
> The analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete. Their inspiration is the same, their process (allowing for the different quality of the vehicle), is the same, their success is the same. They may learn from each other, they may explain and sustain each other. Their cause is the same, and the honour of one is the honour of another.

*Henry James and American Painting*, opening at the Morgan Library & Museum on June 9, is the first exhibition to explore the author’s deep and lasting interest in the visual arts and their profound impact on the literature he produced. Offering a fresh perspective on the master novelist, the show reveals the importance of James’s friendships with American artists such as John La Farge, John Singer Sargent, and James McNeill Whistler. While the author decided early on that the pictorial arts were not to be the arena in which he would work, the painterly quality of his writing has enthralled readers for over a century.

Co-curated by author Colm Tóibín, whose latest novel *House of Names* is published this month, and Declan Kiely, head of the museum’s Department of Literary and Historical Manuscripts, the exhibition includes a rich and eclectic selection of more than fifty paintings, drawings, watercolors, sculptures, photographs, manuscripts, letters, and printed books from two dozen museums and private collections in the United States, Great Britain, and Ireland. Together they weave an evocative story of fascinating artistic intersections.
“With its acclaimed collections of art and literature, the Morgan is the perfect place for this exhibition,” said Colin B. Bailey, director of the museum. “The visual arts were part of the bedrock on which Henry James built his house of fiction. He composed the most dramatic moments in his work as though they were framed, as though his characters were placed in light and shade as a painter might pose figures on a canvas.”

THE EXHIBITION
Portraits of Henry James

Henry James was fiercely protective of his privacy and, despite achieving preeminence as a novelist by the end of the nineteenth century, gave only four interviews over the course of his career. He expressed a “dread of the assault of the interviewer.” Nevertheless, he sat for numerous portraits, and was photographed by some of the leading photographers of his day. In less than a decade James used the word “portrait” in three book titles—*The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), his first literary masterpiece; *Portraits of Places* (1883), a collection of travel essays; and *Partial Portraits* (1888), a collection of essays on writers that argued for the inclusion of narrative fiction among the fine arts.

In 1862, at age nineteen, James sat for John La Farge, a painter eight years his senior, in Newport, Rhode Island. At the time, Henry James was attending Harvard Law School, after which he redirected his focus to essays and fiction. His relationship with La Farge set the tone for his early novel, *Roderick Hudson* (1875), a coming-of-age story of a young law student from Northampton, Massachusetts, who aspires to be a great sculptor in the classical tradition.

It was La Farge who helped James to gain “the dawning perception that the arts were after all essentially one and that even with canvas and brush whisked out of my grasp I still needn’t feel disinherit. That was the luxury of the friend and senior with a literary side.” The exhibition includes the original typescript of *Notes of a Son and
Brother, in which James wrote extensively about La Farge’s important early aesthetic influence.

The 1913 portrait of James by John Singer Sargent—a treasure on loan from the National Portrait Gallery, London—is perhaps the most famous painted image of the author. Sargent was the natural choice when a group of James’s friends commissioned an oil portrait to mark the writer’s seventieth birthday. James described the finished work, which captured his reserve and sensuous intelligence, as “Sargent at his very best and poor old H. J. not at his worst; in short a living breathing likeness and a masterpiece of painting.”

Other portraits of James in the exhibition include Abbott Handerson Thayer’s 1881 crayon on paper drawing from the Collection of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City; Ellen Gertrude Emmet Rand’s 1900 portraits from the National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.; Alice Boughton’s 1905 and 1906 photographs; William James’s 1910 portrait from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston; and E. O. Hoppé’s 1911 photograph from the National Portrait Gallery, London.

**Frank Duveneck and Elizabeth Boott Duveneck**

The relationship between the American painters Frank Duveneck (1848–1919) and his wife Elizabeth Boott Duveneck (1846–1888), and Elizabeth’s father, the composer Francis Boott (1813–1904), offered James inspiration for three of his most important novels—Washington Square (1880), The Portrait of a Lady (1881) and The Golden Bowl (1904). There are clear parallels between Elizabeth Boott and James’s characters: Catherine Sloper in Washington Square, Pansy Osmond in The Portrait of a Lady, and Maggie Verver in The Golden Bowl.

Francis and his only child Elizabeth were wealthy New Englanders who moved between Boston, where James first met them in 1865, and Europe. James, a regular visitor to their apartment in Villa Castellani at Bellosguardo, overlooking Florence, transformed it into the residence of his characters Gilbert Osmond and his daughter Pansy in The Portrait of a Lady. Frank Duveneck came to the attention of James and the Bootts when he showed his paintings at the
Boston Art Club in 1875. James wrote: “In the rooms of the Boston Art Club hang some five remarkable portraits by Mr. Frank Duveneck of Cincinnati . . . The good people of Boston have recently been flattering themselves that they have discovered an American Velázquez.” James added that “the analogy of Mr. Duveneck’s talent with that of the great Spaniard is a natural, instinctive one.” Elizabeth Boott purchased a painting from the exhibition, and, in March 1888, a portrait of her by Duveneck was accepted by the jury of the Salon in Paris.

The tensions that arose when Elizabeth fell in love with Duveneck, who, as her art teacher, was considered by her father to be an unsuitable match, intrigued James. After Elizabeth finally married Duveneck, James came to visit them at Bellosguardo, writing letters to his family and friends about the family dynamics of their household. Elements of his time with the Bootts made their way into his late masterpiece *The Golden Bowl* (1904), a novel that explores the drama of father-daughter bonds complicating husband-wife romance. This exhibition contextualizes James’s friendship with the Bootts and Duveneck, and shows the artists’ work together in illuminating conjunction. Highlights include Duveneck’s portraits of Elizabeth and Francis Boott, and the tomb effigy that he designed to mark his wife’s burial place.

**John Singer Sargent and James McNeill Whistler**

The connections between Henry James and John Singer Sargent make the latter essential to any consideration of James and painting, as they are also fascinating in any consideration of James’s own life in all its rich complexity and ambiguity. James and Sargent were both Americans in Europe who had spent much of their childhood abroad. They were bachelor expatriates, reserved, industrious, careful about their private lives. Both liked society and took an interest in fashionable women. Both, in their work, were interested in surface and psychology. In 1886, one critic noted the connections between them: “He [Sargent] is the Henry James of portraiture, and I can’t help wishing he were not—as I can’t help wishing Henry James were not the Sargent of the novel.” The British painter W. Graham Robertson, who knew both, described them as “real friends, they understood each other perfectly and their points of view were in many ways identical.”

More than a year before James and Sargent were introduced, the writer noted a Venetian genre scene by the artist that was part of an 1882 exhibition at London’s Grosvenor Gallery. Both James and Sargent were enthralled by Venice. “The Aspern Papers” (1888) is set in Venice, and the city also features in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), a novel that features a palace that is clearly reminiscent of the Palazzo Barbaro, home of the Curtis family, where both Sargent and
James spent considerable time. On special loan from the Royal Academy of Arts, London, Sargent’s 1889 painting, *An Interior In Venice (The Curtis Family)*, which was intended as a gift to the family, is displayed. The painting features the couple, Daniel and Ariana Curtis, as well as their son Ralph and his wife Lisa in their opulent Palazzo. Though rejected by the Curtises, (Ariana found her portrayal unflattering), Sargent’s distinguished work is celebrated for its aesthetic depiction of the grand Venetian salon.

In 1884, James declared Sargent to be the “only Franco-American product of importance," who had, moreover, "high talent, a charming nature, artistic and personal, and is civilized to his fingertips. . . . I like him extremely; and the best of his work seems to me to have in it something exquisite.” Conversely, James sometimes critiqued Sargent’s tendency to paint pretty portraits, rather than to remain true to his subject’s natural likeness. As James opined, “His Mrs. Boit is admirable for life & impudence & talent, but seems to me a supreme example of his great vice—a want of respect for the face.” In the context of fiction writing, James had more creative license to create a less-than-flattering portrait with his pen than did Sargent.

Whistler, like Sargent, became known for creating vivid, iconic, and mysterious images of women—as evidenced in his *Arrangement in Black and Brown: The Fur Jacket (1876)*—much as James became known for the subtlety and sympathy with which he treated his female characters. James and Whistler became friends in the 1880s. James sent him an inscribed copy of *The
Spoils of Poynton (1897) and, upon hearing of Whistler’s appreciation, wrote that he was delighted “to have pleased you, to have touched you … for the arts are one, and with the artist the artist communicates.” James was a regular visitor to Whistler’s home at 110 Rue du Bac in the 1890s, and The Ambassadors (1903) drew upon his impressions to describe the house and garden of the sculptor Gloriani, who is based on Whistler.

Hendrik Christian Andersen and Lilla Cabot Perry
Sculptor Hendrik Andersen appears almost as a character out of James’s fiction. James met him in the spring of 1899 in Rome. James was fifty-six, Andersen almost thirty years his junior. Andersen was born in Norway but raised in Newport, Rhode Island, where the James family had also lived between sojourns in Europe. He studied in Paris and then Naples, and moved to Rome in 1897. Between 1899 and 1915, the year before his death, James wrote seventy-eight letters to the handsome young Norwegian-American. Andersen’s 1899 painted terra-cotta bust of Count Alberto Bevilacqua, on loan from the National Trust—was placed by the mantelpiece in a corner in the small dining room at Lamb House, Rye, where James moved in 1897. In his letters, James advised the young sculptor to produce work on a more domestic scale in order to make it more saleable. The bust bore a resemblance to Andersen, and James wrote, “I shall have him constantly before me as a loved companion and friend. He is so living, so human, so sympathetic and sociable and curious, that I foresee it will be a lifelong attachment.” James later told a friend that the sculpture was “the first object that greets my eyes in the morning, and the last at night.”

Henry James was also close to a number of female artists, in addition to Elizabeth Boott Duveneck. These include Ellen Gertrude Emmet Rand, his cousin who painted portraits of him; Alice Boughton, who took several photographs of James, creating images of character that have shaped the mental pictures of generations of readers and enthusiasts; and Lilla Cabot Perry, who was pivotal in connecting James

with the French Impressionists, a movement that he broadly rejected. The daughter of wealthy Bostonians, Lilla Cabot married Thomas Sergeant Perry, literary critic and close friend of Henry James, in 1874. She became the sister-in-law of John La Farge. Perry had no formal artistic training until the age of thirty-six when she studied at the Académie Julian and at the Académie Colarossi. In 1889, the Perrys traveled to Giverny, France, joining the community of artists gathered around Claude Monet. Upon her return to the United States, Perry became an influential proponent of Monet’s work, publishing *Reminiscences of Claude Monet from 1889 to 1909*, a biographical account of her twenty summers at Giverny.

James visited the second Impressionist exhibition of 1876, held at the Galerie Durand-Ruel, and he dismissed “the young contributors of whom I speak” as “absolute foes to arrangement, embellishment, selection. . . . None of its members show signs of possessing first-rate talent.” He failed to recognize the significance of Impressionism, and he did not know the main French artists of the age, even though he knew most of the French novelists. The work that interested him most was Anglo-American, or pre-Impressionist. What mattered to him was the atmosphere that visual artists created and the world they inhabited more than any new systems or innovations.

Ostensibly rooted in academic convention, *The Green Hat*, Perry’s 1913 portrait of her daughter, Edith, manifests her adherence to impressionism through the dynamic brushstrokes of its background, the monochromatic palette and the play of light. What interested James most was not the impression, but the expression.

**Selection of Highlights on View**


Henry James (1843–1916), *Project of a Novel* (ninety-page outline for *The Ambassadors*), September 1, 1900. The Morgan Library & Museum; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. A. Hyatt Mayor, 1974.


**Publication**

Published to coincide with the exhibition at the Morgan, in *Henry James and American Painting* novelist and critic Colm Tóibín, author of the 2004 Man Booker short-listed novel *The Master*, joins art historian Marc Simpson and Declan Kiely of the Morgan Library & Museum to reveal how essential the language and imagery of the arts—and friendships with artists—were to James’s writing. A refreshing new perspective on a master novelist who was greatly nourished by his friendships with artists, this edifying volume reveals a James whose literary imagination, in Tóibín’s words, “seemed most at ease with the image” and the work of creating fully realized portraits of his characters.

Authors: Colm Tóibín, Marc Simpson, Declan Kiely
Publishers: Penn State University Press, The Morgan Library & Museum
192 pages, 70 color illustrations.

**Public Programs**

**LECTURE**

**Henry James and the American Paintings He Loved (and Hated)**

*Marc Simpson*

Henry James used his familiarity with American art and artists to enrich his life and inform his writings. He wrote insightful—and often amusing—comments about paintings by Copley and Church, Homer and Sargent, among many others. Join independent art historian Marc Simpson as he samples from this rich trove of responses both wry and enthusiastic to reveal James’s pictorial aesthetics.

**Monday, June 12, 6:30 pm**

**Tickets: $15; $10 for members; free for students with valid ID.**

The exhibition *Henry James and American Painting* will be open at 5:30 pm for program attendees.
DISCUSSION  The Writer's Art
A Conversation with Jean Strouse & Colm Toibin

In his fiction Henry James wrote about artists, collectors, and galleries. He was fascinated by painters and paintings and his friends and associates included John La Farge, John Singer Sargent, James McNeill Whistler, Frank Duveneck and William Wetmore Story. James’s letters vividly convey his response to visual culture and his work as a novelist was filled with the drama of watching and noticing: the most dramatic, intense and memorable moments in his fiction appear as though framed. Jean Strouse, biographer of Alice James, and Colm Toibin, author of The Master, will discuss Henry James’s relationship to the visual arts.

Wednesday, June 28, 6:30 pm
Tickets: $15; $10 for members; free for students with valid ID.

The exhibition Henry James and American Painting will be open at 5:30 pm for program attendees.

GALLERY  Henry James and American Painting
TALK
Declan Kiely, Robert H. Taylor Curator and Department Head, Literary and Historical Manuscripts

Friday, June 30, 6 pm
Tickets: Free with museum admission; no tickets or reservations necessary.

ADULT WORKSHOP  Reading Henry James
Sharon Fulton, scholar of English and Comparative Literature, guides this multi-disciplinary workshop illuminating the literary mastery of Henry James, drawing connections between his groundbreaking novel The Portrait of a Lady and the artistic masterpieces of John Singer Sargent and James McNeill Whistler. Participants will examine the novel in two workshop sessions. Each literary discussion will be followed by a visit to the exhibition Henry James and American Painting to compare the novel’s scenes to the artist’s paintings. Advance tickets are recommended, as space is limited.

Tuesday, July 11 and July 18, 2–4 pm
Tickets: $45 for non-members; $35 for members. Tickets include two sessions.

FILM  The Golden Bowl
Director: James Ivory
(2000, 131 minutes, Rated R)

An extravagantly rich American widower (Nick Nolte) and his sheltered daughter (Kate Beckinsale), both of whom marry only to discover that their respective mates, a beautiful American expatriate and an impoverished Italian aristocrat (Uma Thurman and Jeremy Northam), are entangled with one another in a romantic intrigue of seduction and deceit.

Friday, July 14, 7 pm
Tickets: Free with museum admission. Advance reservations for members only.

The exhibition Henry James and American Painting will be open at 6:00 pm for program attendees.
This screening is a part of the series, Henry James on Screen. Henry James novels chronicling the passions and missteps of 19th century Americans and Europeans have been the inspiration for countless film and television adaptions over many years. This exhibition related series features three of the most successful adaptions of his works: The Golden Bowl (2000), A Portrait of a Lady (1996), and The Heiress (1949).

GALLERY
Henry James and American Painting
Declan Kiely, Robert H. Taylor Curator and Department Head, Literary and Historical Manuscripts

Friday, July 21, 1 pm
Tickets: Free with museum admission; no tickets or reservations necessary.

FILM
A Portrait of a Lady
Director: Jane Campion
(1996, 144 minutes)

Isabel Archer (Nicole Kidman) isn't afraid to challenge societal norms. Impressed by her free spirit, her kindhearted cousin writes her into his fatally ill father's will. Suddenly rich and independent, Isabelle ventures into the world, along the way befriending a cynical intellectual (Barbara Hershey) and romancing an art enthusiast (John Malkovich). However, the advantage of her affluence is called into question when she realizes the extent to which her money colors her relationships.

Friday, July 28, 7 pm
Tickets: Free with museum admission. Advance reservations for members only.

The exhibition Henry James and American Painting will be open at 6:00 pm for program attendees.

FILM
The Heiress
Director: William Wyler
(1949, 115 minutes)

This Best Picture nominee was based on the stage version of Henry James's renowned novel Washington Square. Olivia de Havilland's gives an Oscar-winning performance as Catherine Sloper, a young naïve woman in 1840s New York who falls for a handsome young man Morris Townsend (Montgomery Clift) that her father (Ralph Richardson) suspects is a fortune hunter. Music by Aaron Copland.

Friday, August 11, 7 pm
Tickets: Free with museum admission. Advance reservations for members only.

The exhibition Henry James and American Painting will be open at 6:00 pm for program attendees.
Organization and Sponsorship

*Henry James and American Painting* is co-curated by Declan Kiely, Robert H. Taylor Curator and Head of the Morgan’s Department of Literary and Historical Manuscripts and celebrated author Colm Tóibín.

This exhibition is made possible with a lead gift from the Jerome L. Greene Foundation.

Major funding was provided by the Henry Luce Foundation.

Generous support is provided by Karen H. Bechtel, the Mr. and Mrs. Raymond J. Horowitz Foundation for the Arts, and the Franklin Jasper Walls Lecture Fund, and assistance from Barbara G. Fleischman and the Wyeth Foundation for American Art.

The programs of the Morgan Library & Museum are made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

The Morgan Library & Museum

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, the Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, music venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. A century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, and the 2010 refurbishment of the original library, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

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