietro's Coronation of the Virgin because a visitor had cut into «the drapery of the angels, apparently to ascertain what material it was painted upon. Fortunately the injury was not extensive, but that such vandalism should exist in Boston is surprising»²⁹. The restorer Giorgio Mignaty, visiting Paris in Jarves's company wrote to his wife, «How in creation, having seen those Leonardos, was he [Jarves] able for one moment to buy those insignificant little pictures?»30.

The common idea that early Italian painting was primarily of interest because it demonstrated the beginnings of art's emergence from the depths of the dark ages characterized the first Americans who were brave enough to collect them. Jarves hoped that his collection would serve both as a pedagogical instrument for understanding a «correct view of its progress», and a means of elevating American taste, which included «a feeling for art». He insisted that Tuscan painting was a «democratic» art, and the close study of the best examples were beneficial to both artists and the general public. In this he was supported by Norton, who tried but failed to convince the Boston Athenaeum to buy Jarves's collection³¹. Both Bryan and Jarves had pictures stolen from their collection, which they regarded as «symptoms of progress»! But such «progress» was illusory³².

In the end, neither the "powers that be" nor the public were sympathetic to

Jarves's mission. All of his attempts to promote his collection and sell it to recoup his expenses failed miserably, first to the Boston Athenaeum (despite Norton's support for such a sale), and later to Yale College for its art gallery³³. In 1867 Jarves deposited 119 paintings at Yale as collateral for a \$20,000 loan, and the college proceeded to plan for an exhibition of the collection. But fear that the public would react negatively required that they be prepared in advance not to expect masterpieces. An accompanying circular stated, «Of course, the visitor must not look for beauty of execution in all the works of a series intended to exhibit the gradual progress of art from very feeble, though well-intentioned beginnings»³⁴. When by its due date three years later Jarves could not repay the loan, the collection went on sale in 1871. No buyers, however, appeared. Even a professor of art history at Yale opposed the negotiations with the college to purchase these «wretched productions», many of which are «destitute of intrinsic merit», with a price he considered more than four times the collection's value³⁵. Yale, however, agreed to buy the collection for the amount owed by Jarves plus interest, for a total of \$22,000³⁶. It was then forgotten for thirty years.

How did Isabella Stewart Gardner (fig. 12) develop her taste for early Italian art? She certainly would not have been aware of Bryan's or Jarves's collections early on. By the time she married John Gardner in 1860, however, she had already travelled in Europe with her parents as a child; indeed, as a girl of sixteen, after having visited the Museo Poldi Pezzoli in Milan, she declared that someday she wished to have a home stocked with «beautiful pictures and objects of art for people to come and enjoy»³⁷. The Gardners, especially after the tragic death of their toddler son, traveled extensively in Europe, Asia, and the United States. Isabella was soon to have her hands full raising three nephews after the deaths of their parents and, wanting to prepare herself to educate them, she began attending lectures at Harvard, some of which were open to the public, including women. She apparently found Norton's lectures enthralling, and the young Mrs. Gardner, and Norton in his fifties, became lifelong friends. According to her biographer Louise Tharp, it was he who suggested that she collect something besides jewelry and clothing, and thus under his guidance she began acquiring rare books and manuscripts, including three early volumes of Boccaccio³⁸. Berenson, who became her adviser beginning in 1894³⁹, was of course very interested in the early Italian painters and his influence must also have been of great importance.

As an outsider born in New York, who felt she had to defend an (apparently spurious) lineage going back to the royal Stuarts, she—although wealthy enough—was quite unconventional and thoroughly enjoyed that status: her habits, her dress, her public behavior scandalized proper Bostonians and were

sensationalized in the press; her temper and impatience made people fearful of crossing her; her generosity, open-mindedness, independence, and spiritual interests were legendary. Probably only such a person, confident enough to flout convention—including prevailing artistic values—could have successfully defied the norms of elite society in Brahmin Boston. If, as hinted at by one of her biographers, Charles Eliot Norton's bias against Jews led him to dismiss the young Bernard Berenson in favor of a rival for a scholarship to travel abroad⁴⁰, Isabella practically never dismissed anyone: Jews, African-Americans, Mormons, Catholics (she even requested a meeting with Pope Leo XIII on a visit to Rome in 1895)⁴¹ and, apparently, was entirely comfortable with the emerging (if largely closeted) homosexual culture in Boston as suggested by her friendships with George Santayana (1863-1952), Charles Loeser (1864-1928), Logan Pearsall Smith (1865-1946, who was Mary Berenson's brother), and many other dandies of Victorian Boston where, it has been said, Yankee bigotry was «as conventional as table linen»⁴².

Given her unconventional personality, she had perhaps little need to rationalize, as did Bryan and Jarves, the value of early Italian art. Indeed, attracted to Unitarianism, she was drawn to certain spiritual qualities that transcended Catholic piety. Among the trecento works that Mrs. Gardner purchased were Simone Martini's *Madonna and Child* (then attributed to Lippo Memmi; fig. 13) in 1897; Simone Martini's *Madonna and Child with Saints* (fig. 14), purchased in 1899, and Bernardo Daddi's *Madonna and Child with a Goldfinch* (fig. 15). In 1900 she joyfully acquired, through Berenson's extensive negotiations, Giotto's *Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (fig. 16).

Also a maverick of sorts (and perhaps it takes one to buy such off-beat items as gold-ground paintings!) was the Philadelphian John Graver Johnson (1841-1917; fig. 17), a prominent lawyer serving the interests of extremely rich clients, including Henry Osborne Havemayer and John Pierpont Morgan⁴³. There was, however, an eccentric side to his personality: he made fun, for example, of those very clients—those «squillionaires» he called them—and their outlandish expenditures on art. Johnson began collecting art in the 1880s but it took ten years before he turned to Old Masters. Not in the financial league of the Robber Barons of the Gilded Age, he did not attempt to compete with them for the more popular and costly objects. As one of his biographers wrote, «the 'off-beat' pictures, the problem pictures [...] the un-christened pictures [...] the pictures too Unimportant for the Important collectors» was what he was after⁴⁴. If he purchased these because they were available and within his means (unlike Jarves, whose mania for acquisition went well beyond his means), he also did so simply because he *liked* them. He had little interest in their Christian content, and had no patience

for iconography. «To me», he wrote, the names of «the mythical Saints [... are ...] absolutely meaningless and without interest»⁴⁵. But he was interested in style and attribution (though not necessarily to big names) and responded strongly to expressive qualities. Of Fra Angelico's *Saint Francis of Assisi* (fig. 18) he wrote, «The Angelico is a most vital figure, intense and most attractive. I had no idea that Fra Angelico could put so much power into his expression»⁴⁶.

Johnson owned the 1879 edition of Jarves's manual for collectors, Art Hints. An article on the Jarves Collection appeared in the American Archaeological Review in 1895 by William Rankin and in 1896 Berenson's Florentine Painters of the Renaissance came out, which also made references to Jarves. Carl Brandon Strehlke has suggested that Jarves's collection and Berenson's book had a significant impact on Johnson in the development of his interest in Italian primitives. In the summer of 1909 the lawyer visited Florence and had Herbert Horne as his guide. It was that trip that further awakened him to the treasures of early Italian painting. He wrote a letter to Bernard Berenson stating, «I am beyond all forms of expression—delighted at what I was able to see». In addition to several important quattrocento and cinquecento works, he mentions his pleasure in seeing Giotto, Simone Martini, and Cimabue, artists he found «infinitely greater» than he had ever realized⁴⁷. Thus it was that in 1910, through Herbert Horne, Johnson bought Duccio's Angel (fig. 19) from the Chigi-Saracini collection⁴⁸. Although a proper Philadelphian citizen, able to consort with both the business elite and with a wide range of scholars and connoisseurs (Bode, Friedlaender, Valentiner, Berenson, Fry, among others), he refused to cow-tow to conventional tastes and status-seeking by way of art. Unlike Gardner and most other collectors, his residence was disorderly (fig. 20), with pictures hung all over the place, not tastefully and aesthetically hung or in a specially designated gallery. Mary Berenson, who visited Johnson with Bernard in 1904, wrote to Mrs. Gardner about the pictures, «The perfectly awful thing is the way his pictures are placed—all over the walls and doors, on easels and morningstands, one can hardly move about ⁹. Even after he purchased an adjacent building to house some of his works, that too was overwhelmed with pictures. When he died in 1917, leaving his collection to the people of Philadelphia, there were 457 Italian paintings dating before 1800, including ten trecento Florentine school works up to Lorenzo Monaco, thirteen trecento Sienese paintings, including Pietro Lorenzetti's Madonna and Child with Donor (fig. 21), up to Taddeo di Bartolo, five Central Italian works up to followers of Alegretto Nuzi, and one trecento Venetian work—a not insignificant number⁵⁰.

Although by the turn of the century wealthy collectors both in Europe and the United States had become increasingly interested in "early Italian art," their pur-

chases focused primarily on quattrocento paintings. In 1919 Miss Helen Clay Frick (fig. 22), eccentric in her own way, inherited her father's collection of pre-dominantly seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish, and eighteenth-century British and French paintings, as well as furnishings, some sculptures, and decorative arts—but very few Italian and not a single trecento painting. On December 11, 1920, Mary Berenson wrote to Mrs. Gardner about various collections she and Bernard had visited, including «the Frick mausoleum inhabited by his wraith of a daughter». That same year Bernard wrote to Isabella that «Little Miss Frick may be going to Boston before long. Will you be gracious and receive her?»51. It was apparently not until early 1922 that Miss Frick visited the Gardner Museum, as is evident from an unpublished letter she wrote to Mrs. Gardner, dated January 25, in which she refers to a visit «last Thursday afternoon in your beautiful home—it was certainly a great privilege to see such treasures»52. It is probably no coincidence that Miss Frick that same year, 1922, purchased a polyptych then attributed to Giotto (now designated as by the "Master of the Scrovegni Chapel Presbytery"), apparently—although Italian gold-ground paintings had always appealed to her—her first Trecento acquisition (fig. 23). She asked Edward Forbes at Harvard if he thought it was a «[...] good little cornerstone on which to build up something worthwhile [...] and to cultivate an appreciation for the Early Italian Pictures, something which has not yet come my way?»53. During the following years, between 1924 and 1927, she purchased several other early Italian paintings, including works by Bernardo Daddi, Barna da Siena (fig. 24), and Andrea di Bartolo. By that time (after her father's death in 1919), the collection had become a trust. The elder Frick designated in his will that his daughter be a member of the Board of Trustees⁵⁴. Miss Frick, as head of the acquisitions committee, managed to convince the other Trustees of the Collection to acquire a panel from Duccio's Maestà, The Temptation of Christ (fig. 25), and the Coronation of the Virgin by Paolo and Giovanni Veneziano (fig. 26)—all works that would have been, as Inge Reist (of the Frick's Center for Collecting in America) has put it, «anathema to Frick himself». For the elder Frick, in accord with prevailing taste in the United States, preferred «portraits of accomplished men, beautiful women, gentle landscapes, and [...] 'refined' genre scenes». He rarely acquired works of religious subjects (and rejected representations of nudes)55. Although the Trustees were persuaded by Helen to buy Paolo Veneziano's Coronation, one member, Horace Havemeyer, had reservations, commenting that the painting, now one of the glories of the Frick collection, «is a picture which does not make much of a personal appeal to me»⁵⁶.

We have witnessed five individuals, each eccentric in his or her own way — Bryan, Jarves, Gardner, Johnson and Helen Clay Frick — who to a large degree set

the stage for the prolific collecting of trecento paintings by Americans that were to characterize the later twentieth century and beyond. By the end of the Great War, gold-ground paintings were receiving considerable recognition as worthy of respect and even admiration⁵⁷. But as late as 1913 Americans were cautious and particular: the art dealer A.C. Jaccacci wrote to Osvald Sirèn, serving as his agent in Europe, that the current rage for early Italian art must be met as quickly as possible, but any paintings acquired must be by well-known artists, have the endorsement of «real authorities» and, above all, «be of pleasing subjects, no scenes of martyrdom or crucifixions»⁵⁸!

- G. PREVITALI, La fortuna dei primitive dal Vasari ai Neoclassici, Torino 1989, p. 177, comments on the large number of works available for purchase following «la tempesta delle guerre napoleoniche». See also Medieval Art in America. Patterns of Collecting 1800-1940, ed. E.B. Smith, Pennsylvania 1996, p. 27, where mention is made of the French diplomat Artaud de Montor (1772-1849) who had purchased a large group of Italian paintings at the beginning of the century when religious institutions «dumped» thousands of altarpieces and other artworks on the market. See also notes 6-12 below.
- 2 On Stefano Bardini, see C. DE BENEDICTIS and F. SCALIA, *Il Museo Bardini a Firenze: Le pitture*, Florence and Milan 1984; L. FAEDO and E. NERI LUSANNA, *Il Museo Stefano Bardini: Le Sculture*, Florence and Milan 1986, and, for further bibliography, A.F. MOSKOWITZ, *Stefano Bardini: "Principe degli Antiquari" Prolegomenon to a Biography*. Florence: Centro Di, 2015, p. 121 n. 3.
- 3 Probably reflecting American attitudes was a review of Jarves's *Art Studies* in the New York Times of 31 December 1860, which states that «sewerage, pure water, and gas» are more important than «a gallery of the old masters». Cited by L.B. MILLER, 'An Influence in the Air' Italian Art and American Taste in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, in I.B. JAFFE, The Italian Presence in American Art 1760-1860, New York 1989, pp. 26-52.
- 4 R.A. BILLINGTON, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860. A Study of the Origins of American Nativism,* New York 1938.
- 5 M. DAVIES, *The Earlier Italian Schools. National Gallery Catalogues*, London 1951, appendix I, p. 437; see also D. ROBERTSON, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World*, Princeton 1987, p. 145.
- 6 The Crayon, vol. 2, no. 7, 15 August 1855, pp. 101-104. I am grateful to Megan Halsband of the Library of Congress for locating the exact source of this quotation. See also F. STE-EGMULLER, The Two lives of James Jackson Jarves, New Haven 1951, p. 788. Not encouraging the importation and thus knowledge of European art was the institution in 1833 of an extremely stiff tariff of 30% of declared value of art works to be paid to U.S. Customs—justified with the argument that art was a commodity, a luxury item, and should not be distinguished from iron or tea. This tax was in effect until 1881 when it was first reduced to

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- 15%, then eliminated completely from 1895 to 1897, and then imposed again at a rate of 15-20% until 1909 when a tariff was applied only to works less than twenty years old while Old Master art works were allowed to enter the country free; see K. ORCUTT, *Buy American? The Debate over the Art Tariff*, «American Art», vol. 16, no. 3, Autumn 2002, pp. 82-91.
- On Roscoe as well as other rare earlier collectors of primitive paintings, see M. COMPTON, William Roscoe and early collecting of Italian Primitives, «Liverpool Bulletin», 9, 1960-61, pp. 27-51. On the interest of British collectors in Early Italian painting during the first third of the nineteenth-century, see D. LYGON and F. RUSSELL, Tuscan Primitives in London Sales: 1801-1837, «Burlington Magazine», vol. 122, no. 923, February 1980, pp. 112-117. For a more recent discussion of Roscoe's collecting habits see X. BROOKE, Roscoe's Italian Paintings in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, in ed. S. Fletcher, Roscoe and Italy: *The Reception of Italian Renaissance History and Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries*, Aldershot 2012, pp. 65-93.
- On Alexis-François Artaud de Montor, see A. STADERINI, *Un contesto per la collezione di 'primitivi' de Alexis-François Artaud de Montor*, «Proporzioni», n.s. 2004 (2006), pp. 23-62. For some recently reattributed, although lost works formerly in his collection see STADERINI, *'Primitivi' fiorentini dalla collezione Artaud de Montor*, parte I, «Arte Cristiana», 92, 2004, 823, pp. 259-66; parte II, «Arte Cristiana», 92, 2004, pp. 333-42. Cf. the catalogue written by the owner himself, *Peintres Primitifs. Collection de Tableaux Rapportée d'Italie et publiér par M. Le Chevalier Artaud De Montor*, Paris 1843 (ed. or. 1808, ed. 2nd 1811, ed. 3rd 1825). See also http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/rioa.htm (accessed 31 May 2014).
- 9 F. HERMAN, *Peel and Solly. Two nineteenth-century art collectors and their sources of supply*, «Journal of the History of Collections», vol. 3, no. 1, 1991, pp. 89-96.
- 10 On William Young Ottley, especially his travel in Italy, see B. CINELLI, William Young Ottley: un caso anomalo nella riscoperta dei Primitivi, in Studi in onore del Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz per il suo centenario (1897-1997), «Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa», ser. IV/1-2, 1996, pp. 409-414.
- 11 Maria, Lady Calcott published her *Description of the chapel of the Annuziata dell'Arena; or Giotto's Chapel in Padua*, London, in 1835.
- 12 For John Flaxman, see S. TRITZ, John Flaxman und die Renaissance: ein Meister des Klassizismus im diolog mit Masaccio und Donatello (John Flaxman and the Renaissance: a master of neo-classicism in dialogue with Masaccio and Donatello), Berlin 2009; and D.G. IRWIN, John Flaxman, 1755-1826: sculptor, illustrator, designer, New York 1979, esp. pp. 29-30 and 31-42. Irwin offers an extensive discussion concerning Flaxman's response to trecento and quattrocento paintings and sculptures encountered in Italy. Flaxman often filled his sketchbook with linear interpretations of these works.
- 13 On the influence of Rio and other early collectors see MILLER, *Influence in the Air*. See also http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/rioa.htm (accessed 31 May 2014). Lord Lindsay's writings and collecting habits are discussed by H. BRIGSTOCKE, *Lord Lindsay and the 'Sketches of the History of Christian Art'* and *Lord Lindsay as a Collector of Paintings*, in N. BAR-KA et al., "A Poet in Paradise." Lord Lindsay and Christian Art, Edinburgh 2000, pp. 17-24 and 25-33, respectively. On Anna Jameson, author of Memoires of the Early Italian Painters, and the series Sacred and Legendary Art, see C. THOMAS, *Anna Jameson: Art Historian and Critic*, «Women's Art Journal», vol. 1, no. 1, Spring Summer, 1980, pp. 20-22. See also http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/jamesona.htm (accessed 13 June 2014). *Sacred and Legendary Art* was first published in 1846 and reprinted several times; see e.g., the 1898

- edition, 2 vols, edited by E.M. Hurll, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin. *Memoires of Early Italian Painters* was first published in London in 1845 and reprinted several times; see e.g., the 1890 edition, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company.
- 14 W.G. CONSTABLE, *Art Collecting in the United States of America. An Outline of a History*, London 1964, p. 34; STEEGMULLER, Jarves, p. 788.
- 15 *ibid.*, p. 132.
- 16 STADERINI, *Un contesto*.
- 17 Quoted by SMITH in *Medieval Art in America*, pp. 23-33. See T. J. BRYAN, *Companion to the Bryan Gallery of Christian Art....with an introductory essay, and an index by Richard Grant White*, New York 1853, p. iv. In his introduction White does grant that the «peculiarity of the Collection is almost of equal importance [... as ...] the intrinsic beauty and excellence of a large portion of the works which compose it»; the comment, however, probably did not apply to the gold-ground paintings of the collection.
- 18 SMITH, ibid.
- 19 E. PERGAM, *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857. Entrepreneurs, Connoisseurs and the Public*, Surrey and Burlington, pp. 201, 308-325. See also EAD., *From Manchester to Manhattan: the transatlantic art trade after 1857*, «Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester», 87, special issue entitled *Art, City, Spectacle: The 1857 Manchester Art Trea-sures Exhibition Revisited*, ed. H.R. Leahy, 2005, pp. 63-91. For the first time throngs of ordinary people came to view the art works, which impelled one journalist to comment that the working classes, who normally would have spent the day at «notorious wakes»—and wakes tended to be rowdy affairs in the nineteenth century—now were «spending a few happy and profitable hours;» PERGAM citing the *Manchester Examiner*, August 22, 1857, p. 3.
- 20 Atlantic Monthly, Nov. 1857, pp. 33-46.
- 21 K. VANDERBILT, Charles Eliot Norton. Apostle of Culture in a Democracy, Cambridge 1959, p. 55, quoting from a letter of 13 January 1856.
- 22 See the chapter, Giotto's Campanile, in STEEGMULLER, Jarves, pp. 112-134, esp. pp. 130-134.
- 23 JARVES, Art Studies: The Old Masters of Italy, New York 1861, p. 71f.
- 24 F.G. SANTORI, *Medieval Revival in chiave Americana: gli scritti di James Jackson Jarves*, «Ricerche di storia dell'arte», 70/70, 2000, pp. 79-90, n. 43.
- 25 ibid. Curiously, one American collector who was not only Protestant but was the founder and first rector of the neo-Gothic Episcopal Church of Saint Paul inside the Walls in Rome, apparently had no theological or philosophical biases against early Italian art: the Pennsylvanian Robert Jenkins Nevin (1839-1906), transplanted to Rome, collected about 175 Italian trecento and quattrocento paintings. On Nevins, see M. MINARDI, Studi sulla collezione Nevin: I dipinti veneti del XIV e XV secolo, «Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell'Arte» ed. Istituto di Storia dell'arte fondazione Giorgio Cini, 36, 2012, pp. 315-350.
- 26 New York Times, November 20, 1860. http://www.nytimes.com/1860/11/20/news/opening-of-the-institute-of-fine-arts.html (accessed 4 July 2014).
- 27 <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1860-11-20/ed-1/seq-4/> (accessed 4 July 2014).
- 28 JARVES, *Hints to Visitors to Art Galleries*, quoted in STEEGMULLER, *Jarves*, p. 203. Even Peter Cooper was guilty of this type of behavior! See Miller, *Influence in the Air*.

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- 29 STEEGMULLER, *Jarves*, p. 204. Conditions in the United Kingdom were not much better; cf. ibid., p. 204, n. 7.
- 30 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 134.
- 31 On Norton, see VANDERBILT, Charles Eliot Norton; on his influence on American culture see M. GREEN, The Problem of Boston: Some Readings in Cutlural History, New York 1966, pp. 122-141; D. HALL, The Victorian Connection, «American Quarterly», XXII, 1975, pp. 561-574. On Norton's attempt to interest Boston in the collection, see STEEGMULLER, Jarves, pp. 164-181; on Norton's support for a sale of the pictures to Yale, see ibid., pp. 230-233, 248.
- 32 *ibid.*, p. 82, citing *The Art Idea*, pp. xxiv-xxv: «Both Mr. Bryan and myself regard these larcenies as symptoms of progress.» Jarves recognized Bryan as a pioneer in collecting. The fail-ure of the collections of Bryan and Jarves to garner interest among Americans is discussed by MILLER, *Influence in the Air*.
- 33 On Norton's support for Jarves's enterprise, see STEEGMULLER, *Jarves*, pp. 76-81, 188-189.
- 34 ibid., p. 237.
- 35 ibid., p. 252.
- 36 *ibid.*, pp. 226-267; for the exhibition see pp. 230-237.
- 37 M. CARTER, Isabella Stewart Gardner and Fenway Court, Boston 1972 (ed. or. 1929), p. 15.
- 38 L.H. THARP, Mrs. Jack: A biography of Isabella Stewart Gardner, Boston 1965, p. 61.
- 39 E. SAMUELS, Bernard Berenson. The Making of a Legend, Cambridge, MA1987, p. 2, and passim.
- Although such a bias, to my knowledge, is not verifiable by way of documents or letters, circumstantial evidence suggests that this was the case. E. SAMUELS in Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Connoisseur, Cambridge MA, 1979, p. 213, writes: «Norton evidently had not been pleased that winter to see his prominent disciple Mrs. Jack Gardner adopt the young immigrant upstart from Lithuania as her adviser in the purchase of art». Norton had at one time endorsed the Know-Nothing Party, which was anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic; VAN-DERBILT, Norton, p. 56. He praised an article in the North American Review, dated April 1870, written by his friend E.L. Godkin, that deplored the new power of «the immigrant races» and warned that the masses with their «ruthless touch» and their «rush into the forum [...] and libraries is not an agreeable sight to witness [...].»; quoted in ibid., p. 109. The comment on «the rush into [...] the libraries» may be a veiled reference to Jews, known as «the people of the book». Berenson's work at Harvard was admired by several of his college professors and a comment regarding his application for the Travel Fellowship, informs us that he was considered «a man of unusual ability and brilliant promise»; see SAMUELS, Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Connoisseur p. 50. Years later, word came to Berenson that Norton had told a colleague at the time that «Berenson has more ambition than ability». BERENSON, Sketch for a Self Portrait, p. 52. Norton's disdain for Berenson reached its peak in an anony-mous review he wrote of the ground-breaking study of Lorenzo Lotto, Lorenzo Lotto: An Essay in Constructive Art Criticism, which appeared in the «Athenaeum», April 13, 1895. On Norton's general fear of and disdain for immigrants, see VANDERBILT, Norton, pp. 42-43, 109, 194, 219. Although Berenson had first mentioned Jarves in 1895, Norton never brought the collection to Gardner's attention. The issue, however, is complicated, as were Norton's thoughts, given his early idealism and desire for reform; see *ibid.*, pp. 43-49.
- 41 CARTER, *Gardner*, p. 149. She supported the most conservative (from the religious and ritualistic point of view) of Anglican sects, donating funds for a high altar for the Church of

- the Advent in Boston, whose beautiful liturgy she loved. SHAND-TUCCI, *Art of Scandal*, pp. 30-33.
- 42 *ibid.*, pp. 116-117. On the other hand, Mrs. Gardner could easily dismiss Belle Da Costa Greene, J. P. Morgan's secretary and librarian as well as Bernhard Berenson's lover, who was (secretly) of mixed race: Hearing of a disparaging remark about her museum Gardner commented, «It turns out she is a half-breed and I suppose can't help lying». Heidi Ardizzone, *An Illuminated Life: Belle da Costa Greene's Journey from Prejudice to Privilege*, New York 1977, p. 144.
- 43 It was said that he lost many anti-trust cases but «if you lost with Johnson you lost less!» C.B. STREHLKE, *Bernhard and Mary Berenson, Herbert P. Horne and John G. Johnson*, «Prospettiva», 57-60, April 1989 Oct. 1990, pp. 427-38.
- 44 A. SAARINEN, *The Proud Possessors. The lives, times, and tastes of some adventurous American collectors*, New York 1958, p. 100.
- 45 Cited by STREHLKE, Italian Paintings, p. 8.
- 46 Ibid., p. 8.
- 47 Cited by *ibid.*, pp. 2-4; see also STREHLKE, *Bernard and Mary Berenson*, pp. 427-438.
- 48 STREHLKE, Italian Painting, p. 127.
- 49 The letters of Bernard Berenson and Isabella Stewart Gardner, 1887-1924, with correspondence by Mary Berenson, ed. R. Van Hadley, Boston 1987, pp. 330-331.
- 50 B. BERENSON, *Catalogue of a Collection of Paintings and some Art Objects*, vol. 1 (Italian Paint-ings), Philadelphia 1913.
- 51 Letters of Bernard Berenson, pp. 619-620.
- 52 Isabella Stewart Gardner papers in the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C. I thank Margaret Zoller of Reference Services for supplying me with a copy of the document.
- 53 Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Archives, as cited in M. FRICK SYMINGTON SANGER, Helen Clay Frick: Bittersweet Heiress, Pittsburg 2008, p. 31. See also I. REIST, Helen Clay Frick: Charting her own Course, in Power Underestimated: American Women Art Collectors, Marsilio 2011.
- 54 Upon his death in 1919, Henry Clay Frick bequeathed his house and its contents to the public, to be transformed into a «gallery [...] to which the entire public shall forever have access»; see C. BAILEY, Building the Frick Collection: An Introduction to the House and its Collections, New York 2006, pp. 80-81, 93, 111.
- 55 REIST, Helen Clay Frick.
- 56 Frick Collection Trustees files TFC/FARL Archives, cited by REIST.
- 57 Philip Lehman began collecting trecento paintings as early as 1914; between then and the early 1920s he amassed a notable collection of primitives. See A. FRANKFURTER in *Exposition de la Collection Lehman de New York*, Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris 1957, p. xiii-xv.
- 58 A.F. Jaccacci to O. Siren, 11 July 1913 in Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; quoted by MILLLER, *Influence in the Air.*



Fig. 1: "American Patriot", broadside, 1852 (in public domain).

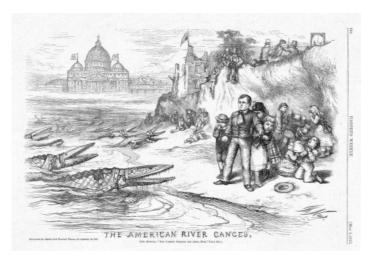


Fig. 2: THOMAS NAST, "The American River Ganges," Harpers Weekly, Sept. 30, 1871.



Fig. 3: MARGARITONE D'AREZZO: Madonna & Child with scenes of the Nativity and saints, tempera on wood, 36×69 ", late 13th century. London, National Gallery of Art.



Fig. 4: THOMAS SULLY: *Portrait of Thomas Jefferson Bryan*, 1871. Oil on canvas, $20 \times 16 \times 1/8$: New York, The New York Historical Society. The John Jay Watson Fund.



Fig. 5: NARDO DI CIONE: *Madonna & Child with Saints* (originally attributed to Guido da Siena), tempera and tooled gold on panel, 77 $1/2 \times 39 \times 1/2$ in. (196.9 x 100.3 cm), mid-14th century. Now in the Brooklyn Museum, New York City.



Fig. 6: Charles Eliot Norton (Courtesy Harvard University Archives).



Fig. 7: James Jackson Jarves. Yale Library Manuscripts & Archives department (in public domain).



Fig. 8: "MAGDALEN MASTER": Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints, Tempera on panel, framed: $106 \times 160.2 \text{ cm}$ (41 3/4 x 63 1/16 in.), 13th century. Yale University Art Gallery (formerly Jarves Collection).



Fig. 9: GUIDO DA SIENA, workshop: *Crucifixion*, 65.1 x 96.5cm (25 5/8 x 38in.). Tempera on panel. ca. 1270-1280. Yale University, formerly Jarves Collection.



Fig. 10: AMBROGIO LORENZETTI, attrib.: St. Martin & the Beggar, 65.1 x 96.5cm (25 5/8 x 38in.) Tempera on panel. Yale University Art Gallery (formerly Jarves Collection).



Fig. 11: TADDEO GADDI: (?) Entombment of Christ, c. 1345. Tempera on panel, 116 x 76.3cm (45 $11/16 \times 30 \ 1/16$ in.) Yale University, formerly Jarves Collection.



Fig. 12: Isabella Stewart Gardner. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.



Fig. 13: SIMONE MARTINI: $Madonna\ and\ Child$, ca. 1325. Tempera and gold on wood. 116 x 76.3cm (45 11/16 x 30 1/16in.). Purchased (as Lippo Memmi) in 1897 from the dealer Stefano Bardini, Florence. Boston, Isabella Steward Gardner Museum.



Fig. 14: SIMONE MARTINI: *Madonna and Child with Saints*, ca. 1320. Tempera and gold on wood, 5 components: center 99 x 60.7 cm, side panels each about 86.3 x 42.5 cm. Purchased in 1899 with help of Bernard Berenson. Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.



Fig. 15: BERNARDO DADDI: *Virgin and Child with a Goldfinch*,c. 1342. Tempera and gold on wood, 98.2 x 55.6 cm. Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.



Fig. 16: GIOTTO: *Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple*, ca. 1320. Tempera and gold on wood, 45.2 x 43.6 cm.Purchased in 1900 from J. P. Richter, through Berenson. Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

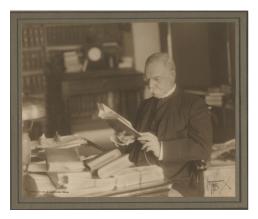


Fig. 17: Unknown photographer: John G. Johnson, c. 1913 (public domain).

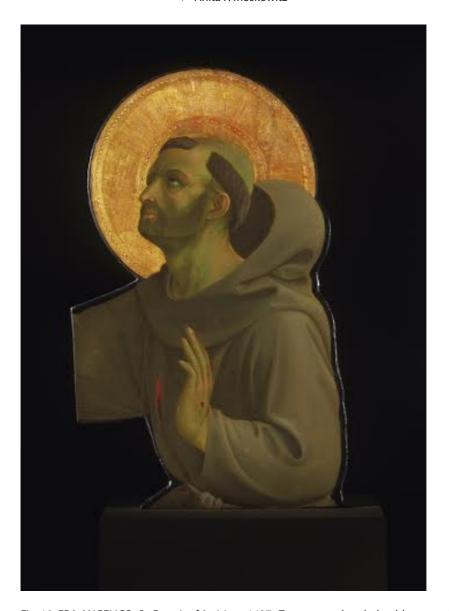


Fig. 18: FRA ANGELICO: St. Francis of Assisi, ca. 1427. Tempera and tooled gold on panel, 27 9/16 x 19 1/4 inches (70 x 48.9 cm) Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Fig. 19: DUCCIO: Pinnacle panel of an altarpiece: *Angel*, by 1311. Tempera with tooled gold on panel, 9 $1/2 \times 6 \times 11/16$ inches (24.1 x 17 cm). Philadelphia, Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Fig. 20: Room in home of John G. Johnson, after Strehlke, Italian Paintings.



Fig. 21: PIETRO LORENZETTI, Madonna and Child with Donor, ca. 1319. Tempera and tooled gold on panel, 51 $3/4 \times 27 1/2$ inches (131.4 $\times 69.9$ cm) Central panel: 49 $5/8 \times 29 3/4$ inches (126 $\times 75.6$ cm) Each spandrel: 9 $3/4 \times 10 1/2$ inches (24.8 $\times 26.7$ cm). Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Philadelphia.



Fig. 22: Helen Clay Frick. Frick Art Reference Library. Copyright, the Frick Collection.



Fig. 23: Master of the Scrovegni Chapel Presbytery: *Madonna and Child with Saints, Scenes from the Life of Christ and the Life of the Virgin*, 1308. Tempera on panels



Fig. 24: BARNA DA SIENA, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, Ca. 1350-60. Tempera on poplar panel. New York, Frick Collection. Copyright, the Frick Collection.



Fig. 25: DUCCIO, *The Temptation of Christ from the Maestà*, 1308-1311. Tempera on poplar panel, $17 \times 18 \, 1/8 \, \text{in.}$ (43.2 x 46 cm). New York, Frick Collection. Copyright, the Frick Collection.



Fig. 26: PAOLO AND GIOVANNI VENEZIANO, *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1358. Tempera on poplar panel, 43 $1/4 \times 27$ in. (109.9 x 68.6 cm). New York, Frick Collection. Copyright, the Frick Collection.