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**THE MORGAN PRESENTS EXHIBITION ON THE GREAT—AND  
ENDURINGLY POPULAR—NOVELIST JANE AUSTEN**

***SHOW INCLUDES LADY SUSAN, THE ONLY SURVIVING COMPLETE  
MANUSCRIPT OF ANY OF AUSTEN'S NOVELS, AS WELL AS EARLY EDITIONS OF  
HER WORKS AND A GROUP OF REMARKABLE LETTERS TO HER SISTER,  
CASSANDRA***

**Also featured is a new documentary film about Austen's continuing influence, with  
commentary by Fran Lebowitz, Colm Tóibín, and Cornel West, among others**

*A Woman's Wit: Jane Austen's Life and Legacy* opens November 6, 2009

**\*\*Press Preview: Wednesday, November 4, 10 a.m. until noon\*\*  
RSVP: 212.590.0393, media@themorgan.org**

**New York, NY, November 23, 2009**—The extraordinary life, work, and legacy of one of the greatest novelists in the English language, Jane Austen (1775–1817), are the focus of a new exhibition at The



Jane Austen, steel engraving after a sketch by Cassandra Austen. London: Richard Bentley, 1870. Purchased by J. P. Morgan, Jr., 1925; MA 1034.12. Photography by Schecter Lee, 2009.

Morgan Library & Museum from November 6, 2009, through March 14, 2010. Offering a close-up portrait of the iconic British author, whose popularity has surged over the last two decades with numerous motion picture and television adaptations of her work, the show provides tangible intimacy with Austen through the presentation of more than 100 works, including her manuscripts, personal letters, and related materials, many of which the Morgan has not exhibited in over a quarter century.

*A Woman's Wit: Jane Austen's Life and Legacy* also includes first and early illustrated editions of Austen's novels as well as drawings and prints depicting people, places, and events of biographical significance. A highlight of the exhibition is a specially commissioned film by the noted Italian director

Francesco Carrozzini, featuring interviews with artists and scholars such as Siri Hustvedt, Fran Lebowitz, Sandy Lerner, Colm Tóibín, Harriet Walter, and Cornel West.

“The greatness of Jane Austen’s writing is seen in her continuing popularity today,” said William M. Griswold, director of The Morgan Library & Museum. “Although she wrote about life and society in England two centuries ago, her witty, satirical approach to her subjects resonates with contemporary readers. The Morgan is fortunate to have such an outstanding collection of Austen material, and this exhibition provides a close, intimate look at the artist’s life and work.”

## JANE AUSTEN

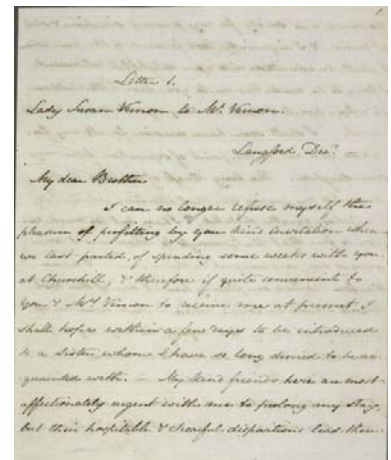
Jane Austen was born in 1775 into a rural middle-class family. Her father, George Austen, was the rector at Steventon, a small village in the southern English county of Hampshire. Her mother, Cassandra Austen, was a member of a prominent family. Austen’s immediate family included six brothers and one sister, also named Cassandra, who remained Jane’s closest friend and confidante throughout her life.

At an early age, the two sisters were sent to Oxford for schooling. Both girls, however, caught typhus and returned home. Two years later, they were once again sent away to school. At the age of eleven, Jane Austen finished her formal education and returned home. It was in this environment, encouraged by her family—all enthusiastic readers themselves—that she began to write poems, stories, and plays for her family’s as well as her own amusement.

As Austen grew into adulthood, she continued to work on her fiction while taking part in the everyday activities of young women of her time—she practiced the pianoforte, assisted in supervising servants, sewed, socialized frequently at dances and balls, traveled to visit family members, and detailed these activities in numerous witty and amusing letters, mostly to Cassandra. She continued to write short pieces and shared them with her family.

Most likely first composed in 1794–95, Austen’s first surviving novel, *Lady Susan*, about a wicked yet enchanting widow who is determined to find a husband at any cost for herself and her retiring daughter, was written as a series of letters. It was a longer and more sophisticated story than were her previous efforts. *Lady Susan* was never published during her lifetime; it was not until 1811 that her first major novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, was printed. This was followed by *Pride and Prejudice* (initially entitled *First Impressions*; 1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), and the posthumous *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* (1817).

In 1816 Austen became ill but continued writing. She died in 1817, at the age of 41.



Jane Austen, *Lady Susan*, autograph manuscript, ca. 1805. Purchased in 1947; MA 1226. Image provided by DIAMM on behalf of Jane Austen’s Holograph Fiction MSS: A Digital and Print Edition.

## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

The exhibition is organized into three sections: Austen’s life and personal letters, her works, her legacy, and concludes with the documentary-style film.

Only a relatively small number of Austen’s personal letters have survived. The Morgan is a major repository of her correspondence, with one third of all surviving letters held in the department of Literary and Historical Manuscripts. These materials—from correspondence to her beloved sister, Cassandra, to a letter to her niece in which all the words are spelled backwards, to “crossed letters” (also known as “cross-hatching,” in which Austen, to save paper and reduce postal charges, wrote across the horizontal lines of text at right angles)—offer a remarkable glimpse into Austen’s everyday life and relationships, as told in her characteristically witty and confident voice. Some highlights include a letter dated 2 June 1799 to her sister, which includes a drawing of the lace pattern of her cloak, and a letter dated 20 July 1817, written by Cassandra to Fanny Knight, Austen’s beloved niece, reporting Austen’s death: “I have lost a treasure, such a Sister, such a friend as never can have been surpassed.”



William Blake, *Portrait of Mrs. Q (Mrs. Harriet Quentin)*, 1820. Gift of Charles Ryskamp in memory of Michael S. Currier, 1998; 1998.36.4. Photography by Schecter Lee, 2009.

Drawings and prints of people, places, and events of importance in Austen’s life and times will provide visual context for the letters. On view is a *Portrait of Mrs. Q* (Mrs. Harriet Quentin) by William Blake.

There will also be numerous prints by James Gillray (1757–1815), an influential printmaker and social satirist, who touched on many of the same subjects and themes found in his illustrious contemporary’s letters and novels, including women’s fashions, marriage, and social rank.

The section on Austen’s works includes the autograph manuscript of *Lady Susan* (rewritten ca. 1805), the only surviving complete manuscript of any of her novels. Also included in the exhibition is an unfinished autograph manuscript of *The Watsons* (ca. 1805), which remained unfinished and is the only surviving manuscript of Austen’s novels showing her work in progress and under revision. Also on view is an autograph note by her sister Cassandra, listing the date of composition of her novels *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasion*, and *Emma*. Another note by Austen lists the profits of her novels.

The exhibition also incorporates rare books and manuscripts from the Morgan’s collections by authors who influenced Austen, including Fanny Burney, William Cowper, Samuel Richardson, and Lord Byron. After reading Byron’s poem *The Corsair: A Tale*, Austen wrote in a letter to her sister, “I have read *The Corsair*, mended my petticoat, and have nothing else to do.”

The legacy of Jane Austen is examined through later writers' responses to her work. Beginning with a diary entry by her contemporary Sir Walter Scott, the exhibition also features comments by twentieth-century writers, including Vladimir Nabokov, William Butler Yeats, and Rudyard Kipling.

The influence and popularity of Jane Austen is also examined through the film at the conclusion of the exhibition. It features interviews about Austen with an eclectic group of artists and scholars.

The exhibition is organized by Declan Kiely, Robert H. Taylor Curator, and Clara Drummond, Assistant Curator, Literary and Historical Manuscripts, The Morgan Library & Museum.

*A Woman's Wit: Jane Austen's Life and Legacy* is generously supported by the Laurence Levine Charitable Fund, Inc. and Sir Thomas R. Moore.



This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

### Music and Dance

#### ***Dancing with Darcy***

To celebrate the final weekend of the exhibition travel back to Regency England for an evening of period music and dancing in the Morgan's elegant Gilbert Court. Join Beverly Francis and Country Dance ★ New York for an English country dance demonstration, audience participation, and live music.

Friday, March 12, 7–8:30 pm

### Lectures and Discussions

#### ***A preview of MASTERPIECE Classic's Emma with Rebecca Eaton***

Join MASTERPIECE executive producer Rebecca Eaton for a sneak preview of scenes from the new four-hour adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma*, starring Romola Garai, Jonny Lee Miller, and Michael Gambon. *Emma* will be broadcast on three Sundays beginning January 24, 2010 on PBS/Thirteen ([www.pbs.org/masterpiece](http://www.pbs.org/masterpiece)). This event is cosponsored by the Jane Austen Society of North America, New York (JASNA-NY).

Wednesday, January 20, 6:30 PM★

#### ***From Gothic to Graphic: Adapting Jane Austen Novels***

Jane Austen's works continue to inspire new generations of writers working in popular literary genres. In a lively presentation, authors of recently published books discuss their unique twist on Austen with Juliette Wells, Manhattanville College. Participants include Ben Winters and Jason Rekulak (*Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*), Jane Rubino and Caitlen Rubino-Bradway (*Lady Vernon and Her Daughter*), and Nancy Butler (*Pride and Prejudice* graphic novel). This program is cosponsored by the Jane Austen Society of North America, New York (JASNA-NY).

Tuesday, January 26, 6:30 pm★

★The exhibition will be open at 5:30 pm especially for program attendees.

#### ***Reading Jane Austen***

Patrice Hannon, author of *Dear Jane Austen: A Heroine's Guide to Life and Love* and *101 Things You Didn't Know About Jane Austen*, leads a reading group on three of Austen's most beloved novels. The group will

closely examine the texts of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*, paying particular attention to matters of style. Sessions will take place in the historic family rooms of the nineteenth-century Morgan house. The group will be reading from the Penguin Classics edition of the novels. Light refreshments will be provided. Advance tickets are recommended as space is limited.

Wednesday, January 27, 3–4:30 pm: *Pride and Prejudice*

Wednesday, February 10, 3–4:30 pm: *Emma*

Wednesday, February 24, 3–4:30 pm: *Persuasion*

### Family Programs

#### ***Winter Family Day Celebration***

Join us for our annual family day celebrating the exhibitions *A Woman's Wit: Jane Austen's Life and Legacy* and Charles Dickens's *Christmas Carol*. Travel back to the days of the English Regency with art workshops that will bring Jane Austen's fashion sense to life. Then move on to Victorian London to meet Charles Dickens and his famous characters through the original play *Goblins, Ghosts, and Geezers: The Making of Scrooge*, \* improvisational skits, and other activities.

Sunday, December 6, 2009, 2–5 p.m.

\*There will be two performances of *Goblins, Ghosts, and Geezers: The Making of Scrooge* at 2:30 p.m. and 4 p.m. Tickets will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis on the day of the program.

#### ***Paper Dolls at the Ball: Jane's Fashion for Kids***

To coincide with the exhibition educator Deborah Lutz leads a workshop that begins with a short tour of the exhibition that features a series of humoristic prints illustrating the extravagances of fashionable ladies and gentlemen of Austen's time. Children will design evening costumes for women or men using paper doll templates, a wide variety of quality decorative papers, and colorful trimmings. Appropriate for ages 6–12.

Saturday, February 6, 2–4 pm

### Films

***Pride and Prejudice*** (1940, 118 minutes)

Director: Robert Z. Leonard

All the wit and wisdom of Jane Austen's popular comedy of manners is vibrantly brought to life in this classic film adaptation starring Greer Garson as the spirited Elizabeth Bennet and Laurence Olivier as the arrogant and dashing Mr. Darcy. Sunday, January 24, 2 pm

***Sense and Sensibility*** (1995, 135 minutes)

Director: Ang Lee

Emma Thompson received an Academy Award for the screenplay of Ang Lee's feature adaptation of Jane Austen's novel about two sisters—pragmatic, ironic, Elinor (Thompson) and passionate, willful Marianne (Kate Winslet)—and their struggle to find romantic happiness in a society obsessed with financial and social stature. Hugh Grant (Edward Ferrars), Alan Rickman (Col. Christopher Brandon), and Greg Wise (John Willoughby) round out the superb cast. Friday, February 12, 7 pm

### Gallery Talks

***A Woman's Wit: Jane Austen's Life and Legacy***

Declan Kiely, Robert H. Taylor Curator and Department Head, Literary and Historical Manuscripts, The Morgan Library & Museum. Friday, November 20, 7 pm

***A Woman's Wit: Jane Austen's Life and Legacy***

Clara Drummond, Assistant Curator, Literary and Historical Manuscripts, The Morgan Library & Museum. Friday, February 26, 7 pm

For tickets and more information, visit [themorgan.org](http://themorgan.org).

### **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, musical venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. More than 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, 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.

**General Information**

The Morgan Library & Museum  
225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405  
212.685.0008  
[www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org)

**Hours**

Tuesday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; extended Friday hours, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. The Morgan closes at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve.

**Admission**

\$12 for adults; \$8 for students, seniors (65 and over), and children (under 16); free to Members and children, 12 and under accompanied by an adult. Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.